

BARLAAM AND JOSAPHAT

THE editing of any of the versions of *Barlaam and Josaphat* is a major comparative and bibliographical undertaking, and the full bibliography in Keiko Ikegami (ed.), *Barlaam and Josaphat – A Transcription of MS Egerton 876 with Notes, Glossary, and Comparative Study of the Middle English and Japanese Versions* [AMS Studies in the Middle Ages, 21; New York: AMS press, 1999. Pp. xvii + 244. ISBN 0-404-64161-X], bears witness to that. It is select yet occupies pp. 225–35, and includes many items in Japanese, and several works relating this Middle English prose text to Eastern religion, for it is an important medieval work of special significance in Buddhism. This is to be contrasted with John C. Hirsh's edition of *Barlaam and Josaphat: A Middle English Life of Buddha . . . from MS Peterhouse 257*, for the Early English Text Society, which has a valuable, brief appendix of ten apologies to the text, but no bibliography. The text from the Egerton MS has been presented by Carl Horstmann in a bare edition included with the *Schulprogramm* for 1877 of a *Gymnasium* in Saran (now Sarbinowo), but that is not widely available, so that a new, full and modern edition is welcome.

Virginity and asceticism are central to this text from *The Gilt Legend* (three legends of which were edited by Richard Hamer from the Egerton MS in 1978). The attractions of the pious story are briefly characterized by J. A. W. Bennett, as related in spirit to *The Divine Comedy* and the Middle English *Pearl*, though it is not suggested that either Dante or the *Pearl*-poet need have known it. Ikegami's very learned work is semi-diplomatic, that is, a literal transcription but with modern punctuation and that helps the reader. There is a wide-ranging introduction, the notes are full and there is a glossary.

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Notes

THE ACCURACY OF THE 'ST PETERSBURG BEDE'

IN the course of the last twenty years, a scholarly tradition has arisen concerning the remarkable accuracy with which the 'St Petersburg Bede' (St Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Lat. Q. v. I. 18 (referred to hereafter as P))¹ reproduces the text of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. While the precise context in which this accuracy is claimed varies from scholar to scholar, its extent is described in almost identical terms in each case. As Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe puts it, '[P] is a particularly careful copy of the text. Excepting errors in the sources quoted by Bede (and thus, probably, in the originals), editors have reported only six errors in the text of Bede's *Historia*, and these errors are minor.'² Similar language is used by R. D. Fulk ('there appear to be just six errors in the text, so . . . the work [i.e. P] must be very close to the author's autograph copy')³ and M. B. Parkes ('there are only six errors in the text written by Bede himself. The high quality of the text in this copy [i.e. P] suggests that it cannot be very far removed from the author's draft').⁴

These claims about the 'six errors' in P are highly significant to each scholar's argument. In O'Keefe's book, the manuscript's extreme accuracy is used to bolster her argument that Anglo-Saxon scribes treated vernacular and Latin texts differently in the earliest manuscripts. For Fulk, P's very low number of errors serves as evidence against suggestions that the manuscript may be considerably younger than the traditional dating of 731 × 746 would suggest (427). The boldest use, however, is made by Parkes, who takes the 'six errors' as basic evidence both to support his reconsideration of the development of the

use of uncial and insular minuscule script at Wearmouth-Jarrow (5) and, more tentatively, to suggest that Bede himself may have had a hand in the manuscript's production (7 n. 45).

But P does not contain 'just six errors'. The suggestion that it does derives ultimately from a misinterpretation of the textual introduction to Colgrave and Mynors's edition of the *Historia ecclesiastica*.⁵ After noting that the *Historia* is 'one of the very few works written in Latin before the Carolingian renaissance which have come down to us in copies virtually contemporary with their authors' (xxxix), Mynors, who was responsible for the textual introduction in the edition, goes on to discuss the relative ease with which these early manuscripts allow for the establishment of Bede's text:

We know from books like the Lindisfarne Gospels, the Stonyhurst St. John, or the Oxford copy of Bede on Proverbs, MS. Bodley 819, how high was the tradition of accuracy in the Northumbrian scriptoria; and the *Historia* is no exception. In the whole work, as it appears in the consensus of our oldest and best copies, there are perhaps thirty-two places (in nearly 300 printed pages) where some defect of sense or syntax suggests that correction is required. But even this small quantum of error is not what it seems. In twenty-six of these places, Bede is transcribing from an earlier source. . . . There remain six examples of error in all our oldest manuscripts – and so presumably in their common original – where Bede does not seem to be copying an earlier document. One is the omission of *ur* at the heading of ii. 5 . . . which seems just a slip. The others may be unprovoked scribal mistakes; but all could be explained if the author had changed his mind and not removed all traces of the change. (xxxix–xl)

Later on, Mynors compares P to the 'Moore Bede' (Cambridge, University Library Kk. 5. 16 (M)), a second eighth-century copy of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, by noting that its 'text is

very close to M, but more accurate. There seems no reason why both should not have been taken from the author's copy – not to say 'autograph', because Bede's own copy may well have been in the hand of an amanuensis' (xliiv).

As the reference to the 'consensus of the oldest and best copies' (a class whose members are never specifically enumerated)⁶ in the first passage indicates, Mynors is not discussing P exclusively when he mentions the 'six errors'. Indeed, he is in one sense not even discussing the accuracy of the manuscripts at all: as his account makes clear, the 'six errors' represent places in which an editor is forced on internal grounds to emend the text of the *Historia ecclesiastica* without support from any early witness – places, in other words, in which Bede's own text appears to have contained the original mistake and the surviving manuscripts either reproduce the error faithfully or supply an alternative that is more obviously flawed: everywhere else, the 'correct' reading is presumably found in one or another of the surviving early witnesses. While Mynors suggests that it is the general accuracy of the early witnesses that allows us to determine that the six errors must have arisen in Bede's original copy of the *Historia*, he does not claim that this accuracy is a particular property of any one manuscript.

Nor could he do so. Common sense suggests that the high standard of accuracy Mynors claims for the tradition as a whole would be impossible to maintain in a single scribal copy of any reasonable length. While, in the absence of a published collation of P against the other 'oldest and best copies' of the *Historia ecclesiastica*,⁷ it is impossible to determine precisely how many errors P does contain, what evidence there is suggests that

⁶ Colgrave and Mynors's text of the *Historia ecclesiastica* is based on eight manuscripts of the eighth, ninth, and eleventh centuries (see pp. xlii–xliiv). Several of these are described as having serious errors, however, suggesting that they are not to be included among the 'oldest and best' witnesses.

⁷ Colgrave and Mynors do not record the readings of individual manuscripts in their edition (p. xli and n. 1). The most complete collation of the surviving witnesses is still C. Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis anglorum* (Oxford, 1896). Plummer did not know of P, however, and consequently ignores it in his apparatus.

¹ This is the manuscript formerly known as the 'Leningrad Bede'. The shelf-mark was Leningrad, M. E. Salykov-Schedrin Public Library. Lat. Q. v. I. 18. The manuscript is often referred to by the siglum L in secondary discussions.

² K. O'Brien O'Keefe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge, 1990), 33.

³ R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia, 1992), 427.

⁴ M. B. Parkes, *The Scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow, Jarrow Lecture 1982* (Jarrow, 1982), 5.

the number is greater than six. The introduction to O. S. Arngart's facsimile edition of the manuscript, for example, lists five pages of more-or-less obvious scribal errors from P – a list that, even then, represents only a sample of the total number of mistakes the manuscript contains.⁸ Among the errors Arngart notes are examples of the confusion of individual letters (e.g. *nobilismo* for *nobilissimo*, fo. 30^v/2/14; *qui in* for *quin*, fo. 118^v/2/17; *insulus* for *insulas*, fo. 2^v/1/1; and *clunisse* for *claruisse*, fo. 63^v/2/23); mistakes in inflection (e.g. *perituræ* for *perituri*, fo. 28^v/1/12); the misinterpretation of occasional words and phrases (e.g. *ad extremum* for *ad dexteram*, fo. 9^v/2/22; *aeternis* for *a terrenis*, fo. 27^v/1/20; *duchus* for *duabus*, fo. 157^v/2/6); and numerous cases of the omission of one or more words and phrases (e.g. *insula* for *haec insula*, fo. 42/7; *interrogavit* for *interrogavit eum*, fo. 102^v/1/2; the omission of the *capitula* for Book iv, chapters 21 and 22 with a subsequent error in the numbering of chapter 23; and the addition or omission of longer phrases at, among others, fos 8^v/1/7, 11^v/1/23, 89^v/2/10, and 145^v/1/5). In many cases, these errors have been corrected, either by the scribe responsible or by a subsequent corrector; in others, the errors remain uncorrected or are 'improved' by corrections that are themselves in error (30). As Arngart notes, however, such errors are so prevalent that it is even possible to distinguish among the four scribes on the basis of their relative accuracy:

[S]cribe 4, who wrote the greater part of the text, on the whole executed a correct copy which, judging by the critical notes in Plummer's edition, compares favourably with that of M in exactness. The workmanship of scribe 2 is also in general comparatively high, but falls off towards the end,

⁸ O. Arngart (ed.), *The Leningrad Bede: An Eighth Century Manuscript of the Venerable Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis angolorum in the Public Library, Leningrad*, EEMF, II (Copenhagen, 1952), 24–30. The examples that follow are all drawn from Arngart's discussion. Additional discussion and examples of errors in P can be found in Arngart, 'On the Dating of Early Bede Manuscripts', *Studia Neophilologica*, xiv (1973), 47–52 at p. 50 n. 4; and O. S. Anderson [ie. O. Arngart], *The Old English Material in the Leningrad Manuscript of Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, Skrifter Udgivna av Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskapsnämnden I Lund, 31 (Lund, 1941), 9 n. 1.

where some pages (e.g. *51a, 58a, b) contain a good many errors and spelling peculiarities. Scribes 1 and 3, whose writing makes the more finished impression, appear slightly less accurate than the other two. (24)

All evidence suggests that the St Petersburg Bede is an early and accurate copy of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. But the manuscript remains a copy produced by human, not mechanical, means. Mynors's suggestion that the 'consensus of our oldest and best copies' contains only 'six errors', all of which can be attributed to Bede himself, is remarkable enough testimony to the abilities of the scribes responsible for producing the earliest witnesses to the *Historia ecclesiastica*. We do their memory no disservice by accepting that their accuracy as individuals fell somewhat below the standard of one mistake for every fifty printed pages Mynors claims for the tradition as a whole.

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CHRIST AND SATAN line 406b

ACCORDING to the description of the harrowing of hell in the Old English poem known as *Christ and Satan*, the souls of Adam and the patriarchs are permitted to ascend to heaven immediately after Christ's victory over the devil at lines 365–404. The ascent of Eve, on the other hand, is delayed until she has made a lengthy speech of confession and intercession at lines 408–40. The introduction to the speech in lines 405–7 reads as follows in the standard edition of Old English poetry used by the compilers of *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English* and the ongoing *Dictionary of Old English*:¹

Let þa up faran eadige sawle,
Adames cyn, ac ne moste Efe þa gylt
wiltian in wuldre ar heo wordum cwæð?²

[Then he let the blessed souls go upwards, Adam's kin, but Eve was not yet allowed to look at heaven until she said . . .]

¹ A. dip. Healey and R. L. Venezky, *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English* (Toronto, 1980); A. C. Amos and A. dip. Healey, *Dictionary of Old English* (Toronto, 1986–).
² G. P. Krapp (ed.), *The Junius Manuscript*, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records I (London and New York, 1931), 148.

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