

element in estimating the comparative value of a translation of ancient compositions for devotional use?

The more I study both, the less do such defects as cling to the Revised Version disturb me—the more unbearable do the blunders of the Authorised Version become; and the cumulative effect on my estimate of the former produced by its multitudinous emendations of the latter is overwhelming.

Not a few passages in the Authorised Version are, to speak plainly, nonsense; if they be dear by association, so much the worse for association. Indeed, far too much stress has been laid on the “familiar associations” of the Authorised Version. Familiarity with the forms and expressions of religious thought is no unmixed good; their variation is often an advantage in itself, as conducing to alertness and reality in our religious apprehensions. By all means, therefore, variation should be welcomed where fidelity of translation calls for it.

At any rate, no one now pretends that the Authorised Version can be commended to general study without caution and qualification; yet it seems most undesirable to let the idea be disseminated that the book is in some respects untrustworthy, instead of substituting a corrected version of it, and thus defining the limits of that untrustworthiness.

I believe, with the Bishop of Durham, that the Revised Version will displace the Authorised Version by degrees, as the Authorised Version did the “great” and Genevan Bibles. But it would do so more quickly if certain details, not so much of translation as of printing and pricing, could be amended.

The excision of all the references, and of the page headings, the indistinctness of the numbers of the chapters, and the absence of a cheap nonpareil edition of the whole Bible, may seem little drawbacks, but unquestionably hinder the popularity of the Revision.

The Spirit and the Spirit-born.

BY THE REV. JOHN REID, M.A., DUNDEE.

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”—JOHN iii. 8.

THERE are very grave objections to this familiar verse, as a translation of the original. In the Greek it runs: τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ, καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ’ οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει· οὕτως ἐστὶν πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος. If we had not the A.V. before us, or were not familiar with it, we would, without the slightest hesitation, translate: “The Spirit breathes where He wills, and thou hearest His voice, but knowest not whence He comes and whither He goes; so is every one who has been born of the Spirit. The following objections make the familiar version an impossible translation:—

1. πνεῦμα occurs five times in the immediate context, John iii. 5–8. In four cases it is translated “Spirit”; in the other case, at the beginning of the verse (John iii. 8), it is translated “wind.” But if the New Testament translation is to proceed on rational lines, the same meaning must be given to πνεῦμα throughout the passage. It is nothing but exegetical lawlessness to make it mean “wind”

at the beginning, and “Spirit” at the end of the *same verse*. This of itself is enough to condemn the received translation.

2. πνεῦμα is one of the most common words of the New Testament. In all, it occurs about 370 times, and only in one other place is it translated “wind,” viz. in Heb. i. 7, “Who maketh His angels” (πνεύματα) “winds.” Apart from the question of the right translation of the word in this passage, which is still in dispute, it is well to notice, that the phrase in which it occurs is a quotation from the Old Testament, where רוּחַ, *ruach*, is used for wind or breath and Spirit. In New Testament Scripture πνεῦμα is reserved as the name of “Spirit” or “spirit” except in cases where it is strictly qualified as in 2 Thess. ii. 8 (πν. τοῦ στόματος), *breath of the mouth*, or Rev. xi. 11 (πν. ζωῆς), *breath of life*. The proper word for wind is ἄνεμος, which occurs thirty-one times in the New Testament, and with it our evangelist was familiar (John vi. 18). One would as soon expect

that 2 + 2 should now and again equal three, as that πνεῦμα, in New Testament Scripture, when unqualified, should ever mean "wind." If words have a meaning, they should be made to say what they mean.

3. The translation of the A.V. forces those who adopt it to make remarkable admissions. Godet recognises nothing strange or startling in saying,¹ "The application of the comparison in the second part of the verse is not quite accurately expressed. It would have been necessary to say—thus take place the changes in every one who is born. But it is not in the genius of the Greek language to square the comparison and its application so symmetrically" (!). If our Lord had intended to say, "thus take place the changes in every one who is born," no doubt "the genius of the Greek language" would have proved sufficiently flexible, to allow such symmetry of application. A translation which requires to minimise the genius of the most expressive of languages, cannot surely be "quite accurately expressed." The explanation is fatal to it.

4. It is now almost certain that the conversation between our Lord and Nicodemus was carried on in Aramaic. The retention of the word "Rabbi" in the record, is regarded as a confirmation of this opinion. If so, the Greek of our gospel is a translation of the original Aramaic. *But every translation is at the same time an interpretation.* And therefore we are at liberty to conclude, that by using πνεῦμα instead of ἀνεμος, the evangelist indicates, that he understood the Lord to refer to "Spirit" and not to "wind." In this we have a first-hand interpretation of the passage.

In view of these considerations, nothing but the absolute impossibility of interpreting the literal translation, can justify the liberty which has been taken with πνεῦμα. It can, however, be shown that there is no impossibility, and not even much difficulty, in the interpretation of πνεῦμα as "Spirit." The supposed difficulty has arisen from a misconception of the truth to be expressed. The majority of commentators regard the verse as giving an illustration of the manner in which the new birth is brought about, e.g. Godet: "Thus take place the changes in every man who is born." The reference to the wind is supposed to make the new birth more easily understood. But the

fact is, that all it does illustrate, when so taken, is its mystery. It illustrates nothing but that.

But the language employed by the evangelist, distinctly *excludes* a reference, in this verse, to the manner in which the new birth is brought about. The perfect participle phrase ὁ γεννημένος can only mean the product of the birth, the man *after he has been born* of the Spirit. If the reference had been to the act of birth, with the intention of describing its manner or source, the tense would have been the aorist—ὁ γεννήθεις. Cf. John i. 13, οἱ . . . ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν, "who were born of God"; John viii. 41, ἡμεῖς ἐκ πορνείας οὐκ ἐγεννήθημεν (Westcott and Hort's reading), "we were not born of fornication"; John ix. 34, ἐν ἀμαρτίαις σὺ ἐγεννήθης, "thou wert born in sin." The exact use of the tenses is a distinctive feature of the Johannine Writings. The contrast between the aorist and perfect is very clearly seen in 1 John v. 1: "And every one that loveth Him that begat (τὸν γεννήσαντα) loveth also Him that is begotten of Him (τὸν γεννημένον ἐξ αὐτοῦ). The manner of the new birth is described in ver. 5, "Except a man be born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." There the aorist (γεννήθη) is rightly used. But by using the perfect instead of the aorist here, the evangelist indicates *a comparison between the Holy Spirit and the Spirit-born.* Qualities or attributes of the Spirit are to reappear in every one "who has been born of the Spirit." The law of generation holds good in the kingdom of God, "that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." "Like begets like." Bengel, in a clear-cut phrase, gives the true interpretation, "sic est ut hic."

When taken in this way, the difficulty of interpretation disappears, and a fresh idea is brought out regarding those who are Spirit-born. They are (οὕτως) like the Spirit. All are familiar with the idea of the Christian life as one of Christ-likeness. Here the impressive thought is expressed, that it is also one of Holy Spirit-likeness. The particular points of likeness are stated—(1) "The Spirit breathes where He wills." This expresses the attribute or quality of freedom. The Spirit does not act from compulsion or caprice. His movements are in accordance with His will. In the largest and fullest sense the Holy Spirit is free. "So is every one who has been born of the Spirit." The life of the Spirit-born is marked by this characteristic. Spiritual freedom is his

¹ *Commentary on Gospel according to St. John*, vol. ii. p. 54 (T. & T. Clark's translation).

birthright. The Christian alone is free. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2) "Thou hearest His voice." This expresses the attribute or power of spiritual influence or communication. It also suggests, that the method is one which, like the voice, appeals to the intelligence, the heart, and the conscience. The voice of the Spirit is heard in the suggestions which quicken right thoughts, pure feelings, and holy inspirations. And the man who has been born of the Spirit, is endowed with a spiritual voice. "A holy life is a voice," says James Hinton. Such a life is instinct with spiritual influence. It appeals to other lives. It quickens in them such thoughts and emotions as are quickened by the Holy Spirit. (3) "Thou knowest not whence He comes, and whither He goes." The movements of the Spirit are hidden. We cannot trace His outgoing or mark His incoming. Mystery broods over His ways. And the spiritual life of the believer is likewise hidden. No one sees its beginning or knows its process of growth. Its fellowship with God, in ways the feet have never trod; its walk with Christ in the Word and in the world; its hopes and struggles, are all within the veil of spirit, hid with Christ in God. Even to the Spirit-born his life is largely a hidden thing. As Amriël says, "What is most precious in us never shows itself; only part of it reaches our consciousness. We ourselves, when all is said, remain outside our own mystery." The presence of these qualities in Jesus Christ, the first-born of the Spirit, bears out their application to the life of those who are to be Christlike. In Him we see the best example of freedom, the strongest power of spiritual influence, and the greatest depths of mystery. His life is still a secret, whose veil no man hath lifted.

There is only one point in this interpretation which needs further explanation, viz. the difficult phrase, *τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις*, "Thou hearest His voice." How, it is asked, can we hear the voice of the Spirit, when *φωνή* means *articulate* voice? We might retort by asking, "How can we hear the voice of the wind, since *φωνή* means articulate voice? The difficulty really springs from supposing that the voice here spoken of, must be audible to the sense of hearing. It may be so, as when our Lord spoke to Nicodemus; but the Spirit speaks in many ways and tones. He quickens not simply vague, indefinite feelings, but distinct, *articulated* desires and thoughts. The *φωνή* of the Spirit

expresses the word of thought (*λόγος*), not the word of speech (*ῥῆμα*). No one finds difficulty in the phrase, "The Holy Spirit said," or "Hear what the Spirit saith." These are interpreted in the line of spiritual analogy, and when that is done in the case before us, the difficulty vanishes.

As the majority of commentators are against the translation here advocated, it may be well to say, that it appears on the margin of the R.V., and is supported by Origen, Augustine, Wiclif, Bengel, Maurice, Vaughan, and Watkins.

This verse then gives us, not a description of the manner or the mystery, in which the new birth is brought about, but *an impressive description of the spiritual life*—the life of the kingdom of God, which follows the new birth. In addition, this translation provides an additional statement to that in 1 Cor. xii. 11 (*καθὼς βούλεται*) of the much-needed truth of the WILL OF THE SPIRIT. To liken His movements to those of the wind, no doubt expresses the fact that they are beyond our control. But that is brought out more strongly and intelligently, without the suggestion of caprice, of which "wind" is the fitting symbol, in the words "He breathes where He wills." Spiritual life depends on His action, but no one need lose heart, as one might easily do if His action were as uncertain as the wind. His movements are not arbitrary. The character of God the Spirit, is behind His will. Therefore the highest wisdom and the widest mercy guide its action. The sphere and time and means of His "breathing," are confined by no limit, but that of His own glorious and gracious will. And that will of His is as essentially a will to save, as is that of the Father or the Son. This revelation of the will of the Spirit, is part of the good news of the gospel. It opens wide the door of hope, and fills the soul with joy unspeakable.

The mistranslation of *πνεῦμα* not only hides this truth from the anxious, but it even misleads the wise. For instance, Dr. Monro Gibson says: "Little as we know of the motions of the wind, and impossible as we find it to control its currents, we know for certain that wherever we make space for it, in it will come."¹ But he fails to notice that that is to make the wind blow where *we* list. "Is it not," he also says, "a good thing, after all, that the wind bloweth where it listeth?" Rather let us say, is it not best of all, that the Spirit breathes where He wills, and that His actions do not *wait* on ours? Of him

¹ *Christianity according to Christ*, p. 134.

the words are emphatically true, "My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." The movements of the Spirit, like the grace of God of which they form part, anticipate the desires and thoughts of men. Our aspirations arise from His inspirations. Just as no sinner can have a stronger desire to be saved than Christ has to save him, so no one can have a deeper yearning for spiritual life than the Holy Spirit has to impart it. "The creature" cannot "surpass the Creator." And it is with the Creator of spiritual life, in the freedom and grace of His wise and merciful will, that we have to do in this matter. There is danger in

thinking of the Spirit under the figure of "wind," and in speaking of "Him" as "it." We must hold fast the revelation of His Personal Will.

One loss, and only one, has to be met in return for this ample wealth of truth. Preachers and commentators, in adopting the above translation, will no longer be able to fly off on the wings of the "wind," and show their powers of eloquent flight in phrases like, "the sad moaning of the evening breeze," "the gentle zephyrs," "the circumambient air," and other such poeticisms, which are made to do duty for definite, instructive, inspiring, and biblical, teaching.

Professor Thomas Hill Green.

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR JAMES IVERACH, D.D., ABERDEEN.

II.

IT would leave a false impression of Professor Green were we to say that metaphysic was his chief study or his chief interest. He studied the theory of knowledge for the sake of the guidance of conduct. He believed that a bad metaphysic led inevitably to a bad ethic, and that an unworthy ethic led to false and inadequate issues in every sphere of human activity. The beautiful memoir of him by Mr. Nettleship reveals to us how varied were his studies, how many were the topics that interested him, how wide his sympathies, and how manifold were the labours he undertook for men. Politics were to him a matter of absorbing interest. Whoso reads his *Four Lectures on the English Commonwealth*, his lecture on *Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract*, or his great treatise on *Principles of Political Obligation*, will at once see that he was no mere metaphysician, no dweller amid "abstractions," but a living man among living men. See how he talks about parliamentary reform. "We who were reformers from the beginning, always said that the enfranchisement of the people was an end in itself. We said, and we were much derided for saying so, that citizenship only makes the moral man; that citizenship only gives that self-respect, which is the true basis of respect for others, and without which there is no lasting social order or real morality. If we were asked what result we looked for from the enfranchisement of the people, we said that is not

the present question. Untie the man's legs, and then it will be time to speculate how he will walk." Again: "Our present system of great estates, as I believe, gives a false set to society from top to bottom. It causes exaggerated luxury at the top, flunkeyism in the middle, poverty and recklessness at the bottom. There is no remedy for this poverty and recklessness as long as those who live on the land have no real and permanent interest in it. . . . It is this debased population that gluts the labour-market and constantly threatens to infect the class of superior workmen, who can only secure themselves, as I believe, by such a system of protection as is implied in the better sort of trades-union. This is an evil which no individual benevolence can cure. Ten thousand soup-kitchens are unavailing against it. It can only be cured by such legislation as will give the agricultural labourer some real interest in the soil" (*Works*, vol. iii. p. cxii). To tell of his interest in education, both elementary and advanced, of his political and municipal activity, of his influence as a tutor and a lecturer, and of his work as an active member of the university, would lead us too far afield. In truth, no human interest was alien to him. But of these things we do not propose to speak. What further space we have will be devoted to Green's teaching on ethics and theology.

For Green the key to metaphysics lay in the fact of self-consciousness. This is the distinctive