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A MISUNDERSTOOD WORD

By PROFESSOR A. T. ROBERTSON, D.D.

It is the word ἐπίλυσις in 2 Pet. 1: 20, which is usually rendered 'interpretation'. There are several serious objections to this translation. One is the context itself. V. 21 gives the reason for the statement in v. 20, 'For no prophecy was ever brought by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.' This reason deals with the *source* of prophecy, not with the *interpretation* of it. No man ever started a 'prophecy' by his own will or impulse. The real prophets spoke under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, not because they wished to make a prophecy.

Another reason is the copula γίνεταί, which means 'comes' not 'is' (ἔστιν). Bigg feels the difficulty about γίνεταί here, and says that it simply has the force of ἔστιν; but that is never true. The difference is well illustrated in John 1: 1, where 'the Logos was (ἦν) with God' and 'was (ἦν) God', but in v. 14 'the Logos became (ἐγένετο) flesh'. So the idea in γίνεταί, in 2 Pet. 1: 20, is precisely the same as that in v. 21, with 'was brought' (ἦνέχθη).

Then the case of ἐπιλύσεως is ablative, not genitive. 'No prophecy of Scripture came of private ἐπιλύσεως.' The idea is *origin* or source, as in v. 21.

Besides, the original meaning of ἐπίλυσις is 'release', 'letting loose', just as the verb ἐπιλύω means 'I release, let loose'. Secondary meanings are 'solution', 'explanation'. The idea of 'interpretation' is possible for ἐπίλυσις in itself, but so is 'release'. In the context 'release' suits better than 'interpretation'. The word occurs only here in N.T. The papyri use it for the settlement of monetary transactions.

The verb ἐπιλύω occurs twice in N.T. Once it appears in Acts 19: 39, when the town clerk pointedly says, 'But if ye seek anything further (περαιτέρω) and additional (ἐπιζητεῖτε), it will be settled (ἐπιλυθήσεται) in the lawful assembly.' Here the notion of 'release' (disclose) suits better than 'interpret'. The other example is in Mark 4: 34; 'And without a parable spake He not unto them; but privately to His own disciples He

expounded all things.' For 'expounded' the Gk. has ἐπέλεν (imperfect active)—'He was expounding all things.' What does this mean? That in private Jesus merely 'explained' what He had previously said? Does it not mean that 'in private He was *disclosing* (releasing) all things to them'? The idea is more that of *revelation* than of exegesis.

Hence it would seem that Peter is urging that the readers give heed to the prophetic word (v. 19) because of its *divine origin* (vv. 20–21): 'No prophecy of Scripture is of private release (disclosure)'—that is, the impulse does not come from the individual, but from God, as he shows in v. 21.

It is well known that Roman Catholics have made much use of the usual translation of v. 20 as an argument against the popular use of the Scriptures, because 'private interpretation' brings great peril to the individual, who needs 'official' and 'correct' interpretation. All this is quite beside the mark if ἐπίλσις here means 'release' or 'disclosure' instead of 'interpretation'.

—*The Baptist Times*

NOTES ON HEBREWS

By W. E. VINE, M.A. (Lond.)

Chapter 11 (continued)

. Verse 5. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death*; Enoch's life was a life of faith, a life in which he pleased God. The Septuagint has this statement twice. The Hebrew has 'Enoch walked with God'; to please God and to walk with God are indissociable. The believer leads a life entirely different from his former life in which he pleased himself; he has a new motive, made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Christ 'pleased not himself' (Rom. 15:3), and He is our example. This walking with God involves the enjoyment of communion with God as the habit of the life, delighted submission to His authority, dependence on His guidance, the consciousness of His approval.

In his translation he is a standing testimony to the fact that for the believer the domination and rights of death are destroyed. It is gain to the life of faith. Prophetically, Enoch foreshadows the Church. He testified of coming judgment upon the world (Jude 14, 15) but did not go through it.