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*ARTIFICIAL VARIANTS IN THE TEXT OF
THE NEW TESTAMENT.*

THE title which I have put at the head of this paper is somewhat obscure : are not all variations from the true text of a document artificial products, the results of a conscious or an unconscious art, unconscious in the case of the scribe as he patiently toils at a task from which

error cannot be excluded, conscious in the case of a reader or critic, who thinks he knows better than the author what the author wrote or should have written ?

I was, however, thinking of phenomena of a much narrower range. The text of the New Testament is overloaded with variety : there are readings which are not really readings at all, in the sense that you have to balance this against that, and sit on a judgment seat and announce a verdict. There are cases that ought never to waste the time of a revising barrister. One particular species is in my mind and may be discussed for a while with actual illustrations, the case where a passage of the New Testament has been translated out of its Greek into some other language, and then subsequently retranslated back out of Latin, say, or Syriac, or Coptic into Greek, so as to produce a shadow text over against the original. Obviously the variations of such a retranslated text would be artificial variants, and if we could be quite sure which text was the original text and which the retranslation, we should never trouble over the secondary form any more, nor need we be at the pains of recording it. That is a very simple way of stating the case ; the important word in the sentence is the little word "*if*." Are we sure that the flow of the text was from A through B to C : may it not have been in the reverse order, with C for the original form ?

Now this question is not an idle speculation. We can give it bodily shape by discussing a concrete case. In the second century, we know that a large part of the New Testament was canonised, and given an orderly sequence and authoritative form by Marcion, the so-called heretic, whom Tertullian, amongst others, refutes both as to his doctrine and as to the changes which he makes in the text. As, however, the greater part of the evidence for the text of Marcion comes from the Latin of Tertullian, we have

before us the question as to the character of the Greek text which underlies the renderings and the quotations of Tertullian. Naturally, the most obvious thing to do was to retranslate Marcion's or Tertullian's Latin into a word-for-word Greek equivalent and call this the Greek text of Marcion in the middle of the second century. Suppose, for instance, we took Zahn's reconstruction, we should find that not only did we recover a large part of what we may call the Catholic text, but we also should have before us a series of passages in which (allowing for such cases in which Marcion may have altered the text to suit his peculiar views) we have a Greek text which never existed and ought never to have been created. The readings are not even Marcionisms, they are Zahnisms, and as such they have no place in the apparatus of the N.T. Accordingly when Harnack produced his monumental study of Marcion, and Marcion's views and Marcion's Biblical text, he followed in the footsteps of Zahn as his precursor, but he followed very warily. He did not mean to fall into the mistake which Zahn had made; but we shall see presently, from an instance, that he did not wholly escape the contagion of a fallacious method.

It is easy for us to play the judge in certain cases. We should, for example, have no hesitation in discarding the Greek text of the Three Heavenly Witnesses, which was manufactured by some monk for Erasmus' third edition; nor should we attach any importance to Erasmus' own completion of the last verses of the Apocalypse from a retranslated Latin; but it is not so easy to see that the same thing has happened with the text of Marcion, and that Zahn often, and Harnack sometimes, must be put on one side. Let us take a case in which Zahn goes hopelessly wrong, and where Harnack does not go helpfully right.

In discussing Marcion's text of Luke xiv 16 ff. Tertullian

tells us that the master of the house, who had prepared the feast from which successive guests begged to be excused, was *moved* at the refusal of his invitations, and orders them to be offered to a humbler and a more widely-sought constituency. Tertullian remembered that Marcion's God, the God of the N.T., was of a different temper from the Creator God of the O.T., of whom he says.

“Deus melior inventus est, qui nec offenditur nec irascitur nec ulciscitur.”—(C. Marc. i. 27).

Tertullian evidently thinks he has caught Marcion in the admission of a text of Luke which does not agree with his theory of a good-natured God. This is one for my side, says he, this word *motus* :

“Hoc ut patrifamiliae renuntiatum est, *motus* tunc (bene quod et *motus*, negat enim Marcion *moveri* deum suum, ita et hic meus est) mandat de plateis et vicis civitatis facere sublectionem.”

Now let us see what Zahn will make of this. He finds fault with those who equate Marcion's *motus* with the catholic text *ὀργισθείς* on the ground that if the Greek text were really *ὀργισθείς* Tertullian would have had a much stronger case by reading *iratus* instead of *motus* to express the emotion of the master of the house who, it is agreed, represents parabolically the Supreme Being. So Zahn manufactures a new Greek variant, and tells us that Marcion read *κνηθείς*, which would, of course, by literal translation give us *motus*.¹

Zahn did not, however, understand that *motus* in popular speech meant *angered* and was a proper translation of *ὀργισθείς*, so he made what I call an artificial variant, which ought never to have found its way into the textual apparatus. For instance, in the *Acta Perpetuae*, when Perpetua tells us that her father was *enraged* by her persistence in affirming herself a Christian, and that the old man

¹ Zahn, *Kanon*, ii. 452, 478.

rushed at her as if he would have torn out her eyes :

“tunc pater *motus* in hoc verbo misit se in me ut oculos mihi erueret.”¹ (*Acta Perp.* 3).

As is well known, there is reason to refer these *Acta* to the pen in part, and the editorial care throughout, of Tertullian, and we notice that we have here the same usage of *motus* for anger as in the Lucan text ; but we must not hastily draw the conclusion that we are dealing with *African* Latin ; for at this point Harnack comes to our aid and gives us good reason for believing that Tertullian deals directly with Marcion's Latin, and is not, generally speaking, occupied with translating Marcion's Greek. Then Marcion as well as Tertullian uses *motus* in the sense of *iratus*, and the whole argument of Zahn collapses : he has made an imaginary Greek reading *κωηθείς*, he has made a wrong objection to the real Greek reading *ὄργισθείς*, as furnishing a stronger counter-agreement to Marcion's passionless God than *κωηθείς* would supply and he did not see that Tertullian was actually making his objection to Marcion's views on the ground of Marcion's own text.

Now it is unfortunate that Harnack and Soden both follow Zahn's method of restoration, and so present us with a N.T. variant in Luc. xiv., which never existed. Harnack goes to work on the passage in which Tertullian is commenting on Luc. xiv. (15-24), picks out the textual fragments and restores them from Latin to Greek. When he comes to *motus*, he gives us, with some hesitation, *ἐπαρθείς* as an equivalent, and adds a note that it is either *ἐπαρθείς* = (stirred up) or *κωηθείς* = (moved), and that this is a “tendency” reading of Marcion's for *ὄργισθείς*. He had forgotten that it was his own argument that Marcion's

¹ If the Greek of the *Acta* is here a translation of the Latin, as seems fairly certain, then the translator has also misunderstood *motus*, which he renders by *ραπαχθείς*.

text is Tertullian's Latin. It is safe to say that *ἐπαρθείς* is as little to be found in Marcion as *κινήθείς*. When we turn to Soden, we find similar textual misadventure.

In his *Introduction* (§ 376=p. 1627) he gives a list of passages where Marcion's text varies from the common ancestry of the Catholic tradition, and is under the influence of Marcionite ideas; against Luc. xiv. 21 he notes that Marcion reads *κινήθείς loco ὀργισθείς* but concludes that such a reading does not belong to the original text of Luke, though his reason for its exclusion is fallacious. The real reason is that *κινήθείς* never existed! No doubt Marcion ought to have altered the text but he didn't. The foregoing illustration will show how easy it is to manufacture and to imagine variations in the text of the New Testament.

Having gone so far with the explanation of the word *motus* in Tertullian and Marcion, we can hardly avoid referring to another case in the N.T. where a similar misunderstanding may have occurred.

In Mark i. 41 (the story of the healing of the leper), the text, as commonly edited, reads:

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς σπλαγχνισθείς ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἤψατο.

A reference to the critical apparatus shows decided traces of a variant *ὀργισθείς* for *σπλαγχνισθείς* (Jesus was *angry*, and stretched out his hand, etc.); now this is certainly a case of the harder reading so much loved by critics of a certain temper of mind; it is a reading which, if it ever existed, would have been repulsive both to Catholic and to Marcionite: to the Catholic because it is the wrong place and the wrong person to provoke the ire of Jesus; to the Marcionite because the Good God did not send His Son into the world to be angered with anybody, certainly not with lepers, who had turned worshipful and needed pity. But, on the other hand, the textual evidence for it is very

early and very decided. A group of Western authorities, such as *D a ff² r¹* support the harder text. Not only so, but it was also the reading of the *Diatessaron*, as we can prove in the following manner.

When we turn to Ephrem's commentary upon the *Diatessaron* we find him discoursing in this wise :

(p. 144). "*If thou wilt, thou canst.* The method and the manner are those of suppliants, the words are the words of doubters. And the Lord showed two things to these two attitudes, first reproof, when *he was angry with him*, and then *pity*, when he healed him. He was angry at his saying, *If thou wilt*; He healed him because he added *thou canst*. . . .

"The Lord was not *angry* with him, but with his leprosy. . . . The Lord showed *by his anger* that he did not respect persons when he healed. . . . The Lord was *angry* at the thoughts of the leper."

There can be no doubt that *ὀργισθεὶς* had its equivalent in the Tatian text. Ephrem turns the word this way and that way, in order to extract a meaning from it which shall not derogate from the honour of our Lord. No doubt he had a Syriac equivalent for *ὀργισθεὶς* before him : the question, however, arises whether he did not also have the other reading, according to which Jesus *had compassion*. If he had both readings, it may be urged that one of them is an alternative for the other, and, as far back as the time of Michaelis, attempts were made to show that the whole trouble arose in Syriac, by the copying of the word *ethrahām* (he had pity) as *ethra'em* (he was enraged). There is, however, no reason to resort to Syriac nor to change the spelling. Our previous investigation shows us how a word *ὀργισθεὶς* was likely to be done into Latin, or out of it. We have shown that this reading is attested by Tatian and by certain western authorities. If we can find at this

point of the text the Latin reading *motus*, we shall not hesitate to banish *ὀργισθείς* from the Western text, in spite of its early attestation and occurrence in Syriac. Just at this very point we are 'gravelled' for lack of evidence. The Latin text of Mark says *iratus* according to *d a ff*² and *r*¹. The form *motus* has not yet turned up in our Latin MSS.

Then we can hardly treat *ὀργισθείς* as a retranslation which was made before the time of Tatian, and which would require us to admit the existence of a Latin text of Mark before Tatian.

At this point Synoptic criticism comes to the aid of textual criticism. We observe that Matthew and Luke, who are working over the text of Mark, both omit the clause which says that Jesus was angry (*or* pitiful). It is in the highest degree unlikely that they would have omitted *σπλαγχνισθείς* if they had found it in Mark; on the other hand, it is altogether likely that they would have omitted *ὀργισθείς*. Then we suggest that this was the original Marcan reading, whatever may be its ultimate origin, and we retain it in the text, throwing in our lot, for this time, with the harder reading. We notice that the Lewis Syriac does not follow Tatian in the peculiar reading; it has "Jesus had compassion"; there is no difficulty, then, in our finding a trace of this reading in Ephrem.

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