

Again, not only does the peculiar character of the Hebrew vocabulary demand special and direct study on the part of the interpreting teacher; its peculiar grammar imposes conditions equally imperative. By "peculiar" here is not meant difficult, or odd, or forbidding, though if these actually were its proper characteristics the diligent study of Hebrew grammar would still be binding upon the teachers of the Word. I simply mean by this phrase what is unlike English, and the implication naturally is that the Hebrew grammar must be well understood before what is written according to its laws can be made intelligible to others than ancient Hebrews. Here, again, the general impression seems to be that the English version or versions, having been made by scholarly and conscientious men, may be assumed to have rendered the Hebrew sentences fairly in sense and in spirit. But once more this easy persuasion needs correction. I shall cite but one comprehensive and cardinal fact. It is one of the most remarkable things in the history of the treatment of any language that the Hebrew syntax has only within the last half century been properly understood by Christian scholars, and it is only very lately that the true doctrine of the subject has been popularized among English students. Consequently even the revised version is defective in ways that any moderately well-trained Hebrew scholar can detect and amend for himself. Indeed the average properly educated theological student has the high prerogative of settling the sense of many disputed passages for himself and for others. We are not likely to have another revision for many years, and it is probable that even the version thus amended will be hampered like the present by limitations which will prevent the placing in the text of the full clear sense of many passages, even when it is apparent to a majority of the revisers. However that may be it is certain that limitations have obtained in the Revision of 1885 such as the rule of a two-thirds majority for the acceptance of new renderings, by virtue of which the true translation has often been placed in the margin instead of in the text proper. This reversal of the right order, however it may have been occasioned in individual instances, is certainly one of the main disadvantages of this great work. But can any one who seeks for saving truth in the Bible maintain, without shame-facedness, that if he has within reach the