

Despite its great merits it has long been universally recognized that the edition they produced is by no means satisfactory in view not only of the considerable accretion of material that has come to light since the sixteenth century, but also of our more severely critical methods. It is possible to control the work of the Sixtine and Clementine commissions since most of the important manuscripts used by them are still at our disposal: the result of such examination shows that, careful though they were, the collations made by the sixteenth century editors were not always free from inaccuracies. Moreover, as was said above, the discovery and classification into families of a great number of ancient and important manuscripts not previously known (a task which has occupied biblical scholars throughout the last century, particularly since the pioneer work of Samuel Berger in 1893), has rendered a new critical edition of St. Jerome's Bible absolutely essential, and this not only to such as are conscious of its traditional value as the accepted version of the Western Church throughout the ages, but also to textual critics who realize its importance as one of the chief witnesses to the original wording of the inspired writings of the Old Testament.¹

THE 'AUTHORIZED' VERSION

EARLIEST USE OF THE EPITHET

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TITLES must be succinct. So it is as well to state at once that this note is concerned, not with the earliest use in English of the word 'authorized,' but with its earliest use as a designation of the version, or more correctly revision, of the Bible issued in A.D. 1611 during the reign of King James I.

Had there been an ordinance, whether of ecclesiastical or lay authorities, declaring the version to be authorized, the earliest use of the term would have been fixed by the date of the document containing the ordinance. It is a commonplace, however, in the histories of the English translations of the Bible that no such authorization is known to exist. Thus John Brown writes: 'There seems to be no authority for calling it the "Authorised Version," since, so far as is known, there was no Edict of Convocation, or Act of Parliament, or decision of Privy Council, or royal proclamation giving it authority,' *The History of the English Bible* (Cambridge, 1911) 108. Similar statements are found in B. F.

¹ Of this new edition, six volumes have appeared in twenty years: the whole Bible will comprise some twenty-eight volumes. It is well known that Pope Pius X entrusted the work to the Benedictines in 1907, and that it is now being executed by the monks of the Abbey of San Girolamo in Rome, which Pope Pius XI founded in 1933 for this and any similar work confided to them by the Holy See.

Westcott, *A General View of the History of the English Bible*, 3rd edition, revised by W. A. Wright (London, 1905) 119 and J. R. Dore, *Old Bibles*, 2nd edition ([London] 1888) 325.

Regarding the antiquity of the title the only statement in these authors is that of Dore's who writes: 'This revision has long been commonly called "The Authorised Version,"' p. 325. Some sixty years before Dore, the celebrated book-lover T. F. Dibdin wrote: 'Early in the seventeenth century, appeared what is called our *authorised version*—under the auspices of James I: in two stately folio volumes, 1611. A copy of *this* impression is almost absolutely necessary for every Library which has any claim to be curious or complete,' *The Library Companion* (London, 1824) 32. This is the earliest occurrence quoted in the Oxford English Dictionary, where, incidentally the quotation given inaccurately represents Dibdin as spelling the word 'Authorized.' A hundred years earlier the title was not in common use. John Lewis instead speaks of 'the Bible of this Royal Translation' and of 'this Bible of King James's,' *A Complete History of the Several Translations of the Holy Bible, and New Testament, into English*, 2nd edition (London, 1739) 34of. His index even refers to its as 'Translat. of the Bible into English by K. James.'

The earliest use of the term known to me occurs in the 'Epistle dedicatorie' to James I prefixed by Ambrose Ussher to his English version of the Bible. As this remained so long unprinted it cannot have exercised much influence on the public adoption of the word. In this Epistle the author, who was a younger brother of the better known James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, speaks of 'our new translatoours of the authorized bible,' *Fourth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, Part I (London, 1874) 598. These 'new translatoours' can only be those who worked under the auspices of James I. The Bishops' Bible had appeared in 1568, and the only other recent translation into English was that published at Rheims (New Testament, 1582) and Douay (Old Testament, 1609-10). The translators of this version would not have been called 'our new translatoours' by Ussher nor would their Bible have been spoken of as 'authorized.' John Lewis cannot have seen this Epistle as he says that Ussher lived long enough to finish his translation and to dedicate it to James I 'before the Translation made by his Order was begun,' op. cit. p. 340. This error in a slightly different form is repeated by A. F. Pollard in his notice of Ambrose Ussher in the *Dictionary of National Biography*: 'Before the completion of the authorised version of the Bible, Ussher prepared a translation from the original Hebrew, which he dedicated to James I.' The curious slip here which suggests that the New as well as the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew is perhaps due to a hasty reading of Lewis's remarks: 'Tho' he died young, he had yet attained to great Skill and Perfection in the Oriental Tongues,

particularly the Hebrew and Arabic; the last of which it was very rare and uncommon, in those Days and that Country, for anyone to have any knowledge of. This his Knowledge he applied to the Translation of the whole Bible.'

However, the mention of the 'new translatoours' is not the only indication that Ussher is speaking of what is known today as the Authorized Version. The Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, p. 589, ascribes the MS in Trinity College, Dublin, to 'circa 1620,' eleven years after the appearance of King James's version. That there was some such interval is clear from the Epistle Dedicatorie. Ussher refers to the King's godly vehement flame (of zeal) for having a translation. As the King loves God's blessed word he must of force admit its perfecting. His own version is likened to a dainty dish brought in after the main meal of the King's Bible: 'Though your Ma^{tie} then being presentlie desirous of your dinner haue dined afore hand, yet if after dinner come in some daintie dish unto you and well prepared, you assuredlie will take the taste of it. Your Ma^{tie} at your first coming were sharp set, and content with anie, and the cooke hasted you out a reasonable sudden meal; in the whiles you haue been a doing on that, I haue leiserlie and seasonablie dressed, served out this other dish.'

Then after mention of the kind of improvements aimed at there is a silent reference ('othersome') to the Rheims-Douay translators: 'The prophets . . . are best turned where those wordes are searched and enquired after, that . . . aunswere in appearance forme to forme. This drift it is intimated in the preface of our new translatoours of the authorized bible, and practised also by them and their predecessours: othersome (and therein deserving blame), in the body itselfe of their translationes, strangelie keepe the verie original specialities, and properties, and so clap them into the text.' This is a reference to the passage in the preface of King James's revisers in which they say: 'We have on the one side avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans, who leave the old ecclesiastical words, and betake them to other, as when they put *washing* for *Baptism*, and *Congregation* instead of *Church*: as also on the other side we have shunned the obscurity of the Papists, in their *Azymes*, *Tunic*, *Rational*, *Holocausts*, *Prepuce*, *Pasch*, and a number of such like, whereof their late Translation is full' (spelling modernized). Incidentally, it may be recalled that many Latin words were, nonetheless, adopted by King James's revisers from the Rheims New Testament. (The Douay Version of the Old Testament was published too late to be of service.) And many such words have long since become current English. Westcott from the one Epistle to the Romans gives a list of Latin words taken over from the Rhemish Testament. As checked by Wright his editor the list is as follows, p. 253: *separated* (i, 1), *approvest* (ii, 18), *remission* (iii, 25), *glory* in tribulations (v, 3), *commendeth* (v, 8), *concupiscence* (vii, 8), *expectation* (viii, 19), *conformable*

(viii, 29), *confession is made* to salvation (x, 10), *emulation* (xi, 14), *concluded* (xi, 32), *conformed* (xii, 2), *contribution* (xv, 26). This, however, is by the way. The present point is that this reference by Ussher to the preface of King James's Bible confirms the correctness of Gilbert's dating of Ussher's manuscript after 1611.

Although, as mentioned above, there was no Act of Parliament or other ordinance authorizing the 'Authorized' Version, it was quite natural that this designation should pass into use. On the title-page were printed the words 'Appointed to be read in Churches,' a phrase which itself suggests previous authorization. Moreover, the word 'authorized' had appeared on the title-pages of various previous editions. Thus the folio edition of the Bishops' Bible, issued in 1584, bore the words 'Of that translation authorised to be read in churches,' Dore p. 266. The folio editions of the same Bible dated 1585 and 1602 are both said on their title-pages to be 'Authorised and appointed to be read in Churches.'

Between Ussher's manuscript use of the word about 1620 and Dibdin's use of it in print I have come across the two following examples. In 1823 G. D'Oyly and R. Mant issued the first volume of *The Holy Bible according to the Authorized Version; with Notes* (Cambridge). And in 1821 Henry Cotton describes a Bible published in 1715 as having the 'authorized text, with Genevan notes,' *A List of Editions of the Bible and Parts thereof in English, from the year MDV to MDCCCXX* (Oxford) 38. This, however, is not quite the same as speaking of 'The Authorized Version.' In the British Museum's list of Bibles this name occurs for the first time in the title of an annotated folio edition of 1817. This is entitled *The Holy Bible, . . . compared with the Authorized Version, and illustrated and explained by . . . notes and annotations: abridged . . . from the . . . commentary of . . . Matthew Henry . . .* (London, 1817). According to the same catalogue another edition of slightly earlier date with notes by Adam Clarke calls the text 'authorized' but does not use the word 'Version.' Its title is *The Holy Bible . . . The Text carefully printed from the most correct copies of the present Authorized translation . . . with a commentary and critical notes . . .* It was published in 8 volumes at London 1810-25 in 4°. Perhaps readers can supply earlier instances.