

NEW BOOKS.

The Four Gospels, translated from the Greek : with preliminary Dissertations and Notes critical and explanatory. By George Campbell, D. D. Principal of the Marischal College, Aberdeen. 2 Vol. in 4to. Price Two Guineas in Boards. Cadell, 1789.

[From the *Analytical Review*.]

WE are happy to have it in our power to give to the public so early an account of this important and learned work, which we have so long wished to see, and which we have read with uncommon pleasure.

The first volume (of 700 pages) contains a dedication to the present Bishop of Carlisle, a Preface, and twelve preliminary Dissertations.

In the preface, our author gives an account of the origin and preparation of the work. As far back as the year 1750, he formed the design of collecting criticisms on the New Testament; and particularly to take notice of such proposed alterations on the manner of translating the words of the original, as appeared to express the meaning with more perspicuity or energy.—In this way he proceeded many years, merely for his own improvement; till he found that he had made a new version of a considerable part of the book. Having afterwards, occasion to turn his thoughts more closely to Scriptural Criticism, he entered into a more minute examination of the subject; of which the present work was the result. On some of the points re-examined, he found reason to change his first opinion; on others he was confirmed in the judgment he had formerly adopted.

‘I have always (says he) laid it down as a rule in my researches, to divest myself, as much as possible, of an excessive deference to the judgment of men: and I think that, in my attempting this, I have not been unsuccessful—but, at the same time, I have been ready to give a patient hearing and impartial examination to reason and argument, from what quarter soever it proceeded. That a man differs* from me on some articles, has given me no propensity to reject his sentiments on other articles: neither does the concurrence of his sentiments with mine on some points, make me prone to admit his sentiments on others. Truth I have always sought; and if a man may pronounce safely on what passes within his own breast, I am warranted to say, I have sought it in the love of Truth.’

Our author here points out with great shrewdness; the difference which, he thinks, there exists between

‘The impartial seekers of truth, and those who, under the appearance of exalting human reason, idolize all their own conceptions and prejudices. In what concerns revelation, reason has a twofold province: first, to judge whether what is presented to us as a revelation from God, be really such or not: secondly, to judge what is the import of the testimony given.—With the first, (the evidences of the truth of our religion) I am not here concerned. The great design of this work is, to deliver with plainness, in our own tongue, a very essential part of what was, more than seventeen centuries ago communicated in another tongue, to the inhabitants of countries remote from ours. It was in order, the more effectually to answer this end, that I determined, on reflection, to add to the Version the preliminary Dissertations and Notes.’

Dr. C. then takes notice of the principal difficulties which a modern translator of the holy scriptures has to encounter: arising chiefly from the distance of time; the difference of manners; the change that has gradually been made in the acceptance of many terms, and the inveterate prejudices of religious system.

‘Hence (says he) the propriety of *Scholia* or notes, for vindicating a new version.—For (adds he very justly) it is not on account of any peculiar obscurity in sacred writ, that more has been judged requisite in this way with regard to it, than with regard to any other writings; but partly on account of certain peculiarities in the case; and partly on account of the superior importance of the subject.’

As, in illustrating the principles on which some of the Author’s translations are founded, a great deal more seemed necessary to do justice to the argument, than could with propriety be thrown into the notes; it was deemed expedient to discuss some points more fully in preliminary dissertations.

This however is not the only use they were

* We have some doubt, whether this be properly expressed. We think it should be rather, ‘a man’s differing from me, &c.’