

The Wesleyan

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"WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING; THEREFORE GET WISDOM."

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WESLEYAN TRACTS FOR THE TIMES.

WESLEYAN METHODISM NOT A SCHISM.

The charge of schism continues to be advanced, in some quarters, against Wesleyan Methodism. As that charge has been so often denied and refuted, the tenacious maintenance of it is but too apt to create unfriendly feeling. Yet it is hoped that the Wesleyan Methodists will imitate the example of their honoured predecessors, and guard with patience against everything that would violate the law of Christian meekness. Let them be firm, but calm. Angry passion is not the element of truth. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Charity is the "more excellent way;" and charity "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things," and even if hope itself should fail, "endureth all things. Charity never faileth." It is, we trust, with an unaffected regard to the claims of charity that we approach the question which is reviewed by the circumstances of the present times, and again forced on our attention.—**IS WESLEYAN METHODISM A SCHISM?**

1. WHAT IS SCHISM? It seems necessary to settle this point at the very entrance, that the way may be thus prepared for our chief inquiry.

Schism literally denotes a rent, a cleft, fissure, or rupture, a division. Of this there is no dispute. But the main question is, What kind of a rent, rupture, or division, are we to understand by the term when it is used concerning the Christian church? Here, if any where, lies our difficulty on this subject. How, then, or in what sense, is the term employed in the Scriptures? for it occurs there not unfrequently, though it is almost constantly translated in our English Bibles, and indeed is retained but once in the text, and twice in the margin.

To pursue this inquiry with perfect satisfaction, our only method appears to be, to trace out what may be called the history of the word, comprehending the verb as well as the noun, in its several successive applications. This course may be thought tedious and minute, but it is safe. The examples which we shall produce are taken not only from the New Testament, but from the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, commonly known as the version of the Seventy.

1. Schism is applied to material substances which sustain some breach or injury.

Thus it signifies a rent in a garment, the veil of the temple and a net. "No man," as we read in St. Matthew's Gospel, "putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent" (or schism, *skisma*) "is made worse." St. Mark uses exactly the same expression; but St. Luke has the verb "the new" (*skidset*) "maketh a rent." So the verb is also elsewhere employed to signify the rending of garments. "Then came Elisha, the son of Shaphan, that was over the household, and Shaphan the scribe, and Joab, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah, with their clothes rent." (*eskismenoi tous itonous*) "and told him the words of Rabshakeh." And it came to pass, when King Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, (*eskiste ta itonous*) "The Roman soldiers, in making a distribution of our Lord's garments, into four parts, to every Soldier a part," said among themselves, of his "coat," which was without seam, woven from the top throughout. "Let us not rend it." (*Me skisomen auton*) "This had, without doubt, a reference to rending with the purpose of dividing, or separating, the vestment into distinct portions; but the word itself simply expresses the act of rending, or tearing."

So, in respect of the veil of the temple, it is recorded by three of the Evangelists, that, at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion, "the veil of the temple was rent," (*eskisthe*) "This issued in a separation of its parts; but, then, such a separation is particularly noted. It "was rent in the midst," says St. Luke; and the other two Evangelists more emphatically, "it was rent in two from the top to the bottom." The verb is likewise used of a net in the history of the miraculous draught of fishes, after our Lord's resurrection. "Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three. and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken, (*ouk eskisthe*) it was not rent or torn."

Again, the word denotes a cleft, fissure, opening, in a rock, mountain, wood, or the heavens. "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts" (*skismas*) "of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks." "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains," says Jonah, literally from the Hebrew, as in the margin of our Bibles, to the "cuttings off" or, according to the version of the Seventy, to the clefts or schisms (*skismas*) of the mountains, to the depth of the sea not far from the shore, where the mountains appear to be cut off, or abruptly terminated, and where their rocky bases are cleft into fissures and caverns; "the earth," as it follows, "with her bars was about me forever." The verb is applied in like manner. "Thou thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also," (*skisthesetai petra*, the rock shall be cleft,) "and the waters gushed out." "The earth did quake, and the rocks rent," (*eskisthesan*) "The mount of Olives shall cleave" (*skisthe etai*, shall be cleft) "in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley." "Abraham "clave" (*skisas*, having cloven) "the wood for a burnt offering." "They clave" (*skidsousi*, they cleave) "the wood of the cart," on which the ark of the covenant had been laid, "and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the Lord." "Whoso removeth stones," says Solomon, "shall he hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth" (*skidson*) "wood shall be endangered thereby." St. Mark uses this word, in its participial form, in the history of our Lord's baptism: "And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened," (*skidsomenous*), where the marginal version is, "cloven or rent."

It may also be noted that, in the wisdom of Solomon, which, with the other apocryphal books, is good authority in matters of verbal criticism, the participle is applied to the cleaving of the air by the action of a bird's wing in rapid flight:—"When a bird hath flown through the air, there is no token of her way to be found, but the light air being beaten with the stroke of her wings, and parted," (*skidsomenon*) "with the violent noise and motion of them, is passed through."

The word farther denotes a violent tearing of the human body, and also, such a want of arrangement and congruity in several parts and members as would be inconsistent with its harmony, health, and comfort. An example of the former use of the term, as a verb, occurs in the History of Susannah: "And Daniel said, Very

well; thou hast lied against thine own head: for even now the angel of God hath received the sentence of God to cut" (*skidset* and shall cut) "thee into two; where it is probable that there is a reference to the mode of punishment which our Lord, according to the literal interpretation of his language, denounces by another word against the "evil servant." "The lord of that servant shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites." But an example of the latter use of the term, as mentioned above, and one which is of great importance to us in our present investigation, occurs in the following passage: "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism" (*skisma*) "in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now" adds the Apostle, "ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." The value of this text, in the question now before us, arises partly from the application of its figurative language to Christ's mystical body, the church, and, partly, from the exact view which it gives us, by means of a contrast, of St. Paul's sense of the word in this connection. A schism here, where the word itself is retained by our Translators, plainly means all that is not in accordance with mutual care and entire sympathy, whether in suffering or in honour.

2. Schism is applied to companies of people assembled together, and differing in their sentiments and judgments, but without any observable reference to church communion or division. The bare citation of the passages where the word occurs in this application, seems to be quite sufficient to explain its meaning. "Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?—Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division" (or schism, *skisma*) "among the people because of him." "Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath-day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division" (or schism, *skisma*) "among them." "There was a division" (or schism, *skisma*) "therefore again among the Jews for those sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" So, in the history which relates the lengthened sojourn of Paul and Barnabas at Iconium, the verb is employed to express the dissensions which arose in that place on their account:—"The multitude of the city" (*eskisthe*) "was divided and parted with the Jews, and part with the Apostles." Again, on another occasion, "when Paul perceived that the one part" of the Jewish Council, before which he was then brought, "were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees," he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead, I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the multitude" (*eskisthe*) "was divided. For the Sadducee say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both." It is proper to observe that the "dissension" which gave

occasion to this schism, or "division," of the multitude, had an evident bearing on religious tenets. We may just add here that, in the first book of Maccabees, the verb is used in the account of a warrior, who rushed through the ranks of the enemy, and broke, or parted them, in pursuit of his object:—"Eleazar, perceiving that one of the braves armed with royal harness, was higher than all the rest, and supposing that the king was upon him, ran upon him courageously through the midst of the battle, slaying on the right hand and on the left, so that they were divided" (*eskidonto*) "from him on both sides."

3. Schism is applied to a Christian church, viewed as agitated and disturbed by internal commotions. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, who were grievously rent by such schisms, "that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions," or schisms, (*skismata*) "among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." The nature of church schism among the Corinthians may be clearly discerned in this text, by an attention to what St. Paul marks as its contrast or opposite. It is the reverse of "speaking the same thing;" and especially of "being perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." It is an uncharitable division of sentiment, choice, and affection, attended with corresponding language; or according to the Apostle's own application of the term to the human body, as already noted, it is a want of mutual care and entire sympathy among those who are members of the same mystical body. The Church of Corinth was not separated into distinct communities. It is addressed as externally and formally one: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth." But it was internally divided in its own views, preferences, and talk. "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren adds the Apostle, "by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you;" "contentions," a word which, in this context, is very nearly related to the preceding word "schisms." "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? The church of Corinth, then, was violating the union of brotherly unanimity and love. Its schisms were not outward separations from the church, at least not yet; but they were perilous dissensions and divisions within the church. This will appear still more fully from another passage in the same Epistle, the only one which remains to be produced on this branch of our subject. "Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions," or schisms, (*skismata*), "among you; and I partly believe it. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other in his supper: and one is hungry and another is drunken. What have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God which is the table that have not?" or, "them that are poor?" "What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." "The evil had become fearful. It extended itself to practice, and to practice in the observance of the most solemn institutions of Christianity. The language which St. Paul uses, however, is irreconcilable with the notion of separate or distinct commun-

James i. 22. 1 Cor. xii. 31. 2 Cor. xiii. 6-8. The Greek word schisma is immediately derived from schizo, I rend, cleave, or divide. 1 Sam. x. 4. 1 Mark ii. 22. Luke v. 26. John xii. 24. John xii. 24.

1. Matt. xxv. 31. Mark. xvi. 32. Luke xxii. 43. John xii. 31. 1. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.

1. History of Susanna. 2. In fact six for, the spirit of prophecy fail. 3. To be inspired in the words of the Spirit. 4. The Greek word schisma is immediately derived from schizo, I rend, cleave, or divide. 5. Matt. xii. 22. 6. Luke v. 26. 7. John xii. 24. 8. 1 Cor. xii. 31. 9. 2 Cor. xiii. 6-8. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.