

*THE CRETANS ALWAYS LIARS.*

EVERY student of the New Testament knows the famous hexameter verse on the Cretans in the first chapter of the Epistle to Titus (Titus i. 12), and is also aware that it is from a lost work of Epimenides, the Cretan poet. The identification is a very early one in the Christian literature ; it occurs, for example, in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* (i. 14), with the remark that St. Paul recognizes Epimenides the Cretan as a Greek prophet, and is not ashamed to quote him. It is found again in the Euthalian apparatus of the New Testament, where, in the list of quotations (*μαρτυρίαι*) in the Pauline writings, we find the passage from Titus, described as—

Ἐπιμενίδου Κρητὸς καὶ μάντεως χρῆσιμός,  
καὶ Καλλιμάχου Κυρηναίου ποιητοῦ ἢ αὐτῆς.

Here we find a reference to Epimenides as having the Mantic gift, which explains why Clement of Alexandria and the Epistle to Titus call him a prophet, rather than a poet ; and we have a further reference made to Callimachus the poet, as using the same testimony (*μαρτυρία*), who must, on this showing, have quoted from Epimenides. A MS. on Mount Athos<sup>1</sup> has the Euthalian note in a more extended form and tells us that the verse from Titus is found in Callimachus' *Hymn to Jove*—a fact which had already been recognized by scholars. The Athos note is as follows :—

Ἐπιμενίδου Κρητὸς μαντέως χρῆσιμός.  
κέχρηται δὲ καὶ Καλλιμάχος τῇ χρήσει  
ἐν τῷ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ῥηθέντι εἰς τὸν Δία ὕμνῳ,

and the verification of the reference is given by turning to Callimachus, *Hymn in Jov.* 8, where we find a line beginning with

Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεύδονται.

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Laura, 184. ;

So far there is nothing in the identification that has not been long recognized, unless it should be the marginal reference from the Athos MS. But now let us pass on to a more obscure point, viz., the reason why Epimenides, himself a Cretan, should have expressed himself so savagely with regard to the Cretan character. He would not have denounced his fellow-countrymen unless he had been provoked, and one is tempted to say that the provocation must have been acute. He is not writing a book on national characteristics ; something must have preceded in his text which caused the rhetorical outburst. This is betrayed not only by the passion of the writer, but by the word *ἀεὶ*, which has here a retrospective reference to some particular lie which has fallen from Cretan lips. If, for a parallel, I were to say that "A or B *always* exaggerates," it would probably be the case that I had before me some definite case of exaggeration on the part of A or B. This case I might have treated by the method of rapid generalization (probably an unjust proceeding), and thus have replaced the incident by the character corresponding to it, or I might actually have had the generalization made in advance, and from experience, in my thought, and simply have put the particular exaggeration into the company where it belonged. What then was the incident which provoked Epimenides ? and was his extended formula just or unjust ?

The Greek scholiasts and commentators, with pedantic and pitiful biblical loyalty, went to Homer for the answer : they laid it down, as Eustathius does, in his commentary on Homer, that it was the wickedness of Idomeneus the Cretan which led to the outburst of Epimenides ; he had played false in the distribution of the spoils of Troy : hence the proverb about Cretan lying, and Cretizing, and all the rest of the proverbial railings which have come down to us. But this bit of pedantry is obviously wide of the mark :

there is not the slightest reason to suppose that Epimenides was thinking of Idomeneus or writing about him. He would not have lost his temper and talked about "beastly Cretans" on the provocation of a single obscure incident in the Trojan war. We must, therefore, reject the suggestion of Eustathius and of the scholiast upon Callimachus (one of whom is probably copying the other) and we must look for the wrath of Epimenides in another direction. We must search for a particular lie rather than for a particular Cretan. It was not the Cretan, but his lie that enraged Epimenides. And it is not difficult to unearth the falsity: it is the statement that *Zeus was buried in Crete*. That Zeus should have been born in Crete was not thought to be an impiety, but that he should have been dead and buried, that was blasphemy, blasphemy of the first water. The proof of this is manifold. For example, Lucian (*Timon*. 6) makes Timon laugh at Zeus and tell him it is time for him to bestir himself, "unless" (says he) "the Cretan myth should turn out to be really true, *which they tell of thee and thy tomb*."

Again, in his treatise on *The Liar* (*Philopseud*. 3), Lucian points out that it is no wonder that peoples and cities lie both in public and private, "since the Cretans can show the tomb of Zeus and not blush." A monumental lie, this of the Cretans, in more senses than one!

In the same way Lucan, in his *Pharsalia* (viii. 872), says that the Egyptians are just as great liars about the tomb of Magnus as Crete is over the grave of the Thunderer:

Tam mendax Magni tumulo, quam Creta Tonantis.

And now turn once more to the Hymn of Callimachus, and examine the context of the words "the Cretans are always liars"; he is discussing the relative claims of Arcadia and Crete to be the birthplace of Zeus; one of them must be wrong; which of them is telling the untruth? and he

answers, that it must be the Cretans, because they are known to be liars, in that *they have fashioned a tomb for the King immortal* :

Κρήτες ἀεὶ ψεύσται· καὶ γὰρ τάφον, ὃ ἄνα, σείω  
Κρήτες ἐτεκμήναντο, σὺ δ' οὐ θάβες, ἐσσι γὰρ αἰεί.

So we not only get the reason why the Cretans are liars, but we can go a step further, and say that the reason must have been in the lost text of Epimenides, and the quotation made from the Cretan poet by Callimachus is not limited to the statement that "the Cretans are always liars"; the tomb of Zeus was mentioned in the original poem : in fact, the tomb *is* the lie.

If we turn to the Greek Anthology (iii. 22), we shall find an epigram of Gaius Lentulus Getulicus, describing a tomb raised to a man who was lost at sea, something in the style of the English epitaph :

Here lies the body of Jonathan Ground,  
Who was lost at sea and never found.

The epigrammatist describes how the supposed dead-and-buried Cretan lost his life. It was one Astydamas the son of Damis, the Cydonian ; the island of Pelops, ill-navigable Crete, the sunken reefs of Malea have been his ruin : long ere this he has filled the paunch of the sea-monsters. But people have set up on the shore a lying tomb. Do not be surprised at it ! where the Cretans are liars and even Jove is buried !

Τὸν ψεύσαν δέ με τύμβον ἐπὶ χθονὶ θέντο· τί θαῦμα ;  
Κρήτες ὅπου ψεύσται, καὶ Διὸς ἐστὶ τάφος.

Here it is clear that the writer of the epigram is using either Epimenides or his imitator Callimachus : the connexion is made, not merely by the Cretan liars, but by the Cretan lie.<sup>1</sup> And here we see an elegiac couplet formed

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that the writer also imitates an epigram of

out of a previous hexameter couplet, in which there can be no doubt that the writer who is imitated had both the liars and the lie. Does it not look as if we should have to restore to Epimenides the statement about Zeus dead and buried ?

Probably enough has been said on this head, and it is not necessary to multiply Greek or Latin references further : the meaning of the famous hexameter has been deduced from a number of associated passages : and I see that the same suggestion was made by one of the editors of the Anthology in the following form :

“ That the Cretan lie relative to Jove’s tomb was the cause of the island’s bad name, is implied by Lucan, *Pharsalia*, viii. 872 ” ; a passage to which we drew attention above.

Le Prieur also, in his notes on Tertullian, makes a similar suggestion (*Tert. Apol.* 14 : “ In Insula Creta mortuum fuisse constat, unde Callimachus, *Hymni in Jovem*, etc.”).

I now propose to go a step or two farther, with the object of disclosing something more with regard to the lost text of Epimenides, and of throwing light upon an interesting riddle in Greek mythology.

I have in my possession a copy of a rare Nestorian commentary upon the Scriptures, known as the *Gannat Busamé*, or *Garden of Delights*. It is full of valuable extracts from Syrian fathers, of the Eastern school especially, and has incorporated a very large number of passages from Theodore of Mopsuestia, under the name of the Interpreter (the usual disguise by which the faithful Nestorians describe their great, but proscribed, teacher). The following passage,

Leonidas of Tarentum (No. 90), which also deals with the grave of a man who has become food for fishes :

κάγω μὲν πόντῳ δινεόμενος ἰχθύσι κύρμα,  
Οἰχοῦμαι. ψευστῆς δ' οὗτος ἔκεσσι λίθος.

which I believe to be from Theodore's hand (it certainly is a translation from the Greek and follows immediately on an extract from Theodore), contains a curious comment upon Acts xvii. 18.

“ ‘In Him we live and move and have our being.’ The Cretans used to say of Zeus, that he was a prince and was ripped up by a wild boar, and he was buried : and lo ! his grave is with us. Accordingly Minos, the son of Zeus, made over him a panegyric and in it he said :

“ ‘A grave have fashioned for thee, O holy and high One, the lying Kretans, who are all the time liars, evil beasts, idle bellies ; but thou diest not, for to eternity thou livest, and standest ; for in thee we live and move and have our being.’ ”

Here then we meet again with the famous quotation, and, curiously, not in a comment upon the Epistle to Titus, but upon the Acts of the Apostles, in a passage where Paul is admittedly quoting from Greek poets ! And it is clear that Theodore is either quoting Callimachus, or the sources of Callimachus. But, although it agrees closely with Callimachus, there are some things which point to the sources from which Callimachus has worked. The manner of Zeus' death is not given nor suggested in Callimachus ; and, as we shall see presently, it is information that is very valuable. But even if that bit of theological news be referred to some other source, what are we to make of the reference to Minos, the son of Zeus, as making a panegyric on his father ? This cannot have been arrived at from the reading of Callimachus, and it cannot be detached from the quotation.

And yet it is clear that the text agrees closely with Callimachus. For example, the word “fashioned” (*negaru*) is used of the carpenter or the worker in wood and stone ; it certainly stands for *ἐτεκτῆναντο* in Callimachus : and the statement “thou didst not die, but livest ever and

abidest," is an almost exact translation from Callimachus. On the other hand, there are variations in order : it looks as if the Greek which underlies the Syriac was something like this :

Σοὶ γὰρ ἐτεκτῆσαντο τάφον, κύδιστε, μέγιστε,  
Κρηῆτες, αἰὲ ψεύσται, κακὰ θήρια, γάστερες ἀργαί.

On this hypothesis the Κρηῆτες in the ordinary proverbial quotation belongs to a statement about the tomb in a previous line and should have a comma after it. The verb belonging to it has preceded it. We will suppose some such restoration to lie behind the quotations of Theodore and Callimachus. But now what has become of Epimenides, when Minos is introduced in this way ? I do not think there is any real difficulty. We must not get rid of Minos,<sup>9</sup> though I think it is possible that the name Epimenides, written in Syriac, may have been confused with the words "over him Minos," and so, perhaps, have dropped out. But whatever be the exact form of the extract, we have the key to its meaning in a statement made by Diogenes Laertius (i. 112) to the effect that Minos, or rather Minos and Rhadamanthus, were the subject of a poem in 1,000 verses by Epimenides ; and this poem may very well have been the panegyric referred to. For if Epimenides wrote a long poem on Minos, the son of Zeus, this would be the very place in which to denounce the impious Cretans, and the denunciation might even have been put into the mouth of Minos himself.

Upon the whole, then, I suspect that Theodore is working direct from Epimenides, and not merely quoting Callimachus.

Now we pass on to the other point to which I referred, viz., the particular death with<sup>r</sup> which Zeus was credited before his burial. It is certainly, at first sight, surprising to have an element of this kind introduced into Olympian mythology. To be ripped up by a wild boar belongs to

the Syrian cult of Adonis, and not to the Greek cult of the All-father. We are tempted to ask, at the first reading of the new legend, what place has the pig in the ritual of Zeus? We should expect him in the worship of Atys or Adonis or Aphrodite, but not in this connexion.

It is, however, a fact that the presence of the pig in the Cretan ritual of Zeus had already been suspected, and the connexion between the Cretan and Asian religions had actually been divined for us by our leading mythologists.

For example, Farnell writes as follows in his *Cults of the Greek States* (i. 36, 37) :

“The Cretan legend . . . may have little value for the history of the purely Hellenic religion of Zeus. A student of Greek history has to receive evidence from Crete with much suspicion, not for the reason that the Cretans were always liars, but because *their cults and legends were often confused with influences from Phoenicia and Asia Minor.* . . .”

The Child-Zeus who dies, the son of Rhea, attended by the orgiastic rout of the Curetes, is probably not the Hellenic Zeus at all, but rather the Dionysos-Atys of Phrygia, the child of the earth, whose birth and death may typify the rise and fall of the year, and whose image, like that of Dionysos, was hung on a tree for sacrificial purposes.”

It is both curious and interesting to find a confirmation of these statements in the new form of the Cretan legend which we have brought to light.

Dr. Farnell had also brought out very clearly the fact that the pig was a sacred animal in the cult of the Cretan Zeus. He says :

“Stranger still is the Cretan story recorded by Athenæus, that it was a sow that gave nourishment to the new-born god ; therefore all the Cretans consider this animal especially sacred, and will not taste of its flesh ; and the men of

Praesos perform sacred rites with the sow, making her the first offering at the sacrifice. Now the pig is nowhere else found in the ritual of Zeus, but was a sacred animal in the cult of Attis-Adonis, Cybele, and the Aphrodite of Asia Minor, her counterpart."

From this it appears that the pig was taboo in Crete, and in connexion with the original Zeus-cult of the island; two mythological explanations are given of the cult, one that the infant Zeus was suckled by a sow, the other that Zeus met his death by the tusks of a wild boar. Either of the explanations will find a place in the Asiatic cults, and the parallel with the Adonis-cult (and perhaps the same thing is true of the Attis-cult) in the new bit of mythology is extremely close. It is interesting, at this point, to recall what Frazer (*Golden Bough*, ii. 304) has explained, as regards the connexion between the god and the tabooed animal that appears in its cult. :

"The worshippers of Attis abstained from eating the flesh of swine. This appears to indicate that the pig was regarded as an embodiment of Attis. And the legend that Attis was killed by a boar points in the same direction. For after the examples of the goat Dionysus and the pig Demeter it may almost be laid down as a rule that an animal which is said to have injured a god was originally the god himself." <sup>1</sup>

Probably enough has now been said on the mythological side: it seems clear that neither in Crete nor in Asia Minor did the pig owe its taboo to hygienic reasons. The quotation which we have been discussing is, in any case, a contribution, however slight, to the history of the early Cretan religion.

Now let us return, for a moment, to the supposed extract

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion of this point, see Frazer, *l.c.*, and for the death of Attis by a boar, *ibid.* p. 131.

from Theodore in the *Gannat Busamé*. If we are right in going behind Callimachus for the sources of the Cretan disrepute, and in suggesting that Epimenides is involved, we must also, I think, recognize that Theodore took the saying in the Acts of the Apostles from the same source. It will be quite clear that he has both text and commentary : the text is—

“ In Him we live and move and are ” :

the commentary is meaningless, unless the words “ In *Thee* we live and move and are ” are a part of the quotation : he would not have quoted at all, unless the quotation had illustrated the text, and the last clause of the quotation is the elucidation towards which the commentator is working ; it is not a repetition of the text ; it is the explanation, and it is the origin of the text. Consequently we have not only a reference of Paul to Aratus, in “ We are also his offspring ” (*τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γενὸς ἐσμεν*) but also a reference to some other Greek poet, probably to Epimenides, in the words, “ In Him we live and move and are.” Certainly he put himself into sympathy with the best and noblest side of the Hellenic faith. He was preaching a living God and not a dead one ; and he was willing to recognize that his hearers believed, to some extent, in the same God as himself.

The story of the dead and buried Zeus was a commonplace in Greek religion, a faith to some, a blasphemy to others. It is interesting to notice briefly the kind of treatment that the legend received at the hands of the early Christian apologists. It appears that they took a line of their own. They did not argue that Zeus was alive and that death could not and did not touch him. They wanted him dead, and so they pressed home the legend upon the Greeks with whom they disputed, using irony and sarcasm to the best of their ability. After all Zeus was only a man, you can see his grave, if you go to Crete. His character

is proved to be that of a mortal, and the tomb contradicts and negatives any Olympus that may be elsewhere. The king of the gods being got rid of, the lesser divinities would soon disappear. Hence the importance of good raillery ; and the Apologists railed him out of Court ; they had Lucian to help them, and probably a crowd of other reformers, and half-philosophers, who said the same things, but not so cleverly as Lucian.

Lactantius (*Div. Inst.*, col. 179) takes Cicero to task, because in his book on the *Nature of the Gods* he had distinguished three Jupiters, the third of whom was the Cretan Jupiter, whose tomb was shown there. How ! says Lactantius, can God be living here, and dead there ! have here a temple, and there a tomb ! The martyrs, too, if we may judge from their *Acta* (which at any rate are in evidence for what they ought to have said) were not slow to take advantage of the humorous side of the pagan tradition. When Achatius, for instance, was ordered to sacrifice to Jupiter, he remarked as follows : “ To the one whose tomb they show in Crete. Has he risen from the dead ? ”

While we admire the lofty protests of Epimenides and Callimachus and their allies, who attempt to purify and elevate the religious conceptions of their time, it is open to question whether the Christian apologists and martyrs were not taking the short road to a better faith by realizing that the matter had become humorous, and by treating it accordingly. And no doubt there are many superstitions in our own day that will never disappear as long as they are treated seriously. If only we could make epigrams like Tertullian or laugh with Lactantius or with Lucian !

Now that we have shown that the majority of those who called the Cretans liars were speaking from the standpoint of religion, and dealing with a particular lie, rather than with a general habit, we are almost bound to admit

that the Cretans have been judged too severely. Epimenides will have to answer for it.

If we have shown reasons for the belief that some more fragments of Epimenides can be recovered from the supposed comment of Theodore, and that a trace of the recovered lines is to be seen in the passage of the Acts of the Apostles upon which Theodore is commenting, we can now go on to clear up a difficulty which has long attached to the interpretation of St. Paul's sermon on the Unknown God: for before any suspicion had been provoked as to the existence of matters from Epimenides in the famous sermon before the Areopagus, a connexion had been suggested between Epimenides and the altar to the unknown God.

Diogenes Laertius (*Epim.* 3) tells us of a time when a pestilence raged at Athens, and in order to stay it, the Pythian oracle directed that Epimenides should be summoned from Crete to give advice on the matter. He came and turned loose a number of black and white sheep on the Areopagus: wherever they lay down an altar was erected and a sacrifice offered τῷ προσήκοντι θεῷ, and this is the reason, says Diogenes, why you find at Athens βωμὸς ἀωνύμους, altars without names.

It was not unnatural that this passage should have been seized on to explain the mysterious Unknown God of St. Paul. But, on the other hand, Diogenes does not specify with sufficient clearness what was meant by the god that belonged or was appropriate to the place where a sheep lay down, and neither does his "nameless altar" furnish a sufficient agreement with the inscription of which Paul speaks. It is possible that these difficulties may be removed, or, at least, lightened, by the considerations at the beginning of this paper.

For if we admit that St. Paul spoke of Epimenides or from Epimenides in his discourse on the altar to the Un-

known God, then the story of Diogenes Laertius about Epimenides and the nameless altars acquires a certain confirmation. The nameless altars and the altar to the Unknown God may very well be the same thing spoken of in two different ways. The legend may actually have been known to St. Paul by popular explanation ; and in that case the reason for quoting from Epimenides would lie on the surface. He came in along with the observed altar, and when he was brought in, it was easy to raise the question of the Living God from his poems.

Perhaps this may seem to be unduly speculative. But the sermon on Mars' Hill (or to the Areopagus) is, at least, only a rapid summary, and we are obliged to speculate as to the matters that underlie the *précis* of Luke. I offer, as the ground of fresh speculation, the argument for the belief that Epimenides was quoted as well as Aratus ; and from that, as a starting point, it is quite likely that the abbreviated narrative of Luke may acquire a fresh meaning and a higher degree of vividness.

J. RENDEL HARRIS.