

in great doubt and misery, after some higher and more satisfying conception of the Divine Ruler of men. Happy are we if, from the abyss of doubt or from the depths of some divine despair, we, like Job, have seen and climbed the altar-stairs which slope through darkness up to the only wise and true God. s. COX.

*SOME RECENT CRITICAL READINGS IN THE
NEW TESTAMENT.*

I.

WHILE it is satisfactory to think that the great mass of intelligent Englishmen are thoroughly agreed as to the importance of revising the Authorized Version of the Bible, the same thing cannot, as yet at least, be said of their feelings with regard to a revision of its original text. There may be no prejudice against the idea of such revision in the abstract, as indeed it would evidently be impossible for those who look upon the Word of God with becoming reverence to oppose by reasonable argument any earnest, conscientious, and scholarly effort to determine what that Word really was when first delivered to the world by "holy men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Every one who reflects upon the subject for a moment will acknowledge that precisely in proportion to the degree in which our conception of the influence exerted by the Almighty upon the writers of Scripture approaches what is commonly called Verbal Inspiration, does our obligation increase to see that what they did write shall be presented to us in its purest form. It is not contended by any that the text of the Bible, however pure from erroneous admixture at the first, has been

preserved pure by special or miraculous interposition. It is allowed that it was left to the ordinary results of human guardianship. That guardianship may indeed have been much more careful than in the case of writings to which no Divine authority was attached. We know that it was so with the Old Testament among the Jews, and it forms one of the most honourable characteristics of much of the monastic life of the Middle Ages that those who devoted themselves to the transcription of the New Testament did so with a reverence and a love eminently calculated to secure faithfulness in their work.¹ It ought not indeed to be forgotten that this very reverence of Christendom for its sacred books brought with it dangers that had no existence in the case of books regarded with less pious awe. It led to their being far more frequently copied, and every one knows that the danger of mistake increases with the multiplication of copies. It led to their being copied by men who, though reverent in spirit, were often singularly ignorant of the language they were transcribing, a circumstance again in no small degree increasing the danger of mistake. It led also to their being translated into many different tongues, and it is hardly

¹ The following story, told by Maitland in his "Dark Ages," may be worth repeating, in illustration of the importance attached at that time to the work of transcribing the Scriptures. A prior used to tell his monks the following story:— "There was a monk in a certain monastery who was guilty of many transgressions against its rules. But he was a writer, and, being devoted to writing, he of his own accord wrote out an enormous volume of the divine law. After his death his soul was brought before the tribunal of the just Judge for judgment; and when the evil spirits sharply accused him, and brought forward his innumerable crimes, the holy angels, on the other hand, shewed the book which that monk had written in the house of God, and counted up the letters of that enormous volume as a set-off against the like number of sins. At length the letters had a majority of only one, against which, however, the demons in vain attempted to object any sin. The clemency of the Judge, therefore, spared the monk, and commanded his soul to return to his body, and mercifully granted him space for the reformation of his life" (p. 268).

necessary to say that, as the idioms of these tongues differed from one another, different inquirers now, though proceeding on the supposition that the translations before them are correct, will not always agree as to the original which they represent. Finally, too, it has to be borne in mind upon this point that it can be proved by a sufficient induction of particulars that the greatest corruptions of the New Testament text took place at a very early period of Christian history, long before we have any proof of the existence of that remarkable scrupulosity and care which distinguished the scribes of the Middle Ages. These considerations ought not to be lost sight of when we speak of the guardianship of the text of Scripture by the Early Church, as if it exposed that text to far less risk of error than would have existed had it been viewed with less profound veneration. But we have no need to insist on them at present. The most prejudiced opponent of textual emendation does not rest his opposition to change upon the plea that any miraculous care has been exercised for the preservation of the text. He admits that it has been exposed to the fate of all other texts which have come down to us through a succession of centuries, and he thus occupies substantially the same ground as the Biblical critic, whose labours he is too apt to view with suspicion and distrust.

In these circumstances some other course than that of argument as to principles seems to be called for. The fundamental principle on both sides is the same. It is the application, not the principle in itself, that is in dispute. No doubt there is a great controversy of other principles, which opens up the moment we pass beyond the rudiments of the question. There are the

rival schools of criticism, which may be styled the Ancient and Modern schools; the one consisting of those who deduce the text of the New Testament from the older authorities, few in number; the other of those who depend to a much larger extent, in practice it may be said almost wholly, upon younger authorities, including the great mass of MSS. in our hands. Upon this controversy we have no thought of entering at present. Let us only say that it is not at all the dry study which those who have not tried it imagine it to be. It possesses an interest which may be justly described as being often of a romantic kind. It allies itself in the closest possible manner with every branch of theological attainment. It calls forth the highest powers of the student. No one who thoroughly pursues it will find himself disappointed with the field of work that he has chosen; and it is so boundless in extent that rich tracts of country remain to be explored in which the diligent inquirer will certainly be rewarded for his pains. But this last consideration alone would forbid any attempt to enter upon the controversy now, to say nothing of the fact that we should thus be led away from the task that we have immediately in view.

The frame of mind, then, that we have before us is easily understood. It admits to the full the importance of inquiry, is reverent, devout, justly afraid of anything that threatens to shake the confidence of the mass of men in the stability of Scripture; but it is not sufficiently disciplined by actual experience to feel that we have no right to pay to the mistakes of copyists the honour due to the Divine Word alone, and that here, as in all other Divine things, the true is also in the long run the beneficial. What it needs is the

actual facts of the case, and it may be both interesting and useful to produce a few. There are two ways in which, in doing this, we might go to work.

First, we might take some examples of recently adopted readings which illustrate general topics connected with the New Testament (for we deal only with this), such as the structure of a book, or the spirit of a narrative. The newer readings of the Apocalypse would furnish excellent illustrations of both these points. No book of Scripture, except perhaps the Gospel of St. Mark, has suffered so much from the well-meaning tendency of transcribers to correct supposed mistakes as the Apocalypse. Its strange Greek was a constant puzzle to them; and hence the wonderful process of refining, smoothing, polishing its apparently rough, certainly peculiar, text, which at last ended in the comparatively flat and uninteresting readings of the *Textus Receptus*. Let us look at a small part of it with the purpose in view of which we have spoken. Take the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Chapters ii. and iii. How much light is thrown upon the structure of these remarkable Epistles, how much help even given to their interpretation, when we observe that in the Epistles to Smyrna and Pergamos the words "I know thy works" have no place (Chap. ii. 9, 12). These words are omitted by Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort,¹ the editors to whom we propose mainly to refer, but they occur in all the other Epistles to the Churches. The effect is to group Smyrna and Pergamos with Ephesus, and to

¹ As the text of Westcott and Hort is not yet published, it may be well to say that no reference is here made to it except in cases already known, with their sanction, through others, or in which a similar sanction has been obtained by the writer of these pages.

throw the remaining four cities into a separate group. The same conclusion had indeed been often drawn from the difference of place assigned in these two groups to the call, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." It had been observed that in the first three that call preceded, in the last four followed, the promise, "To him that overcometh;" and the inference had been drawn that we had thus an intimation on the part of the Seer that it was his wish to divide the number 7 into its two parts, 3 and 4. If so, it was obvious that, in dealing with the number of the Churches, we were dealing not with an absolute, but with an artificial and symbolical number, and important consequences followed for the interpretation, not of this part only, but of other parts of the Apocalypse. The inference, however, wanted confirmation. Now it finds it. Again, in the Epistle to Ephesus, at Chapter ii. 5, the *Textus Receptus* reads, "I come unto thee quickly," reading also in the same way in that to Pergamos at Chapter ii. 16. But the Editors of whom we have spoken omit the word "quickly" in the first of these two passages; and the omission is important, especially when combined with the fact that they also omit "behold" in the Epistle to the Church at Philadelphia at Chapter iii. 11. For we have thus an illustration of the *progress*, the *advance*, which characterizes the Seven Epistles as a whole, and at the same time a guide to the principles upon which they must be interpreted.

We take only one other newer reading from this book, illustrative not so much of the structure as of the spirit of its narrative. In the *Textus Receptus*, at Chapter

viii. 13, we read, "And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!" Our four recent editions, however, all read the word "eagle" instead of "angel" in this verse. We accept the reading, and a fresh light is immediately thrown upon the spirit both of the passage and the book, for the "eagle" thus spoken of is not looked at as the bird which, famed for strength and nimbleness of flight, best symbolizes the dominion of the air. It is "the eagle that hasteth to the prey" (Job ix. 26), the bird that supplies their expressive emblem to the Old Testament prophets when they describe the swift and overwhelming destruction that is to come upon Jerusalem and Edom (Jer. iv. 13; xlix. 22). Nor is this all; for a similarly fresh light, when combined with one or two other considerations foreign to our present purpose, falls upon the description of the "living creatures" in Chapter iv. The fourth of these, "like a flying eagle" (Chap. iv. 7), is one of a group whose meaning is therefore to be sought not so much in the nobler as in the fiercer and more terrible qualities of the animals referred to. The whole aspect of the Cherubim is thus changed for us,¹ and not only so; the leading idea of the Apocalypse as to the *judgment* which marks the Almighty, and his dealings, receives confirmation. Illustrations of this kind might be increased, and other readings of modern critics be selected which are of the highest value, not simply for the correct appreciation of single texts of the Apoca-

¹ The writer may be permitted to refer to his paper on the Cherubim in the "Bible Educator," vol. iii. p. 290, for further explanation of the point here spoken of.

lypse, but for the right understanding of the whole *method* and *aim* of the book.

Secondly, instead of pursuing this mode of inquiry, the force of which can hardly be fully estimated except by those who have made the Revelation of St. John a subject of special study, we turn rather to a second way of bringing out the point we have in view, that of considering a few separate and individual texts. Nor shall we select these at random, our purpose being rather to take readings which, though at first sight suspected, appear to commend themselves to further reflection as of great interest and value. Let our first be

Matthew vi. 12.—This petition of the Lord's Prayer runs in the Authorized Version in conformity with the reading of the *Textus Receptus*, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." But instead of the present tense of the verb "forgive" in the second clause, the Editors before us read the perfect, "have forgiven." It is true that even Mr. McClellan does the same,¹ and the reading may thus seem hardly to belong to the class with which we are dealing. The principles, however, upon which the verdict must be given in its favour do belong to that class, and the only remark to be made is, that those who apply them in this instance ought also to apply them in many others to which as yet they refuse their application. Adopted, however, by whom it may be, how great the improvement when it is adopted! The clear and positive standing of the Christian is at once seen. It is not the vague "as we forgive," but the distinct "as we also have forgiven."

¹ "The New Testament: a New Translation from a Revised Greek Text. Part I. The Four Gospels." P. 17.

Taught by Divine grace actually to forgive others, knowing that he has done it, the Christian learns experimentally his own position in his Redeemer, and is encouraged to ask that the blessings of that position may be constantly renewed to him. How much more searching, too, is the question for self-examination, "Have I forgiven?" than "Do I forgive?" A complete correspondence is thus also established between the petition before us and the precept of Chapter v. 23, 24: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." More than all, the later reading seems valuable in pointing out to us the true character of the three Chapters of St. Matthew as a whole (Chap. v.-vii.), in which the Lord's Prayer occurs. It is often said that they contain nothing but plain, simple, elementary teaching; and they are contrasted with what is considered the profounder, the more metaphysical, more difficult, teaching of the Fourth Gospel, to the disadvantage of the latter. The comparison has in it something that is true, but quite as much that is false. More metaphysical the discourses of Jesus in St. John's Gospel may be, profounder or more difficult they are not. So far from being a sermon for babes, the Sermon on the Mount presupposes for the understanding of it the very bloom of Christian feeling, the very ripeness of Christian life. He to whom that Sermon is to be a reality and not a name must have behind him the long experience of Christian living in an evil world. It is of the utmost consequence, in the light of many errors of the day, that we should have a

sense of this ; and it will come home to us with constantly increasing power the more we try to enter into all that is involved in the prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Matthew vii. 29.—Here we read in the Authorized Version, "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes;" and the Greek for that translation rests upon nine uncials, most cursives, and the Gothic, while it is also the undisputed reading of *St. Mark* i. 22 and *St. Luke* v. 30. But the *Codex Sinaiticus*, the *Codex Vaticanus*, the *Codex Ephræmi* 3, one or two other uncials, several cursives, one old Latin expressly, and several by inference, the Armenian and *Æthiopic* Versions, the *Vulgate* and *Syriac* by inference, and one or two Fathers, add an *αὐτῶν*, thus giving the rendering, "not as *their* scribes," instead of "not as *the* scribes." The authority for this latter reading may be considered as decisive, and the *αὐτῶν* ("their") is accordingly inserted in all the four editions of which we speak. Adopting the later reading, which has the undoubted weight of authority on its side, its value is immediately apparent in relation to one of the most important controversies of the day, that relating to the authenticity of the Gospel of *St. John*. It is one of the objections most frequently urged against the authorship of that Gospel by the beloved disciple, that "the Jews" are spoken of in it as persons with whom the writer has no connection. No Jew, it is urged, could have spoken in that way; there is nothing like it in the earlier Gospels; it at once betrays the author's Gentile birth. It is not doubted that the author of the First Gospel was a Jew; yet, with the reading now before us as the true one, we have the very method of expression that we find in

the Gospel of St. John, only much more explicable in the case of the latter than of the former, when account is taken either of its date, or of the circumstances amidst which it was composed.

Let us turn to the Gospel of St. Mark.

Mark vi. 22.—The reading of the *Textus Receptus* supplies the rendering of our English Bibles: "And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and pleased Herod, and them that sat at meat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee." But there is a very remarkable reading here, adopted however by Westcott and Hort alone, which substitutes the masculine for the feminine pronoun (*αὐτοῦ* for *αὐτῆς*), thus producing the rendering, "And when *his* daughter Herodias came in," and making the girl the daughter of Herod himself, and her name Herodias. Both these conclusions are of a very startling character; and it need be no matter of surprise that Dr. Scrivener, who discusses the reading, should speak of it as certainly false, partly because St. Mark is thus brought into direct contradiction with Josephus, that historian quoting Salome as the name of the daughter of Herod-Philip by Herodias, who did not leave her husband till after Salome's birth; and partly because of "the extreme improbability that even Herod the Tetrarch should have allowed his own child to degrade herself in such wise as Salome did here, or that Salome could not have carried her point with her father without resorting to licentious allurements" ("Introd. to Bibl. Crit." second edition, p. 473). As the reading is a particularly interesting and testing one, it may be well to mention the evidence. For *αὐτῆς* (Authorized Version, "the said") there is the

authority of the Codex Alexandrinus, the Codex Ephræni, and several other uncials, almost all cursives, and the later Syriac. To these, Tischendorf adds, within brackets, several old Latins and the Vulgate, which read *ipsius*; but no weight can be attached to these, because *ipsius* may be masculine, and in the Latin translation of the Cambridge Codex certainly is so. For *αὐτοῦ* ("his") we have the Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus, the Cambridge Codex, the Codex Regius, and one other, together with two cursives. Add to this that three cursives, three Old Latins, the Memphitic, Armenian, Æthiopic, and Gothic Versions omit the pronoun altogether, a fact much more easily explained by the supposition that they took offence at the masculine than at the feminine pronoun, and thus leading to the inference that the masculine was originally there to make them offended at it; and it will hardly be denied that the external evidence is in favour of the masculine. We may look at the matter in another light, and our conclusion will not be different. For, applying the great rule of criticism, that that is the true reading out of which the others were most likely to spring, we are led at once to the masculine form. The variations are the feminine form and the omission of the pronoun altogether. If it was originally omitted, it is difficult to see why, not needed, it should ever have been inserted. If it was originally there, but in the feminine form, we can understand the omission, for it is both unusual and unnecessary; but it is impossible to understand the change to the masculine. If it was originally there, but in the masculine form, the just offence taken at the abominable character of the act might easily lead some to escape the difficulty by changing it to the feminine, others by

omitting it altogether. Finally, taking into account the extreme difficulty of the reading, there appears to be no way of escaping the conclusion that Westcott and Hort are right, unless we are to abandon principles, and to be guided by empiricism in the settlement of the text. The great source of perplexity is, of course, the statement of Josephus that Herodias had a daughter to her first husband Herod-Philip, after whose birth she forsook her husband and married Herod-Antipas, his half-brother, the Herod of our text, and that this daughter's name was Salome (*Antiq.* xviii. 5, 4). But, even at the worst, may not the authority of the Evangelist be equal to that of Josephus? May not Josephus be mistaken? Or, without putting our two authorities in opposition to each other, may not Herodias and Salome be the names of two different persons, the latter the legitimate daughter of Herod-Philip and his wife Herodias, the former an illegitimate daughter of Herodias by Herod-Antipas, whom she afterwards married? Josephus would not be likely to notice the first of these two children, as he deals only with the legitimate line; and illegitimacy may help to explain the fact that the girl was permitted by her father to dance before his guests. It is urged that Herod could not have permitted his own daughter to do so, but is it not equally incredible that he should have granted such liberty to a legitimate daughter of his wife? On the other hand, difficulties seem in some degree to disappear upon the supposition that the girls Herodias and Salome were two different persons, the former a child born in adultery to Herod-Antipas by the woman who afterwards forsook her lawful husband to marry him. Some small measure of confirmation may even

seem to be given to this supposition by another statement of Josephus, that Salome married Philip, Tetrarch of Trachonitis. It is hardly possible to imagine that a girl who had danced before Herod's guests could have made such a match. If, then, this reading of the masculine pronoun, as yet placed in the text by Westcott and Hort alone, be accepted, we have a new fact added to ancient history, and another ray of lurid light thrown upon the iniquitous character of Herodias and the dissoluteness of the Herodian family.

Mark vi. 20.—Speaking in this verse of Herod's relation to John the Baptist, the Authorized Version reads: "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." This "did many things" must strike every reader as remarkably tame and meaningless, yet it is vouched for by an array of authorities so great that nothing but the firmest grasp of the principle that leads to the preference of even a few ancient texts over an endless mass of copies with modern ones can justify departure from it. Even Lachmann did not think the evidence for change satisfactory, and here deserts us for the *Textus Receptus*. Tischendorf, Tregelles (alternatively), and Westcott and Hort adopt, however, another reading, vouched for by a few, but these first class, authorities. It consists in the substitution of another verb for that rendered "did." The one verb differs only by two letters from the other, but it conveys an entirely different meaning; and, making it necessary at the same time to understand the word for "many things" adverbially, a sense in which it is used several other times in this Gospel, it supplies the translation, "he was much

perplexed." Instead of the utterly lifeless character of the Authorized Version, so peculiarly inconsistent with the vivid graphic style of St. Mark, we have then the struggle in Herod's mind admirably presented to us in a double series of contrasts.

Herod feared John,
And kept him safe.

He was greatly perplexed,
And heard him gladly.

We pause here for the present. In a second and closing paper upon this subject we propose to consider some later readings in the Gospel of St. John and in the Epistles of the New Testament, and to draw the general conclusion.

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DIVINE MYTHS.¹

IF I were to say, without preface or explanation, that I look upon the earlier records of Genesis as myths, devoid of direct historical value, I suppose I should be set down at once by the mass of good Christian people as a free-thinker, or, at least, as holding a very low and shadowy view of Inspiration. And yet I think they would be very much mistaken. As a fact, I hold, and hold very earnestly, what seems to many quite an extreme and old-fashioned doctrine of Inspiration. I believe firmly and devoutly that the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, *is* the word of God; I believe that the Spirit of God not only moved by secret impulses the

¹ It is well, I think, that even this method of interpreting the earlier Chapters of Genesis should be stated for consideration and discussion; and I do not see how it could be stated more ably or more reverently than in the following pages. But it must be remembered that THE EXPOSITOR is not pledged to this interpretation of them, nor indeed to any other.—EDITOR.