

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 VII.

NEW EDITION OF PLUTARCH'S LIVES.

Plutarchi vitas parallelas ex recensione Caroli Sintenis. [In four vols. 8vo.; vol. 1 appeared in 1839; vol. 2 in 1841; vol. 3 in 1843; vol. 4 in 1846.]

THIS is the first edition of Plutarch's Lives, founded on new examinations of manuscripts, since the year 1572, (when H. Stephens' edition in 13 vols. 8vo. was published at Geneva,) if we except Bryan's (London, 1723—29), completed after his death by Moses Solanus or de Soul. Reiske (Leipzig, 12 vols. 8vo. 1774—1782) and Hutten (Tübingen, 14 vols. 8vo. 1795—1805), in their editions of the entire works of Plutarch had no new manuscript aid; and the same may be said of Coray's (Paris, 6 vols. 8vo. 1809—1815) and Schaefer's (Leipzig, 6 vols. 12mo. 1825—1830) valuable editions of the Lives.

Meanwhile several German scholars were beginning to call attention to Plutarch's Lives by careful editions of one or more of them with or without manuscript assistance. Among these we name Bähr of Heidelberg who published in 1822 the Life of Alcibiades, and in 1826 the Lives of Philopoemen, Flaminius and Pyrrhus; Held of Sulzbach (Aemilius Paulus and Timoleon, 1832), Vögelin of Zürich (Brutus, 1833), Schoemann of Greifswald (Agis and Cleomenes, 1839), Kraner (Phocion, 1840), Westermann of Leipzig (Solon, 1841), and Sintenis himself, who is, we believe, a gymnasial professor at Zerbst, in Anhalt-Dessau; and who by his Themistocles (1832) and Pericles (1835) gave decisive proof of his judgment and ability.

Sintenis came to his task of preparing a critical edition of all the Lives, aided by important collations of Paris manuscripts which Bähr and Held had set on foot as well as by readings of a Munich manuscript received from Goeller, and of Palatine manuscripts examined by himself. Before his work had reached its close in 1846, he obtained from several quarters, especially from Paris, valuable additional readings which are given in the addenda to the fourth volume. Hence it will be obvious that no one has been able to determine the text of Plutarch as well as Sintenis; and we apprehend that the judgment of scholars will accord him high praise for the execution of his task.

Those critics who have given their attention to the text of Plutarch have found it difficult to decide respecting the merits of the edition of H. Stephanus. This great scholar, after the fashion of his time, was careless in giving the authorities for his emendations; so that without new examinations of manuscripts it could not be said whether he followed his own taste and knowledge of Greek, when he departed from earlier editions, or whether he had readings from uncollated manuscripts. Wyttenbach's judgment, although he attributes to Stephanus great license in altering the text without authority, is not severe. He frees him from the charge of bad faith and fraud which many modern scholars have laid upon him; and attributes to haste and to the custom of the age, by which conjectures and the readings of manuscripts were held in equal respect, whatever in his treatment of Plutarch's text tends to throw a shade upon his reputation. Sintenis however is not so lenient. We will give his own words in his preface spoken with reference to an assertion of Stephanus, that he had forborne to follow his own conjectures, and had obeyed the manuscripts throughout,—an assertion by the way which Wyttenbach seems to have overlooked. "Admirabuntur," says Sintenis, "hanc tanti viri modestiam, qui verbis fidem habere assueti, Plutarcheam Stephani operam usu cognitam non habent, praedicabuntque tanto magis, quo pejus coepit nostrorum hominum audire in hoc genere temeritas: sed qui ipsi causas quae aguntur explorare didicerunt, nec idoneo scriptoris usu destituti sunt, non poterunt non suspectissimam habere Stephani fidem talia jactantis de sua in ea re modestia alia autem omnia agentis. Nam qui aliquam in Plutarcho posuerunt operam uno ore confessi sunt omnes, quas Stephanus multis locis adhibuisset correctiones non ex libris petitas sed ab ipso excogitatas esse, cujus rei argumenta certissima ex ipsarum correctionum indole petere licet cuivis sermonis Plutarchoi non plane ignaro."

This charge against the great printer-critic carries on its face the air of improbability. That he should have appropriated the labors of others without acknowledgment, which he is accused of doing in his edition of Plato, is not incredible; but what motive was there for passing off his own conjectures as manuscript readings, when nobody cared whether his emendations sprung from the one source or from the other. One would think that the temptation lay on the other side; that the desire to gain applause by seeming conjectures, really founded on the manuscripts, would have led a man of bad faith to suppress his authorities and shine in borrowed plumes.

It is one of the 'curiosities of literature' that after three hundred years the character of this eminent scholar has, as it respects Plu-

tarch's *Lives*, been vindicated and proved to be immaculate by the very man whose aspersions we have quoted above; that the often repeated charges against Stephanus have been shown to have emanated from the sluggish ignorance of editors who propped themselves up by the unexamined opinions of their predecessors; and that the new readings from Paris manuscripts, which appear at the beginning of Sintenis's fourth volume prove Stephanus to have neither received into his text, nor mentioned in his notes other readings which were not drawn from manuscript sources. Sintenis has taken occasion in two places to atone for the injury which he did in his preface to the memory of his predecessor in the criticism of Plutarch; he has done so in the preface to his fourth volume, and also in the first number of the *Philologus* edited by Scheidewin of Göttingen (pp. 134—143). In this magazine he speaks as follows: "da mir die Lesarten der Pariser Handschriften vollständig vorliegen, kann ich versichern dass nur wenige stelle übrig bleiben, wo die Learten, welche Stephanus entweder stillschweigend in den text gesetzt oder mit Erklärung versehen hat dass sie handschriftliche seien, nicht in einer oder der andern Pariser Handschrift sich fänden. Dass aber auch für diese verhältniss-mässig wenigen stellen eine Benutzung bis jetzt unbekannter oder verloren gegangener Handschriften angenommen werden müsse, scheint zwingende folge der gemachten Erfahrung zu sein."

Thus is Stephanus set right again before the present and future generations of scholars; and it is to be hoped that some one will be equally successful in clearing him from all blame in regard to the text of Plato. What Passow said of him years before this vindication from manuscripts was known, deserves to be inserted here, as the dictate of a generous mind bringing forward the best defence which was then possible. "He prized them [manuscripts] only that he might restore by their aid decidedly corrupt places, and was obliged, where they left him in the lurch, as frequently happened, to make use of his divining faculty in their stead, which he did often judiciously and with success. This, however, is the side on which the most frequent blame, the strongest reproaches have been directed against his editions, especially against those of Plato and Plutarch; the charge being brought against him not only of haste and negligence, but also of consciously and purposely deceiving his readers as to the true origin of the readings he has adopted. To defend him on the first of these charges would be but vain painstaking. Stephanus must have renounced the activity which had become to him a second nature, if he would have toiled with that carefulness, going into all the minutiae of language which has made the name of his excellent contemporary Frederick

Sylburgius almost proverbial. Intentional dishonesty, however, lay so far from his whole way of thinking and feeling, that to defend him against such a charge in literary matters would be an insult."

At the close of his fourth volume, Sintenis inserts a letter of about forty pages in length, addressed to Prof. Sauppe, then of Zürich; but now, we believe, of Jena, and relating to the practice of Plutarch in his *Lives* with regard to hiatus. In this letter he avows himself an unwilling convert, as far as his author is concerned, to Benseler's doctrine that the dislike of the hiatus which Isocrates shows in his writings was shared by other later writers; as the orators Polybius, Plutarch, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. If this can be proved in the case of any Greek author, it manifestly offers an occasion for conjectural emendation, and also puts a check upon it; for on the one hand the occurrence of hiatus will throw some suspicion upon the words in the sentence or upon their order of arrangement, while on the other it will be unlawful to propose emendations which contain an inadmissible hiatus. In his remarks Sintenis confines himself to the concurrence of vowels in two words where either or both of them are long, reserving his opinion respecting the concurrence of two short vowels for another occasion. He allows likewise to Plutarch more liberty than Isocrates retained; he is not offended by the forms of the article, by prepositions, by *καί*, by numerals, nor by words forming together one notion when they make hiatus; and a pause likewise excuses this freedom in his estimation.¹ The heads of proof that Plutarch did accommodate his style to the rhetorical rules of Isocrates are chiefly these:

1. The passages where hiatus occur, if compared with those of writers before Isocrates, as Xenophon and Thucydides, are very few. Three or four pages of these two last named authors or of Plato will contain about as many examples as the first six *Lives* of Plutarch. This contrast is rendered highly striking when passages from other authors who overlooked hiatus are quoted by Plutarch. In a law of Solon's, consisting of four lines only, there are more hiatuses than in the entire *Lives* of Solon and Poplicola.

2. Of the instances of hiatus in Plutarch many are corrected by the new readings. Thus of the forty-six occurring in the first six *Lives*, the manuscripts supply the correction for twenty-one. Now since this aid against hiatus is furnished by manuscripts neither very old, except the Sangermain one, nor very good, what might we not expect, asks Sintenis, if older and better books were at hand?

¹ Sintenis is inclined to a freer use of interpunctuations than some other editors. In consequence of his views in this respect, a number of hiatuses have the ban taken off from them.

3. To these proofs it may be added that the free and loose collocation of words, which some attribute to negligence in Plutarch, is in part due to the desire of avoiding hiatus, and that we may ascribe to the same origin the use of compound words, where simple ones would have been chosen by good writers of the older times.

It is impossible to give these arguments their due weight without an extended examination of Plutarch's text particularly, as compared with the text of some author who flourished before the times of Isocrates. Sintenis takes the lives of Numa, Timoleon and Paulus Aemilius as touchstones of his theory; in the former, all the hiatuses of the wrong kind except one are removed by good manuscripts, or are found in passages suspicious for other reasons besides the occurrence of hiatus in them; and that one is removed by an elegant and almost certain emendation. As for the two other lives we will quote the words of Sintenis: "Ego quidem, quum reputo quam sint rara in conjunctis Timoleonis at Aemilii vitis hiatusum vestigia, ut quaevis Thucydidia, Platonis, Xenophontis pagina plures habeat, quam denique suspecta omnia, alia propter aliam causam, nihil habeo quod in hoc genere cum Plutarcheis comparare possim nisi Isocratea."

After the number of passages containing hiatus is thus materially reduced by the aid of the manuscripts, it becomes an easy task to emend most of the remaining ones; and the great machine for so doing is to change the collocation of words. The right to do this may fairly be conceded to the critic; still it may be asked, in regard to all such passages, whether they may not have escaped from a writer contrary to his usual rule. Is it possible for the most careful writer, who composes as many works as we have from Plutarch's hand, to be ever awake to such petty solitudes as that in regard to the hiatus; nay, must not the presence of more than usual earnestness or manly purpose in writing call his attention away to better and higher things? However, then, the ear of Plutarch may have been trained to dislike the hiatus—the proof of which is furnished with great ability by Sintenis—we are prepared by such general considerations to look for exceptions; although, we confess, that fewer instances remain after the present editor's criticisms than we could have supposed.

From all that has been said it may be gathered that a new era has begun as to the text of Plutarch's Lives, and that they have found a most careful, thorough and sagacious editor.

T. D. W.

Yale College.