

GRACE, PHILOLOGICALLY VIEWED.

THE word *grace* we got from the French. The French got it from the old Romans. And the Romans, along with all who spoke the Latin tongue, got it under the old, old parental roof, at that exceedingly remote period which preceded the migration both of Latins and Greeks from their common Oriental home north-east of the Holy Land.

The Greek form of the word is *χάρις*, connected with *χαίρω*, *I rejoice*. So that the word, in its etymology, means *that which gives joy and pleasure, that which is delightful*.¹

Hence it was, at a very early period of its career as a word, applied to *that which was beautiful*. Beauty is delightful. It gives delight. It is *grace*. A beautiful movement of the body is *graceful*. If a dress is beautiful in its fabric, and if it fits beautifully, it is *graceful*. The fertile Greek imagination constructed three distinct personifications of beauty, which obtained a prominent and interesting place in the mythology of the people. They were called *the Graces*. The echo of their idea continues, and we still speak of the *three Christian Graces*—faith, hope, charity, the greatest or most graceful of which is charity.

When our Queen or the Princess of Wales visits some private home, we sometimes say that the royal lady *graces* the home with her presence. She lends charm and beauty to it; and the charm and beauty occasion delight.

But both Greeks and Latins, as also the people who speak French and the people who speak English, were not slow to perceive that there is an inner as really as an outer beauty. There is beauty of character. There is beauty of moral deportment. There is beauty of moral feeling and acting; and this beauty is fitted to give great delight and joy. Hence the Greeks, Latins, French, and English were united in calling it *grace*. Kindness and loving-kindness is *grace*. It is really most *graceful*. It is the most beautiful possible ornament. Justice is admirable. It cannot be dispensed with. There would be an ineffaceable blemish in character were it erased or curtailed. Its presence lends dignity to character; and dignity is a species of grandeur; and grandeur is a species of beauty. Thus there is beauty in justice. But it is by a circuitous logical process that we find out “the *beauty* of holiness,” and the corresponding

¹ The root-syllable in *χάρις* and *gratia* is identical. Had not *χαίρω* been preserved, the fundamental idea of the nouns would have been latent.

beauty that is inherent in the hatred of sin. But not so is it with kindness or loving-kindness. We instantaneously recognize the beauty of that peculiar manifestation of mind and heart. It charms us at once. It inspires us, on the spur of the moment, with delight and joy, especially when we find ourselves the objects of the loving-kindness. That loving-kindness is called *grace* just because it is peculiarly beautiful and delightful. It is the *grace* that belongs peculiarly to God; and its presence, as a prominent feature in his character, constitutes Him "the Lord ever *gracious*." It is the *grace* of which St. Paul speaks when he says, "The *grace* of God, that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and devoutly in this present age of the world." God's favour is *grace*.

But man, too, as well as God, can be *gracious*. Our Queen is *gracious*. The Princess of Wales is *gracious*. It is their pleasure to be kind, lovingly kind; and their loving-kindness is delightful, and, because delightful, is *grace*; so that they are *gracious*. Even a very humble man can be *gracious*, or shew favour to his fellow-man. If his fellow-man has injured him so as to expose himself to punishment, the injured may show *grace* to the injurious, and thus be *gracious*. Such graciousness is most *graceful*, most delightful to contemplate. It is the reflection in man of the peculiar glory which is inherent in the character of God.

There is still another application of the word *grace*. We speak of *grace* before and after meals: at all events our fathers spoke freely in that manner. They *said grace* before and after taking food. It seems a somewhat strange application of the term. What is the meaning? It is this: *they said thanks*. They uttered *thanks* or *gratitude* to God, the great bountiful Provider and Benefactor. This *gratitude* was *grace*. How significant! With what charm it invests the idea of *gratitude*! Gratitude is *graceful*. Gratitude for loving-kindness manifested, or for favour received, as a token of loving-kindness, is as truly and really *graceful*, and *grace*, as is loving-kindness itself. In nothing is there greater deformity and unloveliness than in ingratitude. Hence both Greeks and Romans freely combined in calling gratitude *grace*. And thus, in the New Testament use of the word, we light upon a somewhat singular phenomenon. The word cannot always be rendered *grace* or *favour* when it is transferred to our English tongue, for it sometimes means *thanks*; and thus, as in *grace* before and after food, it denotes not what we now,

in our present English idiom, call *grace*, but that other manifestation of character which consists in a thankful appreciation of favour or benefit received. Remarkable as it may at first sight appear, it is nevertheless the case that the term which in the Bible is so often and so appropriately rendered *grace*, and which denotes *loving-kindness* or *favour*, is sometimes rendered *thank* or *thanks*. We read, for instance, "For if ye love them who love you, what *thank* have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them who do good to you, what *thank* have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what *thank* have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners to receive as much again." We read in another part of the New Testament those glorious and glowing words of the Apostle St. Paul, "*Thanks* be unto God for his unspeakable gift." In these passages the term employed in the original is the identical term that is generally translated *grace*. In the sayings of our Saviour, as is evidenced by the parallel expression in St. Matthew, the word is tantamount in import to *reward*. What *thank* or *reward* do ye deserve? In the saying of the Apostle it simply means *thanks*; and *thanks* is expressed by this term *grace*, just because *thankfulness* is always, as a manifestation of character, a *grace*, *delightful* to God and to all other beings who are God-like.

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NOTE TO "THE AUTHOR OF ECCLESIASTES."

It is right that I should acknowledge my indebtedness for one of the main thoughts in the above article, the influence of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy traceable in the confessions of the Preacher, to one of the ablest of my predecessors in the treatment of the problems presented by that book. When the Commentary of which the article forms a part appears, it will be found that I have fully recognized my obligations in the sections which precede the Ideal Biography; but I feel that it is an act of justice to Mr. Thomas Tyler, the writer of whom I speak, that I should make this acknowledgment also in THE EXPOSITOR. If by so doing I lead any of the readers of my article to study his work on *Ecclesiastes* (Williams and Norgate, 1874), they will, I am sure, thank me for introducing them to a volume marked at once by original thought and by accurate scholarship.

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