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His table of contents is included.

THE EARLIEST LATIN COMMENTARIES ON THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL

A STUDY

BY

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PREFACE

Dr. Hans von Soden's just published article, 'Der lateinische Paulustext bei Marcion und Tertullian', in the Festgabe für Adolf Jülicher (Tübingen, 1927), pp. 229–81. Lastly, another MS. of Sedulius Scottus (see p. 212), unknown to Traube and Hellmann, has turned up at Basle, Univ.-Bibl. ii. 5 (saec. x-xi, of the St. Gall school), and is described in Dom Morin's as yet unprinted catalogue.

Aberdeen, Scotland, 28 *Feb.* 1927.

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INTRODUCTION

THE various writings which at an early date came to be called the New Testament were composed, roughly speaking, within the period A.D. 50 to 150. The fourfold Gospel must already have attained authority among Christians before the middle of the second century, and a collection of Pauline Epistles, foreshadowed in Polycarp, is a reality in the time of the author of the Second Epistle of St. Peter; and he may have been contemporary with Marcion, whose collection is the earliest of which we know anything definite.

As in the case of the Old Testament, the Homeric poems, and other great works, authority is a necessary antecedent of commentary. People do not trouble to write, and people certainly do not trouble to read, commentaries on works which have no authority. It is therefore no surprise to find that the earliest commentaries on a part of the New Testament, of which history tells, are posterior in date to the period at which their authority had become established. About the middle of the second century commentaries on the New Testament books began to be written, at first it is true in the interests of particular sects, but later for the great body of Christians. About the end of the second century commentaries began to be written in catholic circles, of course in Greek, which was even at that time the language of the greater number of Christians. And just after that period comes Origen, whose figure dominates subsequent efforts for centuries, to a degree which may perhaps be imagined, but can never be adequately estimated thanks to the irreparable loss of the greater part of his exegetical writings.

Revolving time brought about a gradual cleavage and the final division between the two parts of the Roman

Empire. About the beginning of the fourth century there were already many Christians in the West who could not read Greek, and at the end of that century it was the exception to find persons in that part of the Empire who could. It is in this period, then, that Latin commentaries begin. The oldest extant is that of the martyr Victorinus of Poetouio (Pettau) on the Apocalypse, written about the year A.D. 300. Then come the works of Hilary of Poitiers about the middle of the fourth century. His later contemporary, Victorinus Afer, comes next, in the decade A. D. 355 to A. D. 365. He is followed by the so-called 'Ambrosiaster', A.D. 370-85. Then come Jerome, Augustine, and Pelagius. Of these Ambrosiaster and Pelagius commented on all thirteen Epistles. Of Victorinus Afer we possess commentaries on three Epistles only; Jerome wrote commentaries on four only, and Augustine on two.

It will perhaps be of some service to our study if I explain my point of view on certain subjects. I approach the investigation that is to follow as a Christian believer, yielding to none in his sense of the value of Scripture study for all. If I select the Epistles of St. Paul as that part of Scripture to which our attention is exclusively to be directed, it is because I believe these Epistles to be of all parts of Scripture the most important for the Christian faith and life of those who, like most people in Europe and the United States, are non-Jews and at the same time inheritors of the Graeco-Roman civilization. And I arrive at my belief by a process of what seems to me inexorable logic. However we explain the miracle wrought on the way to Damascus, there can be no doubt that Saul of Tarsus was directly and specially commissioned by the risen Christ, who is identical with Jesus of Nazareth, to make known His Gospel to non-Jews in the Roman Empire. The studies of my honoured teacher and predecessor in Aberdeen, Sir W. M. Ramsay, have made clear

to us the unique fitness of St. Paul for this task. He was the inheritor of the purest form of Judaism; he had been thoroughly trained in the most morally elevating of all the Greek philosophies, the Stoic; and as a Roman citizen he knew and appreciated the significance of the Roman Empire.

To the peoples he evangelized his voice was as the voice of Jesus Himself. Probably he had known Jesus in the flesh, but whether or no, he was an absolute master of Jesus' message, and was the one man who could be trusted to deliver it, in pure form, to the Gentile peoples. This he did, principally by preaching. But the preaching was supplemented by letters, as difficulties arose in his absence. These letters, while they were each written to suit a particular occasion or particular circumstances, were in great part preserved, as of superlative value not only for their original recipients, but for all who should come after. I do not hesitate to say that in my opinion they are the most valuable writings in the world.

But you may say, they were written for special contemporary circumstances, and we have outgrown them. Have we? I would ask you to consider carefully what this attitude means. A careful reading of the letters themselves shows that there are portions in them where Paul speaks explicitly κατὰ ἄνθρωπον 'as a mere human being'. What does this imply? It implies that all the rest of the Epistles are to be regarded as the words of Christ. In the first instance, no doubt, as the words of Christ to the particular groups of persons addressed. Admitting for the moment the possibility that some of the teaching is applicable only to these recipients, it is a most hazardous proceeding to seek to separate that element, and we have not yet, I think, arrived at the state of knowledge which would permit us to do so. In particular I would impress on all the importance of far more extensive archaeological work than has yet been undertaken. Every site which St. Paul visited should be thoroughly excavated, no matter the cost. Every relic, in particular every inscription, in Tarsus and elsewhere, should be preserved, copied, and studied. When this has been done, and not till then, can we say that it will be possible to detach the temporary and accidental from the permanent and essential. And it will require generations of reverent work to achieve this end.

But, you may say, are the letters authentic productions of St. Paul? To prove that I am no obscurantist, let me state the opinions at which I have arrived. I see no reason whatever to reject any of the Epistles addressed to churches, or the Epistle to Philemon. I am still as certain as I was in 1911 that the so-called Epistle to the Ephesians is not a secondary production, based mainly on the Epistle to the Colossians, as some hold. The true text of i. 15, which is the shorter form, in itself proves that Ephesians cannot depend on Colossians. That verse should be translated: 'having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus that is among you, and that is in all the saints', as it was rendered by the Bohairic translator many centuries ago. am equally certain that the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of Romans could not have been addressed to any other community than the Roman community, and that they are an authentic part of at least one form of the Epistle to the Romans. But I cannot accept the so-called pastoral Epistles, namely the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, in their present form, as productions of St. Paul, holding rather with Dr. Harrison and others that they were compiled by a later person, a Paulinist, who incorporated genuine fragments of St. Paul in them. Such is my position with regard to the critical questions involved.

But, admitting the importance of the Epistles of St. Paul as you define it, I may be asked, why do you discuss Latin commentaries instead of Greek commentaries?

Surely, I shall be told, Greek commentators, writing in the same language as that in which the Epistles are themselves written, are likely to be more valuable than Latin. I concede this point at once, and will proceed to explain why I choose the Latin. There are two reasons. As a young student of classics I devoted myself perhaps more eagerly to Greek than to Latin study. It is the way with young students of classics in England (I might say Great Britain); whether it is so in the United States, I do not know. But early in my twenty-first year I came into personal contact with one of the greatest Latin scholars of all time; I refer to Professor John E. B. Mayor, of Cambridge, whose edition of Juvenal must be as well known in the United States as it is in Great Britain. Mayor revealed to me as in a flash the vast store of unrecorded wealth in the later Latin literature, say from A. D. 150 to 750. I saw the men round me devoting themselves intensely to Greek. I saw that they were able to get the highest honours in classics by study that was almost exclusively Greek. I began to feel that their success in examinations must be due to the fact that their elders were doing the same, that in fact the same standard of difficulty was not generally aimed at in the study of both languages. I felt also that the result of this one-sidedness would be the loss of that knowledge of Latin, both comprehensive and minute, which the greatest scholars of previous generations had laboured to acquire. I there and then decided to devote such leisure from public duty as might be afforded me to the exploration of the Latin of these six centuries, in order that I might have a share, however small, in handing on the torch of Latin learning.

The literature of that period is vast, and those who know something of it will want to know why the Latin commentators on St. Paul's Epistles have come to claim my special attention. That also I can explain. I had been

reading freely in St. Augustine, recording his vocabulary and idiom, when at the end of 1898 the promoters of the great Thesaurus Linguae Latinae accepted my offer to excerpt for that work the greater part of the writings contained in the fourth and last volume of the works of St. Ambrose of Milan, the seventeenth of Migne's Patrologia Latina, which is entirely taken up with works falsely attributed to St. Ambrose. Among these is the Ambrosiaster commentary on St. Paul. A few years later I was appointed Yates Professor of New Testament Greek and Exegesis at Mansfield College, Oxford, and was privileged to devote eight years of my life to special study of the Greek New Testament. I learned something of textual criticism in those years, and began to see that the field in which I was called to labour was the field where my two greatest interests, St. Paul and Latin, converged, the earliest Latin commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul.

There is a defect of which I am deeply conscious, and that is the want of a specifically theological training. I mention this, though indeed it will be apparent enough from the treatment that is to follow. The treatment is that of a Latin scholar passionately devoted to St. Paul.

A writer who attempts to treat this subject has some right to consideration from his readers, on the ground that the field has been so little worked. In a sense everything has yet to be done. Nothing equal in importance to the work of Richard Simon has appeared since his day, that is, over two centuries ago. Victorinus, also, was inaccessible to him, his commentary having remained unprinted until its discovery (or rather rediscovery) by the indefatigable Mai in the early decades of the nineteenth century. It is true that as a guide to the theology of Victorinus we have the masterly article of Bishop Gore in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography* and other studies, but of his place in the history of exegesis I know no treatment.

Nor have we any such up-to-date and reliable guide to the history of Latin exegesis as Professor Turner has provided for that of Greek exegesis. There is doubtless a disposition in some quarters to assume that there is nothing original in Latin exegesis, that it is entirely dependent on Greek exegesis, and that it may therefore be safely neglected. I cannot call it anything else but unfair, for example, when I read in the excellent commentary of Von Dobschütz on the Thessalonian Epistles,1 'The Latins have hardly any value except in so far as they communicate to us the exegetical tradition of the Greeks', and I can only forgive the remark on account of his admission that Ambrosiaster and Pelagius have independent value. In the absence of such comprehensive treatment it is a pleasure to turn to the more modern commentators who have troubled to look into these Latin authors. It is hardly to the credit of non-episcopal communions that they have left this interest almost entirely to the Roman and Anglican communions. In the commentary of Cornelius à Lapide and other Roman Catholics on the one hand, and in such nineteenth-century commentaries as those of Lightfoot, Westcott, Sanday, Swete, Robinson, Bornemann, and Von Dobschütz on the other, we find welcome evidence of interest in the old commentaries and use of them. This present age is one that shows signs of squandering the heritage of the past, much more by neglect than by misuse, and it can never cease to be of moment to the real lover of Scripture what was thought of its meaning by any patient investigator in any country or in any age. It is the more to be regretted that an illustrious Bampton Lecturer on the History of Interpretation should have ignored the oldest Latin commentators entirely. How his hearers or contemporary readers took this I have not had leisure to inquire.