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Notes on Bible Words.

No. VI.—“STRIFE” (PARTY-SPIRIT).

IN that welcome work, “Ordination Addresses and Counsels to Clergy,” by the late Bishop of Durham (Macmillan and Co.), appears a striking comment on Philip. ii. 3: *Μηδὲν κατὰ ἐριθείαν μηδὲ κικυρόμην κενοδοξίαν.* *Do nothing of party-spirit nor yet of vain glory* The Bishop wrote :

Two distinct habits of mind are here condemned and rejected. . . . What are these two tempers which the Apostle condemns as influencing action in a perverted way? . . . the spirit which unduly exalts party, and the spirit which unduly exalts self . . . They are two species of the same genus.

The one is *ἐριθεία*. I need not remind you that this word is confused with *ἐρις*, and translated “strife” in the Authorised Version. But its true significance is thus obliterated, and the force of the passage before us disappears. It denotes the temper, habit, principle of action of the *ἐριθοῦς*, the hireling, the hired servant, the hired canvasser, the hired partisan. Thus it designates party-spirit generally; for, though no actual money may have passed into his hands, the partisan consciously or unconsciously is influenced by the motive of gain. It may be influence or success or reputation or the getting one’s own way or the humiliation of one’s enemies or some other low aim. But in some form or other, gain to self through the triumph of party is the underlying motive. Though the direct object is not self, yet ultimately this spirit may be traced to self.

But in the other word, *κενοδοξία*, self is the immediate as well as the ultimate aim. The whole motive concentrates itself on self. It is the inflated estimate of one’s own ability, one’s own reputation, one’s own position and importance.

In his surroundings at Rome, when he penned this letter to the Philippians, St. Paul saw the evils of party-spirit. There were those who preached Christ *ἐξ ἐριθείας*:² envy stimulated their zeal; the triumph of their party stood first.

This *ἐριθεία*, continues Bishop Lightfoot,

is especially dangerous, because it masks itself and disguises its true character. . . . It may display its activity in the dissemination of the truth, or in the defence of the Church of God. Where, for instance, do we find more painful and extravagant exhibition of it than in the great Councils of the Church? . . . This party spirit is the last infirmity of the religious man, the devoted, and zealous follower of Christ, follower at least (at however great a distance) in His zeal and self-devotion; but not follower in His wide sympathy, not follower in His large charity, not follower in His concessive, indulgent moderation, His *ἐπιεικία*, which is the direct negation of partisan zeal.

We have simply quoted. The student will compare Rom. ii. 8; 2 Cor. xii. 20; Gal. v. 20; Jas. iii. 14 and 16.

¹ “The correct reading. . . . In the common text,” says the Bishop, “the distinction is more or less obliterated.”

² Philip. i. 16, “preach Christ of contention,” A. V.; *out of a spirit of faction.*