

**DISCUSSION ON REVISION OF THE HOLY
ORACLES AND UPON THE OBJECTS,
AIMS, MOTIVES THE CONSTITUTION,
ORGANIZATION, FACILITIES, AND
CAPACITIES OF THE AMERICAN BIBLE
UNION FOR REVISION, PP. 1-217**

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Discussion on Revision of the Holy Oracles and upon the Objects, Aims, Motives the Constitution, Organization, Facilities, and Capacities of the American Bible Union for Revision, pp. 1-217 by James Edmunds & T. S. Bell

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JAMES EDMUNDS & T. S. BELL

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OR

REVISION OF THE HOLY ORACLES,

AND UPON THE OBJECTS, AIMS, MOTIVES, THE CONSTITUTION,
ORGANIZATION, FACILITIES, AND CAPACITIES OF THE

AMERICAN BIBLE UNION, FOR REVISION.

By TWO "LAYMEN" OF THE REVISION ASSOCIATION,
AND FIVE CLERGYMEN;

THE LATTER SPECIALLY APPOINTED BY A CONGRESS OF
MINISTERS OF THE CITY OF LOUISVILLE.



LOUISVILLE, KY.
MORTON & CRISWOLD, PRINTERS
1856.

INTRODUCTION.

THE BIBLE REVISION ASSOCIATION appointed the undersigned to prepare and publish in the Louisville Journal and the Manning Courier a series of articles on the necessity of a Revision of the Holy Scriptures, and on the means and facilities of the American Bible Union for accomplishing this needed Revision. Upon the announcement that an arrangement of this kind had been effected with the papers we have named, and before we had made any publication, the drummers of that sectarianism, which is at once the bane and disgrace of Christendom, took immediate steps for a contention. Five clergymen were found ready to form a temporary union for the purpose of doing all in their power to shut out from King James's version every ray of light that biblical science has shed upon the text of inspiration, and to hunt down with worldly means all who are engaged in a pious, holy, righteous desire to give the English reader as exact a transfer of the ideas of the Holy Spirit as human labor, genius, learning, and skill can make from the Original texts. A "religious" paper, devoted to party purpose, issues, and aims, thus trumpeted, on the 17th of April, 1866, the official bark of the champions of this contention:

"The five clergymen referred to were no mere volunteers, but at one of the largest meetings of *MINISTERS* of various denominations ever held in the city of Louisville, they were appointed expressly to assure their brethren that this Revision movement was a sectarian immersionist interest, and that it had no claim to the sympathies of any others."

The capitals are our own. The reader will perceive that this historic record of the careers of the five clergymen upon their hunt after the Bible Union, announces that the Convention that appointed them was the Kingdom of the Clergy, not representatives of the people. Jesus Christ never appointed a clerical hierarchy for the management of his affairs—he sanctioned that the members of his Body are brethren; they stand upon common ground, and owe to all men on earth their leader. The commission, as recorded by Matthew, was given to five hundred brethren on a mountain in Galilee, thus declaring that all things pertaining to the conversion of the world, belong to the individual members of the body, and not to privileged orders. It is sectarianism that maintains the Kingdom of the Clergy, not the Kingdom of Christ; and that same sectarianism, by its clerical orders, sent these five clergymen into the newspapers to decide and revile the righteous efforts of the American Bible Union to ascertain what God has said to mankind, and after ascertaining it, to say it in intelligible English. The very terms of the record we have quoted:—"members of various denominations," show that it was not Christianity that was converted in opposition to the Revision of the Holy Scriptures, for Christianity knows nothing of "various denominations;" it is a unit, it was so constituted divinely, and Heaven has never acknowledged any other characteristic of it. It is sectarianism that is made up of "various denominations," not Christianity.

On the 19th of April, the same partisan paper, in answer to a proposition of the Western Recorder, that both sides of the Revision Discussion should appear in both papers, said: "we will not publish both sides of the Revision question." "Because it would be unreasonable and unfair to our readers to do so."

And on the same day, the same paper edited the assembling of the Revision Association in Louisville in the following courteous and gentlemanly terms:

"A QUERIE FOR THE JOURNAL AND COURIER.

"MR. EDITOR:—Now that the five clergymen have clearly shown the intensely sectarian character of the Revision movement, will the publishers of the Journal and Courier permit Dr. Bell, in their names, to puff the doings of the Convention which meets this week in the city, to promote that object? I, as a subscriber to both their papers, protest in advance against any such prostitution of the secular press, to the fostering of the most intensely sectarian movement of the age.

FATE PLAW."

To this admirable specimen of bigoted sectarianism, the editor of the Journal thus responded, on the 11th of April:

"REFERENCE.—We have been under the necessity several times of rebuking the Rev. Mr. Hill, of the Presbyterian Herald, for his ill-considered references to the management of the Louisville Journal. He seems to have learned something from those lessons and now undertakes this interference through the medium of anonymous correspondents. As we never meddle with the Presbyterian Herald, we can see no reason why the editor of that paper should undertake to instruct us in what is clearly our own business. In the present instance, the Herald's corres-

pendent begs permission to muzzle the Louisville Journal in reference to the Bible Revision Association, now in session in this city. The course of the Journal has always been to give every great public enterprise, conducted properly and under the management of good and true men, courteous and respectful treatment; and we know of nothing in the character of the Revision Association, or in the character of the great number of learned, reputable, and pious men engaged in furthering its objects, that should exclude it from the respect and courtesy of this paper. The correspondents of the Herald may rest assured, that we shall manifest that respect and courtesy in any way we may think proper.

And the editor of the Courier expressed the most thorough contempt for this impudent interference with his business.

The individual name named in *Fair Play's* modest and decent dictation, felt himself called upon to return his thanks for the honor conferred upon him, in the following card, published in the Journal:

"I think that as a matter of simple justice, I owe the expression of my thanks to the Rev. Mr. Hill and his correspondents *'Fair Play'* for their modest request, and I alone should not be permitted to notice the proceedings of the Revision Association. They flatter me exceedingly in conveying the idea that no one but myself would be likely to give any efficient aid in the cause, an efficient help would be the only kind to which they would be likely to object. While I discern all right to the honor, I may thank the two gentlemen for even the unintentional compliment they have thrust upon me.

T. S. BELL.

We have recorded the facts of the treatment received by the friends of Revision, as specimens of a most wretched condition of things still in existence, amidst the blaze of the light of nearly nineteen centuries of Christianity. These specimens of clerical intolerance will do service of folly and true men, to give the masses of the people the pure Word of God in the clearest and most accurate translations, are precisely such as have attended every effort of holy and true men of all ages, to make the inspired text clear and intelligible to the people, as may be seen in our XI. letter.

In this volume we present the entire Discussion of the Revision cause between two "laymen," as selectionists designate, members of the body of Jesus Christ, on behalf of the Revision Association, and five clergymen selected and specially appointed as champions, by a convention of MINISTERS, represented as the largest assembly of that kind ever convened in Louisville. We cheerfully commit the discussion to the judgment of the people. "In their opinions they are seldom wrong, in their sentiments they are never mistaken." The Saviour appealed from the judgment of the doctors of divinity, the scribes and other members of the hierarchy, to the people and we have followed his example.

Reader, we pray you diligently to consider these questions: Is King James's version the Word of God in all its *6* words? Every scholar on earth, who has paid any attention to the subject, says No.

And since all scholarship, all liberal science says the English language has no version that is faithful in all respects to the inspired text, are you not in morally bound, as one who is to give an account of all your acts and words, to look into this matter, and determine for yourself, that let others do as they may, you will do all in your power to secure for earth's learning millions as faithful translations of God's Word, as can be made? The peace of your soul, reader, rests upon your response to these questions—rests upon your fidelity to God's own Word. For he does quietly permit false versions of the text of inspiration to pass into the unguarded mind of the masses of the people, as true representatives of God's words, or aids and encouragers such, perversions, apocryphal statements, interpolations into or omissions from the true text, as are universally acknowledged to disfigure the Common Version, will not be half-guidance. The path of investigation is palpable, the way is clear, and neither negligence nor misdirected action can be acceptable to God. The voice of inspiration rings in the ears of every redeemed soul, it lingers amidst even the echoes of every awakened conscience, and will sound as the trumpet of an archangel at the bar of final judgment: "In him that knoweth how to do right, and who doeth it not, it is sin." Even in the utmost degeneracy of the Jews into the very depths of secularism, no Jew ever insulted Jehovah by saying, as an excuse for bad conduct, that he did not understand what Jehovah wished him to do. Christian reader, take care how you try such an experiment upon your Maker and Redeemer.

JAMES EDMUNDS

T. S. BELL.

DISCUSSION.

NUMBER I.

THE REVISION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

THE Bible Revision Association have appointed the undersigned to prepare and submit to the public such information, as to the objects, efforts, plans, and facilities for success in the purposes of the Bible Union in making a revision of the Holy Scriptures, as shall conduce to a proper understanding of that important enterprise. We enter upon the performance of the duty with a full recognition of the responsibility entrusted to our care. The enterprise is one of the noblest elements in the progress of the age, and is commanding attention and approbation wherever the English language is spoken. And of the multitudes of great and good minds engaged in hearty co-operation in the work of a thorough revision of the Bible, we do not know of one that does not recognize this cause as a leading vitality in Christianity. How, indeed, can it be otherwise? The two most momentous questions that can engage the human mind are, first, has God spoken to mankind? If he has, what has he said? No one will controvert the fact that the second question is quite as momentous as the first. Even the mere temporal blessings of the Jews were so entirely dependent upon obedience, not to inferences, whims, fancies, or feelings, but to words of the law, that Moses commanded an extensive publication of them upon great stones covered with plaster, and he expressly enjoined: "You shall write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly." If that was essential under the Mosaic institution, can it be less so under the Christian di-

pensation? Can any Christian mind utter a negative to this question?

It is not a matter of any controversy that what is called the authorized version of the Scriptures fails to answer the conditions we have named. There is not one sect in Christendom that even pretends to think it in all respects a fair exposition of the mind of the Holy Spirit, as that mind was expressed in the original language. There is not a classical scholar anywhere, there has not been one in any age since King James prescribed orders, not only for a translation, but as to how it should be made, who has not discovered manifold faults in the version thus made to royal order. A vast multitude of translations have been made by scholars, eminent alike for learning and piety, of almost every sect recognized as orthodox. These have been great helps in the hands of Biblical readers toward retaining the authorized version, for the same reason that the mass of persons who are able to read Greek do not feel the necessity for a better version, as much as those, who, without the ability to read Greek, know that the authorized version is not a faithful translation in all respects of the ideas which the Holy Spirit expressed in Greek. The more thoroughly the investigation is made, the more thorough will be the conviction that in these matters the Bible Union has means for success, which were utterly inaccessible to the men employed by King James. Not to enter into details, at this time, it may be sufficient to say that, when King James's translation was made, not one of the Greek manuscripts, now received as authorities for the purity of the text, was known to be in existence. The first discovered one of these four manuscripts did not come to light until seventeen years after the publication of King James's version, and that version, with all its acknowledged imperfections, has been jealously locked up against any ray of light from the floods thus cast upon the voice of inspiration. There can be no good reason why such a state of things shall any longer be tolerated. There is not an apology of any

kind for the refusal of any Christian to aid in removing the acknowledged rubbish that has grown over the revealed will of Heaven to man.

In the year 1850, in the month of June, a number of pious, devout, and God-fearing scholars determined that, while others might do as they desired in view of this state of things, as for themselves, they would no longer aid in perpetuating the existence of errors against which their learning and consciences alike rebelled. They felt that it was absolutely necessary that a vigorous effort should be made for a correct version of the Holy Scriptures, and they resolved upon starting the work. To this resolve the American Bible Union owes its origin. The times seemed eminently propitious for success. At no period since the Apostolic age has there been a finer scholarship in the Greek and Hebrew languages than at this time. And for many centuries there has not been such a pure original text as the present age possesses. These two truths constituted an excellent basis for the superstructure undertaken by the Bible Union—an English text which should be a faithful reflection of the original text. That such an object may be attained few persons will deny; that it is desirable all will admit. Timid persons were frightened with the idea that the result might be a sectarian Bible, and many such characters rushed into opposition without pausing to inquire whether an evil of that character could not be successfully guarded. They readily admitted that there are errors of a grievous nature in the authorized version, which promote and feed divisions among Christians, but they seemed to think the evil irremediable.

The Bible Union has successfully grappled with this evil. There is not one element of sectarianism in its constitution, its aims, its efforts, or its work. It has called to the work of revising the Holy Scriptures forty of the best Hebrew and Greek scholars that could be found in Europe and America. If there are any better scholars than those employed by the Bible Union, no amount of honest and assiduous effort on the part of that