

THE  
BIBLE OF CHRIST  
AND HIS APOSTLES

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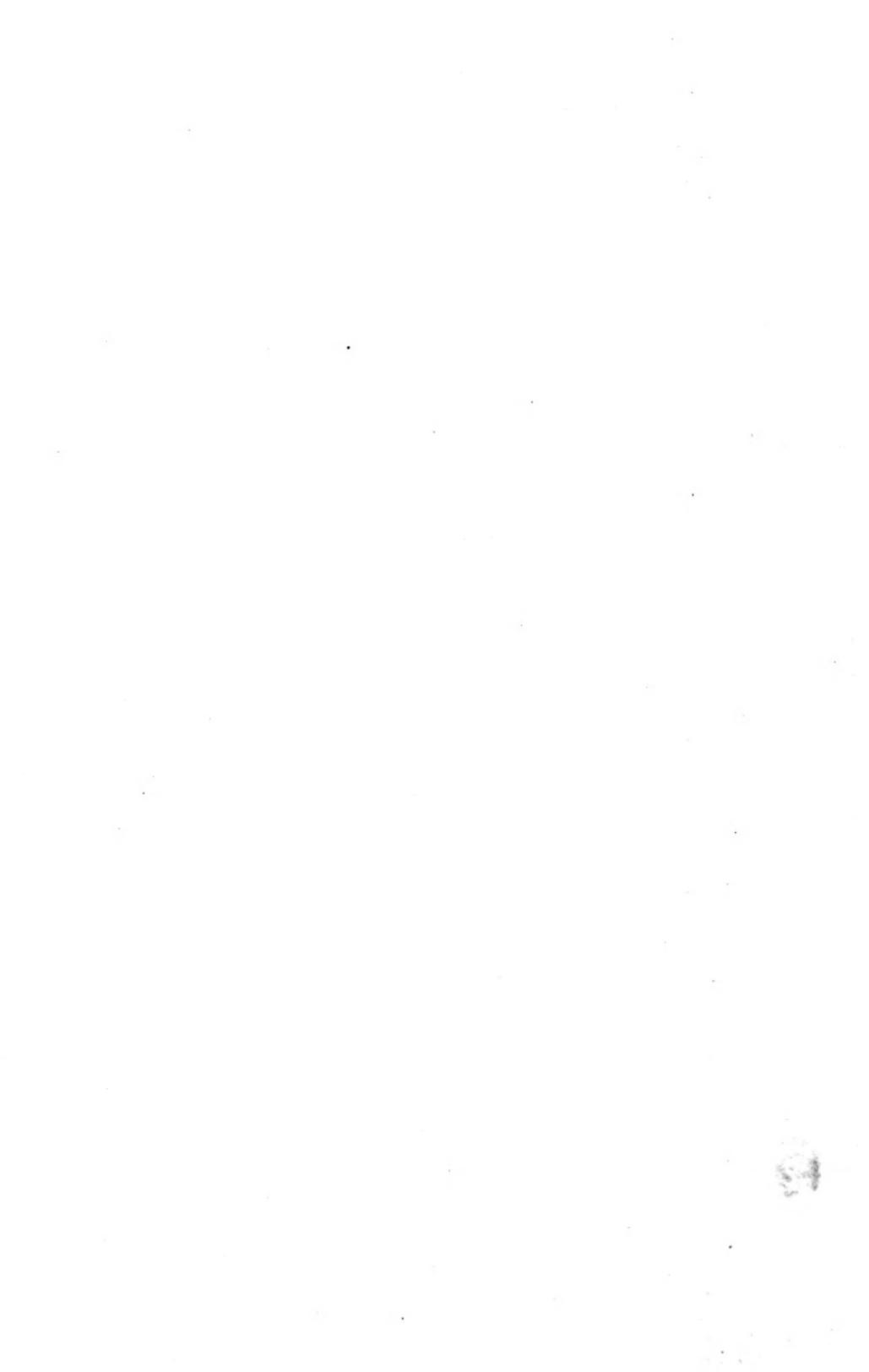
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BY  
ALEXANDER ROBERTS, D.D.,  
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*Διηρμήνευεν αὐτοῖς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς γραφαῖς.*

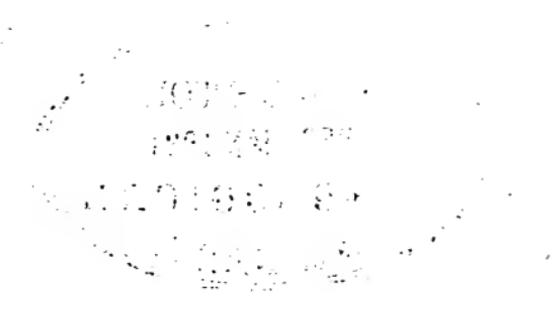
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## P R E F A C E .



THE subject handled in the following pages forms only a portion of a larger question which I have treated at length elsewhere. In the first part of my *Discussions on the Gospels*, it is my object to prove that Greek was the language habitually made use of by our Lord and His Disciples. The argument, as there developed, is many-sided, but its success may be safely staked on the one point to which atten-

tion is specially called in this treatise. If it can be proved that the Greek version of the Septuagint was the Bible constantly appealed to by Christ and His Apostles, it will follow as an undeniable conclusion that Greek was the language which they usually employed. This will be found further adverted to in the concluding chapter.

As was to be expected, the views which I ventured some years ago to propound as to the language of Christ have met with strong, not to say violent, opposition. Some very uncomplimentary epithets have been applied to them, but of these I shall

take no notice; some able efforts have also been made to refute them, and these I have carefully considered; but I still feel constrained to abide by the position which I formerly assumed. If anything has recently occurred to make me doubt the security of that position, it is the fact that such a master of logic as the present Archbishop of York has declared himself against it. But His Grace has expressly declined to argue the question (*Speaker's Commentary on New Testament*, i., p. 22), and has decided against me, so far as appears (p. 29), simply on *à priori* grounds. In these circumstances I hope

I may still, without being deemed guilty of presumption, submit the following pages to the consideration of Biblical scholars.

A. R.

THE UNIVERSITY, ST. ANDREWS,

*August 23rd, 1879.*

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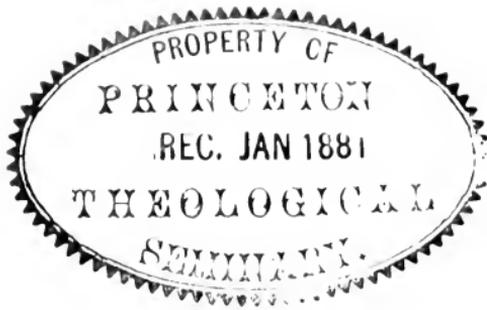
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## INTRODUCTION.



THERE is hardly a more interesting question connected with New Testament criticism than that which respects the *form* in which the Old Testament was made use of by our Lord and His Disciples. We constantly come upon passages in the Gospels in which appeal is made to the Scriptures both by Christ and those whom He addressed. And the inquiry naturally suggests itself—What were the writings thus in the hands of our Lord and His contemporaries, writings which, it is every-

where assumed, were quite familiar alike to Him and His Disciples, and to the people of Palestine among whom they mingled? Did Christ and His contemporaries read and quote from the original Hebrew text? Or was it an Aramaic version of the Old Testament which they had in their hands, and to which they appealed? Or, finally, did they make use of the Septuagint Greek translation, which we know had been begun to be formed between two and three hundred years before the Christian era, and which had gradually attained completion?

Much contrariety of opinion and great apparent confusion of thought are to be

found on this subject in the writings of Biblical scholars. As we shall soon see, there is perhaps no critical question connected with the Scriptures which has continued to be treated in a more unscientific spirit. Suppositions are rested in, to the neglect of facts. Theories of an *à priori* character are accepted, though demonstrably opposed to positive evidence. One difficulty is evaded only by adopting another; and there is a general clinging to traditional opinions on the subject, while a very brief consideration is sufficient to prove these destitute of any solid foundation.

If this be so, we may safely predict

that such a state of things cannot last. The demand of our day is that a supreme deference should be paid to *facts*. All theories, however plausible, and all traditions, however venerable, must be set aside if found to be unsupported by substantial and sufficient evidence. Truth, at all hazards, is what mankind most passionately desire. And in pursuit of this noble aim many views which formerly prevailed have become modified, while some have been altogether abandoned. Nor can it ultimately be otherwise in regard to the subject before us. Truth will prevail against tradition. And, as I shall endeavour to show, the truth

here offers itself very clearly to our acceptance, provided we are willing to look at the question in the genuine spirit of science, determined to lay aside all prepossessions, and to allow ourselves to be guided by evidence alone to a conclusion.

I have above suggested three answers which might be given to the question about to be discussed, and these may be regarded as exhausting all the possibilities of the case. Christ and His Apostles either used the Old Testament Scriptures (1) in the original Hebrew, or (2) in an Aramaic version, or (3) in the Septuagint translation. A remarkable combination of the second and third views has, in-

deed, recently been propounded, and will, as we proceed, receive due consideration. But if the subject be treated under the threefold division which has been mentioned, we shall find a natural opportunity of noticing all the opinions that have been entertained regarding it. I proceed, then, to an examination of the several hypotheses, with the simple desire of ascertaining which of them is in accordance with the facts of the case, and has therefore a claim, however much opposed to deep-rooted and long-prevalent views, to be accepted with the homage ever due to the majesty of Truth.

# THE BIBLE OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES.

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## CHAPTER I.

First hypothesis: That Christ and His Apostles, in reading and referring to the Old Testament Scriptures, *made use of the original Hebrew text.*

IN the case of those persons who have not thought much upon the subject, this is, doubtless, the prevailing impression. They are aware that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and when they find our Lord and His Apostles quoting from it, they naturally suppose that this

was done in the original language. It has never occurred to them to question the fact, so that they quietly repose in the conclusion stated, without giving it the smallest consideration.

While this is the position occupied by readers of the New Testament in general, it is not uncommon to find, even among professed Biblical scholars, the same belief expressed or implied. Evidently without having reflected on the point, they write as if there could be no doubt that Hebrew was the language in which the Old Testament was known to Christ and His contemporaries. Thus, to give only one notable example: the highly accom-

plished and widely-learned Dean of Westminster tells us, in his *Sermons in the East*, with respect to Christ in the synagogue at Nazareth, that “the roll of the *Hebrew* Scriptures was delivered to Him,” and that He unrolled it and read, the supposition being apparently made that in so doing He was perfectly intelligible to His hearers.<sup>1</sup> The Dean may be regarded as being in this matter representative of a multitude of others. His attention had probably never been specially directed to the point; and he therefore naturally assumed that when our Lord read from the Old Testament to the people

<sup>1</sup> Stanley's *Sermons in the East*, p. 45.

in the synagogue He did so in the original Hebrew language.

But the *consensus* of scholars proclaims that this could not have been the case. It is almost universally admitted that in the days of our Lord the language of the Old Testament books had long been dead, and was not understood by the great body of the people. It, no doubt, continued to be studied and taught by the learned. As the venerable language of the sacred books of the nation, such would, of course, be the case; but acquaintance with it was confined to a comparatively limited class. The "Hebrew" mentioned in the New Testament

was a very different dialect. It seems to have been a kind of *patois*, formed from a mixture of Syriac and Chaldee, with perhaps some other elements;<sup>1</sup> and the common use of this so-called Hebrew in Palestine still left the people utterly helpless when confronted with the Hebrew of the Old Testament.

At what time the language of their sacred books ceased to be a living language among the Jews cannot be positively determined. There is a well-known

<sup>1</sup> "Il est certain que la langue qui est nommée Ebraïque dans le Nouveau Testament n'est proprement ni Ebraïque, ni Syriacque, ni même Caldaïque, ayant quelque mélange de l'Ebreu et du Caldaïque ou Babylonien."—R. Simon, *Hist. Crit. d. Text. du Nouv. Test.*, p. 65.

passage in Nehemiah bearing upon the point.

We are told (chap. viii. 8) that Ezra and his coadjutors read to the people "in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." The question here is whether these words mean that Ezra *translated* the Hebrew into Aramaic, in order that the people might understand it, or whether he simply *paraphrased and expounded* the passage, so as to make its meaning clear. Scholars are divided in opinion upon this point. On the one side, the learned Jewish authorities, Rabbis and Talmudists, generally assume that

Hebrew continued to be used only up to the time of the exile, and was then gradually superseded by Aramaic. This view has also been adopted by many eminent Christian writers. Buxtorf and Walton may be named among scholars of a former age, and Hengstenberg<sup>1</sup> and Hävernick<sup>2</sup> among recent writers. But, on the other side, Gesenius observes—"It is a false impression, derived from a misinterpretation of Neh. viii. 8, that the Jews, during their exile, had wholly forgotten their ancient language, and were obliged to learn its meaning from the

<sup>1</sup> *Book of Daniel* (Eng. Trans.), p. 242 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Introd. to Old Test.*, § 35.

priests and scribes.”<sup>1</sup> Bleek agrees with him in this, and maintains that the true meaning of the disputed word (עֲרָבָה) is not *translated* or interpreted, but *distinct* or clear,<sup>2</sup> so that the passage simply implies that Ezra explained those portions of the Old Testament which he read in the hearing of the people. It may be admitted that probability is rather in favour of this second view of the import of the passage.

But the important point to be noticed is that all the above-named scholars, with multitudes of others, agree that the ancient

<sup>1</sup> *Heb. Gr.*, §§ 2, 5: comp. *Gesch. d. Heb. Spr.*, § 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Einkl. in das A. T.*, p. 96.

Hebrew had died out of common use among the Jews long before the coming of Christ. Opinions differ, as we have seen, with respect to the exact date at which this took place; but those who are best entitled to speak with authority on the subject declare, with almost one voice, that for a century at least before our era the ancient Hebrew had ceased to be used in writing, as it had previously ceased to be used in speech; and that, though it continued to be studied by professed adepts as the language of the sacred books, it was, in the days of Christ and His Apostles, totally unknown to the great body of the Jewish people.

As this is a vital point in the present argument, let me give emphasis to it by expressly quoting the words of some leading authorities among Biblical scholars. There is a constant tendency evinced by mere popular writers on Scripture, quietly to assume that the Jews of our Saviour's day did understand the ancient Hebrew, and that, accordingly, it was in that language they became acquainted with the books of the Old Testament. Let the following statements of scholars of the highest standing suffice to set aside such an opinion. Ewald declares that "the Hebrew in the last centuries before Christ became more and more an antique lan-

guage, acquired only by special study.”<sup>1</sup> De Wette writes :—“ After the exile the Hebrew language gradually ceased to be heard from the lips of the people, and continued to survive only as the language of learning and literature.”<sup>2</sup> Bleek, referring to the times of Christ, remarks :—“ The ancient Hebrew had already for a long time been, even to the Jews of Palestine, a dead language, the knowledge of which, so far as it was necessary for the reading of the Holy Scriptures, continued only among those who were devoted to such a special study.”<sup>3</sup> And, not to

<sup>1</sup> *Ausführ. Lehrb. d. Heb. Spr.*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Einl. in d. A. T.*, § 34.      <sup>3</sup> *Einl. in d. N. T.*, p. 53.

multiply quotations, I shall simply add that similar views are also expressed by Winer, Gesenius, Deutsch, and almost every writer of reputation who has touched upon the subject.

In support of the conclusion stated, I may refer to an illustration which will be intelligible to all. Josephus, the well-known Jewish historian, was distinguished for his learning above most of his contemporaries. He says that this was generally admitted. "Those of my own nation," he tells us, "willingly acknowledge that I far surpass them in the learning belonging to the Jews."<sup>1</sup> This,

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.*, xx., 11, 2.

then, is the very man of all others likely to be well acquainted with the ancient Hebrew, if that were at all generally known among the Jews. Yet it is certain that Josephus knew comparatively little of the language. He depends more in his writings on the translation of the LXX. than on the original text;<sup>1</sup> and his etymological and other blunders are of the grossest conceivable character. Referring both to him and Philo, Renan remarks:—  
“The explanations which they give of certain Hebrew words surpass the strangest

<sup>1</sup> “Joseph. ist mehr von der LXX. als vom hebr. T. abhängig.”—Fritsche, in Hertzog's *Real-Encyclopädie*, Art. “Alexand. Bibelübersets.”

hallucinations of the ancients on the field of etymology.”<sup>1</sup> Here, then, we find a crucial case. If a scholar so distinguished among his contemporaries for Jewish learning as Josephus, is proved, after all, to have been so deficient in an acquaintance with ancient Hebrew, there can be no hesitation in concluding that to the community at large those books were sealed which were written in that language.

Such being the state of the case, I cannot but express surprise that a scholar of the calibre of Keim should have written as follows:—“The interesting question whether Jesus read the Scripture in the

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. des Lang. Sémit.*, p. 166.

Greek translation rather than in the Hebrew text must be answered in the negative. Doubtless it has been before now maintained that the old Hebrew of the Bible had become a dead, unintelligible tongue to the Jews of that time who spoke Aramaic; that only the scribes could still read it; that the people were pointed to the Greek translation if they wished to study the Scripture for themselves. This view is altogether at variance with the Jewish regard for the sacred relics of their country, and with their dislike to the Greek, of which even Paul was aware (Acts xxi. 40)—yes, to the Greek translation itself, which found only slow accept-

ance ; at variance, too, with the linguistic fact that to go back from the Aramaic dialect to the nearly cognate ancient Hebrew was a hundredfold easier for the Jews than to have recourse to the Greek. Add to this the express statement that even the proselytes of the Jews learned their sacred language : Izates, the Prince of Assyrian Adiabene, under Caius Claudius, sent his five sons to Jerusalem to acquire accurately the language and culture of the country. As to Jesus, He afterwards not only spoke Aramaic, but rendered the Scripture in Aramaic with slight alteration from the Hebrew ; and, what is of more weight, He disputed times out of

number with the scribes concerning the word of Scripture, whose authority for them—and we may believe for Him too—lay solely in the original text. The only fact that would seem to speak for an employment of the Greek version is that the Scriptural quotations made by Jesus in our Gospels are taken in the majority of cases from the text of that translation. He who would argue like a child must come to the conclusion that Jesus mostly had recourse to the Greek, but now and then to the Hebrew. But these Scripture citations, as regards their definite linguistic garb, belong altogether to the Evangelists as such.

“This Hebrew text, and not the Greek, it must have been which the parents of Jesus also would best have understood, read, and taught. It was quite in keeping with the whole character of Jewish reverence for the Law that pious parents should themselves have a manuscript of the Law, and that in the ancient sacred language. As early as the age of the Hasmonæans there were a number of MSS. in private possession; and the rage of the Syrian king, who was for Hellenising the Jews, was specially levelled against these writings, which, like those of the Christians in later times under the Emperor Diocletian, were torn and burnt. It

is not likely that the employment of these documents in houses should be afterwards more rare—rather would it continually increase under the exertions of the Scribes and Pharisees, if only as the symbol of resistance to the intrusion of foreign culture. Though, no doubt, considerable wealth was implied in the possession of a complete copy of the Old Testament in parchment or Egyptian papyrus, yet the Law, a Prophet, or a Psalter might adorn even a modest house, and single passages from the Law written on the door-posts and on slips of parchment—the ‘mementos,’ Tephillim, phylacteries—were to be found probably in every house, in accord-

ance with the letter of Moses and the customs of post-exilic times. According to the Talmud, rolls were given into the hands of children on which weighty portions of the Old Testament were marked.”<sup>1</sup>

I have quoted the above passage at length, in order that the fullest justice might be done to both sides of the question. And it would be a cause of great satisfaction if those writers who differ from the views which I hold as to the prevalence of Greek in Palestine in the time of Christ would boldly take their stand with Keim, and maintain that the Jews still read the Old Testament in the

<sup>1</sup> Keim's *Jesus of Nazara*, ii., p. 152 (Eng. Trans.).

ancient Hebrew text. We should then have to deal with something substantial, instead of being tantalised by the reiterated mention of an Aramaic version of the Old Testament, for the existence of which, as we shall soon see, no evidence can be produced. The ancient Hebrew text undoubtedly existed at the date referred to, and we should thus, I repeat, have something positive set before us, did scholars generally follow Keim, and say, *That* was the Bible in ordinary use among the Jews in the days of Christ and His Apostles. But, as we have seen, there is no hope of this. All critical opinion is dead in the teeth of such an assertion. It

is even a kind of commonplace among Biblical scholars that ancient Hebrew had been unintelligible to the Jewish people for generations before the coming of Christ. There is, indeed, not the smallest necessity at the present day for refuting the views of Keim, as set forth in the passage which has been quoted. Scholars, with consentient voice, call out against them. They are utterly opposed to the clearest evidence, such as that derived from the case of Josephus; and, as has been shown, Ewald, Bleek, De Wette, Gesenius, Winer, Deutsch, and many others, join in condemning them. But while hardly a single critic will be found

agreeing with Keim in his affirmation, that the Old Testament in ancient Hebrew was still commonly read by the Jewish people in the time of Christ, there is nevertheless much in the tone of the passage quoted which falls in with prevailing impressions or prejudices, and which, therefore, calls for further consideration.

First, we are told that the Jews of the period *disliked* Greek. This is a very common assertion; but what say facts? Look, for instance, at the Apocryphal books of the Old Testament. These range from about the third century before Christ to the commencement of our era. Many of them were popular in Palestine, and in what lan-

guage did they circulate? Unquestionably in Greek. Several of them, indeed, were originally composed in that language, while those of them which were written in Hebrew (Aramaic) soon assumed a Greek dress, and the originals were left to perish. As I have remarked elsewhere, "the Jewish literature was then Greek. Writings intended for the people, and commonly current among them, were composed in the Greek language."<sup>1</sup> Josephus wrote all his works in Greek, except his "History of the Jewish War," which he composed at first in Aramaic for the use of "the barbarians of the interior." Justus of

<sup>1</sup> *Discussions on the Gospels*, p. 57.

Tiberias, a contemporary of Josephus, also wrote in Greek, as is plain from the fact that his work on "The Chronology of the Kings of Judah" was read by Photius of Constantinople in the ninth century after Christ. And, as Credner has remarked, a familiar acquaintance with the Greek language by the inhabitants of Palestine is presumed throughout by the writers of our Gospels.<sup>1</sup> Let us hear no more, then, of the Jews' dislike to Greek. Any passages from the Talmud which seem to sanction such a statement must be regarded as exceptional, or as referring to a later period than that under considera-

<sup>1</sup> *Einl. in das N. T.*, § 77.

tion. Accordingly, scholars of the highest repute in regard to their acquaintance with Jewish feeling about the time of Christ repudiate this notion of their dislike to the Greek language. Zunz (*e.g.*) tells us that "it stood among the learned Jewish authorities of Palestine in high esteem."<sup>1</sup> And Lightfoot, referring to the early Rabbis, declares that "the Jews do well near acknowledge the Greek for their mother-tongue even in Judæa."<sup>2</sup> Thus, facts that are incontrovertible combine with opinions that must be acknowledged weighty in setting aside the oft-

<sup>1</sup> *Vorträge*, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. xi., p. 25 (Pitman's Edition).

repeated assertion that the Jews of the time of Christ disliked Greek, and in establishing the very opposite conclusion.

But we are told above, that "even Paul was aware of" this dislike. The passage relied upon to prove this is Acts xxi. 40, or rather xxii. 2. But it proves nothing of the kind. It simply shows with what consummate tact the Apostle accommodated himself to the exigencies of his position, and how naturally the Jews were disarmed of the prejudices they entertained against him when they heard him so unexpectedly address them, not in the Greek, but the Hebrew language. They had imagined he was thoroughly alienated

from all that was distinctively Jewish, and had gone over entirely to the Gentiles. But his adoption of Hebrew for the nonce as the language of his address was an instant witness in his favour, so that "they kept the more silence," and allowed him to proceed with his speech, which they probably would not otherwise have done. It was no dislike to *Greek* which the Jews then felt: it was dislike to the *man* who was to address them; and he took the readiest means available for propitiating them. This was the special reason for St. Paul speaking to them in Hebrew; while St. Stephen, on the other hand, having no such motive to

influence him, addressed even the Sanhedrim (as all but the most prejudiced admit) in the Greek language.<sup>1</sup>

The alleged dislike of the Jews to "the Greek translation" will be considered afterwards. Meanwhile, there may be noticed, further, in the above passage from Keim the wide generalisation which it derives from an individual case, to the effect that "the proselytes of the Jews

<sup>1</sup> "If he spoke in Hebrew (Syro-Chaldaic), then either those passages where the LXX. varies from the Hebrew text must owe their insertion in that shape to some *Greek narrator* or to *Luke himself*, or Stephen must have, in speaking, *translated them, thus varying*, into Hebrew: either supposition being in the highest degree improbable."  
—Alford on Acts vii.

learned their sacred language.” Because the sons of King Izates were sent to Jerusalem to do so, *therefore* proselytes generally did so. This is much the same as if we were told that because an Indian prince, on his conversion to Christianity, might send his children to Europe to learn its customs or languages, therefore all converts followed the same course. Josephus evidently mentions the case of Izates as remarkable, and not as exemplifying what usually took place.

The assertion that the “Scripture citations” found in the Gospels “belong altogether to the Evangelists as such” is simply one of those reckless statements

which deserve no refutation. It rests upon nothing but the subjective opinion of the critic, and seems opposed to all the probabilities of the case, as well as to the special features which the quotations present.

Finally, to imagine that our Lord's hearers in general were possessed of *Hebrew* manuscripts of the Old Testament is opposed to well-known facts as to the cost at which these were produced. It is evidently taken for granted throughout the Gospels that the people of the Jews in the time of Christ had easy and familiar access to the entire Old Testament. Appeal is constantly made to the Scriptures

as being in their possession. But not one in a hundred, to say the least, could have afforded to purchase a Hebrew copy even of the Law, far less of the entire Scriptures. Greek books, on the other hand, as we know from abundant evidence, were produced at a very low rate, and might easily be procured by almost the poorest of the people.

I trust nothing more need be said to convince the reader that when our Lord quoted from the Scriptures in His addresses to the people, or when they, in turn, did so in conversation with Him, the original Hebrew text could in neither case be the medium employed. We may refer,

*e.g.*, to Mark xii. 35—37, in which passage Christ is represented as teaching publicly in the Temple, and citing the Old Testament. “And Jesus answered and said,” we read, “while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.” Here we find the people at large (*ὁ πᾶσις ὄχλος*) spoken of as easily understanding our Lord when He quoted an Old Testa-

ment statement. And if we turn to such a passage as John vi. 31, we find a citation from the ancient Scriptures made by the people themselves. They, the multitude (*ὁ ὄχλος*, v. 24), addressed the Saviour in these words:—"Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat;" and they thus quoted familiarly from the Book of Psalms. Now, in what language were these citations made? Certainly not in the ancient Hebrew; for, as we have seen, that was then, by the general consent of scholars, a dead language, so far as the inhabitants of Palestine generally were concerned. It follows, there-

fore, that the first hypothesis, to the effect that the original Hebrew Scriptures constituted the Bible in the hands of Christ and His Disciples, cannot possibly be accepted.

I am anxious that the ground should be thoroughly cleared thus far before another step is taken. And if any reader has been hitherto resting in the belief that our Lord's frequent references to the Old Testament were made to the Hebrew text, I trust he will carefully weigh the considerations which have been stated. Let him reflect that the ancient Hebrew had long been a dead language to the Jewish people in general. Let him con-

sider, too, that the cost of a Hebrew roll of the entire Old Testament was such as to place its possession utterly beyond the reach of any except the wealthiest of the nation. Either of these facts is sufficient to negative the idea that when our Lord referred His hearers, as He so often did, to the Scriptures, He could have meant the original Hebrew text. It will not, I hope, be deemed going too far if I say that this is a point clearly and conclusively settled. And the first hypothesis being thus disposed of, we are now prepared to advance to the discussion of those other theories which have been mentioned.

## CHAPTER II.

Second hypothesis: That Christ and His Apostles, in reading and referring to the Old Testament Scriptures, *made use of an Aramaic version.*

DID a written Aramaic version of the Old Testament ever exist? Many have assumed that such was the case, but on grounds which, I believe, will not bear even the slightest examination. This, I trust, will become plain to the reader as we proceed to a further examination of the subject.

As has been already remarked, and as should be carefully noted, it is manifestly implied throughout the Gospels that the

Jews of our Lord's time had access to the entire Scriptures of the Old Testament in a written form which was well understood. This is plain, for instance, from the familiar words in John v. 39—*ἐρευνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς*—whether the indicative or imperative rendering of the passage be adopted. The declaration, “Ye search the Scriptures,” or the injunction, “Search the Scriptures,” obviously involves the existence at the time of a complete version of the Old Testament, with which the people of the Jews did, or might, make themselves familiar. It has, indeed, been observed, with apparent truth, that *οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι* (to whom this discourse was

specially addressed) never means “the multitude, but always those in authority of some kind,” but it is truly added that St. John always puts these forward “as the representatives of the whole people in their rejection of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> This clearly implies that access to the sacred Scriptures was no mere class privilege, but extended to the whole body of the people. So much lies on the very surface of the passage, yet it has suffered strange distortion. Thus, Mr. Watkins, in his recent excellent Commentary on St. John’s Gospel, thinks the words may be paraphrased as follows: “Ye make your Mid-

<sup>1</sup> Alford, *in loc.*

rashim (Commentaries in the sense of Cæsar's) on the Scriptures; ye explain and comment, and seek for hidden mystic meaning; ye do all this because ye think they contain eternal life; their true meaning is not hidden; they tell of life, and ye who seek it do not hear them, and will not come unto me that ye might have life"<sup>1</sup>—an extraordinary comment, surely, on the simple words ἐρευνᾶτε τὰς γραφὰς. Another able writer, under the pressure of a felt difficulty, has supposed that these words were not addressed to the people in general, but were "directed, in the first instance, to the scribes and lawyers, the authorised

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Ellicott's *New Testament Commentary*, in loc.

exponents of the Law, whose duty it was to study it in the original.”<sup>1</sup> But even granting, against probability, as I think, that the words were thus limited, there are many other passages in the Gospels which necessarily imply that a popular version of the ancient Scriptures then circulated in Palestine. Thus, we are told at Matt. xxi. 42, of this appeal of Jesus in His public teaching—“Did ye never read in the Scriptures?” And again, we find it stated at Luke xxiv. 45, respecting the private intercourse of Christ with His Disciples—“Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the

<sup>1</sup> *The Expositor*, vol. vii., p. 383.

Scriptures.” These are only two passages out of many which imply that in the days of our Lord the Old Testament was, in its entirety, in circulation among the Jews of Palestine, and that they were familiarly acquainted with its contents.

That being the case, we return to the question—Did such a version exist in Aramaic? Some seem to think that it is sufficient to answer that this *must* have been the case. They assume certain points as to the linguistic condition of Palestine at the time, and then they affirm a hypothesis as to the Bible in use among its inhabitants. But nothing could be more unscientific than such a mode of dealing

with the subject. And the day has gone by when mere assertions of the kind referred to carry weight in any department of knowledge. Proofs, facts, incontrovertible arguments are now called for, and, as we shall soon see, are, with reference to the hypothesis before us, lamentably wanting. Will the reader believe that, while what is required is evidence that an *entire* Aramaic version of the Old Testament existed in the time of Christ, all that is forthcoming is some slight reference to a Targum of the Book of Job? And even that, if it existed, could not lawfully be used. As we shall see from a passage to be immediately quoted, it

was held in such detestation by a leading authority among the Jews that he caused it to be buried in the earth! And if such were the feelings of the time in regard to written Aramaic versions of any portions of Scripture, we may safely conclude that no translation of the entire Old Testament in that language could be in common use. It is stated, indeed, that *written* Targumim of Scripture were strictly interdicted.

It may be argued, however, that if there is any reason to believe that a Targum of Job existed about the middle of the first century of our era, we may infer that there would also be a translation of

the other books of the Old Testament. Zunz has even gone so far as to maintain that “written Aramaic translations of most of the books of the Bible had already undoubtedly existed under the Asmonæans.”<sup>1</sup> But in this opinion he has not been followed by scholars. Beelen declares that he brings forward no sufficient proof of the statement.<sup>2</sup> And Bleek says:—“The strong probability is that there were no written translations of the

<sup>1</sup> “Geschriebene aramäische Uebersetzungen der meisten Biblischen Bücher hat es sicherlich schon unter den Hasmonäern gegeben.”—*Vorträge*, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> “Ut suam sententiam confirmet nullum satis firmum affert argumentum.”—*Chrestomathia Rabbinica et Chaldaica*, p. 91.

sacred books in Aramaic before the times of Christ—no one, at any rate, which obtained special circulation, and was held in esteem.”<sup>1</sup>

I should myself have no difficulty in believing that Aramaic versions of the Old Testament books circulated among the Jews for a considerable period after their return from the exile, were it not for the fact, noticed in the passage about to be quoted, that no written interpretations were allowed. The Targum of the Book of Job, of which special mention is made, seems at last to have been reduced to writing, but only, as will be seen,

<sup>1</sup> *Eint. in d. N. T.*, p. 53.

to be shrunk from with horror. We shall now listen to what Emmanuel Deutsch, the late celebrated Talmudical scholar, has to say upon the subject. Let the reader observe that while he speaks of an Aramaic translation of Scripture being necessary after the ancient Hebrew ceased to be generally understood, the translation was oral, and not *written*. And let it be remembered, along with this, that it is some written version of Scripture—*γραφαί*—we are in search of, as having been in use among the Jews of Palestine in the days of Christ.

“If the common people thus gradually had lost all knowledge of the tongue in

which were written the books to be read to them, it naturally followed (in order 'that they might understand them') that recourse must be had to a translation into the idiom with which they were familiar—the Aramaic. That further, since a bare translation could not in all cases suffice, it was necessary to add to the translation an explanation, more particularly of the more difficult and obscure passages. Both translation and explanation were designated by the term *Targum*. In the course of time there sprang up a guild, whose special office it was to act as *interpreters* in both senses (*Meturgeman*), while formerly the learned alone volunteered their

services. These interpreters were subjected to certain bonds and regulations as to the form and substance of their renderings. Thus (compare Mishnah, *Meg.*, *passim*; *Mass. Sofer.* xi. 1; Maimon. *Hilch. Tephill.* 12, § 11 ff.; *Orach. Chaj.* 145, 1, 2) ‘neither the reader nor the interpreter are to raise their voices above the other;’ ‘they have to wait for each other until each have finished his verse;’ ‘the Meturgeman is not to lean against a pillar or a beam, but to stand with fear and with reverence;’ ‘*he is not to use a written Targum*, but he is to deliver his translation *vivâ voce*,’ lest it might appear that he was reading out of the Torah

itself, and thus the Scriptures be held responsible for what are *his own dicta*; 'no more than one verse in the Pentateuch and three in the Prophets (a greater licence is given for the Book of Esther) shall be read and translated at a time;' 'that there should be not more than one reader and one interpreter for the Law, while for the Prophets one reader and one interpreter, or two interpreters, are allowed,' &c. (comp. xiv. 21 ff; xii. 30; 27, 28). Again (Mishnah, *Meg.* and *Tosiftah*, *ad loc.*), certain passages liable to give offence to the multitude are specified which may be read in the synagogue and translated; others which may

be read but not translated ; others, again, which may neither be read nor translated.

. . . The same causes which, in the course of time, led to the writing down—after many centuries of oral transmission—of the whole body of the Traditional Law . . . engendered also—and about the same period, as it would appear—written Targums, for certain portions of the Bible at least. The fear of the adulterations and mutilations which the Divine Word—amid the troubles within and without the Commonwealth—must undergo at the hands of incompetent or impious exponents broke through the rule that the Targum should only be *oral*, lest it might

acquire undue authority (comp. Mishnah, *Meg.* iv. 5, 10; *Tosifta*, *ib.* 3; *Jer. Meg.* 4, 1; *Bab. Meg.* 24 *a*; *Sota*, 39 *b*). Thus, if a Targum of Job is mentioned (*Sab.* 115 *a*; *Tr. Sopherim*, 5, 15; *Tosifta Sab.* c. 14; *Jer. Sab.* 16, 1) as having been highly disapproved by Gamaliel the elder (middle of first century A.D.), who caused it to be hidden and buried out of sight, we find, on the other hand, at the end of the second century the practice of reading the Targum generally commended, and somewhat later Jehoshua ben Levi enjoins it as a special duty upon his sons. The Mishnah even contains regulations about the manner (*Jud.*

iv. 5) in which the Targum is to be written.”<sup>1</sup>

This passage has been gravely adduced<sup>2</sup> to prove, on the authority of Mr. Deutsch, that a written Aramaic translation of the entire Old Testament circulated in the time of Christ among the Jews of Palestine. If it does not prove *that*, its citation is wholly irrelevant to the point before us. The question is, What were those *γραφαί* to which our Lord so often appealed, and which He took for granted were in the possession of His hearers? It is obvious that the *Scriptures* referred to

<sup>1</sup> Deutsch's *Literary Remains*, p. 324 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *The Expositor*, vol. vii., p. 384.

denoted the whole Old Testament, in one form or another; so that if the above extract from Mr. Deutsch does not imply that a written Aramaic version of the entire Old Testament existed in the time of Christ, it completely fails in effecting the purpose for which it is produced.

Now, the reader has only to let his eye fall upon the passage to see that it does not mean, and was never intended by its author to mean, what has been so strangely inferred from it. Mr. Deutsch italicises the injunction that the Meturgeman was "not to use a written Targum," and tells us that even so late as the middle of the first century A.D. Gamaliel regarded a

written translation of the Book of Job as an utter abomination. It is needless to say that if this were so the supposition that the entire Old Testament circulated in the days of Christ in an Aramaic version, contains its own refutation.

It has been justly observed, with respect to the writings of Mr. Deutsch, that their general indefiniteness as to dates goes far to strip them of true scientific value.<sup>1</sup> This was felt by many when his wonderful paper on the Talmud appeared in 1867. In that sparkling and eloquent article it

<sup>1</sup> "His articles contribute absolutely nothing to our stock of scientific materials." — *Westminster Review*, April, 1874.

may be true that he insinuates opinions as to the very early date of some portions of the Rabbinical writings, but he guards against committing himself to any definite assertion.<sup>1</sup> What, however, he did not do himself his followers have done for him. The "Talmud" article was laid hold of by all sorts of writers, and made the basis of the most extraordinary statements. Thus, to give only one example, we find

<sup>1</sup> His most positive statement is the following:—"We need not urge the priority of the Talmud to the New Testament, although the former was redacted at a later period."—*Remains*, p. 55 (note). The point here taken for granted can be conceded only with respect to a small portion of the Talmud, and that in an unwritten form. There is another reference to the subject of "dates" at p. 137, but nothing is satisfactorily established.

the following amusing sentence in one of our ablest periodicals :—“ As for the old idea that *the Talmud was not written before the Christian dispensation*, and therefore contains plagiarisms of the New Testament, that has by this time been given up, along with the notion that all languages are derived from Hebrew, or that the cuneiform inscriptions are the work of worms !”<sup>1</sup>

While Mr. Deutsch’s article on the Talmud was thus made the foundation for assertions from which he carefully abstains,

<sup>1</sup> *Saturday Review*, Nov. 2nd, 1867, p. 569. It is almost needless to say that even the Mishnah was not committed to writing till the second century after Christ.

the same, as we have seen, has been the fate of his writings on the Targums. In the paper from which we have already quoted he goes on to enumerate the existing Targums, and expresses himself thus as to the oldest of them—that of Onkelos:—“The Targum was begun to be committed to writing about the end of the second century A.D. So far, however, from its superseding the oral Targum at once, it was, on the contrary, strictly forbidden to read it in public (*Jer. Meg.* 4, 1). Nor was there any uniformity in the version. Down to the middle of the second century we find the masters most materially differing from

each other with respect to the Targum of certain passages (*Seb.* 54 *a*), and translations quoted not to be found in any of our Targums. The necessity must thus have pressed itself upon the attention of the spiritual leaders of the people to put a stop to the fluctuating state of a version which, in the course of time, must needs have become naturally surrounded with a halo of authority little short of that of the original itself. We shall thus not be far wrong in placing the work of collecting the different fragments, with their variants and reducing them into one—finally authorised version—about the end of the third, or the beginning of the

fourth, century, and in assigning Babylon to it as the birthplace.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus, according to Mr. Deutsch, the formation of the Targum of Onkelos on the Pentateuch took place some centuries after the Christian era, and he adds that this is the general belief of the greatest Rabbinical authorities at the present day. “The opinions,” he says, “developed here are shared more or less by some of the most competent scholars of our day: for instance, Zunz (who now repudiates the dictum laid down in his *Gottesdienstl. Vortr.*, that the translation of Onkelos dates from about the middle of the first

<sup>1</sup> *Literary Remains*, p. 342.

century A.D. Comp. *Zeitschr.*, 1843, p. 179, note 3), Grätz, Levy, Hertzfeld, Geiger, Frankel, &c.”

It is plain from all this that Mr. Deutsch, so far from lending his support to the idea that a written Aramaic version of the Old Testament existed in the time of Christ, again and again implies the very opposite. According to him, an oral interpretation alone was sanctioned,<sup>1</sup> while any slight attempts which had been made towards a written version were frowned upon and condemned. What, then, are we to understand by those *γραφαί* to

<sup>1</sup> So Vitringa: “Versio peragenda absque Scripto.”—*De Synagoga Vetere*, p. 1019.

which our Lord so often referred? We read (Luke xxiv. 27) that "He expounded to his disciples *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning himself." These words clearly imply that the inhabitants of Palestine had at the time easy and familiar access to a written version of the entire Old Testament. But, as we have just learned, on the most unimpeachable authority, no such version then existed in Aramaic. We conclude, therefore, with certainty, that Christ must have referred to the Old Testament books in some other form when He appealed, as He so often did, to the sacred Scriptures.

And yet the passage above quoted from

Mr. Deutsch has been thought to prove against me that there *was* an Aramaic version of the Old Testament Scriptures current among the Jews of Palestine in the days of Christ. An able and learned writer, who has done me the honour of criticising my arguments in support of the general use of Greek by Christ and His Disciples, has brought it forward with an air of triumph, and then said:—"If Dr. Roberts wishes to continue this controversy, it would be instructive to know what are his views on this matter." Well, my views have just been stated. They are to the effect that the statements

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Sanday in *The Expositor*, vol. vii., p. 386.

made by Mr. Deutsch, instead of confirming the belief that an Aramaic version of the Old Testament then circulated in Palestine, clearly show the very opposite. Every reader will, without difficulty, be able to form an opinion on the subject for himself.

That the amplest justice may be done to the hypothesis now under consideration, I shall here bring forward all that has recently been said in its behalf by the writer just quoted. "I doubt," he says, "whether we shall ever have a satisfactory scientific statement of the case until the references in the Talmud have been more thoroughly examined and sifted,

and the antiquity and antecedents of the Targums more fully ascertained. What is needed, in fact, is an examination of the whole Jewish literature, beginning with the fragments of Aramaic embedded in the canonical books of Daniel and Ezra, extending over the whole of the Apocrypha (and many of these books, though now preserved only in Greek, appear to have had, undoubtedly, Hebrew—*i.e.*, Aramaic—originals), and ending with the final elaboration of the Jerusalem Talmud and the committing to writing of the Jerusalem Targum. If this were done, and all the allusions, direct and indirect, were carefully collected, it would be more

possible than it is at present to trace the history of Western Aramaic speech and its real relations to the Greek. It seems on the face of it highly improbable that there should be a great breach of continuity in this history. It would be very strange if at the beginning of the period parts of the Scriptures themselves should have been written in Aramaic, and at the end of the period the Aramaic paraphrases of Scripture, long orally transmitted, were fixed in writing, while in the middle of the same period the books of the Old Testament were habitually read in another and foreign tongue. It would be especially strange if the interval

in which this is said to have been the case was (as we know that it was) a time of passionate national aspirations and excited patriotic feeling. But, indeed, I suspect that, apart from probabilities, there is considerable evidence, direct or indirect, that this was not the case. The Targum of the Book of Job is known to have been written before the destruction of the Temple. A writer like Credner, examining the quotations from the Old Testament with a care and thoroughness of which it would be well if there were more in some of our English scholars, finds in several of them such marked coincidences with the text of the Targums

as prove to his satisfaction the use of a Targum by the Evangelist. Thus in Matt. xii. 18, the Evangelist, like the Targum of Isaiah xlii. 1, has *θήσω* where the LXX. have *ἔδωκα*, and both the Evangelist and the Targum give to the passage a Messianic application. Similarly, in the application of Jeremiah xxxi. 15, Credner thinks that a Targum has been used. In the quotation of Micah v. 2, he traces to this source the insertion of *οὐδαμῶς* (*οὐδαμῶς ἐλαχίστη* for *ὀλιγοστός*), and also the insertion of *ἡγούμενος*—two very marked peculiarities. Credner sums up his researches on this section of quotations thus:—‘ In several places the materials

still at our command are sufficient to prove the intervention of a Targum, so that we are justified in coming to the conclusion that, wherever a connection with the Hebrew appears, this has not been caused by a direct recourse to the original, but has been brought about through the medium of a Targum.'"<sup>1</sup>

Before proceeding to examine this passage in detail, I would remind the reader that what is wanted to meet the requirements of the case is an *entire written version* of the Old Testament. Now, is there anything in the above argumentation to countenance the idea

<sup>1</sup> *The Expositor*, vol. vii., p. 94.

that such a version existed in Aramaic? We have seen that Mr. Deutsch and other high authorities expressly state that no written Targumim were then allowed in Palestine, so that the *γραφαί* of our Lord and His Apostles could not possibly have been a Bible written in Aramaic.

More particularly: it is not to be expected, as the above passage suggests, that further investigation of the Talmud or Targums will lead to any radical change in the views which have been reached on the point in question. As we have seen, Rabbinical scholars are perfectly agreed respecting it, and harmoniously join in instructing us that no written Aramaic

version of the Old Testament existed in the time of Christ. Let me again entreat the reader to look not at what may be deemed “probabilities,” but what must be acknowledged as *facts*. And that the Jews, as a nation, exhibited strong Hellenic proclivities for several generations before Christ is a fact which cannot be doubted by any unprejudiced scholar. Ewald observes:—“If one glances over the nearly three hundred years of Grecian supremacy from the conquering inroad of Alexander, he perceives at last the whole of Palestine sown over, so to speak, with Greek appellations of cities, places, and rivers, &c.”

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte d. Volk. Isr.*, iv., 265.

Greek names appear (B.C. 107) even in the family of the Maccabees; and, as was before remarked, the literature of the country for a considerable period before Christ seems to have been exclusively Greek. Take, *e.g.*, the second book of Maccabees. That book was composed probably not later than half a century before the Christian era, and its original language was unquestionably Greek.<sup>1</sup> Now, it bears the most striking testimony, both direct and indirect, to the firm root which Hellenism had taken in Palestine.

<sup>1</sup>“Das Buch gibt sich auf den ersten Blick als Griechisch Original zu erkennen.”—Grimm in *Handbuch zu den Apokryphen d. Alt. Test.*

We read (chap. iv. 13) of the "acme" which had been reached in that respect. And in the seventh chapter there is a remarkable illustration of the fact that the Jews had become bilingual, using Aramaic in familiar intercourse among themselves, while Greek was the language of literature and public address. We read of the heroic conduct of a mother and her seven sons, when subjected to torture in the presence of Antiochus Epiphanes. Mention is again and again made in the narrative of the sufferers having made use of the *patois* of the country in addressing each other, while, at the same time, it is evident that they also spoke Greek. At verse 21 we

are told respecting the mother that, full of the noblest courage, she exhorted each of her sons "in their native tongue" to suffer patiently; and at verse 24 we read that the king, not understanding the language that was used, and suspecting that it was meant to mock his power, put forth his utmost efforts to win over to his purpose the youngest brother, who still remained alive. And then, at verse 26, we find the mother addressed by Antiochus, evidently in Greek, but only replying to his exhortation by again appealing to her son (verse 27) in "the native tongue;" while at verses 31-38 we read of the young man directly addressing to the king, obviously

in Greek, words of severe rebuke and resolute defiance. It is manifest from this narrative that both the mother and the sons were *bilingues*; since, while they spoke between themselves in their native dialect, they listened to Antiochus, and also addressed him, in the Greek language.

Ewald has given an excellent sketch of the history of the period referred to, and has traced with much power the gradual encroachments and ultimate ascendancy of Gentilism.<sup>1</sup> Credner, too, the admirable writer quoted in the above extract, has expressed himself on the subject in the following remarkable words :—“ Ever since

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte d. Volk. Isr.*, iv., 250—520.

the times of Alexander the Great the Jews had emigrated in great numbers from Palestine to Greek countries. In these lands even the more learned among them, such as Philo, forgot their mother-tongue ; and this happened all the more readily since, from their sacred books having been translated into the Greek language, provision had thus been made even for their religious necessities. Nevertheless, these Grecian Jews, known as Hellenists, remained in unbroken communion with their native country. Jerusalem was always regarded by the Jews as their capital ; the Sanhedrin of that city was, in all religious points, their highest

authority ; and thousands of Greek-speaking Jews travelled annually to Palestine in order that in the national sanctuary at Jerusalem they might present their supplications, and pay their vows to the Lord who dwelleth in Zion. At the same time, first the Greek and then the Roman conquerors filled the land ; and from the time of Herod, not only were Greek artists and artisans to be seen at work in Palestine, but Greek colonies were also, in no small numbers, to be found. The combined influence of these circumstances had, in the time of Christ, brought about this peculiar condition of things in Palestine, that the Greek

language was generally understood, while the properly Jewish language was understood only by the strictly Jewish inhabitants; so that one may say, almost all the dwellers in Palestine understood Greek, but not all their own vernacular language.”<sup>1</sup>

As to the opinion quoted from Credner in the passage given above, that some special forms in the New Testament citations were derived from a prevalent Aramaic interpretation, and not from the LXX., I am not greatly concerned to deny that such may have been the case. There were, doubtless, not a few render-

<sup>1</sup> *Einkl. in das N. T.* § 75.

ings, different from those of the Septuagint, current in the land. This point will be adverted to in the following chapter. But, even though it be granted that the Evangelists occasionally adapted the Greek of their quotations to some accepted Aramaic rendering which departed from the LXX., that does not touch the vital part of the question. We have already had frequent occasion to notice that any Aramaic translations of the Old Testament which existed at the period referred to, were exclusively *oral*, while what is wanted to furnish any basis for the second hypothesis as to the Bible of our Lord and His Apostles, is proof

that a *written* Aramaic version of the entire Scriptures then circulated in Palestine. All proof, as we have seen, points to the opposite conclusion; and this may now be briefly supported by a few additional considerations.

Josephus is totally silent respecting any Aramaic version. As is well known, he gives an account of the rise of the *Greek* version of the Pentateuch (*Antiq.* xii. 2, 1 ff.); and he very frequently makes use of the LXX. in his writings. But none of his works contain the slightest allusion to a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic, nor does he appear to have made any use of such a

version. Had it, then, any existence in his day?

Again, not one of the Christian Fathers seems to have known anything of such a work. As we shall soon see, it is to the LXX. only that they refer, as being in constant use among the Jews. Some of the Fathers, we know, were very diligent in examining into the history of the ancient Scriptures, and are not likely to have overlooked the fact that they had been translated into Aramaic, if such had really been the case. Yet even Origen, who understood Hebrew, and who was unwearied in Biblical researches, says not a word upon the subject.

Finally, it appears somewhat remarkable that hardly anything which can possibly be deemed a vestige of the imagined version, has descended to our day.<sup>1</sup> We still possess the Samaritan Pentateuch in a complete form. It can be traced, from an early period, through references which are made to it, both in the Talmud and in the Fathers. In like manner, had an Aramaic version of the Old Testament existed among the Jews at the commencement of our era, it too would surely have been traceable, in whole or in part, down to

<sup>1</sup> De Wette refers only to Matt. xxvii. 46, as "eine spur targumischer Uebersetzung." *Einkl. in das A. T.* § 57.

the present day. But not a relic or reminiscence of it has been preserved; while, as has just been remarked, not a single reference to it is to be found in the remains of patristic antiquity.

The second hypothesis, then, with respect to the Bible of our Lord and His Apostles, must as certainly be rejected as the first. No evidence is forthcoming that a written Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Scriptures existed among the Jews in the days of Christ. It is not, therefore, a mere "subjective opinion"<sup>1</sup> of mine which is put forward, when I remark that the

<sup>1</sup> So it has been called in *The Expositor*, vol. vii., p. 383.

language addressed by our Lord to his contemporaries—*ἔρευνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς*—could not have referred to such a version. Hard words have, no doubt, been used regarding me, for thus refusing to believe that the Bible of Christ and those around Him was an Aramaic translation of the Old Testament. But let the blame still be borne, if it is thought to be still deserved. I must repeat that there was no such version in existence. Fancy may invent it, but facts testify against it; and therefore I maintain that our Lord had in view some other form in which the sacred books of the Jews then really circulated among them, when He referred His hearers, as He so

often did, to the Holy Scriptures. This leads us to the third hypothesis, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

### CHAPTER III.

Third hypothesis: That Christ and His Apostles, in reading and referring to the Old Testament Scriptures, *made use of the Septuagint translation.*

HERE we at once feel ourselves on firm ground. We know, beyond all doubt, that a Greek version of the ancient Scriptures did exist in our Saviour's day. Although much that is fabulous may have been mixed up with the account given under the name of Aristeas, and repeated by others, of the formation of the translation of the LXX., certain points are admitted by all scholars as undoubtedly historical. Among these are the follow-

ing:—That the version was begun about 280 B.C., that it was gradually completed in the course of the succeeding century, and that thus it had existed, in its entirety, for many generations before the coming of Christ.

Is this, then, the Bible of which we are in quest? It would seem that, since the two hypotheses already considered have, of necessity, been set aside, no further choice is left. By a process of exhaustion we are led to the conclusion, that the version of the LXX. *must* have been the Bible of Christ and His Apostles. But if such was in reality the case, we are sure to find actual evidence to that

effect. Let us then, first of all, turn to the New Testament, and enquire whether or not the facts which it presents harmonise with the conclusion which has been reached.

On doing so we appear to be at once released from all lingering dubiety or hesitation. For, on glancing at the Old Testament passages cited in the New, we find that the great majority of them are expressed in the very words of the LXX.; while others, though differing slightly, are manifestly derived from it. We also find the most remarkable harmony between the general diction of the New Testament and that of the LXX.

A strong *prima facie* impression is thus produced that the question we have been agitating is solved; and that, in the Greek version of the Old Testament, we have discovered the Bible of our Lord and His Disciples. We proceed, however, to a fuller and closer examination of the whole facts of the case.

The number of passages quoted from the Old Testament in the New has been somewhat differently stated by different writers; and the reason is obvious. There are some cases in which it is difficult to say whether the words in question should be regarded as a direct citation, or merely a reference; and, according as they are

viewed in the one aspect or the other, will be the sum-total of the quotations. Following a recent writer, who has treated the subject with great care,<sup>1</sup> we may say that altogether 275 passages are quoted from the Old Testament in the various books of the New Testament. If John vii. 38, John vii. 42, and Eph. v. 14, be added, the whole number of citations will be brought up to 278.

Now, as I have said, in the vast majority of these quotations, the Septuagint is either exactly followed, or the resemblance is so close as to be virtually identical. As an example of perfect agreement

<sup>1</sup>Turpie, *The Old Testament in the New*, 1868.

we may refer to Acts ii. 34, 35, or Acts iv. 25, 26, in both of which passages the New Testament corresponds, word for word, with the LXX. As an instance, again, of slight variation, we may turn to Rom. x. 5, or 1 Pet. ii. 9; in the first of which passages we find *ὁ ποιήσας* in the New Testament, for *ἃ ποιήσας* in the Old; while in the second, the Apostle varies from the LXX. only by omitting the *καὶ* in his quotation of *βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα καὶ ἔθνος ἅγιον*. Such passages tell their own tale, as being directly and unquestionably taken from the LXX.

There are, again, many degrees of variation from the text of the LXX., where

still there can be doubt as to the source whence the words were derived. Sometimes nothing more than a faint reminiscence of the Greek version seems to have been present to the mind of the New Testament writer, while yet it is plain that he had it in view in his citation. We may refer for an example to John xiii. 18, where (not to notice other differences) we have *ἐπήρην ἐπ' ἐμὲ τὴν πτέρναν* in the Evangelist, for *ἐμεγάλυνεν ἐπ' ἐμὲ πτερνισμόν* in the LXX. The Hebrew exactly corresponds with the LXX., and it is evident that St. John had the rendering of the latter in his mind, while he expressed its meaning otherwise in his citation.

But further, there are passages which are quoted exactly from the LXX., where that version departs from the original Hebrew. An example is found at Matt. xiii. 14, where an *imperative* in the Hebrew is represented by a *future* both in the LXX. and the Gospel; and at Rom. xv. 12, where what is in the Hebrew, "which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek," is represented both in the Greek version and in the Epistle, "he that shall rise to rule over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust." In these and similar cases, the meaning expressed in the Greek may be implied in the Hebrew;

but so far as the phraseology is concerned, the New Testament departs entirely from the original text, and adopts that of the LXX.

And, what is still more remarkable, there are some instances in which the quotation made in the New Testament depends entirely for its pertinency and force on the words which are found in the LXX., and not in the Hebrew. A very striking example occurs at Acts xv. 16, 17. The Greek, as here quoted by the Apostle, runs as follows :—“ After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins

thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord who doeth all these things." The corresponding Hebrew of Amos ix. 11, 12 is thus given in our Authorised version:—  
“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins; and I will build it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this.”  
No one doubts that the Apostle's citation

is from the LXX., though, as is often the case, there are slight variations. But the noteworthy point is, that the Greek differs from the Hebrew in the very words on which the stress of the argument depends. James is pleading for the admission of Gentiles to the Christian Church, without requiring them to submit to the yoke of Jewish observances; in other words, he is pleading for an acknowledgment of the freedom and catholicity of the Gospel of Christ. Now, he does so, as was natural, by quoting a passage from the Old Testament, which implied that God had, from the first, intended that the new dispensation should

be of this character. For this end nothing could be more apposite or effective than these emphatic words:—“Ὅπως ἂν ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ καταλοιποὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸν Κύριον, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. But the Hebrew gives a totally different turn to the passage, and cannot be said even to *imply* the sense ascribed to it in the Acts. So much has this been felt, that many modern scholars hold that the original text of Amos has here been wilfully corrupted by the Jews. Others think that the Seventy must have had a different Hebrew text before them from what at present exists. Be this as it may, there can be no doubt that the Apostle followed the reading of the

LXX. He quoted from it as authoritative in the hearing, not only of his fellow-apostles, but of the *multitude* (τὸ πλῆθος, v. 12), and that, too, in the heart of the Holy City.

Besides this constant use of the LXX. by the New Testament writers in quoting from the Old, it deserves to be noticed how Septuagintal throughout is the diction of the New Testament. This is strikingly apparent to any one who looks through such a book as Grinfield's *Novum Testamentum, Editio Hellenistica*. There is hardly a verse but is found to possess a close linguistic affinity with the LXX. The minds of the New

Testament writers seem to have been saturated, so to speak, with the phraseology of the LXX. This is especially noticeable with regard to those great words which embody in themselves the root ideas of Christianity. Many of these are scarcely to be found in classical writers with any approach to their Evangelical meaning, but are seen to have been got ready for use in the pages of the LXX. Let us turn, for example, to the Epistle to the Romans. There we soon encounter the verb *δικαιῶ* (ii. 13; iii. 24; v. 1, &c.), on which so much depends in the New Testament. Its classical sense is "to make right," or

“to think fit;” but such is evidently not its import as employed by St. Paul. It means, “to acquit,” or “justify,” or “free from guilt;” and it was prepared in the LXX. for being so used (Exod. xxiii. 7; Ps. cxlii. 2, &c.). Again, what a flood of light is shed upon the Pauline phrase, *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*, as applied to Christ (Rom. viii. 3), when we observe that that expression is constantly used in the LXX. (Lev. v. 6; Num. vi. 11, &c.) for “a sin offering.” And, leaving the region of doctrine for that of ethics, we find such a word as *ταπεινός* (and its derivatives) absolutely unintelligible, unless it is looked at as employed

by the LXX. Where found in the classics, *ταπεινός* means only *low* in a local sense or in a bad moral sense; whereas in the LXX. (Ps. xxxiii. 18; Prov. xi. 2) it denotes "humble" or "lowly," and in this sense is applied (Matt. xi. 29) by our Lord to Himself. The Septuagintal usage of words is thus a most valuable guide to their real meaning, as employed in the New Testament; while a mere acquaintance with the same words, as occurring in the classics, would prove dangerously misleading. Well might Grinfield say, in referring to the style of the New Testament, "Sive ergo Hellenisticam, sive Hebraeo-Graecam, sive

Macedonicam, sive quovis alio nomine hanc dialectum vocares; nequaquam credendum est Grammatistis, qui voces et phrases sacrosanctas ex auctoribus profanis interpretentur, et Jordanis flumina cum Tiberis aut Arethusae aut Alpei limo et colluvione, ut ita dicam, contaminare elaborent.”<sup>1</sup>

It being thus certain that the New Testament phraseology is throughout based upon the LXX., this question may now be asked:—Did the sacred writers ever quote directly from the Hebrew? Many have replied very positively that such was the case. They think that the few cases in which the New Testament

<sup>1</sup> *Edit. Hell.*, Praef. ix.

writers depart from the existing Greek text, and seem to have recourse to the Hebrew, are sufficient to prove the point. But let us consider. If any one of the human authors of the New Testament might be expected to quote the Hebrew original, it would be the Apostle Paul. He had received a regular training under the famous Rabbi Gamaliel, and was, to use his own expression, a very "Hebrew of the Hebrews." Yet a very able and diligent student of his writings in our own day expresses himself on the point before us as follows:—"The whole number of quotations is about 87 . . . . Of these, nearly half show a precise verbal

agreement with the LXX. ; while of the remaining passages, at least two-thirds exhibit a degree of verbal similarity which can only be accounted for by an acquaintance with the LXX. None of these passages *offer any certain proof that the Apostle was acquainted with the Hebrew original.* That he must have been acquainted with it can hardly be doubted ; yet it seems improbable that he could have familiarly known it without straying into parallelisms with the Hebrew text in those passages in which it varies from the LXX. . . . . On the other hand, the Apostle must have possessed a minute knowledge of the LXX., as is found by

the fragmentary character of the quotations, no less than their verbal agreement.”<sup>1</sup>

If St. Paul's acquaintance with ancient Hebrew is thus doubtful, much more ought we to hesitate before ascribing a knowledge of it to any of the other sacred writers. They all seem to have been *ἀγράμματοί καὶ ἰδιῶται*, men destitute of that technical and scholastic culture by which alone such a knowledge could be acquired. But we will be told that they sometimes correct the LXX. rendering by turning to the Hebrew, and that they must therefore have been acquainted with

<sup>1</sup> Jowett's *Epistles of St. Paul*, i., 401.

the ancient language. Matt. ii. 15, *e.g.*, is appealed to, which contains a quotation from Hosea xi. 1, where the LXX. reads τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ, instead of τὸν υἱὸν μου, which is an exact rendering of the Hebrew.

There can be no doubt that the LXX. followed in this passage an erroneous text, and that St. Matthew gives a correct rendering of the true original. But that is very far from proving—against all probability—that he possessed a knowledge of ancient Hebrew. Let us take an analogous case. Suppose a writer among ourselves is in the habit of quoting the Authorised English version, but that

he occasionally gives it in an amended form—that, surely, would be no proof that he occasionally had recourse to the Hebrew or Greek original. There are well-known passages in which the Authorised version is defective or incorrect; and these are quite familiar to mere English readers, who have given attention to the subject. And so with the New Testament writers. There were, doubtless, many emendations on the LXX. version current in Palestine. Those scholars whose duty it was to study the original would suggest such improvements; and they would come to be known among the people, just as corrections of

the common English translation circulate among ourselves. And thus we naturally account for the few cases in which the sacred writers depart from the rendering of the LXX., and give a Greek version more correctly representing the original.

It would be contrary to the facts already established to suppose that men like Peter or John, who were technically "unlearned and ignorant," should have formed a translation for themselves from the ancient Hebrew; but there is no difficulty in conceiving that they took advantage at times of emendations on the current Greek version, which had been

suggested by those who studied the original text.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, laying aside all pre-suppositions, and following simply the evidence of facts, we are led to the conclusion that the Greek translation of the LXX. was the

<sup>1</sup> Some writers (*e.g.*, Bleek, *Einl.*, p. 276) have maintained that, whenever St. Matthew himself quotes a text from the Old Testament to prove the fulfilment of prophecy he translates directly from the Hebrew, while in passages quoted in his narrative the LXX. is followed. But facts do not bear out the former of these assertions (comp. chap. i. 23 with LXX.). Böhl affirms (*Forsch.*, p. 187) that only *one* of St. Matthew's quotations, viz., chap. ii. 15, corresponds exactly to the Hebrew, and adds that "all the others are at least moulded after the Septuagint." There is, however, a wide departure from the existing text of the LXX. at chap. viii. 17 and chap. xiii. 35, to be accounted for by the considerations stated above.

Bible of our Lord and His Apostles. Let us now glance at some of those strange vagaries of opinion into which scholars have been led, from failing to perceive, and rest in, this conclusion.

The very learned Bishop Walton, well aware that it would have been useless to read *ancient* Hebrew to those frequenting the synagogues of Palestine in the days of our Lord, says, with a curious mixture of truth and error, that Christ made use of the Greek version in the synagogue at Nazareth, and then translated the passage read into the vernacular Syriac!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> After quoting Luke iv. 18, 19, he remarks: "Hic videmus verba Evangelistae ab Hebraeo textu differre:

Vitringa, again, is distressed (*dolendum*) that any place should be allowed to the Greek version in the synagogues; while, remembering that the Hebrew of the Old Testament was then a dead language to the people, he tells us that there was always present some one “qui Scripturam praelectam in vernaculum idioma transferret.” But if so, it is somewhat stumbling that we find no reference to this important personage in the pages of the New Testament; as Vitringa himself admits when he says:—“Hujus vero sacri quae tamen cum Interpretatione Graeca exacte congruunt. Unde videtur colligi posse, Dominum Versionem Graecam in Synagoga usurpasse; quam postea lingua vernacula, Syriaca, populo explicavit.”—*Proleg.* ix., § 15.

ritus interpretationis lectae Scripturae nulla, quod sciam, exerta mentio occurrit, in scriptis novi foederis.”<sup>1</sup> Dean Milman seems to acknowledge that there is really no *evidence* for the existence of an interpreter in the synagogues of Palestine, when he tells us that “there was an officer in the synagogues out of Palestine, and *probably even within its borders*, called an interpreter, who translated the Law into the vernacular tongue, usually Greek in the first case, or Syro-Chaldaic in the latter.”<sup>2</sup> Such are the assumptions made and the uncertainties introduced by disregarding the fact already established, that the Greek

<sup>1</sup> *De Syn. Vet.*, p. 1021.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. of Jews*, ii., 464.

Bible was then universally in use among the Jews, both within and without the boundaries of Palestine.

A very singular hypothesis on the subject before us has recently been suggested by Professor Böhl, of the University of Vienna. In a deeply interesting and learned work<sup>1</sup> on the popular Bible of Palestine in the time of Christ, he tries to prove that our Lord and His Disciples used a *Syriac* version of the Old Testament, made, *not from the Hebrew, but from the LXX. translation.* This theory

<sup>1</sup> *Forschungen nach einer Volksbibel zur Zeit Jesu, und deren Zusammenhang mit der Septuaginta-Uebersetzung.*  
—Wien, 1873.

requires no lengthened refutation. It is sufficient to say that not a trace of the supposed Syriac Bible is to be found, and that we cannot conceive of a Jew of Palestine, if he felt himself capable of forming a new version of Scripture for the benefit of his countrymen, taking as its basis the translation of the LXX. instead of the original Hebrew text. Professor Böhl states what is unquestionably true, that "the New Testament authors cite a text which, in a remarkable degree agrees with the LXX."<sup>1</sup> But he refuses to find the

<sup>1</sup> *Forschungen nach einer Volksbibel zur Zeit Jesu, und deren Zusammenhang mit der Sept.-Uebersetzung*, p. 180.

simple and satisfactory explanation of this fact in a direct citation of the Greek version. He prefers instead the following round-about process. First, the LXX. was translated from the original Hebrew; next, this translation was retranslated into the Hebrew *patois* of Palestine; and then, from this secondary *Syriac* Bible, as he calls it, the New Testament writers made their quotations in *Greek*.

We cannot but regret that so much learning and diligence have been thrown away on such a manifestly untenable and unnecessary hypothesis.

The only point which remains for con-

sideration is an opinion or prejudice, which, more perhaps than anything else, has prevented the general acceptance of well-founded and accurate views on the subject under discussion. It has been maintained that the Jews of our Saviour's time had a repugnance to the Greek version, and even regarded it with a kind of religious horror. This idea meets us in many different forms, and is often expressed with great assurance. At one time we are told that the Jews of Palestine "held that on the day on which the seventy translators met, a supernatural darkness overspread the earth; and the day was to them one of their solemn periods

of fasting and humiliation.”<sup>1</sup> At another time it is affirmed that the Hebrew-speaking Jews despised those of their brethren who spoke Greek, and that it was only out of indulgence to the Hellenists that the version of the LXX. was permitted to be used in the synagogues; with other statements of the same sort.

As to the first assertion, every one who has looked below the mere surface literature on the subject knows that it is without foundation. This was clearly shown by Archdeacon Hody nearly two

<sup>1</sup> Dean Stanley's *Lectures on the Jewish Church*, i., p. 35.

centuries ago; and the story of the supposed fast being justly classed by him with that of a corresponding festival, “cui nihil fundamento erat praeter mendacium quoddam perridiculum,”<sup>1</sup> deserves no further consideration.

But let us now see what was the real estimation in which the Greek version was held by the Jews in the time of Christ. A long *catena* of passages might be quoted bearing upon this point. We shall content ourselves with the following:—

In the Talmud itself, the LXX. is, as a rule, spoken of with the greatest

<sup>1</sup> *De Textibus Originalibus*, lib. iii., ch. 1.

respect.<sup>1</sup> Inspiration is even claimed for it; and in one passage (*Megill.* i., 8) we find the opinion of Rabbi Symeon, a contemporary of Josephus, quoted to this effect: "that it was lawful to write down the sacred Scriptures, and to read them in public *only in the Greek language*, and not in foreign tongues."<sup>2</sup> Discrepant passages reflect the feelings of a much later age than that of Christ. Bishop Walton well remarks with respect to the

<sup>1</sup> Frankel, a learned Jewish scholar, writes—"In Talmud selbst, wird der Septuaginta nur ehrenvoll gedacht."—*Vorstudien*, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Latin by Hody, *De Textibus Originalibus*, p. 221. The original is given by Morinus, *Exercitationes Biblicae*, p. 365.

different estimates of the Septuagint formed by the earlier and later Rabbis —“ Licet ante Christi tempora eam magni aestimabant, posteriores, qui Gentium ad fidem conversioni invidebant, omnibus modis deprimere conati sunt.”<sup>1</sup>

Let us now glance at some of the statements made by those Fathers of the Church who lived nearest to the times of Christ. Tertullian tells us respecting the LXX.—“The Jews are accustomed to read it in public.”<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus, in a

<sup>1</sup> *Proleg.* ix. § 16. So Dr. Böhl says justly of the Jews:—  
“So lange als ihnen die Christen in der Polemik nicht allzu lästig mit den LXX. fielen, liess man der berühmten version ihr altes Ansehen ungeschmälert; später erst proscribte man sie.”—*Forsch.* p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> *Apol.*, ch. xviii.

very interesting passage, testifies to the point already established, that the version of the LXX. was habitually made use of by the Apostles.<sup>1</sup> After giving an account of the manner in which the translation was said to have been formed, and reprobating the attempts which some were making in his days to introduce renderings different from those of the LXX., he remarks that, “the Apostles agree with the aforesaid translation, and the translation agrees with the tradition of the Apostles. For,” he adds, “Peter, and John, and Matthew, and Paul, and the rest in succession, as well as their followers,

<sup>1</sup> *Adv. Haer.*, iii., 21, 3.

did set forth all the prophetic [statements] *just as the interpretation of the elders contains them.*"<sup>1</sup> Justin Martyr, again, tells us respecting the sacred books, as translated by the LXX., that they "exist everywhere among all the Jews;" and in another place he speaks of these books as to be found "in the synagogues of the Jews,"<sup>2</sup> implying the habitual use of them by that nation in the worship of God.

The full force of these passages is

<sup>1</sup> I am aware, of course, that a different view has been taken by some (Hody, Massuet) of the passage here quoted from Irenaeus. But Bellarmine, Walton, and others, agree with the import which I have assigned it, and the reader can judge for himself as to its natural signification.

<sup>2</sup> Hody, *De Text. Or.*, p. 226.

allowed by Archdeacon Hody and other learned writers. But Vitringa has striven, in a manner far from candid or creditable, to blunt their edge, or even to distort them into an opposite meaning;<sup>1</sup> and Ernesti<sup>2</sup> has well exposed the exaggerated importance which, throughout his erudite, but not always trustworthy, treatise, *De Synagoga Vetere*, he has attached to the later Jewish writings.

The truth, I believe, is that, until the time of Jerome, none of the Fathers of the Church imagined that the Old Testament circulated generally among the Jews of the

<sup>1</sup> *De Syn. Vet.*, p. 956.

<sup>2</sup> *Institutes*, ii., 308.

Apostolic age in any other form than that of the LXX. translation. Jerome allowed himself to make some very baseless and erroneous statements on the subject of the New Testament citations; and the groundlessness of these has been excellently exposed by several writers, such as Morinus and Father Simon. There is a very thorough discussion of the views of Jerome in the third of the *Exercitationes Biblicae* of Morinus; and his inconsistencies are set forth in the most telling and effective manner. But, indeed, his own pupils sometimes showed him how untenable were his positions. It was, for instance, a favourite doctrine of his that the Apostles

never cited the LXX. unless that version were in perfect concord with the Hebrew text. But his illustrious female disciple, Eustochium, staggered him by referring to Romans iii. 10—18, in which St. Paul quotes freely from the LXX., without regarding the Hebrew at all. Upon this discovery, Jerome was deeply agitated, and expressed himself as follows:—“*Quod cum audissem, quasi a fortissimo pugile percussus essem, coepi tacitus aestuare, et stuporem mentis vultus pallore signare: Hebraeus, inquam, ex Hebraeis, secundum legem Pharisaeus, eruditusque ad pedes Gamalielis, aut ignoravit haec, aut eorum qui lecturi erant abusus est igno-*

rantia.” The worthy Father might have been saved all this painful excitement, if he had only, like others, admitted the simple and obvious fact, that the LXX. was the Bible of St. Paul, as well as of the other writers of the New Testament. In reality, Jerome himself is compelled to own, in several passages, that such was the case. Morinus notices this in the following pungent words:—“Ipse fatetur, et res ipsa clamat Paulum ad ipsos Hebraeos scribentem testimonia a LXX. usurpasse, nunquam vero Hebraica. Quando igitur illis usus est? Non *debit* ad Graecos scribens, non *fecit* cum Hebraeis scriberet.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Exercitationes Biblicae*, p. 143.

Whatever view may be taken of the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is a striking fact that the quotations from the Old Testament which are found in it, agree with the LXX., even where that differs from the Hebrew (chaps. ii. 6, 8; x. 5—7, &c.). This occurring in an Epistle addressed to *Hebrews* tells its own tale; and the whole document is built, so to speak, upon the LXX. In connection with this point, the following words may be suitably quoted:—“When Jesus ‘stood up for to read,’ and the book of the Prophet Isaiah was given Him, it was the LXX. translation. In St. Stephen’s speech before the Jewish council,

there are not less than twenty-eight distinct quotations from that version. In the Epistle of James to the Twelve Tribes scattered abroad, there is not a single quotation which is not taken from the LXX. The Epistle to the Hebrews has been said, as far as language goes, to be a kind of mosaic, composed of bits and fragments of the LXX.”<sup>1</sup>

And now we have no difficulty in fully realising that impressive scene at Nazareth, when our Lord, for the first time, assumed the office of an instructor in the home of His youth. We see the book of the Prophet Isaiah put into His hands; and He

<sup>1</sup> Blunt's *History of the Christian Church*, p. 135.

opens it and reads. He reads, what? Not the ancient Hebrew, for the people at once understand Him, and the narrative knows nothing of an interpreter standing between Him and them. No; the tones of His loving voice fell intelligently, as well as attractively, upon their ears; so that "all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." He reads, what? Not an Aramaic version, for, as we have seen, none such existed in writing; and it is evident that He had now a written roll in His hand. Will it be said that He first read the Hebrew text, and then translated it into Aramaic? If any are

inclined to take up this position, let them reflect how inconsistent it seems with the narrative, and how gratuitously it introduces circumstances totally unsanctioned by the Evangelist. We are told that Christ simply read the passage, closed the book, gave it again to the attendant, and sat down: there was no process of translation gone through, either by Him or by any other. What, then, did He read? He read that which we still find written—read from the venerated Greek version of the Old Testament, formed by so remarkable an arrangement of Divine Providence many generations previously—read words which we can even

now repeat, and not words which, after being once heard, died for ever away, and left not even an echo in the ear of the world. The Bible of Christ is still with us; and the words which He read out of it still reach us, hallowed by His lips, and in the very form in which He uttered them.

## CHAPTER IV.

The Text of the Septuagint, and the Language spoken by  
Christ and His Disciples.

IN the preceding pages we have been led to the conclusion that the Greek version of the Old Testament was the Bible habitually read and referred to by our Lord and His Apostles. In other words, the LXX. constituted the *people's Bible* of the period; it formed, so to speak, the Authorised version of Palestine at the commencement of our era. It was universally made use of both in public

and private. The ancient Hebrew was, no doubt, as said above, studied and taught by the learned; but of its use in the synagogues, or for popular purposes, we find not a single trace.

I well know how repugnant this conclusion will be to some, and how far it is from fitting in with impressions which have long prevailed. A sort of horror has been felt at the thought of any other text than the original Hebrew having been used in the religious assemblies of the Jews. Writers like Vitringa have given very strong expression to this feeling; and it has embedded itself very firmly, not only in popular

literature, but even in the mind of the erudite world.

But in the previous chapters an appeal has been made to facts. And these, as I believe, have led to a sure result. We have seen that there is no evidence that the ancient Hebrew was then generally understood by the Jews of Palestine. On the contrary, all evidence leads to the opposite conclusion. No proof is even to be found that the Hebrew text of Scripture was read in the synagogues of the Jews, as a matter of form, in the days of Christ. Some are inclined to plead at least for this, while admitting that the practice amounted to nothing more than

a decent superstition, since the language was wholly unintelligible to the people. But those who believe in the existence of such a custom seem to have been misled by the usages of later times. And, so far as appears from all the sources of proof to which we can appeal, nothing except the Septuagint translation was read in the popular assemblies of the Jews in the days of Christ.

I speak only of the times of Christ. There can be no doubt that, when the Hebrew ceased to be a living language among the Jews, the reading of the Old Testament in public was, for a time, accompanied by an oral translation

or paraphrase into Aramaic.<sup>1</sup> At what exact period this practice commenced it is impossible to say; and it is equally impossible to fix the date at which it ceased, and gave place to a simple reading of the Greek version. But, if we are to be guided by facts, we learn from the New Testament that the Greek alone was read in the days of our Lord. And probably the practice was already of pretty long standing, since the country had, for some generations previously, been thoroughly Hellenised. Accepting, then,

<sup>1</sup> I need hardly say that there is no foundation for the conjecture of Dr. Böhl, that the interpreters prepared themselves by the use of *written* Targumim.—*Alt. Cit.* XIX.

as inevitable, the conclusion that the version of the LXX. was the Bible of our Lord and His Apostles, it is now perhaps fitting that some inferences which naturally flow from that conclusion should be briefly considered. Of these I shall notice two: First, how important it is that we should possess the text of the Septuagint in a thoroughly satisfactory state; and secondly, that Greek was the language usually spoken by our Lord and His Disciples.

SECTION I.—*Importance of possessing a thoroughly satisfactory text of the Septuagint.*

Every scholar will admit that this is

one of the great desiderata of Biblical criticism.<sup>1</sup> When the LXX. is simply regarded as the most ancient of all the translations of the Old Testament, and as the version constantly used, as well as supremely venerated, by the primitive Church, it will be owned that the greatest pains may worthily be expended in securing the purity of its text. "The Church," says St. Augustine, "has received this LXX. translation just as if it were the only one;"<sup>2</sup> and, as these words express the mind, not only

<sup>1</sup> In writing thus it is not forgotten how much diligence and scholarship have already accomplished. See Art. "Septuagint" in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*.

<sup>2</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, xviii., 43.

of his own time, but of all the previous Christian ages, a version which comes to us thus exalted above every other has an irresistible claim upon our best efforts, in order that every stain which the finger of time has fixed upon it may be removed.

But the duty and importance of labouring for this end must be felt far more solemn and pressing when the conviction is reached that the LXX. formed the Bible constantly used by Christ and His Apostles. It then becomes an office of piety which we are bound to discharge, as well as a practically valuable undertaking in which we are called to engage,

when we seek to purify to the uttermost the Septuagintal text.

As naturally happened in the case of a work so widely used, and so frequently transcribed, as the LXX., many errors speedily crept into the manuscripts. The illustrious Origen set himself to point out these, first by the preparation of his *Tetrapla*, and afterwards by that of his *Hexapla*. The *Tetrapla* placed side by side the version of the Seventy, and the versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. When all the versions agreed, Origen concluded that the LXX. was in accordance with the Hebrew, while he supplied from the other versions

any deficiencies which were found in its text, and marked in it any redundancies. This was done before he had acquired a knowledge of Hebrew, but after learning that language he set himself to the formation of his *Hexapla*. That consisted of six columns—the Hebrew original, the same written in Greek letters, the LXX. translation, and the three versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. “But what,” it has been said, “was the result of all this toil? Where is now his great work, the *Hexapla*, prepared with so much care, and written by so many skilful hands? Too large for transcription, too early by centuries for

printing (which alone could have saved it), it was destined to a short existence. It was brought from Tyre and laid up in the library at Cæsarea, and there probably perished by the flames, A.D. 653. One copy, however, had been made by Pamphilus and Eusebius, of the column containing the corrected text of the LXX., with Origen's *asterisks* and *obeli*, and the letters denoting from which of the other translators each addition was taken. This copy is probably the ancestor of those Codices which now approach most nearly to the Hebrew, and are entitled Hexaplar; but in the course of transcription the distinguishing

marks have disappeared or become confused, and we have thus a text composed partly of the old LXX. text, partly of insertions from the three other chief Greek versions, especially that of Theodotion.”<sup>1</sup>

The learned writer just quoted expresses, as has been done above, an earnest desire for a satisfactory edition of the LXX., and gives the following hints for its preparation. “The critic would probably take as his basis the Roman edition from the Codex Vaticanus, as representing most nearly the ancient (*κοινή*) texts. The collection of fragments of Origen’s *Hexapla*, by Montfaucon and

<sup>1</sup> Smith’s *Dictionary of the Bible*, iii., p. 1203.

others, would help him to eliminate the additions which have been made to the LXX. from other sources, and to purge out the glosses and double renderings; the citations in the New Testament and in Philo, in the early Christian Fathers, both Greek and Latin, would render assistance of the same kind; and perhaps the most effective aid of all would be found in the fragments of the Old Latin version collected by Sabatier in 3 vols. folio (Rheims, 1743).<sup>1</sup>

To the *Apparatus Criticus* thus described, would fall to be added the Samaritan Pentateuch, between which and

<sup>1</sup> Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, iii., p. 1209.

the LXX. there is a striking affinity which has never yet been thoroughly investigated and explained; and also the Syriac Hexaplar version of the Old Testament. This last is specially valuable for the criticism of the LXX., for it “was made on the principle of following the Greek, word for word, as exactly as possible. It contains the marks introduced by Origen; and the references to the versions of Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, &c. In fact, it is from this Syriac version that we obtain our most accurate acquaintance with the results of the critical labours of Origen.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, iii., p. 1629.

Apart from the collation of manuscripts and versions, a simple comparison of the Hebrew text with that of the LXX. is sufficient to reveal numerous errors in the latter. Many of these are of a kind which implies that they have existed from the formation of the version. They are easily accounted for and corrected. Capellus has enumerated the following causes of mistake, and has given a large number of examples under each head.<sup>1</sup>

1. *From improper pointing as respects the Hebrew vowels.* Thus, at Ps. cxxxii. 1, we find in the Greek, “ Lord, remember

<sup>1</sup> *Critica Sacra*, Lib. iv., pp. 212—322.

David, and all his *meekness*” (πραότης), where the Hebrew has “affliction,” from a different vowel-pointing of the same consonants.

2. *From an improper division of clauses.*

Thus, at Ps. vii. 9, 10, we read in the Greek, “God trieth the hearts and reins; righteous is my help from God, which saveth the upright in heart,” where the Hebrew joins “righteous” with “God,” and reads—“The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins: my defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.”

3. *From confusion of letters resembling each other in sound.* Thus, one guttural is mistaken for another. This is the

reason why at Ex. iv. 31, where the Hebrew reads, "When they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel," the Greek has, "They were glad that the Lord had visited the children of Israel."

4. *From confusion of letters resembling each other in form.* It will easily be conceived how readily letters so like each other as א and כ, ט and ר, &c., might be confounded. Hence, *e.g.*, we find in the Greek at Lam. iii. 6, "among the dead," where the Hebrew has "like the dead," א having been read for כ.

5. *From confusion of letters differing from each other.* This, of course, is far

from being so common as in the case of letters resembling each other, but undoubted examples occur. Thus at Ps. xl. 16, instead of  $\nu$  there seems to have been substituted  $\kappa$ , and hence we find in the Greek, "let them immediately receive their shame" for "let them be desolate for a reward of their shame" in the Hebrew.

6. *From a transposition of letters.* Owing to this we read in the Greek at 1 Chron. xvii. 16, "that thou hast loved me for ever," instead of "that thou hast brought me hitherto," as it stands in the Hebrew.

7. *From the omission or removal of a*

*letter.* Hence we read in the Greek at Eccles. xii. 5, "And they shall look into the height," for "And they shall be afraid of that which is high," the letter *v* having been omitted.

8. *From the addition of a letter.* On this account, instead of "The sun shall not smite thee by day," at Ps. cxxi. 6, we find in the Greek, "The sun shall not burn thee up by day."

9. *From an addition of one or more words.* Thus, at Ps. xxii. 17, "many" is inserted in the Greek; and at Ps. lxxi. 8, we find "that I may sing of thy glory"—words which do not occur in the Hebrew.

10. *From the omission of one or more*

*words.*' Thus, the Greek omits "to upward" at Ps. xl. 5; and in several places, as Zech. xiii. 4, the negative is omitted.

11. *From a substitution of one word for another.* Thus, while in the Hebrew we read at Gen. xlvi. 27, that the family of Jacob going into Egypt amounted to *seventy*, in the Greek we find *seventy-five*.

12. *From the transposition, or running together, or division of words.* Examples are found at Ps. xxviii. 7; 2 Kings ii. 14; Hosea ix. 13, and in many other places.

13. *From the addition, omission, transposition, or substitution, of whole sentences or verses.* A striking example is found at

Gen. iv. 8, where the Greek inserts "Let us go into the field," words which do not occur in the present Hebrew text. There is also found a remarkable variation from the Hebrew at Ps. lxxxiv. 12, where, instead of "For the Lord God is a sun and shield," we read in the Greek, "For the Lord loveth mercy and truth."

It is by no means to be supposed that, where the Greek differs from the Hebrew, the error is always on the side of the Greek. There can be no doubt, for instance, that the words inserted by the LXX. at Gen. iv. 8, ought to stand in the text; and there is, I believe, as little doubt that the negative read in the Greek

at Prov. v. 16, gives the correct sense, though not found in the Hebrew. Capellus has a very instructive chapter on those passages in which the reading of the LXX. seems preferable to that which exists in the Hebrew text. He follows this by another chapter, in which it is shown how the LXX., as it now stands, has suffered from the ignorance, oversights, rashness, and boldness of transcribers.

Much, then, remains to be done for the criticism of the LXX. And, as has been well said: "For the critical scholar it would be a worthy object of pursuit to ascertain, as nearly as possible, the

original text of the LXX. as it stood in the time of the Apostles and Philo. If this could be accomplished with any tolerable completeness, it would possess a strong interest, as being the first translation of any writing into another tongue, and the first repository of Divine truth to the great colony of Hellenistic Jews at Alexandria.”<sup>1</sup>

To the motives thus stated as prompting to such an undertaking, there has been added, in the preceding pages, this one—the weightiest of all—that the LXX. version of the Old Testament, as it existed at the commencement of our era, con-

<sup>1</sup> Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, iii., p. 1209.

stituted the Bible of our blessed Lord and His Apostles.

SECTION II.—*The Language spoken by Christ and His Disciples.*

I do not intend here to enter on this subject at large, having handled it very fully elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> I simply wish to notice the bearing which the conclusion reached, as to the Bible used by Christ, has upon the question respecting the language which He habitually employed. I

<sup>1</sup> *Discussions on the Gospels*, in two parts. Part I.—On the Language employed by our Lord and His Disciples Part II.—On the Original Language of St. Matthew's Gospel, and on the Origin and Authenticity of the Gospels.—Second edition. Macmillan and Co.

shall also take the opportunity of making some remarks, which may tend to remove what seem to me some misconceptions which prevail upon the subject.

If it has been proved that the LXX. version was the Bible constantly quoted and referred to by Christ, the question is settled as respects the language made use of in His public addresses to the people. The scene in the synagogue at Nazareth is sufficient to decide the point. He who read to His assembled townsmen the Old Testament in Greek, certainly made use of no other language, when, by-and-by, He addressed the multitudes in His Sermon on the

Mount, and when, afterwards, He conversed with Pilate, the Roman governor.

The question as to the language then commonly used among the Jews of Palestine in public intercourse is thus decided. If it was to the Greek Scriptures that reference was so often made by Christ and those around Him (Matt. xxi. 42, xxii. 29; Mark xii. 24, xiv. 49; Luke xxiv. 32; John vii. 42, &c.), then there can remain no doubt that Greek was the language which a public instructor naturally employed, and the language in which the people expected to be addressed.

But it must not be forgotten that,

alongside of the Greek, there existed also a kind of impure Hebrew, and that this was familiarly made use of by the Jews in homely intercourse with one another. Many analogous cases might be referred to among bilingual nations. There is a language of literature and public life, and there is also a language of common talk and easy companionship. Nothing could be more natural than that, while a religious teacher generally avails himself of the former, he should sometimes, for special reasons, have recourse to the latter. And hence the occurrence in the Gospel narratives of such expressions as *Raca*, *Corban*, *Boanerges*, &c.

As has been said, I do not mean to argue the question more at length in this place; but I think it well to say a few words as to the testimony of Josephus on the subject. The Jewish historian is, I believe, in perfect accord with the conclusion which I have stated; but he has been very grievously misunderstood and misrepresented.

Josephus speaks, in the concluding chapter of his *Antiquities*, of the difficulty which he had felt in composing the work. Wherein lay this difficulty? Not, certainly, in writing Greek *of some sort*, for it is now admitted by the stoutest opponents of my views that "there is

no question that the Jews of our Lord's time were practically bilingual."<sup>1</sup> Josephus, then, as a matter of course, was acquainted with a kind of Greek—the Hebraic Greek, spoken in his native country. He had no trouble about *that*—it came to him as a matter of inheritance. But is it in Greek of that kind that his work is written? Nay; there began his difficulty. His ambition was to write in the style of the classical writers, and that he found a matter most difficult of attainment. Any one who wishes to test this has only to read a few verses of the New Testament, and

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Sanday, in *The Expositor*, vol. vii., p. 81.

then a sentence or two of Josephus, in order to feel what efforts it must have cost a man who was, from his youth, accustomed to the one kind of Greek to learn at last to write in the other. This is the simple explanation of that passage in the Jewish historian which has proved so misleading, and which has blinded the minds of many to the clear evidence which his writings bear to the fact that Greek was then the language of public intercourse in Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

I have said that there would have been

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq.* xiv. 10, 3; xviii. 8, 5; *Wars*, v. 7, 4; v. 13, 2. Cardinal Wiseman remarks in his *Horae Syriacae* (p. 71):—"Josephi temporibus, etiam servi linguam Graecam callebant."

nothing strange or difficult in Josephus writing a certain kind of Greek—Hebraic or Palestinian Greek such as meets us in the New Testament. The difficulty and strangeness consisted in his writing *such* Greek as that in which his works are composed. Let me, by way of illustration, refer to an analogous case among the Romans. Pliny the younger, writing to his friend Antoninus, compliments him on the truly classical air of his Greek compositions. He exclaims:—"Quantum ibi humanitatis, venustatis! Quam dulcia illa! quam antiqua; quam arguta; quam recta! Callimachum me, vel Heroden, vel si quid his melius, tenere credebam. . . ."

*Hominemne Romanum tam Graece loqui?*  
 Non me, dius fidius, ipsas Athenas tam  
 Atticas dixerim.”<sup>1</sup> Here the point that  
 excited Pliny’s admiration was not that  
 his friend could write Greek—that was  
 a perfectly common accomplishment  
 among the Romans; but the wonder  
 sprang from the fact that a Roman could  
*so* express himself in Greek—a language  
 which to the Latin as well as the Jew was  
 what Josephus styles it, a ξένη καὶ ἀλλοδαπή  
 διάλεκτος—that he could imitate with such  
 skill the great models of Greek composition.  
 And so in the case of the Jewish historian.  
 It was nothing at all for him to speak and

<sup>1</sup> *Epistolae*, iv., 3.

write a kind of Greek. Fishermen, like St. Peter, could do that. But the difficulty was, in spite of all national hindrances, to acquire something like a correct and classical style. That was what Josephus aimed at, and what, as he tells us (for otherwise his words have no meaning), it cost him so much labour to secure.<sup>1</sup>

I need say nothing of the additional charm which gathers round the Greek

<sup>1</sup> A further analogy to the case of Josephus may be found in the difficulty which Scottish writers of the last century experienced in writing classical English. This is often referred to by them, as in Campbell's Preface to his work on the Gospels. Lord Mansfield remarked to Dr. Carlyle that when he was reading Hume's and Robertson's histories "he did not think he was reading English" (*Autobiography*, p. 517). An amusing example is fur-

Gospels when these are regarded as enshrining the discourses of our Lord in the language in which He uttered them. Who does not rejoice when (as sometimes happens) an important ancient writing, which has hitherto been known only by means of a translation, is recovered in its original form? If the works of such master-minds as Milton or Shakespeare existed only in Latin or German, what a longing there would be to possess them in

nished by Sir Walter Scott in the *Heart of Midlothian* of the dialect spoken by the magistrates of Edinburgh in 1736. The provost, in examination before the House of Lords, talked of *dukes* and *fools*, instead of *ducks* and *fowls*, and got into some trouble in consequence. This seems exactly to illustrate the difficulty felt by Josephus in securing accuracy, *περὶ τὴν προφορὰν*, in Greek.

the original English! And surely, it must be felt still more interesting to know that the words of the Divine Man have not really faded into a translation, but still retain for us their original freshness, in the very tongue in which they were spoken.

The conclusion which we have reached is also possessed of great practical importance. This might be shown in many ways, but I shall only say a few words regarding it in connection with the vexed question as to the *origin of the Gospels*.

The difficulty here is how to account both for the coincidences and the diversities which appear in the writings of the first three Evangelists. On the supposi-

tion that our Lord spoke in Aramaic, and that therefore His words, as reported in the synoptical Gospels, have been translated, the problem has become exceedingly complicated, and has, indeed, seemed to defy every attempt at solution. I have given elsewhere<sup>1</sup> an account of the most celebrated theories which have been devised in connection with it, and have also ventured to suggest a hypothesis of my own upon the subject. My explanation has, at least, the recommendation of simplicity. It is to the effect that our Lord was accustomed to speak in Greek, and that the Evangelists independently

<sup>1</sup> *Discussions on the Gospels*, Part ii., chap. vi.

narrated His actions, and reported His discourses, in the language which He had Himself employed.

I claim for this theory that it naturally explains both the coincidences and the differences which are found in the first three Gospels. The coincidences arise from the fact, that the Evangelists all report our Lord's words in the language in which they were uttered; and the differences are accounted for by their all being independent writers. "The only thing that could hinder verbal coincidences would be a defect in the fulness or correctness of their information. And it would, of course, be in reports of what was *said*

by our Lord and others that they would be most of all expected to agree; there might, and would necessarily, be differences in the narrative portions, though in these also, from various causes, we would naturally expect occasional agreement. Two or more reporters in our own day giving an account of a public meeting would, of necessity, agree chiefly and verbally in their statements of what was *said*; in their descriptions of the scene, the order of events, and the effects produced on the individuals present, they would as naturally differ to a considerable extent; yet also, probably, to some extent, verbally agree. Thus it is with our Evan-

gelists. The far larger proportion of their coincidences is to be found in what they *report*, a small portion only in what they *narrate*. And this is exactly what we should expect from those who were competent to give us a history of our Saviour.”<sup>1</sup>

How *could* the Evangelists have so often hit upon the same words if each translated for himself from discourses originally delivered in Aramaic? Bishop Marsh, the author of a once celebrated hypothesis on the problem of the Gospels, has observed that, “In translating from Hebrew into Greek there is still less probability of agreeing by *mere accident*

<sup>1</sup> *Discussions on the Gospels*, Part ii., chap. vi.

than in translating from Greek into English, because the Greek language admits of much greater variety both in the choice and the position of the words than the English language." Upon this very just observation, Dr. Hales has as justly remarked :—" Thus we are indebted to the learned and ingenious author of this dissertation for a plain and simple refutation of his own abstruse and complicated hypothesis in all its parts; satisfactory as it should seem to every unprejudiced and unbiased critic."<sup>1</sup>

My theory stands completely clear of the difficulty which must thus ever beset

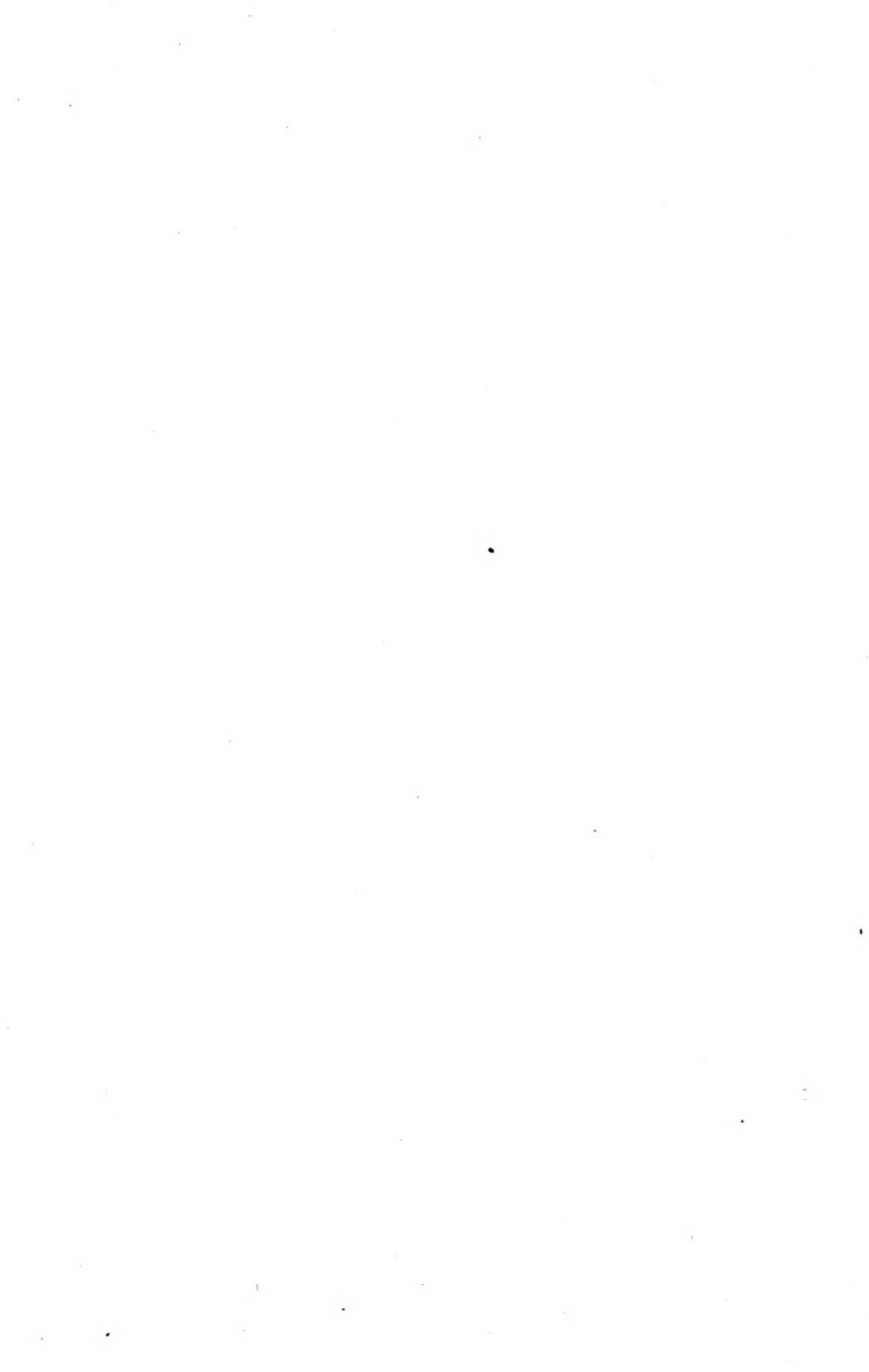
<sup>1</sup> *Analysis of Chronology*, iii., p. 8.

any hypothesis that proceeds on the hypothesis of Hebrew or Aramaic having been the language of Christ. I humbly claim to have proved that He usually spoke in Greek; and I add to this the statement that the Evangelists independently reported His words in the language which He had Himself used. It is evident how much the problem of the Gospels is thus simplified, though I do not deny that difficulties still remain, some of which will perhaps never be removed. But, at any rate, the complications arising from the idea that Christ spoke in Hebrew, while His words have been reported in Greek, are escaped. Professor Jowett has

said :—“ There was, if we may use an expression which sounds almost like a contradiction in terms, a Hebrew Christianity yet earlier than the New Testament, the memorials of which are preserved to us in the translation only.” And then he proceeds to ask the following hard question—a question which must be faced by every one occupying his position :—“ How did this Hebrew or Syriac Christianity pass into a language so different as the Greek ? ”<sup>1</sup> I believe enough has been said in the preceding pages to show that no such gulf lies between us at the present day, and the Christianity which was pro-

<sup>1</sup> *Epistles of St. Paul*, i., p. 452.

claimed by Christ Himself. My earnest contention is, that we still possess His words in the language in which they were uttered; and I have the satisfaction of reflecting that, whatever opposition may yet be offered to this view, the late Dean Mansel expressed to me his belief, that, in presenting it to the world, I had “adopted a powerful and important line of argument.”



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