

ARTICLE X.

THE HIGHER CRITICAL QUANDARY: A CORRESPONDENCE WITH DRS. BRIGGS AND DRIVER.

BY HAROLD M. WIENER, M. A., LL.B., OF LINCOLN'S INN,
BARRISTER-AT-LAW, LONDON.

IN the *Expositor* for September, 1910, is an article by the Rev. Professor Alex. R. Gordon, D.Litt., Montreal, entitled "Skinner's 'Genesis.'" The following sentences occur in it:—

"He [Dr. Skinner] is frank even to a fault, and appreciative of every honest effort to get nearer to the original. . . . The general superiority of the Massoretic text he valiantly defends against the strangely perverse attempt of 'the more recent opposition' represented by Dahse and Wiener to prove the Massoretic text 'so unreliable that no analysis of documents can be based on its data.' In his most caustic vein he observes: 'Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction; and, however surprising it may seem to some, we can reconcile our minds to the belief that the M. T. does reproduce with substantial accuracy the characteristics of the original autographs.' . . .

"This carefully judicial habit of mind lends all the greater weight to Dr. Skinner's pronouncements on the 'higher critical' question. Here he shows no hesitation. 'My own belief in the essential soundness of the prevalent hypothesis,' he says in the Preface, 'has been confirmed by the renewed examination of the text of Genesis which my present undertaking required.' . . . We have already quoted one of the sardonic sentences in which he disposes of Wiener's attempt to evade the problem by a frank abandonment of the reliability of the Hebrew."

The following is a complete copy of some correspondence that arose out of this article in the *Expositor*, with the exception of covering letters and letters marked "not for publication."

9 OLD SQUARE,

LINCOLN'S INN, W. C.

24 October 1910.

To the GENERAL EDITORS of the

"International Critical Commentary,"

per the Rev. CANON DRIVER, D.D., F.B.A., etc.,

Christ Church, Oxford.

Gentlemen:—

It is with supreme reluctance that I find myself compelled to write and draw your attention to the false position in which Dr. Skinner has placed you; but unfortunately I cannot now feel any doubt as to my duty in the matter, although I well know that the inevitable result will be to put you in a position that will give you no less pain than my present action does me.

For the detailed facts of the case I must refer you to my article in the October number of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* of which I am posting a copy to Dr. Driver. In reliance on this I just summarize the material points.

1. In discussing the Divine appellations in Genesis Dr. Skinner only records 50 cases of divergences from the Massoretic Text and bases his argument on these. In fact he well knew that the actual number was very much greater, and he had twice had his attention drawn to this in public. The evidence of knowledge is as follows:— (a) the reference in his discussion to my article in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for January 1909; (b) his statement as to the Samaritan Pentateuch in the *Expository Times* for May 1909; (c) the additional variants he records in the body of his commentary; (d) Professor Schlögl's contribution to the *Expository Times* for September 1909 in a controversy to which Dr. Skinner was himself a party. Thus we have here both *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*.

2. Dr. Skinner argues on the assumption that differences might be explained by causes purely internal to the Septu-

agint and says not a word of any *Hebrew* (or other) corroboration of Septuagintal readings. He is here deliberately arguing on a false issue after his attention had twice been publicly drawn to the true issue. The evidence for his knowledge is as follows: (a) the reference in his discussion to my article in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for January 1909; (b) the note of Mr. Cox in the *Expository Times* for May 1909; (c) my reply in the issue of the same magazine for July 1909.

3. In spite of all this Dr. Skinner writes as follows in the preface which is dated April 1910:—"My own belief in the essential soundness of the prevalent hypothesis has been confirmed by the renewed examination of the text of Genesis which my present undertaking required." Read in its context that sentence has only one natural—and indeed necessary—interpretation: viz, that he had given a full and fair examination to the facts and arguments adduced by his opponents. In truth he had done nothing of the sort. Here I must ask you to refer to pages 243 f of the *Expositor* for September 1910. You will see that Dr. Gordon has, through no fault of his own, been deceived—I fear that is the right word—by Dr. Skinner. He naturally assumed that Dr. Skinner had told the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth on the matters with which he purported to deal.

After much anxious thought I had succeeded in persuading myself that I might leave my article in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* to have its natural effect and had abandoned the half-formed intention of writing to you on the subject. Then came Professor Gordon's article in the September *Expositor*. On reading it I could not help seeing that it was my duty to point out to you what had been done under the cover and sanction of your names. I have only waited for the appearance of the October number of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* to avoid the necessity of writing a letter the size of a pamphlet; but in the interval I have received further confirmation in the shape of notices of a volume of mine by Professor Condamin and a Saturday Reviewer, both of whom have obviously taken Dr. Skinner's allegations at face value. It seems so

improbable that a man of Dr. Skinner's standing should adopt such methods and that he should not see in what a position he was placing you, that I have earnestly striven to believe that I was mistaken, or at any rate had taken too grave a view of the matter; but if a critic of Professor Gordon's knowledge and authority has been utterly misled, this theory becomes untenable. I limit the question to Professor Gordon for the sake of clearness and simplicity: but you will understand that every reader of the book who had not been warned would naturally be deceived and that to my knowledge this has actually occurred in at least two other instances.

I reserve liberty to publish this letter and any correspondence arising out of it not marked confidential, and of course I consent to similar action on your part.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Messrs. T. & T. Clark, the British publishers, whose interest in the matter appears to me to be second only to your own.

Yours faithfully,

HAROLD M. WIENER.

FROM DR. DRIVER.

CH. CH., OXFORD,

Oct. 26.

Dear Sir:—

I am in receipt of your letter, and accompanying number of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*. I will communicate your letter as soon as possible to Dr. Briggs. I cannot, however, promise you a speedy answer: for, as he is in New York, we can only confer by correspondence, which may necessitate more than one letter on each side.

Yours faithfully,

S. R. DRIVER.

TO DR. DRIVER.

9 OLD SQUARE,

LINCOLN'S INN, W. C.

27 October 1910.

Dear Sir:—

Thank you for your letter. I fully understand and am quite content to wait. Indeed in this matter my sympathies are very strongly with you, and I should be only too glad if you could find yourself in a position to say that on referring the matter to Dr. Skinner he had been able in some unexpected way to justify himself completely.

I ought perhaps to tell you that some weeks ago I sent Sir W. R. Nicoll an answer to Dr. Gordon which may possibly appear next month.

Yours faithfully,

HAROLD M. WIENER.

The Rev. CANON DRIVER, D.D., F.B.A.,
Christ Church, Oxford.

FROM THE GENERAL EDITORS.

Dear Sir:—

In reply to your letter of October 24, we desire to say that in our opinion Dr. Skinner has in no way either placed us in a false position, or otherwise compromised us. We conceive that it is the function of an editor to secure, so far as this is possible, the author whom he considers to be generally the most competent to do the work to be entrusted to him, and with whose principles and point of view, so far as they affect the work to be done, he is generally in agreement. But, having secured an author, with whom upon general grounds, we are as editors thus satisfied, we must, in regard to the way in which he carries out his work, give him a free hand. It is neither required nor expected of us, as editors, that we should in every detail tell him what arguments he is to use or not use, what conclusions he is to adopt or not to

adopt, what writers or publications he is to mention or not to mention. Such matters as these are left naturally to his own judgment; and if his judgment in any given case leads him to use or not use a particular argument, to adopt or not adopt a particular conclusion, to mention or not to mention a particular writer or publication, we do not consider that as editors we are in any way responsible. Even therefore though it were true that in the particular case to which you have called our attention, Dr. Skinner was at fault, we could not consistently with what we regard as our position as editors consider ourselves to be in any respect compromised.

In fairness however to Dr. Skinner, we think it right to add that we do not consider him to have been at fault in his treatment of the case to which you have referred. There appears to us to be no evidence that, when writing the sentence quoted by you from his preface, Dr. Skinner had not given a full and fair examination to the facts and arguments adduced by his opponents. He was under no obligation to state in detail what he had done. The fact that he had reached, from the facts adduced, different conclusions from those which you had reached, is not evidence that he had not properly considered them; and he himself assures us that he had done this. As we have already said, it appears to us that it is for a writer to decide himself what arguments, or opposing views, he mentions. If therefore, after having examined, as he tells us he has done, the conclusions drawn by Prof. Schlögl or yourself from the additional variants, and the Hebrew corroborations, which you complain of his not mentioning, he was of opinion that they were not established, we do not understand why blame should attach to him for not referring to them.

Yours faithfully,

C. A. BRIGGS.

S. R. DRIVER.

Jan. 4. 1911.

9 OLD SQUARE,

LINCOLN'S INN, W. C.

6 January 1911.

To the GENERAL EDITORS of the

"International Critical Commentary,"

per the Rev. CANON DRIVER, D.D., F.B.A., etc.,
Christ Church, Oxford.

Gentlemen:—

I am obliged to you for your letter of the 4th inst.

From the first paragraph of the letter I gather that the appearance of your names on a volume of the International Critical Commentary does not in your opinion render you in any way responsible for the truthfulness or the good faith of its contents. I did not know that this was your view when I wrote on the 24th October 1910. At that time I believed that the appearance of your names on a volume was a sufficient guarantee of good faith, that not one of the editors of the International Critical Commentary would wittingly allow his name to appear on a publication that was intended to deceive, and that if Dr. Skinner's volume contained anything that was not in accordance with the nicest standards of honor you were a proper tribunal to deal with the matter. If I was wrong in all this, I may at any rate thank you for your lucid exposition of the principles that guide you. I now understand that the only responsibility you admit to the public and to those who may buy a volume in reliance on your names is that of choosing an author whom you regard as suitable.

With regard to the second paragraph of your letter there are two points that call for reply.

(1) You write: "it appears to us that it is for a writer to decide himself what arguments, or opposing views, he mentions." That is, I think, susceptible of more than one meaning. In the case before us Dr. Skinner had decided to refer to my article in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* and to write an answer to it. Having come to that decision I claim that it was his duty to state my facts and arguments fairly, and

not expressly or by implication to mislead his readers. He has failed to act fairly in all the following respects: (a) he has ignored the additional variants I had adduced and called the readings in all such passages "undisputed": (b) he has himself on Syriac evidence rejected a reading which he here reckons as "undisputed" (Skinner, p. 330; cp. *Bib. Sac.* Oct. 1910, p. 660): (c) he has written an answer which is calculated to make his readers believe that I had advanced an argument based on what might be purely Greek corruptions and nothing more. Now your canon might mean that in your opinion a writer is free to elect to mention some only of an opponent's arguments, even where those arguments form an interdependent whole, or you might repudiate this interpretation. In any case I feel it my duty to express clearly my dissent from the standard you have set up. In my view it is the duty of a writer to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth with regard to any point that he thinks deserving of detailed discussion. For the sake of clearness I will take an illustration from every-day life. If a man were to tell me that he had three apples and begin to argue on that basis when in truth and in fact he had six, I should not regard his presentation of the case as satisfactory; and I cannot apply any other standard to a man who records 50 variants and argues on that basis, when to his knowledge there are not fewer than 189. I may point out that since you state in your letter that Dr. Skinner had considered the additional variants, his acquaintance with them is no longer open to question.

(2) You say: "If, therefore, after having examined... the conclusions drawn by Professor Schlögl or yourself... he was of opinion that they were not established, we do not understand why blame should attach to him for not referring to them." Permit me to say that I never suggested that any blame would attach in such a contingency. My complaint had no reference whatever to any "conclusions." He stated my conclusions with sufficient fulness and then argued against them on premises that were false to his knowl-

edge. I complained of suppression of *facts*, suggestion of falsehood, ignoring of arguments. You must, I think, be able to understand the difference between a fact and a conclusion drawn from that fact. The former is something undeniable, the latter an inference as to which different minds may conceivably differ. This part of your letter is therefore not *ad rem*.

As the O. T. general editors of the International Critical Commentary admit no responsibility if the contributors to that series fail in the elements of truthfulness, it must be left to the public to judge this matter.

I thank you for the trouble you have taken.

Yours faithfully,

HAROLD M. WIENER.

FROM DR. DRIVER.

CH. CH., OXFORD,

Jan. 10.

Dear Sir:—

I am in receipt of your letter, which I have forwarded to Dr. Briggs. Until I hear from him, I am naturally unable to say whether we shall desire to send you a reply or not.

Yours faithfully,

S. R. DRIVER.

TO DR. DRIVER.

9 OLD SQUARE,

LINCOLN'S INN, W. C.

11 January 1911.

Dear Sir:—

In view of your letter of yesterday's date I should like to know your wishes as to immediate publication of the correspondence. When I received the letter of Jan. 4 I thought that it barred the way to further discussion because it ap-

peared to me that the differences between us were partly due to two entirely incompatible theories of editorial responsibility. Accordingly I sent off a complete copy of the correspondence to the *Bibliotheca Sacra*. I am therefore writing today to delay its publication for two or three days, and I should be glad to know whether you would like me to delay it further until you can hear from Dr. Briggs.

We are so little *ad idem* in this matter that I venture to ask you to try and realise some of the considerations that weigh with me. Before I came to Biblical studies I should have believed that such an episode as this of Dr. Skinner was impossible. Gradually I have been robbed of one illusion after another; but I believe that a large portion of the general public still think as I did some seven years ago. If that be so they ought to be disabused of their belief: and for that reason the speedy publication of the correspondence appears to me to be desirable.

On the other hand I am naturally extremely anxious that I should not do you the slightest injustice. Yesterday's letter suggests to me a possibility that when you signed the letter of Jan. 4 you had perhaps not quite grasped all that was involved in my original letter. Now if that be so, I have not attained my object. I tried to make matters perfectly clear; if I have so far failed that there can be a scintilla of doubt in your mind as to my exact meaning, please tell me so, and let me answer as fully as may be any questions that may be necessary to clear the matter up. It is most certainly not to anybody's advantage that an erroneous impression of your attitude should get abroad. When I wrote my first letter I believed that neither you nor Dr. Briggs would in any way permit your names to be used to give currency to falsehood: and it did not for one moment occur to me that you would adopt or had adopted a theory of editorial responsibility which made this possible. I only abandoned this view because your own signatures forced me to do so; and it was obviously impossible for me to go behind them. But if on reflection you think that

there is room for further consideration, please tell me to hold up the publication of the correspondence. Your final decision must affect the traditions of Anglo-American O. T. studies for a long time to come.

Of course at any moment a rash reviewer may write a notice that will force my hand: but that is a risk that we may have to take: and in case of any difficulty I should venture to consult you as to the proper course to adopt if your final decision were still pending.

Yours faithfully,

HAROLD M. WIENER.

The Rev. CANON DRIVER, D.D., F.B.A.

Here followed two letters marked "not for publication" (one from Dr. Driver to the writer and a reply from the writer to Dr. Driver). The correspondence then continued as follows:—

FROM DR. DRIVER.

CH. CH., OXFORD,

Jan. 15.

Dear Sir:—

I am very much obliged to you for your letter, and appreciate your willingness to postpone the publication of the correspondence. Your letter is certainly very helpful; for it appears to me to both clear and narrow the issue. It is a satisfaction to find that we agree upon points on which Dr. Briggs and I had both supposed that we differed; and if we had had this letter before us when we drew up our reply, I have little doubt that it would have been a different one. I forwarded your letter to Dr. Briggs by yesterday's mail, at the same time telling him what I now thought: I also telegraphed to him to defer sending an answer to my previous letter, till he received this.

Your first letter was in my possession, though not actually before me, at the time of my signing our reply: but I had read it very carefully before sending it to Dr. Briggs,

and examined the passages referred to in it. Both it and our reply are now with Dr. Briggs, as I thought that he might wish to refer to them: but I asked him to return them to me; and as I cannot now do more till I hear from him, I do not think I need avail myself of your kind offer to supply me with a duplicate.

I am acquainted with your writings, and have read considerable parts of them; indeed, I am indebted to you for sending me all the most important. I obtained your *Essays in P. C.*, as soon as it appeared; and have several times referred to it, — I mean, on other points besides the present question.

Believe me,

Yours truly,

S. R. DRIVER.

FROM THE GENERAL EDITORS.

NEW YORK. February 28, 1911.

HAROLD M. WIENER, Esquire.

Dear Sir:—

We beg to acknowledge your letter of January 6th in reply to ours of January 4th, as well as more personal communications from you of January 11th and 13th. We regret that the wide separation of the editors of the International Commentary, and the consequent time required for any exchange of views, has led to such a delay in our answer. We now desire to say that we welcome the evidence which we believe we find in your letters that our conception of the duties of the editors of such a series does not, after all, differ very widely from yours.

The issue seems to be narrowed down to this: whether or not in anything which Dr. Skinner has written, or omitted to write, in his Commentary on Genesis, he has laid himself open to just criticism on the part of the editors under the general rules which we seem to agree should govern

editorial supervision in such cases. On this point we desire, first, to reaffirm the opinion which we have already expressed with regard to Dr. Skinner; and, secondly, to explain more explicitly than we did before the grounds on which our opinion rests.

First, there appears to us to be absolutely no evidence showing that Dr. Skinner wrote with any intention to deceive; and we most emphatically deny that he did deceive, or that he wrote untruthfully, or that he omitted to mention any facts which were of any importance for the question at issue.

Secondly, we base this opinion on the following considerations. We have both been familiar with the Septuagint for many years, and have compared large parts of it very minutely with the Massoretic text. As the result of this comparison we both hold that, where the two differ, the Massoretic text is to be preferred until the reading presupposed by the Septuagint has been shown to be superior to it, especially by yielding a sense in better agreement with the context or by being preferable upon philological or grammatical grounds. One of us expressed substantially this view as long ago as 1890 (*Driver, Notes on Samuel*, p. xl), and he repeated it in 1906 (*Book of Jeremiah*, ed. 1, p. xxv), "The principle which, I venture to think, will most generally commend itself is that of giving the Hebrew text the general preference, and of deviating from it only where the grounds are cogent, and the advantage gained is unmistakeable and clear."

In such expressions as these we have proposed no novel doctrine, but we only voice the general judgment of sober modern scholars. Dr. Swete writes to the same effect (*Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, 1900, p. 444-5). We cannot, therefore, consistently with these principles, formed long ago, without any reference to the present controversy, admit that a variant reading presupposed either by all or by some MSS. of the Septuagint, possesses any value as against the Massoretic text, or even casts doubt upon the Massoretic text, until good cause has been shown for pre-

ferring it. In our opinion this has not been done in the case of those variants which you blame Dr. Skinner for disregarding.¹

The series of Commentaries of which we are editors are commentaries, not on the Septuagint or other versions, but on the Hebrew text of the various books of the Old Testament; and it is no instruction given by us to the contributors to register every variant reading presupposed by the versions. They are free to use their own discretion in mentioning such variants as they think suitable to their purpose; and they naturally mention chiefly such as suggest probable emendations of the Massoretic text or possess some other special interest. The readings which you censure Dr. Skinner for not noticing have not been shown to possess the smallest critical value, or to supply any sufficient ground for questioning the correctness of the Massoretic text.

¹ [It will be observed that in the above letter the general editors do not cite any expression of the senior editor and first signatory, Dr. Briggs, as voicing what they term "the general judgment of sober modern scholars." After the correspondence had been closed, I looked up his works to see whether I could discover any statement of "these principles, formed long ago, without any reference to the present controversy," and I found that in point of fact there were a number of statements absolutely *contradicting* them. I will cite only three:—

"In a very large number of instances the ancient Versions, especially LXX and Vulgate are more correct than M.T. Modern scholars have greatly erred in a too exalted estimate of the correctness of the unpointed Hebrew text in this regard. The measures make it evident that even M.T. by its numerous additions and changes of the original, is as truly an interpretation of an older text as LXX and other ancient Versions" (Psalms (1906), vol. i. p. liii); "The Septuagint version of the Law . . . takes us back of the Maccabean text" (General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture (1899), p. 238); "There can be no doubt, as Robertson Smith states: 'It has gradually become clear to the vast majority of conscientious students that the Septuagint is really of the greatest value as a witness to the early state of the text'" (*op. cit.*, p. 229).

In such expressions Dr. Briggs is in fact supported by nearly all the "sober modern scholars" who have contributed volumes

You acknowledge that Dr. Skinner's treatment of the Septuagint variants in the matter of the divine names in Genesis, which are put forward by Professor Eerdmans, is from his point of view sufficient. If he holds, as we believe he has a right to hold, that the larger number of variants claimed e. g. by Professor Schlögl has no critical worth, why should he mention them? It appears to us that Professor Schlögl is following altogether unsound principles of textual criticism, and that his conclusions with regard to the Hebrew text of Genesis are destitute of the smallest probability.

If Dr. Skinner does not specifically state that some Hebrew variants agree with the Septuagint, it is simply because the history of the Hebrew text shows that such agreements are presumably late and possibly accidental, and have no bearing upon the original text. Evidence from the Samaritan Pentateuch is, of course, of a different kind, but so meagre as to decide nothing in the matter of literary analysis. This being the case, we cannot agree that Dr. Skinner has withheld from his readers any facts relevant in reality to the question at issue. He has done nothing more than

on the Old Testament to the International Critical Commentary at the invitation of the general editors. Thus Dr. Toy writes of the LXX in Proverbs, "It represents in general an older text than that of the received Hebrew tradition" (Proverbs, p. xxxii). I do not dilate on the question now, as I wish to see whether the general editors will really venture to exercise the right of further discussion which they have specifically reserved in the letter of May 3; but I hope to return to it before long.

Meanwhile I desire to lay stress on the following points: (1) For a century and a half the critics followed Astruc's clue practically without textual investigation; (2) When recent textual researches had rendered their position insecure, Dr. Skinner deliberately misrepresented the facts in an attempt to bolster up the documentary theory; (3) When the attention of the general editors was drawn to this, they took no steps to undeceive the public, which had been deceived under the cover and sanction of their names, and put forward the contentions contained in the joint letters.—H. M. W.]

is done in general by commentators on the Old Testament, who habitually take no notice of the readings of the versions which they consider to be without value for the emendation of the Massoretic text and to possess no other special interest.

In the dialogues in the book of ¹Job, as is well known, the names *God* and *Shaddai*—except in 12:9—are uniformly employed. The Septuagint, however, in most cases represents both these names by *Lord*: but the fact—as we imagine scholars would universally agree—affords no justification for correcting, or even for questioning in regard to these names, the existing Hebrew text of the book.

In this connection we may refer to Dr. Skinner's treatment of Genesis 16:11. It appears to us to be not at all clear that in this passage *God* is the true reading of the Hebrew. The stress lies upon the verb *heard*, not upon the particular divine name employed; and in the explanation of the name "Samuel" in I Samuel 1:20 the Tetragrammaton is used.

It is, however, not possible for us, nor do we think it is necessary, to cite further illustrations of our view. Even if we thought that Dr. Skinner's judgment had been at fault in the matter of material selected, we should not necessarily as editors have felt called upon to insist that his judgment should yield to ours, convinced as we are that he has presented all essential facts that bear upon the question before him.

We naturally read the sheets of our contributors and make suggestions upon them, but we do not consider it to be our duty to instruct them how they are to deal with every question which arises. But for the reasons which we have now explained, we were satisfied with Dr. Skinner's treatment of the present case.

We beg to remain,

Yours faithfully,

C. A. BRIGGS.

S. R. DRIVER.

9 OLD SQUARE,
LINCOLN'S INN, W. C.
15 March 1911.

TO the GENERAL EDITORS of the
"International Critical Commentary,"
per the Rev. CANON DRIVER, D.D., F.B.A., etc.

Gentlemen:—

I thank you for your letter bearing date February 28 1911 to hand this morning. It was not necessary to apologise for the delay in answering as I most fully realise your difficulties.

It appears to me that your letter intertwines two sets of considerations: first, the views you yourselves hold on textual criticism, and secondly, the issue of Dr. Skinner's honesty or dishonesty. I should be delighted to discuss the former with either or both of you on any other occasion, and not the less because I notice that your letter avoids many germane considerations that I have advanced in the articles to which your attention has been drawn: but I feel that I should be failing in my duty on this occasion, if I were to enter on any line of argument that might for one moment obscure the real issues. Either the ordinary rules of good faith apply to the International Critical Commentary and the conduct of its contributors or else they do not: and my present task is to strive to make that so clear that no confusion shall be possible.

1. In my first letter I wrote "In discussing the Divine appellations in Genesis Dr. Skinner only records 50 cases of divergences from the Massoretic text and bases his arguments on these. In fact he well knew that the actual number was very much greater, and he had twice had his attention drawn to this in public.... Thus we have here both *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*." You do not now dispute the accuracy of my charge, nor could you, for I have proved it up to the hilt. But you say: "We cannot.... admit that a variant reading presupposed either by all or by some MSS. of the Septuagint, possesses any value as against the

Massoretic text, or even casts doubt upon the Massoretic text, until good cause has been shown for preferring it. In our opinion this has not been done in the case of those variants which you blame Dr. Skinner for disregarding. . . . The readings which you censure Dr. Skinner for not noticing have not been shown to possess the smallest critical value, or to supply any sufficient ground for questioning the correctness of the Massoretic text." Now these opinions would be open to discussion on the question of scholarship, but on the question of good faith they do not seem to me to have any bearing for three reasons: (a) Dr. Skinner himself, as I pointed out in my letter of the 6th January, *adopted* one of these variants which in your opinion "have not been shown to possess the smallest critical value" in another portion of his commentary. You may hold that he was mistaken in so doing; but as he did adopt it you cannot hold that he entertained an honest opinion that it possessed no critical value. This alone disposes of the argument that "If he holds, as we believe he has a right to hold, that the larger number of variants claimed. . . . has no critical worth" he is under no obligation to mention them. One at any rate of that large number seemed to him so valuable that he preferred it to the Massoretic text. In view of this I scarcely know what to make of your emphatic denial "that he did deceive, or that he wrote untruthfully, or that he omitted to mention any facts which were of any importance for the question at issue."

(b) Dr. Skinner himself most emphatically admits what you say you cannot, viz: that a variant reading presupposed either by all or by some MSS. of the Septuagint possesses value. "It cannot be denied," he says, "that the facts adduced by these writers import an element of uncertainty into the analysis, so far as it depends on the criterion of the divine names." And he then goes on to put forward the thoroughly disingenuous numerical argument based on the number 50 for the variants. This argument itself presupposes that the variants have importance, and if that be so of the 50, it is

so of the much larger number that existed to his knowledge. A writer who held that the variants were of no importance could not have written the numerical argument.

(c) Dr. Skinner in the *Expository Times* and you yourselves in this letter of the 28th February place reliance on the Samaritan Pentateuch. Yet he here ignored its eight variants.

To return to my old illustration of the apples. If a man tells me that he has three apples when to his knowledge he has six, I cannot regard his statement as ingenuous. If his friends then urge that the matter is of no consequence because in their opinion it is immaterial whether he has any apples at all, that can make no difference to the question of his truthfulness. If they admit that some of the apples possessed some sort of importance while the others did not, that still leaves my opinion on the original issue unaffected: and if the man himself said that his possession of not more than three apples was important, I conclude that with the best of goodwill his friends are unable to offer any excuse that will hold water.

2. In my original letter I wrote "Dr. Skinner argues on the assumption that differences might be explained by causes purely internal to the Septuagint and says not a word of any *Hebrew* (or other) corroboration of Septuagintal readings. He is here deliberately arguing on a false issue after his attention had twice been publicly drawn to the true issue." You say (a) that the history of the Hebrew text shows that such agreements are presumably late and possibly accidental: (b) that the Samaritan evidence is meagre: and (c) that "He has done nothing more than is done in general by commentators on the Old Testament, who habitually take no notice of the readings of the versions which they consider. . . . to possess no other special interest." Now I differ from you as to the point of scholarship, but the difference is not very striking since the high water mark of your assurance is reached in the expressions '*presumably* late and *possibly* accidental"—not even "*probably* acci-

dental." If you really think phrases like this sufficient to rule out inconvenient evidence, we are separated on a fundamental principle of research: but putting this aside "the possibly accidental" Hebrew variants, *plus* the "meagre" Samaritan variants, *plus* the evidence of Aquila, Hexaplar notes, the Targum, etc., which you do not even mention, *together* constitute a body of evidence to which such epithets as "presumably late," "possibly accidental," and "meagre" have no application. But even this does not touch the main point. Dr. Skinner knew that this body of evidence existed: it is impossible to contend that variants that rebutted his argument as to corruptions, etc., of the Greek text possessed no "special interest" *for the question he was considering*. You will correct me if I am mistaken, but so far as I know O. T. commentators generally would not be prepared to concede that they habitually omit all mention of inconvenient facts and then argue on the basis that no such facts exist. Here again it seems to me indubitable that Dr. Skinner wrote untruthfully and that he omitted to mention facts which were of importance for the question at issue. That he did deceive is shown by the facts adduced in my first letter.

You cite my admission about Eerdmans: let me supply the context: "As a matter of fact Dr. Skinner's note would have been a sufficient reply to Eerdmans: but as a reply to me it was entirely dishonest. You may say 'well, even if there are 10,000 variants in Genesis, that does not alter my view of the documentary theory because my principles of textual criticism are different.' You cannot say that if to your knowledge there are 189 variants, including some Hebrew variants, it is honest to lead readers to believe that there are not more than 50, or that they may be due to purely Greek causes."

I have striven to keep this letter as much as possible to the true issues. To me it seems that what we are debating goes to the very root of the claim of the I. C. C. to be regarded as in any sense scientific. To my mind it is a pre-

condition of all scientific work that the investigator shall strive to tell the truth to the best of his ability. I am not sure that I understand even now whether you agree with this or not, for you seem to me to rest your case not on whether Dr. Skinner spoke the truth, or even on whether he spoke the truth on matters that he himself thought important, but on whether *you* think the matters on which he failed to speak the truth important. To my mind this is the abandonment of the principle of truthfulness — the erecting of some standard of belief on critical questions as a canon that overrides the obligation to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth on the matters discussed. And herein lies some of the gravity of this correspondence. If the letter of February 28 represents your last word on this subject, the most authoritative Anglo-American O. T. critics reject ethical standards that are universally accepted in other fields of learning.

Believe me

Yours faithfully,

HAROLD M. WIENER.

FROM THE GENERAL EDITORS.

Dear Sir:—

It appears to us that no good purpose will be served by prolonging this correspondence. It is not easy for scholars to meet the charge of untruthfulness patiently. We have endeavored to do so, assuming that the charge was based on a misapprehension on your part. But we do not think we should go further. We of course accept your major premise, that untruthfulness is reprehensible, but this seems to be almost the entire extent of our common ground. We deny absolutely your minor premise, that untruthfulness is shown in Dr. Skinner's book. The question between us does not relate to the elementary principles of honesty, but to the elementary principles of textual criticism. You seem to regard virtually any variant of any Version or of any MS.

of a Version, of whatever date or character, as superior to M. T. This is not a principle accepted among scholars at large; in fact, as far as we know, it is confined to Schlögl and yourself. It is obvious that, under the circumstances, little progress can be looked for in this discussion, and we must beg you to excuse us from continuing it. We, of course, reserve the right to treat the issues of scholarship involved in whatever manner we may think proper.

Very truly yours,

C. A. BRIGGS.

S. R. DRIVER.

May 3, 1911.

9 OLD SQUARE,

LINCOLN'S INN, W. C.

4 May 1911.

To the GENERAL EDITORS of the
"International Critical Commentary."

Gentlemen:—

I thank you for your letter of May 3 and have only to add one thing, viz. that you are mistaken in your interpretation of my textual attitude—I think also in your interpretation of that of Professor Schlögl. So far as I am aware I have never written anything that will bear the construction that any variant of any Version or of any MS. of a Version of whatever date or character is superior to M. T., and certainly that is not my opinion.

Yours faithfully,

HAROLD M. WIENER.