

THE 'EPISTOLA APOSTOLORUM' IN A NEW TEXT.

IN the *Sitzungsberichte* of the Berlin Academy for 1895 (p. 705) Dr C. Schmidt gave a preliminary account of a Coptic narrative of the appearances of our Lord after the Resurrection. The document, which is assigned to the middle of the second century, and appears to be of great interest, is to be published in the *Texte und Untersuchungen*.

We have a fragment of this same book in Latin; a single leaf is preserved in a Vienna palimpsest, first published by Dr J. Bick in the Vienna *Sitzungsberichte* (Phil.-Hist. Kl. 159), and subsequently commented upon by Dr Schmidt (Berlin *Sitzungsb.*, 1908, p. 1047), and by Dr E. Hauler (*Wiener Studien* xxx, 1908, p. 308). In this Latin fragment the book has a title, *Epistula*.

Quite recently I have noticed the existence of a third authority. In the invaluable *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, 1907, pp. 1-8, M. L. Guerrier gives an analysis of an Ethiopic *Testament of Our Lord*, which he distinguishes from other similarly-named books by the addition of the words 'in Galilee', in accordance with the *data* of the text. He promises a speedy publication of the book in the *Patrologia Orientalis* of MM. Graffin and Nau, together with a Latin version.

To demonstrate as briefly as I can the fact that this Ethiopic Testament is to a large extent identical with what we have in Coptic, I will set down the following points which the published notices shew to be common to both texts:—

Appearance of Christ to the women¹ who are weeping: announcement by Mary Magdalene to the Apostles: their unbelief. Appearance of Christ to the Apostles: Peter is reproached with his denial. They prostrate themselves and ask pardon with tears.

Our Lord states that it was He who appeared to the Virgin at the Annunciation, under the form of Gabriel.

He bids the Apostles keep the Passover (or Easter) in memory of Him, and predicts that at that season one of them will be imprisoned and will be released by His power under the form of Gabriel.

He says of Himself, 'I am wholly in the Father and the Father in me'.

The Apostles ask concerning the time of His coming.

Stress is laid upon the resurrection of the flesh.

There is a polemic against false teachers. In the Coptic text they are named, but apparently not in the Ethiopic.

There is an exposition of the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

¹ The Coptic names them as Mary, Martha, Mary Magdalene: the Ethiopic gives Sara for Mary.

Here is enough community of matter to shew the importance of the Ethiopic text. We must not, of course, assume that it is a complete, still less an unadulterated or unexpurgated, version of the original. The analysis gives no hint, for example, of the remarkable episode which describes how the great archangels failed to recognize Christ as He descended through the heavens. On the other hand, it does contain matter (about the Annunciation, &c.) which the scribe or author of the Latin version seems to have omitted intentionally.

The probability that it is a complete document must also be considered. The opening sections treat of the same topics, and in much the same terms, as the *Testament of the Lord* first published by Mgr Rahmani: signs of the end, disasters in various named countries, the coming of Antichrist and his personal appearance. But thereafter, instead of treating questions of Church order, our Lord begins to speak of Himself, and of His miracles. Then follows the narrative of the appearance to the women.

Later on there is a prediction of the conversion of St. Paul, and there is also a good deal of exhortation, and of promises vouchsafed to the righteous. The Coptic has a *lacuna* of several leaves which may have contained this matter. The book concludes very soon after the discourse on the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

Perhaps it may turn out to be the original of the whole class of *Testaments of the Lord*.

The moral of this identification, coupled with the discovery of a large portion of the *Apocalypse of Peter* in similar surroundings,¹ is obvious. We can by no means afford to neglect these late oriental texts, often preserved to us in single copies, written, it may be, in the eighteenth or even in the nineteenth century. The two examples to which I call the attention of scholars are a striking demonstration of the value of the work of research in which the *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* has taken a leading part during these last years.

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¹ Both documents are found in one and the same manuscript (No. 51 of the fonds d'Abbadie).