

THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.—HAB. ii. 1.

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SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATION.

1. Cor. xi. 10.

"For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels."

The variety of opinions respecting the true explication of this passage, is a strong presumptive proof of its difficulty. Indeed, as it occurs in our generally excellent authorized version, its language must be wholly unintelligible to a large portion of Christian readers; particularly to those who have no opportunity of consulting a comment. To bring into review all the different explanations of this passage by all the different writers who have endeavored to cast light upon it, would be labor little interesting to ourselves, and still less edifying to others. In the following observations, therefore, we shall avail ourselves of the help of those, and of those only, whose annotations on the text appear to us the most consistent and judicious.

The first difficulty which presents itself in this passage is the apparent two-fold cause assigned why "the woman should have power on her head." All the Greek and Latin texts we have seen as well as the authorized English one, evidently make verse 10 a conclusion from what the Apostle had been arguing in the 9th verse. But if this be admitted what are we to make of *dia tous angelous*, "because of the angels?" To obviate this difficulty we suggest two readings which we have never seen before: 1. Supposing the connection alluded to above to exist between verses nine and ten, the insertion of the word *and* immediately before "because of the angels," will supply the apparent omission and render the sentence much more complete. This, we hesitate not to acknowledge, is perfectly unauthorized by any of the different readings we have seen of the sacred text. But then if we contend for the relation between verses 9 and 10, already mentioned, the sense of the sentence imperiously requires it. Nor does the proposed alteration at all affect the leading opinions respecting the true meaning of the word "angels." 2. If the apparent connexion between the verses be given up, we suppose that the Apostle intended by the repetition of the *dia*, or cause why "the woman should have power on her head," in the last clause of verse 10, to add intensity to the first part of it; and consequently, we should write it thus: "The woman ought to have power on her head on this account—on account of the angels."—The first reading agrees better with the context; the last is more in accordance with the original.

One other difficulty still remains—to settle the meaning of the word "angels."

Many Annotators, of no common attainments either in learning or piety, understand by this term guardian angels or spirits; in reference perhaps to Matt. xviii. 10; Hebrews i. 14, and possibly to an opinion which prevailed among the Jews that the "angels" were interested in what passes here upon earth. Thus interpreted the passage may be paraphrased as follows: "The woman ought to have power on her head because of the (supposed) invisible presence of angels in the religious assemblies of Christians." But, admitting the truth of this hypothesis, for which the texts of Scripture above cited, and others that might be added to them, certainly seem to afford some foundation, we cannot help thinking the Apostle's argument very much wanting in that strength and clearness which usually characterize the reasoning of this distinguished teacher of Christianity. Although not impossible, it is

confessedly not easy, to imagine these divine Spirits ignorant of the intention of the hearts of those individuals for whose good their superintendence is graciously vouchsafed. Of this, perhaps, we want full and satisfactory evidence. If it be admitted that these guardian angels possess this knowledge, there is something extremely frivolous, as we think, in making the Apostle urge the presence of "the angels" as a reason why "the woman should have power on her head," or, as it is generally understood, wear the veil in their religious assemblies: for the having, or the not having, on the veil must have been a matter of perfect indifference to the angels, except indeed as the absence of the veil might have served to indicate a want of becoming attention to the established rules of propriety and decorum. In either case, we cannot imagine the Apostle could suppose that conformity to the customs and manners of the age, or the want of it, would avail so far with these divine visitants as to prepossess them favourably, since the state of the heart, from which certainly, much more correct information might be drawn, was perfectly within their cognition.

The word "angels," however, is susceptible of another, and we think of a preferable interpretation. The term *angel*, in its original signification, implies simply a human messenger. Its corresponding word is so used in the Old Testament, and in a like sense, we find the term itself frequently employed in the new. It has been suggested, therefore, that the word "angels" should here be rendered "spies:" persons who, perhaps, bigotedly attached to the law of Moses, and even commissioned by the Priests and Pharisees, obtruded themselves into the assemblies of Christians for the purpose of "spying out" and reporting any little irregularity they might discover there. That unbelievers did thus come in, as spies in Christian assemblies, we learn from the Epistles of St Paul: see 1 Cor. xiv. 23, 24, 25; and particularly Gal. ii. 4.—We have also, in some sort, the authority of St James for this translation, who uses the word "angels" in very nearly the same sense: thus in chap. ii, 25, he says, speaking of Rahab, that "she received the Messengers," (*Greek angels*;) which Messengers we know were spies; and were the very same persons whom St Paul (Heb. xi. 31,) denominates by the Greek word which properly signifies spies.

We conclude, therefore, that we have sufficient authority for this interpretation:—it is attended, upon the whole, with fewer difficulties: and so rendered, the sense of the sacred text becomes more significant and easy.

We exhibit the passage subject to the two critical observations suggested in the earlier part of this paper.

1. "For the man was not created for the woman but the woman for the man. On this account the woman ought to have power on her head," and "on account of the spies."

2. "The woman ought to have power on her head on this account—on account of the spies."

* Commentators generally agree that by the word power here, is to be understood a veil, which was considered a sign of the subjection of the woman to her husband.

† It was the custom, it would seem, in the East for females to wear veils: consequently omitting to do so might be considered (and no doubt it would be reported by these spies) as highly indecorous and disgraceful.

Be content to hear other men's sense and opinion of thy matters: if thou art inaccessible, thou art incurable; and thou wilt precipitate thyself, if no body dares come near thee to hinder thee.