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ARTICLE VII.

THE LATEST TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

BY HENRY M. WHITNEY.

IV. SUPPLEMENTARY.

ALTHOUGH the discussion in these papers has covered the field originally planned, it seems worth while to bring out some of the points a little more fully.

It may be remembered that Huxley was indignant at the Apostle Paul for saying, in 1 Cor. xv. 32, that, if there is to be no future life, we may as well just "eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," and that the answer was that Paul did not mean that we had better be sensual, or even sensuous, on that account,—the case being one of Hebrew *boldness of ellipsis*, that which one is tempted to say being put as though it were a proper utterance of the bitterly disappointed soul. There is in the original Bible far more and bolder ellipsis than most people suppose, and the recognition of it has a vital relation to clearness in the translation of the Bible, a relation to which translators have given too little heed.

Other cases will bring this out more fully: Ps. xix. 3: "There is [to them] no speech nor language; their voice is not heard": this was almost universally misunderstood for lack of words centering "no speech nor language" upon the starry host. Prov. xxvii. 7: "He¹ who is sated loatheth [spurneth? *Heb.*, trampleth upon] [even] a honeycomb; but to him¹ that is famished anything, [even though] bit-

¹ Is it not time that the word *soul* was put out of this verse? It is not the soul, but the body, the physical man; *nefesh* meant that, ranging from *breath* through *spirit, life, soul, animal, person, to body*.

ter, is sweet." Mark vii. 19: "[This he said,] making all meats clean": formerly the last four words were tacked upon the previous sentence, completely hiding the thought. John xv. 4: "Abide in me, and I [will abide] in you"; the second clause is commonly understood as meaning: "Let me abide in you"; xvii. 9: "I pray not [at this time] for the world"; this omission has puzzled many a reader. Rom. viii. 24: "Hope [of a thing] that is seen [that is, by Hebrew pregnancy of expression, possessed] is not hope"; this is fairly clear, but uncouth. 1 Cor. x. 16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a [symbol of the] communion of the blood of Christ?"—the doctrine of the "real presence" is founded on a literal treatment of a few passages like this. Heb. ii. 7: "Thou madest him [but] a little lower than the angels"; compare Ps. viii. 5 (A. R.). Heb. xiii. 4: "Marriage honorable": this used to be guessed at as "Marriage is honorable," but now is more felicitously rendered, "Let marriage be had in honor"; xiii. 8: "Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day the same, and forever"; this used to stand baldly without a verb, and was therefore by many supposed to mean that Jesus Christ was "the end of their conversation"; now it is rendered "Jesus Christ is . . .," but there are those who would render it "Let Jesus Christ be . . ." In 1 John iv. 19 shall we read, "We love [him] because he first loved us" (A. V.)? or shall we (E. R., A. R.) suppose that "him" was not in the writer's thought? It is a fair question whether Christ's "preaching to the spirits in prison" (1 Pet. iii. 19) is not an extreme case of ellipsis of some sort, and whether the finding of its meaning will not come by the supplying of the omitted words.

These examples are sufficient to show not only the freedom with which the authors of the Bible left out words that they trusted the reader to supply, but also the extent to which they went beyond the mere omission of the copula,

and the extent to which even the omission of the copula brought uncertainty into the text. As to the duty of the translator, can it be other than to bring out some sense if he can, to take the sense that seems most probable, and to indicate, in the margin, any other sense that seems entitled to respect? To leave some of these and like passages as they stand in all the versions is to sentence the reader to remain in the dark.

We have mentioned the Hebrew fondness for pregnancy of expression. It has misled many, both translators and readers, and it must be constantly watched for by him who would make out the sense, either for himself or for others. An excellent and suggestive example occurs in John xx. 9: "As yet they *knew* not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead." *Knew* is the inevitable rendering of *ᾔδεισαν*, and pretty nearly all the versions have it; but in what sense did they not know? The "Twentieth Century" thinks that it means that "they were not even then familiar with the passage of Scripture . . .," but that is exactly not it; on the contrary, they had heard that Scripture read again and again in the synagogue, and Jesus had told them about it himself. Arguing by exclusion, we are obliged to think that it must mean that they had not comprehended, had not "sensed," the meaning, had not roused up to a realization that the Scripture meant their own beloved teacher. In this case the obscurity comes from a recognized rhetorical method, a method of which Hebrew and Hebraized writers were especially fond, the use of an ordinary word pregnantly in an unusual and vivid sense; it happens here that, even by an Occidental, the sense can be made out from the context. It would appear that the translator, when he is sure, might well indicate in the margin the enlarged or intensified meaning of the word.

We have remarked that there are in each Testament some words whose meaning can never be conclusively made

out. We have noted a whole class of cases illustrated by the impossibility of deciding in Matt. iv. 3; xxvii. 54, between "a Son of God" and "the Son of God." There is, in Rev. i. 13, a similar uncertainty between "the Son of man" (A. V., A. B. U.) and "a son of man" (Revisions): the difference in meaning is wide.

Another class is made by the difference between general Greek usage and English usage in regard to the definite article. For example, in Matt. xiii. 42 we used to read: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Both the Revisions and the Bible Union have it: "The weeping and the gnashing of teeth." But in the original there is a *the* also before "teeth"; so that, if we must say, "the weeping and the gnashing," we ought to say also "the teeth" or "their teeth." The fact is that *the* is not idiomatic in English with any one of the three; the "Twentieth Century," therefore, went back to the form used in 1611. Meyer says that the article in "*the* weeping and *the* gnashing" points to these things as well known; another possible view is that the case is one of pregnant ellipsis: "There shall be *the* [bitterest of all their] weeping and *the* [fiercest of all their] gnashing of *their* teeth": all their other times of anguish will then be as nothing.

The definite article raises questions, in translation, along another line, in that it may stand for whatever possessive pronoun would be appropriate in the connection. Thus "the Father" may, or may not, mean "my Father" or "his Father"; "the teeth," mentioned above, may be just "teeth" or "their teeth." In 1 John iii. 16 we now read (Revisions, A. B. U.): "Hereby know we love," literally "the love,"—that is, perhaps, the act or state of love,—but it may be "his love," thus bringing us back to the rendering of 1611.

Returning to the fact that ancient writers did not feel the need of writing so that they could not be misunder-

stood, we may add that the translators of 1611 had not fully reached modern ground in that respect, and that the Revisers, of both companies, while clearing up many of the older obscurities, still left some for later workmen to remove. For example, in Gen. xlv. 24: "See that ye *fall not out* by the way" (A. V., Revisions), at least children, if not some grown people, think that it means that they must guard against falling out of the wagons; soldiers would naturally think that it means a warning against the dangers of straggling; some, but not all, recognize it as a sarcastic remark shot after the brothers to remind them that Joseph had not completely forgotten the past.

In Heb. x. 29 all three versions should have refrained from using "unholy" when they meant a common or non-holy thing.

A striking case among those that have been cleared up by the Revisions is in John vii. 18: "He that speaketh of [*now from*] himself seeketh his own glory." Another is the use of "Master" to cover a considerable number of words ranging from "Teacher" to "Lord"; at least one of these, indeed, has no distinct or distinctive English equivalent, and has to be left undistinguished from others.

A *pons asinorum* in the rhetoric of all languages and ages is what is expressively named the "squinting construction." A sentence from De Quincey's "Essay on Rhetoric" is sometimes given as an example because it happens to have a double "squint": "The smooth monotony of the leading religious topics, *as managed by the French orators, under the treatment of Jeremy Taylor*, receives at each turn of the sentence a new flexure"; it takes something of an effort to make out which way each of the italicized clauses looks for its grammatical connection and its sense. Most writers of any experience are on the lookout not to get into this kind of trouble, but the ancients seem not to have cared.

For instance, in John iii. 15 there is no telling which is right: "That whosoever believeth in him should . . . have eternal life" (A. V., A. B. U., T. C.), or "that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life" (Revisions). In Matt. xix. 28 we may read: "Have followed me in the regeneration,"¹ or "In the regeneration ye shall sit"; most versions, going by the inner idea, give the latter form, but the Bible Union leaves the construction "squinting."

Similarly, in Heb. xiii. 20 "through [in] the blood of an eternal covenant" seems by the context to be the means to "make you perfect," but by its location it should hang uncertainly ("squinting") between being the means of bringing the Great Shepherd back from the dead and being the means by which that Shepherd is our Lord.

It is well worth while for the student to trace out the way in which translators have varied, and, evidently, have been puzzled, as to the connection of the last clause in John i. 9, which in the American Revision stands in this equally indecisive form: "The light which lighteth every man, coming into the world." In the version of the Bible Union it reads: "The true light, which lights every man, was coming into the world,"—an entirely possible sense.

There are many such cases in the Bible, doing no harm—for each sense may be true, and there is spiritual profit in working out the possibilities, and no doctrine or fact or valuable lesson is imperiled by the doubt—but they are there, to plague the translator with the recurring question which shall be taken, and which shall be left, and whether the rejected sense has probability enough to entitle it to mention in the margin. And it should be remembered that the cases are more frequent because the original manuscripts had no punctuation, not even a period, and not even division into words, to help the making out of the sense.

¹T. C.: "New Creation."

And then, as we have already suggested, how many of the Bible-words have no English words that cover all, and just, their sense! A notable pair of examples are the Hebrew *lebh* and the Hellenistic *καρδία*, which, for lack of a closer fit, are necessarily rendered "heart." They covered not only, as with our word "heart," the emotional nature, and not only, as commonly understood in the Bible, the emotional and the volitional, but the intellectual too. They were the broadest words to be found in their respective languages for the whole inner man.

One cannot understand the third commandment (Ex. xx. 7), "Thou shalt not lift up the name of Jehovah thy God unto vanity [or falsehood—applying to perjury]," by any combination of English words; it is necessary to study the verb that is used, and also the way in which the word "name," and especially the expression "the name of God," are used in the Bible: "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe"; Christ said that he had made known this name to the twelve, and he prayed that they might be kept through the name. There is no possible transferring of the atmosphere, the suggestiveness, of that word into another tongue.

No English word covers the sense of the Bible-"mystery" (as in Mark iv. 11), since it is a hidden thing that is not meant to stay hidden but that one is invited to find out, and can find out in a large degree by attaining a spiritual mind.

As to the translation of the metaphors of the Bible, two other points may be made:—

1. How shall they be rendered when they are incongruous or unpleasant? There is in 1 Peter iii. 12 a case that is whimsically suggestive: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, . . . but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil": how he can combine such frontings does not appear until the passage (Ps. xxxiv. 15, 16) from

which Peter quotes is examined; it is thus discovered that the second "upon" means "against." In Isaiah lx. 16 we find: "Thou shalt . . . suck the breast of kings"; the American Revisers, changing the "firstlings of ox" to the "firstlings of cow" (Ex. xxxiv. 19), might well also have accommodated this bit from Isaiah to the facts of nature. The "Twentieth Century" did well in changing (Acts vii. 51) "uncircumcised in heart and ears" to "heathen" in those parts of their bodies. In an age that is exquisitely sensitive to incongruity in metaphor and to indelicacy in expression, exactness of translation may well be softened when cases like these occur.

2. We would emphasize, also, the desirability of restoring, if possible, such metaphors as are faded, and of bringing out those that are left concealed.

The former may be illustrated by *edify* and *edification*, which once vividly suggested the building of a house, but now certainly do not; by *pervert the right ways*, which once suggested the turning aside of a path that was straight; and by *err* (as in Heb. iii. 10) for *go astray*. It will be a great gain for the power of the Bible if its metaphors can be kept constantly fresh.

The second class, that of metaphors never brought out in translation, may be well illustrated by Judges vi. 34 and Matt. xvi. 26. In the first "the spirit of Jehovah clothed itself with Gideon,"¹—that is, entered into him, took possession of him, and wrought through him, as the body informs its clothing, and the spirit informs the body. It is needlessly far-off, incorrect, and tame, to say, with all the versions, that the spirit "came upon Gideon": a fairly colossal figure thus goes for nought. In Matt. xvi. 26 the "soul" or "life" is first regarded as forfeited by a penalty, a fine, adjudged in court; thus, thereafter, it is held

¹ Parallel cases are in 1 Chron. xii. 28; 2 Chron. xxiv. 20; hence Luke xli. 49 seemed idiomatic and clear to those who heard it from Christ.

by another, with the original owner seeking to buy it back: "What shall a man be *profited* [how much will he "make"], if he shall *gain* [a mercantile word] the whole world, and [but] be *mulcted* of his life? or what shall a man *give in exchange* to recover his life?" In the next verse: "Then shall he *render* unto every man according to his doing," there seems to be the figure of an employer paying off his workmen at the end of a job; this would be made more visible by changing "render" to "pay." Few scholars realize how dependent plain people are upon figures of speech to help them see and feel the abstract. They are grateful for anything that thus turns the light on the truth.

We would not carry this discussion to a wearisome length; yet it would be easy to say much more. We hold back great numbers of illustrations that would bring out in a still stronger light the facts that we have been emphasizing throughout: namely, that a perfect translation of the Bible is an unattainable thing; that an adequate translation of the Bible is an extremely difficult task; that the American Revision is greatly superior to any other well-known text; and that the work of improvement in the New Testament needs to be immediately resumed.

If we were asked which, among the changes still needed, is most immediate and urgent, we should answer without hesitation, The multiplication of the paragraphs by three or four or five. It is needed for the acceptance of the version by almost any one; it is especially needed that the Bible may be restored to the young and to the untaught, from whom the English Committee very largely took the Bible away; if these lose their hold upon the Bible, there is little reason to hope that they will return to it in later years.

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