

SOME COPTIC APOCRYPHA.

DR BUDGE's last volume of Coptic texts from British Museum MSS, issued by the Trustees in 1915, contains some very interesting apocryphal matter, upon which I have so far seen no comment, which under present conditions is not surprising. I will venture notices of two or three of the documents.

I

The 'Twentieth Discourse' of Cyril of Jerusalem on the Virgin contains an account of a monk, Annarichos of Maioma, who was reported to Cyril as teaching heresy. Cyril sent for him, and the interview is related. The monk described himself as a follower of 'the holy bishop Sator, and Ebion who succeeded him', and also of Harpocratius (Carpocrates?), who could cast out devils. Called upon for an account of his teaching, he said: 'It is written in the (Gospel) according to the Hebrews (*hem phata hebraios*) that when Christ wished to come upon the earth to men, the good Father called a mighty power (*δύναμις*) in the heavens which was called Michael, and committed Christ to the care thereof. And the power came down into the world and it was called Mary, and he (Christ) was in her womb seven months. Afterwards she gave birth to Him, and he increased in stature, and chose the Apostles . . . He fulfilled the appointed time (*προθεσμία*) . . . After the Jews had raised Him upon the cross, the Father took Him up into heaven unto Himself.' Cyril asked: 'Where in the four Gospels is it said that the holy Virgin Mary is a *δύναμις*?' Answer: 'In that *κατὰ Εβραίων*.' Cyril: 'Then according to you there are five Gospels.' 'Yes.' 'What is the fifth? The four Gospels have titles "according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John". Whose is the fifth?' 'It is that which was written for the Hebrews.' After some general remarks from Cyril, in which he quoted the *Ancoratus* of Epiphanius, the monk declared himself convinced of his error, and requested that his books might be burnt. It is possible that Cyril said something more of interest, but most unluckily a leaf is gone at this point. No more is said of the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

Confused as is the account given by the monk of this fifth Gospel, we may see in it at least a reflexion of a Gospel of the kind that used to be called Gnostic. It would be difficult to defend the view that the Gospel according to the Hebrews which Jerome knew identified

Michael with Mary, making the latter an incarnation of the former! and it is only less difficult to suppose that Epiphanius would have missed the chance of declaiming against such a doctrine if he had read it in his Ebionite Gospel. On the same lines the Gospel of Peter is excluded. But that the passage may represent the teaching of some Gnostic group I see no reason to doubt. In an earlier page of his discourse Cyril says: 'Let Ebion now be ashamed, and Harpocratius, these godless heretics who say in their madness that *Mary* was a *δύναμις* of God, which took the form of a woman and came upon the earth and was called Mary, and gave birth to Emmanuel for us. Does it not follow . . . that Christ did not take flesh upon himself,' &c.

There are other curious points in the discourse. Cyril expresses his disbelief in the fabulous lives of the Virgin, and tells her story, in fact, with some sobriety. She is identified, however, with all the other Mariés of the Gospels including Mary Magdalene. Her parents were Joakim (= Kleopas) and Anna, her grandparents David (or Aaron) and Sara. The rejection of Joakim's offering, and the picturesque details of the birth and childhood are all pruned away. The story of the death is told at some length, but its end is quite unexpected. The Jews attack the funeral procession and the Apostles flee, leaving the body on the bier. The Jews burn the bier, but the body is nowhere to be found: their fruitless search for it is stopped by a voice from heaven, which bids no man seek for it before the judgement day.

The discourse of Demetrius on the Birth of our Lord, which follows, has some telling details. I will extract one. When Mary was dwelling under Joseph's care, 'the angels were round about her at all times . . . and they were in the form of doves, or some other kind of holy bird. They flew about her in the place where she used to sit working at her handicraft, and they would alight upon the windows of her room.'

II

The Dying Prayer of St Athanasius (p. 1019) enables us to restore a puzzling passage in the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* (Steindorff's *Anonymous Apocalypse*). Athanasius says: 'Heaven and earth hang upon His word, even as a drop of water hangeth from a potter's vessel (κἀδος).' The passage in the *Apocalypse* (p. 37, *T. u. U. N. F.* ii 3) is

(I saw)
the whole earth, how it
. . . like as a drop of water
(illegible line)
when it came up . . . a . . . spring

Also the same words occur near together on the almost wholly illegible

page of the Sahidic *Apoc. of Zephaniah* (p. 114), viz. 'heaven', 'a drop of water', upon a'. The metaphor is that of a drop of water hanging to a jar when it is drawn up out of a well. This is not the place to discuss the question of the identity of the *Anonymous Apocalypse* with that of Zephaniah, of which I am well convinced: but the small point I bring forward here is one of a good many that are in favour of that identity.

III

The Discourse on St Michael by Timothy, Abp. of Alexandria, adds another to the list of Johannine Apocrypha, native to Egypt. It quotes *in extenso* a book found by Timothy at Jerusalem which had been written by Proclus (Prochorus?), the disciple of John, a late and wild production containing an Inferno which has some antique features.

IV

But the last document in the volume is by far the most interesting. It is a Coptic version of the greater part of the Apocalypse of Paul: a version of which hitherto nothing had been heard. More space may reasonably be devoted to this.

Tischendorf's Greek Text and the Syriac and Latin versions (the last is printed in my *Apocrypha Anecdota*, 1st series) are our best authorities for this book: and of these the Latin is in some respects the first, for the Greek original has reached us in a rather shortened form. Tischendorf divided his text into fifty-one sections, and I have followed his division in printing the Latin.

The Coptic begins in the sixteenth of these sections and is continuous, with small gaps, until late in the fiftieth, when we are startled by a note of Dr Budge's. 'Fifty-two pages wanting.' We should read 'Two'. The explanation of the mistake is given in a footnote.¹

It has long been recognized that the Apocalypse is imperfect. The Greek, Latin, and Syriac all end the vision at the same point. Paul has met Elijah and Enoch (or Elijah and Elisha: Syr. Lat.), and Elijah is telling him how he prayed for a drought, how the angels interceded for men, and how God said: 'Be patient until my servant Elijah prays, and I will send rain upon the earth.' The Syriac has contrived a smoother ending by adding a few words and subjoining the

¹ A footnote on p. clxii (Budge) tells us the quires of the MS are disordered. Dr Budge has printed them as they stand (!) and his arithmetic has become confused in spite of the fact that the pages of the MS are numbered. The volume (Brit. Mus. Or. 7022) consists of pp. 1-14 (Encomium of St Raphael, imperfect), 79-126, 129-140 (Apocalypse of Paul); pp. 15-78 (both inclusive) and 127-128 are missing. The remarks 'about 80 pages wanting' (p. 534), 52 pp. wanting (pp. 556 and 1076) are quite wrong; that on p. 1042 'about 64 pages wanting' is alone correct.

story of the discovery of the book at Tarsus, which in Gr. Lat. begins the book, and no doubt did so in the Coptic. But the imperfection is clear. Elijah has not finished his speech, his companion has said nothing, and there is no hint of how Paul returned to earth.

Now it is a chief point of interest in the Coptic that it continues the text on the same lines and carries on the story for a considerable time (some eight pages in Dr Budge's translation). Elijah finishes his speech, Enoch addresses Paul, and then there are meetings with Zacharias and John Baptist, Abel, and Adam. After that Paul is carried up into the third heaven, and there is a curious *double* vision of Paradise, in which much of what has gone before is repeated in shorter form. (We need not be surprised at almost any quantity of repetition in this Apocalypse: Paul has already been to Paradise twice.) Then the angel carries him back to the Mount of Olives, where he finds the Apostles. After hearing Paul's story, they command 'me Mark, and Timothy' to put the Apocalypse into writing. Our Lord then appears, greets the Apostles with apostrophes familiar to readers of Coptic Acts, blesses the readers of the Apocalypse, foretells the death of Peter and Paul on the 5th of the month Epeph, and dismisses them all on a cloud to their several countries.

I cannot suppose that the original Apocalypse ended just in this way: there is an admixture of native Egyptian stuff in these last pages, the extent of which it is not easy to define. But I have no doubt that in them the original conclusion is embodied—a point of some interest.

The Coptic gives upon the whole a fairly faithful representation of the Greek. There are three insertions in the body of the text, of appreciable length. In § 16 (pp. 1043-1044) is a description of the ministers of punishment, and of the torments they inflict. They have the faces of lions, bulls, bears, asses, crocodiles. In § 31 (p. 1058) is half a page telling of the pits of hell which are of various depths and filled with various torments. It is quite pointless where it stands. In § 46 (p. 1072: speech of the Virgin to Paul) are a dozen lines promising rewards to those who copy or read the Apocalypse: this is 'common form' in Coptic books. All these insertions I do not hesitate to attribute to the Coptic translator, and it is no more than natural to credit him with having dressed up the conclusion of the book as well.

Dr Budge's translation has suffered in this, as in preceding volumes, from insufficient use of other texts. By the help of these it is not difficult to correct a good many errors. A footnote on Temeluchos (p. 1060) ought to be deleted. It is quite wrong, and obliterates an interesting and decisive witness to the use of the Apocalypse of Peter by the author of *Paul*.