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ARTICLE V.

THE LATEST TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

BY HENRY M. WHITNEY.

IX. CONCERNING IDIOM.

IN Acts xxvi. 11 is a passage that illustrates in an interesting way the slow progress that the Bible has made toward being understood. We may trace it through several versions:—

1. Wyclif: *Bi alle synagogis ofte Y punyschide hem, and constreynede to blasfeme.*

2. A. V.: *I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme.*

3. Conybeare and Howson: *In every synagogue I continually punished them, and endeavored to compel them to blaspheme.*

4. Both Revisions: *Punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme.*

The form of the Bible Union agrees substantially with that of the Revisions. In forms 3 and 4 there has emerged a recognition of the fact that, by an idiom of the New Testament Greek, the imperfect tense may mean not only action continued (I was compelling), or action begun (I began to compel), or action frequent (I used to compel), and so on, but action attempted (I tried to compel).¹ The last of these senses is so appropriate here that it is recognized at once as the necessary thing: force was applied, but it largely failed.

In this connection we may call attention to two other examples:—

Matt. iii. 14: [John] tried to forbid him.

Luke i. 59: They started to name him Zachariah.

¹ Winer, §40, 3, c.

In these cases the Revisions have "would have hindered" and "would have called": most other recent versions and the "Edition of Paris" show a recognition of the idiom in the tense, but the makers of the old standard English versions, the "English Hexapla," were not acute enough for such things.

Recurring to Acts xxvi. 11, we quote:—

5. Weymouth: In all the synagogues also I punished them many a time, and tried to make them blaspheme.

Here, more than in the previous forms, we are, in spite of the unfortunate comma, helped to realize that not only the punishing took place in the synagogues, but also the attempts to extort words of reprobation of Christ: this use of a place of worship is a touch that heightens the horror of the tale.

6. "Edition of Paris" (1805): Souvent même dans toutes les Synagogues, je les contraignois de blasphémer en les punissant.

7. An edition dated 1785 has: En les persécutant, je les contraignois de blasphémer.

8. Weizsäcker: Ueberall in der Synagogen habe ich sie oftmals durch Strafen gezwungen zu lästern.

In forms 6, 7, and 8 we find a failure to recognize what some others had discovered, the necessary meaning of the imperfect tense, but there is the prominence of the synagogue as the scene of both the acts, and there is the added discovery that the punishing is subordinate to the effort to compel, the former being only the means, while the latter is the end: it is the relation that in later times subsisted between the rack and the agonized and perjured confession. In other words, by hendiadys, the acts are made coördinate, when one is really the means to the other. The mind responds with gratitude to this clearing of the sense. It is strange that the French versions should have carried the idea for so very many years before there came any wider recognition of the truth. The single

word "by," inserted before "punishing" in the Revisions, would have been a help.

9. T. C.: Time after time, in every Synagogue, I tried by punishments to force them to blaspheme.

In this form all three of the points are fully brought out: the effort was not successful; the whole action was in synagogues; the punishment was only a means to making the disciples deny their Master.

Thus the travail of the ages, through more than five hundred years, has brought the full meaning of the passage at last to the birth.

In the passage we find three examples of *idiom*: not only, as we have suggested, the special sense of the imperfect tense, and the hendiadys, but the special sense of "blaspheme." It is of the idioms of the Bible, in connection with translation, that we have something to say.

The word "idiom" is not very luminously defined in the dictionaries or the rhetorics, but its sense is pretty well understood. It is, for our present purposes, (a) sometimes the use of a phrase in a sense not consistent with the meaning of the several parts of the phrase, or (b) sometimes a dialectic peculiarity in the sense, or (c), in general, any distinctive usage. "There is" must count as an idiom, because it puts an exceptional sense upon "there"; a similar thing is true of *il y a*, and *es gibt*. The French use *avoir beau* (to have beautiful) to say that an action is useless; thus *il a beau s'excuser* (he has (a) beautiful (task) to excuse himself) means that he cannot do it; *beau* has no such sense elsewhere, and hence the phrase is an idiom. To say that a window "gives upon" a street or a court is to use an idiom of France (*donner sur*), a Gallicism, that for some forty years (Howells, Kip-

ling) has been trying to sink its roots into Anglo-Saxon soil. One idiom of our fathers was to make a verb, when it had a complex subject, agree with the nearest member of that subject, as in Shakespeare's "Thou and I *am* one"; another was the use of cumulated negatives to make the negation stronger, as in Shakespeare's "I cannot go no farther": Chaucer in one place piles up four; another may be found illustrated in Gen. xli. 32: (A.V., E.R.,) "The dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice," when the doubling was but once; another was to add the suffix *ly* to but one of a series of adjectives, as in Shakespeare's "sprightly and bold," "poor and basely."¹ These, and a thousand other idioms of our fathers, are dead. "Had better," on the other hand, is a living idiom, a perfectly good one, of long standing, historically accounted for, and the inept "would better" should not be allowed to displace it.

Not only are idioms continually dying, but they are as continually springing up: one of the newest is "failing this," for "if this fails." Many of these are uncouth, yet some of the worst of them cling to life like weeds. Generally, unless the fitness of a new idiom is instantly perceived, it is likely to excite a measure of resentment, as over the recent outburst, in England, of abandonment of the possessive case (e. g.: "There was no fear of him [his] going under" [R. J. Campbell]), or, in the Revisions, at John x. 41: "John did no sign": who ever heard of "do a sign"?

The matter is, however, larger and deeper than this: "Most tongues are full of idiomatic phrases, which, when we attempt to analyze them, are often obscure, or meaningless, or absurd, [but] which nevertheless constitute no small part of the

¹ Compare Spanish usage, as in "clara y distintamente," "literal y diligentemente."

strength and charm of expression.”¹ Colman reminds us that idioms are to be counted, not among the irregularities, but among the beauties, of a language. On the other hand, some of the most painful or ridiculous blunders in translation have come from failure to comprehend idioms in the language concerned.²

Idiom in the Bible is commented on as far back as Donne; he says: “There are certain idioms . . . which the Holy Ghost repeats several times, upon several occasions, in the Scriptures.” It was an idiom to use “blaspheme” of disowning Christ. It was evidently an idiom for the disciples of Christ to call their discipleship “the Way” (Acts ix. 2, etc.: compare the expression “new methods,” out of which came “Methodist” as a term of contempt). It was a peculiar idiom, in Jas. i. 11, to throw the assertion back into the past: as Wyclif has it: “The sunne *roos* vp with heete [the scorching wind], and *driede* the gras, and the flour of it *felde* down, and the fairnesse of his chere *perischide*,”—an imagined case in the past taking the place of the frequent general fact; this idiom, although Weizsäcker copies it, would not do at all with us, and all the translators into English, since Wyclif, have, so far as we have noticed, used the present tense.

An entirely parallel case of this idiom of tense is in Matt. x. 39: “He that *found* his life shall lose it, and he that *lost* his life for my sake shall find it.” The “Twentieth Century” follows the original, but the idiom is not at home in any modern speech, and most versions in any language state what is evidently a general fact in the present tense.

¹ W. D. Whitney, *Life and Growth of Language*, p. 96.

² A recent case of this is in the Hohenlohe memoirs: “*Bauernfängerel*” is innocently called “peasant-catching”; it means “confidence-game.”

This idiomatic Hebraizing avoidance of the present tense is conspicuous in places where many have found a surprise in the Revisions; e. g. :—

Matt. v. 10: Blessed [are] they that *have been* persecuted for righteousness' sake.

vi. 12: Forgive us our debts, as we also *have forgiven* our debtors.

It is a very peculiar idiom to use "Give glory to God" (Josh. vii. 19; John ix. 24) as an adjuration to a man to tell the truth.

All these cases exhibit idioms that are, at least by scholars, well understood. Our present thesis is, however, that there are in the Bible idioms which, if detected, have not been brought out in English idiom in any standard version.

I. Take the matter of hendiadys as an example. In English, in Latin, in classic Greek, it is rare and generally poetic: Vergil speaks of "pateræ and gold" for pateræ of gold; Cicero, of "memory and posterity" for the memory of posterity; Shakespeare says: "Contrive and quaff"; we say: "Try and think." In almost any language or author, outside of the Bible and colloquial idiom, the form is not likely to be frequent. Yet in the Bible, in each Testament, it is so exceedingly common, it is used, often, with such entire lack of poetic or artistic feeling, that it has to be counted, not as a poetic figure, but as an idiom, unconsciously used, just as we are unaware that we are peculiar when we say, "I was good and tired." Hendiadys is sometimes a fiery, and sometimes a homely, plodding, idiom of the Old Testament, and, by inheritance, of the New.

We have given great numbers of examples, of each kind, in previous papers. The following are only additional cases, bringing out no fresh aspect of the matter: we give them here, partly because the other cases are not under the present

reader's eye; partly because, given in connection with the present discussion, they emphasize the point; and partly because to many they will be just so much help toward the understanding of the Scripture. They differ in their degrees of certainty or imperativeness, and in their matter-of-factness, but, taken together, they help one to realize how pervasive the method is, and how far it is, often, from being an intentional or an emotional deviation from the ordinary forms of expression.

Just here one side-remark should be made: We have said that many cases of hendiadys are brought out in no standard English version; yet the "Twentieth Century" shows by far the most sagacity in detecting them and bringing them out. We do not, however, consider the "Twentieth Century," with all the merits of its second form, a standard version, and this especially for the following reasons: It is, at many points, so free a translation as to be more properly called a paraphrase: this alone should settle the case; it intrudes ideas that are not in the original; it breaks up the simplicity that often is of the essence of the original by attempting to be vivacious; it injures the fluidity of the style by an almost wholesale omission of conjunctions: the Revelation is the very last book on which such treatment should be put; it is equally diligent in reducing figurative expressions to a literal form; it as carefully dims or removes all local color; it constantly prefers an inadequate translation to one that would be more exact or felicitous by the use of a slightly archaic word; it has fantastic prejudices against some of our commonest and pithiest words; it substitutes weak, flat, words for strong ones, as, in 2 Cor. viii. 5, "expect" for "hope." Yet the merits of the later form of this version are so great, its conception is so penetrating or brilliant at many points, that it should be perhaps the chief

handbook of those who will some day give to the New Testament as final a form as it can ever receive.

We were about to give some additional cases of hendiadys: the first form, in each case, is from the American Revision:—

Isa. vi. 5: I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.

Real sense: Though I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell . . . yet mine eyes . . .

Matt. xxiii. 3: All things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe: but do not ye after their works.

Real sense: Though you do and observe all that they command you, yet do not according to their works.

Mark xv. 25: It was the third hour, and they crucified him.

An edition of 1785: Il étoit trois heures *quand* ils le crucifièrent.

Weizsäcker: Es war aber die dritte Stunde, *da* sie ihn kreuzigten.

Weymouth also and the "Twentieth Century" treat this verse as a case of hendiadys.

John xvii. 25: The world knew thee not, but I knew thee [a bad case of using the past tense where the perfect is needed].

Weizsäcker and the "Twentieth Century" have, in substance, the rendering of Weymouth:—

Though the world has failed to recognize thee, yet I have known thee.

Acts ii. 46: Gladness and singleness of heart.

T. C.: Simple-hearted gladness.

iii. 12: Why fasten ye your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness [Godliness is no longer an apt word here] we had made this man to walk?

No version that we have seen shows a suspicion of that which suggested to Olshausen his comment on the verse: "Piety is viewed . . . as imparting a real power."

v. 8: Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price?

It is possible to render this " . . . lie to the Holy Spirit by keeping . . ."

xvii. 25: Life and breath.

Is not this really, or substantially, "the breath of life"? Without life breath would be of small account.

xxi. 28: He brought Greeks also [even Greeks?] into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place.

It is possible to treat this as a case of ellipsis by inserting "thus" before "hath defiled"; or to omit the comma after "temple" and "hath" before "defiled" (so Weizsäcker); but hendiadys is the better view, especially as the temple is "this holy place." Such is certainly the spirit of the passage: "he hath defiled this holy place by bringing in Greeks."

2 Tim. 1. 10: Who brought life and immortality to light through the [his?] gospel.

Possibly "life and immortality" stands for "immortal life," but in this case the literal rendering carries an idea that is larger and richer. Yet every couplet of this kind should be challenged with the question whether hendiadys is not concealed under its coördination of terms; e. g. :—

Jas. 1. 13: God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man.

T. C.: God, who cannot be tempted to do wrong, does not himself tempt any one.

v. 10: An example of suffering and of patience.

T. C.: An example of patient endurance of suffering.

Rev. v. 10: Thou madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests.

T. C.: a Kingdom of Priests.

The proof of this is in Ex. xix. 6.

xvii. 13: These have one mind, and they give their power and authority unto the beast.

T. C.: These kings are of one mind in surrendering their power and authority to the Beast.

We close a list that might be much longer with a remarkable and, as it seems to us, an entirely unanswerable case:—

Matt. v. 16: Even so let your light shine before men: that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

If there is anything contrary to both the letter and the spirit of Christ's teachings, it is just what, according to the literal form of this verse, we are bidden to do: performing good deeds in order to be seen. Only a few verses farther along we are told not to let the left hand know what the right hand does; our acts of "righteousness,"—our prayers, our alms, and our fasting, (vi. 1-18)—are not to be done before men. Hence, in translating this verse, we have to seek a way of escape, and that way is found in considering the mandate an extraordinary case of hendiadys. It is softened none too much in the "Twentieth Century": ". . . that, seeing your good actions, they may . . ." It might be legitimately rendered: ". . . that, if they see . . ."

We do not undertake to say just how hendiadys should be noted in the English Bible, but somehow, especially in the more marked or probable cases, the reader ought to be not only enabled, but compelled, to know. In a few cases the real sense has already been put into the English text; in many others it ought to be; in others it might go into the margin; in the least probable cases mention in a commentary would suffice. But, all the time, the reader—and, if possible, the hearer—has a right to know what his Bible is believed to mean.

II. At the outset we gave some cases of idiom in tense. There is one notable case in which, from failure to allow for idiom, the English Revisers blundered out of the right sense into a wrong one, and the American Revisers and the Bible Union seem to have felt bound to follow:—

Matt. xxiv. 22: Except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved.

But the reference is not to what "had been" or "would have been," for the catastrophe in question had not yet come. No matter what classic usage with that tense may have been, it is entirely impossible to believe that "would have been" is right. We have to suppose that Christ spoke, and that the apostle wrote, something that would fit the facts. The Revisers were keen enough to realize that they must not go by classic usage in another part of that same clause: they wrote "no flesh" where by idiom, by Hebraism, the original has "not all flesh"; but with that their courage failed, and they must needs reverse all precedent by giving to the word standing between "not" and "all" a perfectly impossible sense. The translation, even if it were unique with that tense, has to be essentially as Lange makes it: "Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved." Such is the uniform rendering of the second verb, so far as we have examined other versions in any language, and the rendering which the English Revisers started and the two others blindly followed is only another example of the almost incredible way in which one Revision or both went off sometimes on freakish ideas. If "would be saved" is anomalous in this place, it is anomalous by idiom, and that is the final word in the matter.

We may note another case of uncouthness through failure to render what is idiomatic in one language by what is idiomatic in another. John xxi. 18 ("When thou *shalt be* old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands . . .") is not even literal to the Greek tense, and is now contrary to the higher principle of "idiom for idiom." By idiom it should be "when thou art old," or, more literally, "hast grown old" (T. C.).

Before leaving the question of the tenses, we would add that the fading or weakening of an idiom in English is well illustrated by passive participles in such passages as Matt. xxii. 3, 4, and Acts xv. 20. In earlier times the sense of completed action was much more likely to be felt in the English perfect passive participle than now; hence the sense of the perfect was then given to what now seems a present tense. There was a like relation between the pluperfect and the past tense. In Matt. xxii. 3 we read: "[He] sent forth his servants to call them that were [had been, by a previous messenger] bidden to the wedding"; the point is that they had accepted the first invitation, but, on the customary second call, "begged off"; the form in the standard versions is very misleading. So in verse 4: "Tell them that are [have been] bidden"; and in Acts xv. 20: "Abstain from what is [has been] strangled." Such forms were once good enough, but now they should all be changed.

III. We have given, in previous papers, a good many cases in which the Revisers, instead of improving upon the old versions, made matters worse. A case not connected with Hellenistic idiom is in 1 Tim. iv. 12: "Be thou an *ensample*." King James's men found "ensample" in earlier versions, but deliberately gave it up, giving us "example" instead: why go out of the way to darken the meaning of the Bible with an archaism that was rejected by great masters of English three hundred years ago?

Another case not connected with idiom is in Phil. ii. 1: "If there is therefore any *exhortation* in Christ." There is no word that precisely fits this place, but "exhortation" is bad. "Consolation," as in the old versions, is nearer, but not near enough. "Encouragement" (T. C.) is, in our opinion, the best that can be found.

In Mark x. 45 ("Even the son of man . . .") it was a pity to change "even" to "also."

The following changes for the worse are connected with idiom:—

2 Kings xvii. 14: They would not hear, but hardened their *neck*. A whole nation had to get along with but a single neck! The men of 1611 thought that they must have had more than just one. In the original Bible it was an idiom to give many people a single mouth or neck or heart, but with us it is not so; hence, also, the Revisers should not have said, in Heb. xiii. 7, "the issue of their *life*."

Mark vii. 24: He entered into a house, and would have no man know it; *and* he could not be hid [hide himself?].

Tyndale has it: "*Butt* he culde nott be hid." *But*, as in many other cases, is obviously and necessarily the sense. From all such cases and from the relation of the Hellenistic to Hebrew we argue infallibly that it was an Hellenistic idiom to use καὶ in the sense of *but*. It is equally plain that in Rev. iv. 3 ("jasper *and* sardius") *and* should be *or*.

The *and-but* question and, equally, the *will-shall* question are well illustrated in Ex. iii. 19, 20:—

I know that the King of Egypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty hand. *And* [but] I *will* [shall] put forth my hand and smite Egypt. . . ; and after that he will let you go.

It is hard to make out what the American Revisers had in mind in changing 1 Cor. xv. 51 to "we all shall not sleep."

1 John v. 19: The whole world lieth in *the evil one*.

As to the way in which this wretched notion of an idiom came to be intruded into our Bible, including the Lord's Prayer, there is an illuminating passage in Hastings's Bible Dictionary (vol. v. p. 262).

It was an Hellenistic idiom to say in Phil. iii. 2: "Beware

of *the* dogs, beware of *the* evil workers, "where our idiom would leave the article out; hence the Revisers should not have put the article in.

It was an Hellenistic idiom to say in Luke xix. 2: "a man called by name Zacchæus": the version of 1611 did not use this uncouth form, but the Revisers evidently thought that they must. So they said in Matt. v. 35: "footstool of his feet." It was not necessary to make our Bible awkward by transferring pleonastic forms to a language from which pleonasm has through centuries been diligently weeded out. The Revisers evidently felt this in other places, for in 2 Sam. xiv. 5, etc., they changed the idiom "widow woman" to "widow," and in Acts i. 16, etc., "men, brothers," to lower terms. Surely there should be consistency in such respects.

IV. To turn to matters in which the Revisers did not go backward but only left things wrong:—

In Ex. viii. 26 is an obvious breach of idiom: "Moses said, It is not meet so to do, for [then] we *shall* [should] [have to] sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians . . ."

It is not good idiom to say in Mark xii. 33: "to love his neighbor as himself," when there is no word to which "his" and "himself" can refer. The American Revisers remedied a similar defect in Jas. i. 27.

It was an idiom of that part of the world to use as the epistolary standpoint the time of the receipt, instead of that of the writing, of a letter—as with us: hence, the idiom not being understood, the letter of Claudias Lysias to Felix (Acts xxiii. 30), and the letter of Paul to Philemon, are, in King James's version and in the Revisions, darkened at critical points. In Jude 3 Weymouth and Weizsäcker recognize the fact that the tense, on account of the epistolary standpoint, must be present:—

Beloved, while I was [am] giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was [am] constrained. . . .

There are idioms in the way in which certain words go together: it is not present idiom to speak of "dissolving" doubts (Dan. v. 16, A. V., Revs.); doubts are *resolved*. It is not present idiom to speak of *healing* disease (Matt. x. 8, etc.); wounds are healed; sickness and disease are cured.

There is now a fully established idiom as to the relative pronoun: when it is restrictive, showing what one is meant, we now, unless there is, in the demands of euphony, some reason to the contrary, use *that*, while *who* or *which* introduces only a parenthetical clause. Hence we should not say now (John vi. 58), "This is the bread *which* came down out of heaven." The first clause of the Lord's Prayer is addressed, really, to "the father *that* is in heaven." The Revisers seem to have used the two forms indifferently, not ignoring the distinction, but not aware that it exists; in John vi. 57 they have: "he that eateth me," in which the relative, being restrictive, is conformed to present usage.

There are idioms that are limited to a certain part of the English-speaking world: in England "expect" is much used for "suppose": in America it is only a vulgarism. Few Americans use "very pleased," or "directly he came" (for "as soon as he came"), or "different than," or "recover [from] the blow." It makes most Americans wince to read in Eph. v. 32: "I speak in regard *of* Christ and *of* the church"; they would say: "in regard to," or "in respect to," or, better because more simply, "I speak of Christ and the church."

We have given some notable examples of the idiom by which a passive is much used in the New Testament for the reflexive, or perhaps the intransitive, verb. It is curiously suggestive of the opposite idiom,—an idiom, by the way,

illustrative of the polarizing tendencies in language,—by which, in an overwrought self-consciousness, certain languages,—Spanish, for instance,—abound, altogether unnecessarily, in the reflexive, where we should have the intransitive or the passive: as, *alegrarse*, to rejoice: *disgustarse*, to be displeased; Matt. iii. 2: *se ha acercado el reino de los cielos*.

The point may well be brought out a little more fully:—

As with hendiadys, the examples of this peculiarity are of different degrees of certainty, interest, and importance. As to certainty, some tenses are the same in the passive and the reflexive. As to interest, doubtless the most striking is one that we have already given (Matt. i. 18): Mary found herself (not “was found”) with child by the Holy Spirit: there is no certainty about this case, but the reflexive as a rendering is extremely fit. As to doctrinal importance, the helplessness, the high-Calvinistic passivity, of man is turned into activity if we prefer the reflexive idea.

Many of these cases, but not all, are the result of the literary method of representing God as doing everything, while man is only acted upon: this is carried so far that in Matt. xx. 23 (“To sit on my right hand . . . is not mine to give, but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my Father”) the literal sense can hardly be other than that the seat is for the man who earns it by character attained; so in Acts i. 7 the literal thing about the “times or seasons [that] the Father hath set within his own authority” must be that he will suffer these things to work themselves out. Again, there are many passages where “in order that” is very properly rendered by the literal “when”: as in John xvi. 2: “There is coming an hour *in order that* every one [that] killeth you may think that he is performing a ceremony of worship to God.” The effect of this literary method is heightened in our

English Bible by the undue preference of translators for "shall" instead of "will"; as in Gal. vi. 7, 8: here the substitution of "will" for "shall" would put the reaping of the spiritual harvest under the laws of character, and less immediately under the fiat of God.

With these things goes also the fact that in the New Testament many things are said to happen "in order that" an utterance of the Old Testament may be "fulfilled," when perhaps the utterance has no such significance or does not even exist.

In Matt. xviii. 3 and John xx. 16 are two passive forms of the verb *to turn*.—

Except ye *turn* [lit., are turned] and become as little children. . . .
She *turneth herself* and saith unto him, Rabboni.

The first of these, taken literally, represents the old doctrine of "inability" to the full. The second has been made awkward by the entirely unnecessary "herself," but it certainly is not passive in sense.

Matt. xxvi. 43: Their eyes *were heavy*.

This is, literally, "had been made heavy," perhaps by what they had been going through: we should take that sense for granted, if we did not know so many cases of the other kind. We quote it as a case where the Revisers were not obliged to make the change to a neuter, and could not change to a reflexive, verb.

Acts xiii. 41: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and *perish*.

Literally, be made to disappear.

xiv. 11: The gods are come down to us *in the likeness* of men.

Literally, having been made like unto men; probably, as in the "Twentieth Century," having made themselves like men.

xvii. 34: Certain men *clave* unto him.

Literally, were glued: evidently, attached themselves closely.

xix. 9: Some were hardened.

Hardened themselves?

Rom. viii. 7: The mind of the flesh . . . *is not subject* to the law of God.

The verb is enfeebled here by the translators. It may be reflexive, or passive, but the sense is reflexive: the carnal mind does not subject itself; (T. C.) does not submit.

2 Cor. iv. 10, 11: That the life of Jesus may *be manifested*. . . Manifest itself? It is so in the Spanish version.

Gal. ii. 11: I resisted him to the face, because he *stood condemned*. This peculiar form is an effort to bring out the sense of the pluperfect tense:—

T. C.: stood self-condemned; Weymouth: had incurred just censure.

Paul evidently meant that Peter had been active in the matter.

In this connection may be noted a curious thing: In 1 Sam. iii. 2, 3, according to the three standard versions, Eli and Samuel *were laid down* to sleep. There is in the original nothing to justify this implication that the attendants had put them to bed; the verb is not passive, but neuter. The venerable English form is sheer uncorrected blunder: the reflexive or "had lain" is precisely what is meant.

Winer (sect. 39, 2, 3) gives many other cases of passive for middle, including the middle of interest; as:—

Acts xiii. 2: Whereunto I have called them [for myself].

xxv. 12: Thou hast appealed [for thyself] unto Cæsar.

Rom. iv. 21: What he had promised [for himself] [that is, had pledged himself to].

For each of these three the passive is an entirely impossible sense.

The Revisers were not particularly wiser than King James's men in this matter of the passive. At times, as certain examples here given show, they made a free paraphrase, with entire disregard of the literal sense; at times they ignored the question of voice; at times they used the passive as though they had to, although the peculiarities of the New Testament passive had long before been pointed out.¹ This third class needs to be dealt with again before the standard New Testament is really evolved.

V. Of course, the extraordinary amount of ellipsis in the Bible is also a matter of idiom. Here are a few more cases, from Robinson's long list, in which an omitted clause must be supplied by the mind, to account for a clause introduced by *for*:—

John ix. 30: The man answered . . . [Why speak ye thus?] for herein is the marvel. . . .

Acts iv. 20: . . . [but forbid us not], for we cannot but speak . . .

iv. 27: . . . [and all this has been fulfilled], for [they] were gathered. . . .

xiii. 36: [Now this was not said of David], for David . . . saw corruption.

2 Cor. xiii. 4: [And so it is with us as well as with you,] for we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him.

Heb. vii. 11: Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood ([as some may have thought,] for under it hath the people received the law). . . .

¹This is like that extraordinary double blunder, in Matt. xxvi. 64, by which "nevertheless" is put for "what is more," and "henceforth" is put for an indefinite time in the future. We give their form, and the true sense:—

"Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: *nevertheless* I say unto you, *Henceforth* ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

"Jesus saith unto him: Thou hast said; *yea, more*: . . . ye shall *yet* see the Son. . . ."

The second of these is intelligible; the first is not.

Matt. v. 12 is composed of a main proposition and two *for*-clauses, the first direct, the second elliptical:—

Rejoice and be exceeding glad, *for* great is your reward in heaven, [and you suffer no more to attain it than others,] *for* so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.

Conybeare and Howson give these among others:—

Act xxi. 26: Paul . . . went into the temple, declaring the fulfilment of the days of purification, [and staid there] till the offering for each one of the Nazirites had been brought.

This is one way of clearing up a puzzling passage.

Gal. v. 9: [Your seducers are few, but] a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

Winer (sect. 64) emphasizes chiefly the conventional, proverbial, or obvious ellipses, but some of them are very bold; as:—

2 Cor. viii. 15: He [that gathered] much had nothing over; and he [that gathered] little had no lack.

“Only” is a word that, in very many places, is needed for the bringing out of the real or the full idea. We have given examples suggesting the frequency of this in the Old Testament. From the New Testament we add:—

Matt. v. 46: If ye love [only] those who love you, what reward have ye?

ix. 13: I desire mercy, and not [merely] sacrifice.

xvi. 17: Not flesh and blood [, only,] have revealed this to thee, but my Father.

xxiv. 8: All these things [are only] the beginning of travail-pains.

Luke xiv. 12: When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not [only] thy friends . . . and rich neighbors.

John v. 45: Think not that [only] I shall accuse you [not “I will”]: A. V. and Reva.].

vi. 27: Work not [merely] for the food that perisheth, but for . . .

2 Cor. viii. 3-5: Beyond their power [they gave] of their own accord . . . and [this] not [only] to the measure of what we had [dared to] hope, but first they gave themselves to the Lord.

Phil. ii. 4: Not looking, each of you, to his own things [only], but, each of you, also to the things of others.

1 Peter iii. 3: Whose [adorning] let it not be [merely] the outward adorning of braiding the hair. . . .

We add, from the general field:—

Num. xxiii. 7: Come, [he said,] curse me Jacob.

This represents many cases of abrupt and unnoted change of speaker in the poetical and emotional parts of the Old Testament. The Song of Solomon would be much clearer if there could be indications of such changes.

Psa. lxxxiv. 10: A day in thy courts is better than a thousand [elsewhere].

Isa. lx. 17: I will also make thy officers [men of] peace, and thine exactors [men of] righteousness.

In this verse, by the way, as in some other places, there has always been a violation of idiom: "thy" should be "thine," because "officers" begins with a vowel.

Matt. xxiii. 13: Ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men: [but that does you no good,] for ye enter not in yourselves.

Mark iii. 4: Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good or to do harm [, since in this case we must needs do one or the other]?

This is, in strictness, a case of "pregnancy" of style, by pregnancy being meant the putting of weightier meaning into words than they ordinarily bear; as when we say: "When you are working, *work*," or: "*There* was a *man*," or: "What I have written, I have written." The Bible has much of this: as, in John iv. 20, 21, "worship" means "make the headquarters of worship"; in Acts xvii. 3, "suffer" means "die"; in Rev. vi. 8, "kill with death" means to destroy with pestilence (compare the Septuagint and Chaucer), or in some other horrible way; and in Matt. iii. 10, Luke ii. 34, etc., there is a dread or an august significance in the little word "lie." Of course, all these may be counted as cases of the ellipsis of the

intensifying word or words, but, on the other hand, they belong under the rhetorical method called pregnancy.

xvi. 7: Go, tell his disciples and [especially] Peter.

John vi. 49: Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and [yet] died.

Acts xii. 18: There was no small stir among the soldiers [over the question] what could have become of Peter.

Something stronger is needed here than "what had become."

xx. 21: Testifying . . . [the need of] repentance and [of] faith.

xxi. 37: Dost thou know [how to speak] in Greek?

Rom. v. 7: Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: [and yet it is not impossible,] for perhaps for the¹ good man one does [sometimes] dare to die.

1 Cor. iv. 15: Though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; [but I am your father,] for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel.

Gal. iii. 5: "Doeth he it" has necessarily been supplied by the translators.

Col. i. 15: Who is the [visible] image of the invisible God.

1 Thess. iv. 14: If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also [we believe that] God will with Jesus bring those that have fallen asleep in him.²

1 John v. 4: This is [the means of] the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.

Rev. v. 3: No one could . . . open the book or [even] look thereon.

xxi. 25: The gates thereof shall not be shut at all by day, [nor will they be shut by night,] for there will be no night there.

It is possible to dispute a few of these cases, but not many; it is possible to say of some of them that the ellipsis is obvious, but not of all. A thing that is much more obvious is that all the scholarship that has been spent upon the subject of ellipsis in the Bible has not availed very much through standard translations for the enlightenment of the humble

¹ "A good man," by our idiom: see an unmistakable case in the original of 2 Cor. viii. 15: "the much, . . . the little."

² Here, by the way, is another case of the passive used for the intransitive: "have fallen asleep" is, literally, "have been put to sleep." So pervasive is the idiom of representing man as acted upon,—especially by God,—instead of acting for himself.

student of the Word. There should be more indication of ellipsis in commentaries and other apparatus for the study of the Bible.¹ The Revisions do not, in this field, give the light that they should.

The object of this paper has been to emphasize such facts as these: That idiom is, at times, an extremely subtle matter, escaping detection by the lexicographer and the grammarian, yet felt instantly in style; that an idiom of one language is rarely paralleled in another;² that idiom for idiom is likely to be the finest kind of translation, but cannot often be achieved; that literal translation is so far from connoting literary significance that often the translator becomes only a blind man leading the blind; that the man with no special faculty for expression will blunder over idiom more than over almost anything else; and that our English Bible has suffered in this field more than many know, and more than those like to tell who know the most about it; the Revisers of the New Testament, by transferring idioms that in English are misleading or uncouth, actually put back the hands on the dial of

¹ W. C. Allen, in his recent commentary on Matthew, notes a curious but suggestive fact: although Mark's story is only about three-fifths as long as Matthew's, there being many parallel passages in the two, it is generally Mark that rounds out a sentence even to repetition or other redundancy, while Matthew goes quite as far in the other direction by ellipsis. Striking lists of these parallels are given. This is only one of the many fields in which may be found evidence of "the human element in the inspiration of the Bible."

² So true is this that it is one of the humors of language that an idiom that is classic in one tongue may in another be the rankest slang. Such came near to being the fate of the expression: (1 Sam. ii. 29) "Wherefore *kick* ye at my sacrifice?" And in Mark vi. 19 it is said that "Herodias *had it in for*" the Baptist: Doctors Chadband and Dryasdust would not understand that, but the boy on the street would think that the Bible had suddenly gone over into his part of our current speech.

³ In Luke xiv. 18 are two interesting illustrations in this field. "Beg off" would be "idiom for idiom," while "make excuse" is not

progress.¹ So high up does this evil go that bare transfer of idiom is a part of "the letter" that "killeth."

Of course we all know that the greatest things in literature, secular or sacred, cannot be fully translated at all. No one has ever truly translated Petrarch. When we first read that Dante's passage about the doves returning to their windows was the one consummate piece of expression in all the world, we looked it up in every known English translation and found not one rendering that made us thrill: it could be translated,

even correct. On the other hand, "*have me excused*" has held its place from Wyclif down because it seems to be "idiom for idiom," but it is not so: the sense is "hold [count, consider,] me as having been excused"; "hold" would be "idiom for idiom," but "have" is, and for more than five hundred years has been, a blunder.

The impossibility of giving "idiom for idiom" in some of the tremendous passages of the prophets may be well illustrated by Isa. xxiv. 19. So far as it can be transliterated, it is this:—

Ro'ah hithro'a'ah ha'arets;
por hithpor'rah arets;
mot hithmot'tah arets.

These nine words, fifteen in English, are an extraordinary threefold parallelism of comparison, inversion, assonance, climax, personification, and paronomasia, a combination so mighty that every Hebrew who heard it might well feel that he heard the crash of the ending of the world. But there is no possibility of transferring it into any other tongue; no other has such ways. The men of 1611, and the Revisers after them, did as well as they could, but there was no chance for "idiom for idiom," and the best that any one can do with the verse has no such overwhelming effect.

¹For absolute transfer, the words being shoveled over in their order, with idioms unassimilated, certainly nothing could surpass the Latin text of Arias Montanus, now most easily accessible in the "Leusden Greek and Latin New Testament." It is in its way an extraordinary piece of fidelity to the original Greek, a fidelity far too great for intelligibility to him who has not the Greek as well; as Latin, to borrow a phrase of Milton's, it

"would have made Quintilian stare and gasp."

Similarly, as is well known, between vocabulary and idiom, the Septuagint is so much more the result of transfer than of translation that often the sense can be made out only by turning to the Hebrew text.

but it had not been, it could not be, transfused. It has been recently said in print that "the poetic beauty, the rugged grandeur, and the tragic force ascribed to" Æschylus cannot be found in any English version. The same sort of thing is true with "the book of books."

Yet great work, monumental work, has been done in secular translation, and in the translation of the Bible into German, into Danish, into English. There was great work in the Genevan version, the Bible of the Pilgrim Fathers, the model and, as many think, the superior, of King James's.

The Bible, as we have it, is a wonderful book. Yet it can be better: "the one apt word" can be more frequently found; the idioms can be better understood, and more wisely matched with plain English, if not with idioms of our own; at a thousand points it can yet be touched by the chisel of the master, and with each touch it can come nearer to a perfect form: the angel can be yet more fully released from the stone.