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Samson

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G. W. SAMSON

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HISTORIC TEXT OF ALL AGES AND CHURCHES

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G. W. SAMSON

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NOW OF BIBLE WORKERS' COLLEGE, NEW YORK

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OCCASION AND PROMISE OF THIS REVIEW.

THE British revisers of the English Scriptures, and their publishers, have shown a natural interest in the reception given to their work on the New Testament by the American public. The same royal patronage of James I. promoted Bible revision and fostered settlements of his Bible-loving subjects in American Colonies; and nearly three centuries have witnessed the success of both these noble endeavors. A century ago, March 22, 1775, in the British Parliament, Edmund Burke maintained the political loyalty and religious integrity of the colonists, then 3,000,000 in number, by this statement: "I have been told by an eminent book-seller, that in no branch of his business, after tracts of popular devotion, were so many books as those on law exported to the plantations. The colonists have now fallen into the way of printing them for themselves. I hear that they have sold nearly as many of Blackstone's Commentaries

(issued six years earlier) in America as in England." A century of independent growth since Mr. Burke thus spoke, with a population of intelligent readers of every nationality, who compare notes as they study both law-books and Bible translations, has but intensified the truth thus early apparent to the great British statesman.

As to the version itself criticism has been specially impartial and appreciative. As was natural, eminent American scholars and publishers have met native demands for editions in which the suggestions of the American revisers have been made to appear in the text; but in this no rivalry has been intended. Criticism of the *translation* has been ready and spontaneous. A deeper study, that of the *text* translated, has been delayed only that it might be intelligent. When the sheets of this review were ready for the printer the exceptions taken to the altered text by the Bishop of St. Andrews were made public. As its last pages are coming from the stereotyper the article in the *London Quarterly* for October, 1881, has met the writer's eye. The text of the revisers, published by Westcott and Hort, may seem to be severely criticised; but certainly there has been occasion for review.

Certainly, too, a lesson is to be learned from Christ's apostles as to the purport of His maxim:

“Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” The oft-rebuked Peter commends sincerely the misinterpreted epistles of his “beloved Brother Paul”; and declares them as authoritative as the Old Testament Scriptures. Earnest Jude writes to his fellow-disciples: “Ye should contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints”; while, on the other hand, gentle John, in his last epistle, enjoins as to his juniors in age and his uninspired fellow-laborers in a field remote from his: “We ought to receive such that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.” The differing views of Christian scholars and workers are needed to furnish both sides of counterpoising convictions essential in the quest for truth. The practical wisdom of the Bishop of St. Andrews, in his responsible charge, was designed to offset the speculative judgment of the scholar Tregelles formed in his cloistered study. The review not only has an *occasion*, but also a *promise*.

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