

**A PLEA FOR THE RECEIVED GREEK
TEXT: AND FOR THE AUTHORISED
VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, IN
ANSWER TO SOME OF THE DEAN OF
CANTERBURY'S CRITICISMS ON BOTH**

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A Plea for the Received Greek Text: And for the Authorised Version of the New Testament, in Answer to Some of the Dean of Canterbury's Criticisms on Both by S. C. Malan

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Henry Wilford's New Testament

©
A Plea

FOR

THE RECEIVED GREEK TEXT

AND FOR

THE AUTHORISED VERSION

OF

The New Testament,

IN ANSWER TO

SOME OF THE DEAN OF CANTERBURY'S CRITICISMS ON BOTH.

BY
Solomon Caesar
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PREFACE.

To hear some people talk, one really would think wisdom and knowledge had come with them into the world; until, whether from conceit on their part or from their "scientific" discoveries, we shall soon have nothing left either of the old world or of our old faith. Once, indeed, even heathens, ἐκ Διὸς εὔχοντο, claimed their descent from Heaven—for, said they, τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν, we are his kin; though Christians now derive it from brutes; while language, which of old was, in theory, said to be *πρῆφορικὸς λόγος*, 'outspoken reason,' in token of its divine origin, is now discovered practically to be nothing but the development of the two mighty roots BAU-WAU, which in time overspread the earth. Such profound lore cannot, of course, be gainsaid; but everything, from the creation of the world and of man, to the laws of etymology and the rules of syntax, is now settled accordingly.

No wonder, then, if, under such circumstances, both the Received Greek Text and the Authorised English Version of the New Testament—monuments of learning of the past—should lately have had a hard life of it. The Greek Text especially; because, being read by comparatively few, any one who takes into his head “to construct” a text, may try his hand at it with a certain degree of impunity; so that, as things are at present, we have almost as many texts as there are critics; to the great hindrance and confusion of us all. Perhaps is it that “to construct a text,” after the manner of some men, is on the whole easier than to study and explain the one already existing, which, for the last two or three hundred years, has been ἐφόδιον ἐν παντὶ χρόνῳ τῆς ζωῆς,¹ the provision by the way and trusty guide of thousands on their life-long journey to heaven.

The handling of the Authorised Version, however, is not so readily done as “the construction” of a Greek text. Written as the English Bible is, in a style especially chaste and vigorous, that blends Saxon manliness with cadence and melody,

¹ S. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catech. v.

in greater harmony, perhaps, than any other English book written before or since—it first formed the language of the nation, and then struck root so deep in the affections of those who love truth and know the sterling worth of their mother-tongue, that alterations in it, by whomsoever made, will not so soon be borne.

Not that it is perfect. It only is the best of modern versions and inferior to none of the old ones; so that the few blemishes it has, no more hurt its worth and usefulness, than do the spots on the sun the heat and light thereof; they trouble no one but those who make them an excuse for a change. Yet, let those few blemishes remain rather than accept the ready services of eager Revisers, who, under the pretext of new discoveries—which, after all, amount to very, very little of any real utility—fain would, if they could, introduce a new Bible of their own; that by so doing they might cut asunder one of the few remaining links of fellowship between men of the same nation, who yet are estranged one from another on all points but that of using the same Bible, and thus occasionally listening together to the same words.

It is, no doubt, easy to talk of revising the Authorised Version. But, besides that in this case, as in most others, it is best to let well alone, the simple truth is that there are not now in England enough men able either to revise the English Bible without making mere patchwork of it, or to translate afresh and equally well from the originals. Revisers or translators, first, need be masters of Hebrew. But where are now-a-days in England the Hebrew scholars of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries? Their works then written in Latin enlightened Europe, took the lead in European scholarship, and still are the treasure-house of knowledge to which all must come. But who would dream of looking here for aught of the kind, now that silks, lace, and embroidery, begin to take the place of Greek and Hebrew; and that even the veteran scholar who represents Hyde, Pococke, and Lowth, is reduced to write in Roman characters the Hebrew of his learned Commentary, lest haply the sight of "strange alphabets," as the "Literary Churchman" calls anything but Latin and Greek, should offend the eyes of his readers?

Next, Revisers of the English Bible should be imbued with solid Biblical lore; with a few of the marvellous attainments in learning of some of their ancestors, in days, "when," to quote even the "Saturday Review," "England had scholars." Whereas, are not Biblical criticism and scholarship, confessedly at the lowest ebb at present, in this country, and, so far as they go, not much else than German teaching at second hand? Only compare what now passes for learning and scholarship—the Bible story-book about Abraham, king of Damascus, inventor of monotheism, being tempted of the Devil to offer up his son in sacrifice, &c., prepared by one Dean for the special use of the Clergy, with the kindred works of Selden, Spencer, and Stillingfleet, Marsham, Lardner, and Warburton; or the mighty labours of Walton, Castell, Lightfoot, Mill, and others, on the Old and New Testaments, with the aimless criticisms on the same subject and borrowed learning of another Dean; and then say whether, with all the boasting of to-day, the scholarship of yore was not more true, though with smaller means; the research deeper and more honest, though with fewer resources;