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LINES OF DEFENCE OF THE BIBLICAL REVELATION.

I. The Bible of the Gentiles.

The Old Testament is the treasure of the Israelites, but other races have utilized it more than they. The same talent which committed to the Jews produced little, having been committed to the nations of Europe and Asia has produced much. Gentiles have taught the Jews to translate their Bible, to perpetuate its pronunciation, to comment on its matter and language, and to codify its precepts; if the Gentiles would have had no Bible save for the Jews, the Jews but for the Gentiles would have had no literature besides. By communicating their treasure to the world, the Israelites have thus gained more than if they had succeeded in keeping it to themselves.

The first translation of the Bible into another language is associated with the name of Ptolemy Philadelphus, whose reign lasted from 285 to 247 B.C. The LXX. translation is stated by both Greek and Hebrew writers to have been executed by his order; the ancient Calendar of the Synagogue[1] commemorated the undertaking by a fast-day; whereas, if we may believe Josephus, King Ptolemy himself celebrated it by a feast-day. Let us endeavour to get some idea of the occasion which led to the introduction of Jewish literature into the Hellene world.

Of the poets who flattered Ptolemy Philadelphus the idyllist Theocritus has always enjoyed a large share of popularity. This writer's Greek is frequently of a sort which makes it difficult to believe that Greek was his native language;[2] and the information which we possess

[1] *Feasts of the Jews*, No. 13. (To be published this year.)

[2] The native language of Theocritus must have been Hebrew or Syriac, for he cannot distinguish between *daughter-in-law* and *bride*, just as the LXX. cannot; xviii. 15, τεὰ νυὸς ἅδε could only mean "This is thy daughter-in-

concerning his birth and domestic history seems mainly to be based on statements of his own, not all of which are intended to be serious. Several of his Idylls, however, can be accurately dated, whence he is a valuable witness. In Idyll xvi., which is of the year 270 B.C., or thereabout, he observes (line 40) that certain princes had got no good out of their wealth "when once they had *emptied out* their sweet soul into the broad raft of the grim old man (Charon)." To "empty out"[1] one's soul is, of course, incorrect and absurd Greek, but a very tolerable Hebraism for "to spill" or "to pour out"; since the old Semitic verb[2] which means "to shed" or "to pour," is in Hebrew confused with a word meaning "empty," whence the verb gets the double sense. We can, moreover, trace this Hebraism to its source. That is the third verse of the Song of Solomon, where the LXX. has "Thy name is like ointment emptied out" (with the same compound verb as is here employed by Theocritus) for "poured out."[3] Now identity of mistake is regarded as important evidence in law when questions of infringement of copyright are discussed. We see that Theocritus has mistaken the sense of this Greek verb in the same way in which the LXX. translator of the Song of Solomon has mistaken it; but the LXX. translator's mistake is due to the fact that he is translating from Hebrew, which is not the case with Theocritus. Unless, therefore, Theocritus be himself the translator of the Song of Solomon, there is a strong presumption that in Idyll xvi. 40 he was misled by

law"; and it is even doubtful whether xv. 77 would be tolerable, though doubtless "*the* daughter-in-law" could be said in lieu of "the bride." xviii. 49 contains a curious mistake: "Letters shall be written in bark, that the passer-by may read in Doric, 'Reverence me,' etc.," where clearly the words in Doric should be those of the inscription; they are not in Doric, but the Doric verb for *to read* is used! The mistakes in xxii. 2, xv. 129, and xxvi. 29, also betray the foreigner.

[1] ἐκκενοῦν. The mythology seems erroneous.

[2] Arabic *harāḳa*: used of tears in the earliest Arabic we have. [3] תורק.

the usage of the LXX. Song of Solomon; whence we infer that the LXX. Song of Solomon is earlier than 270 B.C. If we find in Theocritus further traces of the influence of the Song of Solomon, this presumption will rise into a certainty.

The most striking of these are to be found in Idyll xviii., the Epithalamium to Helen, a performance which, both from the point of view of language and of taste, contains much that is objectionable. In line 30 Helen is compared (among other things) to a *Thessalian mare in a chariot.* That such a comparison is extraordinary in a Greek poet must strike every one;[1] It struck Vérgil, who, though he imitates some of this passage (Ecl. v. 32–4), omits the mare in the chariot. Hence Theocritus must have got it from some non-Greek source; and this is clearly the Song of Solomon, almost at the commencement of which we read (i. 9), "To my *mare* in the *chariots* of Pharaoh do I compare thee, my kinswoman." The word Thessalian is got from an oracle in which it is stated that the best horses are from Thessaly, just as the best women are from Lacedæmon; but the idea of the mare being the pride of the chariot, just as Helen is the pride of the Lacedæmonian women, is from Solomon.

Two comparisons that are more in accordance with Greek taste occur at the commencement of the paragraph: "The rising dawn gives a glimpse of its fair face: the lady moon at night." The word *moon* is introduced by conjecture, but the scholar who introduced it does not seem to have been thinking of the Song of Solomon. These two comparisons are found in the Song in the same order (vi. 9); 'Who is this that peereth forth like the dawn, fair as the moon?"

The theory that *swarthiness produced by sunburning* need

[1] Alcman, in Bergk's *Lyrici Græci*, iii. 39, compares a beauty to a horse among *cattle.*

not be regarded as disfiguring a woman is the subject of some pretty verses in Idyll x. 26–29. A distinguished German commentator compared the Greek "popular song" (as he termed it) "I am swarthy, yet fair." This "popular song" is from the Song of Solomon (i. 5), where it is further explained that the swarthiness is, as in the case of the girl in Theocritus, produced by sunburning.

The picture of foxes munching grapes is one that took Theocritus' fancy, and is found twice in his Idylls (i. 47, v. 112). It seems to be drawn from the Song of Solomon (ii. 15), "Seize for us the little foxes that spoil the vines."

The greater number of the Idylls show much prettiness and wit, but little originality; yet their author is the *founder of a style*—Bucolic Poetry. That Theocritus was the first Bucolic or Pastoral poet is attested by Vergil (Ecl. vi. 1), an excellent authority; and the silence of the Poetics of Aristotle, which was composed but little before the time of Theocritus, bears out Vergil's statement. That this style, in which highly artificial performances are put in the mouths of shepherds and cowherds, should have originated in Greece would be surprising; for the persons who followed those callings were ordinarily slaves, or humble hirelings, whom the classical writers treat with little respect. But from the time of Theocritus their profession becomes associated with the poetic art. The shepherd's clothes are donned by Vergil, Spenser and Milton. The existence of the LXX. translation of the Song of Solomon gives us the explanation of this fact. The Song of Solomon is a Pastoral Poem, but *its pictures are true to nature.* The father of the writer, himself both a king and a poet, had kept sheep. The combination of the court life with country life, which in Theocritus seems so unnatural, was perfectly natural in pre-exilic Palestine. Hence the rich descriptions of the country (ii. 12) beside the glowing descriptions of the king's wealth (iii. 10). Theocritus can match both (Idylls

vii. and xv.), but it may be doubted whether he could have found any Greek model for either.

There is, if I mistake not, a certain trace of another Biblical book in the Idylls of Theocritus. In Idyll xxiv. ("the little Heracles") two verses (86–7) are introduced into an oracle, which are apparently unconnected with their context: "There shall be a day when the ravening wolf shall refrain from harming the fawn, though he see her in her lair." These lines remind us of Isaiah xi. 6, "And the wolf shall feed with the lamb." But what makes it practically certain that the verses are modelled on Isaiah is that the preceding line in Theocritus runs, "Who sent these burrowing monsters (*i.e.* serpents) to harm the babe." Now since, in Isaiah xi., the verse quoted is almost immediately followed by "and the little child shall put its hand on the holes of asps," the connexion in thought becomes intelligible, if we suppose Theocritus to have had the passage of Isaiah either before him or in his mind. For the subject of Idyll xxiv. is "serpents attacking the infant Heracles." The epithet "burrowing" or "living in holes," which he applies to the serpents, is surely suggested by the verse in Isaiah also. Several editors, indeed, regard verses 86 and 87 as interpolated; but this cannot be, since Vergil knew them and imitated them in his Messianic fourth Eclogue.

Since, then, Idyll xxiv. implies that the LXX. translation of Isaiah already existed, it is worth while trying to fix the date of Idyll xxiv. Idyll xvii. was composed before 265 B.C., because the author there glorifies Cos in a way which would have been impossible *after* the defeat sustained by Ptolemy off Cos in that year. But in Idyll xvii. Theocritus speaks of his Praises of the Demigods as well known. One of these may well be Idyll xxii., which deals with Castor and Pollux. The others must be some of the Heraclean collection, *i.e.* xiii., xxiv. and xxv.

But xiii. is later than xxiv., for at the commencement of xiii. there is a reference to the list of Heracles's accomplishments which is given at length in xxiv. The Theocritean authorship of Idyll xxv. is abandoned by most scholars. I am unable to agree with their opinion; but every one must grant that the style is sufficiently different from that of xxii. to mark a different period in the poet's life. On the other hand, Idyll xxiv. belongs to the same period as xxii., for Pindar's Nemean Odes are imitated in both. Therefore Idyll xxiv. is earlier than Idyll xvii., and so is earlier than 265 B.C. Therefore the LXX. translation of Isaiah is earlier than 265 B.C.

A little internal evidence in support of this result is worth extracting. An unusual word for "cup" which occurs in Isaiah li. 17 and 22 is rendered by the foreign word *κόνδυ*. Now on this word there is an interesting article by the archæologer Athenaeus, who quotes for it two authors of the New Comedy, who flourished about the year 320 B.C., *i.e.* within the century in which we suppose the translation of Isaiah to have been made. Since the word appears only to occur in this period, it is probable that these comedians introduced it, that it was in vogue for a short time, and then fell into disuse. Athenaeus's authorities point out that it was an Asiatic (not Egyptian) cup, whence the LXX. translator appears anxious to reproduce the foreign appearance of the word in his text.

The translation of the Pentateuch is certified as Ptolemaic by the intentional avoidance of the Greek word for "hare" (*λαγώς*) in the list of unclean beasts: for the tradition that the king was sensitive about the name of his ancestor Lagos is shown to be true by the fact that Theocritus intentionally alters its quantity: "*Lāgīdas*" (Idyll xvii. 14) is meant to suggest not "hare," but "leader of the people," a far more princely name.

It was desirable to get some external evidence to show

that Ptolemy's translation included all three divisions of the Old Testament; and that evidence has now been produced.

But how came Ptolemy Philadelphus to know of Jewish literature? and what interest had he in procuring a translation of it? These questions can at present be answered hypothetically, but the following hypotheses seem to have some probability.

It is clear that some specimens of a literature have to be translated before it becomes worth while to organize a translation on a large scale. Neither the Song of Solomon nor Isaiah is likely to have been the first Hebrew book rendered into Greek; for neither of these exhibit signs of being specially intended for the Greek market. The whole tendency of translation in antiquity is from the less to the more literal. The work in the whole LXX. which shows the clearest signs of being intended for Greeks is the *Wisdom of Solomon*. That this book is a translation from the Hebrew is absolutely certain. For there is a paragraph in the disquisition on idolatry which this book contains (*c.* xiv.) in the middle of which occur the following sentences: "For that which was *done*[1] shall be punished together with the *doer*;[2] for this reason also there shall be visitation on the idols of the Gentiles" (*vv.* 10–11). Those who are accustomed to think while they read will at once detect a mistranslation here; for how can the thing done be punished apart from the doer? And the source of the mistranslation is easy to find; for the word which in Aramaic means "to do" means in Hebrew "to worship." Hence the original sentence must have meant "for that which is *worshipped* shall be punished together with the *worshipper*"; and from this the next sentence follows logically. And we learn from Josephus that at the time of the LXX. translation Aramaic was better known than Hebrew, though the two languages

[1] πραχθέν. [2] δράσαντι.

were known to be alike; nor need we quote examples of mistakes due to homonymy in the languages, since these are common in the LXX. What, however, takes the reconstruction of the above verses out of the region of probability into that of certainty, is that the original (or a paraphrase of it) is preserved in the Midrash [1] on Genesis xlvii. 49. We are there told that Jacob disliked being buried in Egypt for fear of becoming an object of worship to the Egyptians; "for just as the *worshipper*[2] is to be punished, so also is the *object of his worship*"; [3] wherefore it is written, "And on all the gods of Egypt I will execute vengeance" (Exod. xii. 12). But these verses are found in the middle of a paragraph, which is closely reasoned. Therefore the quotation in the Midrash is sufficient to certify a Hebrew original for the whole of the Wisdom of Solomon.

Confirmation of this result meets us everywhere as soon as it has been ascertained. In i. 12, "do not emulate [4] death" is parallel to "do not attract destruction"; clearly "emulate" is a mistranslation for "acquire," as it is in the LXX. of Isaiah xi. 11; [5] this mistranslation is also due to the disappearance in Aramaic of a sense which the Hebrew root retains. In xii. 24, "thinking gods the dishonourable among the beasts of the enemies" is assuredly a mistranslation: for what are beasts of the enemies? The phrase should have been rendered "beasts of prey." [6] In i. 14, "there is in them no venom of destruction, nor reign of Hades on earth," the word "venom" is probably an error for "authority": by the converse error the translator of Ben-Sira says, "There is no head worse than the head of a snake."

The fact that the Wisdom of Solomon is translated from Hebrew is therefore sufficiently certain to be made the basis

[1] See the collections called Rabbah and Tanchuma.
[2] העובר. [3] הנעבר. [4] ζηλοῦτε.
[5] Hebrew ת for תקנאו.
[6] Probably Hebrew השניים (intended for "of the teeth," as in Syriac).

of inferences; if it is not certain, then nothing in the history of literature is certain; and we must date the thought by the language, not the language by the thought.

Three facts strike us about the Greek of this work. First, it is the Greek of an educated foreigner, who is anxious to display his acquaintance with the resources of the classical language. There are not a few happy reminiscences of Greek poets, and adaptations of the technical language of the schools. The translator has done his utmost from this point of view to render the work of the Hebrew writer attractive to Greek readers. Secondly, he resolutely avoids mentioning the names of persons. Instead of speaking of Adam, Noah, Lot, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, he uses allusive expressions, such as "the father of creation," "the just," "the holy prophet." The reason for this is evidently that he does not wish to spoil the appearance of his Greek. The introduction of barbarous words would seriously mar the effect of his eloquence. Thirdly, he scrupulously avoids mentioning *Egypt*. The deliverance from Egyptian bondage is perhaps his chief theme; and the name of Egypt nowhere appears!

From this third fact we may draw two inferences. It is evident, in the first place, that the omission of the name of Egypt is due to the *translator*; for in the verses preserved in the Midrash it is on the gods of *Egypt* that vengeance is threatened, not on the gods of the Gentiles generally. And indeed we learn that Wisdom xiv. 11*a* is a quotation from Exodus xii. 12, brought in to illustrate the paragraph. Now the substitution of the generalizing "nations" for "Egypt" must have a purpose; viz., to avoid offending the Egyptians, for whom the translator was working. He thought (probably with justice) that whereas a threat of vengeance on the idols of the *nations* would escape notice, an attack on the idols of Egypt would ruin Solomon's chance of obtaining popularity in that country. But if he deliberately omitted the proper name in this place, he

probably omitted the proper names deliberately everywhere; and hence an Egyptian might read the book from beginning to end and need never even fancy that his own country was being attacked.

But this fear of offending the Egyptians could only have been felt before any considerable portion of the Old Testament was translated into Greek. For with the deliverance from Egyptian bondage the whole Old Testament rings. Any one who had the most elementary acquaintance with the history of Israel must have heard of the relation of Israel to Egypt. The miraculous deliverance of the Chosen People from that country is the fact in their history which overshadows all others. Now it is worth while concealing a matter only if it is not known. When it is a matter of common knowledge, it is taken for granted. People become callous about it. Hence the Wisdom of Solomon must have been translated into Greek before any considerable portion of the Old Testament was known to the Egyptians. And since the translator has done his utmost to give the Greeks a favourable impression of the literature of the Hebrews, we are justified in concluding that this was the first Hebrew work translated into Greek.

A little external evidence would be desirable to support this result, and this we have in the LXX. of Isaiah iii. 10. The Hebrew has there, "Say of the righteous, It is well: for they shall eat the fruit of their works; Woe to the wicked, it is ill." For the first of these sentences the LXX. has "Saying: Let us bind the righteous, for he is grievous unto us." It is very clear that the LXX. can here make no claim to represent the original; the correctness of the Hebrew is certified by the antithesis. The word "bind," moreover, seems a mistranslation of the Hebrew "say," resulting from the similarity in some scripts of the letters M and S.[1] But the wilful substitution of

[1] אסר and אמר. For the insertion of the word "saying" compare viii. 17.

"grievous" for "well" or "good" requires further explanation: and this is to be found in Wisdom ii. 12, where, in the middle of a discourse which is put into the mouth of the wicked, occur the words, "*Let us waylay the righteous, for he is grievous unto us,* and opposes our works, and taunts us with transgression of the Law." The discourse in Wisdom bears considerable resemblance to that in Proverbs i. 11, where the word for "let us waylay" occurs; it bears none to the passage of Isaiah. Hence it seems clear that the LXX. translator of Isaiah, having by a misreading substituted "bind the righteous" for "say of the righteous," *interpolated* the rest of the passage from the discourse in Wisdom, which he remembered. But in that case the LXX. translation of Wisdom must have existed before the translation of Isaiah.

We are justified in assuming that the translator of Isaiah would alter his text on account of a reminiscence, because he does so elsewhere. In xlv. 9, where he finds curious difficulty in translating, he inserts a clause "shall the plougher plough the ground the whole day?" from xxviii. 24, because the consonants of xlv. 9 bear some resemblance to those of the other verse. Likewise in lxv. 4, where the text has "they pass the night in caves" he adds *for the sake of dreams,* undoubtedly with a reference to the Greek cave-oracles, of one of which Plutarch gives us a vivid description. Hence in the preceding verse, where the original has "they offer incense on the bricks" and the translator adds *to the demons who are not,* it seems reasonable to see a reminiscence of Wisdom xiv. 13, where we are told distinctly of the idols that "they were not from the beginning, nor ever shall be." A much clearer reminiscence of Wisdom occurs in xxxv. 6: "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shout." The word here rendered "shout" [1] is a favourite word with

[1] רנן, τραυάς.

Isaiah, and is ordinarily represented correctly by the LXX. translator: why then here does he render "the tongue of the dumb shall be *clear*"—using for "clear" a word that is found nowhere else in the canonical LXX.? It is clearly a reminiscence of Wisdom x. 21, "Wisdom has made *clear* the tongues of the speechless." It would seem that the jingle of the Hebrew word in Isaiah with the Greek word used in Wisdom was what suggested this inaccurate but elegant rendering.

Wisdom can scarcely have failed to win a favourable reception at Alexandria. The language employed by writers at Ptolemy's court was very similar in character to that which this translation exhibits. It is very far removed from Attic simplicity; but it is rich, learned, and melodious. Morover the brilliancy of the thought is but little tarnished by the faults of the style. Many of the themes handled are such as may be relied on to evoke warm approval from any fairly educated audience.

I am inclined to find a trace of the Wisdom of Solomon in certain lines of Lucretius, who lived at a time when Alexandrian literature was greatly admired in Italy, and who may possibly have used the Wisdom of Solomon at second hand. "Men often," he says (iii. 912), "when seated at banquets holding cups in their hands, and with their brows shaded with crowns, say bitterly: 'This enjoyment is of brief duration for us poor mortals; soon it will be past and beyond recall.'" The four ideas of the banqueters, with cups in their hands, and crowns on their brows, saying that life is short, all recur in the fine passage of Wisdom ii. 2, and 7, 8: "They say in themselves, reasoning falsely, 'Our life is short and grievous; presently we shall be as though we had not been. Come, then, let us enjoy our present goods; let us be filled with rare wine and ointment; let us crown ourselves with rose-blossoms before they fade.'"

We may suppose, then, that the success which attended this translation led to the rendering into Greek of another work by Solomon. This would naturally be the Song of Songs, the matter of which, being erotic, would be suitable to Alexandrian taste; for with the Alexandrines love was a favourite theme. Assuredly the translator made a fortunate choice; for the form of love which this book *appears* to glorify is of a sort which would give it a peculiar interest to Ptolemy *Philadelphus*. His marriage with his sister Arsinoë deeply offended Greek sentiment; Sotades earned a martyr's crown by publicly rebuking the king for it. Now in the Song of Solomon the bridegroom seems to be a king, and the very king to whom the noble philosophy of the Wisdom of Solomon is ascribed; and he and the bride repeatedly call each other *brother* [1] and *sister*. Apparently, in order that there may be no mistake, "my kinswoman" is substituted sometimes for "sister." Of course in the Hebrew these words are used with the most harmless intent; for among Oriental peoples a husband calls his wife "my sister" or "my cousin." But this was not a Greek custom; the matrimonial relation was so very distinct from the erotic relation that the forms of address between husband and wife were far more cold and respectful; and in the ode of Callimachus in honour of the marriage of Ptolemy and Arsinoë the poet is careful to state that Arsinoë's love for her husband was due to the fact that he was her brother! Since we have seen that Theocritus's acquaintance with the Song of Solomon can scarcely be questioned, and Theocritus was a flatterer of Ptolemy Philadelphus before he became a Pastoral poet, and endeavoured to please the king by justifying his marriage with his sister: we have in this fact about the Song of Solomon what at any rate is an adequate reason for Ptolemy's interest in the literature of the Jews; for when

[1] ἀδελφιδός could probably be regarded as a diminutive of ἀδελφός.

men violate the well-grounded sentiments of their contemporaries, they are grateful to any advocate who will speak in their favour.

We have, therefore, acquired the date 270 B.C. as the *terminus ad quem* for the LXX. translation of the Song of Solomon. Now if that translation were accurate, it would be a help to the understanding of the Song of Solomon, but would tell us nothing of the state of the Hebrew language at the time when it was made. As, however, it is a literal but incorrect translation, something may be learned from it in regard to this point also. For if a translator of the year 270 B.C. interprets a Hebrew word X as Z, it may reasonably be inferred that the meaning X was obsolete by his time.

Naturally we should like to know who the translator was, since the assertion of Josephus that the LXX. were the best scholars of the time does not necessarily settle the point. It seems, however, clear that the translator must have been an Israelite, with whom Greek was an acquired language. The geographical and historical references could have been understood by no one other than an Israelite. Moreover one who had had a Greek education would have avoided many errors that are clearly due to imperfect acquaintance with Greek.

The translator's geography is remarkable both for what he knows and what he does not know. He knows that in iv. 4 *Thalpioth* is the name of a place. This must be regarded as an out-of-the-way piece of knowledge, for it seems to have escaped all the commentators. Yet a place bearing this name is mentioned by the Arabic geographer Yakut in such a way as to leave little doubt of the correctness of the LXX. interpretation. "Talfiatha," he says, "is one of the villages of the Ghutah of *Damascus*"; it is mentioned in the tradition of Abu 'l-'Amaitir Al-Sufyani, who revolted in the days of the Caliph Al-Amin" (ninth century A.D.). It

also figures in history in the reign of his immediate predecessor, the Caliph Harun Al-Rashid.[1] Evidently the translator identified "the tower of David built towards Talpioth," with "the tower of Lebanon which looks towards Damascus" of vii. 4. As a proper name the word admits of an easy derivation; it is the Hebrew for "Edge-hill," or "the Mound of Edges," so called after its shape. Since in other places geographical names are translated, and the meaning of words guessed at, it seems clear that had not the translator known the local name Talpioth, he would have rendered the passage by some ingenious guess, as others have done.

This being so, we have reason to infer that in his time those geographical names which he does not know were obsolete. The most striking of these is *Thirzah*, at one time famous as the capital of the northern kingdom; but apparently the river *Amanah* also had already changed its name, since he misrenders this word by "Faith."

But what is more important is that we may infer from a study of this translation that the Biblical Hebrew was a dead language in the translator's time. He stumbles where we stumble; in some cases he is misled by modern usage so as to mistake what to us is the obvious meaning of a passage—obvious, because most of us are more familiar with Biblical than with late Hebrew. Throughout the book he mistakes the old word for "love" (*dodim*) for "breasts" (*dadaim*), a favourite word in New Hebrew. Hence *dodim* must have been obsolete in his time.

A most interesting mistake is his mistranslation of the word for "veil"[2] by "silence." This word properly signifies a "juncture,"[3] and refers to the juncture of the hood which comes over the head with the veil that comes up over the face. In the costume of Egyptian women of the

[1] Ibn Al-Athir's Chronicle, vi. 88.

[2] צמוך. [3] Arabic *dammah*.

present day the juncture itself is effected by a short chain; but the advantage of the method is that it allows the eyes and temples to appear, as was the case with the veil spoken of by Solomon (iv. 1, 3). Evidently to the translator this sort of veil was obsolete, as he was not acquainted with its name; for from this it may be inferred that the custom itself was obsolete. But since the name must have been preserved in Canaanitish from pre-historic times, it seems to follow that it must have been lost during some great break in the national continuity—viz., during the exile.

The absurd rendering "silence" is also of value. The word *samt* is ordinary Arabic for "silence"; and it is old Arabic, for among examples of early words is the name of a desert called *Ismit, i.e.* Hush! The rendering of the word by Silence can therefore be no accident; yet we should not be justified in supposing that the LXX. translator could do as we do on any emergency in our Hebrew studies—look out the word in an Arabic dictionary. The word must have been known to the translator either as an old Canaanitish word, or as a recent importation from Arabia; and the latter is the only possible account to be given of it. We have then in this translation a confirmation of the statement in Nehemiah about the loss of the "purity" of the Hebrew language which suggested to him the necessity of preventive measures.

In viii. 5 we have a remarkable case of two guesses side by side from the Arabic: "Who is this that cometh up *clad in white, leaning* on her cousin?" For the two words italicized the original has only one word.[1] The analogous Arabic word is employed in an Arabic tradition:[2] "Who is so-and-so?" *Answer*: "The white, the leaning." So the tradition is rendered; but, since another derivative of this stem is used with the sense of "white," it seems likely that the answer in that tradition should be rendered "the

[1] מתרפקת. [2] See Nihāyah of Ibn Al-Athir (brother of the historian).

white, the clad in white,"—thus making the second word explain the first. Whether this comparison be just or not, it is certain that the word rendered "leaning" occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament; and it is also certain that it belongs to a numerous family of Arabic words—a family which contains the word for "elbow," which also appears in late Hebrew. The word, therefore, employed by Solomon is old Canaanitish; the double rendering in the LXX. implies that the translator had a doubt about it, and apparently interpreted it with hesitation from the Nabatæan usage, which in this case had reintroduced into Palestine a stem that had disappeared.

Nabatæan is not the only foreign language which the translator consults. He translates one word from the Aramaic: the modern authorities follow him, but probably he is wrong. He has also found many followers in interpreting a word from the *Greek*—by evidently a mere guess; for the text is thus made to say that Solomon made for himself a *bier*, whereas a very different kind of couch is intended.

What I desire to prove in this paper is that a book of the Old Testament presented to a Jew of the year 300 B.C. or thereabouts much the same appearance as it presents to one of us. It is in a dead language. Many verses we are inclined to give up altogether; too little is known of their meaning to allow of any chance of a satisfactory conjecture. Elsewhere from what we know of cognate or contemporary tongues we can perhaps satisfy ourselves; but our ignorance of many ancient customs, and of matters historical and geographical, is likely to mislead us constantly. That we can interpret the Song of Solomon better than the LXX. translator is due to the fact that many sources of knowledge are open to us now which were not then accessible to him. The Song itself is evidently pre-exilian, and the tradition which ascribes it to Solomon is

most likely to be correct; but the traditional interpretation which very likely accompanied it seems to have perished during the Exile. Had it been current in the LXX. translator's time, he would assuredly have employed it.

The evidence of the translation of Isaiah is too bulky to be collected here, but it fully bears out that of the Song of Solomon. In one place the translator gives a word in his native language—*Geioras* for "stranger" (xiv. 1); and it is Syriac. In another he interprets a Hebrew word—which ought to have occasioned him no difficulty from the Arabic, or, more probably, Nabatæan—"curse," for "confusion." That the language of the prophet is as much a dead language to him as it is to us does not admit of question.

It follows that we must deny the post-exilian origin of any performances in classical Hebrew, and thus restore the bulk of Scripture to pre-exilian times. For it is certain that the philological sense failed the ancient Hebrews altogether. The way to save the old language would assuredly have been to register it in grammars and dictionaries; but such an idea did not occur to Nehemiah: he tried far more drastic, yet far less effectual methods. Now even when a language has been thus registered it is difficult to write in a style that does not betray the century in which the work is written; even in such artificial performances as Latin Hexameters or Greek Iambics a competent judge ought to be able to tell the work of the nineteenth century from that of the eighteenth, and indeed the work of the first half of this century from that of the second half. The process of judging is not *divining*, but perfectly scientific: the judge ought to know exactly what rules were known to composers at each of those periods, and the records of the progress of knowledge give him exact dates. But if we possessed complete knowledge of the ways of the ancients, this criterion would in the case of the best work be inapplicable. Hence, in dealing with the work of a nation that

possessed no sense of grammatical science at all, fabrication ought to be very easy of detection. A man who had possessed the skill to analyse the old Hebrew idioms would probably, by starting the science of philology among his countrymen, have won more permanent fame and gratitude than he could ever have won by fabrication. But it is certain that the study of Hebrew grammar is not older than 850 A.D. The Mohammedans were compelled by circumstances to compile grammars, vocabularies, and commentaries; and since the Jews flourished in Mohammedan states, they imitated their example.

There is, moreover, another reason for paying great attention to the traditional dates and authors of the Biblical books. Science detests the uneven balance; to use a line of argument when it leads to a desirable conclusion, but reject it when it leads to an undesirable one is an abomination in her eyes. Now let us think how it comes that we can read Hebrew texts at all. The vowels remained unwritten from the time at which those texts were composed until about 750 A.D.—about 1,250 years after the death of old Hebrew, and about 700 years after the death of new Hebrew. The correct pronunciation of the words was handed down from father to son, from teacher to pupil. In sporadic cases it could be tested by transliterations; but owing to the fact that till the most recent times no scientific method of transliteration had been invented, this test was absolutely insufficient. A test has at last been discovered, and this will confirm many remarkable peculiarities of the traditional vocalization. We trust the tradition, then, for such minutiæ as vowel points through a period of more than a thousand years and find that trust justified; but when it comes to important questions, such as the authorship and dates of Isaiah and the Psalms, we discard the tradition with scarcely a hearing!

In judging questions of authorship, we had best be guided

by experience; the closer we follow what it tells us the more likely we shall be to hit the mark. Anonymous works, except when they are humorous, are rarely, if ever, good. A good writer is not anxious to shirk either the responsibility or the honour of what he writes. And posterity is not ordinarily unmindful of those who have served the race by their pens, but preserves and reverences their names. The Song of Solomon was, as we have seen, a work of such striking beauty that Greece, so rich in literary forms, borrowed from it a new style. If any other than Solomon had written it, his name would doubtless have been handed down, as has happened with such authors as Archilochus, Sophron, and Menippus. Moreover, if the tradition that it was by Solomon was pre-exilic, we assuredly have now no power of checking it. The historical facts that shine through show us Palestine united and peaceful, such as it was only in the great king's days.

Hence the fact that it was by Solomon gave it a place in the Bible; and that place was utilized by Providence to introduce the preparation for the Gospel. The Law and the Prophets can be appreciated by a trained taste only; but every one is attracted by the rich fragrance of the country. "Beauty and grace doth thine eye desire, but most of all the green of the fields." The Rabbis, who do not ordinarily show themselves impressionable, speak of the Song of Solomon as the gem of the Bible. It has about it a bloom and a freshness which reflect the halcyon days wherein it was composed.

But were those who gave it a place in the Canon because it was by Solomon in the right? Did the Bible condescend to entertain an erotic poem in order that the Gentiles might one day be won, or is the theory more true that its love and wine stand for something very different from what they ordinarily signify? Here again we had best be guided by experience. There is no poet more highly prized in Persia

and India than Hafiz; scarcely one more popular where Arabic is spoken than Ibn Al-Farid; these authors apparently are occupied only with love and wine; but no one believes that they in reality are dealing with either. In many cases there is a traditional interpretation of their verses; this is not always easy to understand, because to those who spent their lives in certain forms of meditation, certain concepts would be familiar which to others convey little or no meaning. But occasionally the inner sense is plain. Sometimes the verses are so clearly mystical that no one could suppose the literal meaning to be the sense intended; whereas at other times, without the tradition to guide us, we might fancy we had before us commonplace wine-songs or love-songs. Thus the first ode of Ibn Al-Farid, where the wayfarer is asked to tell certain of the tribe of Tay that he is sick of love, that the physician had told him there was no cure for his complaint, that the tie which bound him and *her* in the code of love was nearer than that of brother and sister, seems at first sight so clearly erotic that we have difficulty in assimilating the mystical rendering. But the same writer's *Tá'iyyah*, probably the most celebrated of the mystic poems of the East, scarcely veils its meaning from the first, but lands us at once in Pantheism. Somewhat similarly in the Song of Solomon the last chapter is mystical, one might say, without question; its allegorical character is on the surface; thence we are justified in arguing that the same is the case with the other chapters; they are mystical too, but the fact is less conspicuous.

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