

derived so richly and to so unique a degree from all its books. Our opinions as to the date or unity of these books may be inevitably changed by historical discoveries or by critical analysis, but as long as man's spirit retains the spiritual gift of discriminating the transcendent,¹ so long will the Bible continue to be the most precious treasure of the human race, because in it we hear—far more clearly than either in the inarticulate speech of the universe or in the articulate voices of other men—the intelligible utterance of the Word of God.

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NOTES ON THREE PASSAGES IN ST. PAUL'S
EPISTLES.

1 CORINTHIANS x. 4: "For they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ."

It has often been remarked that St. Paul's phraseology is here probably determined by a Jewish legend respecting the well which the Israelites are related in Numbers xxi. 16 ff. to have dug upon their arrival at the border of Moab. The Targum of Onqelos exhibits to us this legend in its genesis. The passage referred to describes how the Israelites, upon reaching a place called Beer, dug a well there to the words of a song, which is quoted; and the song is followed, somewhat abruptly, by a continuation of their itinerary, the names in which, as well that of the place Beer, happen to be significant in Hebrew: thus, "(16) And thence (they journeyed) to Beer (*well*): that is the well whereof the LORD said unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. (17) Then sang Israel this song:

¹ καὶ δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα.—Rom. ii. 18.

- Spring up, O well ; sing ye to it :
- (18) The well which the princes digged,
Which the nobles of the people delved,
With the sceptre, and with their staves.

And from the wilderness to Mattanah (*gift*) : (19) and from Mattanah to Nahaliel (*torrent of God*) ; and from Nahaliel to Bamoth (*high-places*) ; (20) and from Bamoth to the ravine that is in the field of Moab, the top of Pisgah, which looketh down upon the desert." The old Jewish interpretation of the passage, as found in the Targum of Onqelos, connected however both the first part of verse 16 and the words following the song, not with the movements of the Israelites, but with the *well*. We read accordingly in the Targum : " (16) And thence the well *was given unto them* : that is the well of which the LORD said unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. (17) Then sang Israel this song, 'Spring up, O well: sing ye to it: (18) The well which the princes digged, which the heads of the people, the scribes, delved with their staves.' And from the wilderness *it was given* to them ; (19) *and from* the time that *it was given* to them, it went down with them to the *torrents*, and from the *torrents* it went up with them to the *high places* ; and from the high places to the valleys in the fields of Moab," etc. Because *Mattanah* happens to be capable of an interpretation in Hebrew, it was referred to the well, which was supposed accordingly to have accompanied the Israelites up hill and down dale in their subsequent journeyings! This however is not all. The well was further imagined to have been with them previously, and the office of the princes on such an occasion as Numbers xx. 17 was merely to evoke it into activity. On account, also, partly of the fact that immediately after the death of Miriam it is said (Num. xx. 2) that the people had no water, and partly of the similarity between the verse Num-

bers xxi. 17 "Then sang Israel this song," and Exodus xv. 21 "And Miriam answered and said, Sing to the Lord," it was attributed to the "merit" of Miriam (בזכות מרים). Thus we read in the Midrash Rabbah (a compilation some centuries later than the Targum of Onqelos), on Numbers i. 1: "They had the well through the merit of Miriam, as it is written, 'And Miriam died, and was buried there.' And what follows immediately after? 'And the congregation had no water.' And how was the well formed? It was a crag (סלע) like a bee-hive (!), and it used to roll along (כמתגלגלת), and accompany them on their journeyings. And when the standards were pitched, and the tabernacle rested, the crag came and settled in the court of the Tent of Meeting, and the princes came and stood beside it, and said, 'Spring up, O well,' and then it would spring up." There are allusions to the same fable—not in Onqelos, but—in the fragmentary Targum, and in the later Targum of "Pseudo-Jonathan," on Numbers xii. 15: "And the glory, and the tabernacle, and the *well*, did not move or journey until Miriam was healed of her leprosy; and after that the people journeyed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran"; and on xx. 2: "And because through the merit of Miriam the well had been given, when she died, the well was taken away."

Further developments of the legend may be seen in the two last named Targums, and in the Midrash Rabbah, on Numbers xxi. 16–20;¹ but they are not worth quoting.² The entire fable is of the most puerile order, though scarcely more so than many other fables related in the pages of the Midrash. There is no reason for supposing, even if in St. Paul's day it had reached the extravagant dimensions

¹ The latter, in Wünsche's German translation, p. 475 f.

² It is to be noticed that the legend is based entirely upon the *well* of Num. xxi. 17 f., and is unrelated either with the rock (צור) of Exod. xvii. 5 f. or with the crag (סלע) of Num. xx. 7–11 (though it is brought into connexion with the latter by some later writers, e.g. Rashi; comp. xx. 13 in Pseudo-Jon.).

of the Midrash, that the apostle adopted or accepted it himself: though he does, no doubt, occasionally make use of a rabbinical interpretation, the adoption of such an incredible legend would be totally out of harmony with the masculine character of his mind, such as it is exhibited in his writings generally. St. Paul views the water which the Israelites drank in the wilderness as provided for them by Christ, in His pre-existent Divine nature, who attended and watched over His people, and whom he represents under the figure of a rock, accompanying them through their journeyings. The particular expression chosen by the apostle may have been *suggested* to him by his acquaintance with the legend current among the Jews; but it is evident that he gives it an entirely different application, and that he uses it, not in a literal sense, but figuratively.

Galatians iii. 16: "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

The difficulty of this passage lies in the fact that our experience does not suggest to us as possible a case in which either the writer of Genesis xxii. 18 or the apostle could have used the plural *seeds*. The term *seed*, like *σπέρμα*, has a collective signification, and thus expresses itself a plurality; so that the argument founded upon it appears to be nugatory. It is the merit of the learned Jewish scholar, Abraham Geiger,¹ to have pointed out what certainly appears to be the true origin of the—to us—strange *seeds*, and to have shown that the argument, if not conclusive as to the meaning of the passage in Genesis, was no far-fetched conceit on the part of St. Paul, but appealed to a usage with which both he himself and his Jewish readers would be perfectly familiar. Though *seeds* does not occur in the Hebrew Bible,² there was a case in which it

¹ In the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 1858, pp. 307-309.

² Except 1 Sam. viii. 15, of different kinds of grain.

was in use shortly after St. Paul's time, in a connexion which justifies the inference that it was in use also among his contemporaries. In the treatise of the Mishnah *Sanhedrin* iv. 5 witnesses in a court of justice are warned of the difference between civil and capital cases in respect of the gravity of the issue: "Know that capital cases are not like cases which involve merely a pecuniary issue. In cases which involve a pecuniary issue, a man pays a sum of money, and is forgiven; in capital cases, his own blood, and the blood of his *seeds* (זְרַעֵי תַיִו) to the end of the world, depends upon the evidence of the witness against him. For thus we read in the case of Cain, who slew his brother, 'The bloods of thy brother cry unto Me from the ground.' The text does not say *blood*, but *bloods*; i.e. Abel's own blood, and the blood of his *seeds* (זְרַעֵי תַיִו)." In Hebrew, blood shed is commonly denoted by a plural term, lit. *bloods*; and the use of this plural in Genesis iv. 10 is taken to show that the guilt, not of Abel's blood alone, but of that of all those who, had he lived, might have been descended from him, rested upon the murderer. Whatever the worth of the argument in itself, the passage shows incontrovertibly that the word *seeds* was in use in the language of the schools to denote a series of generations descended from a man. It is true, the word used is not strictly the same as the Hebrew זֶרַע, but it is such an immediate derivative of it, that it would naturally be represented in Greek by the same word σπέρμα. The same usage occurs in Aramaic. In the Targum of Onqelos, Genesis iv. 10 is explained just in the same manner as in the Mishnah: "And he said, What hast thou done? (there is) the voice of the blood of the *seeds* (זְרַעֵי תַיִו) which were destined to spring forth from thy brother crying before Me from the ground."¹ And in

¹ Some of the rabbis explain similarly the plural *bloods* in 2 Kings ix. 26, 2 Chron. xxiv. 25. See the Midrash Rabbah on Gen. iv. 10 (in Wünsche's German translation, p. 104).

Onqelos the same derivative, זרעי, זרעיתא, from זרע, *seed*, occurs repeatedly for the Hebrew משפחה *family*; e.g. xii. 3 all the *seeds* or *families* of the earth.¹ It is natural now to suppose that St. Paul, in writing Galatians iv. 10, had in mind the use of זרעיות as illustrated by the passage quoted above from *Sanhedrin*. The *seeds* with which he contrasted the single "seed" of Genesis xxii. 18 are not *contemporaneous* generations, but *successive* ones. The use of the singular in a passage where, according to the usage of his time, the plural might have been employed, appeared to him to show that the promised blessing was not to flow from an indefinite succession of the generations descended from Abraham, but from a *particular* generation, *viz.* the generation summed up in Christ. These considerations do not indeed make his argument a perfectly valid one (for they do not show, nor does it appear probable, that at the time when Genesis xxii. 18 was written, the plural would have been used in the manner supposed); but they relieve it of its apparent arbitrariness, and show that the apostle was simply speaking in language which to his contemporaries would seem perfectly natural and just. And of course the remark of Bishop Lightfoot, to the effect that the original word *seed* lends itself to application to an individual as a word of plural form, such as *sons*, would not have done, retains its force.²

Ephesians iv. 8: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

The passage Psalms lxviii. 18 which St. Paul here quotes

¹ The corresponding word in the plural (זרעיות) is used in the Peshitto version of Ezra ii. 59, where the Hebrew has *their seed*, and the Septuagint σπέρμα αὐτῶν. The Greek σπέρματα appears to have the same force in 2 Macc. xviii. 1 (quoted by Meyer, from Geiger), ὡ τῶν Ἀβραμῶν σπερμάτων ἀπόγονοι παῖδες Ἰσραηλῖται, πείθεσθε τῷ νόμῳ τούτῳ.

² The above explanation of σπέρμασιν is accepted by Delitzsch in the ninth of his studies, called "Horæ Hebraicæ et Talmudicæ," on the N.T. in the *Lutherische Zeitschrift* for 1877, p. 603 f. In this country it has been noticed incidentally by Dr. W. R. Smith, in the *Academy*, 1877, p. 299, but does not appear to have attracted sufficiently the attention of commentators.

has, as is well known, "Thou *receivedst gifts among men.*" The Psalm, as may fairly be inferred from ver. 4 "*Cast up a way* for him that rideth *through the deserts,*" was written in view of the approaching return of the people from Babylon (comp. Isa. xl. 3 "*Make straight in the desert* (same word) *a high way* for our God"; also lvii. 14, lxii. 10, where the same phrase *cast up a way* is used); and its buoyant and jubilant tone is an echo, no doubt, of the feelings evoked among patriotic Israelites by the prospect of deliverance. In vers. 7-10 the Psalmist reviews the glories of the past—the progress through the wilderness, the triumphant occupation of Canaan, and defeat of the kings who from time to time arose to contest its possession with the Israelites, culminating in the choice of Zion as the abode of Jehovah, and His solemn entry into it: for in these glories he sees a type and pledge of the people's deliverance now, and of their triumphant *re-occupation* of their ancient capital and home. In ver. 18 Jehovah's entry into the sanctuary on Zion is described under figures borrowed from the triumph of an earthly conqueror: like a victor, attended by trains of captives,¹ and receiving gifts from the vanquished,² or others who come forward in the hope of thus securing his favour, He ascends the hill of Zion: even the rebels, the Psalmist adds, are now ready with their homage, "that Jah God might dwell there" (R.V. *margin.*, with the Geneva version), *i.e.* might dwell permanently and undisturbed in the abode which He has thus chosen, and, as it were, conquered for Himself. But why does St. Paul change "received gifts among men"

¹ The expression, "led (thy) captivity (*i.e.* thy captives) captive," is to be explained from the Song of Deborah—which is the clue to so much in the first part of the Psalm—Jud. v. 12 "Arise, Barak, and *lead thy captivity captive*, thou son of Abinoam."

² The rendering "*consisting in men*" (Ibn Ezra, Ewald, Cornill) is also admissible; the reference will then be to the persons of the surrendered enemies themselves, instead of to their offerings.

into "gave gifts to men"? The same variation from the Hebrew is found in two of the ancient versions, the Peshitto and the Targum. In the Targum the verse is referred, fancifully enough, to *Moses*, and his ascent to Sinai to receive the Tables of the Law, and is thus rendered: "Thou didst ascend to the firmament, O *Moses* the prophet; thou didst take captivity captive; thou didst teach the words of the Law; thou didst *give gifts* to the children of men: but the rebellious ones who become proselytes, and repent, upon them resteth the Shekhinah of the glory of the LORD God." In the Syriac version the verse is rendered more literally, except in the second part, the sense of which is altered: "Thou didst ascend on high, and take captivity captive; and thou *gavest gifts to men*; and also the rebellious shall not dwell in the presence of God." Whether the rendering of the Peshitto is due to Jewish or Christian influence may be uncertain, though the former is perhaps the more probable: but in any case, the Targum shows that *gave unto men* was an old Jewish interpretation—or rather, as it cannot by any means be elicited from the Hebrew, an old Jewish *paraphrase*—of the verse, which, it is not unreasonable to suppose, may have existed as early as the time of St. Paul. Probably this will account for the form of the quotation in the epistle. The connexion in which the quotation occurs should be noticed. St. Paul is not arguing on the subject of the *ascension* of Christ, or quoting the text as a proof of it; he is speaking of the *gifts* bestowed by Christ upon His Church: "But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." The text, as he wrote, probably came into his mind as a passage which, *in the form in which he was familiar with it*, described a bestowal of gifts upon men; and he quotes it accordingly, without stopping to inquire whether his

application of it was consistent with the sense strictly attaching to it in its original connexion. He quotes it because he sees in it, as understood by the Jews of his day, an anticipation of a particular truth of Christianity. The 68th Psalm was not understood Messianically by the Jews,¹ and verse 18 relates plainly to a *past* fact: at the same time, the ascent of the ark into Zion might not unnaturally be taken as *prefiguring* the ascension of Christ into heaven, and the captives and spoil, presupposed in the very fact of David's conquest of the stronghold of Zion, and imagined by the poet to form part of the procession, might similarly be understood to *prefigure* the evil powers vanquished by Christ, and, as it were, led visibly in triumph by Him on the occasion of His return to heaven. But if, following the same principle of interpretation, we ask what the gifts received among men may prefigure, it is plain that they cannot, without great artificiality, be taken as prefiguring anything except the *tokens of homage* rendered by men to their ascended Lord. Here then St. Paul, as he quotes the text, substitutes a different sense altogether: for *material gifts received among men*, he substitutes *spiritual gifts given to men*. On the ground of the rendering in the Targum, it is, however, reasonable to suppose that in doing this he is following a current interpretation or paraphrase of the verse, which made it suitable for quotation in the context in which he uses it.

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¹ Except ver. 31 (Heb. 32), which, of course, from its very form looks to the future, and is parallel to many passages in the prophets (*e.g.* Isa. xviii. 7, xix. 18-25; Zeph. iii. 9).