

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### THE STORY OF THE OLD AND NEW VERSIONS.

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The Hampton Court Conference, in 1603, convened by King James to settle ecclesiastical differences, and which terminated unsatisfactorily, accomplished one good thing. It started the movement which ended in the bringing out of the authorized version. The idea originated with the Puritan minority, though it fell to the lot of the Episcopal majority to take the principal part in carrying it out. Dr. Reynolds, then President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, made the suggestion to the king at the second session of the conference, which was promptly taken up and acted on. Bancroft, then Bishop of London, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, was appointed to supervise the work. By the end of July fifty-four were chosen to conduct it in sections, but from death and declination forty-seven was the actual number engaged. They were instructed to make the Bishop's Bible their basis and to make as few changes as possible, every particular man of each company to take the same chapter or chapters, and having translated them severally by himself, all to meet together, confer on what they have done, and agree for their parts what shall stand. They were then to send to the rest, to be considered by them "seriously and judiciously." If any company upon the review of the book so sent doubt or differ upon any place, to send them word thereof, note the place, and send the reason, to which if they consent not, the difference to be compounded at the general meeting of the chief persons of each company at the end of the work. When any place of special obscurity occurs letters to be directed by authority to any learned person in the land, for his judgment of such a place preceding translations named above, to be followed when counted preferable to the Bishop's, etc. These are among the fifteen rules drawn up for the direction of the translation. The revision board was divided off into six companies, two to meet at Oxford, two at Cambridge, and two at Westminster. The first, composed of ten, met at Westminster, and had allotted to them from Genesis to the 2nd Book of Kings. The second, composed of seven, principally professors, met at Cambridge, to whom was apportioned 1st Chronicles to Ecclesiastes inclusive. The third convened at Oxford, composed of seven, chiefly Oxford Professors, to whom were allotted the remaining books of the Old Testament. Pre-eminent in this section was Reynolds, the Puritan College President, who died while the work was in progress and in whose lodgings during his sickness his associates gathered to go over their work. "The memory and reading of that man," said Bishop Hall, "were near to a miracle, and all Europe at the time could not have produced three men superior to Reynolds, Jewell and Usher, all of this same College." The fourth company, comprising eight, of whom George Abbott (afterwards Primate) was one, met also at Oxford, and had charge of the New Testament to Acts, inclusive, with Revelation. The fifth company of seven met at Westminster, and translated from Romans to Jude inclusive. The sixth company, embracing seven, and sitting at Westminster, had charge of the Apocrypha. The only glimpse we get of the private history of the authorized version is from Selden's Table Talk, that remarkable man saying "translation in King James's time took an excellent way; that part of the Bible was given to him who was most excellent in such a tongue, and then they met together, and one read the translation, the rest holding in the hands some Bible either of the learned tongues or French, Spanish, Italian, etc. If they found any fault they spoke, if not they read on." The Committee's work lasted two full years. These copies were sent to London from the three localities where they sat, and were subjected to the criticism of a committee of learned persons who devoted nine months to a thorough revision of the whole. It was published in 1611, in handsome folio, printed in black letter—with handsome frontispiece. The proofs were read by Dr. Thomas Bilson, Bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Myles Smith, made the following year Bishop of Gloucester, who also wrote the translator's preface.

Robert Barker printed it at his own expense. It did not cost the king or the nation anything. For

37 years (from 1577 till 1709) "not a single copy of the sacred volume had issued from the press in which this one family—father, sons and grandsons—had not a personal pecuniary interest."

The translators did their work gratuitously. A small allowance was made for the expenses of the final course of revision. The title page bore the words, "Appointed to be read in churches," but there is no record of any such appointment by Convocation or Parliament, Privy Council or King. The version, as Westcott informs us, "gained currency partly by the weight of the king's name, partly by the personal authority of the prelates and scholars who had been engaged upon it, but still more by its own intrinsic superiority over its rivals."

#### REASONS FOR REVISION.

1. The change in our language has had to do with it. During the past two centuries and a half the English language has altered greatly. Books written at the time of our authorized version are now, in not a few portions, hard to be understood. Many words in them have become obsolete, so that they need a glossary, or, when new editions are published, the spelling, and not unfrequently the words themselves are changed. Some of those old authors are quite different in their modern from their original dress. The authorized version has been in this respect quite exceptional. It has wonderfully kept abreast of the language and is indeed a marvel of simplicity and correctness. Still, being human, it is necessarily imperfect. Many of the words used in it have a different meaning now from that of the time when they were introduced. This was shown by adducing a variety of the military, musical, artistic and scientific terms, etc. The discoveries in Natural History have rendered obsolete such words as Cockatrice, Palmerworm, Unicorn, Behemoth, Leviathan, etc. Sneezing is now used for "neezing," architect for master-builder, crown of the head for "pate" or "poll," satchel for "scrip," boil for "seethe," report for "bruit," man-servant for "servitor," modesty for "shamefacedness," scrawl for "scramble," fine for "amerce," bruise for "briar," directly for "straightway," etc. Some words too have got different meaning from what they had 270 years ago. *Prevent* followed then its etymological signification to "go before" or "anticipate," not "hinder," as now. As in God is "preventing with the blessings of His goodness," and the living saints, not "preventing them that are asleep." To "ear" then is plough or sow now. "We took up our carriage," is the baggage—not the conveyance. "Charity" then meant the same as love, but how different now, when "as cold as charity" is a proverb. "Lewd" was like lay, as opposed to clerical; "virtue," valour; "conversation," behaviour in general; "ancient," an elder. "Wit" was knowledge; "witty invention," not funny, but wise; sober was then "sedate;" "sobriety," gravity—not limited, as now, to one form of temperance, etc.

Spelling has changed. In this respect corrections have been made since 1611 of many words, but we retain still in the best of modern editions "astonied" for astonished, "bewayeth" for betrayeth, "chaws" for jaws, "causey" for causeway, "sope" for soap, "tentation" for temptation, "fat" for vat, "fitch" for veitch, "cotes" for cots, "crudle" for curdle, "knop" for knob, "defence" for fenced, "marish" for marsh, "magnifical" for magnificent, "garner" for granary, "shird" for shred, "unmoveable" for immovable, etc. Denominational partialities also occasionally crop out, though very seldom, as "Bishop" for overseer, "bishopric" for office, "Easter" for passover.

There are also some indelicate forms of expression which were not out of the way at the time, but which sound strangely now and which it is well to have altered.

2. The material for the formation of a correct text is much more ample and reliable than two centuries and a half ago. Certain interpolations and inaccuracies have occurred in copying—the wonder is there are so few; and the compilers of the authorized version had not the invaluable codices, such as the Vatican Codex, the Alexandrine, and especially the "Codex Sinaiticus," discovered by Tischendorf, which contains, besides the Old Testament, pretty complete, and the Epistles of Barnabas and Hermas, the entire New Testament, except a single leaf, and which dates back to the middle of the fourth century. Nor had they the mass of manuscripts, at least a thousand, which have accumulated since. In this how much

more reliable is the Bible text than that of any classical author, the most celebrated of which date not back beyond the tenth century, and are taken from at most fifteen or twenty MSS., and sometimes even from one. Some have felt strongly the risk of unsettling the popular mind by the very proposal to revise, but, in point of fact, that mind has been already roused and made restless, and revision may secure settlement and satisfaction, where uncertainty and dissatisfaction exist. It is desirable to invite all the light which the progress of science, philosophy, geographical and archaeological discovery has gathered, so as to make our dear old English Bible as perfect as it can be made, all the more when we take into account not merely that the English language is spoken by so many, but that our English authorized version has been the basis for the 150,000,000 copies sent by British and American Book Societies all over the world. Our missionaries have not leisure or facilities, as a general thing, for the settlement of the original text, or for going into the critical niceties of language. They largely follow in their work of translation our standard version, and if there be any obscurity or mistakes in it these will be multiplied and perpetuated indefinitely through them. Such considerations have weighed strongly with wise and learned men in England and America, and led them seriously to entertain the question, not of making a new translation, but of revising the time-honoured existing one, making no change save where palpable error exists or the original is obscured by the rendering, and avoiding the pedantry of discarding Saxon for Latinized expressions, or sacrificing English idiom to slavish literalism.

(To be continued.)

#### THE ENGLISH OF THE REVISED VERSION.

"Long looked for, come at last." After waiting for it eleven years, the public is now in possession of the revised version of the New Testament in English. In this article I shall, in conformity with the title thereof, say nothing regarding its merits as a version, but treat it merely as an English book. I shall make my criticisms with the greatest respect for the learning and piety of the revisers.

One of the rules by which they had to go was the following: "2. To limit, as far as possible, the expression of such alterations to the language of the authorized and earlier English versions." From this they have almost invariably departed in their use of the subjunctive mood. According to the rules of English grammar we should, for example, say, "If I, thou, he, she, we, you, or they *be*." The same is also true of such words as "though" and "until." This is the almost invariable form of expression in the authorized version, as in the following instances: "If I *be* a father . . . a master;" "If Thou *be* the Son of God;" "If He *be* the King of Israel;" "Though He *were* a son;" "Until He *come*." The common form of expression at the present day is making the subjunctive the same as the indicative, as for example: "If I *am*, if thou *art*, if he or she *is*." Sometimes we find instances of this in the authorized version. In Proverbs xx-x. 9 it is said, "If a wise man *intrudeth*;" yet in v. 12 it is said, "If a ruler *hearken*." In Philemon v. 18 it is said, "If he *had* wronged thee or *oweth* thee aught;" yet in v. 17 it is said, "If thou *count* me." These are inconsistencies, very possibly at least in some cases, the continuation of misprints like "straining at a gnat." Now, the revisers almost invariably use the modern form of the subjunctive already referred to. For instance they say, "If then I *am* a wrongdoer . . . if none of these things *is* true;" "If Thou *art* the Son of God;" "Though He *was* a son." There was not the slightest need of such a change. The old form of the subjunctive is more majestic than the new, and therefore, more suitable for the Scriptures. The revisers—as we shall afterwards see—have let some things remain which really needed changing. They are inconsistent, too, in their use of the subjunctive. For example, they say: "If any man *have* a hundred sheep and one of them *be* gone astray;" "If he *gain* the whole world and *lose* or *forfeit* his own self;" "If this counsel or this work *be* of men . . . but if it *is* of God." Here, "the piece taken out of the new agreeth with the old" (Luke v. 36).

When the verb "to ask" means "to express to one our desire that he would bestow on us a certain fa-