

**THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET
HOSEA, LITERALLY TRANSLATED,
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY BY
THE REV. F. TILNEY BASSETT**

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AND

NOTES CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY.

BY THE

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PREFACE.

IN giving publicity to the following translation of the Prophet Hosea, it may be well to state that the precise object the writer has in view, is to convey to the English reader the native cast and character which these prophecies present in their Hebrew protoplast; and thus to furnish, as nearly as possible, in our own tongue a facsimile of the original. To attain this end—

1. The most exact and literal rendering of the Hebrew text has been adhered to, and in a few places only has the necessity of the case introduced an exception to this rule.

2. The same word in English has been employed to reproduce the same word in the original, with the exception of some prepositions and conjunctions, and in a few other instances, where the idioms of the two languages, or other special reasons, have rendered a slight variation necessary.

3. The position of the words in the original has been preserved, it is hoped without incurring the charge of obscurity. In most versions this order of the Hebrew arrangement has been almost wantonly disregarded, so that not only has the nervous expression of thought, and the point of a striking

antithesis, been frequently weakened and lost, but the proper emphasis also, so necessary to the intelligent comprehension of Holy Scripture, been rendered uncertain, and sometimes even transferred to the wrong word. This rule also, it may be added, has been violated on but a few occasions. .

4. In arranging the parallelisms and the punctuation generally, the accents which from time immemorial have been affixed to the Hebrew text, have been followed as a guide. It is to be regretted that our own punctuation supplies so few facilities for representing the complex but perfect system of Hebrew accentuation. At the utmost we can only reproduce, and even that but imperfectly, the larger and more important members of this body-guard of the sacred text, which have been compared to emperors, kings, and lords in the dominion of Hebrew literature, but those that are more feeble, but perhaps not less necessary for the exact disposition and arrangement of words in a sentence, must be lost to us, or only supplied in thought. We may listen to the word of command uttered by the leaders to their battalions, but the directions of the subalterns and sergeants to their respective companies and quaternions fail to reach our ear; to say nothing of the conjunctive accents, whose office is not to separate or disjoin, but to link and group together words in a clause—" stops to tell you to go on," as they have been facetiously defined. These minute companions of the text have

been duly consulted, and the hints they convey not been disregarded.

Those who have studied the translations of our prophet, ancient and modern, English and Continental, will see how far the present effort has been aided by those which have gone before, and how far a servile following of authorities has been avoided. Some critics have proposed emendations of the text where the language appears to be difficult or hopelessly obscure ; these are really only so many confessions of ignorance of the meaning of the prophet, as he has been handed down to us, or exhibitions of their own ingenuity. Such liberties with God's Holy Word I emphatically repudiate. Scripture is not an enigma for theologians or critics to sit round like a party of children at a puzzle or a labyrinth, to guess at solutions or to escape by force or fraud from difficulties. Our duty is not to distort the text which Providence has preserved to us, to make it square with theories that have their birth in individual minds, and which therefore can have no weight with others who are qualified to think for themselves, or to pass off private hypotheses as ascertained truth, to impose upon the multitude, but to translate the text fairly, as it stands, and where we cannot unravel the tangled skein by the proper laws of language, to confess the difficulty, and not rudely to pull the ark to pieces and patch it up again with man's devices, in a vain endeavour to disclose and explain its mysteries. At the same time, when MSS.

vary, when ancient versions, such as the Septuagint, Syriac, and Latin Vulgate, or the relics of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, &c., are unanimous in their testimony, or a majority of them point to a particular reading, such evidence should command, to say the least, the respect and consideration of every translator.

In the notes brevity has been studied. In all difficult and disputed passages the renderings of the versions above mentioned, together with those of the Targum, have been appended to the note, by which it will generally appear—a matter of consolation if not of information to ourselves—that the texts which present difficulties to us now wore the same features in days of old, and as doctors disagree now, so they did then; but the long lists of modern authorities, so common in works of this kind, have been purposely omitted, except when strictly necessary. Their assistance has, it is needless to say, been fully felt and appreciated, but there is neither pleasure nor profit to the ordinary reader to find every page encumbered with an ever-recurring pedigree of critics. It is sufficient to say that they have been for the most part consulted, their opinions severally weighed, compared, accepted, or discarded.

It may be well, for the sake of the general reader, to take a brief glance at the origin and history of the ancient versions and authorities referred to in the notes. The first and most important is, beyond all question,

the version of the Septuagint. Various are the accounts given of the first formation of this translation. Tradition and fable have been busy in spinning their cobwebs, to conceal the early history of this effort to clothe the Word of God in a foreign garb. Some points, however, are clear and incontrovertible; that it was commenced in the early part of the second century B.C., (about 280;) that it was the work of Jews, and that the task was performed at Alexandria, and probably at the request of Ptolemy, the king of Egypt; that it received its name either from being the work of seventy-two interpreters, as an old writer on the subject tells us, or because it was approved of by the Sanhedrin. This version was received by the Jews with great favour, and was of general use with "the dispersed among the Gentiles," from whom it passed to the early Christian Church, and was received by them as the "authorized version of the Old Testament Scriptures."

During the second century of the Christian era other Greek versions of the Old Testament were made. Aquila, who was a Jew, or a proselyte to Judaism, undertook the task of translation, chiefly with a view to assist the Jews in their controversy with Christians, who pressed them closely with arguments derived from the Septuagint version. That translation, as we have seen, had been held by the Jews in the highest veneration till the Church employed its testimony polemically against the synagogue, when their love