

THE REVISED VERSION.

I AM anxious to put before the readers of the EXPOSITOR some thoughts upon the Revised Version, which I shall venture to make the ground of a practical suggestion. I have long felt, and I feel increasingly, that we have not reaped, and scarcely seem likely to reap, all the fruit which we might fairly have hoped for from the labours and ability of the Revisers. It saddens me to think that a work so eagerly anticipated and so warmly welcomed should have already lost so much of popular interest and have so greatly declined in popular use. I use the word "popular" designedly, for the Revision had for its end and object, not the enlightenment of scholars, for whom the original Greek and Hebrew, with abundant stores of textual criticism, were available, but the information of the ordinary reader of the Bible, whose knowledge of its true meaning is only attainable through a translation. It was certainly expected that a flood of light would be poured upon numbers of passages of Holy Scripture by new translation, and the enormous sale of the New Testament, when the Revised Version appeared, proved that this expectation was very widely entertained. I believe, however, that a great part of the disappointment felt in the results of a project once so full of hope is to be traced to the fact that the Revisers, at all events in the New Testament, seriously exceeded their instructions, and, instead of removing manifest errors and obscurities, were drawn into attempting a new translation; or at any rate fell into the error of over-minuteness of alteration, and encumbered much most valuable work by over-elaboration and hypercritical exactitude.

My first business is to prove this charge, and in order to do so I must trace the history of the movement from its inception, and bring documentary evidence of the intentions of its promoters.

It was on the 10th of February, 1870, that the initial step towards a Revised Version of the translation of the Bible was taken by the adoption in the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury of a resolution, proposed by the Bishop of Winchester (Bishop Wilberforce), and seconded by the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol (Bishop Ellicott), in the following words :—

That a committee of both Houses be appointed, with power to confer with any committee that may be appointed by the Convocation of the Northern Province, to report upon the desirableness of a revision of the Authorised Version of the Old and New Testaments, whether by marginal notes or otherwise, in all those passages where plain and clear errors, whether in the Hebrew or Greek text originally adopted by the translators, or in the translations made from the same, shall on due investigation be found to exist.

I would call special attention to the words “plain and clear errors.” The committee was duly appointed, and on May 3 in the same year (1870) reported as follows :—

1. That it is desirable that a revision of the Authorised 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 Authorised 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 of revision, who shall be at liberty to invite the co-operation of any eminent for scholarship to whatever nation or religious body they may belong.

I would again draw attention to certain words in this

document—namely, those of the 3rd clause, which asserts that the committee does “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.” This report was, after much discussion, adopted on May 25, with some modifications and amplifications, which will be found in the Preface to the Revised Version of the New Testament. Certain “principles and rules” were finally adopted, of which the first is this—“To introduce as few alterations as possible into the text of the Authorised Version consistently with faithfulness.”

It will be unnecessary to recall the long and earnest debates which in 1870 and 1871 accompanied the elaboration of the scheme of revision and the selection of the companies of revisers. But it is right to observe that at that period the Convocation of York refused all concurrence with the action of the Southern Convocation, and thus purged itself by anticipation from any complicity with the results of the revision.

On May 17, 1881, the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury was summoned by the Upper House to hear the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol lay the report of the Revisers of the New Testament before the House. The next day—namely on May 18, 1881,—the following resolution was passed by the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury, after a long debate, by 75 to 8—

That our respectful thanks be tendered to the Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol and his learned colleagues for the labour which, during a period of ten years and a half they have bestowed on the endeavour to make the Scriptures of the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ more clear to the humblest of those who speak the English tongue.

No step was taken at once by the Convocation of York on the appearance of the Revised Version of the New Testa-

ment, but on April 3, 1883, the two Houses, sitting together, agreed to the following resolution :—

This Convocation, while declining to express at the present time an opinion as to the Revised Version, desires to give sincere thanks to the Revisers for the arduous and conscientious labours which they have devoted to their work.

It was not till April, 1885, that the Revised Version of the Old Testament appeared. It was at once found that the changes made in the Old Testament were far fewer than in the New, and although its publication excited considerably less interest, yet it was received with unanimous votes of thanks by both Houses of the Southern Convocation. I am not aware that the Northern Convocation has taken any notice at all of the appearance of the Revised Version of the Old Testament. So much for the action of the two Convocations.

As soon as the Revised Version of the New Testament appeared, it was welcomed by an outburst of hearty interest, and, as I have already said, had an enormous sale, which at least proved that Bible students were by no means indifferent to the great help which a revised translation might prove. Of course attention was at first naturally fixed upon the more important of the new readings, and a large number of these were found to be either valuable corrections of faulty translations, or renderings throwing much light upon the true sense of the original. But it was speedily discovered that the Revised Version contained a multitude of minute and unimportant alterations, and by degrees the value of the really important corrections became more and more obscured by the multiplicity of what I fear I must call trivial and unnecessary changes.

I do not think it is necessary to discuss the merits or demerits of the revised *text* of the Greek of the New Testament, even were I competent to do so, because the changes dependent upon it are not very numerous. Some

of them are undoubtedly of great importance, and some, especially the omission of the concluding verses of St. Mark's Gospel, have aroused a great amount of hostile criticism. Of course we must be prepared to accept all emendations where textual criticism leaves little room for doubt.

It is quite plain (whether Dean Burgon saw it or not) that the book which was received with so much interest has forfeited its first popularity, and is now comparatively neglected. I believe the reason of this is the fact that the Revisers largely exceeded their instructions, and did not adhere to the principles they were commissioned to follow. A vast expenditure of time and labour and learning was spoilt by overminuteness. It is felt to be fussy in its multitudinous petty changes. These, I believe, have really robbed us of what might otherwise have been of extreme value. This excess of minute alteration is perfectly natural. Bishop Ellicott, in his little book on the *Revision of the English Version*, published when the scheme was beginning to take shape in 1870, warns us of the danger. His words are worth quoting:—

In revision, as in many other things, there is a continually accelerative and intensifying tendency which increased habitude in the work never fails to develop, but which certainly must be closely watched and constantly corrected.

And again in another place he speaks of alteration always having a tendency to accelerate, and revisers being always dangerously open to the temptation of using with increased freedom acquired facilities. He also lays down as a leading principle in the projected work of revision,—“to introduce as few alterations as may be into the current version.” How completely he himself, as chairman of the New Testament Company, became a victim to the temptation he speaks of may be seen in the following facts. In the little book I have referred to he takes the Sermon on the

Mount as a specimen, and prints it with such alterations as he thinks needed. These amount in all to 75 in the 111 verses, nineteen being due to textual criticism. But when the Revised Version appeared the number of alterations in the Sermon on the Mount proved to be, not 75, but 127, as nearly as I can count them. Let me take the first of the three chapters containing the Sermon on the Mount—namely, the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, and ask whether the following alterations in that chapter fulfil the requirement of correcting “plain and clear errors,” or are such as “in the judgment of the most competent scholars” can be pronounced “necessary.” “They that hunger” is substituted for “they which do hunger”; “reproach” is substituted for “revile”; “a city set on an hill,” for “a city that is set on an hill”; “it shineth,” for “it giveth light”; “pass away from the law,” for “pass from the law”; “accomplished,” for “fulfilled”; “the least in the kingdom,” for “least in the kingdom”; “in no wise,” for “in no case”; “every one who is,” for “whosoever is”; “with him in the way,” for “in the way with him”; “till thou have paid,” for “till thou hast paid”; “last,” for “uttermost”; “not thy whole body,” for “not that thy whole body”; “every one that putteth away,” for “whosoever shall put away”; “by the heaven,” for “by heaven”; “the throne of God,” for “God’s throne”; “smiteth thee,” for “shall smite thee”; “would go to law with thee,” for “would sue thee at the law”; “one mile,” for “a mile”; “it was said,” for “it hath been said” (two or three times); “sons,” for “children” (twice). Here are twenty-one alterations in one chapter which it would, I think, be very difficult to prove corrective of “plain and clear errors,” or “in the judgment of the most competent scholars,” or, indeed, of anybody else, “necessary.” One has only to glance at any chapter to find the same abundance of unnecessary and un instructive alterations.

One can hardly understand how the Revisers were induced to encumber their valuable and laborious work with such irritating trivialities as the change of "lift up herself," into "lift herself up"; "derided," into "scoffed at"; "tormented," into "in anguish"; "believed not," into "disbelieved"; "Moses' disciples," into "disciples of Moses"; "pattern," into "ensample"; "if there is," for "if there be"; and so on. It will be remembered that Bishop Charles Wordsworth, of St. Andrew's, who was a member of the company of New Testament Revisers, was compelled at the last to refuse his name to a testimonial of thanks to the Chairman (a step which caused him much pain) because he held so strongly that the number of minute and unnecessary changes made was in direct violation of the instructions under which the work was undertaken. It is rather a surprise that no others joined in this protest. But one can understand the all-but irresistible temptation to excessive particularity in work of this sort.

The Bishop of St. Andrew's thought the great number of minute and unnecessary alterations would wreck the work. But is there nothing precious which can be saved out of the wreck? I cannot but think there is. In talking this matter over with Dr Liddon some years ago, he expressed an opinion that, if a very careful selection could be made of such alterations in the Revised Version as satisfy the terms of the original instructions, being either corrections of "plain and clear errors," or "in the judgment of the most competent scholars" "necessary," and if these could be printed in a marked and separate type in the margin of an edition of the New Testament prepared for reading in Church, and if some sanction could be given to the adoption in the reading of the Lessons in Church of these selected alterations, the intention of the original promoters of the Revision might yet be fulfilled, and non-critical hearers be greatly helped to the understanding of the Holy Scriptures.

He told me he thought it should be quite optional at first whether the reader should substitute the selected alterations or not, and that no attempt to make them compulsory should be made unless and until usage had stamped approval upon the practice. The subject of the authorisation of the Revised Version for reading in Church was brought before the London Diocesan Conference in April, 1890, and, although the debate turned mainly upon the general adoption of the Revised Version, yet some mention was made by one or two speakers of the possibility of such a selection as that suggested by Dr. Liddon.

It is scarcely necessary to bring forward examples of amendments in the Revised Version which are of the greatest value in correcting errors, or removing the occasion of errors, nor of such as competent scholars would readily pronounce necessary for the elucidation of the true sense of the original. Every one will be familiar with such. Yet I will venture to adduce a few examples taken almost at random. Perhaps one of the most familiar, as it is one of the most obvious, is the removal of the word "damnation" from the sacramental passage in 1 Corinthians xi. The substitution of the untranslated word "Hades" for "hell" in very many passages removes a very serious obscurity and confusion. The correction of proper names—notably of "Jesus" into "Joshua" where Joshua is meant—is no light gain in perspicuity. The alteration of "beasts" into "living creatures" throughout the Book of Revelation removes a very misleading and depreciative conception of the heavenly beings, especially among the uninstructed. In St. John vii. 17, it is a great gain to have "If any man willeth to do His will," for the inadequate "will do." In St. John xiii. 10, a flood of light is poured upon the passage by the substitution of "bathed" for "washed" in translating *ὁ λελουμένος*. In Ephesians ii. 21, a most luminous amendment is made by the correction of "all the building"

into "each several building," this verse and the next then setting forth respectively the individual and the corporate indwelling of God by the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians iv. 4, the curious archaism, "I know nothing by myself," becomes "I know nothing against myself." In Acts xxi. 15, "took up our carriages" becomes "took up our baggage"; and in Acts xxviii. 13, "fetched a compass," becomes "made a circuit." In the Sermon on the Mount the "take no thought" is relieved of its ambiguity by becoming "be not anxious." The word "offend" is constantly misunderstood; it is in many places replaced by "cause to stumble." In St. John x. 16 an unwarranted inference is avoided by the correct translation "one flock" being given in place of "one fold." A most ignorant, but most perilous, abuse of ambiguous words is prevented in 1 Corinthians vii., by the insertion in three places of the word "*daughter*" in italics after the word "virgin," the sense so given being quite clear to the thoughtful student. In St. Matthew xxv. 27, the substitution of "bankers" and "interest" for "ex-changers" and "usury," is valuable. In St. Matthew xxvi. 5, "Not during the feast," in place of "Not on the feast day," may remove a difficulty of reconciliation. In 1 Timothy vi. 5, it is an obvious improvement to invert the words "gain" and "godliness." And in 2 Timothy iv. 14, "The Lord will render to him" removes the apparent vindictiveness of "The Lord reward him according to his works."

We are confronted with a much more difficult task when we have to examine large classes of alterations which depend, in a greater or less degree, upon the varying genius and the idiomatic peculiarities of the Greek and English languages. I will venture to touch upon three groups of alterations of this description, which may perhaps be generally described as corrective rather of inaccuracies than of "plain and clear errors." But it is very hard to draw

any line between these, and inaccuracies in certain contexts and relations undoubtedly lead to plain and clear errors.

I will take, first, alterations depending on a more accurate translation of the tenses of verbs. These are exceedingly numerous in the Revised Version. It seems to me, however, that by far the greater number are not necessary for any correction of error or elucidation of meaning. Let me, first of all, adduce certain examples where such corrections certainly are most valuable in these ways. Will any one deny the importance of the correction of "such as should be saved," as the translation of *τοὺς σωζομένους* in Acts ii. 47, even though it may be doubted whether "those that were being saved" is the best possible rendering? Parallel with this, though of less moment, is the correction to "Our lamps are going out," in the parable of the Ten Virgins; and "were going over the sea," in place of "went over the sea," in St. John vi. 17. Many instances could easily be given where the literal translation of the imperfect adds great clearness to the sense, even though it may be doubted whether it can be called "necessary." Probably the gain is more clear in the careful distinction made in the Revised Version between the aorist and the perfect in certain passages of high doctrinal importance. For example, in Galatians ii. 19, "I through the law died unto the law" is an important correction of "I through the law am dead to the law." Again, in chapter iv. 6, "God sent forth" is distinctly corrective, in point of the time in the writer's mind, of "God hath sent forth." The force of the perfect is brought out in chapter ii. 20, by translating *Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι* by "I have been" instead of "I am crucified with Christ." In 1 Corinthians vi. 11, the simple aoristic reference to a past act is made clear to the English reader by the substitution of "were" for "are" in the sentence, "but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified." So, too, in 2 Thessalonians ii. 13,

“God chose” is rightly given instead of “God hath chosen.” In 2 Timothy i. 9, “Who saved us and called us” is a truer rendering of the participles than “Who hath saved us and called us.” I do not know why the Revisers did not translate τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν (in Gal. v. 24) by “crucified,” or “did crucify—the flesh” instead of retaining the “have crucified” of the Authorised Version. While, however, it would probably be held “necessary” for the conveying of the true sense to the ordinary reader or hearer to bring out the force of the tense in a certain number of passages, there would appear to be a far larger number in which, while the Revisers have carefully marked the true note of time, it cannot be said that any appreciable gain in accuracy or fulness of meaning is thus achieved. To the non-critical reader I do not think there is any advantage, which can be classed either as corrective of error or necessary for the conveyance of the sense, in the alteration of “He hath put” into “He put all things under His feet” in 1 Corinthians xv. 27; or of “He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition” into the more exact “made both one,” and “brake down the middle wall of partition” in Ephesians ii. 14; or of “Ye have not so learned Christ” into “Ye did not so learn Christ” in Ephesians iv. 19; or, once more, of “have washed their robes,” into “washed their robes,” in Revelations vii. 14. The great difficulty would obviously be to draw any line upon a definite principle. But perhaps we may say that where the past act, expressed in the simple indefinite past in the original, is of continuous force, and from the nature of the case passes on into present fulfilment, there is no occasion to alter the English perfect (which brings up the completed act to the moment of present thought) into the aorist (which throws it back in thought upon the time of its occurrence). I have marked a large number of changes of tense which appear

to me to add nothing to the general reader. Let me give but one more example. We will take the well-known passage as to the Resurrection in 1 Corinthians xv. 14, 16, 17. In the Revised Version it reads thus:—"If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." "For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised; and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain." Would any humble listener receive one new idea or one clearer conception of the argument from these literalisms?

There are many more things I should like to say about tenses, but I will turn to the two other groups of corrections of which I spoke. It is certainly an idiomatic characteristic of the New Testament Greek to use "in" as the preposition in a great many cases where we should use some other preposition, especially the preposition "by." To bring the English into strict accord with the Greek by translating *ἐν* invariably by "in" seems to ignore difference of idiom, and becomes somewhat pedantic. No doubt there are cases in which such translation is a distinct gain in meaning—as, for instance, in 1 St. Peter iii. 19, where "in which" (speaking of the Spirit) is a clear gain upon the Authorised "by which." In places where the "in" implies the sphere of being or of action, it should certainly be given literally, but there are many passages where such is not the case, and I do not, for instance, think it "necessary," or helpful, to substitute "In Him were all things created" for "By Him were all things created" in Colossians i. 16. I suppose a similar distinction might be drawn with regard to the necessity or non-necessity in particular instances of the literal translation of *ἐκ*, *διὰ*, and possibly of some other prepositions.

The other group of alterations I must refer to is that connected with the use or non-use of the definite article. I suppose that difference of idiom must be allowed for again

in this case, but a careful observance of the Greek usage is here of the greatest possible importance. Take only three illustrations. How much we gain by the promise that the Spirit of truth shall guide "into all *the* truth," and not simply "into all truth" (St. John xv. 13). What access of force is given to the sacramental observance when we find that, both in St. Luke xxiv. 35, and in Acts ii. 42, "breaking of bread" is really "*the* breaking of bread." And what enlargement of ethical teaching is imported into St. Paul's argument in the second and third chapters of the Epistle to the Romans by a thoughtful discrimination between "law," as a principle of external regulation of conduct, and "*the* law," as the embodiment of such principle in a revealed code of ordinances.

There are, of course, some alterations which to us seem distinct losses, though resting on evidence it is impossible to ignore. Thus in Galatians iv. 7, I suppose we must accept "If a son, then an heir, through God," *διὰ Θεοῦ* being the true reading, and not *Θεοῦ διὰ Χριστοῦ*. Again in Ephesians v. 9, we are compelled to substitute "the fruit of the light" for "the fruit of the Spirit," the true reading being *φῶτος*, and not *Πνεύματος*. Again, in 1 Timothy i. 4, we must replace "godly edifying" by "a dispensation of God," the word being *οἰκονομίαν* and not *οἰκοδομίαν*. We must not forget that if we are reverting to the true reading, it cannot be really a loss.

There are a few, but very few, cases in which I should myself like the marginal word accepted instead of the textual. Thus in 1 Corinthians vii. 1, I should greatly like to read—"Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up"; especially as this rendering is adopted in other places, as in 2 Corinthians x. 8, "Our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up, and not for casting you down"; and again in Ephesians iv. 12, "Unto the building up of the body of Christ"; and 16, "Unto the building up of itself in love."

And now it is time to ask what would be the probable result of the attempt to select such alterations as alone entirely fulfil the original commission to the Revising Companies? I am omitting all reference to the Old Testament, because the changes in it, though often important, are far fewer than in the New, and the revision is far more faithful to the instructions under which the Revisers laboured. I have, however, somewhat carefully gone through the whole of the New Testament, marking those alterations in the Revised Version which seemed to me to fulfil the conditions imposed in the original commission. We have already taken the Sermon on the Mount as a specimen of revision, and have seen that Bishop Ellicott, before beginning his work with the New Testament Company, made 75 corrections in the 111 verses, but, after the long labours of the revision, recommended 127 corrections. I find that I have marked only 24 in the same 111 verses. If the same proportion is maintained throughout (and I think it is so on the whole), I should not select for adoption in reading quite one in five of the alterations in the Revised Version. In other words, whereas the Revised Version adopts (if we judge by the Sermon on the Mount) one alteration and a seventh in every verse, I would adopt one alteration in every four verses and two-thirds. I believe that, had the Revisers of the New Testament adopted such a restrictive and self-repressive scheme of revision as that which I have ventured very imperfectly to sketch, their work would have been a far greater boon to the Church and the English-speaking race. There never was an occasion in which the old *πλέον ἤμισυ παντός* was more absolutely true. Perhaps it may not even now be too late to carry home the tithe sheaves from the harvest-field in which the Revisers spent such long years of labour. I know not. It may be that the proposal I have made is impracticable. I am not blind to its difficulties. I shall be quite content to have venti-

lated a suggestion which I have pondered over for years, and to leave it to others to mature or to abandon. I think at least my readers will agree with me in holding that it would be an inestimable boon if the uncritical and unlearned hearer could listen to the words he has learnt to love and revere with more intelligent understanding through the removal of "plain and clear errors," whether of reading or of translation, as well as of serious obscurities, without losing his sense of familiarity with the wording and idioms of our old translation, so pure in its diction, so grand in its flowing periods, so priceless in its influence upon all our literature, so faithful in its simplicity, and so dear to thousands and tens of thousands of Christian souls.

W. WALSHAM WAKEFIELD.

*CANON CHEYNE ON KING DAVID AND THE
PSALTER.*¹

To all who are aware of the lines on which theological discussions in England have recently been running the title of this book tells its own tale. The Bampton Lectures on the Psalter by the same author furnished a striking example of what the criticism of the Old Testament is doing, and not a few persons, unprepared for the results therein set forth, believed that an assault was being made on "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." The controversy which has ensued has done something towards dispelling this illusion, but the author of a work round which so fierce a fight has raged not unnaturally desires to show both by example and by precept the manner in which he holds that criticism and reverence can travel hand in hand. Nor is it a mere task of self-defence to

¹ *Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism.* By the Rev. T. K. Cheyne, M.A., D.D. London: T. Fisher Unwin.