

ARTICLE VIII.

SOME MERITS OF THE AMERICAN STANDARD  
BIBLE.

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SINCE the American Standard Bible, which will celebrate its twelfth anniversary on August 26th, is still unacceptable to many readers, the attention of those who make the two objections most frequently urged against it is invited to the following suggestions.

I. PARAGRAPH, INSTEAD OF VERSE, FORM.

One objection has reference to the fact that its matter has been printed in logical, paragraph form, like modern books and periodicals. Professor Moulton has said of the King James Version that it is "the worst printed book in the world"! Modern printers of the sacred writers have endeavored to give them the advantage of all known devices for representing thought on the printed page. An analysis of the thought of the writer is essential to its comprehension; and this analysis is expressed partly in the division into logical paragraphs. If you dash a beautiful vase on the ground, you break it into a myriad fragments and destroy its beauty. Can then Moses and Paul and their collaborators feel grateful to the mediæval blunderers who marred the beauty of their writings by breaking them up into bits,—into illogical divisions of chapter and verse? One would not

thank the tailor who brought home a suit in a multitude of strips a few inches in size, instead of in the logical divisions of coat and skirt. Imagine then the feelings of an author who sent the pet child of his brain to a publisher and later sees it mutilated in Bible-verse style; of a teacher whose pupil brings him a composition divided in like fashion; of a friend who receives a letter thus written; or a reader who opens his morning paper to find his daily news served up like minced meat! What an insult to one's intelligence! And then think of the complacency with which the world reads its sacred classic from such a page; yes, marvel at the perverted taste which demands that the publishers shall thus print it!

It is true that the minute division of such a classic is necessary for purposes of reference. But this division is effectively accomplished by marginal or inserted numerals, which do not vitiate the logical representation of the thought, as do the senseless divisions into uniform verses and ill-marked chapters.

A corollary to this objection comes from those who think this Version unsuited for *responsive reading*, and who have not considered the uses for which different portions of Scripture were intended. Mr. Marion Lawrance, in replying to an inquiry about concert reading in the Sunday school, assumes the advisability of reading the lessons responsively. This mode of reading has long been customary in public and social services, and has proved so acceptable that it has widely spread. Perhaps one reason for its popularity in the church and Sunday school is that it aids in holding the attention of the congregation to the reading. But age and prevalence do not make a custom rational, nor prove that all parts of the Bible were designed to be read responsively. Certain Psalms

were written to be sung antiphonally, and many poetical parts of the Bible have, for centuries, in the historic liturgies, been found suitable for such reading. But the historical, biographical, hortatory, and epistolary portions were not meant to be thus read. So, when they are restored to their appropriate and rational form in the Standard Bible, if the paragraph form is found inconvenient by responsive readers, there is no obligation on leader and congregation to read such passages responsively. Why then should not all denominations follow the example of those churches that allow the leader to read such lessons alone, or let all read them in concert, and limit responsive reading to those styles of literature which are suitable, and which are printed in convenient form, for that purpose?

The complaint is also made that the old custom of "reading a verse around" at family prayers, and the finding of a verse by a child in the Sunday-school class, is rendered less convenient by the paragraph arrangement. Here again the question is, whether we should do evil that good may come; whether we should do violence to a sacred text, against all reason, or modify a non-essential custom. We do not cut up the texts of classical authors, of Milton or Shakespeare, in order that they may be studied in school; but only add marginal figures, numbering the lines on the page. Is it a lesser evil to indoctrinate children and their elders with the erroneous idea that the verse arrangement is sensible and appropriate than it is to educate them to locate the verses by the figures in the paragraph? To estimate the injury and misunderstanding that the Scriptures have suffered through this abuse by their friends, or to appraise the benefit and illumination that may accrue from an improved arrangement, is quite impossible.

II. THE RESTORATION OF THE MEMORIAL NAME,  
 "JEHOVAH."

Another influential reason for the favor shown the American Standard Bible by some, and for the opposition to that Version on the part of others, is its restoration of the name "Jehovah" to the Old Testament.

Scholars tell us that this name is older than Moses, though it was freshly emphasized in his day. On the question of its original form, archæologists seem to be divided and uncertain. That form may have been "Yahweh"; but that would doubtless seem more uncouth to the English ear than "Jehovah"; and there is slight prospect that the latter can be altered now. For the vowels of "Yahweh," the vowels of *adonai* (the Hebrew word for "lord") were substituted, long before Christ, by scribes who thought that human lips were not fit to utter the sacred Name. And so, for many centuries, one word has been forced to do the duty of two entirely different words, — the one a proper noun, a personal name of unique significance; and the other a common noun, a mere title of rank. The title "lord" implies a master, ruler, owner, peer, etc., having dozens of different uses; but it has primarily none of the precious associations of the incomparable name "Jehovah." There are many "lords," but only one Most High God, "whose name alone is JEHOVAH."<sup>1</sup> Men have ventured to call their sons by the name of "Jesus," but none would dare thus to use the august Name, "Jehovah," although, to be sure, it is part of the name of "Jesus," as it is of many other compound names.

Much has been written on its import; and every Bible

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxiii. 18; in a few passages like this, even the old versions felt obliged to leave the original "Jehovah"; and they print it in large capitals! The Scripture quotations in this article are taken from various versions.

student should be familiar at least with the justification offered by the Revisers in their preface, for restoring this Memorial Name. One thought that the etymology of the name is said to imply should be dear to every devout soul; for it suggests to him the God *who fulfills his promises.*

To some the sound of "Jehovah" is "most unmusical and distasteful." "*De gustibus non disputandum.*" But the hypercritics who overemphasize the importance of the musical rhythm of a translation may be reminded that it is required of translators, as of stewards, that they be found (not first musical, but) *faithful!* And it may be suggested that, as "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," and taste in the tongue of the eater; so music is in the ear of the auditor. What is music to one individual, and to one people, to another is discord and agony. It should surely be admitted that familiarity has much to do with our recognition of sounds as musical and rhythmical; that to some extent what is usual is musical. That which is familiar has worn a certain channel in our brains, and a variant sound does not run smoothly in that channel. If we had been brought up from childhood on "Jehovah" instead of "LORD," would the sound of the former be unpleasant to as many as it is now? Moreover, love for a person begets love for the dear one's name. And it must be recognized that there are unnumbered persons who, before the American Standard Bible was issued, loved the name of "Jehovah"; and there was many a pardoned sinner in whose ears *Jehovah Tsidkenu* ("Jehovah our Righteousness") was the sweetest music, just as certainly as there is no one now to whom "Jesus" is unmusical. "Jehovah" has been restored in the missionary translations of the Bible into heathen tongues. No doubt the strange names of the Bible seem unmusical and outlandish to many a heathen

ear. But as one grows accustomed to them and learns to love the persons they represent, he will develop an affection for the very names of the persons.

The name "Jehovah" (in over forty instances abbreviated to "Jah") occurs "6,855" times in the Old Covenant. It is of interest to note that the memorial name is dwelt on most constantly in the final books of the Pentateuch and the Old Covenant, — namely, Deuteronomy and Malachi; in the valedictory orations and exhortations of Moses, and in the final prophetic appeal of Jehovah to his chosen people, in the book called "My Messenger." The Pentateuch as a whole leads the Prophetic section in frequent use, but the Psalms are a close second to the Pentateuch.<sup>1</sup>

How the Psalmists delight to resound the praises of Jehovah's name! Songs like Ps. cxxxv. begin and end with it; in this Psalm of twenty-one verses, it is repeated eighteen times in eleven verses. In verse 13 the Psalmist assumes the rôle of prophet, and declares: "Thy name, O Jehovah, endureth forever; thy memorial name, O Jehovah, throughout all generations." See also Ps. cii. 12. And yet a Jewish error was allowed to impair the fulfillment of this prophecy, and to eliminate that name from the greatest book in the world, — the record of the New Dispensation; and also, for the space of a millennium, from the translations of the Old

<sup>1</sup>A cursory view of the oft-recurring name (subject to corrections by any who find a more accurate observation to be of interest) shows that the first, fourth, and fifth books of the Psalms use "Jehovah" eight times as often as the second and third books. In the five books it occurs nearly seven hundred times; in Deuteronomy, about five hundred times. In the other Historical and Prophetical books, it occurs with about equal frequency in each of the two classes, but not half as often as in Deuteronomy. In the other Poetical books, it is less than one third as frequent as in the Historical and Prophetical. In Canticles, Standard Version, it is found once; in Esther, not at all.

Covenant into our English tongue; and consequently from the hymnology of the church!<sup>1</sup>

For if the name of "Jehovah" had not disappeared from the early Hebrew Scriptures, it would doubtless have been transliterated into Greek, and have reappeared in the Septuagint version, instead of being supplanted by *kurios* ("lord"). And would it not then have found a place on the lips of our Lord and in the writings of his followers? As it is, the sacred name does not appear in the New Covenant except by implication. By one translator of these writings into modern English, the name "Jesus" is returned to its Old Covenant form, "Joshua"; so that we read: "Thou shalt call his name *Joshua*, for he shall save his people from their sins"; and thus, throughout. Of course "Joshua" is a shortened form of the Hebrew for "Jehovah is our salvation"; so that every time we use the name "Jesus," we unconsciously mention "Jehovah,"—the name that is so distasteful to the writer quoted above.

The word "lord" occurs some seven hundred times in the New Covenant, and it seems probable that in several scores of these instances "Jehovah" might have been used. The advantages of the restoration of "Jehovah" in the *Old Covenant* have been noted by various writers. Half a century ago Benjamin Wilson, in his "Emphatic Diaglott New Testament," thought it necessary to a translation of *kurios* in at least eighteen passages to use the name "Jehovah."

In an article that appeared in the *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA* for April, 1902 (doubtless written before he had seen the American Standard Version), an anonymous writer presented a

<sup>1</sup>Take a popular hymn book,—the "Gospel Hymns"; out of 739 hymns, only about five celebrate the name of "Jehovah"; while the name of "Jesus" occurs in innumerable cases,—sometimes a dozen repetitions in single hymns.

clear and elaborate argument for the necessity of reading "Jehovah" in such New Testament passages as: "Prepare a way for Jehovah"; "The Angel of Jehovah said"; "There is born to you a Saviour who is Messiah-Jehovah"; "Thou shalt not presume upon Jehovah thy God"; "Jehovah, thy God, alone shalt thou worship"; "The Spirit of Jehovah is upon me, . . . to proclaim the year of Jehovah"; "God made Jesus to be Jehovah-Messiah"; "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is Jehovah"; "No man can say that Jesus is Jehovah"; "Every tongue shall confess that Jesus-Messiah is Jehovah"; "The Day of Jehovah comes as a thief," etc.

If it were possible, we would reproduce here the fourteen pages of this article entire, for the convenience of the reader; but we can only recommend him to the study of this illuminating discussion. Its perusal must suggest that, when the Old Covenant was robbed of the divine Name by pious Jews, and in consequence a mere title, indicating a function, was substituted in the New Covenant, the Scriptures lost one of their strong supports for the divinity of Christ. If "Jesus" had been as constantly identified with "Jehovah" as the New Testament writers did identify him *in their thought* when they wrote the word *kurios*, would it have been possible for Unitarian views to develop as they did? What a convincing argument for his deity would have been here available for the defense of that truth! And would it not strengthen the bond between the two Covenants to find that our God had the same name in both parts of his Word; to find that God has made Jehovah (to be incarnate in) Jesus?

It is true that "a rose by any other name will smell as sweet"; and so "LORD" may suggest the same person and attributes to an informed reader as "Yahweh" does. But how many would be willing to surrender the *names* of their



dearest ones, to forget them forever, and substitute therefor such titles as "husband," "wife," "brother," etc.? It is often necessary to distinguish between what words properly mean and what they actually suggest. *Christ* is the Greek for *Messiah*, but multitudes in the church as well as outside do not know it, and the two words suggest quite different ideas to their minds. Wilson recognizes this fact when, in his "Diaglott," he frequently uses *Messiah* or *Anointed* instead of *Christ*. And he might well use it still more frequently than he does. Likewise, although "LORD" stands for "Jehovah" in the Old Testament, the two words suggest very different ideas to the ordinary reader. And when "LORD" is quoted in other literature, the distinguishing small capitals are very commonly forgotten, the printer uses the lower-case letters, and the reader has not the faintest suggestion of the name which God told Moses was to be his Name forever, his memorial unto all generations (Ex. iii. 15).

One easily accessible article on this point is that by the late Rev. Theodore J. Cooper, reprinted from the *Anglican Church Magazine*, December, 1906. This is especially noteworthy, coming as it does from one of our conservative English cousins.

One passage that will bear a little further notice is Ps. cx. 1, where "Jehovah said unto my Lord" seems incomparably preferable to the tautological obscurity that has resulted from the abnormal reverence of ancient Jewish scribes, and the excessive conservatism of generations of English translators. When "Jehovah" is named, the passage becomes far more intelligible, as referring to a known personage, — the Covenant-maker, — speaking to the Lord and Son of David. This classic text is quoted four times in the New

Testament: by each Synoptist, and by Luke again, in his report of Peter's Pentecostal sermon; while two similar portions of the Psalm are repeated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The most frequent users of "Lord" in the New Testament where "Jehovah" might have been used, seem to be Luke, Matthew, and the writers to the Hebrews and the Romans. Moreover, how appropriate, and suggestive of the Burning Bush, it would be to read in John's Revelation (i. 8): "I am the ALPHA and the OMEGA, says *Jehovah*, God; he who is, and was, and is to come,—the ALMIGHTY."

The use of "Jehovah" in these New Testament passages will not of course be admitted to be a translation of the Greek *kurios* unless this word is recognized as meaning "Jehovah"; which is the claim of the nameless writer above mentioned. But is it not clear to all that *as commentary* such suggestions are all-important, in addition to translation, and that they illuminate and glorify the divine Word? It would seem fruitful to consider these scores of New Testament passages in this added light, where the gain in meaning is as obvious as in the Old Testament.

As a parallel, suppose the Christian church were asked to refrain from the use of the name "Jesus" in the New Testament and elsewhere, and to substitute everywhere the title "Saviour," on the ground that "Jesus" was too sacred a name for ordinary use, and that such common utterance tended to diminish our reverence for the divine Person. Recall all the hymns which sound the praises of the "sweetest name on mortal tongue"; would we consent to replace that name by some mere title,—even though more significant than "LORD"? Then imagine that after centuries had passed in which the name of "Jesus" had been rarely used, it

were proposed to restore the name to its original place in the New Covenant: should not the Christian church welcome such a proposal? And should not the English-speaking world to-day equally congratulate itself that it can read in the American Standard Old Testament, as the heathen world does in the many tongues into which the Hebrew has been rendered, the inspired Memorial Name that Moses and the Prophets wrote? Many such improvements in this Version render a commentary unnecessary for the ordinary wayfarer through passages where he has previously been as a blind man in the catacombs!

When the Standard Bible was issued in 1901, it met with a very discouraging reception from the public; and although a large proportion of the church still seem to be little acquainted with it, and to prefer an imperfect and partial version, yet it has grown in popular favor steadily, and lately by leaps and bounds. Perhaps as good an evidence as any of its appreciation is its increasing use by the Sunday-school lesson commentators. Reviewing the stages of this growth, we observe that at first the lesson papers printed the King James text, and put the Standard variations in footnotes. Next the varying portions were printed in small type in the same line with the parts that coincided. Later, the Standard text was printed in full, but in smaller type, after the King James. Then it was printed in larger type and given the leading place. The King James was afterwards relegated to the footnotes; and finally, by some periodicals has been dropped altogether; thus justifying the reference that has been made in some clerical circles to "The Passing of the Old Revised Bible of 1611."

Other editions of the Bible have applied the printer's art, to a still fuller degree, to the exhibition of the Scriptural

meaning. If an edition of the "Modern Reader's Bible" with the Standard, or some yet more advanced, text were issued, it would promote the popular comprehension of the Book. For while our conservatism may uphold the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin for scholars, and the early English and King James versions for antiquarians and students of literature, the churchman of to-day and the "man in the street" (of whom the latter has the greater claim to consideration on the score of numbers) need a living Word in their own tongue, and not in Elizabethan English — the tongue of their forebears many generations removed. The English version is not finished, for the English language is not dead. It may consist with the attitude of the Church of Rome toward the Book to read it to the people in an unknown tongue, a dead language; but should the Protestant church relax its principles in even a small degree, or fall behind the times? While there are advantages in having one standard Bible, there are advantages also in using various styles of English, *à la chinoise*, for people of different grades of education and taste; and there are uses for paraphrases of varying degrees. As the late Professor H. M. Whitney said: "The Bible, as we have it, is a wonderful book. But it can be better. At a thousand points it can yet be touched by the chisel of the master, and with each touch it can come nearer to a perfect form: the angel can be yet more fully released from the stone."