

CHAPTER I

Difference between the Earlier and the Later
History of the Vulgate Text

ON THE METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

THE history of the Vulgate text from the ninth century onwards has not hitherto been investigated at any length. The main reason for this is that textual criticism, seeking to reconstruct the original of St Jerome, has found it of no practical value and, therefore, of little interest.¹

It cannot be denied that the textual development of the Vulgate, in the period with which we propose to deal, differs essentially from that of the earlier centuries, during which traditions were clearly established. The MSS that survive could be divided into distinct families or types, each of which, at least a priori, claimed to be derived from the unknown original. Indeed, no matter what were the intermediate links, the Italian, Spanish, Irish, Gregorian, Anglo-Saxon, Northumbrian, Theodulfian, and Alcuinian texts are the final derivatives from a common source and there is always the possibility that in many places a comparatively late type, like Alcuin's edition at the beginning of the ninth century, might offer a better text than, say, MSS of the sixth century.

To explain this, we must inquire how the Vulgate spread in its early days down to the time of Alcuin and even beyond it. In another study we have endeavoured to show² that the numerous recensions to which the text was subjected in the course of its journey from Italy, to Spain,

¹ This has been demonstrated by H. Quentin, *Mémoire sur l'établissement du texte de la Vulgate*, Rome et Paris 1922 (Collectanea Biblica Latina vi), pp. 94, 97 f., 385 ff.

² H. Glunz, *Britannien und Bibeltext* (Kölner Anglistische Arbeiten xii), Leipzig 1930.

2 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EARLIER AND

Gaul, Ireland, and England were the natural results of the practical attitude adopted by those who were concerned in the propaganda. Each type was founded on a form, or forms, of text and the forms themselves were derived in a similar manner from earlier sources. The researches of French Benedictine scholars such as Dom de Bruyne and Dom Quentin¹ have gone far to make it very probable that the Vulgate reached the beginning of the ninth century in a twofold or threefold line of tradition. So the connection between St Jerome and Theodulf, Alcuin, or the Spanish ninth-century MSS is in itself a guarantee that in these later types we possess all the material necessary for a reconstruction of the original. And that is as much as textual criticism can expect from the mere MS material.²

The question may be raised, however, whether such an arrangement of the MSS, extremely useful and convenient as it is for the textual critic, will be necessarily correct from the historical point of view. It would seem that the various lines of tradition have not remained distinct from each other in the course of their development, but that they mixed at an early date, so that the greater number of the MSS are the outcome of many interpenetrations of types, that is to say, none of them actually is the pure representative of a type. The question is admittedly of minor importance for the earlier history of the Vulgate, but it has a bearing on the later period, when the intermixing has become so general that the retention of the distinction would not be justified. It has so far been customary to regard the post-Carolingian text, even one so late as the Paris text of the thirteenth century, as a mixture of separate traditions. This view carried with it the tacit assumption that the history of the Vulgate in post-Carolingian time moved in lines more or less analogous

¹ D. de Bruyne, 'Étude sur les origines de la Vulgate en Espagne' (*Revue Bénédictine* xxxi, 1919, 373 ff.); H. Quentin, *op. cit.*

² See the stemma in Quentin, *op. cit.* p. 352. Also in Glunz, *op. cit.*, an attempt has been made to outline the two separate branches of the tradition down to the ninth century.

LATER HISTORY OF VULGATE TEXT 3

to those of the earlier centuries. The vague notions which have been held as to the nature and character of the so-called *Exemplar Parisiense*, a text never properly studied, appear to be responsible for a view which has little in common with the facts. There is one fact, however, which alone should have been sufficient warning; it is that after Alcuin's revision there has never been another text to play any considerable part whatever in the Vulgate history. Alcuin's text, mixture as it is of at least two distinct textual traditions,¹ remains, in the following centuries, the only genuine type, and the only link with Jerome which supports the claim of the Paris text to be called a derivative of the Vulgate. It furnishes an illustration of what Professor Allgeier says of textual development in general²—that in the history of a text a point will invariably be reached at which the increase of the number of variant readings comes to a standstill. This is the case when the various types have attained their full growth and, for one reason or another, one of them becomes predominant and in the end remains supreme. And, from the ninth century onwards, this is the position of the Alcuinian text.

But if this is the situation shortly after A.D. 800, what, it might reasonably be asked, constitutes the further history of the Vulgate? The answer must take account of the fact that the history of a text differs essentially from those constructions which are intended to guide textual criticism. From the point of view of the latter the Alcuinian recension is indeed the last type to be taken account of in the enucleation of Jerome's original; to the critic of the text the true tradition comes to an end in the ninth century.³ To the historian, however, the critical annotations in the edition of Wordsworth and White are sufficient proof to

¹ See Glunz, *op. cit.* p. 129 ff.; and below, chap. II. De Bruyne, *op. cit.* p. 393. In Quentin's analysis of the Alcuinian text this important fact does not come into consideration at all. There Alcuin's revision appears as a representative of the pure Amiatine tradition.

² A. Allgeier, *Die altlateinischen Psalterien*, Freiburg i. B. 1928, p. 55 f.

³ Glunz, *op. cit.* p. 175.

4 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EARLIER AND

make him realise that the text does more than simply retain such readings as existed in the century after Charlemagne. New variants appear on the scene, to which Wordsworth's W and vg witness, and of which not a trace is to be found in the MSS up to the Emperor's time. These variants seem to indicate that there were forces at work tending towards a further development of the one text as distinct from the earlier types. In the ninth century the point is reached where the various chains of tradition which lead back to St Jerome cease to grow, because the forces to which they owed their origin are being superseded by something else. No longer is the spirit of practical activity, which first carried the Vulgate to the various parts of newly converted Europe, the inspiring power required for the preaching and transcribing of the gospel and, in many cases, the altering of the text. It is now a question of finding, in the words of Professor Allgeier, the intrinsic principle which in the future will be responsible for any textual changes that might occur. We shall see in due course how a theoretical principle becomes closely associated with almost all the uses to which the text of the Bible was generally put in the post-Carolingian period. In order to understand clearly the textual history of that period the historian who approaches it from a study of the preceding period is faced with the necessity of altering his point of view. He will find himself constrained to abandon all considerations as to the usefulness and value of the results for the criticism and reconstruction of the text. The principle underlying the new readings in the text merely serves to explain these, and it is this principle on which the attention of the historian will have to be concentrated.

LATER HISTORY OF VULGATE TEXT 5

EFFECT OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS ON THE
EARLY TRADITION OF THE VULGATE

Before attempting the main problem it may seem advisable to enter somewhat more deeply into the nature of the forces to which the shaping of the Vulgate text was due before the period under consideration. Was there in the interval between the fifth and the ninth century but one single theoretical principle which could have influenced the character of the text? We have endeavoured to show in a previous study that this was not the case, that on the contrary there were only the practical needs of the moment and of the society or the individual in whose activities the Bible played a part, which could at all impress on the text a certain typical stamp. The reason for this is found in the fact that in the first centuries after St Jerome's work the character of Christianity was essentially dynamic, active, and practical. The missionary monks, who first carried the Latin version of the Bible into the parts they were about to christianize, as well as the scholars, who undertook the correcting or the collecting of the version of St Jerome in the form of an edition, were the authors of what we call to-day groups or types of the text, and there is a close connection between the spirituality and the intention that lay at the bottom of their zeal, and the influence they exercised upon the Latin text of the Bible. It certainly is not mere speculation to say that the spirit which drove the early missionaries to foreign and dangerous parts was in full conformity with those ethical precepts of practical activity by which it was made the duty of the individual Christian at every moment and in all situations to act up to the Christian principles by a definite decision of the will. According to the ethical ideas of St Augustine¹ (who was the greatest spiritual power in the Church for

¹ On the important part which Augustinian ideas played throughout the Middle Ages, cf. M. Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Methode* i, Freiburg i. B. 1909, 126 ff., 135.

6 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EARLIER AND

centuries after his death), the Church was hardly anything more than the spiritual ground within the folds of which the individual member participated in divine grace, that is to say, he was given freedom of decision; he could convert the possibility to act either way, for or against God, to his positive spiritual gain or his actual spiritual detriment. God has given equal chances to all Christians, it lies with them to prove their being children of God, or of the devil, by making good use of their chances, or by rejecting them. This equality of chances is, with St Augustine, an essential characteristic of the Church:

God has given worldly goods both to the good and to the evil, lest his followers who are not yet far advanced in the spirit should covet them as something great; and this is the sacrament of the Old Testament, in which the New lies concealed, that there promise is made of worldly goods to those eager for the spirit, though not yet able to manifest it. The temporal gifts of those times signify the eternal life; in these gifts of God the true bliss was to consist.¹

But the happiness and bliss of the Christian is a mere possibility which, if it is to become reality, must receive substance through the actions of the individual. It is a question of choice between two sides in a given opportunity which decides whether the Christian will attain to that felicity or not. So Augustine says of Christian princes that it is not a sign of their having found favour with God, if they enjoy such wealth and power as they have been endowed with; if, it may be, they reign longer than a pagan prince, if they leave the realm to their sons and die in peace, if they succeed in vanquishing their enemies or keeping order at home;

but we call them blessed by God (*felices*) if they govern in justice; if the words of those who extol them or the obsequious manners of humble petitioners do not make them proud, but make them mindful of being human; if they make their power the servant of God's majesty by propagating the worship of Him; if they fear, love, and worship God; if they take vengeance

¹ *De civitate Dei*, lib. iv, c. 33 (Migne xli 139 f.).

LATER HISTORY OF VULGATE TEXT 7

only as necessary for the governing and protecting of the State, not in order to satiate their hatred of the enemy; if they dismiss a criminal not because they would foster iniquity, but because there is hope for his conversion; if when compelled to act severely they make up by an act of lenient mercy and beneficent liberality; if they check lust the more, the easier it is to be licentious; if they would sooner govern bad inclinations than subjects of any kind; and if they do all this not for the sake of vainglory, but for the love of eternal bliss, and if they do not omit to make a sacrifice of humility, repentance and prayer to God for their sins.¹

The law of the gospel is, therefore, not to recoil from an opportunity which offers itself to the Christian for proving his loyalty to the party of God by a decision forced upon him in a given situation. It is important to notice in this ethical precept the absence of all considerations as to the end or purpose of a moral act. No definite aim is set forward towards which the act might be directed; implications or definitions of goodness, piety and other virtues as inherent in some end to be achieved by the act are entirely wanting. The place of a narrowly limited or defined end of action is taken by an infinite series of historical events, sent and predestined by God in the course of time with the express purpose of offering to his children opportunities to prove their loyalty, i.e. to act morally, or to fail to do so. History in the broader sense of the word, especially the history of Christianity, appeared to Augustine as a mere series of events in the encountering of which the citizens of the City of God succeeded, or failed, in manifesting their allegiance to the standard of Christian ethics: the adherents of God practised the Christian principle, whereas their antagonists were drawn yet further into their ignorant and blind strife against the principle of all good, the *Summum Bonum*. So the historical theory is largely bound up with the system of ethics. The human will is free from restrictions which a predisposed end-in-view might exercise

¹ *Ib.* lib. v, c. 24 (*ib.* col. 170 f.).

8 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EARLIER AND

upon the action itself.¹ The members of the Celestial City live a moral and Christian life by constantly attending to and obeying the call of God in all situations in which they may be called upon to act. The Christian in all daily emergencies requiring a definite action on his part decides the turn of his action in conformity to the will of God; he meets each situation with the best of his mental and intellectual capabilities and then adopts suitable means to direct it so as to make it agree with what he takes to be the divine will:

Man is gifted with a rational soul, and therefore he subordinates all he has in common with animals to the peace of his soul, so that he may contemplate a situation and act accordingly. Then there will be that perfect agreement between intellect and action which we have called the peace of the rational soul. In order to attain to that cognisance of the useful, and accordingly to arrange his life and habit of acting, he must not heed sorrow nor be guided by desire or frightened by death. But lest through the weakness of the human mind in the very examining of a situation he fall into some error, he must needs have divine advice that he may obey with equanimity, and divine help that he may obey with freedom. And because during this mortal life he is separated from God, he must walk in the faith and so ordain all peace of mind or body to that peace which is between mortal man and immortal God, so that his obedience be to the eternal law, in the faith.²

These words might have been said of any of the missionary monks to whom we owe the early propagation of the Vulgate in Europe. They contain the two principal elements for which their activity was conspicuous, the belief that divine inspiration and the will of God overshadowed their work, and the conviction that they had to make full use of their insight into the conditions, requirements, and possibilities of a given situation.

Nor is St Augustine the only one to stress these points, especially the latter. They form part of early Christian ethics and can frequently be found in the reflections of

¹ Cf. *De civitate Dei*, lib. xix, c. 15 (*ib.* col. 643).

² *Ib.* lib. xix, c. 14 (*ib.* col. 642).

LATER HISTORY OF VULGATE TEXT 9

historians on the course of history. Their common view is that history has no extrinsic end or purpose, but offers merely opportunities, to the righteous for making good use of the possibilities and facts resulting from a certain constellation of events, to the iniquitous for acting in the contrary way. The *Historiarum Libri Septem* of Orosius, a pupil of St Augustine, was the early medieval authority on questions of general history, and there we find Orosius expressing the view that the variety of historical events tends to disclose the existence of God inasmuch as these witness to the fact that the Christian participants in them have individually realised the peace of which Augustine is speaking ('Pax hominis mortalis et Dei: ordinata in fide sub aeterna lege obedientia', *De Civ. Dei* xix 13). This peace they achieve by an act of the will that decides to assist the cause of God, and by prudent and intelligent action on behalf of that cause. By making use in his action of all expedients at his disposal man is acting as morally as he can do, and his reward is the peace of God: 'From the outset mankind was created and established that under the rule of religion they might live in peace and without labour, and as the reward of obedience earn eternal life' (*Hist.* vii 1). History according to Orosius does not enumerate results achieved, it pays regard only to the force whereby a certain turn of events came about. The force is either a motive of the children of God or of those of the World.¹ As to the result Orosius states the barren

¹ *Historiarum*, lib. vii, c. 1 (Migne xxxi 1059): 'Sufficiencia, ut arbitror, documenta collecta sunt, quibus absque ullo arcano, quod paucorum fidelium est, probari de medio queat, unum illum et verum Deum, quem Christiana fides praedicat, et condidisse mundum creaturamque eius cum voluit, et disposuisse per multa, cum per multa ignoraretur, et confirmasse ad unum, cum per unicum declaratus est, simulque potentiam patientiamque eius multimodis argumentis eluxisse. In quo quidem angustas deiectasque mentes offendi paulisper intelligo, quod tantae potentiae patientia tanta miscetur. Si enim potens erat, inquit, creare mundum, componere pacem mundi, insinuare mundo cultum ac notitiam sui, quid opus fuit tanta vel (ut ipsi sentiunt) tam perniciose patientia, ut in ultimo erroribus, cladibus, laboribusque hominum fieret, quod a principio virtute eius quem praedicat Dei, sic potius coepisse potuisset? Quibus quidem veraciter respondere

10 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EARLIER AND

fact, there is no predetermined aim in it. He is far from trying to make the series of historical issues into a chain of evidence for the providence of God, in order to prove that throughout the troubles, dangers, fears, and entanglements of history God has constantly awarded ultimate success to the faithful. It was left to Bossuet to work out so injudicious a theory. To Orosius history merely points out the moral and religious standards of the actors on either side. It is a touchstone which, through the manner in which the individual decides to act for or against God, reveals the moral value of the individual and so gives the reader a lesson to act likewise, for God's reward is great. Historical events merely happen, accidentally and by chance, and it is not their results in which Orosius is interested, but the way the events received a definite turn and determination at the hands of those who had to take action in connection with them. The celestial citizen can convert any event to a definite gain, if only at the right moment he sides with the right party. These ideas are common to all Christian historians of the early days, however they may differ in subject or treatment; historical events retain their character of something unique and accidental, of something infinitely variable. History is a fight between the armies of God and those of the devil: 'I will write down the wars of the kings against hostile tribes, of the martyrs against the pagans, of the Churches against the heretics, and therefore I will first make a confession of faith, that the reader may not doubt my being a *catholicus*',¹ so Gregory of Tours says in a significant possem, ad hoc ab initio creatum et institutum humanum genus, ut sub religione cum pace sine labore vivens, fructu obedientiae aeternitatem promereretur: sed abusus bonitate creatoris, libertatem indulgentis in contumacem vertisse licentiam, atque ex contemptu in oblivionem deflexisse, iustamque nunc esse patientiam Dei, et iustam in utramque partem, ut nec contemptus disperdat in totum, cui misereri velit; et affici laboribus, dum velit, sinat contemptus potens. Deinde subsequens esse, iuste semper adhibere quamvis ignoranti gubernationem, cui aliquando pie restiturus sit poenitenti antiquae gratiae facultatem. Sed haec, etsi verissime fortissimeque dicuntur, fidelem tamen atque obedientem requirunt'.

¹ *Hist. eccles. Francorum* i, Prol. (Migne lxxi 161).