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ARTICLE I.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS TO BE UNIVERSALLY CONFESSED.*

The pure and unsullied righteousness of God lies at the foundation of all right conceptions of his nature, his word, and his works. God is himself absolute moral perfection. Whatever he speaks is absolute truth; whatever he does is absolute righteousness. It must be so. The God who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom and power, must be so no less in his holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. You can more reasonably deny the existence of God altogether, than deny that. An infinite devil is a moral impossibility; our reason revolts at it, no less than our conscience. The heathen, with all their devil-worship, have never imagined, much less believed in, such a monster. The advocates of Dualism never held to such an absurdity; for even in their view, the eternal principle of evil is eternally limited and checked by the eternal principle of good. Consciously or unconsciously, the mind refuses to ascribe infinite attributes to a being even tainted with moral imperfection. Jupiter with all his magnificence

*Some peculiarities of this paper render it proper to state that it embodies the substance of a sermon preached before the late Synod of South Carolina, which has been reduced to writing and prepared for publication in this form, at the particular request of one of the Editors of this REVIEW.

ARTICLE XI.

REVISION OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE.

In the year 1857, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church met at Lexington, Kentucky. Dr. R. J. Breckinridge, from the Committee on Bills and Overtures, presented the following overture concerning the American Bible Society and certain alterations made by it in the English Bible:

"1. The American Bible Society has, by the terms of its Constitution, no legitimate right to alter in any way the common and accepted standard English Scriptures as they stood at the period of the creation of that Society.

"2. Concerning the said English Scriptures, the American Bible Society has full power to print and circulate them, and to collect and manage funds for those purposes; but it has no power to edit them in any other sense than to keep them in the exact condition in which the standard English Bible stood at the formation of said Society.

"3. This General Assembly and the Church it represents are, and from the beginning have been, warm and unanimous supporters and friends of the American Bible Society. And it is in this sense we feel called on to say that we neither do nor can allow, on our part, of any, even the smallest, departure from the original principles on which that Society was founded, and to express the settled conviction that the continued support of that Society by the Presbyterian Church depends upon the strict adherence of the Society to those clear and simple principles.

"4. The Board of Publication of the Presbyterian Church will consider and report to the next General Assembly a plan for the preparation and permanent publication by it of the common English Bible, in a form suitable for pulpit use, with the standard text unchanged, and the usual accessories to the text commonly found in pulpit English Bibles from 1611 to 1847."

Dr. Breckinridge said he had never performed any duty in his whole ecclesiastical life with more regret than the one he was now undertaking. His friends knew that from the first he had viewed the Church of God as a different thing from what most people thought her. He had always believed she had power given her to carry on all her own work, and had always been jealous of the assumption by the voluntary societies of any of the powers of the Church. These societies were a class of Christians whom

he had looked on always as predestinated to mischief. But he had regarded the Bible Society as an exception. The work of publishing and circulating the Scriptures was peculiarly appropriate to an organisation in which various denominations could unite. From the beginning, and down to this day, he had been an earnest friend to that Society. It was in his heart next to his own Church. And if we shall be compelled to withdraw from this Society he did not see what we are to do next. He proceeded to say there were two ideas in the overture: one that the Society is the *printer*, but not the *editor*, of the Bible, which two things were widely diverse; the other that the Board of Publication should just publish one impression of the Bible as a standard text, as in all governments they keep a standard of weights and measures. What was the standard text was a question as easily settled as any literary proposition whatever. It was near five hundred years since Wickliffe first translated the Bible into English. Various other translations were subsequently made. King James appointed fifty-four scholars to translate the Bible, or rather to collate those various English translations. This work was published in 1611. All we have to do now is to get the text of 1611 and print it; and the British Bible Society not long since actually republished the Bible of 1611 to show that what they publish is the genuine version. Again, in 1769 Dr. Blaney, under the authority of the Oxford and London authorised presses, brought out an edition of a revision made by him, which was adopted as the English standard text, and is the standard to this day. The English-speaking people and the Protestant Churches throughout the world had accepted the Bible of 1611 and also the Blaney Bible, and the Bible Society might publish either of these.

The late movement of the American Bible Society (he said) originated not with the Church of God; it came not from any public clamor; not from thrones of kings or breasts of scholars. In 1847 a superintendent of printing spoke of some errors in the Bible to a secretary of the Society, and he to the managers, six and thirty laymen in the city of New York, and the result was a new standard Bible, edited, printed, and stereotyped. A question

of the *purity* of the text arising within a society organised solely to *print* and *circulate* the Bible—a question which may ultimately rend Protestantism in pieces, is taken up and carried through on the motion of a *nameless printer*. The Christian public knew not aught hereof until too late. He would lift up his voice against this thing whether any here concurred with him or not. The Christian Church shall answer and say whether a voluntary society on the suggestion of a printer and under the control of one New School man, one Old School man, and some other one man, are to be justified in these alterations.

The English Bible, Dr. Breckinridge said, had been blest in saving more souls than the original Hebrew. It was a bold but true statement. Hence the importance of this matter: much is at stake, for English is to be the language of the world, and the Bible is the greatest classic in the language. Moreover, the English Bible is one of the strongest and most tender ties that bind together the English-speaking peoples of the two greatest nations of the earth. The Bible, too, is the standard of our language. Who are this printer, preacher, and who their colleagues, that they should take it upon themselves to amend this standard of our noble English tongue? We do not hold them competent for that work. If that work is to be done at all, we must go higher than they for the doers of it.

Dr. Breckinridge then examined the explanatory report of the Society. Some of the changes made were unimportant, others involve glosses and comments, and are, as the Society itself admits, of consequence. Many of the things done may be right in themselves, but not right to be done by a Society organised simply to print the Bible. We never gave them our money for that purpose. It establishes the precedent, that the text is under their control, which we can never allow. The report admits two things: changing *the text* and changing the *accessories of the text*. Under the first head, it admits changes in *words, orthography, particles of exclamation, proper names, compound words, capital letters, italics, punctuation, parenthesis, brackets*. Under the second head, it admits changes in the *contents of chapters, the running heads of columns, the marginal references, etc., etc.*

All these heads together involve every conceivable principle of editing except the adding of notes and comments. They had changed some of the very *words* of the text. Then they had changed the *spelling* of the Bible. Dr. Breckinridge had a great reverence for New England English, but we had a better English before New England was born, and he trusted we would still have it when New England English was run out. Then they had changed the *italics* of the text, and that is a change of the Bible. If it was not a change, what was the use of making it? If it was a change, they had no power to make it. So with all the other items. The Society itself says they "believe" there are five cases in which they have altered the sense by changes of punctuation. If we could only know all the other changes in punctuation they have made, perhaps we might "believe" the same was true of many more of them. Dr. Breckinridge was firm in his conviction that this movement, if persisted in, will ruin the Society in less than ten years. All that it has to do is just to go back to where it was before. If they do not retract, there will be a new Bible Society. This Assembly is a Church of God, and if we regard the Bible as in danger, we are bound to rise up in its defence.

After Dr. Breckinridge, the Rev. Mr. McNeill, of North Carolina, Agent of the Bible Society, was heard in defence of what had been done by it.

The matter was felt by the Assembly to be of great consequence, but the body was not prepared for immediate action. Many of the leading members wanted more light. Dr. Thornwell was of this number and took no part whatever in the discussion. It was moved to refer to the next Assembly. One hundred and twenty-eight favored this course, but the impression made by Dr. Breckinridge's speech was strong enough to induce one hundred and fourteen to vote for immediate action.

The following July, Rev. Dr. Charles Hodge took up the subject in the *Princeton Review*. He discussed three questions: 1. What had the Bible Society a right to do? 2. What had it done? 3. What ought it now to do?

As to the first question, Dr. Hodge said any individual or

company of men may revise and publish the Scriptures, but the Bible Society being established not to improve but simply print and circulate the English Bible is limited to that object alone. But what is the Society to print? Where is the authorised version to be found? The English version appears in different forms in different editions. Collating the edition of 1611 with those of Oxford, Cambridge, London, Edinburgh, and the standard American editions, no less than twenty-four thousand discrepancies appear. These are for the most part very minute indeed. Still no universally recognised standard edition exists. The Oxford and Cambridge and Edinburgh and American standard editions all differ from each other in minute points. What had the Society a right to do in these circumstances? One of two things: either what the British Bible Society does—make no attempt to produce a standard text, but reproduce and circulate some one of the standard editions which have no differences that ordinary readers would ever discover or be offended with; or else take these standard editions and collating them determine the true text from this comparison. But in prosecuting this collation, the Society must be guided by authority and not by its judgment or its taste. If three or more authorities of equal weight give one reading and a fourth gives another, the fact that the Society or its Committee think this fourth one affords a better sense or would be more appropriate is not sufficient reason why it should be adopted. It is not competent for the Bible Society to choose the readings which it deems to be best suited to the original—it must take those which have the most authority. The Society has no discretion—it has no more right to alter the received version in a single passage than to make a new translation.

This principle applies to all changes in punctuation, italics, parentheses, etc., affecting the sense. In Rom. iv. 1, the words "according to the flesh," if pointed in one way, qualify the word *father*, and Abraham is said to be our "father according to the flesh;" if pointed in another way, they qualify the words *hath found*, and the question asked in the text is, "What hath Abraham found according to the flesh?" To alter the punctuation

then is to alter the sense, it is to assume the office of expounder, which of course does not belong to a Bible Society. Its only course is either to take some one edition which has the confidence of the Christian public, and to follow it *verbatim, literatim, et punctuatim*, or by a careful collation form a text supported by a majority of the standard editions.

As to spelling, Dr. Hodge maintained that the Bible ought not to initiate changes, but slowly follow after the usage of the English-writing community. Sweeping changes are never to be introduced. It would be a just cause of protest if the Bible Society were to introduce all the peculiarities of Dr. Webster's spelling. We do not want a Bible in American-English, but in the *lingua communis* of the Saxon race.

As to the second point: From the Report of the Committee on Versions, adopted by the Board of Managers, Dr. Hodge gives a full account of what the Bible Society did in the matter of revising the English Bible. The Committee on Versions, consisting of Rev. Dr. Gardiner Spring and six other gentlemen, were directed to have a collation made of all the different editions. A collator is appointed and sets to work, and he reports to the Committee from time to time the progress he is making. Subsequently a set of rules are adopted for the guidance of the collator, and then the Committee of Seven, finding it impossible to meet so often, appoint the Rev. Dr. Edward Robinson (the celebrated oriental scholar and traveller), and the Rev. Dr. Vermilye of the Reformed (Dutch) Church, a sub-committee to attend to the work. They meet the collator once a week and sit generally for hours in this laborious business, which occupied them for nineteen months. At length the new edition appeared.

Dr. Hodge shows that the object contemplated in this official revision of the English version evidently was to remove existing discrepancies—a laudable object and one clearly within the province of the Society. And he holds that the gentlemen who devoted so much time and labor to this enterprise deserve the thanks "of the Christian public for their disinterested zeal," which seems to show that they labored gratuitously.

Dr. Hodge commends as worthy to receive the approbation

of the public almost all the principles which the Board adopted for the guidance of the sub-committee and collator. But, he says, they made two great mistakes. One was the not authoritatively restricting the work to the restoration of the English version to its purity instead of admitting departures from that version and its accessories at the discretion of the Committee. The discrepancies, moreover, which were to be removed, related only to *orthography, capital letters, words in italics, and punctuation*—not a word being said about altering the version itself, nor about the headings of the chapters. But there was no authoritative direction to the Committee to limit themselves to the removal of discrepancies and of discrepancies relating only to the four items above named. Gradually, perhaps unconsciously, all such limits were lost sight of and the sub-committee and collator undertake to alter the version even where the sense was affected, pleading with themselves, no doubt, in every instance, “Is it not a little one?” and “Is not the change for the better?”

The second great mistake was in giving the collators leave to exercise their own discretion in the choice of readings afforded by the British editions. The fourth rule adopted was, “That so far as the four English copies are *uniform* the American copy be conformed to them, *unless otherwise specially ordered by the Committee.*” This exception, says Dr. H., vitiates the whole rule and opens the door to emendations *ad libitum*. The true principle was laid down in Rule Seventh: “That in cases where the four recent British copies, and also the original edition (that of 1611) and our own vary in *punctuation*, the uniform usage of any three copies shall be followed.” But why should this rule have been limited to *punctuation*? Why not extend this rule to all matters subject to change? Had it been so extended and faithfully observed no complaint could have arisen.

The alarming feature of the case, Dr. Hodge said, was not that changes of essential importance had been made, but that good and eminent men could coolly claim, exercise, and defend the right as a Committee of the Bible Society to alter the version in matters confessedly affecting the sense. What were to be the limits to this right, and where was this work to stop?

Dr. H. summarises thus: "In several cases mentioned on pages 19 and 20 of the Report they have altered the sense by altering the *words*; in five cases they have altered the sense by altering the *punctuation*; in several other passages, by a change in the *italics*; and, in one case, 1 John ii. 33, they have *introduced a whole clause* into the text, which, in all previous copies, is marked as not belonging to it. The Committee have thus assumed the powers of translators, expounders, and emenders of the text." But he holds that this is not the worst feature of the case. The alterations in the accessories of the text, and especially in the headings of the chapters, are of far greater consequence than any yet referred to. "These are so numerous, so radical, and in general so much for the worse, that we should regard the general introduction of this new edition of the English Bible as one of the greatest calamities that has ever come upon the American churches." We cannot particularise here to the extent to which Dr. Hodge did, but we quote his words briefly: "It is most extraordinary, lamentable, and unaccountable, that evangelical headings familiar and endeared to all readers of the English Bible should be discarded, and others, such as Gesenius or De Wette would have preferred, adopted in their stead. However this may be accounted for, the fact is undeniable."

The third point was briefly disposed of by Dr. Hodge, viz., What ought the Society now to do? He said: "They must give us back our old Bibles. We are no prophets, we have less opportunity than many others to learn the state of the public mind upon this subject; but from what we have and what we feel, we are fully persuaded that, unless the Society does retrace its footsteps and return substantially to its old standard, its national character is at an end. We are entirely misinformed if our late General Assembly were not withheld, by an imperfect knowledge of the facts in the case, and by the hope that the Society would thus recede, from adopting at once the overture presented by Dr. R. J. Breckinridge."

But the Society did recede. And, accordingly, when the matter came up in the succeeding General Assembly, which met at

New Orleans, a minute proposed by Dr. Breckinridge, expressing very fully the views he had urged the preceding year, was unanimously adopted. And in his review of that Assembly, Dr. Hodge, speaking of the changes that had been ventured upon by the Bible Society, says: "This is a work which the Church would not commit to any six or six hundred men in the country. Its assumption by this Committee, the acquiescence of the Board in this assumption, and their sanctioning the stereotyping and distribution of thousands of copies of the Bible with these spurious headings, has done more to shake public confidence than anything which has ever occurred in the history of our benevolent institutions. It is the greatest public wrong that, so far as our knowledge extends, has ever been committed by any of our national societies."

We have thus gone back to the records of 1857 and 1858, at a special request made on behalf of our younger ministry, to whom this whole matter is *res incognita*. It is the more proper to do so because the Rev. Dr. C. S. Robinson, of New York city, we believe, has recently published in *Scribner's Magazine* that "The (Bible) Society made quite a needless surrender." He earnestly maintains that when it decided to go back to the old position, which its constitution and the safety of its vested funds alike required it always to maintain, that that was indeed "the most melancholy moment in the history of the Society"!

In maintaining this idea, he is hardly respectful at times to Dr. Charles Hodge, but very much the contrary to another very great Presbyterian name, that of ROBERT J. BRECKINRIDGE, while he is utterly and flagrantly unjust to our beloved and honored Thornwell and the General Assembly which met at Lexington in 1857. He represents that Assembly as debating and almost adopting "a string of violent resolutions," which were at last, by only "fourteen majority, not adopted, but referred" to the succeeding Assembly. The reader of this article has seen those resolutions, and can judge if they contain one violent expression. He represents Dr. Thornwell and Dr. Breckinridge, as well as the writer of this article, as "talking sharply about New England, and speaking spitefully as to New School tenden-

cies"; and he charges that "there was a measure of suspicion and jealousy in the discussion outside of the regard for King James's version of the Scriptures. Some things (he says) besides the eternal verities of God's truth were involved. Questions of policies widely distinct from Greek and Hebrew floated in the startled air. First of all, sectional feeling was simply rampant during those melancholy days," etc.

Now, if Dr. C. S. Robinson knew so little of the real character and feelings of the distinguished Kentuckian with whose name he made so free in these remarks, it is not so much to be wondered at that he should have so unjustly dealt with the no less eminent South Carolinian. Both these great men have long been in their graves. If they were alive, they would probably not consider it necessary to make any reply to these charges. Being dead, a friend's jealousy for their honor may excuse his noticing the unfounded allegations. The simple truth is, that Dr. Thornwell said not one word from the beginning to the end of this debate over the Bible Society's undertaking to amend the English version. His venerated name, therefore, is dragged into the accusation made by Dr. C. S. Robinson without the least ground whatever. The present writer knows what he is asserting, for Dr. Thornwell said to him that he was not prepared to condemn the Bible Society without further light, and Dr. Breckinridge also expressed to the writer some disappointment that his friend had not supported his views. Then, as to Dr. Breckinridge's "sectional feelings," the statement of Dr. C. S. Robinson is simply ridiculous. Every person who knew Robert J. Breckinridge was aware how utterly opposed he was to secession, and how free he was from all jealousy of the North, although a Southern man; and Dr. C. S. Robinson has been guilty of assailing departed greatness in entire ignorance of what he was asserting.

But Dr. C. S. Robinson has made another and more offensive assault upon the memory of the great Kentuckian in these words: "Dr. Breckinridge collapsed rather suddenly, for he found he had as much on his hands as he could attend to at the moment in repelling the charge of plagiarism, which some theologians

were pressing: he had published a volume of divinity, and they said he pilfered the best part of it from Stapfer."

Let us put against this infamous charge of plagiarism what Dr. Thornwell said of Dr. Breckinridge's book: "It will take its place by the side of the works of the greatest masters, and none will feel that they are dishonored by the company of the new comer. It has peculiar merits. It is strictly an original work—the product of the author's own thoughts, the offspring of his own mind. He has studied and digested much from the labors of others, but has borrowed nothing. No matter from what quarter the materials have been gathered, they are worked up by him into the frame and texture of his own soul before they are sent forth."

Let us put against Dr. C. S. Robinson's statement Dr. Charles Hodge's words: "Few books from the American press produced so deep an impression on the public mind as the first volume of this work. Whatever diversity of opinion existed as to its merits in some respects, it was felt and acknowledged to be a work of extraordinary power, and a noble exposition and vindication of divine truth."

Let us also put against Dr. C. S. Robinson's allegation what Dr. Humphreys, of Danville Seminary, said about his colleague's books: "Now, Dr. Breckinridge's two volumes contain 1,221 pages, while all the alleged plagiarisms which have been so industriously accumulating from the different parts of the work amount, in Dr. Park's article, to perhaps a couple of pages, and those of words and sentences which belonged no more to Stapfer than to Dr. Breckinridge, or to the entire Church in every age."

And let us also put against this slanderous charge a few sentences written by Dr. Breckinridge before this calumny was uttered. From the Preface to his work, let the reader judge how he himself regarded what he had written:

"I have not aimed to produce a compend of theology. I aim to teach theology itself. . . . This knowledge of God unto salvation I accept and develop as a science of absolute truth. . . . As to books in such a science as this, and in such an attempt as this, the Bible is the only one having any authority. And yet, I am far from undervaluing the immense ad-

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vantages I have derived from the labors of others: without which, indeed, I could have done nothing. The fruits of such attainments as I have painfully made will manifest themselves to the learned who may honor me by considering what I advance. I know too well that the Spirit of God has been on his Church always, to treat with unconcern the deliverances of her great teachers, much less her own well-considered utterances of her constant faith; and I perceive clearly enough that on such a subject as this, and after so many centuries of exalted effort, any claim of proper originality touching the subject-matter would be merely a confession of folly, of ignorance, and of error. The general doctrine of this treatise is in the sense of the unalterable faith of the Church of the living God: in the sense of the orthodox Confessions of the Reformation; in the sense of the standards of the Westminster Assembly, which constitute the Confession of so large a part of the Christian world, and amongst the rest of my own Church. The details which have been wrought out by learned, godly, and able men in all ages, of many creeds, and in many tongues, have been freely wrought into the staple of this work, when they suited the place and the purpose, and turned precisely to my thought. That for which I alone must be responsible is that which makes the work individual: the conception, the method, the digestion, the presentation, the order, the spirit, the impression of the whole."

Now it is respecting these very details which Dr. C. S. Robinson was not ashamed to charge a great and exalted genius with *pilfering from Stapfer*, that another learned professor in a theological seminary thus expressed himself: "The details have such a relation to the book and its abstract, scientific object, as details in an arithmetic bear to an account, or in a dictionary to a translation, so that there was no more reason why their authors' names should be mentioned, than why an accountant should always give the name of the arithmetic in which he learned the multiplication table. The details were not Stapfer's but borrowed by him from previous authors; and in fact such as were the common property of the science." And we remember distinctly how strongly Dr. Thornwell expressed himself to us regarding the extent to which what is found in all systems of theology has been derived by their writers from their predecessors. A very large part of all divinity, ancient and modern, is indeed, as just expressed, "the common property of the science." So that Dr. Breckinridge was quite right in saying that "any claim of proper originality touching the subject-matter of

theology would be merely a confession of folly, of ignorance, and of error," and so that all which any theologian can claim as his own, and all that he can be held responsible for, is what makes his work individual—the conception, the method, the presentation, the spirit, the impression of the whole. In a high and true sense theology is *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*. Dr. Hodge made a grand and glorious claim for Princeton Seminary, when he said that they had never made any discoveries of truth there and had never taught anything new.

There is one more quotation from Dr. Breckinridge's own words which it may be suitable to add. It is taken from the *Preliminary Remarks* prefixed to the second volume of his *Theology*. Referring to what is quoted above from the introduction to his first volume, he says those statements "were never capable of being misunderstood; unless perhaps to authorise the supposition that my use of the labors of others, both in that treatise and in this, was far more extensive than in fact it was, and that my contributions to the true progress of Christian theology were less distinct than they might turn out to be. Claiming nothing except a patient consideration by the people of God, of a sincere endeavor to restate with perfect simplicity and according to its own sublime nature and in its own glorious proportion, the Knowledge of God unto salvation; I confidently ask who are they amongst the living—how many are there amongst the dead—on whose behalf it can be truly asserted that such a claim is unjust to them, or unbecoming in me?"

So much we have thought it necessary to put on record once more in denial of an old falsehood intended now to cast dishonor on a great name and fling defilement on the grave of our beloved and honored friend. As to the other part of the charge, viz., that Dr. Breckinridge *collapsed* and *collapsed suddenly* from his attack on the Bible Society because of this accusation, the reader is sufficiently informed. *Collapsed* indeed, when after a year's reflection and inquiry, the next Assembly to that where he brought up the subject, unanimously endorsed his sentiments, and before that the very Society itself had receded most absolutely from its false position. What is to be thought of a writer

who on one page alleges that Dr. Breckinridge collapsed, and on the next page complains that the Society should have surrendered its ground to him and to those who agreed with him ?

Returning at length from this digression to our proper subject, let us refer to what Dr. Hodge said (while denying to the Bible Society any right to put forth as the authorised version one which it has altered to suit its own views of improvement), viz., that "any body [except the Bible Society] may make a new translation of the Bible or alter the old one" on his or on their proper responsibility. Dr. Blaney about a century since took it on him to revise the text and alter the italics, the punctuation, etc. He put out his edition for what it was worth. Noah Webster, more adventurous still, put out an "expurgated" edition of the English Scriptures, and as Dr. Hodge remarks, no one had anything to say against it. But the English Bible, he says well, is the common heritage of the Anglo-Saxon race in all parts of the world, and no body of men either in Europe or America have a right to change it by any *formal* and *authoritative revision*. But he adds, if any good and competent man should now do what Dr. Blaney did in revising the English version, correcting with wise and sparing hand its blemishes, retaining its spirit and its precious aroma, and if these corrections should commend themselves to the minds of English-speaking Christians, and be gradually introduced first in one edition and then in another, first in Oxford and then in Cambridge, then in London and Edinburgh, then in New York, or in the reversed order, until it was universally adopted, then that would come to be, after this slow and gradual fashion, the "received version," and our Bible Societies would be authorised to print and circulate it.

Now this is what a body of learned men, some in Great Britain and some on this continent, are actually attempting. And their revised edition of the New Testament in English is at length about to appear. For perhaps a century or more this subject has been under consideration and discussion, but more earnestly for some twenty-five years past. Errors in both the original text as used by King James's appointees and in their translation of the same have been often observed and pointed out by com-

mentators and by scholars. During the last half century great has been the progress of biblical learning along with all the other progressive sciences. Dr. Daniel Curry, associate editor of the *New York Methodist*, says well that "a new era" in the interpretation of the Scriptures has arrived. There are "vastly improved methods and apparatus for study." "New manuscripts of unequalled value" have been discovered. "New commentaries, learned and elaborate beyond all precedent, and monographs devoted to every kindred subject, with improved grammars and lexicons and whatever else may aid in the study of the Scriptures, have been multiplied." "Probably the study of the Bible with the means for its elucidation . . . has advanced more during the last fifty years than it did during the whole time from Erasmus and Beza to fifty years ago," so that "built on these foundations the structure of biblical science has risen to an eminence before entirely unknown."

Dr. Curry goes on to remark that, for a long time back, our authorised version, with all critics and many merely English scholars, has not been accepted as a final authority. Preachers from the pulpit give corrected renderings of their texts, and Bible-class leaders, and even Sunday-school teachers, tell their scholars that the common version is not always the most correct and felicitous translation of the sacred original. And so we have a different Bible for the learned from that put into the hands of the unlearned; and if the latter are to be permitted to get at the real matter of the word, they must accept it at second hand or obtain it by a roundabout process. "All this (says Dr. Curry) is not entirely according to the Protestant rule which calls for the Bible—the whole Bible, in the nearest possible approach to purity—for all the people. The time has therefore fully come that English-speaking Protestants should have prepared for all the people a version of the Scriptures brought fully up to the present advanced standard of Biblical learning. To meet this reasonable demand is the purpose of the proposed revision of the Holy Scriptures for general use."

The Christian public are of course very curious, nay anxious, to see this Revision. None of the Churches of God, so far as we

know, have been consulted on the subject, nor have had any hand, directly or indirectly, in appointing the scholars to whom this work should be intrusted. It is, in a sense, altogether a private undertaking. The learned men who have been thus employed are doing this work on their own responsibility. Meanwhile both hope and fear are much excited; some not doubting that the Revision will be cautiously, wisely, safely accomplished; others seriously apprehensive that evil and not good is to be the result. This latter class do not deny the progress of Biblical science, but they distrust the spirit of the age as it affects our Christian scholarship. They remember what Dr. Hodge said: "If the English Bible had been altered to suit the public opinion of the first half of the last century it would have been thoroughly pelagianized; if altered to suit the dominant sentiments of the Church of England during the last decennium (1847-1857) it would have been semi-romanized." We do not know how far English and American Biblical critics can withstand and have withstood the influence of German scholarship in some of its dangerous tendencies. And then we do not know what is afterwards to grow out this first beginning. Now, and for a long time back, we have enjoyed the benefits of a standard version of the word in our own vernacular. Imperfect it is, of course, because the translation is human, but the popular mind has rested confidently in this unequalled version as giving substantially the mind of the Spirit of God. And more and more the Church of God, amongst all English-speaking people, has been getting to be supplied with a ministry capable of correcting whatever really stood in need of being corrected in the English Bible. But in 1881 we are to have a Revised Version which it is to be hoped will be wisely and honestly and soundly executed. Who can tell what other revisions of a different character are to follow this one, until perhaps by 1900 there shall be no standard English Bible in the world?

Dr. Curry says "one of the ablest and most active of the English New Testament Committee (Dr. Moulton of Lee's College, near Cambridge,) remarked to the writer, some years ago, that 'the revised version, if read from the pulpit, probably would not in many cases be detected by the hearers as anything new; and

yet (said he) the whole of the emendations necessary to be made will amount to very much.'” It does not appear to us that this test would be at all a satisfactory one. Very great changes in the version might be made and the reading of them from the pulpit not attract the attention of a congregation. Nor does it assure us much for Dr. Curry to say that Dr. Moulton is “one of the ablest and most active of the English New Testament Committee.” His ability and activity might be just what are most to be dreaded.

Neither yet does Dr. Curry do much to quiet our apprehensions when he says—

“Small portions of the revised text have been published and carefully compared with the old form, and these indicate at once the care with which the old style has been preserved; and yet the needful emendations—sometimes very considerable ones—introduced. And yet, as many and as weighty as these may seem to be, they will not be new to biblical students, for nearly all of them may be found in the commentaries; and not a few of them have been heard of from the pulpit and the platform. Certain texts—verses and paragraphs—will be either omitted or changed, and, if any one is impatient to know what ones they are, and what they are to be, he need not wait for the appearance of the revised version, for almost any good critical commentary will answer his requirements. The coming changes are old acquaintances, and, to borrow a commercial phrase, the Church has already very fully discounted the work of the revisers.”

What if the coming changes are *old acquaintances*? We do not like all our old acquaintances, nor are they all worthy of being liked. And as to their all being found *in the commentaries*, that only raises the question, What is the character of the commentaries that contain many of them? But what will alarm many is, that certain verses and paragraphs will be omitted or changed.

Dr. Curry says: “The revision of our English Bible was clearly a duty owed by the Christian scholarship of the age to the commonality of the Church.” But who is prepared to vouch for all that the Christian scholarship of the age (so called) may say and do? Dr. Curry proceeds: “It has been undertaken at the right time, and all the conditions of the work are especially felicitous. The conduct of those having charge of it has been

highly judicious and altogether praiseworthy." Well, not knowing much about the particular details, we cannot speak as to the "judiciousness or praiseworthiness" of what has been done. We are waiting to see for ourselves what this Revised Version is really to be. But Dr. Curry proceeds:—

"And as we have gotten on pretty well thus far with the old version, though recognising our need of a change, there need be no great haste about the new one. Nor is it desirable that ecclesiastical bodies shall especially concern themselves about it—and we hope the Bible Society will have nothing to do about it for some time to come: the free Christian intelligence of English-speaking Christendom is the tribunal that must be allowed to decide on its merits. It will be wise to allow the most ample time for the consideration of the subject. The hundred million dollars' worth of Bibles in the land will not all at once become worthless. But with the same old Bibles that our fathers have used—simply adapted at all points to the sacred original, but changed in no considerable historical or doctrinal statement—it is designed that the common people shall have in their hands and homes versions of the Scriptures that approximate as nearly as possible to the words which holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Upon this let us remark:

1. That we consider ecclesiastical bodies will be very derelict if they do not "especially concern themselves about" a revision of the English Bible which is to come forth with such claims to attention.

2. That we must needs be anxious to know what the Revisers have been doing when those who applaud their undertaking and their work acknowledge, as Dr. Curry does, that some of the historical and doctrinal statements of the word have been changed.

3. That Dr. Curry's hope for the Bible Society is that it will have nothing to do with the Revised Version, ought not to have been limited, as he has limited it, to "some time to come." Dr. Hodge seems to have supposed that it was possible for a revision in the course of time to be recognised as the authorised version. That possibility evidently depends on whether the language of the Society's Constitution will fairly admit of such a metamorphosis. If the language is such as to shew that by *received text* was meant the text and its accessories as they stood when the Society was organised, it is difficult to conceive how the substitution

could possibly be made. The English-speaking people might all be well satisfied with the surrender of their present Bibles for the new ones, and the heirs of those parties who gave permanent funds to the Society for publishing the now received text be not satisfied. We take it for granted that the Bible Society holds funds that are liable to revert back to legal heirs, if it shall ever violate its Constitution. Dr. C. S. Robinson talks about "some men loving the Bible and the Bible Society enough to go even to the primary meetings every year till a Legislature could be created which would give a new charter that would permit a new constitution, which would let in a new version," etc. But we are confident that there is still integrity enough in the courts of the land to set aside any such a charter as illegal and void. How could a new charter carry the vested funds of the present Society into a different organisation?

4. Dr. Curry is certainly right when he says: "the free Christian intelligence of English-speaking Christendom is the tribunal that must be allowed to decide on the merits" of the Revised Bible. And he is further right when he adds: "It will be wise to allow the most ample time for the consideration of the subject."

Whatever apprehensions may be felt about this Revision of the English Bible, there is ample consolation and support in the assurance we have that Providence has always watched over the preservation of the word and will doubtless do so to the end.

JOHN B. ADGER.