

**THE ENGLISH BIBLE AND
OUR DUTY
WITH REGARD TO IT:
A PLEA FOR REVISION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649349005

The English Bible and Our Duty with Regard to it: A Plea for Revision by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

THOMAS KINGSMILL ABBOTT

**THE ENGLISH BIBLE AND
OUR DUTY
WITH REGARD TO IT:
A PLEA FOR REVISION**

THE
ENGLISH BIBLE

AND

OUR DUTY WITH REGARD TO IT

A Plea for Revision

BY

THOMAS KINGSMILL ABBOTT, M.A.

Fellow and Tutor of Trinity College, and Professor of Moral Philosophy in the
University of Dublin

SECOND EDITION

C DUBLIN

HODGES, FOSTER, & CO., 104 GRAFTON STREET

LONDON: LONGMANS, GREEN, READER, & DYER

1871

Bills. 13.5
18.57. 3a

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY

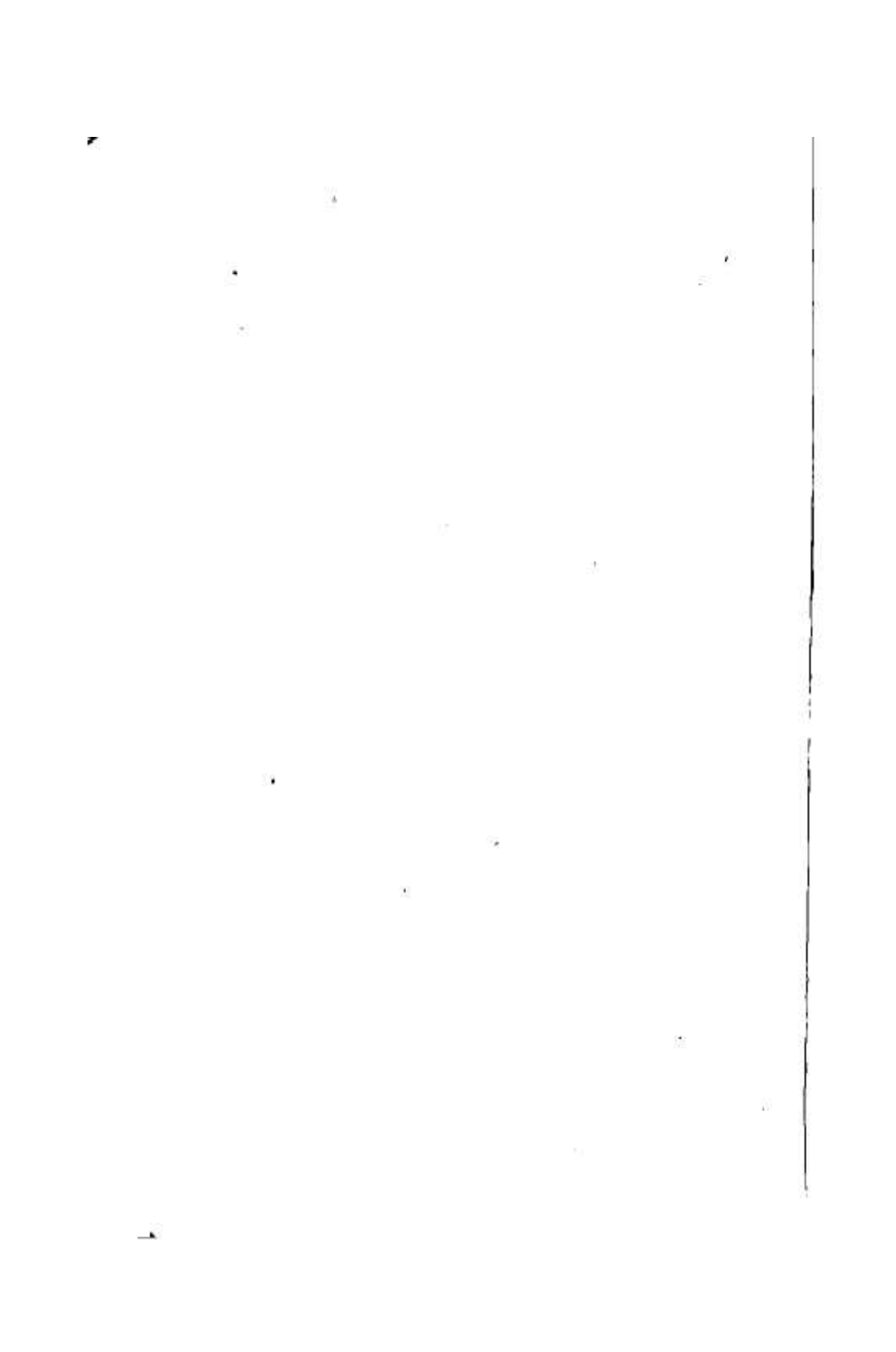
1871, July 1.
Moimot Fund.

DUBLIN STEAM PRINTING COMPANY.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The substance of the following pages was published anonymously in 1857. The revived interest in revision, accompanied as it is with the revival of the old objections, has suggested this republication, in the hope that it may promote in some degree an intelligent appreciation of the question. The additions now made are considerable.

NOTE.—In the former edition a "Collection of Approved Emendations and Alternative Renderings," was announced as in preparation. The design was not completed; but it may not be improper to mention that part of the materials collected for it was used to assist Mr. BLACKADER in the preparation of his valuable "Chronological Bible" (London, 1864), in the latter half of each Testament.



REVISION OF THE AUTHORIZED VERSION,

ETC. ETC.

§ I. *Lessons from History—Objections Considered.*

FEW great works are commenced and completed in a single effort. It is needful that many successive labourers should unite their energies, in order that even a tolerable degree of perfection may be attained. At each step new difficulties and new objections arise, but no sooner are they overcome than it is forgotten that they ever existed, and instead of increasing wisdom and increased encouragement from previous success, we find that before the succeeding step is contemplated, the gradual character of the advance already made is lost sight of. It is imagined that by fortunate accident, the institution, whatever it may be, reached almost absolute perfection at one bound, and that it is dangerous to expect similar good fortune, if it be meddled with again. This feeling naturally adds strength to the old objections which are sure to be revived, stronger, if possible, from having been overcome. In the case of the English Bible, which may be called an institution of our country, these causes have certainly operated, but they have been assisted by others peculiar to it. The general and deserved admiration which has been yielded to it has led to the neglect of all other existing or possible versions.

With many persons there is no medium between perfection and worthlessness; what is not infallible cannot be trustworthy. The general excellence of the English Version being admitted, its perfection is assumed, and therefore all preceding and subsequent versions must be unworthy of notice; nay, even the original text need not be consulted. The steps by which the present excellence of our version was attained are wholly forgotten. Its noble language is supposed to bear the stamp of the age of James I.; and its accuracy is attributed to the learning and judgment of the translators of 1611. It is generally taken for granted that the translations existing before that date were obsolete and faulty; while there was a general demand for a new one, which was accordingly executed by the special command, and, as is of course supposed, at the expense of that "most high and mighty prince," King James. It is further imagined that this version, either by royal authority, or by its own surpassing excellence, at once superseded all its predecessors.

Its superiority, indeed, may be admitted to the fullest extent, while we maintain that it is extremely imperfect. The eulogies, indeed, bestowed upon it, often extravagant and indiscriminating, if they have not led to a half-conscious belief that the translators were inspired, have at least left the impression that no wise man has ever dreamed of desiring a better version. It is not strange, then, that any proposal for its improvement should be looked upon with as much alarm as if the British Constitution were to be revised, or the Scriptures themselves brought up to the present state of science. Moreover, the aversion to meddle with what has been so long admired is naturally mingled with a vague fear of some dreadful innovation, some terrible shock to our most cherished feelings. Who can tell what may be imposed on us as Scripture if we

once give way to the rage for 'improvement?' Let us then, it is said, rather imitate the wisdom of our forefathers, and firmly hold to what they have bequeathed to us. Be it so; but it must be remembered, that besides the results of their labours they have left us the history of their own experience; and, in the present case, as in all others, it will doubtless teach us a useful lesson. -

It is not my design to enter in detail into the history of the English Bible,* but there are some misapprehensions which it is necessary to remove. It is, perhaps, of little consequence to observe that the received version has never been, strictly speaking, authorized, for, in such a case, use and familiarity are authority sufficient. But it is important to remember that it is not a new translation, but a revision; nor is it the result of a single revision, but is several steps removed from its original. In fact, its excellence is due, in great part, to the number of revisions through which it has passed. If no country enjoys a more faithful version, in no country have there been so many revisions successively received. And it is worthy of notice, that all of these were the result of private energy, and undertaken at private expense. It was not so in other countries. In Germany, a century before the Reformation, a translation was commenced at the Imperial expense; in later times the Swedish, Norse, and other versions have had public assistance. The Danish has been four times revised, by order of as many kings; and a King of Denmark appointed at his own expense a travelling commission for the collation of manuscripts. But in England, from Henry VIII. to the present time, no monarch has promoted, except by words, the vernacular translation.

* Those who wish to do so may consult Canon Westcott's *History of the English Bible*, Rev. Chr. Anderson's *Annals of the English Bible*, and an article in the *Quarterly Review* for April, 1870.