

*WESTCOTT AND HORT'S GREEK TESTAMENT
AS A COMMENTARY.*

AMID the multitude of criticisms on the merits of the Revised Version as a translation, one fact seems to be almost universally recognised—that *as a Commentary* it is invaluable. While the English reader misses the old familiar phrases and the exquisite rhythm of the Authorized Version, and is perpetually startled and repelled by some awkward or even uncouth rendering which the stern fidelity of the revisers has ruthlessly forced upon us, he is yet quite as often charmed at finding some hitherto hidden beauty of the Original brought forth into light, and delighted with the discovery that a passage, which till now had been perplexing or unintelligible, has become plain, straightforward, and pregnant with meaning. And so it seems as if gradually there was being brought about a general consensus of opinion on the part of thoughtful men with regard to the merits of the Version; and it is probable that the verdict finally returned will be something approaching to this: that it fails as a translation, but is strong as a Commentary. A simple text, without note or comment, and yet recommended for its merits *as a Commentary!* This seems a strange paradox at first, but it is no new one. More than two centuries ago Thomas Fuller noted in his Church History that “a good translation is an excellent comment on the Bible;”¹ and it is said that the late Dr. Routh, when requested to name the best Commentary on the New Testament, replied, “On the whole, the Vulgate.” Perhaps if this were more largely realized, and if people would only learn to make the Bible its own commentary, and study *it*, instead of perplexing themselves with a multitude of books about the Bible, there would be less of the shallowness and more thoroughness of grasp of the truth and

¹ *Church History*, vol. iii. p. 247.

meaning of Revelation than, it is to be feared, at present exists among us. For English readers, then, the Revised Version may safely be recommended as the best Commentary. For those however who can read the New Testament in the original language there is a still better one. Even more valuable than the Versions (and far be it from me to depreciate the inestimable value of the Vulgate, and, for the Old Testament, of the Septuagint) is a critical edition of the Greek text itself. Armed with this, and with a good Grammar, Lexicon, and Concordance at his elbow, the student is, to a great extent, independent of commentators, and can discover for himself what the Sacred Record really says, and, in most cases, what is the natural meaning of the words. He will, of course, never be *entirely* independent of the works of commentators; and I for one owe so deep a debt of gratitude to them that I would not for one moment be thought to despise or cast a slur upon them. Difficult passages will frequently come before him, in which he will have recourse to their aid; but he will only consult the Commentary when he has first discovered the difficulty for himself, and will not (as so many do) find the difficulty first created for him and suggested by the Commentary: and thus he will more thoroughly appropriate and make his own what he finds therein. "I don't only know it, *I have found it out*," said James Hinton, when he had worked out for himself some great truth, which hitherto he had only accepted on the testimony of others. And exactly so in Biblical study; that which we have discovered for ourselves is far more really our own and more completely assimilated than what we find ready to hand, and take cut and dried, so to speak, from the works of others.

Among critical editions of the text there is one the importance of which has been recognized far and wide; that by the Cambridge Divinity Professors, Drs. Westcott and Hort. It has been called an "epoch-making book," and

such undoubtedly it is. It is impossible to overrate its value for the textual critic and indeed for the general reader, as being probably the best critical edition that has been published, bringing us into closer proximity to the original autographs of the sacred writers than we ever were before. But my purpose in the present Paper is not so much to dwell on this, as to draw attention to the wonderful way in which this work may serve *as a Commentary*, although it contains in Volume I. the simple text without note or comment of any kind, and in Volume II. an Introduction on the principles of textual criticism, and notes on selected passages, which are simply intended to elucidate questions of disputed readings. The arrangement of the text and the variations of the type employed will be found highly suggestive, and assist the reader in grasping the meaning and connexion of the writing in a manner which renders this edition far superior to any other as a manual for ordinary use.

(1) *Arrangement of text.* The principles followed are thus stated by Dr. Hort in the Introduction (vol. ii. p. 319). "The course which we have followed has been to begin by examining carefully the primary structure of each book as a whole, and then to divide it gradually up into sections of higher or lower rank, separated by spaces, and headed if necessary by whole words in capitals. In the subdivision of sections we have found great convenience in adopting the French plan of breaking up the paragraphs into sub-paragraphs by means of a space of some length. In this manner we have been able to keep together in combination a single series of connected topics, and yet to hold them visibly apart. The advantage is especially great where a distinct digression is interposed between two closely connected portions of text. We have been glad at the same time to retain another grade of division in the familiar difference between capitals and small letters

following a full stop. Groups of sentences introduced by a capital thus bear the same relation to sub-paragraphs as sub-paragraphs to paragraphs."

Let us now see what light this throws on St. Matthew's Gospel. On turning to it, we find that there are six passages headed by whole words in capitals. (1) Chapter i. 1: *BIBΛOΣ γενέσεως*. (2) Chapter i. 18: *ΤΟΥ ΔΕ [ΙΗΣΟΥ] ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ἡ γένεσις*. (3) Chapter iii. 1: *ΕΝ ΔΕ ΤΑΙΣ ΗΜΕΡΑΙΣ ἐκείναις*. (4) Chapter iv. 17: *ΑΠΟ ΤΟΤΕ ἤρξατο*. (5) Chapter xvi. 21: *ΑΠΟ ΤΟΤΕ ἤρξατο*. (6) Chapter xxvi. 1: *ΚΑΙ ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν*. This gives us as an analysis of the Gospel: (1) Introduction, (2) the Infancy, (3) Preparation for the Ministry, (4) Early, and (5) Later Ministry, (6) the Passion and Resurrection. It will be seen at once that, according to this analysis, St. Matthew divides our Lord's public ministry into two great sections, one beginning at Chapter iv. verse 17, and the other at xvi. 21. The arrangement of the text not only points this out to us, but seems to suggest a comparison of the formulæ with which the two sections are introduced; and most instructive such a comparison is. The early ministry is introduced by the words, "*From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" The account of the later ministry commences as follows: "*From that time Jesus Christ began to shew to his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.*" The similarities and variations of the two passages are equally worthy of notice. The opening words *ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο* ("From that time began") serve in each case to mark a new point of departure in our Lord's earthly life. In each case there is a beginning made, and something new is brought before us. At the first occurrence of the phrase it marks the commencement of our Lord's *public* ministry, which is charac-

terized as a preaching of repentance and a proclamation of the kingdom. There is thenceforward no further break in the narrative until we come to Chapter xvi. Meanwhile we have the full record of our Lord's Galilean and *popular* ministry, which should be read as a whole, and which will thus be seen to culminate in St. Peter's great confession of his Messiahship: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Even if the common people (the ὄχλοι) no longer hear him gladly—if they have rejected or misjudged Him, yet the disciples (μαθηταί, verse 13) have at any rate learnt this lesson, and acknowledge Him as Christ.

And now comes the second section. "From that time began Jesus Christ (no longer Ἰησοῦς alone, but most significantly Ἰησοῦς Χριστός) to shew to his disciples (not to the multitudes, but to those only who had learnt the first lesson aright) how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things," etc.

When the lesson that He is the Messianic King, the Christ promised in the Old Testament, has been grasped and acknowledged by the faithful few, then the title Jesus Christ is used by the Evangelist¹ as it is used nowhere else, except in the Introduction (Chapter i. 1 and perhaps i. 18); and the training of the disciples in receiving the new truth that He must be a *suffering* Messiah is introduced by precisely the same formula as that which marks the commencement of the ministry itself.

This may serve as an instance of the value of this careful arrangement of paragraphs. It is perhaps the most remarkable one, but I am convinced that, if in a similar way each student will make his own analysis of any book of the New Testament at which he may chance to be working, by

¹ It must be noticed that Ἰησοῦς Χριστός is a new reading, received apparently by no critical editors before the Cambridge Professors, but noted in the margin of the Revised Version as being found in "some ancient authorities." These include the Vatican and Sinaitic MSS.

carefully following out the sections thus indicated in this Edition, he will be richly rewarded by thoughts and suggestions which will come to him almost as discoveries of his own, and therefore will be assimilated and appropriated by him in a manner which will render them a lasting possession.

(2) A second feature that is especially helpful may be noticed. "Passages apparently metrical in rhythm have been printed in a metrical form, whether taken from the Old Testament or not." Thus we are not only enabled to recognize the poetic quotations at a glance, but throughout the Canticles in St. Luke (Chapters i. and ii.) the reader has his attention drawn to the parallelism which is the distinguishing feature of Hebrew poetry, and is as conspicuous in them as in the Psalms of the Old Dispensation. One is almost tempted to wish that this typographical arrangement could have been extended yet further, although perhaps it would scarcely have been allowable. But occasionally there are passages in our Lord's discourses in which a kind of metrical structure may be clearly discerned, and it is to be regretted that these could not have been marked for the general reader. The same sort of insensible transition from prose to poetry is found also in the Old Testament; *e.g.* in the first chapter of Genesis Keil notices that at the crowning work of the sixth day (in verse 27) "the words swell out into a jubilant song, so that we meet for the first time with the *parallelismus membrorum*, the creation of man being celebrated in three parallel clauses." So occasionally in his more solemn utterances our Lord's words fall into similarly balanced clauses either of "antithetic" or of "synonymous parallelism." For instance, the allegory of the Good Shepherd in St. John (Chapter x. verses 14, 15) contains perhaps the most perfect specimen of introverted parallelism to be found in the whole Bible.

- (1) Ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός,
 (2) Καὶ γινώσκω τὰ ἐμὰ, καὶ γινώσκουσί με τὰ ἐμά,
 (3) Καθὼς γινώσκει με ὁ πατήρ, καὶ γὼ γινώσκω τὸν πατέρα,
 (4) Καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν μου τίθημι ὑπὲρ τῶν προβάτων.

This is one of the passages where the Revisers have happily restored the meaning, of which the Authorized Version had made sad havoc; and as the English reader can now read it, if he arranges it as is done above, he will see how the second and third clauses answer to one another, while the fourth corresponds exactly to the first, for it has already been noted in verse 11 that the characteristic of the Good Shepherd is that he "layeth down his life for the sheep."

Another beautiful instance noticed by Dr. Westcott in his "Introduction to the Study of the Gospels" (p. 271) is our Lord's parting blessing of his disciples in St. John xiv. 27.

*Εἰρήνην ἀφήμι ὑμῖν, εἰρήνην τὴν ἐμὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν.
 Οὐ καθὼς ὁ κόσμος δίδωσιν ἐγὼ δίδωμι ὑμῖν.
 μὴ ταρασσέσθω ὑμῶν ἡ καρδία μηδὲ δειλιάτω.*

But though these could perhaps hardly be marked by any deviation from the ordinary arrangement of the text, yet the reader will feel it to be a real gain not only to have the hymns in the Apocalypse pointed out, and such passages as Ephesians v. 14, and 1 Timothy iii. 16 given as poetical quotations, but also to find that the Editors have marked "the essentially metrical structure of the Lord's Prayer in St. Matthew's Gospel, with its invocation, its first triplet of single clauses with one common burden, expressed after the third but implied after all, and its second triplet of double clauses, variously antithetical in form and sense."¹ This will probably be new to most readers, and it is indeed a "pearl of great price," as it brings out the fulness of meaning in this Divine Prayer in a most striking manner. The arrangement is as follows:—

¹ Volume ii. p. 320.

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς·
 Ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου,
 ἐλθάτω ἡ βασιλεία σου,
 γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου,
 ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς·
 Τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον
 δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον·
 καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν,
 ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν·
 καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν,
 ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

Thus the first three petitions are as it were bracketed together, and the refrain *ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς* is taken with each of them, and not as is commonly the case confined to the third. There is no need to enlarge upon the beauty and suggestiveness of this arrangement. It must be apparent to the dullest reader when once his attention is drawn to it; only somehow it seems to have escaped the notice of commentators in an extraordinary manner until Dr. Hort brought it forth into the light.

(3) A third point on which a few remarks may be made is the treatment of citations from and allusions to the Old Testament. "Quotations from the Old Testament are printed in 'uncial' type. Under this head are included not only passages or sentences expressly cited in the context as quotations, but sentences adopted from the Old Testament without any such indication, and also all phrases apparently borrowed from some one passage or limited number of passages, and in a few places characteristic single words."¹ I have dwelt upon the value of this in a previous paper in the *EXPOSITOR*,² but its importance is so great that I shall be excused for recurring to it again, and emphasizing it once more. In many cases the recog-

¹ Vol. ii. p. 315.

² *EXPOSITOR*, vol. iv. p. 121, *et seq.*

dition that a passage is taken from the ancient Jewish Scriptures is the only sure guide to its meaning; and it is not too much to say that there are some parts of the New Testament which cannot be understood unless they are compared chapter by chapter, and almost verse by verse, with the Old Testament. How, for instance, can we expect to arrive at anything like a correct interpretation of the Apocalypse until we have realized the extent to which passages from the Old Testament, and especially the Prophetical books, are worked up into it, so that some Chapters appear as a sort of mosaic of fragments pieced together out of Isaiah, Daniel, and other writers. The same remark applies to the Epistle to the Hebrews, and to some of our Lord's discourses. Again, there are those passages in St. Paul's Epistles, in which he takes a text from the Old Testament and argues from it, working all round it, and perpetually returning to its words, breaking it up into fragments each of which is considered separately. In these it is a great assistance to have the words of the citation marked for the reader by a difference of type: it enables him to follow the argument, and brings vividly before him the whole line of thought in the Apostle's mind. The reader is recommended to work out for himself such passages as Romans iv; x. 5-15; Ephesians iv. 8-11, as examples; and I feel confident that he will agree with me in my estimate of the value of this feature of the work under consideration. The employment of uncial type, it is true, is no novelty. Bishop Lightfoot has familiarized us with it by his Commentaries on Galatians, Philippians, and Colossians, and others have used it as well. But it is here consistently carried out throughout the whole of the New Testament, and with closer attention to minute and perhaps undesigned coincidences, than has been given in other editions. Only I cannot help thinking that even now there is room for a still wider application of it. We

are told that in a few places "characteristic single words" are thus noted as belonging to the Old Testament. Surely, then, the very remarkable connexion between the first and the fourth Gospels on the one hand and the Book of Genesis on the other, might have been marked for the reader by the employment of uncial type for the opening words of these two Gospels. The phrases *βίβλος γενέσεως* in Matthew i. 1, serves to link together the "book of the generations of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," and the Book of Genesis so remarkably divided into ten sections, giving the "generations" (*tôldôth*) of the heavens and the earth, of Adam, of Noah, etc., for which *βίβλος γενέσεως* is the actual expression used by the Septuagint in Genesis v. 1, "The book of the generations of Adam." So also when St. John begins his Gospel with the statement *ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος* we can hardly resist the impression that he is consciously and of set purpose linking it on to the same book of the Old Testament, which opens with the corresponding statement, *ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν*. And the intimate connexion of the Old Covenant with the New would be brought home to the reader, as I believe, in a very legitimate manner if the uncial type, so freely employed elsewhere, had been permitted to stand in both these passages, on the latter of which Dr. Westcott himself writes in the Speaker's Commentary as follows: "The phrase carries back the thoughts of the reader to Gen. i. 1, which necessarily fixes the sense of the *beginning*," a note which increases one's surprise that in his Greek Testament the reference should meet with no recognition.

As an example of a "characteristic single word" in a discourse of our Lord, which would direct the thoughts of his hearers to the prophecies of the Old Testament from which he was drawing, I would specify *σημεῖον* in Matthew xxiv. 30, which appears to be an allusion to the prophecies

of Isaiah concerning the "standard," or signal, which should herald the approach of the Messianic age, and for which the Septuagint translators freely employed this very word.¹ Other instances might be given, *e.g.* it might be plausibly argued that the saying, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John xiv. 15), is but an echo of the closing words of the fourth commandment, "shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments" (Exod. xx. 6); that ἐν ῥαβδῶ in 1 Corinthians iv. 21, is a reminiscence of Psalm lxxxix. 32; and that the *hapax legomenon* ὑπερύψωσεν in Philippians ii. 9 was drawn from Psalm xcvi. 9, where the same word appears in the Septuagint. Sufficient, however, has been said to indicate that the subject is not yet exhausted, but that there is still room for further research in it.

(4) Lastly, it must not be forgotten that "Hebrew and Aramaic words transliterated in Greek, not being proper names, are marked by spaced type; inscribed titles and the peculiar formulæ quoted in Romans x. 9; 1 Corinthians xii. 3, and Philippians ii. 11, are printed entirely in ordinary capitals."² All this helps to make the reader *think*. It obliges him to notice the peculiarities of diction, and forces him to ask himself the question, *why* a different type is employed. And anything which arrests attention is a real assistance towards a correct understanding of the Sacred Writings.

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¹ See the EXPOSITOR, Second Series, vol. i. p. 298.

² Vol. ii. p. 316.