

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for the *Journal of Theological Studies* (old series) can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_jts-os\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article]

work of the individuals to whom they are commonly attributed need not be questioned. But over and above these there remain great quantities of fragments, scraps, and snatches, often welded together or adapted to suit different occasions and contexts. These can be separated and distinguished, their interrelations elucidated, and their primitive character approximately determined. It is no longer possible to ask whether Jeremiah quotes from Obadiah or Obadiah from Jeremiah, whether a passage is 'original' in Micah or in Isaiah. There are certainly cases where it may be said with some degree of assurance that one prophet was acquainted with the work of his predecessors—there can be little doubt that some of the prophecies of Ezekiel were consciously based on Jeremianic oracles—but in others the 'fragment hypothesis' is the only one which prepares the way for sound exegesis. And sound exegesis is the aim and the justification of all true criticism.

THEODORE H. ROBINSON.

### 'MYTHS AND GENEALOGIES'—A NOTE ON THE POLEMIC OF THE PASTORAL EPISTLES.

WHILE studying recently the usages and terminology of the grammatical schools of Greece and Rome, I came across phrases which reminded me of some vexed passages in the Pastoral Epistles. Whether these resemblances are merely coincidences, or whether they have a real bearing on the interpretation of the epistles, I do not feel sure. But I think the latter alternative is at any rate sufficiently probable to deserve discussion.

It is perhaps needless, but I should like to remind the reader that in considering the possible bearing of school terms on such works as the epistles, we must cast aside much of the associations which the word 'school' has for us. We must remember that what was taught in schools had a far closer relation to the life of the adult population than our school work has to ours. Of the two great staples of education, 'grammaticæ' and rhetoric, if rhetoric stands first in this respect, 'grammaticæ' is a good second. The *grammaticus* was a power in the land well paid and generally respected. If he could not draw big congregations like the *rhetor* yet his lore appealed to a large public. It was, as Quintilian says, 'necessaria pueris, iucunda senibus, dulcis-secretorum comes'.

Again, I hope I shall not be uselessly reiterating the well known, if I point out that in these highly organized 'grammatical' schools, the teaching of literature, especially poetry, was an important, indeed for

a long period, the main factor, and that in this teaching the *ἐξήγησις ιστοριῶν*, that is the elucidation of allusions, and the accumulation of knowledge real and supposed as to the personages and things mentioned in the poems, was a very important element. Indeed there were schools in which little else was done in the way of literary teaching. Sextus Empiricus tells us that these *historiae* are divided into (1) legendary matter, (2) fictitious but possible matter, (3) what was really historical, and that the first of these were called *μῦθοι*.<sup>1</sup> But we also find another classification, which divides them, according as they dealt with (1) persons, (2) places, (3) dates, (4) events. In this classification the personal are called *γενεαλογικά*.<sup>2</sup> It follows from this that *γενεαλογία* bears a much wider sense than our 'genealogy' and carries the idea of personal and biographical detail. And a further inference may fairly be made. As poetry, especially Homer, largely dealt with mythology, and as personal details are much more attractive than questions of geography or chronology, all the more interesting 'histories' were from one point of view 'myths', from another 'genealogies'. And as a matter of fact most of the typical instances quoted by Juvenal, Aulus Gellius, and others will come under these heads.

That *γενεαλογία* in 1 Tim. i 4 and Titus iii 9 means more than pedigree is not a new suggestion to students of the epistles. It is inferred by Hort from evidence which he gives in his 'Judaistic Christianity' pp. 135, 136. The further point, which the facts I have mentioned suggest, is that 'myths' and 'genealogies' were accepted and leading terms in the technical talk or jargon of a large literary or dilettante public which made great account of such studies. And I may here add, that there was another public which despised them as frivolous and useless, in fact took much the same view as the writer<sup>3</sup> of 1 Tim., who as Weiss and Hort point out, does not regard the interests he condemns as in themselves wicked or heretical, but as vain and empty and likely to divert the mind from higher things.

The evidence for the existence of these two publics may be verified sufficiently by any one who will read and look out the references in Mayor's note on Juvenal vii 234. I may give a few instances. Juvenal would rather not sit at a dinner-party next the lady 'quae sciat omnes

<sup>1</sup> The other two were called *πλάσματα* and *ιστορίαί* (in a limited sense). Cf. as late as the fourth century Ausonius *Prof.* 21. 25:

Ambo omnia carmina docti  
callentes mython plasmata et historias.

<sup>2</sup> Τὸ δὲ πᾶν ποίημα καλοῦσιν οἱ παλαιοί, συγκείμενον ἐκ τοπικοῦ καὶ πραγματικοῦ καὶ χρονικοῦ καὶ γενεαλογικοῦ, εἰς ἃ διαίρεσθαι τὴν ἱστορίαν φασίν. Int. to Dionysius *Περὶ ἡγήσεως* p. 81 Bernh. v. Usener *Kleine Schriften* ii p. 286.

<sup>3</sup> When I use throughout the word *writer*, I must not be understood as implying any view, one way or the other, as to the Pauline authorship.

historias'. Aulus Gellius had a friend who had a huge note-book full of such questions as the names of the followers of Odysseus who were torn by Scylla. Tiberius, who carried this 'notitia historiae fabularis usque ad ineptias et derisum', would test the *grammatici* who were great favourites of his by such questions as 'Who was Hecuba's mother?' and 'What was Achilles's name when he was dressed as a girl?' Augustine (*De Ord.* ii 12, 37) speaking of these 'histories' remarks that he pitied his friends, who, if they could not answer the question, 'Who was Euryalus's mother?', were dubbed ignoramuses ('accusantur inscitiae'). He adds that the ignoramuses themselves regard their interrogators as triflers and refuse them the name of scholars ('curiosi'). Of Didymus, the most famous collector of such points, Seneca says that his books are full of 'quae dediscenda erant, si scires.' Quintilian,<sup>1</sup> who recognized its value to some extent, strongly deprecates excessive attention to such research, for 'inanis iactantiae est (cf. *κενοφωνία* 1 Tim. vi 20) et detinet atque obruit ingenia melius aliis vacatura'. He adds that the pursuit of it involves devoting the student's efforts 'anilibus fabulis', an exact equivalent of course of *μύθους γραύδεις* (1 Tim. iv 7). And here we may note that such problems are regularly known as *quaestiones*, or in Greek *ζητήματα* or *ζητήσεις*, a word which also appears in this connexion in the epistles, while any one who made a trade or business of such matters was said *profiteri* or in Greek *ἐπαγγέλλεσθαι*, and we are thus reminded of the *γνώσις ἣν τινες ἐπαγγελλόμενοι περὶ τὴν πίστιν ἠστούχουσαν* (*id.* vi 21).

The hypothesis then, which I propose for discussion, is that the polemic of the pastorals is directed against an intellectualism, which largely consisted in a research similar to that described above, which in the writer's opinion was in itself frivolous and useless and in practice led to strife and irreligion. If this were so, the question would arise—Was the culture, learning, intellectualism, or whatever we choose to call it, pagan, Jewish, or a mixture of the two? Now if we could isolate the First Epistle to Timothy from the other two, I should be inclined to say pagan. The word *βέβηλος* is in favour of it. And I do not think the fact that we find attached another *ματαιολογία* which is connected with law militates seriously against it. For if the 'myths and genealogies' appealed to a wide public, still wider was the public who delighted in the 'controversiae', such as we find described by the elder Seneca, in which the competing rhetoricians regularly argued on some point of law, or at any rate took some assumed law for their basis. The only evidence against it in this epistle is the passage iv 9, in which the *ζητήσεις καὶ λογομαχίαι* are stated to lead up (amongst other things) to the 'wranglings of men who think that religion is a trade'. I think the natural meaning of this is that the professors of the condemned intellec-

<sup>1</sup> *Inst.* i 8.

tualism claimed to be following a religious study, but it is hardly decisive. But in Titus i 16 the myths are definitely called Jewish. This can hardly be surmounted, except by supposing that 'Titus' is by the hand of another who has imperfectly understood the work of his predecessor. But I do not wish to adopt so heroic a course, and indeed my hypothesis will stand as well or better if we adopt the view that the culture attached, though Hellenic in spirit, made use of Jewish materials.

It is, I think, *a priori* probable that there were circles of Hellenized Jews, where the Old Testament was treated in the same spirit as that in which the devotees of 'historical' research treated Homer. We must remember that, while this kind of research went a great deal further than Homer, it was the love of Homer which gave it its primary impulse, and that Homer always stood first with it. Homer, it is clear, was treated in two different ways. To the philosophically-minded he was sometimes in his literal sense the fount of ethical lessons, and to be read, as the Articles tell us we should read the Apocrypha, for 'example of life and instruction of manners',<sup>1</sup> sometimes a mine of philosophical allegory. On the other hand, to the devotees of 'grammar-tice' he was a field of romantic interest and for the amassment of legendary lore. We are often told that Homer was the Bible of the Greeks. May we not invert the statement and say that the Pentateuch was the Homer of the Hellenized Jew? Of an allegorical and philosophical treatment of the Old Testament, consciously and deliberately based on the philosophical treatment of Homer, we have abundant evidence in the shadowy Aristobulus and the very substantial Philo. This form of Helleno-Judaic culture has been preserved to us by its affinities to Christianity. If there was another form which consciously and deliberately imitated the 'grammatical' method, it has not been preserved; but that is not surprising, since it could only repel the Christian mind. For it may be added that such a method of treating the Old Testament lore would naturally lead to some contamination with real pagan mythology, much in the spirit of Cleodemus or Malchus, the Jewish historian, who according to Josephus<sup>2</sup> stated that Abraham's grand-daughter became the wife of Heracles.

As for the other branch of the *γνώσις*, the *ἔργα νομικὰ* which are evidently associated with the 'myths and genealogies' in 1 Tim. and still more closely in the other epistles, there is nothing in the words

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hor. *Ep.* i 2. 1-4:

Troiani belli scriptorem . . .

qui quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,

planius ac melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.

<sup>2</sup> *Ant.* i 15.

employed which suggests more than the ordinary disputations of Jewish legal theologians. Still it is reasonable to suppose that the writer discerned the same tone in both the objects of his censure. And if we suppose that there was something Hellenic in the one, we may conjecture it in the other. We may conjecture a school or schools of legalists who gave a philosophical cast to their discussions, perhaps after the manner of 4 Maccabees, prided themselves on their dialectical skill, and in general regarded themselves as the counterpart of the acknowledged philosophers.

My view of the matter does not perhaps differ in substance from that of Dr Hort, who regards the writer as speaking of the frivolities of the Haggada on the one hand, and the Halacha on the other. But it puts it in a different atmosphere and colouring. The writer in fact is not combating a Pharisaic Judaism, but a somewhat conceited pseudo-Hellenic Judaism. And I venture to think that on one point at least my view meets the facts better than Dr Hort's. For when Dr Hort suggests that the writer attacks the frivolities of the Haggada, he overlooks the fact that the writer of 2 Tim. is apparently a Haggadist himself. At any rate he gives us the most obvious piece of Haggada in the New Testament—the mention of Jannes and Jambres. It seems strange that one who saw such danger in Haggadic legend should write thus. But it is quite intelligible that one who cherished Haggadic lore should strongly object to seeing it treated as on a par with heathen myths and perhaps mixed up with such myths.<sup>1</sup>

There are a few special points which are worth considering in the light of my hypothesis. The first is the much discussed 'antitheses'. While on the whole I am inclined to adopt a very simple interpretation, there is another possible, which would bring it into line with the 'myths and genealogies'. Next to research into 'histories', the favourite line of study with *grammatici* and their followers was to investigate the 'tropes' and 'figures' in their texts. Now, though 'antithesis' in rhetoric has other senses, its common use is for the 'figure' which we, as they, call antithesis, i. e. two contrasted or compared statements, put for effect in a carefully balanced form. If a Jewish student treated his Septuagint as a Greek student treated his classics, he would no doubt regard the psalms and prophets as a form of oratory, for the absence of metre would hide from him their poetic character. And there can be no doubt as to what 'figure' would strike him as most prominent. It is the doublet which is so characteristic of Hebrew poetry, such as 'What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?' Now what would a grammarian or rhetorician call this

<sup>1</sup> Indeed such a feeling may perhaps lie behind the phrase Ἰουδαϊκοῖς μύθοις. 'You apply the term μῦθοι with all its evil associations to our venerable traditions.'

'figure' which is entirely foreign to Greek literature? It is not the same as the various forms of repetition, which the rhetoricians found in the poets and orators and named accordingly. It has something of the character of 'tautology', but tautology was a vice. I think they would regard it as a form of antithesis,<sup>1</sup> for though such doublets lack the sense of contrast, which is generally present in the classical antithesis, they are antithetical in form. If we adopted this explanation, we should not need to suppose that the writer of the epistle understood or cared to understand the term. It would be enough to suppose that he heard the term bandied about and branded it as a piece of jargon, characteristic of a lore which seemed to him both frivolous and mischievous.

If on the whole I reject this (to me) tempting explanation it is not because it seems to me in itself improbable, but because the word will admit of one much more simple. Another rhetorical use of the word is for the answers and objections alleged by the opponent. Thus though an 'antithesis' is not quite the same as a disputation, it is a necessary part of one, and here, too, I should regard our writer as quoting with some scorn and impatience a word which figured largely in the discussions which he deprecates. If this is the meaning, it probably applies primarily, though not necessarily altogether, to the legal and dialectical side of the *γνώσις*.

The verse 1 Tim. vi 5 *διαπαρατριβαὶ . . . ἀνθρώπων . . . νομιζόντων πορισμὸν εἶναι τὴν εὐσέβειαν* seems to me to point to a paid body of teachers, and if so, we note that the main characteristics ascribed to these teachers are (1) quarrelsomeness, (2) a desire to make money. This falls into line well enough with my suggestion, for these two charges are frequently brought against Greek and Roman sophists in the wider sense of the word. They may be found often in Lucian, e.g. in the *Symposium*. It may perhaps be said that there was a strong body of opinion in the ancient world from the time of Socrates downward, which never quite reconciled itself to the idea of a teacher of 'wisdom' taking fees. When I say that this falls into line I do not imply anything more. Any atmosphere of debate may engender or seem to engender strife, and I have no reason to suppose that teachers of purely Jewish Halacha did not take fees. Most people who teach anything systematically have to live by it.

Perhaps a little more may be said of the verse 1 Tim. iv 8 *ἡ γὰρ σωματικὴ γυμνασία πρὸς ὀλίγον ἐστὶν ὠφέλιμος*. This is sometimes taken of bodily discipline or self-denial, but the natural meaning is training in the palaestra. And the words will gain force, if we suppose the writer to have in view some form of Hellenic culture, which always included such training. Quintilian<sup>2</sup> holds that the palaestra is a valuable element

<sup>1</sup> This would be in technical language *ὡς ἀντιθέσεις*, 'quasi contra-positiones'.

<sup>2</sup> *Inst.* i 11.

in the education of the rhetorical student, as giving him grace of movement.

As I have throughout called my suggestion an hypothesis, I am free to admit that the chief objection against it—and Dr Hort's—is that there are some phrases in 2 Tim. and Titus which seem to me to indicate a propaganda more positively erroneous and mischievous. I would cite especially 2 Tim iii 6, 7, *id.* iv 4, and Titus i 11. It is true that we must not confound the writer's apprehensions as to the future with his censures of the present, and that when he speaks of the present he need not always be speaking of the same thing. But on the whole I cannot rule out the possibility that he refers to some form of incipient gnosticism. But this lies outside my special knowledge, and I accept provisionally Hort and Weiss's view that he refers to 'barren and mischievous trivialities usurping the place of religion', a view which seems to me to fit 1 Tim. completely and most of 2 Tim. and Titus. If this view is accepted, I venture to think that my form of it suits all the facts as well as Dr Hort's, and some of them better.

This paper is perhaps in some sense a 'Tendenz-Schrift' in so far as I might have hesitated to bring forward so speculative a matter, but that I wish to point a moral, which I have pointed in earlier papers in this JOURNAL. We all recognize that the Church grew up in a world of 'Greeks who sought after wisdom'. But I hold that we are far too apt to restrict this *σοφία* to philosophy, whereas it covers all the intellectual life of the Greek world<sup>1</sup> and thus includes the two great studies of literature and rhetoric. If the two words of my heading had been shewn to be leading catchwords of the philosophical schools, their possible connexion with these schools would long ago have received full consideration. If they had been catchwords of the mysteries, they would of late years have received the same consideration. If, as I think is clear, they were catchwords of a widely favoured form of learning, their possible connexion with it deserves to be considered, even if it is not to be finally accepted.

F. H. COLSON.

<sup>1</sup> This appears clearly in e. g. Tatian *Or. ad Graec.* §§ 1 and 2.