

Osler says that that is all. Was he called to bless? Surely he did not know it, but he came to curse.

What is it that the student of science does to himself, not merely to make him incapable of belief in immortality, but capable of such posterous belief in his fellow-men? Does Professor Osler honestly think that, when we believe in the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, we are suffering from excess of emotion? He does not once mention Christ. As if the Resurrection from the dead had never been named, he makes his own confession of faith, and says that like Cicero he would rather be mistaken with Plato than in the right with those who deny altogether the life after

death. But what business has he, as a student of science, to be content to be mistaken with any man? If his science makes immortality impossible, let him say so and reject the belief in immortality. He does not say so. All through the lecture he seemed to be saying so. He does not say so at the end. He says at the end that science is organized knowledge, and knowledge is of things we see. 'Now the things that are seen are temporal; of things that are unseen science knows nothing, and has at present no means of knowing anything.'

If, then, science does not say that belief in the life to come is impossible; if it merely says that it is outside its province; why does not Professor Osler leave science for a little and consider Christ?

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

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### II.

THE offences against the childlike directness of the Old Testament apprehension of God's self-manifestation in Creation, Providence, and Revelation, which disfigure many versions, and which are always apt to creep into new translations unless carefully guarded against, are of very many kinds. I select a few instances, almost at random.

(1) All devotion is so far anthropomorphic. The abstract view of God, as the unconditioned, the all-powerful, the principle of infinite justice, and the like, is not that which can predominate in prayer and praise. God is prayed to as a personal God, and where this personality is grasped with strong undoubting faith, strongly anthropomorphic language is sure to be found. Of such language the Psalms are full, and we cannot afford to lose it. When, for example, the Dutch version in Ps 99 speaks of God as the *Heilig Opperwezen*, everyone feels the incongruity. But an offence of the same kind, if not quite so gross, is committed when Watts writes—

His *sovereign power* without our aid  
Made us of clay and formed us men,

or when Tate and Brady give us in Ps 36—

Thy Providence the world sustains,

or when, in Ps 3, 'Thou hast put joy in my heart,' becomes 'So shall my heart o'erflow with joy'; or when in Ps 8 Watts writes—

When I behold Thy works on high,  
The moon that rules the night,  
And stars that well adorn the sky,  
These moving worlds of light.

The Hebrew poet spends not a word on the description of the heavens; what absorbs him is the thought that they are 'Thy heavens,' 'the works of Thy fingers,' 'the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained.'

The anthropomorphisms of the Psalter are only an extreme case of the general principle that the concrete and personal is everywhere fitter for the language of devotion than the general

and abstract. Let us have no such paraphrases as this—

Shall He who with transcendent skill  
Fashioned the eye and formed the ear,  
Who modelled Nature to His will,  
Shall He not hear?

The Hebrews had no such word as 'Nature'; they had not the idea of Nature, which implies an abstraction of the world from God which has no place in devotional thought.

(2) The entire absence of the idea of Nature, the indifference to the order of natural causes, and the full conviction that all events are direct from God's hand, and that their true cause is moral, is a feature of immense value, which is very often lost. Thus Tate and Brady in Ps 91, not knowing that, in the Psalms, Nature is simply the interpreter of God's love or anger towards man, lose the whole ideal character of the description and give us such lines as—

No plague of unknown rise that kills  
In darkness, or infectious ills  
That in the hottest season slay.

What an idea! To the Israelite the plague was neither infectious nor of unknown rise. He knew that it was sent by God, and could not harm him who was at peace with God. This was a simple religious truth lying in the ideal sphere. But Tate and Brady transfer the same to the empirical region, and leave the impression that godliness dispenses with sanitary science.

Innumerable instances of errors arising from misapprehension of the Hebrew view of Nature as the transparent organism of God's purpose might easily be collected, especially from versions of Psalms like the 18th, the 50th, the 97th, in which the dull phenomenalism of translators often sees mere exaggeration instead of idealism. Thus we find Ps 50 treated as if purely prophetic of the last judgment (Watts), or in Ps 93 the floods are allegorized into nations (Watts). In all such cases the idealism of the representation should be accepted without qualification and without explaining it away. It is the idealism of childlike faith and confidence in God, the praise from the mouth of babes, before whom the wisdom of this world stands abashed.

I pass now to a different side of the large subject of the devotional immediacy of the Psalms. All thoroughly genuine devotional creation springs from definite concrete religious experience. The

devotional poet writes what he, as he writes, feels. Now some veins of religious feeling have a very wide suitableness to all circumstances. They can be fully expressed in words which are equally direct and personal in every mouth. Some of the Psalms are of this kind. Many especially of the later poems in our collection seem to have been written from the first for Temple use, and to have purposely avoided all special allusions which would detract from their generality of application. The use of these Psalms in public worship is therefore still easy; and most of these Psalms are still leading favourites in our churches, though, as a rule, they have not nearly the freshness and depth of earlier Psalms. But the earlier and nobler Psalms are generally much more special in tone. Many of them were not first written for public worship; or, if even from the first they expressed the praises of the Church, they at least are specially written for some event in the Church's history. There is good reason indeed to believe that the collectors of the Psalter expressly omitted such Psalms as were too personal and special in tone to admit of adaptation for temple use. The most personal Psalms have a general side, and express religious experiences and feelings which the Church must continue to sympathize with. But then we are not in the same position as the singers of the Second Temple. The Church has passed into another phase. Our experiences and feelings, if not changed in essence, are at least modified. And we are much more remote than the men, say of Nehemiah's time, were from the historical ground on which the more specially personal Psalms grew up. We need a commentary to understand many Psalms. We need a laborious process of historical reconstruction to appreciate and do justice to many veins of feeling they express. I need but refer to those imprecatory Psalms which I have already relegated to this head. And side by side with these may be put many of the allusions to the Temple, the Jewish polity, the House of David, the heathen nations, and the like. How are these features which need explanation to be treated in translations for public worship? I have already hinted that I believe that in such cases there is no wise medium between a perfectly literal translation and a perfectly free paraphrase. If the literal translation is used, some verses may have to be omitted. But very generally the difficulty would very much disappear if we could use the *whole*

Psalm, because then the thought would explain itself. For, on the whole, the devotional feeling which is Catholic and unchanging, would, if we take a whole Psalm, so overpower the slight historic discrepancy of position as to leave no real sense of incongruity in the mind of the singer. But I confess I think there is necessity for being very guarded in such a use of the Psalms. It is very undesirable that anything of the nature of an internal commentary should accompany the singing. The effect of anything of the kind is necessarily to disturb the purity and immediacy of devotion. And even the common and necessary mental substitutions, by which we understand the Heavenly Zion to stand for Jerusalem, and the Church for Israel, may be abused, and form the first step towards an allegorical interpretation. In short, I fear we must admit that some of the noblest Psalms, which, read and explained, are most perfectly fitted to shape and guide devotion, cannot be sung in our Churches except under the interpreting influence of special parallelism, in the present historical state of God's kingdom. But such Psalms may still be sung for purposes not purely devotional, *e.g.* in schools, and for this purpose should be kept literal.

But now the question fairly arises—Can we not by a paraphrase avail ourselves of the Psalmist's spiritual experience and apply it to our own needs? The question is a fair one. But the task is difficult, and unless well done had better be left untouched.

The following principles, I think, may be laid down:—

(1) A translation which is in the main literal, but which gets rid of all that is special in a Psalm by allegorizing individual words and phrases, is most objectionable—*e.g.* we constantly find the devil substituted for enemies, *conversion* for *destruction* of foes, spiritual blessings for temporal, mental for bodily distress, and the like. This is not fair. It may sometimes do no great harm, but often it destroys the whole sense. For by substituting an entirely different set of circumstances, we, as a rule, do away with all the fitness and harmony of the Psalmist's utterance.

(2) The foundation of the paraphrast must be historic exegesis. He must learn to appreciate the Psalms as first sung. Then only, the whole situation being grasped in detail, can he rightly choose out the general from the particular, and understand the way in which we can still enter into the same devotional vein.

Since not the words but the devotional effect is the thing needful to be reproduced, the paraphrast has a right to use all freedom of detail; if he has really entered into the thought of the Psalm. A paraphrase of this kind can be well written only by a man of deep religious experience. We have as yet nothing comparable to the few specimens of such versions left us by Luther. As for the lower semi-literal paraphrases, we have hardly one that is worth the paper it is written on. And I doubt if we are likely to add many to the number of good paraphrases, till we again recover something of that unison of deep personal devotion with high scholarship which marked the first generations of Protestantism. And unless our paraphrases are to be very good, I for one would rather not have the Psalms spoiled by familiar use of bad paraphrastic exegesis.

II. Time compels me to hurry on from the reproduction of the thought of the Psalms, to questions of *form and æsthetic expression*.

In a perfectly natural poetry like that of the Psalms, thought and expression mutually condition one another in the closest way. There is hardly a stroke of art in the Psalter which does not do direct service in stimulating or supporting the devotional frame which the thought indicates. As regards the imagery of the Psalms, this is implied in what has been already said. All the figures drawn from Nature exist, not for the sake of Nature painting, but directly for the interpretation of the religious idea, and they cannot be tampered with without tampering, at the same time, with the thought. The same thing holds good in every department of the expression. The whole Hebrew language is in a special sense a language of the emotions. Defective as regards the expression of abstract thought, it is a perfect medium for expressing feeling, especially religious feeling. In the hands of masters like David and his fellow-Psalms every word, every suffix, every modification of order, and the like, expresses some delicate shade of feeling, often hardly reproducible in another language. Hebrew, in truth, is a language of excessive difficulty; so difficult that most metrical translators have got more harm than good from their occasional attempts to go back to the original.

But it would be wrong to suppose that it is always by slavish literalism that the Hebrew sense

is to be brought out. Often the opposite is the case. Often a considerable change of language is needed to bring out a nicety of meaning, while adherence to the letter may be the ruin of the spirit. So the adherence to 'Jehovah' and 'God' respectively, where the Hebrew has *Jahweh* or '*Elohim* (or '*El*'), is a mere piece of pedantry. Nothing is gained in sense, much is lost in freedom, and after all, we know that in many Psalms a copyist arbitrarily changed the Divine names.

I find that time will not permit me to give illustrations of syntactical niceties, such as it would be well to keep in translation. But I must say a word or two on a very practical point—the rhythm of the Psalms. Hebrew has no metre,<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the rhythm of sound is left free to the author. What the language insists on is the so-called parallelism—a rhythm of sense.

Now something of this kind runs in all languages through the modern artificial sound-rhythm. The principle of *cæsura* is, in fact, a relic of a time when all rhythm was rhythm of sense. We cannot get the parallelism out of Hebrew poetry. And though we could, we may not do so, for this sense-rhythm, wave of thought and feeling answering to wave, is essential to the thought, and is a great source of the simple power of the Psalms. But, again, if we keep the rhythm of sense we cannot allow it to run its course quite out of relation to the modern rhythm of sound; for to allow sound and sense to clash is the greatest fault a poet can commit. If anyone doubts this, let him consider how much more rhythmical to the ear is a prose Psalm than a metrical version in which the parallelisms are allowed to fall out of relation to the line, *e.g.* Ps 49<sup>10, 11</sup>—

For why? he seeth that wise men die,  
and brutish fools also  
Do perish; and their wealth, when dead,  
to others they let go.

<sup>1</sup> We may remind our readers that this was written in 1872. Since then, as many of them are aware, numerous attempts have been made to discover—or create—metre in Hebrew poetry. But the metrical schemes proposed all involve, if they are to be carried through, such violence to the text and such *repeated* alterations of it (Duhm, Marti, etc.), that we doubt whether Professor Robertson Smith, had he lived, would have accepted any of them. We make an exception of course in the case of Budde's *kina* metre where, at least within limits, there can be no doubt that we are on solid ground (see Professor Driver's *L.O.T.*, p. 457 ff.).—  
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Their inward thought is, that their house  
and dwelling-places shall  
Stand through all ages; they their lands  
by their own names do call.

Almost all that is unpardonably clumsy in the Scottish version is caused by such violations of the parallelisms—violations which are much more offensive to the ear than even the addition of insipid epithets, when these are used to keep the metre and sense-rhythm in unison.

On the whole, however, our version has, in respect to the reproduction of the parallelism, a peculiar advantage. The ballad metre is itself a relatively primitive form of rhythm, and is subject to a very strict law of *cæsura*, almost amounting to a sense-rhythm. Just as in Hebrew verse, each couplet (taking fourteen syllables as a line) must contain a separate sentence or clause, and again the line is regularly broken after eight syllables. This renders the metre wonderfully fit for the reproduction of Hebrew poetry, as long as the parallelism runs into distichs, though the lightness and buoyancy of the original is sometimes affected by the slow movement of the long ballad lines.

The real weakness of the metre of our Psalms is in the reproduction of tristichs and other complicated rhythmical figures. Then the parallelism must be sacrificed to the rhyme. The metre has no elasticity, and a whole passage may be ruined because one line of the original is a little longer, or a little shorter, than those around it.

Again, the ballad metre has no capacity for strophical arrangement. Thus the strophes of the Psalms are often lost. If the strophe is marked by a refrain, the case is still worse. Nay, our translators seem to have thought it an achievement to get rid of the refrains by varying the rendering at each occurrence! The grossest case of this kind is in Pss 42 and 43.

Finally, there are certain rhythms in Hebrew which are not strictly parallelisms at all, *e.g.* the climatic rhythm of some of the Songs of Degrees. Here, too, our version often fails, as in the latter part of Ps 130.

Let me now in a few words attempt to bring this very imperfect sketch to a more practical issue.

We have seen reason to believe that the theory of reproducing the Psalms in all their simplicity, which the Scottish version follows, is the right one—that the qualities really valuable for devotion are almost necessarily impaired by any attempt to give

a fine translation, or to accommodate Oriental to Occidental taste. Again, our version is singularly free from such errors as proceed from inadequate sympathy with the religion of the Bible; and even as regards form, the ballad metre is probably the best medium we have for the reproduction of the Hebrew sense-rhythm. On the other hand, the faults of the version are considerable. I do not say anything of what is obvious to everyone, that increased smoothness of metre might often be attained without injury to the sense, and that tasteless epithets might often be removed without any reference to special principles of translation. These are matters, not of scientific discussion, but of poetic tact. But what I wish to urge is that scientific study must be brought to bear on any really successful remodelling of the translation.

One great defect of our version lies in a want of delicate perception of the subtler beauties of the original. Many of the grosser faults of translation might be removed by any new versifier, who would keep the consensus of recent critics in his eye. But it should be an object not only to correct gross faults, but to retain as much as possible of those excessively volatile excellences which will hardly survive double translation,—first, into prose and then into metre. In short, we should have our translation revised by some man who, to poetical gifts and spiritual insight, adds a great scientific familiarity with the Old Testament. From a revision by such hands much might be expected.

Undoubtedly it must be confessed that, from a metrical point of view, our present version is too monotonous. Congregations will tire of singing all possible sentiments to ballad metre. And why is this? The answer I believe is easy, and follows from what has been already said. So long as the Hebrew verse runs in distichs of pretty equable length, the ballad metre with its variation short and long metre is admirable, and gives us such noble results as appear in Pss 25, 36, 89, 100, and so many others which congregations never tire of singing. But a single deviation of distich may throw out the harmony of metre with thoughts. The metre of our versions is utterly inflexible, while that of the original is more flexible than that of a Greek chorus. Thus, in the finest Psalms, a feeling of incongruity arises, the lyric spirit is blunted, and the congregation cannot sing with full energy and heartiness.

Who, for example, could sing with much spirit these lines, vv.<sup>3, 4,</sup> and <sup>5</sup> of Ps 48?—

The Lord within her palaces  
is for a refuge known.  
For, lo, the kings that gather'd were  
together, by have gone.  
But when they did behold the same,  
they, wond'ring, would not stay;  
But, being troubled at the sight,  
they thence did haste away.

Contrast the literal unpolished translation of the original—

God in her palaces  
Hath proved Himself a fortress,  
For, lo, the kings assembled,  
They sprang forth together.  
When they saw, straightway they marvelled,  
Were panic-stricken, and fled.  
Tremor seized them there,  
Pangs like a woman in travail.  
With storm wind from the East  
Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish.  
As we heard  
So have we seen,  
In the city of Jehovah of Hosts,  
In the city of our God,  
God upholds her for ever and ever.

I do not see that it is possible to render these lines into any regular metre without sacrificing to the artificial rhythm, the noble rhythm of sense which the literal translation shows; and, of course, an irregular rhythm is of no assistance in singing. Surely the simple solution is to sing the prose. Not perhaps the prose just as it stands in our version, but a version slightly modified so as to do more justice to the details of the parallelism, and with occasional correction of undoubted errors. The preparation of twenty or thirty Psalms to be thus sung would be a great enrichment of our devotional material, and could raise no questions to trouble the weakest conscience. I do not, I confess, see any other thoroughly satisfactory solution of the Psalmody question in our Scottish churches; yet, at the same time, the improvement of the metrical version should be carefully studied. There is no doubt that taste and tact can do a great deal in conquering the hampering influences of a syllable rhythm. I believe that almost everything in this direction must be done on the basis of the Scottish version. The other English renderings, I am convinced, can teach us very little. The early ones have similar defects to our own, the more recent are too artificial and modernized.

The Germans are masters of some departments of hymnology, but weak in literal translation. Of the versions of the Reformed Churches, I know only one which in many Psalms equals, and in a few excels, our own. And the fact that this is the version of the Church which was long most closely united in sympathy and history with our own seems a significant fact. Dutch is not a poetical language, and Holland has not been rich in great poets. But in Holland and in Scotland the religious history and theology of the nation were specially calculated to foster a love for the Psalms,

as a spiritual appreciation of their meaning, which goes much further than any mere æsthetic quality. As a whole, indeed, the Dutch version is exceedingly unequal. But some of the Psalms, especially one or two of Ghysen's are most masterly. This writer's rendering of Ps 130 is probably the finest literal translation of a Psalm that was ever written, and shows in the most convincing manner what loving and sympathetic labour can do in reproducing those peculiarities of the Hebrew Psalms, which might at first sight seem inimitable.

## The Mythological Acts of the Apostles.

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PARTS iii. and iv. of *Horæ Semiticæ* consist respectively of an Arabic version<sup>1</sup> of 'The Mythological Acts of the Apostles,' and of an English translation of the same by Mrs. Agnes Smith Lewis, who also writes full and scholarly editorial notes. Appendices contain the text and the translation of Syriac palimpsest fragments of the Acts of Judas Thomas from Cod. Sin. Syr. 30. A great gain is the substitution of 'mythological' for 'apocryphal'; for, unlike the Apocrypha of the Old Testament, which bear 'some sort of relation to the Hebrew canonical books and to historic fact,' these legends represent the Apostles as 'degraded to the level of the heathen wizards for whom we are told that they were mistaken.'

A family likeness in the tales is recognized, but they vary both in value and interest. *The Preaching of Matthew* most nearly approaches the Lucan 'Acts of the Apostles' in its 'convincing simplicity and congruity with the conditions of actual human life, in this narrative, which Mrs. Lewis has good grounds for regarding more highly than the rest, on account of its moral teaching and literary beauty, Matthew thus answers a question of Armis the priest, who desires to know something more of the country in which dwells Matthew's God:—

'He is in a clean country; whose streets are justice, and its roads righteousness. My country is a country of righteousness, and its inhabitants die not. There is no darkness in my country, but it is all light. And my God is He who giveth light to all who are in it. And death hath no power over my

countrymen. My country is all furnished with seats; the sweet scent in the midst of it is great; the trees never wither; not one of the inhabitants of my country hath a wish to sin, but they are all just men. There is no slave, but all of them are freemen. My God is merciful and pitiful; a giver to the poor until he maketh them rich. There is no anger in my country, but they are all in harmony; there is no hatred in my country, but they are all united. There is no rebellion in my country, but they are all of one mind. There is no deceit in it, but they are all humble. There is no sound of wailing in it, but joy and delight.'

When Armis the priest would fain go out with Matthew to his country, Matthew says: 'Thou shalt enter my country, and thou shalt see my God, partaking with me in the faith of my Father, and in His Holy Mysteries.'

At the other extreme is *The Story of Peter and Paul*, in regard to which Mrs. Lewis confesses that she had scruples as to the propriety of printing it along with the other stories. 'It seems to belong to the series of the Thousand and One Nights.' Satan is represented as taking the form of a Hindoo man and putting on the garments of a king; thus disguised he approaches the palace of the Roman emperor and says to the door-keepers: 'Go ye in and say unto Bar'amus the emperor, that "thy brother the king of India standeth at the door."' The king of India complains that Peter and Paul came down upon his country from a cloud, that they led astray his viziers and friends, who ultimately rejected him and said, 'We have found a heavenly God better than thee, and He is the King of Peter and Paul, the Ruler of the whole world.'

<sup>1</sup> *Acta Mythologica Apostolorum*. 12s. 6d. net; Translation, 6s. net. Cambridge University Press.