

# BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

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## ARTICLE I.

### EXEGESIS OF ACTS XXVI. 28, 29.

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IN our received English translation of these verses we have the following words: "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Luther's translation is similar:<sup>1</sup> "Agrippas aber sprach zu Paulo: Es fehlt nicht viel, du überredest mich, dass ich ein Christ würde. Paulus aber sprach: Ich wünschte vor Gott, es fehlte an viel oder an wenig, dass nicht allein du, sondern alle, die mich heute hören, solche würden, wie ich bin, ausgenommen diese Bande." In our English translation of the scriptures, therefore, and also

<sup>1</sup> Tyndale and Cranmer translated the twenty-eighth verse thus: "Somewhat thou bringest me in mind for to become a Christian." Tyndale's New Testament appeared in 1525, and Cranmer's Bible in 1539. The received translation appeared first in the Geneva version. This was the work of Protestant refugees living in Geneva, Switzerland; among them Coverdale, Whittingham, and John Knox. The New Testament was published in 1557; the whole Bible in 1560. Tyndale's translation was made at Wittenberg under the immediate direction of Luther, who had published his New Testament in 1522. In Cranmer's Bible Tyndale's version very largely re-appears. Luther's Bible entire appeared in 1534. The translators at Geneva, who entered upon their work with the purpose of enlisting the biblical knowledge of the continental reformers, seem to have had Luther's version constantly before them. This is the reason why the same mistranslations so often occur in both versions.

in Luther's translation, we are taught that Agrippa, under the power of the truth presented by Paul, not merely trembled, as Felix had done, but that he was almost persuaded to own himself a disciple of Christ.

Accordingly, in the practical enforcement of the lesson that is here taught, Agrippa is generally represented by religious teachers as a type of a large class in every Christian community — the "almost Christians." Thus Blunt, in his *Lectures on the History of St. Paul*,<sup>1</sup> referring to this passage asks, "Have we no 'almost Christians' even in a Christian congregation? Alas, is not this rather the peculiar danger and sin of our times? There are few, very few, of the church-going portion of our community, who would for a moment think of contradicting any of the great truths of our holy religion; yet how many are there, of whom, while we may truly say, as St. Paul said of Agrippa, we know that they believe, historically, notionally believe, we do not know, we cannot even in Christian charity profess to hope, that they are fully persuaded to be Christians, to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as their all-sufficient and only Saviour, to be justified, sanctified, governed by him, to desire to live the life of faith on earth, that through his atoning merits, they may live the life of glory in heaven." So, also, Gerok in his "*Die Apostelgeschichte*,"<sup>2</sup> a course of expository lectures on the Acts of the Apostles: "O wie Viele giebt's heut noch solcher beinahe Christen, wie der reiche Jüngling einer war (Luc. 13) und wie Agrippa einer für einen Augenblick wenigstens zu sein scheint. 'Es fehlt nicht viel:' o hütet euch, ihr Lieben, vor diesem gefährlichen Wort, bei dem eben doch meist zuletzt alles noch fehlt! Wie oft sind auch wir dem Himmelreich nahe gewesen: es fehlte nicht viel, wir wären durchgedrungen aus der Finsterniss zum Licht, aus dem Unglauben zum Glauben, aus der Sünde zur Busse, aus dem Unfrieden zum Frieden, aus der Welt zu Gott. Das Herz war angefasst, der Verstand überzeugt, das Gewissen geweckt, die Stunde günstig, die Gnadenstunde, welche hätte entscheiden können

<sup>1</sup> Lec. xx. p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Band, 6. 439.

über unser ewiges Heil:— es fehlte nicht viel. Aber das Wenige, was noch fehlte, mochten wir nicht dran strecken: von Einem Erdengut mochten wir uns nicht losreißen, Eine Lieblingssünde mochten wir nicht lassen, Eine Zerstreuung verwehte wieder den guten Eindruck, Eine Versuchung brachte uns wieder zu Fall, und der Schatz, den wir schon fast gehoben hätten, blieb vergraben in der Erde, weil wir zu träge waren, den letzten Spatenstich vollends zu thun; das Rettungsseil, an dem wir schon fast herausgehoben waren aus den Fluthen des Verderbens, riss wieder, weil wir zu lang in der Luft schwebten, weil wir feige zögerten, festen Fuss zu fassen auf dem Felsengrunde des Heils: wir gehörten wieder der Welt, wir waren wieder ferne vom Herrn!”

No examples are necessary in order to show that this is the usual practical enforcement of the passage in sermons.

Expositors and preachers, however, in their presentation of the lessons derivable from Agrippa's words to Paul, and Paul's answer thereto, have not merely followed the received translation of the scriptures; they have the support of certain commentators. Thus Dr. Adam Clarke, in his note on Acts xxvi. 28, says: "This declaration was almost the necessary consequence of the apostle's reasoning, and Agrippa's faith. If he believed the prophets, see vs. 22 and 23, and believed that Paul's application of their words to Christ Jesus was correct, he must acknowledge the *truth* of the Christian religion; but he might *choose* whether he would *embrace* and *confess* this truth, or not. However, the sudden appeal to his religious faith, extorts from him the declaration: Thou hast nearly persuaded me to embrace Christianity." So also Dr. Albert Barnes in his note on the same verse: "*Almost*; except a very little (*Ἐν ὀλίγῳ*). Thou hast nearly convinced me that Christianity is true, and persuaded me to embrace it. The arguments of Paul had been so rational; the appeal which he had made to his belief of the prophets had been so irresistible, that he had been nearly convinced of the truth of Christianity. . . . Yet, as in thousands of other cases, he was not quite persuaded to be a Christian. What was in

cluded in the 'almost;' what prevented his being *quite* persuaded, we know not." There are other commentators, doubtless, who interpret this passage in the same way, but their works are not within the writer's reach.

To the view thus presented, however, there is a fatal objection, namely that *ἐν ὀλίγῳ*, which is regarded by these interpreters as signifying "almost," is never used in this signification either in classical or in New Testament Greek.<sup>1</sup> In classical Greek "almost" is expressed either by *ὀλίγου* (Od. 14. 37. Plat. Prot. 361 C. Phaedr. 258 E. Herod. 7. 10. 3), or by *ὀλίγου δεῖ* (Wolf ad Dem. Lept. 238), or by *παρ' ὀλίγου* (Bernhardy 258). See Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon. Among the numerous examples of the use of *ὀλίγος* in its various forms which are there given under this word, not one can be found in which we have *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* in the sense of "almost."

Moreover, Robinson, in his Lexicon of the New Testament, gives no example in which *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* is thus used. He refers to this passage, also to Eph. iii. 3 (in our English version, "as I wrote afore in a few words," *ἐν ὀλίγῳ*; in Luther's version: *wie ich droben auf's kürzeste geschrieben habe*"); and this is the only other passage in the New Testament in which *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* is found; but in neither does he give to this phrase the signification "almost."

The received translation of Acts xxvi. 28, therefore, "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," must be set aside. As Dr. Hackett in his Commentary on the Acts (p. 407) says: "It is held, at present, to be unphilological to translate *ἐν ὀλίγῳ almost*." With him agree all the later critical com-

<sup>1</sup> It is true that Bloomfield, in his note on Acts xxvi. 28, says: "The sense here must be 'within a little,' or *almost*, though the phrase usually signifies 'in a short time.' Yet *one* example of the other sense is adduced by Grotius from Plato, to which I would add Thucyd. i. 18." I am not able to verify the citation of Grotius, as the particular work is not mentioned; but, this is the passage in Thucydides to which reference is made: *ἔτη γὰρ ἔστι μάλιστα τετρακόσια καὶ ὀλίγη πλείω ἐς τὴν τελευταίην τοῦδε τοῦ πολέμου*. In the first place, it will be noticed that the phrase in question, *ἐν ὀλίγῳ*, is not found in the passage; secondly, *ὀλίγη*, which is found, is not here used in the sense of "almost." That an editor of Thucydides should make such a blunder is unaccountable. In regard to the passage in Plato referred to by Grotius, it should be added that our classical scholars know of no such use of *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* in Plato's writings.

mentators; namely, Meyer, DeWette, Alford, Ellicott, Conant, Olshausen, Lechler, Whedon, and others.

I am aware that there are some, who, even at the bidding of such authorities, will not thus summarily dismiss the received translation of *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* in the passage now before us. There are rhetorical, historical, and dogmatical reasons, they say, why this translation should be retained, notwithstanding the weightiest philological objections. But to such I commend the words of Ellicott, in his Preface to the first edition of his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians: "My own studies," he says, "have irresistibly impelled me to the conviction that, without making any unnecessary distinctions between grammar and exegesis, we are still to recognize the necessity, of first endeavoring to find out what the words actually convey, according to the ordinary rules of language; then, secondly, of observing the peculiar shade of meaning that the context appears to impart. For often has this process been reversed; the commentator, on the strength of some 'received interpretation' or some dogmatical bias, has stated what the passage ought to mean, and then has been tempted, by the force of bad example, to coerce the words 'per Hebraismum,' or 'per enallagen,' to yield the required sense." To do this, however, is, as Ellicott says, to use the word of God deceitfully.

What, then, first of all, is the meaning of the phrase *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* in Agrippa's address to Paul, "*ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεισιν Χριστιανὸν γενέσθαι*"?

Wetstein and others<sup>1</sup> have brought together a large number of examples from classical writers to show that *χρόνῳ* is to

<sup>1</sup> The citations of these writers are not within my reach. A passage, however, in which *χρόνῳ* is expressed with *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* we have in Plato's Apology, II. E. ἀπολογητέον δὲ, ὡ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, καὶ ἐπιχειρητέον ὑμῶν ἐξελεῖσθαι τὴν διαβολήν, ἣν υμεῖς ἐν πολλῷ χρόνῳ ἔσχετε, ταύτην ἐν οὕτως ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ. An example of its omission (according to Wagner in the notes of his excellent edition of the Apology), we have in VII. B. ἔγνω οὖν καὶ περὶ τῶν ποιητῶν ἐν ὀλίγῳ τοῦτο, ὅτι οὐ σοφία ποιοῦν & ποιοῦν, etc. It is but just, however, to say that another translation is possible here, namely, in brief, in a few words; and so Liddell and Scott in their Lexicon. Paul used the phrase in Eph. iii. 3, in this sense.

be supplied after *ἐν ὀλίγῳ*. This is Robinson's view in his *Lexicon of the New Testament*. It is also the view of Neander, DeWette, Hackett, Howson, and others. Neander, after giving a translation of the passage in his *Planting and Training*,<sup>1</sup> in which he makes *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* temporal, says in a note: "I understand the words *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* in the only sense which they can have according to the '*usus loquendi*,' and Paul's answer." DeWette says: "Almost = *παρ' ὀλίγον, ὀλίγου*, is ungrammatical (*sprachwidrig*), and does not correspond to *ἐν πολλῶ*: therefore, *in a short time*."<sup>2</sup> Dr. Hackett, in his *Commentary on the Acts* (p. 407), translates: "In a little time you persuade me to become a Christian." Howson, in his *Life and Epistles of Paul* (Vol. ii. p. 298), says: "The king's reply was, 'Thou wilt soon persuade me to be a Christian.'" This interpretation, he adds in a note, "agrees best with the following *ἐν ὀλίγῳ καὶ ἐν πολλῶ*."

Of course, by these writers the same sense is given to *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* in the 29th vs. According to Neander, Paul's reply in spirit was this: "Yes, I pray God that sooner or later, he may make not only thee, O king, but all who hear me to-day, what I now am, except these bonds!" So also DeWette and Howson. Dr. Hackett paraphrases the passage thus: "I could wish that you might become a Christian *in a short time*, as you say; and if not in a short time, *in a long time*. I should rejoice in such an event, could it ever take place, whether it were sooner or later."

The advocates of this view, it will be noticed, appeal not only to the *usus loquendi*, but say that the *ἐν πολλῶ* of the 29th vs. requires us, both in Agrippa's remark and in Paul's answer, to give a temporal sense to *ἐν ὀλίγῳ*. It happens, however, that in some manuscripts in this passage *ἐν μεγάλῳ* is found instead of *ἐν πολλῶ*. Indeed from internal evidence alone such textual critics as Lachmann and Tischendorf long ago adopted this reading. The recent discovery of the *Codex Sinaiticus*, which has *ἐν μεγάλῳ*, had greatly strengthened the external evidence (A and B have the same reading), so

<sup>1</sup> American edition, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Apostelgeschichte*, p. 181.

that now the corrected text seems to have the weight of authority. Meyer early adopted this reading, and accordingly was compelled to reject the temporal sense of *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* in both passages. In his view the phrase is to be regarded as quantitative, and following Oecumenius (*ἐν ὀλίγῳ· τουτέστι δι' ὀλίγων ῥημάτων, ἐν βραχέσι λόγοις, ἐν ὀλίγῃ διδασκαλίᾳ, χωρὶς πολλοῦ πόνου καὶ συνεχοῦς διαλέξεως*) he gives this translation to the 28th vs.: "With little (*ἐν* instrumental) thou persuadedest me to become a Christian"; i.e., with little pains, effort, by a few words. This is also the view of Alford, Conant, Lechler, Ellicott, Olshausen, and others, who with Meyer adopt the reading *ἐν μεγάλῳ*. Conant translates the 28th vs.: "With little pains thou persuadedest me to become a Christian." Dr. Hackett says that this would, no doubt, be the correct explanation if *ἐν μεγάλῳ* is to take the place of *ἐν πολλῷ* in the 29th vs. Whether he would regard the reading of the Codex Sinaiticus as sufficient with A and B to outweigh the common text, I am unable to say.

In the 29th vs., Meyer and the other commentators, who agree with him in his interpretation of *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* in the 28th vs., translate *ἐν ὀλίγῳ καὶ ἐν μεγάλῳ* with little effort, pains, trouble, or with great. Thus Alford, in his "How to Study the New Testament" (p. 354), gives this translation: "I would to God, that, whether with little persuasion or with much, not only thou, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds."

The interpretation of the phrase *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* in these verses, then, depends upon the reading which we adopt. If we regard that of the *textus receptus* as the true reading, following the *usus loquendi* we must give to *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* a temporal sense. If, on the other hand, we accept *ἐν μεγάλῳ* as the true reading, in accordance with the preponderating weight of manuscript authority, we must, likewise following the *usus loquendi*, give the *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* a quantitative sense. The latter view, therefore, seems to be the true one.

But whether we give to *ἐν ὀλίγῳ* a temporal or a quantitative sense, the question arises how are we to understand the

words of Agrippa in his address to Paul? It hardly seems as though the king could have been in earnest. At the close of the apostle's fervent personal appeal he abruptly broke off the interview; and Agrippa passed out from the presence of Paul, never again to meet him until they both, king and apostle, appear at the judgment-bar of Jesus Christ.

It may be that Paul by his courteous address had made a favorable impression upon the mind of Agrippa, and that in dismissing him, the king adopted a courtly form of expression, which the apostle at once caught up, and pressed into the service of his Master.

Hackett and Olshausen are of the opinion that Agrippa was moved by the earnest manner of the apostle, and sought "to conceal his emotion under the form of a jest." And certainly the words of Agrippa to Festus, when the king and the governor had retired at the close of the interview, seem to show that the apostle, by his address, not only had not prejudiced his cause, but had found favor in the eyes of the king. According to this view, therefore, we have in Agrippa, as in Felix, an illustration of the power of the truth over a worldly heart, and the power of that heart to resist the truth. For however deep may have been the inward emotion of Agrippa, it was not abiding, and he died as he had lived.

Others, and by far the larger number of our recent critical commentators (for example, Meyer, DeWette, Neander, Lechler, Alford), regard the words of Agrippa as a scornful outburst. I cannot but think that this is the true view. In its favor is the use by Agrippa of the word *Χριστιανόν*, a term of contempt. It is also in harmony with the well-known character of the king. The proud spirit of Agrippa was aroused. He a Christian! Did the apostle think that a monarch on his throne could thus be persuaded to take a place among the followers of the despised Nazarene! Even the common people regarded Paul and his associates as fanatical religionists. The lowest and most worthless had only words of contempt for the disciples of a crucified leader. And should *he* bow the knee—the mightiest representative

of the royal house of Herod, wearing a crown that he had received from the Caesars, surrounded, too, by princely associates—should *he* bow the knee, and thus make the humiliating confession, Galilean, thou hast conquered? No! His spirit was stirred within him. The very thought was not to be endured.

Another consideration, too, must have been present in his mind. The gospel that Paul proclaimed was hostile to the course of life upon which Agrippa had embarked. Worldly advantage, and worldly pleasure he sought, and these alone. But the gospel does not minister to self. It has other aims, higher and nobler. It makes the life that now is but a preparation for a life beyond. Its language is, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" All such considerations Agrippa waived. He would indulge his sin-seeking soul. He loved the pleasures by which he was surrounded at his court, and he would not dismiss them at any man's bidding. In a word, he would be his own master, as he had been hitherto; and so with a contemptuous sneer—that cold irony, as Westcott says,<sup>1</sup> which "suits the temper of one who was contented to take part in the destruction of his nation"—he met the apostle's fervent appeal, seeking, it may be, at the same time, to rid himself of an impression momentarily felt.

Dr. Vaughan, in his work, *The Church of the First Days*,<sup>2</sup> uniting the temporal and the quantitative sense of *ἐν ὀλίγῳ*, has given this paraphrase of Agrippa's words: "What, in so short a space, and on so slight a summons to become a Christian; to forfeit, perhaps, fortune and rank, and to become the brother and the fellow of an outcast like thee; to part with all, as the result of listening, in a casual visit, to a poor prisoner's self-defence; such changes are not for me."

How, now, does the apostle meet this sudden outburst of the king? He had a heart which could not but feel, and most keenly too, the scornful words of Agrippa. Yet his

<sup>1</sup> Smith's Bible Dictionary (American ed.), Vol. ii. p. 1054.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. iii. p. 333.

answer was in everyway worthy of an apostle. He would not meet scorn with scorn. An ambassador of Christ, he was not there to repel, but to win. And so, with a courtesy and dignity that royalty never possessed, he took up the words that had just fallen from the lips of the king, and nobly replied : *Εὐχαίμην ἂν τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ ἐν ὀλίγῳ καὶ ἐν πολλῷ [ἐν μεγάλῳ] οὐ μόνον σὲ, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντάς μου σήμερον, γενέσθαι τοιούτους ὅποιός κἀγὼ εἶμι, παρεκτός τῶν δεσμῶν τούτων.* Dr. Vaughan, here also uniting the temporal and the quantitative sense of *ἐν ὀλίγῳ*, gives the following paraphrase of this reply : “ Well, be it sooner or later ; be it on the sudden or on long reflection ; be it by my brief words, or by any other process which God may see fit in his wisdom and in his mercy to employ ; my heart’s desire and prayer is that thou, with all that hear me, mightest become such as I am, except these bonds.” My chains, he would say, I do not wish for you — this cross I will bear alone, and bear it cheerfully — but this peace that is mine, this joy in the Holy Ghost, this sense of pardoned sin, this consciousness of communion with God, and the hope, the daily animating hope, of eternal life through Jesus Christ the Lord, all this I would have you possess, and these friends, too, who are assembled here with us to-day ; this, this is the wish of my heart, God being my witness.

As the scornful words of Agrippa are in harmony with his well-known character, so the firm, discreet, winsome reply of Paul is in harmony with the character of the great apostle. That he was the most courteous of men his letters and addresses abundantly prove. See for example the opening of his address at Athens : *Ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, κατὰ πάντα ὡς δεισιδαιμονεστέρους ὑμᾶς θεωρῶ, Men of Athens in all things I perceive that ye are very devout.* Paul, also, as Howson has clearly shown, was a man of tact and presence of mind. In the scene of the storm and shipwreck, in his address on the staircase of the tower of Antonia, in his defence before the Sanhedrim, before Felix, and here before Agrippa, this characteristic of the apostle is abundantly illustrated. “ If

ever," says Howson,<sup>1</sup> referring to Paul's answer to Agrippa, "speech was with grace, it was that admirable reply." Meyer also calls attention to the conciliatory opening of the address: "Wie wahr und würdig ist auch hier (Vrgl. xxiv. 10) der gewinnende Eingang, mit welchem Paulus seine Rede anhebt."

But, especially, was Paul's answer in harmony with his missionary spirit. Two thoughts must have moved him to make this last appeal. In the first place he knew that Agrippa and all those who were present with him were in need of the salvation that he proclaimed. They were sinners; their guilt, indeed, was apparent in the sight of men. They needed therefore to recognize their relations to God; to have a new principle of life implanted within them; to be born again — born from above. In this way only could they attain to the true end of their being, and at last win the unfading crown of heaven. The solemnity of the occasion, accordingly, impressed the mind of the apostle. The thought of the lost condition of his hearers stirred his heart. To the scornful words of the king he would not give a scornful answer. Perhaps, even yet, he might gain for his message an entrance to these needy souls. Certainly no word of his should be left unspoken, and laying aside all resentment he made his prayerful appeal.

For, in the second place, the apostle knew that to meet this need of salvation, on the part of Agrippa and those with him, the gospel which he preached was all-sufficient. He himself had experienced its saving power. In what way, he had already made known to the king and his associates. And his contempt for Christianity had been as great as that of Agrippa, if not greater. He had no thought that he should ever become a convert to the faith which it had been his desire to destroy. But God who is rich in mercy to all, even to the chief of sinners, had mercy upon him, and from that day he sought to secure to others the same great possession, salvation by Christ. Here now were needy souls. They were living without the blessings of the gospel of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Lectures on the Character of St. Paul (English ed.), p. 37.

They might share them if they would. The message of the apostle, in all his missionary work, had ever been that which had come down from an earlier time: "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." The apostle believed that Agrippa and his companions might accept this gracious invitation. The sceptre of divine mercy had been extended on their behalf, as well as on his. Would they draw near the gracious king, as he had done, they, too, might receive forgiveness of sin and acceptance with God. And so he pleads. He has one prayer, and only one prayer: "I would that you were as I am, except these bonds. For I know whom I have believed. I have experienced the riches of divine love. I have felt, and still feel, that Christ is my Saviour. And peace I have, the peace of God that passeth all understanding. Joys, too, are mine, joys that I never before possessed; joys that the world cannot give and cannot take away. Moreover, nothing has separated me, nothing can separate me, from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord. Yes, Agrippa, and all you who hear me this day, I would that you were such as I am, except these bonds."

Noble words! Never was the apostle a grander figure than then and there. "The true king here was the manacled and suffering prisoner, not the monarch seated in state by the side of the emperor's representative, and surrounded by all the pomp of office."<sup>1</sup> All eyes were turned upon him. "And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them," and in thoughtful silence they withdrew. "And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Caesar."

The result, then, of our examination is this: that *ἐν ὀλίγῳ*

<sup>1</sup> Howson's *Scenes from the Life of St. Paul* (English ed.), p. 120.

never means *almost*, that it means either in a short time or in a brief address, i.e. with little effort—pains; that the latter interpretation is here required if we adopt in the 29th vs. the reading *ἐν μεγάλῳ*, which now seems to have the weight of manuscript authority; that in all probability, as we learn alike from the passage and from what has come down to us in history concerning the character of Agrippa, the words of the king were spoken contemptuously; he would have Paul know, and he would have those with him know, that he was not thus to be persuaded to join the disciples of the crucified Nazarene; that the answer of the apostle as presented in the corrected translation is not only in harmony with the context, but with the character of Paul as it is brought before us in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles.

I know that it is not easy to give up a translation which is associated in our minds with sermons that have impressed thereupon the most solemn lessons. Yet, as Ellicott says, "God's word, like the Ark of the Covenant, may not with impunity, be stayed up by the officiousness of mortal aid." Moreover, the corrected translation has lessons by which we gain as much as we lose in setting aside the translation with which we have been made familiar in the prayer-meeting and in the house of God. There are those in our time who reject Christianity, and who do so contemptuously. Was it a proud spirit which led the king thus scornfully to dismiss the message of Paul? It is this spirit that still rules in many breasts, and refuses submission to the requirements of the gospel. The evidence of this is to be found on every hand. You may discover it in much of the literature of the day. It does not disguise its contempt for what it is pleased to call a worn-out faith. You may discover it in the attitude of many who occupy prominent positions in public life. Mr. Ruskin not long ago made the remark "that so utter is the infidelity of Europe that no statesman of England or France would dare, in defending a measure before Parliament or the Corps Legislatif, to quote the word of God to support his position." The remark was undoubtedly an extravagant one; but it is

true of many individuals in both of these bodies. Rejectors of Christianity they look upon even such a recognition of the religion of the cross as unbecoming in men of their station. This religion is not for them. Others may be persuaded to swell the number of those who acknowledge Jesus as their master ; but, proud of spirit, like Agrippa of old, they exclaim, Think not to persuade us !

There are others, also, who are moved to this contemptuous rejection of Christianity by the thought that it is opposed to the course of life which they have chosen. Unquestionably it is. For what with them is the end of life but worldly advantage and worldly pleasure ? These are the prizes for which they contend. Moreover, the exercises of religion have no attractions for them. In fact they would ill accord with the occupations in which they are engaged. An antagonism is thus discovered. The principles of Christianity are not the principles that govern them. Hostility is awakened. And what is the result but this, that, does the advocate of Christianity plead with them as did Paul with Agrippa, their answer is like that of the king,—the answer of a worldling to whom the religion of the cross is foolishness. And they turn away with contempt.

But what shall be our attitude towards them if not that of the apostle towards Agrippa. It will be certainly if we have the spirit of Christ. Our hearts desire and prayer to God will have this as their end, that those who treat the gospel message with contempt may nevertheless be saved. For salvation is their need. The sweet song of the angels hovering over the fields of Bethlehem is an evidence of it. So, also, is the agonizing cry which was heard in Gethsemane and on Calvary. God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Here is salvation provided. There is sunlight enough for every flower that opens its petals toward the sky ; and there is grace enough for every child of earth, under whatever influences reared, who lifts supplicating hands toward heaven. Indeed there is no difference between

the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how shall we lead men thus to call upon this sacred name? It can only be done by earnest, affectionate entreaty. So our Redeemer himself walked among men, ever manifesting that spirit which we call the spirit of Christ—a gentle, self-denying, loving spirit. Men might reject his words, but we still hear his tender plea: “O Jerusalem; Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not.” We have seen that it was so with the apostle. Agrippa might treat his message with contempt, but he will not cease his efforts to lead him to Christ. “Would to God,” he exclaims, “that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were such as I am, except these bonds.”

He who manifests such a spirit may be no more successful than was Paul in his appeal to Agrippa. The scornful monarch died as he had lived, rejecting the gospel. But such a Christian will be true to his trust. Not his own glory will he have sought, but the glory of God; and at the close of life he will be able to say with the apostle: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”; and peacefully he may close his eyes to the scenes of earth, to open them upon the fairer scenes of heaven.