

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

REVISION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

ADDRESS TO THE TEACHERS OF KNOX CHURCH SABBATH SCHOOL, BY
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PART III.—CONCLUSION.

Many persons are repelled from the consideration of the subject of Biblical revision by believing that the knowledge of the ancient languages is absolutely necessary to any one attempting to understand the matter. No doubt the knowledge of Hebrew and Greek is indispensable to any one seeking a critical comprehension of the ancient writings, but it by no means follows that an intelligent understanding of the subject cannot be obtained without such learning. Most persons of ordinary intelligence, although incompetent to discuss scientifically any geological problem, have yet such a knowledge of this branch of learning as will enable them to understand something of the arguments employed, and the results of the discussion of such questions. The object of the present paper is to endeavour to awaken an interest in the important subject of the revision of the New Testament and to supply such information as will enable ordinary readers to understand the object sought in revision, and the material now before the revisers.

I. The first object sought by the revisers is not the translation but the restoration of a purer Greek text than that from which the authorized version was made.

The translation now in use was made from what is known as the "received text." This dates from the first printed edition of the Greek Testament by Erasmus in 1516, and was first so styled by Elzevir, the publisher of Leyden, in his edition of 1633. The "received text" was prepared from most scanty materials when most of the great manuscripts were unknown, and without the apparatus now within the reach of the revisers. There were only a few manuscripts then known to exist; but now about 1,583 of such ancient writings are available.

II. Another duty of the revisers will be to correct errors of typography, grammar and translation.

(1.) Misprints.—A familiar example of such is found in Mat. xxiii. 24, where we have "strain at a gnat," instead of "strain out."

(2.) Errors in grammar.—An example of these is found in Mark viii. 27, 29. "Whom say ye that I am?" for "who."

(3.) Mistranslations.—In John x. 16, we now have "one fold, and one shepherd" instead of "one flock, one shepherd." Our version reads in John xiii. 2, "supper being ended" instead of "being about to begin." In 1. Thes. v. 22, "abstain from all appearance of evil," ought to be "from every kind or form of evil."

III. The rectification of inexact and imperfect renderings which obscure, weaken or modify the sense, will form an important part of the revisers' duty. In Mat. xxiv. 12, the omission of the article "the" greatly weakens the sense. We have "the love of many shall wax cold" instead of "the many," which means the vast majority.

The insertion of the article in 1 Tim. vi. 10, injures the sense. We now read "the love of money is the root of all evil." The apostle tells us that it is "a root" in common with many other things.

IV. The preservation of consistency and uniformity in the rendering of words, will also receive attention. In many cases in our version artificial distinctions are created and real distinctions are destroyed.

In Mat. xxv. 46, the same word is used to express duration, yet we have "everlasting punishment" and "life eternal." The ordinary reader is thus led naturally to suppose that there might be a distinction between the expressions.

The word "overseer" is in many places translated "bishop," and in one instance only rendered "overseer." Thus one of the strongest arguments for the identity of rank of all ministers is lost to the reader.

In John i. 11, our version has "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." The first "His own," being neuter and the latter masculine, the distinction between place, "His own home," and "His own people" is thus entirely extinguished.

In 1 Cor. xiv. 20, we read "Be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children." The latter word rendered "children" means babes, and gives great point to the apostle's injunction.

Complete confusion exists in the English version as to "Hades." This word, which does not mean "hell," is

eleven times translated "Hell" and once (1 Cor. xv. 55) translated "grave." The word *gehenna* which really means "the place of punishment" is also translated "hell."

V. The translators will remove what are known as archaisms or old fashioned expressions not now intelligible to the common reader.

Examples of these are found in such expressions as *to prevent* now meaning *to hinder*, but formerly used in the sense of "anticipation" or to come before. *To let* once signified *to prevent* but now to *permit*. In 1 Tim. v. 4, it is stated "If any widow have children or nephews," the word translated nephews really signifies *grandchildren* or "descendants." At the time our version was made the word "nephews" was commonly used to signify grandchildren. Thus in the translation of Plutarch's *Morals* it is rendered "the warts, moles, etc., of fathers, not appearing at all on their own children, begin afterward to put forth and show themselves in their 'nephews' to wit the children of their sons and daughters."

In 1 Cor. iv. 4, our version has "I know nothing by myself." The meaning conveyed by this passage to the English reader is now a wrong one, although at the time the version was made this meaning was quite right. I know nothing *against* myself is the correct meaning. An example of this use of "by" is found in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* where the historian in narrating an incident in the life of one of his heroines says: "Thou hast spoken evil words *by* the queen" and the answer is given "No man living upon earth can prove any such things *by* me."

VI. The introduction of uniformity of spelling of proper names throughout the Bible will also be attended to. We have at present such differences as Joshua and Jesus, Lucas and Luke, Judæa and Jewry, Asshur and Assyria, Jeremiah and Jeremy, etc., etc.

VII. The proper division of the texts into paragraphs, and the metrical arrangement of the poetical books according to the rules of Hebrew parallelism will also form a not unimportant part of the duty of the revisers.

As was mentioned in the beginning of this paper the division into chapters and verses formed no part of the original text and in many cases has injured the sense.

A simple illustration of the carelessness of the division into chapters may be found at the very beginning of our version. The first chapter of Genesis ought to include the first three verses of the second chapter. The absurdity of the present division into verses is too apparent to require remark. The sources of information or the "apparatus criticus" which will be used by the revisers are:—

I. The Manuscripts: It need scarcely be mentioned that none of the actual autographs of the sacred writers are now extant. The fragile papyri have long since perished. There however, remain to us manuscripts of a very ancient date. These are of two kinds, the *Uncials* and the *Cursive*.

(1.) The uncial MSS. are so termed from being written in capital letters. They are engraved on large skins of parchment generally in double columns. From no spaces being left between the words, and on account of there being no marks of punctuation, and no attempt at finishing a line by a syllable, the work of reading them is painful to the eye of a student not familiar with their use. They are difficult to copy and doubtless many of the errors in those MSS. arose from mistakes on the part of the persons who made the now extant copies occasioned by their confusing appearance.

(2.) The cursive MSS. are so termed from being written in what we would term a "running hand." They are not nearly so ancient as the uncial MSS. and are vastly more numerous. Although not so venerable as the great uncial MSS. it does not follow that they are of less value, for a cursive MS. may, so far as we know, have been copied from an uncial MS. of greater antiquity than any we now possess.

The great uncial MSS. are few in number. Scarcely one is perfectly complete, and some consist only of a few pages. To give a list of them would be tedious, and would be little more than a catalogue. Mention must be made however of some of the more important of them.

The one which was last discovered is the most complete, and probably the most ancient. It is known as the *Codex Sinaiticus*. It was discovered in 1844 and 1859 by Constantine Tischendorf, in the monastery of

St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. Professor Tischendorf was at the convent of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai in his journey through the East in search of ancient MSS. under the auspices of Frederick Augustus of Saxony. One day his attention was attracted to some vellum leaves which were just about to be used to light the stove. He examined them and finding that they contained a part of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament he at once secured them. On his return to Europe he published the rescued portion, which contained Esther and Nehemiah, with parts of Chronicles and Jeremiah. In 1853 Tischendorf was again at Mount Sinai, but could find no trace of the precious MS. On a third visit to the monastery in 1859, he succeeded in recovering the remaining sheets of the missing treasure, and after a good deal of negotiation the monks were persuaded by Tischendorf to surrender the manuscript to the Emperor of Russia. The MS. is now in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg. In 1862 a splendid fac-simile edition of 300 copies was published as a memorial of the one thousandth anniversary of the empire of the Czars. Every item of internal evidence leads to the belief that this MS. dates from the fourth century. It is probable that it was one of the fifty copies prepared by order of Constantine in 331, and that it was presented to the monastery by Justinian its founder. This MS. contains the whole of the New Testament and is the only complete MS. in existence. It is usually designated by critics, the Hebrew "*Aleph*."

The MS. known as "A" is the Alexandrian Codex. It is preserved in the British Museum. It was sent as a present in 1628 from Cyril, Patriarch of Constantinople to Charles I. Cyril states that it was written by a monk named Thecla, but when or where is not known. It is supposed to have been prepared in Egypt during the fifth century. The MS. known as B is the Vatican Codex. Nothing also is known of its history beyond the fact that its existence for 400 years in the Vatican library is ascertained. It is written in characters very closely resembling those in the manuscripts found in Herculaneum. The greatest difficulty has always been experienced in consulting it. Napoleon carried it to Paris with many other literary treasures. It was on his fall restored to the Papal custody. Continued pressure was brought to bear on the Pope to have it published, and in 1857 an edition made its appearance under the editorship of Cardinal Mai. It was found that numerous passages were actually inserted, and the whole edition was so garbled that scholars named it "a copy of the Scriptures according to Rome." The contempt with which this edition was received by scholars induced the Pope, Pius Nono, to issue a fac-simile edition in 1868, reproducing the very "form, lines, letters, strokes, marks" of the MS. itself. We have thus in the hands of critics a scrupulously exact copy of this treasure.

The codex of Ephraem known as C, is an important MS. It is a *palimpsest*, that is a work written over an older writing on the same skin. Over the old MS had been engrossed the work of a Syrian theologian named Ephraem; hence its title. It is now in the National library in Paris. It was not until the end of the 17th century that the existence of a part of the New Testament under the more recent writing was suspected. In 1834 a chemical application was made to it when much of the original writing was revived. It was found to be written with great care and undoubtedly belongs to the early part of the 5th century.

D, or the *Codex Beza*, is preserved in the University of Cambridge. It was at one time the property of the Reformer Beza who presented it to the University library at Cambridge in 1581. The text of this MS. differs much from the other great uncials. It is supposed to have been written in France by a Latin copyist ignorant of the Greek language. Its age is fixed at the latter end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century.

Space however prevents any further enumeration of these uncial manuscripts. There are about 125 of them known to exist of varying degrees of completeness. Some are almost perfect and others consist of only a few verses, such as the *Fragmentum Nitriense*. They vary in age from the 4th to the 10th century.

The second source of our information is the Cursive manuscripts. These are very numerous; about 1,450 of these have been compared and examined; they date from the 10th to the 15th centuries.

On all classes of these MSS. may be observed cor-