

THE PALESTINIAN SYRIAC LECTIONARY.

THE April number of the *Journal of Theological Studies* contained a paper by Professor J. T. Marshall upon remarkable readings found in the *Palestinian Syriac Lectionary* of the Epistles, in which the writer attempted to shew from internal evidence that the Lectionary was composed in Egypt, and that it contains a biblical text of a very peculiar type, both from the readings it supports and from the interpretations that it gives to the Greek. The following pages are, alas, almost wholly controversial. I shall try to shew that the arguments which link the rise of the Palestinian Syriac version with Egypt are of very little cogency, and that the proved connexion of a Palestinian Syriac community with Egypt belongs to a late stage in the literature of that dialect. This being the case let me begin by shaking my opponent's hand, as prize-fighters do (so I am told) in the ring. Disagreements in these complicated and difficult questions of language and criticism are inevitable, but it is at any rate a matter for congratulation that both my opponent and myself feel a common interest in this long neglected corner of Christian Literature.

Professor Marshall bases his case on internal evidence. Before examining his reasons let us set down what we know on general grounds about these documents. In the first place we must not forget that the Christian Palestinian Literature is wholly 'Orthodox', i. e. belonging to a body in communion with the Byzantine Church. This consideration should at once render us very sceptical about alleged points of contact with Coptic versions of the Bible, for the Coptic Church was always a stronghold of Monophysite doctrine from the days of Anastasius onwards. The next point is to note the places from whence came the Palestinian MSS that have survived to our days. These are: the Monastery on Mount Sinai, the Monasteries on the Boar's Head Promontory near Antioch (*J. T. S.* ii 177 f), the great Monastery of St Mary Deipara in the Nitrian Desert, the Cairo Geniza, and unknown places in Egypt. The Nitrian MSS seem to have been bought at the sale of Sultân Bibars's booty by one Surûr, a deacon of Palestinian descent, and the Geniza fragments may very likely have come to the Synagogue at the same time. These last are now all palimpsest with Hebrew writing on the top, so that no doubt they were bought by the Jews as cheap writing-material. Thus the 'Palestinian Syriac' Literature is quite as much connected with orthodox sanctuaries in Palestine as with the Nile Valley.

The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Epistles is known to us from a single codex, of no great antiquity, which was bought in Cairo

by Mrs. Lewis of Cambridge in 1895. No one doubts that the Lectionary is considerably older than this MS; but it is well to bear in mind, before we allow ourselves to draw startling conclusions from minute points of translation, that the text upon which we are working is that of a single MS, a MS copied by a scribe who was possibly ill instructed in the dialect of the Lectionary. The MS certainly contains many blunders: we find *Misren* (i. e. Egypt) for *Midian* in Isaiah ix 4, p. 27, and at the end of Isaiah lx 3, p. 124, we find *thy Saviour* for *thy Sunrise*. When, therefore, Prof. Marshall speaks of the 'scores of readings not found anywhere else', we may reasonably suspect that not a few of them may be mere mistakes.

Prof. Marshall founds his case for the Egyptian origin of the Lectionary on two considerations. The first is that the Lesson containing Genesis ii agrees almost verbatim with that found in the *Liturgy of the Nile*, as published by G. Margoliouth in 1896. With this no one will quarrel. The *Liturgy of the Nile* was obviously drawn up in Egypt, and the community of Aramaic-speaking Christians who used it must therefore have been settled in Egypt. But the MS in which it is preserved is not exclusively a 'Palestinian' book: parts of it are written in Edessene Syriac, as well as in Carshuni. No Coptic influence is visible in any part of the MS; in fact, the whole book is a translation from the Greek¹. We find *Greek* formulas transcribed in Syriac letters, but the only Egyptian thing in the MS is the Nile Service itself. The *Liturgy of the Nile* proves the existence in Egypt in the thirteenth century of a Christian congregation, which used a Palestinian Syriac ritual, but it leaves the presence of that congregation in Egypt unexplained.

It is when Prof. Marshall goes on to connect the Palestinian Lectionary with the Bohairic version that his work is so unsatisfactory. He attempts to shew that the Lectionary was translated from a Greek text akin to that represented by the Bohairic, i. e. the Coptic version of Lower Egypt. The readings of the Lectionary are grouped in Tables; of these, Tables A and B illustrate the alleged kinship with the Bohairic, while the rest are intended to exemplify the theology of the translator.

¹ Mr Brightman informed me while this Paper was passing through the Press that the Greek of the *Liturgy of the Nile* has been edited in A. Dmitrijevskij's *Euchologia*, pp. 684-691, an important book which I have been able to consult through the kindness of my friend Mr F. C. Conybeare. Dmitrijevskij's text is actually taken from a MS at *Sinai*, dated 1510 A.D.

It may be of interest to note that the mysterious Response $\rho\lambda\upsilon \rho\lambda\omicron\kappa$, which is said so often by the congregation in the Palestinian rite, turns out to be a corruption of Ἄνω, Νείλε . The other response, *O holy one of God* (Margoliouth, *JR A S* for 1896, p. 712), is in the Greek $\text{Ἄνω τῇ προνοίᾳ καὶ τῇ προστάξει τοῦ θεοῦ, Νείλε}$.

Table A, however, we may leave at once on one side, as it only contains 'Disputed readings in which the Lectionary agrees with the Bohairic, and also with the best Greek MSS'. This Table informs us of the value of the text of the Lectionary, but naturally it cannot demonstrate any special connexion with the Bohairic version. It is otherwise with Table B, which contains 'Readings in which the Lectionary agrees with the Bohairic, in cases where it is *not* generally supported by the best Greek MSS'. Community in error shews community of parentage. If Table B contain a number of agreements with the Bohairic, where the Lectionary and the Bohairic stand alone or almost alone, then Prof. Marshall's case will obtain a ready hearing. But as a matter of fact, out of the thirteen readings in Table B only in one is it alleged that the Lectionary and the Bohairic stand alone. This is Rom. v 6, a passage marked by Westcott and Hort as corrupt on account of the numerous petty variations in the MSS. Substantial agreement between our two 'authorities' in such a passage would doubtless go far to prove a common origin for their text. But their agreement is only partial after all. Westcott and Hort, following B, print

εἰ γε Χριστὸς ὄντων ἡμῶν ἀσθενῶν ἔτι κατὰ καιρὸν ὑπὲρ ἀσεβῶν ἀπέθανεν.

For εἰ γε . . . ἔτι the following variants are found :—

ἔτι γὰρ . . . ἔτι NACD* Marcion Syr.hkl

ἔτι γὰρ . . . [om. ἔτι 2^o] 5 etc.

εἰς τὴν γὰρ . . . [om. ἔτι 2^o] D^bG Latt

εἰ γὰρ . . . [om. ἔτι 2^o] 104 (*alias* h^oo^r) *fuld*

The Peshitta has ܐܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܠܐ, i. e. εἰ δὲ . . ., omitting the second ἔτι, and the ancient Arabic text from Sinai, edited by Mrs Gibson, begins with 'if', and joins ἔτι with ὄντων ἡμῶν ἀσθενῶν.

Now a literal English translation of our two authorities is

Lect. 'For if Christ when we are weak, yet on a time on account of wicked men died.'

Boh. 'For if yet when we are weak on a time Christ died on account of wicked men.'

The Lectionary keeps the Greek order, the Bohairic adopts an order of its own and appears to join ἔτι with ὄντων ἡμῶν ἀσθενῶν (like the mass of Greek MSS) rather than with κατὰ καιρὸν (like B and the Lectionary). It would never have occurred to me to cite such a doubtful and imperfect agreement between the Palestinian Lectionary and the Bohairic version in support of any hypothesis. If I had done so, I might have said that the Lectionary shews some contact with the Peshitta as might be expected in a late Aramaic version, and some affinity with the text of B as might be expected in a text which has a geographical connexion with 'Abûd near Caesarea in Palestine. But it is safer to leave such intangible coincidences altogether on one side.

In the remaining twelve passages grouped together by Prof. Marshall, the Palestinian Lectionary and the Bohairic agree in company with other authorities, and these are by no means of a specifically Egyptian character. In Rom. vi 5, Eph. i 20, Col. ii 13, the reading alleged by Prof. Marshall as shewing a special connexion between the Lectionary and the Bohairic is actually that of the English Authorized Version. In Rom. vi 11, where the true text has 'Christ Jesus' and the Bohairic with most Greek documents has 'Christ Jesus our Lord', the Lectionary has 'in the Lord, in Jesus Christ' (*sic*). In Rom. viii 2 the Lectionary and the Bohairic do agree in reading 'hath made *us* free from the law of sin and death', a very natural turn found also in the Ethiopic in Erpenius's Arabic, where for *us* our Greek MSS vary between *me* and *thee*. Rom. viii 11, on the other hand, ought not to have been put in the Table at all, because (i) the better texts of the Bohairic read 'Christ Jesus' not 'Jesus Christ', and (ii) the Palestinian Lectionary, like the Peshitta, always puts 'Jesus' before 'the Messiah'. In Rom. x 5, where both the Lectionary and the Bohairic translate δ ποιήσας *ἄνθρωπος* by 'the man who doeth *it*', the two authorities differ in that the Lectionary puts δ τι immediately before δ ποιήσας while the Bohairic puts it before *τὴν δικαιοσύνην*, and this difference corresponds to a well-marked textual variation. In Rom. x 8, where the true text has λέγει only, the Lectionary has 'saith the Scripture' with D Latt, while the Bohairic has 'the Scripture saith' with G. In Rom. x 9 the Lectionary and the Bohairic agree with B and the English Revised Version against the mass of copies in reading δ τι Κύριος Ἰησοῦς. In Eph. i 11 our two authorities agree in the company of D G and a number of minuscules, in Heb. ix 14 they agree in the company of D* N° P and some thirty more, in Heb. x 32 they agree with N° and at least nine more. Where two authorities thus agree as members of considerable groups, little can be inferred as to the nature of their common element.

I venture to think that no one who weighs these thirteen alleged coincidences will consider that Prof. Marshall has even made out a case for his theory. It was indeed hardly to be expected that the Orthodox Palestinian Lectionary should have much affinity with the Monophysite Egyptian version, seeing that the Hareclean Syriac, a Monophysite version which we know to have been prepared in Egypt, shews so little kinship with any Coptic text. But mere statements made about these Eastern versions are too often accepted by textual critics who may have no special acquaintance with the obscurer Oriental dialects, so that it seemed worth while to examine Prof. Marshall's examples one by one.

It will scarcely be necessary to treat Prof. Marshall's arguments

in Arabic (Rom.—Eph. ii 9) from a fragmentary MS at Sinai of the ninth century. As is often the case with MSS of the New Testament some lectionary rubrics are inserted in the text. The system is neither the present Byzantine Lectionary, nor that of the Nestorians, Jacobites, or Maronites, but it is closely akin to what we find in the Palestinian Lectionary. It will be convenient to give a translation of the parallel rubrics in each document. The order is that of the Lectionary, starting with the first Sunday after *Pentecost*. Only beginnings of Lessons are noted, as no clue is given where the Lessons ended in the Arabic.

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| 1. Rom. v 1 | <i>Pal.</i> | First Sunday: to the Galatians (<i>sic</i>), from the Epistle(s) of St Paul. |
| | <i>Ar.</i> | Read on the first Sunday. This is the first of the Lessons. |
| 2. Rom. vi 3 | <i>Pal.</i> | For the second Sunday: to the Romans. |
| | <i>Ar.</i> | Read on the second Sunday. |
| 3. Rom. viii 2 | <i>Pal.</i> | For the third Sunday: to the Galatians (<i>sic</i>). |
| | <i>Ar.</i> | Read on the third Sunday. |
| 4. Rom. ix 30 | <i>Pal.</i> | For the fourth Sunday: to the Hebrews (<i>sic</i>). |
| | <i>Ar.</i> | Read on the fourth Sunday. |
| 5. 2 Cor. v 14 | <i>Pal.</i> | For the fifth Sunday: to the Corinthians. |
| | <i>Ar.</i> | Read on the fifth Sunday. |
| 6. Eph. i 17 | <i>Pal.</i> | For the sixth Sunday: to the Ephesians. |
| | <i>Ar.</i> | Read on the seventh Sunday ¹ . |
| 7. Eph. ii 4 | <i>Pal.</i> | For the seventh Sunday: to the Galatians (<i>sic</i>). |
| | <i>Ar.</i> | Read on the eighth Sunday. |
| 28. Gal. iii 24 | <i>Pal.</i> | For the day of the Nativity of the Messiah to the Galatians is read. |
| | <i>Ar.</i> | Read the day of the Nativity and the day of the Wax-tapers (τὰ φῶτα) ² . |
| 36. 1 Cor. x 1 | <i>Pal.</i> | Second Lesson, to the Corinthians (at the hallowing of the water [35], on the night of the Kalends in the Mass [34]). |
| | <i>Ar.</i> | Read on the day of the fast of the Kalends in the Mass ³ . |

¹ There is no Lesson in the Arabic for the 'Sixth Sunday', so probably a number has been misread.

² *Ar.* القير, *ηπόλ*. The night of the vigil of the Epiphany (Jan. 5-6) is clearly meant, an opinion with which I am glad to say Mr Brightman agrees.

³ Mr Brightman writes: 'The Fast of the Kalends would at first suggest Jan. 1, which was once kept as a fast as a protest against the pagan orgies. But here the Kalends, for whatever reason, means the vigil of the Epiphany.' He compares the *ieiunia in Kalendis Ianuarii* of the Mozarabic Breviary (Jan. 3-5), the fifth being also *ieiunium Epiphaniae*. Further research among orthodox kalendars may possibly bring to light some other instance of this

37. Rom. xiv 14 *Pal.* For the Sunday of the Excommunications¹:
to the Romans.
Ar. Read on the Sunday of the Excommunications¹.
39. 2 Cor. vi 2^b *Pal.* For the second Sunday of the Fast: to the
Corinthians.
Ar. Read on the first Sunday of the Fast.
41. Rom. xii 1 *Pal.* For the third Sunday of the Fast: to the
Romans.
Ar. Read on the second Sunday of the Fast.
44. Rom. xii 6 *Pal.* For the fourth Sunday of the Fast: to the
Romans.
Ar. Read on the third Sunday of the Fast.
48. Rom. xii 16 *Pal.* For the fifth Sunday of the Fast: to the
Romans.
Ar. Read on the fourth Sunday of the Fast.
- []. Rom. xiii 7 *Pal.* [Two leaves missing here.]
Ar. Read on the fifth Sunday of the Fast.
59. Eph. i 3 *Pal.* Lesson from the Epistle that is called of the
Ephesians. (Sunday of the Εὐλογημένος
[58].)
Ar. Read on Palm Sunday (τῶν Βαΐων)².
71. 1 Cor. xi 23 *Pal.* The Apostle, from (Ep.) to the Corinthians.
[on Maundy Thursday.]
Ar. For Great Thursday.
73. Gal. vi 14 *Pal.* The Apostle, from (Ep.) to the Galatians.
[on Good Friday (72).]
Ar. On the day of the Feast of the Cross³.
86. 1 Cor. xv 1 *Pal.* This for Great Saturday: to the Romans.
Ar. Read on the morning of Easter Sunday in the
Mass.

Thus the two systems are practically identical. The only rubrics of the Arabic unrepresented in the Palestinian Lectionary are:—

Rom. viii 28 for Feasts of Martyrs

1 Cor. xii 27 for Feasts of Apostles and Prophets

1 Cor. xv 12, 18, 51 three Requiem Lessons for the Dead.

nomenclature, but in any case its rarity and obscurity is a strong point of contact between the Palestinian Lectionary and the Arabic MS at Sinai.

¹ *Pal.* ܩܘܕܫܐ, *Ar.* القدوس. 'The Sunday of the Excommunications', says Mr. Brightman, 'seems obviously to be the κυριακή τῆς ὀρθοδοξίας, i.e. the First Sunday in Lent, when all the heretics are anathematized, a ceremony instituted after the Iconoclastic troubles.'

² The Rubric is put at Eph. i 1, but there is a great star in the text at v. 3.

³ It is not certain that Sep. 14 is meant.

These would naturally have come at the end of the Lectionary, which is now missing. If it were complete, there is every reason to believe that all the rubrics in the Arabic would correspond to Lessons in the Syriac Lectionary. On the other hand, the four following Lessons in the Syriac are unrepresented in the Arabic:—

- 17. Rom. i 1 Sunday before the Nativity
- 18. Rom. iii 19 St Basil
- 77. Rom. v 6 Sixth Lesson for Maundy Thursday
- 79. 1 Cor. i 18. Eighth Lesson for Maundy Thursday.

Against these trifling differences we have to set the many curious agreements, such as the beginning of the year after Pentecost, the mention of the 'Kalends' and the Sunday of the Excommunications. Common usage of this sort points to a common local Use. I venture to think that there can be no further doubt that the locality was the Convent on Mount Sinai, and that Mrs Lewis and Mrs Gibson were in every way well advised when they published the Lectionary in *Studia Sinaitica*.

Of course it may be many years since the MS was at the Convent; indeed it is conceivable that it never was there, but was made in Cairo for the use of the establishment that the Sinaitic community have long kept up in the capital of Egypt. The Abbot of Sinai habitually lives not on Mount Sinai but in Cairo, so that his household actually needed to use the Nile service, and it seems to me highly probable that the Palestinian Syriac community of Egypt, for whom the *Liturgy of the Nile* was drawn up, consisted of members or dependants of the Sinaitic community. In that case the *Liturgy of the Nile* is older than the ninth century, for no prayer is made in it for the Archbishop of Sinai, a dignity which the Abbot of the great Convent has enjoyed since that period with very few intermissions. However that may be, it does not affect the identity of the Lection system found in the Palestinian *Praxapostolos* and in the ancient Arabic MS at Sinai. This is probably the oldest Byzantine Table of Church Lessons of which we have any detailed information. The Kalendar found in the Palestinian Syriac MSS which have an ultimate connexion with 'Abûd is different and very much nearer to the modern Byzantine arrangement.

It should also be added that the Palestinian Lectionary and the Arabic MS at Sinai are quite different in their textual character. Both are translations from the Greek, but they have very few readings or renderings in common. Thus the preceding investigation cannot claim to throw much direct light upon the first beginnings of the Palestinian version of the Bible.

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