

ON *CELTIS* 'A CHISEL': A STUDY IN TEXTUAL TRADITION.

ONE of the earliest Biblical various readings discussed at the Revival of Learning was whether in the Latin Vulgate text of Job xix 24 we should read *vel celte* or *vel certe*. F. Lucas of Bruges wrote an interesting Note upon it in his *Animadversions*, published in 1580, which is still worth reading. The question has come up again, because M. Havet in his quite admirable *Manuel de Critique Verbale* (1911), par. 898, has championed *vel celte* on internal grounds. The discussion of this reading is therefore of some interest for the student of textual criticism in general, and I propose to examine it somewhat fully.

(§ 1) The Hebrew of Job xix 23, 24 presents no difficulty: sense and language are alike clear. A literal translation is

Oh, that now my words might be written!

Oh, that in a deed they might be inscribed!

With a pen of iron and lead

For ever on the rock might they be engraved!

It is not quite clear, and in a poetical style it is not necessary to be clear, whether Job is thinking of one inscription, or of alternative methods. Probably the latter; perhaps he suggests three alternatives: (i) a written roll, (ii) a leaden tablet, incised with an iron stylus, (iii) an inscription cut on a stone.

(§ 2) The oldest known rendering of the passage is the LXX, the true text of which has

τίς γὰρ ἂν δόξῃ γραφήναι τὰ ῥήματά μου, τεθῆναι δὲ αὐτὰ ἐν βιβλίῳ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἢ ἐν πέτραισ ἐγγλυφῆναι;

This is the text attested by the Sahidic version and the Syro-Hexaplar, which for the Book of Job are our best authorities. Most Greek MSS (including B) insert *ἐν γραφίῳ σιδηρῷ καὶ μολίβῳ* after *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*, but our Hexaplar authorities expressly warn us to read these words under asterisk, i. e. we are to understand that they are among the 400 half-lines originally left untranslated in the original Greek version and first inserted into the text by Origen. B* further omits *ἢ ἐν πέτραισ ἐγγλυφῆναι*, but the words are supplied by an early corrector.

The text as given above has the regular characteristics of the old Greek Version of Job, among which may be noted an entire ignoring

of the Hebrew system of parallelism in poetical style, and a free insertion of Greek particles where, in the opinion of the translator, they were needed to make the sense clearer. Here $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ carries on the action of writing down Job's words, while η indicates where one of the alternatives is reckoned to begin. The translator chose badly; $\epsilon\iota\sigma$ τὸν αἰῶνα ought to go with $\epsilon\nu$ πέτραισ ἐγγλυφῆναι, as is shewn by the balance of the clauses in Hebrew and as is recognized by the Massoretic accentuation.

Origen made things worse: not seeing that $\epsilon\iota\sigma$ τὸν αἰῶνα ought to belong to $\epsilon\nu$ πέτραισ, he made his insertion after these words instead of before them; then after η he inserted $\epsilon\iota\sigma$ μαρτύριον from Theodotion, which is an alternative rendering of the Hebrew already translated $\epsilon\iota\sigma$ τὸν αἰῶνα, but with another vocalization ($\ell\acute{e}'\acute{e}d$ for $\ell\acute{a}'ad$).

These remarks on the Greek text are given by way of a parenthesis: the main point is that 'engraved on the rock' was regarded as a clause by itself, and was separated from the rest by the particle η , to which in the original there is nothing to correspond.

(§ 3) St Jerome edited the text of Job in Latin twice; the first edition was a revision of the Old Latin from Origen's Hexapla, the second is a new translation of his own, professedly from the Hebrew, but that generally meant an eclectic choice of the Greek renderings of Aquila, Symmachus, or Theodotion, with occasional new renderings of the Hebrew given him by his Jewish tutors. Jerome's first rendering of our passage is 'Quis mihi tribuat ut scribantur sermones mei et ponantur in libro in perpetuum *in stylo ferreo* et plumbo, aut *in testimoniis* in petris sculphantur?' This follows the fullest Greek; the words here in italics are marked in our MS under asterisk, and there can be no doubt that *et plumbo aut* should be included also with them.

The second edition, now the Vulgate, runs in Codex Amiatinus:

Quis mihi tribuat ut scribantur sermones mei?
quis mihi det ut exarentur in libro
stylo ferreo et plumbi lammina,
uel certe sculphantur in silice?

If these words be compared with the English rendering of the Hebrew given above it will be noticed that they are a very literal translation. In only two points is there material divergence. The Hebrew has 'and lead'; it is uncertain whether this means with a leaden pen, or with leaden lettering, or on a leaden tablet. St Jerome inclines to the last hypothesis, which is indeed intrinsically probable, and so introduces his *lammina plumbi*. There is nothing said about a *lammina*, a plate, in the original, or so far as we know in any ancient version. Besides this, 'for ever' is unrepresented: this is irregular, and I can

only suppose it is an example of the *ignavia Hieronymi* of which Wordsworth and White have collected a certain number of instances. In this case, however, a kind of explanation is to hand: *uel* corresponds to nothing in the Hebrew, and therefore is a relic of the old Greek rendering, which, as we have seen, inserted a disjunctive η immediately before the equivalent for 'graven on the rock'.

(§ 4) In itself *uel certe* is quite satisfactory. *Aut certe* or *uel certe* occurs 13 times in the Vulgate Old Testament, where the Hebrew and Greek have simple 'or'. Two instances may be given:

- (i) 2 Chron. vi 36^b 'to a land near or far'

VULG. *in terram longinquam UEL CERTE quae iuxta est.*

- (ii) Job xiii 22 'call and I will answer, or I will speak and answer thou me'

VULG. *Voca me et ego respondebo tibi, AUT CERTE loquar et tu responde mihi.*

But in Job xix 24 instead of *uel certe* some MSS and the modern official Clementine text have *uel celte*, in which *celte* is taken to be the ablative of *celtis* (or *celte*) 'a chisel', so that the last line of the verse becomes

'or with a chisel be cut in the rock'.

(§ 5) M. Havet (*Crit. Verbale* § 898) argues in favour of *celte*. His main argument is from the 'principe de banalité'; *certe* is a common word, *celte* a very uncommon word, so that a scribe would be likely to change *celte* into *certe*, unlikely to change *certe* into *celte*. Further a change of ERT into ELT is not graphic.

These are, so far as they go, sound arguments. When M. Havet goes on to say that '*certe* est obscur en soi', I can only express my polite surprise: the thirteen occurrences of *aut certe* and *uel certe*, two of which have been given above, shew quite clearly that St Jerome used these locutions as an equivalent to η , just in the same way as we say 'or else' for simple 'or'. And I do not think he has considered the possibility that a tired scribe with *uelcerte* or *uel cte* before him might, by a sort of mental jingle, write *uelcelte* and not notice his blunder.

It may be argued further in favour of *uel celte* that Jerome has introduced the *lammina* in the preceding clause. If he rendered the word *lead* by 'a tablet of lead', he might conceivably render the word *graven* by 'graven with a chisel'.

(§ 6) All this, however, assumes that *celtis* is a real word, meaning 'chisel'. When we ask for examples beyond the doubtful text of Job xix 24, only one example, so far as I know, has ever been brought

forward. This is the epitaph of one Sertius or Sergius of Pola, described as a *histrion*. The tombstone in this epitaph is described as *malleolo et celte literatus silex*. It was published by the younger Aldus in his *Orthographiae Ratio* (1561) under the word *Cloaca*, and it was gravely accepted by Gruter. But if we look up the word in Forcellini we find that the stone was set up by one Jacobus Baduarius in the 15th century and did not profess to be antique at all. No doubt the author of these facetious lines took his word for 'chisel' out of the text of Job as he knew it. So the authority for the word goes back to the controverted text.

(§ 7) Christian scholars have a great advantage over their Classical *confrères* in the general greater antiquity of the MSS of the works in which they are interested. In the case of the Latin Bible we have the further advantage of a series of quoters, commentators, and glossators. It is therefore sometimes possible to trace the history of a word almost to its source on external evidence alone.

First, then, as to the MS evidence. And here it will be of some interest to take the reading of the three words *lammina uel certe*. The spelling of *lammina* in this place, or elsewhere, has nothing directly to do with the question whether we are to read *celte* or *certe*. But as it happens to be one of the words in which the later centuries tended to use *lamina*, with one *m*, the spelling of the word in our MSS may be regarded as an indication of the worth of the text they contain.

MSS of the Latin Vulgate are extant by hundreds, and I have only attempted to ascertain the readings of a few. The remarkable thing is that so far as I have gone at present I have found nothing but *uel certe* until we come to the 13th century, and (as we might expect) *lammina* is very much more common in these earlier MSS than *lamina*. The facts are:—

<i>lammina uel certe</i>	Cod. Amiatinus (about 700)
	Cod. Palatinus 24 (about 700)
	B.M. Add. 10546 (Wordsworth's K, about 850)
	„ „ 24142 (Wordsworth's H, <i>saec.</i> ix)
	„ Arund. 125 (ix)*
	„ Harl. 2805 (ix)**
	„ Royal 1 E viii (ix/x)
	„ Add. 28107 (A. D. 1097)
<i>lamina uel certe</i>	B.M. Add. 14788 (x)**
	„ „ 4773 (xii)**

* This MS has had the first *m* of *lammina* struck out.

** These MSS have had *certe* corrected into *celte* by much later hands.

For the later MSS I examined 29 in the Cambridge University Library. Of these 15 have *certe*, 8 have *celte*, 4 have *scelte*, Dd xiii 6 has *cërce*, Ff vi 19 has *celpte*. Only one (Dd i 6) has *lammina*, and it is one of the 15 that have *certe*. Those that have *scelte* are

Mm iii 2 (xiii)

Dd xv 35 (xv) This MS reads *aut scelte*.

Ee ii 23 (xiv) This MS has *cërte* in the margin.

Ee vi 26 (xiv)

In two MSS *celte* has been altered to make *certe*, and in two *certe* has been altered to make *celte*. It is perhaps worth while noticing that Mm iv 22 (xiv) reads 'lamina uel celte fct|pantur'. If this be taken together with the occurrence of *celpte* in Ff vi 19, it may suggest the possibility that *scelte* is older than *celte*, and that it is nothing more than a miswriting of the first part of *sculpantur* which has somehow taken the place of *certe*.

I possess two Latin Bibles. One, a 12th-century codex from Bonne Espérance near Cambrai, which elsewhere has good and ancient readings, has *lammina uel certe*; the other, a very ordinary but neatly written 14th-century octavo, has *lamina uel celte*.

Surely it would be a paradox to maintain that *celte* is original and *certe* a correction, if these MSS fairly represent the state of the text in the centuries to which they belong. No external event happened between the 12th and 15th centuries which would tend to resuscitate a genuine reading of St Jerome's version.

(§ 8) From MSS we come to Commentaries. Neither St Jerome himself nor his disciple 'Philip' give any explanation of our passage. It is otherwise with the two great Latin expositions of Job, viz. the 'Moralia' of St Gregory and the Commentary of St Thomas Aquinas. St Thomas clearly read *uel certe*, as Lucas Brugensis points out.¹ As for St Gregory, it is a pity that none of the ancient codices of the *Moralia* in the British Museum is extant for Job xix (= *Moralia* lib. xiv c. 53/25), but even without their help it is evident that Gregory also read *uel certe*, as the Benedictine editors saw (Migne *P. L.* lxxv 1071 B and 1074 B). They point out that St Gregory has an elaborate explanation of the leaden 'lammina'—it signifies the weight of avarice!—and he also remarks on the iron pen and on the hardness and durability of 'silex', but he says nothing about a 'chisel'. The only MS I have seen, the 12th-century Cambridge MS (Dd i 32), agrees with the conclusions of the Benedictines, for it has *plumbi lammina uel*

¹ Lucas *Notiones in Sacra Biblia*, p. 97 f. The Cambridge MS of St Thomas's Commentary (Kk vi 31) has clearly *certe sculpantur* (fol. 119 *init.*).

certe sculpantur in silice (Migne 1071 B) and *in plumbi lammina uel certe in silice scribit* (Migne 1074 B).

Rupert of Deutz (Migne clxviii 1046) has *uel certe* in both places where the verse is explained. St Bruno (Migne clxiv 618), on the other hand, has *uel celte* in the printed text, but though he explains *stylo*, *plumbum*, and *silice*, he gives no explanation of *celte*, so that very likely he read *uel certe* also. The evidence of Cardinal Hugo is discussed below.

(§ 9) So far the evidence is almost all one way. It is a little different with the quotation of Job xix 22 ff in Jerome *aduersus Ioh. Hierosolymitanum* 30 (Migne *P. L.* xxiii 381 C). Here Vallarsi prints *lamina uel celte*, and his note seems to say that neither of his MSS have anything else. The only MS I have had access to (*CUL* Dd vii 2) reads *lamina uel celte*. This MS is of the 15th century; I do not know what age Vallarsi's MSS were, but he does not lay any stress upon their antiquity. The context is quite neutral, and Jerome makes no further reference to our verse, which is only quoted to introduce the following words where Job, according to the Latin text, professes his expectation of a bodily resurrection (*de terra surrecturus sum*). We have seen that from the 13th century onward *uel celte* had a certain tendency to be substituted for *uel certe*. It is therefore quite possible, if all our MSS of the treatise *Against John of Jerusalem* are late, that the mediaeval editor of this work, from whom our MSS are descended, was already accustomed to read *uel celte* just in the same way as he was accustomed to spell the word for a plate with one *m*. He may therefore have introduced *celte* into the text of Jerome's tract.

If I were to be employed to defend *celte* against *certe* in the Latin text of Job I think there is only one way to do it with any approach to plausibility. I should say *celtis* (or *celte*) was a very rare word used by St Jerome for some reason in this passage, though the word was so rare, and therefore obscure, that *certe* was immediately substituted for it. But St Jerome quoted his own translation accurately, and the tradition of this quotation, preserved in a work little read and rarely copied, survived uncorrupted. Then a couple of centuries before the invention of printing some one corrected his Bible to agree with St Jerome's quotation, and from this corrected copy the reading *celte* spread and was finally printed.

But all this seems to me very artificial. Moreover, it does not explain the variant *scelte*, or oddities like *celpte*. And the fact remains that, now we have got rid of the 'inscription' that took in the precocious young Aldus, the omnivorous Gruter, the careless editor of the last edition of Du Cange, and a good many other people ancient and modern, there is no evidence that the word *celtis* or *celte* ever existed—

at least, not until the late mediaeval period, when the familiar context of Job xix 23 suggested that it must be some sort of a rock-cutting tool. Isidore *Etymologiarum Liber* xix 7 and xx 4 (Migne *P.L.* lxxxii) enumerates for us the stock-in-trade of a mason. He has nothing to say about *celtis*, but his humanist editor did not fail to bring the word to our notice, quoting Job xix 23. By such artificial means words are made still to walk, like ghosts.

(§ 10) I have spoken of the 'familiar context' of Job xix 23. It was particularly familiar to mediaeval churchmen, for it comes in the 8th of the Nine Lessons from Job in *Dirige*, the Mattins for the Dead (*Pelli meae*, Job xix 20-27). These Lessons, once known in England as 'Petty Job', were almost as frequently recited and copied as the Psalms themselves. They occur in all the Breviaries, the Manuals, and the countless Books of Hours, that were so multiplied during the two centuries preceding the Reformation. And it is in these books, copied and recycled from one another without any check from the influence of rational exegesis, and recited day after day by clerks whose independent knowledge of Latin was small, that the reading *uel celtte* is most at home. I have examined a great number of those in Cambridge, dating from the 14th and 15th centuries: of these 50 have *celte*, 7 have *scelte*, 5 have *certe*. Service-books earlier than the 14th century are not nearly so plentiful: I have only come across two in the collections now accessible, *viz.* Fitzwilliam 13 and *CUL* II iv 20, both of the 13th century¹; there is also the *Portiforium Oswaldi* (Parker 391), written about 1064, of which the reading has been kindly ascertained for me by the Master of Corpus. All these three have *uel certe*.

So far as I have seen, not one of these Service-books has *lammina*; they all have *lamina*, with one *m*. On the other hand more than half do not spell *silice* right, for I have noted 23 which have *scilice* and 11 which have *cilice*!

I venture to think that we may draw two conclusions from these striking figures. In the first place, the fact that *certe* occurs at all, and that in all the oldest MSS, shews us that the Office itself is older than the change of *certe* into *celte*. In the second place, the misspellings *scilice* and *cilice* for *silice* prove that neither the scribes who multiplied these Service-books, nor the clerks and lay-folk who used them, were careful or learned enough in the 14th and 15th centuries to know the difference between what was Latin and what wasn't. By this time the new modern languages were acquiring a fixed shape, and a vernacular literature was springing up. Latin had become what it is now, a dead language, something that had to be conventionally

¹ II iv 20, an Ely Breviary, is so dated by Mr Bannister.

learned, so that instinct was gone and *mumpsimus* sounded as likely to be right as *sumpsimus*.

(§ 11) But if *celte* had wriggled its way into the text, and had become familiar by countless repetition, then if any one tried to construe our verse, the context suggested that it was something in the ablative or instrumental case, and that it was, in fact, an instrument for 'sculpting'. This is how Cardinal Hugo de Sancto Charo, the inventor of the Corcordance, puts it in his gloss on Job xix 23: *Celtes instrumentum est (ut dicunt) quo literae uel imagines sculpuntur in silice*. Notice the *ut dicunt*, and the fact that Hugo guesses the nominative to be *celtes*. Hugo died in 1263, so he was a contemporary of Aquinas: his Note, so evidently drawn only from the context, is the earliest witness I can find for the reading with *celte*.¹

The next in order is Richard Rolle of Hampole, who wrote a Latin Explanation of 'Petty Job'. He says: *Celtis enim ex metallo conficitur quod citius frangitur quam curuatur*.² This is good evidence that Richard read *celte* in his Dirge-book, but he almost seems to imply that '*celtis*' is the material out of which the durable inscription is made. In any case the explanation, like Cardinal Hugo's, is derived solely from the context.

(§ 12) However this may have been, the reading *celte* became widely spread in the 14th century, and so the vernacular versions of the Bible made then all support it.

The Old French (Fitzwilliam 9) has: *que mes paroles soient escriptes ou liure de greffe de fer . ou pieces de plon eu soient adertes establiees & entailles en pierres dures par chisel*.³

The Wycliffite Bible has: 'who geueth to me that thoo be writen in a book with an yren poyntel eithir with a plate of leed either with a chisel be grauen in a flynte?' Various MSS shew variation in spelling here, but they all speak of a 'chisel'.

Finally, the Dutch Books of Hours, which in the 15th century are often written wholly in Dutch, bring in a *beitel*, i. e. a chisel.

(§ 13) Thus in the 16th century, at the Revival of Learning, when the mechanical art of printing fixed texts as they had never been fixed before, the word *celte* had become firmly ensconced in the text of *Dirige*. To those who derived their Latin from the Service-books themselves it seemed as natural a word as any other in the familiar Offices. I have explained in the early part of this Paper the rather

¹ I quote from the edition of 1498: I have not seen a MS of the *Postillas*.

² So the Paris ed. of 1510. The Cambridge MS Dd iv 54 (s. xiv) agrees.

³ I do not know the history of this version: *par chisel* is decisive for *celte*, but *adertes* looks like the equivalent of *certe*. Is it possible that the text is a doublet caused by revision?

indirect process by which any alternative particle found its way into the Latin text of this verse: it was not obvious by glancing at the Hebrew text, with a Humanist's knowledge of Hebrew, whether *certe* or *celte* was necessarily right. So the Clementine Editors let *celte* stand in the text, and there it stands to this day. Let us hope that Abbot Gasquet and his coadjutors will have the courage to restore *certe* to its rightful place!

For my own part I feel as sure that St Jerome wrote *uel certe* as I am sure he wrote *lammina*, both in the text of his translation of Job and in his quotation of it in the book against John of Jerusalem. I feel sure that *scelte* and *celte* are late mediaeval corruptions, that came into the text I don't quite know how. And I think the moral of it all is that textual corruptions do sometimes arise by stupidity and accident, not according to rules and formulae, not always according either to the *ductus litterarum* or the procedures of an imagined scribal psychology. And therefore there is no royal road to textual emendation. The neatest correction is not always right, the most ingenious psychology of the cause of an error is not always a true account of it. The age that turned *sumpsimus* into *mumpsimus* may equally well have changed *uel certe* into *uel celte*.¹

¹ When the above paper was read before the Cambridge Philological Society it was pointed out by Professor Housman that quite lately *cellis* has been foisted into the text of the *Mulomedicina Chironis*, a Latin work of the 4th or 5th century A. D., edited by E. Oder in 1901 from a single 15th century MS now in the Munich Library. In this work (§ 26) we read, concerning a horse's swollen veins that require lancing, *percutiuntur trauerse securi celle uel flebotomo*. Bücheler here emends *celle* into *celte*, whereby we learn that the vct. is expected to 'cut across with an axe, a chisel, or a lancet!' And similarly in § 693, where the MS has *sanguinem . . . emittito de securi cella*, the editor changes the last words into *de securi uel celta*, in which *celta* is a supposed by-form for *cellis*.

Professor Housman pointed out that these heroic operations were required neither upon the animal nor upon the text of the *Mulomedicina*. All that is necessary is to take *securicella* as one word, meaning (as may be gathered from the context) some special sort of knife, perhaps shaped something like a small axe-head. In any case *cellis* is not in the text as transmitted by the MS, and in neither place does the context suggest the use of anything like a 'chisel'.

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