

"BOS ET ASINUS" AGAIN.

That the reading *in medio duorum animalium* is already found in the Septuagint all students of Biblical archeology know, myself not excepted. Note 4 of my brief paper in the January number of *The Open Court* makes mention of this passage in the LXX, and in my essay in *Modern Language Notes* (April, 1914) I quoted the corresponding Septuagint reading verbatim. Prof. H. J. Heuser must then have overlooked my footnote, else he would have known that the Itala did not form the last source of this erroneous version for me. I have mentioned the Itala as the version from which the Roman Breviary has taken the reading *in medio duorum animalium* verbally, but the Itala version is, of course, to be led back directly or indirectly to the LXX, for the Itala undoubtedly represents a Greek original prior to Origen's Hexapla. The Itala is the immediate, but not the ultimate source of the version in the Breviary.

In this footnote, which Professor Heuser seems to have overlooked or ignored in his criticism, I made the statement that the *in medio duorum animalium* reading in the LXX is a patristic interpolation intended to make of this text a Messianic prophecy. It is inconceivable, as Professor Heuser in his comment in the February number of *The Open Court* would have it, that this corruption of the text was made by the Jewish rabbis (?), who, in fact, in their translation of the Masoretic text "were necessarily and entirely guided by the living tradition which had its focus in the synagogal lessons" (*Encycl. Brit.*, article "Septuagint"). I am the last man on earth to take up the cudgels for the Jewish "rabbis," but as an unbiased student of ancient as well as modern literature I maintain that this wilful alteration of the text cannot be laid at the doors of the Alexandrian Hellenists of pre-Christian days. It is true that the palpable mistakes they otherwise made would go to show that though proficient in Greek they had "an inadequate knowledge of Hebrew" (*ibid.*), but this reading *in medio duorum animalium* instead of *in medio annorum* is beyond the least shadow of a doubt an intentional alteration, and these Hellenists living one and a half centuries before Christ had no motive whatsoever to corrupt the text. We must bear in mind that this erroneous passage is not due alone to a wrong pointing of an unpointed text, though one would expect that the translators, who were well familiar with the Bible, knew the correct pointing of this very common word; in order to mispoint this word it was necessary for them to misread the word following, to substitute false letters. And what is more, this very same word which the translators mispointed, though in order to do so they had to corrupt the following word, was correctly pointed by them in the very same verse. Does common sense not tell us that this change was intentional? And in order to remove just suspicion a commentary was added to the word when it was correctly pointed. To make my meaning clear let me place side by side the two versions.

Habakkuk iii. 2

Septuagint.¹

Domine audivi auditionem tuam et timui. Domine opus tuum, in medio duorum animalium. In medio annorum notum facies cum advenerit tempus demonstraberis.

Vulgat.

Domine audivi auditionem tuam et timui. Domine opus tuum, in medio annorum vivifica illud. In medio annorum notum facies.

Professor Heuser thinks that in rendering the prophecy of Habakkuk into Greek the prophecy of Isaiah (i. 3) may have been ringing in the ears of the translator. Quite aside from the fact that Isaiah could not have meant anything else but the inferiority of Israel to the most stupid animals in his ingratitude to the Lord, the Giver of all life and sustenance, Professor Heuser

¹ The Greek reads:

Κύριε εἰσακήκοα τὴν ἀκοήν σου, καὶ ἐφοβήθην. κατενόησα τὰ ἔργα σου, καὶ ἐξέστην. ἐν μέσῳ δύο ζώων γνωσθήσῃ, ἐν τῷ ἐγγίξειν τὰ ἔτη ἐπιγνωσθήσῃ.

might be interested to know that it was reserved to Cornelius to see in the two animals between which Christ was to be born the ox and the ass. First these animals were thought to be the Medes and the Persians. Then Theophylactus saw in these animals the two cherubim, others the two seraphim, others again the two robbers between whom the Man of Nazareth was crucified (Cf. Georges Duriez, *La théologie dans le drame religieux en Allemagne au moyen âge*, Lille and Paris, 1914, p. 240).

But though I hold the Church Fathers responsible for this spurious passage I have not the least doubt of the purity of their motives, and my reverence for their fiery zeal in winning the world for Christ is not lessened by the fact that they had no scruples in putting into the mouth of a man who lived some six centuries before, words he would never have dreamt of saying. We all know that authors in those days were in the habit of attributing their works to men who lived centuries upon centuries before them with the purpose of gaining a better hearing. How many books in the Bible bear the names of men who have by no means written them. We must bear in mind that all the Christian evidence in those days was limited to the Bible. If the Jews interpreted everything out of, and, if need be, even into the Bible, the early Christians had to use the same weapons. Instead of calling this passage erroneous I consider it with Cornelius-a-Lapide (Comment. in Habac. III) prophetic. For though these words did not come from a man who lived six centuries before the supposed event, but possibly from a man who lived a century after it, they were nonetheless inspired—inspired by the loftiest and noblest motives.

Father Heuser is anxious to assure us at the close of his communication to *The Open Court* that the medieval mystery playwright was familiar with the corresponding passage in the Vulgate, a point which I have not touched at all in my paper. Many critics of medieval literature deny Biblical knowledge to the clerical dramatists of the Middle Ages. The prophetic quotations in the medieval mystery plays are so deficient and incorrect, as I have shown in my little work on the prophet-scenes in the medieval religious plays of Germany (Cf. *Die Prophetensprüche und -zitate im religiösen Drama des deutschen Mittelalters*, Leipsic and Dresden, 1913, pp. 20-21 and App.) that I feel justified in my statement (*Modern Language Notes*, April, 1914) that the Bible was for the medieval playwright a *terra incognita*. For a further defense of my standpoint and a repudiation of the charge of *mal connaître l'esprit du moyen âge* I refer my critic to my review of Duriez's works in one of the approaching numbers of *Modern Language Notes*.

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NOTES.

The University of Pennsylvania has published, in connection with the Babylonian Section of its Museum, a volume entitled "Legal and Administrative Documents from Nippur Chiefly from the Dynasties of Isin and Larsa," embodying the results of research work done by Dr. Edward Chiera, Harrison Research Fellow in Semitics in the University of Pennsylvania, on materials obtained in Nippur by four expeditions conducted by that institution. The book contains 110 pages devoted chiefly to transliterations, translations and annotations of specimen texts, lists of date-formulae of the Isin and Larsa dynasties, and a list of personal names. Following the reading matter and occupying one-half of the volume are a large number of plates, chiefly autograph copies of the tablets in question.