

SOME LESSONS OF THE REVISED VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

VI. LIGHT UPON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. CONCLUSION.

1. WE have already noticed summarily the singular clearness with which Greek distinguishes between a fact regarded simply as past and a past fact regarded in relation to the present, by the use of the aorist and the perfect respectively. We do not habitually mark the distinction so sharply in English, though the language is perfectly able to do so, and the A.V. furnishes abundant precedents to justify the exact expression of the difference in every kind of connexion. At the same time the constant and almost consistent use of the aorist in the R.V. occasions on first hearing an impression of harshness; and the reader is required not unfrequently to exercise some patient reflection before he realises the corresponding gain. Yet, to take a general illustration, it is obvious that while it is equally true to say of men in regard to the efficacy of the work of Christ, "ye were saved," "ye have been saved," "ye are (are being) saved," the forms of thought suggested by the three tenses are perfectly distinct, and ought to be represented in a faithful translation. So we now read in Rom. viii. 24, *By hope were we saved* (not *we are saved by hope*); and thus we are reminded that the thought of the Apostle goes back to the critical moment when the glorious prospect of the gospel made itself felt in the heart of the believer with transforming power. And again, 2 Tim. i. 8, *Suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God, who saved*

us . . . (not who hath saved us . . . ; comp. Tit. iii. 5, A.V.). On the other hand, in Eph. ii. 5, 8, St. Paul insists on the present efficacy of the past Divine work: *God . . . when we were dead . . . quickened us together with Christ*—there is the decisive fact: *by grace have ye been saved*—there is the continuous action of that one vivifying change. The use of the present is even more significant. When we read in A.V. *the preaching of the cross . . . (is) unto us which are saved . . . the power of God* (1 Cor. i. 18), it is almost impossible not to regard salvation as complete; but the very aim of the Apostle is to press home upon his readers the thought of a progressive work wrought out under the living power of the gospel: *The word of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness; but unto us which are being saved it is the power of God.* And so again in 2 Cor. ii. 15, *We are a sweet savour of Christ unto God, in them that are being saved, and in them that are perishing.* The same rendering in Acts ii. 47, *The Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved*, no doubt lacks neatness, but it avoids the false suggestion of A.V., *such as should be saved*, and brings the rendering of an unusual phrase into harmony with the rendering in other places.

2. It will be evident from what has been said, that the force of the Greek aorist is nowhere more expressive in the New Testament than when it is used to describe the ideal completeness of Christ's work for man. No reader who weighs the words can fail to feel the difference between *walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us* (Eph. v. 2, A.V.), and *walk in love, as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us* (R.V.). In the latter rendering, which reproduces the form of the Greek, the Divine purpose is shown to us in its essential fulfilment from the side of God. In the historic life and death of Christ there is the perfect revelation of love absolutely accomplished: *He is our peace, who made both one, and brake*

down the middle wall of partition (Eph. ii. 14; not, as A.V., *hath made, hath broken down*).

This cardinal thought, by which our minds are concentrated on the historic work of the Incarnate Word, is presented in many lights. It is an encouragement in the fulfilment of our work. The presbyters at Miletus are charged to *feed the Church of God, which He purchased (not hath purchased) with His own blood* (Acts xx. 28). Those whom they have to serve are already the property of God; and the Christian pastor has the historic assurance of the fact when he looks to the Cross. And so, under the same image, it is said of Christians: *Ye are not your own; for ye were bought (not ye are bought) with a price* (1 Cor. vi. 20, vii. 23); and again in Christ *we were made a heritage* (Eph. i. 11). Thus the consciousness of blessing becomes also a motive to labour: *Be ye kind one to another*, St. Paul writes, . . . *forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave (not hath forgiven) you* (Eph. iv. 32). And he speaks of his own efforts as answering to one sovereign act of the Lord: *I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was (not am) apprehended by Christ Jesus* (Phil. iii. 12).

A fresh element is added to the conception when we read that God . . . *reconciled us to Himself through Christ* (2 Cor. v. 18); that *the Father . . . made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love* (Col. i. 12 f); that *Christ Jesus . . . was made (not is made, A.V.) unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption* (1 Cor. i. 30). And so we pass to the other side of the truth, which presents the change in the individual believer as accomplished once for all: *Such were some of you: but ye were (not are) washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our*

God (1 Cor. vi. 11; comp. Rom. viii. 30, A.V.). In this sense we are enabled to draw near to God, and for this end the Son of man, *Jesus*, . . . *dedicated for us a new and living way, through the veil* (Heb. x. 20).¹

3. This is one aspect. There is another complementary aspect. That which Christ did and suffered, completely, absolutely, from the historic point of sight, abides unchangeably in its virtue. All that He experienced in His earthly life still remains as a present power for our salvation. Thus we read now in Heb. iv. 15, *We have a high priest . . . that hath been in all points tempted like as we are . . .* The temptation is not only a past fact (*was tempted*, A.V.), but even now an effectual reality (comp. vii. 28; ii. 18, A.V.).

So again, in the original, the Crucifixion of Christ is spoken of in 1 Cor. i. 23 as having a present reality, though it seemed impossible to convey the thought in a popular English version (*a Christ that hath been crucified*). But the corresponding relation of the believer to Christ is given exactly in Gal. ii. 20; *I have been* (not *I am*) *crucified with Christ*.

This use of the perfect is very impressive in 1 Cor. xv. In that chapter with one natural exception (v. 15), the Resurrection of Christ is uniformly spoken of as an event which has a continuous power. The message of the Apostle is "Christ hath been raised," not simply "Christ was raised." The risen Christ lives, in virtue of His rising, with all the fruits of His victory, as the Saviour of men. The very strangeness of the language, as strange in Greek as in English, must arrest attention when we read: *I delivered unto you, . . . that Christ died . . . ; and that He was buried : and that He hath been raised ; . . . and that He appeared to*

¹ A study of the use of the aorists in the last discourses of the Lord in the Gospel of St. John, as I have noticed before, suggests many thoughts of deep interest (e.g. chap. xiii. 31 marg.). We may notice, for example, in chap. xvii. aorists in vv. 2, 3, 4, 6 (so A.V.), 8, 14, 18, 21, 25, 26, and perfects in vv. 2, 4, 22.

Cephas . . . (v. 3 f; comp. vv. 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20); and even a slight pause is sufficient to allow the vivid image of the present Lord to make itself felt in place of the simple record of the fact. So also in 2 Tim. ii. 8, the only other passage where the form is used of the Lord, the same idea is indicated by the translation: *Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead*, in place of *Remember that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead*. The latter words simply recall the incident of the Resurrection; the former bring before the mind the figure of the living Christ.¹

4. The redemption of men is referred, as we have seen, under one aspect, to the historic work of Christ, past and complete. There is a corresponding description of the position of the Christian. His redemption is connected with a historic fact in his life. *As many of you*, St. Paul says to the Galatians, *as were* (not *have been*) *baptized into Christ did* (not *have*) *put on Christ* (Gal. iii. 27); and again to the Corinthians: *in one Spirit were* (not *are*) *we all baptized into one body* (1 Cor. xii. 13). For him ideally, on the Divine side, all is done. His historic incorporation into Christ included potentially whatever is wrought out little by little in the conflict of time. The Death and Resurrection and Life of Christ, with whom he is united, are in a true sense his also.

Thus we read, in regard to Christ's death, *We thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died* (2 Cor. v. 14).

We have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were holden (Rom. vii. 6; comp. vi. 6 f).

If ye died with Christ, . . . why . . . do ye subject yourselves to ordinances? (Col. ii. 20.)

Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God (Col. iii. 3).

Faithful is the saying, For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him (2 Tim. ii. 11).

¹ Compare for other examples II. § 8.

And in regard to His Burial and Resurrection St. Paul says,—

We were buried with Him through baptism into death ; and then, with a most significant change of tense, If we have become united with Him by the likeness of His death, we shall be also by the likeness of His Resurrection (Rom. vi. 5 f).

In Him ye are made full : . . . having been buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead (Col. ii. 12 ff).

When we were dead . . . [God] quickened us together with Christ, . . . and raised us up with Him (Eph. ii. 5 f).

If then ye were raised with Christ . . . (Col. iii. 1).

5. This truth of the mystical union of the believer with Christ finds its simplest and most complete expression in the Pauline phrase "in Christ," which is itself a full gospel. This phrase, it will be felt at once, corresponds with the formula of baptism, *We were baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost* (Matt. xxviii. 19, R.V.), and in virtue of that act we are "*in Christ.*"

The phrase, which is a charter of life and union and strength, has been frequently rendered with exactness in the A.V. ; but in many memorable passages it has been obscured, to the great loss of the English reader. When, for example, we read in Rom. vi. 23, *the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord*, we recognise a general description of the work of Christ, of what He has wrought for us, standing apart from us. But all is filled with a new meaning when the original is closely rendered : *the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*. Life is not an endowment apart from Christ : it is Himself, and enjoyed in Him. *I am*, He Himself said, *the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. We are alive unto God*, not only *through Christ Jesus* (A.V.), but *in Christ Jesus*

(Rom. vi. 11; contrast John xv. 5, *apart from Me*). We seek therefore *to be justified*, not only *by Christ*, but *in Christ* (Gal. ii. 17); the blessing of Abraham came upon the Gentiles, not simply by the agency of Christ, *through Christ Jesus*, but *in Christ Jesus* (Gal. iii. 14).

Three additional examples, taken from a single chapter, where the force of the preposition has been obscured in A.V., will show how the truth thus distinctly expressed becomes a spring of peace and power and mature growth:

The peace of God, St. Paul writes, *which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in (through, A.V.) Christ Jesus* (Phil. iv. 7).

I can do all things in (through, A.V.) Him that strengtheneth me (Phil. iv. 13).

My God shall fulfil every need of yours according to His riches in glory in (by, A.V.) Christ Jesus (Phil. iv. 19).

And here it may be noticed that as man receives "in Christ" the fulness of Divine blessing, so God fulfils "in Christ" His purpose of salvation. Thus He showed *the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness to us in (through, A.V.) Christ Jesus* (Eph. ii. 7). *Be ye kind one to another*, St. Paul writes, *tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ (A.V., for Christ's sake) forgave you* (Eph. iv. 32; comp. 2 Cor. v. 19, A.V.).¹

6. But the relation of the believer to Christ, which has been historically established, has to be realised and maintained. Everything, as we have seen, is done by Christ once for all; and still man is required freely to make his own that which has been won for him. The change of a single word brings out the responsibility of man from the first. Thus, when we read in Acts iii. 19, *Repent ye, and be converted*, the passive form of the second clause puts out of sight the thought of man's willing action, which lies in

¹ Other examples which deserve consideration are found in Rom. xv. 13, 17; Gal. ii. 20; Eph. ii. 22.

the original *Repent ye, and turn again*—"turn" with a glad response to the Divine voice which you have recognised. So the charge to St. Peter in Luke xxii. 32 receives its full force in R.V., *Do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren.*

But man does not originate the force which he uses. He can do nothing "of himself." He makes his own, as has been said, what Christ has done. This truth finds a striking expression in Col. iii. 35, *Ye died: . . . mortify therefore . . .* The one death in Christ makes each subsequent victory possible.

Under this aspect, the advance of the Christian is likened to a natural growth: *If we have become united with Him [Christ] by the likeness of His death, we shall be also by the likeness of His resurrection* (Rom. vi. 5). The power of the risen Christ will reveal itself in those who are one with Him.

In another passage this gradual transformation is presented under a different figure. It has been often said that we grow like those with whom we live; and so St. Paul writes, *We all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory* (2 Cor. iii. 18). The rendering here indeed is not certain; but even if we adopt the marginal translation, *beholding as in a mirror* (A.V.) the main conception is the same. The believer grows like the Lord whom he intently contemplates.

7. This truth of the transforming power of the faith is affirmed in the Epistle to the Romans with singular force. In place of the words, *that form of doctrine which was delivered to you* (vi. 17), we must read, *that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered.* Our creed is indeed our sovereign lord, which fashions our character; and therefore we read, *Every one when he is perfected* (not *that is perfect*) *shall be as his Master* (Luke vi. 40). Since this is so, we can understand the full significance of the words with

which the Lord closes His long line of parables. "We are disciples to the kingdom of heaven"; we are not simply "instructed into it," but placed under its sway; and *every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old* (Matt. xiii. 52). The thought is of wide application, and finds its ultimate expression in a most remarkable passage of the Epistle to the Ephesians: *Everything that is made manifest is light* (Eph. v. 13). All that bears the light shares the nature of the light, and becomes in its turn a centre of illumination.¹

8. In correspondence with this view of man's life, as brought little by little nearer to its ideal, it is important to preserve the exact force of those passages in which the Divine action is described as present; as, for example, 1 Thess. i. 10, *Jesus, which delivereth (not delivered) us from the wrath to come*; 1 Thess. ii. 12, *Walk worthily of God, who calleth (not hath called) you*—with a call answering to every changing circumstance of life—*into His own kingdom and glory*, words which find an echo at the close of the epistle, where they are rightly rendered in A.V., *Faithful is He that calleth you, who will also do it* (v. 24). And in this connexion we can feel the full meaning of Heb. ii. 16, *For not of angels doth He take hold [to help], but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham*. The hand once laid on the believer (Phil. iii. 12) still rests upon him with sustaining power. "Notice," Chrysostom says on John i. 29, "he does not say, 'The Lamb which will take,' or 'which took,' but 'which taketh the sins [so he wrongly quotes] of the world,' as always doing this."

¹ In this connexion a change may be noticed, which depends on a change of reading, of which the full meaning may easily be overlooked: *The old things are passed away; behold, they (A.V. all things) are become new* (2 Cor. v. 17). The joy of the thought lies in the assurance that the old is not lost, but transfigured.

9. Such changes as have been already noticed give us a clearer and more consistent view than was offered before of the essential relations of the Christian to God. It follows necessarily that not a few features in his life are brought out now with fresh distinctness.

One word, which was mistranslated in A.V. in two critical passages, marks the Christian life as a continuous conquest. *This is the will of God*, St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians, . . . *that each one of you know how to possess himself of (not to possess, A.V.) his own vessel in sanctification and honour. . . .* (1 Thess. iv. 3 f). *In your patience*, such was the Lord's promise to the disciples in the prospect of the overthrow of all they held to be most sacred, *ye shall win (not possess) your souls* (Luke xxi. 19). Even that which seems to be most our own, our bodies and our souls, must be won.¹

They must be won, but not by our own strength. The Apostle's command is not, as we are accustomed to read it, *Be strong*, but, *Be strengthened* (2 Tim. ii. 1). Abraham in the trial of his faith *waxed strong*, "was strengthened," and not simply *was strong* (Rom. iv. 20; comp. Eph. vi. 10 marg.). And in the prospect of this Divine help, nothing short of a Divine ideal is set before us. The prayer of St. Paul is that the Lord would direct the hearts of the Thessalonians *into the love of God, and the patience of (not patient waiting for) Christ* (2 Thess. iii. 5). The charge of St. Peter to the elders is that they should *tend the flock of God, . . . not of constraint, but willingly, according unto God* (1 Pet. v. 2). And St. John speaks of *love made perfect with us (not our love made perfect: 1 John iv. 17)*, as man responds to the inspiration of God.

10. Viewed therefore from another side, the advancing victory of the believer is the advancing power of the

¹ Compare V. § 7.

revelation of Christ over him. When this is checked there is fatal danger. *Ye seek to kill Me*, the Lord said to the Jews, *because My word hath not free course* (not *no place*, A.V.) *in you* (John viii. 37). And the thought finds a characteristic expression in the paradox of St. Paul already quoted,¹ where he offers thanks to God, not *which always causeth us to triumph in Christ*, but *which always leadeth us in triumph in Christ* (2 Cor. ii. 14). His joy was that of a soul wholly surrendered to a sovereign conqueror.

11. We can understand therefore that while the Christian is stirred by a generous "ambition" in the conflict of life, his ambition is widely different from that of the world. *We make it our aim* (*we are ambitious*, marg.), St. Paul writes, . . . *to be well-pleasing unto [the Lord]*" (2 Cor. v. 9); . . . *making it my aim* (*being ambitious*, marg.) *so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named* (Rom. xv. 20). And the term points an expressive paradox when we read in 1 Thess. iv. 11 (marg.), *be ambitious to be quiet, and to do your own business*. If the progress of the Christian is "without rest," it is also "without haste." Few changes of reading give a more remarkable thought than that in 2 John 9 (*προάγων* for *παρὰβαλὼν*): *Who-soever goeth onward* (A.V. *transgresseth*) *and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God*. To advance over-eagerly and to hang back are alike violations of duty.

12. Life as it is on earth necessarily includes suffering, and in several passages light is thrown by R.V. upon the discipline of pain. The rendering of Heb. xii. 7, which represents the addition of a single letter in the Greek text, furnishes a good illustration of the kind. At first sight A.V. seems to give a more natural thought (*If ye endure chastening . . .*); but a little reflection will show how important it is to bring out that patient endurance converts the pain into a beneficent lesson: *It is for chastening that*

¹ Compare V. § 2.

ye endure. The fact is assumed and explained. And so a few verses after the apostolic writer marks the permanent effects of chastening: *it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised* (not *are exercised*, A.V.) *thereby, even the fruit of righteousness* (xii. 11). At the same time we are taught in several places to recognise more plainly than before the intensity of the trial which must be endured and made a source of blessing. *False Christs . . . shall show signs, . . . that they may lead astray, if possible* (A.V. *if it were possible*), *the elect* (Mark xiii. 22): even this extreme result is not excluded. *Abraham without being weakened in faith considered* (A.V. *considered not*) *his own body now as good as dead* (Rom. iv. 19). The patriarch made a true estimate of the natural impossibility of the event for which he looked. *Look carefully how ye walk*, is St. Paul's command (Eph. v. 15). Every step must be determined beforehand with wise calculation.

13. There is necessarily another side to the thought of Christian progress. In correspondence with the growth of the Christian there is also the possibility of deterioration. There can be no moral stationariness. This law is recognised in Eph. iv. 22: *Put away . . . the old man, which waxeth* (A.V. *is*) *corrupt after the lusts of deceit*; Rev. xxii. 11: *He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness* (A.V. *be unjust*) *still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy* (A.V. *be filthy*) *still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness* (A.V. *be righteous*) *still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy* (A.V. *be holy*) *still.* And we can better understand the peril of the Hebrews when we read (v. 11), *Ye are become dull.* Their fault was not one of nature, but of neglect. They had failed to go forward, and so they had degenerated.

14. The fulfilment of this law reveals the Divine law of retribution. The sin becomes its own punishment. Men receive what they wrought, *the things done in the*

body (2 Cor. v. 10; comp. Eph. vi. 8). Thus we read (Col. iii. 25, marg.), *He that doeth wrong shall receive again the wrong that he hath done*; and a most difficult passage of the Second Epistle of St. Peter gains an impressive meaning by the help of this thought: *These . . . shall in their destroying surely be destroyed, suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing* (2 Pet. ii. 12 f). It cannot be otherwise. *Sin*, St. John says, *is lawlessness* (1 John iii. 4), and not, as A.V., *the transgression of the law*, a phrase which by its definiteness obscures the real significance of the original words. "Sin" and "lawlessness" ("violation of law") are convertible terms. Law is the expression of the will of God for us in regard to ourselves, to our fellow men, to creation, to God Himself. To transgress this in any direction is to sin, and so to realise just so far the will of God against us.

Here our inquiry comes naturally to an end. The illustrations which have been given in this section show the general effect of small corrections, which have been hitherto noticed in isolated details, upon large views of the Faith. They will enable the student to see how fundamental truths are presented by the Revision with a force and consistency unattained before. They will therefore, as I trust, be sufficient to guide him to the most important use of it. He will be encouraged to bring together for himself the familiar passages in which he has been accustomed to find the outlines of apostolic teaching, and then to consider how they are affected by new renderings, which he will at least have learnt to interrogate with intelligent patience. As he does this, diligently investigating (for example) what is set before us in the New Testament on the Person and Work of Christ, or on the position and destiny of man, his own experience will teach him to look with something more than suspicion upon the criticisms of

scholars who appear to find nothing better than solemn music in the English version of words of life, and to admit no hope of riper knowledge from the discipline of two centuries and a half. In any case, he will recognise that he must bring self-control and reverence to an inquiry which reminds us at every step of the feebleness of our own thoughts; and, if any particular results prove disappointing, he will draw strength from the modest endeavour to gain a clearer vision even of one fragment of the truth.

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MALACHI.

I.

TURNING from the autobiography of Nehemiah to the brier and pointed utterances of Malachi, we readily recognise that they were contemporaries. The abuses which Nehemiah strove to correct, the neglect of the Temple service and the mixed marriages, are the prevalent scandals against which the indignant denunciations of the prophet are directed. He would seem to have stood in the same relation to Nehemiah as Haggai and Zechariah occupied towards Zerubbabel, and to have uttered the closing words of Old Testament prophecy about the year 430 B.C. Of his personal history so little is known that it is even doubted whether any prophet of the name of Malachi ever lived. For, singularly enough, the word "Malachi" occurs in the first verse of the third chapter, where it is translated "my messenger," being necessarily accepted in that verse as an official, not a personal name. This title was not an unknown one, nor was it of novel application to the prophets of Jehovah, for we find Haggai speaking of himself (i. 13) as "Jehovah's messenger." Accordingly it is an old tradition among the