

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

a host of doubts make one certainty. The attack has really changed front: the objectors of our day have quitted the old ground; the questions raised by a Spinoza or an Astruc are now quite out of date. Cumulation in such a case is impossible; opinions that are mutually destructive cannot be cited to establish the same point. However, it may be well to review some of these objections, and attempt a refutation of some of the charges by selecting a few examples; though it must be remembered that, as no explanation is demanded of us, so no endeavour in this direction is sure of success or necessarily right.

F. TILNEY BASSETT.

(To be continued.)

ART. IV.—LATIN TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE.

THERE can be no question that for a considerable period the Christian Church was a Greek-speaking Church. The Septuagint had quite superseded the Hebrew original text; the New Testament was entirely in Greek; in the Churches of Alexandria, Corinth and Antioch, Greek was the vernacular, and even at Rome there were sections of the community which spoke Greek. It is noteworthy that the works of the great Stoic philosophers, Epictetus and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, have come down to us in the Greek language, notwithstanding that Cicero had shown that the refined Latin of the pre-Augustan age presented a sufficient vehicle for philosophic inquiry. The oldest non-Hellenic version was not the Latin, but the Peshito Syriac, a loving return of the Scriptures to a kindred dialect of the old Aramaic and Hebrew. No one, however, can read the Greek Testament without feeling that the penumbra of a Latin superior power overshadows it, just as in the modern literature of India the presence of English is felt in the ideas, the phraseology, and the word-store. Such words as "sicarius," "Prætorium," "membrana," "census," "Cæsar," "Colonia," "Niger," "Gaza," "libertinus," "rhetor," strike the reader in the same manner as an English expression in a Hindustani document. The current coins bore Latin names and Latin characters; one of the inscriptions on the Cross was in Latin. Still, even in the distant Church of Gaul, so far removed from direct Hellenic influences, where the people spoke a barbarous vernacular, Greek was for some period the recognised language of Christian authority; in Rome the literary use of Greek extended into the third century, and in the early days of the Roman Church Greek was the language of public worship.

Here let us stand aside for a moment and reflect upon another

aspect of the Divine plan; the period, the locality, the environment of the great drama of man's salvation were unique in the history, the geography, and the ethnology of the world; no such a favourable conjunction of place and opportunity for a world-wide revelation had occurred before or since the Christian era, and I proceed to show how in the fulness of time a suitable vehicle, not always the same, was, as it were, prepared beforehand to safeguard the oral Message. In all false religions the founder from his own narrow human point of view thought only of his own time, his own people, and their peculiar surroundings; his blinded followers worshipped the letter of their master's writings, and allowed of no vernacular translations, and so the oral word became shrouded and withdrawn from the human intelligence of generations yet to be born, using languages which had not come into existence, or which had not been reduced to literary requirements, but were darkened by the overlaying of antique and obsolete customs, instead of being capable of adaptation to the requirements of every age, every clime, every grade of civilization.

Now a doubt has been expressed whether the red, black, yellow, and white man can have possibly descended from one primæval pair, and have become differentiated in the colours of their skin and shape of their skull, in the course of ages, from causes of which we have no knowledge, and in a manner which has never recurred in the long period of recorded history. I pass no opinion on this subject beyond recording the fact that the existing races of mankind, however differing in minor features, resemble each other physically and intellectually more than they resemble any other species of animal. But there can be no doubt whatever that languages did *not* spring from the same seed-plot. There has been no continuous descent of languages even in historic times; they differ from each other so considerably in structure and word-store as to render the theory of their being descended from a common stock quite untenable. Some have thrown out the idea that man was created without the power of uttering articulate speech; that there existed in early times an animal scientifically described as *ἄλαλος ἀνὴρ*; after their dispersion in many countries the power of utterance was developed by their organs under different circumstances, and presented different phenomena. Now in no ancient document do we find such early allusions to the existence of differentiations of speech as in the Old Testament. We become aware of the existence of the Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian languages, and of other less important dialects. All the nonsense of Hebrew having been spoken in the Garden of Eden, or before the Flood, or in Mesopotamia before the call of Abraham, has been swept away; up to

the time of the Jewish Captivity the Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian languages had had a long innings, and had played their game out. Egyptian might have been the language of the older Hebrews after their long sojourn in Egypt, and Babylonian might have been the language of the later Hebrews after their shorter sojourn in Babylon: they were both literary languages, and documents in their particular form of words and method of writing have come down to our time; but they were not chosen to be the vehicle of conveying the oracles of God, and centuries have passed since they both became dead and extinct. But during the Captivity in Babylon the Jews came into contact with two other languages, the Median and the Persian; both are known to us, the former only by the inscription of Darius' tablets of Behistun, the latter by a vast literature and a living vernacular, one of the simplest and most beautiful in the world: but neither was selected for God's purposes. The Hebrew form of speech, which had lasted more than one thousand years, from the time of the sojourn in Egypt to the Captivity in Babylon, had died as a living speech, and was never a sufficient vehicle for logical thought; still less so was the Aramaic vernacular, which succeeded it, and which had the peculiar honour of being the vehicle of the oral teachings of our Lord and His Apostles.

∴ The epoch of the Captivity was a remarkable one in the history of the world. Cyrus, or Kai Khusru, had appeared as the representative of the Aryan race; before him and his successors fell the empire of the Semites in Mesopotamia, and of the Hamites in Egypt. There was a birth of great spiritual leaders at that time all over the world: Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, 586 B.C.; Pythagoras flourished, 580 B.C.; Buddha, 580 B.C.; Koung-futz-zee, or Confucius, 550 B.C. The later Hebrew prophets were pronouncing the decay of Israel, and looking forward into a mysterious and unintelligible future. The domination of the Aryan-speaking races commenced when Cyrus the Persian appeared, followed by the Greeks and Latins, and law has since been given to the world in an Aryan tongue, with the short interlude of a Semitic revival in the early Mahometan rule. On the other hand, the dominating cosmopolite religions of the world, the Christian and Mahometan, have been, and ever will remain, essentially Semitic; and there seems no possibility of any change, except a return to the blank atheism of Buddhism and Confucianism, or the development of a scientific agnosticism, or a hopeless, despairing atheism.

∴ The time, predestined from the commencement of the world, had come for the throwing down of the barrier betwixt the Jew and the Gentile, and for the manifestation of God as the Father of all His poor children, and not only of one favoured race, to

whom up to this time His oracles had been entrusted. The civilization of the nations who dwelt on the shores of the Middle Sea of the Western World (for the Eastern World of India and China sat apart, until last century, in darkness) had been prepared; and there was a preparation also of the Roman polity, the Greek philosophy, and the Phœnician written character in its three great developments, Hebrew, Greek, and Roman. The Hebrew language might have been sufficient for the spiritual and intellectual wants of one insignificant nation; the lordly languages of Greece and Rome were required for the teaching of races in a higher civilization, and the illumination of the countries west of the Volga and the Euphrates for all time. The Greek language had gone through the great curriculum of poetry, the drama, the schools of philosophy, and the political debates in the Agora. When Alexander the Great defeated Darius at Arbela, Greek had already, in the hands of Plato and Aristotle, been fashioned into a great logical machine, and had become ripe for the reception of the Divine oracles, which had become too vast to be any longer contained in the imperfect receptacle of the vowelless and voiceless Hebrew. The alphabet of the Greek nations was strong in all the details where the Hebrew failed. Here we see the marvellous wisdom of God watching over the preservation of His Word. When the Jews came back from Babylon they left in that city a large colony, who were in possession of the Books of Moses, the poetical books, and some of the prophetic, thus anticipating and guarding against the attacks which after-ages would bring against the honesty of Ezra, who is charged with crediting Moses with utterances which he never uttered. The rival sect of the Samaritans seem to have been maintained in a profitless existence merely to be additional witnesses of the genuineness of the Pentateuch, preserved in a different dialect and written character down to our days. To anticipate falsification on the part of the Pharisees and Sadducees of the time of our Lord, the Septuagint translation into Greek had come into existence 150 B.C., the first instance on record of a translation of a large volume from one language into a totally different one. As far as we can judge, the Old Testament is the unique specimen of the Hebrew language of that period. There were few, if any, Gentile Hebrew scholars before the time of Jerome. Greek became the vehicle of the translation of the Old Testament, and supplied the original text of the New. Many Romans studied and were acquainted with the Greek literature, and there was no need of translations; on the other hand, no one cared to make translations of the ample stores of Egyptian literature, such as the "Book of the Dead," or of the accumulated learning of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and still more ancient Accadian libraries.

No Greek translations have come down to us of the Cypriote, Hittite, Lycian, and many other minor languages. The Hebrew Old Testament, being at this early period enshrined in Greek, and entrusted to nations who knew no Hebrew, has been thus preserved, so that no one could possibly add to or take from its text, or impugn its genuineness.

But as time went on a second vehicle of speech was required, and was found in the Latin. The Greek language was destined to be childless, to give birth to no great families of new languages, as its two sisters, the Sanskrit and Latin, have done; never entirely dying as a vernacular, for many centuries it was under a cloud, and had ceased to be a vehicle of literature. On the other hand, the Latin language, which differed from it in so much, and yet resembled it in so much more, was selected for a more remarkable destiny, and, as we shall see, for a long period became the faithful depository of the Word of God, guarded, however, from fabrications by the existence of the Greek and several early Asiatic and African versions, and, as regards the Old Testament, by the jealous care of the Jews of their Hebrew text.

Let us pause and thank God. The Roman Catholic Church might have been tempted in the hour of its dogmatic pride, amidst the dense ignorance of the mediæval laity, to alter the Sacred Text; but, bearing in mind the early translations in Syriac, Koptic, Abyssinian, Armenian, Georgian, hid away in unknown regions, and forgotten corners in the heart of Mahometan countries, they dared not. The Greek Church, in its madness for disputation, might have done the same; but the separation of the Latin Church prevented them. The Jews at the time of our Lord, the custodians of the Hebrew text, might have desired to rid themselves of the Messianic prophecies; but the Septuagint stood in their way. The Samaritan Pentateuch was an unwilling testimony to the accuracy of the Hebrew Synagogue rolls. At the time of the return from the Captivity, if Ezra had wished to manipulate the Scriptures to suit the views of the priestly party, how could he have induced the remnant of Israel left at Babylon, who had ceased to care for Canaan and Sion, the Jews scattered like Tobit in Rages and Ekbatana in Media, to fall into his views and alter their MSS. also? The Holy Spirit made use of Language as a watchful sentinel on the text of the Scriptures, more faithful and powerful because the nature of the safeguard was less understood. Manuscripts in uncial and cursive characters of different dates and styles, endorsed on varying material, distinguishable by idiosyncrasies of copyists and prejudices of rival Churches, have survived in scores to testify in these last days to the essential truth of the Word which has come down to us.

Of the Old Latin Version little is known with certainty,

except that it existed. It is first heard of in the Churches of Africa, before the time of Tertullian; but in the hands of unskilled transcribers it became so changed that it is uncertain whether there was one leading translation or several distinct versions. Jerome alludes to variations in copies, but Augustine tells us that the "Itala" is to be preferred to other versions. Manuscripts of the old Latin are in general terms called copies of the *Vetus Itala*; but it cannot be precisely defined, for it is only mentioned by Augustine, and by him only once. Such as exist are of no practical value; but we must always think of these pre-Vulgate versions with tender love, for men and women—notably Perpetua and Felicitas, names to be perpetually and happily remembered—gave up their lives rather than sacrifice their copies of the Scriptures, thanking God that they were counted worthy to suffer for His Name. Felicitas was a young wife, and was seized with the pangs of labour in the dungeon. When the gaoler heard her groans, he asked her how she would bear on the morrow the agony of being thrown to wild beasts, when she groaned so much under the ordinary trials of women. Her noble reply should live for ever; true nobility is born of tribulation: "It is only I that am suffering *now*; but *then* there will be Another with me, Who will suffer for me, because I also shall be suffering for Him."

It cannot be said that the *Vetus Latina Africana* was written in vain, and passed away from the lips and eyes of men without leaving some happy names entered in the Book of Life. Later on, in the time of the persecutions of Diocletian, the Bishop of a town near Carthage was called upon to surrender his copy of the old version. He replied, "Better it is that I should be burned than the Scriptures of God," and he suffered death. These things happened for our learning and the strengthening of the hearts of generations to come, and not in vain. We find their echo in the bold words of John of Gaunt, the protector of Wickliffe from a more deadly enemy than the pagan Roman—viz., the Roman Papist: "We will not be the dregs of all, seeing that other nations have the Law of God written in their own language." We find these words interpreted into acts by the Protestant martyrs, who fell two hundred years later in England, going to the stake with the Bible tied round their necks, and in these last days by the young uncivilized, unlearned, weak Christians of the Churches in Madagascar, who would not surrender their Bibles to Giant Pagan; and later on, even to the time while we are writing, by the nascent Church of Christ in the Society Islands in Oceania, who will not give up their Bible in their own language at the bidding of Giant Pope, only because these islands have passed under the sovereignty of France.

The necessity had arisen for a new and authorized version of

the Old Testament in Latin: there was, perhaps, a spark of rivalry in the movement. The Emperor Constantine had legalized Christianity, but he had migrated from Rome to Constantinople, and Greek had become the vehicle of empire. The New Testament existed in the original inspired Greek, and the Old Testament in the Septuagint, with the authority of a usage of five hundred years, which gave it the weight of inspiration, though it was not alone in the Greek field, as is evidenced by Origen's Hexapla. Damasus, Bishop of Rome in the year A.D. 381, felt the difficult position of the Roman Churches and the danger of unsettled and varying Latin translations, and looked round for a man of learning, industrious, pious, free from heretical bias, yet possessed of critical acumen. Such a man was found in Hieronymus, better known as Jerome, who, after the Apostles, rendered the greatest service to the Western Church that it was possible for man to render. He was born in Dalmatia about A.D. 340, and was old enough to study grammar in A.D. 353, when the last sigh of expiring paganism was breathed by the noble but mistaken Emperor Julian: "Galilean, you have conquered." His parents were orthodox Christians, so he had no hard struggle of conversion to pass through. He finished his education at Rome: it is recorded that he attended lectures of the Neo-Platonic School, and expended his Sundays in deciphering the inscriptions in the catacombs. He was a great scholar, and a great traveller in Gaul, Germany, Dalmatia, Greece, Asia Minor, and Syria. A serious illness had brought him to God, and he consecrated his talents to the translation of the Scriptures. In the island of Eubœa he adopted the life of a hermit, copying manuscripts and learning Hebrew. He then went to Constantinople to make himself a master of Greek. No such scholar as Jerome appeared until one thousand years later Erasmus was born, and closed the period of the reign of the Vulgate and opened a new era.

Jerome accepted the task imposed upon him by Bishop Damasus. No one was more aware than he was of the necessity of a careful revision of the Latin Bible. He began the work of collation of manuscripts at Rome, and in A.D. 385 he published a revised edition of the New Testament and the Psalms. When Bishop Damasus died he left Rome and set out for the East. At Antioch he was joined by two Roman ladies, Paula and her daughter Eustochium, who also had learnt Hebrew. They were accompanied by a band of Roman women to found a nunnery in Palestine. Jerome made a tour of Palestine to satisfy himself on Scripture topography. He then went to Egypt to inspect the convent, still existing, in the Nitrian Desert.¹

¹ These were the debased, ignorant, and fanatic monks who, under the leadership of Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, massacred the beautiful and

During all his wanderings his thoughts were fixed upon this one subject, and he took the opportunity of discussing moot passages with learned men when he met them; and we can hardly imagine how important this was at a period when there was no accumulation of commentaries, and not the faintest development of a free press for discussion. On his return to Palestine Paula built four monasteries at Bethlehem, three for nuns and one for monks. Paula presided over the nunneries till she died in A.D. 404, and her daughter Eustochium succeeded her. Jerome lived to an advanced age and survived both the ladies, and in one of his letters we read how poignant his grief was at their loss, for they were remarkable characters, and sustained him in his high endeavour and in his numerous conflicts, for he was a bitter controversialist, and at one time so provoked his antagonists that he had to fly from the monastery over which he presided at Bethlehem and conceal himself for two years. He returned to Bethlehem in 418 and died in 420, aged 80 years. Jerome unhappily yielded to the strange fascination of the period of seeking by retirement into a hermitage to escape from the needed discipline of ordinary life; but in his letters to Paulinus he sternly rebukes the increasing folly of seeking sanctity by making pilgrimages: "Let them that say, 'the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord,' listen to the words of the Apostle, 'Ye are the temple of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit dwelleth in thee'"; and the famous passage, "Et de Jerosolomis, et de Britannia, æqualiter patet aula cœlestis." We thank the good old man for this prophetic utterance, for that country, of which Jerome had only heard vaguely as the Ultima Thule, was destined in the century after his death to be won to Christ, and, by God's grace upon the love of the British nation for the Bible, to become the centre of the evangelization of the world, carrying the Gospel in its own proper vernacular to regions which Cæsar never knew, and fulfilling the prophecy, "The isles shall obey Thy law."

Here he translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew original with the aid of Jewish scholars, who came to him secretly for fear of their co-religionists. The result of his labours at Rome was a revision of the New Testament, and at Bethlehem

unfortunate Hypatia, the last teacher of the Neo-Platonic School in Alexandria. Chrysostom was his contemporary at Antioch, and predeceased him, 407. Before he died Jerome must have heard that the eternal city had been taken and plundered in 410 by Alaric, King of the Goths. The end of the world must have seemed to be at hand. Nothing but the Word of God had any degree of permanence, but even before Jerome commenced his task Ulfilas had translated the New Testament from the Greek into the language of the Goths, as he died A.D. 381, and perhaps may have been comforted by a belief that the Word of God would be honoured when entrusted to the Teutonic race.

a new translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew was the famous "Vulgate." No doubt the text became very corrupt in the Middle Ages, changes being made by copyists under the influence of older translations. It must be recollected that Jerome had collected all existing early Latin translations of the New Testament and the best Greek manuscripts. He separated the inspired books from other books, and struck out the Apocrypha as having no Hebrew original. It required no small nerve to accomplish his task: it was no small matter for Jerome to abandon the Greek text of the Old Testament, actually quoted by the Apostles in the New Testament and read in the Churches, and commented upon by the early Fathers. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, a younger man, but a correspondent of Jerome, who had freed himself from Manichæism and Neo-Platonism, thought the experiment a dangerous one. He was informed by the great translator that the Church had already abandoned the Septuagint, and used the text of Origen, which contains additions made by the Jews, Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus, because the Septuagint had gradually in the first centuries of the Church been degraded by mistakes and additions. The Jews had always had their Hebrew originals to check the tide of growing errors, but the Christians had nothing to prevent glosses creeping in or phrases being manipulated. Origen's Hexapla had partially added to the sources of error, for, as few cared to copy the Hexapla *in toto*, they entered the variations gleaned from it in the margin of their own copies of the Septuagint with the usual result. To the stolid conservative, who prefers quiet error to emendations, which must cause anxiety, Cyprian's remark applies as well now as in his own time, "Custom without truth is the decrepitude of error." The Church of England of the nineteenth century has not much ground for throwing stones at the contemporaries of Jerome, as it still uses in the Prayer Book a version of the Psalms pronounced inaccurate by two companies of revisers at the interval of two centuries.

The favourite argument against Jerome's Vulgate was much of the same kind as would be urged now: "It is better to adhere to false translation than disturb the peace of the Church and the foundations of faith." Church and faith so-called were put against and preferred before eternal truth. "Populus vult decipi, et decipiatur": Usage hallows errors. Only a few could see the importance of having access to the purest possible text, and the most accurate possible translation. Truth triumphed at last, and always will, and some of us may live to see the disuse of the Psalms in the Anglican Prayer Book. Gradually the Vulgate supplanted the old versions, many of which have bodily disappeared. Africa clung to the old version till the day

of her opportunity had passed and her candlestick was removed. The Venerable Bede in the eighth century had adopted the Vulgate in England.

The influence which the Vulgate exercised upon Western Christianity is not less than that of the Septuagint on the Eastern Churches. Both versions have been in later times unjustly neglected and reviled, though the share which they took in preserving the Scriptures up to the age of the revival of learning in the fifteenth century can scarcely be overrated: they were the bulwarks of the Western and Eastern Churches for centuries. The Vulgate was for one thousand years the only Bible used, and the real parent of all the vernacular versions of Western Europe except the Gothic version of Ulfilas. From the point of language, it is interesting to record that the Vulgate held the fort until the magnificent crop of Neo-Aryan languages in Western Europe was matured, and ready for the reception of the oracles of God. We have copies of the Vulgate in our libraries, with Saxon and Irish glosses written interlinearly, so that we know what manner of form of speech existed in Great Britain in the eighth and ninth centuries. Neither Bede's translation (A.D. 735) nor Wycliff's (A.D. 1324-1384) was fit to be the conquering angel of the everlasting Gospel, which it was the happy lot of the English Bible of a few centuries later to become. God's wheels grind slowly, but very fine, and the fulness of time had to be waited for in the use of languages. The Vulgate is also the source of our current theological terminology, and an important witness to the text and interpretation at the time of the translation. The words "Vulgata Editio" are synonymous with *κοινή ἔκδοσις* in Greek, and "current text" in English. As the monument of the power of a translator from a Semitic language into an Aryan, at a period of linguistic knowledge when few men knew both languages, the translation of the Old Testament is so far unique that we have no other specimen that can be compared to it. The New Testament had indeed been translated from the Aryan Greek into the Semitic Syriac by men of Antioch, who were bilinguals, living in the midst of a bilingual population. In the same manner the Hellenized Jews at Alexandria had translated their sacred books from their dead sacred language, which they had studied, into the Greek, which they spoke, at a much earlier date. But Jerome's work compares more closely with the labours of missionaries like Carey, and Morrison, and Elliot, and many others, who acquired a strange vernacular first, and then rendered a book from the dead languages into this new and unadapted vehicle of thought. But Jerome was still at a great disadvantage with the modern translator, who always has on his table critical helps to assist him to the interpretation, linguistic

helps in the way of grammars and dictionaries to bring out the meaning, and, lastly, his own English version standing as arbitrator betwixt the inspired originals and the imperfectly handled vernacular. Jerome had nothing.

The Vulgate was unduly venerated by the Church of Rome, and in consequence its value was depreciated by the Protestants. It is a faithful translation, and sometimes (notably Rev. xxii. 14) exhibits the sense of the original with greater accuracy than our Authorized Version. Jerome had access to manuscripts older than any now existing, and supplies an approximation of readings now lost in the original. The work was completed before many of the theological controversies, which disgraced the second period of Christianity, came into existence. Whether the Council of Trent was wise or not in giving to the Vulgate its Imprimatur, absolute and unconditional, may be doubted; but it is manifest that it was the only version which a majority of Churches, who clung to Rome, would acknowledge. As finally accepted, it differed from the original translation of Jerome, in that it included the Psalms of the old version, only revised by Jerome, and not translated from the Hebrew, and some apocryphal books, which Jerome did not include in his version at all. We must recollect the circumstances of the time before we sit in judgment upon the leaders who led the Council of Trent on to its unwise and fatal decision. The Protestant Churches were tearing up all the landmarks of theology, as then received, by their new vernacular version, and the interpretation placed upon newly-revealed texts. The Church of Rome, had it been guided by the Holy Spirit, might have recognised the signs of the times, and employed scholars of repute, but not Protestants like Erasmus, to revise the text, correct the translation, and bring the Vulgate up to the level of contemporary knowledge, as we have been doing in England with our Revised English Versions. If the new text and translation destroyed some dogma based on error, so much the worse for the dogma. Throw it over the side of the ship. This meant reformation of errors, and the discontinuance of some of the favourite vices of the Church of Rome, celibacy of the priesthood, worship of images, doing penance, worship in foreign language, transubstantiation, purgatory, masses, etc., and the Church of Rome had become hopelessly hardened in her evil unscriptural system. Although the Latin language had naturally ceased to be understood by the laity, in its stupidity and blindness, and utterly mistaken view of the object and nature of true worship in spirit and truth, Rome clung to the mediæval conception of uniformity of usage and unity of worship, and refused to allow the vernaculars to approach the altar. *This is a sure test of a false religious*

conception. The policy adopted by Rome had been adopted long before by the Hindu, Buddhist, and Mahometan. In the dark hours of the Middle Ages there was no prohibition of glosses, or versions, or Scripture narratives for private edification, generally metrical, or artificially made up; but with the revival of learning and the Reformation, Rome became aware of the wide gulf between the Scripture and her practice. The Bible had become an instrument of attack in the hands of her enemies. No inquiry was made whether the books included by usage in their Scriptures were inspired. It was blindly decreed that the Vulgate was the only Bible, the entire Vulgate, and nothing but the Vulgate. On that rock the Church of Rome must sooner or later be wrecked, for the letter kills, and the spirit gives life.

Other versions of the Scripture appeared in Latin, but none ever came in collision with the Vulgate, or were of any practical value. Copies of the Vulgate spread over Western Europe, some prepared in the most costly manner, as may be seen in the treasure house or the library of many Roman Catholic foreign cathedrals or convents. In this lay the difficulty of substantially amending the text, as who was prepared to pay the vast expense of collating the copies scattered all over Europe, the hazard of offending all by the compilation of a new text, the difficulty of supplying copies of the amended text, and the still greater difficulty of enforcing compliance with the order to use the new one only? In A.D. 802, after a lapse of four centuries from the time of Jerome, the text was revised by Alcuin, under the orders of Charlemagne. This helped to preserve its purity. In A.D. 1455 it was the first book printed and published. In A.D. 1546 the Council of Trent declared that the so-called Vulgate was the sole authorized version of the Bible. In 1589 appeared the version under the authority of Pope Sixtus V., and in 1592 this version was further revised by Pope Clement VIII. Two infallible Popes issued rival editions of the same inspired books; and thus the story of the Vulgate ends. Another incidental solid advantage accrued from its existence, that it proves the substantial identity of the Hebrew text used by Jerome and the Masoretic text in use to this day.

Whatever English Roman Catholic priests may say to the contrary, the desire of the Church of Rome has for many centuries been to hide the Scriptures from the eyes of the people. It is clear that in the early centuries the Latin Churches yearned for copies of the Scriptures in their own vernacular, and the Head of the Church of Rome took counsel to secure a revised text on a level with the learning and requirements of the age. Such is not the Roman policy now. As the chemist places his dangerous ingredients out of the reach

of the public, and only supplies them under the prescription of the competent and authorized physician, so the Romish Priesthood, deeming the vernacular Bible dangerous, forbid it to the laity except under the conditions laid down by themselves. This is no new claim. I supply a catena of Papal dicta on the subject.

Gregory VII., Hildebrand, in 1080 A.D., replies thus to the Duke of Bohemia :

Non immerito sacram Scripturam Omnipotenti Deo placuisse *quibusdam locis esse occultam*, ne, si ad liquidum cunctis pateret, forte vilesceret, et subjaceret despectui, aut pravè intellecta a mediocribus in errorem induceret.

Gregory IX., in 1229 A.D., wrote :

Prohibemus, ne libros Veteris Testamenti aut Novi *laici permittentur habere*, nisi forte Psalterium, sed ne prætermisissos libros habeant in *vulgari lingua* arctissimè prohibemus.

In 1546 there follows the Council of Trent Rule VI., which I give in English :

Inasmuch as it is manifest from experience that, if the Holy Bible translated in the vulgar tongue be indiscriminately allowed to everyone, the temerity of man will cause more evil than good to arise from it, it is on this point referred to the judgment of the Bishop, or inquisitor, who may by the advice of the priest-confessor permit the reading of the Bible translated into the vulgar tongue by Catholic authors, and this permission they must have in writing. But if anyone should have the presumption to read, or possess it, without such written permission, he shall not receive absolution until he shall have first delivered up such Bible to the Ordinary. Any bookseller who shall sell, or otherwise dispose of, Bibles in the vulgar tongue to any person not having such permission, shall forfeit the value of the books, to be applied by the Bishop to some pious use, and be subjected to penalties.

Benedict XIV., 1757, somewhat relaxed this :

Quod si hujusmodi librorum versiones vulgari lingua sint ab Apostolicâ sede approbatæ, aut editæ cum annotationibus desumptis ex sanctis Ecclesiæ patribus, vel ex doctis, Catholicisque viris conceduntur.

Finally, in the Rules of the Index we find :

Ad extremum omnibus fidelibus præcipitur, ne quis audeat contra harum regularum præscripta, aut hujus Indicis prohibitiones libros aliquos habere aut legere. Quod si quis libros hæreticorum vel scripta ob hæresiam, vel falsi dogmatis suspicionem damnata atque prohibita legerit sive habuerit, statim, in excommunicationis sententiam incurret. Biblia sacra eorum (hæreticorum) operâ impressa, vel eorum annotationibus, argumentis, summariis, scholiis et indicibus aucta, sunt inclusa.

In 1713 Clement XI. issued the Bull "Unigenitus," and condemned Pasquier Quesnel's French translation of the Vulgate in such terms as finally to lay down unmistakably, *that the Scriptures were shut out from the people.*

In 1816, June 29th, Pius VII. denounced the British and

Foreign Bible Society "as a crafty device by which the foundations of Religion are undermined, and a defilement of the Faith most universally dangerous to souls. No version of the Bible in the vulgar tongue is to be permitted except as above stated."

The same Pope in 1816, September 3rd, prescribed that "if the Holy Bible in the vulgar tongue was permitted everywhere without discrimination, more injury than benefit would thence arise."

In 1824 Leo XII. issued an Encyclical letter, urging all his subordinates, by all means in their power, to keep the people from reading the Scriptures, and giving his sanction to the Bulls of his predecessors against the circulation and reading of the Word of God, which *he calls the Gospel of the devil*. I quote his words :

You are not ignorant that the Bible Society is stalking through the world, which, condemning the tradition of the Fathers, and contrary to the Council of Trent, is lending all its strength, and by every means to translate the Bible in the vulgar language of all nations, or rather *to pervert it*; whence it is greatly to be feared lest, as in some versions already known, so in others, by a perverse interpretation, instead of the Gospel of Christ it should become the Gospel of man, or what is worse, the Gospel of the devil.

In 1844 Gregory XVI. strongly enforced the Encyclical letter of Pius VIII. :

We confirm and renew the decrees delivered in former time by Apostolic authority against the publication, distribution, reading, and possession of the Holy Scriptures translated in the vulgar tongue.

You are consequently enjoined to remove from the hands of the faithful the Bibles in the vulgar tongue, which may have been printed contrary to the decrees above mentioned.

All these decrees breathe a determined and unmitigated hatred to the Bible, and a desire to dishonour it in the eyes of the people, as it is placed in the same index with nauseous and obscene publications.

In 1840 the Bishop of Bruges, in Belgium, described the British and Foreign Bible Society as a "society hostile to God and the Holy Church. The Church holds heretical Bibles in abhorrence, and utterly detests them."

In 1844, in the presence of Archbishop Hale, of Tuam, Ireland, a friar preached as follows :

Any person who practises the reading of the Bible will inevitably fall into everlasting damnation. Do not allow the Bible-readers near your homes; do not speak to them; when you meet put up your hands, and bless yourself, and pray to God and the Virgin Mary to keep you from *being contaminated by the poison of the Bible*. The worst of all pestilences, the infectious pestilence of the Bible, will entail on yourselves and children the everlasting ruin of your souls. Those who send their children to school where the Scriptures are read *give their children bound with chains to the devil*.

In 1849, Pius IX., the predecessor of the present Pope, addressed an Encyclical letter to the Bishops of Italy, in which he reiterates the condemnation of the Bible Societies, and represents "the Bible, when translated into the vulgar tongue, and issued without Catholic comments, as poisonous."

In 1864 appeared the Syllabus, in which Bible Societies are placed in the same category with secret societies and Socialists.

Thus the holy work of good old Jerome, which had been commenced so auspiciously and lasted so long, has become the snare and curse of the Roman Church. Science advances, and the thoughts of men grow broader with the progress of the sun; just when the Renaissance of Literature was bringing new light, the Council of Trent galvanized the poor Vulgate into a cast-iron reservoir of the errors of thirty generations of copyists, who were denied access for the purpose of periodical verification to the Greek or Latin or early Asiatic and African versions. A more sad mistake was never made. The folly of the Mahometans in not allowing the Koran in the Turkish language is as nothing to it; in India the Koran is appearing in the vernacular, and in diglott editions.

Gradually the Church of Rome allowed translations, with notes, to be made from the Vulgate and vernacular of Europe, and the ubiquity of the agents of the Bible Societies has compelled them to go forward with this work, described in my paper on "French Translations of the Bible" (CHURCHMAN, March, 1890). It may be accepted as a fact, until the contrary is asserted or proved, that no attempt was made deliberately to tamper with the texts of the Vulgate by the Roman Church, nor, considering the wide spread of manuscript copies in libraries, convents, churches and private houses in every part of Europe, was it possible, as it had been used for centuries in independent countries, and by quasi-independent churches. According to all experience of manuscripts, secular or religious, corruptions come in the very process of transcription; the copyists of those ages had no conception of the fiduciary duty of their office; glosses and marginal notes were insensibly incorporated in the text of the new copy; corrections were made in the supposed interest of grammar and style, especially in parallel passages of the Gospels. When translations came to be made in the vernacular of particular Churches, as a general rule they were faithful renderings of the Vulgate, but not always. I have only to allude to the Bordeaux version in the French language made by the Jesuits in 1685 to cajole the French Protestants, who, by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, were at the mercy of their persecutors; copies of this book are rare, but still in existence. No doubt there is always the possibility of unscrupulous religionists, who place their Church and dogma

above truth, attempting such shameless forgeries again, but exposure must soon follow.

In all the essentials of the Christian verities, and the saving truths of the Gospel of Christ, certain versions issued under the authority of the Church of Rome are sound; and this compels me to allude to a controversy which is disturbing one corner of the Evangelical section of the Protestant Churches of England at this moment. The priests of the Romish Church positively forbid the use by their flocks of the versions made in certain languages of Europe—French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and Polish—and distributed by the British and Foreign Bible Society. That society has no love for versions which have the imprimatur of Romish bishops; but the value of a soul is not to be weighed in human balance; and the possibility of bringing the Word of God into contact with the conscience of man is not to be limited by red tape rules, and the great Bible Society of London, seeing that the Roman Catholic flocks are permitted by their bishops to purchase and possess certain authorized translations of the Bible, supply them, and they are greedily purchased, and greatly blessed in their use. I wish not to speak hardly of those who would deny wholesome bread to starving Christians because it is not of the finest flour, and who would let their children pine with hunger because they are by the foolish rules of their family not permitted to partake of the pure unadulterated cocoa, which is the only diet which narrow-minded enthusiasts can tolerate.

The inspired Word of God in the Hebrew and Greek has never, in its long course, been other than an unmixed blessing to mankind. Words are but coins to represent ideas, sentences are but capsules to inclose an opinion or statement. The inspired Word of God, always fresh, always clear, makes itself always intelligible to the prayerful spirit. I think poorly of the zeal or ability of any minister of the Gospel who has not made himself familiar with the Hebrew and Greek. A translation is something essentially different. Let us take the highest instances, the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and our own Revised Version: the translators were honest, and learned up to the level of their epoch, but their renderings only express the eternal Word in the transitory conception of their own age and country, and general turn of thought. The intellect which has coined the translation, the hand that engrosses it, is human, nothing but human; the language which they used is the vernacular of their age, and the danger is that a false halo will surround their errors, and a false sentiment be engendered to perpetuate the so-called eccentric beauties of the style, the majestic flow of the words, not reflected from the original. We see it painfully in our own beautiful, and flexible, and constantly

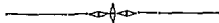
changing form of speech. What right have we to cling to erroneous word-renderings and avowedly interpolated sentences (such as the last words of the Lord's Prayer, the words of Philip to the eunuch, and the heavenly witnesses) because we learnt them from the lips of our mothers? Let us go back more to the original texts, if we care for rhythm, or beauty of expression, and be content with the matter contained in the translation, for the form of words used is only a transitory human conception; that which suited the time of Queen Elizabeth is antiquated in the time of Queen Victoria, but the matter contained is always the same, whether expressed in English, Arabic, Hindustani, or Maori. Translations are a necessity of the stream of time, and the ever changing word-moulds of succeeding generations. We should have holy strength each century to free ourselves from the yoke of the linguistic interpretations of our ancestors, and bathe fresh and fresh in the river of crystal, the pure Word of God, as delivered to holy men of old, and handed down to us, and children still to be born, in their *ipsissima verba*.

And not only from the linguistic interpretation, but from the narrow interpretation of the meaning of the words. The writers of the Old Testament wrote with no knowledge beyond the horizon of the Jewish people; the translators of the Septuagint had an Alexandrine bias with a possible admixture of Platonism. The Apostles and the Greek fathers had their human intelligence restricted to the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean. The Roman fathers could see nothing beyond the bounds of the decaying Roman Empire. We are in a fuller light with the inhabitants of the whole world—all equally the children of God, for all of whom Christ died—revealed to us, and with a correcter text, and more accurate translations, are in a better position to arrive at a sounder judgment. We look with pity on the narrow views of the Procrustean bed of the Roman Church, and the crass ignorance of the weak Oriental Churches; and we cannot but feel that the power of elucidation of a text is now at a higher level. No one can have had the opportunity of following a text from the Hebrew to the Septuagint and the Vulgate, and thence to one or two of the cultivated vernaculars of Europe, and then extended his comparison to some of the many languages of India, and the great Semitic language of Arabic, without feeling that new lights are thrown upon the meaning of the inspired original, as each faithful translator struck his hammer on the anvil, which gave forth a different, and yet similar, sound. How much better is this than the commentary based on mediæval fallacies, repeating platitudes of previous generations, grasping no new aspects of the eternal truth. The Holy Spirit still dwells among men, indicating the right of private judgment on a matter affecting individual

salvation, after sufficient and prayerful reading and inquiry; and with a humble, undogmatic and chastised frame of mind, seeking illumination from the only quarter in which it is to be found—not infallibility, but a spiritual discernment, and harmony with the Spirit of God.

ROBERT CUST.

May, 1890.



ART. V.—TURKISH-SPEAKING CHRISTIANS IN BULGARIA.

FROM the mouths of the Danube, southward to the mouth of the Kamchiya (English *ch*), a little below Varna, the old established inhabitants, as distinguished from later and more modern immigrants, are the Turkish-speaking Christians called the *Gagauzes*. The Christianity of these Gagauzes dates from an epoch considerably anterior to the Ottoman conquest, and they may be properly described as not merely Christians, but fanatical Christians. They write Turkish with Greek letters, like the Karamanlis in Asia Minor, with whom, however, they do not appear to have the slightest connection.

The existence of these Gagauzes is but little known in literature. Lejean, in his "Ethnography of Turkey in Europe" (Gotha, 1861), confounded them with the remnant of the Albanians in South Bessarabia, and in another place looked upon them as a mixture of Bulgarians and Turks. The two Englishmen, St. Clair and Brophy, who resided a long time on the Eminé Balkan, considered "the Gagauzes on the Black Sea a very mixed race," speaking, besides Turkish, "a corrupt dialect of Bulgarian or a very impure Romainic" ("A Residence in Bulgaria," London, 1869, p. 18). Kanitz, in his "Donau Bulgarien und der Balkan," looked upon the "Gagauzen" "as Greeks who had forgotten their own language and taken up Turkish," which many Armenians have actually done.

But the Bulgarian writer, who eventually became Minister of Finance in his native country, Petko R. Slavejkov, in the magazine *Napreduk*, Constantinople, 1874, December, Nos. 19 and 20, contended that they were the descendants of the Petshenegians and Kumanians, Turkish tribes, who played an important part in Eastern Europe before the Ottoman conquests. Dr. Konstantine Jireczek, in his history of the Bulgarians (Prague, 1876), expressed himself (p. 575) unfavourably with regard to Slavejkov's views. But in 1884 he made a special journey into the Bulgarian coast district of the Black Sea, when his inquiries fully satisfied him that Slavejkov was right, and that the Gagauzes are a people essentially different from both