

**ON A FRESH REVISION
OF THE ENGLISH NEW
TESTAMENT**

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On a fresh revision of the English New Testament by J. B. Lightfoot

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OF THE
ENGLISH NEW TESTAMENT

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AND
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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

DURING the last summer, immediately before the Company appointed for the Revision of the English New Testament held its first sitting, I was invited to read a paper on the subject before a Clerical meeting. Finding that I had already written more than I could venture to read even to a very patient and considerate audience, and receiving a request from my hearers at the conclusion that the paper should be printed, I determined to revise the whole and make additions to it before publication. The result is the present volume. Owing to various interruptions its appearance has been delayed much longer than I had anticipated.

This statement of facts was perhaps needed to justify the appearance of a book, which as occupying well-known ground cannot urge the plea of novelty, which has many imperfections in form, and which

makes no pretensions to completeness. At all events it appeared necessary to be thus explicit, in order to show that I alone am responsible for any expressions of opinion contained in this volume, and that they do not (except accidentally) represent the views of the Company of which I am a member. In preparing the original paper for the press, I have been careful not to go beyond verbal alterations, where I was discussing the prospects of the new Revision or the principles which in my opinion ought to guide it. On the other hand, I have not scrupled to developpe these principles freely, and to add fresh illustrations from time to time: but in most cases this has been done without any knowledge of the opinion of the majority of the Company; and in the comparatively few instances where this opinion has become known to me, I have expressed my own individual judgment, which might or might not accord therewith.

I ought to add also that I am quite prepared to find on consultation with others, that some of the suggestions offered here are open to objections which I had overlooked, and which might render them impracticable in a Version intended for popular use, whatever value they may have from a scholar's point of view.

The hopeful anticipations, which I had ventured to express before the commencement of the work, have been more than realized hitherto in its progress. On this point I have not heard a dissentient voice among members of the Company. I believe that all

who have taken part regularly in the work will thankfully acknowledge the earnestness, moderation, truthfulness, and reverence, which have marked the deliberations of the Company, and which seem to justify the most sanguine auguries.

This feeling contrasts strangely with the outcry which has been raised against the work by those who have had no opportunity of witnessing its actual progress, who have been disturbed by rumours of its results either wholly false or only partially true, and who necessarily judging on *a priori* grounds have been ready to condemn it unheard. This panic was perhaps not unnatural, and might have been anticipated. Meanwhile however other dangers from an unforeseen quarter have threatened the progress of the Revision; but these are now happily averted. And, so far as present appearances can be trusted, the momentary peril has resulted in permanent good; for the Company has been taught by the danger which threatened it to feel its own strength and coherence; and there is every prospect that the work will be brought happily and successfully to a conclusion.

Great misunderstanding seems to prevail as to the ultimate reception of the work. The alarm which has been expressed in some quarters can only be explained by a vague confusion of thought, as though the Houses of Convocation, while solemnly pledged to the furtherance of the work on definite conditions, were also pledged to its ultimate recep-

tion whether good or bad. If the distinction had been kept in view, it is difficult to believe that there would have been even a momentary desire to repudiate the obligations of a definite contract. The Houses of Convocation are as free, as the different bodies of Nonconformists represented in the Companies, to reject the Revised Version, when it appears, if it is not satisfactory. I do not suppose that any member of either Company would think of claiming any other consideration for the work, when completed, than that it shall be judged by its intrinsic merits; but on the other hand they have a right to demand that it shall be laid before the Church and the people of England in its integrity, and that a verdict shall be pronounced upon it as a whole.

I cannot close these remarks without expressing my deep thankfulness that I have been allowed to take part in this work of Revision. I have spent many happy and profitable hours over it, and made many friends who otherwise would probably have remained unknown to me. Even though the work should be terminated abruptly to-morrow, I for one should not consider it lost labour.

In choosing my examples I have generally avoided dwelling on passages which have been fully discussed by others; but it was not possible to put the case fairly before the public without venturing from time to time on preoccupied ground, though in such instances I have endeavoured to tread as lightly as possible.

The discussion in the Appendix perhaps needs some apology. Though it has apparently no very direct bearing on the main subject of the volume, yet the investigation was undertaken in the first instance with a view to my work as a reviser; and hoping that the results might contribute towards permanently fixing the meaning of an expression, which occurs in the most familiar and most sacred of all forms of words, and which nevertheless has been and still is variously interpreted, I gladly seized this opportunity of placing them on record.

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
April 3, 1871.

THIS second edition is in all essential respects a reprint of the first. A few errors have been corrected, and one or two unimportant additions made, but the new matter altogether would not occupy more than a page.

The reception accorded to this book has taken me by surprise, and the early call for a new edition would have prevented me from making any great changes, even if I had felt any desire to do so. To my critics, whether public or private, I can only return my very sincere thanks for their generous welcome of a work of whose imperfections the author himself must be only too conscious.

From this expression of gratitude I see no reason to

except the critique of Mr Earle in a letter addressed to the editor of the *Guardian*; but I am sure that he will pardon me if, while thankfully acknowledging the friendly tone of his letter, I venture entirely to dissent from a principle of translation to which he has lent the authority of his name.

In fact he has attacked the very position in my work, which I confidently held, and still hold, to be impregnable. I had laid it down as a rule (subject of course to special exceptions) that, where the same word occurs in the same context in the original, it should be rendered by the same equivalent in the Version (p. 33 sq.); or, as Mr Earle expresses it, that 'a verbal repetition in English should be employed to represent a verbal repetition in the Greek.' Mr Earle (I will employ his own words) would reverse this, and say that in many of my details he would practically come to my conclusion, but that the principle itself, with all the speciousness of its appearance, is essentially unsound. This position he endeavours to establish by arguments, which I feel bound to meet, for I consider the principle which he assails to be essential to a thoroughly good translation.

If, notwithstanding our opposite points of view, we had arrived at the same results, or, in other words, if Mr Earle's exceptions to his principle of variety were coextensive or nearly coextensive with my own applications of my principle of uniformity, I should have felt any discussion of his views to be superfluous; for then, so far as regards any practical issues, the difference between us would have been reduced to a mere battle of words. But when I find that Mr Earle defends such a rendering as Matt. xviii. 33, 'Shouldest not thou also have had *compassion* (ἐλεῆσαι) on thy fellow-servant, even as I had *pity* (ἠλέησα) on thee?', I feel that the difference between us is irreconcilable. Indeed I had vainly thought that my illustrations (with one or two doubtful exceptions) would carry conviction in themselves; and I confess myself