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SUGGESTIVE HEBREW PARTICIPLES

THERE have been men of brilliant imagination, affluent diction, and oratorical power, who disliked, or disregarded the grammars of the sacred languages, Hebrew and Greek. A soaring, poetic fancy might disastrously collide with a grammatical rule. A Hebrew participle or a Greek tense might impair the whole outline of a discourse. Like the ten commandments, the grammar will not budge. These grammars helped to destroy the former allegorical absurdities, and in company with lexicons and concordances, can puncture the modern inflated conjectural criticism. It may be a misnomer to class Hebrew and Greek as "dead" languages, since with modifications, they are a medium of lively communications to-day. The true life of civilization, to say nothing of the gospel of eternal life, flows through those languages. But their grammatical forms are for ever crystallized, to be studied through all changing times, and among all nations. The blessed Reformation is still with us. Its harbinger was the Greek New Testament, and mature men were stimulated to study Hebrew. Children twelve years old have learned the elements of these tongues. If another Reformation, or revival of Scripture study is graciously bestowed from heaven, we may have the inspiring sight of myriads of new students of the original, elders, deacons, Sabbath school teachers, as well as the thousands in high schools or academies. And their pastors would not dare to fall behind.

And now let us review some Hebrew participles, emphasizing them in each quotation. The Westminster Confession begins with an allusion to the light of nature, and the 19th Psalm begins with the same subject. Dr. Driver in his *Hebrew Tenses* distinguishes the character or kind of an action, incipiency represented by the imperfect, continuance by the participle, and completion by the perfect. Continuous manifestation actively or passively of the idea expressed by the root is the function of the participle. And (p. 48) he illustrates from the 19th Psalm. "The *continual* declaration of the heavens (participles) the *reiterated* announcement of day and night (imperfects), the *established fact* that this proclamation is audible wherever their dominion extends, could not be more concisely and expressively indicated than is here done by a simple variation in tense. And

few languages would indicate as much with greater ease and neatness, or by a lighter touch."

Sometimes commentaries explain the Hebrew participle, often they do not. Dr. W. H. Green says, "They express what is permanent or habitual, (the Lord) *loveth* righteousness and justice (Psalm xxxiii. 5), a generation *goeth*, and a generation *cometh*, and the earth *abideth* for ever" (Eccles. i. 4). And Mitchell's *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* defines it, "The active participle indicates a person or thing in the constant, uninterrupted carrying out of an action; the passive participle describes a person or thing acted upon by external events."

The idea of a participle's habitual or continued action may be transparent enough in Psalm cvi. 20, "The similitude of an ox that *eateth* grass." Dr. J. A. Alexander's comment is, "not in the act, but the habit of so doing". So too, as to characteristics (Psalm xvii. 12), "a young lion *lurking*" and Psalm xxii. 14, "a *ravening* and a *roaring* lion". In Psalm cxxx. 6, there is a beautiful repetition, "*watching* for the morning, *watching* for the morning". And Dr. Alexander explains (Psalm lii. 2), "a sharp razor *working* deceitfully, i.e. moving silently and smoothly when it cuts most keenly".

The participle sometimes shines brightly when it concludes a description or a paragraph. An exquisite instance of this is in Isa. xi. 6. Messiah's reign brings universal peace, as if wild and domestic animals would dwell and feed together, the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, the calf and young lion and fatling together—and a little child shall (habitually) *lead* them. "Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" asks the psalmist (Psalm xv. 1). Then follow characteristics, participles, *walking* uprightly or perfectly, *working* or doing right, and *speaking* the truth sincerely, in his heart. Other details follow; finally the psalm climaxes in a participle, "he that (constantly) *doeth* these things shall never be moved". Another psalm that leads up to a final participle is Psalm lxxxiv. 12: "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who (continually) *trusteth* in thee",—as Perowne says, "The psalmist rises at last to the joyful conviction not only that they are blessed who dwell in God's house, or they who swell the festal throng on their way to that house, but they who are one with him by faith."

A century after Calvin's death, Francis Turretin taught theology in Geneva; and it would be a boon to the Church, if

his volumes, at least, their Calvinistic topics, could be published in English. In his third topic, "De Deo Uno et Trino" (Edinburgh edition, vol. I, p. 167) he argues that the angel of the Lord who appeared to Moses (Ex. iii. 2) was not a created angel, but the Son of God. And the miraculous sight that drew Moses' attention was the bush (continually) *burning* with fire. In discussing the famous question whether God's knowledge includes future contingent events, he refers to Genesis xviii. 21 as an anthropomorphic description of a proposed divine visit to Sodom and Gomorrah (vol. I, p. 191). And a participle states the occasion, "Whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is (incessantly) *coming* unto me." In his seventh topic, about angels (p. 490) he mentions, as one of the limitations of their knowledge, that they do not know the heart, which is God's prerogative (made clearer by participles). Jer. xvii. 10: "I the Lord (constantly) *search* the heart, I *try* the reins." Turretin is an eminently Scriptural theologian, and other participles can be gleaned from his discussions.

When the Hebrew participles are presented in groups, they are the more impressive. Let us observe the following series: Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16: "He that *walketh* righteously, and *speaketh* uprightly; he that *despiseth* the gain of oppressions, that *shaketh* his hands from holding of bribes, that *stoppeth* his ears from hearing of blood, and *shutteth* his eyes from seeing evil; *He* (emphatic) shall dwell on high," etc. Isa. xlv. 7: "I *form* the light, and *create* darkness: I *make* peace, and create evil: I the Lord *do* all these things." Psalm xix. 7-9: "The law of the Lord is perfect, *converting* the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, *making wise* the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, *rejoicing* the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, *enlightening* the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, *enduring* for ever." Psalm xciv. 9-11: "He that *planted* the ear, shall he not hear? he that *formed* the eye, shall he not see? He that *chastiseth* the heathen, shall not he correct? He that *teacheth* man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord *knoweth* the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." Psalm ciii. 3-6: "Who *forgiveth* all thine iniquities; who *healeth* all thy diseases; Who *redeemeth* thy life from destruction; who *crowneeth* thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; Who *satisfieth* thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord *executeth* righteousness and judgment for all that are

oppressed." Psalm civ. 2-4: "Who *covereth* thyself with light as with a garment : who *stretcheth* out the heavens like a curtain : Who *layeth* the beams of his chambers in the waters : who *maketh* the clouds his chariot : who *walketh* upon the wings of the wind : Who *maketh* his angels spirits ; his ministers a *flaming* fire." Psalm cxxi. 2-5 : " My help cometh from the Lord, which *made* heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved : he that *keepeth* thee will not slumber. Behold, he that *keepeth* Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy *keeper*."

Psalm cxlvi. 6-9 : " Which *made* heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is : which *keepeth* truth for ever : Which *executeth* judgment for the oppressed : which *giveth* food to the hungry. The Lord *looseth* the prisoners : The Lord *openeth* the eyes of the blind : the Lord *raiseth* them that are bowed down : the Lord *loveth* the righteous : The Lord *preserveth* the strangers."

Psalm cxlvii. 2 : " The Lord *doth build up* Jerusalem : he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." 3 : " He *healeth* the broken in heart, and *bindeth up* their wounds." 4 : " He *telleth* the number of the stars ; he calleth them all by their names." 6 : " The Lord *lifteth up* the meek : he *casteth* the wicked down to the ground." 8 : " Who *covereth* the heaven with clouds, who *prepareth* rain for the earth, who *maketh* grass to *grow* upon the mountains." 9 : " He *giveth* to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." 11 : " The Lord *taketh pleasure* in them that fear him, in those that *hope* in his mercy."

Much Christian sentiment has been expressed about Palestine. " Over whose acres walked those blessed feet, which, fourteen hundred years ago, were nailed for our advantage, on the bitter cross." And why may we not become sentimental concerning those holy eyes which read these same Hebrew oracles that have been transmitted to us through a wonderful preservation ? " O may these heavenly pages be My ever dear delight ; And still new beauties may I see, And still increasing light."

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