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Review

TEDROS ABRAHA, *La lettera ai Romani, Testo e commentari della versione Etiopica*

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Reviews

Oriental Society” 112 (1992) 78–87 = *Studies in Semitic Linguistics. Selected Writings by G.G.* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1998) [333]–[342], esp. 79, and to the contrary of the general arrangement of W. LESLAU’s *Comparative dictionary of Ge’ez (Classical Ethiopic)* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987), which is the main guide of the author. It appears that the enclitic particles *-hi*, *-hu* (cf. e.g. Dillm. c. 1, Ps. 72,13 and 93,9), *-ma*, *-sa*, *-nu*, *-ni*, *-kē* have no entry of their own: a particular which is probably insignificant to those involved with the identification of quotations, but a bit disappointing to the linguists. The list of proper names begins *ex abrupto* on p. 528 (as we are told on p. XIV), in a sort of tacit appendix, but they would have been better included in the body of the concordance. Following the wishes of the author that similar tools will be published soon, a concordance by G. LUSINI of the *Ascension of Isaiah* (critical edition by P. BETTILOLO *et al.*, *Ascensio Isaiae*, 2 vols., Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 7–8, Turnhout: Brepols, 1995) is now forthcoming.

Alessandro Bausi

TEDROS ABRAHA, *La lettera ai Romani, Testo e commentari della versione Etiopica* = *Aethiopistische Forschungen* 57. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2001. 734 pages. Price: Eur 149,-. ISBN : 3-447-04380-6.

A reliable edition of the earliest retrievable text of the Ge’ez Version of the complete New Testament has been a wish for a long time. Tedros Abraha’s text-critical edition of Paul’s *La lettera ai Romani* is an important achievement, filling a considerable part of the still existing gap. The edition is based on thirteen described manuscripts from a group of almost one hundred. Their variant readings are placed in an extensive text-critical *apparatus*.

Apart from the edition of the text of the Epistle to the Romans this large Volume (734 pages) includes a text-critical edition of the traditional Ethiopic commentary (‘Andemta’) on Romans. It is based on thirteen manuscripts, all but one from EMMML, the microfilm collection of the Hill Monastic Microfilm Library at Collegeville, Minnesota. The commentary contains the text of Romans but necessarily in a form slightly different from the edition. The edition of the ‘Andemta’ comes with a full translation of both text and commentary. Little research has so far been done in this field and scholars will greatly welcome the edition of this text, its translation, and helpful explanatory notes.

There is one serious drawback: all introductions to the edition and the translation of the Andemta are in Italian. Although some Ethiopic scholars

will be familiar with the basics of that language, it makes this valuable book inaccessible to many.

Tedros Abraha distinguishes in the Epistle to the Romans two major early types of text. ‘Family A’ is represented by three manuscripts: Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Éth 46, the Pentaglot B 20 from the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, both from the 14th century, and Tanasee 110 from the 16th century. The text of ‘family A’ is supposed to be as close as possible to the original translation of the Greek. The usual argument in favor of a Greek *Vorlage* is the spelling of proper names. The author provides a short list on page 62, adding just one example of apparent mistranslation.¹

‘Family B’ is represented by five manuscripts, three from the 14th/15th and two from the 16th century. A third group, called ‘later manuscripts’, comprises of five manuscripts from the 17th/18th century. Finally there is one manuscript of the 16th/17th century² considered the odd one out. This three- or fourfold differentiation confirms what we know from the rest of the New Testament and in some respects even the Old Testament³: the *Versio Antiqua* was translated from the Greek Bible, it has been remodeled in an ongoing process which had started already in the 13th century and was intensified from the 16th century onward with the help of Arabic Versions.

In the past the *Editio Princeps* (Roma 1548) and to a lesser extent the eclectic Platt edition of 1830, frequently reprinted by the British and Foreign Bible Society, have been generally accepted as authoritative. The text presented in this edition of the Epistle to the Romans is by and large the text of the family A manuscripts, among which, according to the editor, Paris Bibl. Nat. Éth 46 takes first place. That is a fundamental decision which, on the basis of the material presented, looks acceptable. It results, however, in a text that shows remarkably few differences from the Roman edition.⁴ Nevertheless New Testament scholars should be aware of the fact that since the appearance of

¹ Romans 1:20 in the Paris manuscript interpreting ἄδιος as ἴδιος. The quotations on this page ought to have been printed lower by three lines.

² Comboniani S 8. No reference exists as to where the manuscript is located [Oswaldo Raineri informed the editor: the manuscript is located at the Biblioteca Vaticana and catalogued by Codices Comboniani Aethiopicis. Recensuit Oswaldus Raineri, In: *Bibliotheca Vaticana MM*, nr. 280, pp. 276–281].

³ See MICHAEL A. KNIBB, *The Ethiopic Version of the Old Testament* (Oxford: University Press, 1999). Even the *phenomenon* of an ‘odd one out’ manuscript is known in the tradition of the Gospel (Daga Estifanos = Tana 113) as well as the Octateuch (Cambridge, University Library Add. 1570).

⁴ Tedros Abraha decided against recording the readings of that edition (page 36, note 1). It is obvious that the editor of the *Editio Princeps* used a manuscript with a text that, although not identical, was akin with Tedros Abraha’s basic manuscript.

this new edition references to the Ethiopic Version in the current editions of the Greek New Testament are in principle out-of-date.⁵

The text-critical *apparatus* registers variant readings with numbers referring to a footnote attached to a word in the text. Since the number of variant readings is huge, footnotes, often consisting of two or three entries, occur virtually at every word. As a consequence of this system notation of large variant readings must be spread over many footnotes, which often makes it difficult to reconstruct the text of a particular manuscript. It is also a source of mistakes in the notation of variant readings. One wonders whether in a case like this, with many and large variant readings, it would not have been more suitable to publish the two or three main types of text separately. The chosen lay-out of the Andemta part of the book does not always make it easy to find quickly the exact place of Romans to which the text or the translation refers.

Anyone who has worked on editions like this knows that small inaccuracies are very difficult to avoid. Ethiopic manuscripts often differ immensely in matters of spelling and we should not make it hard for an editor when he or she, like Tedros Abraha, does not always succeed in harmonizing these variations. Mistakes in the printed text are a more serious matter. Checking the *apparatus* of chapters one, six and twelve in manuscripts C (EMML 6462) and F (EMML 2198), I found the number of mistakes in the first chapter unacceptably high.⁶ It may not always affect the final conclusions very much, but a *caveat* regarding the reliability of the details of the *apparatus* in that part of the edition seems appropriate. A frequent error in spelling, all through the edition in both text and *apparatus*, is confusion of Ge'ez ኅ and ኅ, e.g. spelling the preposition ኅበ ፩ as ኅበ.⁷

A number of *desiderata* remains. The edition is very much geared to Ethiopisants and much less to those who would use it for the purpose of textual criticism of the Greek New Testament and its ancient versions. In the Introduction the editor confines himself to mentioning the indisputable fact

⁵ Since the present text of Ethiopic Romans does not differ very much from the *Editio Princeps* the references to "eth" in the Greek text of the United Bible Societies (4th revised edition, Stuttgart 1994) can mostly remain in place, although the interpretation in a number of cases should be reconsidered.

⁶ I did not count orthographical or small grammatical variant readings. More than 75 times in the samples the apparatus notes 'er' (*i.e.* erasure) whereas in the majority of cases the text, although stained, is nevertheless legible on microfilm or easily restored. Excluding all these I still found in Chapter 1 (from verse 10) at least 25 mistakes, but in Chapter 6 no more than 13 and in Chapter 12 no more than 3 real textual errors among the variant readings of manuscripts C and F.

⁷ In some early mss. the ኅ sometimes looks like a ኅ.

that the original translation from the Greek is concise and sometimes difficult to follow. The translation of the Andemta includes a translation of the text of Romans, in the Andemta version, with notes comparing it with a translation of the Greek. Why not the actual Greek? The Introduction (p. 471) states that significant Greek variant readings have been considered, but one finds little evidence of that.⁸ Which kind of Greek manuscript might underlie the *Versio Antiqua* has not been considered. On the other hand the translated and annotated Commentary may shed valuable light on the reasoning of those who translated the text from the Greek or took part in later revisions.

The sections discussing the relation of the Ge'ez Version with the Syriac, Coptic and Arabic Versions are very brief indeed. Admittedly this is a complicated matter, but there are many cases where direct or indirect dependence on these versions is obvious. An occasional note to that effect would have been helpful for the interpretation of the Ethiopic text.

Apart from a few lines stating that most existing Ge'ez editions of the Epistle to the Romans are very much akin, little attention has been given to these editions. One or two have been mentioned occasionally, but a list, as complete as possible, including editions printed in Ethiopia that are not always easy to find, together with a short characterization of the text, would have been useful.

Rochus Zuurmond

GERARD COLIN, *L'Homélie sur l'Église du Rocher, attribuée à Timothée Ælure. Texte éthiopien et traduction* = Patrologia Orientalis, Tome 49 – Fascicule 2 – N° 218. Turnhout: Brepols 2001. 94 S. € 48,00.

Zu den bedeutendsten Wallfahrtsorten Ägyptens gehört der Ġabal aṭ-Ṭayr ('Vogelsberg') am Ostufer des Nils in der Nähe der Stadt Samālūt. Ein Kloster bestand hier bis in die jüngere Vergangenheit und eine Kirche, die z.T. aus dem Felsen ausgehauen ist, zieht jedes Jahr am 22. August zahlreiche Pilger an.

Der hier edierte Text gibt sich als Homilie des Timotheos II. Aeluros, 26. Patriarch von Alexandria (457–477) und kämpferischem Verfechter des Monophysitismus zur Gelegenheit der Einweihung des Felsenheiligtums auf dem Ġabal aṭ-Ṭayr. Tatsächlich kann er aber erst aus dem sechsten Jahrhun-

⁸ I did not find a reference to a variant reading at any of the 85 places discussed in the edition of the Greek text by the United Bible Societies (above, note 5), not even where we have a clear and relevant case, such as in 3:7, 6:4, 7:18, 8:2, 9:4, 10:1, 10:17 etc.