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A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

Church of England Magazine, v. 427, lii. 210, liv. 201, lxi. 341.
Church of England Pulpit, iii. 208 (Meyrick).
Clerical Library, Three Hundred Outlines, 84.
Daily Course of the Christian Life, 91, 214.
Expositor, 1st Series, ii. 455, vii. 197.
Homiletical Library, ii.

Homiletic Review, xviii.
Homilist, xxvi., xxxi., xliii., liv.
Preacher's Magazine, 1891, 1892.
Preacher's Monthly, x. 354.
Pulpit, lxiv.
Treasury (New York), ix.

Ecclesiasticus in Hebrew.¹

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THE scholars to whom we are indebted for the lately published Revised Version of the English Apocrypha, little dreamed that part of their work would so soon be antiquated. But even had the discoveries that have produced this effect been made before the publication of their volume, it would not, perhaps, have been prudent to make immediate use of them. For much patient investigation must be accomplished ere they can safely be employed for such a purpose. In this important work scholars all over the world have it now in their power to join.

In the spring of last year, to tell the story once more, Mr. S. Schechter, reader in Rabbinical Hebrew at Cambridge University, discovered, among some fragments of MS. obtained by Mrs. Lewis in Palestine, an indifferently preserved leaf containing a Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus 39¹⁵-40⁶. It soon became known that Dr. Neubauer had found, among some fragments acquired by Professor Sayce for the Bodleian Library, the next nine leaves of the same MS. It is these ten leaves of Hebrew MS. that give its great value to the volume just issued by the Clarendon Press.

To say that the publication of this volume has been awaited with keen interest would convey a very inadequate idea of the eagerness with which scholars have been expecting its appearance. And many others than professed scholars must have shared this feeling. For the Apocrypha seem to have emerged out of the obscurity in which they had too long lain, so that

even the general reader has come to understand something of their importance for the study of the development of Judaism and Christianity. Moreover, works on Introduction and Canon have emphasised the value of Ecclesiasticus and its prologue in particular. Mr. Cowley and Dr. Neubauer, therefore, of the Bodleian Library Semitic department, the editors whose names appear on the title page of the volume before us, could not desire a more interested public to lay their work before.

The volume consists of two parts: first, preface and critical apparatus (pp. ix-xxxvi); and second, the text of Ecclesiasticus 39¹⁵-49¹¹ (pp. xxxviii-xlvii and 2-41). The preface, after stating that the aim of the editors has been to publish the text of the newly-discovered MS. and the means for studying it, with as little delay as possible, gives a concise account of the fortunes of the Hebrew text of Ben Sira. It has long been taught that Jerome had a Hebrew copy; but it was only recently that we learned the interesting fact that R. S'adyah Gaon, of the tenth century A.D., also possessed a copy, and himself mentions that, unlike the text now published, it resembled the Massoretic text in being provided with vowels and accents. The editors of the Oxford volume proceed to tell of the discovery of the present fragments, and to give an account of them and of the character of the text they contain. Finally, they explain the method adopted in the present edition.

The preface is followed by some very helpful compilations. Pages xix to xxx contain a convenient and valuable collection of proverbs of Ben Sira, gathered by various scholars from Talmudic and Rabbinic literature; and this is followed, in pp. xxxi to xxxv, by a Glossary of Hebrew words found in the Sirach MS., but not in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, or only in passages cited.

¹ *The Original Hebrew of a Portion of Ecclesiasticus* (xxxix. 15 to xlix. 11), together with the Early Versions and an English Translation, followed by the Quotations from Ben Sira in Rabbinical Literature, edited by A. E. Cowley, M.A., and Ad. Neubauer, M.A., with two facsimiles. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1897.

This most valuable contribution is from the pen of Professor Driver, and is executed with his usual care and skill. It discusses some 140 words. The asterisk, prefixed to considerably more than half of them, indicates that they are 'common, or closely resemble words which are common, in New-Hebrew or Aramaic.' The caution which makes Dr. Driver's work so reliable is seen, e.g., in the fact that in the case of one word, *מַעֲרִיץ*, occurring on the margin at 43⁸, the only note is a mark of interrogation.¹ This glossary will be of great use to the student, and to the next Hebrew lexicographer.

The larger part of the volume, however, is occupied with the text of the Ecclesiasticus fragment. The upper half of each even-numbered page contains a reproduction of one page of the Hebrew MS., the lower half, the corresponding text of the Syriac version, an extremely accurate reprint of Lagarde's edition. Opposite the latter is the text of MS. B of the Septuagint (from Dr. Swete's edition), and above this, facing the Hebrew, an English version.

This version is the fruit of the careful study of the editors, and has had the additional advantage of being revised by Professor Driver. In a text so imperfectly preserved, it is a great help to have such a guide, even if, as must be the case where there is so much obscurity, the reader may not always be able to adopt the same view as the editors.

Their general principle has been to adhere to the text of the MS., if it could be made to render even a possible sense. In spite of this, they have been compelled to adopt the readings added in the margin or written over the line in some fifty cases, and in one or two of these, as well as in some two dozen others, they have felt it necessary in one way or

¹ In a footnote to the verse cited, the editors suggest the sense 'terrifying,' and the combination with *מַעֲרִיץ* in *v. 8^b* may be paralleled, e.g., in Isa. 8¹². This being so, there is hardly a warrant, merely because 'robbing, arraying' would seem to give a better meaning, for going beyond Hebrew, as one is tempted to do, and comparing the Ethiopic *ârazza*, common in the Piêl in this sense (cf. Hos. 2⁷; 2 [4] K. 10²²). The phonetic difficulty is not insuperable. It is true Ethiopic *z* does not often represent a North Semitic *z*; but compare, e.g. Ethiopic *hemz* = *חֲמִץ*, and see Barth, *Etym. Stud.* p. 51 f., where it is contended that such modifications are facilitated by a preceding liquid. If the reading in the text were perfectly satisfactory, the simplest explanation would lie in pointing out that the scribe or some predecessor is, as we shall see, very apt to transpose letters, and supposing a confusion of *z* and *z*.

another to emend the text they adopt. Perhaps a score more of emendations are recorded in the footnotes without being admitted into the text itself. It is certainly well to make a decided effort to treat the text as it stands, before undertaking to emend it. Even this conservative principle, however, has led to the results just described, and so we may be prepared to hear a good deal of emendations for some time to come. All the more welcome, therefore, to many who cannot make full use of the Polyglot edition, will the present translation be when published separately, as we are informed the editors have decided to publish it, with the ordinary English Version on the opposite page.²

Interesting and valuable, however, as the translation is, the main interest attaches naturally to the Hebrew text itself. It reproduces exactly, without any attempt whatever at emendation, what the editors, with the help of the others who have examined the MS., have been able to decipher of its contents. The two beautiful *facsimiles*, facing the title page and p. xxxvii respectively, with which the published volume is enriched, show what the MS. is like.³

The page contains eighteen lines, each, except occasionally, divided into two hemistichs, so that the text appears as a rule to be arranged in two columns, although it is really to be read right across the page. The writing is neat and legible, except where the MS. has suffered; but the scribe is not very accurate, and in particular is apt to transpose letters. Many of these blunders are corrected on the margin. Some peculiarities of orthography are described by Dr. Driver in an instructive note on p. xxxvi, which should by all means be read at an early stage.

The Hebrew text of this MS. was declared by Mr. Schechter to be beyond doubt original—a conclusion that was at once accepted by scholars, Cornill, e.g., mentioning it as a fact in the fourth edition of his *Einleitung*—that is to say, it is not, as might at first have been feared, a translation back into Hebrew from versions. Of this, abundant proof will be furnished in the sequel. Of

² When this is done, it would, perhaps, be well to collate the English and Hebrew texts once more with respect to the use of brackets. A slight unevenness detectable here and there may be due to the contingencies of printing, or to the incessant revision the work has been subjected to. Thus, to cite one example of each kind, at 45^{2a} 'glorified him' should be bracketed, as it is perfectly illegible in the MS., though the marginal note leaves little doubt what the reading was; while conversely the bracketing of 'servant' in 42¹⁰ seems to be justified by the MS., and therefore עַבְד should be marked as not clear in the Hebrew text also.

³ Complete sets of collotype *facsimiles* will soon be procurable at a very moderate price. The photographs are excellent, being in some cases even clearer than the MS. itself, though, of course, in others scarcely as clear.

course, any one who is familiar with the phenomena of the text of the Old Testament generally, knows that this does not necessarily mean that, as compared with the text of the versions, the new text is always purer. Indeed, there are, as we should expect in a MS. dating from the eleventh century at the earliest, passages where, as a matter of fact, one or other of the versions must be judged on internal grounds to possess a better, that is, more original text. We are, therefore, in reality now simply in the same position as regards the determination of a critical text of Ecclus. 39-49, as in the case of the other Hebrew portions of the Old Testament. We must work by a scientific comparison of the various witnesses.

One matter, however, seems to have been set at rest. The new document shows, confirming in the most reassuring manner the conclusions of critical scholarship, that a language which cannot be otherwise described than as, on the whole, classical Hebrew, was still written in the days of Ben Sira, *i.e.* about 200 B.C., probably later rather than earlier. This point is perhaps what will appeal most to the imagination, and the certainty of it is in no way dependent on our possessing the whole or a large part of the Hebrew text. The single leaf acquired by Mrs. Lewis, and published in the *Expositor* (July 1896), was really enough to establish the fact. The other nine confirm the proof.

This proof hangs on several points,—vocabulary, forms of words, syntax, general style,—and is quite convincing. It were idle to repeat what has been already said in the preface and elsewhere, but which we have not space to substantiate. How classical, however, the syntax, *e.g.*, is, appears clearly enough from two points: *vav conversive* with the imperfect, a well-known characteristic of classical Hebrew used quite freely, as the editors point out, in this fragment, occurs but thrice in Ecclesiastes; on the other hand, the relative *v*, rare in the older literature, and, as the preface states, not once occurring in these ten chapters, is used more than sixty times in Qoheleth. And, though it is not so easy to illustrate the point, the writer's general style, which has, *e.g.*, in most places everything to gain by a comparison with, say, the Chronicler's, supports the same view; while the vocabulary, though it contains a fair number of new words, forms, and meanings, is simply that of the transition period to which the work belongs. No doubt, as the editors admit, the text does not lie before us as its author left it, and it may be argued (see, *e.g.*, *Expositor*, August 1896) that it has been in places made more classical (the variants on the margin are interesting from this point of view); but he will be very daring indeed who will contend that the general character of the style is due to a subsequent tampering with the text. It is needless to point out how satisfactory it is to have this

testimony of a work whose date is known more exactly perhaps than that of almost any other in the Old Testament, to what has long been believed by many scholars on critical grounds to be a fact, namely, that biblical Hebrew was still used for literary purposes by the generation to which Mattathias, the father of the Maccabees, belonged.

For the study of Ecclesiasticus itself, however, as a book, it is a matter of much moment and interest what chapters have been recovered. These are, 39¹⁵-49¹¹. They do not include, therefore, the part in which occurs the strange dislocation of text (transposition of 30²⁵-33^{13a} and 33^{13b}-36^{16a}), found in almost all MSS. of the Greek version; nor the passage where Bickell (*Zeitschr. f. kath. Theol.* 1882, p. 326-32) thought he had discovered an alphabetic poem (51¹⁸⁻²⁰), and one he calls "alphabeticising" (51¹⁻¹²). For Hebrew testimony on these points we must wait. The same applies to 50^{25f} (the three nations), which has been supposed to be an insertion dating from the time of Herod the Great.

But the portion recovered does include a number of interesting points. The passage 43¹¹⁻³³, omitted in the Syriac version, is in its place, the distrusted, because Greek-looking, phrase *Tò p̄n̄n̄ ēstiv̄ aut̄os̄*, appearing as *הוּיָהּ הַכֵּל*. Again, in 44¹⁶,¹ another contested passage, the Hebrew is against the Syriac in including the verse, and with the Greek in giving 'taken' as a passive, but against it (cf. Copt.) in having 'knowledge' for 'repentance'—a divergence very interesting in the light of later traditions about Enoch. It is disappointing that a hole in the MS. has deprived us of the line 48^{11b} ('For we also shall surely live'), for any new light on the history of eschatological conceptions would be valuable. All the more important, therefore, is the fact, whatever be the explanation of it, that in 41³ the Hebrew joins the Syriac against the Greek in the remarkable reading, 'Remember *that*² they which went before and they which come after (will be) with thee' (R.V. 'Remember them that have been before thee and that come after'). The only explicit mention of angels, however (the destruction of the Assyrian host, 48²¹), disappears in a characteristic way, 'and His angel destroyed them' becoming 'and (He) discomfited them with the plague'; and though *τέλος* in 43²⁶ becomes

¹ The verse is quoted in full below (p. 265).

² The Armenian also has *that*.

ἄγγελος, as in cod. 248, the editors question the accuracy of the Hebrew reading.

On the other hand, the Hebrew confirms the Greek in the textually interesting passage 46^{19c}, and we have now the 'pair of shoes' of I Sam. 12³ LXX in Hebrew, although the editors, indeed, adopt another translation. Of course this does not prove that Ben Sira was familiar with the LXX of Sam.; he may have known the Hebrew reading that the LXX followed. In 44^{21b} again, to take an example of another kind, unless we suppose a case of syncope of the letter ך after the preposition, we have the Hebrew deserting the passive verb of the R.V. ('That the nations should be blessed in his seed,' after B A & Syr., etc.: cf. the reflexive in the Hebrew of Genesis) for the active of the A.V. (after cod. 248, etc.). In 46^{19a} once more, where there is a close verbal parallel to the Hebrew of Isa. 57², the new text follows the Syriac.

It is the precise determination and explanation of these intricate mutual relations of the Hebrew and the versions, that constitutes the task scholarship now has before it. This will take time, for account has to be taken in each case of the variants occurring in one and the same version. Thanks to the laborious work of the editors in arranging their texts,—and the more closely one looks at it the more one sees how much their work involved,—it is a simpler matter to determine how far the texts run parallel line for line, irrespective of the character the common matter assumes. Space will not admit of our giving anything but the most general results. But the following statements will suffice to give some idea of the relations of the texts.¹

For brevity we shall use G, S, L for readings found in Greek (codex B), Syriac, or Latin respectively. As is well known, S omits a number of passages of considerable length found in the other versions. As many as five of these, amounting in all to some 120 hemistichs of G, belong to our portion of the work. In addition to these, S omits over 60 detached hemistichs common to GL. The Hebrew, however, contains not only the five omitted passages, but almost every single one of the scattered lines. On the other hand, S includes a considerable number (about 18 in xxxix¹⁹–xliv¹¹) of hemistichs not in GL. These, on the contrary, are almost all confirmed by the Hebrew. We get, in this way, the important result that the Hebrew confirms S in its inclusions, but negatives it, almost without exception, in its exclusions. With L the case is different. Its inclusions and exclusions, especially the latter, are not numerous, but the Hebrew negatives almost every one of them. G, finally, shows very few, if any, inclusions or exclusions, and if such exist the Hebrew is against them. All that remains to be considered, is the case of GSL being in agreement.

¹ Some further notes on this subject will be found in a forthcoming article in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*.

Naturally this case is by far the commonest. Of such hemistichs, supported by the three versions, some 17 are omitted by the Hebrew; while of new hemistichs not found in GSL at all, it has given us some 7. It would carry us too far to give the analysis of these here.

The general result is that G hardly ever stands alone in the matter of inclusions and exclusions; that S's testimony, when positive, is confirmed by H, but L's is, according to H, quite unreliable; and that, finally, the Hebrew gives us 7 new lines and rejects 17 included in all the three versions.²

The testimony of the Hebrew on the points we have been considering, is happily, for the most part, a confirmation of the previous conclusions of scholarship. Nor is it otherwise with regard to the character of the versions, as versions, which we do not consider here in detail. The impression is confirmed that they must be used with caution, from the difficulty of distinguishing translation from loose paraphrase. At the same time, a good deal of the divergence may be due, not to the translators, but to causes already at work in the Hebrew text. To give the English reader a clearer notion of the nature of the textual problem as it stands now, we quote 44¹⁶, referred to above, as it appears in the different texts.

- 16^a H. Enoch [was f]ound perfect, and walked with the Lord, and was taken,
 LG. Enoch pleased God (B. the Lord; 248, the Lord God) and was translated (L. *in paradise*),
 Eth. Copt. (Eth. And.) Enoch pleased the Lord and he translated (Eth. hid) him,
 16^b HG. Being an example (sign) of knowledge (B. of repentance; 253, for ever) to the (H. all) generations.
 L. To give repentance to the nations.
 Eth. And he was an example to the world that they might repent.
 Copt. For an example of intelligence (prudence) to the generations.³

² Two things must be carefully borne in mind in regard to these statements. First, hemistichs have been treated as identical, if they occur in the same general context and have some features in common, even though there may be very important various readings. When the latter are taken into account S rises in trustworthiness (from the standpoint of the Hebrew) relatively to G, just as cod. 248 does relatively to other codices of G. Second, the various Greek codices just alluded to diverge so strikingly that, as is well known, they must receive separate treatment. The above survey deals with one alone, codex B.

³ The Armenian, as we have it, does not extend beyond ch. 42. The Syriac (Peshitta) and Arabic (Lond. Polyg.) omit 44¹⁶. The Syro-Hex. goes with cod. 253.

A very interesting and extremely important feature of the MS. is the margin. This deserves careful study. Its contents are very various. It corrects accidental errors (e.g. transposition of letters), substitutes an alternative grammatical form or orthography, or a late or Aramaic word for a classical, or *vice versâ*, adds lines to the text (e.g. lines found in G, one also in S, 44^{14b}; or lines found in the Bab. Talm. 40²²—in the last case accompanied by a note in Persian, in Hebrew characters, suggesting that the lines are not really Ben Sira's), or gives various readings of one kind or another.

Apparently every conceivable combination is represented: thus (using GSL as before for readings agreeing with the Greek, Syriac, or Latin respectively), the text may be G and the margin S, perhaps *vice versâ*, the text GS, margin different; text GL, margin new; text G, margin three other readings, and all different from S,—and so on. Thus, to give one example: in 41^{12b},² the text has 'wisdom'; the margin, followed by L and the editors, 'costly'; G, etc., 'gold'; S, 'violence (craft).'¹ The value of all this is obvious. Nor does it always depend upon the actual worth of the variants. Sometimes, too, the margin accidentally enables us to recover a word that has become illegible in the MS. itself. The notes appear to represent either the variants of more than one MS., or perhaps the text and marginal variants of one and the same MS. Unfortunately the MS., as a note in Persian at 45^{8a} states, did not extend beyond about the first three-fifths of our present fragment. Four variants are, however, quoted from some source or other on the margin at 47^{8c}–^{9b}.

The editors of the Oxford volume find unnecessary, or reject in their translation, most (about 90) of these marginal readings; but they have, as already stated, adopted some 50 of them, calling attention to the fact in a footnote.² The footnotes likewise contain a note not only of emendations adopted, but also of a score or so not adopted.³

In the case of the Hebrew text, the editors have simply reproduced the MS., text and margin, as it

¹ 'Treasures of violence' might easily be a corruption of 'treasures of knowledge'; but perhaps the Syriac translator read חסם (cf. Prov. 4¹⁷, Peshitta), or its equivalent.

² Possibly the figure³ has dropped out after 'exchange' in 42^{8a}.

³ Note 4, on p. 3, belongs to the latter class, although an unwary English reader might suspect that it belonged to the former, and that 'salvation' in the text was a *misprint* for

now stands.⁴ In an *editio princeps* of a fragment like the present, this was probably the best course to follow. We shall not have long to wait for critical reconstructions in abundance. This is certain, because of the extreme importance of the MS. and the attraction it possesses for scholars in many departments. Its value for the history of the transition from classical to New Hebrew has already appeared. It is equally fitted to shed light on the important subject of the habits of translators, and the amount of confidence to be put in conjectural restorations of text founded on the study of versions. It provides new material of the highest importance for students of the Wisdom literature, and of Ecclesiasticus in particular. Finally, it raises the hope that other witnesses may rise from their graves to shed light on the mysteries of the past.

The editors, and all who have helped them, are to be congratulated on the result of their labours; Prof. Sayce, to whom the volume is dedicated, on being the means of rescuing from oblivion so precious a relic; and the Clarendon Press, on the issue of a volume which it is a pleasure to look at and a delight to use.

some English equivalent of לחבונו. Of course the meaning really is, that though the editors have *not* made the substitution, possibly, following Schechter's emendation of לחבונו for לחשטו, the word 'understanding' *should* be substituted for 'salvation' in the text.

⁴ The printing has been done with such care that the reader may pretty safely assume that any unintelligible group of letters does not contain a misprint, but represents the real text of the MS. In all cases of this kind where the present writer has collated the printed text with the MS. he has found the printing accurate. Thus, to cite an instance, one might have suspected, on the ground of the frequent transpositions of letters in the MS. corrected on the margin, that תמרות (42^{5a}) was a misprint for תמרות, corrected on the margin into תמרות. But if the ה is a mistake for ו, the error is the scribe's, not the printers', and Dr. Driver cites it as such (p. xxxvi). Another example is, perhaps, worth citing. What view Dr. Driver takes of מן־ריש (43^{1b}), a reading about which there can be no possible doubt, does not appear. He probably regards the ו as a simple intruder. And this is perhaps more likely (cf. a similar case, נברא for נבא, in 48^{12b}) than that it is a misread ה (cf. the converse case in 43⁴ if we accept the editors' emendation) of Hiphil, or a resolved *daghesh* in Aramaic style.