Writings and fragments

Pierus of Alexandria (d. c. AD 310)

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Translator's Biographical Notice

Pierus of Alexandria. Translator's Biographical Notice. [a.d. 275.] Among the very eminent men who flourished near his own time, Eusebius mentions Pierius, a presbyter of Alexandria, and speaks of him as greatly renowned for his voluntary poverty, his philosophical erudition and his skill in the exposition of Scripture and in discoursing to the public assemblies of the Church. He lived in the latter part of the third century, and seems to have been for a considerable period president of the Catechetical school at Alexandria. Jerome says that he was called Origenes, junior; and according to Photius, he shared in some of the errors of Origen, on such subjects especially as the doctrine of the Holy Ghost and the pre-existence of souls. In his manner of life he was an ascetic. After the persecution under Galerius or Maximus he lived at Rome. He appears to have devoted himself largely to sacred criticism and the study of the text of Scripture; and among several treatises written by him, and extant in the time of Photius, we find mention made of one on the prophet Hosea. And, in addition to the Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Photius notices twelve books of his, and praises both their composition and their matter.

A Fragment of a Work of Pierius on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians

I.—A Fragment of a Work of Pierius on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. Origen, Dionysius, Pierius, Eusebius of Cæsareia, Didymus, and Apollinaris, have interpreted this epistle most copiously; of whom Pierius, when he was expounding and unfolding the meaning of the apostle, and purposed to explain the words, For I would that all men were even as I myself, added this remark: In saying this, Paul, without disguise, preaches celibacy.

A Section on the Writings of Pierius

II.—A Section on the Writings of Pierius. Different Discourses of the Presbyter Pierius.

There was read a book by Pierius the presbyter, who, they say, endured the conflict for Christ, along with his brother Isidorus. And he is reputed to have been the teacher of the martyr Pamphilus in ecclesiastical studies, and to have been president of the school at Alexandria. The work contained twelve books. And in style he is perspicuous and clear, with the easy flow, as it were, of a spoken address, displaying no signs of laboured art, but bearing us quietly along, smoothly and gently, like off-hand speaking. And in argument he is most fertile, if any one is so. And he expresses his opinion on many things outside what is now established in the Church, perhaps in an antique manner; but with respect to the Father and the Son, he sets forth his sentiments piously, except that he speaks of two substances and two natures; using, however, the terms substance and nature, as is apparent from what follows, and from what precedes this passage, in the sense of person and not in the sense put on it by the adherents of Arius. With respect to the Spirit, however, he lays down his opinion in a very dangerous and far from pious manner. For he affirms that He is inferior to the Father and the Son in glory. He has a passage also in the book entitled, On the Gospel according to Luke, from which it is possible to show that the honour or dishonour of the image is also the honour or dishonour of the original.

And, again, he indulges in some obscure speculations, after the manner of the nonsense of Origen, on the subject of the “pre-existence of souls. And also in the book on the Passover (Easter) and on Hosea, he treats both of the cherubim made by Moses, and of the pillar of Jacob, in which passages he admits the actual construction of those things, but propounds the foolish theory that they were given economically, and that they were in no respect like other things which are made; inasmuch as they bore the likeness of no other form, but had only, as he foolishly says, the appearance of wings.

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