THREE NOTES ON THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE HEBREWS.

1. "Now it came to pass, when the Lord had come up from the water, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit came down and rested upon Him, and said to Him: My Son, in all the prophets was I waiting for Thee, that Thou mightest come and I might rest in Thee. For Thou art My Rest; Thou art My Son, (My) firstborn, which reignest for ever."

This passage is cited by S. Jerome in illustration of Isaiah xi. 1: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him," etc. (Vall. vii. 156). The following parallels from the Psalms deserve to be noted in explanation of the words, "Thou art my Rest," etc.

Ps. cxxxii. 14: "This (is) My Rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it" (LXX.: *Αὕτη ἡ κατάπαυσίς μου εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος· ὧδε κατοικήσω, ὅτι ᾑρετισάμην αὐτήν*).

Ps. lxxxix. 27: "I also will make Him (My) firstborn" (LXX.: *Κἀγὼ πρωτότοκον θήσομαι αὐτόν*).

Ps. ii. 7: "Thou art My Son," etc. (LXX.: *Υἱός μου εἶ σύ, κ.τ.λ*).

Thus the final words are an elaborate combination from three of the Messianic Psalms. But there seems no indication whether the combination was made in the first place in Hebrew from the Hebrew Psalter, or in Greek from the LXX. What interests us chiefly is the method by which the supposed Divine utterance is shaped.

2. "I will choose Me the excellent excellent: those whom My Father in heaven hath given Me."

This is cited twice in the *Theophania* of Eusebius (iv. 12), which survives only in a Syriac translation. The rendering of the Syriac has been a matter of dispute; and

the first of the two citations clearly contains a corruption.[1] Lee (p. 234) renders the first thus:

> I will select to Myself these things: very very excellent are those whom My Father, who is in heaven, has given to Me.

The second he renders:

> I will select to Myself the very excellent, those whom My Father, who is in heaven, has given to Me.

Zahn (*Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons*, ii. 702) recognises that there is a corruption in the first citation, and renders the second thus:

> I will choose Me the good: the good are those whom My Father in heaven hath given Me.

By way of illustrating this passage I would call attention to some remarkable variants found in Matthew xiii. 48, at the close of the Parable of the Drag-net: "they sat down and gathered the good into vessels" (*καθίσαντες συνέλεξαν τὰ καλὰ εἰς ἄγγη*). Here the Old Syriac Version (*sin.* and *cur.*) has:

> They sat down (and) chose the fishes that good good,[2]

omitting altogether the words "into vessels." That Tatian had a similar reading in his *Diatessaron* is shown by S. Ephraim's Commentary, which is preserved only in an Armenian translation: for there the literal translation is (Moes. 128):

> And when they draw it out, they draw near to choose the good good, and the bad to cast away.

In the Armenian Version itself, which was originally made from Syriac and afterwards corrected systematically by the

[1] ܐܓܒܐ ܠܝ [ܗܢܝܢ] ܫܦܝܪܐ [.] ܫܦܝܪܐ ܗܢܘܢ ܕܝܗܒ ܠܝ ܐܒܝ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ

The second citation, a few lines below, is the same, but with the omission of the word and the point which I have bracketed.

[2] ܘܐܬܒܘ ܓܒܝܘ ܢܘܢܐ ܕܛܒܝܢ ܛܒܝܢ

aid of Greek MSS., a trace of this reading still lingers. For there we find: "they gathered the good good into vessels." Even the Peshito Syriac has a trace of it, though a different trace, in the word "chose." For it reads:

And they sat down (and) chose, and the good they put into vessels.

But how are we to account for the expression "the fishes that good good"?

It is not clear, to begin with, what is the meaning of the phrase. Two explanations are possible. One is that "the good good" is a Syriac idiom for "the best." The other, which is offered by those who deny the existence of such an idiom in Syriac, is that the sentence means: "They chose the good (as) good."

Whatever be the grammatical construction of the words "the good good," it is to be noticed that the second "good" appears as a substitute for "into vessels."

Now many Greek MSS. read for εἰς ἄγγη either εις αγγεια or εις αγγια; and Codex L actually has εις αγια, so that τα καλα εις αγια might be taken as "the good for holy ones," or "as holy." Another suggestion has been made to me on somewhat similar lines, namely, that εις αγγια got corrupted into εις αγαθα, which would yet more easily account for the rendering "the good (as) good." On the other hand, this departs more widely from the original Greek word.

In connection with the opposite view, which regards "the good good" as a superlative, we may note that Codex Bezae has at this point:

συνελεξαν τα καλλιστα εις τα αγγια,
collegerunt meliora in vasis;

and Evan. 604 has συνέλεξαν τὰ κάλλιστα εἰς ἄγγη.

Moreover, the Old Latin gives some form of *optimus*, thus:

ek. collegerunt quae optuma (optimae *e*) sunt in vasa;
b. ellegerunt[1] optimos pisces in vasis suis.

Now it is not necessary to suppose that the Old Latin *optima* represents a Greek reading *κάλλιστα*: for in Lc. viii. 8, where Codex Bezae has *τὴν ἀγαθὴν καὶ καλὴν γῆν*, we find in *cer* "bonam et optimam." *Optima* then may simply represent *καλά*, though here the actual existence of a Greek reading *κάλλιστα* seems to offer a more ready explanation.

With regard to *κάλλιστα* a solution presents itself, if we look again at the text of Codex Bezae: *συνελεξαν τα καλλιστα εις τα αγγια*, and consider the following possibility of confusion:

ΤΑΚΑΛΑΕΙΣΤΑΑΓΓΙΑ
ΤΑΚΑΛΛΙΣΤΑΕΙΣΤΑΑΓΓΙΑ.

It is possible that this is the origin of the whole trouble. If *τα καλα εις τα* were read as *τα καλλιστα*, the word *αγγια*, or *αγγη* would give no sense, unless *εις τα* were repeated. Otherwise it might fall out, or become some equivalent of "fishes." In this case, if we can admit the superlative force of "the good good," the Old Syriac reading is entirely accounted for: and the Old Latin too, (as represented in *b*), where "the vessels" are restored again.

Whatever may be the true history and interpretation of these curious words, it is hard to resist the conviction that there is some link of connection between the words of the Gospel according to the Hebrews:

I will choose Me the excellent excellent,

and the words:

They chose the good good.

It is obvious that the Syriac words, which I have ren-

[1] *Elegerunt* is found elsewhere, and is the reading of the Vulgate.

dered as "excellent" and "good," are equally true representatives of the Greek καλός.

Other suggestions may be made to explain various points of detail on which I have touched; but I submit that there is a *primâ facie* case for the dependence of the Gospel according to the Hebrews at this point on the canonical Gospel according to S. Matthew. It certainly appears as though the writer of the former had based his phrase on a false reading and a false interpretation of the latter.

And, if this be so, we seem to see again the compiler's hand: for when once the second half of his phrase (viz., "those whom My Father in heaven hath given Me") is released from confusion with the first, it becomes more difficult to deny that it has come from the Gospel of S. John.

3. S. Jerome tells us that in the Gospel according to the Hebrews he read, not that the Vail of the Temple was rent, but that "a lintel of vast size" was "broken and divided," or "fell down" (Vall. i. 831 (cf. 53), vii. 236).[1]

At the first of the places which I have referred to (*Ep.* cxx. *ad Hedibiam*), and at the last (*Comm. in Matth.*), he is commenting on Matthew xxvii. 50 ff. But at i. 53 (*Ep.* xviii. *ad Damasum*), he is expounding Isaiah vi. 1 ff.; so that it is well to refer also to iv. 93 (*Comm. in Isaiam*).

Now in Isaiah vi. 4, we read in the LXX.: "The lintel was removed by reason of the voice wherewith they cried" (ἐπήρθη τὸ ὑπέρθυρον ἀπὸ τῆς φωνῆς ἧς ἐκέκραγον). At i. 53 Jerome gives as the Latin of this, "elevatum est superliminare a voce qua clamabant."

Thus the removal of the lintel at the cry of the Seraphim is parallel with, and has apparently suggested, the fall of the lintel at the cry of the Lord (κράξας φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, Matt. xxvii. 50). But the original Hebrew of this passage

[1] Superliminare templi mirae magnitudinis corruisse, i. 831; superliminare templi infinitae magnitudinis fractum esse atque divisum, vii. 236.

in Isaiah does not appear to offer the same parallel. אַמּוֹת הַסִּפִּים is rendered in the A.V. "the posts of the door," and in the R.V. "the foundations of the thresholds." S. Jerome himself renders the Hebrew by "superliminaria cardinum," perhaps under the influence of the earlier Latin version which he thus partially corrects.

It would appear then that, as in the case of the Voice at the Baptism the Old Testament was drawn upon for a substitute, so here too the Old Testament has offered a variation of the canonical narrative; but not, in this case at any rate, the Hebrew Old Testament, but its Greek translation by the Seventy.

I am indeed aware that Dr. Nestle has put forward in the EXPOSITOR of October, 1895, a theory of the relation between "the lintel" of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, and "the vail" of the Gospel according to S. Matthew. He says:

"The Greek *καταπέτασμα* corresponds, as every Hebrew scholar will know by heart, and a glance at any concordance proves, to a very common Hebrew word: פרכת, *prkt* (pronounced *paroket*); *superliminare*, again, stands for a rather rare word, *spelt with the very same letters*, but in a little different order: כפתר, *kptr* (pronounced *kaftor*). This Hebrew word stands in the Old Testament: Amos ix. 1; Zephaniah ii. 14."

I say nothing about the intrinsic probability of Dr. Nestle's conclusion: "*Καταπέτασμα is translation of a misread* כפתר, *superliminare*." My difficulty begins at an earlier point. I cannot find that *superliminare* is ever the equivalent in S. Jerome's Vulgate of כפתר. It is true that in each of the passages which Dr. Nestle quotes *superliminare* is found in the Latin, and כפתר is found in the Hebrew: but not so that the one word corresponds to the other. On the contrary, I find the following equations:

Amos ix. 1 : הכפתור = *cardinem.*
הספים = *superliminaria.*
Zeph. ii. 14 : בכפתריה = *in liminibus.*
בסף = *in superliminari.*

It is possible, of course, that Dr. Nestle, whose minute exactitude has laid many scholars under an obligation, has some further explanation to give of this matter; but it is also just possible, even in his case, that in rapid reading the eye has fallen upon the wrong words.

I fear that the above suggestions may arouse more than one sleeping lion of criticism. Dr. Harnack, in his remarkable book on the Chronology of Early Christian Literature, has accepted Dr. Zahn's verdict that the Gospel according to the Hebrews is in no way dependent on our canonical First Gospel; and has even expressed the hope that the condemned theory may never be heard of again.

I am not trying to state the case on behalf of this theory, or I should be bound to refer to older arguments in its favour. I merely ask whether these three fragments (alas! we have nothing but fragments) do not suggest (*a*) the hand of a careful compiler who knows his Old Testament well, (*b*) the use of the language of two of the Canonical Gospels, and (*c*) the introduction of an incident based on a Septuagint rendering. In each case there may be an alternative explanation which will prove better than mine. If there is not, then we must look again at our other fragments and search more keenly than ever for traces of their origin. The very fact that Dr. Harnack inclines to place this Gospel between 65 and 70 A.D. is sufficient to justify a new effort to penetrate its mystery.

J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON.