

have lain unnoticed, emerging at a later date when nothing was remembered of its original history. Afterwards it won its way slowly to canonical recognition, because of its inherent excellence, its "Catholic" and Apostolical doctrine, its venerable antiquity, and perhaps not least because it was quoted by Clement of Rome. Indeed Clement, who was probably a Jewish Christian, may have been a member of the original "House-group," and even the preserver of the letter. If so, we can well understand why in certain quarters he was regarded as its author. I throw out this tentative solution of the "literary riddle of the Epistle to the Hebrews," thinking that at all events it is worth discussion, and hoping that the discussion will increase our understanding of one of the most entrancing of the New Testament documents.

JOHN DICKIE.

PLEA FOR FULLER CRITICISM OF THE MASSORETIC TEXT, WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE FIRST PSALM.

THE study of the Old Testament has fascinated multitudes, in the Christian Church as well as in the Church which first received and has preserved the sacred oracles. Ardent scholars have applied themselves to the investigation of the language used by the Prophets and the Psalmists, and have given to others the results of their labours, that the meaning of the Prophecies and the Psalms might be better understood. As these researches, however, have been deepened and extended, especially within the past century, it has come to be recognised that the received Hebrew text, in spite of the immense labour and care bestowed on it by the Massoretes in early mediaeval times, is not a perfect work. Though this has naturally formed the foundation on which learned and skilful commentators have—often unsuspectingly—based their expositions, this

foundation has at many points proved insecure, and the superstructure they have raised has, at many points, fallen to the ground.

The truth is that frequent transcription of the Hebrew text during the course of many centuries has conduced to deviation from the original, through inadvertence on the part of the scribes,—for there has been no miraculous intervention constantly preventing transcribers from making mistakes. Many of these changes may seem slight in themselves; there may merely be the substitution of one letter for another resembling it (“mis-spelling”), or the omission of a letter or a word; but the consequence has often been a very serious change in sense; and now, in these later ages, many difficulties present themselves, baffling all attempts to find a solution. Too often have some critics, in despair, pronounced certain passages “hopelessly corrupt.”

Much, indeed, has already been accomplished in getting behind the received text, and recovering more reasonable readings at points where little or no sense could be evolved. Intelligent study of the ancient versions, executed centuries before the Jewish editors had fixed the present text for us, and comparison of the renderings given by those old translators of the Hebrew text before them with what we now possess, may sometimes lead to the restoration of right readings. The Septuagint Version in particular—though the text of this itself has suffered at the hands of successive transcribers and editors—is frequently most helpful in guiding to better readings than those which appear at the corresponding points in the Massoretic text. More limited assistance is afforded by the Syriac and the Latin Versions, and by the Targums.

The object of this paper is to point out that even *the Massoretic text itself, when patiently and carefully studied, gives more help for its own correction than any external guide.*

The disciplined critic who earnestly applies himself to the study of the traditional text will frequently perceive the genuine reading through the disguise of a "corrupt" form. Intelligent cultivation of this field will yield more fruit, with comparatively little labour, than can be obtained elsewhere, frequently with greater expenditure of time.

To illustrate this thesis, let us carefully examine the Massoretic text of the First Psalm.

In the first verse, an old scribe inserted a Note-line—though this now appears only in some printed editions—before the expression "walketh not in the counsel of the unrighteous," in order to give forewarning of a suspected reading;¹ and when we bethink ourselves, it does seem strange to read of walking "in the counsel" of the ungodly. Instead of the form בַּעֲצַת , it might be better, by changing the first consonant to another closely resembling it, to read בְּעֲצַת , "according to the counsel"; but it would be still better to change the third consonant so as to obtain the form בְּעֲרֹת , as Olshausen has already suggested, and thus secure the meaning "in the company of the unrighteous."

At the beginning of the second verse also, a Note-line was inserted—and still appears in many printed editions—calling attention to another difficulty, which, as may be perceived by one who is acquainted with English only, is presented in the repetition of the same word "law" in both clauses. Instead of reading "in the law of the Lord [is] his delight, and in His law doth he meditate day and night," one would naturally, on the first thought, deem it better, at the second occurrence, not to have the form וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ , but rather the pronominal compound וּבָהּ , "and in it" (or "and therein"). The presence of the Note-line, however, before the *first* occurrence of the word "law,"

¹ See the author's treatise on *The Note-line in the Hebrew Scriptures*, especially pages 78 ff.

rather points to the conclusion that this, and not the second, is the form to be suspected. The proposal of Lagarde, to change בְּתוֹרַת into בְּיִרְאָת , does not commend itself, especially because the resultant meaning would be "in the fear of the Lord [is] his delight"; more appropriate is the suggestion of Grätz, to read בְּתַעֲוִיּוֹת (cf. Isa. viii. 16, 20), which, with its genitive, would mean "in the testimony of the Lord"; the most likely substitute, however, resembling the Massoretic reading, would seem to be בְּהוֹדוֹת ,¹ which makes the expression mean "in praising the Lord."

Considerable difficulty is experienced with the first clause of the fourth verse, which is usually rendered, "Not so [are] the ungodly. But it must be noted that the Hebrew term כֵּן , here translated "so," is really an adverb, indeclinable, instead of a plural adjective, as required by the rules of grammar. Perceiving this, Cheyne, in his latest commentary on the Psalms, has felt constrained to supply another verb than the copula at this point, in order to make fair sense: "Not so [fare] the wicked."

Let it further be observed here, that apart from הָאִישׁ , "the man," at the beginning of the Psalm, הָרָשָׁעִים is the only word that has the article; but why should *this* term be thus distinguished, while the ה is absent from the other plurals following? The answer to this question seems to be that the ה originally formed no part of the word to which it is now prefixed, but rather was an element of another word preceding. Let it also be noted that, in the ancient Hebrew script, as well as in the Phœnician alphabet, and in the characters appearing in the Mesha inscription and the Siloam inscription, מ and נ (like our M and N, m and n) are very similar in form, so that one might readily be mistaken for the other.² Moreover, as the letters ו and

¹ The Hiphil construct infinitive of הָדָה .

² See another instance of confusion below, in verse 5; also Gen. xxiii. 17 and 20, where וַיִּקָּם ("and it [viz. the field of Ephron. . .] arose to Abraham") is certainly a transcriptional error for וַיִּקָּן ("and it was bought . . . by Abraham").

ר, even in the modern characters, are closely resemblant, one or the other, if both occurred together, might be inadvertently omitted by a transcriber. Hence לֹא כֹן רְשָׁעִים may probably have originally been לֹא כְמוֹת רְשָׁעִים, i.e. לֹא כְמוֹת רְשָׁעִים, "Not like him [are] unrighteous ones."

After this, the Septuagint repeats "Not so!" (οὐχ οὕτως) from the beginning of the line; and, strangely enough, many modern critics agree in regarding this as a genuine reading: indeed, Wellhausen (in the Polychrome edition of the Psalms) ventures on no other change in the whole Psalm. There seems no sufficient reason, however, for adding "Not so!"

The next point which claims attention is the pair of monosyllables אִם כִּי, which, as here, is the normal consequent of a negation in Hebrew (see verse 2; also Gen. xxxii. 29; 1 Kings xviii. 18, etc.),¹ though sometimes כִּי alone is deemed sufficient (see Gen. xvii. 15; xix. 2; xlv. 8, etc.). An indispensable necessity here is the pronoun "they" to resume mention of the "unrighteous," if not, indeed, further to accentuate the contrast between them and the righteous man. The required הֵם may quite legitimately and simply be secured, and the antithesis properly expressed, by changing אִם כִּי אִם כִּי either into כִּי הֵם כִּי (assuming that אִם was inadvertently *substituted* for הֵם by a transcriber), or into כִּי אִם הֵם כִּי (assuming that הֵם was inadvertently *omitted* after its resemblant אִם); on either alternative, the resultant meaning becomes, "but *they* [are] like the chaff."

After the beginning of the fifth verse, the admonitory Note-line again appears,—this time to question the correctness of at least one form if not more. It does seem somewhat strange to read that the unrighteous shall not "arise" (or "stand up") in the judgment,—for such is the normal

¹ Cf. Lat. *sed* after *non*, Gr. *ἀλλά* after *οὐκ*, Ger. *sondern* after *nicht*.

meaning of יָקָמוּ (see Gen. xiii. 17; xix. 1, 14, 15, 31, etc.); "stand," in the sense of standing firm and holding one's ground, would rather be expressed by a different word, viz., יַעֲמִדוּ (see Josh. xxiii. 9; 2 Kings, x. 4; Esth. ix. 2, etc.). The rendering given by Cheyne in his latest commentary on the Psalms is "maintain themselves," but this is certainly not the meaning of the word in the Hebrew text. By a slight change of מ for נ,¹ and transposition of this letter so as to form the closely resemblant word נִקְוֵי, the meaning of the clause becomes "unrighteous ones shall not be acquitted in the judgment."

In the next place, one may question whether the Masoretetes were right in assuming that עֲרַת (part of the second last word in verse 5), is the construct form of the noun עָרָה (as in verse 1), so that the clause in which it appears should be rendered "sinners in the company of just [men]." Bearing in mind that the dominant idea in the verse is *judicial procedure*, there is good reason for holding that עֲרַת is rather the construct infinitive Qal (in segholate form) of the verb עָרַח, to "arraign" ("indict," or "charge with commission of an offence," or "cite to appear at the bar of judgment").² A better reading of the last two words of this verse in Hebrew is thus בְּעֲרַת צַדִּיקִים, "when just men arraign [them]."

In the last verse of the Psalm, as fixed by the Massoretetes, difficulty has always been felt with the verbs forming the predicates in the two clauses. To say that the Lord "knoweth" the way of the righteous sounds something like a truism; while still greater difficulty is felt in understanding and accepting, as a fitting conclusion to the verse, the statement that the way of the unrighteous "shall

¹ See note^a p. 381.

² See 1 Kings xxi. 10, where וַיַּעֲרֹהוּ should, fully written, be וַיַּעֲרִיבְהוּ, "and let them indict him"; also Mal. iii. 5, where עָרָה should be עָרַח, "an accuser."

perish." It has been suggested, indeed, that the closing verb-form $\text{תִּאַבֵּד} \text{ (Qal)}$ should rather be the suffixed Piel form תִּאַבְּדֵם ("shall destroy them," or "shall ruin them"); the difficulty, however, is thereby merely lessened, not removed. Obviously, we expect here a clear *contrast* between the righteous and the unrighteous, as in the preceding verses. A simpler and fairly satisfactory solution will be found by substituting the resemblant form יִתְאַב , an Aramaic mode (see the cognate participle in Amos vi. 8) of writing יִתְעַב , "he abhorreth" (cf. Job ix. 31; xix. 19; Ps. v. 7, etc.). After fixing this, we naturally turn to ask what verb-form, resembling יִרְע in the first clause, would there express a fitting antithesis to "abhorreth." Choice seems to lie between יִרְעֵי , "He is friendly with" (see Prov. xiii. 20; xxviii. 7; xxix. 3), and יִרְצֵי , "He delighteth in" (see Isa. xlii. 1; Ps. xliv. 4; cxlvii. 11, etc.); from the nature of the case, the latter must be preferred.

After giving effect to these emendations, the Psalm will assume something like the following form in English;—

1. Blessed is the man who walketh not
 in the company of the unrighteous,
 nor standeth in the way of sinners,
 nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers;
2. But whose delight [is] in praising the Lord,
 and [who] meditateth in His law
 day and night.
3. He shall be like a tree
 planted beside water-courses,
 that giveth fruit in its season,
 and whose leaves wither not;
 And all that he doeth prospereth.
4. Not like him [are] unrighteous ones,
 but *they* [are] like the chaff
 which wind driveth away.
5. Therefore unrighteous ones shall not be acquitted in the judgment,
 nor sinners when righteous men indict.
6. For the Lord delighteth in the way of righteous men,
 but the way of unrighteous ones He abhorreth.

JAMES KENNEDY.