

**THE GREAT MEANING OF
METANOIA: AN
UNDERDEVELOPED CHAPTER IN
THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF
CHRIST**

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The great meaning of metanoia: an underdeveloped chapter in the life and teaching of Christ by
Treadwell Walden

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AN UNDEVELOPED CHAPTER
IN THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF CHRIST

A NEW EDITION
WITH A SUPPLEMENTARY ESSAY

BY
TREADWELL WALDEN

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INSCRIBED
WITH DEVOTED LOVE
TO
MY WIFE,
GRACE GORDON WALDEN.

"233 CLARENDON STREET,
"BOSTON, October 15, 1881.

"DEAR WALDEN: I have just read your 'Metá-
noia' through from beginning to end, and I want
to tell you how much I enjoyed it, and how much I
thank you for sending it to me.

"It is full of inspiration.

"It makes one think of Christian faith as positive
and constructive, and not merely destructive and
remedial.

"It makes the work of Christ seem worthy of
Christ.

"I thank you truly, both for writing it and for
giving it to me.

"Your sincere friend,
"PHILLIPS BROOKS."

PREFACE.

THE first of these Essays appeared in the "American Church Review" for July, 1881—following the memorable day in May when the Revised Version of the New Testament was issued. The paper was soon afterwards reprinted separately, and in 1882 was put into book form by the present publisher.

Although its point was made timely by the revision, and by the astonishing fact that, in a work expressly undertaken in this age to correct the misapprehensions of a former age, a mistranslation involving such consequences had been overpassed and perpetuated, yet the Essay did not set out to be a criticism of the New Version in this particular. It could not help falling into something like it, but its main purpose was to draw attention to, and to be a popular exposition of, a word in whose enormous potentiality of meaning lay, as I believed, a more true and more catholic, a more spiritual and more philo-

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sophical, interpretation of Christianity. The Essay could have done as well for this—with a little modification—if the revisers had adopted a new rendering which was, in any degree, sympathetic with the real import of the original.

As such, I am glad to say—after the novelty of the New Version had passed—the Essay seems to have been accepted: simply as an exposition in itself, that might at any time be in order; and as a contribution, called for under the circumstances, to the knowledge and the spirit which ought to inspire that comprehensive English expression or that happy combination of words—varying according to their connection in the text—which may venture sometime hence to represent the idea of *Μετένοια*; a word of whose fullness, in its initial position, the New Testament itself can be the only adequate translation, for, in that initial position, it is the key-note of its whole strain.

There was nothing new in the view itself. If there had been, it could not have been true. It was as old as the apostolic age. And the revival of it was only an attempt to uncover and clear out a partially choked well.

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The Greek expression lay directly under the eye of any reader of the original, manifestly opening down to a great depth, provided his eye was disengaged enough from prepossessions to be alive to the fact. The word bore the hint of what it was on its very face: an intimation that the whole inward nature of man was appealed to, all its springs of action, all its possibilities of affection. Every scholar was aware of its literal meaning—and that meaning alone was in itself enough to suggest the dropping of an exploring plummet. Why this was not done, why what was so obvious was overlooked, perhaps the second Essay may explain.

Neither was there anything new in the endeavor to recover the lost meaning of the word. There had been, even so far back as the remote age in which its present customary curb and covering had first been imposed upon it, an instinctive misgiving that its full depth had not been sounded. But the misgiving had been overborne because it was not pronounced enough. The Reformation, also, developed a restiveness under the same ancient limitation—for mud, as well as water, was being drawn up now—but the restiveness

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wrought no real purification, because it was not articulate enough. At a later day—that is, a hundred years ago—an orthodox but independent Scotchman, Dr. George Campbell, exposed the whole imposition with startling distinctness, and succeeded so well in sweeping the fabric away that many since his day—several recent translators among them—owe all their new conception of the truth to him. But in both his and their contentment with the substitute “reformation” for “*repentance*” there lay an implication of externalism, which betrayed, apparently, a lack of insight into the spiritual profundity of the original expression. The new rendering did not, also, popularly prevail, though pointing to the practical result in the life, because the old one, though falling short of the whole truth (“regeneration”), did at last reach down far enough to stir the oft-stagnant pool of the conscience and the heart.

It has turned out that the absolute insight into the meaning of the word has in our own day been given to two scholars like De Quincey and Matthew Arnold, and has found its first distinct expression through them, because, unlike all that have gone before them,