

COPTIC LITERATURE IN THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY.

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ONE of the outstanding features of the John Rylands Library is its interesting collection of Coptic manuscripts. The importance of this collection may be judged from the fact that it has been examined by Monsignor Hebbelynck, Honorary Rector of the University of Louvain, for the purpose of tracing scattered leaves of the same manuscript, and also from the recent transcription of certain fragments in order to supply what is regarded as essential material for a new Coptic lexicon. As these manuscripts have been carefully catalogued by Mr. W. E. Crum, it is not necessary to reproduce the information given in his well-arranged and most useful catalogue about their date, contents, provenance, etc.

The object of this article is to give a general account of printed Coptic texts and of aids to the study of the language contained in the Library.

It is remarkable that in Manchester it is possible to trace the history of the interest taken by students of Coptic in Europe, from its earliest beginnings in the works of Kircher to the latest critical estimates of the most recent works in "The Journal of Egyptian Archæology".

In view of the present relations between England and Egypt, and of the possibilities of the future, it is interesting to note that there has been a continuous encouragement of the collection of Coptic manuscripts, and of the editing of texts in this country, so that continental scholars have been indebted to English support both for research and publication.

The best account of the early history of Coptic studies in Europe is given by E. Quatremère in his "*Recherches sur la Langue et la Littérature de l'Égypte*" (Paris, 1808). This work is well worth the attention of students of literary history, as it traces, in a most interesting way, the progress of nearly two centuries of research, with

minute care, and with a wonderful wealth of references to original authorities. The first European collector of Coptic manuscripts noted by Quatremère is that of N. C. F. de Peiresc, whose life by P. Cassendi, the well-known philosopher and mathematician, is to be found in the Library in a contemporary binding. About the same time Pietro della Valle made a tour in the East, and himself brought back several Coptic manuscripts. His life also may be studied in the Library in four different editions.

But the most important pioneer work was done by Kircher, whose "*Prodromus Coptus*" (Rome, 1636), and "*Lingua Aegyptiaca restituta*" (Rome, 1643), are in the Library, bound together in one volume. The first of these works contains a chapter on the utility of the Coptic language, and concludes with a grammar, which is probably the earliest printed in Europe. The second reproduces grammars of previous Egyptian authors and adds the "*Scala magna, or vocabulary*," being the first attempt at Coptic lexicography. The John Rylands Library also possesses a copy of the life of Robert Huntington (1637-1701), the first English collector of Coptic manuscripts, who lived in Syria and brought home a collection which passed to the Bodleian. Thomas Marshall (1621-1685), Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, commenced an edition of the Coptic "*New Testament*" with type provided by Dr. Fell, Bishop of Oxford, but only one sheet (Matt. i.-iii.) was actually printed. This scheme is mentioned in Marshall's preface to a curious little duodecimo volume, by Josephus Abudacnus, "*Historia Jacobitarum seu Coptorum*," published at the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, in 1675.

After Marshall's death in 1685 encouragement and interest seem to have ceased for a time, but the early part of the eighteenth century is marked by the publication of three Coptic Liturgies in a translation by Renaudot (Paris, 1716), and his dissertation on the language. Renaudot apparently was not in a position to secure Coptic type. Contemporaneously we find the editions by Wilkins of "*The Lord's Prayer*" in the Chamberlayne collection (1715), and of the "*New Testament*" at the expense of the University of Oxford (1716). Fifteen years later (1731) he published the "*Pentateuch*". On the relation of the text of Wilkins and that given by subsequent editors to the manuscripts, reference should be made to an important article by Professor Brooke in "*The Journal of Theological Studies*," III. 258-78.

Wilkins was a Prussian whose original name Wilke (Latinized as Wilkius) was changed to that by which he is best known, as a compliment to the Bishop of Chester. His "New Testament" is severely criticized by Lacroze both for its text and translation. Lacroze accused Wilkins of profound ignorance of Coptic, and went so far as to place him below Kircher in that matter. In the edition of the "Pentateuch," however, Quatremère considers that Wilkins surpassed himself. According to the same authority the receipt of a copy of the "New Testament," by Richard Cumberland, Bishop of Peterborough, greatly interested that aged prelate, who, though eighty-four years of age, gave the rest of his life to the study of the language.

The middle of the eighteenth century reveals a revival of Coptic study in Italy. Tuki, a Copt by birth, and Bishop of Arsinoe, began to publish at Rome, exactly 100 years after the appearance of Kircher's "Prodromus," a series of works of which Quatremère gives the following list: "Missal" (1736), "Psalter" (1744), "Diurnal" (1750), "Pontifical" (1761, and 1762), "Ritual" (1763), "Grammar" (1778). Of these the John Rylands Library possesses the "Psalter" and the "Grammar". Tuki's "Grammar" was largely used by Peyron in his "Lexicon" for illustration of Coptic words.

We now come to Lacroze, who, according to Quatremère, surpassed all his predecessors in the study of Coptic. His life by C. E. Jordan, "*Histoire de la Vie et des Ouvrages de Mr. Lacroze*" (Amsterdam, 1741), is also in the Library. With the name of Lacroze must be connected those of Scholz, Royal Preacher at Berlin, and Woide, a Pole by origin, all of whom were ultimately indebted to the University of Oxford for the publication of their researches. The "Lexicon" of Lacroze (1775) arranged by Scholz, annotated and indexed by Woide, is bound with the "Grammar" of Scholz, edited by Woide (1778), in the John Rylands copy.

The end of the eighteenth century shows a noteworthy activity in Italy, both on the part of native and foreign students, which was partly due to the interest of Cardinal Stephen Borgia, Secretary, and afterwards Prefect of the Propaganda. The presses of Parma and Bologna give us the "Grammar" of Valperga [Didymus Taurimensis, q.v. in John Rylands Catalogue], and Mingarelli's "Reliquiae" (1785). Valperga's "Grammar" displays a remarkable advance on Tuki's

already mentioned, both in the clearness of its type and in its improved arrangement. This improvement is an indication that we have reached the time when the accumulation of evidence and the advance of knowledge are beginning to give better editing of text and grammar, with improved presentation and estimates of textual material. We find this in Georgi, represented in the Library by his "Fragments of the Gospel according to St. John" (Rome, 1789), a fine copy in olive morocco with the arms of Pius VI; in Ford's edition of Woide's "Sahidic Fragments of the New Testament," also a magnificent volume, and in Zoega's Catalogue of the Borgan Museum Coptic Manuscripts. Georgi and Woide both give facsimiles of manuscripts, and Zoega classifies the script by a method which is still regarded as a standard, and thus prepared the way for the development of Coptic palæography.

When Quatremère's book was published Zoega's "Catalogus" was already printed, but its publication was deferred by a lawsuit between Cardinal Borgia's heirs and the Congregation of the Propaganda. It was actually published in 1810. The Library possesses a copy of the Leipzig reprint of 1903. Much information about Biblical texts, after Quatremère's account ceases, will be found in Hyvernat's "Studies on the Coptic Versions," reprinted from the "Revue Biblique" (1896 and 1897).

After Zoega the next important name is that of H. Tattam (1789-1868), whose manuscripts formed the nucleus of the Crawford Collection now in the John Rylands Library. His own published works include: "The Gospels" (1829); "Grammar," 1st ed. (1830); "Lexicon" (1835); "Minor Prophets" (1836); "Book of Job" (1846); "Apostolic Constitutions" (1848); "Greater Prophets" (1852); "Grammar," 2nd ed. (1853). "The Book of Job," the "Apostolic Constitutions," and both editions of the "Grammar" are in the Library.

Meanwhile, Lagarde (1827-1891) [formerly Boetticher, q.v. in the John Rylands Catalogue] had commenced his textual labours and in 1852 published at Halle editions of the "Acts of the Apostles" and of the "Epistles," both of which are in the Library, in copies which belonged to Bishop Westcott. The Library also possesses his "Orientalia" (1879), which describes the manuscripts bought from Brugsch by the Göttingen Library, reprints Old Testament fragments,

and intimates his desire to investigate scattered material in England. In the years 1881 and 1882 Lagarde received £200 from Bishop Lightfoot and other English promoters of learning, to enable him to examine manuscripts at Rome, Florence, and Turin. One result of these investigations was the publication of "Aegyptiaca" in 1883. A translation of the text of "Wisdom" in this work was presented to the Library by the late Dr. J. H. Moulton.

In 1898, Dr. E. A. Wallis Budge published "The Earliest Known Coptic Psalter from 'Codex 5000' in the British Museum". Other texts from the same source were published by Sir Herbert Thompson, (1) "The Coptic (Sahidic) Version of Certain Books of the Old Testament" (1908), and (2) "A Coptic Palimpsest containing Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Judith, and Esther" (1911); and by Mr. E. O. Winstedt in "The Journal of Theological Studies," x. 233-54. The Library possesses the Ciasca-Balestri edition of the Roman fragments of the "Old Testament," and Horner's "New Testament," the whole in Bohairic, as well as the "Gospels" in Sahidic. Texts edited by Budge, Crum, Delaporte, and Winstedt will be found in the Catalogue of Additions. The Grammars of Stern, Steindorff, and Mallon, and the Berlin reprint of Peyron's "Lexicon" may be consulted. The collection of material for Mr. Crum's new *Lexicon*, which will be twice the size of Peyron's book, has been interrupted by the war, but nevertheless continues to advance steadily.

Having traced in a very general and confessedly imperfect way the light which the Library throws upon the history of Coptic study, and having indicated some of the useful assistance which it provides, I may conclude with the hope that its treasures will continue to enable students and investigators to gain a better knowledge of the life and history of early Christian Egypt, and especially of the valuable contribution which the Coptic Versions and homiletic literature make to the textual criticism and interpretation of the Bible.