

and that the textual evidence ought alone to decide what he *did* write. But those who hold themselves bound to pay some regard to the correct phraseology of the New Testament, especially where it varies its forms warily to express varying shades of the same idea,—and most of all when that phraseology and those varying forms are those of the same writer, and a writer whose style is eminently his own,—will insist that the external evidence shall be *very strong indeed* ere they can reconcile themselves to the reading of the Revised Version here, confounding, as it does, the way in which unregenerate men and the only-begotten Son of God are described.

But is the external evidence for this reading so overmastering? That A and B should both have this reading is a strong point, for in disputed readings A usually goes with the bulk of the later MSS., B with the few earlier ones. But on the other hand, **8**, which in disputed readings usually goes with B, has the received reading, and a corrector of A. This pretty much equalises the evidence, especially as three other uncials, K L P., have the received reading.

But, after all, the real question is, Were both readings not meant for the same pronoun? For not only were breathings very rarely used in the oldest Greek MSS., but, in particular, Cod. A—which is quoted as reading *αὐτόν*—has no breath-

ings at all in the New Testament;¹ so that when it reads AYTON it may just as well have been *αὐτόν* = *ἑαυτόν*, 'himself,' as *αὐτόν*, 'him.' That it actually was so meant, I judge from the fact that the Fathers, Greek and Latin, so far as I have observed, all seem to have understood the apostle's statement in the sense of the received text and our Authorized Version. Thus Jerome (Vulg.) reads, 'but the generation of God preserveth him' (*sed generatio Dei conservat eum*); in other words, his own regenerate nature keeps him.² And this is exactly what the same epistle says in chap. iii. 9: 'Whosoever is born of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.' Didymus also (before Jerome) has, 'He that is born of God keepeth himself' (*sed qui natus est ex Deo servat semetipsum*); and Origen not only has the received reading, but comments upon it in that sense.

But all this went for nothing with the majority of the Company, for they had determined to adhere to the reading of the Greek text, which they had adopted.

¹ Scrivener, Intro., third edition, p. 44. But anyone may see this for himself in the British Museum.

² Tischendorf misunderstands Jerome's statement as if in favour of *αὐτόν*, because his words end with *eum*. But the nominative clause, *generatio Dei*, which can mean nothing else than the believer's own regenerate nature, makes *eum* equivalent to *semetipsum*.

Sermonettes for Children on the Golden Texts.

I.

'And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.'—Mark xvi. 15 (R.V.).

It was the Duke of Wellington who heard a young man question the worth of foreign missions, and said, 'You forget your marching orders.' These are our marching orders: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.' (The Revised Version translates the Greek more accurately: 'to the whole creation,' but the meaning is not altered.)

1. *The gospel is to be preached.*—Both the Greek word *euangelion* and the English word *gospel* means *good news*. (Some say 'gospel' is literally God's news, but that is the same thing.) Now we may hear good news often, and often it is not worth hearing. But this good news is so *good* and so *new*, that it deserves to be called *the good news, the gospel*. What is it? The angels came with it to the

shepherds, and we cannot better their way of it: 'Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' You see, the misery and madness of the world is due to sin. But sin is the hardest thing to get rid of. So it is good news to be told that a Saviour has come to save us from it. And the good news is not only of salvation from sin, but of a *Saviour*. God does not send word of salvation; He so loves the world that He gives His only begotten Son. And so we can love the Saviour who saves us from all sin. That is good news indeed.

Well, this gospel is to be *preached*. To preach is to speak clearly out. It means that we have something to say, think it worth saying, and say it firmly and clearly. The Greek word is 'cry like a herald,' literally 'herald it.' So a great Scottish evangelist called the paper he founded *The Herald of Mercy*. Whatever makes clear declaration of the gospel is preaching.

2. *Everybody is to preach the gospel.*—In the passage where the Golden Text is found, only the eleven are

addressed. But the Duke of Wellington was right when he looked upon it as marching orders for *everybody*. You may say that surely we must be sent before we go and preach the gospel. Certainly. But you are sent as soon as you know the gospel. Have you heard it, believed it? Then go ye into the world and preach it. And if you have heard it aright, you will feel compelled to go. You will feel like the Apostle Paul, 'Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.' But you may remember that the world is at your own fireside, or in your own school, as surely as abroad.

3. *The gospel is to be preached to everybody*.—It is nearly two thousand years since the marching orders were issued, and the earth is not half covered by preachers yet. This is the great sin of the world. The earliest followers of Christ understood clearly that *everybody* had to hear the gospel; and they tried to let them hear it as soon as possible. But after their day the love of many grew cold. To-day, however, we are wakening to see how impossible it is that we should be blessed until we have obeyed this order. And you will find that the Church which obeys it best is most blest. It is much more difficult to preach the gospel to everybody now than it would have been at one time. Men were neglected, and they took to false religions; and it is harder to get a man who has a false religion to give it up and believe the gospel, than to get one to believe it who has no religion worth keeping. That is our punishment for disobeying our marching orders. Well, let us put off no longer. Let us all begin, let us begin at home if you like, but let us begin at once.

II.

'Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this Man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins.'—Acts xiii. 38 (R.V.).

This is part of St. Paul's sermon at Antioch of Pisidia. St. Paul heard the marching orders, and was away in obedience to them, preaching the gospel to as many as *he* could reach. By the time he got as far as Antioch of Pisidia, he had suffered a good deal of hardship, but he never dreamt of turning back or staying there. His orders are to march and preach, and he obeys them. What did he preach?

1. He preached *remission of sins*. Wherever he went he found the same old trouble—sin, sin everywhere, sin the cause of all the misery, and there was misery enough in some of the places he visited. He found sin and sinners everywhere, but nowhere did he find any remedy, anyone who could pardon sin or cleanse the sinner. In Athens he found men full of anxiety about sin, anxious to be rid of it, erecting altars to innumerable gods, to see if *they* would take it away, even an altar to the unknown God—who might be more helpful than all the rest. But neither in Athens nor in Antioch did he find anyone who had been forgiven, or any god or man who was able to forgive. But this was the very gift he came to give them. This was the good news he came to preach.

2. He preached remission of sins *through Jesus*. He told the people the story of the life of Jesus on the earth. They knew so much about sin that they could scarcely believe that a man could forgive sin. But Paul told them that while

He was upon the earth, Jesus showed that He had the power to forgive sin. He showed it by the miracles He did. And then Paul went on to say that after dying for sin (so as to gain the right to forgive sin), He had been raised from the dead to prove His power to forgive the sins of all the world. And in that way Paul's hearers could see that this Man was more than man, and had the power to forgive sins, just because He was God, the very Person against whom all sins were committed.

3. This forgiveness is *unto you*. St. Paul spoke to the Jews who were resident in Antioch of Pisidia. But when he went to Athens he said the same to the Greeks and Romans there. He says the same to *every creature*. To *you*. Have you heard the good news? Do you believe it? Do you know this Man? Do you not love Him for giving you the forgiveness of all your sins? And will you not go and preach this gospel to every creature you can reach?

III.

'I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth.'—Acts xiii. 47 (R.V.).

Whenever St. Paul came to a new city to preach the gospel, he began with the Jews. This was Christ's command. Besides, the apostle felt that the Jews had the first claim upon him; and, at the beginning of his work, at anyrate, he must have felt most at home amongst his own countrymen. So when he came to Antioch of Pisidia, he preached first of all to the Jews in their synagogue. But after a time they set themselves against the Word, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, 'It was necessary that the Word of God should first be spoken to you, seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.'

It was, indeed, a bold speech, and a bold step. There was not another, perhaps, of all the disciples who would have dared to say it yet. For they had scarcely learned to believe that the gospel was intended for the Gentiles. So Paul and Barnabas quoted Scripture to explain and defend their action. The Scripture they quoted is our Golden Text. It contains two statements.

1. There is salvation in Jesus. This is just the gospel again, just the good news the angels told the shepherds, just the last legacy the Saviour left His disciples. There is salvation in Jesus. But salvation is a great word. It means forgiveness of sin, forgiveness of all the sins of the past, full forgiveness so that they are remembered no more against us for ever. But it means more. It also means deliverance from sin, a clean heart, an obedient will, a pure life, a glorious immortality. It is a great word, the great word of the gospel. It covers past, present, future. It runs back to Adam's sin, it enters into every nook and cranny of my present evil life, it passes with me into the Great Beyond, making heaven heaven and mine. The old translators call it *health*. For they felt that salvation means healing of body and of soul till they are perfectly sound and *whole*.

2. This salvation is to Gentile as well as Jew, to the most distant as to the nearest, to every creature in all the world. For (1) every creature in all the world needs it.

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And the farther you go, the more terribly you find that men have sinned, the more short they come of the glory of God. The Jew was like the elder brother, the Gentile like the prodigal, though that is not the meaning of the parable.

And (2) every creature is helpless to find salvation elsewhere. All have tried; some have tried hard and long; but all have failed. And the failure is often pathetically admitted. When the missionary goes to a new tribe, or even a new village, he is sometimes welcomed with extravagant joy in the hope that he has health for body and for soul, a health they need so terribly, and have failed to find so miserably.

And (3) this salvation is suited to every creature. They say that no book is so easily translated into other languages as the Bible. Be that as it may, no gospel is so suited and so satisfactory as the gospel of Jesus Christ. It forgives *all* sin; it cleanses *every* heart; it brings all into one common brotherhood, breaking down every partition; it opens the same kingdom of heaven to all believers.

IV.

'We believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they.'—Acts xv. 11 (R.V.).

When the news spread that Paul and Barnabas had been preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, the Jewish followers of Christ met at Jerusalem to consider the matter. Then Peter made a speech. He told the story of the conversion of Cornelius. And he said that so far as he could see the Gentiles were saved just in the same way and just as completely as the Jews. For, he added, in both cases it is a matter of grace. That was a grand thing to end with, and that is the Golden Text.

1. All that are saved are saved by the same means. Every different nation, almost every different person, tries a different way of getting saved. The Jews tried keeping the commandments of God; the Gentiles tried worshipping many Gods. Both failed. Then came the one universal way.

2. The means is grace. That is to say, no one can win salvation, all must receive it. No one can ascend up into heaven, till first heaven has come down. This is good news to all. For he who has got nearest heaven by his own good life is still very far from it; and he must enter as a little child, just receiving it as a gift. And it is good news to those who are farthest off, for they have no hope of salvation otherwise. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, and he that hath no money.'

3. It is the grace of the Lord Jesus. 'Ye know,' says St. Paul in one of his letters, 'ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.' And he goes on to tell of His being rich and becoming poor, and all for our sakes. Grace is a word

that can only be applied to a rich man. Of course 'rich' means more than 'monied.' A poor man cannot have grace, because he has nothing to give, and grace means giving. It means giving liberally and upbraiding not. It means giving what is worth receiving. In short, grace belongs properly to Jesus only, for He only gave us love and giving us love gave us God.

V.

'Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith.'—James ii. 18 (R.V.).

We often hear sermons on Faith; not so often sermons on Works. Here is a sermon by James, the Lord's brother, on Works. Some think that he was tired hearing Paul preach on faith, some even think that he preached this sermon on works to contradict Paul. Both are wrong. James had not Paul in his mind at all. He *had* in his mind the ways of certain persons, who bragged of their faith and did nothing. But that was surely far enough from Paul's way. And it was as far from Paul's preaching. Why, Paul says that the whole sum of Christianity is comprised in this: Faith which worketh by love. And that was the tone of all the sermons he ever preached, and of all the letters he ever wrote.

1. Works are useless without faith. That is the root of the gospel. All the failures of the men whom James had seen fail were due to this, that they thought works were good whether you had faith or not. Nicodemus came to Jesus to ask what *more* he should do. Jesus said, 'You have done nothing yet that will stand, begin again.' The rich young ruler asked, 'What lack I *yet*?' Jesus answered that he lacked the one thing needful yet—and so he lacked everything. The one thing needful was faith. 'Sell all thou hast, and follow Me,' that is, give up doing and having, and trust Me for everything.

2. Faith is useless without works. Indeed, faith is impossible without works. You may have something that you call faith, but if it does not produce works, it is not faith, but some other and far inferior thing. Faith worketh—that is its nature, just as it is God's nature, and Christ's nature: 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' For faith is trust in a Person who works, and that trust makes me one with the Person, and so I cannot help working; I become a fellow-labourer with God.

If it were possible to sever faith from works, which it is not, you could say that faith is safer than works, but works are more satisfactory than faith. For faith is the laying hold of the grace of the Lord Jesus; but as soon as the Lord Jesus is laid hold of, the faith begins to work by love.

Now, it is not the amount or the success of our work that proves our faith, it is the love of it.