

ROBERT GROSSETESTE ON THE PSALMS.

OF Grosseteste's commentary on the Psalms very little appears to be known: so far as I can see, information is summed up in Tanner's note (*Bibl. Brit.* p. 349):

'*In duas quadragenas Psalmorum* lib. ii. "Psalmorum libri, Græce Psalterium." MS Bononiae in bibliotheca Praedicatorum. *Super psalmos* usque ad centesimum inclusive. Gascoigne "Psalterium postillavit usque ad medium, nec ulterius licuit ob vitae terminum". Wharton *Angl. Sacr.* ii 3 Dominus Rob. Grost. super Psalterium manu sua propria scriptum—opus est Oxoniae inter fratres Minores. Tho. Gascoign. *Diction.* voce *Christus*'

In effect, no account of this work has ever been published, and I have found no reference to any manuscript save that (of Tanner) to the copy at Bologna. There is, however, a manuscript of it in the library of Eton College. When I made the catalogue of the MSS there, many years ago, I did not know that the work was so rare, and I passed it over with only the briefest description. At various times since then, and of late in particular, I have examined it, and I think that the chief results of my reading of it deserve to be recorded in print.

The salient fact about it is that Grosseteste, in the latter part of it at least, cites a number of Greek fathers of whose works there were, in his day, no Latin versions.

The Eton MS (no. 8) is a handsome folio of the fifteenth century, decently written in double columns. The scribe is not very intelligent, uses many tiresome abbreviations, and leaves many blanks, especially in the earlier part of the book: these are usually of one or two words only. There are no old marks of ownership, save that in the first initial the letters *t*, *b*, in gold, appear at the sides: in the centre is *ihc* in gold.

There is no original title: *Ro Grosthed in centum psalmos* is written on the first leaf in a hand of the sixteenth century at earliest. The structure of the commentary is curiously irregular, though it begins regularly enough.

There is first a prologue:

'Psalmorum liber Grece psalterium ebrayce nabla latine organum dicitur (agreeing with the *incipit* given above). Vocatur psalmorum liber quod uno propheta canente ad psalterium chorus consonando respondet.

Titulus autem in psalmis ebrayce est ita sephēcchilin (*sic*) quod interpretatur volumen ymnorum.'

The book (he goes on) is not by a single author: ten or more contributors are named. It has an allegorical meaning, referable specially to Christ. Esdras put it into its present shape, but the order is not strictly historical, e. g. the fiftieth psalm is prior in time to the third.

There is next a discussion of the 'psalterium decachordum' of the decalogue: Augustine de x chordis is referred to.

On fol. 1 b the psaltery and cithara are interpreted as signifying by their shape the inhabited part of the world. Several other topics are introduced; Cassiodorus is quoted.

The commentary begins at the end of fol. 1 b:

'*Beatus vir* etc. Solus dominus noster Ihesus Christus mediator dei et hominum non abiit' etc.

The only other part of this psalm which is expounded seems to be v. 4, *Et folium eius non defluet.*

We then find ourselves at ii 6. '*Mons* significat dominum' (fol. 2 b col. 2), a long disquisition on mountains and what they typify, e. g. '*Sunt autem quidam montes aurei ad quos accedere (non) possunt homines propter dracones et gryphes et immensorum hominum monstra.*' These words recur on fol. 171 a col. 2. The subject of mountains is continued to 4 a. On the same page is an exposition of iv 9, then of iv 3 on *mendacium*. The next passages to be treated are vi 3, vii 3 (the lion), vii 16, viii 5 (the moon), perhaps xiii 3 (the asp), passages in xvi-xviii, xx. Then on 14 a col. 2 is a section beginning '*Aqua spiritus sanctus est*', in which the marvellous properties of many fountains, rivers, and lakes are described and expounded. Subsequent sections deal with the Cross, the eye, the heart, &c. On 23 a col. 1 a section occurs '*Posuit os meum dominus ut gladium acutum*', which is avowedly a sermon on St John Baptist. On 23 b col. 2 we arrive at xlvi 6, '*Ascendit deus in iubilatione*', followed by comments on xlv 2, liv 7, lv 4, l 9, 19.

On 32 a col. 2 begins a tract on stones. '*Idem eciam est lapis in terra quod os in carne.*' The twelve stones of the Apocalypse are discussed at length.

At 37 b col. 2 the comments resume on lviii 12, l 20?, lvii 2, lix 5, and so on, up to the end of lxxix, fol. 73 b. So far the text has been broken up into sections of varying length, each headed with a few words in large letters, and the exposition has been by no means consecutive or complete. With the beginning of lxxx, *Exultate*, a fresh start is made. Each psalm has but a single heading, viz. the first words, in large letters, and the whole text is expounded. This system is continued to the end of Ps. c, *Misericordiam et iudicium*, with which the work ends. The exposition is far more copious—twenty-one psalms occupy 130 leaves—and a completely fresh series of authorities begins to be quoted. Hitherto

we have had none but Latins, Augustine, Gregory, Cassiodorus, Bernard, Rabanus; the only trace of 'learning' has been an occasional Greek etymology. Now, though Augustine, Gregory, and Bernard are still very copiously used, and Jerome more sparingly, there are many citations of other writers.

At 80 *a*. 'Iohannes damascenus in sentenciis' (this from the Latin version, no doubt).

82 *b* col. 1 *fin.* 'hebraica veritas'. This, which is often cited, is Jerome's *Hebraicum*.

85 *b* col. 2 *fin.* 'Aristoteles in libro animalium'. Again, on 182 *a* col. 2, the fifth, seventh, and eighth books are quoted at some length on the subject of spiders, probably from Michael Scot's version, but this I have not tested.

91 *a* col. 1. 'Ioh. Crisostomus omelia I super Iohannem.'

93 *b* col. 1. 'Crisostomus in libro de compunctione cordis.'

94 *a* col. 2 (on lxxxv 5 'Mitis'). 'Mitis vero est peccata dimittendo, unde Aquila et Theodosion posuerunt propiciator (*ἰλαστήριον*¹) simachus vero dimissor (*ἀφίων*)'. This would be either from Eusebius or Theodoret. It is the first trace I have detected of the use of a clearly Greek source. Such traces soon begin to increase in frequency.

On 106 *b* col. 1. 'Secundum Origenem Ire et terrores intelliguntur dei ...'

On 107 *a* col. 1 ('Elongasti a me amicum' lxxxvii 19):

'Cyrillus vero exponit hic de fidelibus recolentibus peccata sua et dicentibus quod posuerunt me demones in profundi fovea peccati, qui ante peccatum erant mihi familiaris (-es), angeli videlicet boni amici etc.'

This is the first (I believe) of a very large number of quotations from 'beatus Cyrillus'. The next is on 112 *b* col. 1 ('Aquilonem et mare' lxxxviii 13):

'Vel secundum Cyrillum per hec quatuor nomina intelliguntur quatuor mundi climata, per aquilonem pars septentrionalis, per mare intelligitur pars vespertina, per Hermon que est mons in heremo Syna pars australis, per Thabor qui est mons in Galilea pars orientalis. exultauerunt autem montes isti, Hermon videlicet baptizato domino, Thabor vero transfigurato domino, et ambo exultauerunt domino in ipsis desuper testificato. apud Hermon quoque est Naim ciuitas, in qua dominus filium vidue resuscitauit. hec est expositio ad literam beati Cyrilli. Dicit quoque consequenter idem beatus Cyrillus quod oportet (?) quod aspicientibus nobis ad orientem contra faciem est oriens et ad dorsum occidens, in dextra vero aquilo, in sinistris auster. Sed hec verba Cyrilli videntur falsa, quia versa facie nostra ad orientem auster est in dextra, aquilo in sinistra. Sed forte exemplar falsum est et cor-

¹ The Greek equivalents are added by me.

ruptum, nisi forte ipse vellet intelligere quod aquilo esset in dextra, non manu, sed mundi, et auster e conuerso.'

This extract is worth quoting, because it seems to shew that Grosseteste was himself translating the words of Cyril from a manuscript that lay before him

Meanwhile, on 109 *a* col. 1, there has been a note from Athanasius 'quod ideo Dauid legitur iurasse dominus, quia et Dauid primo iurauit se non datum requiem sibi donec inueniret locum domino, tabernaculum deo Iacob.'

117 *a* col. 1 ('veritas mea et misericordia mea' lxxxviii 25):

'Congruentius vero intelligitur hoc de Christo, cum quo est veritas et misericordia patris. Secundum Theodoricum veritatem hic dicit in spiritu et veritate adoracionem quam Christus nobis induxit, quam et ipse deus et pater recepit cum filio et spiritu sancto.'

This is the first citation of Theodoret by name: quotations from him are, in the sequel, second in frequency to those from Cyril, and he is often used without being named.

ibid. 'Vel sicut supra expositum est super illum versum *Misericordia et veritas obuiauere sibi* potest et hoc intelligi secundum Eusebium quod misericordia sit diuina natura habens potestatem dimittendi peccata, veritas vero humana natura, secundum quam non inuentus est dolus in ore eius et quod ipsam naturam suscepit non fantasticam et quod euangelium non tradidit in ripis (*sic*: ? typis) sed in manifestacione veritatis.'

It will not be necessary to give many more extracts, but another sample from Theodoret shall be quoted:

121 *b* col. 2 ('Diripuerunt eum omnes transeuntes viam' lxxxviii 42):

'Historice dicit Theodoricus, Moabite, Amonite, Alofilii, Idumei, Assirii, Babilonii et simpliciter gentes omnes vicine diripuerunt populum Iudeorum et bona eorum, et ita facti sunt in depredacionem quod eciam quiuis inermis vie transitor eos diripuit.'

Another interesting class of passages are those in which Grosseteste quotes Greek words or readings. The scribe has so mangled the Greek letters that I do not attempt to copy his version of them. Examples are:

151 *a* col. 2 ('insipiens' and 'stultus' xci 7)

'In greco enim codice pro insipiente ponitur *αφρων* quod significat proprie priuatam prudentia, ab *α* quod est sine et *φρονησιω* fronesis quod est prudentia; pro stulto vero ponitur *ασυνετος* quod significat priuatam intellectu, ab *α* quod est sine et *συνεσιω* sinesis quod est intelligentia.'

191 *b* col. 1. 'in greco habetur *σπως* opus quod significat qualiter.'

On 153 *a* col. 1 is a disquisition on the palm, à *propos* of xci 13 'Iustus ut palma florebit.' In this, Pliny 'in libro 13^o naturalis

historie' is quoted, and also Aristotle 'in libro de vegetabilibus', and Basilius 'in exameron omelia 5'. This last citation has a curious incidental interest: we happen to know that Grosseteste procured a copy of Basil's Hexameron (in the old Latin version) from the monks of Bury St Edmunds and gave them in exchange for it a volume which is now MS 8 in the library of Pembroke College, Cambridge, and in which the transaction is noted.

Basil is cited in one or two other places as expounding texts in the Psalms, but I have not tried to discover whether the Hexameron is being used, or some of his homilies on Psalms.

Besides the writers already named, I have seen one mention of 'Gregorius Nicenus' (Nyssen), 156 *a* col. 1, and one of 'Maximinus', 154 *a* col. 1. Cyril, Theodoret, Eusebius, Athanasius, Origen furnish almost all the material with which I am concerned, and the quotations of the two first outnumber all the rest.

Proof has been given above that Grosseteste had a Greek Psalter before him when he wrote this commentary: that he possessed such a thing we knew before, for we have one of his at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Did he also possess manuscripts of works by Cyril, Theodoret, and the rest, in Greek? I imagine not. I believe that all his quotations from them can be accounted for if we suppose them to be taken from a Greek Catena on the Psalms. I have not as yet examined the edited Catene, but it is obvious from the lists of authors made by Fabricius that, in the Catena printed by Corderius, Cyril and Theodoret are quoted on almost every page. I have therefore no hesitation in adding to Grosseteste's Greek Library a Catena on the Psalms. From the fact that he does not appear to make any use of it before he reaches the eightieth Psalm we might be inclined to suppose either that he acquired it late, or that it was imperfect. Neither supposition is necessary, for the earlier part of the commentary is so fragmentary and irregular as to point to a complete change of plan on the part of the author after he had made some progress; perhaps there was an intention, frustrated by his death, to rewrite the first portion on a larger scale.

It may be worth noting that no mention of other Greek books which we knew Grosseteste to have read—Suidas, Dionysius the Areopagite, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs—is to be found in this commentary, and that the greater part of it seems rather diffuse, occupied to an overwhelming extent with allegorical interpretation, homiletic in tone, and containing practically no references to events or conditions of the author's own day.

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