

The Use of ὑπέρ in the New Testament.

BY PROF. D. R. GOODWIN, D.D., LL.D.

THIS preposition, like the English "for," — which is throughout its best representative, and which I shall here use in its stead — has a remarkable variety of meanings, or rather of divergent applications. For examples: "Christ died *for* us," and, "*for* our sins," a very different relation; and so again, "pray *for* them that persecute you," and, "we pray you *for* Christ"; and again, "praying *for* you," and, "giving thanks *for* you," and "giving thanks *for* all things." But amidst all this variety, one negative rule may be noted in passing: this preposition is never employed before a word designating what is conceived merely as existing uncertainly in the future, as an object of desire or hope. It seems always to refer to a *datum* or ground to rest upon. We may give thanks not only *for* (ὑπέρ) persons but *for* (ὑπέρ) things which have been received, Eph. v. 20. But, while we may pray *for* (ὑπέρ) persons, this preposition is never used in praying *for* a thing desired, as *for* grace, or faith, or daily bread.

It may also be observed in passing, that, in the expressions, "my body given *for* you," "my blood shed *for* you," both St. Luke and St. Paul use ὑπέρ; but St. Matthew uses the sacrificial περί, the preposition which the Septuagint almost always use to express atonement for; St. Mark too uses ὑπέρ, which Lachmann changes to περί. In Romans viii. 3 we have περί, where the authorized version translates, "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *for* sin" — Marg. "by a sacrifice for sin"; and the revised version reads, "as an offering for sin."

I proceed now to show that this preposition ὑπέρ in the New Testament, just like the English *for*, may mean, and sometimes must mean, "instead of," a sense which is not unknown in classical Greek. "That one man should die *for* the people, and that the whole nation perish not." Here is life for life, — dying for the people's good, no doubt, but also *in their stead*, that they might not perish. So also, "who *for* my life laid down their own necks." So also, and still more clearly, "Who gave himself a ransom *for* all" (ἀντιλυτρὸν ὑπέρ), 1 Tim. ii. 6; for which our Lord had said unequivocally λυτρὸν ἀντὶ πολλῶν, "a ransom instead of many."

In 2 Cor. v. 20, ὑπέρ can scarcely mean anything else but "instead of": "*For* Christ, then, are we ambassadors, — we pray you *for* Christ," must mean "in his stead" or "as his representatives." It

cannot mean "in his behalf" in the sense of "for his good or behoof." The Apostle says: "*For* Christ we are ambassadors, as *God* did beseech you *by us*; we pray you *for* Christ."

And still more clearly, if possible, is this the meaning of $\dot{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho$ in Philemon 13: "That *for* thee he might minister to me"; where the authorized version puts "instead of," and the revisers substitute "in behalf of." What was their motive in making this change it is not easy to say. But, *if* they intended to avoid the sense "instead of," they egregiously missed their aim; for "in behalf of" often has this very meaning, as when a chairman of a committee puts his name to a report "in behalf of the committee," *i.e.*, certainly not for their sake, or for their good or benefit, but as their representative or substitute, by their authority, — simply *in their stead*. And, without having recourse to the authority of translators or revisers or lexicons, it is plain on the face of this passage that St. Paul would have Onesimus minister to him, not for the sake, the good, the benefit of Philemon, but as his representative or substitute, — *in his stead*.

When St. Peter says, 1 Pet. ii. 21, "Christ suffered *for* us, just *for* unjust," the contrast can hardly fail to suggest the sense of substitution. For, if the sense be merely "for the sake of," "for the good of," then what is there strange or striking in the *just* suffering for the unjust? It would be still more remarkable if the *unjust* were to volunteer to suffer for the good of the unjust. Good men often labor and toil for the good of the criminal class, but criminals rarely trouble themselves about it. Besides, why should it be of any special advantage to the unjust that he who suffers, who dies, for them should himself be just? If the suffering of "just for unjust" has in it any point, it would seem necessarily to involve the idea of substitution, — of some value, worth, or merit of the just, *set over against* the unworthiness and demerit of the unjust.

Thus, I think, it has been shown that $\dot{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho$ (*for*) in the New Testament may mean, and sometimes must mean, "instead of." But it is never to be forgotten that, while the sense "instead of" does not exclude the sense "for the sake of" or "because of," no more do these last senses exclude that of "instead of"; so that all the passages in which Christ is said to suffer or die or shed his blood *for our sins*, while they mean "because of our sins," may also mean "because of, *as being a sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for* our sins"; and those which speak of Christ as suffering, dying, or shedding his blood *for us*, while they mean "for our sake," and "for our good," may also mean "on our behalf," in the way of being our *substitut*e and *representative*, — *in our stead*.