

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

REVISION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

ADDRESS TO THE TEACHERS OF KNOX CHURCH SABBATH SCHOOL, BY
WM. MOFTIMER CLARK, SUPERINTENDENT.

PART II.—REVISION AND REVISERS.

Although the matter of Biblical Revision has been prominently brought under the public notice only within the last few years, it must not be thought that the question is a new one. Among the first contributions to the literature of the subject was "An Essay for a New Translation," by one H. Ross, which appeared in 1702. Bishop Lowth, in 1758, in a visitation sermon, advocated the necessity of Revision; and Secker in a speech at Convocation in 1761 urged it. Dr. Thomas Brett in his "Essay on Ancient Versions" recommended the propriety of comparing them with the received text. Anthony Purvey, a Quaker, in 1764 published a "New Translation of the whole Bible." In 1768 a "Literal Translation of the New Testament" by one Harwood appeared, purporting to be done "with freedom, spirit and elegance." That it was eminently distinguished by freedom cannot be disputed when we find Mark v. 39 rendered: "The young lady is not dead;" and 1 Cor. xv. 51 translated: "We shall not pay the common debt of nature, but by a soft transition," etc.; but the elegance is certainly more doubtful. Worsley's translation "according to the present idiom of the English tongue"—1770—was another attempt at a free translation. Dr. Geddes, a Roman Catholic, in 1786 published a "Prospectus for a New Translation." Kennicott, Barrington, Symonds, and White by their sermons and pamphlets all kept the question alive. Archbishop Newcome in 1792 published a defence of the scheme of Revision, and Doddridge, Wesley, and Campbell favoured the proposal. New translations were from time to time published of the whole or parts of the New Testament by Wakefield, Scarlet, Campbell, and Macknight, and the subject seemed fast ripening. But a check was given in a rather singular way to the progress of the scheme by the French Revolution. At once everything like change began to be viewed with suspicion, and to moot the subject seemed to savour of Jacobinism. Dr. John Bellamy, in the "Classical Journal," was the first after the restoration of peace (1818) to venture on suggesting the need of a new translation. He was furiously attacked in the "Quarterly Review," as also was Sir J. B. Burges, who had issued a pamphlet entitled "Reasons in favour of a New Translation." Mr. Todd in his "Vindication of the Authorized Translation," 1818, Archbishop Lawrence in his "Remarks on the Critical Principles," etc., 1820, opposed Revision. The last quarter of a century has seen the publication of more literature on this subject than appeared for the previous century. We have had such works as Dr. Beard's "A Revised English Bible the Want of the Church;" Prof. Scholfield's "Hints for an Improved Translation;" Archbishop Trench's "On the Authorized Version;" "The Revision by Five Clergymen," (Barrow, Moberly, Alford, Humphry, and Ellicott;) also the writings for, and against, of Stanley, Jowett, Conybeare, Scrivener, McCaul, Malan, Marsh, etc. There has latterly been a vast mass of articles in literary and theological periodicals on this subject, a general interest has begun to be diffused among the community, and a widespread feeling exists that Revision is required. But there has always been a strong conservative body of men who would rather let the version stand, and who regard the proposal for revision almost as an attempt to touch the Ark of the Covenant. The opposition has been carried to great length, and much bitter and unreasoning hostility has been offered to the movement. It is interesting to look back at the times of the publication of the authorized version itself. History seems again to repeat itself. The very version now so vigorously upheld was, when it appeared, received very coldly, and criticised with severity. The translators knew what fate awaited their work from the same class of men in their day as now oppose the Revision in our time. In their "Preface to the Reader" they say that their work "is welcomed with suspicion instead of love," for "there was never anything projected that savoured any way of newness, or renewing, but the same endured many a storm of gainsaying or opposition." And again, "Whosoever attempteth anything for the public (especially if it pertain to religion and to the opening and clearing of

the Word of God, the same setteth himself upon a stage to be glouted at by every evil eye." Those who object to the proposed revision will remember that the very authorized version owes its own merit to, and is the product of, revision; and this very principle it is again proposed to invoke with means and appliances far beyond what was within the reach of the former revisers. The words of the old translators in their "preface" are worthy of remembrance. "To whom ever was it imputed for a falling by such as were wise to go over that which he had done, and to mend it where he saw cause? Truly good Christian reader, we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a *new* translation, nor yet to make a bad one a good one . . . but to make a good one better. . . that hath been our endeavour, that our mark." The words of Bishop Ellicott on this subject are worthy of careful consideration by every one who feels any doubt on this most important subject. In the "Preface to Pastoral Epistles" in putting the question whether it would be right to join those who oppose revision he says: "God forbid. . . It is in vain to cheat our own souls with the thought that these errors (in the authorized version) are either insignificant or imaginary. There *are* errors, there *are* inaccuracies, there *are* misconceptions, there *are* obscurities . . . and the man who, after being in any degree satisfied of this, permits himself to lean on the counsels of a timid or popular obstructiveness, or who, intellectually unable to test the truth of these allegations, nevertheless permits himself to denounce or deny them, will . . . have to sustain the tremendous charge of having dealt deceitfully with the inviolable word of God."

After lengthened discussion the Convocation of the ecclesiastical province of Canterbury at its meeting on 6th May, 1870, referred the matter to a committee. This committee presented a report to the following effect:

1. That it is desirable that a revision of the authorized version of the Holy Scriptures be undertaken.
2. That the revision be so conducted as to comprise both marginal renderings and such emendations as it may be found necessary to insert in the text of the authorized version.
3. That in the above resolutions we do not contemplate any *new* translation of the Bible, or any alteration of the language, except where, in the judgment of the most competent scholars such change is necessary.
4. That in such necessary changes the style of the language employed in the existing version be closely followed.
5. That it is desirable that Convocation should nominate a body of its own members to undertake the work, who shall be at liberty to invite the co-operation of any eminent for scholarship to whatever nation or religious body they may belong.

This report was adopted unanimously by the Bishops, and by a very large majority of the Lower House of ministers. A committee consisting of eight Bishops and a like number of ministers was appointed to give effect to these resolutions. It will be noticed that the Convocation of the Province of York did not *officially* unite in the movement. This was chiefly owing to the influence of the Archbishop (Thomson). Many prominent individual members, however, take an active interest in the work.

The committee of sixteen thus appointed, at its first meeting, under the presidency of Dr. Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Winchester, adopted the following rules for the conduct of the Revision:

- I. "Resolved, that the committee appointed by the convocation of Canterbury at its last session, separate itself into two companies, the one for the revision of the authorized version of the Old Testament, the other for the revision of the authorized version of the New Testament.
- II. That the company for the revision of the authorized version of the Old Testament consist of the Bishops of St. Davids, Landaff, Ely, and Bath and Wells, and of the following members of the Lower House: Archdeacon Rose, Canon Selwyn, Dr. Jebb and Dr. Kay.
- III. That the company for the revision of the authorized version of the New Testament consist of the Bishops of Winchester, Gloucester and Bristol, and Salisbury, and of the following members from the Lower House, the Prolocutor, the Deans of Canterbury and Westminster and Canon Blakesley.
- IV. That the first portion of the work to be undertaken by the Old Testament company be the revision of the authorized version of the Pentateuch.

V. That the first portion of the work to be undertaken by the New Testament company be the revision of the synoptical Gospels.

VI. That the following scholars and divines be invited to join the Old Testament company. (As the names were afterwards changed, a correct list is given below.)

VII. That the following scholars and divines be invited to join the New Testament company. (The amended list is given below.)

VIII. That the general principles to be followed by both companies, be as follows—(1) To introduce as few alterations as possible in the text of the authorized version consistently with *faithfulness*. (2) To limit as far as possible the expression of such alterations to the language of the authorized and earlier English versions. (3) Each company to go twice over the portion to be revised, once provisionally, the second time finally, and on principles of voting as hereinafter provided. (4) That the text to be adopted be that for which the evidence is decidedly preponderating; and when the text so adopted differs from that from which the authorized version was made, the alterations to be indicated in the margin. (5) To make or retain no change in the text on the second final revision by each company, except *two-thirds* of those present approve of the same, but on the *first* revision to decide by *single* majorities. (6) In every case of proposed alterations that may have given rise to discussion, to defer the voting thereon till the next meeting. Whosoever the same shall be required by one-third of those present at the meeting, such intended vote to be announced in the notice for the next meeting. (7) To revise the headings of chapters, pages, paragraphs, italics and punctuation. (8) To refer on the part of each company, when considered desirable to divines, scholars, and literary men, whether at home or abroad for their opinions.

IX. That the work of each company be communicated to the other as it is completed, in order that there may be as little deviation from uniformity in language as possible.

X. That the special or by-rules for each company be as follows:

- (1.) To make all corrections in writing previous to the meeting.
- (2.) To place all the corrections due to textual considerations on the left-hand margin, and all other corrections on the right-hand margin.
- (3.) To transmit to the chairman in case of being unable to attend, the corrections proposed in the portion agreed upon for consideration.

May 25.

Chairman.

To those not familiar with the manner of signature used by the English Bishops it may be explained that the above signature is that of Samuel Wilberforce Bishop of Winchester.

The following is a full list of the British committee as originally constituted.

I. OLD TESTAMENT COMPANY.

The Right Rev. the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Somerset.
The Right Rev. the Bishop of Ely.
The Right Rev. the Bishop of Landaff.
The Right Rev. the Bishop of St. Davids.
The very Rev. the Dean of Canterbury.
The ven. Archdeacon Harrison, Canterbury.
The ven. Archdeacon Rose.
The Rev. Canon Selwyn.
The Rev. Dr. Kay.
The Rev. Dr. Alexander, Edinburgh.
R. L. Bensley, Esq., Cambridge.
Prof. Chenery, London.
The Rev. Professor Davidson, Edinburgh.
The Rev. Dr. Davies, London.
The Rev. Dr. Douglas, Glasgow.
The Rev. Principal Fairbairn, Glasgow.
The Rev. F. Field, Norwich.
The Rev. J. D. Geden, Manchester.
The Rev. Dr. Ginsburg, Binfield, Berks.
The Rev. Dr. Gotch, Bristol.
The Rev. Professor Leathes, London.
The Rev. Canon Perowne, Cambridge.
The Rev. Professor Plumptre, Ashford.
The Rev. Professor Weir, Glasgow.
W. Aldis Wright, Esq., Cambridge.

NEW TESTAMENT COMPANY.

The Right Rev. the Bishop of Manchester, London.
The Right Rev. the Bishop of Gloucester, Bristol.
The Right Rev. the Bishop of Salisbury.
The Very Rev. the Dean of Westminster.
The Very Rev. Dr. Scott, Dean of Rochester.
The Ven. the Prolocutor, the Prebendal, Aylesbury.
The Rev. Canon Blakesley, Vicarage, Ware.
The Most Rev. the Archbishop of Dublin.
The Right Rev. the Bishop of St. Andrews.
The Rev. Dr. Angus, London.
The Rev. Dr. David Brown, Alerdeen.
The Rev. Professor Eadie, Glasgow.
The Rev. F. I. A. Hort, Cambridge.