

A note on John 1: 14

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In the Authorized Version this verse reads, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

In Darby's New Translation it is, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father), full of grace and truth."

Differences will be noted in the above, worthy of reverent consideration; reverent because they speak of One whom all true Christians revere.

The first change is from "was made" to "became." The same Greek verb is used five times in the same form in verses 1 to 14 of this chapter, and several times also in another form. All things **were made** (became or received being) through Him and without Him not one thing received being (became) which has received being. There was (became) a man sent from God. The world was made (became) by Him. "The Word became flesh."

It is clear then that Scripture, in saying that the Word **became** flesh, teaches us that this was a new beginning, a condition not existing before, but now become true of the One who was and is the Word. And all true Christians agree surely that the words "became flesh" refer to His becoming Man; to the Incarnation of the Word, in fact.

The second difference is in one sense a minor one. "We beheld," in that context, would probably convey to any spiritual mind that it was spiritual vision and not mere physical sight. So that it would not mean a mere incident in the lives of the beholders, but a continuous impression upon the mind, and hence is rendered in the New Translation as, "we have contemplated "His glory."

But this note more especially relates to the words that follow. The Authorized Version has, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." The New Translation has, "a glory as of an only-begotten with a Father." The actual words in the Greek give no definite article to either "glory," "only begotten" or "Father." Hence the Authorized Version is too specific. The translation therein given would imply that John and the other Apostles with him had some data in their minds of the eternal relations between **the** only-begotten Son and **the** Father, before He became flesh, which enabled them to identify them with their beloved Lord when He did become flesh. The absence of the definite article, while it forbids this idea, does, to a certain extent, lead the English reader to lean towards the indefinite article as the New Translation gives it.

But — is the indefinite article altogether right? It is needful to make proper **English** of it, for in such a case the English language requires either the definite or the indefinite article. Does not the insertion of the indefinite article, however, somewhat obscure the passage? So much has been made of the change from **the** to **a**, that some have thought only of the phrase as an **illustration**, and in consequence have involved themselves in a comparison between Christ and anybody in that relationship of an only son with a father. Many would repudiate any such thought. But while there is an indefinite article in English, the Greek language does not possess an indefinite article at all, so that if they base such teaching on the indefinite form of the article in English, they are building on a flimsy foundation.

The Greek words for "His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten son with a father," taking them in

their order, and literally translated are, "the glory his, glory as only-begotten (or unique) with father."

Now if their meaning be limited to **illustration**, then we must find some only son with a father in human history who answers to such a description. He must possess **glory** and be full of grace and truth, else the illustration is only a fictitious one. Can we find one? The nearest that I can think of would be Isaac with Abraham. One would not ignore for a moment the typical bearing of their history; but no one who knows it would think of them being **full of grace and truth**. Both Abraham and Isaac denied their wives, and publicly dishonoured the holy name of Jehovah whose saints they were; and Isaac very nearly put the blessing on the wrong man because of his appetite. It will not do to use the indefinite article in that verse, because there has never been in human history any such instance as is suggested, to give basis for the comparison, either in respect of glory, or of grace and truth.

Suppose we submit then the rendering of the words just as they stand. "We beheld His glory, glory as Only-begotten with Father full of grace and truth." The meaning would then become apparent. There was glory in this unique Person, "Only-begotten with Father" previously existent, that had never been beheld until He became flesh but when beheld by His devoted disciples, that glory was presented to them in the form of the unlimited grace and truth that for ever bound them to Him. Thus the truth, the eternal truth of His Person, is preserved. The Word who became flesh is not only the Word who was with God and was God (verse 1) but was "Only-begotten with Father," and who became Man, bringing His glory to light in terms of grace and truth.

He was rejected here, and now in resurrection is in heaven and at the right hand of God. But in pressing His present place, and future glory as Lord, and as Head over all things; and the necessity for us to be engaged with, attracted to, and formed by Him, let us not allow the enemy to assail this Beloved One of the Father's heart, depriving Him of the relationship and moral glory that were His before He became Man.