

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 Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

subject of much further investigation, and it seems in many respects to point us beyond or behind itself. We may well believe that it is but a pledge of many more such discoveries in the hidden treasures of the East. But even the preliminary examination we have been able to bestow upon it will, we hope, have helped to illustrate the unity of Christian tradition, to confirm the received conclusions of Christian criticism, and to exhibit in a new and interesting light some important passages of the Gospels.

HENRY WACE.

*THE REVISED VERSION OF THE NEW
TESTAMENT.*

II. THE TRANSLATION.

(2) THE RENDERING OF GREEK GRAMMATICAL FORMS.

IN a former paper I discussed the degree of success attained by the Revisers in their rendering of Greek nouns and verbs. I shall now discuss their rendering of Greek inflexions and particles. My former paper embraced matters pertaining to the Lexicon; this paper will deal with those which belong to Grammar.

The subject now before us is both more difficult to discuss, because more indefinite, and less interesting and perhaps less important, than that of my earlier paper; for it consists chiefly of insignificant details scattered over almost every verse of the New Testament. Moreover, as it seems to me, in the matters now before us the New Version presents predominant excellences strangely associated with unaccountable defects. To form a reliable estimate of this element of the Revisers' work, is therefore exceedingly difficult. And to give satisfactory reasons for a general estimate is absolutely impossible. All I can attempt in this

paper is to take up a few elements in the Grammar of the New Testament, and describe and discuss their treatment by the Revisers. I shall say something now about their rendering of the article, the tenses of the verb, and certain prepositions; and in another paper I hope to discuss a few important passages, of which the rendering seems to me to demand special attention.

It must be admitted that the reasons given in my last paper for uniformity of rendering bear with less force upon the rendering of Greek grammatical forms; for these are not embodiments of definite and complete ideas. Yet, in consecutive verbs, repetition or change of tense is often significant. And the prepositions used in the New Testament frequently convey most important theological truth. We notice also that uniformity is possible or expedient to a much less extent with particles than with nouns and verbs: for particles are much more under the control of current modes of thought and expression. Consequently, the rendering of particles and inflexions and the order of words is less amenable to rules, and depends more upon the tact of the translator, than does the rendering of nouns and verbs.

The rendering of the Greek article is specially difficult. For, although the abstract significance of the article is the same in Greek as in English, namely, to mark out an idea as a definite object of thought, yet the practical usage of it is different. Indeed, in no two languages probably is it alike. For instance, with us, words or terms in the singular number expressing a definite idea must have the article, except words expressing an abstract idea, which do not admit the article: whereas the Greeks used the article only when they wished to call attention to the definiteness of the idea, and then they used it before any noun in singular or plural conveying a definite idea. Consequently, we are frequently compelled to use or omit the English article

where the Greeks did otherwise. These cases test severely the intelligence and tact of the translator. And frequently it is impossible to reproduce exactly the full significance of the presence or absence of the Greek article.

As an example of the above I may quote 1 Thessalonians v. 2, where we have no choice but to render *the day of the Lord*. We do so because the term *day of the Lord* conveys a definite idea. The Greeks omitted the article because the term itself was so definite that the article was needless, and because they wished to look at the idea conveyed by this definite term in its abstract quality as a *day*. This significance of the anarthrous noun cannot be reproduced in English.

In spite of these difficulties the Revisers have done good service by their treatment of the article. They have done good both by omitting and by replacing it.

To the ordinary reader 1 Peter iv. 11 means that the preacher's words must agree with the teaching of the Scriptures, and implies that these were called in the apostolic churches *the oracles of God*. The New Version gives the true sense, viz. that they who speak must look upon themselves *as oracles* or mouthpieces of God. Similarly *the gift*, in Verse 10, is corrected to *as each hath received a gift*.

In St. Matthew v. 1, *the mountain*¹ reproduces an idea which was definite to the first readers, but through our ignorance of the locality unknown to us. The article makes *the bushel* and *the lamp-stand* more graphic because more definite; recalling well-known articles of furniture found in every house. *The glorying* in Romans iii. 27 is the well-known Jewish boasting in good works and in the covenant of circumcision.

In many cases in which the article cannot be used in English, its force is well reproduced in the New Version by

¹ Compare Joshua ii. 22, which refers to the hill country west of Jericho.

a possessive pronoun. In 1 Corinthians iv. 5, not *every man will have praise of God*, but *each man shall have his praise, i.e.*, the praise due to him. So Ephesians i. 7, *we have our redemption*, the definite redemption ever present to our minds.

Good service has been done by replacing the article in 2 Corinthians iii. 17, *the Lord is the Spirit*, instead of *that Spirit*. After expressing a hope that the heart of Israel will *turn to the Lord*, St. Paul tells us that to turn to *the Lord* is to turn to *the Spirit*, and therefore brings liberty. Similarly, in John i. 21, 25, as a definite and simple designation of Him whom Moses¹ foretold, *the prophet* is better than *that prophet*.

Instances of gains similar to the above might be multiplied indefinitely.

At the same time it seems to me that the article has been needlessly and unwisely retained in a good many places, especially before plural nouns. In Romans i. 2 the absence of the article directs attention to the significance of the name by which the Sacred Books are called. They were *scriptures* or writings which were *holy, i.e.* specially belonging to God. This qualitative force of the anarthrous Greek noun ought never to be overlooked. It might in this case be reproduced by the rendering *in holy scriptures*. For a similar reason it would have been better to omit the article before *resurrection of the dead*. With singular perversity, in Romans i. 14, after omitting the article before *Greeks* and *Barbarians*, the New Version retains it before *wise* and *foolish*. As a better reproduction of the anarthrous plural masculine nouns and of the order of words I may quote my own rendering: *Both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to wise men and to foolish, I am a debtor*. With similar, but more pardonable inconsistency, we have in Verses 16, 17, 18: *the power of God; a righteousness of God; the wrath of*

¹ Deut. xviii. 15. Compare also John vii. 40.

God, with a *wrath* in the margin. Of these words every possible rendering is open to objection; good English and exact rendering of the Greek sense are in hopeless conflict. Perhaps it would have been best to put before the last two nouns no article at all, and to render the first *a power of God*. In Romans iii. 5 the Revisers have overlooked an excellent rendering: *If our unrighteousness commendeth God's righteousness*. This would have reproduced not only the anarthrous noun but the emphatic position of the word *God*.

In a few cases the article has been retained with rather serious results. In Romans i. 3 the article before *flesh*, otherwise needless, was retained to keep company with that before *spirit*. But to this last word the article gives undue definiteness, and thus lends unfair support to the patristic exposition which understood by the *spirit of holiness* the Holy Ghost. The article before *spirit of adoption*, in Romans viii. 15, is the more remarkable because of its absence from a very similar passage, 2 Timothy i. 7. The rendering retained by the Revisers suggests that St. Paul had in mind some definite *spirit of bondage*; and on this suggestion, variously interpreted, much false theology has been built. Similarly, in St. Matthew ix. 13 the article suggests that Christ had in mind definite and actual righteous persons. I cannot understand why the Revisers overlooked the plain rendering: *I did not come to call righteous men, but sinners*. Similarly, in St. Matthew xi. 25, the rendering *didst hide these things from the wise and understanding* suggests that from all these the matters in question were hidden. Christ's words were quite indefinite; *from wise and understanding men*.

In a translation from the Greek, the English indefinite article must be used only with extreme caution. The words *a temple*, in 1 Corinthians iii. 16, vi. 19; 2 Corinthians vi. 16, suggest that there may be many temples of God, an idea

repugnant to the entire thought of the Bible and in no wise suggested by the anarthrous Greek noun. Of this last statement we have proof in 1 Corinthians vi. 10; 1 Thessalonians v. 2. In spite of the absence of the article, the old rendering *the temple* is safer.

In its rendering of the present tense of the Greek verb, especially in the participle, the New Version is somewhat better than its predecessor. The rendering *they that are perishing, us that are being saved*, in 1 Corinthians i. 18; 2 Corinthians ii. 15; Acts ii. 47, certainly gives the Greek sense, and keeps before us the apostolic and salutary teaching that, while on earth, our salvation is only in process, and that the ruin of the unsaved is already begun and ever progressing. This gain may, I think, reconcile us to these uncouth phrases.

The force of the present participle ought at any cost to have been reproduced in text or margin of Hebrews x. 26, where the truth of the assertion turns upon the tense. It is only for those who *are sinning wilfully* that *there remaineth no more sacrifice* for sins. For, *if any man sin*, i.e. have committed sin, *we have an Advocate with the Father*.¹ To reproduce the exact force of the aorist in this latter passage is probably impossible. But certainly the contrasted force of the aorist in the former one should have been brought out. With strange inconsistency, while rendering correctly the present participle in Hebrews x. 26 by the hypothetical *if we sin*, the present participle in Chapter vi. 6 is so rendered in the text as to give to this very similar passage a false and very terrible significance. The authorised rendering of this verse, which the Revisers retain, has been a stumbling block to many. The writer evidently means that so long as the persons referred to, *those who were once enlightened and fell away, are crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, it is impossible to renew*

¹ 1 John ii. 1.

them again unto repentance. The margin gives the true sense. But why we have *the while*, instead of simply *while*, I cannot understand. A more literal rendering would be, *while crucifying, etc.*

The new rendering of the aorist and perfect tenses now demands attention. Already, in a series of papers in Vol. xi. of the First Series of this Magazine, I have endeavoured to shew that the Greek aorist occupies the whole ground which in English is divided between the preterite and perfect, and that each of these tenses may always be correctly rendered into Greek, but with some loss of significance, by the aorist; and that the Greek perfect conveys the whole sense of the aorist, adding to it however the sense of abiding results or significance. In support of this distinction I appealed to the ablest grammarians of the Continent, and to the use of the tenses in the New Testament. I also pointed out that, although we have no English tense in the active voice which conveys the full sense of the Greek perfect, we have a fair equivalent in the passive, and especially in the neuter, forms, *I am made, I am come.*

The Revisers betray a complete satisfaction, in my view an altogether misplaced satisfaction, with the form *I have written* as a rendering of the Greek perfect. This is, unfortunately, the best rendering we have for it in the active voice; but it always falls sadly below the grand significance of this remarkable tense. And the Revisers are nervously anxious to use this rendering, in both active and passive moods, even in places where it gives uncouth English, and where the change does nothing to reproduce the sense of the Greek tense. The rendering *hath been raised* in 1 Corinthians xv. 4, 20, would have been better in the margin, with the more euphonious *is risen* in the text. In the former verse, this latter rendering would have sufficiently marked the very significant change of tense.

This marginal notation of the perfect has been adopted in Hebrews xi. 17, 28, where we have the preterite in the text. But it is doubtful whether the ordinary reader will gain anything by the marginal notes. Less correctly, in Revelation v. 7 we have the English present in the text and the perfect in the margin. In St. Matthew xiii. 46 the Revisers have wisely refrained from attempting to note the significance of the perfect. In all these cases the Greek tense has its full sense.¹

That the Revisers are in many cases compelled to render the Greek aorist by the English perfect, gives them evident trouble. They seem to suppose that this rendering obliterates the distinction of the cases. So great is their despair that in many cases of passive or neuter verbs, because they cannot use the preterite, they tolerate the objectionable rendering *it is written*, etc., which ought to be retained, with one or two special exceptions,² for the Greek perfect. Thus we find the aorist rendered *is justified*, instead of *has been justified*, in St. Matthew xi. 19; *is excluded* instead of *has been shut out* in Romans iii. 27; *we are come, art Thou come*, in St. Matthew ii. 2, viii. 29, instead of *we have come*, etc.; *her hour is come* in St. John xvi. 21 instead of *has come*; *the night is far spent* in Romans xiii. 12, instead of *has far advanced*; and numberless similar renderings.

In a few cases however the Revisers have done good service by a skilful reproduction of the distinction between the Greek tenses now before us. For instance, in Philip-
pians iii. 12 they adopt the very excellent rendering of Dean Alford: *Not that I have already obtained or am already made perfect*. Also very good is 1 Corinthians xiii. 11, *Now that I am become a man*.

¹ See THE EXPOSITOR, *First Series*, vol. xi. pp. 302, 305.

² See my rendering of St. Mark v. 35 in THE EXPOSITOR, *First Series*, vol. xi. p. 298.

The theory of the Greek tenses adopted by the Revisers, which is adopted also, I am compelled to admit, by most English scholars, viz. that the English preterite and perfect correspond in their essential significance to the Greek aorist and perfect, makes them naturally eager to render the aorist by our preterite whenever the latter will make good English. By so doing they have sometimes, by the change they have adopted, given a new and wrong sense. For instance, the rendering *Did God cast off his people* in Romans xi. 1 suggests a reference to the days of Isaiah referred to in the previous verse; whereas it is evident that St. Paul refers to the men of his own day. This example warns us not to render the "indefinite" Greek tense by the definite English preterite without careful examination whether this rendering will give to the Greek verb a wrong reference. It seems to me that the rendering *were hardened* in 2 Corinthians iii. 14 is incorrect: for it makes the word thus rendered refer to the men of Moses' day; whereas the context leads me to believe that St. Paul is thinking of the unbelieving Jews of his own day, who are the chief matter of the whole paragraph. This is one of the many passages in which the translator is compelled, by the difference of the languages, to become also an expositor; and a translator's tact and skill are never more severely tested than in such cases. The easiest way would have been to put either *were hardened* or *have been hardened* in the text, and the other in the margin.

The renderings *quicken'd us, raised us up, made us sit*, in Ephesians ii. 5, 6, are better than the old rendering, as recalling the aorists in Chapter i. 20, which doubtless St. Paul had in mind. But perhaps it would have been better to keep the old rendering in the margin. The new rendering on 2 Corinthians v. 14, *one died for all, therefore all died*, is an indisputable and great gain. The

Apostle means that, through the death of Christ, our old life of selfishness has come to an end.

The well-known use of the aorist to denote the entrance into the state denoted by the present tense seems to have been overlooked by the Revisers. In Revelation xix. 6 we have *the Lord our God reigneth*, instead of *hath become king*. And, still worse, in 1 Corinthians iv. 8 we have *ye have reigned without us*, instead of *apart from us ye have become kings*. Similarly, in Mark iii. 21; 2 Corinthians v. 13, instead of *he has gone out of his mind*, we have *he is beside himself*. In the latter of these passages we have in the margin the incorrect sense *we were beside ourselves*.

Looking at it as a whole, I am compelled to say that I do not see that the rendering of the Greek aorist and perfect tenses is much better in the New than in the Old Version. There are not a few indisputable improvements, but these are counterbalanced by a few deteriorations, and by not a few cases in which, without any perceptible gain, the Revisers have given us very uncouth English.

A few words now about the new rendering of some important Greek prepositions. By using the word *through* as the usual rendering of *διά*, in text or margin, the Revisers have done a service far greater than appears at first sight. They thus remind us, in St. Matthew i. 22 and very many places, that *the prophet* was but the mouthpiece *through* which God spake to men. Equally valuable is the same rendering of the same Greek preposition to represent the relation of Christ to the work of salvation. Of this use, the classic example is 1 Corinthians viii. 6: *Through whom are all things, and we through Him*. The careful student of the Epistles of St. Paul will note the immense gain of this apparently slight change.

The Revisers' use of the word *in* as a rendering of *ἐν* is in some cases open to question. Indeed, not only is it

impossible to find a constant English equivalent for this Greek preposition, but to determine its true significance is in many cases very difficult. And the difficulty is increased by the influence, hard to measure, which the corresponding Hebrew or Aramaic preposition exerted upon the thought and expression of the writers of the New Testament. At the same time, the reproduction of St. Paul's all-important and favourite phrase *in Christ*, which is much more frequent in the New than in the Old Version, is an incalculable gain.

The Revisers have been guilty of a sad oversight in the rendering *under the law*, instead of *in the law*, in Romans iii. 19 and 1 Corinthians ix. 21, thus obliterating in the latter passage the contrast with Verse 20. The words *under the law*, which pourtray the law as a burden or yoke, are never used of the Christian.

The frequent use made by the Revisers of the obsolete and, to many readers, almost unmeaning word *unto* as the usual rendering in certain connexions of the preposition *εἰς* and of the dative case is, in my view, a serious blemish in their work. They not only retain it where they might have used a more intelligible word, but sometimes use it where the Authorised Version has a better rendering. A bad example is 2 Corinthians v. 13: *Whether we are beside ourselves, it is unto God; or whether we are of sober mind, it is unto you.* I am sure that to very many readers the phrases *unto God* and *unto you*, and the similar phrases in Verse 15 and in Romans vi. 10, 11, are either quite unmeaning or give a wrong meaning. Surely it would have been better to say, *for God, for you, not for themselves but for Him who died.* Certainly the authorised rendering of Colossians i. 16, *all things are created by Him and for Him*, which is retained by Alford and Ellicott, is infinitely better than the new obscure rendering *all things have been created unto Him.* How a majority of two-thirds was obtained to

outvote in this matter the learned Chairman of the committee, I cannot conceive.

The retention of the word *of* as a frequent rendering of the prepositions $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron$ and $\epsilon\grave{\xi}$, casts a needless veil of indefiniteness over many passages. Fortunately we have now, in St. Matthew i. 22, ii. 15, *spoken by the Lord through the prophet*, instead of *spoken of the Lord by the prophet*. But we still have, in Chapter ii. 12, *warned of God in a dream*; in Chapter iv. 1, *then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil*; in Chapter iii. 13, *unto John, to be baptized of him*; and so frequently. In 1 Corinthians viii. 6 we have *one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we unto Him*. Can any one deny that the sense would have been better reproduced by *from whom are all things, and we for Him*?

Similarly in Romans xi. 36 we have, *Of Him . . . and unto Him are all things*; where we ought to have had *from Him and for Him*. But we have a good change in St. John xvi. 13, where we now read *he shall not speak from himself*, instead of *speak of himself*.

In spite of sufficient explanation of their origin, I cannot think that ungrammatical phrases ought to be tolerated in what is designed to be essentially an English book. No English writer would say now, *where moth and rust doth consume*; *who is my mother and my brethren*; *whose is the adoption, and the glory*, etc. I can see nothing gained by these breaches of grammar; and the mere fact that they need explanation is an objection to them.

After all these strictures it will be difficult to persuade my readers that I consider the New Version to be, even in its rendering of Greek particles and grammatical forms, a real improvement on the Authorised Version; but this is certainly my opinion. In a great variety of small details, which unitedly have great worth, I notice alterations for the better. Naturally, in such a paper as this I call

attention to defects, while passing in silence over a multitude of excellences.

The chief failure of the Revisers seems to me to be in their use of their own language as an instrument for reproducing the sense which the writers of the New Testament intended their words to convey. They have not always been apt in choosing the words which best fit the original Greek, and in so putting them together as to make good English ; but even in this difficult task their successes far exceed their failures.

In another paper I hope to discuss the new rendering of a few passages of special importance or special difficulty.

JOSEPH AGAR BEET.

THE VISION OF ISAIAH.

ISAIAH vi. 8-13.

III. THE SUMMONS.

WHEN Isaiah was caught up into the world invisible, the world above life and beyond death, he had a vision of the unchanging and eternal realities which underlie the change-ful phenomena of time ;

He passed the flaming bounds of Place and Time ;
 The Living Throne, the sapphire blaze
 Where Angels tremble while they gaze,
 He saw.

He saw that God was the true King of men, not Uzziah, nor any of the princes who sat on the throne of David. He saw that the sin of man was no unforeseen accident or lapse, that it was known in heaven before it polluted the earth. He saw that, in his love, God had provided for it—provided a sacrifice from before the foundation of the world by which the iniquity of man would be taken away, his sin purged. And he saw that the end of the