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

III.—EXEGESIS (*continued*).

IT is now just two years since an article¹ appeared in the *Quarterly Review* which excited a good deal of attention at the time, describing in some detail the life and character of the one great authority on Patristic Literature that the Church of England possessed in the first half of the present century — Dr. Martin Joseph Routh, President of Magdalen College, Oxford. Among the many interesting reminiscences which that article contained was one which, though it will doubtless be remembered by many of those who may glance over these pages, it may perhaps be worth while to repeat in connection with the special subject of this chapter. Dr. Routh was once asked by a young student if “there was any commentary on Scripture which he particularly approved of, and could recommend.” He seemed to take little notice of the question at the time, and gave it no direct answer; but about a year afterwards his questioner received a hint that the President would be glad to see him, and much to his surprise the old man at once went back to the point about which he had been interrogated.

He turned to me, and said rather abruptly, “When you have finished, sir, I have something to say to you.” I was dumb. “Do you remember, sir, about a year ago asking me to recommend to you some commentary on Scripture?” “Perfectly well; but I am altogether astonished that you should remember my having taken such a liberty.” He smiled good-naturedly; remarked, with a slight elevation of his hand, that his memory was not amiss, and then went on somewhat thus: “Well, sir, I have often thought since, that if ever I saw you again I would answer your question.”

¹ Commonly attributed to Dr. Burgon, Dean of Chichester.

I was delighted, and said so. He went on : " If you will take my advice, sir (an old man, sir, but I think you will find the hint worth your notice), whenever you are at a loss about the sense of a passage in the New Testament, you will ascertain how it is rendered *in the Vulgate*; the Latin Vulgate, sir. I am not saying" (here he kindled, and eyed me to ascertain whether there was any chance of my misunderstanding him) "*not that the Latin of the Vulgate is inspired, sir*" (he tossed his head a little impatiently and waved his hand)! " Nothing of the sort, sir; but you will consider that it is a very faithful and admirable version, executed from the original by a very learned man—by Jerome—in the fourth century; certainly made therefore from manuscript authority of exceedingly high authority; and in consequence entitled to the greatest attention and deference." I have forgotten what he said besides; except that he enlarged on the paramount importance of such a work.¹

At the time when this advice was given the age of modern commentary writing was only just beginning to set in. The epoch-making works of Meyer and De Wette were already in use in Germany, but they were not yet naturalized in England. Grotius, Bengel, and perhaps Hammond, were the only commentaries at all of the first order to which the average English reader would have access. The labours of Mill were confined to the text. The prince of English scholars, Bentley, had touched occasionally upon New Testament exegesis, and where he had done so he had shown the same masterly grasp as in other directions, but the places illustrated by him were few and far between. The most conspicuous contemporary commentator was Dr. Blomfield, Bishop of London, and his achievements were not by any means such as to throw earlier works into the shade.

But if it is not surprising that such preëminence should be assigned to the Vulgate in New Testament exegesis, it is perhaps less easy to understand why Dr. Routh should have limited his recommendation to

¹ *Quarterly Review*, No. 291, July, 1878, pp. 30, 31.

that portion of the Bible. Probably the reason is only to be sought in his own greater familiarity with New Testament studies. Otherwise an even stronger claim might be put in for the part which contains the Old Testament. It is true that here, too, Gesenius and Ewald had already broken the ground for a more scientific exegesis, but putting these on one side, it would seem to be very doubtful whether the English reader could have found any single commentary that would have thrown as much continuous light upon the whole of the Old Testament as Jerome's translation.

Taking all his work together, there is not one of the Patristic writers who has done as much for the interpretation of the Bible. In the Old Testament he stands alone. None but he approached it with anything like an adequate knowledge of the language in which it was written. To complain that even his knowledge does not come up to the standard of modern scholarship is mere pedantry. We have already seen that such knowledge as he possessed was derived orally from Jewish teachers. It was not systematized in grammars and lexicons, but was picked up by questions and conversation, much as a temporary resident in a foreign country might pick up the language of the country in which he was staying at the present day, but with the further disadvantage, that in Jerome's case the language that he had to acquire had ceased to be spoken, and was only preserved in a not very trustworthy tradition.

A simple test of the degree of proficiency to which Jerome attained may be seen in the rapidity with which the translation was executed. For the whole of the Old Testament he took about fifteen years—from 390

to 405 A.D. ;¹ years filled with other exegetical works, with a constant interchange of letters, and with more than one prolonged and bitter controversy ; years broken by sickness and interrupted by barbarian invasion. Single examples tell the same tale even more clearly. Jerome had been much pressed for a translation of the Book of Tobit. This was written in Aramaic, a tongue which he did not understand. Accordingly he got a Jew to turn it for him into Hebrew, and as fast as it was translated for him, he dictated to the scribe his own Latin Version. "For this," he says, "I snatched the work of one day."² To the Book of Judith he could devote still less. "To this," he says, "I gave a single sitting" (*unam lucubratiunculam*), part of which must have been taken up with the criticism of the text which Jerome found in great disorder.³ The Book of Tobit contains fourteen chapters and 244 verses, and the Book of Judith sixteen chapters and 339 verses, so that the reader may form some idea of what Jerome could do when working at high pressure. These facts speak volumes not only for his practical familiarity with Hebrew, but also for his dexterity as a translator, his command of his own native tongue, his power of work, and his general ability.

Of course, it is not to be supposed that all parts of the translation were dispatched at this prodigious rate. It is one of the chief merits of Jerome that he took up so bold a position as he did in regard to the Apocrypha. In regard to these two books, Tobit and

¹ Zöckler, *Hieronymus*, pp. 183, 184 ; Diestel (*Gesch. d. A. T.* p. 96) gives the date at which the work was begun as 392, but the earlier date seems to be the more correct.

² *Præfat. in Tobiam.*

³ *Præfat. in lib. Judith.*

Judith, he apologizes for translating them at all, throwing the responsibility, in the one case, upon the Bishops, Chromatius and Heliodorus, at whose request the translation was made; and in the other, upon the Council of Nicæa, which was said to have reckoned the Book of Judith amongst Holy Scripture.¹ We cannot, therefore, draw any inference as to the degree of care likely to be expended upon the canonical books. Applying a different test, and judging rather by results, we find that on this criterion the verdict upon Jerome's work is satisfactory. The Septuagint Version was made by bilingual Jews at a time when the knowledge of the Biblical Hebrew must have been both fresher and more extensive than was possible some five or six hundred years later. And yet it seems to be admitted on all hands that Jerome's version is distinctly better than the Septuagint. In some parts, at least, the philological knowledge displayed is greater;² and throughout Jerome must bear the palm as to literary skill and power.

These two qualities, along with a third—unrivalled learning in the works of previous commentators—characterize the whole of Jerome's writings on the Old Testament, and place them even now at the head of all the patristic literature upon the subject. The commentaries have the same excellences and the same defects as the Vulgate. They present a strong contrast to those of Theodore of Mopsuestia. That writer, as we have seen, possessed practically no philological equipment. Not only was he entirely ignorant

¹ See the *Prefaces* (Tischendorf's *Bibl. Sacr. Lat. V. T.* p. xlviij).

² See the art. "Hebrew Learning" in Smith's *Dict. of Christ. Biog.* vol. ii. p. 868.

of Hebrew, but he did not even see that this ignorance was any drawback. His style was at once diffuse and obscure. He went on his own way, caring little to amass materials from those who had gone before him. But all these deficiencies are compensated by his penetrating grasp on the principles of Biblical interpretation. We have little to do but to invert each of these propositions in order to form a very fair idea of the characteristics of Jerome. His philological equipment was, as we have seen, by far the best in all antiquity. No other of the Fathers was, in the least degree, competent to undertake what he undertook,¹ and not only undertook, but carried out with, on the whole, remarkable success. By a piece of singular good fortune he seems to have obtained access to the best Jewish tradition of his time, and the mere fact that he is the vehicle of this tradition invests his writings with importance for the critical scholars of the present day. As his text approached closely to that of the Masoretic editors, so also his interpretation represents more fully than any other extant work can do the authorized and accepted traditions of the most eminent Jewish scholars. Without assuming that that tradition was necessarily right, it could not fail to be, from a merely historical point of view, most valuable.

Then, again, his style is brilliant. It sparkles with epigram and with fine and uncommon, though at times somewhat turgid, metaphor. Erasmus could find in it something that was wanting even in Cicero.² That something was probably the native force and fiery energy which was foreign to the smoother periods of the

¹ Diestel, *Gesch. d. A. T.* p. 94; Merx, *Joel und ihre Ausleger*, pp. 156, 168.

² Quoted in Zöckler, *Hieronymus*, p. 340, n.

master of classical Latin. Jerome by no means avoids errors of taste. His very command of metaphor is accompanied by too little discrimination. In his desire to place a subject in its most graphic light no scruples of delicacy restrain him. His invective is coarse and savage. But whatever else it may be, or may not be, his prose is always alive; it has always a buoyant and forcible movement that carries the reader along with it. Learning in his hands never becomes dull. The brilliant writer is nowhere lost in the mere collector.

And yet as a collector, too, Jerome accumulated stores such as no other writer of ancient times has left behind him. He has made amends for the loss of so many of the works of Origen by incorporating the comments of that great author largely among his own; and not only those of Origen, but of many other writers, famous or obscure. Any one who wished not so much to make acquaintance with some one of the greater minds of antiquity as to form an average conception of the nature of patristic exegesis could not do better than go to Jerome. He would find there the digest that he sought made ready to his hand.

But the same thing which was in one sense Jerome's strength was in another his weakness. Jerome is before all things eclectic. Both in principles and in details he was vacillating and uncertain. Even in regard to the Septuagint he was not consistent. He frequently quotes either from the Septuagint or the Old Latin in preference to his own version, and in that version many errors have been allowed to stand which he had himself directly combated.¹

In like manner in regard to the interpretation. It

¹ See Zöckler, *Hieronimus*, p. 363.

is not difficult to find in the writings of Jerome excellent maxims as to the importance of ascertaining the historical sense. He speaks with scorn of those who, "coming, like himself, to the study of Holy Scripture from that of profane literature, after they have caught the popular ear with their rounded periods, imagine that whatever they say must needs be the law of God; nor do they condescend to learn what was the opinion of prophets or apostles, but fit incongruous proofs to their own opinions; as if it were a fine thing and not a most perverted method of teaching to distort expressions and wrest reluctant Scripture into agreement with one's own fancies."¹ Again: "I am obliged, against my own will, frequently to discuss the peculiarities of the Hebrew tongue; for we do not copy the orators in hunting after periods, piling together words, and exciting the hearers or readers to applause by our declamations; but things which are obscure, and naturally so, to people of another tongue, we are doing our best to explain."² In sending to Amabilis what he calls a literal or historical exposition of a part of Isaiah, he says that his object is "not to win praise for his own efforts, but to have the words of the prophet understood; nor does he make a boast of his own eloquence, but what he seeks is rather a knowledge of the Scriptures."³ At the end of the commentary on Obadiah he bids the discreet reader look rather for consecutiveness in the sense than for elegance of style.⁴ In his Preface to the same prophecy he remarks that he had first taken it up in his youth, and returned to it in his old

¹ *Epist. ad Paulinum* (ap. Tischendorf, *Bibl. Sacr. Lat.* p. xxx.)

² Vallarsi, *Hieron. Op.* tom. vi. p. 118.

³ *Ibid.* tom. iv. p. 169.

⁴ *Ibid.* tom. p. 386.

age: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.' If the Apostle makes progress and passes on to the things that are before, forgetting that which is behind, and according to the precept of our Saviour he who has put his hand to the plough is not to look back, how much more may I, who have not yet reached the age of the perfect man, the stature of Christ, claim indulgence if in my youth, carried away by an ardent temper and zeal for the Scriptures, I interpreted allegorically the prophet Obadiah, the history of which I did not understand?"¹ Of this juvenile attempt Jerome is now heartily ashamed. Nor is he content with seeking for the historical sense himself, but he notes repeatedly the absence of any adequate treatment of it as a blemish in the works of others.

And yet this very same writer, who is so anxious to restrict allegorizing and to secure a plain, direct, literal interpretation—this very same Jerome is himself full of extravagant allegories. Nor are these isolated or accidental, but they run through whole books at once. In the Book of Leviticus "every sacrifice, nay, almost every syllable, and the garments of Aaron and the whole Levitical order, are instinct with heavenly meanings" (*sacramenta*). In the Book of Numbers the forty-four stations of the wanderings are so many "mysteries." The Pentateuch is the "five words" with which the Apostle wished to be able to speak (1 Cor. xiv. 19). Under the "cities, villages, mountains, rivers, torrents, and boundaries" mentioned in the Book of Joshua are really described "the spiritual

¹ Vallarsi, *Hieron. Op.* tom. vi. p. 360.

kingdoms of the Church and of the heavenly Jerusalem." In the Book of Judges there are "as many types (*figuræ*) as there are rulers of the people." "Ruth the Moabitess fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah where he says: *Send forth the Lamb, O Lord, that ruleth over the earth, from Petra in the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Sion*" (Isa. xvi. 1, Vulgate Version). "Samuel, by the death of Eli and the slaughter of Saul, shews that the old law was abolished; and further, in Zadok and David testifies to the deep significance of a new priesthood and a new sovereignty" (*novi sacerdotii novique imperii sacramenta testatur*). "If you look at the history of the Book of Kings the words are plain enough; if you look at the sense hidden beneath the letter, the story told is that of the smallness of the Church and the wars waged by the heretics against the Church." ¹ And so on. It goes without saying that detailed instances of the same kind could be multiplied to any extent from the commentaries.

Perhaps this ought not to be called exactly a "halting between two opinions." There does not seem to be anything to shew that Jerome was directly influenced by the Antiochene movement. If he lays stress upon the historical sense, this is probably a simple reaction of common sense, which could not fail to be greatly aided by his superior philological attainments and the scholarly instinct that would naturally go with them. Origen himself recognized, in theory at least, the necessity of first ascertaining both the true text and its plain and straightforward meaning. In the more obscure parts of Scripture his practice did

¹ *Epist. ad Paulinum.*

not always conform to this. Wherever a difficulty of any kind presented itself in the literal sense the expedient of allegory was close at hand, and Origen never hesitated to avail himself of it. Jerome did the same thing, especially where the difficulty was moral. Abishag, whom David took to wife in his old age, is to be interpreted of the "Divine wisdom," to which, as his end drew near, he devoted himself more closely. The stories of Judah and Tamar, of Samson and Delilah, of Solomon and Rahab, of David and Bathsheba, are all to be taken spiritually. The adulteress whom the prophet Hosea is commanded to marry is the same as she who anointed the feet of the Lord and wiped them with her hair, the same as Rahab, as the Ethiopian wife of Moses, the same as the "black but comely" bride of the Song of Songs; in other words, the Church.¹ Difficulties of another kind—those which were mainly philological—Jerome was more competent to deal with. And of his very considerable success in dealing with these the Vulgate is a conspicuous monument.

And yet, though the mere fact of literal and allegorical interpretations being placed side by side is no proof of inconsistency or vacillation, there are other proofs in abundance that Jerome as a commentator really bore this character. He constantly gives alternative explanations, between which he himself makes no decision. Sometimes, indeed, his uncertainty is very excusable. It really resides in the subject matter of that which is being explained, and it is a merit in the commentator to point out its existence. For instance, in the com-

¹ See Zöckler, p. 372, and *Frefat. Comm. in Osce Proph.* (Vallarsi, tom. vi. pp. xix-xxi.)

mentary on the Book of Joel, Jerome makes a good point when he remarks: "The invasion of the enemy is described under the figure of locusts, and again, language is used about the locusts themselves as if they were being compared to an enemy, so that when you read about locusts you think of an enemy, and when you think of an enemy you come back to the locusts."¹ A very true description this of one main cause of the difficulty of the whole prophecy, a difficulty which both in ancient and in modern times has divided commentators into two great camps, according as they took as their starting-point the literal sense or the figurative. Jerome believes that a hostile invasion is meant, and he gives a choice between the Assyrians and Babylonians, or the Medes and Persians, or the Macedonians, or even the Romans, though he himself prefers the Babylonians and Chaldæans, not on chronological grounds, but because the description seems to tally best with their proverbial ferocity.

The same difficulty of definitely fixing the sense dogs the steps of the commentator all the way through the book. It reaches a climax at the beginning of the third chapter. The previous passage about the outpouring of the Spirit, Jerome naturally referred to the day of Pentecost, but he himself confesses that he found it a "matter of the greatest difficulty how to fit on what follows to what has gone before." Here again Jerome deserves credit for perceiving the obstacles to his own interpretation, obstacles which his predecessors had got over lightly enough. He contents himself with stating a number of different views, but apparently leaning to that which he is inclined to lay down as a

¹ Merx, *Joel*, p. 157.

general principle, that prophecies which the Jews regarded as relating to the last day really had their fulfilment at the coming of our Lord. In accordance with this he would explain the last chapter as having reference to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Vespasian and Titus, though he does not speak with confidence, and leaves open other possibilities.¹

One reason for the indecision which characterizes Jerome's work is, no doubt, the haste with which most of it was accomplished. The commentaries in this respect came off no better than the translations.² A fortnight sufficed to complete the Commentary on St. Matthew, and that at a time when the author was but just recovering from a severe illness.³ Of the Commentary on Ephesians he sometimes composed as much as a thousand lines a day, and in the preface to his Commentary on Galatians he explains that weak eyesight and many bodily infirmities prevented him from writing with his own hand, and hence he summoned a scribe and dictated to him "whatever came first to his lips,"⁴ for if he stopped dictating the man seemed by his impatience to hint that it was no use his being there.

It is certainly a colossal work. Not one man in a generation could do anything at all like it now. True, we have learnt to "verify references" and apply more scientific methods, but the very abundance of books and mechanical facilities have weakened the natural powers. Jerome gives a list of his authorities for the Commentary on Galatians. They include the ponderous tomes of Origen, Didymus, whom, with allu-

¹ For the foregoing, see Merx, *Joel*, pp. 157-169.

² Zöckler, *Hieronymus*, p. 212.

³ *Ibid.* p. 165.

⁴ Vallarsi, tom. vii. p. 486.

sion to his blindness, Jerome calls "his seer," Apollinaris, Alexander, an ancient heretic, Eusebius of Emesa, and Theodorus of Heraclea. All these, he says, he has read, "and piling one thing upon another in his brain,"¹ he dictated to his scribe sometimes matter of his own, sometimes that of others, but not always recollecting the order, the words, or even the sense.

We may see here a part at least of the secret of Jerome's strength. The reader does not flag because the writer did not flag. It is all "aus einem Gusse." Jerome has the most consummate command of language. He can say just what he pleases, and not only say it but adorn it and drive it home with a style at once in the highest degree pointed and vigorous. Never was learning so little accompanied by pedantry. It is wielded with as much ease and dexterity as if it were only the waving of a conjurer's wand. Not, of course, that the style is perfect. It has the faults of taste and exaggeration to which allusion has already been made; but when all the necessary deductions have been made for these, it is still most impressive, and must be, one would think, unique in learned work of this kind.

We have already had occasion to quote some of the introductory matter to St. Paul's Epistles in general, and that to the Galatians in particular, in Chrysostom and Theodore. A specimen of Jerome's way of dealing with the same subject will shew at once the difference between them. The new element introduced is that of learning, and in order to give an idea of the style as well as the nature, the paraphrase that follows shall be somewhat full. Jerome asks the question with which neither Chrysostom nor Theodore had troubled

¹ Vallarsi, tom. vii. p. 370.

themselves: Who were the Galatians, where they had settled, and whence they came? Were they native born or strangers to the soil which they inhabited? Had they lost their proper tongue by intermarriage, or had they learnt a new one while retaining their own? Marcus Varro, a most diligent antiquary, with his followers, had written much that was of interest about the race. But as it was Jerome's purpose not to introduce the uncircumcised into the Temple of God, and as (to speak the truth) it was some years since he had last read about these things, he would rather quote Lactantius, who derived the name Galatæ from the "milkwhite necks" of the Gauls [Galatæ, as if from γάλα]. These Gauls had settled in the province of Galatia, and mingling with the Greeks, had given to it the name of Gallo-Græcia. Nor was it to be wondered at that a Western people should be found so far to the East when Eastern colonies had made their way so far to the West. There was Massilia, founded by the Phocæans, "trilingual," as Varro called them. Then there was the town of Rhoda, founded by the Rhodians, which gave its name to the river Rhone [Jerome is mistaken here, as Rhoda was in Spain, but he seems to have had the good authority of Pliny for his statement¹]. He will not speak of the Tyrian founders of Carthage and Agenor's city, or of Liberian Thebes, and other Greek cities of Libya. He will confine himself to Spain, where was Saguntum, founded by Greeks from Zacynthus and Tartessus, an Ionian colony; besides that a number of Greek names for mountains and islands attested their origin. Even Italy once bore the name of Greater Greece, and none could deny

¹ See Vallarsi's Note, p. 426.

that the Romans were descended from the Asian Æneas. The consequence of this mixture of races was that the subtlety of the Greeks might be found among the orators of Gaul, while barbarian stupidity reigned in Eastern Galatia; and to this St. Paul alluded when he addressed the Galatians as "foolish," just as in other cases he hit the characteristic quality of the Church to which he was writing—the piety of Rome, the irregular customs and intellectual vanity of Corinth, the charity and busy gossip of Macedonia. Any one who had been at Ancyra, the metropolis of Galatia, would still recognize the portrait of that Church in the endless variety of obscure and absurd sects into which it was divided—Passaloryncites, Ascodrobi, and Artotyrites, not to speak of the more respectable. One more fact Jerome will mention in fulfilment of his promise at the outset. Besides Greek, which was spoken all over the East, the native tongue of the Galatians was almost the same as that of the Treveri. If some corruptions had been introduced that was no matter, as other languages, the Phœnician and Latin itself, for instance, were apt to change with time and place.¹

This last statement of Jerome's has given rise to much discussion. It has been argued that the Treveri were a German race, and that therefore, in spite of the *primâ facie* view of the case, the Galatians also must have been German. The premiss of this argument, however, seems to be doubtful as well as the conclusion.² But into this we need not enter here. The passage has been adduced in illustration of Jerome's

¹ *Hieron. Op.* tom. vii. pp. 425-430.

² See Lightfoot, *Galatians*, pp. 235-246.

wide and varied knowledge, and that purpose will, perhaps, have been attained.

Not the least of Jerome's merits is the frank way in which he recognizes difficulties and the ability with which he frequently meets them. Here, however, a distinction must be made. In some cases Jerome is free from, or rises superior to, prejudices which are felt more strongly now. In other instances he succumbs to temptations which a modern critic has no difficulty in resisting. As an instance of the first class may be taken a passage (Gal. v. 12) which even Bishop Ellicott has been led to explain away. Jerome, on the contrary, first states the case as strongly as it can possibly be stated, insisting upon the contrast which it presents to the character and demeanour of Him who was "meek and lowly of heart," and then he gives the following answer to his own accusation. "The Apostle," he says, "speaks not so much from passion against his adversaries as from love for the Church. He saw, in fact, the whole province which he himself, at the cost of his own blood, and at the peril of his own life, had won over from idolatry to the faith of Christ; he saw this whole province harassed by an incursion of proselytism, and with the grief of an Apostle—the grief of a father—he could contain himself no longer, but he began to change his tone and to grow angry with those whom he had hitherto dealt with softly, in order to hold back by oburgation those whom he could not hold by kindness. Nor can it be considered wonderful if an Apostle, himself a man, and still shut up in a vessel of infirmity, seeing too, as he did, another law in his body taking him captive and leading him bound in the law of sin, should for once have spoken in a way into which holy

men may often be seen to fall." ¹ After some further argument to shew that the language used was not really, after all, that of malediction, he very skilfully turns his weapon against the followers of Marcion, and appeals to them to say if there is anything in the Old Testament—to which they objected on this very ground—as stern and bloodthirsty as these words of an Apostle.

There were other questions that touched Jerome more nearly, and on which he was more liable to prepossession. His strong views in favour of the unmarried state found a stumbling-block in the marriage of St. Peter. He has two ways of getting over this; one is, the assertion that though St. Peter was married he "forsook his wife along with his nets and his ship;" another is, that he must needs wash off the stain so contracted by the blood of martyrdom.²

It was in the interest of the same theory that Jerome propounded the hypothesis usually identified with his name as to the relationship indicated by the phrase, "brethren of the Lord." This can hardly, however, be quoted to Jerome's disadvantage in comparison with modern writers, as many moderns³ have adopted it from him, and have held it with greater tenacity than he himself seems to have done.

But there is one episode that has left a deeper scar on Jerome's reputation—his controversy with Augustine about the conduct of St. Peter at Antioch.⁴ The charge, however, really affects not Jerome alone, but others of the Fathers with him. The statement in Galatians ii. 11, "When Cephas was come to Antioch I withstood him to the face because he was condemned,"

¹ *Hieron. Op.* tom. vii. p. 493.

³ *E.g.*, Wordsworth and Ellicott.

² Zöckler, *Hieronymus*, pp. 201, 372.

⁴ See Lightfoot, *Galatians*, pp. 127-131.

gave great offence. The partizans of Petrine Christianity bitterly resented what they considered the presumption of St. Paul. On the other hand, those who exaggerated the principles of the latter Apostle caught at the apparent evidence of his antagonism to Judaic Christianity. And in the mean time writers like Porphyry attacked both Apostles at once, the one for his error, the other for forwardness in rebuking that error, and made use of the dispute as an argument against the truth of Christian doctrine. To meet these assaults two expedients were devised, both equally disingenuous and both in fact equally absurd. Clement of Alexandria started the theory, which found considerable acceptance, that the Cephas here mentioned was not really St. Peter, but one of the seventy disciples. Jerome has every right on his side when he says that "the whole argument of the Epistle, which glances at Peter, James, and John, is repugnant to this supposition." But he himself only discards it in order to adopt the no less untenable view of Origen, that the two Apostles were really only acting a part; that the scene at Antioch was got up between them, "that their feigned contention might restore peace among believers, and that the faith of the Church might be made unanimous by their sanctified wrangling." Not only St. Paul's rebuke, but St. Peter's concession to Gentile prejudices, was a piece of pious hypocrisy. Hypocrisy of one kind was to be remedied by hypocrisy of another. St. Peter was to set an example of humility and submission, and so to shame the Jewish Christians into following his example.

If it had been possible to defend such a theory, Jerome would have succeeded in defending it. He

asserts that St. Paul cannot really have "withstood" his brother Apostle. To have done so would have been inconsistent with the flexibility of his character, who to the Jews became as a Jew, and condescended even to Jewish prejudices. He then adduces examples of fictions with a pious object—Jehu and the worshippers of Baal, David before Abimelech at Nob. He argues that openly to rebuke another would be a breach of the Gospel precept to "tell thy brother his fault between thee and him alone." And he ends by appealing to his own experience in the law courts at Rome, where he had seen the advocates on either side indulge in the most violent invectives only in order to remove all suspicion of collusion.¹

These points are put by Jerome with all his wonted vigour and ability. They are, however, clearly the kind of argument which may be used to make the worse appear the better cause. Jerome found a contemporary of his own prepared to expose them. Augustine wrote to remonstrate with him, and begged him to "sing a palinode," as Stesichorus had done with less reason. A correspondence followed, which was conducted with some warmth, especially on the part of Jerome. The ill-temper was naturally upon the losing side, and though Jerome did not formally retract, he seems to have tacitly withdrawn from his position.

This correspondence admits in other ways an interesting light upon the two great men who were the parties to it, but the further comparison of them must be reserved for the next paper, in which it is hoped that the review of the chief patristic commentators may be brought to a close.

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¹ *Hieron. Op.* tom. vii. pp. 407-409.