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GRAMMATICAL GLIMPSES AT SOME
SCRIPTURES.

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We must forever banish from our minds the supposition that grammatical exegesis is a dull, dead thing, and, therefore, cannot bring light and life to him who searches for truth through grammatical channels. Grammar as the record of living, changing, growing language is itself a living, life-giving, light-giving companion to the student of God's Book. The college and seminary student who found so many stone walls to climb in his Greek grammar while at school must not say to his friend of college and seminary days, "Farewell, Greek Grammar, I have seen so much trouble over you during my school days, I hope I shall never see you any more." One of the most helpful friends of the biblical exegete is his Greek grammar. If a student knows this friend's voice and all he means when he speaks, he needs not a cart load of "homiletical," "pulpit" and "expositor" commentaries to clarify the Word and furnish the material for his sermons. Let no Bible student ever feel with another who said, "Grammar to the wolves!";¹ nor sing with Browning,²

"He settled Hoti's business—let it be!

Properly based Oun—

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic De,

Dead from the waist down."

On this the 400th anniversary of the publication of the first printed Greek New Testament there has come from the press a masterpiece on the grammar of the Greek New Testament—the large grammar by Prof.

1. F. A. W. Henderson, Blackwood for May, 1906, quoted by Robertson.

2. A Grammarian's Funeral.

Robertson. Every student of the Greek New Testament—even the preacher who knows scarcely anything about the Greek language—ought to get this grammar, turn on God's Word the lamp of grammatical exegesis and catch a new meaning and fresh glory from the Old Book's message to men. Thus we can help Professor Robertson to realize his dream in producing this great grammar. "I think with pleasure of the preacher or teacher who under the inspiration of this Grammar may turn afresh to his Greek New Testament and there find things new and old, the vital message all electric with power for the new age."³

Some of the greatest exegetes of the last century turned on the Scriptures the light which grammar gives—Broadus on the Gospel according to Matthew; Westcott on the writings of John and on the epistle to the Hebrews; Lightfoot on Galatians, Philippians and Colossians; Ellicott on the first epistle to the Corinthians; Sanday on the epistle to the Romans. Winer, the German grammarian of the Greek New Testament, about ninety years ago, turned the scales in favor of grammatical exegesis when he laid down the following order of interpretation: "Grammatical, historical, theological." This is a long step forward from the allegorical interpretation of Origen (third century) who held that Scripture like men (as he held) was trichotomic, having in it a sarkic sense for the ordinary man, the ethic sense for the moral man, the pneumatic sense for the spiritual man. It is also much in advance of the theoretic method as held by Theodore of Mopsuestia (of the Antiochian School); also far ahead of the ecclesiastical method as held by the later fathers, Augustine, Eucherius, and others, a method which was a blending of *eisegesis* and *exegesis*, putting into Scripture what harmonizes with the ecclesiastical system and then bringing it out. Grammatical exegesis throws a flood of light upon

3. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, p. xv.

the Scriptures themselves, whereas historic-critical exegesis, as found in Allan,⁴ throws very little light on the real meaning of the Scriptures, since it spends most of its time on historical and critical questions, namely, "Did Jesus say this, or did Matthew add it as a gloss of a later age?" Give us more commentators like Elliott, Westcott, Broadus, and Lightfoot. Or, better still, give us more thoroughly trained preachers and pastors who know their Greek New Testament and under the torch of grammatical exegesis kindled by the Spirit of God can make the Book of God shine like the noon-day sun upon the darkened paths of men and the delicate problems of society.

But we did not mean to write an article on the method of exegesis. We desired merely to show the value of grammatical as compared with other forms of exegesis. Now, we wish to illustrate the worth of this sort of exegesis by turning grammar's torch-light upon a few passages in the New Testament.

"The Baptism of Repentance" (Mk. 1:4).

"John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." Gould⁵ says of this expression, "The genitive denotes the significance of the rite." What kind of baptism did John preach? The rabbis preached and practiced the baptism of initiation into Judaism for those who accepted Judaism. But John preached and practiced a different baptism, the baptism of repentance. What does the phrase, "of repentance," mean as a modifier of baptism? It cannot be a possessive genitive, for repentance does not *own* baptism. It cannot be an objective genitive; that is, it cannot be that baptism produces or effects repentance. It might be a subjective genitive and then we would have, "the baptism which repentance produces." People genuinely repented and this repentance was such a mighty force that it resulted

4. Commentary on Matthew, International Critical Commentary.

5. Commentary on Mark, International Critical Commentary, *in loco*.

in baptism. But it is more probable that the author used the genitive in a descriptive or qualifying sense. In accordance with this sense we translate, "John preached the baptism that was characterized by repentance, repentance which always accompanied it—a repentance baptism." It was not an initiatory rite initiating its candidates into the Messianic kingdom, it was a ceremony picturing and proclaiming men's hearty repentance—a turning from their sins to the coming Messiah. With this interpretation the phrase, "of repentance," becomes the focus on which the light of this passage centers. It was not baptism—dipping—which John preached "unto remission of sins"—it was repentance dipping. No one with the full light of this genitive—*μετανοίας* (*metanoias*) of repentance—streaming into his soul can feel that the mere dipping accomplished the purpose, "remission of sins"; but repentance, which usually expressed itself in those days in the picturesque "plunge," did fulfill the human condition on which God granted "remission of sins." Now the author did not stop to ask or answer the casuistic questions, Could repentance be effective without the plunge? Is the plunge necessary to complete the repentance? Or, could God grant "remission of sins" to any one who repented but did not submit to baptism? The New Testament writers do not stop to play tweedle dee and tweedle dum on such questions, but merely assert that John preached a baptism whose chief characteristic mark was its accompanying repentance, a repentance which brought the penitent sinner to the banks of the Jordan for public confession of his sins and for a positive identification of himself with the Messianic movement inaugurated by the Baptist.

"If Thou Art the Son of God" (Mt. 4:3).

The Authorized Version improperly translates this passage, "If thou *be* the Son of God." The Revised Versions, both English and American, properly translate

it, "If thou *art* the Son of God." The verb (*ei*, *ei*) is in the indicative mode and not in the subjunctive. There is no doubt cast upon the sonship of Christ by satan. He knows that He is the Son of God, and even though deceitful as he is and the father of lies, he dare not suggest to the Son of God that there is any serious doubt as to His divine sonship. He did not dare to say, "If perchance you turn out to be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." But the tempter built his hypothesis upon a fact known to him, namely, that the personality now under temptation is none other than the Son of God. Of course, the indicative mode does not declare the supposition to be a fact. The indicative simply puts the hypothesis in the mildest form possible in the Greek language. The only hypothetical element in the sentence is in the conditional particle *ei*, *ei*. But often in Greek the hypothetical element in this particle is so slight that it could properly be translated *since*—"since thou art the Son of God." See I Cor. 15:44, "If (since) here is a natural body there is also a spiritual body." The conditional particle casts no doubt upon the fact that we *do* possess natural (psychical) bodies in this world, but states the logical conclusion that in the next world we shall just as certainly have *spiritual* bodies.

The detailed significance of this first temptation is easily seen if we remember that the tempter is casting no doubt upon the divine sonship of Jesus. J. Weiss⁶ thinks the tempter means to say to Jesus, "Your messianic vocation is doubtful if God does not come to your help now." This is not what satan means. So far as satan is concerned there can be no doubt as to Christ's divine sonship. Bruce⁷ properly suggests that the heart of this first temptation is "selfishness or self-sacrifice." We might paraphrase satan's suggestion thus: Since

6. Meyer Commentary, *in loco*.

7. Expositor's Greek Testament, *in loco*.

your Father has just told you in your glorious baptismal experience in the Jordan that you *are* His Son and that *He delights in you*, now demand your rights as Son and assert your power to satisfy your natural needs. This is what satan meant to say to the Son exulting in the happy experience of the hour.

“Let Your Light *So* Shine” (Mt. 5:16).

Jesus had adopted the beautiful figure of light to characterize the mission of His followers in the world. “Ye are the light of the World.” He also further uses the specific illustration of the burning lamp in the humble cottage home of Palestine to emphasize the duty and manner of fulfilling this mission. Just as the good housewife, after lighting the evening lamp, places it on a projecting stone in the wall⁸ and thus furnishes light for all the occupants, “so—in like manner—you followers of mine, let your light shine before men,” etc. *ούτως*, *houtos*, so, comes at the head of the sentence, and so is emphatic. That is, Christ exhorts His people, first negatively, not to let obstructions obscure their light, and secondly, to see to it that the lamp of Christian life is hung on the projecting wall in a prominent place, so that those around us *must* see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven. The “so” does not express the degree of intensity of the light as the authorized version suggests, but the *location* of the light and the consequent *manner* of its shining, so that it surely reaches people who need the light. We are to do good in such a way that people *must* recognize our religion and *must* glorify our God. Paul’s exhortation, “Let not your good be evil spoken of,” helps to explain this command of Jesus. It is not enough to have the light of grace burning in our inmost souls, it must be lifted on high, that others, groping in the darkness, may escape the rocks and shoals of sin. It is not sufficient to have character only. A good man needs a good reputation if his light is to bless and

8. Benzinger, Heb. Arch., p. 124.

beautify the lives of others. A Christian must "care" what people say about him. His lamp must be on the projecting stones on the walls of life, and not under the barley measure, or under the bed. He must

"Hold his lighted lamp on high,
Be a star in some one's sky,
He may live who else would die."

This command of Christ does not contradict His other command, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right-hand doeth," or that beautiful ethical principle, "He that exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." This command in Mt. 5:16 does not encourage egotism, or the seeking of prominent places in which to shine for Christ. The command is as much for the poor widow who at the sewing machine in the cottage can keep this command and let her light shine so high and so pure that all around may see it and sing for joy, as for a Woodrow Wilson, in the White House, with nearly 100,000,000 souls, looking to him for civic and social direction, who can keep his lamp of influence bright and brilliant for the blessing of a nation.

"Stop Carrying the Purse or the Wallet" (Lu. 10:4-7).

This is not the translation found in the Authorized Version or in the Revised Versions (English or American). But according to all the Greek grammarians, for example, Winer, Buttmann, Blass, Moulton, Robertson, the present imperative with the negative $\mu\eta$, $m\bar{e}$ means to cease from an action already in process. If we had in this text the aorist subjunctive with $\mu\eta$, $m\bar{e}$, it would have to be translated as our English versions put it.⁹ What does Christ mean by this command? He is sending forth the Seventy and charges them to stop the habit of relying upon themselves (of which habit they

9. See Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament, etc.*, p. 851.

and all of us are more or less guilty) and lean entirely upon God to care for them. To urge this exhortation He reminds them of the ethical principle that "the laborer is worthy of his hire" (v. 7). They must cast themselves on the providence of God, and, as an evidence of their faith, they must take no purse to pay hotel bills and no wallet full of provisions. God will feed His messengers—but He will do it through friends who will open their doors to them in recompense for the good news received.

We must not press too hard the literal interpretation of this passage. Literal interpretation has been the curse of Christendom through the ages. Let us catch the spirit of the charge of Jesus without pressing the letter of its command. Let us lean more implicitly upon our Father's love and grace and less sanguinely upon our physical supplies. It cannot be argued at all from this text that the minister of Christ should not receive a stipulated salary. "The laborer is worthy of his hire," and if the industrial conditions of our age make it necessary for the minister to have a definite "hire," let it be granted, but let the minister trust more in the supplies of grace than in the succor of his salary.

"Behold, the Lamb of God!" (John 1:29)

Some preachers take this text and preach as if the word "behold" were a verb in the imperative mode. "Fix your eyes on Calvary's Lamb—gaze upon Him as He suffers and makes atonement for your sins. As the Israelites looked to the brazen serpent and lived, so look ye to the Lamb on the cross and ye shall live." This is what many preachers on this text seem to say. This is all true, but not all of it is in this text. "Behold" is not a verb but an interjection, and so the sentence means, "Attention! stop! take heed! here is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" The modern preacher can preach a greater sermon from the correct interpretation of this text than from the erroneous view.

“Attention, ye moderns, turn your minds from the gigantic industrial machinery, from the glories of scientific inventions and discoveries, from the comforts and successes of material life in this the most splendid age of the world’s history—take heed, here is a matter of supreme moment—here is the Lamb of God who bore your sins on calvary; stop and consider Him and His claims upon your thoughts and talents, upon your love and life.”

“For That All Sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

The Authorized Version translates this phrase “for that all have sinned.” The American Revision translates it, “for that all sinned.” Augustine, Calvin, Bengel, Meyer, all hold to the aoristic significance of *ἡμαρτον*, *hēmarton* and so translate it, “all sinned” (in Adam), while Burton¹⁰ and Denney¹¹ think the aorist is equivalent to a perfect, and so must be translated, “all *have* sinned.” It is fairly well established in the grammatical world today that in Greek one tense is never used for another.¹² Yet, there is a shade’s difference between the English perfect and the Greek perfect, and so it is probably true, as Professor Burton¹³ and Professor Gildersleeve¹⁴ claim, that the Greek aorist is occasionally more accurately translated by the English perfect.

But is that the case in Rom. 5:12? This whole section, 5:12-21, is a parenthesis inserted by the apostle to magnify the excellent state of the justified man as contrasted with his previous state of sin. He shows how the first humanity received sin and death from Adam its head, while the second (spiritual) humanity receives righteousness and life from Christ its head. Adam the head of the first humanity transmitted to it sin and death, Christ the head of the second humanity graciously bestows

10. Moods and Tenses, § 54.

11. Expositor’s Greek Testament, Rom. 3:23; 5:12.

12. See Winer-Moulton, p. 344; Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament, etc., p. 843.

13. *Ib.*, § 80.

14. Syntax, p. 107.

upon it righteousness and life. In what sense did Adam transmit sin to the first humanity? Evidently in that he, by becoming sinful himself because of his disobedience to God's simple law of paradise, transmitted to his progeny by a natural heredity "the sin-principle." The sin-principle thus deposited in the nature of the race finds its penalty in death, and so the first humanity received, not only sin, but also death, from Adam. This is what Paul means when he asserts, "As through one man sin" (the sin-principle) "entered into the world and death through sin" (the sin-principle);—"and so death passed upon all men, for that all sinned." In what sense did all sin when Adam sinned? In that all the race received the sin-principle from its natural head. All did not *actually* sin (as the federal headship theory seems to teach). It takes an act of the individual's will (so Paul in Rom. 7:16-20) to constitute the sin *act*. So I hold that the verb ἁμαρτάνω, hamartanō (Denney, however, to the contrary) in this passage denotes the receiving of the sin-principle by Adam's race, and in this way receiving moral depravity, *not* the committing of the sin *act*. Only in this sense did all the race sin when Adam sinned. The next two verses prove that Paul meant ἡμαρτον, hēmarton, in the aoristic sense. "For until the law sin" (the sin-principle) "is not imputed where there is no law." That is, the sin-principle is not reckoned as an actual transgression by the individual if he does not possess some kind of law and if his will does not revolt against it in a personal act. "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression." That is, the sin-principle did live in the nature of all Adam's race, and they all died as a consequence of the indwelling sin-principle, although they had not committed the sin act against a specific command of God, as Adam had done. The whole context, therefore, seems to prove that Paul used ἡμαρτον, hēmarton, in

the aoristic sense and meant to teach that all Adam's race became the recipients of the sin-principle when Adam their natural progenitor committed the sin act. Moreover, v. 19 clinches this interpretation of ἡμάρτον, hēmarton; "For as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (the Greek verb meaning were stood down, were constituted, sinners). That is, the sin-principle entered into the constitution of human nature. So Paul does not mean that all the race actually committed sin acts when Adam sinned but that all the race did actually receive the sin-principle in the constitution of its nature. The assertion in the second part of this verse that "the many were made righteous" (that is, received the principle of righteousness and were in this way made righteous from Christ) also proves the above interpretation of the first part of verse 19.

Of course, when Paul wrote these words, the authorized translation, "for that all have sinned," was also true to the facts. All the descendants of Adam had committed sin *acts*, because all had the sin-principle inhering in their natural constitution. But this is not what Paul is talking about in this section and cannot be what he means in the use of this aorist. He teaches the universality of sin in Adam's race in 1:18-3:20, but here he is specifically tracing the inheritance—sin and death—which the first humanity received from its paternal head, and so by contrast is enhancing the glories of righteousness and life which the second humanity graciously receives from Christ its spiritual head. This contrast of the two states exalts the excellencies of the justified man's blessedness.¹⁵

"Present Not Your Members"—"Present
Yourselves" (Rom. 6:13).

These two commands are expressed by two different constructions in the Greek—one by the present impera-

15. See Sanday, *Commentary on Romans*, *in loco*, for further discussion of this passage; also Denney, *Expositor's Greek Testament*, *in loco*.

tive and the other by the aorist imperative. The aorist imperative expresses the command of an act to be done once for all, the present imperative that of a progressive or continuing action (so Robertson¹⁶). Denney¹⁷ translated properly the first clause, "Do not go on, as you have been doing, putting your members at the service of sin," but he misses the point somewhat in the second clause when he says, "but put *them* once for all at the service of God." Paul wrote in the latter clause *ἐαυτοῖς*, heautous, yourselves, not *μέλη*, melē (or its pronoun) your members. It would be impossible for us to present to God once for all our members and then cease. What Paul said was, "Stop using your members (hands, feet, eyes, voice, etc.) for the service of sin, but *once for all dedicate yourselves* (your will and heart, the centralities of your personalities) to the service of God." It is an instantaneous, once for all, consecration of one's self to God, and the consequent perpetual use of all our powers, natural and acquired, for the service of God. Believers, because of their fellowship with Christ in His dying unto sin and in His living unto God (in His resurrection life), logically ought to devote themselves to God. This entreaty is a part of v. 12 which begins with *οὖν*, oun, therefore. The logical demand upon every believer in God's grace and in Christ's death and resurrection is that he first of all "consecrate himself" to God, then stop using his powers as instruments of sin, but perpetually devote them to the glory of God.

16. A Grammar of the Greek New Testament, etc., p. 855f; p. 890.

17. The Expositor's Greek Testament, *in loco*.