

lay us in contrition at His feet. This humility is the beginning of salvation, for it is the condition and prophecy of forgiveness. The Christ before whom we lie in contriteness of heart has been raised up first on the Cross and then on the Throne, that with one hand He might give us repentance, and with the other the forgiveness of sins.

JOHN WATSON.

STUDIES IN THE CRITICISM OF THE PSALMS.

I. PSALM XXXIX.

I HOPE in this short series of papers to keep true to the principle which I have already expressed (EXPOSITOR, Aug., 1898, p. 81), that controversy is something to be avoided as long as possible by lovers of the Church and of truth. "I am quite unwilling"—may I quote from myself?—"to criticise Prof. Robertson," even now, when this courteous controversialist tempts me to a different course. To answer my opponent's belated criticism would not only be to acknowledge that such tardy refutation was quite admirable, but also to lead the public to suppose that a scholar could possibly live seven years without making progress. To my earlier critics I have already given such answer as was requisite, especially in *Semitic Studies, in Memory of Alexander Kohut*, published at New York in 1897;¹ later on I will again briefly refer to them. Besides, Prof. Robertson's position as an Old Testament critic is so peculiar that I should have had some difficulty in meeting him. I cannot help wishing that this honest, well-read, eloquent writer had put controversy aside, and offered his own reconstruction of the history of Jewish religion, or of

¹ See pp. 111-119 : *The Book of Psalms, its origin and relation to Zoroastrianism*. The essay referred to was written in Dec.-Jan., 1895-1896.

the progress of revelation, without embarrassing himself and others by disputing over theories which derive their validity from a point of view which he does not share. Perhaps, however, Prof. Robertson only puts forth his Croall Lectures as a prelude to a thorough study of the contents of the Psalter—an introduction to the religious thought of the temple poets. If this is his intention, I can only rejoice at it, and I think that he will thereby greatly increase the effectiveness of the better part of his criticism. For to investigate the date and origin of the Psalms requires a profound preliminary study of their contents; and if the readers of the Croall Lectures could be presented with such an introduction as I have described, they would perhaps be more fully persuaded of the soundness of his critical conclusions.

I am just now tempted into controversy from another side. Prof. Rothstein, according to an evidently careful report by Mr. Selbie in the *Expository Times* for December, 1898, has been drawing a broad distinction between those critics of the text who found their work on a critical study of the ancient versions and those who give the reins to their own subjectivity, and he appears from the report to find examples of both kinds of criticism in the recently published parts of Prof. Haupt's edition of the Old Testament. I cannot afford to take in all the theological magazines of the day, and I may perhaps have misunderstood Mr. Selbie. But, at any rate, there is a considerable probability that such a distinction will be drawn by others, and I feel a temptation to enter into controversy with such writers when they appear. Nevertheless I hope I shall be able to resist the temptation, because I should be unwilling to encourage those who are not altogether in sympathy with the newer school of textual criticism to express themselves with too much emphasis, and to protest too loudly against subjectivity. The Septuagint and Massoretic texts

show plenty of subjectivity, and in modern times it is our business to train and modify our subjectivities and make them mutually corrective. The newer school of textual criticism is by no means opposed to the older. It does not neglect the critical study of the versions and of the later or latest Hebrew language. But it superadds a fuller study of the habits and dangers of the scribes, and of those phenomena in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and of the versions which can only be explained by the study of those habits and those dangers. The discovery of the Hebrew text of part of Ecclesiasticus has also opened up a new source of information as to the possibilities of corruption, and as to the means of healing it. By comparing this text with the Greek version, we see how incalculably great was the danger of misreading the text. We knew this before, indeed; but the relationship of the translator to the author of Ecclesiasticus makes the errors which the former has committed all the more striking. Of course, I do not assert that the Hebrew text now put before us is itself always correct. On the contrary, it is very often wrong. The groping way in which the scribe went to work in copying his original is strikingly shown in many of the marginal notes.

Need I say that those who belong to this newer school of criticism are by no means inclined to boastfulness? They are not even ready as yet to offer a detailed sketch of their principles. Not until several books of the Old Testament have been thoroughly revised from an advanced point of view will it become possible for some competent scholar to collect a sufficient variety of examples of the different kinds of textual corruption and of the corresponding kinds of correction. Without such a thoroughly adequate collection a sketch of principles would fail to illuminate the student.

The text of the Book of Psalms offers peculiar difficulties

to the critical student. It is in very many passages corrupt, and the Hebrew text presupposed by the Septuagint is nearer, probably, to our text of the Psalms than that presupposed by the Septuagint version of the prophets is to our text of the prophets. But the received text also offers some peculiar advantages, and notably this—that the psalmists very often repeat themselves, or copy from one another. It is time, therefore, that the Psalter should be studied with a special view to the correction of the text. Much preliminary work has no doubt been done, but it has not, I venture to think, been methodical enough. The most notable recent work which has been done on the Versions of the Psalter is that of Baethgen in the *Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie*, 1882, pp. 405 ff., and 593 ff. It is excellent of its kind, and may serve as a model to young workers in the same line, and yet how little has been the result from it for the correction of the worst errors in the Psalter! Among the names of those deceased scholars who have tried other means of correcting the text, Grätz and Lagarde deserve special mention.

I hope that we shall soon be able to point to Dr. Briggs's work on the Psalter as a specimen of up-to-date criticism. Prof. Duhm will have less space at his disposal in Marti's series of commentaries, but he knows how to pack much that is fresh and stimulating into a small compass, and he does not belong to any narrow school of textual criticism. And I have myself worked very hard at the critical problems presented by the text, and I believe that I have in not a few cases solved them, and still oftener approached the true solution. I am convinced that few scholars realize either the extent of the corruption of the Massoretic text or the inadequacy of very many of the most plausible corrections of modern critics. I am also sure that those critics who approach my work from a similar point of view will often be able to make improvements in my works; and that I

shall myself find out much that is still wanting in it. I expect soon to bring my work to an end, and hope that by the combined efforts of critics who belong to the newer school the text of the Psalter may be so greatly improved that we shall understand the meaning of this most precious book very much better than before.

It is, however, not without hesitation that I now and then publish specimens of my results. The critical study of the subject, as I at least understand its principles and methods, is comparatively new. Most scholars are content with correcting the Hebrew text here and there by the help of the versions, or by making some very slight alteration in one or two letters. The simplicity of a correction is held to constitute a presumption that it is correct, and one frequently hears it objected to some "clever" correction that it is "not necessary." This line of procedure and this style of objection I am bound to say that I regard as mistaken; no one who has thoroughly realized the principles and methods of the newer textual criticism could be so easily contented, and so quick to believe in the general accuracy of the traditional text. The truth is that the versions, especially in the poetical books, presuppose a text which is not very different from our own, and probably has, upon the whole, even more faults than our own. And a simple correction is in more than half the number of instances of corruption inadequate. It may be added that the remark that this or that correction is unnecessary sometimes at least implies an inadequate respect for the Hebrew writers, and an imperfect regard for appropriate Hebrew style, and of the requirements of parallelism. I do not in the least disparage the attainments of the scholars whom I presume to criticise. Their textual criticism is at fault, not their learning nor perhaps their sense of style, and I am sure that when they have before them a few editions of Old Testament books, with texts

corrected upon the most modern critical principles, they will at once recognise the necessity and justice of those principles, and the virtual certainty of many of the results.

Interrupted at this point, I come upon a remarkable proof of the necessity for a more distinctly forward movement in textual criticism. I take up an important new work on the Story of Ahikar, of which that acute New Testament critic, Mr. Rendel Harris, is the principal author and editor. In the Introduction "certain strange things are brought to my ears" relative to a passage in Proverbs (Prov. xxxi. 1), which, most unfortunately, the writer uses in an uncorrected form of the text. He speaks as a pioneering critic, but pioneering critics ought not to be unaware of the results of their predecessors, and ought to begin by scrutinizing the text.¹ If such mistakes are possible for a real critic, what portentous errors must be committed every day by theological and other writers who are of a less critical turn of mind!

Before passing on to the detailed consideration of a psalm, I will venture to remind the reader that text-critical studies have an important bearing on the investigation of the origin of the Psalms. I hold with Frankenberg (*Sprüche*, Preface) that "a verse newly explained in a correct manner is worth more than all clever hypotheses and long disquisitions on date and authorship." It is, for instance, no longer possible to adopt Prof. Robertson Smith's dictum that the 139th Psalm is composed in a barbarous jargon, and therefore particularly late. There

¹ The title contained in Prov. xxxi. 1 is an editor's inference from a text which had already, it would seem, become corrupt. The same fate afterwards befell what the editor wrote. It is no new discovery that מִשְׁלֵי, "the prophecy," should be מִשְׁלֵי, "the wise poem" (Grätz). ל and נ were confounded as לְבָן, Jer. v. 2; יבֵּא (read יבֵּל), Jer. xlvi. 18. It only remained for Bickell to point out that לְמוֹאֵל has come in from verse 4, which begins אֵל לְמוֹלְכִים. That לְמוֹאֵל is wrong appears from the absence of the article before מֹלֵךְ, Render, "Words (rules of life) for a king; a wise poem with which his mother instructed him."

are no doubt stylistic inequalities in the different psalms, but on the whole the result of my own studies discourages me from assigning many of the psalms to a very late period. The main conclusion of the book called *The Origin and Religious Contents of the Psalter* (1891) remains unshaken; there are not even plausible grounds for supposing any extant psalm, or any part of an extant psalm, to be pre-Exilic. And as long as we assume the point of view of most scholars in 1889 (the date of the delivery of my Bampton Lectures) as regards both the text and the interpretation of the text, there is strong reason for supposing that the Psalter contains a good number of Maccabæan psalms. But this has for some years past ceased to be my own point of view. None of the reviewers of my Bampton Lectures (to whom I wish I could offer thanks for more really useful criticisms) has been half as severe a critic of the details of my Lectures as I have been myself; and while much remains unshaken in both parts of the book, which is, I believe, a long way from being antiquated, much has to be modified, as those who have followed my recent utterances will easily understand. I will add that when Mr. Schechter has brought out his fresh fragments of Ecclesiasticus, all of us will then get precious light on the Psalter. Let no one exaggerate. The newly discovered Hebrew text of Sirach is in many passages very corrupt. We can, however, still draw some probable conclusions from it, and those conclusions appear to me adverse to putting many psalms as late as the probable date of Ecclesiasticus. But the hope which has been freely expressed that a retrogressive criticism may be initiated by Dr. Neubauer's and Mr. Schechter's discovery are doomed to disappointment. Both on text-critical and on exegetical grounds the criticism of the Psalter is bound to pass, and is passing, into a new stage, but that stage cannot be described by the epithet "retrogressive."

I now proceed to the study of one of the most plaintive psalms in the Psalter, if it is not rather a compound of two fragments of psalms, one of which is not plaintive but rather didactic in the same sense in which the 73rd Psalm may be fitly called didactic. As the text now stands, Psalm xxxix. is full of difficulties, such as we can hardly suppose to have existed when this psalm was originally used. These difficulties can be discerned pretty well in Dr. Driver's conscientiously faithful version in his *Parallel Psalter*. In *v.* 1 he gives, "I will keep a muzzle to my mouth, while the wicked is in my sight." In *v.* 2, "I was dumb in stillness, I was silent even from good." In *v.* 4, "Let me know how frail I am," but the Hebrew says (see note), "how ceasing I am." In *v.* 5, "Surely every man (though) standing firm, is altogether vanity." In *v.* 10, "By the hostility of thy hand I am consumed." In *v.* 11, "With reproofs for iniquity thou chastenest man, and like a moth makest his desirableness to melt away." To these inelegancies of expression we may add the very difficult transition from *v.* 1-3 to *v.* 4.

Such are some of the existing phenomena which suggest the propriety of a close revision of the text. Let me now attempt to throw some light upon them. Perhaps the old Hebrew poem may shine out with somewhat more of its old radiance.

In *v.* 2 (I adopt the Hebrew numeration) Dr. Driver notes the parallelism between "keeping my ways" and "keeping a muzzle." The parallelism exists in M but not in G,¹ but it is due to corruption; the second אשמרה should be אשימרה (G ἐθέμην; so the keenest critics, beginning with Olshausen). The real parallelism is between "guarding my words" and "guarding my mouth"—parallelism of phrase and identity of idea. "My ways" can

¹ M=Massoretic Text, G=the Septuagint Greek.

only mean "my conduct" (1 Kings viii. 25). He who "guards his ways" is not solely anxious "not to sin with his tongue." דרך and דבר are pretty often confounded. Can there be any reason for retaining דרכי in the text? Read דברי (Grätz, Halévy). But why is the psalmist so much afraid of sins of the tongue? The traditional text says, because "the wicked is in my sight." Too vague a reason, surely. G had a better reading, "while the wicked stands (defiantly) before me" (G ἐν τῷ στυγῆναι), i.e., עֹמֵד for עָר; cf. עָר for עֹבֵד (1 Sam. ii. 5). Now as to the "muzzle." The word (מַחְסוּם) occurs nowhere else, and is highly unsuitable; in a passage like Psalm xxxii. 9 it might conceivably have stood, but not here. The supposed word has arisen through the transposition of the two parts of the word which the poet wrote. That word, as Mr. N. Herz was the first to see, is שְׁמֵרָה (cxli. 3). Transposition was followed by corruption.

In v. 3 the Prayer-Book version has given us one of its oddest renderings, "I kept silence, yea even from good words"; so odd is it that it has become a humorous proverb (see, for instance, Mr. G. W. E. Russell's jocose description of Sir William Harcourt, *Nineteenth Century*, February, 1899). A.V. falls, as too often, into unintelligibility: "I held my peace, even from good." Certainly, neither version promotes edification. Dr. Driver feels that he is in presence of a problem. He retains A.V.'s "even from good," but gives as a footnote, "Or, and had no comfort; Heb. away from good." And we are asked to believe that pious Jews of old read and sung such stuff! The evil lies deep, but not too deep to be detected. דוֹמְיָה, rendered generally "in stillness," but by A.V. "with silence," though recognised by the lexicons, is, as I am prepared to show, wherever it occurs in M, due to corruption. In the present passage דוֹמְיָה and מְטוֹב are both undoubtedly miswritten for תְּמִיד; דוֹמְיָה was either what is called a

dittogram (a word repeated in error) or a correction of the miswritten word **נטור** (or the like)—a correction which in its turn became a corruption. There are abundant parallels for this in the Psalter itself. A.V. continues, “and my sorrow was stirred.” But this meaning is forced. **נעבר** ought to mean, “was thrown into disorder, ruined.” The word is corrupt. Read **נער** (**נעיר**), “awaked,” reserving **כ** (**כי**) for the next line. “But my pain awaked” (the more), through this repression of speech.

In *v.* 4 no one has remarked the difficulty of **הגיג** (*v.* 2, nowhere else), yet the accurate statement in the *Anglo-American Dictionary* might well excite suspicion. There really is no such word. The figure of the kindled fire is also difficult; in Deuteronomy xix. 6, Hosea vii. 7, Jeremiah xx. 9, it denotes a craving for vengeance. Clearly this cannot be meant here. The speaker’s anxiety is lest he should utter wild words at the prosperity of the wicked. It was not a sin to be angry with God’s enemies, but it was sin to envy them. In short, looking at verses 2–4 by themselves, we see that they are parallel to Psalm lxxiii., and it is lxxiii. 21 (corrected text) which suggests the right correction for xxxix. 4. Taking up **כ** (**כי**) from **נעבר** (see above), read **כי יתמה לבי וכליותי אשתומם**. **ית** fell away from **יתמה**; **יו** from **כליותי**. **כל** naturally passed into **קר**. **בהגיגי** is easily accounted for. It is a dittogram of **בקרבי**, which a scribe perhaps manipulated to make a show of sense. **אש** and **תומם** were transposed. **ו** naturally became **ב**, and **ם** became **ר**. The change of **מ** into **ע** is rare; but an imperfect **מ**, in an older form of the square character, can easily be mistaken for an **ע**. Before **דברתי**, we should, I think, insert **אז**, which would drop out easily after **אש** which immediately precedes it (in M’s faulty text).

This is the result of the corrections offered thus far. It will be convenient for the reader to see how the first part of Psalm xxxix. runs in what claims to be a near approach

to the original text. The lines are in what Prof. Budde calls the elegiac metre, though it is by no means confined to lamentations. I prefer to call it the halting metre, because the lines are divided by the cæsura into two unequal parts. The second part of each line is here given as a separate line, simply to please the eye.

- 2 I said, Let me guard my words
 That I sin not with my tongue ;
 Let me put a guard on my mouth
 While the wicked confronts me.
- 3 I was dumb, I kept silence continually,
 But my pain awaked (the more).
- 4 For my heart was astounded,
 My reins were horror-struck,
 Then I broke into speech. *
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This is evidently a little fragment of a psalm on the difficulties caused to pious Israelites by the belief that righteousness was necessarily attended by prosperity, and wickedness by adversity ; it is therefore to be grouped with Psalms xxxvii., xlix., and lxxiii. The close parallelism between verse 4 and lxxiii. 21 suggests that these psalms were not separated by a long interval in time. This question I cannot here investigate, but it is something to have established the existence of another composite psalm, and to have produced one more proof of the reality of the danger of scepticism in the Jewish Church. The rest of our 39th Psalm is still more interesting from a text-critical point of view. At first sight it seems in parts hopelessly corrupt. But I venture to believe that by the more consistent application of sound critical principles I have been able to get very much nearer the true text than any of my predecessors, and the result, in that portion of the psalm which is most deeply corrupt, is very interesting. This, however, I must

reserve for a second paper. How I wish that I could be privileged to open the eyes of a few readers to the treasures still buried in a misunderstood Psalter !

T. K. CHEYNE.

APOCALYPTIC SKETCHES.

IV.

THE SEVEN SEALS.

REV. VI., VII.

OUR subject this month is the opening of the seals. They are seven in all; and we shall find, as is often the case, that the complete number is made up of two series; one of four, the other of three. In Oriental symbolism four marked the earthly, three the heavenly; and in accordance with this we shall find that the first four seals show what is coming on the world, while the remaining three have their sphere for the most part within the veil.

We must keep before our imagination the Throne of God and of the Lamb as described in chapters iv., v. We have just been listening to the chorus of praise when the Lamb, alone found worthy to open the book, has taken it from the hand of God and is proceeding to break the seals.

As each of the four seals is broken, a voice like thunder is heard from one after another of the four Living Creatures addressed to the Lamb in the midst of the Throne. In each case it is the one word "COME." The force of this is quite lost in the Authorised Version, where it is rendered as if it were a mere invitation to the apostle to look at what is coming next: "Come and see." But when we follow the correct rendering of the Revised Version, we find it to be an invitation from the longing heart of creation in all its manifold life, as symbolised in these four Living Creatures