THE OPUS IMPERFECTUM IN MATTHAEUM
AND THE FRAGMENTA IN LUCAM

BY

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Any attempt to analyze the Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum must at present be based on an edition whose inadequacies are legion. An examination of the manuscript tradition has led J.-P. Bouhot to doubt that the commentary, as presently edited in Migne even prescinding from Homily 23 which belongs to Chromatius of Aquileia, comes from one author and to propose the hypothesis that only a portion of the present text can be attributed to the original Arian work. While R. Étaix has been able to demonstrate by textual criticism the unity of each of the three sections which constitute the work, he has made it clear that the only criterion by which a single author may be deduced for all three sections is internal criticism. Under these circumstances the critical edition, which will appear in Corpus Christianorum, will play an important role for those asking questions about this puzzling work. It may, then, seem premature to continue any discussion about the text as an original Latin work or as a translation of a Greek original. And yet, however provisional any such discussion will be, it may have some contribution to make about the very nature of the text, as well as to prepare for an analysis of a text whose "message remains sealed and sterile for today's hermeneutics applied to Arianism." The present investigation attempts to make such a contribution by relating the text to another fifth century Arian work which, if successfully connected with the author of the Opus imperfectum, may yield data pertinent both to constituting the text and to establishing its authorship.

Four references in the text point to other works by the author. He alludes to his previous commentaries on Luke and Mark. Contrasting the Gospel treatment of the beatitudes in Luke and in Matthew, he remarks:

*Illae mediocribus, istae autem perfectis, et rectoribus populorum, sicut fuerunt apostoli, ad quos dicta sunt haec: cujus differentiae rationem largius exposuimus ibi. (680B)*
Similarly, citing a passage in Luke which contributes to his discussion of Matthew's text, he raises a question which he answers by referring the reader to his earlier work:

Et quis sit ille, qui nec judicat: quis autem, qui judicat quidem, et non condemnat: et quis est, qui dat, exposuimus ibi. (726B)

Finally, after referring to a passage in Luke, he again refers to his commentary on Luke:

Quorum omnium interpretatio spiritualis facta est in proprio loco. Hic autem hoc dicimus tantum quia ex quibus causis illic ponuntur Judaei non venisse ad Christum, ex ipsis causis carnalibus et terrenis intelligitur populus recessisse a Christo. Tantum differentia in hoc est, quod illic Judaei ponuntur non venisse ad Christum: quia amore carnalium rerum et terrenarum occupati, nec permanserunt in Christo, nec consideraverunt opera ejus, nec audierunt sapientiam ejus: propterea non cognoverunt eum Filium Dei, nec venerunt ad eum; hic autem illum populum Judaeorum demonstrat . . . (808D)

His commentary on Mark is another point of reference:

De hac autem ficu sub alia specie interpretationem fecimus apud Marcus, aestimantes ubique quod verum est, non affirmantes: ut secundum quod visum fuerit unicuique hoc probetur. (920D)

The present discussion will not treat the commentary on Mark. Of the three references to a commentary on Luke the first two belong to the first section of the Opus imperfectum, while the last is from the third section of that work. Perhaps this is a slender clue that these two sections have a common author. That common author is either a Latin or a Greek whose works have been translated by one or more Latin writers. In either case, the chronological setting for these commentaries must be fifth century, somewhat after the reign of Theodosius I in a period in which the Arianism subscribed to by the author is undergoing persecution.

A commentary in Latin on Luke, written by an Arian sometime in the early fifth century or earlier, is available to us only in the sixth century copy contained in the Bobbio Palimpsest. The author is unknown, but the possibility of the work having the same author as the Opus imperfectum deserves some attention in view of the references in the latter to a commentary on Luke.

What has survived from this commentary on Luke is but a fragment of the whole work which was on the scale of the Opus imperfectum. The Bobbio fragments give a portion of the commentary on Luke 1-6