

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)

## ARTICLE IV.

THE LATEST TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.<sup>1</sup>

BY HENRY M. WHITNEY.

## VIII. A FEW FINAL TESTS.

WE should like to test the versions of the present day, whether professing to be modern or not, by a few points that we have not heretofore brought out.

1. The first is in Isa. liii. 9: "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." In this verse "the wicked" is plural, meaning "wicked ones," but "the rich" is singular, meaning "a rich person." It was once right to use "the rich," "the poor," and the like, of a single person, but the usage has long been dead. In this case there is also the offense of confusing the distinction of number. The English Revision keeps the obsolete and misleading form that we have quoted; the American Revision and the Episcopal "Marginal" Bible very properly change "the rich" to "a rich man."

Amos ii. 14-16 affords suggestion in this connection: (A. R.) "Flight shall perish from *the swift* [this is a singular, but no one would know it]; and *the strong* shall not strengthen *his* force; neither shall *the mighty* deliver *himself* [these

<sup>1</sup> CORRECTIONS OF THE PREVIOUS PAPER.—The Episcopal General Convention did not refuse the help of experts to the Commission who made the "Marginal Readings Bible"; they refused to allow the Commission authority to add experts to their number. The help of experts was used.

The proposal negatived in the General Convention of 1904 was to give the clergy liberty to use the English Revision.

two are not so bad, because the pronouns fix the number]; . . . . he that is swift of foot . . . .; and he that is courageous . . . . [these two show how 'the rich,' 'the swift,' 'the strong,' 'the mighty,' might have been handled, so as to be unmistakably in the singular number]."

2. With what feeling did the hierarchy ("the Jews," in John's diction) persecute Christ? The principal word for it is *φθόνος*, which used to be rendered "envy"; as in Mark xv. 10: Pilate "knew that for *envy* they had delivered him up": "envy" is the leading sense for *φθόνος* in the lexicons; all the texts of the "English Hexapla" have "envy" in some spelling. But was it envy in the case of Christ? We do not see anything for which they could have envied him, except his hold upon the people, and for that feeling "jealousy" is the proper word.<sup>1</sup> They were terribly jealous of Christ, and they were afraid of him as well; they carried their jealousy and their fear, quite according to the laws of human nature, to resentment, hostility, hatred, malice, spite. But envy, as we now understand the word, must have had with them at the most a very subordinate place. This is one of those cases where the context must determine the sense.

The historical, the primary, sense of "envy" (*invidia*) is hatred: and that must be what Wycliffe and Tyndale meant when the one led the way in using "envy," and the other followed his example. At least as late as Shakespeare's time, two hundred years after Wycliffe and nearly a hundred years after Tyndale, hatred was still the commonest sense of the word; just as "emulation" was then the word for what "envy" now means to us,<sup>2</sup> and "remorse" was then our

<sup>1</sup> So Meyer, upon the parallel passage in Matt. xxvii. 18: "Sie waren neidisch auf das Ansehn und den Einfluss Jesu."

<sup>2</sup> See any concordance to Shakespeare.

“pity”: in the Rheims version, at Acts vii. 9, “emulation” stands for the feeling that led the brothers of Joseph to sell him as a slave. It is easy to fail to recognize the way in which a word slips out of an old sense into a new one, and it is especially easy to follow the tradition, but, when we really look into the matter, we see that “envy” has ceased to be the right word here.

“*Jealousy* is the malign feeling which is often had toward a rival, or possible rival, for the possession of that which we greatly desire, as in love or ambition. *Envy* is a similar feeling toward one, whether rival or not, who already possesses that which we greatly desire. *Jealousy* is enmity prompted by fear; *envy* is enmity prompted by covetousness.”<sup>1</sup> We should say that “enmity prompted by fear” was a large part of the feeling of “the Jews” toward Christ, but that they hated him for other reasons also, especially for rebuking them and shaming them before the people.

What, then, do we find in the versions of this later day? “Envy” is the word in the Revisions, in the Episcopal book, and in most of the translations that are more fully in the modern. Spencer has “envy,” but he is not nice about such things. Fenton, be it said to his credit, has “malice”; the “Twentieth Century” has “jealousy”; Weymouth has “sheer spite.” *Φθόνος* is used nine times in the New Testament, and the corresponding verb once; in each case it may be rendered “jealousy,” or “malice,” or “enmity,” or “hatred.” Any one of these would do very well, and each is better than “envy.”

The only other words, in the New Testament, translated “envy” are *ζήλος* and its verb. A comparison of the nine cases seems to show that these also are wrong. It is not envy,

<sup>1</sup> Century Dictionary: Syn. under “envy.”

but jealousy, or some resulting or kindred feeling, heated and malign.<sup>1</sup>

It may seem a small matter to emphasize the word "envy," but it illustrates an important general principle, namely, that words need watching, because, as in the case of Fuller's "painful preacher," they have a trick of coming to mean something else. "Envy" and "jealousy" are not synonyms: they may both be included in *φθόνος* and *ζήλος*, as Weymouth evidently thinks, and as they seem to be included in the German *neidisch*, but in themselves they are entirely different things.

And, again, the readiness of men to slide over expressions not understood or not clearly defined to the mind is well illustrated, not only in the way in which commentators on Shakespeare copy each other's explanations but leave many dark points untouched, and not only in the dictionaries, where many definitions do not define but nevertheless are solemnly passed along as if they were good, but also in a similar treatment of the Bible.

There is a striking illustration of the practice in connection with Burns's "Auld Lang Syne." He says:—

"And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp,  
As sure as I'll be mine."

Now, what does that really mean? We looked in many editions and commentaries, but found no answer to the question, till our researches brought us to the "Oxford" diction-

<sup>1</sup>In this connection we may notice Weymouth's effective use of doublets in rendering 1 Cor. xiii. 4: "Love [*ἀγάπη*] knows neither envy nor jealousy. Love [*ὃ περιεσβεταί*] is not forward and self-assertive, [*ὃ φυσιοῦται*] nor boastful and conceited." These are the only cases that we happen to know, in the New Testament, where a doublet is used to render a word that is single in the Greek, but each of these cases seems right. There would seem to be no theoretical objection to a doublet if the matter is not overdone.

ary (vol. i. p. 718), and there we found as the thirteenth definition of "be": "Ellipt. To be good for, to be at the expense of, 'stand'"; with illustrative extracts from Fielding and Goldsmith. So now we know, but it is a pity that no one thought to tell us before. Just so it is a pity to let a Bible-word run on unchallenged long after it has slipped over into another sense.

3. To touch more lightly upon a few similar words: Neither of the Revisions shows much disposition, the "Marginal" Bible shows no disposition, to diminish the use of "anger" and "angry" as applied to God. In Ps. vii. 11 we find with satisfaction that in each Revision the familiar expression, "God is angry with the wicked every day," is replaced by "a God that hath indignation every day." But in 1 Kings xi. 9 we still find that "Jehovah was angry with Solomon," and in Jer. xii. 13 we find "the fierce anger of Jehovah";—and in the Old Testament there is a plenty like these all along.

There has been more finching from the use of "fury." The English Revision does not feel the impropriety of the word so much, and hence, for instance, still reads at Lev. xxvi. 28: "I will walk contrary to you in fury"; for "fury" in this case the American Revision has "wrath." In Job xx. 23 (A. V.), "God shall cast the fury of his wrath on him," both Revisions have "fierceness of his wrath,"—which is not change enough. In neither of these verses does the "Marginal" Bible suggest any change.

We submit that "indignation" and "wrath" are still proper words to use of God's attitude toward sin and the sinner, but that "anger," "angry," "fury," and "fierceness" belong rather to Moloch than to him whom we call God.

The "Century Dictionary" says in its synonymy under "anger": "*Indignation* may be high-minded and unselfish. . . .

*Anger* is a sudden, violent feeling of displeasure over injury, disobedience, [or the like,] accompanied by a retaliatory impulse; it easily becomes excessive, and its manifestation is generally accompanied by a loss of self-control. . . . *Wrath* has an exalted sense, expressive of a lofty indignation, visiting justice upon wrong-doing. *Fury* is even more violent than *rage*, rising almost to madness." Many a man can testify that the use of the harsher words in the Bible gave him, in his childhood, repellant ideas of God. And no one told him that his Bible used words in senses that he met with nowhere else.

Stopford A. Brooke, in his life of F. W. Robertson (vol. ii. chap. 2), has a sentence happily combining the right use of some of these words: "When the injury he resented was a personal one, he apologized frankly for his *anger*, if it had transgressed the bounds of Christian *indignation*; but, when he was indignant with falsehood, injustice, or cowardly wrong done to another, it was terrible to see his whole face knit together with *wrath*."

The Revisions and the "Marginal" Bible evidently did not go quite far enough in their re-study of certain terrible words in the Bible.

4. In Gen. iii. 1 we suppose that it cannot be decided whether the serpent was "more subtil" (E. R.), or "more subtle" (A. R.); there is a good deal of difference between those two senses. Very likely the original word covers both, so that Weymouth might have worked in one of his doublets here. Both Revisions have "more . . . than any [other] beast," forgetting that a serpent is not now a beast.

5. In Jas. i. 9, 10 is a passage that has been little understood. It is, the same in the Revisions and in the Episcopal recension: "Let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate: and the rich, in that he is made low." With reference

to this verse too many people are in the position of Tennyson's "Northern farmer" in regard to the parson's sermon: "I niver knaw'd whot a meän'd but I thowt a 'ad summut to saäy, An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said an' I coom'd awaäy."

We all do this sort of thing in our several ways, we do it by natural gravitation, and not only the preacher but the translator of the Bible should help us to overcome nature until we learn to expect always to think. But what if they do not think themselves?

Really, the first clause of the verse makes no sense at all, and the second gives only a glimmering of a thought. There was a little more sense in the Authorized Version: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice [margin: or glory] in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low." But who knew that these brethren had met changes so great in their lot? We grope, or we ought to grope, for light. We find light at last in the discovery that there exists a "western" addition (Codex Bezae) to Matt. xx. 28: "But seek ye from little to increase, from great to be diminished." In other words, it means, not only learn to bear sudden changes in your lot, up or down, with equanimity, but, by a peculiarly biblical hyperbole and pregnancy, learn to rejoice in such changes for the practice that they will give you in the Christian graces. Here is the clue to the meaning of the extract from James. Now, who has best brought out this hidden idea? The Revisions are actually farther from it than the Authorized Version. Sawyer has: "Let the brother that is humble rejoice in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation"; but that is no gain. The "Twentieth Century" makes it: "A Brother in lowly circumstances should be proud of his high position, but a rich Brother of the lowliness of his position,"—which is a paradox without any point. The Bible Union version, the "American

Bible," and Fenton's version do not at all bring out the sense, for they all have the common vice of seeming to assume that a great change of fortune has happened to every one who is either poor or rich. Weymouth does best: "Let a brother in humble life [this is carefully expressed, to prevent any seeming reference to the possession of a humble *mind*] rejoice *when* raised to a higher position; but a rich man should rejoice in being brought low." Make the last clause read: "rejoice *when* he is brought low," or, much better yet, let the whole passage read: "Let the brother in humble life rejoice *if* he is raised to a higher position, and the rich man *if* he is brought low," and the idea emerges at last into being completely and necessarily understood.

"I like," said Edward Irving, "to see an idea looming in the mist." So does your typical worshiper of Browning. To us, on the other hand, it seems a great virtue to have a passion and a faculty for making thought clear.

6. Again, we do not know any greater stumbling-block, for translators of the Bible, than the little word "for."

From the Old Testament we take but a single case, because there, with *ki* (for), just as with *waiv* (and), the translators were forced into a freer treatment than New Testament workers have been wont to give to *γάρ* or *καί*. The case is in 2 Chron. xxvi. 23, and it has substantially the same form in the Authorized Version, the Revisions, and the "Marginal Readings Bible": "They buried him with his fathers in the field of burial which belonged to the kings; *for* they said, He is a leper." Now this makes no sense at all: they buried him just as they had buried previous kings, because he was a leper. How, then, would they have buried him if he had not been a leper? The following points may be made: (a) The text is probably corrupt, for Josephus, in writing his "Antiquities,"

seems to have had a manuscript that told a different story in this respect. (b) The case may be one of ellipsis, which we have shown to be so common in the Bible<sup>1</sup>: they buried Uzziah in the royal plot, “[and that seems strange,] for they said, He is a leper.” (c) The word rendered “for” might as well have been rendered “although,” and that would have made everything right. Here, as elsewhere, we hold that the translators were bound to make sense if they could, and the use of “although” was the simplest and most natural way.

But, in the New Testament, ellipsis has a large place in connection with the use of *γάρ*. Fortunately, with so unfamiliar an assertion, we are able to shelter ourselves behind the great name of Edward Robinson in the examples that we give. In his “Lexicon of the New Testament” (copyright 1878) are the following among many others; in each of them the “for” gives the reason, not for that which is said, but for that which is left to be supplied by the mind: Matt. ii. 2: “Where is he who is born king of the Jews? [He must be already born,] for we have seen his star”; xxii. 28: “To which of the seven will she be wife? [We cannot tell,] for each of them had her.” Mark v. 42: “The girl rose and walked about, [and well she might,] for she was twelve years old.” Luke vii. 7, 8: “Speak but a word, and let my boy be cured; [that you can do it I know from my own case,] for I too am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me”; ix. 25, 26: “[Thus will it be with him who cometh not after me,] for whosoever shall be ashamed of me. . . .” John

<sup>1</sup>As a fresh example, Job xxxii. 7 may be taken:—

“It is not [only] the great that are wise,

Nor [only] the aged that understand justice.”

And Luke xxii. 2: “The chief priests and the scribes sought how they might put him to death; [and that was a delicate matter,] for they feared the people.”

iv. 43, 44 (a very bold and remarkable ellipsis): "He went thence into Galilee, [but not at first to Nazareth,] for Jesus himself had testified that a prophet hath no honor in his own country." The cases in the Epistles are quite as marked and instructive; at random we quote: Rom. ii. 24: "[All these sins ye commit,] for the name of God is on your account blasphemed among the Gentiles"; iv. 10: "[This ought not to be so,] for we shall all stand at the judgment-seat of God." 1 Cor. x. 1: "[In like manner take ye heed,] for I would not have you ignorant. . . ." 2 Cor. ix. 7: "Not grudgingly, nor on compulsion, [but cheerfully,] for God loveth a cheerful giver"; xii. 6: "I will not glory . . . . [I might indeed do so,] for if I desired <sup>1</sup> to glory I should <sup>1</sup> not be foolish, for I should <sup>1</sup> speak the truth."

These are only a few out of the great number of cases given by Robinson, and there are many more that he does not give. It will be noticed that there is a wide difference in the ease with which an Occidental would make out the fact of ellipsis in the different cases, and the words that have to be supplied in the mind. We should say that a careful study of the uses of *γάρ*, and especially of the bold ellipsis of that for which *γάρ* introduces the reason, was necessary to intelligent work in the translation of the New Testament. Many cases in which *γάρ* has been rendered "why" exclamatory, or "then," might be rendered "for" by supposing an appropriate ellipsis. "Now," instead of "for," would make a sort of sense in a verse that we have quoted in a previous paper, but we are satisfied that "for" and the ellipsis are the true idea: Mark xvi. 4: "They beheld that the stone has been rolled away, [and that

<sup>1</sup>In the Revisions the tenses at these points are exruciatingly discordant.

is at once a marvel and a great relief to them,] for the stone is exceeding great."

Now, what have the various versions done about this? Practically nothing at all. The translators do not seem to have heard of the facts. Take John iv. 43, 44 as an example: Tyn-dale renders *καὶ* by "and," which is entirely wrong; Spencer, Fenton, and Weymouth use "although," which is theoretically possible by supposing that, by Hebraism, the use of *כי* had affected the use of *καὶ*, to that extent, but we do not know that any one has held that view; the Bible Union version and the "Twentieth Century" have "for," which, without supposing an ellipsis such as we have named, is an impossible word. The one conspicuous thing, however, with the standard versions and with those whose ideal is the modern in diction, is the absence of any indication that they know that anything is needed to piece out the sense. So easy is it to miss that which is directly under our eyes. And yet those very persons would find the especial exhilaration of high conversation in constantly interpreting into the conversation the things that were left unsaid. So we note one more thing to be carefully considered when the supreme translation of the Bible into English shall at last be made.

7. But have the new versions any special power of style? Perhaps we have seemed to emphasize unduly the need of knowing what the Bible means, vitally important though that is: we would balance the matter now by bringing out the complementary truth: as we ask of sacred music and of prayer, so we ask of any translation of the Bible, Does its method of expression appeal only to the understanding? If so, it utterly fails.

"Thought is deeper than all speech,  
Feeling deeper than all thought;"

but, half the time, words, written or spoken, are the means

through which thought is quickened in the mind, and feeling is stirred in the soul. To leave the Bible unnecessarily obscure, and to make it inert and passionless in the effort to make it clearer,—each of these is an injury, subtle but great, to the power of the Bible for all forms of good; but, because “feeling is deeper,” we are sure that taking the passion out of the Bible is much worse than leaving the Bible sometimes obscure. We even go so far as to say that it is better not to clear up the obscurities of the Bible, if in the process the old and wonderful distinction in the style, its extraordinary aptness, and especially its emotional power, are to be lost. It is not possible to trace up these qualities till their causes have been brought fully into view, but some things are plain.

(1) There is the question of rhythm. Absence of rhythm, a crabbed structure, will take life and charm and spiritual power out of the expression of any conception or truth, and, therefore, out of the conception or the truth itself,—just as a shot robs a bird not only of life and grace, but even of the sheen of its plumage: it is now just a poor dead thing.

When it was said of Washington that he was “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his fellow-countrymen,” the utterance did not become a household-word until “fellow” was dropped.

A slight example has its own value. No one who heard Professor Park close with Rev. i. 17 a sermon on the majesty of Christ will ever forget the overwhelming power of the words: “And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.” That power, apart from the conception—which could have been meanly and therefore weakly expressed, lay partly in the simplicity of its twelve monosyllables,<sup>1</sup> but especially in the rhythm

<sup>1</sup> So Shakespeare often put his greatest utterances in the briefer words of the old stock of the language, and for the very highest

of the cadence. The Bible Union in their version left the form as it was. The Revisions,—for accuracy, it would seem,—changed “as dead” to “as one dead.” Are we mistaken in thinking that the insertion of the solid word “one” where there is no ictus makes a jolt in the sound, and hence at least weakens the effect? A thousand such little cases would make a large total of harm.

There are cases that are greater. It is not merely rhythm, but it is essentially rhythm, that makes the heart answer to the words, “O ye of little faith” (Luke xii. 28); it is the lack of rhythm, it is the stagnation of consonants, that makes one feel only a sting of annoyance at finding in a modern version, “You men of small faith.” In Matt. xxiii. 6, what is the matter with “They like having the place of honour at dinners”? It is partly the unjustifiable weakening of “love” to “like,” which sounds very flat; it is partly the cheapening of “feasts” into “dinners”; but it is most of all the hardness of the rhythm. Weymouth is even worse: the double trochee of his close makes the words mere chatter: “They love the best seats at a dinner-party.” Examples like these might be given by hundreds.

The rhythm of the cadence is a matter of especial importance; in its perfect form it makes sure that every sentence shall have an appropriate movement, closing in a way that is neither straggling, attenuated, nor abrupt. Of this a consummate example is the comparison of Solomon with the lilies (Matt. vi. 28–30). Such also is the call of Christ (Matt. xi. 28–30) to those who, physically or spiritually, in their daily toil strain and grow weary under an intolerable yoke.

Outside of the Bible, the great passages of the world’s literature turned from the poetic form to prose; for example, the sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth*, v. 1.

ture, the passages, whether poetry or prose, that have achieved immortality by their hold upon the hearts of men, would all have failed of that high destiny if they had jarred upon the ear. King James's men, like Tyndale before them, knew about all this,<sup>1</sup> many of them were chosen because they were recognized masters of style, and they made a book that—we will not say in *mere* style, but—*even* in style has been the model and the despair of the centuries since.

(2) But deeper than rhythm are three qualities that have much to do with the beauty, and hence with the emotional power, of style. One is the euphony of the sounds that make up the words; one is the melody of the sounds as they stand combined into words and into groups of words; the third is the harmony between the sound and the sense<sup>2</sup>; the real artist in speech is exquisitely sensitive to these three qualities in that which he writes or reads or speaks or hears. In these days one may almost say that it is heresy, or at least not "good form," to imply that literary excellence lies in anything else than clearness, but the facts remain. Besides such unapproachable masters in this field as Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser, from whom passages without number might be quoted, the annals of English literature show all along that, when a thing has been supremely well said, it has possessed in large degree these three virtues of style: Chaucer's wonderful tenderness would have been impossible without them; Goldsmith worked patiently for perfect finish in these respects, and attained a very high degree of success; Coleridge, Keats, Longfellow,

<sup>1</sup> Hence we know that they surely made two syllables of "bruisèd" in Isa. xlii. 3: "A bruisèd reed shall he not break": in their work from beginning to end, apart from the Old Testament names, there is no place in which there is such lack of rhythm or euphony as "a bruis'd reed" would have made. Similarly we may be sure that in xl. 8 they said "the weanèd child."

<sup>2</sup> See in the Century Dictionary the synonymy under "euphony."

Whittier, were very different in style, but each carried euphony, melody, and harmony to a degree of perfection that few can match. Among prose-writers one thinks immediately of Hooker, and Burke, and DeQuincey with his dreams, and Newman, and Ruskin,—but there have been many more. The greatest passages of these writers may be analyzed for the secret of their beauty and their power: amongst other things, it will be found that the consonants do not unduly harden, nor the vowels unduly soften, the effect; that the trend of our language toward disagreeable sibilation is fully overcome; that no one sound has a wearisome repetition; that vocally, everywhere, everything is superbly right. We may quote from Whittier, for sweetness:—

“ I love the old melodious lays  
Which softly melt the ages through,  
The songs of Spenser’s golden days,  
Arcadian Sidney’s silvery phrase,  
Sprinkling our noon of time with freshest morning dew.”

And from Holmes, for nobleness:—

“ Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll!  
Leave thy low-vaulted past!  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life’s unresting sea!”

Could a sound be changed in either of these stanzas without peril? Or could the tone of one be exchanged for that of the other? How these men could get together the material for such wonderful vocal effects we do not know; they themselves did not know how they did it; they could not have taught any one else the art; but they could do, and they did do, the work.

Such things are found in prose; they are in some respects even more difficult to achieve in prose; their effects in prose

are just as great: they are found in the Bible of 1611, and in some of the historic confessions and prayers of the church; wherever found, they, by their properties as sound, profoundly affect men's emotions, and thus their hearts, and their lives. It was the problem of each company of Revisers, it is the problem of any reviser, to keep these oral properties up to the highest possible point.

In Ps. xc. 9 is a good example of injury to the melody of the cadence through the effort to be more exact:—

|   |  |
|---|--|
| (A. V.) We spend our years<br>as a tale that is told. | (A. R.) We bring our years to<br>an end as a sigh. |
|---|--|

The English Revision has an intermediate form. No one can doubt which makes the better music. In xc. 12 the new seems as good as the old:—

|  |   |
|--|---|
| (A. V.) So teach us to number<br>our days that we may apply our<br>hearts unto wisdom. | (Revs.) So teach us to num-<br>ber our days, that we may get<br>us a heart of wisdom. |
|--|---|

We wish that all the changes by the Revisers had come off as well as this last; on the contrary, the cases are very frequent where the oral qualities are not merely injured, but spoiled. It is hard to believe that the English Company gave as much attention to the sound of their text as they are said to have done.

Lowell said that he did not know whether Shakespeare was the world's greatest poet, but that he knew that Shakespeare was the world's greatest expresser. Whittier and Holmes were great expressers in poetry; the men of 1611 were great expressers in prose; it is a perilous matter for any one who is not a great expresser to attempt to show us how even the oral methods of a great poet or a great prose-writer could well be improved. Language is as much a musical instrument as any, the finest, organ; under the hands of a master it pro-

duces sometimes the grandest organ-effects. And, again, its melodies, its harmonies, its diapason, are turned by a bungler into hideous noise.

(3). In Luke xii. 28 we noted that a modern version had changed "love" to "like." Unfortunately, this is not a solitary case of its kind. The same version has in Matt. xxiii. 4: "They *decline*, themselves, to lift a finger," and the work abounds in cases where a weaker word has been installed in place of some strong, suggestive, emotional word of the earlier day.

We have been asked why "Lazarus in his bosom," or "on his bosom" (Luke xvi. 23), is really any better than "Lazarus with him." The latter is a bare, flat statement of a simple fact, without any implications: "by him" would be slightly stronger, warmer; "close to him," or "at his side," would be a little stronger yet; but none of these expressions is dynamic, none is more than faintly suggestive. On the other hand, "Lazarus in his bosom" is steeped in local color, and thus appeals powerfully to any cognizant mind. To any one acquainted with Oriental ways it suggests a family-table, a feast, with "the father of the faithful," the revered, the almost worshiped, founder of the Jewish race, reclining at the head; it suggests Lazarus reclining in the place of honor, the place of the best-loved son, on Abraham's immediate right,—sometimes receiving a portion from that which has been especially prepared for Abraham, and sometimes leaning back upon the bosom of Abraham, to hear some word of commendation or of love. To those who have vision all this beautiful picture is sketched in those four words. To get it at all is an exalted experience: to get it in four words, "Lazarus in his bosom," is to feel the power of the vision intensely. He to whom the two expressions are equally good is wanting in the literary sense, and is no more competent

to judge a piece of literature, or the literary form of the Bible, than the color-blind are competent to judge a painting.

Any one who has read much in the modernizing versions, the ones that are not based upon the diction of the great translators of the past, knows that they tend to put the weak for the strong: to give a bill of particulars under this indictment, they tend to put the generic for the specific, the vague for the apt, the abstract for the concrete, the Latinized for the old material of the language, the elaborate for the simple, the literal for the figurative, the absolute for the suggestive, the paltry for the noble, the unimpassioned for the glowing.<sup>1</sup> Imagine such words sung in the oratorio of the "Messiah"! Imagine these modernizers attempting to make the fire of Isaiah and Micah burn in their emotionless words!

All this is a character of the times. We do not know why the great orator is able to lift us for his hour into a supernal life, but it is because he has the mastery of that ancient, nobler, dynamic diction that we, with our exactnesses, and our literalness, have never learned: in his presence we are startled to find that, with all the atrophy of our culture, we are still able to feel.

But not only the orator has this power: some have it with the pen. The makers of the French Bible had it not, and therefore their book has failed to put a strain of iron into the blood of their race.<sup>2</sup> Luther, the maker of the German Bible, had

<sup>1</sup>Shocking examples of this, and worse, may be found quoted at length, or referred to, in an article by J. H. Gardiner, in the *Atlantic Monthly* for November, 1904, pp. 683 f., "On Improving the Style of the Bible." We should be glad if we could annex that article as a part of this. Much that we had meant to say here has been omitted, because Mr. Gardiner has already said it so well.

<sup>2</sup>A good example may be found in Matt. ii. 13: "Te tiens là jusqu'à ce que je te le dise; car Hérode cherchera le petit enfant pour le faire mourir." In the first clause the clatter of rhyming

the power, and what a Bible, and what a Germany, he made! We hold that no one is qualified to be a good transfuser of the spirit of the Bible to whom it is not instinctive to use in his diction the specific, the concrete, the suggestive, the figurative, the picturesque, the emotive, the simple, the strong. To do this, he must be superior to his environment, and especially to that temper of the times by which many who ought to know better can find no way to be effective except by resorting to words that are mean: he must live in daily communion with the masters in expression in every age. And he must believe in the teachings of nature; it has been said<sup>1</sup> that the Bible "is treasured because it communicates great truths and arouses in men the deepest and most ennobling emotions;" but even the greatest truths would not take hold of men if their emotions were not profoundly stirred. Coleridge should be our teacher in this; he tells us that true feeling is the channel by which truth reaches and affects the soul and the life. An unemotional Bible would be as dead as are all the imitations of "The Pilgrim's Progress."

This, then, is the most vital test of any Bible, or any part of the Bible, that men may ever offer for our use: by the rhythm of its movement, by the euphony, the melody, the harmony, of its sounds, by the aptness, the nobleness, the suggestiveness, the passion, of its diction, does it equal or surpass the Bible of 1611 in its power to make our hearts burn within us when we read?

monosyllables, in the second the weak form—"make him die," are in notable contrast to the vigor of the English, "—until I tell thee, . . . to destroy him."

<sup>1</sup>J. H. Gardiner, *loco citato*.