A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF PSEUDO-PHILO'S LIBER ANTIQUITATUM BIBLICARUM IN THE MIDDLE AGES*

BY

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The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (henceforth LAB), one of the oldest midrashic works, has attracted ample attention in the last hundred years. Ever since its re-discovery various aspects of the work have been studied by distinguished scholars such as COHN, JAMES, and KISCH. An important new edition based on all available manuscripts was prepared by HARRINGTON, and published in 1976 with a translation and notes by CAZEAUX, PERROT, and BOGAERT1). This publication fulfilled one of the desiderata for LAB-studies formulated by FELDMAN in the prolegomenon to the new issue of JAMES’ translation2). As another promising field of study FELDMAN drew attention to a “systematic study of the Fortleben of LAB”. Greek and Latin Church Fathers should be thoroughly examined for traces of the LAB, and a study of various medieval authors might yield further information as to its influence3). In this field some new traces were discovered by Berndt SCHALLER, who pointed to Rupert of Deutz (1075/80-1129-30) and Hrabanus Maurus (780-856)4).

Rupert’s knowledge of the LAB concerns most probably

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3) FELDMAN, Prolegomenon, p. lxxxi.

only one quotation. But Hrabanus used the work extensively; in all likelihood in a copy which was kept at the rich library at Fulda. A further contribution to the history of the work in the Middle Ages is the subject of this article.

The textual tradition of the LAB, though some twenty manuscripts have come down to us, is geographically limited). The provenance of the manuscripts points to the Austrian-German region, and the view has been put forward that all the extant manuscripts derive from a single defective copy which can be situated in the Rhineland, perhaps at Trier6). Some traces of its circulation in Northern France may be seen in a reference in a library catalogue from St.-Riquier (near Abbéville). The catalogue dates from 831 and has an entry: liber Philonis Judaei unum volumen. In the Middle Ages Philo’s and Pseudo-Philo’s works in Latin have as a rule come down in manuscripts that contain three texts in one volume: chapter 11 of Jerome’s De Viris Illustribus, which gives us the life of Philo, the LAB, and Philo’s Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesim. Therefore, the identification of the liber Philonis with such a manuscript is not unlikely. Further it is commonly assumed that the LAB is alluded to in a short reference in the famous Historia Scholastica of Peter Comestor7), but Wilpert rightly argues that the reference had an independent tradition and that one cannot conclude from this one quotation that Peter Comestor knew the LAB in its entirety8).

Longer fragments, however, are found in the works of famous

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6) Harrington, op. cit., p. 15-20. The marginal notes in Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS McLean 31 of the Aurora of Petrus de Riga form no exception to the rule. Although the author of the Aurora has links with Paris, the MS. may have been written, according to James (op. cit., p. 18) in the Rhine Provinces, or in Eastern France.
