

**HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE
WORK OF THE AMERICAN
COMMITTEE OF REVISION OF THE
AUTHORIZED ENGLISH VERSION
OF THE BIBLE**

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Historical account of the work of the American committee of revision of the Authorized English version of the Bible by Various

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VARIOUS

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OF THE
WORK OF THE
AMERICAN COMMITTEE OF REVISION

OF THE
Authorized English Version of the Bible,

PREPARED FROM THE DOCUMENTS
AND CORRESPONDENCE OF THE COMMITTEE.

NEW YORK:
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS.
1885.

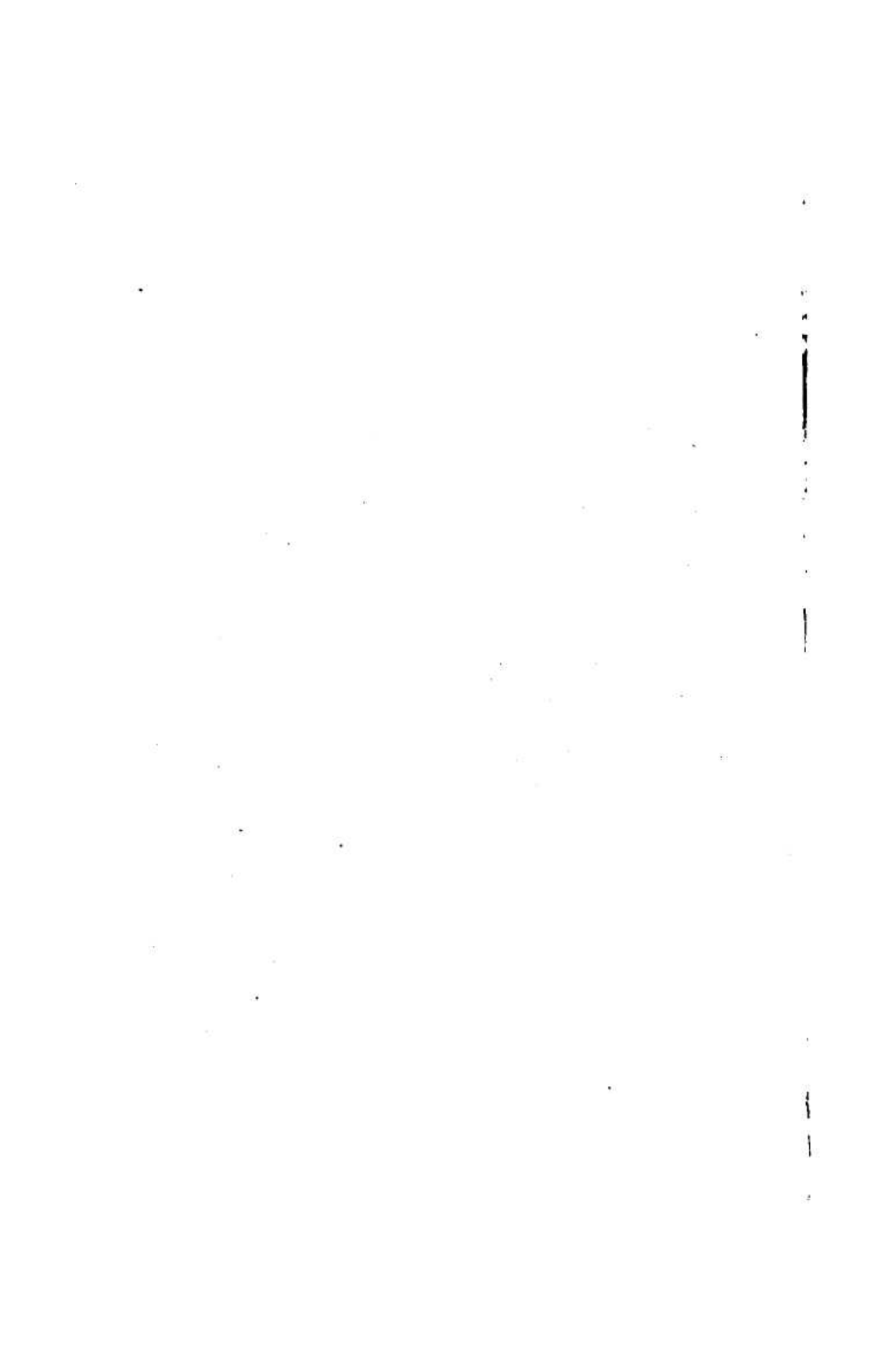


PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following Historical Account of the Anglo-American Revision of the English Version of the Bible, so far as it relates to the work of the American Committee, is based upon the documents and correspondence in their possession, and is, accordingly, of the nature of a Documentary History. These documents and papers were arranged with great care by the President, Rev. Philip Schaff, D.D., and presented by him to the Committee at their meeting in May, 1884; whereupon it was voted that an Historical Account should be prepared under the direction of a special committee of three appointed for the purpose. At a subsequent meeting of the Committee of Revision, held at the Bible House, New York, on the 28th of November, 1884, the History which is contained in this volume was read, and the following vote was unanimously passed :

“That the Documentary History of the Revision which has now been presented be adopted and printed, and that a copy of the same be sent to each subscriber to the Memorial Edition of the Revised Version of the Old Testament.”

May 21, 1885.



HISTORICAL ACCOUNT
OF THE WORK
OF THE
AMERICAN COMMITTEE OF REVISION.

THE American Committee of Bible Revision, as they close the labors in which they have been engaged for more than twelve years, desire to present to those who have co-operated with them by providing for the necessary expenses of their undertaking, a brief historical account of the origin and progress of the work. Such an account demands for its completeness a statement respecting the organization of the English Committee, and the purpose which the Convocation of Canterbury had in view in calling it into being and committing to it its appointed task. The American body, as is well known, was invited to act by the Committee which had already been constituted in England. It was thus summoned to participate in a work, the aim and principles of which were determined before it began to exist, and no proper understanding of its own history can be reached, except as the history of what had taken place on the other side of the Atlantic is made known.

For this reason the Committee avail themselves of an "Authoritative Exposition of the History and Purpose of Revision," which appeared in the *London Times* (weekly edition), May 20, 1881, and was understood to have been written by a late prominent member of the New Testament Company,—believing that it will give the clearest and briefest presentation of what is introductory to the narrative of their own work, while, at the same time, it will describe the method of working in America as well as in England. This Exposition is in the following words :

"On a December day, 346 years ago, the members of the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury were engaged on the same subject which will this day come before that ancient body

—the faithful rendering of the Holy Scriptures into the vulgar tongue. They then unanimously agreed that the King should vouchsafe to decree that the Scriptures should be translated "by some honest and learned men to be nominated by the King, and to be delivered to the people according to their learning." As we know, no immediate results followed this very laudable resolution. The King, however, two years afterwards, made a proclamation in which, while he stontly forbade the public reading of the Scriptures in English, he did, nevertheless, graciously allow "such as can and will read in the English tongue" to do so "quietly and reverently," and "by themselves secretly, at all times and places convenient for their own instruction." The Archbishop, too, appears to have done his best. Cranmer is said to have sent portions of Tyndale's Testament to several bishops to be reviewed and considered, and it is said that all returned their revisions. But there the matter ended. The subject, indeed, was revived in 1542, but in a reactionary spirit, and in the sequel with an equally unproductive result.

The Convocation of Canterbury of our own day have, however, been more fortunate. They have not only suggested that a faithful rendering of the Scriptures should be undertaken, but, by means of members of their own body and co-optated scholars and divines, they have completed one portion of the work, and to-day will publicly receive it. The Revised Version of the New Testament will be presented this morning to both Houses of Convocation.

Before we make any comments on the work itself we may, perhaps not unprofitably, give our readers some general account of the origin of this really great undertaking, and briefly specify the manner in which the work has been done. Our columns for the last eleven years have contained short notices of the meetings that have been held by the Companies, and of the silent progress of the work. We may now give the history of that progress, and also mention the various circumstances connected with the early history of that portion of the work that has now been completed.

To find the true origin of this undertaking we must look back about twenty-five years. The year 1856 was marked by several distinct movements in favor of a revision of the Authorised Version, and by one particularly, on which, as a sort of first step in the now completed work, it may be desirable to speak a little in detail. The subject was alluded to both in Convocation and in

Parliament. On February 1, 1856, the late Canon Selwyn, who had long been deeply interested in the subject, gave notice in the Southern Convocation of a resolution in which Convocation was to pray the Sovereign to appoint a Royal Commission for receiving and suggesting amendments in the Authorised Version of the Bible. The same course was recommended in Parliament by Mr. Heywood, one of the members for North Lancashire; but in both cases the result was the same. Neither the clerical nor the lay mind was prepared for such a leap in the dark as the appointment of a commission to modify the venerable version that has so long maintained its supremacy. Sir George Grey more blandly, and Archdeacon Denison more trenchantly, disposed of the Royal Commission, and, as far as any public action went, no steps were taken, though there were few probably, either in Convocation or Parliament, who did not feel that the subject could not long be postponed.

Private effort, however, was much more successful. The Rev. Ernest Hawkins, then secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, was so deeply impressed with the importance of making some organized effort that he determined to try and gather together a small body of scholars that should undertake the revision of a portion of the New Testament, and that should show by actual results not only that the work needed to be done, but that it could be done, and that, too, on safe and conservative principles. After many efforts he succeeded in gaining the support and co-operation of a few scholars who were known, either by their works or by general reputation, to be interested in the study of the New Testament. He drew together, in the summer of 1856, the Rev. Henry Alford, afterwards Dean of Canterbury; Rev. John Barrow, D.D., Principal of St. Edmund Hall; Rev. C. J. Ellicott, now Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol; Rev. W. H. G. Humphry, Vicar of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields; and Rev. G. Moberly, D.C.L., then Head-Master of Winchester College and now Bishop of Salisbury. These five scholars agreed to make an attempt by the revision of the Authorised Version of St. John's Gospel. They began their work in the autumn, meeting regularly at the vicarage of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, with their gentle taskmaster, Ernest Hawkins, acting frequently as their secretary, and they concluded the first portion of their revision in the course of the ensuing year. The Preface—a composition that will still bear attentive perusal—was written by Dr. Moberly; the press