

BIBLICAL REVISION.

We make the following extracts from a sermon recently preached in the Cathedral, Kingston, by the Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Ontario. The sermon is given at length in the September number of our contemporary, the Churchman's Magazine:—

You are aware that the Convocation of Canterbury has lately revised the Table of Lessons, changing the order in which they have hitherto been read in the Church. It is very probable that the Canadian Church will adopt the revised Lectionary, when it becomes the law of the Church of England, because the changes made seem to tend to edification,—the Epistles being permitted to be read occasionally at Morning service, and the Gospels at Evening service, and the amount of Apocryphal writings being much curtailed. Besides, the necessity of printing our own Prayer Books, if we retain the old Table of Lessons, would entail a great expense, and thus prove a serious hindrance to the circulation of the book.

My remarks, this morning, will be directed to the Bible itself, rather than to the way in which we are to read it. The authorized version is at this moment undergoing revision by a Committee of Convocation, aided by all the scholars whom they choose to invite. I can scarcely imagine any religionist not taking a deep interest in this undertaking. There should, however, be no misconception as to the nature of the undertaking. The Bible is not to be newly translated, but only revised. To place the best texts of the original Hebrew and Greek before the best company of living scholars, and to bid them to translate anew, would be a national calamity. To re-translate the book which has been the anchor of the national language, and the basis of the national seriousness, could not be done without imminent risk of the language becoming modernized and Frenchified.

But it may be said, will not a revision be equally dangerous? Will it not unsettle men's minds, as the saying is? The reply is, men's minds are unsettled. Not only do orthodox scholars know that there are inaccuracies and blemishes in the authorized version, but infidel publications are constantly exposing them, and young Clergymen fresh from college are as constantly informing their congregations that one text is wrongly rendered, and that another might be much improved. To retain an inaccuracy in the translation of God's word, lest men's minds should be unsettled by a correction of it, is to disbelieve the power of truth—is superstition. Men's minds have been for a long time disturbed, and a revision has been undertaken for the purpose of reassuring them. It will also tend to allay alarm if we remember a fact of great importance, that as Churchmen we are not committed to a belief in the perfection of the authorized version. The Church of England happily did not make the mistake which the Church of Rome did, by vouching for the infallibility of any version. The Church never formally adopted the authorized version, except those portions of it which are incorporated into the Book of Common Prayer, and they are very few. The introductory sentences, and the Epistles and Gospels are taken from the authorized version but the Canticles, the Psalms, the Offertory Sentences, the Comfortable words, the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments are taken from other and earlier versions. We are not therefore so tied and bound to the authorized version, that we should hesitate to approve of a revision by competent authority.

We should also recollect that the authorized version is not itself an original translation, but a revision of prior translations, and that it did not supplant them for a very long time, not till the public opinion of scholars had acknowledged its superiority to its predecessors. Neither was it ever regarded even by the revisors themselves as a finality. At every period since A.D. 1611 learned men have been calling for another revision, but the great Rebellion, and the vices of the Restoration, together with the fact that during the Georgian era, people did not think enough of the Bible to trouble themselves about its revision, all conspired to frustrate the attempt. But how comes it (it is asked) that the Revisors of A.D. 1611 did not perform their work perfectly? The

answer is, they nobly performed their work considering the appliances they had, but we have instruments they had not. The three oldest and most trustworthy MSS of the Scriptures in existence are the Sinaitic discovered ten years ago by Tischendorf in a convent on Mount Sinai, and now in the possession of the Emperor of Russia; the Vatican MSS in the Vatican Library at Rome, and the Alexandrine MSS presented to Charles the first by the Patriarch of Constantinople, and now in the British Museum. I need not point out the importance of considering that the revisors of A.D. 1611 knew nothing of these priceless treasures. What Hebrew and Greek texts then had they before them to direct and aid their revision? To make this plain let me remind you that fill the discovery of printing, the MSS copies of the Scriptures were almost altogether in the hands of the clergy and learned laymen. They were multiplied by the laborious process of copying one from another, a process most liable to error. But when printing was discovered there was an intense longing to print the Bible or portions of it, and as a matter of fact, the first book ever printed was the Bible. Erasmus and Beza add Stephanus hastened to publish the Greek Testament, and of course the book was printed from such MSS as they happened to have. The MSS used by Erasmus and on which the subsequent editions of Beza and Stephanus were based, are still preserved in Switzerland, and prove to be of no earlier date than the 15th and 16th century and would now be considered of very inferior value. From this cause, and also from the undue but natural haste with which the work was done, many errors crept into the text, which, however, claimed to be the "received text." This bold claim was admitted, and this text it was, which the revisors of A.D. 1611 had before them. Hence have descended to us some interpolations, mistranslations, and erroneous readings. It is to correct them that the church is now turning her attention. Individuals have attempted to amend them by new translations but have wholly failed. Sects like the Baptists have tried to retranslate the Scriptures, but have only covered themselves with ridicule. It is we humbly think, God's will that the church which first gave the Bible to the people in the vulgar tongue, should have the honour of perfecting the work. His Providence has raised up scholars equal to the occasion, and has led to discoveries which plainly point out the duty of using them, so timely and important do they seem to be.

It is, however, feared by some that the world will not accept the revised Book; that America will still adhere to the authorized version, and so the universality of acceptance of a Bible common to all English-speaking communities be endangered. But I should hope that this danger is imaginary. Even if the foreboding be realized, yet there need not be any abatement of good-will or fellowship between the adherents of the two versions. The English Bible will certainly not suffer anything like the revision or expurgation which the English Prayer-book has received at the hands of our fellow-churchmen in America, and yet we are in full and affectionate communion with them, and hold to our respective Prayer-books without condemning each other. There is even less reason why we should fear danger to our present intercommunion from a revision of the authorized version. The newly-revised book will not be published as the Bible of the church. It will be submitted to the keen scrutiny of public opinion, and its merits be decided by an appeal to the criticism of the scholars of Europe and America. And if, as we pray, the work may be brought to a successful issue, then at the right time the new version will gradually supersede the present one, just as the present one did its predecessors, and with the general good-will of the Anglo-Saxon family become the household Word of God.

There are erroneous renderings which need revision. I shall mention a few as specimens. The verse in Acts ii. 47, "The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved," ought to read thus, "The Lord added together daily such as were saved." In Heb. x. 23, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith," the word "faith" should be "hope." Here we have an instance of a mere error, a printer's mistake, and yet having once gained a

footing in the text, it was impossible to dislodge it, because no one had authority to do so. The same may be said of the 38th verse of the same chapter, where the words "any man" are an unwarrantable insertion. In 1 Tim. iii. 16, "God was manifest in the flesh," should read, "who was manifest in the flesh." "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable," should read "Every Scripture being inspired of God is also profitable." "Strain at a gnat," should be "Strain out a gnat." These are a few of the obvious blemishes of the authorized version and I mention them to point out the harmlessness of the proposed revision, as well as its clear necessity.

But the great advantage to be expected from a revision is not so much the emendation of such errors, nor yet the substitution of new words for words which mislead, because they are obsolete, such as the substitution of baggage or luggage for "carriages" in the text "we took up our carriages and went to Jerusalem;" such revisions are unimportant compared with the results to be derived from a more accurate attention to the force of the tenses and moods and article of that most exquisitely expressive of all languages, the Greek. This will be of inestimable benefit in bringing into clearer light the powerful reasonings of St. Paul's Epistles, and so making the revelation of God to man "more quick and powerful" in working upon the heart and intellect.

CHURCH DECORATION.

The New York Episcopalian has the following timely and sensible remarks:—

"We believe that the removal of the dark, central parts of the windows, retaining the borders and substituting plain white or cathedral-ground glass, would add much to the comfort and pleasure of the worshippers. In this respect, the new church of the Holy Apostles is far superior. The dim religious light will not be a trouble and cause of complaint in the latter place. Light will stream through its clear windows, and, we trust, will also stream from the Word of God read and preached. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." The Word of God is a light that shineth in a dark place. Christ calls his ministers the light of the world, and his disciples, when illuminated by the Spirit through the Word, are said to be light in the Lord. Hence association of ideas and correspondence of circumstances call for light when we assemble to hear His word. It is remarkable that in the most gloomy churches, when there is a night service, the effort is made to have as much gaslight as possible. Often they are brilliantly lighted up, and especially about the chancel. When the sun shines, they cannot be made dark enough; and when night comes, they cannot be made light enough. We have no doubt this gloomy, gothic interior of churches was invented to set-off the blazing lights on the Romish altar, and that a greater effect might be made when the superstitious ceremonies were performed. We repudiated the mass and the altars, and in the churches of a century ago, or even of half that distance from the present, the darkness was expelled. But Puseyism brought back the teachings of Rome and of the dark ages; the 'altar' was in language restored, then in form, next followed the priest, the dim surroundings, and churches dark as a cellar at mid-day. Then arose the necessity for lights; finally they have reached the so-called altar and the mediæval restoration, the reaction against Protestantism, and thus the 'Catholic' movement is complete. We believe the reformation must be made over again—the light let in, the false altars cast forth, and plain tables substituted, the priests changed into ministers, and the congregations become hearers, readers, and thinkers, instead of gazers on ritual, show and pantomime."

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Table with columns: RAILWAYS, Am't of Shares, Paid up, Dividend last 6 m's, Closing Prices. Includes G. T. of Canada, A. & St. Lawrence, etc.

Table with columns: MINES, &c., Am't of Shares, Paid up, Dividend last 6 m's, Closing Prices. Includes Montreal Consols, Canada Mining Co., etc.

Table with columns: BONDS, Am't of Shares, Paid up, Dividend last 6 m's, Closing Prices. Includes Government 5 per cents, etc.

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