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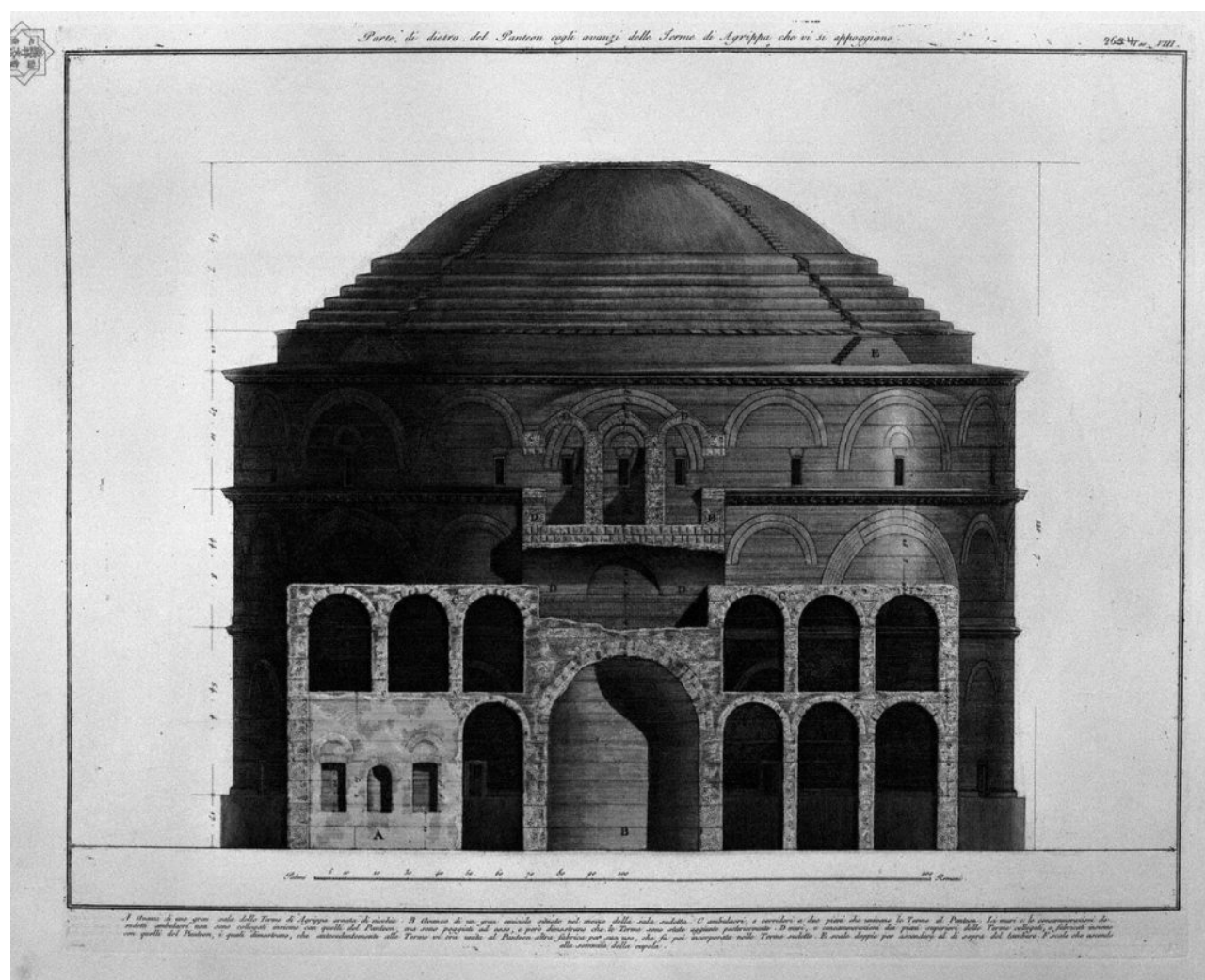
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## A MISCELLANY OF THINGS

Here are a couple of things that I noticed recently, and might be useful to others.

Following an enquiry, I find that there is a translation of Theophylact on Matthew online [here](#). This is certainly better than the \$70 needed to obtain the 1992 translation of the same work, [at Amazon.com here](#).

Next, the physical remains of ancient Rome are always interesting. Piranesi printed a drawing of the rear of the Pantheon, with what he claims are the remains of the Baths of Agrippa, completed before 12 BC and therefore one of the original public baths of *thermae*:



I was able to find online some photos of the same area, [here](#).



Much of the baths still stood in the 17th century, despite use as a quarry for building materials. It would be interesting to track down the older sketches that apparently exist.

Finally I saw something about the Ethiopian canon of the bible. It is a common atheist jeer online is that the Ethiopian canon of the bible is larger than the normal, insinuating – the argument is rarely made explicit – that this proves that the bible does not exist, or is not by God, or something of the kind. I’ve never worried about the odd additions to the Ethiopian canon, since Ethiopia was not converted to Christianity until the canon was pretty much set, and the isolation of that community, the little that we know about it, and its unusual circumstances could result in any amount of oddity. One Ethiopian emperor used to eat pages of the bible when he was feeling ill, for instance. This is not a very educated world.

But I spent a little time looking into this. [The Wikipedia article](#) contains very poor sources. The only one of any value seemed to be by G.-A. Mikre-Sellassie,<sup>[1]</sup> This says on p.119:

It is rather difficult to determine what exactly the official Canon of Scriptures of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is. As R.W Cowley has rightly observed, one of the problems in this study is that in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church “the concept of canonicity is regarded more loosely than it is among most other churches”.[46] Apparently, the two terms, protocanonical and deuterocanonical, employed among many churches nowadays, are not known within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

46. R.W. Cowley, “The Biblical Canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Today” in *Ostkirchliche Studien*, 23 (1974), 318-323. In this short article the author has attempted a careful study of the Canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

This is not encouraging. In fact the article did not give any kind of history of how the canon came to be – a common problem. In general one gained the idea that in Ethiopian history the church was rather more important than the scriptures were, and the apocrypha might have a near-canonical status, or not, as times demanded. Perhaps our own view on canon is shaped by the Reformers here, and is more precise than might have been the case either than in antiquity or the middle ages? If so, the Ethiopians are merely continuing a late-antique vagueness, albeit shaped by their own unusual world.

One of the key sources is apparently E. Ullendorf, *Ethiopia and the Bible: the Schweich Lectures* 1967, OUP (1968). This I could not access, but a Google Books preview gave me [p.31 f.](#), which gives an account about the translation of the Old and New Testaments into Ge`ez:

. . . ወመክብብ፡ መጻሕፍቲሃ፡ ዘብሉይ፡ ተፀልዋ፡ እምፅብራይስጢ፡ ነብ፡ ገዕዝ፡ በመዋዕሊሃ፡ ለነገሥተ፡ አዜብ፡ እነተ፡ ሐወጸተ፡ ለሰሎሞን። ወበእነተዝ፡ ኩ፡ ጽሩዩ፡ ፍካሬሆሙ፡ ለመጻሕፍተ፡ ነቢያት፡ ዘውስተ፡ ብሔረ፡ አገዛዚ፡ እስመ፡ በሕገ፡ አይሁድ፡ ነበሩ፡ እምቅድመ፡ ልደተ፡ ክርስቲስ። ወእመሰኬ፡ አዕለውዎ፡ እምድሃረ፡ ልደተ፡ ክርስቲስ፡ ሚጡ፡ ሰቃልያን፡ ቃለ፡ ጽዱቅ፡ ውስተ፡ ስምዐ፡ ሐሰት። ወከመሰ፡ ተፀልዋ፡ መጻሕፍተ፡ ነቢያት፡ እምፅብራይስጢ፡ ነብ፡ ገዕዝ፡ ትረክብ፡ ትእምርተ፡ በውስተ፡ መጽሐፈ፡ ነገሥት፡ ዘይብል፡ ትርጓሜ፡ ነገረ፡ ፅብራይስጢ፡ ነብ፡ ገዕዝ፡ ኤሱሂ፡ ብሂል፡ እምባክ። አይናይ፡ ብሂል፡ እግዚእ። ጸባሕት፡ ብሂል፡ ዘነይሳት። ወመክብብ፡ መጻሕፍቲሃ፡ ዘሐዲስ፡ ለምድር፡ ኢትዮጵያ፡ ተፀልዋ፡ እምሮማይስጢ፡ ነብ፡ ገዕዝ፡ እምቅድመ፡ ደስተርኢ፡ ሃይማኖተ፡ ንስጥርስ፡ ወእምቅድመ፡ ይትፈጠር፡ ሃይማኖተ፡ ልዩን። ወእምቅድመ፡ ይትጋብኡ፡ ማኅበረ፡ ከለባት፡ ዘውለተሙ፡ ኤጲስ፡ ቆጶሳት፡ ዘከልቆያን። ወበእነተዝ፡ ኩ፡ ፍካሬ፡ መጻሕፍቲሃ፡ ለብሔረ፡ አገዛዚ፡ ዘብሉይ፡ ወዘሐዲስ፡ ንጡፈ፡ ከመ፡ ወርቅ፡ ወፍቸ፡ ከመ፡ ብሩር፡ . . .

. . . and as to the books of the O.T., they were translated from Hebrew into Gə'əz in the days of the Queen of the South who visited

<sup>1</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS. Éth. 113, ff. 63 seqq. (= Zotenberg, *Catalogue*,

Solomon. Hence the interpretation (rendering) of the prophetic books extant in Ethiopia was faithful, as the population were of the Jewish religion before the birth of Christ. However, in the translation after the birth of Christ the crucifiers distorted the true word into a testimony of falsehood. As to the manner in which the books of the prophets have been translated from Hebrew into Gə'əz, one will find an indication in the Book of Kings which gives a translation of Hebrew words into Gə'əz, i.e. አሉሂ: meaning 'God', አይሩይ: meaning 'Lord', ጸባእት: meaning 'of hosts' (cf. Zotenberg, op. cit., p. 8, 2nd col., lines 10-13). As to the books of the N.T. of our country Ethiopia, they were translated from ሮማይስጥ: (Latin?) into Gə'əz' before the appearance of the Nestorian Faith and before the creation of the doctrine of Leo and before the assembly of the Council of Dogs, i.e. the bishops of Chalcedon. Hence the Ethiopian rendering of the Old and New Testaments was pure as gold and proven as silver. . . .<sup>1</sup>

I don't think that we need to rely on this very much. Ullendorff also discusses the equally traditional idea that the bible in Ethiopian was translated by Arabic; and it seems to be a fact that many Ethiopian versions of ancient texts derive from an Arabic translation. However I quickly drowned in the number of books and articles that I would have to read to know more!

That's it for now. More next time!

1. <sup>[1]</sup>Mikre-Sellassie, Gebre-Amanuel (1993). "The Bible and Its Canon in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church," *The Bible Translator* 44 (1): 111-123.↵