

THE COMING CAMBRIDGE SEPTUAGINT:  
A PLEA FOR A PURE TEXT.

THERE are few works whose appearance is more anxiously looked forward to by scientific theologians than the great edition of the Greek Old Testament upon which Mr Brooke and Mr McLean have been working for many years.

Recent criticism has made it plainer and plainer that the decision of the Reformation divines to substitute what they called the Hebrew Verity, by which they meant the Masoretic text of the Bible, for that once accepted by the Jews themselves as well as by all members of the primitive Christian Church, namely the Septuagint text, was at least a doubtful experiment and one which might reasonably claim revision. The opinion of the relative value of the Septuagint text, as compared with the Hebrew, has indeed been revolutionized even since the last great revision of the English Bible, and there can be little or no doubt that if that work had to be done again now, the new revised version would shew a very much larger infusion of Septuagint readings than the present one does.

This being so, those of us who have tried in late years to champion the Septuagint text as against the Hebrew are naturally very anxious that the great Cambridge Bible shall be (what it was, I take it, meant originally to be) a collection of all the manuscript materials available for the reconstruction of the Septuagint text in its original purity, and a sifting out of all those materials by which the true Septuagint text has been sophisticated at different times, and more especially by the syncretic handiwork of the initiator of Biblical criticism, Origen.

I am not quite sure, however, that this most admirable aim will be secured by what I understand to be the intention of those responsible for the new Cambridge corpus of Old Testament readings. They apparently contemplate, not as complete a collection of Septuagint variants as they can secure, but merely a more complete and elaborate edition of Professor Swete's admirable Greek Bible.

Professor Swete's Greek Bible has on its title-page this inscription: 'The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint.' As a matter of fact, it is merely a careful edition of the Vatican Codex, with various readings from all the uncial MSS and in certain parts from some cursives, and it confessedly contains at least one work which has nothing to do with the Septuagint at all, namely Theodotion's Greek translation of Daniel. This appears in the book, I take it, merely because it is contained in Codex B and the other uncials, but no one now believes that it formed part of the Septuagint Bible, and to print

it, not as an appendix with a proper 'caveat', but as an integral part of the text, in a work claiming on its title-page to be an edition of the Septuagint Old Testament is, I think, misleading.

Lately, I have been permitted to write a series of articles in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*. In these I have at some length argued, what was long ago urged by Grotius and later by Whiston, namely, that not only Daniel, as it appears in the great uncials, was derived from Theodotion, but that the certainly once united Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah, and probably Esther, as they appear in the same uncials, are not in any way Septuagint texts, but are all derived from Theodotion also. In the case of one of these books we still possess the Greek rendering, namely the long-neglected document called 1 Esdras in the English 'Apocrypha'.

The conclusions I have ventured to urge have been accepted (as I am assured by themselves) by the greatest authorities on the Greek Bible in this country, in Germany and America, and notably by those who have made a special study of the books in question.

It seems to me that when the New Cambridge Bible appears, it ought not to contain any of these translations of Theodotion, and for two reasons. In the first place, it would utterly mislead every student into the notion that we have in them parts of the great work of the Seventy, which we wish so much to recover in its integrity. Secondly, it would repeat the inducement to the compilers of Septuagint lexicography to introduce, as they have done previously, a large number of words into their lexicons which have nothing to do with Septuagint Greek at all, and merely represent the Greek of the second century A. D. in the district where Theodotion lived and worked.

May I venture to urge, while it is still not too late, that before any Greek text is admitted into the Cambridge Bible there shall be at least an *a priori* probability that it is a Septuagint text?

May I further urge that it would be an excellent complement to the new corpus of Greek Bible readings, if it were possible to bring together all the remains of the other Greek translations of the Bible, namely those of Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus, &c., and to print them together and not scattered (as they are in Field's great work) over the various books of the Bible? In this case, Theodotion would naturally loom very big, and the various books now attributed to him and printed in Dr Swete's professedly Septuagint Bible would find a very natural place.

Dr Nestle assured me some time ago that he had once contemplated such a work, and looked upon it as one of great value and perhaps necessity.

HENRY H. HOWORTH.

[The title of the manual edition of the Cambridge Greek Old

Testament was adopted after full discussion by the Committee to whom the Editor was responsible. It is right to add that he fully concurred with the decision at the time, and still sees no reason to regret it.

To exclude a text which holds the place of the Alexandrine version of Daniel in all our MSS but one might have been held to savour of pedantry, and would certainly have caused much inconvenience to the majority of readers. It is not easy to understand how any one can be misled by the presence of the Theodotonic version, when every page on which it appears bears the symbol of Theodotion.—H.B.S.]

### THE MIRACLE OF CANA.

HAS it ever occurred to the reader what a singularly uncomplimentary speech that was which, according to our version, the ruler of the feast addressed to the bridegroom, when he said to him 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now'? It was as though he had said: 'Other people give their good wine first, and their inferior wine later, but you have given us your inferior wine first, and kept your good wine until now, when we have already drunk freely, and it matters little whether the wine be good or bad.'

And yet the words were, rightly rendered, an intended compliment, and not the contrary. The error has lain in the mistaken interpretation of *τηρήρηκας*. The verb *τηρεῖν* does not mean 'to retain', but 'to maintain', i.e. 'to maintain as it was', 'to preserve unbroken', 'to keep inviolate'. Thus—'He keepeth not (unbroken) the Sabbath-day' (John ix 16); 'If ye love me keep (unbroken) my commandments' (John xiv 15); 'Endeavouring to keep (unbroken) the unity of the Spirit' (Eph. iv 3); 'I have kept (inviolate) the faith', or 'my faith' (1 Tim. iv 7). These examples illustrate the true signification of the term.

Hence, in the present passage, the sense is not that of 'guarding, reserving, retaining', and so (here) 'keeping in store', but of 'maintaining', 'keeping up', 'keeping going', which throws quite a different light upon the words used. 'Thou hast kept going the good wine even until now', this is what the ruler of the feast said. Good wine at the beginning and good wine at the end. Not a limited amount of good and an unlimited amount of inferior wine, but good wine all through. The compliment is manifest.

W. SPICER WOOD.