

**SOME LESSONS OF THE
REVISED VERSION OF
THE NEW TESTAMENT**

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Some lessons of the revised version of the New Testament by Brooke Foss Westcott

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*Some Lessons of the Revised Version
of the New Testament*

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the Revised Version
of the New Testament*

By the Right Rev.

Brooke Foss Westcott, D.D., D.C.I.

Lord Bishop of Durham

LONDON

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PREFACE

THE greater part of the contents of this volume appeared in the *Expositor* for 1887. Hitherto the pressure of other work has hindered me from complying with the request to publish the papers in a collected form. But a space of enforced leisure in the summer of 1895 enabled me to revise and supplement them by much new matter ; and I issue them now in the hope that they may contribute to a fuller understanding of the aim and character of the Revised Version of the New Testament, and lead English readers to the systematic study of it. I have found the illustrations which are given helpful in guiding large and small classes to independent and interesting inquiries.

The revisers have no reason to complain of the reception which their labours have found. It does not appear that the 'Authorised' Version made more rapid progress in public favour in the sixteen years after its publication ; and, as far as I can judge, the Revised Version is more commonly used by preachers now than the 'Authorised' Version was after the same period of trial.

Whatever may be the ground for the statement on the title-page of the revised version of 1611, that it was 'appointed to be read in churches,' there is no evidence whatever that the authorisation was more than permissive. The circumstances under which both the Genevan and the Bishops' Bible continued to be used are decisive against an exclusive authorisation.¹ The 'Authorised' Version

¹ The evidence is given in some detail by the present Bishop of Winchester in an article in *Macmillan's Magazine* for October 1881, pp. 436 ff.

slowly won its way to universal use by its merits in competition with earlier English Bibles.

These facts have a bearing on a question which is not unfrequently proposed at the present time : Is it lawful to read the Revised Version in churches ? I can only answer, looking at the history of the ' Authorised ' Version, that I am not aware of any law, ecclesiastical or civil, which forbids the practice. No doubt long custom must be dealt with very reverently : the utmost consideration must be shown to the feelings of congregations. But if the use of the Revised Version is welcomed by a congregation, I do not think that a bishop has any power, even if he had the will, to prohibit it. For a long time, however strange it may seem, the Great Bible, the Genevan Bible, the Bishops' Bible, and the ' Authorised ' Bible were used concurrently, and at last the ' fittest ' prevailed.

We may, I believe, still trust to the action of the same law.¹

B. F. DUNELM.

AUCKLAND CASTLE,
Feb. 5th, 1897.

¹ As illustrations of the liberty which was allowed, I may quote an edition of the Genevan Bible, with the Prayer-Book of 1608 ('by the Deputies of Christopher Barker'), in which the Epistles and Gospels, as determined by the opening words, are taken from the Genevan Version, while the Psalms are printed at length from 'that translation which is commonly used in the Church' (*i.e.* the Great Bible). A Prayer-Book with the same Epistles and Gospels (*i.e.* taken from the Genevan Version), and the Psalter with the same heading, was printed 'by Robert Barker and the assigns of John Bill' in 1633. The copy before me is bound up with an edition of the Authorised Version, published by the same printers in 1634.