ΠΑΡΡΗΣΙΑ IN THE CATECHETICAL HOMILIES OF THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA

In a recent publication on the Semitic background of παρρησία in the New Testament\(^1\), I drew attention to the fact that in the Syriac version a curious situation exists in connection with this noun. On the one hand, it has been simply transliterated and taken over as a loan-word; but, on the other, its place is taken by an indigenous metaphor galioush panim, lit. "uncovering (or revealing) of the face". The Syriac translation of the New Testament uses these words interchangeably. It was the metaphor, I argued, that lurked in the mind of St. Paul in writing or dictating 2 Corinthians 3:12-18.

In discussing this typically Semitic expression and illustrating its usages from Syriac and other texts, I left out one remarkable passage in the Catechetical Homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the Syriac translation of which was discovered and published 30 years ago by my revered teacher and friend Dr. A. Mingana\(^2\). This "omission" was made for good reasons. These Homilies, which are of the greatest importance for our understanding of dogmatics and liturgy in the 4th century, were written originally in Greek. However, because the original is lost, we must have recourse to the Syriac. Nevertheless, in using these homilies we must always be aware of the fact that we are dealing with a translation and must therefore keep in mind the Greek original. Therefore, one cannot expect to receive much help here in understanding better the relation between παρρησία and the "uncovering of the face". And yet there is a curious passage which may have some bearing upon it, which at least deserves some discussion in this connection.

The word παρρησία holds an important place in the Christian vocabulary\(^3\). It will be interesting, therefore, to see how it was used by a representative theologian in the great fourth century. In this instance, the fact that we do not possess the original text but only the Syriac translation is not too grave a handicap, since this version has kept the Greek word in its transliterated form. In order to see the specific text we have in mind in its proper perspective, it will be wise to take into account the other places where the noun occurs.

One more observation may precede our discussion. As is well-known the word παρρησία and the verb, derived from it, occur many times in the New Testament. One might have expected that texts, containing these words, would have been quoted among the many texts from the Scriptures which he whom the later Nestorians called "the Expositor" cites.
None of these Biblical citations, however, contains the word παρρησία, so that it is impossible to draw any conclusions regarding its meaning.

In 8 out of 9 passages, παρρησία has a strictly religious meaning and expresses a particular aspect of the relation between God and man. The only exception is Hom. ix:2 (M. V. p. 94 = T. p. 214-215). In speaking of the Council of Nicea Theodore says: “For the time gave them freedom (parrhēsia) to assemble”, because the God-loving and the blessed Constantine urged them to it in order to destroy the wickedness of the heretics and to confirm the faith of the Church”. Here the notion of “freedom of action” is in keeping with current Greek speech.

Elsewhere, the parrhēsia is always one of the specific elements of the new life of the Christian. This is most clearly seen in the passage where Theodore speaks about the words of address in the Lord’s Prayer (Hom. xi:7, M. VI. p. 6 = T. p. 296-297). In the same way as Origen, our author considers the fact that we are allowed to address God as “our Father” a special Christian favour and distinction. In contrast to those under the Law of Moses, Jesus says to His disciples: “You have received through Me the grace of the Holy Spirit, whereby you have attained adoption as sons and parrhēsia to call God, “Father”. You have not received the Spirit in order to be again in servitude and fear but to be worthy of the Spirit of adoption as sons through which you call God, “Father”, with parrhēsia”. The background of this passage is unmistakable, namely, Paul in Rom. 8:15 (cf. Gal. 4:5). The apostle, however, does not use parrhēsia in this connection; but one may refer to a text like Hebrews 4:16, which was considered Pauline by Theodore. In the sequel of his exposition Theodore does not specify this parrhēsia; rather, he explains that God is “Lord” and Creator of everything, but also “the Father” by Whom Christians acquire the freedom of an immortal life and the honour of being a son of God. This is given to the Christian by the Spirit. In this connection parrhēsia has not only the notion of “confidence”, but also and foremost that of “liberty” or “freedom of speech”. In contrast with the Gentiles, the Christians know the only God; in contrast with the Jews, they serve Him not as slaves, but as sons, and they have free intercourse with the Almighty God. The depth of the great idea which is expressed here by Theodore is only right­ly understood if we realize on the one hand, that parrhēsia in secular Greek is the right of free citizens or the privilege of true friends, and on the other, that the service of God is awe-inspiring.

This parrhēsia has become the share of the Christians by their profession of faith at baptism, for ‘after we have, by our profession of faith, made our contracts and engagements with God our Lord through the