

SOME REASONS

IN FAVOR OF

RETOUCHING THE REVISED
ENGLISH VERSION

OF

The Scriptures.

BY

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SOME REASONS IN FAVOR OF RETOUCHING THE REVISED ENGLISH VERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

IT has been said by some earnest apologists of the Revised Version that the work must be accepted or rejected as it is ; that no re-revision can be thought of ; that better qualified men could not be found for the work than those who have been engaged in it, nor greater diligence and faithfulness expected from any body of workers to whom a re-examination of the Revised Version might be intrusted. This may be true ; and yet it does not amount to a demonstration that the Revised Version must be adopted *as it is, or not at all.*

Let us look first at some reasons for retouching this work, and then inquire whether, if the reasons are found to be valid, some way cannot be discovered by which it may be accomplished.

The prime importance, in a work of this kind, of *consistency with itself* will be readily acknowledged by all. If instances can be pointed out in which the work of the revisers has not been consistent with itself, they need not be many to constitute a valid reason for such a retouching of the Revised Version as we advocate. We will look first at the Old Testament.

In the third verse of the first Psalm the godly man is compared to " a tree planted by the streams of water, that bringeth forth *its* fruit in *its* season." Here the revisers have done well to substitute *its* for the *his* of the Authorized Version, as referring to an inanimate object, and from the manner in which this change is spoken of in their Preface, it would seem to have been deliberately adopted. And yet in Jer. xvii. 8, a parallel passage, where the man who trusts in the Lord is compared to " a tree planted by the waters," and where the Authorized Version goes on to say, " that spreadeth out *her* roots by the river," and " *her* leaf shall be green," the Revised Version reads, " that spreadeth out *his* roots by the river," and " *his* leaf shall be green," as if to bring the passage into accord with Ps. i. 3 as it stood in the old version. We must either suppose this, or that accidental majorities at different meetings of the committee, perhaps separated by a long interval, came to different and inconsistent conclusions.

The words אלה and אלן are in the Authorized Version usually both rendered *oak*. This rendering the revisers have retained, contenting themselves, where אלה occurs, with adding in the margin, "Or, *terebinth*." But in Isa. vi. 13 and Hos. iv. 13 *both terms occur*, showing plainly that they designate different species of trees. In the first of these passages the Authorized Version rendered אלה, *teal-tree*, and in the second, *elm*. Such hap-hazard work as this the revisers could not do otherwise than correct, and this they have done by rendering it in both cases, *terebinth*. But to be consistent (as well as accurate), they should have so rendered it wherever the term occurs.

In Isa. xviii. 2, Revised Version, the Hebrew word נקטא is rendered *papyrus*, in accord with the best lexicographers and commentators. But in Exod. ii. 3 the old rendering, *bulrushes*, is retained, the revisers contenting themselves with putting in the margin, "That is, *papyrus*." But *bulrushes* does not signify *papyrus*. The bulrush is not a suitable material for constructing boats, while the papyrus plant is. The marginal note amounts therefore simply to an acknowledgment that the text of the translation *ought to be changed*.

So in Gen. xi. 3 and Exod. ii. 3 the revisers have retained *slime* in the text, and say in the margin, "That is, *bitumen*;" but slime in English has no such meaning as *bitumen*. Here again the marginal note is a virtual acknowledgment that its reading ought to have been inserted in the text. Members of the committee may have hesitated to do this, because the word *bitumen* does not occur in the old version. But neither does *papyrus* nor *terebinth*. Nevertheless, they are correct, and for consistency's sake should appear in an English version wherever the corresponding Hebrew terms occur.

נבל is the name of a musical instrument, and doubtless designates the same instrument wherever it occurs. And yet in Isa. v. 12 it is rendered *lutv*, in Amos v. 23 and vi. 5, *viol*, and in 2 Chron. xx. 28 and in the Psalms, *psaltery*. The Authorized Version had the two renderings *psaltery* and *viol*. The Revised Version, by changing the rendering in Isa. v. 12, has made three instead of two.

In their preface to the Old Testament, the revisers state that they had thought best to retain in general the usage of the Authorized Version in rendering the name *Jehovah* by the terms LORD and GOD, having employed the name *Jehovah* "only in a few passages, in which the introduction of a proper name seemed to be required." But if it is appropriate anywhere to retain this sacred name in a version, surely it should be kept when employed by a heathen in designating the God of Israel, as in Exod. v. 1, 2, where (in verse 2)

Pharaoh says, "Who is Jehovah, that I should hearken unto his voice? . . . I know not Jehovah;" also where Jehovah is mentioned in contrast with a false god, as in 1 Kings xviii. 21, where Elijah on Mount Carmel says to the assembled people, "If Jehovah be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him," and of course also in the response of the people, verse 39, "Jehovah, he is God, Jehovah, he is God;" also where God himself challenges this as his peculiar name, as in Isa. xlii. 8, where he makes the solemn declaration, "I am Jehovah, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images." But in all these places the Revised Version has "the LORD."

The confusion in the rendering of the names of measures in the Authorized Version is retained in the Revised Version. The names *homer*, *ephah* and *hin* are, I believe, consistently retained wherever they occur in the Hebrew, and rightly, for modern languages have no equivalent terms. *Cor* also (another name for the *homer*) is generally retained. But in 1 Kings iv. 22; v. 11, and several other places, it is rendered by the indefinite term *measure*, while the same indefinite term stands in Gen. xviii. 6, 1 Sam. xxv. 18, and other places for the *seah*, a measure equal to *one thirtieth part of a cor*.

These may suffice for examples from the Old Testament. In the New Testament the confusion in respect to the names of measures is still greater. There (both in the Authorized Version and the Revised Version) the same indefinite term *measure* is used to render *chanix*, *seah*, *bath* and *cor*, the *seah* being about six times as much as the *chanix*, the *bath* equal to three *seahs*, and the *cor* to ten *baths*. Surely confusion like this should be avoided.

The use of the word *farthing* to represent *ασσάριον* and also *κοδράντης*, which was the fourth part of an *ασσάριον*, is similar to the above, and was in the Authorized Version an error, which the revisers were bound to correct. Neither can the apology be admitted that the terms are used only in a figurative sense; for Mark (xii. 42) specifies that two *λεπτά* make one *κοδράντης*; and where Luke (xii. 6) says that five sparrows are sold for two *ασσάρια*, he is speaking of a definite amount and of well-known coins.

In John xxi. 12 the Revised Version substitutes "break your fast" for "dine," and in verse 15 "broken their fast" for "dined" of the Authorized Version (doubtless because the meal referred to appears to have been taken early in the day); but in Luke xi. 37, where the same Greek word occurs, the rendering "dine" is preserved, and in verse 38 the corresponding noun is "dinner," a marginal note being appended stating that the Greek in both cases is *breakfast*. Now it is well known that *ἄριστον* and *δείπνον* repre-

sent the two principal meals of the Greeks, the former being taken before the middle of the day and the latter at night. They must therefore be rendered in English either *breakfast* and *dinner*, or *dinner* and *supper*. If in Luke xi. 37, 38, as the marginal note of the Revised Version informs us, the Greek words signify *breakfast*, they should have been so rendered in the text, as also in Matt. xxii. 4 and Luke xiv. 12 (on which passages there is no marginal note), and the correlative *δειπνον* should have been everywhere rendered *dinner*. But this the revisers have nowhere done. If *ἄριστον* is *breakfast*, and *δειπνον* *supper*, then the Greek language, with all its wealth, has no word for *dine* or *dinner*.

The Revised Version of the New Testament exhibits in not a few instances excessive literalness in rendering Greek words and forms. It was a matter of course that such a mode of rendering could not be carried through consistently. A few examples may suffice.

In Luke xx. 34 the rendering of *υἱὸν τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου* is changed from "children of this world" to "sons of this world," of whom it is said that they *neither marry nor are given in marriage*, "marry" referring especially to sons, and "are given in marriage" to daughters. So in Gal. iii. 8 "children of Abraham" is changed to "sons of Abraham," where all *believers* are spoken of, male and female.* Similar remarks might be made of other passages, where such phrases occur as "children of the Highest," "children of light," "children of the prophets and of the covenant," in all which the Revised Version has "sons," while at the same time it retains (very properly) the rendering "children of Israel" for *υἱὸν Ἰσραήλ*.

In Heb. xiii. 2 *φιλοξενία* (the normal Greek term for hospitality) is rendered in the Revised Version "to show love to strangers," while in Rom. xii. 13 the rendering "hospitality" has been preserved, consistently with which they might here have rendered "to exercise hospitality."

In their zeal for an absolutely uniform rendering of *αἰώνιος*, the revisers have rejected the familiar phrases, "everlasting consolation," "everlasting covenant," "everlasting destruction," and "everlasting gospel," and given us "eternal comfort" (2 Thess. ii. 16), "eternal covenant" (Heb. xiii. 20), "eternal destruction" (2 Thess. i. 9), and "eternal gospel" (Rev. xiv. 6), while the Revised Version of the Old Testament retains "everlasting" as the rendering of the corresponding Hebrew term in such phrases as "everlasting burnings" (Isa. xxxiii. 14), "everlasting joy" (Isa.

* And yet in Acts xiii. 26, the rendering "children of the stock of Abraham," is (rightly, as it seems to me) retained for *υἱὸν γένους Ἀβραάμ*.

xxxv. 10), "everlasting covenant" (Isa. lv. 3), "everlasting dishonor" (Jer. xx. 11), "everlasting love" (Jer. xxxi. 3), "everlasting kingdom" (Dan. iv. 3 ; vii. 27), etc. I shall have something to say farther on about the necessity of a collation of the Revised Version of the Old Testament with that of the New.

Striking instances of excessive literalness (involving a lack of consistency with itself in the work of the Revised Version) are furnished by the attempt, so manifest throughout, to give exact equivalents in English to the Aorist and Perfect tenses of the Greek verb, according to classical analogy and in disregard of the gradual change which the language was undergoing in New Testament times.

On this point I may be permitted to quote from the preface of a little work which I published in 1883 (Draper, Andover), entitled "Suggested Modifications of the Revised Version of the New Testament," pages vii. and viii.

It is undoubtedly the duty of a translator to bring out as clearly as possible in his translation the differences of meaning expressed by the use of different tenses in his original. But he must also make allowance for the different range of meaning which the same tense may have in different languages. The English phrase, "I wrote you from Paris," will be differently rendered in Greek, and in many other languages, according as it is intended to mean, *I wrote once*, or *I wrote repeatedly*. So the Greek Aorist is used in a variety of ways, which must be expressed in English by the use of different tenses. It will, I presume, be generally conceded that in John xx. 2, 13, the revisers have done well in retaining an English Perfect in place of the Greek Aorist, "They *have taken* away the Lord, . . . and we know not where they *have laid* him." So in Matt. xxv. 20, "I have *gained*." The relation of the events referred to in these passages to the time when the statements were made is so close as to justify the use of the Perfect in English to represent the Aorist in Greek. For similar instances in which the Revised Version rightly employs the English Perfect to render the Greek Aorist, see Matt. xi. 27, Mark v. 35, 1 Cor. iv. 8. With equal justice they might have kept the Perfect of the Authorized Version in Luke x. 40, where they have taken pains to give us a tense corresponding to the Greek Aorist, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister *did leave* me to serve alone?" Seeing the words in question describe a state of things still existing when Martha was addressing our Lord, English idiom justifies (I might even say, requires) the use of a Perfect, and so I would retain the old rendering, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister *hath left* me to serve alone?"

A striking instance of the use of the Greek Aorist instead of a Perfect, is found in John xiii. 31, *Ἄνυ ἐδοξάσθη*, where the revisers have correctly retained the rendering, "Now is the Son of man glorified," and yet, as though their literary conscience were a little uneasy at the concession, they put in the margin, Or, *was*.

The Modern Greek verb can scarcely be said to possess a Perfect tense, and substitutes the Aorist almost everywhere for the old Perfect; and a tendency to this usage is manifest in the Greek of the New Testament.

In Matt. xiv. 3 and Mark vi. 17, the Revised Version has Pluperfects for Aorists, *had laid hold*, *had sent*, *had married*; and rightly, because these expressions relate to events which had taken place before the time immediately contemplated in the narrative.

Probably one reason why the Aorist was employed to do the service of the Perfect was that the Perfect itself, perhaps partly under the influence of Latin usage, had come to be used somewhat loosely. In Rev. xviii. 3 we have *πέπωκε*, a Perfect, preceded and followed by Aorists, and the following Aorists referring to the same time with the Perfect. So in Rev. vii. 14 we have *εἶρηκα* preceded by *ἀπεκρίθη* and followed by *εἶπε*, and all relating to the same conversation; so that the revisers seem to me to have quite needlessly gone out of their way to render, "I say," and to note in the margin that the Greek is "I have said."

I am confident that a Greek professor of his own language, knowing thoroughly English idiom, could not be found who would say that *ὁ ἀγαθὸς* in Rom. v. 7 means anything more than the English phrase, "a good man," or *ὁ κλαυθμὸς* in Matt. vii. 12, etc., anything more, or more emphatic than "weeping" (or "wailing"). As well might the revisers have gone on to say, "gnashing of the teeth," because the text has *βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων*. I would not go so far as some of their critics have gone in charging this crowding in of the definite article to pedantry; but I think it does fairly lie open to the charge of an incautious following of leaders.

A strong reason for revising the revision of the New Testament is found in the excessive deference paid to certain ancient manuscripts, and those notoriously inaccurate manuscripts, to the neglect of evidence coming from quotations and versions still older. This is a heavy charge; but if there were no other instance, that of the reading adopted in Acts iv. 25 (*ὁ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου στόματος Δαβιδ*) would sustain it. No evidence short of St. Luke's autograph would satisfy me that he ever wrote such a medley, and in this opinion I am sure that I should be sustained by the best Greek scholars. Even Drs. Westcott and Hort, whose influence

predominated in the adoption of Greek readings by the New Testament committee, acknowledge in the Appendix to their critical edition of the Greek New Testament that it is *probably an error*.

The adoption of the reading ἰστέ instead of ᾧστέ in Jas. i. 19 is (like the above) in disregard of the authority of the Syriac Version, an authority two or three centuries older than the uncial Greek manuscripts on which Drs. Westcott and Hort so implicitly rely.*

For other instances in which the testimony of the most ancient versions, and particularly of the Syriac, has been disregarded, see Mark ix. 49; 1 Cor. xv. 55; 2 Cor. iii. 3; xii. 7 and 19, and 1 Tim. vi. 7.

Let us now look briefly at the imperative necessity of a collation of the revised versions of the Old and New Testaments. That the two should be prepared on the same plan, and so as not to exhibit differences not existing in the original texts, would seem a matter of course, and I am at a loss to account for no provision having been made for conference between the Old and New Testament companies of Revisers.

The eye of a reader of the Revised Version of the Old Testament is struck by seeing the phrase "spirit of the Lord" printed with a small initial s. In 2 Kings ii. 15, where the "sons of the prophets" are urging Elisha to permit them to go and seek for Elijah, they say, "lest peradventure the spirit of the Lord hath taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley." Here in our ordinary Bibles the word Spirit is printed with an initial capital S. We do not need to inquire into the reasons which led to its being printed in the Revised Version with a small s. But when the reader comes to a precisely parallel passage in the New Testament, and reads (Acts viii. 39), "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more," he has a right to ask why "Spirit" should be printed in the one case with a small initial letter and in the other with a capital.

So when the reader of the New Testament finds the quotations from the prophets printed in parallelisms (*e.g.*, Acts ii. 17-21, compare Joel ii. 28-32), and turning to the corresponding passages in the Old Testament finds them printed solid, like prose, he may reasonably ask, Why this difference of form? It is true, there are passages in the prophets which are composed in plain prose. There are others, however, in which the parallelism is as marked as in Job

* Of course I do not mean that the Syriac MSS. in our possession are older than the Sinaitic or the Vatican, but simply that the testimony is in another and an independent line, and shows what was the Greek text in the hands of the Syriac translators probably not fifty years from the death of the Apostle John.

or in the Psalms, and still others where it is less marked, and where, if the same course had been pursued in printing the prophetic books as in printing the Book of Job (viz., part appearing as prose, and the rest as poetry), it might have been doubtful in which form certain passages ought to appear. Still, who does not see the desirableness of having the quotations in the New Testament appear in the same form in which the original passages are printed?

But still more important than the form is the substance of the translation. There are not a few passages from the Old Testament quoted in the New where there is nothing in the shape of the Hebrew and Greek texts to demand a different rendering in English, and still others where a difference of one or two words in the rendering would satisfy the slight difference of the originals. A glance at these passages in the Revised Version shows that no such collation has been made as the circumstances demand.

In Isa. vii. 14, Revised Version, we read, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son," with a marginal note on "a" or *the*. In Matt. i. 23 this passage is quoted. But here we read, "Behold, *the* virgin shall *be with child*, and shall *bring forth* a son." The Greek of Matthew is in this clause a fair rendering of the Hebrew of Isaiah, and might be expressed in English by the same words. The definite article is the same in both; the first verb is in the Old Testament often rendered *to be with child*, as in Isa. xxvi. 17, 18, Revised Version, and the second is expressed indifferently in both the Old and New Testaments by *to bear* or *to bring forth*; compare "bring forth" (Gen. iii. 16), "is born" (Matt. ii. 2), "bearest not" (Gal. iv. 27), etc. I quote in all these cases from the Revised Version. We need not undertake to decide whether in this important passage we should read "*a* virgin" or "*the* virgin," but since the Hebrew and Greek texts have the article alike, surely the English rendering of it should be the same in both passages.

In Matt. iii. 3 occurs a quotation from Isa. xl. 3, with some variations, but having the phrase, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord" identical. In the Revised Version of the New Testament it is changed to, "Make ye ready the way of the Lord," although in the same version we have *prepare* as the rendering of the same Greek verb (*ἐτοιμάζω*) in Matt. xx. 23; xxv. 34, 41; Luke xxiii. 56; xxiv. 1; John xiv. 2, 3, and other passages.

Again, in Matt. xiii. 14, 15, we have a quotation from Isa. vi. 10, not exact, but having the words, "lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears" identical. Here the Revised Version in Matthew has substituted *perceive* for *see*, although only two verses

farther on the same verb is rendered *see*, as also in Matt. ii. 2, 9, 10, 16, and multitudes of other cases.

In Joel ii. 28 we have the glorious promise, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh," and here the Revised Version agrees with the Authorized Version, except that it gives the word spirit with a small initial s. But the revised New Testament in Acts ii. 17, 18 substitutes "pour forth" for "pour out," although in many passages it renders the same verb, "pour out."

The passage in Ps. xiv. 3, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one," is quoted in Rom. iii. 12. A somewhat more exact rendering of both the Hebrew and the Greek texts would have been, "There is none that doeth good; there is not even one." The revisers of 1611 regarded "no, not one" as an equivalent, and perhaps more forcible, rendering of the last clause, and gave it in both the Old Testament and the New. But in Romans the Revised Version of 1881 gives us, "no, not so much as one," where the revisers seem not to have noticed that they were employing two negatives in English for one in the Greek.

The Hebrew term *Sheol* has been employed (sometimes) in the Revised Version of the Old Testament as the name of the unseen world, and *Hades* (throughout) in that of the New Testament. Now, whatever differing ideas may have been entertained in different ages respecting the unseen world, still it remains true that *ᾗδης* is the only Greek term corresponding to *שְׁאוֹל*, and so was employed to render it in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, and by the inspired writers of the New. The term *Hades* was first adopted in our English literature, and therefore had the prior claim to be used throughout the Old and New Testaments as the rendering of the corresponding Hebrew and Greek terms; and it is to be regretted that in Ps. xvi. 10 we must read,

"For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol;
Neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption,"

and in Acts ii. 27, of the same Bible, where the words are quoted verbatim,

"Because thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades,
Neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption."

Here we have in a single verse the same particle rendered *For* and *Because*, the same preposition rendered *to* and *in*, the corresponding Hebrew and Greek proper names expressed by *Sheol* and *Hades*, and the same verb rendered *suffer* and *give*; also *thine* and *thy*, and *Holy One* with and without initial capitals.

These examples may suffice. They could easily be multiplied. There are also other points, not touched in this article, which would

confirm the same result if fully presented. Such are the different treatment of proper names in the Old and New Testaments, the different degrees of concession to modern usages in such matters as the substitution of *who* or *that* for *which* when referring to persons, and the widely different degrees of strictness with which the revisers of the Old and of the New Testament adhered to the rule, "*To introduce as few alterations as possible into the text of the Authorized Version consistently with faithfulness.*" But I am willing to submit the case without farther argument, confident of the verdict of the great majority of my readers : THE REVISION OUGHT TO BE REVISED.

As a method by which this desirable result might be reached, I suggest the following plan : Let the Old and New Testament companies be constituted one company in two sections, with power to fill their own vacancies either separately or jointly, as the majority may decide. Then let a sub-committee of at least three men be appointed to have immediate charge of the work, and to give *their whole time* to it until it is completed. "Such a committee would be able to render available all the aid offered from without, to watch over the thorough consistency and harmony of the different parts of the version, and to report to the general committees the changes needed to secure these objects. Devoting their whole time and energy to it, they would be far more likely to keep in mind the great variety of points, often minute, which demand attention in the progress of such a work, than ten times as many men of equal ability who are earnestly devoting six sevenths of their time to other duties."*

One more suggestion, and I have done. Let the English Version of the Holy Scriptures be frankly recognized, like the whole body of English literature, as the common heritage and possession of all the English-speaking peoples. To this end let the British and American companies of Revisers (the one representing Great Britain, with its leadership and prestige, and the other Greater Britain, in the widest sense of the phrase, with its large and rapidly increasing majority of those to whom the English language is vernacular) be placed upon precisely the same footing, and a common result reached by the votes of both bodies. The formalities necessary for such an arrangement can easily be reached if those with whom they rest are first satisfied that the arrangement is on the whole desirable. If this reasonable concession *cannot be secured*, then (however much we should deprecate the alternative) let rival editions of the revision be published, and in a friendly way, without contention, compete for the suffrages of all the English-speaking populations of the globe.

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* Suggested Modifications of the Revised Version, p. 4.

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