

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

or to Chapter xl. Verse 5, if we include Job's response to it ; and a Second Divine Remonstrance, conducted on the same lines as the First, extending from Chapter xl. Verse 7, to Chapter xli. Verse 34, or, including Job's response, to Chapter xlii. Verse 6.

S. COX.

WRESTING THE SCRIPTURES.

IT would be difficult for me fully to express my sense of the perils which have been caused to religion, and of the evils which have been inflicted upon humanity, by the misuse and misinterpretation of the words of Scripture. The subject is a very large one, and its due treatment would require one or two volumes. The composition of such a work would occupy a lifetime ; but, if written from a full and accurate knowledge, it would not only be of inestimable value to the Church, but would, I believe, exercise a deep influence on the development of religious thought. It would tend to remove from the system of Christianity those unauthorized accretions which are a needless source of difficulty to thousands ; and it would save the most fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith from many of the bitter and dangerous assaults to which, perhaps, they would never have been subjected if theologians had not demanded a simultaneously and equally loyal assent to hundreds of exegetical conclusions which ought never to have been mixed up with them, and with which they are in no wise concerned.

It would necessarily enter into the scope of such a work to shew that, in consequence of the inherent tendencies of human nature, the sacred books of *every*

religion have been liable to be overlaid with such masses of commentary and inference as to lose no little of their original simplicity and to become like rivers which are lost in morass and sand from the very wealth of their own sedimentary deposits. The monstrous developments of modern Brahminism are utterly alien from the spirit of the Vedas on which they profess to rest; and when European scholars taught the Hindoos to read their own ancient books with fresh eyes, they revealed to them at once how antagonistic were Sutteeism and many other practices to the simpler and nobler spirit of their early religious hymns. Similarly Buddhism, entangled in masses of speculation and ritual, seems to have lost no little of what it might have derived from the high and pure morality of Gautama's teaching. Even a Christian may read with interest the moral aphorisms and exhortations of Confucius, yet nothing can exceed the emptiness, superstition, and aridity of Confucianism as it nominally prevails in modern China. We cannot say very much in favour of the Koran, yet the Koran is at least far superior in tone to the religion which professes to refer every practice and principle to the arbitrament of its asserted inspiration. The peculiarity of the process which has taken place in these and other religions has been that their sacred books have been first of all exalted by "incredible praises,"¹

¹ "As incredible praises given to men do often abate and impair the credit of their deserved commendation, so we must likewise take great heed *lest by attributing to Scripture more than it can have*, the incredibility of that do cause even those things which indeed it hath abundantly, to be less reverently esteemed" (Hooker, *Eccl. Polity*). In one of the most striking passages ever written on the beauty of the English version, F. S. Faber says that "It is worshipped with a positive idolatry, in extenuation of whose grotesque fanaticism its intrinsic beauty pleads availingly with the man of letters and the scholar" (*The Interest and Characteristics of the Lives of the Saints*, p. 116). The passage is usually, but erroneously, attributed to Cardinal Newman.

then covered by mountain-heaps of exegesis, then interpreted by second-hand inferences, often doubly erroneous, because they have been deduced from an exegesis which has from the first followed mistaken methods—until at last persistent misinterpretation has been stereotyped into a system, and the sacred books themselves have been left out of sight and treated as of secondary importance, or even absolutely superseded by the systems which professed to derive from them their paramount authority.

Such an inquiry would throw great light on the history of human progress and human retrogression; nor would it be difficult to illustrate the part played in the evolution of the drama by indolence and ignorance, by speculative restlessness and careless acquiescence, by designing priestcraft and theological ambition, by fear and jealousy and self-interest, by the reticence of the many and the terrorism of the few.

And every step of the progress would find ample illustration as we saw unfolded before us the steps by which among the ancient Jews the Bible also was gradually subordinated to the Mishnah, and the Mishnah set aside in favour of the Gemara; the long sad progress by which the work of Ezra gradually lost itself in the work of Rabbi Akibha—until at last they to whom had been entrusted the living oracles of God thought it more conducive to their happiness and their salvation to prefer the “miserable micrology” of the Talmud to the burning inspiration of the Prophets and the Psalms. Some fragmentary illustrations of this part of the subject I have ventured to furnish to readers of *THE EXPOSITOR* in previous papers on Talmudic Exegesis and the Oral Law; but fully to develop it would

require a leisure which I have never enjoyed, and a learning to which I cannot for a moment pretend.

Then again it would be necessary to shew—and this could only be a work of intense labour founded on a life-long study—the reason why the disastrous methods and assumptions of the Rabbis have been a fatal legacy to all future ages, and have been handed on, in unbroken continuity, to the present day. It may seem a strange, it may seem a boastful thing to say, but it is, I believe, strictly true, that we are in a better position than any previous generation for learning the meaning of the Bible as a whole. The immense widening of the horizon of science, the spread of education to an extent unknown to former ages, the division of labour, the concentration of knowledge derived from every land and every age, the study of the original languages and of the earliest manuscripts, the better understanding of the laws of criticism, the study of the philosophy of history and of the science of comparative religion—even the disastrous upheaval of old landmarks in many minds, which has compelled so many earnest seekers after God to devote their whole endeavours to giving a reason for the faith that is in them—all these have tended to a better knowledge of the Bible than was possible to our forefathers since the days of the Apostles. Nor must any Christian lose sight of that doctrine on which all our hopes of enlightenment are founded—I mean the continual presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit of God in the Church and in the individual heart. That inward enlightenment, which always comes to the individual before it penetrates the mass, may enable a man without arrogance to stand alone without mistaking isolation for error or confound-

ing popularity with wisdom. When great truths are in the process of development, the best and wisest men have often been hated and persecuted only because they were a little before their age; and under such circumstances any man may be proud, like Athanasius of old, to take "the part which has no friend but God and death, the one a defender of his innocency, the other a finisher of his troubles." We do not for a moment suppose that we are better or more gifted than our predecessors in the field of Scriptural interpretation. Many of the conditions of our age—its cares, its distractions, its hurry, its restlessness—are eminently unfavourable to the possibility of our "contemplating the bright countenance of truth in the mild and dewy air of delightful studies." But these disadvantages are more than counterbalanced by other blessings. We stand as it were upon the shoulders of our ancestors, and therefore in some directions see farther than they. We are inheritors of all their learning and of all their gains. The long results of time have diminished the extraordinary vitality of error. God has long been shewing all things in the slow history of their ripening.

It would then, as I have said, be the difficult and interesting task of the historian of exegesis to shew how it was that the Rabbis handed on the fuming torch of their mistaken methods to the Fathers; how from the Fathers they were inherited by the Schoolmen; how the revolt of the Reformers from all formal allegiance to the Schoolmen did not emancipate them from many of the premisses and methods by which the Schoolmen had been led into their interminable speculations; how the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture acquired in the hands of the later Reformers a still

greater rigidity, because they had thrown aside the doctrine of the infallible decisions of the Romish Church; how divines in this day speak about Scripture in an accent of timid conventionalism entirely unknown to Calvin in his day and to Gregory of Nyssa in his; how, in consequence of these facts, mistaken methods and interpretations reign triumphant in the goodly folios of the Puritan and Anglican divines; how—though greatly shaken and discredited—they still exercise a dimming influence, and are still reproduced to the wresting and darkening of Scripture in hundreds of popular sermons and current commentaries.

It would be necessary of course, and it would be easy, to shew in such a history of exegesis that the assumptions on which the whole system has rested find no support in the Scriptures themselves—that they have mainly arisen from the mistake of regarding the Bible as “a talisman sent down from heaven, equipollent in all its parts,” instead of regarding it as that which it is and claims to be, the sacred library and literature of a people passing through many stages of Divine education, of which the earlier stages were confessedly transitory and imperfect. It would be further necessary to shew that the principle of a *progressive* illumination is throughout the Scriptures constantly assumed, and that the manner in which the Prophets and the Apostles and our Lord Himself speak of the Mosaic legislation proves how far they were from treating every utterance of Scripture as a final and irrevocable decision of the revealed will of God. If, indeed, we were to quote the text so often adduced in treating of this subject, that “the letter killeth,” we should be guilty of one of the misapplications which

have been the source of so much evil. For, although there is infinite value in the distinction between "the letter" and "the spirit,"¹ and although it is most true that the letter may be so used as to kill both the spirit of the Bible and the spiritual life of the inquirer, yet that particular phrase has another meaning in the verse from which it is quoted.² But, on the other hand, we do find in the canonical Scriptures a grave and solemn warning that it is possible to wrest (στρεβλοῦν)—literally, "to wrench," "to torture," to stretch as it were upon the rack, to strain as it were with a windlass—the meaning of Scripture, so as to get out of it, not *its* meaning, but a meaning which it does not render, and which tends to the perdition not only of those who thus treat the Holy Book, but to the perdition of the progress and welfare of mankind.

That this warning has been fatally neglected no one can deny who has even the most elementary knowledge of European history. But few are, perhaps, aware of the awful *extent* to which Scripture has been distorted to evil purposes, and of the terrible and agelong injuries which these misapplications of Scripture by human ignorance and perversity have inflicted upon generation after generation of unhappy sufferers. The full record of those injuries would be the record of "untold agonies, and blood shed in rivers;" it would be the record of the lives of millions darkened and blighted by intolerable superstitions; it would be the record of the deadliest violations of the eternal laws of morality

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 6; Rom. vii. 6.

² In 2 Cor. iii. 6, τὸ γράμμα ἀποκτείνει means that the Law, regarded as an outward ordinance, pronounces only the sentence of death (Gal. iii. 10), and could not give life (Gal. iii. 21), and gave strength to sin, which is the sting of death (1 Cor. xv. 56; Rom. v. 12; vii. 9), and was generally a "law of death," (Rom. vii. 1, 2).

committed in the name of religion by those who claimed to be its infallible defenders. For these gross misapplications the Holy Scriptures are in no wise responsible. Those Scriptures are among the most blessed boons which God has ever vouchsafed to man ; they are, in comparison with all other sources of knowledge, as waters in the desert, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. They are holy, just, and good. Their lessons are lessons of holiness ; their message is a message of peace. " They speak to the ear like music, to the heart like a voice that can never be forgotten." The misguided ingenuity of man has turned into sources of deadly misery many of God's most precious blessings ; but never has a falsely-directed learning, and an arrogant theology, and a designing ambition inflicted upon the world a more shameful injury than when it has perverted the words of truth into defences of error, and the means of enlightenment into the deadliest enginery of superstition. It is only through the sin of man that the Book of Light has been used to perpetuate the darkness ; the Book of Mercy and of Freedom to kindle the faggot of the Inquisitor, to buttress the throne of the tyrant, and to rivet the fetters of the slave.

It would, then, be the duty of the historian of exegesis to shew, by way of warning to the Church, how unparalleled was the mischief, how multitudinous were the evil consequences of this wresting of Scripture. If he were but to take a few conspicuous instances, the evidence might be made to come home to the world with almost overwhelming force.

Take, for instance, the unhallowed antagonism between theology and the progress of knowledge which

caused the many martyrdoms of science. How much shame and anguish, and how long a delay of invaluable blessings, have been caused to mankind by this negative misuse of Scripture; yet on that wide branch of the subject I shall not even touch, because the evils which have resulted from the abuse of Scripture to retard progress have been as nothing compared with those which have been caused by its positive misuse for the infliction of actual wrongs upon the well-being of men. Thus on misapplications of "*Honour the king*" have been built the ruinous opposition to national freedom; on misapplications of "*Tu es Petrus*" the colossal usurpations of Papal tyranny; on misapplications of "*Cursed be Canaan*" the shameful iniquities of the slave trade; on misapplications of "*Compel them to come in*" the hideous crimes of the Inquisition; on misapplications of "*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live*" the infuriated butchery of thousands of wretched women. These are but casual and obvious illustrations. When Ravailac stabbed Henri IV. the Jesuits were ready to applaud and defend him by the example of Ehud; and the so-called Popish plot was a not unnatural Nemesis on the sanction which from time to time had been accorded in the name of Scripture to an Anthony Babington, a Jacques Clement, and an Everard Digby. When Innocent III. was giving to the Abbot of Citeaux his infamous advice to entrap the Count of Toulouse to his ruin, he wrote, "We advise you, according to the precepts of the Apostle, to use cunning in your dealings with the Count of Toulouse, treating him with a wise dissimulation, in order that the other heretics may be more easily destroyed." "According to the precepts of the Apostle!"—and indeed says the historian, "it

is remarkable that when the Roman Pontiffs, especially Gregory VII. and Innocent III., had any pernicious design to recommend, they were lavish in their appeals to Scripture, as if they had studied the Bible merely to find an excuse for sacrilege." I say—I cannot say too strongly—that such methods are totally false; they are to enter a holier sanctuary only to commit a deadlier sacrilege, to stand in the sunlight only to cast a blacker and chiller shadow. I say further that all such methods are fatal to Scripture; that if anything at all resembling them is persisted in, they will be utterly fatal to the nation's religious life. I say further still that though men have grown more wary to avoid the most grievous applications of this false method, they still theoretically cling to it, and that in consequence thereof to this day—and that in thousands of instances—the Scriptures are abused, as they were in the days of the Fathers, to support false reasoning in morals and bad inferences in matters of faith.

It would be the duty, then, of one who wrote the story of Scripture interpretation to shew what has been the reason why

The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose;

why it is that

in religion

What damned error but some sober brow

Will bless it and approve it with a text,

Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?

But I am neither writing, nor even presuming to sketch, what would be the proper mode of dealing with a subject so important. My only object is to group together under separate heads, or lines of error, a few specimens of misinterpretation, with the humble object

of urging the duty of reading the Scriptures with more open and earnest minds; of studying them with deeper carefulness; of employing them—especially when we are endeavouring to refute the opinions of others—with a more conscientious accuracy, and a stronger sense of the possibility that we may have neither the knowledge nor the wisdom in uncertain matters to interpret them aright.

I. Need I first of all utter a warning against the rash confidence of sheer ignorance?

No doubt the spread of education will save us from very gross and palpable errors. We shall not be guilty of such blunders as that of the English Archbishop before the Reformation, who argued that the authority of St. Peter and his successors was implied by the name Kephias, because “we all know,” he observed, “that Kephias means a head;” or as that of the Book of Mormon, which makes that mythical personage use a compass I know not how many hundred years before its invention, on the strength of “We fetched a compass and came to Rhegium;” or as that of the unlettered Roman Catholics who supposed that “*Mundum super maria posuisti*” (Psalm xxiv. 2) means that God has founded the world “*super Mariâ*”—on the Virgin Mary; or as that of the ignorant Calvinists, who argue that their conversion requires no repentance for past sins, because “the gifts and calling of God are *without repentance*.” Nor are we likely to make such a use of Scripture as that of the friar who preached at the martyrdom of Cranmer and Ridley on the text, “Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing;” or as that of the preacher who, at the condemnation of Galileo Galilei, is said to have selected

as his text, "*Viri Galilaei, cur statis in coelum respicientes?*" Yet it must, I think, be admitted that, from want of care and study, many of us sometimes, and some of us habitually, use Scripture in a way that makes our quotations rise but little above a play on words.

I. First, Christian writers are too often careless even as regards the text.

(a) Is it not most undesirable to defend certain doctrines by texts of very dubious authenticity? Who has not heard sermons on Trinity Sunday preached from 1 John v. 7—"the Three Heavenly Witnesses"—although the genuineness of that Verse is no longer defended by a single competent critic?

(β) Is it not still more unwise to insist on dubious passages as though the belief of them was essential? I remember many years ago to have heard with some pain a sermon on the angel troubling the pool at Bethesda. It contained strong reprobation of any who did not accept the narrative with absolute literalness. It attributed any doubts or difficulties upon the subject, or attempts to give any other colour to it than that of an actual angel literally descending to stir the pool, to an impious and dangerous rationalism. With what feelings must any hearer have listened, how little could any one have profited, who was aware of the extreme doubt which must rest upon the genuineness of that passage! It is omitted by the four great Uncials, α, B, C, D; is only inserted in the margin of A; is omitted in some of the earlier versions; is marked as spurious in many MSS.; is full of various readings even in the MSS. which retain it; contains no less than *seven* isolated usages of word or meaning

in the space of three lines ;¹ is quoted by no writer earlier than the fourth century, except Tertullian ; and is rejected by Tregelles, Tischendorf, Meyer, Alford, Lightfoot, and Westcott. A preacher may, after due study, still suppose that the passage is genuine ; but is he acting fairly towards his hearers if he presses that conclusion upon them as an infallible conclusion, to be enforced with acrimonious denunciations, and if (which is the common case), without any knowledge or any study whatever, he assumes an accent of ignorant infallibility in condemning the opposite conclusion ? We ask the question ; but we are well aware that, as St. Jerome complains was the case in his day, so now no rustic is so ignorant, no old woman so insane, as not to claim a right, in matters of theology, to reprove even canonized saints whose opinions—and that too in the merest non-essentials—happen to differ from their own. Few spectacles are more saddening than to see the way in which men and women of the feeblest intellect and the most absolute want of culture are prepared, at a moment's notice, to lay down the law on all religious questions as though they were oracles and all wisdom should die with them—"imposing the senses of men upon the words of God, the special senses of men upon the general words of God, and laying them upon men's consciences together under the equal penalty of death and damnation."

(γ) Again, there can be no doubt that fasting is recognized, though nowhere expressly enjoined, in the New Testament ; but is it wise for any one to insist upon it from the verses Matthew xvii. 21, or Mark

¹ Mr. McClellan, in his *Four Gospels*, never seems to realize the force of such a fact as this.

ix. 29 : " This kind goeth not out but by prayer and *fasting*".[?] Ought not any one who relies on those verses at least to call attention to the fact that the words "and fasting" are omitted by \aleph , B, and many of the ancient versions, and that they cannot be relied on? It would be still more unwise to rely on 1 Corinthians vii. 5, because there not only are the words "and fasting" undoubtedly spurious, but there has also been a deliberate ascetic tampering with the verbs and tenses.¹

(δ) Once more, how often has an exultant hope been founded on Revelation v. 10: "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign upon the earth"? That hope is justifiable to the utmost, but the bearing of this Verse upon it is much less direct than is supposed. For the true reading is, "And madest *them* (*i.e.*, the four and twenty elders) a kingdom and priests, and *they* shall reign upon the earth."

2. I need not touch further on the positive duty of considering the text, because, in former numbers of THE EXPOSITOR, an opportunity has been granted me of shewing that it has a bearing on many passages of the extremest importance. But it is of even more importance—for it affects our view of a far larger number of passages—to be wary against founding our conclusions, even when those conclusions are in themselves just, upon texts of which the *translation* is either positively erroneous or highly uncertain.

Let me throw together a few illustrations, appending to them only the briefest possible comment. Some of

¹ The *kai* $\nu\eta\sigma\tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$ are omitted by \aleph , A, B, C, D, E, F, G, which also read $\sigma\chi\omicron\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\eta\tau\epsilon$ for $\sigma\chi\omicron\lambda\acute{\alpha}\zeta\eta\tau\epsilon$, and $\eta\tau\epsilon$ for $\sigma\upsilon\nu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\chi\eta\theta\epsilon$.

these texts have no bearing on Christian faith, but it will be seen at once how sacred are the doctrines which many of them are used to prove; how important therefore it is that we should be on our guard, lest we deduce from any erroneous translation a doctrine which is not true, or rest any indisputable doctrine upon some weak or uncertain base.¹

(a) Isaiah ix. 1-5: "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and *afterwards did more grievously afflict her* by way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. . . . Thou hast multiplied the nation, *and not increased the joy.* . . . For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; *but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.*" The Verses occur in the passage so dear and so familiar to us as the first lesson for Christmas day. What meaning many hearers attach to the words which I have italicized it would be hard to say; but meanwhile the true version is more like this: "For though the land was distressed, it is not now in gloom. Of old he brought shame on the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but *in the latter days he hath brought it to honour* unto the way of the sea," &c. Thou hast multiplied the nation, *and increased its joy*² . . . for *every boot of trampling warrior, and the garment rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire.*"

¹ It need hardly be said that these are only a *few* instances out of many scores which might be adduced.

² The *to* is not the negative but the dative of the personal pronoun. A great orator quoted this Verse in the House of Commons during the last session of Parliament, and I ventured to tell him that when the new version appeared the text in all probability would stand very differently.

(β) Isaiah xxviii. 10: "For *precept must be upon precept; line upon line; precept upon precept; line upon line*; here a little, and there a little." This phrase is generally used to illustrate the gradual method of the Divine teaching. The lesson is a perfectly true one; but these words, so far from being an inspired description of it, are a quotation from the taunting bitter language of the drunken priests and prophets, who wish to hold up Isaiah's teaching to ridicule. In the original they are a striking paronomasia—*tsav la-tsav kav la-kav*—adopted to imitate the stammering words of these drunken deriders.¹

(γ) Psalm ii. 12: "*Kiss the Son*, lest he be angry." The application of these words to enforce the sacred duty of making our peace with Christ while yet there is time is perhaps defensible; but it should not be insisted on without the free admission that the Chaldee, Septuagint, Vulgate, Aquila, Symmachus, and all the ancient versions except the Syriac adopt the renderings "*Receive instruction*" and "*worship purely*," or some similar paraphrase; and that it is at least an unexpected phenomenon to find the Chaldee *Bar* used for "Son" in a Psalm of early date.

(δ) Job xix. 25: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms shall destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. . . ." Perhaps few passages are more frequently quoted than this to express at once a faith in Christ and a hope of the resurrection; and for this reason it may be found carved on innumerable tombs. It is even made

¹ An explanation of this passage by the Editor will be found in an early number of THE EXPOSITOR.

to prove in the strictest sense a resurrection of the body. If such views be maintained from this passage, warning should at least be given that the meaning is highly ambiguous, and that no certain conclusions can be built on the English Version until it has been carefully vindicated from the difficulties with which it is surrounded.¹ That in these words Job does rise above all the doubts which have been haunting him, to express a profound conviction in the vindication which, if not in this world, will be granted to him in some form or other by the justice of God, is undeniable; but to see in this Verse the Christian doctrine of the Atonement and the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection of the body, is to maintain by most dubious arguments truths far too sacred and far too undeniable to be supported by any but the fairest and strongest demonstrations.

It would be endless to multiply instances from the Old Testament. I will proceed to furnish a few examples from the New.

(ε) John x. 16: "And there shall be *one fold* and one shepherd." What our Blessed Lord said was that He had other sheep not of this *fold* (*αὐλή*), and that these also He must bring, and they would hear his voice; "and they shall become *ONE FLOCK* (*μία ποιμνῆ*), one shepherd." Christ never promised that his sheep, even when they were gathered into one flock, should all be penned in one fold. It may be a far more blessed thing that, though forming one flock, their unity should be unity in Him, and not in one corporate re-union. I agree with Canon Westcott that this mistranslation "has been most disastrous in idea

¹ The passage is carefully examined in the Editor's paper on Job, EXPOSITOR, vol. vii. pp. 326-336.

and influence." "The obliteration," he adds, "of this essential distinction between 'fold' and 'flock' in many of the later Western versions of this passage indicates, as it appears, a tendency of Roman Christianity, and has served in no small degree to confirm and extend the false claims of the Roman See. . . . It would perhaps be *impossible for any correction now to do away with the effects which a translation undeniably false has produced on popular ecclesiastical ideas.*"

(5) John xx. 17: "*Touch me not.*" This rendering must surely create difficulties in the minds of multitudes of readers; for our Blessed Lord did not reprove the other women who "held him by the feet and worshipped him" (Matt. xxviii. 9), and He actually invited Thomas to handle Him and see. The words really mean, "Cling not to me" (*μὴ μου ἅπτου*). He meant that the days were now past for the lingering grasp of human tenderness, and that He was no longer only the human Friend and Saviour, but the risen and glorified Son of God—something more than eye could see or hand could grasp.

(η) Acts ii. 47: "And the Lord added to the Church daily *such as should be saved.*" Any reader with a Calvinistic bias would at once infer that this Verse lends strong support to the doctrines of election and reprobation. It has even been supposed that the rendering is due to a Calvinistic leaning in our translators. The surmise is indeed erroneous, for a similar misrepresentation is found in many other versions (*e.g.*, the Vulgate and the Rhenish). But undoubtedly it should be rendered "those who were in the way of salvation" (literally, those being saved, *τοὺς σωζομένους*). The same word occurs in

Luke xiii. 23, "are there few that be saved?" (εἰ ὀλίγοι οἱ σωζόμενοι); 1 Corinthians i. 18, "unto them which perish . . . unto us which are saved" (τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις . . . ἡμῖν τοῖς σωζόμενοις); 2 Corinthians ii. 15, "in them that are saved and in them that perish." Again in Acts xiii. 48, "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed," the highly Calvinistic aspect of the rendering is indeed excusable, but it is certain that the ἦσαν τεταγμένοι (as in Chap. xx. 13, οὕτως γὰρ ἦν διατεταγμένος, "for so had he appointed," and often in Josephus) has a quasi-middle sense, and means "as many as were *disposed* for eternal life," as it is rendered in the Syriac version. But in two other passages it may be feared that the turn given to the translation is really due to theological preconceptions: one is Matthew xix. 11, where "all men *cannot* receive this saying" ought to be rendered, "all men *do not* receive (οὐ χωροῦσιν) this saying;" the other is Galatians i. 18, where "I went up to Jerusalem to *see* Peter" ought in all *fairness* to be, "I went up to Jerusalem to *visit* (ἱστορήσαι) Kephas," even if we do not admit a stronger word.

(θ) The instances in which our great and good translators have thus been unable to resist dogmatic bias are very few; but 1 Corinthians xi. 27, "Whosoever shall eat this bread, *and* drink this cup," is probably one of them. There can hardly be the shadow of a doubt that in using "*and*" they were influenced by an unfortunate and unfaithful timidity, "because they were anxious about the use made of the verse by the Romanists in the argument against communion in both kinds." But the first requirement in translators is absolute faithfulness, and ἢ can never mean anything but "or." In the verses which follow, the saddest and most untenable

conclusions have arisen, both from the wholly unauthorized rendering "damnation" for "judgment," and from the total obliteration of the distinction between the three words, κρίμα, διακρίνειν, and κατακρίνειν. Thus the true and deep lesson of the passage is lost; for that lesson briefly is, that if a man does not "test" himself (δοκιμαζέτω) before eating the bread and drinking of the cup, he eats and drinks *judgment* (κρίμα) upon himself by not *discerning* (διακρίνων) the Lord's body, "for if we had *discerned* ourselves we should not have been *judged*, but in being judged we are being educated (παιδευόμεθα) by the Lord that we may not be *condemned* (κατακριθώμεν) with the world."

(ι) John i. 51: "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." This is one of the instances in which a careless reader may be misled by an English archaism to miss the entire force of the passage. "Hereafter" does not mean "at some future time," e.g., on the last day, but it means "*from this time forth*," as in our prayer "that we may hereafter live a righteous, sober, and godly life." Further, the ἀπ' ἄρτι is not certainly genuine, for it is omitted by \aleph , B, L, by many of the ancient versions, and by some of the early Fathers.

Another instance of misleading archaism is—

(κ) Matthew vi. 34: "*Take no thought* for the morrow." The translation here is perfectly correct, because in older English "thought" was used in the sense of "anxiety," as when Lord Bacon says that Hawis, an alderman of London, "dyed with *thought* and anguish." But this usage has long become obsolete, and hence the verse is now constantly used to support an in-

difference to the commonest laws of prudence, which, except so far as it is excusable from ignorance, would be positively immoral. To take thought for the morrow is a clear duty; what is forbidden is want of faith and over-anxiety (*μὴ μεριμνήσητε*) respecting it.

(λ) Matthew xxv. 8: "Our lamps are gone out." The words might be quoted to prove that it is possible for a man even in this life to fall into a state of *hopeless* reprobation. But the tense of the original is the present, and the meaning is, "our lamps are burning low (*σβέννυνται*), are being quenched."

(μ) 2 Corinthians v. 11: "Knowing therefore the *terror* of the Lord we *persuade men*." Perhaps no text is more frequently used than this as the prelude to, and excuse for, I know not what lurid and apocalyptic menaces of wrath. It needs but a study of the context to shew that the meaning of the passage simply is that St. Paul is appealing against human charges of insincerity to the judgment of God, and saying, that while he attempts in the fear of God to persuade men of his own integrity, he has no need to persuade God of it, because to God his heart is already manifest.

(ν) Philippians ii. 10: "That *at the name of Jesus* every knee should bow." This verse is commonly urged in defence of the practice of bowing the head whenever the name of Jesus is mentioned. But the rendering is wholly untenable. It is not "*at*," but "*in*" the name of Jesus, and St. Paul is speaking of the exaltation of Jesus in order that *all* prayer may be offered *in his name*.

(ε) Philippians iv. 5: "Let your *moderation* be known unto all men." This verse is constantly ad-

duced, and was recently adduced in an elaborate paper, as an argument against total abstinence, and in favour of what is called "moderate drinking." It is needless to point out that the Greek word for "moderation" is το ἐπιεικές, and means reasonable dealing or *consideration for one another*.

(o) Ephesians iv. 32: "Even as God *for Christ's sake* hath forgiven you." It would perhaps be hard to overestimate the effect which has been produced by this verse upon popular theology. It has probably had more effect than any passage in stereotyping the dangerous forensic aspect which has been thrust upon the divine mystery of the Atonement. And considering the immense dissemination of the phrase, it is little short of startling to find that such a phrase as God forgiving us "for Christ's sake" does not once occur in the New Testament, and that indeed the words "for Christ's sake" in this sense are not found. No doubt such a use of words, duly and reverently explained, may be supported by inference from other passages of Scripture, but it is undesirable to put in the very forefront of our theology expressions which are not directly Scriptural, and I need not pause to tell the reader that the true translation, "even as God *in Christ* forgave you," conveys in itself a very different range of thoughts.

(π) Hebrews ii. 16: "*He took on him the seed of Abraham.*" The true rendering of course is, "For it is not angels that he helpeth, but he helpeth the seed of Abraham."

(ρ) Hebrews vi. 6: "[It is impossible] . . . *if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.*" Here again the English translators have been sus-

pected, and happily without justice, of bending their version in favour of Calvinistic views. The translation is nevertheless wrong. It is not "*if* they shall fall away," but "on their falling away" (*παραπεσόντας*).

(σ) Hebrews x. 34: "*Knowing in yourselves* that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." Although no erroneous doctrine is drawn from these words, how much do we lose by their rendering! The words refer not to the *future* hope, but to the *present fruition* of heavenly and permanent happiness. The *ἐν οὐρανοῖς* is omitted by some good MSS. and versions, but whether omitted or received, the lesson of the verse is that God's saints recognize even now and here "*that they have for themselves* a better possession and an abiding."

(τ) Hebrews xii. 17: "He *found no place of repentance*, though he sought it carefully with tears." This verse was, we are told, to John Bunyan during his early struggles "like a flaming sword, barring to him the way of the tree of life." Now if the verse had the meaning which he gave to it—if, that is, it implied that it is possible for a man earnestly to seek (*ἐκζητήσας*) with tears for repentance, and yet not find it—it would not only be the most powerful inducement to despair, but would run counter to the whole meaning of the Gospel message. But no such meaning necessarily attaches to the verse, and indeed Christendom in general has been united in setting it aside. St. Chrysostom and many eminent commentators make it mean, "found no room for repentance," *i.e.*, for change of purpose, in his father Isaac; others, like Zwingle and Beza, refer it to the vain attempt to change the mind of Jacob. Others again, making the clause "for he found no room for

a change of purpose" parenthetical, refer it (*αυτην*) to the *blessing* (*εὐλογία*) which he could not regain though he was passionately desirous to do so. Whatever view be adopted, it is certain in any case that the "repentance" which he did not find is *not* (as Theodore of Mopsuestia said more than a thousand years ago) the repentance which leads to the forgiveness of sins, but such a repentance as might have led to the restoration of the theocratic blessing. Earthly consequences are indeed often irrevocable; but so far from closing the gate of repentance and remission of sins to any penitent sinner, it is the very object of Christ's life and death to fling it wide to all who would enter it.

These instances are, I think, more than sufficient to serve as specimens of the manner in which, and of the extent to which, many have been led astray by the neglect even of textual and grammatical considerations. In some of these instances—*e.g.*, in the case of John x. 16; 1 Corinthians xi. 27-29; Ephesians iv. 32—the correction of the translation has had scarcely any effect in modifying the views to which by way of inference the erroneous renderings have led. But even in the other instances which a student may multiply for himself to almost any extent, have we not seen enough to shew us how possible it is to use in a careless and conventional manner the Book which we profess to regard as containing the oracles of God? It is a very grievous thing to build mistaken inferences in theology upon the inaccuracies of an authorized version. Even this has been done to a very large extent; but what I have especially desired to illustrate is the evil of illustrating and supporting even true and sacred conclusions by untenable translations. A church which is built

upon a rock can only be disfigured and weakened when the buttresses with which men have thought to strengthen it are built of spurious material and daubed with untempered mortar.

In one more paper I hope to return to this subject, and to shew that Scriptural interpretation may be endangered by far subtler enemies than those very obvious ones on which I now have touched.

F. W. FARRAR.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

XV.—THE BETRAYER.

THERE is nothing more remarkable in the history of the Passion than its moral truthfulness, the extraordinary realism with which the varied and most dissimilar characters are painted. The men live and act before us obedient to their respective natures and ends. Each has his own character, and the history but exhibits it in action, articulated in speech and conduct. There is everywhere the finest consistency between the doer and the deed ; new events but make us the more conscious of the harmony. And this harmony is exhibited and preserved under the most extraordinary conditions and in what seems most violent combinations. The central figure is the holiest Person of history, but round Him stand or strive the most opposed and contrasted moral types, every one related to Him and more or less concerned in the tragic action of which He is at once object and victim. The characters and catastrophe are alike beyond and above all the conventional ideals, whether of history or tragedy. The Christ Himself is a wonderful picture. Jesus appears in