

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE XI.

NOTICE OF NEW EDITIONS OF CLASSICS.

By an Association of Gentlemen.

The Metamorphoses of Publius Ovidius Naso; elucidated by an analysis and explanation of the fables, together with English notes, historical, mythological, and critical, and illustrated by pictorial embellishments; with a clavis, giving the meaning of all the words with critical exactness. By Nathan Covington Brooks, A. M., Professor of the Greek and Latin languages, and Principal of the Latin High School, Baltimore. Philadelphia: Grigg, Elliot and Co. 1848. 8vo. pp. 388.

THIS is a formidable title and volume for the first four books of the *Metamorphoses*, for that is all of the fifteen, and even the four are curtailed somewhat by the judicious omission of objectionable parts. The letter press of the octavo page is also large, and the type small both of the text and notes. The quantity of matter to be read, or which may be read, is therefore considerable. We must, however, think this a fault in a school-book, for students in the early stages of Latin, as unnecessarily increasing the expense. The apology, doubtless, is a desire to make the book attractive; but as the editor informs us in the Preface, the book is designed to follow Caesar's *Commentaries*, we doubt if the object is attained by the copious extracts from ancient and modern writers, given for illustration—students at that stage will not appreciate them.

We think better of the pictorial embellishments. These are numerous and large, well executed and for the most part chaste. Yet here are some unfortunate exceptions—how can the pursuit of Daphne by Apollo, of Syrinx by Pan, of Coronis by Neptune, represented pictorially, be called chaste? These with several others, remind one of a recent advertisement in *Punch*—"A new art of printing, by a designing Devil," etc. These faults aside, which however are inexcusable, the embellishments are the greatest merit of the book.

A great fault of the book is the excess of help, which, therefore, becomes no help, given to the student. We refer particularly to the *clavis*, the superabundance of notes, and translation of words and phrases, and the redundancy of the explications. The first two relieve the student from just that labor necessary and beneficial, in

awakening his own powers of research and discrimination. The last, by the uncertainty and contradiction in which the fables are involved, hopelessly, tend only to confuse the juvenile mind. These helps come in the place of specific references to principles, rules, and exceptions in the Grammar which, at this stage, it is the great business of the student to fix in his memory and contemplate in individual application. The editor is not alone in these faults; many editors of classics are now helping students in the same way—by dispensing with dictionaries and grammars—to learn as little as possible of the language they study. Those who adopt this method, of course, will be offended with these criticisms.

But we have graver objections to this work. The Preface states, "Since many of the fables are corrupt traditions of Scriptural truths, I have traced them back to the great fount of purity, the Biblical record, and have given in the notes the parallel passages from the sacred volume." We are sorry that any man should attempt to do this in the rapid process of book making now prevalent, and obviously characteristic of the editor, if we may judge from his *Ovid* and the advertised works accomplished and in progress. There is great danger in tracing these fables back to the great fount of purity, lest the Bible and *Ovid* be somehow placed on a level, and the youthful mind be insensibly led to look on the latter with some of the reverence which he owes to the former. If frequent errors, from slight investigation, creep in, and if cautions are scarce where there is evident allusion to Bible history, impressions most injurious may be fixed, which maturer years will not remove. The first note, in our opinion, inadvertently teaches atheism.

"Ante mare et tellus, et, quod tegit omnia coelum,
Unus erat toto Naturae vultus in orbe,
Quem dixere chaos;

NOTE. "*Ante* ; formerly, at the first. The account which *Ovid* gives, derived from tradition and the writings of the earlier poets, agrees in many respects with the Mosaic account. He begins his narrative with a word similar in meaning to the commencement of *Genesis* : "*In the beginning* God created the heavens and the earth."

Now with *Moses*, the word רִאשִׁית, means a point before all things, when neither sea nor land nor heaven, or even their primordia, existed. But with *Ovid* *ante* means only the time when the elements were reduced to order;—chaos already—and for aught *Ovid* knew, having always existed. This is a heaven-wide difference. The ancient heathen never reached the idea of an original creation—out of nothing, but only an arrangement of a chaos already existing; in

short, metamorphosis was the extent of their conceptions. The pregnant sense of Moses is: In absolute vacuity, *chaos* as well as all things began to be, and Jehovah created all things, and not Jupiter. It opposes atheism and idolatry. What Ovid says, and the best the poor heathen could say, is: Chaos existing, some god, whoever he might be, cut the formless congeries into parts and made them members of one whole. This is atheism and idolatry, and the editor does not lead the youthful mind to contemplate the difference.

NOTE 2. "*Tellus*. The earth, in all the cosmogonies of the ancients, is produced from chaos: τοῦ χάους; δὲ θυγατὴρ ἐστὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ, —PHORNUTIUS."—Of course, the cosmogony of Moses, for he was one of the ancients. Does Moses teach that the earth was produced from chaos?—arranged, it may be, but not *created*, as the youthful mind is left to infer?

NOTE, p. 25, on the line

"Hanc Deus et melior litem Natura diremit."

"*Deus et natura*. This refers to the two principles, mind and matter. We may consider the force of the particle *et* as expositive: God and Nature—even Nature; or, by the figure hendiadys, the God of Nature. The intelligent heathens considered God and Nature synonymous. Thus Strabo:

"Nihil autem aliud est natura quam Deus et divina quaedam ratio toti mundo et partibus ejus inserta."

The power which fashioned the universe Aristotle denominates "Nature;" Anaxagoras calls it "Mind;" so also Plato in his Phaedon. Thales says: "God was that mind which formed all things out of water." Amelius the Platonic, in perfect accordance with what St. John says of the *λόγος*, remarks: "And this is that reason or word, by which all things that ever were, were made." "Chalcidius declares: "The Reason of God is God himself, "just as St. John says: "The Word was God." "Jupiter is a spirit which pervades all things."

"All Nature is but art unknown to thee."—Pope.

The tendency of this note, we think, is dangerous. It places the pantheism and atheism of the heathen philosophers in such juxtaposition and society with the New Testament, as to lead the youthful mind to think the instructions identical, and to look on the heathen as pretty wise and clever reasoners, notwithstanding Paul says, the Gentiles by wisdom knew not God. Nor do we think this fault atoned for by the judicious remark in the preceding note: "How much more

sublime is the idea of God presented in the Bible, who by the word of his power spoke into existence the *material* out of which he formed the universe." We have no reason to suppose the editor other than orthodox; but it seems to us his abundant citations from the ancient poets and philosophers, and his plan of parallel passages, have all the effect of commending the heathen writings and depreciating the Bible in the eyes of the young, and wholly uncalled for in an elementary book designed for them.

The editor's "explications" are probably as good as any. But what do they all amount to? Take the Fall of Phaeton, p. 136. "Aristotle states that in the days of Phaeton (when?) flames fell from heaven which consumed several countries. Eusebius supposed the event to have happened about the time of Deucalion's flood. St. Chrysostom thinks in the chariot of the sun, guided by Phaeton, he recognizes the fiery chariot of Elias, and is disposed to lay considerable stress on the resemblance of his name to *Ἡλιος*, the sun. If any part of the Biblical history forms the subject of this history, it is more probably the destruction of the cities of the Plain, the stoppage of the sun in the days of Joshua, or the retrogradation of the sun in the days of Hezekiah." This is worse, a great deal, than those inept and barren commentaries on the Bible, which run, 'this passage may mean, so and so; or it may mean, so and so; or perhaps the meaning is, so and so;' leaving the reader to the sage conclusion, the passage may mean something if one only knew what it *did* mean. The truth is, the explanation of the fables, for the most part, is irretrievably lost, in the distance and darkness of a world that by its wisdom knew not God. The fables, woven and tinted by the master's hand, are beautiful, exquisitely beautiful; but they are like the dissolving views of the magic lantern, form without substance; if, rustic-like, we attempt to touch them, there is nothing there.

The editor has admitted several fables of bad moral tendency. We instance the story of Callisto. It is altogether too gross in its dress and too horrible in its principles, to find a place in a book designed for ingenuous youth. The story, stripped of its gaudy dress, is just this. Jupiter finds Callisto alone, represented as innocent and pure, deceives her by assuming the form of Diana her patron, forcibly abuses her.—Diana cruelly banishes her from her chorus without judge or jury; and Juno, with studied malignity, changes her into a bear, while pleading for mercy. And yet the editor says, in his explication, "the fable abounds with good moral lessons, as it tends to display the effects of crime upon the person who indulges it. The grove, once so pleasant to her, and the conscious woods, are her aversion; so occu-

piet is she with thoughts of her guilt, that she almost forgets her bow and quiver; the silent lip, the abstracted manner, the downcast eye, the fallen countenance, the timid look, the sudden flush, and the slow step, indicate the degradation that have come upon her spirit."

What a misrepresentation! She was conscious of no guilt—she could not be, for the fable represents her as a feeble but resisting sufferer, in the grasp of the artful and powerful deity. She was conscious of degradation but not of guilt. She was simply the victim of the malignant cruelty of two deities, and the blind cruelty of a third. The explication compared with the fable of Ovid, is a painful confusion of moral distinctions, and with both editor and author it is a violation of poetical justice which makes the blood curdle. Whatever explanation may be given as the ground of the fable, that which will arrest the attention of the student is the poetry of Ovid, and it seems to us, the chief moral to be drawn, is the abominable nature of heathen idolatry. If such were the gods, what must have been the people? Answer, Romans, chap. ii. It is true the mythology may be studied to advantage here and the Latin is simpler than Virgil's. But these advantages are dearly purchased, at the hazard of exposure to such flagrant elements. Ovid is beautiful, often exceedingly tender and moving. What can be more tender than Io writing her name in the sand, and the misery of the father at the disclosure? What more moving than the story of Procne and Philomela? What more moving, tender and graphic, than Ceyx and Alcyone? But how he prostituted his graphic pen and inflammatory pencil—dangerous to the sternest virtue—is notorious. No excellences atone for this. What better is Satan for putting on an angel's shining robe? The best way to guard dangerous paths is to block them up. Expurgated editions of lascivious authors are slight defences to the fascinating fields. We would therefore forego the alleged advantages and adhere to the no less tender and moving and graphic Virgil—incomparably more chaste—as the initiatory of classic poetry. Let Ovid be reserved for a maturer age and for other purposes; but when it is too late, the man deplores the curiosity of the youth, and is compelled, from stage to stage of his inestimable probation, to adopt the confession, "I see the better and approve, but pursue the worse."

History of the Greek Alphabet, with Remarks on Greek Orthography and Pronunciation. By E. A. Sophocles, A. M. Cambridge: Geo. Nichols. 1848. 12mo. pp. 186.

IN the first part of this treatise, Mr. Sophocles has given the substance of the "Traditions and Fictions concerning the Alphabet;" subjoining the passages, in which they are found, from the Greek and Roman writers. These accounts will be interesting to the curious student, and though often as absurd as they are contradictory, they are important as showing all that the ancients pretended to know of the origin of the alphabet. The theories of the Alexandrine grammarians on this subject are ingeniously explained. The "History of the Alphabet," and "Remarks on Orthography," form the second part. The facts on which this portion of the work is based, are drawn chiefly from the Greek Inscriptions, collected and edited by Boeckh. For the *fac simile* of the characters, which the reader will wish to see, he is referred to the work of Gesenius on the Remains of the Phenicians, and to Franz's *Elementa Epigraphicæ Græcæ*. Liberties taken with orthography and etymology by the ancient grammarians, and innovations they made for the sake of fancied or real analogies, are discovered by this examination of inscriptions. Many false views which have been propagated quite to our own times are thus corrected, and the true forms restored.

The *Digamma*, about the existence and use of which there has been so much speculation and debate, is admirably treated here, and a list of *digammated* words added with their forms as appearing in Latin and the Teutonic tongues, which well deserves the attention of the student. The select inscriptions and portions of inscription introduced to illustrate the progress of Greek orthography are rendered easily intelligible by the versions into the common dialect and the observations by Mr. Sophocles.

The "Remarks on Orthography," and the facts presented in this connection are also of great importance as incidentally furnishing unimpeachable testimony on the subject of "Pronunciation," with the discussion of which the volume closes.

The interchange of the vowels and diphthongs, and the mutations of the consonants show, at least, what was their *relative* sound. The "Roman mode of writing Greek Words," and the "Greek mode of writing Latin Words," are fully and accurately given with illustrations. "Romaic or Modern Greek Pronunciation,"—which is *vernacular* to Mr. Sophocles, and on which, therefore, as here represented,

scholars may confidently rely even in the minutest points,—next follows, with the “Probable Ancient Pronunciation.” In treating of the latter, he has been guided by ancient authorities, where they existed, and in cases wherein he has been obliged to offer his own conjectures, he has followed the dictates of a sound judgment, and we are the more inclined to receive his hypotheses as he seems neither to make them unnecessarily nor to substitute them for facts.

This work, though unpretending in its form, is very valuable and trustworthy,—valuable as ably discussing questions, which meet the student at the very beginning of his studies and constantly recur as he proceeds,—trustworthy as coming from one of the most accomplished and judicious Greek scholars now living.

We have here given a mere syllabus of its contents, but propose in some future number to examine the work in detail, and to consider the questions of which it treats.

ARTICLE XII.

REVIEW OF OWEN'S THUCYDIDES.

By James Hadley, Assistant Professor of Greek in Yale College.

The History of the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides; according to the text of L. Dindorf; with Notes, for the use of Colleges, by John J. Owen, Principal of the Cornelius Institute. New York: Leavitt, Trow & Co. 1848. 12mo. pp. 688.

THUCYDIDES is not the earliest Grecian writer to whom we give the name *historian*; yet the earliest of historians could not have been more thoroughly original. Alike in the conception and the execution of his work he shows himself independent of his predecessors. He has his own notions as to the scope and aim of history. Others had been mythographers, annalists, story-tellers; it was his purpose to be something widely different. He could not content himself with reproducing the mere form and surface of the past, in a bare chronicle of outward actions and appearances; he sought to account for the past, to show how that which had been came to be. Nor in this attempt was he satisfied with attributing everything singular or mysterious to