
A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

brave fight' to the last, because, as he said, 'What else is there to do?'

Yes, he had heard and obeyed the call. But he knew by experience that a heavenly call can be obeyed only in the power of a heavenly impulse. And this impulse is given by 'Jesus the Bringer of Love' to those who put their trust in Him. Browning, in his 'Epitaph of one of Nero's Slaves,' puts in his mouth the familiar words:

I was some time in being burned,
But at the close a hand came through
The fire above my head, and drew
My soul to Christ, whom now I see.

'A hand came through,'—that was the Gospel as Henry KINGMAN knew it, preached it, lived it. And would not Paul have said that there was no other, not though an angel from heaven proclaimed it?

St. Paul and Aristophanes.

BY J. RENDEL HARRIS, LITT.D., MANCHESTER.

FEW passages in the New Testament are so perplexing, alike to the textual critic and the commentator, as the second chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, in which St. Paul denounces a teacher or teachers who are propagating some ill-defined heresy in the Colossian church. It is commonly held that these dark shadows which fall across the early history of this famous church are cast by Jewish forms; perhaps they are Essene as well as Jewish; but they are so ill-defined that one might write a volume of speculative comments about them, without bringing the shadows into reality. The text of Colossians in this chapter is held by the best critics to be in a very bad state of preservation, but even where the textual critic finds it plain sailing, the language is so inflated and grotesque as to leave us wondering—not only what the ultimate sense of the words can be—but whether they are really apostolic in origin, and from the same hand and brain that produced the Epistle to the Galatians or the Epistle to the Romans. However, something can be done by the textual critics to help us into clearness of vision and understanding. At all events, they will tell us to drop the negative in 2^{18} (ἃ *μὴ ἑόρακεν ἐμβατεύων*), on the ground of its late and inadequate attestation, even if they cannot tell us what *θέλων ἐν ταπεινοφροσύνῃ* can mean: and if the critic is not afraid to use the art of conjectural emendation, he will be able to rescue a clause or two from the chaos in which the words are now swimming. Let us see how far inquiry has progressed in this regard. First of all, we write down the text of two closely related verses in which the worst obscurities are found:

Col 2^{18}, *μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς καταβραβευέτω θέλων ἐν ταπεινοφροσύνῃ καὶ θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἃ ἑόρακεν ἐμβατεύων, εἰκῇ φυσιούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ νοὸς τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ.*

Col 2^{23}, *ἅτινά ἐστιν λόγον μὲν ἔχοντα σοφιάς ἐν ἐθελοθρησκείᾳ καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ καὶ ἀφειδίᾳ σώματος.*

With regard to the first of these notes, Hort writes in his *Select Readings* as follows:

'Dr. Lightfoot has with good reason revived a suggestion of Alexander More and Courcelles that the (last) word *ἐμβατεύων* must be taken with the three preceding letters, so as to make *κενεμβατεύων*; at the same time, in place of ἃ *ἑόρακεν* he suggests *ἑώρᾳ* or *αἰώρᾳ*, a word twice used by Philo in similar contexts appropriate here. On the whole, however, *ἀέρα*, conjectured by Dr. C. Taylor, (*Journ. of Philol.*, 1876, xiii. 130 ff.), is still more probable; the transitive construction is amply attested for *ἐμβατεύω* and presents no difficulty with *ἀέρα*.

ΑΕΡΑΚΕΝΕΜΒΑΤΕΥΩΝ differs from ΑΕΟΡΑΚΕΝΕΜΒΑΤΕΥΩΝ only by the absence of Ο after Ε.'

Having thus given his benediction to the Taylor emendation at the cost of the abandonment, in part, of the parallels which Lightfoot adduced from Philo, Dr. Hort went on to say of v.^{23} that 'no probable emendation has been suggested. This

Epistle, and more especially the second chapter, appears to have been ill-preserved in ancient times; and it may be that some of the harshnesses which we have left unmarked are really due to primitive corruption.'

This very judicious summary provoked the wrath and the merriment of Dean Burgon as follows:

'Col 2^{18}, ἃ μὴ ἑώρακεν ἐμβατεύων, *prying into the things he hath not seen*; where ℵ*ABD* and a little handful of suspicious (*sic*!) documents leave out the *not*. Our Editors, rather than recognize this blunder (so obvious and ordinary!) are for conjecturing (as above); which (if it means anything at all) may as well mean "proceeding on an airy foundation to offer an empty conjecture!" Dismissing that conjecture as worthless, etc. . . . the Traditional Text cannot seriously be suspected of error.'[1]

Upon which pronouncement I remarked that it was 'witty but not wise.' The emendation was, in any case, slight, was arrived at gradually, and took one from the region of the obscure into what was sufficiently lucid. Now let us see if we can go a step further with Lightfoot's assistance.

First of all, Lightfoot points out that κενεμβατεύων and its equivalent κενεμβατεῖν is not a rare form of speech, nor one that is inappropriate to the Colossian situation; he says:

'The word κενεμβατεῖν, "to walk on emptiness," to "tread the air," and so metaphorically (like ἀεροβατεῖν, αἰθεροβατεῖν, αἰθερεμβατεῖν, etc.) "to indulge in vain speculations," is not an uncommon word.'

'(These) striking parallels (from Philo) show how germane to St. Paul's subjects these ideas of "suspension or balancing in the air" (ἐώρᾳ or αἰώρᾳ) and "treading the void" (κενεμβατεύων) would be, as expressing at once the spiritual pride and the emptiness of these speculative mystics.' Lightfoot's equivalent expressions at once suggest the origin of the Pauline language.

In Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 225, there is a famous situation where Socrates is seen suspended in a basket, and when asked what he is doing, he replies:

ἀεροβατῶ καὶ περιφρονῶ τὸν ἥλιον.
'I tread on air and contemplate the sun.'

That is the most important line in the whole play as far as quotation goes. It was referred to by Socrates himself at his trial, when he alludes to the treatment he had received at the hands of a certain comic poet, to the effect that there is 'one Socrates carried about (in a basket) and saying that he treads on air (ἀεροβατεῖν), along with a lot more foolery.' Every one who knew anything of Greek life or of Greek literature would know this famous line. It has been borrowed with slight modification, of the form but not of the sense, by St. Paul. He describes his Colossian philosopher in the way that Aristophanes denounced Socrates.

As soon as we have decided that St. Paul was under the influence of the *Clouds*, and that one can see through the turbid language of the Epistle to the Colossians the form of Socrates, considered as the *bête noire* of people who distrusted philosophy and philosophers, we are obliged to make a change in our manner of interpreting the Epistle. It is not any longer in order for us to restrict the Colossian heresy to Jewish—that is to say, to Essene speculations. If the Essenes come in at all they must come in with the philosopher's cloak as worn at Athens: and in that case the hostility of St. Paul to philosophy must be more comprehensive than has generally been supposed. If the troublesome people at Colosse were merely Judaizing Gnostics, what would be the use of quoting Aristophanes to them, or showing Socrates on the film in a basket, with an attached reprobation?

In Col 2^{8}, Paul warns the people to whom he writes that they are to beware of false teachers who make a prey of them through philosophy and vain deceit. It has been a matter of serious discussion among theologians, from the days of Clement of Alexandria until now, whether this means that the Church is committed, through Paul, to an anti-philosophic attitude. Tertullian, for instance, when he runs up against philosophy, will have none of it; Clement will have all of it, except the absolutely indigestible portions. Lightfoot takes a middle course and suggests that it was only a special philosophy and a particular teacher that is being antagonized. 'Philosophy is not condemned, it is (only) disparaged by the connexion in which it is placed.' It is bad, in respect that it is Jewish, it would be good if it were Greek. But what will happen if the Jew and the Greek are teaching the same thing? Let it be granted that there is a school of Jewish philosophers at Colosse

[1] *The Revision Revised*, pp. 355, 356.

who are causing trouble; if St. Paul compares them to Socrates on an aeroplane, and makes their angel-worship parallel to cloud-worship, how shall we shut them up again into Dead-Sea hermitages who have been under the open sky at Athens? The fact is that the dividing-line cannot be drawn, and St. Paul does not profess to draw it.

We can approach Colossian speculation from two sides, but the two roads are really one. Take, for instance, the asceticism of the teaching which is condemned in the Epistle: its formula is said to be 'Don't touch and don't taste.' It is usual to illustrate this spirit of abstinence from Talmudic sources, and from the descriptions which we have of Essene life. But ascetic practice is not so easily delimited. In the *Clouds* Socrates appears as an ascetic, with bare feet and pallid cheek, and when the Clouds advise Strepsiades how to become a disciple of the philosopher, he is told that he must never tire, nor feel the cold, nor long for his meals, and that he must abstain from wine and the gymnasium. This may be regarded as an expansion of the ascetic rule given above; and it should be remembered that Aristophanes in the *Clouds* is not always laughing at Socrates: he has limits to the sport that he allows himself. If asceticism were divorced from novel opinions he would, perhaps, cease altogether from criticism of the philosophers. It seems, then, that the formula which St. Paul quotes need not be a Jewish rule; on the other hand, there are signs in the text that whatever might be the origin of the rule, or the extent of its diffusion, the Apostle meant to apply it to Judaizers. The proof of this is interesting. He says that the application of the rule is *κατὰ τὰ ἐντάλματα καὶ διδασκαλίας ἀνθρώπων*. Now this is an Old Testament quotation—but it is more than a quotation, it is a Testimony; and it is more than a Testimony, it is a *Testimonium adv. Judæos*. It is an Old Testament quotation, for it agrees very nearly with Is 29^{13}: *μάτην δὲ σέβονταί με, διδάσκοντες ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων καὶ διδασκαλίας*. It is also a Testimony, for it occurs in Mk 7^{7} (and from Mark in Mt 15^{9}) in the form *μάτην δὲ σέβονταί με, διδάσκοντες διδασκαλίας ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων*. And that it is a Testimony against the Jews appears not only from the preface in Mark ('appropriately did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites'), but also from its occurrence in writers who are known to use written and collected *Testimonies*, such as Justin. For Justin also employs Isaiah's language with regard to the people 'whose heart is far from God' (*Dial.* 39), and makes his proof not from the Gospel but directly from the prophet.

Lightfoot, who did not know the use of collected Testimonies in the first Christian generation, could not recognize the meaning of St. Paul's language. He imagined him to be using the Gospels, Mark or Matthew, or both. 'The coincidences,' says he, 'in St. Paul's language with our Lord's words as related in the Gospels (Mt 15^{1-20}, Mk 7^{1-23}) are striking and suggest that the Apostle had this discourse in his mind.' The suggestion is unnecessary. All that can be inferred is that St. Paul made use of an anti-Judaic Testimony in his letter to the Colossians. He treats, then, the people whom he denounced as being both philosophers and Jews.

As soon as we have made it clear that the language of Aristophanes is involved in the Epistle to the Colossians, we can take another step in the elucidation of the textual and intellectual confusion of the second chapter. In v.[23] the false teachers are charged with *ἐθελοθρησκείᾳ* and *ταπεινοφροσύνῃ*, and it is usually explained that this means a worship in the will of the creature and a false and affected humility. When we look back at v.[18] we see traces of the same defects; here we have the phrases *θέλων ἐν ταπεινοφροσύνῃ* and *θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων*. The first expression is unmeaning; if, however, we remove *θέλων* and restore *ἐθελοθρησκείᾳ* we shall have a close parallel with the language of v.[23]. But what does *ἐθελοθρησκείᾳ* mean? evidently this also is corrupt; if we restore *ἐν νεφελοθρησκείᾳ* we shall have an expression capable of explanation from Aristophanes; the worship of angels is, like the new religion in the Greek comedy, a worship of the clouds. An affectation of humility and a cloud-cult of angels, that is what is amiss with the new teachers. A reference to Aristophanes will show the place of the clouds in the supposed theology of Socrates. Socrates, for instance, introduces Strepsiades to the Clouds as 'these divinities of ours,' *ταῖς ἡμετέραις δαίμοσιν* (l. 252).

In l. 316 they are called *οὐρανίαι Νεφέλαι, μεγάλαι θεαὶ ἀνδράσιν ἀργοῖς*. They are the 'great goddesses revered by idle men,' and throughout the play, where the abolition of Zeus is assumed, they take the form of a Chorus of maidens, and

decide the destinies of the performers. How easily such an expression as ἐν νεφελοθρησκείᾳ could be corrupted into ἐν ἐθελοφρησκείᾳ is obvious.

Let us now look a little deeper into the acquaintance of St. Paul with the play of Aristophanes. Is it more than a mere reminiscence of a formula, according to which Socrates was made to say that he 'trod on air and contemplated the sun'? That single expression would, no doubt, be the extent of the popular remembrance, just as the appearance of Socrates in a basket would be the popular memory of the dramatic action. Can we go further than this? Is there any sign that his mind suggested to Paul more than the bare reference and the single word ἀεροβατεῖν? When we think over the play and ask what it means, the next thing that occurs to us is what suggested itself to Milton, that it is a drama of 'the Worse and the Better Reason,' such as Belial was expert in. The author wants to show, by personification of the two Reasons, how easily the Worse outwits the Better, and that philosophy is the art of doing this. So he introduced old Strepsiades the farmer, whose son has left him to pay for his horses and associated extravagances; and then he sends Strepsiades first, and later his son Pheidippides, to study under Socrates, in order to find out how to escape the payment of their debts. This question of the accumulated debts, and the use of philosophy as a means of repudiation, runs right through the play. It might almost be called, *Philosophy, or a New Way to pay Old Debts.* Socrates puts Strepsiades through a catechism. What would he do if the first of the month was at hand and interest was lawfully due? Strepsiades suggests that he would buy a young Thessalian witch, pull down the moon (a well-known art of the Thessalian women), and put it under lock and key. Then the Calendar, being lunar, would be stopped.

Socrates puts another case: suppose judgment is being entered against you for ten talents, what would you do by way of escape? Strepsiades suggests that he would get the burning-glass in the chemist's shop, take it into court, and, standing some way off, concentrate the sun's rays on the adverse sentence that is being written against him, and erase the letters from the wax tablets of the judges. Socrates asks again what his pupil would do if he had one day left to pay the debt: Strepsiades says he would hang himself the day before the debt became due; they cannot collect revenue from a corpse. And so, finally, Socrates has nothing further to teach him, and dismisses him.

Now is it an accident that in the Epistle St. Paul speaks of a legal document that was adverse to us, and explains how Jesus erased the writing and (so to speak) crucified the document? And is it accidental that he so strongly, in this very chapter, affirms the death of a debtor and his consequent release from obligations of a legal nature? What philosophy, so called, could not do, St. Paul represents Jesus as doing. He tells the Colossian believers that they died with Christ, and that their life is now a secret one with Christ in God, and without any fear of being arrested by old-time creditors. No doubt this explanation will seem very strange, and it is quite unlike the conventional exegesis of the New Testament. Yet it flows naturally enough from the single supposition that St. Paul knew the *Clouds*, had read the play, or even seen it acted. There is nothing stranger in his making use of this knowledge than there is in his quoting the *Ion* of Euripides at the time of the Jerusalem riot; for we showed some time ago that the reference to Tarsus as 'no mean city' was taken from the speech of Hermes concerning Athens at the opening of Euripides' play.

We shall sum up the matter as follows: in the second chapter of Colossians there are suggestions of literary parallelism with the *Clouds* of Aristophanes; and it is possible that an acquaintance with the play and its scorn of philosophy may give a clue to the treatment of Colossian heretics by St. Paul, to his denunciation of Colossian speculations, and to his explanation of Christianity as being also a New Way to pay Old Debts.

The following comments of Dr. T. K. Abbott will show that we have correctly represented the financial side of the passages of the Epistle to which we have referred:

> 2^{14}. ἐξαλείψας, 'blotting out' . . . strictly it means 'wiping out or away,' '*cera obducta* delere.' . . . τὸ καθ' ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον, 'the bond that was against us.' χειρόγραφον, properly an autograph, was in later Greek a technical term for *an acknowledgment of debt.* . . . Here the χειρόγραφον is the Mosaic Law, which, being unfulfilled, is analogous to an unpaid '*note of hand.*'

In the foregoing inquiry we followed Hort in support of the Taylor emendation as against the almost equivalent one of Lightfoot. It brought us at once to the language of Aristophanes. It is interesting to observe that Lightfoot's correction pointed in the same direction. For if we turn to Pollux and his *Onomasticon* (iv. 130, 131), to find out what apparatus is used on a Greek stage, for performers who have to be raised into the air or carried through the air, we find that they employ a crane (the same word that we use) to carry off a suspended body, as when the Dawn carries off the body of Memnon; or else a system of ropes, called αἰώραι, which are attached to the top of the stage, to support heroes or gods, who are to seem to walk upon the air. In the *Clouds* the word used is κρεμάθρα, 'suspender,' and is commonly but doubtfully rendered by 'basket'; it is evidently the same thing as αἰώρα; and, as the commentators say, is meant to give supernatural dignity to Socrates in a ridiculous manner. The conventional Greek prefaces to the *Clouds* actually tell us that Socrates appears ἐπὶ κρεμάθρας αἰωρούμενος. If Lightfoot had not been so bent on giving an abstract, speculative sense to αἰώρα, he would have found his way into the Greek theatre at the time when the *Clouds* was being performed.

There is still a great deal to be done in elucidation of the obscure and inflated language of Colossians. It is pretty certain, for instance, that ταπεινοφροσύνῃ is wrong. The imitation of Socrates can hardly be expressed in that term: but what is the original word? Is it perhaps περιφροσύνη, as in the speech of Socrates, where he *contemplates* the sun (περιφρονῶ τὸν ἥλιον)? The objection would be that the correction is not quite near enough to the word corrected, especially when we reflect that the word occurs twice. Another suggestion, very near to the existing text, would be to read πατεινοφροσύνη, giving the sense to the whole passage of 'a cloud-cult and bird-lore of angels.' But perhaps we have made enough changes in the text for the present, and may leave the rest of the textual perplexities for future study, by ourselves and others. Our task has been to bring Socrates into the New Testament, and into Pauline mentality. The latter part of the process was not very difficult, for we remember that Tarsus was a University town, with a great philosophical school, whose influence upon St. Paul's mind, perhaps at the formative period and before his attaching himself to Gamaliel, cannot have been negligible.

The question of the influence of Aristophanic (Socratic) matter on *Ep. ad Coloss.* raises the inquiry as to whether there are any traces of the same thing in the related Epistle to the Ephesians. In the first place, is there a parallel section? To this there is an affirmative answer. The verses Eph $4^{15.16}$, which speak of the relation of the members of the body to the head and the consequent growth and increase of the body, are parallel to Col 2^{19}, where the same or similar statements are made. When we look at what precedes the Head-passage, with its growing and corresponding members, we see that it is not only Colossians that has the onslaught on philosophy. The same thing is true in Ephesians, where the Christian believers are advised against the fluctuations and the uncertainties of human teaching, and the tricks of teachers who are planning to deceive them. Thus we have an anti-philosophical warning in Ephesians also.

When we look more closely at the Ephesian text we see that the metaphor varies somewhat from that in the Colossian text. The victim of philosophy is not now up in the clouds, he is 'wave-tossed and wind-borne' (κλυδωνιζόμενος καὶ περιφερόμενος ἀνέμῳ), *i.e.* he is at sea. But there is still a fragment of the Socratic tradition in the text, for the word περιφερόμενος is the one used to describe the philosopher by the poet in Plato's *Apology*, where Socrates is said to be περιφερόμενος and to talk all sorts of fooling. The impression made on one's mind is that both Epistles have the same objection to philosophy, but that in Colossians the hostility is more specific, probably because the teachers that are attacked are more in evidence, and their teaching more strongly defined.

In either case philosophy is a form of deceit; in Colossians it is κενὴ ἀπάτη (2^{8}), 'idle or vain deceit': just before it is called πιθανολογία, 'the persuasive art.' In the same way, at the close of the play of Aristophanes, Strepsiades declares that 'Socrates and Chærephon have utterly deceived us' (ἐξηπάτων). In Ephesians the same idea of deceit on the part of the teachers is involved, but a new figure is introduced, that of the dice-player. The person who touches philosophy has the dice loaded against him; he is the victim of ἡ κυβεία τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

Of these two modes of treatment of the un-

desirable philosopher the Colossian appears to be the earlier, and that in the Ephesians to be later and more general. The priority of the Colossians comes out in another detail. Here the philosophers are said to teach the cult of angels, and *not to hold the Head.* The reason for the latter clause lies in the play of Aristophanes where the clouds are the new deities, who (with Vortex and Chaos) have displaced Zeus. The Greek prologues bring out clearly this feature of the text: *e.g.* in the preface of Thomas Magister, 'Socrates deserts the customary gods and plans new divinities, Air and Clouds and such-like.' The non-holding to the Head in Colossians has its motive in the abandonment of Zeus. There is no such motive to be traced in Ephesians. Moreover, the conception of Christ as the Head is a part of the Colossian Christology; it goes back to the Wisdom doctrine of 1^{18}, where Christ is defined as the Head and the Beginning. Thus it was perfectly natural for the Epistle to the Colossians to speak of a displaced Head; it was not so obvious to introduce the idea in Ephesians. So we see the priority of the Colossian treatment. It is interesting to note how the introduction of the Aristophanic parallels has thrown light upon the perplexing problem of the interrelation of the two Epistles.

Literature.

DR. DENNEY.

A NEW volume of letters by the late Professor Denney, admirably edited by Professor Moffatt, is sure of a wide and warm welcome. It is the kind of book you read through at a sitting and then go back to from time to time to renew the first pleasure. The letters of well-known persons are often desperately disappointing. But this cannot be said of Dr. Denney's. His individuality was so strong that he seemed to mint himself in anything he said or wrote. His short speeches of five minutes were almost perfect of their kind, and even the briefest letter in this collection has something of the force and point that his self-expression always conveyed.

The main impression this correspondence leaves is one that is probably familiar to all who knew its author well. There were two Dr. Denneys. There was the critical, dogmatic, and intolerant Denney. His mind was one of the most powerful engaged in our time on theological questions, but at the same time with a narrowness in it. It is good to find a man who knows that he knows anything worth knowing. And Dr. Denney was generally sure of himself. But his judgments were sometimes singularly restricted. In one of these letters he writes of the Roman Church: 'there is nothing in it that is not artificial'; in another: 'the only reason for remembering Dante is that in his poetical passages he is the divinest of poets.' He could see nothing good in the Church's advocacy of social reform. We select these opinions because they deal with great names or great causes, but his attitude in regard to them was characteristic of his mind. He saw clearly and deeply but not always widely, and this fact, while it often makes the letters piquant and arresting, detracts somewhat from the value of the writer's opinions.

But there was another Denney, as real and as interesting, the broad, human, tolerant observer of life. Dr. Moffatt quotes in his Introduction a sentence of Dr. Denney's criticism of Professor Drummond's book, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World,* which is as characteristic of its writer as any of his dogmatic utterances: 'Christ is life: yes, and light and truth and love and righteousness; and wherever these exist in the world, confessed or unconfessed, in Greek, in Jew, in Buddhist or Brahmin, there Christ is, and life and grace and God.' Could anything be broader than that? or than this, on the same subject: 'The Spiritual man is born when the natural man comes *to himself*'? This was the Denney who, in a company that was discussing Matthew Arnold's theology, could say: 'After all it is on the ethical plane we all meet.' This was the Denney of the kind heart, the lover of nature, the loyal friend. This too was the Denney who, on questions of criticism, was as broad as you like.

One might explain this apparent contradiction by supposing that Dr. Denney saw a thing so