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I. THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON.

“WHATSOEVER is spoken of God, or things pertaining to God, otherwise than the truth is, though it seem an honor, it is an injury. And as incredible praises given unto men do often abate and impair the credit of their deserved commendation, so we must likewise take great heed, lest, in attributing unto Scripture more than it can have, the incredibility of that do cause even those things which it hath most abundantly to be less reverently esteemed.”¹

Thus wrote wise old Richard Hooker some three hundred years ago. And multiplied experience since his day has fully endorsed his observations. Nothing has ever been gained by the friends of the Bible by the assumption of false or unnecessary positions, and at the present critical stage of the battle for and against the supremacy of God's word, much, very much, is to be lost by such manœuvering. History abundantly shows how bad tactics, the deep and continuous error of Christian apologetics, has once and again compelled retreat before the sharp onslaughts of the foe, with confusion, and doubt, and dismay as the results. Inexcusably, often, has the Bible been put in a false place by “attributing to it more than it can have.” Subsequent defenders have always felt the serious disadvantage of the well-meant but ruinous policy. Finding themselves at the very outset in an untenable position, their first move was necessarily a retreat, to their own discomfiture and the jubilation of their opponents. We are even now learning something of the risk involved in relying upon argu-

¹ *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book II., Section 8.

IX. "A PECULIAR TREASURE."—MAL. III. 17.

THOSE who know the LXX. Version well know how frequently its authors attained only to the semblance of the Hebrew verity, and how contentedly their followers to this day have entered into their labors. הַסְגָּלָה is such a word, imperfectly understood by the men of ancient glory and inaptly rendered by generations of accredited translators. The beauty of it is such that even an approximation to its original force is of peculiar grandeur; but *λαὸς περιούσιος* is no translation, notwithstanding the fact that inspired sanction can be claimed for it by those who, like us, revere the *ipse dixit* of the infallible oracles in everything and for everything.¹ *Λαὸς περιούσιος* occurs in the Pentateuch four times—Ex. xix. 15; Deut. vii. 6; xiv. 2; xxvi. 18—and in one case only does the *λαὸς* find an equivalent in the original Hebrew. Deut. xxvi. 18, *λαὸς περιούσιος*, with approximation sufficient for the seventy-two wise men of Aristeas' fable, corresponds to עַם סְגָלָה ; in the other cases we may set the *λαὸς* aside as entirely redundant. *Περιούσιος* remains, and *περιούσιος* is most like in pattern to the true, for one's heart is naturally set on all his *περιούσια*; but the radius of the circle described thereby is quite large, and there are things on the circumference that are perfectly dispensable without injury to the person or his affections. To be deprived of one's הַסְגָּלָה , however, is to have some Shylock cut the pound of flesh off next the heart, and in the cutting spare not drops of blood. *Περιούσιος* we will say, then, is only the shadow of the substance, and fisherman Peter felt it so; for though Paul, the scholar, is content (Titus ii. 14) to quote Scripture

¹ The mention of *περιούσιος* reminds us that *ἐπιουσιος* has suffered severely at the hands of Bishop Lightfoot and other erudite etymology-mongers. It may be—Matt. vi. 11—that our Lord intended us to pray, "Give us to-day our bread for to-morrow," but it is not likely that students of the New Testament in Greek previously steeped in the diction of the LXX. Version had ever made the discovery. To them it were easier to say, "Give us to-day our bread as we need it," and justification for the saying would not be wanting. If *περὶ* plus *οὐσία* be *περιούσιος*, *ἐπὶ* plus *οὐσία* is *ἐπιούσιος*, and in every way defensible. The LXX. Version is the grand storehouse of materials for the knowledge of Palestinian Greek, and would-be interpreters of the Greek New Testament who neglect it do greatly err.

in the exact words of Scripture, Peter feels the inadequacy of the time-honored version, and turns the quotation into *λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν* (1 Pet. ii. 9), which is an improvement, and leads us to infer that that whereon one sets his heart—his סגלה, in fact—is that whose acquisition costs, it may be time, patience, labor, or drops of blood.

Others than Peter, and before Peter, felt the inadequacy of the rendering, and he whose glad lot it was to translate the one hundred and thirty-fifth Psalm, verse 4, attempted to do better by omitting the *λαὸς* and using *περιουσιασμός*. This much was gain—to recognize that סגלה was able to stand by itself, and to see in what possible way non-Hebrew thinkers might come to know where and how it stood. But there is more gain; for in 1 Chron. xxix. 3 we are told of the great preparation David had made wherewithal to build a house for God—how with all his might, by the use of the state revenues, he had amassed gold and silver, brass and iron, onyx stones and stones for mosaic work, and many things else for the building and adornment of the temple. This, however, was not all; from his own private income, by careful saving and foresight, by self-denial and prudence—for such is the sense of the skilful scholar of Greek who wrote *ἔστιν μοι ὁ περιεποίημαί*—he had laid by, in his affection for the house of God, quite a sum for the use of the Lord in the work of his house. And because he thus willingly parted with the סגלה he had so lovingly acquired, he felt justified in calling upon the nation as one man to make large sacrifices for the great work. The Preacher, too, king over Israel in Jerusalem, set himself to seek out all that was pleasant and delightful under the sun. Great works he made and houses he built—vineyards and gardens and parks (*paradises*) planted with vines of Sorek and all manner of pleasant fruits; lakes of water and pleasant fountains ministered to his enjoyment as he walked abroad; while men-servants and maid-servants and great possessions of flocks and herds amply provided for his creature comforts. More than this, what kings especially delight in, and the “peculiar treasure” of provinces (R. V., Koh. ii. 8) he too had, sending his messengers to realms of the Orient to search out and procure that thing which was most costly, rare and precious in each separate province—gold from Ophir, apes and peacocks from Tarshish, horses from Egypt. Did he not gloat over his riches and costly possessions? Was not that סגלה indeed which none else had ever possessed?

There are these two elements in סגלה, then, the one of possession and price, the other of acquisition. The former element has been

acknowledged by the unanimous consent of all exegetes; the latter is contained—peace to the etymology-mongers!—in the fundamental root idea, and demonstrated by the persistency with which the authors of the LXX. Version have striven to attain to the substance by diligent pursuit of the shadow. That part of one's *περιούσια* he values most is his סגלה; it may be personal honor, fame, some chosen war-trophy, some black-letter volume of hoary age, some classic from the Aldine, Juntine, Elzevir press—it may be a little shoe put gently away and treasured with care, or a band of gold, the sole precious memorial of a face now resplendent in mansions of light. The soldier's honor, the maiden's virtue, the honest man's character, the preacher's hire of souls, the Christian's faith—the boys of the mother of the Gracchi, the love of David and Jonathan, the ambition of Napoleon—numberless are the examples of סגלה one might cite.

The people of God, by right, then, are the סגלה of God—a CHOICE treasure REDEEMED by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. The סגלה of God is indeed a treasure “peculiar” (*περιούσιος*) to himself; but it is more—a treasure whose acquisition has cost more than gems or riches of the Ind. This סגלה—God's people—God spares as a man spares his own son that serveth him; but to gain this סגלה God spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all—made sacrifice to acquire the thing of greatest price the whole creation round.

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