

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,¹ 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 ἀρχιεπὶς 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 ῥαδίως πιστεῦν διαβολῇ* (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 *I*, 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 ἂν τις ὑπὸ ἐχθρῶν ὠφελοῖτο* and the lost *Περὶ ἀσκήσεως*.

² *Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ῥαδίως πιστεῦν διαβολῇ*.

³ *Περὶ φιλίας* and the lost *Περὶ ἀρετῆς*.

⁴ *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur* (Bonn, 1922), 169.

⁵ *Quaestiones Lucianae* (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 breviorum 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 διορθωτής 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 οἴκοι 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 πρὸς τὸ οὖς λεγόμενα καὶ μεστὰ ὑπονοίας, or c. 17, where the best MSS. read ἂν διαβολὴ λέγοιτο, εἰ ἔλοιτο τις and Madvig, acting along the right lines thanks to Sy., emends to ἦν διαβολή, εἰ λέγοιτό τις, though λέγοιτο seems too weak as Sy. means 'reviled' and we suggest something like χλευάζοιτο (or λοιδοροῦτό 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 ΓP recc.: μεταγνῶναι Ω recc.: μεταγνῶναι καὶ αἰσχυνθῆναι Γ^a Sy.,

and c. 5 Πρόληψις Γ^a : Ὑπόληψις cett.: Sy. = prejudice.

Occasionally Sy. confirms the readings of β class *recentiores* against γ , e.g. c. 24 ὑποτρέφειν Sy., recc.: ὑποστρέφειν 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 ὁμοια, 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 allusions 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

