IGNATIUS AD ROMANOS TITULUS.

'Ignatius... τῇ ἡλεμένῃ... ἡγαπημένη καὶ πεφωτισμένη... ἦτις καὶ προκαθήται ἐν τόπῳ χωρίων Ῥωμαίων...

These famous words have been so much discussed that a mere recital of opinions would take up many pages. In this paper it is proposed to quote a few of the most recent and representative pronouncements, to detail a proof that the vulgate reading of the text is indefensible, and to suggest a correction.

I hold Casaubon's words to be justified, who said that 'those who wish to draw inferences from the words rogandi sunt ut barbaram lectionem prius nobis explicent'.1 He objected to Bellarmine's inferences, but his protest cuts more ways than he meant. If the words are corrupt they cannot be used in favour of a maximist view of either episcopal or papal authority; but neither is it right to leave an important witness unintelligible in order that the minimist argument may benefit by his silence. Let Ignatius's voice first be critically recovered, and it will then be time enough to consider the tendency of what he says.

And now to begin with the opinions of the two most recent authors who have expounded Ignatius:—

Batiffol2 says:

On croit trouver un indice plus sûr de cette prééminence de Rome dans le fait qu' 'elle préside dans le lieu de la région des Romains'. M. Funk ne fait pas difficulté de reconnaître que dire ἐν τόπῳ χωρίων Ῥωμαίων pour dire 'à Rome' est une singularité: le style d'Ignace, par ailleurs, n'est-il pas encombré d'affectations semblables? Si donc Ignace a voulu dire simplement 'à Rome', le verbe προκαθήται se construirait absolument: l'église préside, et elle préside à Rome.

de Genouillac3:

Il n'y a pas non plus à faire grand état d'une expression grammaticalement fort peu correcte par laquelle l'église de Rome est dite préside ἐν τ. χ. P.; on peut y voir la campagne romaine; plus probablement, ce lourd pleonasme trahit le vague de l'idée que se faisait de loin l'évêque d'Antioche au sujet de la grande ville qui avait donné son nom au plus puissant peuple de l'univers.

And again:

Il faut admettre d’une part que χωρίου ne signifie pas l’empire et n’ajoute ici rien à l’idée, de l’autre que ἐν τόπῳ ne limite pas l’autorité mais indique le lieu de son siège.

These explanations are not satisfactory. Are we seriously asked to imagine that Ignatius did not know that Rome was a town? Was he so illiterate as to picture the Romans living ἐν τῇ κόμῳ in the Campagna? Ignatius in the rôle of Tityrus, and even more rustic than he, is an absurdity. And is not to say that χωρίου ‘adds nothing to the idea’ tantamount to saying that the word is unmeaning?

But where a word or words are proved and admitted to be unmeaning the function of criticism is either to emend or to obelize: not to say, as Funk says, (p. 212) interpretatio mediocris magis mihi placet quam mutatio textus speciosissima. These are the words of dogged unreason. What is this but to decree the copyists’ infallibility? Mediocris interpretatio! Ignatius need not be credited with having written sense as long as it be not pure and arrant nonsense. Such a doctrine, gravely parroted as it has been for the last half century, is the abdication of criticism. On this principle texts may be edited by office-boys.

How then is the problem to be attacked? I select χωρίου as the faible of the phrase, and first write the phrase without it:

ἥτις καὶ προκάθηται ἐν τόπῳ . . . Ρωμαιῶν. Now προκάθησθαι usually has a gen. case defining the sphere of ‘presidency’: e.g. Ign. ad Magn. vi 1 (p. 194) the bishop is προκαθήμενος καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων . . . καὶ τῶν διακόνων. This was admitted as long ago as Voss (Zahn op. cit. p. 309); but it seems that Meibom was the only scholar who saw that we have such a genitive here in the word Ρωμαιῶν. Such an expression will be quite analogous to προκαθεξομένη τῆς ἐφας πόλες &c. (quoted by Funk). There is no difficulty in describing the Church of Rome as ‘presiding over the Romans’—provided that ἐν τόπῳ can be accommodated in connexion with the (hypothetically) lost word.

Upon this lost word two lines of probability must converge: (1) the palaeographical, and (2) the logical, according to the sense of the context and the practice of the author or the language. In order to this, I subjoin an exhaustive examination of the usage of τόπος in the Patres Apostolici,1 which while evincing the impossibility of ἐν τόπῳ χωρίου will in probability indicate what kind of word the phrase desiderates.

1. In general: place, locality.

ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ Martyr. Polyc. xix p. 302. οὐ πανταχοῦ . . . ἀλλ’ ἕ ἐν Ἰερουσαλήμ. μόνη κἀκεῖ δὲ οὖκ ἐν παντὶ τ. i Clem. ad Cor. xli p. 112.

1 For convenience, the reference is given by the paging of Funk’s edition (Tubingae 1878).
2. **τόπος** = *room*, a sufficient place, an assigned place.

οὐκ εἶχον τὸ ἄλλο ἐσονταί ἐκβολοὶ. Ἐπιρρήτησα... εἰ ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς μετανοια καὶ έχουσι τ. εἰς τὸν πύργον τόπον 366. μετὰ γὰρ τὸ τελεσθήναι τὸν πύργον... οὐχ ἔχετε τ. 370. μὴ ἔχων τὸν τ. καθαρὸν, καὶ ἦτε ἀποστίηνει τ. τινι γάρ... μὴ ἔχων τ. 400. μὴ ἔχων τ. που εἰσέλθη... ἔρχεται σοὶ... καὶ ἔχων τ. εἰσορίσετε... 436. ἐνα καὶ ἡ σάρξ... σχῆ τ. 462. τῶν δύναται τ. τούτων τ. πληρώσατο; 512. εἰς τὸν ἄδιον τ. 512. ὁ τόπος αὐτῶν μετὰ τῶν ἀγγέλων ἔστιν 548; and, metaphorically, τόπος = *copia*, *potestas*: meta-noiás τόπον ἐδοκεν ὁ δεσπότης.

3. Certain special senses:—

(i) **τόπος** = heaven, a place in heaven.

οὐκ εὐλαβοῦται μὴ τίς αὐτοῖς μεταστήσῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱδρύμαν αὐτοῖς τ. 1 Clem. ad Cor. xliii p. 116. τῶν ἐκλήθησαν καὶ ὑπὸ τίνος καὶ εἰς ὑν τ. 2 Clem. ad Cor. i p. 144. μαρτυρήσας ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον τ. τῆς δάξης 1 Clem. ad Cor. v. 146. μὴ ᾠν τ. τ. ἐπορεύθη ἢδ. εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον αὐτοῖς τ. εἰσὶ παρὰ τῷ κυρίῳ Polyc. ad Phil. ix p. 276. ἢ ὡν ὠδὸς τοῦ φωτός ἐστιν αὐτῇ: ἐὰν τις θέλων ὠδὸν δεδειν ἐπὶ τῶν ὀφειλόμενον τ. απείσῃ... Epist. Barn. xix p. 52. Uniquely χώρος stands for τόπος in a similar phrase 1 Clem. ad Cor. i p. 124.

(ii) **τόπος** = a place or passage in a book.

ἐν ἑτέρῳ τ. λέγει οὕτως 1 Clem. ad Cor. viii p. 72; ἢ δ. xyxxix 96. πάντα τ. ἐξηλαφήσαμεν ὑπομιμήσκομεν ἢθ. lxii p. 140.

(iii) **τόπος** = *dignitas*, place in a hierarchy.

τῷ γὰρ ἀρχιεράτῳ ἦλθα λειτουργίας δεδομέναι εἰσὶν καὶ τοῖς ἑρείσιν ὠδοὶ ὑ. τ. προστέτακται... 1 Clem. ad Cor. xl i 110. τ. μηδένα φυσιότω Ign. ad Smyrn. vi p. 238. ἐκδίκει σου τὸν τ. ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιμελείᾳ... Ign. ad
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Polyc. i p. 246. . . . Οὐδὲντες, ὃς πρασβυτέρος ποτὲ ἐγένετο ἐν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ ὅπως ἄγροι τῶν δοθέντα αὐτῷ τ. Polyc. ad Phil. xi i p. 278.

Out of this classification I reserve the following passages as having special importance because in them τόπος is combined with a genitive of definition:—


(I mention here Past. p. 518 ἐγένετο δ τόπος ἱλαρός καὶ εὐπρεπέστατος τοῦ πῦργου. But here the gen. is apparently partitive and therefore it does not really belong to this category.)

If τόπος τοῦ ἄγροο means ‘part of the field’, there is, so far, nothing to prevent τόπος χωρίων having a local sense. What will that sense be? The answer depends on the meaning of χωρίων, of which word we have two examples:


τόπος χωρίων then, so far as this body of Greek attests, could only mean ‘the part or region of the estate’ (garden plot, holding): which here is evidently inept. And, in fine, whatever spatial sense be given to χωρίων, εἰς τόπῳ will restrict that sense. Consequently the suspicion against χωρίων is confirmed.

(b) In its metaphorical sense the room or place of a person, as his substitute or representative.


(I neglect the passage εἰς δοῦλον τρόπον (al. τόπον) οὐ κεῖται δ νῦς τοῦ Θεοῦ (Past. p. 460), since τόπον is a variant which, even if admitted to the text, would add nothing to the weight of the instances already cited.)

Hic aut nusquam est quod quaerimus!

Here at length we come to something apposite. The sentence from ad Magn. (supported by the Pastor passages) is cast on the very same model as ours—

προκαθημένου εἰς τόπον Θεοῦ . . . τῶν πρεσβυτέρων
προκάθησαι εἰς τόπῳ . . . Ρωμαίων

(for the equation εἰς τ. = εἰς τ. makes no difficulty).

1 Cf. p. 552, where ἀντί = the εἰς τῶν τ. of this passage.

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The missing word must be the name of the person in whose place, as whose representative, authority is exercised. Meibom saw the logical requirement of the phrase when he conjectured κυρίον; but κυρίον is not palaeographically very probable. Combine the palaeographical test with this, and can you doubt that the word which Ignatius wrote, and one copyist mistook for χωρίον, another ¹ for χοροῦ, was none other than χηροῦ = Χριστοῦ?

προκαθηται εν τόπῳ Χριστοῦ merely describes the episcopal office of the Roman Church. It neither exceeds nor contradicts the language which Ignatius uses in the other places, e.g. οἱ ἐπίσκοποι οἱ κατὰ τὰ πέρατα ὁμοθέντες εἰς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ γνώμη εἰς Ἰν ad Ephes. iii (p. 176). ὅπου ὁ χριστὸς ὁ ἐπίσκοπος ἐκεῖ τὸ πλῆθος ἐστι, ὅπερ ὁ πάντως ἢ Ἰησοῦς Ἰησοῦς, ἢ καθολική ἐκκλησία ad Smyrn. viii (p. 240); and in particular ad Magn. vi (p. 194) προκαθητέριν τὸν ἐπισκόπου εἰς τόπον Θεοῦ.

The Church addressed 'has its seat of authority' over the Romans, i.e. besides its other distinctions (καὶ) it is the Church of Rome. The proposed emendation restores the words to Greek and common sense; but neither abates nor advances any claim to Primacy which may be preferred on the strength of this titulus as a whole. Such claim rests (1) on the προκαθητέριν τῆς ἀγάπης, and (2) on the difference in scale and tone between this and any of the other salutations. That is no present concern of mine; nor do I even presume to inquire whether 'Ρωμαίων means Urbis Romanae or Orbis Romani. I merely offer to ecclesiastical historians what looks like Ignatius's real statement.

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¹ The original of the old Latin version.