

*THE VALUE OF THE PATRISTIC WRITINGS FOR
THE CRITICISM AND EXEGESIS OF THE BIBLE.*

II.—THE LOWER CRITICISM.

IT ought perhaps to have been explained sooner that the terms Higher and Lower Criticism are used in their technical sense, the one for that larger criticism which deals with the questions that are commonly included in Prolegomena or Introductions ; the other for the smaller or more detailed criticism which is concerned with the investigation and reconstruction of the text. No doubt the phrase "Higher Criticism" at least is frequently used in another sense. From the fact that not a few of those who have treated of the genuineness, date, and historical character of the sacred books have done so to a great extent from a subjective *a priori* point of view that seemed to carry with it a character of assumption, "the Higher Criticism" has come to be with some writers a term of reproach, implying arrogant subjectivity. This, however, is both a secondary usage and also one which, from its invidiousness, it seems desirable to avoid. The term has, therefore, been confined in these papers to its strict and, I think it may be said, original sense ; there was besides the further reason, no other single title seemed to describe what was meant so conveniently.

When we ask ourselves what is the worth of the Patristic Writings for the Lower Criticism, the same

kind of division naturally suggests itself as in the case of the Higher. We may consider their value as *unconsciously* supplying materials for modern criticism, and we may also endeavour to form some estimate of the direct and *conscious* attempts which they contain at external criticism.

Every student knows that the quotations from the New Testament in the writings of the Fathers form one of the three main classes of evidence upon which the textual critic has to depend—MSS. and Versions being the other two. They are subject, as evidence, to some special limitations and drawbacks. The text of many of the Fathers is still itself in an unsatisfactory state, especially in this very matter of Biblical quotations; and it is often difficult to be certain that the writer is quoting directly from his MS. and not loosely from memory. Patristic evidence, unless it is very explicit, so long as it stands alone, counts almost for nothing. It is only when it coincides with the evidence of MSS., or with some unmistakable indication in the Versions, that any stress can be laid upon it. But whenever this is the case, it rises at once into great importance.

There is one respect, indeed, in which patristic evidence is perhaps the most important of all. It has the immense advantage of being dated. And not only is it dated, but the dates carry us back to within a century of the time when the autograph copies of some of the books of Scripture (the Gospel of St. Luke, and the Acts, in all probability, and the Gospel of St. John) themselves were written. In the three quarters of a century—A.D. 175–250—we have a number of voluminous writers, in the extant remains of one of whom

alone (Origen) it is said that "the greater part of the New Testament is actually quoted."¹

Neither MSS. nor Versions can shew anything to compare with this. The earliest dated MS. of the Greek Testament was written A.D. 949.² Of the rest two only date back to the fourth century and two to the fifth. The date even of these is matter of not quite certain inference, from the form of the letters, the amount and nature of the punctuation, the insertion of breathings, division into paragraphs, and the like. The date assigned must needs be rough and approximate. And if this is the case with the MSS. themselves, still more must it be so—prior to the application of collateral tests—with the text which they embody. A MS. of the fifth century may be copied from one only a few years older than itself. A MS. of the tenth or eleventh century may be copied from one of the third.³ The fifth century MS. may be removed from the original by some seventy or eighty transcriptions; the MS. of the tenth century by less than half as many. In an active literary centre copies would be rapidly multiplied and passed from hand to hand, and the fashionable emendations and corrections would soon acquire currency; while it is easy to imagine that in some quiet monastery, where the thirst for knowledge was less eager, a monk who wished to transcribe the whole or part of the precious volume might find himself thrown back upon some ancient copy which had lain neglected upon the shelves for

¹ Tregelles, in Horne's *Introduction*, vol. iv. p. 334. (Tenth Edition.)

² Scrivener, *Introduction*, p. 28. (Second Edition.)

³ This is not altogether a supposed case. It would describe, not unfairly, the relation between the text of Cod. A (Alexandrinus) and the cursive No. 33 (Gospels).

centuries. Taken simply by itself, a MS. does not tell its own tale. Its text may be of the very oldest, or it may be quite recent. The date at which the MS. was written is a *terminus ad quem*, and nothing more.

There is the same uncertainty in regard to the Versions. Some of these, indeed, are dated. The different stages in Jerome's great work, commonly called the Vulgate, are clearly marked. The New Testament portion, which was simply a revision of the Old Latin, appears to have been begun in A.D. 382, and finished about 385. The translation of the Old Testament, which, with the exception of the Psalter, was made directly from the Hebrew, was finished about A.D. 405. The Gothic Version (which, however, has come down to us in a somewhat corrupted form) was made by Ulphilas, who lived between A.D. 318-388. The Philoxenian Syriac is dated A.D. 508, and the revision of the same version by Thomas of Harkel, A.D. 616. As for the remaining versions, if we were left to them alone, we should have no means of determining their relative antiquity. For instance, when the Curetonian Syriac was discovered in a MS. of the fifth century, there was quite a *primâ facie* case in favour of the view which was stoutly maintained by one school of critics, that it was really a later version than the Peshito, though this latter was only extant in one MS. of the sixth century, and in others of the eighth and later. It was, however, quoted by Ephraem Syrus and other writers from the fourth century downwards. For the use of the Curetonian Syriac only some ambiguous evidence could be produced from the writings of Aphraates in this century, and then nothing more until a single casual allusion of Dionysius Barsalibi in the

twelfth. So far the balance of patristic evidence seemed decidedly in favour of the version which was already in possession of the field. But when the range of investigation was extended, when indirect evidence was taken into account, and the character of the text presented by the Curetonian Version carefully weighed, the tables were turned as decidedly. Here, too, the ultimate arbitrament lay with the patristic quotations.

It may be well to give a few examples of the kind of evidence that was adduced.¹ It should be remembered that the Curetonian Syriac exists only in fragments, including about twenty-one chapters of St. Matthew, nine of St. Luke, and five of St. John, with the last four verses of St. Mark. In the first Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, it has a reading apparently unimportant, but really presenting remarkable phenomena. In Verse 18, all the Greek MSS. with but one exception, the two Egyptian Versions, the Peshito, Origen, and other Fathers, read as our Authorized Version, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise." The single exception to the unanimity of the Greek MSS. is Codex B (Vaticanus), which has the words "Jesus Christ" in reversed order. The Old Latin, the Vulgate, and the Curetonian Syriac alone unite in reading "Christ" ("The birth of *the Christ* was on this wise"). Here, it will be thought, at once is an argument *against* the value of the Versions in question. That, perhaps, may be; but, at any rate, it is not an argument against the antiquity of their text, for a writer older even than Origen states expressly that the read-

¹ The examples that follow are suggested by various places in Tregelles *On the Printed Text of the Greek Testament*. (London. 1854.) Others might easily have been collected from the critical editions; but those which are given, though well known, will, perhaps, have more point.

ing in his copies was "Christ" only. He is arguing against the Valentinian Gnostics, who maintained that Jesus was not the Christ at his birth, but only became so subsequently. Irenæus thinks that the phrasing of this verse was providentially designed to refute them, inasmuch as it is said, in so many words, that "the Christ (as such) was born." Without, therefore, deciding as to the merits of the reading, we have at least proof that it was current in Gaul before the end of the second century.

In the Sermon on the Mount there is an almost equal unanimity of MSS. in supporting the common order of the two benedictions on the Mourners and the Meek. Codex D (Bezaë) alone inverts them, with representative copies of the Old Latin, the Vulgate, and Cureton's Syriac. Here it is Origen who clearly shews, by the form of his comment, that this inverted order was that which lay before him. The Peshito is on the other side.

In Matthew xviii. 35, a small group of the oldest MSS., with the Curetonian and Egyptian Versions, concur in omitting "their trespasses." Origen again supports, and the Peshito goes with the majority.

In the famous passage (Matt. xix. 17), "Why callest thou me good?" the two Syriac Versions are once more divided, and an explicit statement by Origen is thrown into the same scale with the Curetonian.

The evidence is similarly marshalled for the omission or retention of the clause, "thy will be done," in St. Luke's Version of the Lord's Prayer (Luke xi. 2). The Curetonian is for the omission, the Peshito for the retention, and this time not only Origen but Tertullian side with the Curetonian.

Similar phenomena meet us in John iv. 43. Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, and the group of oldest MSS., are with the Curetonian Version, the majority of later authorities with the Peshito. Cyril, again, and the oldest MSS. support the Curetonian against its sister Version in a certain omission in John v. 16.

These instances might easily be added to, and some, perhaps, might be quoted on the other side. They are not given as proofs, but only as specimens of the *kind* of proof which has decided the best textual critics to regard the Curetonian Version as presenting an older type of text than the Peshito; to treat them, in fact, as bearing the same sort of relation to each other that the Old Latin (or at least some one form of the Old Latin) bears to the Vulgate.

And the principles thus illustrated may be very widely extended. It is by an indefinite repetition of the same process that the conclusion has been reached which lies at the foundation of textual criticism:—viz., *that a certain group of ancient authorities, though in fewer numbers, is to be preferred to the later authorities, though in greater numbers.* This is the principle for which Tregelles was contending all his life, against an influential and not incompetent opposition; and the cause for which he contended may now be considered won. The Archimedean point, so to speak, was supplied by the patristic quotations. These came in to prove that the text represented by a certain small group of MSS.—not all themselves necessarily early in date—was really the text current in the best copies at the end of the second century, that it was really that which was nearest to the times of the Apostles, that the other varieties of text were superinduced upon it, and not it

superinduced upon them. Tregelles asserts that the number of readings confirmed in this way is from two to three thousand,¹ and there can be little doubt that the assertion is warranted by the facts.

It is true that there is another kind of confirmation which these principles received — that supplied by Internal Evidence. Evidence of this internal kind is no doubt easily open to abuse. Where it is ambiguous it is really worthless. But there is an immense number of minute and, in themselves, unimportant cases, where it is not ambiguous—cases of correction to more regular and fluent Greek; cases where the text of our Gospel has been harmonized so as to correspond with another, and the like—and in the immense multitude of these cases one group of MSS. and authorities is found to be far superior to the rest.²

But with this second class of corroboratory evidence we have not here to do. All that I need call attention to now is the importance of the part played by quotations from the writings of the Fathers in settling the very first principles that textual criticism has to go upon. Those principles might have stood upon the evidence of these quotations alone. As it is, they are otherwise confirmed; but this fact is in itself only a clearer proof of their value.

But the patristic quotations are not confined to this

¹ *On the Printed Text*, &c., p. 148 n.

² I am aware that both Dr. Scrivener and Mr. McClellan (*The New Testament*, vol. i. pp. xxx.—xxxiv.) have given lists in which they consider it proved, chiefly by internal evidence, that Codd. **N B** are in error. But these lists are chosen on a wrong method. Instead of taking the number of simple cases where the bearing of internal considerations is quite clear, and arguing from these up to the more difficult cases, these latter have been attacked at once without any such preparation; and the way in which the internal evidence presents itself to a single mind is taken as if it were final, whereas really there is often much to be said on the other side.

rough and general use. Textual criticism is an instrument that is capable of receiving a very fine temper, and of being put to very delicate tasks. But long and complicated investigations are necessary before it can be brought to the required degree of perfection; and in such investigations the study of patristic quotations must needs play an important part.

Much has already been done. The patristic quotations had been consulted, in a more or less desultory way, from Erasmus downwards. In the early part of the eighteenth century, Mill had made a considerable collection of them, and Bentley, with his usual insight, proposed to undertake himself a thorough examination of the bearing of each quotation on the text. Bengel followed in the steps of Mill, and Wetstein also added something. But the first beginning of a systematic study of the patristic writings for text-critical purposes was made by Griesbach, who, in his *Symbolæ Criticæ*, brought together all the quotations he could find in the works of Origen. Thus commenced a new era which has seen several most important contributions to the critical apparatus. Lachmann, who (perhaps after Bentley) may be called the founder of the school now in the ascendant, carefully examined or re-examined the readings in the Latin writers—Irenæus, Cyprian, Hilary of Poitiers, and Lucifer of Cagliari, and also those in Origen. The Greek Testament of Tregelles contains "all the citations that he could gather from the Fathers, Greek and Latin, of the first three centuries, including Eusebius and others, who belong partly to the fourth."¹ And in Tischendorf's eighth edition may be seen a mass of matter of the same kind.

¹ Horne's *Introduction*, vol. iv. p. 341.

When the works of these last two critics are considered, even after all due allowance has been made for the help afforded by their predecessors, it is impossible not to feel amazed at the combined amount and accuracy of the materials collected. In this one department of quotations alone enough seems to have been done to be the work of a lifetime, and yet in each case this was only one department in a whole field of research. Nor should it be supposed that the collection of patristic quotations is at all a mechanical thing, in which the mind itself may remain passive. It is not so by any means. Constant watchfulness and a sound and practised judgment are necessary. The critic must be sure (1) that he has the true text of his author before him; (2) what passage it is that the author is quoting (and this is a point about which it is very possible to make mistakes); (3) that the quotation is deliberately taken from a MS., and not made freely from memory, and intended rather as an allusion than a quotation; and (4) what precise reading it was that the MS. presented. In order to be clear on these points, every single instance of supposed quotation has to be weighed carefully with its context, and only the sifted results of a most extended study can be admitted into the critical apparatus. It needs perhaps some little practical experience of text criticism to appreciate the immense labour of the task which Tischendorf and Tregelles undertook and the very large amount of success that they have attained.

And still the end has not yet been reached. Much has been done, and a first rough approximate result has perhaps been made possible. But not a little still remains to do. The *desiderata* just enumerated them-

selves are suggestive. It cannot be expected that the Biblical critic should make his own text of the ecclesiastical writers whom he is quoting. He ought to find a trustworthy text made ready to his hands. But this is the case with only a comparatively small portion of the writings in question. The Apostolic Fathers indeed have been—or are being—magnificently edited; but though they have some value for the text of the Septuagint, they are too early to have much for that of the New Testament. Irenæus is perhaps sufficiently edited, and so also Tertullian.¹ Cyprian has been well done by Hartel;² but Origen is still used in the edition of Delarue, made about the middle of the last century. The text of Clement of Alexandria, who, in spite of his habitual freedom in quotation, cannot but be of great importance, is notoriously unsatisfactory. And so on. The field of the patristic writings needs to be thoroughly overhauled. What makes this the more urgent is that where the text has not been critically tested, the quotations from the Bible are the first to suffer. The scribes were constantly in the habit of substituting the text with which they were themselves familiar for that which they found before them in the MS. So that what we have very frequently is not the words of the Father as they were originally written, but simply the late Byzantine or Vulgate text current in the Middle Ages when the MS. was copied.

¹ By Oehler, with the corrections of Rönisch. (See *Das N. T. Tertullian's*, pp. 36, 37.) For a perfect edition we shall have to wait for that which is promised by the Academy of Sciences at Vienna.

² Since writing the above, however, Dr. Hort, who is probably the highest authority in Europe on such matters, tells me that Hartel is faulty, especially in Biblical quotations; that the text of Irenæus can only be used with great circumspection; and that Rönisch—"much as we owe to him"—is not entirely satisfactory. Germany is great, but for precise and delicate criticism Cambridge is greater!

This is one direction to which attention may be turned very profitably. Another is indicated by some recent publications. If Griesbach's *Symbolæ Criticæ* marked a second stage in the application of patristic quotations to the study of Biblical text, the book entitled *Das Neue Testament Tertullian's*,¹ by Rönsch, marks a third. This book contains a complete collection of the quotations from the New Testament in two columns, according as they are express quotations or only allusions and reminiscences. It is accompanied by a critical commentary.

Two things seem strange about this book. One is that, though eight years have elapsed since its publication, it should not as yet have been followed by others of the same kind. The utility of the plan is so certain that it would seem to be only obvious to deal with Irenæus and Cyprian and others in the same way. Yet, so far, this has not been done. It appears indeed that the well-known scholar, De Lagarde, has collected over forty thousand Biblical quotations from Augustine, which he has been unable to publish (as we gather) from want of funds.² If this is the case, it is very greatly to be regretted; and the question naturally suggests itself whether, as English resources and liberality have not seldom before stepped in to remedy the shortcomings of English scholarship, so here it might not be possible for English means to help in obtaining the publication of a work that cannot fail to be of so much value.³

¹ Leipzig, 1871.

² See Ziegler, *Die lateinischen Bibelübersetzungen von Hieronymus*, p. 65.

³ Not, however, of the highest value. Dr. Hort points out that (1) Augustine's quotations represent "the most completely revised and corrupted Latin text at all events in most books of the New Testament" (of which I was partly aware); (2) "Ziegler has shewn by his own and Dombart's collations that the Benedictine

The second fact that strikes one as strange is that the appearance of Rönisch's work should not have given a greater and more direct stimulus than it seems to have done to the study of the origin and mutual relations of the different forms of the Old Latin. It is true that progress has been made in our knowledge of the Version, but it is rather in outlying regions than at the centre and heart of the problem. The Earl of Ashburnham has had published the text of nearly the whole of the Books of Leviticus and Numbers from a MS. of the seventh century in his possession. Portions of the Books of Genesis and Exodus have been published by Vercellone. Some small fragments of the Books of Samuel have also been brought to light. But by far the largest contribution in regard to the Old Testament has been made by Professor E. Ranke, of Marburg, who has published a number of considerable fragments both of the Pentateuch and of the Prophetic Books. When the time comes for the production of a thoroughly critical edition of the Septuagint, these publications will be of great value, as the Old Latin Version was made from the Greek, and will be evidence for the text of the Septuagint in the second century A.D.

A series of interesting researches in the portion of the Version containing the Epistles has recently been made by Ziegler. These researches began with the publication, in 1876, of the so-called "Freisingen Fragments" of St. Paul's Epistles, with some fifty-eight verses of the First Epistle of St. John.¹ Then followed,

text is by no means to be depended on, and of course it is Lagarde's basis." Still, "in the Old Testament Augustine very often furnishes the only Old Latin evidence of any kind, as, indeed, he sometimes does in the New."

¹ *Itala-Fragmente der Paulinischen Briefe, &c.* Marburg. 1876.

in 1877, fragments from the same text of the two Epistles of St. Peter, recovered in part *from the impressions left by the ink on the paste*, by which strips cut from the MS. had been used to attach together the two sides of the binding of a later MS. of the Vulgate.¹ The zeal and care shewn in such a discovery deserve to be commemorated. Early in last year Ziegler gave to the world some further results of his investigations in a treatise on the "Latin Versions of the Bible before Jerome."²

There was an emphasis on the plural "Versions." One of the main points for which Ziegler contends is that the different forms of the Old Latin that have come down to us are not (as is commonly supposed) variations gradually introduced from a single original, but that they represent a number of quite distinct translations. In proving this point, Ziegler has made great use of the patristic quotations. He thinks that one type of text is traceable in Tertullian; that another distinct type appears in Cyprian and a group of African writers; and that the quotations made by Augustine have their affinities rather with Italians like Ambrose and Ruffinus.

By means of this application of the patristic quotations, and by a diligent comparison of them with the MSS., Ziegler seems to have found the key to a problem which has long perplexed the text-critics. Augustine speaks in terms of praise of a certain "Versio Itala" as surpassing the rest in clearness and fidelity.³ Assuming that Augustine himself would

¹ See *Bruchstücke einer Vorhieronymianischen Uebersetzung der Petrus-Briefe*, p. 608. (Separat-abdruck.)

² *Die lateinischen Bibelübersetzungen vor Hieronymus und die Itala des Augustinus*. München. 1879.

³ *De Doctr. Christ.* ii. 1.

naturally make use of this Version, Ziegler points out the close resemblance between the quotations in the writings of that Father and the Freisingen Fragments which he himself had published. So close is this resemblance, that out of more than 3500 words, in which they are parallel to each other, there are not much more than seventy variations, some forty of which Augustine has in common with the Vulgate, which he is known also to have used. This serves to shew pretty conclusively that the Freisingen Fragments belong to the text which St. Augustine called "Itala."¹

With a backhanded stroke the same demonstration shews the incorrectness of the use which has been common in Germany, though Tregelles protested against it with effect in England; that, namely, by which the term "Itala" was taken as a general designation of the Old Latin. The "Versio Itala" was certainly not a name for the Old Latin translation as a whole, but only for a single form of it—whether that form is to be regarded as a separate and independent translation, or as a recension of a translation already existing.

Tregelles is also confirmed by Ziegler on another point on which he had raised a protest. Cardinal Wiseman had put in a claim for a certain Codex *m* that it was an actual work of St. Augustine, and it had been edited by Mai as "S. Augustini Speculum."² Tregelles had affirmed, in opposition to this, that the text was African and not Italic; and Ziegler made a similar observation in his earliest work, adding the

¹ *Die lat. Bibelübersetzungen*, p. 82.

² The term "Speculum" seems to be used for "a collection of extracts" or "common-place book."

further proof that this Codex contained the Apocryphal Epistle to the Laodiceans, which Augustine neither quoted nor received.¹

In yet another instance were patristic citations happily applied in conjunction with MSS. By this means two propositions were proved: (1) that the famous "Comma Johanneum," the passage on the three witnesses in 1 John v. 7, formed no part of the original text of the Vulgate, the earliest supposed copy in which it was found, the Codex Cavensis, being really largely interpolated from other sources; (2) that the interpolation probably found its way into the text of the Epistle during the controversy against the Arians at the time of the great Vandal persecution.²

With these conclusions our knowledge of the Latin Versions has been enriched, and in all, or most of them, the study of the writings of the Fathers has borne—as it must do in all *comparative* criticism—a prominent place. The remarkable omission noticed above is that, whereas much has been done for the fragmentary remains of the Version in the Epistles and the Old Testament, very little has been done in recent years for the Gospels, where the materials are ample. Scrivener enumerates no less than thirty-two codices, several of which contain the Gospels entire, or nearly so; and some other fragments are to be added. But these abundant materials exist at present in a very scattered shape. Some of them need critically reëditing. All need to be collected together and tested by careful comparison with the quotations in the writings of the Fathers. Only in this way will it be possible

¹ *Itala-Fragmente*, pp. 7, 8. *Bruchstücke d. Petrus-Briefe*, p. 652.

² See *Bruchstücke*, &c., pp. 653-660.

to determine the real origin of the Version—whether it proceeds from one translation, or from several; and if from several, how many distinct types may be traceable.

The results thus obtained will not by any means stop with the illustration they will afford of the history of the Version. They will be a help to text criticism in determining the primitive type of the Old Latin text. They will be a help to the history of the Canon in shewing approximately at how early a date the books of the New Testament were translated into Latin, and what was the state of the text when they were so translated. They will throw a light, perhaps, on other questions apparently more remote still. It has long been my belief that the study of the Old Latin is more qualified than anything else to clear up the difficulties which surround the question as to the mutual relations of the Synoptic Gospels. There, too, we have the same phenomena—marked differences combined with marked resemblances, a ground-stock variously worked up—and by the study of these phenomena it may be possible to fix more definitely than has yet been done the extent to which unity may exist in diversity, and to which divergence from a given type is possible.

The Latin is only one and the most accessible of the Versions. Similar methods of investigation, if applied thoroughly to others, especially the Memphitic and Thebaic, would no doubt lead to results equally fraught with interest and value. And it is to be hoped that before very long we may look forward to the day when the character and worth of the best MSS. shall be no longer an esoteric conviction derived from long and trained experience on the part of a few practised

critics, but something demonstrated and set forth in such a way that he who runs may read. But whenever this time shall come, and whenever any part of these anticipations is fulfilled, there can be no question that the systematic collection and collation of patristic quotations will form a most essential element in the process. It is, as has been said, the "Archimedean point" on which the lever of scientific criticism must be laid, and by means of which alone, fixed, precise, and definite conclusions can be reached.

W. SANDAY.

THE DISCIPLE NOT ABOVE HIS MASTER.

ST. LUKE VI. 40.

THIS saying was already a proverb in the time of our Lord, or He made it a proverb by his frequent use of it. The things which He said were not written every one, lest the world itself should not be big enough to contain the book. We have only a selection of his sayings, recorded with the utmost brevity; and therefore it is the more surprising when we find the same saying recorded more than once, especially if the saying does not seem to be a very profound or pregnant one. Yet this proverb was so familiar to his lips that during the brief course of his earthly ministry, He used it on no less than four different occasions.

Now it can hardly fail to be instructive, it may lead us to find a far deeper meaning in them than we see at first, if we glance at the several occasions on which the great Master uttered these words in the hearing of his disciples, and briefly consider what sig-