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0521330890 - Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian - Edited by Bernhard Bischoff and Michael Lapidge

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## 1

## Introduction

The present volume brings into print for the first time a set of biblical commentaries on the Pentateuch and gospels which are preserved in their fullest form in an eleventh-century Italian manuscript now in Milan (Biblioteca Ambrosiana, M. 79 sup.), but of which extracts are preserved in a number of earlier manuscripts. One of these, a fragmentary manuscript now in Berlin (Staatsbibliothek der Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Grimm 132, 2), of mid-eighth-century date, provides the absolute *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the commentaries; on the other hand, the fact that Isidore's *Etymologiae* are several times quoted verbatim in the commentaries shows that they were composed after *c.* 650, the approximate earliest time at which this work of Isidore (d. 636) was in circulation.<sup>1</sup> The commentaries were composed, therefore, broadly between the mid-seventh and mid-eighth century. That they were composed in Anglo-Saxon England is clear not only from the various Old English words embedded in them,<sup>2</sup> but also from the fact that biblical references to weights and measures are frequently explained in terms of Anglo-Saxon coinage.<sup>3</sup> Most importantly, Theodore and Hadrian are often cited *nominatim* as authorities for particular interpretations,<sup>4</sup> and the conjunction of these names in the context of a work composed in Anglo-Saxon England between *c.* 650 and *c.* 750 suggests that the authorities in

<sup>1</sup> See Bischoff, *MS I*, 171–94 ('Die europäische Verbreitung der Werke Isidors von Sevilla') and Lapidge, 'An Isidorian Epitome', pp. 443–5. For quotations of Isidore's *Etymologiae*, see esp. PentI 295, Gn-Ex-EvIa 9 and discussion below, pp. 204–5.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 588 ('Index of Old English Words quoted in the Texts').

<sup>3</sup> See especially PentI 139, 143, 194 and 455, and EvII 5.

<sup>4</sup> For Hadrian, see Sg 30 and Br 12; for Theodore, see PentI 115 and Wb1 13 as well as the rubric to Wb1 ('Haec Theodorus tradedit').

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question are none other than Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury (d. 690) and his companion Hadrian (d. 709), abbot of the monastery of SS Peter and Paul (later St Augustine's) in Canterbury. The biblical commentaries, in other words, are the product of the famous school at Canterbury, of whose existence and renown we know from the account in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*:

Et quia litteris sacris simul et saecularibus, ut diximus, abundanter ambo [*scil.* Theodore and Hadrian] erant instructi, congregata discipulorum caterua scientiae salutaris cotidie flumina inrigandis eorum cordibus emanabant, ita ut etiam metricae artis, astronomiae et arithmeticae ecclesiasticae disciplinam inter sacrarum apicum uolumina suis auditoribus contraderent. Indicio est quod usque hodie supersunt de eorum discipulis, qui Latinam Graecamque linguam aequae ut propriam in qua nati sunt norunt. Neque unquam prorsus, ex quo Britanniam petierunt Angli, feliciora fuere tempora.<sup>5</sup>

It has not hitherto been possible to adjudicate or corroborate Bede's warm appraisal of this Canterbury school, for the reason that we have had no substantial body of writings by Theodore and Hadrian, and the 'crowd' of English students – with the problematic exception of Aldhelm<sup>6</sup> – has left no writings either. Earlier scholarly treatments of the school have therefore been obliged to resort to speculation in the attempt to adjudicate Bede's account.<sup>7</sup> The biblical commentaries provide us for the first time with a window on the Canterbury school,<sup>8</sup> and give us a brilliantly clear

<sup>5</sup> HE IV.2: 'And because both of them, as I have said, were thoroughly trained in sacred and profane literature, a crowd of students assembled around them, into whose minds they daily poured rivers of wholesome learning, such that they gave their audience instruction in metrics, astronomy and computus, as well as in books of the Bible. A proof of this is the fact that some of their students are still alive who know Greek and Latin as well as their native English. Never were there happier times since the English first came to Britain.'

<sup>6</sup> Aldhelm is problematic because he seems to have spent a relatively short period of time (two years?) at Canterbury in the school of Theodore and Hadrian (see *Aldhelm: the Prose Works*, trans. Lapidge and Herren, p. 8). There is no doubt that he did study with the two Mediterranean masters – indeed he praises their instruction enthusiastically (see below, p. 268) – but one must exercise care in assuming that the knowledge of any book which Aldhelm quotes was necessarily acquired at their Canterbury school.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, P. Riché, *Education et culture dans l'Occident barbare, VIe–VIIIe siècles*, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1962), pp. 419–22, and V.R. Stallbaumer, 'The Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian', *American Benedictine Review* 22 (1971), 46–63.

<sup>8</sup> A preliminary study, drawing on the evidence of the biblical commentaries and glossaries compiled at Canterbury, is Lapidge, 'The School of Theodore and Hadrian'.

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picture of the immense range of learning which the two Mediterranean masters brought to bear in interpreting the Pentateuch and gospels for their 'crowd' of English students. We will have occasion to discuss the range of learning embodied in the commentaries in due course; but the commentaries also contain many incidental details which throw light on the careers and training of their authors, and which permit a much clearer estimation of both Theodore and Hadrian than has hitherto been possible. It will be appropriate to begin, therefore, with the careers and training of Theodore and Hadrian.

However, if we are properly to appreciate the impact which these two exceptional men had on late seventh-century English learning, it is necessary to approach their achievement not only from an English point of view, but also from the perspective of the Mediterranean culture which nurtured them. Although by the earlier seventh century, during the youth of Theodore and Hadrian, the Roman empire – with its two focal points at Rome and Constantinople – no longer enjoyed the wealth and untroubled prosperity of earlier centuries, and although it was to undergo a profound transformation during the course of the seventh century, there is no doubt that the opulence of its cities, and particularly of its Christian churches, would have dazzled a visitor from faraway England. The implied contrast can be grasped immediately by anyone who has stood in Hagia Sophia in Constantinople or Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome – two of the largest and most opulent churches in Christendom, then as now – and also in (say) the modest little Anglo-Saxon church at Escomb, which dates approximately from this period. The literary culture of the Mediterranean was no less opulent: the riches of centuries-old traditions were preserved in books and libraries, in Greek and Latin, and transmitted by teachers in universities and monasteries. In late seventh-century England, by contrast, there was no literary tradition, no books, no libraries, no teachers. The contrast should always be borne in mind by anyone studying the Canterbury biblical commentaries.

In attempting to reconstruct the careers of Theodore and Hadrian in the following chapters, therefore, we have tried to do more than provide a mere list of the facts which are known or can be deduced about them. Rather, we have attempted where possible to recreate the Mediterranean contexts in which they grew up and received their early education: in a word, to assemble any evidence which might help to illuminate the background and training of these two extraordinary men. The undertaking

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is both worthwhile and necessary, for it is clear – as the biblical commentaries attest – that their presence in Canterbury represented one of the most brilliant moments in European scholarship between the fall of Rome and the rise of the universities.

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## 2

## Archbishop Theodore

Most of what we have known hitherto concerning Archbishop Theodore is derived from Bede.<sup>1</sup> Bede's information may be summarized briefly as follows. Theodore died, as archbishop of Canterbury, on 19 September 690, at the age of 88.<sup>2</sup> He must accordingly have been born in 602. He was a native of Tarsus in Cilicia; he was well trained in secular and divine literature, both Greek and Latin; he was a monk after the eastern fashion who was living in Rome at the time the Englishman Wigheard arrived there to seek consecration as archbishop of Canterbury. But after Wigheard's sudden death in Rome from the plague (probably in 667), Pope Vitalian (657–72) resolved, after some negotiation, to consecrate Theodore to this archbishopric. Theodore was duly consecrated on 26 March 668. In company with Hadrian (on whom see below, ch. 3) and an Englishman then resident in Rome named Benedict Biscop, Theodore set off for England on 27 May 668; he arrived at the church of Canterbury a year later, on 27 May 669, to begin his archiepiscopacy. He will then have been 67 years old.

It will be seen that most of Bede's (meagre) information pertains to the latter part of Theodore's career, from his appointment by Pope Vitalian onwards, when he was already 66 years old. Concerning his earlier career

<sup>1</sup> *HE* IV.1–2 and V.8 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 328–34 and 472–4). Notable earlier studies (which are, however, based almost wholly on Bede's report concerning Theodore) include: G.F. Browne, *Theodore and Wilfrith* (London, 1897), esp. pp. 81–99 and 175–84; Cook, 'Theodore of Tarsus and Gisenus of Athens'; M. Deanesly, *The Pre-Conquest Church in England*, 2nd ed. (London, 1963), pp. 104–59; W.F. Bolton, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature I: 597–740* (Princeton, NJ, 1967), pp. 58–62; and Brooks, *The Early History of the Church at Canterbury*, pp. 71–6 and 94–8.

<sup>2</sup> *HE* V.8 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 472–4).

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Bede is silent. However, it is now possible, with the assistance of the present Canterbury biblical commentaries, to reconstruct something of the background and circumstances in which Theodore was educated before his election. Let us begin at Tarsus in Cilicia, where Theodore was born in 602.

## TARSUS

At the time of Theodore's birth in 602, Tarsus was one of the principal cities in the eastern province of Cilicia (see fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> The Byzantine empire, which then had its seat of government in Constantinople, had inherited the political and geographical structure of the earlier Roman empire (the Byzantines were still referred to as Ῥωμαῖοι or *Romaioi*), and Cilicia had been an important diocese of the eastern Roman empire.<sup>4</sup> That it retained its importance into the sixth and early seventh centuries is clear from the substantial number of churches which have been identified and excavated,<sup>5</sup> many of them possessing splendid mosaics.<sup>6</sup> In geographical terms Cilicia consisted of two regions: a fertile coastal plain enclosed by a ring of mountains and watered by three major mountain-fed rivers, called 'Cilicia of the Plain' (*Cilicia Pedias* in Greek or *Campestris* in Latin), and a nearly impenetrable mountainous interior, the Taurus range, called 'Rough Cilicia' (*Cilicia Tracheia*). 'Rough Cilicia',<sup>7</sup> because of its very inaccessibility, has been very little studied until quite recently, but its topography<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> On Cilicia, see Ramsay, *The Historical Geography*, pp. 383–7, W. Ruge, 'Kilikia', *RE* XXI (1921), 385–90, *ODB* I, 462–3, as well as H. Hellenkemper and F. Hild, *Neue Forschungen in Kilikien* (Vienna, 1986). The principal topographical study of the diocese is now Hild, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini V: Kilikien und Isaurien*; on the geography, see esp. pp. 22–9.

<sup>4</sup> Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* I, 270–7, Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, pp. 191–214, and Hild, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini V: Kilikien und Isaurien*, pp. 30–43.

<sup>5</sup> See Hild, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini V: Kilikien und Isaurien*, pp. 85–91, as well as F. Hild *et al.*, 'Kommagene-Kilikien-Isaurien', *RBK* IV (1989), 182–356, esp. 194–227, on the early Byzantine churches of Cilicia; see also M.R.E. Gough, 'The Emperor Zeno and some Cilician Churches', *Anatolian Studies* 22 (1972), 190–212, as well as *EEC* I, 175.

<sup>6</sup> L. Budde, *Antike Mosaiken in Kilikien*, 2 vols. (Recklinghausen, 1969–72).

<sup>7</sup> There is a useful historical survey by T.B. Mitford, 'Roman Rough Cilicia', *ANRW* II (Principat) 7.2 (1980), 1230–57.

<sup>8</sup> See G. Bean and T.B. Mitford, *Journeys in Rough Cilicia in 1962 and 1963*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse, Denkschriften 85 (Vienna,

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and early Christian churches<sup>9</sup> are now coming to light. More relevant to Theodore, however, is the situation of 'Cilicia of the Plain' which, because of its fertility and geographical position, was a very wealthy diocese. Cilicia was intersected by a network of Roman roads which, in addition to their importance for military and administrative purposes,<sup>10</sup> also served as trade routes between East and West. 'Cilicia of the Plain' lay on one of the principal trade routes of the ancient world, a land route that passed from Syria and the east along the Cilician coastal plain, then inland and northwards through the Taurus Mountains by way of a pass called the 'Cilician Gates', a mountain defile said to be so narrow that a loaded camel could scarcely pass through.<sup>11</sup> This geographical position made Cilicia an important focal point for conflicts between eastern and western empires, and these conflicts form the background to Theodore's childhood in Tarsus.

In the late sixth century Byzantium was under intense pressure on two fronts: from the north, by Avars and Slavs crossing the Danube to settle in what is now Romania and Bulgaria; and from the south and east, by the imperial and military pretensions of the Persians.<sup>12</sup> Byzantium's survival

1965); *idem*, *Journeys in Rough Cilicia 1964–1968*, *ibid.* 102 (Vienna, 1970), as well as the important work by F. Hild cited above, n. 3.

<sup>9</sup> S. Guyer and E. Herzfeld, *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua II* (Manchester, 1930), on the churches of Meriamlik and Corycus, and J. Keil and A.U. Wilhelm, *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua III* (Manchester, 1931).

<sup>10</sup> See J.G.C. Anderson, 'The Road-System of Eastern Asia Minor with the Evidence of Byzantine Campaigns', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 17 (1897), 22–44, with pl. I, and, more recently, D.H. French, 'The Roman Road System of Asia Minor', *ANRW II* (Principat) 7.2 (1980), 698–729, and Hild, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini V: Kilikien und Isaurien*, pp. 128–40.

<sup>11</sup> See W.M. Ramsay, 'Cilicia, Tarsus and the Great Taurus Pass', *The Geographical Journal* 22 (July–December 1903), 357–413 (with photographs); and, more recently, F. Hild, *Das byzantinische Strassensystem in Kappadokien*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse, Denkschriften 131 (Vienna, 1977), 51–9 with pls. 24–7 illustrating the Cilician Gates; *Tabula Imperii Byzantini II: Kappadokien*, ed. F. Hild and M. Restle, *ibid.* 149 (Vienna, 1981), 223–4 and 261–4, as well as *ODB I*, 464.

<sup>12</sup> For general historical accounts of these circumstances, see Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates*, pp. 73–103; Stratos, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, trans. Ogilvie-Grant I, 57–131; Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom*, pp. 186–204; Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, pp. 41–8; and Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian*, pp. 55–191 (on the Balkan wars) and 195–308 (on the Persian wars). For the campaigns of Heraclius, see Pernice, *L'imperatore Eraclio* (an excellent study of the

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depended on its ability successfully to deal with these two hostile threats. The emperor Maurice (582–602) made an attempt to stabilize the situation by concluding in 591 a peace treaty between Byzantium and the Persian emperor, Chosroes II (590–628).<sup>13</sup> But the treaty was not to last. Discontent in the Byzantine army led to the murder of Maurice in 602, and the half-barbarian soldier Phocas (602–10) was raised to the throne in the year Theodore was born. But Phocas was incompetent to deal with the empire's economic and military difficulties, and after several years a senatorial coup led to the installation of the young emperor Heraclius (610–41). Heraclius was to be one of the greatest of all Byzantine emperors, but his greatness was forged under extraordinary pressure. Early in his reign Persian armies under Chosroes II advanced into Syria and Palestine, with the result that Antioch was taken in 613, followed by Damascus and Jerusalem in 614. The Persian armies sacked Jerusalem, causing much destruction of Christian churches; in particular they enraged all Christendom by confiscating the relic of the True Cross from the church of the Holy Sepulchre. After taking Antioch some Persian armies had advanced northwards as far as Tarsus, which was duly taken; further northward advance was halted only by the difficulty of penetrating the Taurus Mountains by way of the aforementioned Cilician Gates.

When Tarsus was occupied by the Persian armies, the young Theodore will have been 11 or 12 years old. Assuming that he and his family were still resident there, and had not fled in the face of the Persian advance, they will inevitably have had some first-hand experience of Persian culture. At two points in the Canterbury biblical commentaries there are observations which probably reflect this experience: at PentI 206, it is said that the Persians, like the Byzantine Greeks, kept as eunuchs only those who had been castrated; and at PentI 303, commenting on the *scyphos* or 'cups' of Exodus XXV.31, we are told that the cups in question are 'not round like a saucer, but long and angular; the Persians still use them for drinking at feasts'. Unfortunately, we can scarcely imagine the circumstances in which

primary sources which, however, needs to be updated by reference to more recent scholarship).

<sup>13</sup> On Chosroes II (Persian Khusrau) and his campaigns against Byzantium, see A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen, 1944), pp. 444–9; R.N. Frye, 'The Political History of Iran under the Sasanians', in *The Cambridge History of Iran III*, ed. Yarshater I, 116–80, at 165–70; *idem*, *The History of Ancient Iran* (Munich, 1984), pp. 335–7; and (briefly) *ODB* I, 432.



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the young Theodore watched Persians drinking at a feast; but we need not doubt that the conflict between the Byzantine and Persian empires was a formative influence on his early life.

The years following the occupation of Antioch and Tarsus witnessed an extended and difficult campaign by Heraclius to recover Syria and the Holy Land; that the campaign was successful in the end was due to the full mobilization of Byzantine resources, both human and financial. Eventually Heraclius's armies comprehensively defeated Chosroes and the Persians near Nineveh in 627. Persian military might was to play no further role in the Near East; but by the time it had achieved its victory, Byzantium was totally exhausted, a situation which was to have dire consequences when in the following years it had to face a new and even more ferocious aggressor, as we shall soon see.

At the same time as the Byzantine empire was under threat of invasion by external enemies, the stability of its church was threatened from within by religious dissension of many kinds. The dissension was doctrinal in origin and turned on the interpretation of such fundamental issues as the nature of Christ, Who, although divine in nature was nevertheless human in so far as He was born of a human mother. In what sense(s) could Christ be said to be both divine and human? Did He have one nature or two? These Christological questions, which came to the fore as a result of the Council of Nicaea and the Arian controversy which followed it, occupied the most brilliant Greek theologians for centuries, and gave rise to virulent debates and violent condemnations.<sup>14</sup> And the debates were not only of interest to effete theologians, but also to the Christian populace at large, since their very salvation could be seen to depend on a proper understanding of the nature of Christ.<sup>15</sup> One of the most virulent debates was provoked by Nestorius (c. 381 – c. 451),<sup>16</sup> a powerful orator of Syrian origin who was sometime patriarch of Constantinople (428–31) and had formerly studied at Antioch, possibly with Theodore of Mopsuestia (on whom see below).<sup>17</sup> Nestorius apparently drew a sharp distinction

<sup>14</sup> There is clear and helpful guidance on these christological dissensions in Chadwick, *The Early Church*, pp. 192–212, and Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, pp. 178–289.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, pp. xi–xii.

<sup>16</sup> On Nestorius, see *DTC* XI (1931), 76–157, *ODB* II, 1460 and *EEC* II, 594.

<sup>17</sup> On the unmistakably Antiochene orientation of Nestorius's Christology, see R.A. Greer, 'The Antiochene Christology of Diodore of Tarsus', *JTS* n.s. 17 (1966), 327–41, and Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, esp. pp. 236–9.

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between the two natures of Christ in order to emphasize the transcendence of the divine nature (as against orthodox theologians, who argued that Christ was at once God and man, the union being expressed by their term *benosis*, 'unity'); he consequently rejected the use by orthodox theologians of the term *theotokos* ('God-bearing') to describe the Virgin Mary and substituted the term *Christotokos* ('Christ-bearing').<sup>18</sup> Opposition to Nestorius's views was led by Cyril, the powerful and unscrupulous patriarch of Alexandria, who at the Council of Ephesus in 431 succeeded in having Nestorius condemned and driven into exile,<sup>19</sup> first to Antioch, then subsequently to the Egyptian desert. Although Nestorius later issued an *apologia*, his 'Bazaar of Heraclides',<sup>20</sup> he ceased after the Council of Ephesus to be a central player in theological debate; but his supporters, particularly Syrian bishops, refused to endorse the condemnation and eventually constituted a separate church,<sup>21</sup> first centred in Edessa, then subsequently (after 489) in Nisibis,<sup>22</sup> whence it spread eastwards, first to Persia and then ultimately to India and China. The Nestorian church still exists and today numbers some 100,000 members, known as 'Assyrian Christians'.<sup>23</sup>

The Council of Ephesus in 431 promulgated twelve *anathemata* or condemnations of the doctrine of Nestorius, and these *anathemata* led in turn to further dissension. During the 440s Eutyches of Constantinople and Diocorus of Alexandria elaborated Cyril of Alexandria's emphasis on

<sup>18</sup> See F. Loofs, *Nestorius and his Place in the History of Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge, 1914); Sellers, *Two Ancient Christologies*, pp. 107–201; H. Chadwick, 'Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy', *JTS* n.s. 2 (1951), 145–64; M.V. Anastos, 'Nestorius was Orthodox', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962), 117–40; H.E.W. Turner, 'Nestorius Reconsidered', *Studia Patristica* 13 (1975), 306–21; and the sympathetic account in Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, pp. 229–40.

<sup>19</sup> See Young, *ibid.*, pp. 213–29 and 255–8.

<sup>20</sup> See G.R. Driver and L. Hodgson, *The Bazaar of Heraclides* (Oxford, 1925), and R.C. Chesnut, 'The Two *prosopa* in Nestorius' *Bazaar of Heraclides*', *JTS* n.s. 29 (1978), 382–409.

<sup>21</sup> See *DTC* XI (1931), 157–323 and *ODB* II, 1459–60, as well as A. Ziegenaus, 'Die Genesis des Nestorianismus', *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift* 23 (1972), 335–53, and esp. R. Macina, 'L'homme à l'école de Dieu: d'Antioche à Nisibe, profile herméneutique, théologique et kérygmaticque du mouvement scoliaste nestorien', *Proche-Orient chrétien* 32 (1982), 86–124 and 266–301, and 33 (1983), 39–103.

<sup>22</sup> On the date of the establishment of the independent Nestorian church, see W.F. Macomber, 'The Christology of the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, A.D. 486', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 24 (1958), 142–54.

<sup>23</sup> Nichols, *Rome and the Eastern Churches*, pp. 27–52.