

*REMINISCENCES OF THE LECTIONARY
COMMITTEE.*

THE private history of the work of the Committee, or, to speak more technically, of the sub-Committee of the Ritual Commission, to which was entrusted the drawing up of the present Lectionary of the Church of England, will probably not be devoid of interest to the readers of the EXPOSITOR. Though not a subject of a directly expository nature, it will still be found to involve, both in its description of the principles which the Revisers of the Old Lectionary kept steadily before them, and of the manner in which these principles were carried out, some passing elucidations of Holy Scripture. It will also certainly indicate what the Revisers considered to be the most profitable mode of reading publicly the Word of God with a view to personal and general edification.

It will be well to state at the very outset that the object of this paper is not to explain the details of the new Lectionary, but simply to give a brief account of the manner in which the Committee carried out the work entrusted to them, and of the general course of their procedure in reference to the three portions of that work—the revision of the Lessons chosen for Sundays, for Holy Days, and for daily reading throughout the year. There are two reasons for this limitation. In the first place, the New Table of Lessons was explained shortly after its authoritative publication in a small but carefully written volume by Prebendary Humphry, who acted throughout as the secretary of the Committee, and who kept the minute-book with that care and precision which marked every undertaking with

which my lamented friend was in any degree connected. As it is a quarter of a century since that useful explanation was written, it may be well now to mention that it appeared in 1871, and was published in Cambridge for Deighton, Bell & Company, and for Bell & Daldy, in London. Its object was to explain the reasons for the choice of the Lessons ultimately agreed upon; but I have found it also very useful in steadying a memory which is exercising itself in a long retrospect. As, however, I have already mentioned, the object of the useful manual and of these reminiscences is different, and the point of view of each hardly in any respect identical.

The second reason for the particular tenor of the present paper is of a melancholy nature. Finding myself, alas! the solitary survivor of the pleasant company with which I long and happily worked, I have for some time felt it desirable to leave behind some record of the *modus operandi* of the Committee that drew up our present Lèctionary. It would seem to be the more necessary, as that which would, to a large degree, supersede this paper—the minute-book to which I have alluded—has been unhappily, and apparently irrecoverably, lost. So far as can be made out, the book, after the labours of the Committee came to a close, remained in the custody of our deeply interested and genial chairman, Bishop Wilberforce, then Bishop of Oxford. After his death a most careful search was set on foot by Prebendary Humphry and the active secretary of the parent Commission, Mr. Kemp, of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Every effort was made to find the small black leather quarto which contained our annals, but to this hour not a trace of it has been discovered. We suppose that it was either lost in the removal of Bishop Wilberforce from the See of Oxford to that of Winchester, or destroyed among papers supposed to be of no value after his sudden and lamented decease.

For these two reasons, then, this paper has been written in the form in which it now appears before the reader. It will, at any rate, supply some record of past labours, though necessarily an imperfect one, as resting partly on recollection, and partly on the scanty notices of a briefly-kept journal. It will also indicate in a general way the manner and circumstances in which an integral part of our Book of Common Prayer was reconstructed by those to whom the responsible work was committed by the members of the Ritual Commission.

To begin this narrative, I may remind the reader that the Royal Commission appointed for the consideration of the rubrics and directions of the Book of Common Prayer, including the Tables of Lessons and other preliminary matter, commenced its sittings on June 17th, 1867, and after 108 meetings (not including those of the Lectionary Committee), brought them to a close on June 28th, 1870.

The Lectionary Committee was appointed November 21st, 1867, and the following were chosen to serve on it out of the general body of the Commissioners:—Earl Beauchamp (6th Earl), Bishop of Oxford (Wilberforce), Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, Dean of Westminster (Stanley), Dean of Ely (Goodwin, afterwards Bishop of Carlisle), Dean of Lincoln (Jeremie), Canon Payne Smith (afterwards Dean of Canterbury), and the late Prebendary Humphry, Vicar of St. Martins-in-the-Fields. On the next meeting of the Commission (Nov. 27th) the Bishop of St. David's (Thirlwall) was added to our number. We were thus nine in all; and it may here be remarked that the greater part of these were steadily punctual in attendance, so that the quorum, so far as I can now remember, very rarely fell below the majority of the whole body. The fact was soon evident that we all became deeply interested in the work, and found it a welcome refreshment after the debates and discussions in the general body of the Commission. Our

meetings on several occasions were held immediately after the sitting of Commission, and the walk from the Jerusalem Chamber, where the Commissioners regularly sat, to the lodgings of Bishop Wilberforce at 26, Pall Mall, where our Lectionary meetings, by our friend's kindness, were regularly held, was the pleasant introduction to an hour and a half of welcome work in connection with God's Holy Word.

Before entering into details, it may be best to allude to the general principles which guided us in the prosecution of the work. These principles were not definitely formulated, but were the outcome of two or three preliminary conversations in which we carefully discussed, and ultimately came to a general agreement upon, what seemed to us to be the true nature of the work that was entrusted to us. It was not merely to revise in detail tables of lessons already in use, but to draw up tables suitable for the uses of our own times, whether by modification of existing selections, or by more complete and fundamental reconstruction. The one word that seemed best to define our general aim in the changes we made was *edification*; just as, in another and greater work, the revision of the Authorised Version—the one word *faithfulness* represented the dominant principle on which changes were introduced by the Revisers of the Authorised Version of the Holy Scriptures.

Resting on this broad principle of edifying, as far as the changes we made could ensure it, the future hearers of the Lessons that we were selecting, we soon came to the agreement of adopting shorter portions of Scripture, especially in the New Testament, than we found before us in the old Lectionary.

The maintenance of chronological sequence, especially in the Old Testament, as far as it could be arranged in the order of the Books from which the Lessons were taken, was

also a tacitly recognised principle. At the same time we were well aware that this principle could not be rigidly carried out, from the simple fact that the ecclesiastical year and the civil year had different starting-points, and that the prophecy of Isaiah, for example, could not be detached from the seasons of Advent and Christmas in which it was read and rightly read from the time of the First Prayer-Book onward.

Another principle which emerged from our preliminary considerations was that of finding a place for some portions at least of every Book of the Canonical Scriptures. In the Old Lectionary, as we may remember, the Books of Chronicles had been entirely passed over, though room had been found for Bel and the Dragon, and the History of Susanna, and an unduly large portion of the Apocrypha.

These were some of the leading principles which, though, as I have already mentioned, not definitely formulated, were not the less tacitly accepted and acted on throughout our Revision. They involve, it will be seen, designs not always in harmony with each other; as, for example, a shortening of Lessons on the one hand, and on the other a finding room for adequate portions of Books which had been exiled, or insufficiently made use of, as, for example, the prophecies of Ezekiel. This second matter, and, in the sequel, the possible want of room for the Lessons we wished to add, was always before us. What we mainly relied on, however, for supplying room, when we might hereafter need it, was the space occupied in the Old Lectionary by the 106 Lessons from the Apocrypha. Of this we early took notice as a space which might be profitably utilized in finding room for the introduction of new Lessons from the canonical Scriptures.

Some little interest may perhaps be felt in knowing what our *apparatus biblicus* was in the construction of the new Tables. So far as I remember, it was simple and slender.

A Bible, a Prayer-Book, and the best Paragraph Bible of the time (about which I was commissioned to make inquiry) made up our library. Our object was not antiquarian. We knew generally the nature of the Lectionary in the first Prayer-Book, and the changes made in the Prayer-Book of 1559, but into these details we rarely, if ever, entered. What we had to do was to revise what was before us in the Prayer-Book of 1662, and where necessary to reconstruct; and to this work we confined ourselves. We became, however, involved in the paragraph question in the New Testament, and especially in the Gospels, in which the chapter-system was no longer observed. We were thus obliged to take into cognisance what seemed to be the best modern arrangement, as well as that which was indicated in the Bibles which we had in our hands.

With this matter we were, of course, only concerned in fixing where the new Lessons were to terminate, when not terminating at the end of a chapter. With this detail of our work I do not remember that any fault was found in the countless criticisms that were lavished on our work when it was first made public. It might be of some interest to investigate where our division happens to differ from the paragraphs of the Revised Version, but with this I need not now concern myself. I have looked through St. Matthew's Gospel in which the chapter-system has been much broken up in the new Tables of the Daily Lessons, and I only observe two differences of opinion, viz., at chapter xvi. 24, and chapter xix. 27, in neither of which cases the Revised Version has any break of the continuity.

Turning our thoughts now to the work itself, and the order in which it was executed, we grievously need the guidance of the lost minute-book. So far as I can remember, and the few notes which I made at the time serve to guide me, we began with the Daily Lessons, after having fully talked out the principles to which I have referred, and

also having settled that some portion of the Apocrypha, especially of the so-called sapiential Books, should be included.

The work on the Old Testament went on comparatively easily. The Book of Numbers was slightly increased; seventeen Lessons from the second Book of Chronicles were inserted; the Lessons from Job were slightly reduced; those from Ezekiel were largely increased; and those from Isaiah slightly added to. The lessons from the Apocrypha were reduced by more than one-half, portions of the Book of Tobit being retained in the Report as presented to the Commission, but, as will be mentioned, struck out afterwards, so that ultimately the 106 Lessons from the Apocrypha in the old Tables of Lessons were reduced to 40 in the new Tables.

In the Lessons from the New Testament great changes were introduced. Instead of the New Testament (excluding the Revelation) being read through three times in the year, it was only read through twice in that time, and was so arranged that when the Gospels were read in the morning, the Acts and the Epistles were read in evensong, and *vice versâ*. The Book of the Revelation also, to the extent of twenty-two Lessons, found at last a place in the calendar in the closing days of the year.

For this last change I stand mainly responsible. I had brought forward the subject early in our preliminary discussions, but found then but little to encourage me. Feeling very deeply on the subject, I spoke earnestly from time to time with individual members of the Committee, and at last so far succeeded that, when it was found there was available space, it was agreed that we should provisionally go through the holy Book, and see if we could frame out of it Lessons which should stand that test of edification which, as I have already said, dominated all our proceedings. We commenced, and as we went on we all, I believe, alike felt

not only the feasibility, but the desirableness and even appropriateness, of thus closing the year with Lessons from this elevating portion of God's most Holy Word. Three chapters only—the 9th, 13th, and 17th—were omitted, on account of their mystery and the difficulties of interpretation which they involved: and so the Book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine was restored after a considerable lapse of time to a place in the Christian calendar. The place which the Book originally occupied in the readings of the early Church was the period between Easter and Whitsuntide; but as this period was already assigned to other portions of Holy Scripture in accordance with the chronological arrangement to which I have already alluded, we unanimously fixed upon the appropriate period which the Lessons from the Revelation now occupy in our calendar.

Our next work, so far as my memory serves me, and as my notes made at the time seem to substantiate, was the revision of the Table of Proper Lessons for Holy Days. This part of our work did not occupy a very large amount of our time. The old Lectionary was obviously defective. Some Holy Days, such as Ash-Wednesday and the Monday and Tuesday in Holy Week, had no special Lessons assigned to them. Others—such, for example, as the festivals of St. Andrew, St. Thomas, the Purification, and the Annunciation, for all of which it was obvious that appropriate Lessons could easily be chosen—were either left without second Lessons (as in the two former cases), when such could suitably be assigned, or had the first Lessons (as in the two latter cases) chosen from the Apocrypha, when the canonical Scriptures could appropriately be used. Every part of this section of the work assigned to us required careful revision, and has, I believe, been admitted to have suitably received it. The reader who may desire to enter into details will find, in the useful work of Prebendary

Humphry, to which I have already referred, the reasons given for the choice of the particular Lessons now assigned to the Holy Days of our Church.

The last part of our work, so far as I can recollect, and as memoranda made at the time seem clearly to indicate, was the important work of revising the proper Lessons for Sundays. I seem to remember that we kept this work to the end, that we might approach it after having acquired much useful experience. One or two important questions had to be settled at the outset. Were we to yield to the modern desire to cancel for public reading on Sundays all those Lessons which might be considered to contain what has been commonly called painful matter? For the most part we answered this question in the negative. We did, however, omit Genesis xxxiv. This question came up once in the New Testament, viz., in Romans i. It was proposed, I remember, that the Lesson should stop just before a certain verse, and that the following Lesson should begin at the verse after it. At first there was a little tendency to adopt the expedient; but some further consideration, to say nothing of the context, speedily disposed of the matter.

Another matter of importance was considered very carefully—the necessity of bringing before the larger Sunday congregations more of the canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament than was set forth in the old Table of the Proper Lessons for the Lord's Day. This we were enabled to carry out by two arrangements: first, by a reduction of the number of lessons from the Book of Proverbs, which, however edifying they might be to the careful *reader* of God's Holy Word, who could dwell upon what he was reading, were certainly less likely to be profitable to the general *hearer* than Lessons from other portions of Scripture in which there was more continuity of subject. Secondly, our purpose was greatly forwarded by having to draw up a table of alternative First Lessons for Evensong, this (if I remember rightly)

being an instruction given to us by the Commission at our appointment.

Having thus at our disposal space acquired by the reduction above mentioned, and as many as about fifty-eight additional Lessons to provide for, we were enabled to introduce into the Sunday calendar portions from Ruth, Chronicles, Nehemiah, Job, Ecclesiastes, Amos, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi, and to add to the lessons from books which were already in the Sunday calendar. All this required much thought and care, and absorbed not a small amount of time. I find noted in my contemporary memoranda that this last portion of our responsible work was executed very slowly.

The exact number of the meetings of the Committee I am not able to state with precision. The number of my own attendances I find from my memoranda to have been about thirty. As I was very punctual in my attendance throughout the sittings of the Commission, and especially at those of the Lectionary Committee, I do not think the number of meetings could have exceeded thirty-two, if even they reached that number. The greater part of our work was done between February 10th, 1868, and July 20th in that year. There were also about ten or eleven sittings in the early part of 1869, and with these our work came to its close. On May 13th of that year our Report was laid on the table of the Commission.

Of the particular part taken in the work by my dear fellow-labourers I cannot trust a memory that is now looking backward very nearly a whole generation. But this I do well remember, that our meetings were marked from the beginning to the end by the most perfect harmony; that all took part in the work with a heart-interest that was particularly noticeable; that we had in Bishop Wilberforce a wise and genial chairman, and in Prebendary Humphry a most punctual and accurate secretary; that we owed

much to Dean Stanley in reference to the historical books ; that Bishop Thirlwall was a very helpful and watchful critic in our choice of Lessons from the Apocrypha ; and that the only layman among us, Earl Beauchamp, showed a knowledge and love of Holy Scripture that was not exceeded by the knowledge and love shown in our work by any of his clerical fellow-labourers.

What follows will be found more fully stated in the printed records of the Commission as drawn up by the accurate and indefatigable secretary of the Commission, Mr. W. F. Kemp, of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

The substance is as follows : The Report being now on the table of the Commission, formal notice was given that it would be taken into consideration on June 10th (1869). At that meeting very favourable comments were made on the Report viewed as a whole ; but, as might easily have been foreseen, the retention of Lessons from the Apocrypha was at once challenged ; and the more so, as a few Lessons from the Book of Tobit appeared in the first form of the Report. A division was taken on the general question of the retention of the Apocrypha, but only five votes were given for its expulsion, sixteen being given for its retention. The subject was then adjourned till the next day.

On June 11th the Apocrypha question was partially adjusted by the adoption of a note which now forms part of the directions in the Preface to the Prayer-Book relative to the reading of Holy Scripture, by which, in any case of real difficulty, the Ordinary may interpose. This, however, did not completely settle the question. The appointment of Lessons from the Book of Tobit was strongly objected to, and, after full discussion, cancelled, thirteen votes being given for the rejection of the Lessons out of that Book, and eleven for their retention. After some objections in detail, which ultimately were not pressed to a division, the Report went back to the Committee.

The Committee held another, and that their last, meeting on June 19th. In this meeting they removed the Lessons from Tobit, and made such adjustments as the removal rendered necessary. The revised Report was presented on June 24th, and on the same day the Report, as presented, was approved and adopted by thirteen votes, as against one dissentient voice.

A year then passed away. The Commission held its last, and 108th, meeting on June 28th, 1870. Its Report, including the Tables of Lessons, was presented to the Queen, and very shortly afterwards Parliamentary action was taken by the Lord Chancellor (Lord Hatherley), who introduced the Tables of Lessons Bill into the House of Lords. The second reading took place on July 7th, 1870. The Bill was criticised by Lord Shaftesbury, and strong exception was taken by him to the omission of Joshua x., which in the old Tables was the first lesson for the morning of the first Sunday after Trinity, and contained the account of the sun and moon standing still on Joshua's speaking to the Lord, and afterwards issuing the command (vers. 12-15). I replied to Lord Shaftesbury by showing the reasons why the chapter, which from the beginning to the end was a recital of slaughter and extermination, was not retained as a Sunday Lesson, though, in the early part (including the miracle), holding distinctly a place in the Daily Lessons. This answer was considered to be sufficient, and the Bill passed the second reading without a division. In the Committee-stage a change was made by Archbishop Thomson in the provision relating to the use of other Lessons in lieu of Lessons from the Apocrypha. This change was withdrawn on the third reading. The Bill then passed the House of Lords, and subsequently the House of Commons, and, after receiving the Royal assent, became law.

As may be remembered, much opposition was at first

manifested against the new Lectionary. Faults were considered to be patent in all parts; pamphlets were written against it; resolutions never to use it were freely announced in several quarters. In the end, however, the opposition died out, and the new Lectionary became silently accepted, and used throughout the Church.

There seem now many reasons for thinking that, in due time, it will be thus also with the Revision of the Authorised Version of the Scriptures.

C. J. GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.

THE EARLY VISITS OF ST. PAUL TO JERUSALEM.

I SHALL hope to be forgiven if, in offering a few words of reply to my friend Prof. Ramsay's criticism in the last number of the *EXPOSITOR*, I say very little about that part of it which is personal to myself. If I were to go more fully into this, I should have to deduct much from my friend's praise, but I should also have to deduct something from his blame. I fear it is true that I had overlooked some points in his argument—not wholly, for I find most of them marked in my copy of his book, but at the time of writing my article. I did not intend this to be in any sense exhaustive, and I stated the case in the form in which it still held possession of my own mind. I shall do my best to repair omissions; and I hope that at least, after Prof. Ramsay's own clear and incisive restatement, the readers of the *EXPOSITOR* will have had the data for forming a judgment sufficiently set before them.

I think that in some ways my friend expects rather too much. It is true that I am one of those who have given in adherence to his view about the Galatian Churches; that is, on a balance of the evidence, I believe it to be somewhat more probable than the view which is opposed to it; but I