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Two Passages in the Psalms.

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IN this article I propose to emend two corrupt passages in the Psalms, 2^{11, 12} 119⁸⁵.

Ps 2^{11, 12}.—The fourth strophe (2¹⁰⁻¹²) of this Psalm reads as follows, according to the Massoretic text :

- 2¹⁰ Now therefore be wise, O ye kings :
 Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
 1¹ Serve the Lord with fear,
 And *rejoice* with trembling. ¹²*Kiss the son*
 Lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way,
 For his wrath will soon be kindled.
 Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

In the above strophe scholars are practically agreed that the fourth line is corrupt. I have italicized the words that cannot stand.

Let us consider shortly the objections to the Massoretic text, and first as to the word 'rejoice.' 'Rejoice' cannot be used as a parallel to 'serve' in the preceding line. Hence most modern scholars deal summarily with it and either excise it, as Cheyne, Duhm, Buhl, etc., or emend חילו, as Ewald, into חילו.

Next, the phrase 'kiss the son' is wholly unsatisfactory. Both the Semitic words נשקו בר in this phrase are difficult. Let us deal with the second first. The word בר in the sense of 'son' is impossible. For (1°) it is an Aramaic word, and its occurrence instead of the Hebrew בן, which the author has used already in 2⁷, is unaccountable. 2°. The absence of the article is inexplicable if the word refers to the same person as 'my son' in 2⁷, where of course it is clearly defined. 3°. The rendering of בר by 'son' is not found in the LXX and Targum (*i.e.* παιδείας and אולפנא), which appear to presuppose another reading. The misinterpretation of בר as = 'son' is due to Syriac and Aramaic influence.¹ It is not found in Aquila or Symmachus, whose respective renderings ἐκλεκτῶς and καθαρῶς presuppose בר, which is to be derived from quite a different root. 4°. As in line five above, 'Lest he be angry,' as well as in lines three, six, and seven, it is God Himself that is referred to and not the Son of God, so it is not the Son of God nor any other being than God that can be mentioned

¹ The Syriac alone of the ancient versions renders 'son.'

in line four. The entire strophe refers to God alone.

Hence we conclude that the Aramaic word בר = 'son' cannot be original in 2¹².

We have next to study נשקו. There are several difficulties connected with the use of this word here in the sense of 'to kiss,' *i.e.* 'to worship.' 1°. Duhm with considerable justice argues that this meaning cannot be inferred from 1 S 10¹ or the cultic use of the term in 1 K 19¹⁸, Hos 13², Job 31²⁷. 2°. The LXX, Targum, and Vulgate agree in a different rendering (*i.e.* δράσασθε, קבילו and *apprehendite* respectively). Aquila and Symmachus render it respectively by καταφιλήσατε and προσκυνήσατε, but assign a different meaning to בר, as we have seen above. 3°. Hardly any modern scholar accepts נשקו. It is taken either to be corrupt or to be an interpolation. Briggs retains it, but emends בר.

Thus since practically all the ancient versions are at variance as to the meaning of both words in the phrase נשקו בר, and since most modern scholars are at one in regarding this phrase as corrupt or in rejecting it as an interpolation, the question may well be asked: Is there any hope of recovering the original text of line four? The present writer believes that it can be recovered by means of careful emendation, which does full justice (*a*) to the parallelism, (*b*) to the metrical structure, and (*c*) in all probability to a grammatical idiosyncrasy of the author of the Psalm.

(*a*) נילו is against the parallelism. Whether it is an interpolation or a corruption is a question that can be left for the present, though at the outset with scholars generally I took it to be an interpolation and so excised it. Turning to נשקו בר it flashed upon me that this phrase was a corruption of הקשבו. Thus we should have :

Serve the Lord with fear,
 And with trembling hearken.

This emendation satisfies the parallelism save that there is no parallel to 'the Lord.' If the parallel is perfect then, we should expect to find the missing parallel word under the corruption נילו.

(*b*) At this stage I showed my emendation to

various scholars, who approved of it provisionally, and finally to Dr. Cowley. Dr. Cowley after some study of the problem made a great improvement on the emended verses by showing that נילו was a corruption of אילו. By this discovery the parallelism is rendered complete and the metrical structure of the verse is recovered, which runs thus :

ואילו ברעה הקשיבו,

and the couplet is perfect in every respect :

Serve the Lord with fear,
And unto him with trembling hearken.

Thus the original is recovered by the change of a few letters and without an excision of any kind. But the recovered text has some further support from the fact stated in (c).

(c) The reader will recognize that in the above couplet we find the grammatical and rhetorical figure chiasmus—that is, a figure by which in the case of two parallel clauses the order of the words in the one is inverted in the other. Now, if we examine 2^{1, 2, 5}, and especially 2^{9, 10}, we shall find that the author of the Psalm has already used this figure five times. That he has again used it here, evidence of an independent character serves to prove.

Thus in the emended line, though no word has been excised, the perfect parallelism in the two clauses has been recovered, as well as the metrical structure. Finally, the emendation thus effected is confirmed by the fact that the very order of the words represents the rhetorical figure chiasmus, of which the author is very fond.

Thus the strophe which refers only to God and His judgment runs :

Now therefore, O ye kings, be wise :
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
Serve the Lord with fear,
And unto him with trembling hearken,
Lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way.
Blessed are all that put their trust in him.

[I may mention here a few of the most notable emendations of former scholars. For נקשו בר Lagarde proposes מוסרו נ"ג = 'puts on his bonds,' Brüll, בקשו פניו, 'seek his face.' But the metre does not admit of these. Cheyne, followed by Marti and Duhm, regards נילו and נשקו to be two competing readings and both incorrect. Duhm suggests ושרו = 'and bow ye down,' but this is

insufficient for the metre : Cheyne, והשחחו לו, 'and do homage.']

Ps 119⁸⁶.—

The proud have digged pits for me,
Which are not after thy law.

So the A.V. The R.V. (so also Kautsch's German Version) runs :

The proud have digged pits for me,
Who are not after thy law.

Both renderings reproduce the text accurately, but the couplet in either case is unsatisfactory. That 'the proud' or the 'pits' which they dig for the righteous are not according to God's law would be a truism, unworthy of a place even in a Tupper *in duodecimo*.

Briggs draws attention to the fact that, whereas the Massoretic put the negative after the relative (אשר לא = 'which are not'), the LXX puts it before it, i.e. ος ους, which presupposes לא אשר. The latter he takes to be a corruption of לא אשר (= 'for one who'), and translates :

The proud have dug for me pits—
For one who is according to thy commandments.

But this is not much of an improvement on the R.V. Besides, it does not explain the genesis of the different order in the Massoretic and LXX.

That none of the above renderings or emendations are satisfactory is clear. Notwithstanding, the present writer is assured that it is possible to emend the text so as to do justice to the sense and explain the variants.

Now the one fact that emerges from the renderings just given is that there appears to be nothing wrong with the first line of the couplet, nor with the closing words of the second line, 'after thy law.' The corruption, in other words, lies in אשר לא (= 'which are not'). If the relative is retained, it must refer to one or other of the three nouns in the first line, as in the three versions just given. The result, as we have already seen, is pure bathos in all three.

Hence we assume that אשר at any rate is corrupt. Now if אשר is corrupt, the text of itself suggests that behind אשר there stood originally אשרי (i.e. אשרי = 'my footsteps'). This word

occurs frequently in this connexion: cf. Ps 37⁹¹ 17⁵⁻¹¹ 44¹⁸, Job 31⁷, Pr 14¹⁵. Further, this word suits the first line of the couplet perfectly: the pits are digged for the feet of the righteous. It suits also perfectly the words that follow in the second line, 'after thy law'—if we excise the negative. Leaving out the negative we have:

The proud have digged pits for me,
(But) my footsteps are according to thy law.

Here the meaning is all that could be desired. The Psalmist states that the proud have digged pits into which he may fall, but he fears them not; for his footsteps are directed by the law of his God.

The omission of the adversative particle 'but'

is frequent in Ps 119: see 119^{23, 51, 61, 70, 73, 81, 83, 141, 143, 157, 163}.

But how are we to explain the genesis of the negative? This is quite easy. So long as אָשְׁרִי ('my footsteps') stood uncorrupted in the text, there was no ground for the interpolation of the negative. But, when it was corrupted into אָשֶׁר (= 'which'), a subsequent scribe, taking this naturally to be a relative referring either to 'proud' or 'pits,' added אֵל (= 'not') in the margin. This אֵל was subsequently incorporated into the text: by one scribe *before the relative*—hence the LXX. Vulgate versions: by another scribe *after the relative*—hence the Massoretic text.

Thus the above emendation satisfies every requirement of the text.

Literature.

PERSIA.

BRIGADIER-GENERAL SIR PERCY SYKES, K.C.I.E., C.B., C.M.G., has issued his great book, *A History of Persia*, in a second edition, bringing it up to date (Macmillan, 2 vols., 8vo, pp. xxviii, 563; xx, 594; 70s. net). It is six years since the first edition was published, and at that time just a century had elapsed since the publication of Sir John Malcolm's *History of Persia*. In that long period the mystery of the cuneiform inscriptions had been solved, Susa had yielded up its secrets, and in many other directions a notable advance had been effected. Each important discovery had been embodied in some work of special value, but no book had been written dealing with Persia as a whole and embodying the rich fruits of all that modern research. It was time that another History of Persia should be written, and Sir Percy Sykes was the man to write it.

For he had spent twenty-one years in Persia. He was a writer as well as an administrator. He had given himself to the study of the literature of and about Persia and to the study of the country and the people. All that is necessary to the writing of a great history was his, and the History he wrote was undoubtedly great.

But in its new edition it is greater. All the illustrations are in the new edition and there are new maps, magnificent maps. The story of the

War as it affected Persia is told in fullness. A wonderful story it is—quite by itself, not at all like the story of the war in Palestine or Mesopotamia. And there is a long chapter at the end on 'Persia after the Great War.'

The future of the country is not easily foreseen. The danger is from the Bolsheviks. 'Will Persia become a convert to Bolshevik propaganda? It is difficult to answer this question. We read of proposals emanating from Moscow, by the terms of which the Bolsheviks cancel all debts owed by Persia, and all railway, road, and land concessions. Compensation, too, is promised for damage due to the Bolshevik invasion. Other terms are tantamount to a recognition of the Soviet principle in Persia; and unlimited consular representation, or, in other words, unlimited opportunities for propaganda are demanded. The Cossack *coup d'état* announced at the time of going to press has brought in a Cabinet which intends to reject both the British and Bolshevik proposals, and to create a force under foreign officers for the defence of the country after the departure of the British troops. Will this new Cabinet, based on the discredited Cossack Division, be strong enough to defend Persia against the Bolsheviks? I doubt it. In my opinion she may burn her fingers in the hot seething cauldron of Russian Communism and will then bitterly repent. It cannot be too often repeated that the percentage of roughs and robbers