

A CURIOUS BEZAN READING VINDICATED.

THE recent publication of Dr. Hort's lectures on the Clementine Homilies has revived the interest in those references in the early Patristic writers which have to do with the person of Simon Magus. It is well known that in the Clementine Homilies, if not elsewhere, Simon is an effigy or mask of the Apostle Paul, considered as the antagonist of St. Peter and the enemy of the true Jewish or Judæo-Christian faith; and the main question for the critic who occupies himself with the interpretation of the Clementines is the determination of the meaning and extent of the hostility between the Apostle Peter and the one whom we may call his Anti-Peter. That this hostility runs far beyond the limits of any reasonable interpretation of the Scriptural accounts of the parties in the Early Church may be taken for granted; but it is not so easy to frame a theory of the relation of parties in the Early Church which shall serve as an adequate base for the highly developed diatribes which make the substance of the Clementines. And it is not surprising that some students have come to the conclusion that the accounts of the internal differences between the leaders in the Acts of the Apostles are as much undercoloured as they are heightened and exaggerated in the pages of the Homilies, while others have pushed the matter even further, and have contended that even in the Acts of the Apostles the figure of Simon Magus must be explained by the Clementine method, as a survival from an early form of Anti-Paulinism which found in the great Apostle of the Gentiles a wizard, a deceiver and an enemy.

Now, with regard to this question whether Simon Magus ever existed at all, Dr. Hort speaks somewhat contemptuously, as though the discussion were a mere waste of time. He regards the story in the Acts as decisive, quite apart

from any question of Biblical authority, and in this most of his readers will agree with him. But in discussing the matter he has to deal with a curious passage in Josephus, which seems to contain a distinct reference to the great magician, and might conceivably be taken as the appropriate confirmation of the Biblical record. We will transcribe his own words on the question :

Besides these Christian accounts there is a *possible* allusion to Simon Magus in Josephus (*Ant.* xx. 72), who says that Felix sent to Drusilla one, Simon by name, one of his own friends, a Jew, but by birth a Cyprian, who pretended to be a magician (*Σίμωνα ὀνόματι τῶν ἑαυτοῦ φίλων Ἰουδαίων Κύπριον δὲ γένος μάγον εἶναι σκηπτόμενον*), to induce Drusilla, by means of promises, to forsake her husband and marry *him* (Felix). It would be conceivable that Josephus, hearing Simon Magus called a native of Gittha or Gitta, mistook the guttural, and supposed him to be called a Kithian, by which, as we know from his language elsewhere (*Ant.* i. 6, 1; cp. ix. 14, 2), he would naturally understand either a man of Cyprus (see especially *Epiῤῥh.* p. 150 B, *παντὶ δὲ τῷ δηλόν ἐστιν ὅτι Κίτιον ἢ Κυπρίων νῆσος καλεῖται*: *Κίτιοι γὰρ Κύπριοι καὶ Ῥόδιοι*) or a man of Citium, a town of Cyprus. But then it would be necessary to assume also a second error, or at least laxity of language, that of calling a Samaritan a Jew. On the whole it seems most likely that Josephus' mock-magician Simon is not the true Simon Magus. The name Simon was extremely common in Palestine at this time.

From the foregoing it will be seen that Dr. Hort resisted the temptation¹ to support the accuracy of the Acts of the Apostles by a reference to Josephus, and preferred the conclusion that there were two Simons, both magicians, one of them a Samaritan from Gittha, and the other a Jew from Cyprus. If the reader will now look at the footnotes which the editor (Mr. J. O. F. Murray) has added to Dr. Hort's posthumous lectures, he will find a reference to the actual text of Josephus in the following form :

Σίμωνα. [So Codd. M.W. and Lat. vers. But the Ambrosian MS. A has *Ἀτομον* (with *Σίμωνα* in marg.): this reading is also found in the "Epitome," and is adopted by Niese].

¹ As Whiston had done before him,

On the evidence, then, of the eleventh century MS. at Milan, *plus* the Epitome of Josephus at Vienna, *plus* the much abused canon of the harder reading (which must surely be right this time), we expel Simon Magus from the text altogether, and restore an unknown magician, whom we may call, following Josephus,

Atomos the Mage.

Dr. Hort's suspicion was, therefore, justified when he declined to change Samaritan into Jew, and Gittha into Citium. He was, however, wrong in falling back upon the theory that Simons were plenty at this time and in this region, with which it was involved that magicians also were plenty, at least sufficiently so for two of them to be called Simon, nearly at the same time, and not far removed from one another in place. It was an easy lapse. How many errors are still extant in the Christian history through duplication of Simons, Johns, Judases, and Maries!

Meanwhile, then, between the delivery of the lectures and their publication, Simon Magus has dropped out of Josephus, and Atomos Magus has come in. Who was he? And can we find any clue which shall rescue him from the shadowy existence which he shares with Simon, as if he were the shadow of a shade. We remind ourselves that he is to be a Jew, a Cypriote, and a magician, and his name is to be Atomos.

Now turn to the Acts of the Apostles (chap. xiii.), and to the story of St. Paul's conflict with Elymas the sorcerer. According to the text of Westcott and Hort, we are told that Paul and Barnabas, on arriving at Paphos,

ἔβρον ἄνδρα τινὰ μάγον ψευδοπροφήτην Ἰουδαῖον ᾧ ὄνομα Βαρισησοῦς.

This Jewish magician and false prophet opposed their teaching, and sought to hinder the influence which they were gaining over Sergius Paulus, the proconsul. The language in which the conflict is described is as follows :

ἀνθίστατο δὲ αὐτοῖς Ἐλύμας ὁ μάγος οὕτως γὰρ μεθερμηνεύεται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, ζητῶν διαστρέφαι τὸν ἀνθύπατον ἀπὸ τῆς πίστεως.

It is generally supposed that the name of the magician is Elymas Bar-jesus, and that it is implied by Luke that Elymas is a translation of some Semitic name, by a method which was common enough at the time; but what that name was has never been satisfactorily conjectured.

The remarkable thing to be noticed at this point is that we have in Acts xiii. an account of a magician who was also a Jew, and who from his habitat may certainly be described as a Cypriote; he is like Josephus' mage, an intriguer in high places, and has a position of privilege at the local Roman court. Only his name is at fault. Why is he called Elymas and not Atomos? The parallel would then be perfect. Suppose we turn to the Western text of the Acts and see how the passage reads. For instance, here is Codex Bezae:

ἀνθίστατο δὲ αὐτοῖς ἐτ[ο]ίμας ὁ μάγος,
resistabat autem eis etoemas magus,

and the peculiar form of the name as given in Codex Bezae is confirmed by several Western authorities, such as Lucifer and the Gigas MS., who give us either the form ἔτοιμος, or its Latin equivalent *paratus*. We may say that the Western form of the name is either the *ετοιμας* of D, or *ετοιμος* of its companions. Here then we have made a remarkable approach to the perplexing Ἄτομος of the passage in Josephus. The identification of the two names is not to be resisted, especially in view of the agreement noted above under the descriptions of *Mage*, *Jew*, and *Cypriote*. The editor of Josephus is abundantly justified in the form which he has printed. But what are we to say of the editors of the Acts of the Apostles?

I must say frankly that it has always seemed to me to be extremely improbable that the reading of D could be

the best reading in this perplexing passage, and I never expected to see anything approaching to a justification of it; and when my good friends, Ramsay and Blass undertook the patronage of it, I took it to be a case of undue bias provoked by excellencies which they had elsewhere discovered in the Western text, and not a case of sound editorial judgment.

Dr. Blass has edited the form *Ἐτοιμᾶς*, following Codex Bezae closely, and only making a slight transposition, for which there is some authority, in the order of the sentences, so as to make the text more intelligible; accordingly he gives us as follows:

ἔβρον ἄνδρα τινὰ μάγον ψευδοπροφήτην Ἰουδαῖον, ὀνόματι καλούμενον Βαριησονα(ν), ὃ μεθερμηγνέεται Ἐτοιμᾶς . . . ἀνθίστατο δὲ αὐτοῖς Ἐτοιμᾶς ὁ μάγος, ζηγῶν διαστρέψαι κτέ.

There may be some doubt about the details of the critical restoration of the passage; there can be little doubt that the name is now substantially right.

Ramsay, too, appears to be in the main correct when he says of the incident, that "among these [the *comites* of Sergius Paulus] was a man, Etoimas Bar-jesus by name, a man skilled in the lore and the uncanny arts and strange powers of the Median priests or *Magi*."¹

It follows, of course, that the justificatory explanations which have been made of the form Elymas in the received text are no longer to be considered. For example, Dr. Chase's attempt to prove that *Etoimas* is due to a misreading of a badly written Syriac text, which has affected the Western tradition, is, like so many of his ingenious but impossible guesses, definitely out of court.

We now turn to the history involved in the text, and ask ourselves how it stands between Luke and Josephus and the facts. If our identification is correct, then the

¹ *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 76.

magician referred to must have left the Roman court at Cyprus, and attached himself to the Roman court at Caesarea; he must have abandoned Sergius Paulus, and joined himself to Felix the Roman governor. Is there anything impossible in this? The date of the mission to Cyprus lies between the limits 45-49 A.D. Felix came into office, according to Eusebius, between January 51 and January 52; the intrigue for the possession of Drusilla may well have taken place soon after this; and the dates are so close together that there is no reason why Etoemos should not have secured his position at Caesarea while Paul was making his earliest missionary journeys. There is, however, no clear trace of his presence there when Paul is made prisoner; Felix does not appear, on the superficial view of the story, to have any cause for treating Paul unjustly besides his own cupidity. On the other hand, the Western text tells us plainly, in a passage which is commonly reckoned as an aberrant gloss, but which must surely have a historical foundation, that the reason why Felix left Paul bound was that Drusilla wished it.¹

This is replaced in the received text by the explanation that Felix wished to show the Jews a favour, which looks like an explanation of the foregoing. Is it possible that, after all, the influence of Etoemos had been used against Paul through Drusilla? Here we are wandering, perhaps without due caution, into the region of historical conjecture. We will, therefore, content ourselves with repeating that there is nothing incredible in the belief that the Cypriote magician had migrated to Caesarea. He may even have been there for a length of time.

In any case the Western text stands, and it helps us, as in so many other instances, to a better position for historical research. We are also in a better position for

¹ I can make no other sense out of the curious expression—*τὸν δὲ Παῦλον εἶασεν ἐν τηρήσει διὰ Δρούσιλλαν.*

philological inquiry into the reason for the name that was given to the magician, for we have rid ourselves of Elymas ; and although there is some variation in the spelling of the name that replaces it, we ought to be able to decide whether Etoemos is a genuine Greek word, translating an Aramaic name, or whether it is a mere transliteration of some such name.

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DIALOGUES ON THE CHRISTIAN PROPHETS.

III.

Babylon the city of Rome—The *reda*—The number of the Beast—
Irenaeus on the number—Salmon and Zahn on Irenaeus.

Mason. Since we last met, Riddell, I have looked up two or three authorities, to see what interpretations they adopted concerning Babylon.

Riddell. Are you engaged in writing a dictionary, Mason, or only an encyclopaedia ?

M. Not yet, thanks.

R. Then why such extravagant devotion on your part to necessary evils ?

M. I suppose you admit that there is room for diversity of opinion on the solution of the great riddle of the Bible ?

R. Dear me, yes, that I do ! By all means let us have every possible opinion put forward, and let the best prevail. "A life without discussion is not worth living," as Plato observes : and we may add, "Not even for the junior clergy." But I cannot quite admit that the question now before us is the great riddle of the Bible. The Synoptic Gospels, and their mutual relations, are a greater riddle, to name only one. And I cannot agree either that much good is to be gained from consulting authorities, as you call them.

M. Why not ?