

## The Doctrinal Significance of the Revised Version.

BY THE REV. GEORGE MILLIGAN, B.D., CAPUTH, DUNKELD.

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LIFE—life not in ourselves but in Christ, that is the promise of the Gospel; and short of this 'life, which is *life* indeed' (1 Tim. vi. 19), we cannot rest satisfied. Death to sin, forgiveness however absolute and complete, are at best but starting-points. What a man longs after is restored communion with God—that knowledge of God which our Lord Himself teaches is of the very essence of life eternal (John xvii. 3). Atonement, if it is to be truly deserving of the name, must issue in atonement. And it is perhaps just because this old English word has lost its original meaning, as well as for consistency of rendering, that the Revisers have removed it from the only place in which it occurs in our English Bibles, and that Rom. v. 11 now reads, 'But we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.'<sup>1</sup> Reconciliation indeed, the reconciliation of God to man, and man to God, is, as we learn elsewhere, the great message entrusted to Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor. v. 18-20), and the man who accepts it is more than pardoned: he is 'a new creation' (2 Cor. v. 17, margin). How beautifully, too, this our new state is brought before us in the revised rendering of Eph. ii. 13: 'But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ.' Already in ch. i. 7, St. Paul has spoken of the blood of Christ as the *causa medians* of our redemption (*διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ*). Now, he brings that blood before us (and it must be kept in view that in Scripture blood is always conceived of as living, and that therefore by the blood of Christ we must understand not His death, but His life, won through death, in heaven), as the abiding condition or power in which we draw near. The Christian lives not only through or by Christ, but *in* Christ. 'The free gift of God is eternal life in ('through,' A.V.) Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. vi. 23). Truly, as Luther remarked, 'There's a great divinity in prepositions,' and in none is this

<sup>1</sup> The consistent rendering 'rejoice' in this verse and in vers. 2 and 3 should be noticed as marking three progressive steps in the Christian's joy. The A.V. actually uses three different words, 'rejoice,' 'glory,' 'joy.'

more noticeable than in the case of this simple preposition *ἐν* or *in*. Take one or two further examples which we owe to the R.V. The believer 'is persuaded in ('by,' A.V.) the Lord' (Rom. xiv. 14); he has his 'glorying in ('through,' A.V.) Christ Jesus' (Rom. xv. 17); in everything he is 'enriched in ('by,' A.V.) Him' (1 Cor. i. 5). The duty of Christian forgiveness, again, is made to rest upon the fact that 'God also in Christ ('for Christ's sake,' A.V.) forgave you' (Eph. iv. 32); while once more St. Paul's proud claim is, 'I can do all things in Him ('through Christ,' A.V.) that strengtheneth me' (Phil. iv. 13).

Other passages where *ἐν* has now got its proper force, and which have a more or less doctrinal significance, are Rom. v. 21, where the contrast between 'sin in death' and 'grace through righteousness unto eternal life' is very instructive; Col. i. 16, 17, where the original creation of all things 'in' Christ, as their initial cause, is shown to precede their coming into existence 'through' Him, the mediatorial Lord, and their final return 'unto' Him as their end and goal; and 1 Tim. iii. 16, where 'in glory' marks Christ's state before and at the Ascension, as well as after.

Another preposition which, properly translated, throws much additional light on several important passages is the preposition *ἐκ*. It is far more than 'from,' it is 'out of'; and this the Revisers have recognised, though unfortunately they have confined the emendation to the margin. Thus our Lord's claim is not, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me' (John xii. 32), words which would naturally confine His saving and attractive power to His death; but, 'And I, if I be lifted up out of the earth,' in which the thought of His resurrection is also included. It is the living Lord, who has reached His own glory through suffering and death, who is to exercise a universal sway, in strict conformity with the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'But we behold Him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, *even* Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He should taste death

for every *man*' (Heb. ii. 9),—while it is important to notice that in this same Epistle the real tenor of our Lord's prayer in the Garden is represented as being, not that He should be delivered 'from' death, but 'out of' death—brought safely, that is, through death into a new life: 'Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him out of death, and having been heard for His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered' (v. 7, 8, margin).

To return, however, to the great truth of the life of the believer in Christ, we may still cite one or two fresh illustrations which it receives in the R.V. A very familiar one occurs in our Lord's own analogy of the vine and the branches, for, as we now read, it is 'apart from,' and not merely 'without' Him, the central Vine, that the branches 'can do nothing' (John xv. 5). Or again in St. Paul's favourite figure of the Body and the members, how much is gained by the substitution of 'made full' for 'complete,' in Col. ii. 10: 'In Him,' that is, in Christ (so the apostle has just been declaring), 'dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily'; 'and,' he continues, 'in Him ye are made full.' It is actually in Christ's own fulness, the divine fulness just spoken of, that His people are entitled to share,—while once more it is coming unto Him, 'a living stone,' that they also, 'as living stones,' are built up a spiritual house (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5)—the substitution of 'lively' for 'living' in the second case in the A.V. quite obscuring the parallelism.

The mention of 'building up' of a progressive growth in holiness may lead us to ask next, What has the R.V. to teach us regarding the great doctrine of sanctification? One thing certainly which is continually lost sight of, it makes clear, namely, that sanctification is not so much a consequence of salvation as an integral part of it. 'Ye were washed . . . ye were sanctified . . . ye were justified' (1 Cor. vi. 11)—all, it will be noted, definite past acts,—while it is 'in sanctification' rather than 'unto holiness' that 'God called ('hath called,' A.V.) us' (1 Thess. iv. 7; cf. 2 Thess. ii. 13); and 'in' ('by,' A.V.) the will of God, which Christ has perfectly fulfilled, that Christians are included, and therefore sanctified (Heb. x. 10, margin).

But this is very far from saying that sanctifica-

tion can on our part be realised all at once. The Christian believer, though in one sense from the moment of his acceptance of Christ's mercy ideally complete in Him, still knows from practical experience that it is only slowly and gradually that he comes to apprehend the full privileges and duties of his new condition. And hence it was that the early converts of the Christian Church could be described, not as 'saved,' but as 'being saved' (Acts ii. 47); or that, writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul could speak of the word of the Cross as the power of God 'unto us which are being saved' (1 Cor. i. 18).<sup>1</sup> The use of the perfect tense in the revised translation of Eph. ii. 5, 'by grace have ye been saved,' and the 'being renewed' of Col. iii. 10, point in the same direction,—while how clearly is the ever-advancing goal towards which the Christian is to press brought out in St. Paul's prayer for his converts, 'that ye may be filled unto ('with,' A.V.) all the fulness of God' (Eph. iii. 19); and in the words of the following chapter, 'till we all attain unto the unity ('come in the unity,' A.V.) of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown ('perfect,' A.V.) man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (iv. 13).

The word *τέλειος* in this last verse is in itself full of significance. Literally it means that which has reached its goal, the end (*τέλος*) of its existence. No single word in English altogether expresses this. 'Full-grown' is perhaps as literal a translation as possible, and is certainly better than the A.V. 'perfect,' which is apt to convey an erroneous impression. It is unfortunate, therefore, that the Revisers have not adopted it in 1 Cor. xiv. 20, Phil. iii. 15, Col. i. 28, iv. 12, and Jas. iii. 2 as well as here, and in 1 Cor. ii. 6 (margin) and Heb. v. 14.

But however we describe this new life to which believers attain in Christ, the great point to be kept steadily in view is that it is a 'new' life, and not merely a reviving or deepening of the old. Its standard is derived from the heavenly and divine Jesus; from Him in the fulness of His glorified humanity it derives its character and scope. And hence it is that believers receive the right to become 'children,' and not merely 'sons'

<sup>1</sup> Cf., further, 2 Cor. ii. 15. In Luké xiii. 23 and 1 Cor. xv. 2 no change is made. We may notice here the interesting gloss in Rom. xiii. 11: 'Now is salvation nearer to us than when we *first* believed.'

of God (John i. 12);<sup>1</sup> and that we can catch the full meaning of such a passage as 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'We all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.'

Is it not, too, this victory of 'the Spirit' in believers which underlies the amended translation of Gal. v. 17? As we read the verse in the A.V., 'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,' St. Paul would seem to be adding only another to the many passages in which he reminds us that, notwithstanding our best wishes and intentions, sin is ever present with us. But read the last words as in the R.V., 'that ye may not do the things that ye would,' and are we not rather introduced to the comforting thought of a constraining power within us which prevents us from doing what we might otherwise incline to? The victory now rests with the Spirit, and not with the flesh.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *τίκνον* points to community of nature as distinguished from *ἕως*, which might denote merely dignity of heirship. Cf. Phil. ii. 15; 1 John iii. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> For this interpretation I am indebted to a paper by Dr.

Very striking, too, as bringing out the natural evolution of the Christian graces, is the amended version of 2 Pet. i. 5-7: 'In your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge temperance,' and so on, where the 'in' in place of 'to' implies not merely a catalogue of the graces, but their necessary dependence upon one another,<sup>3</sup>—while the last clause, 'and in *your* love of the brethren love,' which at first sounds so strangely after the familiar, though it must be admitted tautological, 'and to brotherly kindness charity,' Bishop Westcott claims as teaching no less a truth than that 'love, the feeling of man for man as man, finds, and can only find, its true foundation in the feeling for Christian for Christian, realised in and through the Incarnation of the Word.'<sup>4</sup>

Roberts in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, iii. p. 129. For a different view, see Professor Massie in the same volume, p. 219, *seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Bengel, as usual, is very suggestive: 'Præsens quisque gradus subsequentem parit et facilem reddit; subsequens priorem temperat ac perficit. Ordo est autem naturæ potius, quam temporis' (*in loco*).

<sup>4</sup> See THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, iii. p. 396.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

#### JOHN iv. 24.

'God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth' (R.V.).

#### EXPOSITION.

'God is a Spirit.'—Notice the change from 'the Father' to 'God.' The word Father needs no explanation. It interprets the common human instinct. And if in relation to men God is found and felt as a Father through His Son, in His own absolute being He is 'a Spirit' or 'Spirit.' The absolute detachment of God from all limitations of space and time is implied. Our own personality, our consciousness of existing, of thinking, of willing, are the surest guide to the understanding of God's essential nature. Both names are necessary to our true conception of God. As Spirit alone we might

reverence Him, not love Him; hardly believe He was an object to love. As Father alone we might think of him with feelings unworthy of His glory. The Spirit guards the Fatherhood, and the Fatherhood makes the Spirit personal and real. The worship of God, therefore, depends on the God worshipped; He is Spirit, and He is the Father seeking men with unspeakable love to be His children.—REITH.

*God is Spirit*, absolutely free from all limitations of space and time. The nature and not the personality of God is described, just as in the phrases, *God is light* (1 John i. 5), or *God is love* (1 John iv. 8).—WESTCOTT.

St. John has recorded elsewhere that 'God is Light' and 'God is Love.' These three divine utterances are the sublimest ever formed to express the metaphysical, intellectual, and moral essence