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REPLY TO DR. BRIGGS ON THE REVISED VERSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

By Rev. William Henry Green, D.D., of Princeton.

Dr. Briggs is utterly dissatisfied with the Revised Version of the Old Testament. And he has freely uttered his mind on the subject, as he had an undoubted right to do, in the EVANGELIST and the Presbyterian Review. In his judgment the Revision companies were incompetent for the task entrusted to them. They were marvellously ignorant of the advances made in the study of Hebrew and in Biblical learning generally, particularly in these last few years. And their work does not by any means answer the reasonable expectations of those who are initiated in the results of this recent progress. This being the case, it was the manifest duty of the real scholars, whom Dr. Briggs represents, to lift their warning voice against the acceptance of a work so wretchedly performed.

The article in THE EVANGELIST was mainly intended, I presume, to herald that which was forthcoming in THE REVIEW, and to prepare the public mind for so weighty a communication. It is occupied for the most part with general assertions of the numerous and serious shortcomings of the Revision. These I simply regret to find so unfavorable. He is, however, entitled to have his opinions and to express them. But when these are offered to guide the judgment of others, their weight will depend on the validity of the reasons on which they are based. And for these we must chiefly look to THE REVIEW, where abundant exemplifications are given of the alleged incompetency and mistakes of the Revisers. A brief examination will show whether they warrant the disparaging conclusions which the Doctor so confidently draws from them.

But before we proceed to this, a criticism in THE EVANGELIST on Dent. vi. 4 demands a moment's attention. Dr. Briggs says: "The Revisers leave King James's Version unchanged: 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.' But there are no less than three alternative renderings in the margin. Only one of them is correct. This is manifest if we give the proper name of God—Jahveh instead of Lord—thus: 'Jahveh our God: Jahveh is one.'" "First as to his preference for 'Jahveh' as the name of God, which he tells us that some of the English Revisers wished to introduce. This belongs to the inner history of the British Company, in respect to which I am not informed. The fact may be as Dr. Briggs states; but if so, it is creditable to the judgment and good taste of the Revisers generally, that the proposition was not only over-ruled but suppressed. If exact transliteration is required, the name is not 'Jahveh,' but Yahve or Yahwe. And if this is insisted on in the name of God, we must say 'Yira'yahu' for 'Jeremiah,' and so of all the rest. The rendering proposed by Dr. Briggs is a possible one, and has been adopted by some respectable authorities; it was, therefore, properly placed in the margin. But it is not the equal of that in the text, which has the sanction of the ancient versions and the best modern commentators: 'Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.' The stress is not upon unity alone, but upon character as well. Chemosh too was one. A merely national or local deity might be one. Israel's God was not simply one God, but 'one Jehovah,' whom they must accordingly love with all their hearts.

The multiplication of renderings in the margin, particularly in important passages, it is claimed "discloses a timidity and hesitancy among the Revisers, a constant necessity to compromise with one another, and also to compromise with public sentiment." On the contrary, it rises from the conscientious desire to give the reader of the English Bible, as far as possible, the advantage possessed by the student of the original. Where more than one construction was possible, and has been plausibly advocated, the reader is entitled to know it, and information of the fact is given in the margin. I am inclined myself to think that this has in some cases been overdone, and agree with Dr. Briggs that the margin is sometimes so crowded as to create confusion. But this is a question of judgment and taste, not of "timidity" or "compromise."

In the Revision (p. 497) the Revisers are charged with "an entirely incorrect presentation of Hebrew poetry." Within the last ten years there have been at least three notable discoveries of the true scheme of Hebrew poetry, by Ley, by Bickell (not to speak of the modifications of this system by Gietmann), and by Dr. Briggs in his "Biblical Study." Each of these differs widely from the others, not in details merely, but in the fundamental principles of prosody; each is equally confident of the correctness of his own method, and no one has gained general approval. Far be it from me to say that Dr. Briggs is not the sole possessor of the long-lost secret of Hebrew poetry. I do not propose to contest the correctness of his scheme of trimeters, tetrameters, and pentameters, which are liable to be interchanged in the same poem, and are regulated by the accent, the secondary accent being disregarded, and "kol-yô'békha" with its four syllables counting in the measure precisely as "kên," which has but one. All that I say is that the Revisers introduced no novelties in this matter. They divided the lines in the manner approved by the consent of eminent scholars, such as Hupfeld, Ewald, Delitzsch, and others. And there are members of the British company who are themselves entitled to rank as authorities on this subject, if any man living are. Dr. Briggs's lines may in some instances be more equitable than theirs, but mechanical uniformity in the length of lines is not the final test of accuracy in the measurement of poetry, especially in Hebrew, where the governing law is the parallelism of clauses. The palpable mistakes into which a slavish adherence to this principle leads him, may be illustrated by Isa. xxxviii. 10. The Revisers have: "I said, In the noontide of my days I shall go into the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years."

Dr. Briggs says "In following the Massoretic accents they have mistaken the structure of the pentameter. It should be: 'I said, In the noontide of my days, I must go: Within the gates of Sheol, I am deprived of the residue of my years.'" The Revisers are further charged with serious blunders of translation arising from their ignorance of Hebrew grammar. To some of "the heights of Hebrew grammar" (p. 526), as expounded by Dr. Briggs, most assuredly they have never climbed. They know nothing of "the Vay of the oath" (p. 531), which is familiar enough in Arabic, but unexampled in Hebrew; nor of the use of the perfect to express a wish (p. 530), which, even if it could be established in the rare instances claimed by Ewald and Boettcher, would have no application to

Song of Songs ii. 4, where Dr. Briggs lugs it in to bolster up the preposterous hypothesis of an absent shepherd lover. In several of Dr. Briggs's suggested emendations of the Revision, he is technically right and yet practically wrong. His renderings are such as a teacher might properly demand in the class-room to assure himself that the precise sense of certain forms or constructions was apprehended by the pupil, but which are awkward, enfeebling, and out of place in a version of the Scriptures designed for ordinary readers. He would substitute "who toucheth the earth so that it doth melt" for "toucheth the land and it melteth"; "My dwelling is in the house of Jahveh" for "I will dwell in the house of the Lord"; "O rise up, Jahveh, that thine enemies may be scattered" for "Rise up, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered"; "The ruler would not suppose that I may glorify him" for "This is my God and I will praise him"; "Water he asked, milk she gave" for "He asked water and she gave him milk"; "The people volunteered" for "offered themselves willingly"; this last rendering, he says (p. 502), "was probably to represent that they were free-will offerings in accordance with the use of *n'dhabhâ* in the law code, but this is a mere conceit." Such language from Wellhausen or Kuenen would be intelligible; what it means in the mouth of Dr. Briggs, is not very clear.

He says, p. 516, "In the Song of Songs ii. 8, 9, we have a series of participles, 'cometh, leaping,' 'skipping,' 'is like,' 'standeth,' 'looketh in,' 'showeth himself' are all participles in the original. The English language is surely capable of giving proper expression to these participles." I turn to the Presbyterian Review for January, 1885. I there find the Song of Hannah translated and commented on by Dr. Briggs. In 1 Sam. ii. 6-8 we have a series of participles. Dr. Briggs himself falls into the same blunder (if it be one) which he censures in the Revisers. He renders them throughout not by participles, but by the indicative present—"kills, quickens, brings down, dishonors, enriches, humbles, exalts, raiseth up"; and though the participles cease at this point, the Hebrew changing to a tense form, Dr. Briggs keeps on with the same unvarying form, "exalts," adding in a note "We can hardly express the difference in English."

Other corrections which he makes are open to more serious objections than those of taste. He claims that "there is no propriety" in "That ancient river, the river Kishon"; it should be "The river of battles," though this is contrary to all ancient testimony as to the meaning of the word, to the judgment of a majority of the best modern authorities, and to the sense of other derivatives from the same root, not to say that it might puzzle him to point out any battle fought there before the time of Deborah; whereas "ancient river," like "everlasting hills," forms a striking contrast with the ephemeral lives of the host which it swept away. But "the heights of Hebron" Lexicography, as well as the *nê plus ultra* of exegesis, would seem to be reached in the rendering adopted from Ewald and Bertheau, Judges v. 8, "He chooses new rulers"—i. e., Barak and Deborah—where the Hebrew can by no possibility mean anything but "new gods." This strain upon the sense of familiar words does not find the slightest justification in Ex. xxi. 8, xxii. 8, where "God" does not mean "judges"; men came to God for the decision of their case when they came to the tribunal which He had established and where He gave sentence through human lips. And no exigency in the passage requires such extraordinary treatment; the description of the oppression and its guilty cause (verses 6-8) is followed by the gallant uprising (verse 9).

To this must be added the frequent doctoring of the text not in accordance with ancient manuscripts and versions, but in spite of the concurrence of all external authorities, and that from no necessity but that which exists in the imagination of the operator. Such perlocutions of interpretation and of criticism exemplify, we may suppose, that "boldness" which Prof. Francis Brown is surprised to find lacking in the Revision (Presbyterian Review, p. 541), and which reverent lovers of the inspired Word in its integrity will fervently pray may never be permitted to mangle our grand old English Bible.

One charge based on the refrain of the Song of Songs, I frankly confess, I do not comprehend. Dr. Briggs says, page 511, "Our American Revisers do not hesitate to interpolate in order to avoid an interpretation which is against their *a priori* theory." Nothing has been interpolated; if he refers to the possessive pronoun that is involved in the article, the rendering of the American Company, so far from being dictated by "hostility to the realistic interpretation," is not only as consistent with that as with any other, but positively requires it as the necessary basis of that which is higher and more spiritual. They object to that of the English Revisers that it puts an unnatural meaning upon words; to speak of true unbiassed affection as love that is not stirred up nor awakened "until it please," is a very extraordinary use of terms, and the sentiment itself is of doubtful propriety. Dr. Briggs's memory must be at fault in this case or his pen has made a slip. He says "The English Revisers have rightly adhered to King James's version here." It is the American Revisers who have adhered to it; the English abandoned it.

Dr. Briggs further complains, page 532, that "in the whole department of Biblical Theology the Revision has failed to adequately represent the original text." What he says of the sacrificial terms will serve as a sufficient specimen of the whole. He objects, page 529, to the change of "meat-offering" to "meal-offering" as a word-play, then confesses that he does not see his way to "an entirely appropriate term," but would prefer "vegetable-offering." This is obviously the reverse of an improvement. If "meal-offering" is too narrow, "vegetable-offering" is too wide; the sense usually attached to "vegetables" would make it misleading to ordinary readers; and even as technically employed by scholars it includes the drink-offering. "Meal-offering" is commended by its brevity, by the trifling character of the change required from the Authorized Version, and by the fact that, while it is not absolutely exact, for the English language does not contain a precise equivalent, it is the most descriptive term that has ever been suggested, the offering being uniformly of grain in some form and most commonly of meal. When the original word so translated in the law has a more general sense elsewhere, the Revisers represent it by a more general term; but this is no fault of theirs, it must be laid to the account of Hebrew usage.

He says "The Revisers disagree in their rendering of *âshâm*." So they do; there was an

honest difference of opinion, and they frankly avow it. As *âshâm* commonly denotes "guilt," and is properly so rendered, the English Revisers thought it best for the sake of conformity to translate it by "guilt-offering." The American Company, with the approval of Dr. Briggs as I infer, believed that the characteristic peculiarity of this species of sacrifice, which was a compensation for damage done to rights or property, was better expressed by the old term "trespass-offering." And yet in Isa. liii. 10 "offering for sin" is allowed to stand, the strict translation being simply noted in the margin. This the Doctor considers a "serious error" and "altogether inexcusable." He adds "There is also a mistake in rendering the reflexive *nepesh* as if it indicated the Messiah's soul as distinguished from his body, which is an altogether false conception. The proper rendering is 'When he himself offers a trespass-offering.'" I do not agree with him in either of these particulars. The trespass-offering was simply a variety of the sin-offering, notwithstanding their ritual differences. So closely akin were they that there has scarcely been a more perplexed question in the entire ceremonial than how these two species of sacrifice were to be discriminated. I do not comprehend what the Doctor can mean by saying that while the trespass-offering is appropriate to the idea of substitution and the representation of the Messiah as the in-bearing victim suffering for the sins of His people, "the sin-offering has a very different meaning in the Hebrew ritual," since "it represents the atonement as accomplished by the application of the blood of the victim to the divine altar." Atonement was made by blood in the trespass-offering, and indeed in every other species of sacrifice as well as in the sin-offering, only in this last the ritual was more elaborate. In the trespass-offering there was both atonement for transgression and the superadded idea of satisfaction for a wrong or injury. The Revisers judged, and in my opinion correctly, that cleanness would be promoted, so far as the great majority of readers are concerned, by putting the essential meaning in the text, and suggesting the modification in the margin, which is equally a component part of the Version. The proposed substitution of "he himself" for "his soul" mistakes the point of this emphatic word. The stress is not laid upon the offering which "he himself" brings as contrasted with those brought by others, but upon the fact that the offering which he made was not of something external to him, but his own life. The Hebrew conception of *nepesh* cannot be adequately represented by any English equivalent. The best that can be done is to retain the old familiar rendering "soul," and let its Biblical usage speak for itself, which readers of the Scriptures are not in much danger of mistaking to any serious extent.

Dr. Briggs has detected "two other errors" in this important passage, viz: the rendering "sprinkle" Isa. lii. 15, and "made intercession" lili. 12. But the translation is correct in both instances. The first of these words occurs twenty-four times; in twenty-three of these it is universally admitted to mean "sprinkle." In this one passage it has been claimed that "stirle," a meaning derived from the Arabic, is better suited to the context. In deference to those who hold this opinion, that rendering is put in the margin. But the established sense of the word is properly put in the text. The One whom men thought stricken with the plague, lii. 4, shall sprinkle many nations for their cleansing (Lev. xiv. 7). Or if the allusion be to sacrificial blood sprinkled on the nations with whom He thus ratifies His covenant (Exod. xxiv. 8), this again would be appropriate. And it would not involve "the error of confounding different offerings." Why may not a figure be drawn from one species of sacrifice in lili. 15, and another figure from a different species in lili. 10? Besides, although in all ordinary sacrifices (peace-offerings as well as others) it was customary to put the blood upon the altar, and not upon the person to be atoned for (yet see Lev. viii. 23, 30, xiv. 14, 25), still the latter action would be both suitable and intelligible. As sprinkling the blood upon God's altar denotes the divine acceptance of the sacrificial expiation, sprinkling it upon a person would naturally denote the application of its merits to that person.

"The Revisers are also in constant error in rendering *zebhah* 'offering.' It is ever the 'peace-offering.'" There is a slip here, though this is of small account. The constant rendering of the Revision as of the Authorized Version is "sacrifice," and this is the proper meaning of the word. The customary application of it to peace-offerings is just as readily seen in the English as in the Hebrew.

In Lev. xvi. 8 "Azael" is put in the text of the Revision in accordance with the view of the most eminent interpreters at the present time, though I am personally of Dr. Briggs's opinion that this is not correct. The English Revisers put in the margin as an alternative "dismissal"; Dr. Briggs would render it "entire dismissal," referring, I suppose, to the sending away of the goat. The American Company prefer "removal" in application to the significance of the transaction, the complete removal of the people's sins.

And now I submit the question whether the Doctor has made any such showing as warrants his using the following language: "Our examination of the Revisers' interpretation of the sacrificial terms of the Old Testament religion, shows that as a body they have not mastered the subject." Considering the eminent scholarship of the English Revisers, not to speak of my distinguished associates in the American Company, one would think that these words must have slipped from the Doctor's pen without his being aware of what he was saying.

I pass to the only remaining count in the indictment. The Revisers have based their work upon the Massoretic text, and have declined to undertake its correction. Nothing more provokes the Doctor's ire or calls forth more caustic condemnation than this; and particularly that the attitude of the American Company who propose to expunge from the margin the citations from the Septuagint and other ancient versions, which are occasionally introduced by the English Revisers. Charges of "inconsistency and perversity," p. 513, are freely hurled at the American Revisers. In using "the Hebrew Bible" through the veil of the Massoretic accents and vowel points "they see it with the eyes of the Jew, and not with the eyes of the Christian," page 508. Dr. Chambers' admirable explanations upon this subject in his very excellent and useful "Companion to the Revised Version of the Old Testament" are characterized as "extraordinary statements," p. 493. And it is added "The position of Dr. Chambers is a strange position for a

Christian scholar to take. He seems to hold that the oracles of God were committed to the Jewish Massoretic scholars of the Middle Ages, for he insists with the American Revisers in adhering to the text which we receive from them." Dr. Chambers and the entire Old Testament Company take a perfectly intelligible, self-consistent, and defensible position, and one that is not Jewish, medieval, or reactionary. They do not by any means maintain that the Massoretic text or Massoretic points are faultless, or that they may not be departed from in case of a clear, exegetical necessity, or that they are not open to correction from other critical authorities. But this correction should not be capriciously made. It should be made on well-established principles, and these should be carried consistently through. And it should be throughout based on an adequate critical apparatus. It is notorious that no such critical apparatus exists at the present time.

The New Testament Revisers found an immense apparatus ready to their hand in the vast number of ancient authorities gathered, collated, classified, and digested. On this basis successive critical editions of the text had been laboriously prepared by careful scholars, whose lives were devoted to this work, and these were fortified at every point by detailed appeals to the evidence on which they were based. The whole territory had been surveyed and mapped out. The text in all its main points was substantially settled by the consent of critics; and the principles, by which such as were still debated were to be settled, had been thoroughly wrought out. Where is there anything that in the remotest way resembles this in the Old Testament? The extensive collations of Kennicott and De Rossi merely resulted in establishing the substantial identity of the text in all Hebrew manuscripts known to them; and in demonstrating that if anything effective is to be done in Old Testament criticism, it must be by a vast extension of the lines beyond any point which this process is capable of reaching. Old Testament scholars have recognized this, and are working might and main at the herculean task of preparing the preliminaries which must be laid at the foundation, before any sure and trustworthy superstructure can be reared. A perfectly reliable Massoretic text must first be secured as the point of departure. The immensity and minuteness of the labors of the Massoretic, the conscientiousness and punctilious accuracy with which they noted every feature of the text as it existed in their day, and every peculiarity of its words and letters, is just beginning to be appreciated. The vast store of materials thus accumulated must be put in available shape, and then searched and sifted that whatever is of value may be extracted from it. Dr. Ginsburg after years of research has just begun his great publication of the Massoretic text, embodying the critical notes of ancient Jewish scholars, gathered and corrected from all available sources, in a more complete and reliable form than it has ever been possessed before. Baer and Delitzsch, aided by Strack, are slowly pushing their way through this immense and heterogeneous congeries of materials, with a view to a more exact edition of the Massoretic text, and have issued a few books of the Bible thus corrected.

Changes are made in an indefinite way (page 507) that the Revisers have not made use of this more correct edition so far as it goes. I think it will be found that they have not been taking it in this respect. When the improved readings, which they have neglected, shall be pointed out, the public will be in a position to estimate the measure of their deficiency and to what extent the Revision has been damaged by it. The fact is that while the reader of the Hebrew Bible finds a countless number of changes in unimportant minutiae, such as the vowels, and accents, and other points, and the quiescent letters, changes which in any wise effect the sense, or which can by any possibility be represented in a translation, are very few indeed.

But then "the St. Petersburg Codex" Copies of Strack's facsimile edition are possessed by American, and no doubt by English Revisers. This is extremely interesting from its peculiar punctuation; and the editor's critical notes throw great light upon matters connected with the Massora, the vowel system, and the relation of the Babylonish and Palestine texts. But what would have been the gain to the Revision or to Biblical Science, if the Revisers, instead of trusting this matter to experts whose life-work it is, had undertaken a personal collation of this and other important manuscripts? Prof. Strack (Zeitschrift fuer Lutherische Theologie, 1877) gives thirty-four pages of various readings in Isaiah from this manuscript, and from the oldest known manuscript of the entire Old Testament, compared with Baer's and Hahn's editions of the Hebrew text. The entire outcome of which is as follows: Isa. x. 16, "Lord" changed to "Jehovah" (Revision, Lord); the manuscripts differ about a like change xxvii. 2. In xv. 2, verb altered, sense the same; xxvii. 8, form of verb altered, sense the same; xxvii. 7, one manuscript "Yesay," the other "Thousayest" as the common text which is retained in the Revision; xxxviii. 11, transposition of letters gives sense of "world," so Revised and Authorized Version, while the common text is represented in the margin by "ceased to be"; xlii. 17, points of one manuscript yield "The multitude of the Revision in margin, while retaining the common and undoubtedly correct reading "Thy sons" in the text. And yet on the bare remark that another old manuscript has just been brought to light, Dr. Briggs pronounces the Revision "premature" (article in EVANGELIST). In spite of the earnest frankness of his nature, it is difficult to avoid suspecting that a spice of the *ad captandum* lurks underneath the stress laid on some of these matters.

But if we are to get beyond the Massoretic text, we must have the aid of the versions, and a prime necessity is the pure original text of those versions. This we do not possess. It was the dream of Tischendorf's life to attain this in the case of the Septuagint. Years of toil were spent in a series of skillfully planned approaches by means of facsimiles of ancient texts, diligent collations and critical editions, but without reaching his own ideal. Much is hoped for from the edition that Lagarde is at length bringing out. Berliner has just published a revised text of the Targum of Onkelos. Heidenheim is at work upon the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch. Much remains to be done in perfecting the text of Jerome's version. And the Old Testament Peshito lags yet further behind.

After these ancient critical authorities shall all be edited in a satisfactory manner, the real task of the Hebrew critic is yet to come. The materials thus gathered are to be applied to the sacred text for the purpose of eliciting the most primitive form attainable. And this is a

task of the utmost delicacy and difficulty. The work of the critic is sometimes flippantly conceived or spoken of, as though with a body of various readings before him, and an unlimited amount of conjecture besides, he had nothing to do but go in and slash away like a woodman hewing his path through a thicket. Theodorus has revised the text of Samuel on the basis of the Septuagint. Wellhausen has done the same. They differ perpetually in their conclusions, and other critics differ from them both. Whom shall we follow? What deviations are due to the license of the translator? What to original diversity of text? The problem is immensely complicated. Critics not only disagree in their results; there is no unanimity in principles and methods. Where patient scholars shall have fully elaborated the problem before them, we shall be prepared to accept their results so far as they are satisfactorily established. But until they have made it clear that we can with safety and advantage depart from the text traditionally preserved with such marvellous care and accuracy, we shall adhere to it as for the present at least the best that is attainable, getting along with its hard places as well as we can, and never setting it aside unless from imperative necessity.

In this condition of affairs, the American Company felt that the best thing to do in relation to the text was to do nothing. Where patient scholars shall have fully elaborated the problem before them, we shall be prepared to accept their results so far as they are satisfactorily established. But until they have made it clear that we can with safety and advantage depart from the text traditionally preserved with such marvellous care and accuracy, we shall adhere to it as for the present at least the best that is attainable, getting along with its hard places as well as we can, and never setting it aside unless from imperative necessity.

And now, in closing, I must confess that in one passage, Gen. ii. 4, 5, Dr. Briggs has caught the Revisers napping. I am as much at a loss as he to understand how it came to be overlooked. I did not credit it until I turned to the passage and saw it with my own eyes. I believe, as I stated in print more than twenty years ago, that a new sentence begins in the middle of verse 4, and is continued through verse 5, from which the initial "And" should be dropped, the Hebrew conjunction being simply the sign of the apodosis. But the first clause of verse 4 does not belong to the preceding section, as Dr. Briggs affirms; nor is the section that follows a "second narrative of the Creation."

Princeton, N. J., July 14th, 1885.

"DEAR OLD SAYBROOK."

Dear Evangelist: While inclosing my annual subscription may I be allowed through you, to thank Dr. Cuyler for his letter of June 25th, from "Old Saybrook." The letter awakened most tender memories, especially his reference to attending church and Sabbath-school. Dear Old Saybrook! Home of my ancestors for five generations, their sacred dust sleeping in the cemetery; my great-great-grandfather lies in the one near the Point, while nearer kindred, with the dust of my long ago sainted father, sleep in the one at the north end of the village. The records of that Church contain the names of these my ancestors, from its earliest history. There will be found my name, first as a baptized child, 1815, next on assuming those vows myself, August 5th, 1829, then dismissal from the same in 1829. Neither time nor distance has loosened my love for that dear childhood's home. That Sabbath-school was my first. 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