Correspondence.

SHILOH.

To the Editor of THE CHURCHMAN.

SIR,—The two papers contributed by Dr. Perowne are noticeable. The philological comments are mainly on the lines of Dr. Driver (in "an exegetical study" in the *Philological Magazine*), whose Hebrew scholarship and fair handling are undeniable. It were difficult in a mere letter to answer, or fully criticize, *two* papers; but in the interests of truth, of older views, and of ordinary readers, who, without special knowledge on the point, may be impressed by two learned names, I beg to offer a few modest considerations on Gen. xlix. 10.

Many were startled by a statement of Dr. Driver some while ago that "until Shiloh come" was unknown as a reading before the sixteenth century, and that there was a *tradition* as early as the Septuagint (third century B.C.) for a different interpretation. After some correspondence the *reading* was allowed to be as early as the sixth century, and the *tradition* was "not insisted" on.

If the question were only *philological*, great Hebraists should rule the point; but it is not so. It is, and perhaps mainly, a question of *external* evidence, of fact, of the earliest Hebrew text, of versions, of existing manuscripts, and of comments, Jewish and Christian, from early times. As proof of the uncertainty of the philological ground, Dr. Perowne, in your last, says of one of Dr. Driver's two proffered readings ("he that is his") that he "should doubt whether such a rendering were *grammatically* possible," and, as interpretation, he says "it is extremely obscure."

Let the facts be weighed. The earliest known *Hebrew* text is the *Massoretic*—at first traditional, then put into writing between the fourth and the sixth century (A.D.)—and here the proper name *Shiloh*, שִׁילֹה, appears as the inherited reading. The earliest version or translation is the *Septuagint*, from which all known versions, except the Syriac, are derived. No version has the reading *Shiloh*. Hence the *Hebrew* text of the Septuagint is of supreme concern; but *it is not known*—nay, even its own *Greek* text is questioned. As early as the second century Justin Martyr ("Cum Tryph.," 120) names *two* readings of this first witness. All versions were made *before* the Massoretic Hebrew text was committed to writing, and yet this, the original language, written by Jews, ignored all the versions, and gave the reading *Shiloh*. *No one accounts for this striking fact.* The first Jewish comment or quotation of the Massoretic reading *Shiloh* was in the sixth century. The Christian writers before the fourth century used *only* the Septuagint, not knowing Hebrew. The oldest Hebrew manuscripts, most of them, have the reading *Shiloh*, as Dr. Driver allows in the "Variorum Bible," and the Revised Version *has left this word in its text.* Moreover, the witness of the earliest versions is weakened by the very significant fact that, whilst omitting the *Shiloh*-reading, as guided by the Septuagint and not by a Hebrew text, *they are not agreed in any other*, nor is any one clear and satisfying.

The Talmudic extract, quoted from Dr. Driver in the October CHURCHMAN, is now said to be of no value as to the "true *sense*" of Gen. xlix. 10. I submit that the question is not as to the true sense of this passage, *about which Jew and Christian were ever agreed*, but as to the true *reading of the text.* Strange and "far-fetched" as may be the manner of quotation in the extract—according to our thought and habit—yet the proof is valid that the *words* "Shiloh," "Yinnon," and others were in the accepted *Hebrew* text in and before the sixth century (A.D.). "*Until*

Shiloh come" was then read by the Jews; and it is very striking that in this extract only one "Name" is vouched for *without any pretence of interpretation*—"Shiloh:" it is literal quotation of the Hebrew, with no meaning or *sense* alleged, far-fetched or near, as all the other speakers allege.

The following is from the *Midrash* ("searcher" or "explainer" of Scripture, as the *Massora* was the "hedge" of the text), and it is worth adding for its beauty and devout spirit, as also for its testimony to the "true sense":

> Where is Israel called the vine? There: *For the vine of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant planting.* What is that planting? In the planting of it you will set it in a choice place. So is the planting of the royalty in the tribe of Judah, until the King Messiah shall spring up, as it is said, *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah or a law-giver from between his feet until* SHILOH *come, and to Him shall be the gathering of the people.* Rabbi *Huna* says Messiah is spoken of under seven names—Yinnon, The Lord our Righteousness, Branch, Comforter, David, Shiloh, Elias (super prov., fol. 71, col. 3).

A brief summary may show that Dr. Perowne's assertion that the *Shiloh*-reading has not "tradition" in its favour is questionable: (1) All earliest testimony, Jew and Christian, is for a *personal* interpretation of the text of Genesis as against a vague "ideal future of Israel," or the brief prosperity of Solomon's reign, *without a Messiah.* (2) The traditional teaching is that *Messiah* is the subject of the text. (3) The Massoretic reading, *Shiloh*, is *professedly* tradition, and of *unknown antiquity.* (4) The greatest number of Hebrew manuscripts have *Shiloh.* (5) The Talmud and Midrash have preserved extracts, *from some earliest text*, with the *Shiloh*-reading, in exact quotation, at a date far anterior to any existing manuscripts; and against all this there is not one other unambiguous reading, or one in which all the versions agree.

Dr. Perowne contends against "Shiloh" as a *Name*, because it has no apparent reference to any office or character of Messiah. He says (following Dr. Driver) that the word "*must* be a *prophetic* title." But the root-meaning of the word is disputable—a fact, perhaps, indicated in the Samaritan variant, שלה, and in the seemingly *paraphrastic readings of all the versions*, including the Septuagint. The root of many Hebrew words is unknown; the meaning of not a few Hebrew *names* is doubtful. Perhaps Rab Shila's scholars in the extract were not unwise when they left the word as found in the Hebrew text to speak for itself, as the revisers also have done.

But, alas! for "the received *interpretation*," the grand prophecy *failed;* Judah's greatness and prevalence over his brethren ceased, royalty and "political independence" departed long before Christ came—so says Dr. Perowne; and he says "the fathers" therefore explained the prophecy as meaning "that *Judah would be under a foreign yoke when Messiah came*" ("Justin. Apol.," i. 32; "Clement. Hom.," iii. 49). I have not by me the means of testing the second reference, but Justin surely is misread, for he states plainly (*in loc. cit.*) that *after Christ* the land of the Jews was "straightway taken by the sword and given over" to the conquerors (*μεθ' ὃν εὐθὺς δοριάλωτος ὑμῖν ἡ γῆ Ἰουδαίων παρεδόθη*).

Dr. Perowne's next overthrow is the rendering of the ancient versions, "Until the things that are reserved for him come," and the like meanings. "We must," he says, ". . . abandon both these interpretations"—the Massoretic and that of the versions—and to sustain this destructive position he alleges that *history* contradicts both. This is bold, though honest assertion. Is it, then, true that events substantially falsified all previous interpretations both of Jews and Christians? Was there really no promise of *any* authority to Judah *to continue till Messiah's advent?*

The best authorities, ancient and modern, have always held that, either under kings *or* governors (as the text reads), some governing power did remain with Judah till Christ came. Josephus witnesses that for 532 years—from David to the Captivity—*kings* reigned, and that after the return the Asmonean princes again set up the royal power; who kept the *name* of king till Herod's time. "Governors" had preceded these, under foreign suzerainties, and, finally, the priest-rulers, or "kings;" but *all these administered Jewish law in Jewish courts* (satisfying the "law-giver" or governor of the prophecy); and after the Captivity *Judah* (with the annexed tribes under him) was supreme over the whole land, Samaria and Judæa, and JERUSALEM, of Judah, remained the seat of government, wherein was preserved the power of capital punishment until our Lord's day. Vicissitudes there were—judgment, and captivity, and foreign over-rule, with loss of perfect national independence, but never the permanent loss of Jewish law, or of Judah's distinction over his brethren. Substantially, then, the promise of the prophecy is *not* at issue with historic facts. How much higher would have been the inheritance of the promise, had Judah continued faithful to God, is a matter of faith. It is allowed that the promise was qualified, but it was not destroyed, by unfaithfulness.

Dr. Perowne's summing up is startling:

> When was the prophecy fulfilled? Clearly in the reign of Solomon, primarily. . . . In David's time Judah became the sovereign tribe; under Solomon it attained to rest. And the Messianic idea is here bound up with the tribe as elsewhere with the nation. . . . The Messianic vision of rest and peace and submission of the nations finds its foreshadowing in the destinies of the tribe out of which "our Lord sprang."

This is "private interpretation," surely. The very centre of gravity of the prophetic Word is boldly shifted. Its subject is not the personal coming of the Messiah, the Jewish hope, undying, of "HIM that should come," or Judah's state as a contemporary sign of that—as universal scholarship and belief have hitherto acknowledged—but the vision, as if seen through an inverted telescope, is the "*destinies* of the tribe" in Solomon's days . . . a "*foreshadowing*" of the Messianic vision, and that is *all*—a foreshadowing, not an actual fulfilment, and this obscurely, not "clearly"!

What is the Messianic *idea* in this passage? and how is it in any special way "*bound up* with the tribe" in Solomon's days? It had been so bound up for 600 years before. Surely in that Eastern voluptuary's reign there was no *foreshadowing* of the coming of THE HOLY ONE OF GOD. He was rather, in his hideous corruption and fall, a hindrance of the promised spiritual blessings of Messiah—a type of the Jews' mistaken ideal of Messiah perhaps, but never of the "kingdom not of this world."

Judah's proper kingly sceptre was given in David, and it was not to "depart" utterly till a certain event. Was, then, the prophecy *drawn in* and limited to the very next reign? No event happened to warrant the thought of any fulfilment then, of a word so ancient, and with such a forecast over the ages to come. Not even a false Messiah came then; but the mighty guard of the prophetic word kept the sceptre for far-off centuries after Solomon.

Well may Dr. Perowne say, with half unconscious candour, that his view "lacks ancient support"—it *does*, except that of the Samaritans—Judah's enemies—and modern support will, I think, fairly be withheld for want of the essential elements of "clearness," proportion, and probability.

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Temple Ewell, Dover, 11th Dec., 1886.

[This letter did not reach us in time for the January CHURCHMAN.—ED.]