THE SYRIAC VERSION OF LUCIAN'S DE CALUMNIA

THE literary legacy of Aramaic-speaking Christianity consists predominantly of ecclesiastical works—theological treatises (both original and translations), sermons, hymns, and the like; it is for the most part, one must admit, rather dull stuff. Distinguished from the rest, and of peculiar interest to classical students, are secular works, translated from the Greek, which include, apart from medical and scientific treatises, a handful of writings by Plutarch, I Lucian,² and Themistius.³ Baumstark⁴ suggests that the translator of these three Greek writers be identified as Sargis (died 536), a learned priest and ἀρχιατρός in Theodosiopolis, with a somewhat chequered ecclesiastical career (he changed sides in the christological controversy, starting out as a monophysite and ending up in the Chalcedonian camp), who is known as the translator of a number of philosophical and medical treatises. Sargis has his place in the history of thought, for it was in the first place through his Syriac translations that the Arabs became acquainted with Galen, whose works eventually assumed almost canonical status with them.

The Syriac version of Lucian's Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ραδίως πιστεύειν διαβολῆ (hereafter Sy.) which, if by Sargis, was composed as early as the sixth century A.D., is extant in a MS. of the eighth or ninth century, and is important as the earliest, albeit non-Greek, text of Lucian. For students of the text of Lucian the most useful study of Sy. is by M. Rothstein,5 who ably summarized the pioneer works of E. Sachau⁶ and G. Hoffmann. ⁷ Rothstein's description of Sy. is worth quoting: 'Qui versionem Syriacam confecit hoc maxime egit ut praecepta illa moralia cognoscendi popularibus suis occasionem faceret. Itaque et omisit non nulla quae illi intellegere non potuissent et in aliis cum libertate quadam negotio functus est pro arbitrio non nulla ab accurata Graeci textus imitatione deflectens.' As he suggests, Sy. reads like a 'lay' homily based upon the writing by Lucian. The translator renders the Greek original into clear, flowing Syriac, but allows himself the liberty of adaptation. Paraphrase more aptly describes the work than translation.8

Thus far we agree with Rothstein, but his conclusion, 'Non multa sunt quae ad ipsius libelli textum ex interpretatione disci possunt, apparet tamen fuisse illo tempore codicem qui vel ab iis quae utrique codicum nostrorum familiae communia esse videntur, satis graviter discreparet', is open to question, particularly in view of the light thrown on the textual history of Lucian by K. Mras⁹ and on the text of *De calumnia* by the apparatus of N. Nilén's Teubner. ¹⁰

For De calumnia we have excellent representatives of the γ class in Γ , the outstanding Lucianic MS., and in Ω , but, as in a number of Lucian's works, the witnesses of the β tradition, such as P or N, are untrustworthy, and our only

- ¹ Περὶ ἀοργησίας, Πῶς ἄν τις ὑπὸ ἐχθρῶν ωφελοίτο and the lost Περὶ ἀσκήσεως.
 - 2 Περί τοῦ μη ραδίως πιστεύειν διαβολή.
 - 3 Περὶ φιλίας and the lost Περὶ ἀρετῆς.
- 4 Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur (Bonn, 1922), 169.
 - 5 Quaestiones Lucianeae (Berlin, 1888), 92-9.
 - 6 Inedita Syriaca (Vienna, 1870).
- ⁷ Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen (1871), 1201 ff.
- 8 Cf. the verdict of the Teubner Plutarch: 'Libere agens ac saepe in breviorem formam reddens'; cf. also p. 299 n. 1.
 9 Die Überlieferung Lucians (Vienna, 1911).

 - 10 Lucianus, Fasc. 1. 2.

reliable evidence for β readings lies in the few variae lectiones added by Γ^a Alexander, Bishop of Nicaea (fl. c. A.D. 950), the $\delta \iota o \rho \theta \omega \tau \dot{\eta} s$ of Γ . Nilén's apparatus makes it clear that Rothstein underestimated the quality of the text of the Greek exemplar of Sy.

As instances of the excellence of Sy.'s Greek model we would quote c. 2, where the other MSS. read οἶκοι before συνεχύθησαν, but Sy., perhaps supported by what Nilén identifies as the first hand of Γ, reads ὄρκοι, or c. 21, where the MSS. read πρὸς τὰς λεγομένας καὶ μεστὰς ὑπονοίας and Du Soul with the help of Sy. made the palmary emendation <math>πρὸς τὸ οὖς λεγόμενα καὶ μεστὰ ὑπονοίας, or c. 17, where the best MSS. read ἄν διαβολὴ λέγοιτο, εἰ ἔλοιτο τις and Madvig, acting along the right lines thanks to Sy., emends to ἢν διαβολή, εἰ λέγοιτό τις, though λέγοιτο seems too weak as Sy. means 'reviled' and we suggest something like χλενάζοιτο (or λοιδοροῖτό taken passively).

The all too few *varia* added by Γ^a , our only reliable β class witness in *De calumnia*, usually seem to be supported by Sy. (though not by *recentiores* such as P or N, which here, as in many other works of Lucian, are *deteriores*). The two clearest examples are:

c. 3. αἰσχυνθῆναι ΓΡ recc.: μεταγνῶναι Ω recc.: μεταγνῶναι καὶ αἰσχυνθῆναι Γ a Sy.,

and c. 5 $\Pi \rho \delta \lambda \eta \psi \iota s \Gamma^a$: | $\Upsilon \pi \delta \lambda \eta \psi \iota s \text{ cett.}$: Sy. = prejudice.

Occasionally Sy. confirms the readings of β class recentiores against γ , e.g. c. 24 $\dot{\nu}\pi\sigma\tau\rho\dot{\epsilon}\phi\epsilon\iota\nu$ Sy., recc.: $\dot{\nu}\pi\sigma\sigma\tau\rho\dot{\epsilon}\phi\epsilon\iota\nu$ γ . Furthermore Sy. never clearly supports γ against β . We therefore suggest that the Greek original of Sy. was of the β class and indeed that in a few passages such as those quoted above from cc. 17 and 21 Sy. alone has preserved the true tradition.

Hofmann and Rothstein believed that the Greek text translated by Sy. was heavily interpolated and greatly inferior to the text of the extant MSS. We would admit the inferiority of Sy.'s original in a few of the passages noted by Rothstein, e.g. c. 12 εὖ γὰρ οἶσθα for οὐ γὰρ οἶδα and c. 21 ὅμοι' οὖν for ὁμοίως or ὅμοια, and we would add the passage in c. 6 where our MSS. have ὑπόθερμον δὲ καὶ παρακεκινημένον and Sy. renders 'and she was full of commotion and silence/rest'. (We think that Sy. was trying to translate not παρακεκινημένον but παρακεκοιμημένον.) We believe however that Rothstein has exaggerated the deficiencies of Sy.'s Greek original.

Here it is important to consider the method of the translator. For the most part he abbreviates and simplifies. The normal candidates for abbreviation are classical references and allusions. In c. 1 for instance, having neatly negotiated a long simile in which human ignorance is compared with the night in which men fumble about and miss the right way, the translator comes to an illustration based on classical drama and the themes of tragedians. He misses the illustration out, abbreviating it to the simple phrase 'narratives full of misfortune'. His reason is clear. What is the point of mentioning 'the houses of Labdacus and Pelops' to Syriac readers who probably knew next to nothing about Greek tragedy? If they could understand the reference they would know enough Greek not to need a translation. Similarly in c. 10 the Homeric reference is omitted and c. 26 with its quotation from Homer and classical allutions is reduced to the first sentence only—a general observation on the troubles caused by slander. From the fact that the translator abbreviates, omitting the bits incomprehensible to his readers, it is an easy step to conclude that he

always abbreviates. Perhaps Rothstein took this step. But it is, we think, a false one, for the abbreviation is *per accidens*; it arises from the translator's intention of making the original comprehensible and does not preclude him from adding explanatory glosses for the same purpose. It is these that Rothstein takes as interpolations in the original Greek and whose existence we doubt. A little gloss on the condemnation of Socrates in c. 29, Rothstein takes to be a gloss by a Greek grammarian. Possibly—but it is more plausible to suppose that the translator is explaining a point to his readers who will certainly have heard of Socrates (so it is a reference worth keeping in) but may not know the grounds of his condemnation or his religious views. What applies here applies to other cases of alleged interpolation.

On other occasions we believe that Sy. differs from our extant Greek MSS. not because it had a different or inferior Greek text but because of the short-comings of the translator. For instance in c. 3 the best surviving MSS. of both classes read δ δè Πτολεμαΐος ώς ἂν οὐ πανὺ φρενήρης τις ὤν and Sy. has

In conclusion we believe that Sy.'s original was perhaps a cheap popular text containing some typical mistakes, but that it was nevertheless based on a good MS.¹ of the β class. This provides better evidence for the existence of β at an early date than does Vind. Phil. Gr. 310, a twelfth- or thirteenth-century MS. of Aristaenetus (dated to the fourth century by Lesky) in which occur a few snippets culled from Lucian's *Dialogi Meretricii* which correspond closely to a β -class MS. but unfortunately the interpolated Vat. 87 (14/15 century) rather than the apparently more reliable Laur. 57. 51.² It is ironical that the earliest extant γ -class reading occurs as late as Photius. Mras has shown that whereas γ the ancestor of Γ and Ω , etc., was a complete edition of Lucian, β , the ancestor of the other family, only contained selected works. Although γ is usually superior to β , β nevertheless contains so many good readings and supplements gaps in γ so convincingly as to suggest that β , like γ , originated with Lucian himself. This cannot be proved conclusively, but now at least we have better evidence for the existence of β long before the time of Arethas³ or Alexander of Nicaea.

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¹ Cf. the verdict of Helmbold on the Syriac version of Περὶ Ἀοργησίας (Loeb, vol. 6, p. 91): 'A free Syriac translation which helps occasionally in the constitution of the text', and of Babbit (Loeb, vol. 2, p. 3) on the Syriac Πῶς ἄν τις ὑπὸ ἐχθρῶν ὡψελοῖτο: The translation of this essay is rather an adaptation, but even so

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- it gives light on the Greek text in a few places.'
 ² See *Dialogi Meretricii*, ed. K. Mras (Berlin, 1930), 5.
- ³ Despite the belief of Mras to the contrary, the weight of the evidence suggests that the lost part of Arethas' Lucian, Harleianus 5694, was of the β class.