

721ST ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,  
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, MARCH 18TH, 1929,

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 following elections:—As Associates: Mrs. Louisa Wilson-Smith and James Verdier Stevenson, Esq., C.B.E., M.V.O.

The CHAIRMAN then called upon the Rev. A. H. Finn to read his paper on “Conjectural Emendations in the Psalms.”

---

CONJECTURAL EMENDATIONS IN THE PSALMS.

By THE REV. A. H. FINN.

MANY have tried their hands at endeavouring to suggest corrections in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, and some have pushed their conjectures very far indeed, as may be seen in Professor Cheyne's *Psalms* and Canon Box's *Isaiah*. It is only fair to say that Dr. Melville Scott, in his work *Textual Discoveries in Proverbs, Psalms, and Isaiah*, has been much more cautious, and claims that he is “contending for a method, regarded as scientific” (p. 100).<sup>\*</sup> Our chief concern now will therefore be with the methods followed in that work, not with examining the details of all the “individual emendations.” That would be far too long a task for a single paper, even though limited to the Psalms alone.

---

\* Page figures in *italics* are to Dr. Scott's volume, and not to folios in the Journal.

It is very rightly laid down as "a fundamental principle of textual criticism that no emendation ought to be accepted unless graphically probable" (p. 154). It is doubtful whether that principle has always been strictly adhered to in this work.

No doubt, in the square Hebrew character the letters *Beth* (ב) and *Caph* (כ), *Daleth* (ד) and *Resh* (ר), *He* (ה) and *Cheth* (ח), *Vav* (ו) and *Yod* (י) are a good deal alike, and might easily, especially if badly formed, be confused. The possibility of that confusion ought, however, to be only suggested rather than taken for granted. The likeness between *Mem* (מ) and *Pe* (פ), *Lamed* (ל) and *Resh* (ר), *Samech* (ס) and *Caph* (כ), *Tsaddi* (צ) and *Aleph* (א) is at least no so obvious. When this is definitely asserted as though indisputable, one has an uneasy feeling that our author may have relied rather on his own "discoveries" than on independent proofs. But when we are asked to believe that *אסרו* has been turned into *כארו* (xxii, 17); *ירחם* into *חיים* (xxx, 6); *פגעו* into *מעוג* (xxxv, 16); *ארמון* into *צלמון* (lxviii, 15); and *מלאו* into *אסרו* (cxiii, 17), one may be pardoned for feeling a little doubtful whether "graphical probability" has been quite made out.

In the proposed emendations the letters ו (*Vav*) and י (*Yod*) are frequently ignored as mere "vocalization," or are as frequently introduced where the received text has not got them. It is true that elsewhere these letters are sometimes omitted when words are written defectively, or inserted to indicate the vowel required, but often they serve a more important function. At the beginning of a verb the י indicates the tense (in lxviii, 15, where this letter is ignored in the "emendation," it is actually one of the three radicals of the verb), and at the end of a word is the sign of the first person singular. So also an initial ו is the conjunction "and," while at the end of a word it is the sign of the plural. In such cases these letters are not merely vowels, and ought not to be treated as altogether unimportant. It is difficult to believe that any scribe, however careless, would ever have written *נעים* defectively as *נעם* (xxxvi, 2), or *חסיד* as *חסר* (cxli, 5). The words were much too familiarly known.

Not only are these "vowels" treated as not worth considering, even the acknowledged consonants are shifted about as though their order was of little consequence. For instance, it is suggested that *שפלתו* should be read instead of שפת לה (lxxxii, 6), and *בישימון* for *ימישון* (cxli, 5).

Again, it is laid down that "Far too great weight has been attributed to the MSS., and too little to the Versions" (p. 152).

There may be something to be said for this, but the author seldom refers to any Version except the LXX, and in one instance (xxii, 17) actually throws over the evidence of the LXX, Vulgate, Arabic, and Syriac (which all support the Hebrew reading), and relies on a reference to Jerome and Abraham of Zante!

Even as regards the evidence of the LXX, the use made of it is strange. In about a dozen passages the Greek reading is eagerly adopted in preference to the Hebrew. In over a hundred instances the Greek agrees with the Hebrew against the proposed "emendation," yet of these no notice is taken, except that in two of them the fact is just mentioned as showing that the "mistake" is an early one. In the immense majority of instances, then, the very Version chiefly relied on is contrary to the contentions of this volume.

Moreover, this selecting of a very few instances for approval really inverts the true force of the evidence. For in the Psalms the Greek translators have very often differed from the Hebrew, sometimes omitting words, sometimes inserting others, sometimes paraphrasing (*e.g.* the Greek, "A body hast Thou prepared for me" is manifestly a paraphrase, not a translation, of "ears hast Thou opened for me," xl, 7). Most of these variations are not accepted by anyone, not even in this work. This lack of accuracy on the part of the translators is found also in the Pentateuch, as the Samaritan clearly shows. Hence it is precisely on the Greek *variations* that suspicion should rest, while the *agreement* of the Greek with the Hebrew ought to prove that the reading is the right one.

Dr. Scott, then, has taken no notice of most of the Greek variations, or of the adverse testimony of the Greek in something like ninety per cent. of the passages he considers "corrupt," while he has eagerly snatched at a few readings which he happens to approve.

Even in these there are some that only partially support his contentions. In xvi, 2, he insists on the one word *ἐθαυμάστωσε* as justifying his emendation "magnifieth" in place of the Hebrew "the excellent," but says nothing of the Greek (like the Hebrew) reading "not" where he would read "all," or of the Greek having *αὐτοῦ* which lends no support to his contention that *הַהַה*, "a defence" (but really "a canopy"), is the true reading.

In lxxxv, 9, the literal rendering of the Hebrew in the last clause is "and let them not return to folly," and of the Greek, "and upon those that turn back unto Him (their) heart." The differences are (1) where the Hebrew reads "not" the Greek has "upon" or "unto"; (2) the Greek inserts "unto Him"; (3) the Greek has taken the first syllable of "folly" for a word meaning "heart," and omits the rest of the word. The proposed emendation, "And to the broken in heart. Selah," accepts (1), disregards (2), and partly accepts (3), but adds "Selah," which is not in the Greek.

In cxli, 5, the Hebrew has, "Let the righteous smite me, a kindness; and correct me, oil to the head; let not my head refuse: for still is my prayer against their wickedness." The Greek, dividing the clauses differently, and substituting "wicked" for the first "head," has "Let the righteous correct me in mercy and reprove me; but let not the oil of the wicked anoint my head; for still and my prayer is in (or against) their approvals." The proposed emendation deserts both of these in the opening clause, "They smite the righteous, and condemn the godly"; accepts the Greek for the next clause, and the Hebrew for the final one. That is to say, the "emendation" follows the Greek in one-third of the passage, the Hebrew in another, and rejects both in the remaining third, and yet is called following "the most ancient authorities"!

Still more, it is claimed that this "restores the whole passage from absolute incoherence to a real continuity of thought" (p. 166). When it is remembered that Hebrew parallelism is often by way of antithesis rather than likeness (*see* i, 6, "The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish"), the verse so unsparingly condemned becomes an expression of the Psalmist's readiness to bear the reproach of the righteous rather than be associated with the "workers of wickedness" of *v.* 4. There is a "real continuity of thought" and no "incoherence."

Sometimes in this work assertions are made that are not quite accurate. The literal translation of xxx, 8, is not (as asserted on p. 112) "Thou . . . didst make strength to stand for my mountain." The Hebrew order is quite different and might be rendered "Thou didst establish my mountain strength."

The assertion that "רעים [Ra'im] cannot be the noun 'evils'" disregards the fact that this is the regular plural of רע [Ra'], which can have the meaning "calamity, misfortune."

“Angels (or messengers) of calamities” gives a perfectly good sense, and it is altogether unnecessary to substitute “thunder,” which is negated by the LXX *πονηρῶν* (evils).

The line, “He is gracious, and full of compassion and righteous” (cxii, 4), is said to be “ambiguous,” because it may “refer either to God or to the godly man” (p. 158). There can be no ambiguity, for the meaning is absolutely determined by the subject of the Psalm, which is one of a carefully balanced pair of acrostics. Ps. cxii sets forth the glory of God, and in it the corresponding line states explicitly “Gracious and compassionate is the LORD”: cxii deals with the happiness of the God-fearing man (*see* the opening verses of the two Psalms), and therefore the line in question can only refer to the godly man. Hence the suggestion that the line ought to read “He (God) . . . justifieth the righteous” (the word “justified” having dropped out as being thought a reduplication) is entirely out of the question, and is negated by the LXX. For the same reason (p. 162) the same verb is supposed to have been omitted from cxxix, 4. It is not needed, the sense “the LORD is righteous” being quite sufficient, and is not found in the LXX.

Then there is the unusual word *Golem* which begins cxxxix, 16, concerning which it is alleged there is “the damning fact that it is a singular noun followed by a plural verb” (p. 164). That plural verb, “they saw,” is absolutely required by “Thine eyes” which is the subject of the verb, the other word being its object. The plural verbs in the next two clauses, “were written” and “were fashioned,” are equally required by the plural “all of them.” What are these? The word objected to by him means something wrapped together, not unfolded, or (as used here for the human embryo) undeveloped. Obviously this is pictured as consisting of several parts or “members,” and it is these, “all of them” not only “bones,” which were written in the book and fashioned day by day. Also in the LXX the word used is not “*ὑπόστασις*,” but “*ἀκατέργαστον*”—unwrought, imperfect—which gives no sanction to the guess that the true reading should be “my bones.”

On p. 167 it is asserted that “Selah” is “an expression rather of triumph or of fierce indignation than of calm resignation and trust”: yet in p. 147 it is suggested that the two last lines of lxxxv, 9, ought to read, “He will speak peace to His people and to His saints; and to the broken in heart. Selah.” There is not much “triumph or fierce

indignation" about that. The two estimates of the use of "Selah" hardly seem consistent.

Actually the word is considered to be a musical term (probably marking a direction to the instrumental accompaniment), which need not interrupt the current of thought. It occurs in the middle of lv, 20, "God shall hear and answer (or afflict) them—and He is enthroned of old. Selah—those to whom there are no vicissitudes"; in lvii, 14, "He shall send from heaven, and save me, when he that would swallow me up reproacheth;—Selah—God shall send forth His mercy and truth"; and at the end of lxxiii, 33, between "O sing praises unto the LORD," and "To Him that rideth upon the heavens." It is then something of an over-statement to say that in lxxiii, 8, "The Selah occupies a very unusual position, being in the middle of an incomplete sentence" (p. 132). That may not be common, but it is not unparalleled. Nor does it follow that because it happens to come here and in lv, 8, after "wilderness," and in cxliii, 6, after "a weary land," that therefore "Selah seems to have a peculiar attraction to any word meaning wilderness" (p. 167). As the word occurs some seventy times in the Psalter it is not so very wonderful that two of these are after "wilderness" and one after a similar phrase. There is no good reason for altering it in these three passages to the "graphically" doubtful מֶלַח, which means "salty" and not "barren." That word would be inappropriate in lxxiii, 8, and not very suitable in the other two passages. In cxliii, 6, עֵיפָה means "weary" not "thirsteth," and the word "land" is separated from Selah.

We may now notice in fuller detail six passages that demand special attention.

(A) Ps. ii, 12—"Kiss the Son" (pp. 101-2).

The LXX rendering "receive instructions" is dismissed as "a mere paraphrase," and another, "in purity," adopted by Aquila, Symmachus, Jerome (text), and Rashi, is thought to be a translation "without probability." The English rendering "the Son," found also in the Talmud, Aben Ezra, and Jerome's *Commentary*, is rejected on the ground that בַּר (*Bar*) "has the meaning of 'son' only in the Syriac or Aramaic," (Phœnician might be added). Then it is suggested that the letters ב (*Beth*) and ר (*Resh*) may "mask the true reading," and "of the two letters the *resh* is the one most liable to suspicion." Yet ב is

as much like כ as ר is like ד, and there is no "graphical" reason for suspecting the latter more than the former. Still it is thought that the *resh* "stands for an original *daleth*," and that "the real word was בִּיר ('with' or 'on the hand')." This would require that an original בִּיר was written defectively בַּד, and that in turn mistaken for בַּר. But it is very doubtful that any scribe, however inattentive, would ever have omitted the medial י, for here it is no mere vowel but an integral part of the word *Yad*, "hand." It is also doubtful that the verb for "kiss" would be followed by the preposition ב, since elsewhere it takes ל, "to," even in the very passage here cited (Job xxxi, 27). As the Versions, which translated the word by "in purity," show that *Bar* (not *Bad*) was read, it will be seen that the proposed emendation, besides being improbable, deserts the evidence of the Versions as well as that of the MSS.

Still, it may be asked Why should the foreign word *Bar* be used in *v. 12*, when the ordinary Hebrew *Ben* is found in *v. 7*?

Since the word is followed by *pen*, "lest," it has been suggested elsewhere that *Bar* may have been chosen to avoid the awkward sound of *Ben pen*. There is, however, another, perhaps a stronger, reason possible. This section of the Psalm (*vs. 10-12*) is addressed to "kings and judges of the earth," clearly referring to the "kings of the earth . . . and the rulers" in *v. 2*, and these were (*v. 1*) of the nations and peoples, *i.e.* Gentiles. It is then possible that a foreign word was used intentionally in a message to foreigners, while the Hebrew word was retained in Jehovah's address to His Anointed.

(B) Ps. xxii, 17.—"They pierced" (p. 109), כֹּאֲרוּ (*Ca'aroo*).

The present Masoretic text reads כֹּאֲרִי [*Ca'arey*], "like a lion," and this has sometimes been thought a deliberate Jewish alteration to avoid the Christian interpretation. We need not go so far: it is possible that the MS. they relied on had an imperfectly formed כ which they honestly took to be י, and accordingly reproduced. Yet that leaves the clause without a verb and gives no intelligible sense.

"The Versions," it is admitted, "mainly read כֹּאֲרוּ," but it is objected that "no such verb is known to exist." Since it is allowed that there is "a verb כָּרָה (to dig or bore)," it is a little inconsistent to object to the insertion of an *aleph*, and at the same time to maintain that the "copyists always considered legitimate the addition of an *aleph*." The assertion

is somewhat sweeping, but it may be admissible that in this case the **ס** only indicates the vowel sound.

A further objection is, "The punishment of crucifixion was a Roman custom," and piercing the hands and feet would not "have been done to the Psalmist by his enemies" (p. 109). There is no reason to suppose that the Psalmist was alluding to crucifixion at all, though he was led to use a word which would apply to it. He is complaining of ill-treatment by "the company of evil-doers," and it is possible that they had inflicted injuries on hands and feet which might rightly be described as piercing.

The LXX "*ῥομφαίαν*," Vulgate "foderunt," Jerome "fixerunt," the Arabic, and the Syriac all support the reading "pierced," yet here it is suggested that the original reading was **סָבְדוּ**, "they bound." To make this possible it is alleged that "There are many instances of confusion between *caph* and *samech*, and of the consequent mutation in the consonantal order." It would be interesting to learn what instances of this confusion can be produced which are not due to the author's own conjectures.

Lastly comes the conclusion, "When graphical probability goes with strong versional evidence the result is moral certainty." Perhaps, but when the "graphical probability" is dubious, and the main "versional evidence" is against the proposed alteration, the "moral certainty" is likely to be different.

(C) Ps. lxxviii, 15.—"It snoweth in Zalmon" (pp. 133-4).

Because commentators have differed much in their explanations of this clause, it is here thought "best to treat it as having no meaning at all"—not a very logical inference. An allusion in a very ancient poem may well be obscure and hard to explain without being meaningless.

Next it is laid down that "the one guiding principle to be relied on" is to be found in the "many traces of Deborah's song" in the whole Psalm. That they are found in "this stanza in particular" does not hold good unless the "emendation" proposed is accepted. That v. 14 is an allusion to the song is generally admitted, but that "the women that publish good tidings" (v. 12) refers "primarily to Deborah and her fellow-singers" is very doubtful. Barak is the only "fellow-singer" mentioned, and there is no hint of other women. It would be much more plausible to refer the verse to Miriam "and all the



women " who went out after her (Exod. xv, 20). So also " Kings of armies did flee " (v. 13) cannot apply to the rout of Sisera's host, but would suit the victories over Sihon and Og. The dividing of spoil is only mentioned in Judges v, 30, and in v. 13 of this Psalm, so it is an exaggeration to say, " There is much in both passages about the division of spoil " (p. 133). At the very utmost the " traces of Deborah's Song " can only be made out in three verses out of thirty-six, if, indeed, there be any except in the one verse 14. It is not true that " the whole Psalm . . . shows many traces of Deborah's song," and therefore, " the one guiding principle " is without foundation, nor does there seem any particular reason for dragging a mention of Sisera's mother into a Psalm chiefly concerned with the achievements of the Almighty.

How can that intrusion be made out ? It has to be assumed that ברה [bah] of the previous clause really belongs to this ; that it is a shortened form of יבב [yabab], the verb used in Judges v, 28 ; that the initial ך of the next word ought to be ה ; that ג and ל have changed places ; and that the first two letters of the final word have been altogether misread. What a complicated case of " corruption " !

Out of all this tangle of supposed errors is evolved the sentence, " The queen-mother cried out in the palace." That has no kind of connection with the preceding, " When the Almighty scattered kings " : kings were not scattered in Sisera's defeat ; there is no authority for calling his mother a queen of any kind ; Shegal is rather queen-consort than queen-mother ; and there is no hint that she was in a palace.

As the proposed " emendation " does not cohere with what goes before, so also it has no connection with " A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan " which follows. On the other hand, the rejected " It snoweth in Zalmon " fits well with both. An armour-strewn battlefield when kings were scattered, perhaps in some of David's victories, might well be compared with the unusual gleam of snow on dark-hued Zalmon, and the mention of that hill might well suggest the thought of mighty mountain ranges looking askance at the comparatively low mountain which God desired.

The Hebrew reading, supported too by the LXX, is quite in place : the reading offered in its place requires a good deal of doubtful correction, and is out of keeping with the context on either side.

(D) Ps. lxxiii, 10 (pp. 137-8).

The reading "Therefore his people return thither" is also called "meaningless," and is said to be "excellently emended" into "Therefore are they satisfied with bread." How that emendation is arrived at is not explained, beyond a remark that "לֶחֶם [lechem] (bread) seems peculiarly open to mistake." That points to הָלֹם [halom] "thither," being a perversion of that word. Also it would have to be assumed that יָשׁוּב עִמּוֹ, "his people return," has displaced יִשְׁבְּעוּ, "they are satisfied," a double error which hardly seems likely. When this "emendation" has been made it becomes possible to refer what follows to "the wicked" of v. 3. Then arises a further objection: "the questions asked in the next verse are hardly likely to be asked by the ungodly." Therefore it is suggested that v. 11 should begin "and I said" instead of "and they say." In favour of this, three considerations (p. 138) are mentioned: (1) The change was "the work of some scrupulous scribe who was shocked at such words being attributed to a pious Israelite"; a deliberate alteration, therefore, and no accidental misreading; (2) "The divine name 'the Most High' could hardly have been used by the ungodly"; (3) "The LXX actually reads the words 'and I said'" before v. 13. Yet (1) assumes that the "scrupulous" scribe, instead of faithfully copying the text before him, was unscrupulous enough to substitute what he thought ought to have been written, and that all existing MSS. have been derived from his falsification; (2) forgets that the title *El-Elyon* is first found on the lips of a Canaanite, Melchizedek; (3) supposes that the LXX translator had before him "two sets of MSS.," one giving the original and the other the later reading, and was stupid enough to put the wrong word in the right place, and the right one in a wrong place two verses further on!

All this trouble arises from assuming that the previous "emendation" is correct. Let us see how it will read if that line is left undisturbed. "Therefore (because the wicked are so prosperous) His People (former believers, λαός μου, not the ungodly) return (turn back) hither (to the position of the ungodly) . . . and they (these misled people) say, 'How doth God know?'" There is no need to substitute "I said," or to imagine an erring scribe and a foolish translator. The "and I said" in the Greek of v. 13 is simply the insertion of a translator who wished to make it clear that the Psalmist is now returning to his own perplexity in v. 2.

(E) Ps. lxxvii, 7 and 12 (p. 141-3).

Two separate sections of the book deal with *vv.* 7 and 12 of this Psalm. They affect (a) one word in *v.* 7; (b) two words in *v.* 12. Later on the two results are compared.

(a) In *v.* 7, נְגִינָתִי [neginathi], "my song," is considered "difficult and I think meaningless." As the Greek has ἐμελέτησα, it is proposed to substitute וְהִגִּיתִי [v'hagithi], "and I meditate." This, it is said, "merely involves the dropping of an ׀ before ׀," but it really involves adding a ׀ ["and"], changing ׀ into ה, and dropping the second ׀ before ת. Curiously enough, the LXX reading ἀλλοίωσις in *v.* 11 is rejected, so the Greek is to be right in one verse and wrong four verses later, a strange way to value its evidence!

(b) In *v.* 12 it is thought that "what is wrong must be sought in the line 'I will remember the deeds of the LORD,'" and it is proposed that מַעֲלֵלֵי יְהוָה [m'a'leley Yah], "the deeds of the LORD" ought to be עִמִּי לַיְלָה [immi lailah], rendered "within me by night" (but literally "with me night") (p. 142).

When "I meditated" has been introduced into *v.* 7 it resembles *v.* 13, where the word actually occurs; and when "within me by night" is introduced into *v.* 12, that resembles "in the night" of *v.* 7. So, certainly, "as restored" the two passages closely resemble one another. It would be strange if they did not. Then it is specially noticed that in the two passages "the same three verbs, 'remember,' 'meditate,' 'muse,' occur . . . in the same order, thus making a free refrain" (p. 143). The idea of a "free refrain" will bear examination.

In this Psalm, *Selah* occurs thrice, at the end of *vv.* 4, 10, and 16. Here are two groups of six verses each, but as the first *Selah* comes at the third verse of the actual Psalm (omitting the heading), these really form five stanzas of three verses each.

The close of the first stanza, "I remember God, and am disquieted: I muse and my spirit fainteth" (*v.* 4), is echoed at the close of the next, "I remember my song in the night: with my heart I muse, and my spirit searcheth" (*v.* 7). The next stanza (*vv.* 8-10) takes up the thought of the "song in the night," expressing the mournful burden of it, "Will my Lord cast off for ever . . . Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" The bare memory of God only intensifies the sense of being forgotten and deserted, and that is emphasized by *Selah*. Then follows the

corrective (*vv.* 11–13). Not “the years of ancient times” (*v.* 5), but “the years of the right hand of the Most High.” It is the *deeds of Jehovah*, His wonders, His works, His achievements, that are to be remembered, meditated, mused upon, if courage and confidence are to be restored. These, then, culminating in the redemption of His People (*v.* 16) form the subject of the fifth stanza, and that, too, is emphasized by *Selah*. The introduction of “meditate” in *v.* 13 serves to strengthen the “remember” and “muse” of *vv.* 4 and 7, a delicate touch wholly obscured by thrusting another “meditate” into *v.* 7.

The received text gives a finer sequence of thought than the “restored.”

(F) Ps. cxviii, 27.—“Bind the sacrifice with cords” (pp. 159, 160).

Here the LXX, though interpreting the words differently, shows clearly that the translators had much the same Hebrew text as we have. Yet, as so often, the evidence of this early Version is simply disregarded. Instead it is proposed that words meaning “Fill the bowl with measures (of wine)” were originally written. This requires that מלאו has been turned into אסרו, and חג הגביע בתם into חג בעבתים. How far so radical a change can be deemed “graphically probable” is dubious. In xxii, 17, בארו is thought to be a mistake for אסרו, which here is taken to be a mistake for מלאו. How can it be that the same word could be confused with two words so utterly different? No wonder the “emendation” is said to be “avowedly speculative”! (p. 160).

Yet the “passage is evidently corrupt” and “the existing text is desperate.”

Three reasons are given: (1) “*Chag* properly means a festival or pilgrimage, not a sacrifice.” Yet two independent writers (Exod. xxiii, 18; Mal. ii, 3) appear to think it can be used of a sacrifice. (2) “Grammatically, the preposition ב (to) is never found with the verb translated ‘bind.’” It is actually so used in Ezek. iii, 25, “They shall lay bands (the same word as ‘cords’) upon thee, and bind thee with them.” (3) “The horns of the altar were never used for such a purpose.” How is that known? The most that can be said is that Scripture does not mention it. Moreover, the Hebrew text does not speak of binding to the horns, but ער “up to, as far as.” According to Lev. i, 5, 11, the one who brought an animal to be sacrificed was to slay it. Presumably it would have to be tethered to something

and when there were many victims some might have to be brought up close to the horns of the altar.

If the objections were really sound then the scribes responsible for the present text were not only careless and guilty of a gross misreading; they must have been ignorant of their own language, using a word in a wrong sense and a wrong preposition, and ignorant of the usual sacrificial procedure. What a pity they did not have Dr. Scott to enlighten them!

There are also other objections to the proposed reading. It is laid down that "The ordinary use of the horns of the altar was for pouring libations." But in Lev. iv, 25, 30, upon the horns of the altar the blood of the victim (not a libation of wine) was to be put with the finger (not poured from a bowl). Then *Gebhi'a*, used of Joseph's silver cup (Gen. lxiv, 2, 5), of the cups of the lamp (Exod. xxv, 31), and of bowls of wine (Jer. xxxv, 5), would not have been of any great size. The "bowl" of the emendation must have been huge if it could contain "baths" (measures), for, according to Josephus, the bath held some  $8\frac{1}{2}$  gallons. Also the usual quantity of the drink-offering was a quarter of a hin, and a hin was one-sixth of a bath.

Perhaps the received text is not so "desperate" as the "avowedly speculative" emendation.

Dr. Scott is quite confident about the merits of his emendations. He describes them as merely "small changes," a "simple redivision," "the slightest possible interference with the text," and even says "the alteration is absolutely microscopic." He eulogizes them as giving "an added force to the sentence, and an added beauty to the comparison," or "an admirable meaning to the whole verse"; or says, "both the grammar and meaning are improved"; "renders the whole passage consecutive and tremendously powerful"; "improves both sense and metre," etc. He is equally sure that the passages he discusses are really corrupt, calling them "meaningless," "peculiarly weak," "incredibly weak," "untranslatable," or "evidently corrupt." Yet there may be some doubt about it.

At the outset the large amount of corruption alleged—over 130 instances in the Psalter alone, four instances in eighteen verses of Ps. x, and five in twenty-three verses of Ps. lxxiv—raises a suspicion that the list may have been unnecessarily swollen.

There are passages in which difficulty has been found where the ordinary reader would find none. A few specimens out of a good many must suffice :—

(1) In cxix, 91, “for all are Thy servants” follows quite naturally on “according to Thine ordinances they stand (or, are established) this day,” which in its turn refers to v. 90, “Thou hast founded the earth and it standeth.” The plurals in both clauses of v. 91 clearly belong to the earth and all that therein is. It is futile to object that the plural “servants” occurs nowhere else in this Psalm : elsewhere it is not needed, and here it is. It is equally futile to object that the transition to the next verse is “abrupt,” for abrupt transitions are not uncommon in acrostic psalms.

(2) The word translated “unless” at the beginning of xxvii, 13, is marked for omission in the Masoretic text, and is actually omitted in the LXX. Without it the verse reads, “I believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living,” which leads up to v. 14, “Wait on the LORD.” With the omission all difficulty vanishes.

(3) In xlii, 5, “These things I remember” has to do with what follows, “How I went with the throng.” The word translated “remember,” really means “bear in mind.” God had in no way forgotten when He “remembered Noah” (Gen. viii, 1).

(4) In cxxvii, 2, “So He giveth His beloved sleep” contrasts sharply with the restlessness of those who rise up early and late take rest. Substitute “treasure” for “sleep” and that contrast is lost.

When corruption is alleged it is sometimes necessary to see what the Hebrew actually says, for the English renderings may be faulty or inadequate. Again, a few instances must suffice :—

(1) The opening words of xxxvi, 2, need a little explanation. *Naom*, like the cognate Arabic word, means “affirmation” not “revelation” or “oracle.” *Pesha'a* means wilful “wrong-doing,” as distinguished from *Chataah*, “error,” and *Avon*, “innate sinfulness.” The verse then reads, “Wilful wrong-doing affirms to the wicked within his\* heart, (There is)

---

\* As afterwards pointed out by the Chairman, the true reading is “within *my* (not *his*) heart.” The verse then should read “The affirmation of wilful wrong-doing (as regards the wicked) within my heart is There is no fear of God before his eyes.”

no fear of God before his eyes." There is no "personification of transgression": the act of deliberate defying of God's law is in itself the declaration that "there is no fear of God." To the question, "Can anyone possibly believe that this verse is otherwise than corrupt?" the answer is, the startling, arresting form of the utterance is itself a mark of originality. To substitute "Transgression is sweet to the wicked," turns it into a commonplace, and robs it of all vigour.

(2) Ps. lvi, 5, "In God will I praise His Word" (of promise), repeated with double emphasis in v. 11, leads up to "in God I have trusted, I fear not: what can flesh do to me?" (cf. v. 12). Praise for God's faithfulness to His Word is just what is wanted, not prayer. "I wait for His word," would be incongruous.

(3) "The sin of their mouth, the word of their lips, yet they shall be taken in their pride" (lix, 13), may sound incoherent in English, but in Hebrew the first clause may be taken as exclamations, "The sin of their mouth! the word of their lips!" implying how bold, how overweening are they, "yet shall they be taken in their pride." As both "sin" and "word" are in the construct state, preceding "mouth" and "lips," the proposed "Their mouth is sin, their lips are a pestilence," is grammatically impossible.

(4) In "a lip (word) I knew not, I heard" (lxxxix, 6), the "I heard" refers, like the subsequent verbs, to God. It has been admirably suggested that "I knew not" is an allusion to Pharaoh's arrogant "I know not Jehovah" (Exod. v, 2).

It must always be borne in mind that difficulty in translating need not mean corruption of text. In dealing with poetry, especially ancient poetry and Oriental ancient poetry to boot, we must expect to find some obscurity and some turns of thought unlike our own.

Much stress is laid on "parallelism" in this work. It is said to be "weak," "imperfect," "defective," "deplorable," or even totally absent in the received text, while it is claimed that the emendations give "an excellent," "a better," or "a real" parallelism. That feature undoubtedly figures largely in Hebrew poetry, but not always. Absence of parallelism is no proof of corruption.

(1) "Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up Thine hand, forget not the poor" (x, 12) is accused of "a total absence of

parallelism." Is it any worse than "Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God; for Thou hast smitten all mine enemies" (iii, 8).

(2) The first line of xxx, 6, "gives an imperfect parallelism." The Hebrew may fairly be translated, "a moment in His anger, a life in His favour," which balances well with the next line, "In the evening lodgeth weeping, and at morning rejoicing." "Life" makes a better parallel to "a moment" than the suggested "mercy" would be.

(3) In lxxiv, 3, "the parallelism of the couplet is deplorable," and "Now at length restore all" is put forward in place of "Lift up Thy feet unto." If "lift up Thy footsteps" be taken to mean "hasten," then "Haste unto the desolations of old" becomes quite as good a parallel to "All the evil the enemy hath wrought in the sanctuary" as "Now at length restore all the ancient desolations."

There is a development of parallelism which may be called alternate or introverted. When there are two pairs of clauses, a, b : c, d, they are sometimes arranged a, c : b, d, forming a parallelism of whole verses instead of clauses. An excellent example of this is found in xl :—

- |                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| v. 7. Sacrifice and offering  | My ears hast Thou opened. |
| Thou hast no delight          |                           |
| in :                          |                           |
| v. 8. Burnt-offering and sin- | Then said I, Lo, I come.  |
| offering Thou hast            |                           |
| not required :                |                           |

To rearrange and bring together the corresponding clauses is far less effective.

A similar rearrangement in lxxv, 10, also spoils the double parallel :—

- |                             |                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Thou visitest the earth,    | Thou greatly enrichest it ; |
| and waterest it,            |                             |
| The river of God is full of | Thou providest them corn—   |
| water ;                     |                             |

In this case it is the last two clauses which it is proposed to transpose.

"Similar misplacements" are alleged (p. 121) in lxxx, 16 ; cvii, 40 ; and cxvi, 14 (? cxvi, 2). Only the second of these is such a "misplacement." When then it is added "Thus mis-



placement is frequent," it only means that our author has found three or four passages in which he thinks (perhaps not very correctly) that lines or clauses have been misplaced.

There are two instances of later Psalms reproducing a portion of earlier ones. Ps. lxxi, 1-3, largely agrees with xxxi, 1-3, and it is taken for granted that the former is a quotation of the latter, only, by a complication of errors, lxxi, 3, has been badly corrupted. Actually lxxi, 2, is not identical with the corresponding clauses of xxxi, showing that the passage is an adaptation not a precise quotation. In the other instance it is conjectured that in cxv a line has been dropped out from *v.* 7 which is supplied in the corresponding cxxxv, 17. A comparison of the whole of the two passages shows that cxxxv, 15, 16, are all but identical with cxv, 4, 5; the first half of cxxxv, 17, is only slightly varied from cxv, 6; the second half, containing some words that are the same, conveys a somewhat different meaning from that in cxv. Ps. cxxxv, 18, is the same as cxv, 8. Ps. cxv, 7, does not appear at all in the other Psalm. All that has happened is that the later Psalmist, quoting freely (perhaps from memory) has left out one of the five verses, which he did not wish to reproduce.

There are two instances in the Psalms of incomplete sentences ("He that teacheth man knowledge . . .," xciv, 10, and "Let my right hand forget . . .," cxxxvii, 5), and in both cases it is presumed that a word has dropped out. Now in Exod. xxxii, 32, there is a remarkable instance of a broken sentence, "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin . . .," where clearly the reader is left to supply the wanted word from the context. Possibly, too, the broken sentences, "Cain said unto Abel . . ." (Gen. iv, 8), and "Moses went down unto the people and said unto them . . ." (Exod. xix, 25), are to be explained in the same way. The sentences then in the Psalms may also have been left unfinished intentionally.

There are several instances of words being denounced as "corrupt" because they seldom or never occur elsewhere. If every rare word or peculiar construction is to be suspect the whole Bible will need a good deal of "emending." "The sides of the north" (xlviii, 3) is pronounced corrupt, and "a reference to the topography of Jerusalem . . . is quite unworthy" (p. 122). A little better acquaintance with the topography might have obviated this remark, for the very finest possible view of "the city of the great King" is that obtained from the northerly height of Scopus."

It is to be feared that a desire to find corruption leads to finding it where it need not be suspected. Those who form a theory are often tempted to look for more and more evidence to support it.

Dr. Melville Scott's work undoubtedly shows great industry, a considerable knowledge of Hebrew, and much plausible ingenuity. Yet his methods are not always unimpeachable nor his conclusions unassailable, and at times his ingenuity seems a little over-ingenious.

#### DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN (Dr. Thirtle) said : It gives me pleasure to preside on this occasion, if only to recognize—as I do with all sincerity—the good work of the learned lecturer upon that portion of the Holy Scriptures which has commanded my special attention during a long period of years. I am not unfamiliar with the work of Dr. Melville Scott, work in which, with other features, there has been combined a stimulating scholarship and great diligence. I examined his volume when it first appeared, and formed the judgment which I still hold, that in this case the tendency of the annotator has been to lose his way in the work of textual emendation. When coming up against difficulties, whether of words or phrases, whether as to sense or application, it is, as we well know, easy to suggest “corruption of the text.” Of such procedure, however, after long years of experience and close observation I have a profound distrust ; and accordingly I find myself in large sympathy with our lecturer this afternoon, whose past work and latest endeavour have commanded my warm appreciation.

I need not, on this occasion, discuss the many points of criticism and interpretation that have been introduced ; rather, I will confine myself to two distinct matters, in which, as I trust, some interest may be excited. To begin with, I call attention to the opening verse of Ps. xxxvi (p. 180). In showing a failure to understand this passage, Dr. Melville Scott was in large company ; in fact, the very general failure, and that from an early date, to reach the correct point of the Psalmist, has led to a misreading of the text, which appears in certain Hebrew manuscripts, in some early versions, and, moreover, has had the support of a host of commentators. For myself, I would suspect at the very outset

any such thought as that an oracle from God or a sacred revelation should arise in the heart of a wicked man. On the contrary, it is in the heart of the man of God, in this case within the heart of the Psalmist—note the words “within my heart”—that there arises, and is given forth, a solemn declaration as to the way of the wicked, with an explanation of his transgression.

The Authorised Version of the passage before us reads: “The transgression of the wicked saith within *my* heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.” The superficial reader may see nothing distinctive between “my heart” and “his heart,” but there is a profound difference. The words stand clear, however, and they are “within my heart”; that is, not within the heart of the wicked transgressor, but rather within the heart of the God-fearing Psalmist. Is this a *difficult* reading? Then, most assuredly, it is to be preferred on that very account, for it is a well-known principle of textual criticism that the difficult is to be accepted in preference to the simple and commonplace. What, then, is the message of the “transgression of the wicked”? What does it say to the Psalmist? Just this—that “there is no fear of God before his eyes”; in other words, absence of the fear of God explains a man’s wanton sinfulness. Accordingly, the Psalmist goes on to speak of such men as devoted to sinful courses in an all-round sense, being wicked in word and deed (*see* the verses which follow in the Psalm).

Need I remind you that, in the Hebrew idiom, also in Semitic languages generally—the *heart* has its place, not only among bodily organs, but in well-defined relations to mental and moral activities. Accordingly, to “say in one’s heart” is to purpose, or plan; to “speak to a man’s heart” is to assure him, or impress him; and, further, for a solemn affirmation to “reach a man’s heart,” to find lodgment therein, is for such a man to *become convinced*. The heart may plan, may be assured, may become convinced. Surely the idiom is one that needs no apology; and the explanation requires no elaboration. Now look at our passage, with the figure of speech resolved into a term of psychological significance. The words of the Common Versions are adequate for our purpose—“The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart”—the transgression of the wicked, his sinful course of life, *convinceth me*—“that there is no fear of God before his eyes;”

he does not tremble in the presence of God, no terrors arise in his mind from a consciousness of God.

In spite of what commentators have said, we do not hesitate to conclude that the passage is one which admits of no thought of illumination coming to the heart of the wicked man himself. "To say within the heart" is to *convince*; and in the passage before us the saying is within the heart of the Psalmist, and not the heart of the wicked man. Toward the close of the Psalm we read of the divine loving-kindness being continued for those who *know God*, and His righteousness for *the upright in heart*. And it is to the hearts and minds of such, and only such, that light is given as to "the transgression of the wicked." Reading our passage with the figure of speech duly resolved we find no reason to alter the Massoretic reading of the Hebrew text, which is so clearly "*my heart*"; no reason to accept in its place such an impossible change as "*his heart*." It is for us to appreciate the theology of the Psalter: though the Psalmist might be oppressed with his conviction regarding the wicked and his transgression, he had no doubtful thought in regard to the case of the enemies of God: he speaks of them (*v.* 12) as "fallen": "they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise." It has seemed to me of urgent importance to make a special point of explaining a passage that has been very commonly misinterpreted.

Now I proceed with a few remarks on a subject that is widely different, but nevertheless may not be overlooked. The word "Selah," dealt with on p. 172, is beyond question an old acquaintance, and but little understood. I do not hesitate to say that the formula has suffered much at the hands of expositors, though, as I freely admit, until quite recent times, there have been few facts upon which to form a judgment as to the meaning and use of the word. There is no need now to rehearse explanations that have been advanced, from the familiar "Pause" to the adventurous imperative "Think of that!" Quite generally these explanations, made more or less at random, have been employed to suggest emphasis on the part of the writers of the Psalter; and on occasion they have been held to mark some kind of direction to an instrumental accompaniment. It is difficult to make a case for the use of the word, now in connection with the poem, and again in connection with the music; surely there must be unity in

some direction. I speak with confidence, however, when I say that, on a survey of the Psalter as a whole, no one of these suggestions can be declared to "work."

Accordingly, I pass on an explanation which was committed to me many years ago, by a distinguished Orientalist, the late Colonel Conder (shortly before his death in 1910). Calling my attention to the cross-lines found on the cuneiform tablets—lines which, while dividing up a poem served to preserve alignment in the script, he maintained that by this word "Selah," proof is furnished that the older Psalms were, in the first place, inscribed on clay tablets. Let it be remembered that in the Assyrian inscriptions one meets such cross-lines at intervals, and not always at regular intervals; and let it be clear that, in the cuneiform inscriptions, these lines have no bearing on the substance of the poems themselves. In the light of these facts, Colonel Conder held that early copyists of the Psalms, on encountering the cross-line, marked its occurrence by inserting the word "Selah," "a pause," for with them no doubt the line expressed a pause, or rest—not a pause for the work of the poet, but a pause in the process of copying. As showing to what extent the word "Selah" has stood outside the text, it may be added that, in some versions of the Bible, including that of Coverdale in English (1535), the word is given indifferently at the opening or the close of sections, a fact which seems to suggest a feature that is mechanical rather than logical.

In the light of this observation by Colonel Conder, I suggest that "Selah" indicates the place where a cross-line occurred in the poems as originally inscribed, and that it had no mystical purpose—certainly no relation to versification or musical performance. From the mere presence of the word, however, I reach a conclusion which is not without importance, namely, that whatever defects may have been attached to the work of copying, we must allow that the scribes were conscientious to a fault, inasmuch as, in the execution of their labours, they passed on with fidelity, by the use of the word "Selah," the familiar cross-line, although in their judgment such line made no contribution to an understanding of the text or its use in temple worship. In this light, may I add, we may possibly find an explanation of the LXX translation of the word "Selah." That translation is *Diapsalma*, which means "across a psalm," that is to say, a cross-line, and no more! The cross-line was found

by the Hebrew copyists, and they indicated it with "Selah"; and the Greek version tells us no more regarding the much-discussed word. What is more, the Greek lexicographers are unable to throw any light upon the formula as found in the LXX.

Feeling sure that some of my hearers will appreciate the points which I have developed, I forbear further remarks, and have great pleasure in proposing a vote of thanks to our esteemed lecturer.

Lieut.-Col. SKINNER, thanking the lecturer, asked if he would kindly give an opinion as to whether the phrase "To-day if ye will hear his voice," which occurs in Psalm xlv and is quoted in Heb. iv, might be regarded as a "broken sentence" akin to that of Moses, "Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin . . .," or if it should be rendered as in the R.V., "To-day, O that ye would hear his voice" ?

Referring to the "Selah," while welcoming Colonel Conder's explanation, which he thought probably the true one, he ventured to suggest another simple one, that had always appealed to him personally, viz., that, the Psalms being set to music, the "Selah" merely indicated the gap or pause between verses or stanzas which was to be filled by the instrumental refrain; the practice being common in southern and eastern countries for musicians to "carry on" with their guitars or zithers while soloists paused to regain their breath or improvise fresh verses. Would the lecturer kindly say if such explanation could be held to fit the facts ?

Mr. PERCY O. RUOFF said: This learned paper, with its many instances cited from Dr. Melville Scott's work of emendations in the Psalms, many of which are supposed "to restore the whole passage from absolute incoherence to a real continuity of thought," adds to the already long list of Bible critics who do not hesitate to correct the text rather than accurately translate it. This method should always be resisted, as it certainly is not scientific, and is a violation of the principles of evidence. It is not new, for in Jerome's Vulgate there are instances of corrections, which are not translations. Mr. Finn has ably dealt with the bizarre treatment of a number of Psalms by Dr. Scott, and has riddled his contentions for the emendations he proposes. The paper also shows how con-

tinuous is the need for constant vigilance lest those who claim authority in Biblical emendations should seek to saddle on the public conclusions which have no really valid or scientific basis.

On p. 183, Mr. Finn says, referring to Dr. Scott's book: "There are several instances of words being denounced as 'corrupt' because they seldom or never occur elsewhere." This principle applied to Biblical writings, having regard to their unique claim as the oracles of God, is dangerous and unsound as criticism, because many instances can be quoted of single and isolated references to a matter in words not found elsewhere which have never been "denounced as corrupt." If this principle is adopted in some cases, it ought to be applied in all cases.

Mr. WILLIAM C. EDWARDS said: The learned paper to which we have just listened is quite beyond my powers of criticism. I should like our worthy Secretary to send a copy to Dr. Scott, and learn in detail what he has to say in reply to *each* of the points raised. Many of the critics seldom get properly criticised; it would appear that they read little but the praises of fellow-critics. I should like to refer to the "broken sentence" of Exodus xxxii, 32. This verse has seemed to me one of the many and convincing proofs of verbal inspiration. The prayer of the man of God is here *verbatim*, just what Moses said. Have you never had the experience? We make half a request, and stop almost in the middle of the prayer, for we cannot finish the sentence. Moses prayed, or almost gasped out, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold, yet now if Thou wilt forgive their sin . . .," then he hesitates, the agitation of his mind is too great, the request too much, he cannot believe that they can be forgiven. There must be punishment. Then he adds, "and if not," that is to say, if they are to be destroyed, as they *must* be, and deserve to be, I cannot survive it, I cannot bear it, in time or eternity—then I must go *with* them in punishment—"blot me I pray Thee out of Thy book." How absolutely, how wonderfully—how psychologically exact! One seems to be at the side of that man of God, hearing his groans and beholding his agonies and tears. It is only comparable to that of the Eternal Son of God in the garden called Gethsemane.

## LECTURER'S REPLY.

Rev. A. H. FINN, after thanking the Chairman for his kindly appreciation of the paper, remarked about the word "Selah." I greatly doubt that the Hebrew of the Old Testament was in any way affected by cuneiform. If Colonel Conder's explanation of the word, as indicating the cross-line of alignment (found in cuneiform inscriptions) were correct, one would expect that it would occur frequently in most of the Psalms of any length. Actually, it only occurs seventy times in the whole Psalter.

As to Colonel Skinner's suggestion, that it marks where one singer leaves off, that would not account for its being found in the middle of a sentence.

In the sentences, "if Thou wilt forgive their sin—" (Exod. xxxii, 32), and "To-day if ye will hear His voice" (Ps. xcv, 7), the Hebrew word is "Im," which simply means "if." Yet that may suggest an unuttered desire in the mind of the speaker such as "would that!".