

## Some Ancient Versions of the Scriptures.

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AMONG the daily increasing number of laymen who follow with interest the progress of biblical research are not a few who are apt to get confused among the technicalities of modern criticism. It is for such among the readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES that these notes are intended. Their aim is simply to state, in as brief a space as possible, what is known of the origin of the more important versions of the Scriptures, with some indication of their value for the critical student.

### (a) THE SEPTUAGINT.

First in age and importance comes the translation of the Old Testament in Greek known as the Septuagint version, or version of the Seventy (LXX.), so called from the tradition that it was the work of seventy or seventy-two elders, who had been sent by the Jewish Sanhedrin to Alexandria for the purpose at the request of Ptolemy Philadelphus (see EXPOSITORY TIMES for April). It is now admitted that this tradition is entirely devoid of foundation. The following may be considered as a fairly accurate summary of the conclusions of modern scholars regarding the origin of the LXX. :—(1) The LXX. owes its existence to the desire of the Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt to possess the Old Testament in what was now their mother-tongue. (2) The translation was made by men of varying ability at different times, extending over a century or more, beginning with the five books of Moses about the middle of the third century B.C. (3) The greater part, if not the whole, of the translation was executed at Alexandria.

The extreme importance of the LXX. for the textual criticism of the Old Testament is due to the fact that very few of the MSS. of the original text of the Old Testament are older than the twelfth century of our era, the oldest dated MS. being of the tenth. In the LXX., therefore, we have a witness to the text of the Old Testament *twelve hundred years older than any Hebrew MS.* Unfortunately the text of the LXX. has suffered in the course of transmission infinitely more than has the text of the original Hebrew, but it nevertheless remains *facile princeps* among the critical apparatus of the Old Testament student.

The most convenient edition for the ordinary student is that just completed under the editorship of Dr. Swete, *The Old Testament in Greek, according to the Septuagint* (2 vols., Cambridge University Press, 1887 and 1891). The introduction to vol. i. gives a succinct account of the principal MSS. of the LXX. and of the primary editions.

### (b) THE TARGUMS.

By the Targums (from a Semitic root signifying "to interpret," whence also "dragoman") are meant the versions of parts of the Old Testament in Aramaic, the Semitic dialect which, at some period before the birth of Christ, supplanted Hebrew as the vernacular of the Jews. One of the officials of the synagogue was the Meturgeman (interpreter), whose duty it was to render the lessons for the day into the language "understood of the people." These official renderings or Targums were at a late period committed to writing. Many such Targums have irretrievably perished; of those that still survive the most important are the two following:—(1) The Targum of Onqelos, of uncertain authorship and date. It is a literal rendering of the Pentateuch, and probably assumed its present shape in Babylon in the third or fourth century of our era. The best edition is that of Dr. Berliner, with notes, in two vols. (Berlin, 1884). There is an English translation of this and other Targums of the Pentateuch by J. W. Etheridge. (2) The Targum of Jonathan, containing the prophetic books, is named from a pupil of the celebrated Hillel. Parts of this Targum, as of Targum Onqelos, may be as old as the first century, but it can scarcely have received its final redaction before the fourth or fifth.

The Targums are of more value for the exegesis than for the textual criticism of the Old Testament, as their authors had before them a text practically identical with that of our Hebrew Bibles.

### (c) THE PESHITTO.

The Greek and Aramaic versions of the Old Testament are, as we have seen, the work of Jews. The Syrian Church was the first to possess a translation of the completed canon made from the originals by Christian hands. This was the Peshitto (*i.e.* simple or literal) version in Syriac, which dates from the second century, or, at latest, from the beginning of the third.

The Peshitto is of importance for the history of the canon, but especially for the textual criticism of the New Testament, having been made from manuscripts but little removed in time from the autographs themselves. For a complete list of the editions, in whole or in part, of the Peshitto see my translation of Nestle's *Syriac Grammar*, second edition, 1888.

### (d) THE VULGATE.

Strange as it may seem, the official language of the Roman Church, for the first century at least

of its existence, was not Latin but Greek. The need of a Latin translation of the Scriptures was first felt in North Africa. The history of the Latin version (or versions) before Jerome is still very obscure. This learned father first undertook to revise the version in common use, the so-called Old Latin. After his removal to Bethlehem, however, he set himself to the task of issuing an entirely new translation, which appeared at intervals between 393 and 405 A.D. This version, to which the name Vulgate (*editio vulgata*) was given, gradually drove the Old Latin from the field.

An interesting illustration of how history repeats itself is afforded by the Latin Psalter. The latter

is not, like the rest of the Vulgate, the version made by Jerome from the original Hebrew, but the Old Latin version made from the LXX. By centuries of liturgical use, this version had become so familiar to the Latin Church that it was found impossible to displace it by the more accurate version of Jerome. Now, the English Psalter in King James' version had a precisely similar experience, and to this day the English Prayer-Book version of the Psalms remains that of the Great Bible of the century preceding.

Jerome's date, his scholarship, and his familiarity with Jews and Jewish traditions, all unite to render the Vulgate one of the most important of the ancient versions.

## The Expository Times Guild of Bible Study.

THE following Examination Papers are set in accordance with the conditions laid down in recent numbers. Answers must be received by the EDITOR, Kinneff, Bervie, N.B., on or before the 20th of June.

### I.

BY THE REV. PROF. MARCUS DODS, D.D.

1. What do you understand by the creation of man, his formation out of the dust of the earth, and his being made in God's image?
2. What do you understand by the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and by the tree of life?
3. Why was Abel's offering accepted and Cain's rejected?
4. What arts are ascribed to the posterity of Cain; and why would you expect to find the arts flourishing among his posterity?

### II.

BY THE REV. PROF. J. T. MARSHALL, M.A.

1. Summarise the arguments of Delitzsch in favour of the Mosaic *origin* of the several parts of the Pentateuch.
2. What are the fundamental conceptions in the Biblical account of creation? Compare this with the Babylonian tradition.
3. Explain the words תהו ובהו i. 2; רקיע, i. 6; בעלמנו, i. 26; תולדות, ii. 4; ארבעה ראשים, ii. 10; תשפנו עקב, iii. 15; פרובים, iii. 24; שאת, iv. 7.
4. Translate Gen. iv. 20-26, and parse each verb in this extract.

### III.

BY THE REV. PRINCIPAL H. C. G. MOULE, M.A.

*The Epistle to the Ephesians.*

1. Briefly but carefully examine—
  - (a) The occasion and date of the Epistle.
  - (b) Its precise destination.
2. Putting this Epistle for the time aside, what does the New Testament tell us, directly or indirectly, about Ephesus and the Ephesians?
3. From this Epistle alone construct a simple statement of—
  - (a) The Person and Work of Christ.
  - (b) The work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian.
  - (c) The Church, and its relation to Christ.
4. Write notes, as for an annotated Bible, on any three of the following passages (reckoning each letter (a, b, and c), as one passage):—
 

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| (a) Chap. ii. 8. | (d) Chap. iv. 11, 12. |
| (b) „ iii. 19.   | (e) „ vi. 12, 15.     |
| (c) „ iv. 8.     |                       |

### IV.

BY THE REV. PROF. J. AGAR BEET, D.D.

1. Reproduce and discuss Meyer's exposition of Ephesians ii. 1, "Dead through your trespasses and sins;" or of verse 3, "And were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."
2. Expound, in its relation to the foregoing, Eph. iii. 19, "That ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God."
3. Reproduce and discuss Meyer's exposition of Eph. iv. 8, "And gave gifts unto men."
4. Expound, in its relation to the context, Eph. v. 23, "Himself the saviour of the body."