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978-1-108-04317-5 - A Tract of Plutarch on the Advantage to be Derived from One's Enemies: The Syriac Version

Edited by Eberhard Nestle

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A Tract of Plutarch on the Advantage to Be Derived from One's Enemies

Eberhard Nestle (1851–1913) was a German biblical scholar and theologian who studied at the University of Tübingen before teaching in London and across Germany. A talented linguist and textual critic, he published a grammar of Syriac and several editions of ancient manuscripts including the New Testament in Greek. This work, originally published in 1894 as part of the *Studia Sinaitica* series, is the text in Syriac of a treatise by Plutarch on human virtue found in a manuscript in the library of the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai. Nestle believed the text dated from the late sixth century and suggested that it was translated into Syriac from Greek by a Christian scholar who adapted it for a Christian audience. This text will be of great interest both to Syriac scholars and to those interested in the comparison of Greek philosophy and Christian theology.

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STUDIA SINAITICA No. IV.

A TRACT

OF

PLUTARCH

ON THE ADVANTAGE TO BE DERIVED
FROM ONE'S ENEMIES

(DE CAPIENDA EX INIMICIS UTILITATE)

THE SYRIAC VERSION

EDITED FROM A MS. ON MOUNT SINAI

WITH A TRANSLATION AND CRITICAL NOTES

BY

EBERHARD NESTLE, PH.D., TH.LIC.

LONDON :

C. J. CLAY AND SONS,

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS WAREHOUSE
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1894

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PREFACE.

THE same Syriac manuscript of the Sinaitic Convent (No. 16), which has preserved for us the version of the *Apology of Aristides*, contains also the Syriac translation of *three moral tracts of Plutarch*. Two of them have already been printed in Syriac by *de Lagarde* in his *Analecta Syriaca*; the lost one *de exercitatione*, which has been translated by *Gildemeister* and *Bücheler* (*Rheinisches Museum*, 1872, vol. 27), and *περὶ ἀοργησίας*, on which *V. Ryssel* may be compared (*über den textkritischen Werth der syrischen Uebersetzungen griechischer Klassiker*, II. Theil, Leipzig, 1881, p. 55, 56). The present one does not seem to be found in any of the Syriac MSS. of our European libraries. It stands in the Sinaitic MS. immediately after the *Apology of Aristides*, before the tract *περὶ ἀσκήσεως*; it occupies there the fol. 105*a* to 112*a*. For the description of the MS., which is believed to be of the seventh or according to Prof. Sachau of the second part of the sixth century, see the edition of *Aristides* by *J. Rendel Harris* and *J. Armitage Robinson* (*Texts and Studies*, Cambridge, Vol. I. No. 1 (1891), p. 3—6 of the first edition and the facsimile facing the title page). “The book is made up of a number of separate treatises, all of which are ethical in character.” As the discoverer of the Syriac *Aristides* justly remarked “it was apparently the ethical character of the *Apology of Aristides*, that secured its

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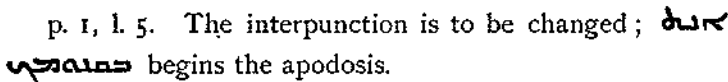
incorporation with the volume," so we may say the same of the translation and preservation of these moral tracts of Plutarch.

Surprising as it seems at the first, that Syriac monks or clerics should have thought of translating into their mother tongue the writings of a Greek heathen author, the fact is easily explained if we consider the character of the writings, which they chose for translation, and the way in which they made them familiar to their countrymen. For they are all moral tracts warning against anger and hatred and recommending love and moderation and self-restraint. And it is not a literal translation which we have here, but *rather an adaptation of the heathen tracts* for the benefit of the Christian community; all that for the Christian reader was void of interest or which he could not approve of, for instance the particulars of Greek mythology, is left out or changed. If, in consequence of this character, these Syriac texts are less instructive for the philological student whose delight is in a most literal translation of an ancient text, they are all the more interesting for the theological and Christian reader, who finds here one more link between Grecian philosophy and Christian piety. It was the same sound of a truly human religion which those Syrian scholars heard in the Proverbs of the Old Testament, in the Sermon on the Mount with its golden rule or in the Epistle of St James in the New Testament, and which they also seemed to hear from these writings of the Greek philosopher, and therefore they made them accessible to their co-religionists.

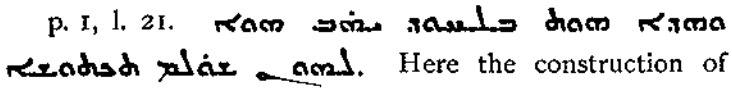








But there is a third point which makes the publication of the following text desirable. The state of Syriac philology and lexicography is still such, that every addition to our stock of printed Syriac texts is highly welcome. I therefore gladly undertook the task of preparing the

following pages for the press, when Prof. J. Rendel Harris had the great kindness of offering me, for this purpose, the copy which he had made from the MS. on Mount Sinai. A few remarks, I hope, will be sufficient.

The Syriac text is printed from the very copy made by Prof. Harris; but where an alteration seemed to be necessary, the emendation was received into the text and the reading of Prof. Harris always given in the margin. Prof. Harris has also corrected my printed text by the aid of photographs. As a rule the text is well preserved and the translation very fluent and easy. There are passages which read more smoothly in Syriac than in the original Greek, just as it is for instance with the book of Titus of Bostra against the Manicheans and its Syriac version. There are, however, some points in the text, on which a remark seems desirable.

p. I, l. 5. The interpunction is to be changed;  begins the apodosis.

p. I, l. 7. As the text stands, the translation must be: there is not to be found *in the land of Creta what is called a wild beast*; but should we not expect: in the land that is called Creta?

p. I, l. 21. . Here the construction of the feminine subject  with the masculine predicate  is irregular,—we expect  or ; and if we consider the first  as the enclitic , spoken of by Nöldeke (§ 328), it should be  instead of the fem. . But I don't think it advisable to change the text, because to the Greek neuter correspond in Syriac both genders, masc. as well as fem.

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Later on, p. 11, l. 22, we have again a fem. subject connected with a masc. verb ܟܕܩܐ [ܘܐܠܥܝܐ] ܘܐܠܥܝܐ ܘܐܠܩܐ ܘܐܠܥܝܐ (Nöldeke, § 321; Duval, § 378 a).

On the stat. emph. p. 6, l. 21, ܟܕܩܐ ܟܕܩܐ ܟܕܩܐ = *καλὸς καὶ γαθὸς γενόμενος*, comp. Nöldeke, 204 B, C.

p. 10, l. 3. ܟܕܩܐ ܟܕܩܐ . I have not changed the text, but it seems to stand for ܟܕܩܐ "from hatred."

As to the Lexicon, no wholly unknown word is contained in our text, except the proper names; but there are several, examples for which are highly welcome. For instance

ܘܐܠܩܐ = *σπαράττειν* [p. 5, l. 4]; Payne Smith 546; to the examples given there add Julian, ed. Hoffm. 57, 3¹.

ܕܩܐ [p. 11, l. 18] with the sense of *investigate*.

ܟܕܩܐ = *ζωγρεῖον* [p. 8, l. 19].

ܘܐܠܩܐ ܘܐܠܩܐ with the special sense *ναυτιώω* [p. 4, l. 1], for which compare Novaria 177 as quoted by Castle-Michaelis 895 = Lagarde Praetermissa 32, 31.

At the end I have put a list of some of the rarer words. Here I may yet mention ܘܐܠܩܐ [p. 12, l. 12] "as for

¹ I may be pardoned for seizing the opportunity of correcting an old mistake connected with this word. Beside ܘܐܠܩܐ and its infinitive-noun ܕܩܐ Bar Ali has (ed. Hoffmann 4647) ܕܩܐ ܕܩܐ (sic), Bar Bahlul (ed. Duval 3, 880) ܕܩܐ ܕܩܐ , the same Payne Smith 1786, Cardahi (al-Lobab 589). The two latter give as its meaning, on the authority of Karmsodinoyo, *cartilago*, it. *pars ossium medulosa quae mandi possit*; BA and BB acknowledge it as infinitive-noun with the meaning *abrodere ossa, exedere medullam*: it is clear that the whole paragraph is due to the misspelling ܕܩܐ instead of ܕܩܐ .

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me" as a very good rendering of the Greek *ῥῆμην* (347 B). Quite in the same way it stands Lag. An. 191, 21 for *καὶ μὴν ἐδόκουν* (*περὶ ἀοργ.* 872 F). This leads to the question as to the rendering of the Greek text.

Whether our tract has been rendered into Syriac by the same hand, to which we owe the Syriac version of *περὶ ἀοργησίας* (and *περὶ ἀρετῆς*) I dare not answer in a definite way; yet it seems to me very likely. The general treatment of the two texts is quite the same. Particulars, for instance, of Greek Mythology, unknown to the Syriac and Christian reader, are left out in both texts; so are uncommon proper names; instead of them we read "a king," "a wise man"; the vocabulary is very similar. It is a pity that in the beginning of *περὶ ἀοργησίας* the beautiful saying of Musonius is left untranslated: *δεῖν αἰεὶ θεραπευομένους βιοῦν τοὺς σώζεσθαι μέλλοντας*. For this latter expression occurs again in our tract in the saying of Antisthenes [p. 9, l. 11], *ὅτι τοῖς μέλλουσι σώζεσθαι ἢ φίλων δεῖ γνησίων ἢ διαπύρων ἐχθρῶν*, and our translator has given it here in a very singular way, quite destroying the almost Christian tinge which the word has in these and similar passages: he gives it *ܩܘܘܢܐ ܘܠ ܩܘܘܢܐ ܘܥܘܕܐܘܪܐܘܩ ܩܘܘܢܐ* *he who wishes to get famous by (in) his behaviour*¹.

But there is another passage, which is almost identical in both texts, the saying of Plato, that men must give a severe reckoning even of the lightest thing in the world, the uttered word. In *περὶ ἀοργ.* 456 D it runs thus: *κουφοτάτου πράγματος, ὡς φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων, λόγου βαρυτάτην ζημίαν τίσουσιν ἐχθροὶ καὶ κακολόγοι καὶ κακοήθεις δοκοῦντες εἶναι*. This is rendered in the Syriac (Lagarde, 189, 23): *ܩܘܘܢܐ ܩܘܘܢܐ ܘܥܘܕܐܘܪܐܘܩ ܩܘܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ ܩܘܢܐ*

¹ On this use of *σώζεσθαι* the theological reader may compare Wytttenbach's Annotations to Plut., de discern. adul. ab amico, 74 C, p. 548.

ܘܫܝܢ ܟܘܝܒܘܢܟܘܢ ܟܫܝܠܘ ܟܫܝܘܢܝܘܢ ܡܫܝܚܝܢ
 ܟܘܝܒܘܢ ܟܘܢ ܟܘܢܝܢ ܟܘܢ ܟܘܢܝܢܘܢ ܡܝܒܘܢܘܢ
 ܘܫܝܢܘܢ i.e. and well has Platon said, that of the word,
 which is believed to be the lightest thing, a heavy punishment shall receive the enemies from God and from men,
 because of it.

In our tract (90 C) we have it in this form: λόγου δὲ, κουφοτάτου πράγματος, βαρυτάτη ζημία κατὰ τὸν θεῖον Πλάτωνα καὶ παρὰ θεῶν ἔπεται καὶ παρὰ ἀνθρώπων.

The corresponding Syriac is here: ܝܘܢܝܢ ܡܝ ܘܫܝܢܘܢ ܟܘܢܝܢܘܢ ܟܘܢܝܢܘܢ ܟܘܢܝܢܘܢ ܟܘܢܝܢܘܢ ܟܘܢܝܢܘܢ, "But Plato said, that of the light(est) word men must pay loss by God and by man." That *ζημία* in this text is rendered by its second, or perhaps original, meaning *damnum*, *loss*, is remarkable; comp. for the Syriac ܟܘܢܝܢܘܢ beside the examples given by Castle-Michaelis, Julianus ed. Hoffm. 105, 8 ܟܘܢܝܢܘܢ ܟܘܢܝܢܘܢ; 186, 23; the verb 107, 25; 172, 25; ܟܘܢܝܢܘܢ ܟܘܢܝܢܘܢ Lag. Anal. 186, 2. Thus we might suppose two different translators; but on the other hand, the addition in the first text "from God and man," which has nothing there to correspond to it in the Greek, nor indeed in the passages of Plato referred to¹, seems best to be explained by the supposition that the translator of *περὶ ἀσκησίας* had the passage of our tract in mind; and this again would be most easily accounted for if it was one and the same person who translated both. In the Sinaitic MS. our tract stands first, then follows *περὶ ἀσκήσεως*, then "a discourse of Pythagoras" (probably the same as Lag. Anal. 195—201), then *περὶ ἀσκησίας*.

¹ Legg. 4, 717 C (601 D) διότι κούφων καὶ πτηνῶν λόγων βαρυτάτη ζημία· πᾶσι γὰρ ἐπίσκοπος τοῖς περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐτάχθη Δίκης Νέμεσις ἄγγελος, and II, 935 A (684 B) ἐκ λόγων, κούφου πράγματος, ἔργω μίση τε καὶ ἔχθρῳ βαρυτάται γίνονται.

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At what time and in what place these versions from the Greek philosopher were made, we are not informed; the other pieces contained in the Sinaitic MS. as well as in that of the British Museum 987 (Wright's Catalogue p. 1160) referred to by Harris (p. 5) should be compared with them. Edessa has always the first claims to be thought of.

As they are adaptations rather than literal translations their help for emendation of the present Greek text is not very great. Immediately at the beginning of our tract there is a crux interpretum: it has: Ὁρῶ μὲν, ὅτι τὸν πραότατον, ὃ Κορνήλιε Ποῦλχερ, ἄτερ πολιτείας ἤρησαι τρόπον. Instead of ἄτερ, one MS. has ὅπερ, others proposed ἄτε δὴ. The Syriac has merely: "Because I see thee, Cornelius, that it is chosen by thee, to lead the meekest life." He leaves the doubtful word out and read perhaps ὁρῶν μὲν, to which participle in the Greek δοκεῖ μοι in l. 10 with an anacoluthon or ἀπέσταλκά σοι would form the sequel.

But there is at least one passage where the current Greek text receives an undoubted emendation from the Syriac.

On p. 88 C (339) we have the following connexion:

Εἰ θέλεις ἀνιᾶν τὸν μισοῦντα, μὴ λοιδορεῖ κίναιδον...
 ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἀνὴρ ἴσθι καὶ σωφρόνει... ἂν δὲ λοιδορῆσαι
 προαχθῆς, ἄπαγε πορρωτάτω σεαυτὸν ὧν λοιδορεῖς ἐκείνον...
 μή τις καὶ σοί ποθεν ὑποφθέγγηται κακία τὸ τοῦ τραγηδοῦ
 ἄλλων ἰατρὸς αὐτὸς ἔλκεσι βρῦων·
 ἂν ἀπαίδευτον εἶπη σε, ἐπίτεινε τὸ φιλομαθῆς ἐν σεαυτῷ
 καὶ φιλόπονον· ἂν δειλὸν, ἔγειρε μᾶλλον τὸ θαρσαλέον καὶ
 ἀνδρῶδες... οὐδὲν γὰρ αἰσχίον ἐστὶ βλασφημίας παλινδρο-
 μούσης καὶ λυπηρότερον.

Every careful reader will perceive from the connexion, that the sense must be: *if thou callest him a fool, not if he calls thee so: si eum illiteratum dicis, not si te dicit*; that

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we, therefore, with the slightest change must read: *ἀν ἀπαίδευτον εἴπησ, ἐπίτεινε*. It is strange that Wyttenbach (or Xylander before him? see the preface of Wyttenbach, p. 142) gives the right sense in the translation, but did not receive it into the text nor mention it in the annotations. Whether it was done in later editions, I have not the means of ascertaining here. Again on p. 91 F (353) where in the received text is mentioned a *πολιτικός ἀνὴρ Ὀνομάδημος ἐν Χίῳ*, our version calls him *Δῆμος*, read therefore *ὄνομα Δῆμος* (or *τοῦνομα*) with the authorities alleged by Wyttenbach in the annotations p. 635.

While, as a rule, the Greek text is abbreviated by the Syriac author, there is one passage, where the latter has a little amplification. Omitting the sentence (91 F) that it is useful to the man *τῶν παθῶν ποιούμενος ἀποκαθάρσεις εἰς τοὺς ἐχθροὺς καὶ ἀποστρέφων ὡσπερ ὄχετοὺς*, he says instead of this not very friendly comparison, that we must have frequent resort to the house of the wise men, as to *those of the physicians*. Did he not like the comparison or not understand it? But the relation of the Greek Original to the Syriac will be best seen by the annexed version. I have purposely made it as literal to the Syriac as possible, and have nothing to add but my best thanks to Prof. J. Rendel Harris, who to his kindness of handing over to me his Syriac copy has joined that of revising my English and of providing that the whole could be printed.

E. NESTLE.

ULM, August, 1893.