THE TALE OF SAINT ABERCIUS.

THE chief authority for the life of this saint is the biography by Symeon Metaphrastes, written about 900-50 A.D. It quotes the epitaph on the saint's tomb, and the question whether this epitaph is an original document of the second century A.D., or a later forgery, is one of the utmost importance for the early history of the Christian church, and of many literary points connected with it. The document is not very easily accessible, so that it may be well to quote it as it is given in the Life by Metaphrastes; the criticism of the text has been to a certain extent advanced by the metrical restorations proposed by Pitra and others.[1]

Ἐκλεκτῆς πόλεως πολίτης τόδ' ἐποίησα ζῶν, ἵν' ἔχω καιρῷ σώματος ἐνθάδε θέσιν, τούνομ' Ἀβέρκιος ὁ ὢν μαθητὴς Ποιμένος ἀγνοῦ, ὃς βόσκει προβάτων ἀγέλας οὔρεσι πεδίοις τε· ὀφθάλμους ὃς ἔχει μεγάλους πάντα καθορόωντας. Οὗτος γάρ με ἐδίδαξε γράμματα πιστά· εἰς Ῥώμην ὃς ἔπεμψεν ἐμὲ βασίλειαν ἀθρῆσαι· καὶ βασίλισσαν ἰδεῖν χρυσόστολον χρυσοπέδιλον· λαὸν δ' εἶδον ἐκεῖ λαμπρὰν σφραγῖδα ἔχοντα· καὶ Συρίης πέδον χώρας εἶδον καὶ ἄστεα πάντα, Νίσιβιν Εὐφράτην διαβάς· πάντας δ' ἔσχον συνομηγύρους Παῦλον ἔσωθεν. Πίστις δὲ παντὶ προῆγε καὶ παρέθηκε τροφὴν, ἰχθὺν ἀπὸ πηγῆς παμμεγέθη καθαρὸν ὃν ἐδράξατο Παρθένος ἁγνὴ, καὶ τοῦτον ἐπέδωκε φίλοις ἐσθίειν διαπαντός· οἶνον χρηστὸν ἔχουσα κέρασμα διδοῦσα μετ' ἄρτου. Ταῦτα παρεστὼς εἶπον Ἀβέρκιος ὧδε γραφῆναι, ἑβδομηκοστὸν ἔτος καὶ δεύτερον ἄγων ἀληθῶς. Ταῦθ' ὁ νοῶν εὔξαιτο ὑπὲρ Ἀβερκίου πᾶς ὁ συνωδός. Οὐ μέντοι τύμβον ἕτερον τις ἀπ' ἐμοῦ ἐπάνω θήσει· εἰ δ' οὖν, Ῥωμαίων ταμείῳ θήσει δισχίλια χρυσᾶ καὶ χρηστῇ πατρίδι Ἱεραπόλει χίλια χρυσᾶ.

[1] See *Acta Sanctorum*, Oct. 22.

Tillemont has argued that the life of the saint as written by Metaphrastes is a mere fiction, and that the epitaph is as worthless as the biography. He is much shocked with the levity of the epitaph, for the only incidents of his Roman journey recorded by the saint are his seeing the Empress in her gold robes and shoes, and the people who wore rings, *i.e.* the senators and equites:[1] he therefore condemns the epitaph as unworthy of 'sanctum senioremque episcopum, jamque moriturum.' Probably this disagreement between the style of the epitaph and the spirit of later Christianity would now be considered as one of its chief points of interest, and as an indication of its probable authenticity. But the arguments of Tillemont on historical grounds are so weighty that the epitaph could certainly not be quoted with confidence as historical, however much one might incline to count it genuine. In particular, Tillemont's argument that there was no room for Abercius and his successor in the list of bishops of Hierapolis was apparently unanswerable. It is quite clear that in the biography, Abercius is conceived as having lived a considerable time, and travelled much after his Roman visit in 163 A.D. He is succeeded by another Abercius; and yet it is a known fact that the bishop of Hierapolis in 171 A.D. was Apollinaris. In the next page it will appear how this difficulty has been done away with, much to my own surprise, by a paper which I recently wrote. We have reason to consider that our brief expedition during last autumn was specially favoured by fortune in having enabled M. l'Abbé Duchesne finally to restore to historical science a document of the second century.[2]

In the *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellenique*, July 1882, I published an article on the three Phrygian cities, Hieropolis, Brouzos, and Otrous, which were previously mere names: nothing was known of them except that the second and third had struck coins under the Empire. The first, which occurs in the Byzantine lists as Hierapolis,[3] had been still more unfortunate. Its existence had been almost ignored, and it had been identified

[1] The words admit of a symbolical interpretation, see Lightfoot, *Epp. to Coloss., introd.*, p. 55 *ff.*

[2] See *Bulletin Litteraire*, Aug. 15, 1882.

[3] Though it is always called Hierapolis in literary authorities, I shall use the form Hieropolis, given on coins and inscriptions, for the sake of distinction.

with the far more important Hierapolis, also a Phrygian town, in the Maeander valley. The object of my paper was to prove that these three cities all lay in or close to the large and fertile valley of Sandukli, and that a general outline of their history could still be recovered. At the same time I proposed to assign certain coins, previously attributed to Hierapolis of the Maeander valley, to this Hieropolis: these coins bear the legend **ΙЄΡΟΠΟΛЄΙΤΩΝ**. In this paper there were several points which rested on somewhat bold restorations or assumptions; and my first object is now to add some additional corroborations, which subsequent travel and M. Duchesne's discovery have enabled me to make. In particular I had hardly dared to trust my own judgment in restoring two lines of one inscription

ΟΝΗΒΟΥ
ΗΜΟΣΟ
ΝΕΠΙΜΕ

as [Σεβασ]τὸν, ἡ βου[λὴ καὶ ὁ δ]ῆμος Ὀ[τροηνῶ]ν, ἐπιμε[ληθέντων] κ.τ.λ., and in rejecting the alternative δῆμος ὁ Βρουζηνῶν as requiring more letters than the line could hold. The consideration that made the restoration Ὀτροηνῶν doubtful was the difficulty of placing three cities, all important enough to coin money, in one valley so near each other. But M. Duchesne has shown on other grounds that Otrous and Hieropolis were probably neighbouring cities.

I had also argued that the name Hieropolis might be taken as proof that the city was once the religious centre, on the analogy of Ephesus, Comana, and other towns in Asia Minor, of the whole surrounding district, whose inhabitants must then have been all the property of the temple (ἱερόδουλοι); and connecting this fact with one or two others, I ventured to rest on this hypothetical basis a reconstruction in outline of the history of the valley. During this summer, on a journey in Cappadocia which the kindness and scientific interest of Sir Ch. Wilson procured for me, I found three official decrees in Comana, which prove that the native and official name of that city was Hieropolis. These three decrees all begin Ἱεροπολειτῶν ἡ βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος.

In this paper I published the following inscription, which

proves clearly that the epitaph of Abercius was already imitated in this valley in the beginning of the third century A.D.

...λεκτῆς πο..ως ο πολεί...οὖτ' ἐποί...ν ἔχω ΦΑΝΕ I. σώματος ἔνθα θεσιν οὐ.ομα .λέξανδρος Ἀντ. νιου .αθητὴς ποιμένος ἁγνοῦ. Οὐ μέντοι τυμβ' τις ἐμῷ ἕτερου τ.να θήσει. εἰ δ' οὖν Ῥωμαίων τα. εἰῳ θήσει δισ.είλιᾶ .ρυσᾶ, καὶ .ρηστῇ πατρίδ. Ἱεροπόλει .ειλι. .ρυσᾶ. Ἐγράφη ἔτει τ', μηνὶ ς', ζόντος. Εἰρήνη παράγουσιν κα. μν..κομένοις περι ἡ. ὢν.[1]

I did not recognise the importance of this inscription, except as being a monument of Christianity dated as early as the year 216 A.D. The oldest Christian inscription hitherto known in Asia Minor is dated in the year 279 A.D., but the well-known coin of Apameia in Phrygia, about thirty miles south of Hieropolis, furnished a proof that Christian (or Jewish) influence was strong in this district before the death of Septimius Severus, 211 A.D. On this coin, struck under this emperor, a man and a woman are represented standing before the ark and raising their hands to heaven: the ark bears the inscription **ΝΩΕ**. The very name of St. Abercius was unknown to me till I heard that M. Duchesne had discovered the relation of the inscription of Alexander to the epitaph of the saint. In the following notes I shall not touch on any of the literary and historical points about which M. Duchesne has promised an elaborate work; but I shall try from topographical considerations to make it probable that the legend as told by Metaphrastes is taken from an older literary source, that this older biography was written between the years 363 and 385 A.D., and that it merely gave written expression to a legend that had grown in the district around the remarkable tomb with the still more remarkable legend. Of course this is merely a presumption suggested as the most natural explanation of certain geographical considerations; it is liable to be overborne by stronger considerations derived from other points. I do not deny that the geographical facts may be consistent with a later date than I have assigned: but they are certainly more easily explained on this supposition, and they are absolutely inconsistent with an earlier date.

The tale of Saint Abercius is briefly as follows. Abercius was bishop of Hieropolis in Little Phrygia. Being moved to indig-

[1] Such faults of grammar and metre as occur in this inscription show that the Phrygians spoke very bad Greek.

nation by the sacrifices ordered by the Emperor Aurelius, he broke the statues of the gods in the temples of the city. When the populace was about to lay hands on him, he cured three men possessed with devils; the whole crowd was immediately converted, and 500 men were baptized. His many miracles procured him great fame. He was summoned to Rome to cure the Emperor's daughter Lucilla, who was possessed by a devil. He then travelled in Syria and Mesopotamia, and received from the churches there the title ἰσαπόστολος. He returned to Hieropolis, where he died at the age of seventy-two.

In the first place the biography presupposes the division of Phrygia into two provinces, which was made by Diocletian in remodelling the administration of the empire. The exact time when this remodelling was completed is uncertain; but the approximate date assigned by Mommsen is 297 A.D.[1] The two provinces were called Phrygia I. and Phrygia II. About 385 A.D. Phrygia II. had received the name Salutaris, and by 405 A.D. Phrygia I. had been called Pacatiana. These names, Phrygia Salutaris and Phrygia Pacatiana, continued to be used universally till the end of the Byzantine period. Pacatiana was the larger, richer, and more important province, and Justinian among his many alterations raised its governor to the rank of *comes*, and placed it on an independent footing. Before this time, about 535 A.D., it had been governed by a *consularis*, an official of lower rank than a *comes*, and both Phrygias were under the administration of the *Vicarius Dioceseos Asianae*. From this time onwards, Pacatiana was governed by a *comes*, who was co-ordinate in rank with the *Vicarius*, and not as before subject to him. Salutaris, however, as a less important province, continued to be governed by a consularis. Now the Life by Metaphrastes always says that Hieropolis was in Little Phrygia (Φρυγία Μικρά), and one passage implies the existence of two provinces, Great and Little Phrygia. These names have caused the commentators much difficulty. They thought of the older distinction into Phrygia Magna and Phrygia Epiktetos, and of the fact, true before 297 A.D., that Hierapolis was in Phrygia

[1] I need not here allude to the controversy that has arisen about Mommsen's theory as to the date of the Verona MS. The common dates for Silvius Polemius, and the *Notitia Dignitatum*, 385 and 405, may also be used as nearly true.

Magna. But the difficulty disappears when we observe that Metaphrastes refers to the period after the division by Diocletian; and it becomes certain that Phrygia I. and II. were also known as Phrygia Magna and Parva (Μεγάλη, Μικρά), although no other example occurs where the two provinces bear these names. The names Pacatiana and Salutaris had not come into use when the biography was written, and the old names persist when the original biography was over-written by Metaphrastes. I do not mean to assert that the name Salutaris suddenly supplanted the name Little Phrygia; the change was probably a slow one. But it is certain that the name Salutaris did come into use in the second half of the fourth century instead of the older forms Secunda or Parva, and that when it was once adopted it established itself throughout the Byzantine period as the common name. It is not improbable that Metaphrastes, when he took from his authority the traditional name Little Phrygia, did not know the real meaning of the phrase he was using. Now Hieropolis was in Salutaris or Parva Phrygia, and it thus becomes clear why we read in the biography ὁ τῆς ἐν τῇ μικρᾷ Φρυγίᾳ τῶν Ἱεραπολιτῶν ἐπίσκοπος (*sic*) and many similar expressions. The two provinces are distinctly implied in συνέῤῥεον (to Hieropolis) οὐ τῆς μεγάλης μόνον Φρυγίας...ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅσοι τὴν Ἀσίαν ᾤκουν. Before 297 A.D., there was no separate governor of Phrygia or of any part of Phrygia: the whole country was part of the province of Asia under a proconsul, and the official capital of Asia was Ephesus. But Synnada was the capital of Phrygia Salutaris,[1] and hence we read in the biography Σύναδα (*sic*) τῆς μικρᾶς Φρυγίας μητρόπολιν. Accordingly, Abercius was bishop of Hieropolis in the valley of Sandukli and not of Hierapolis in the Maeander valley, for the latter was in Phrygia Magna, or Pacatiana. The chronological difficulty above mentioned disappears, as Abercius and Apollinaris may have been contemporary. Finally, it appears that several names, Secunda and Parva, were used to designate this province of Phrygia, before the usual name

[1] M. Waddington *Fastes de Prov. d'Asie*, p. 27, has for once erred on this point. Arguing, I suppose, from the order of Hierocles who places Eucarpia first in his list, he says that the capital of Phrygia II. was Eucarpia: and it has been common to say that Eucarpia was the original capital, and Synnada the later capital. But Hierocles wrote about 530, and it is quite certain that Synnada was the capital both before and after his time.

Salutaris was devised; but the latter name came so early into general use that the older names hardly ever occur. A document which uses the name Parva may therefore be dated with the utmost probability between 297 and 385 A.D.

This conclusion is confirmed by another consideration. In the biography Phrygia Parva is governed by a *Praeses* or ἡγέμων (Ποπλίῳ τῆς μικρᾶς Φρύγιας ἡγεμονεύοντι, and later τοῦ ἡγεμονεύοντος ἐκεῖ Σπινθῆρος). Now about 405 A.D. both provinces of Phrygia were governed by a *Praeses* or ἡγέμων (*Notit. Dignit. Orient.* cap. I.).[1] But this arrangement was altered before 535 A.D.; for Hierocles, whose list falls before that year, says that both provinces were governed by a *consularis.* Justinian, in 535, placed Pacatiana under a *comes,* but left Salutaris or Parva under a *consularis.* Accordingly in this respect also the biography is true to the facts of an early date, and false to the facts of a later date.

It is equally certain that the biography was written after Constantinople was made the capital of the East (330 A.D.). Valerius and Bassianus, the two *magistriani* sent by the Emperor with his letter to Euxenianus, go first to Byzantium, taking ship from Brundusium. Thence they travel on the imperial post-road (δημοσίῳ δρόμῳ, δημοσίοις ἵπποις) to Synnada. I have in an article which will be published in the forthcoming number of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* explained the revolution in the system of roads in Asia Minor caused by the foundation of Constantinople as capital of the East. Before that time all roads led to Ephesus; after that time all roads led to Constantinople. Under the older system the envoys would have landed at Ephesus and gone right up the great highway of Asia Minor by the Maeander and Lycus valleys to Apameia, and thence direct by a country road to Hieropolis, or else continuing along the great highway to Synnada they would have there diverged by a country path to Hieropolis. The proconsul of the province of Asia was always obliged by law to land at Ephesus first of all.[2] Cicero in going to Cilicia, landed there, and went by the great highway over

[1] This date is always given for the composition of the *Notitia Dignitatum,* and is assumed by Mommsen, though the proof promised by Böcking, the editor, has not so far as I know been yet actually published.

[2] Waddington, *Fastes de Prov. d'Asie,* p. 16.

Laodiceia, Apameia, and Synnada, to his province.[1] This road explains why under the Republic these three *conventus* were placed under the governor of Cilicia, and not, as seems geographically natural, under the governor of Asia. The proconsul of Cilicia had to pass through Laodiceia, Apameia, and Synnada on his way; and hence it was arranged that he should hold the *conventus* at these towns going and returning, though they are so much nearer to Ephesus the seat of the Asian proconsul than they are to Tarsus the seat of the Cilician proconsul.

If the original biography which underlies the work of Metaphrastes had been written before 330 A.D., it would certainly have represented the imperial messengers as travelling by the imperial road from Ephesus. After the post-road by Nicomedeia and Dorylaion[2] to Iconium, which has existed ever since Constantinople became the seat of government, had been instituted, the official road to Synnada lay along this great road either to Lysias or to Cedrea, about LXXV. M.P. south of Dorylaion, or to Julia, a day's journey further on. At one of these places the road to Synnada, Apameia, and Baris diverged from it, and this was the road that the imperial envoys were, during the period after 330 A.D., naturally conceived as travelling by. It is certainly a very roundabout way from Rome, and so evidently the saint himself thought. He agreed to go to Rome, but sent the envoys to return as they came, travelling post on the post-road (δημοσίοις ἵπποις). But he himself refused to accompany them, and merely said he would meet them at Ostia in forty days. A native of Hieropolis knew that the easy and short way was by Attalia in Pamphylia, which still retains its old name, Adália, and its old importance as the chief seaport on this part of the southern coast. Five good days' journey would bring Abercius, passing along the easy valley behind (*i.e.* east of) Apameia, beside the fountains of the Obrimas and the lake Aulocrene, and thence through Baris to Attalia. Here he would constantly find homeward-bound ships engaged in the eastern trade, and so he arrived at Ostia three days sooner than the envoys with all the advantages of the imperial post. A touch like this makes it highly probable that the tale of Saint Abercius grew in the valley of Hieropolis.

[1] Cic. *Fam.* xv. 4, 2.

[2] On this road and on the site of Cedrea see an article in the *Mittheil. d. d. Instit. Athen*, 1882, p. 140.

The same accuracy in details is manifested in the description of the envoys' journey to Hieropolis. Along the post-road to Synnada, the capital of the province, they go with ease and without guides. When they reach Synnada, they have to diverge from the post-road, which goes straight south to Apameia and Baris. Hieropolis is separated by a very rugged chain of volcanic mountains from Synnada, and the pass across this chain is a very unpleasant and tortuous one. Accordingly they got guides from Spinther, the *praeses* or ἡγέμων of the province, and reached Hieropolis the same day at the ninth hour. I have traversed all the roads near Synnada and Hieropolis, and can bear witness to the perfect accuracy of this incident. It impresses me strongly with the conviction that only a native of the district could have written the original narrative. On the other hand, the journey from the Peloponnesus to Byzantium is described in an absurd way.

The return journey of Abercius from Syria is also described accurately, but the terms are too general to found any inference upon.

Another passage narrows still further the period within which the tale must have been written down. In gratitude for the cure wrought on her daughter, the Empress Faustina, in the Emperor's absence, ordered at the saint's request that 3,000 medimni of corn should be given annually to the poor of Hieropolis, and this donation was continued until Julian put a stop to it (363 A.D.). The life of the saint must therefore have been written later than this date, and if there is any truth in my argument that it was written earlier than 385 A.D., it may be counted highly probable that some annual benefaction to the poor of Hieropolis, bequeathed perhaps by some pious soul, was actually seized by the officials of the Emperor Julian. Within such a short period it is improbable that the tale could grow without some foundation; and it is quite in accordance with historical verisimilitude that a Christian benefaction should be seized on at this time.

My argument, therefore, is that it is justifiable to regard the tale of Saint Abercius as a tradition and not, like the lives of some of the saints, as a mere legend. The historical facts contained are in the first place all that is vouched for in the epitaph; secondly, the rapid spread of Christianity in Phrygia during the second century; thirdly, the seizure by Julian of

a Christian benefaction to the poor of Hieropolis. It is not probable that there is any historical element underlying the tale of the Emperor's daughter. There was evidently a strong inclination, shown in some other tales, to make the good Emperor Aurelius into a semi-Christian, and moreover some of the incidents, especially the reference in 163 A.D. to an event that occurred in 180 A.D.,[1] and the Byzantine machinery of the court, are gross anachronisms. But the general course of the story of Lucilla fits so well into history, that it might almost seem as if some historical fact, perhaps quite unconnected with Abercius, lay at the foundation of it. According to Eckhel, Lucilla was betrothed to L. Verus, and was married to him in 164 A.D. Her father conducted her to Brundusium in 164 A.D., and Verus met her on her landing at Ephesus. She was born in 147 A.D. Now the biography says that when sixteen years of age, *i.e.* in 163 A.D., Lucilla was about to be conducted by her father to Ephesus to meet Verus, and that her sudden illness obliged the Emperor to postpone the marriage till the following year, making the excuse of disturbance on the German frontier. But a different train of reasoning is suggested by the letter of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius to Euxenianus Poplio summoning the saint to Rome. Euxenianus was resident at Hieropolis: it is implied that he was an official of high rank, in frequent communication with the Emperor (*ἦν τῶν παρὰ τῷ αὐτοκράτορί τε καὶ τῇ πόλει πάσῃ τὰς πρώτας ἐχόντων τιμάς. ᾧ πολλάκις περὶ δημοσίων ἐπέστειλας πραγμάτων*), and he is therefore presumably in authority in this part of Phrygia. But at the same time it is implied that he was governor of the province of Asia, for he was the agent through whom the Emperor relieved the distress of Smyrna caused by the great earthquake. His procurator Caelius is mentioned as concerned in this business. This distress and the relief given by the Emperor are historical facts: the earthquake took place in 180 A.D., and the letters of the rhetorician Aristides begging the Emperor for help to the city and thanking him for it when it was given are preserved. This letter must therefore have been composed at a time when Phrygia and Asia were under the same governor, *i.e.* before 297 A.D.; and it therefore preserves a form of the tale as it

[1] The earthquake that destroyed Smyrna, and the Emperor's generosity to the ruined city.

existed in the third century. It was incorporated by the writer of 363-85 A.D. in his biography, without his observing the contradiction between the office of Euxenianus and the office of Spinther or Poplius. He has rather slurred over the official character of Euxenianus, who must have been proconsul of Asia. He and his procurator Caelius are officers of the Roman Empire, the rest of the machinery in the tale belongs to the Byzantine Empire. It must be added that the reference to the Smyrna earthquake is made, according to the supposition in 163 A.D., seventeen years before it occurred; and this shows how the historical facts of the tale have been shuffled in the course of its growth. It is doubtful whether the incident of the Emperor's daughter occurred at all in the older form of the legend. In the Byzantine period Phrygia was wholly disjoined from Asia. The *Proconsul Asiae* ruled three provinces, *Asia, Insulae, Hellespontus:* the *Vicarius dioceseos Asianae* ruled eight provinces, *Pamphylia, Lydia, Caria, Lycia, Lycaonia, Pisidia, Phrygia Pacatiana* and *Salutaris.*[1] While this division is inconsistent with the episode of Euxenianus and Caelius, it suits the rest of the tale very well, and in particular the opening of cap. ii., where it is said that people flocked to see Abercius not only from Great Phrygia and all the neighbouring districts, but from Asia and from the provinces of Lydia and Caria.

It follows that the local legends incorporated in the biography —the production of the hot-springs at Agros beside the river, the production of the fountain on the hill at the τόπος γουνκλισίας, the affliction of the villagers at Aulon with eternal insatiability in feeding, the place called Phrougis or Phragellion in the market-place of Hieropolis—all these must be tales current from old times in the district, and told doubtless of pagan divinities before they were transferred to a Christian saint. A similar transference of pagan tales to Christ and the Apostles is a well-known phenomenon in German folk-lore. In particular the tale how Abercius sat on the stone by the village of Aulon, and the villagers disregarded his entreaties, recalls the ἀγέλαστος πέτρα of the Eleusinian legend.[2]

[1] This arrangement is certain in 405 (*Not. Dign.*). The remarkable inscription of Poplius, given in *C.I.G.* 3188 after Constant. Porphyrog. *de Them.* l. 3, perhaps proves that the Proconsul of Asia was after 297 supreme ruler of all Asia Minor west of Armenia.

[2] On the native religion of Hieropolis see *Trois Villes Phrygiennes* in *Bull. Corr. Hell.* 1882.

Only one fact is recorded in any historian about Abercius. Eusebius[1] mentions that an anonymous presbyter of Otrous wrote a tract on the Montanist heresy addressed to Avircius Marcellus. It is implied that this Avircius was a near neighbour of the bishop, and as the tract is apparently written about the beginning of the Montanist controversy in 171 A.D., it is exceedingly probable that he is identical with Saint Abercius. Le Quien had long ago conjectured that this was the case; and M. Duchesne now regards it as quite certain.

The epitaph shows clearly that Abercius was a man of mark in his own time, and that his tomb was a noticeable monument. It consisted of a square monolithic substructure, on which was placed an altar with the epitaph inscribed on it. A very remarkable early monument at Phocaea, carved out of the natural rock, proves that this form of monument was known in Asia Minor in the very earliest time: the monument has been very incorrectly engraved in the Smyrna Μουσεῖον, vol. ii., and I hope soon to give a more correct representation of it. The same form of monument appears in a curious relief,[2] now built into a house at Coula in the Katacecaumene on the borders of Lydia and Phrygia, which also I hope to publish hereafter. We may therefore conclude that the form was originally Phrygian. It is interesting to observe that the early Christians of Phrygia did not sever themselves by a social barrier from their pagan neighbours. On their tombs they employ some of the common pagan formulas; their tombs are made in the usual pagan form of the sepulchral altar, as has been remarked[3] about the epitaph of Alexandros quoted above; and they place their tomb under the protection of the public law. The word χρηστιανός, which is sometimes employed on their tombs,[4] is probably intentionally as much as possible assimilated to the ordinary pagan χρηστός. In later time, when Christianity had finally triumphed, the spelling χρηστιανός was proscribed as heretical.

The personality of Abercius formed a centre round which gathered a religious myth, containing the popular conception of the early history of Christianity in Phrygia. The incidents recorded in the epitaph were entwined with other historical and

[1] *Hist. Eccles.* V. 16.

[2] Referred to by Wagener, in vol. xxx. of the *Mem. of Academy* of Brussels.

[3] *Bulletin Corr. Hell.* 1882, p. 520.

[4] Lebas, *Inscr. As. Min.* No. 727.

semi-historical facts: to these were added some ancient and originally pagan local legends about certain natural features of the district. No doubt the tale that the devil who was cast out of Lucilla, was ordered to carry a stone altar from the Hippodrome (*i.e.* the Circus Maximus perhaps) at Rome to Hieropolis to serve as the saint's tomb, was suggested by the peculiar form of the tomb with its sepulchral *βωμός* exactly resembling the old pagan monuments. Finally about 370 A.D. the local mythology was committed to writing, and the life of Saint Abercius took nearly the form that it has in the work of Metaphrastes.

There is one consideration which might overturn my argument, and that is the proof that there are no hot-springs near Hieropolis. It would then be necessary to suppose that the legend had not finally taken form till a much later time, when the hot-springs of Hierapolis were confused with the district of Hieropolis by some ignorant compiler. It is quite certain, however, that the description of the hot-springs given in the biography does not suit with those of Hierapolis: the former are said to be outside the city near a river, while the latter were inside the city and far from any river. If then it be discovered that there are hot-springs in the valley of Sandukli, this might be regarded as a conclusive proof that my theory is correct. I shall here quote the words I used on this subject in the paper already referred to,[1] written when the name and legend of Abercius were unknown to me: 'le nom d'Hieropolis implique que l'emplacement devait être désigné comme sacré par des caractères naturels, par exemple une source thermale ou quelque autre particularité semblable. Ceci pourrait aider un voyageur futur, disposant de plus de temps que nous n'en avions, à decouvrir la situation exacte de cette ville.'

NOTE.—After the preceding remarks were already in print, I observed in Hamilton's *Travels*, ii. 169-70, that there is in the valley of Sandukli a river, Hamam Su, 'The Water of the Baths,' which recalls the *Ἅγρος τῶν Θερμῶν*, as the hot-springs are called in the biography. Hamilton also says, "He pressed me to remain another day to visit some hot-springs which he affirmed were near the centre of the plain, about four miles to

[1] *Trois Villes Phrygiennes.*

the right of our road.' It may, therefore, be counted almost certain that the *Acta* of Metaphrastes follows faithfully an authority of the fourth century, embodying a genuine popular tradition, and not constructed by a legend-writer. The gradual growth of the tale in popular tradition is proved by the occurrence of elements dating from the third century, which do not harmonise with the usual fourth-century machinery of the biography. The tale may therefore be regarded as a clear example of the growth of a saint's life in the popular mind, and may even be employed with due caution as a testimony to history.

Another inference of some literary importance may be drawn. Metaphrastes has in this case faithfully reproduced an old authority, probably the same which underlies the account of the saint in the *Menologion Basilii*, 886 A.D. It is probable, therefore, that in his lives of other saints he was equally faithful, and that he deserves a much higher rank than is frequently assigned to him.

The confusion of the two towns Hierapolis and Hieropolis has produced much error in early Christian history. In the introduction to the Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon, p. 55 *ff.*, the Bishop of Durham has rightly caught the ring of genuineness in the epitaph of Abercius, but the longstanding geographical mistake made it impossible to explain the historical difficulties. Hence arise such statements as 'Hierapolis, though only six miles from Laodicea, belonged to the province of Salutaris, whose metropolis was Synnada. The Lycus seems to have formed the boundary line between the two provinces,' Pacatiana and Salutaris. Hierapolis of Salutaris must always be interpreted as the Hieropolis in the valley of Sandukli: Hierapolis near Laodicea is *always* assigned in the Byzantine authorities to Pacatiana. The Lycus is in the heart of Pacatiana.

The Bishop of Durham also, by a conjectural alteration of the text of Eusebius, makes Apollinaris the author of the tract on the Montanist controversy above referred to. The writer mentions in the course of the tract *τοῦ συμπρεσβυτέρου ἡμῶν Ζωτικοῦ τοῦ Ὀτρηνοῦ*, and mentions that Avircius Marcellus had frequently enjoined on him to write against the new heresy. It is, therefore, certain that the writer was a presbyter of some place near Hieropolis, and there is no reason to identify him with Apollinaris of Hierapolis.

The oldest Christian inscriptions known in Rome, dating 71, 107, and 204 A.D., are mere names with date. The Phrygian epitaph of Alexander, son of Antonius, 216 A.D., may therefore rank as the earliest inscription yet found which affords any evidence of the state of Christianity. In Rome an inscription of the year 217 A.D. is of much interest (see De Rossi, *Inscr. Christ. Urb. Rom.*).

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