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PRIMITIVE EXEGESIS AS A FACTOR IN  
THE CORRUPTION OF TEXTS OF  
SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATED FROM THE  
VERSIONS OF BEN SIRA.

THE Greek addition to Sir. x. 8 f. "for there is nothing more lawless than a miser, for he setteth even his own soul to sale," affords a striking example of the way in which the Scriptures were used by early Christian teachers. In order to provide the catechumens with moral instruction, they were accustomed to select passages bearing upon the different virtues and vices, and to round off each anthology with a historical example calculated to impress the mind by way of warning or encouragement. Much of the Paedagogus of Clement of Alexandria rests upon these collections of commonplaces: the *Testimonia* of Cyprian and the *Liber de divinis Scripturis* of "Augustine" are examples of the actual collections preserved by their attribution to great doctors of the Church.

In the nature of the case the influence of this catechetical tradition must have been felt from the first, and the consequent corruption of the text of Scripture itself is one of the primitive sources of confusion which called forth the various new translations and revisions. And so the interpolation in Sir. *l. c.* is found not only in three late Greek manuscripts (Holmes and Parsons 70. 106. 248) but also in the Syro-Hexaplar and the Latin.

The title *de avaro*, affixed to ver. 9 in the Codex Amiatinus, is an example of the marginal references which served the purpose of a concordance: this is a passage used to illustrate the vice of avarice. It was so chosen not

merely because ver. 8 (according to the Syriac, Greek, and Latin) speaks of Mammon as one of the causes of the transference of empire but chiefly because 9 b describes the fate of the miser *par excellence*—Judas Iscariot (Acts i. 18). To the Christian the Greek version “because while he liveth he casteth away his bowels” was a prophecy of the familiar fact and therefore evidence thereof nearly equal to the testimony of an eye-witness or a well-informed contemporary: he cared little for the true text and strict exegesis of its original meaning as compared with the paramount necessity of turning his converts from their evil courses.

The interpolated couplet emphasizes this homiletical interpretation. There is no suspicion of bad faith. If their hearts were opened to understand the Scriptures by the inward vision of the mysteries seen till then far off, dimly as in a glass, the early teachers and missionaries of the Christian Church were bound to elucidate the ancient authorities to which their appeal lay. Further the gloss interprets the doom thus prophesied and exemplified. Not every covetous man perishes thus miserably, the man of the world would say out of his own experience. True, says the teacher, punishment is not always manifest but it is sure: the miser may live out his tale of days in the enjoyment of his unjust gains, but he has sold his own soul, to win the fleeting goods of this world he has sacrificed his portion in the world to come.

In the Syro-Hexaplar there is to be traced the beginning of this further interpretation of the text, for there ἐξουδένωσε, “despised” or “made nought of,” is substituted for ἔρριψε, “he cast away”: τὰ ἐνδόσθια αὐτοῦ is easily rendered figuratively “his soul” or “himself.”

Finally it is to be noticed that the variant of  $\aleph^c$  καὶ ἐν γῆ αὐτοῦ for ἐν ζῶῃ refers to the plot of ground mentioned in Acts l. c.: cf. Papias (*Apostolic Fathers*: ed. Lightfoot and Harmer, p. 524) “Judas died after many torments in his own place” (ἐν ἰδίῳ χωρίῳ: cf. Acts i. 25).

After xiii. 13 is added in certain cursives (Holmes and Parsons, 106. 248. 253) and under asterisks in the Syro-Hexaplar "When thou hearest these things awake in thy sleep (or 'in thy sleep, awake'). Love the Lord all thy life and call upon him for thy salvation." So the Latin in a slightly longer form: *Audiens vero illa quasi in somnis vide et vigilabis omni vita tua dilige deum et invoca illum in salute tua.* The starting-point of this addition appears to be the words הִיה זְהִיר (13), or rather a variant thereon נְהִיר (cf. Dan. v. 11, 14 נְהִירוּ = γρηγορόσις), for these so-called glosses often embody Hebrew or Aramaic variants. This awakening implies previous slumber in which the words of the Lord are heard, as by Samuel of old: compare also Job xxxiii. 14 ff., Eccles. ix. 17. The rest of the couplet is a bold adaptation and interpretation of ver. 15: πᾶν ζῶον ἀγαπᾷ "every animal loveth" becomes in the hands of a teacher eager to edify at all costs πάση ζωῆ ἀγάπα, "in all thy life love": and the natural object is easily supplied, for love of God, in whose image man was made, is the first duty of man: that is only the elucidation of the text of 15 ב כל אדם את הרומה לו. The exegesis is that introduced to the Greek-speaking world by Aquila; את, the sign of the Accusative, must have other real significance—it implies another object of love beside the lower meaning of "him that is like him," adopted by the LXX, "his neighbour." The last clause is the complement of 13 b: "for fear of the men of violence call upon God for thy salvation." Our addition then is a little sermon based upon verses 13 and 15. On analysis primitive methods of exegesis reveal themselves to confirm the evidence of the authorities for the gloss that it is very early, and to justify in a measure the inference from the asterisks of the Syro-Hexaplar, that it comes directly or indirectly from an Hebrew or Aramaic source.

xvi. 10 "Nor the six hundred thousand who were gathered together in the hardness of their hearts," although it stands in all the manuscripts of the LXX and is con-

firmed by the evidence of the Hebrew and the Syriac, is nevertheless marked with asterisks in  $\aleph^{c.a.}$ . The only natural explanation of this is that it does not properly belong to the common edition of the LXX used by the Christian Church, but has been interpolated under proper precautions by Origen in the course of his Hexaplaric revision. It is certain that it is original, and it is easy to understand why this obscure reference to Old Testament history should have been dropped in favour of a more general couplet. Its rival is preserved in  $\aleph^{c.a.}$  "all these things did he to the hardhearted, and at the number (or 'multitude') of his saints he was not comforted." The first member of this verse is merely a general summary of the foregoing examples of the ways of God with men: the second is suggested by the mention of the place where Lot sojourned in ver. 8 above. For it is written "And Abraham said 'O let not the Lord be angry and I will speak yet but this once: peradventure ten righteous shall be found there.' And the Lord said 'I will not destroy it for ten's sake' . . . And Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord, and he looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah—and the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of the furnace." Philo and Wisdom agree that "the multitude of the wise is the salvation of the world," but the leaven is not always sufficient to leaven the whole lump.

These three passages may be regarded as fair samples of such fragments of the early Greek version as it is possible to isolate by textual criticism. The general result of an investigation of these pre-Origenian texts of Ecclesiasticus is to impugn their trustworthiness. Attractive as some of the readings are, they are commonly the result of the elucidation of the assumed meaning by men who cared everything for the spirit and nothing for the letter. Many of the glosses which now stand side by side with their rivals contain the materials necessary for the correction thereof, but that is not their *raison d'être* though it may

be a contributory cause of their genesis. They arose not in the literary sphere of complete Bibles, but in what is practically the sphere of an oral tradition.

Thence they invaded the Church copies, and though branded by Origen and expelled in deference to his authority, they return in the later cursives to throw some light upon the methods and ideas of early Christianity and to justify Origen in his rigid adherence to the best Manuscript authority he could procure.

“All things are double one against another: and he hath made nothing imperfect. One thing establisheth the good of another: and who shall be filled with beholding his glory?”

J. H. A. HART.