

Bible; Matthew's, 1537; Great Bible, sometimes called Cranmer's, 1539; Geneva, 1560; Bishop's, so named from the number of prelates engaged in the translation, 1568; the Douai Version, 1582-1609; Authorized Version, 1611; and the present revision. In most of these renderings the substantial agreement seems much more apparent than the dissimilarity. Taking four of them immediately at hand—the reprint of Wycliffe's, the Geneva of 1599, the authorised version, and the new revision—as fairly representing the others, it seems as if in substance they were much alike, although with a very considerable diversity in form and detail. Hence they may be called revisions rather than translations. In the case of the first Westminster company, while they were to go, in the first place, to the fountain-heads in the original languages, it was also an instruction that they were to adhere as closely to the text and phraseology of the Bible in use as “the original will permit.” Indeed, the present New Testament is that of Tyndale, or even that of Wycliffe, with variations. We do not mean by this to say that there are no differences worth speaking about, and that there is no necessity for a fresh examination and re-setting of the text of the sacred writings. Of the very earliest it may certainly be said that he who runs may read; but the contention of experts, that the text of to-day is a much closer approximation to the originals than any that have preceded it, we are bound to respect. It would be strange if it were otherwise. The number of

MSS., for one thing, has enormously increased. Dr. Angus, one of the company of revisors, mentions that in 1516 there were only sixteen manuscripts available to Erasmus in preparing his edition of the Greek Testament, while now there are about 1600. Exegetical skill and knowledge of Biblical antiquities have also greatly improved, particularly of late years, aided as they are by all kinds of scientific and literary helps in the elucidation of the text of Scripture. The objections to all further revision, which occasionally are still to be heard, may with truth be described as both unphilosophical and pusillanimous. It is no homage to truth knowingly to perpetuate error. Many readers are probably old enough to remember the late Lord Panmure (Lord Dalhousie), at a meeting in Edinburgh five-and-twenty years ago, declaring, in so many words, that a new version of the Scriptures would be dangerous to the civil and religious liberties of the nation. Animadversions in the same direction are still current, but the consensus of opinion amongst those most competent to judge is that a new revision is likely to prove of the utmost importance in a critical age like the present, and is, as a matter of scholarship, imperatively demanded.

There are several interesting differences between the circumstances attending the production of the present version and that of 1611, which it may be worth while to allude to. The latter was the project very much of James I., whose theological tendencies were so marked a feature of his singular