

have only the few hours before sunset in which to win them. We are not winning them as we should, because the fact of the reverses is so little realized, and the needed reinforcements are not forthcoming, as they would be if the position were thoroughly understood. Reinforcements of men and women are needed, but, far above all, reinforcements of prayer. And so we have tried to tell you the truth—the uninteresting, unromantic truth—about the heathen as we find them, the work as it is. More workers are needed. But we will never try to allure anyone to think of coming by painting coloured pictures, when the facts are in black and white. What if black and white will never attract like colours? We care not for it; our business is to tell the truth. The work is not a pretty thing, to be looked at and admired. It is a fight. And battlefields are not beautiful.

But if one is truly called of God, all the difficulties and discouragements only intensify the Call. If things were easier there would be less need. The greater the need, the clearer the Call rings through one, the deeper the conviction grows; *it was God's Call*. And as one obeys it, there is the joy of obedience, quite apart from the joy of a success. There is joy in being with Jesus in a place where His friends are few; and sometimes, when one would least expect it, coming home tired out and disheartened after a day in an opposing or indifferent town, suddenly—how, you can hardly tell—such a wave of the joy of Jesus flows over you and through you, that you are stilled with the sense of utter joy. Then, when you see Him winning souls, or hear of your comrades' victories, oh! all that is within you sings, 'I have more than an overweight of joy!'

The Descent into Hell.

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IN the July number of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES the Rev. De Lacy O'Leary suggested that the clause 'descended into Hell' of our Apostles' Creed was dependent on the legend of 'the harrowing of Hell' as described in the Gospel of Nicodemus. He denied that such teaching had any true foundation in Holy Scripture, and traced back its origin to the legends about the descent of Orpheus into Hades which were prevalent in Italy in pre-Christian times.

Unfortunately Mr. O'Leary does not seem to have read the very careful studies of the whole subject of the history of the clause and its interpretation which have recently been published by Professor Kattenbusch¹ and Dr. Clemen.² He has failed to take account of much evidence of early Christian thought which renders such a conclusion impossible.

Every survey of the history of the clause must begin with the witness of Rufinus, who, c. 400 A.D., noted in his commentary that it was found in the Creed of Aquileia. Mr. O'Leary gives to this Creed the arbitrary date 341 A.D. It is necessary

for his argument that it should be later than the supposed date of the Gospel of Nicodemus. But it is impossible to prove that the clause had not stood in the Aquileian Creed for more than a century before the time when Rufinus wrote of it. Critics generally agree that Rufinus had lost the clue to its history.³ He did not attach any special importance to it, regarding it (as Mr. O'Leary says) as an explanation of the word *buried*.⁴ Rufinus would not wish to admit that the Aquileian Creed had anything peculiar about it. Anything peculiar in a Creed was suspected. The word *buried* had implied the teaching that Christ after death shared the condition of departed souls in the unseen world, which was commonly described as the under-world in antithesis to the upper-world of Heaven. When the question was raised, What did Christ do in the under-world? Rufinus fell back on the common tradition that He announced His redemption to the patriarchs, and preached to the spirits in prison (1 P 3¹⁸).

It is quite a mistake, however, to say (as Mr.

³ See Dr. Swete, *Apostles' Creed*, p. 61.

⁴ Kattenbusch (ii. p. 900) pertinently asks why then was it added to, not substituted for, *buried*.

¹ *Das apostolische Symbol*, ii. pp. 895-915. Leipzig, 1900.

² *Niedergefahren zu den Toten*. Giessen, 1900.

O'Leary does) that the clause had not found an entrance into any Eastern formulary. The famous Dated Creed of Sirmium, of 359 A.D., contained it, and, with slight variations, the words were taken into two revisions of that Creed, which were accepted by the Councils of Nice and Constantinople in 360 A.D.

At a conference of Arian and semi-Arian bishops, which was held on Pentecost Eve, in the presence of the Emperor, Mark of Arethusa, a Syrian bishop, was commissioned to draw up the Dated Creed, which contained the following:—

'We know that He, the only-begotten Son of God . . . was crucified, and died, and descended into the parts beneath the earth, and regulated the things there, whom the gate-keepers of hell saw (Job 38¹⁷ LXX), and shuddered; and He rose. . . .'

The Dated Creed is said to have been drawn up in Latin, but no vestige of a Latin text has come down to us. Germinius, who was bishop of Sirmium at the time, wrote about it in Latin to other bishops when he came over to the cause of the orthodox bishops in 366 A.D. Probably it would be drawn up both in Latin and Greek.

Now a good deal turns upon the question whether it was a Latin Creed in the first instance or not. Professor Gwatkin has suggested that 'Western influence may have contributed to the insertion of "descended into Hell," a clause on which stress was laid in the West, in order clearly to state the truth of our Lord's death.'¹ Professor Zahn goes further and suggests that the formula was drawn up with reference to the Church use of the place where the synod was held. 'We may perhaps look upon Sirmium, on the Sau, in the south-eastern corner of Pannonia, as well as Aquileia, as one of the native places of this article of the Creed.'² Professor Kattenbusch³ thinks that Aquileia was a kind of ecclesiastical centre for Pannonia. It has also been remarked that St. Jerome, who was born on the border of Pannonia, in his translation of Origen's Tenth Sermon paraphrases *died by descended into Hell*; and that Martin of Bracara, who came from Pannonia into Spain one hundred and fifty years later, had the clause in his Creed. But no less than three out of four MSS omit the words from Martin's Creed, and they were not found in the Creed of Niceta of Remesiana in

Dacia, near Sirmium, at the end of the fourth century; so the explanation that they were found in the Pannonian Creed lacks support, and we must look elsewhere for the influence under which they came into the Dated Creed.

Dr. Gwatkin points out that many important phrases in the Dated Creed have close parallels in the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem. Its author, Mark, as a Syrian bishop, if not dependent on Cyril, had come under the same influences. And it is important to note that Cyril included the descent into Hell in his list of foundation truths. Cyril's explanation of the Descent in his Fourteenth Lecture reminds us strongly of the Dated Creed:—

'Death was struck with dismay on beholding a new visitant descend into Hades, not bound by the chains of that place. Wherefore, O porters of Hades, were ye scared at the sight of Him. What was the unwonted fear that possessed you? Death fled, and his flight betrayed his cowardice. The holy prophets ran unto Him. . . .'⁴

Further, we may compare the doxology at the end of the Syrian *Didascalia*, in which we read that our Lord entered into rest to announce to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all His saints the perfecting of the world and the resurrection of the dead.⁵

It seems to me, therefore, easier to account for the teaching of the Dated Creed by tracing its connexion through Mark with Palestinian tradition than by any theory of a lost Creed of Sirmium. As Dr. Sanday has forcibly pointed out, the current of influence then flowed from Syria—the Balkan peninsula—to Aquileia.⁶ But it is not likely that Sirmium would have given the clause to Aquileia. So the Aquileian Creed remains an isolated instance of such addition to a Baptismal Creed, under the influence of the same general causes which brought it into prominence in Cyril's Lectures. Dr. Swete⁷ suggests that it had been introduced as far back as the latter part of the second century to meet the Docetic heresy, or at least to emphasize the truth, which they denied, that the Lord really died as He really suffered. This is precisely the point which Cyril emphasized—

'He was truly laid as Man in a tomb of rock; but the rocks were rent asunder by terror because of Him. He went down into the regions beneath the earth, that thence also He might redeem the righteous.'⁸

¹ *Studies of Arianism* (ed. 2), p. 171.

² *The Apostles' Creed* (trans.), p. 155.

³ *Op. cit.* i. p. 398, n. 2.

⁴ *Cat.* iv. 19.

⁵ *J. Theol. Studies*, iii. 17.

⁷ *The Apostles' Creed*, p. 61.

⁸ *Clemen, op. cit.*

⁸ *Cat.* iv. 11.

In such teaching Cyril echoed the ideas of many earlier teachers, and there is not the least shadow of proof that he had learnt it from the Gospel of Nicodemus. It is possible to distinguish two strains of thought, both of which may be traced back to New Testament times.

The first is the tradition that Christ descended to set free the patriarchs, prophets, and all saints of the Old Testament from literal detention. Professor Loofs¹ regards Mt 27^{52f.} as a fragment of this tradition. We may explain by the light of it Eph 4⁸: 'He also descended into the lower parts of the earth,' taken with the context about leading captivity captive. The second is the thought that Christ descended to preach and deliver souls from spiritual detention in a state of sinfulness, and the scriptural source is 1 P 3^{18f.} about preaching to the spirits in prison, taken with 4⁶ about the preaching of the gospel to the dead.

Our first witness, Ignatius, writes both to the Magnesians (c. 9) and Philadelphians (c. 5) about the prophets awaiting Christ, who, when He came, raised them from the dead. It is clear that he believed that the souls were raised to Paradise or Heaven. On the other hand, the emphasis which he laid on Christ's office as teacher in the unseen world, is an important point of contact with the passages quoted from S. Peter.²

It is instructive to learn from Irenæus how a gnostic writer such as Marcion perverted the common teaching of the Church. Marcion taught that Christ descended to free not the patriarchs, but those who had set themselves in opposition to the Revelation of the God of the Old Testament, Marcion's Demiurge, *i.e.* Cain, the Sodomites, the Egyptians, raising them to His kingdom. Irenæus combats such a theory vigorously, using the *apocryphon* which had found a place in some Christian copies of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah: 'The Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, remembered His dead which slept in the dust of the earth, and descended to them to preach unto them His salvation.' It is 'possibly a fragment of a primitive homily.'³ Irenæus applied it to all saints of the Old Dispensation, but refused to base on it the argument which was used by some in his day, that Christians were therefore freed from the doom of

descent into Hades. On the contrary, he says that the disciple is not above his Master, and therefore the souls of Christ's disciples 'go into the invisible place prepared for them, and there remain awaiting the Resurrection.'⁴

Tertullian argued in the same strain. His teaching has been well summarized by Kattenbusch:—

'Tertullian in an important chapter of his treatise *On the Soul* (c. 55), teaches that it was common Christian belief that Christ descended into hell, that this means that Christ fulfilled the law for men, dying and being buried according to the Scriptures. He speaks of some who considered that they did not need to believe in lower regions with the idea that the faithful must go thither; that Christ went to make patriarchs and prophets, but in the first place them only, partakers with Himself.'

As a Montanist, however, Tertullian taught that the souls of martyrs went direct to Heaven.

With the rise of the Alexandrian school of theology more stress was laid on the tradition that Christ preached, which was hinted at by Ignatius. Clement of Alexandria taught that the purpose of the Descent was that Christ should preach to all the dead, Jews and heathen: 'For no other reason did He descend into Hades than to preach the gospel.'⁵ He borrowed from Hermas⁶ the idea that the apostles also preached in Hades.

Origen had to meet the scornful suggestion of Celsus,⁷ which yet bore witness to the current Christian belief, that Christ went to persuade the dead there because He had failed here. Origen denied this. 'In the body He persuaded a multitude, and then, in His soul stripped of the body, preached to souls stripped of bodies, and saved as many as would turn to Him.'

Thus we are led back by the Alexandrian teachers to concentrate our attention upon 1 P 3^{18f.} Are we to take the words literally or metaphorically? The metaphorical view was suggested by Calvin: 'I do not doubt that Peter is speaking generally of the manifestation of the grace of Christ which came to pious spirits, and thus they were imbued with the vital virtue of the spirit.'⁸

I agree with Dr. Clemen that this view is shattered on the word *πορευθείς*, *went*. What meaning then are we to give to *ἐκήρυξεν*? In the sixteenth century it was generally interpreted to mean preaching of damnation, but this does not seem to be its New Testament meaning. In

¹ *Symbolik*, i. p. 42. He compares also St. John 8⁵⁶, Apoc 1¹⁸, He 11³⁸.

² Cf. Lightfoot's notes *ad loc.*, and on *Philad.* 9.

³ Swete, *op. cit.* p. 58.

⁴ *Hier.* v. 31.

⁵ *Strom.* vi. 6.

⁶ *Sim.* ix. 16. 5.

⁷ *C. Celsum* ii. 43.

⁸ *In novum test. comm.* ed. Tholuck, vii. 219.

Mk 7³⁶ it is used of the crowd who published the good news of the healing of the deaf and dumb man. In Mt 12⁴¹, Lk 11³², κήρυγμα is used of the preaching of Jonah, which was certainly preaching of salvation since Nineveh repented. These and other references support the interpretation that the preaching was gospel preaching.

Who then are the spirits in prison? Augustine, Bede, Luther explained that they were the souls of living men imprisoned in the flesh to whom the message of Christ came by the lips of Noah. As Dr. Alford has well put it: 'If the words mean that the gospel was preached to some during their lifetime who are now dead, exegesis has no longer any fixed rule, and Scripture may be made to prove anything.' Another interpretation has been suggested, and held by Baur and Ewald, that they were imprisoned angels. But the word πνεύματα, though used for angels, is also used for the spirits of the dead (Ac 23⁸). Dr. Clemen suggests that St. Peter wishes to keep back ψυχαί to use of the eight souls saved in the ark, so that there is distinctly a reason for his use of πνεύματα above. Nor can we consider 1 P 3¹⁹ apart from 4⁶, which speaks of the gospel being preached to the dead, that they might 'live according to God in the spirit.' The most satisfactory interpretation here appears to be, that which was given unhesitatingly by early Christian writers, that Christ preached to the spirits of the men drowned in the Flood, and that His preaching was in some way instrumental in changing their condition for the better.

If we are learning more and more clearly to believe, in the spirit of Butler's *Analogy*, that our destiny is to be determined by character rather than by the accidental circumstances of death, our confidence in the justice of future judgment will be confirmed, not lessened, by such meditation on the revealed truth of Christ's passing into the realm of the dead. The fine phrase of Ignatius, 'the gospel of our common hope,' has been illustrated for us in the teaching of Alexandrine theologians. We have traced the first appearance of such teaching in the Creed of Sirmium under Palestinian influence, then in the Creed of Aquileia, from which it spread into other Creeds. The Aquileian addition, of which Rufinus was half ashamed, has justified itself to the conscience of all Western Christendom.

I have only attempted to quote a few of the passages in early Christian literature in which the descent into Hell is mentioned. I hope that I

have quoted enough to prove that the clause did not come into the Creed of Aquileia from the Gospel of Nicodemus. At a much later period we find the Gospel of Nicodemus influencing the popular imagination of our forefathers through a famous old English poem of the school of Cynewulf.¹ But that is no gain to Mr. O'Leary's theory. It is indeed probable that the legend of Orpheus coloured popular superstition in Italy in the fourth century. An ignorant peasant seeing a picture of Christ represented as Orpheus in the catacomb of St. Calixtus, might well be excused if he confused the legend told him in his heathen infancy with the beliefs of his Christian manhood. Mr. O'Leary does well to call our attention to the possibility of such confusion. But we are concerned with the main stream of Christian thought, not with its backwaters.

Nor have I attempted to answer all the statements in Mr. O'Leary's article which appear to me dubious. To quote one example of general interest. I cannot believe that the only logical meaning of the words in the *Te Deum*: 'Tu, devicto mortis aculeo, aperuisti credentibus regna² cœlorum,' is that Christ led out the souls of the righteous from the *Limbus Patrum*, and took them to Paradise or Heaven. The author represents the Church of Christ as echoing the Creed, and these words describe the Passion and Triumph of the King of Glory, who now sitteth at the right hand of the Father. The words which follow imply that there is an intermediate state, in which all souls must await the Judgment before they can be rewarded with the saints in eternal glory. If the theory that Niceta of Remesiana wrote the *Te Deum* be accepted, a further argument may be based on his references to the intermediate state in his sermon on the Creed.³

Our thoughts about life after death are dim, but it is enough for us to hold to the main thought which the clause 'descended into Hell' teaches, that Christ stood once 'in the midst of the shadow of death,'⁴ and bids us in death as in life abide in Him. In the words of the *Te Deum*—

Te ergo quæsumus itus famulis subueni.

¹ Grein-Wülker, *Bibliothek*, iii. 1. 175.

² This, not *regnum*, is the true reading.

³ Cum homo ex hac uita deficit . . . putrescente in terra corpore, anima pro suo merito aut in loco lucis, aut in loco caliginis reseruat.

⁴ Irenæus, *Hier.* v. 31.