

**NOTES ON THE GREEK TEXT OF THE
EPISTLE OF PAUL TO PHILEMON, AS THE
BASIS OF A REVISION OF THE COMMON
ENGLISH VERSION; AND A REVISED
VERSION, WITH NOTES; PP. 3-87**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649394067

Notes on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to Philemon, as the Basis of a Revision of the common English version; And a revised version, with notes; pp. 3-87 by Various

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Cover @ 2017

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VARIOUS

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EPISTLE OF PAUL TO PHILEMON,
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WITH NOTES.

Πάντα δε δοκιμάζετε· τὸ καλὸν κρατέετε (1 Thess. 5 : 21).

NEW YORK:
AMERICAN BIBLE UNION.
LOUISVILLE: BIBLE REVISION ASSOCIATION.
LONDON: TRÜBNER & CO., No. 60 PATERNOSTER ROW.
1860.

AMERICAN BIBLE UNION, }
No. 350 BROOME STREET, NEW YORK. }

ALL the revisions, thus far published by the American Bible Union, are preliminary. They are circulated in the expectation that they will be subjected to a thorough criticism, in order that their imperfections, whatever they may be, may be disclosed, and corrected by the Final Committee. Until adopted by the Union, the views expressed are those of the respective revisers.

WM. H. WYCKOFF,
Corresponding Secretary,

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1890, by
THE AMERICAN BIBLE UNION,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.

THOMAS HOLMAN, PRINTER AND SETTERS, NEW YORK.

P R E F A C E.

OF the two principal parts which compose this publication, the second is obviously dependent on the first, though the first is complete, in a certain sense, without the second. An exposition of the text, as a mental process at least, on the part of the interpreter (though the results may not be written out), must precede a translation. The Notes, therefore, here laid before the reader, have the same interest and value as a means of understanding the text of the Epistle, as if they were unaccompanied by a revision of the Common English Version.

But the other portion of the work has also its separate claims on the attention of the Biblical student. An addition of this nature has become, within a few years, a common feature in the best exegetical works published in this country, and in

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England. The fact sets forth an important truth. It is felt more and more that critical attempts to explain the meaning of the Scriptures should, as the proper test of their definiteness and precision, terminate in an endeavor to express the sense as nearly as possible in our own language; and furthermore, that they must assume this form, in order to render such studies available in any great degree to the bulk of English readers.

The topic last suggested here deserves a word further. This matter of the history of the current translation of the Bible, and a comparison of its renderings, with those of the preceding translations,* out of which the Common Version has arisen, are opening to us a range of study, comparatively new and attractive certainly to those who enter upon it. Some of the best scholars of

* It can not have escaped notice that the various English readings have begun to form an important new material in our works of Biblical criticism. Professor Alexander of the Princeton Theological Seminary, whose recent death is a calamity to the cause of sacred learning, has enriched greatly his New Testament Commentaries by his copious illustrations of this character.

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the day are giving their attention to it. The student of English literature will reap profit as well as gratification from it. The different epochs of our language are well marked in the style of the different versions. We learn, thence, that the English race, even since the dawn of Protestantism, and during some of the most effective periods of the national development, have not been dependent upon any single translation of the Bible, but have received their knowledge of the gospel through various channels. It is no disservice to be taught that the power of Christianity resides in its doctrines and ideas, and not in any set of words or phrases which it may outgrow with the advance of Biblical science, and the mutations of language, and must then, or should, discard for other forms. It is seen from such recurrence to the past, to be the wisdom of the church, to which have been committed the Oracles of God, to open promptly every source of religious knowledge to the many as well as the few. The names of Wiclif, Tyndale, Frith, Coverdale, are witnesses how slowly this truth has made its way in the world, in regard to the use and treatment of translations of the Sacred word into

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the vernacular tongue of a people. The history of the English Bible has been, from first to last, a singular history of conflicts between an excessive conservatism on the one hand, and the promptings of a more expansive religious spirit on the other, and a history, at the same time, of victories on the side of truth and progress. It is well that the public mind is turning itself back to inquiries which are so interesting and adapted to reassert and enforce principles of vital importance.

There is much misapprehension still, I imagine, respecting the precise nature of the enterprise, in the interest of which this volume has been prepared. The object is not to supersede, but revise the current Version of the English Scriptures. A new translation of the original text, and a revision of the translation of that text, are very different things; and yet, different as they are, are confounded by many persons who would not be unfriendly to what is attempted, if they would keep in mind this important distinction. It is not proposed to discard the present Version; to cast away its manifold advantages; to introduce rash and doubtful innovations; to substitute a cumbrous

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Latinized style for the simple, nervous, idiomatic English, which brings the familiar Version so home to the hearts of the people; but simply to do upon the work of our translators what they did upon that of their predecessors; to survey it afresh in the light of the knowledge which has been gained during the more than two centuries since they passed away; to make such changes, and such only, as the general verdict of the best scholarship of the age has pronounced to be due to truth and fidelity; to make these changes in a style of delicate harmony with the present language of the English Bible; to confirm its accuracy, where it is correct, against false or unsupported interpretations, as well as to amend it where it is confessedly incorrect; and thus, in a word, carry forward from our position, if we might, the labors of the revisers (for such they were) of James' age, as they carried forward the labors of the generations before them.

On some other occasion I may have an opportunity to speak of the Greek text on which the revision is founded, and some other kindred topics. I have endeavored to unfold the contents of the Epistle with candor and impartiality, and would