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1930

731ST ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH, 1930,

AT 4.30 P.M.

DR. JAMES W. THIRTLE, M.R.A.S., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were read, confirmed, and signed, and the HON. SECRETARY announced the election of the following:—As a Member, John W. Laing, Esq.; and as Associates, Gordon Davidson, Esq., Miss H. J. MacEwan, and Miss Eleanor M. Shubrick.

The CHAIRMAN then called upon Brig-General H. Biddulph, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., to read his paper on "The Date of Ecclesiasticus."

THE DATE OF ECCLESIASTICUS.

By BRIG.-GENERAL H. BIDDULPH, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

AT the present time it is generally held that Ecclesiasticus was written by Ben-Sira about 180–175 B.C., and the object of this paper is to try and show that, from the evidence afforded by the Hebrew text, the date of its composition must be considerably earlier.

As Mr. R. R. Ottley states in his *Handbook to the Septuagint*, "the point is important because the Prologue alludes to the Law, Prophets, and other Books; and various books of the Old Testament are referred to in the body of the work."

There are two statements, one in a Greek Prologue, and the other in the book itself, which might be thought to fix the date, and are all that we have to go on. The author of the Prologue

states that "coming into Egypt in the eight and thirtieth year in the time of Euergetes" and continuing there some time, he found and translated into Greek out of Hebrew the work of his grandfather. In chapter 50 of the book itself we find a long eulogy of the High Priest, Simon, the son of Onias (Jochanan), evidently written by a contemporary who had seen him officiate in the Temple in the years now past and gone.

Unfortunately there were two Ptolemies who bore the name of Euergetes, viz.:—Euergetes I, 247–222 B.C., and Physcon (Euergetes II), who reigned in Egypt 146–117 B.C. He had been proclaimed by the Alexandrians in 169 B.C. during the life of his brother and predecessor Philometor, and had been given Libya and Cyrene by the Romans. After the death of Philometor he succeeded to the throne of Egypt in 146 B.C.

Similarly there were two High Priests, Simon, the son of Onias, viz., the celebrated Simon the Just, whose date was either 310–291 B.C. or 300–270 B.C., and his grandson Simon, whose date was about 219–199 B.C. It will be noted that Euergetes II and Simon II both died about a century after their illustrious predecessors and namesakes.

In the Prologue a crucial point is the real meaning of the phrase *ἐπὶ τοῦ Εὐεργέτου*. Does the writer mean "in the thirty-eighth year (of some unspecified era) in the time of Euergetes," or "in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Euergetes II," counting from the time when he was proclaimed by the Alexandrians 170–169 B.C.? Many are like Dr. Oesterley, who holds the latter view and refers to Hag. i, 1, and Zech. i, 1, in the LXX, to papyri inscriptions and the Rosetta Stone, in support of this translation, and writes, "we may therefore take these words as referring to the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Physcon Euergetes, for he is the only Egyptian King of this name who reigned over 38 years." Reckoning, therefore, from the date of proclamation, referred to above, viz., 170–169 B.C., we arrive at 132 B.C. as his thirty-eighth year, and adding some fifty years for the grandfather's *floruit* we fix 180 B.C. as the approximate date of the authorship. Dr. Pusey was emphatic on grammatical and linguistic grounds that the phrase cannot mean "in the thirty-eighth year of Euergetes," parallel to *ἐπὶ Δαρείου* in the LXX (Hag. i, 1), for he observes that the Prologue does not contain a single Hebrew idiom, and insists that the ordinary methods of Greek translation must be adopted. He considers, therefore, that it is most natural to understand

the phrase as meaning in the thirty-eighth year of the translator's life, and that the Euergetes referred to is Euergetes I. There is certainly this much to be said for the argument that, since Pusey's date, the greater part of Ecclesiasticus in Hebrew has been discovered, and the discovery proves that the grandson did not possess a very facile or accurate knowledge of Hebrew, for, to quote Sir F. G. Kenyon, "the translator took considerable liberty of paraphrase, and sometimes did not understand the Hebrew before him."

Mr. Hart,* one of the moderns who still hold the older view, maintains that, while the thirty-eighth year may be that of Euergetes, it may equally well belong to some familiar and unspecified era, and that this is the common Egyptian era which began with the accession of each king and ended with his death. Now Euergetes I came to the throne in the thirty-eighth year of his predecessor, Philadelphus, who reigned 285-247 B.C., and the phrase would mean in the thirty-eighth year of the era of Ptolemy Philadelphus, but just after Euergetes I had come to the throne. This view is not generally accepted.

Dr. Swete, in his Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek, writes, "it is not clear whether the thirty-eighth year is to be reckoned from the commencement of the reign of Euergetes, or from some other point of departure," and Mr. Ottley, who also appears to occupy a neutral position, says, "there is no rendering of the phrase which is really secure."

A further point against identifying this Euergetes with Physcon (referred to by Dr. Pusey and Mr. Hart) is the fact that Physcon hated foreigners, while Euergetes I was very tolerant, and, according to Josephus (*c. Apion ii*), had a liking for the Jews and their religion. The reign of Physcon, that monster of foulness and brutality, would not have been an auspicious time for a foreign Jew to come and make a prolonged stay and publish a religious work. On the other hand, Mr. Hart's opponents think that too much can be made of this argument.

Additional points which would affect the question are (*a*) the integrity of the text and the number 38, (*b*) the term "grandfather" sometimes includes a more remote ancestor (and Easterns notoriously use terms of relationship in a generic rather than in an exact sense), and if so a reference to Euergetes II would not give any chronological clue to the "grandfather,"

* Ecclesiasticus, Greek Text of Codex 248.

and (c) that if Euergetes II were intended, it would seem more natural to identify him further, to avoid confusion, just as the coins of King James I bore the name Jacobus, while those of his grandson James II had the numeral added; and, indeed, Pusey* states, "Those who called him at all by the name (Euergetes) entitled him Euergetes the Second, or Euergetes Physcon, to distinguish him from the Ptolemy to whom the title belonged." The same argument applies to "Simon, the son of Onias." If the second were referred to it would seem natural for further identification to be made in order to prevent confusion just as the author in the Hebrew text signs himself Simeon, the son of Joshua, the son of Eleazar, the son of Sira. On the whole, therefore, I think we may say that the reference to Euergetes fails to give us a definite clue to a date for the composition of the book, and we must now consider the eulogy of the High Priest, Simon, the son of Onias, contained in the fiftieth chapter.

Those who hold that Euergetes II is referred to in the Prologue identify this Simon, the son of Onias, with the second of that name, but such a conclusion presents great difficulties if the commonly accepted facts about the two Simons hold good.

Simon I has usually been called Simon the Just, for, as Josephus writes: "He was called Simon the Just because of his piety toward God and his kind disposition to those of his own nation." He left behind him such a reputation that it led to his being singled out in an early tract of the Mishnah† as one of the last remnants of the Great Synagogue; the Jerusalem Talmud has much in his praise and of the notable things that distinguished his office of the High Priesthood, and, in fact, to quote Dr. Edersheim,‡ his is "one of the greatest names in Jewish traditional history."

Further, according to Jewish tradition,§ the Ineffable Name was heard in the Temple for the last time from his lips; henceforward whosoever should attempt to pronounce it was to have no part in the world to come. As Dr. Edersheim|| says, "One relates who had stood among the priests in the Temple and

* "Lectures on Daniel."

† Pusey, ref. *Pirke Aboth*. c. 2.

‡ *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*.

§ *Jewish Encycl.*: ref. Yoma 30 b. Tosef Sotah xiii. Etheridge, *Targums* ref. Sanhedrim x, 1.

|| *The Temple*, ref. Rabbi Tryphon in Jerusalem Talmud.

listened with rapt attention to catch the mysterious Name, it was lost amidst the sound of the priests' instruments, as they accompanied the benediction of the people."

Now if we turn to the eulogy of Simon, the son of Onias (Eccclus. I), several peculiarities are to be noted. First, its great length; it contains in the LXX no less than sixty lines, to which the Hebrew adds another ten, a number greater than that of any of the eulogies of the worthies who are praised from chapter xlv onwards. Thus Abraham's praise is recorded in 13 lines, Moses the Great law-giver's in 16 lines, Aaron's in 63 lines (55 only if we omit the eight lines which merely record the fate of Korah and his company). Phineas has 9 lines allotted to him, Joshua has 30, Samuel has 23, David has 34, many of which relate to his psalmody and his ordering of the Service of the Lord; Elijah has 20 lines allotted to him, Hezekiah has 18 lines, Isaiah has 8 lines, and so on. Next we notice that our author praises Simon for his public character and acts, as well as for the beauty of his High Priestly offices (the latter in no less than 51 lines). He is praised for strengthening and repairing the Temple, for fortifying the City, and for "*taking thought for his people.*" Both as a leader, a patriot, and as a High Priest his memory is gratefully remembered; and the record tallies exactly with Josephus's testimony that Simon the Just was famous for "*his piety toward God, and his kind disposition toward his own people.*" Indeed, so strong is the conclusion that the author of Ecclesiasticus can refer to none other than Simon the Just that apparently in order to justify a later dating for the work, some like Herzfeld and Derenbourg have boldly stated* that Josephus is in error, and that Simon II and not Simon I was Simon the Just. Such a conclusion or theory does not, however, solve the problem, as I hope to show.

We have seen how Simon is praised for fortifying the City, and Gratz† maintains that this can only refer to Simon I repairing the walls torn down by Ptolemy Soter, and agrees with the Talmudic accounts of Simon; although Dr. Oesterley‡ attributes this work on the Temple and City walls as being done by Simon II with money granted by Antiochus the Great, who was friendly to the Jews and gave grants to the Temple (*Antiq.* xii, 3). Be this as it may, let us now turn to the Hebrew text

* Charles, Apoc. and Pseud. of Old Testament.

† *Jewish Encycl.*

‡ Eccclus. 1912.

which, as Canon Charles declares, contains the genuine original text, though with many corruptions.

Here we find most significant differences between the Hebrew text and the Greek version ; and little doubt can be felt as to the inferiority of the Greek version, and the strong suspicion, amounting to certainty, of alteration in the latter.

In the Greek version we read that, after Simon had completed the offerings, the sons of Aaron shouted and sounded trumpets and made a great noise (*v.* 16), the people fell upon their faces (*v.* 17), and the singers praised God, so that the whole House was full of melody (*v.* 18). Then follow verses 19 and 20, "and the people besought the Lord Most High, in prayer before Him who is merciful, till the worship of the Lord should be ended, and so they accomplished the service. Then he (Simon) went down, and lifted up his hands over the whole congregation of the Children of Israel, to give blessing unto the Lord with his lips, and to glory in His Name."

The Hebrew text* of these two last verses runs : "and all the people of the land shouted in prayer before the Merciful One, until he (Simon) had finished serving the altar and had presented his dues unto Him. Then he went down and lifted up his hands over all the congregation of Israel, and the *blessing of Jehovah was on his lips, and with the Name of Jehovah he glorified himself.*" We see at once the differences. In the Greek version the phrase "the people of the land" becomes "the people," betokening that in the interval between the composition of the book and its translation the phrase had begun to be considered somewhat derogatory, whereas when it was used by our author no such suspicion could be attached to it. The alteration is made to suit the sentiment of the translator's age, and finally (what is most significant) the Hebrew text declares most explicitly that the Ineffable Name was pronounced by Simon and was his glory. The Greek version, for good reason, alters entirely this half verse. As we have noticed already, Jewish tradition declares that Simon the Just was the last High Priest to pronounce the Ineffable Name. From verses 18 and 19 in the Greek it appears that the service ended with the priests shouting and blowing their trumpets, the singers singing, and the whole house being full of melody, while the people fell on their faces in prayer before God, and this accords with Rabbi Tryphon's testimony

* Facsimiles Univ. Press : *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach*, Smend.

(quoted by Edersheim) that the sound of the sacred Name was lost in the sounding of the trumpets and music.

The Hebrew text gives us the primitive practice, the priests play, and the common people shout in prayer (compare Lev. ix, 24; Ezra iii, 11), and then silence ensues while the High Priest descends, and lifting up his hands over the whole congregation, pronounces the blessing of Jehovah, pronouncing the Sacred Name thrice (Num. vi, 23). Well might his admirer and contemporary (a priest, if I mistake not, *cf.* chap. xlv, 6-25) declare it to be Simon's glory, for he was the last to do so, and to this day no one can be certain as to how that Name should be pronounced. If we say that this Simon is Simon II, then we bring down to as late a date as 199 B.C. the practice of audibly pronouncing the Tetragrammaton. Such a conclusion seems to be impossible; in the LXX that Name is neither transliterated nor translated, and the LXX version of the Law is assigned by general agreement* to the days of Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.), a date not so very long after the death of Simon I. This confirms the traditions identifying Simon the Just with Simon I, and proves that at the time of translation the use of the Name had ceased.

A further evidence of the translator's feelings is to be found in the eulogy on Solomon in ch. xlvii, 18. The Hebrew text runs: "Thou wast called by the glorious Name, which is called over Israel; thou didst, etc.," referring to the name Jedidiah (beloved of Jehovah) given to Solomon by the Lord (2 Sam. xii, 25), but the Greek version alters this verse to avoid what seemed to the translator such a daring statement, and gives us the very lame substitute of: "By the Name of the Lord God, which is called the God of Israel, thou didst, etc."

Next let us examine the ten last lines of the eulogy in the Hebrew text, which in the Greek version have been so altered as to have no connection with Simon, a detail which has been alluded to above.

The significant lines in the Hebrew are:

- v. 22. "Now bless ye Jehovah, the God of Israel
* * * *
- v. 24. May His mercy be sure with Simeon,
And may He establish with him the covenant of
Phinehas,
That one may never be cut off from him, and
his seed as the days of heaven."

* Swete, Introduction to Old Testament in Greek.

In the Greek version these lines become :—

v. 22. “ And now bless ye the God of all

* * * *

v. 24. To intrust His mercy with us
And may He deliver us in His time.”

We see that all reference to Simeon is omitted, and that the prayer for Simeon and his posterity is changed into a prayer for the deliverance of God's people. No one can doubt that the change is intentional and also significant. If we go back to the time of Simon I we find that on his death he left behind him one son, a boy of tender years, incapable of succeeding to the High Priesthood forthwith. Two uncles, Eleazar and Manasseh, successively preceded him in office, and Onias II did not become High Priest until after their deaths. Well might Ben-Sira, who had witnessed the solemnity and beauty of Simon's service in the Temple, pray that Simon's line, hanging on one life, and that a youthful one, might be continued for ever, in the hope that a noble son and line might continue the memory of a noble father.

When, however, we consider the period after the death of Simon II, an entirely different state of affairs and men of very different characters come on the scene. Simon II left behind him no less than four full-grown sons, three of whom held the High Priesthood, while the fourth was deputy High Priest, and of these four sons three were men of the vilest character and actually apostates in practice. The four sons were :—

- (1) Onias III, who was deposed by Antiochus about 174 B.C., under the influence of a bribe of 360 talents paid by Jesus, brother of Onias.
- (2) Jesus, High Priest, 174–171 B.C., who apostatized and took the name of Jason, and died in exile and poverty.
- (3) Onias IV, High Priest, 171–163 B.C., of the same name as his elder brother, who played upon Jason the same trick which Jason played upon Onias III. He bribed Antiochus, ousted Jason, like him apostatized, took the Greek name of Menelaus, and added to his impiety by raising payment of his bribes to Antiochus and others by the sale of the gold vessels of the Temple, and by securing the murder of his deposed brother Onias III for protesting against this sacrilege. His crowning infamy was aiding

and abetting Antiochus in his desecration and defilement of the Temple. He had to fly from Jerusalem, and was put to death at Aleppo by Lysias, the lieutenant of Antiochus.

- (4) Lysimachus, brother of Menelaus and deputy High Priest to him, was also an apostate and was slain by the incensed populace for his share in selling the Temple vessels. The successor of Menelaus in the High Priesthood was Alcimus or Jacimus (? Eliakim or Jehoiakim), a man of priestly stock, but apparently not of the High Priest's family. He was an apostate, a man of infamous character, a persecutor of the Nationalist Jews, and perished in an attempt to tear down the wall of the Court of the Inner Temple.

[The succession and relationships given above are from Josephus. The author of 2 Macc. makes Menelaus the brother of one Simon, governor of the Temple, whom he describes as a Benjamite. Unless Menelaus was the half-brother of Simon, son of the same mother, but son of a priestly father, it seems difficult to believe that a Benjamite could become High Priest. It has been objected, further, to Josephus' account that Menelaus had the same name as his brother, viz., Onias; but one may observe that brothers or sisters sometimes bear a name in common. Further, the process of turning Hebrew names into Greek forms may well lead to corruption, and, finally, the name Onias may have been looked on almost as a family patronymic, for the youthful son of Onias III who should have succeeded in due time to the High Priesthood was also named Onias, and it was this Onias who fled to Egypt and founded the Schismatical Temple at Heliopolis, in which he officiated as High Priest. In this connection one might refer to the ancient practice of the Eastern Churches, *e.g.*, the Nestorian Patriarch always assumes the name of Simeon, the Jacobite Patriarch that of Ignatius, and the Maronite that of Peter.]

Another verse also supports the view that the time immediately succeeding Simon I is indicated, rather than Simon II, viz., chap. xlv, 26, which closes the lengthy eulogy of Aaron. In this case the reference to Simon is indirect, requiring few changes by the Greek translator. The verse in question runs, "and may He give you wisdom in your heart to judge His people in righteousness, that their good things be not abolished, and that your

glory may endure to all generations." The prayer is undoubtedly one on behalf of the High Priest then living, and is most applicable and suitable to the youthful Onias II, as the author recalls the righteousness and wisdom of his father, the good things that he did toward his nation, and the glory of his priestly offices. Such a prayer would not come naturally to the lips in the troublous times that followed Simon II's period; in fact, the Greek translator felt so forcibly that dignity and glory had departed from the High Priest's family, that he changes "your glory," the glory of the High Priest, to "their glory," *i.e.*, the glory of Israel at large.

From this study of the eulogy of Simon the son of Onias in *Ecclus. 1*, we conclude that from its character and importance it must refer to Simon the Just, for it is impossible that any other than a most famous man in the eyes of his contemporaries could receive such praise; further, his character as revealed in the eulogy, and the splendour and dignity of his sacred offices accord with what tradition has to say on these subjects; and Josephus definitely states that Simon the Just was Simon I.

If, on the other hand, we assume that Simon II was Simon the Just, we are faced with two great difficulties:—(a) The Hebrew text witnesses that this Simon's glory was his utterance of the Sacred Name, and it seems impossible to believe that this practice was carried down to as late a date as 199 B.C., when we know from the evidence of the LXX version of the Law that the practice had ceased long before that time; and the Greek version of *Ecclesiasticus* shows us that when the translation was made not only had the practice ceased, but that it had ceased for so long a time that the translator did not like to suggest (or did not know) that even Simon the Just had ever done so. Simon I seems most certainly to be indicated rather than Simon II by this evidence; (b) the second difficulty is that the prayer for Simon's posterity and the welfare of his house suits exactly the minority of Onias II, his only son, and the conditions of the time when his uncles Eleazar and Manasseh officiated in his stead; while, on the other hand, it is distinctly opposed to the period of the sons of Simon II. No such prayers are befitting the vile and apostate sons of that Simon, even if we give full weight to the integrity of the eldest son, Onias III. The change in the Greek version, however, takes full cognizance of the painful change that had come over the High Priesthood, since Ben-Sira wrote his eulogy of Simon the Just. That family

apostatized and every one of the four sons of Simon II came to a violent and disgraceful end: a man of another Levitical family occupied for some three or four years the office and perished miserably. The man who should have become High Priest started a line of Schismatical High Priests in Egypt, and finally the High Priesthood at Jerusalem was conferred by popular suffrage on the family of the Maccabees. Well might the Greek translator change the prayer for the house of Simon the Just into a prayer for the deliverance of God's people from the grievous troubles of the times in which he lived.

The evidence again seems to point clearly to Simon I being the Simon praised by Ben-Sira; and from the fact that his son Onias II had neither the public nor private virtues of his father (for Josephus depicts him as a miserly, ignoble character, devoid of public spirit), I think that the eulogy must have been written before his succession, or at any rate before his public character had time to reveal itself.

If, therefore, the Greek Prologue is genuine and free from corruption, and if the phrase "in the thirty-eighth year in the time of Euergetes" means "in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Euergetes II," I conclude that the word "*πάππος*" used by the translator means here "ancestor" (as is sometimes the case), and not "grandfather." Further small points in favour of a greater interval than that between grandson and grandfather are to be found perhaps (a) in the translator's words:—"I found a book of no small learning," as if he had discovered a work by his ancestor, of which he had never heard, and (b) the translator's somewhat indifferent knowledge of Hebrew, despite the fact that he was not an Alexandrian Jew, and presumably had come into Egypt from Palestine.

It seems, therefore, that the historical facts concerning Simon, contained in the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus, fit in very exactly with what history and tradition have to tell us of Simon I and his period, whereas they accord but ill with the age of Simon II and his successors; while on the other hand, the alterations in the Greek version reflect plainly the evil days of the translator's time, and which began really with the accession of that ignoble man Onias II, son of Simon the Just.

We place the date of the composition of the work, therefore, a little time before or immediately after the accession of Onias II to the High Priesthood, approximately 270 B.C., and it is interesting to note (especially from chapters 44-49) that our author

had an exact knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures; indeed, although the Hebrew text is defective and corrupt, and the Greek version corrupt and inexact, Ben-Sira appears to refer to or to quote from all the books of the Hebrew Bible except Ecclesiastes, Daniel, and Esther; and his references are entirely free from uncanonical accretions or alterations. The deductions to be drawn from this, in connection with the dating which I suggest, are important, and would afford interesting matter for further study, but I must leave that to some better qualified person than myself.

APPENDIX.

Names and dates of the earlier Ptolemies (from Swete's Introduction to Old Testament in Greek).

	B.C.
Lagi or Soter	322-285.
Philadelphus	285-247.
Euergetes I	247-222.
Philopator I	222-205.
Epiphanes	205-182.
Eupator	182.
Philometor	182-146.
Philopator II	146.
Physcon, Euergetes II	146-117.

Succession of High Priests from Jaddua until the Maccabees (from Josephus), with some approximate dates from Jewish Encyclopædia:—

Jaddua (Neh. xii, 11).

Onias I (son of Jaddua).

Simon the Just (son of Onias I), 310-291 or 300-270 B.C.

Eleazar (brother of Simon the Just).

Manasseh (uncle).

Onias II (son of Simon the Just).

Simon II (son of Onias II), 219-199 B.C.

Onias III (son of Simon II).*

Jesus (Jason), brother of Onias III (deprived by Antiochus), 174-171 B.C.

Onias IV (Menelaus), brother of Jason (driven out by the people) 171-163 B.C.

Alcimus (Jacimus), 163-160 B.C.

* Another Onias, son of Onias III, founded the temple of Heliopolis.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN (Dr. Thirtle) said : It is with profound interest that I have listened to the paper read in our hearing this afternoon. If we have been brought face to face with a difficult problem, it cannot be said that General Biddulph has shown any lack of fairness in placing the facts before us. He has quoted authorities for and against the position which he had been led to maintain ; indeed so manifest was his restraint, that for a time we reasonably asked ourselves, first, which Ptolemy, and then, which Simon, was to be commended to our special confidence, in studying the critical question raised as to the date of the Book of Ecclesiasticus.

Authorities have been found to be at variance, and we have been plainly advised of the fact ; and not until the General had brought the case before us with judicious fullness, as seen from different points of view, did he proceed to indicate the deep importance of the issue raised, and to contend for the *first* Euergetes and the *first* Simon.

Some may inquire—*To what end ?* An answer has been given to this question, although the critical result has not been pursued. Here, in the prologue of the Book of Ecclesiasticus there appear—with the emphasis of repetition—terms descriptive of the Old Testament Scriptures—“the Law, and the Prophets, and the other books”—and it is in view of critical positions that have been widely held as to the larger portions of the Old Testament, that we are induced to trace the date of origin, or anyhow the date of translation into Greek, of the Book of Ecclesiasticus, otherwise “the Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach.” With reason, we ask, at what period are we when we first meet with this particular expression, this formula, comprising the whole of the books of the Old Testament ? Was it the third century, or the second—or was it earlier still or later still ?

From the investigations pursued by General Biddulph we see that it is not easy to reach any satisfactory conclusion as between Euergetes I and II, but the character of the two Simons seems to be decisive, and with the preference shown for Simon the Just (son of Onias I), we are taken with assurance to the third century before Christ. As pointed out by General Biddulph, the reading of the

Hebrew text—fragments discovered during recent years—has an important bearing on the practice of sanctifying the Sacred Name as it was understood in Israelitish worship, up to a certain time, though not later. Just here, also, the statement on p. 123, with reference to King Solomon is of deep interest, though it is a statement which is sadly clouded, not to say misrepresented, in the generally accepted Greek version of the book. Just here the newly found Hebrew fragments render material assistance in reaching a solution of the problem in regard to the Tetragrammaton ; and in calling attention to this fact the General has made an important contribution to critical studies bearing upon Holy Scripture.

I do not profess to have given sustained attention to the various questions debated in the paper, but I feel deeply thankful for the excellent start to-day given to a very useful discussion. I call special attention to the words used on p. 127—“ the historical facts concerning Simon, contained in the Hebrew Book of Ecclesiasticus, fit in very exactly with what history and tradition have to tell us of Simon I and his period, whereas they accord but ill with the age of Simon II and his successors ; while on the other hand, the alterations in the Greek version reflect plainly the evil days of the translator’s time, and which began really with the accession of that ignoble man, Onias II, son of Simon the Just.”

The difference is one of a hundred years or so, speaking generally ; when the Greek version of the book was made, the use of the Sacred Name was a fascinating memory, and no more. For myself, I thank the General for indicating an interesting course of study—the study of an author who referred to (or quoted from) nearly all the books of the Hebrew Bible ; and I have pleasure in asking that we give a hearty vote of thanks for the paper read in our hearing.

Mr. WILLIAM C. EDWARDS said : It seems to me that the early date of Ecclesiasticus is amply proved. A very short study of the book should convince any unbiased person. I take it that it is a sort of commonplace book giving mainly the sermons and sayings of Simon the Just rather than the wisdom of the Son of Sirach. In the chapters 44–50 (of famous men) after going through the Bible characters from Enoch they all culminate and end with Simon. The

prayer for the return of the tribes of Jacob (chap. xxxvi, 11) seems to point to a very early date, when it was still the prayer and hope of Jerusalem. I see no reason to reject the prologue of the unknown writer or that of the translator. The latter took a journey to Egypt—probably to Alexandria where he found in some Jewish synagogue the book written by his grandfather. The Septuagint translation LXX was begun about 280 B.C., but no doubt translations of Hebrew writings were already in the air.

A book of his grandfather's was found by him or was shown to him, and he undertook to translate it and has done so. May I quote the passage in his prologue? "For in the eight and thirtieth year coming into Egypt, when Euergetes was king, and continuing there some time, I found a book of no small learning, etc." It seems quite clear to me that the only Euergetes known at that time was Ptolemy III (247-222 B.C.), otherwise he would have made clear which of the two kings of that name was meant. It was "when he was King." I suggest the king had not died very recently, and yet not very long before. Let us suppose that ten years before this king's death the translator made his journey, say, 232 B.C. I suggest that it was in the translator's 38th year, and therefore he was born about 270 B.C. If his father was 30 years of age at his birth, and his grandfather the same, that would carry us to 330 B.C. As Simon the Just died about 291 B.C. it would permit of the writer having known and heard the famous high-priest for years, and to have been nearly 40 years of age when he died.

[Mr. Edwards compared the chapter on Wisdom xxiv, with Prov. viii and other portions, and said that, interesting as the book was, it was woody, petty, and devoid of high principles, in a word—uninspired, and unworthy of admission into the Canon of Holy Scripture.]

MR. C. C. O. VAN LENNEP drew attention to the first few lines of the prologue, and especially to the words, "this man therefore lived in the latter times, after the people had been led away captive, and called home again, and almost after all the prophets." The last of these words especially bear out Brig.-General Biddulph's contention in favour of an earlier rather than a late date for the author of the book.

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

The chronology of the period of Simon I is very uncertain within some 30 years, and this affects correspondingly the date of Ecclesiasticus. With reference to the theory that Simon II was Simon the Just, and not Simon I, one feels that it is based more on subjective ideas than on the objective statements of history and tradition; and it will be interesting to quote Dr. J. E. H. Thomson from his book, *The Samaritans*. He writes: "Both Josephus and the Talmud (the latter inferentially) declare Simon I to be Simon the Just; but critical opinion asserts that not he but his grandson Simon II had the title; this grandson Josephus dismisses with a single sentence as a person of no account. The sole authority quoted for this identification by Cheyne (except a reference to the Talmud which is not decisive) is Derenbourg. This latter asserts this identification and supports it by a passage from *Yoma*. Derenbourg declares that nothing in the history of Simon I or in the circumstances which surrounded him, either justifies or explains why this title, The Just, should have been given to him. Simon the Just lived in an extraordinary time when ancient institutions were crumbling, and when the gradual enfeeblement of religious sentiment in the priesthood was punished by visible signs of Divine displeasure."

Then follows the quotation from *Yoma*: "During the forty years of the pontificate of Simon the Just, on the Day of Atonement, the lot for the goat destined for Jehovah always fell to the right hand; afterwards it was sometimes the right and sometimes the left. In his time the red thread which surrounded the head of the goat destined for Azazel became white, which indicated that the sins of the people had been pardoned; afterwards it sometimes became white, and sometimes did not. Under Simeon the lamp lighted at the west of the Temple shone always; after him it at times went out. While he lived, the wood once arranged upon the altar, the flame remained always strong, and the priests had only to bring a few faggots of small wood to fulfil their duty; after him the flame often went down, the priests were busy the whole day carrying wood to the altar."

I submit that all this proves precisely the opposite of what Derenbourg says it does; what the Talmudic writer evidently

means to teach is that the period when Simon the Just was high-priest was one of strong faith and unswerving faithfulness, which was rewarded by numerous signs of Divine favour, which ceased in the age which followed. Yet this is the passage which Cheyne quotes as proving his point !

Dean Stanley says : "Derenbourg has conclusively established that the Simon of Ecclesiasticus was Simon II." If that is the critical idea of proof, we shall not be surprised, should they direct their attention to the history of the Tudor period, that they would "establish," from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, that Bishop Bonner was a kindly ecclesiastic with a leaning toward Protestantism. Yet it is something like an axiom of scientific (?) criticism that Simon II is Simon the Just.

Thus far Dr. Thomson, and it seems to me that all the evidence, whether internal or external, points indubitably to the fact that the Simon of Ecclesiasticus is Simon I, better known as Simon the Just.