

covetousness. No doubt he was somewhat limited in his choice. He could not well forbid Jealousy or Anger, seeing they were attributes of God. But still there remained Hatred, Pride, Envy, Malice, and all Uncharitableness. It may be that the Lawgiver prohibited that fault to which his people were most prone. It is more probable that 'his selection was due to that strong respect for property which is a characteristic of rudimentary minds—their own property, that is to say, for they do not usually hold equally strong views about other people's.'

And when we had finished Mr. Wheeler's article we turned to Kautzsch (*Dict. of the Bible*, Extra

Vol., p. 634b): 'The religious and moral significance and the germinal power—we might almost say the power of expansion—of the ideas of the Decalogue are not lessened if we must place it, not at the first beginnings but in the later stages of development of the religion of Israel. Even then, in view of its aims, and above all, in view of its structure, which in the first table shows an advance from the general and more spiritual to the more concrete and external duties, while in the second table the opposite course is followed, it remains a religious document which has a good title to be regarded, even by the Christian Church at the present day, as a kind of *Magna Charta* for the guidance of the religious life.'

On the Translation and Use of the Psalms for the Public Worship of the Church.¹

BY THE LATE PROFESSOR W. ROBERTSON SMITH, D.D., LL.D.

I.

IT may, I suppose, be taken as axiomatic that no translation of a poetical composition can be perfect. If words were mere arbitrary logical marks corresponding to precisely defined ideas, translation would be as easy as the substitution of x for z in an algebraical formula. But were this the case, there would be no poetry; for poetry is the language of the imagination and the emotions, and deals with elements of man's life which refuse to be precisely measured and expressed by mathematical signs. Thus in all ages poetry has had a language of its own, or rather, since poetry is far older than science, all language that goes beyond the expression of man's daily material wants was originally the creation of the poetic faculty. All early speech is, as it were, the crystallization of an early poetry, and the develop-

¹ The above, which formed a lecture delivered by Professor Robertson Smith, at the close of the session in Aberdeen Free Church College in 1872, is now reproduced (with some slight abridgments) from the notebook of Rev. G. Williams, Thornhill, Stirling, an old student of Professor Smith's, who has kindly placed at our disposal his *verbatim* report of the lecture.—EDITOR.

ments of language among different nations are as various and as incomprehensible as are the developments in different ages, climes, and historical conditions of human imagination and human emotions. In all languages and in all poetry, the fundamental notes are the same, but the shades of expression and feeling, on which the total effect depends are infinitely various. In poetry, as in every work of art, it is impossible to separate the artistic thought from the form in which it is incorporated; and the impossibility of precisely reproducing the form in another language is equivalent to an impossibility of reproducing the thought. Every translation, then, must lose something of the effect of the original; and the skill of the translator, as distinguished from the insight and sympathy required to understand the original poem, consists mainly in two things—(1) in such a familiarity with the poetical capacities of the language into which he is translating as shall enable him exactly to reproduce the poetic effect where that is possible; and (2) in the power of judging what part of the effect is to be surrendered, when

it is clear that something must be lost. The former quality does not admit of general discussion. All that can be said as to the principles of good translation has reference to the second head.

When we discuss the respective advantages of prose and metrical versions, of literal renderings and paraphrase and the like, our argument turns on the decision what part of the original effect it is most necessary to preserve, and what we may be content to dispense with. Of course, in such discussion it will make a great difference whether the translation is made for general literary purposes or with some special design. And so, in discussing the translation of the Psalms for liturgical purposes, we must begin by considering what are those features in the Psalms which specially fit them for use in public worship, and which, accordingly, a liturgical translation must specially seek to preserve. The answer often given to this inquiry is, that the Psalms ought to be sung in Churches, because, unlike all other hymns, they are inspired. But this answer is worth nothing for the question in hand. If inspiration is not altogether a magical thing, it must be possible practically to test and scientifically to analyze the unique character that it imparts to the Psalms, to show what are the features secured by inspiration, which render the Psalter the crown and pattern of all liturgies. Nor will it be profitable to attempt to deduce these features *à priori* from the idea of inspiration. Such *à priori* deduction generally turns on the quality of infallibility. But infallibility, which has regard purely to the communication of truth, cannot be the main characteristic of a book which has for its aim, not so much to impart doctrine, as to express and stimulate the spirit of true devotion. Accordingly, it was justly recognized by the Reformers that the true category under which to express the unique value of Scripture for the Church is, not its infallibility, but its normative character. As applied to the Psalms, this character can mean nothing else than that they contain a perfect pattern and rule of devotion; but this is a purely formal determination, the concrete features of which can be filled up only by actual study of the Psalms themselves.

Some of these features I will now try to enumerate, considering how each may be preserved in translation. I cannot, of course, attempt to give a complete and systematic enumeration of all the characteristic points in the Psalter, but will simply

recount some that seem to me especially important or apt to be overlooked.

The qualities of any literary composition may be considered under the heads of *thought* and *expression*. We have, indeed, seen that in the case of poetry it is impossible to make an actual separation of the two species of qualities; but at least in critical analysis they may be considered separately.

I. First, then, let us look at some of the qualities of *thought* that mark the Psalter. Of course, the word 'thought' must be taken in the widest sense, and understood to include all elements of feeling, so far as these assume articulate form in the mind of the poet.

In truth, all the points to which I propose to call attention under this head belong at least as much to the emotions as to the intellect. These points are mainly three, namely—Catholicity, Purity, and Immediacy of Devotional Feeling.

(a) I begin with the Catholicity of the Psalter. Perhaps, of all the qualities of the Psalms, this is the most indestructible in translation, as there is no quality that has deeper roots in the fundamental principles of the Old Testament economy, or is more thoroughly interwoven with every utterance of Old Testament devotion. No doubt the modern, like the ancient Gnosis, judges differently, and insists on the particularism of the Old Covenant, as if the test of Catholicity were geographical extension, or the necessary antithesis of the true religion to heathenism were the same thing as sectarian narrowness. The right test of Catholicity lies in a different sphere. That religion was truly Catholic in which every religious act of the individual has a relation to the religious community, and where the religious community is defined, not by any earthly mark such as separates natural societies of men, but by the free elective grace of God, to whom all men are alike. This was essentially the character of Israel's religion. The Old Testament believer had no access to God through merit of his own; he had no pledge of acceptance with God private and peculiar to himself. He could draw near to God's footstool only as a member of the Chosen People, pleading covenant rights in which he had part only in his fellowship with his brother Israelites.

Nor did these rights belong to Israel as a natural unity. They were the gifts of free grace. Israel

was separated from the Gentiles only because Jehovah had made Himself known to them. And the day must yet come when the rays of divine light that shone on Israel should pierce the darkness of heathendom, when nations should come to the light of Zion, and kings to the brightness of her rising. We are not concerned at present to follow out the objective development in prophecy of the grand Catholic idea, inconceivable to the heathen world, that the religion of Israel is a religion for all the earth, that all mankind must yet be united in the one kingdom of Jehovah. The same conception of the nature of God's grace, of the relation of the believer to his Redeemer, and his brethren in holiness, which finds its objective expression in the prophetic hopes, displays itself from the more subjective side in the devotional utterances of the Psalms. How entirely is the Psalter free from the particularism, the sickly individualism or sectarian isolation that marks so much modern religious poetry! The old Testament believer casts himself on God with all fulness of personal confidence; but in drawing near to God he always draws nearer to his brethren. It is the blessing of God's people for which he prays, a shower of grace to refresh him in and with the Church. Nothing in the Old Testament is more marvellous than the way the spiritual life of the individual vibrates in constant sympathy with the life of Israel as a whole. Nowhere can we find so perfect a realization of those words of St. Paul, which in our days seem to be so often a vain ideal—'If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it' (1 Co 12²⁶).

This noble catholicity of spirit marks the whole religion of Israel so strongly, that one of the most infallible marks of sectarianism is a distaste for the Old Testament. To those whose own religion is purely an individual thing, the whole Old Testament is a riddle or an offence. But in the Psalms, the Catholicity of the Old Testament reaches its highest expression. For no point in Biblical Criticism is more certain than that the Psalter was collected for the public worship of the Old Testament Church. Every Psalm, therefore, though in its first utterances perhaps the voice of a single believer, finds its place in our Psalter only because already in the age of revelation it was appropriated as the utterance of the Church, because even then it had proved itself fit, in generation after generation, to express the common prayer and praise of

the Assembly of the Saints. So viewed, the Psalms are seen to possess a value for public worship that is simply inestimable, and fortunately, as we have already remarked, this is a value that can hardly be lost in translation.

Even the loosest paraphrase can hardly so distort the spirit of the Psalms as to make them cease to be Catholic utterances of a faith that is in conscious fellowship with the whole Church. No doubt such a distortion may occasionally be produced by such careless translators as Tate and Brady, who, for example in Ps 127, succeed by an arbitrary change of person in placing the singers in direct antithesis to the Church. But such gross cases are rare. More often a point is lost by failure to observe the precise force of certain words that indicate the relation of the Old Testament believer to God, and to the Church. For example, it may be doubted whether in Ps 30⁴ the words—

O ye that are his holy ones,
Sing praise unto the Lord;—

generally convey to those that use them the thought (clearly expressed in the Hebrew word [חַסִּדִּיּוֹ]) and necessary for the connexion with the previous verse) that the ground of the united praise is fellowship in God's covenant grace. The true idea is clearly brought out in the French of Beza—

Vous qui sa bonté cognoissez
Chantez sa gloire;

in the Dutch of Voet—

Psalmzingt Gods gunstgenooten;

and even, though less clearly, in the Old English version of Hopkins—

Sing praise ye saints that prove and see the goodness
of the Lord.

Such oversights as our Scottish metrical version here exhibits, certainly impair the effect of the Psalms as hymns of the Church; but it would not be fair to lay great weight on them. In truth the only way in which the Catholic sense of the Psalms is likely to be much obscured in the practice of public worship is by the use of isolated sentiments torn from the context, in accordance with the radically faulty plan (in the Scottish Churches) of never singing more than from four to six verses at a time. But what I have to say on this point does not belong specially to the present head.

(b) I pass therefore to our second point—the

Purity of Devotional Feeling in the Psalter. In matters of devotion, Purity and Catholicity of Spirit run closely side by side. Only that which is pure can be really Catholic, and that which departs from Catholicity is almost of necessity impure. Thus the general deduction of the purity of the Old Testament spirit of devotion from the principles of the Old Testament religion, would be based very much on the same considerations as explain to us the Catholicity of the Old Covenant. The same doctrine of free elective grace, which forbids a man to set up a barrier between his own religion and that of his fellow-men, demands also that full surrender of the whole man to God in which, above all things, purity of devotion lies. And the consciousness that the object of God's redeeming purpose is not the individual but the Church, makes it clear that there is no full surrender of self to God, except in the exercise of pure and self-denying love to the fellowship of the Saints. It is not hard to show how fully these characters are displayed in the Old Testament religion. The grand sentence of Deuteronomy (6⁵), in which Jesus Himself (Mt 22³⁷) summed up the precepts of the Old Covenant, is even more directly a summary of pure devotion than of pure morality. To a devotion that acknowledges this rule nothing can be added.

It will hardly be seriously maintained that the religion of the Psalms is less elevated than that of the Pentateuch. Yet it is often asserted that, just in respect of this element of Purity, the devotional spirit of the Psalter falls short of the Christian level—that it is interwoven with elements of human passion and rancour which the New Testament Church must reject. And so, many translators, and especially many paraphrasts, have not so much made it their business to avoid introducing turbid elements into the pure stream of the Songs of Zion, as they have aimed at eliminating from the Psalter something which offended their religious susceptibilities.

I do not propose to undertake the defence of the imprecatory passages of the Psalms. It is only a very superficial religious sense that cannot perceive that indignation against sin must sometimes take the shape of indignation against sinners; that the absolute duty of private forgiveness which the Psalter acknowledges plainly enough, is not the same thing as passive submission to the enemies of God's kingdom. I do not doubt that every

passage in the Psalms can be defended in connexion with its historical occasion and with the peculiar circumstances of a dispensation in which the Church and the State met in a visible theocracy. But it is one thing to vindicate the purity of the Psalmists' spirit, even in their most awful utterances, and another to adopt these utterances for use in our circumstances. There are many things in the Psalms which we dare no more lightly take in our mouth, than we dare to arm ourselves with the woes which Jesus hurled at the rulers of Jerusalem. They are weapons too terrible for our hands, though history seems to show us that now and then they have been rightly wielded, even in New Testament times, when the course of Providence had reproduced in unusual degree the circumstances of the Old Testament saints.

We must, therefore, concede that there are passages in the Psalter which we cannot use in public worship; but we maintain also that the reason of this lies not in any imperfection or impurity in the spirit of the Psalms, from which the Christian spirit is free, but wholly in the historical difference between the Old and New Covenants. And so we cannot admit the right of the translator, who reproduces the Psalms as a mode of devotion, to tamper with these passages, substituting abstracts for concretes, sins for persons, and the like. That can never improve the Psalms as they stand, and let those sentiments which are not capable of being appropriated in our devotions, at least be acknowledged as useful for our edification with the help of historical exegesis.

On this view there is no generic difference between the difficulties attaching to the use of imprecatory passages, and the difficulty we feel in using such Psalms as are full of historical and geographical allusions into which we cannot enter. And all difficulties of this kind belong less to the head of Purity than to that of Directness and Immediacy of Devotional Feeling. The Psalm is in such cases not capable of being taken unchanged into our mouths, because that which was in former days the natural and direct expression of a pure devotional feeling in given circumstances, has, by a change in our position, ceased to be in direct contact with the religious consciousness, and calls for a process of interpretation to make it come home to our hearts. To the class of Psalms of which this is true we must return by and by.

Meantime, I pass from the present head with

the remark that the purity of the religion of the Psalms is not likely to be seriously impaired by any translator who seeks only to translate. Of course, a certain number of mistakes must occur in every version, and of such mistakes our own metrical version has ample store. But when the translator has real sympathy with the spirit of the Psalm, such errors are more likely to mar the æsthetic than the purely religious effect. And so, though the Scottish version sometimes misses the true meaning, and sometimes can hardly be said to give any meaning at all, it is very difficult to find cases in which it gives a bad meaning. The only decided instance that I can call to mind is in the reproduction of a sentiment which, even correctly rendered, lies very much apart from our present religious consciousness. When Ps 68²² (Hebrew ²³) is rendered, 'My people I will bring,' the quite unbiblical idea is given that God's people are gathered again in order to their participation in an act of vengeance. Really the sentiment is the same as in Am 9^{2, 3}. It is the enemy that is brought to judgment, be his hiding-place never so secure. Greater scope for error in the reproduction of religious sentiment is, of course, found in half-literal versions which allow themselves some liberty of commentary and allegorizing paraphrase. Such versions are, in truth, the most dangerous of all, and vastly more likely to distort the true sense than the looser kind of paraphrase, which allows itself perfect freedom of detail in reproducing the general tone of the Psalm. Take for example, Tate and Brady's rendering of Ps 84⁵, where we read—

Thrice happy they whose choice has Thee
Their sure protection made,—

against the spirit of the whole context, and the unvarying Old Testament idea, that only those whom God chooses can approach to Him in His sanctuary (Ps 65⁴). No doubt there is another aspect in which choice is ascribed to man (*e.g.* Jos 24); but the view that governs devotion is of necessity not ethical, but purely religious. In truth, this version is rich in renderings injurious to the purity of the devotional tone of the Psalms. Thus Ps 90¹¹—

And yet Thy wrath doth fall or rise,
As more or less we fear.

To this slavish sentiment even the unintelligible rendering of our Scottish version is preferable. But the sense is rather, 'Who knows Thy wrath accord-

ing to Thy fear?' *i.e.* so as to fear Thee aright. Our last example from Tate and Brady shall be Ps 103¹¹—

As high as Heaven its arch extends
Above this little spot of clay,
So much Thy boundless love transcends
The small respects that we can pay.

For another good instance of misapprehension of a religious idea I may refer to a version of Ps 42² which I have seen proposed—

My soul for God, the living God,
Doth thirst, O when in His abode
Shall I Him see?

This translation rests on a change of pointing in the Hebrew and is favoured by more than one recent critic. But the change is utterly unsuitable. It is not a doctrine of Scripture that God's face is seen in His sanctuary, as even Ex 33²⁰ shows. When the righteous is said to gaze on God's face, or when God lifts upon the people the light of His countenance, this idea is not associated with the outward service of the sanctuary, but belonged exclusively to the sphere of revelation and spiritual illumination (inspiration), which even in the Old Testament dispensation was never limited to fixed places and occasions. The Old Testament saint never believed that it was only in the sanctuary that he could come personally close to God. And the whole Psalm (which, of course, includes Ps 43) makes it clear that the singer longs for the service of the sanctuary, not as a means towards acceptance with God, but as the privilege of those whom He has accepted.

(c) I pass on to our third point—the Immediacy of Devotional Feeling shown in the Psalms. On this somewhat vague term a few words of explanation are necessary. It lies in the nature of true religion that the religious life must have its source, not in certain beliefs about God, but in God Himself, in actually realized fellowship with Him. And so devotion consists not in intellectual meditation on theological truths, but in direct spiritual approach to God. Such approach may be impeded by impure religious beliefs, but it is not secured by purity of doctrinal expression. Thus, the ultimate test of the fitness of any religious composition to be a rule of devotion, is the closeness with which the man who uses it with spiritual appreciation is brought near to God. Of course, in our present discussion, which has to do with

the public worship of the Church, we are not concerned with those obstacles to approach to God which arise from ignorance of God's revelation of Himself, or from a source of sin unforgiven.

Church fellowship is essentially fellowship in grace, and the praise of the Church is praise for grace received. But a *true* sense of God's grace is not necessarily an *adequate* sense, and the ideal of public worship is not attained, unless the overpowering sense of God's grace in Jesus Christ so fill our hearts as to subordinate under it all other thoughts and feelings. This ideal is so hard of attainment—there is so much in all our hearts that continually thrusts itself between us and the immediate realization of God, and God only—that it is a matter of vital importance that at least the material of our devotion shall be such as to interpose no disturbing element. Let at least the words that we take on our lips be the purest expression of a direct unclouded sense of God's grace, in its immediate presence to our necessities. This, I conceive, is what we find in the Psalter, in a perfection that no other hymns have attained. But, unlike the qualities which we have already considered, this is a character which is very easily impaired in translation. Like all other spiritual qualities, it does not lie merely in the broad meaning of the sentences, but subtly interpenetrates the smallest details of expression, and can only be reproduced by those who have themselves felt it.

Of the peculiarities of the Psalter in this respect, one of the most notable is the absolute subordination of doctrinal statement to the expression of personal devotion. There is very little direct religious teaching in the Psalms; when doctrine is presented it always appears as it were in solution, borne on in the stream of personal feeling. The singer does not approach God through his theology, but beholds the truth in the contemplation of God Himself. This feature in the Psalms is often connected with the imperfection of the Old Testament dispensation; and a desire is expressed for 'objective hymns' embodying Christian doctrine. A more erroneous notion can hardly be conceived. A doctrinal hymn is a hymn for schools; in which rhythm and music are enlisted in the service of memory. Such hymns, I think, first became common at the Reformation, for obvious reasons.¹ At

¹ Such a pre-Reformation objective hymn as 'O filii et filiae' is historical, not doctrinal, and has a place in the Church service only as an anniversary hymn.

that period they did very special service, and they have still an important sphere; but their proper place is not in the public worship of the Church. That want of 'objective hymns' in the Psalter does not lie in the doctrinal backwardness of the Old Testament will appear plainly enough, if we simply compare the Ten Commandments in rhyme, as they appear in most Protestant Psalters and Hymn Books, with Psalms like 15, 24, etc. The Hebrews knew, what we seem to have forgotten, that the poetry of devotion is necessarily lyrical. And to natures so passionately fervid in every emotion, so incapable of looking at anything with merely objective interest, every object of religious contemplation naturally received a lyrical interpretation. It is not enough that an undercurrent of emotional appreciation should accompany the intellectual contemplation of a religious theme. This is too often the height of our devotion. But in the Psalms, the direct feeling of personal devotion is always overpowering every intellectual and didactic element at will. This character of the Psalms is one to which it is very necessary for the translator to take good heed, as its expression often lies not so much in what is said as in the way of saying it, and in the balance and emphasis of parts of the Psalm. Take for example Ps 9^{16f}. As these verses read in the Scottish version, they appear to give little more than a bare abstract statement of principles of divine justice, which the singer cites in support of his plea. Not so the original, in which the Psalmist paints with lyrical concreteness that which he has seen of Jehovah's works—'Jehovah hath shown Himself, He hath wrought judgment, the wicked is snared in the work of his hands.' In a Psalm of this kind the rapid movement of the rhythm has an essential part in the effect, and the weakness of the metrical rendering is due to the slower flow of the ballad metre. The slow music of our Churches completes the distortion of the original effect, and practically excludes from use one of the noblest Psalms.

Of course, it is not only in statements of doctrine that it is important to observe the due subordination of objective delineation to devotional sentiment. The principle holds for all descriptive passages, and not least for those which involve a contrast between the outward aspect of things and that which reveals itself to the eye of faith. There is a peculiar perfection in the way in which the Psalms represent the wrestling of

faith with (for example) the empirical perception of the success of the wicked. Yet, in translation, such a Psalm as Ps 10 almost inevitably becomes heavy. Only the intense fire of conviction that pervades every word of the original, and finds its proper utterance in the unique and pregnant condensation of the lyrical language of Hebrew can prevent the long description of the wicked from overbalancing the noble conclusion. But, indeed, this Psalm will not bear separation from the 9th, with which it is of right united.¹

In cases of this sort, brief and nervous utterances almost of the essence of the poem, and the necessarily greater diffuseness of every English equivalent, is an inevitable drawback to the full reproduction of the sense. But at least the sense of proportion should secure the right balance of the parts.

Nowhere is the supremacy of the subjective devotional element more clearly brought out than in the Nature Psalms. The feeling which leads our poets to linger in loving contemplation of Nature as Nature was quite foreign to the Hebrews. Endowed with a keen eye for individual beauties, the Semite has neither the patience nor the taste to reproduce a scene in its objective totality. Whatever he saw in relation to himself was coloured and reshaped by the action of personal emotion. Such a tendency, enlisted in the service of the spiritual inspiration of the Psalmists, has given to us some three or four Nature hymns of unique perfection. The Western poet is so busy in regarding Nature as she is in herself that it is only by an intellectual process that he rises to Nature's God. Our modern Nature hymns are like versified chapters of Paley's *Natural Theology*. How different is the 19th, the 29th, or the 104th Psalm. The Psalmist needs no rational link to connect Creation with the Creator. His whole heart overflows with the sense of the immediate presence of God, and hurries him restlessly from this to that display of His power and love. In such a frame of mind elaborate word-painting is impossible. And the translator who seeks to adorn

¹Our version has some quite intolerable faults of mistranslation both in 9 and 10. The apostrophe to the enemy (9th) is not in the original, which runs: 'The enemy—is utterly laid waste for ever | Yea, the cities that Thou (Jehovah) hast destroyed—their memory is lost. |' Again in Ps 10th, no one can recognize in the Scottish version the figure of the lion crouching down to spring upon his prey and seize it in 'his two strong ones,' *i.e.* his merciless claws.

his subject by details, chosen in our Western taste, impairs the devotional immediacy of the effect in precisely the same proportion as he gives colour and fulness to the description of the natural phenomena in themselves. In this respect almost all translators who have gone beyond the letter of these Psalms have failed. Even as gorgeous a poem as Buchanan's rendering of Ps 104 has ceased to be a hymn.

It is plain, however, that in all these remarks on the immediacy of the devotional feeling of the Psalter, and especially of what we have said of the Nature Psalms, we have tacitly assumed a higher element than mere emotional concentration. Religion is not a mere sentiment, and there is no true devotion without a true knowledge of God, without actually hearing His voice and seeing His face. And so the measure of devotional immediacy will, in the last resort, be the directness with which every religious emotion rests on the immediate vision of faith, on the sense of close personal contact with the revealing God.

No one needs to be told with what ideal completeness this quality of true worship is realized in the Psalter; with what childlike simplicity, without effort and without doubt, the singers of Israel realize God's existence, character, and dealing with His people, as facts as patent and self-evidencing as the existence and the actions of their fellow-men; how easy, how inevitable, it seems to them to maintain at all times that all-filling sense of God's presence, which to us seems hardly to be reached even in moments of the highest spiritual elevation.

We cannot now pause to ask in detail why this is so, why we, in the light of a perfect revelation, must yet seek in the Psalms of the Old Testament a model of devotional nearness to God, which we can never hope to transcend. The solution of this problem must no doubt be sought in the line of Pauline illustration, according to which we are men, while the Old Testament saints were but children. In all that pertains to immediate personal feeling the child must ever remain the model of the man. The superior knowledge, both of Nature and of revelation, which are our equipments for man's work in the kingdom of God, has of necessity the tendency to fix our minds on the work rather than on the worker, on the organism rather than on its Creator. The Israelite knew no such hindrances. He had neither scientific theology nor scientific cosmology to come between

him and the direct sense of God as the prime mover in creation and history. And so the Old Testament Church was thus unfit for much work that falls to Christianity to accomplish; it, at least, had this work among others to perform. It has left for our guidance a perfect model of a child-like faith and devotion.

Now in translation it is essential that this model should be kept in all its simplicity. Every artificial touch, every trace of modern taste, must

be avoided. Let us in worship, at least, become as little children and throw ourselves with all simplicity into the pure and natural utterances of the Old Testament Church. A translation of the Psalms for devotional use must be, above all things, simple, even naïve. This great requisite our Scottish version has fully realized, and to have done so in merit that outweighs a hundred faults.

(To be concluded.)

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

ACTS XVII. 30, 31.

'The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.'—R.V.

EXPOSITION.

'The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked.'—The time referred to is that previous to the sending of the 'message' by Jesus which Paul 'proclaims.' The A.V. translates *ὑπεριδῶν* 'winked at' and the R.V. 'overlooked.' Both words suggest an idea of pardon not contained in *ὑπεριδεῖν*. The word is the opposite of *ἐφορᾶν*, 'to regard,' and only occurs here in N.T. The word here, however, must not be pressed as though it contained any positive statement as to God's treatment of men in the past; it has merely a negative force, serving to bring out more clearly the contrast between the past and God's present definite revelation. One part of an antithetical statement should never be taken alone.—PAGE.

THIS ignorance itself suggests a difficulty which the Greeks could raise at once. If God is creator and parent, how is it that He left man in ignorance of Himself? What of the past generations? This problem had vexed the apostle himself, and he now finds an answer in three lines of thought. (1) The first anticipates the modern idea of evolution. There were definite times of ignorance which had their place in the appointed seasons of the divine education of the world, just as in the life of man there is a 'time of ignorance' in childhood. God then 'permitted' them; and man, if unable to read the whole plan of God, must be content to know that it is His will. (2) Where God had not revealed Himself in the law, there guilt was not imputed; and so the apostle

conceives of God as overlooking the times of ignorance. (3) But this does not relieve man of all responsibility; for God had not left Himself 'without witness,' whether in nature or in the heart of man—the law written in his conscience. Man is responsible for reading this witness; and for failure he incurs guilt, and is liable to judgment, as his own conscience bears witness. The question of the times past is a matter of speculation. St. Paul's concern and ours is with the present and ourselves.—RACKHAM.

'But now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent.'—To both Stoic and Epicurean this counsel would appear most objectionable. To the latter because it would conflict not only with his denial of immortality, but with his whole idea of the gods, and to the Stoic because the wise man was himself a king, self-suffering, who stood in no need of atonement, who feared no judgment to come.—PELOUBET.

'Inasmuch as He hath appointed a day.'—Here the speaker would seem, to both sets of hearers, to be falling back into popular superstition. Minos and Rhadamanthus, and Tartarus and the Elysian Fields—these they had learnt to dismiss, as belonging to the childhood of mankind, 'Die Welt-geschichte ist das Welt-gericht.'—PELOUBET.

'In the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained.'—This, again, raises difficulties: (1) How can the God who 'dwelleth not in temples' reveal Himself as Judge? (2) How can God, who must be untouched by human ignorance and weakness, judge man in righteousness? The answer is—He will judge in (the person of) a man whom He ordained. So (1) God will be revealed in one who is the Son of God; (2) and the judge, being at the same time Son of man, will be able justly to measure the allowance for human infirmity.—RACKHAM.

'Whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.'—*πιστιν παρασχῶν*, 'having afforded' or 'brought forward proof' (of this appointment). *παρῆχσθαι*, regularly in Dem. of 'bring forward evidence.'—PAGE.