

**ON THE AUTHORIZED VERSION
OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, IN
CONNEXION WITH SOME
RECENT
PROPOSALS FOR ITS REVISION**

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On the Authorized Version of the New Testament, in Connexion with Some Recent Proposals
for Its Revision by Richard Chenevix Trench

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BY
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ON THE
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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

IT is clear that the question, Are we, or are we not, to have a new translation of Scripture? or rather,—since few would propose this, who did not wish to lift anchor and loosen from its moorings the whole religious life of the English people,—Shall we, or shall we not, have a new revision of the Authorized Version? is one which is presenting itself more and more familiarly to the minds of men. This, indeed, is not by any means the first time that this question has been earnestly discussed; but that which distinguishes the present agitation of the matter from preceding ones is, that on all former occasions the subject was only debated among scholars and divines, and awoke no interest in circles beyond them. The present is apparently the first occasion on which it has taken serious hold of the popular mind. But now indications

of the interest which it is awakening reach us from every side. America is sending us the instalments—it must be owned not very encouraging ones—of a New Version, as fast as she can.¹ The wish for a revision has for a considerable time been working among Dissenters here; by the voice of one of these it has lately made itself heard in Parliament, and by the mouth of a Margaret Professor of Divinity in Convocation. Our Reviews, and not those only which are specially dedicated to religious subjects, begin to deal with the question of revision. There are, or a little while since there were, frequent letters in the newspapers, either urging such a step, or remonstrating against it;—few of them, it is true, of much value or weight; yet at the same time showing how many minds are now occupied with the subject.

¹ With more haste, it is to be feared, than good speed. It is certainly not very encouraging, in respect of the equipment of those who undertake the work, when in the American Bible Union's version of the Epistle to the Hebrews, published with an enormous apparatus of what present themselves as learned notes, we fall, in the fifth page, upon this note [on i. 9, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity"] : "ἠγάπησας . . . καὶ ἐμίσησας. These *participles* are usually rendered by verbs." The translator congratulates himself that the *errata* are few. Running over a few of the notes I detected these : ἐστρεφάσθωσας, p. 9 ; ὁμοίωσεν, p. 21 ; βοήθειαν, do. ; ποικίλεις, pp. 14, 53 ; φωτισθέντες, p. 55 ; καταπόθησαν, p. 64 ; σπουδάσομεν (Heb. iv. 11), p. 19 ; πλανομένους, p. 21 ; σωτηρίας, p. 27 ; ἀντιλογίας, p. 32 ; ἀκούμενοι, p. 73 ; διαθήκεν, p. 46 ; μεμαρτύρηται, p. 58 ; ἐρμενεύμενος, p. 30 ; εὐλόγηκε, p. 31 ; κατέταυσε, p. 19 ; κατάσχομεν, p. 15 ;—all these, except perhaps one or two, testifying for themselves that they are not mere printer's *errata*; such I have omitted. The Ephesians yields a similar harvest : ἄσ χαιρῶν, χαιροῦ, p. 4 ; ἐκληρόθεμεν, ib. ; εὐαγγελίζω, p. 5 ; ἐνεργία, p. 6 ; μυστηρίου, p. 3 ; Ἐπιφάνιας, p. 4 ; συνεζωοποίησε, p. 7 ; ἐζωοποίησε, bis, p. 8 ; πρεσβύμασεν, p. 9 ; πορόσ, p. 19 ; ἐνέργησε, p. 6.

It is manifestly a question of such immense importance, the issues depending on a right solution of it are so vast and solemn, that it may well claim a temperate and wise discussion. Nothing is gained, on the one hand, by vague and general charges of inaccuracy brought against our Version; they require to be supported by detailed proofs. Nothing, on the other hand, is gained by charges and insinuations against those who urge a revision, as though they desired to undermine the foundations of the religious life and faith of England; were Socinians in disguise, or Papists—Socinians who hoped that, in another translation, the witness to the divinity of the Son and of the Spirit might prove less clear than in the present—Papists who desired that the authority of the English Scripture, the only Scripture accessible to the great body of the people, might be so shaken and rendered so doubtful, that men would be driven to their Church, and to its authority, as the only authority that remained. As little is the matter profited, or in any way brought nearer to a settlement, by sentimental appeals to the fact that this, which it is now proposed to alter, has been the Scripture of our childhood, in which we and so many generations before us first received the tidings of everlasting life. All this, well as it may deserve to be considered, yet, as argument at all deciding the question, will sooner or later have to be cleared away; and the facts of the case, apart from cries, and insinuations, and suggestions of evil motives, and appeals to the religious passions and prejudices of the day, apart, too, from feelings which in themselves demand the highest respect, will have to be dealt with in that spirit of seriousness and earnestness which a question affecting so profoundly the whole moral and spiritual life of the English people, not to speak of nations which are yet unborn, abundantly deserves.

It is no main and leading purpose in the pages which follow, either to advocate a revision, or to dissuade one; but rather I have proposed to myself to consider the actual worth of our present Translation; its strength, and also any weaknesses which may affect that strength; its beauty, and also the blemishes which impair that beauty in part; the grounds on which a new revision of it may be demanded; the inconveniences, difficulties, the dangers it may be, which would attend such a revision; some of the rules and principles according to which it would need, if undertaken at all, to be carried out; and thus, so far as this lies in my power, to assist others, who may not have been able to give special attention to this subject, to form a decision for themselves. I will not, in so doing, pretend that my own mind is entirely in equilibrium on the subject. On the whole, I am persuaded that a revision ought to come; I am convinced that it will come. Not, however, let us trust, as yet; for we are not as yet in any respect prepared for it; the Greek (I mean that special Hellenistic Greek here required), this, and the English no less, which would be needful to bring this work to a successful end, might, it is to be feared, be wanting alike. There is much of crude and immature in nearly all the contributions which have been, and for some time yet will be made, to this object. Nor, certainly, do I underrate the other difficulties which would beset such an enterprise; they look, some of them, the more serious to me the more I contemplate them. Still, believing that this mountain of difficulty will have to be surmounted, I can only trust and confidently hope that it, like so many other mountains, will not on nearer approach prove so formidable as at a distance it appears. Only let the Church, when the due time shall arrive, address herself to this work with earnest prayer for the Divine guidance, her conscience bear-