

A N
HISTORICAL VIEW
OF THE
ENGLISH BIBLICAL TRANSLATIONS:
THE
EXPEDIENCY OF REVISING BY AUTHORITY
OUR
PRESENT TRANSLATION:
AND THE
MEANS OF EXECUTING SUCH A REVISION.

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P R E F A C E.

IT is an enquiry of much importance, whether the state of our English bible demands a revifal under the higheft sanction and authority. The following work, or rather compilation, is defigned to exhibit a comprehensive view of this queftion; that attention to it may be raifed in fome, and revived in others; and that every competent reader may enable himfelf to decide on it with a wellinformed judgement.

The Author's original plan extended no further than to solve every objection which has been urged against adopting such a measure, and to state the principal arguments usually alleged in support of it. But his thoughts soon led him to take an historical survey of the subject: and as Lewis's account of our several English translations, though a very useful book to consult, is too minute, and sometimes too indistinct, to invite a perusal, he conceived that it might neither be unprofitable nor displeasing to biblical scholars, if he extracted from that work a general history of the chief editions, and supplied from a few other books, and especially from some of the prefaces to our early bibles, whatever seemed interesting both with respect
to

to our vernacular translations of the scriptures, and also to the state of clerical literature during the period treated of. But as the situation which afforded him leisure for prosecuting his design precluded him from access to any library, some quotations must have been too implicitly followed, and many weighty authorities and curious facts must have been omitted.

In matters of fact it is indispensable to quote authorities. He has also largely produced them in matters of opinion; because the writers referred to expressed his sentiments much better than he was able to represent them, because he thus points out sources whence the reader may derive further information, and because the weight
of

of eminent names arrests attention to what is advanced.

The rules for biblical translators, prefixed to the Author's exposition of the Minor Prophets, have been much enlarged in the concluding chapter: and he hopes that they are somewhat improved, if not from his own reflections, yet from the later publications of such able critics as Dr. Geddes, Dr. Campbell, Dr. Symonds, and Mr. Wakefield.

The zeal of the good, the great, and the learned, in advancing the English bible to its present state, is highly instructive and worthy of imitation. It has actually been imitated in some countries, during the
present

present century. Beaufobre and L'Enfant, who published their French translation of the New Testament in 1718, thus express themselves in their * preface. “ Il y a déjà
“ plusieurs années, que sur la représentation
“ que l'on fit au feu Roi de Prusse de glorieuse
“ memoire, que nos Versions Françoises
“ commençant à n'être plus ni si intelligibles,
“ ni si agréables à lire, qu'elles le furent
“ d'abord, il sembloit que l'edification
“ demandât qu'elles fussent retouchées, ou
“ qu'on en fit une nouvelle ; d'autant plus
“ que depuis longtems on l'avoit pratiqué
“ en France avec tant de succès, que nos
“ Versions tomboient insensiblement dans le
“ mépris de biens des gens. Ce Prince,

* P. ccxxiv.

“ .toujours

“ toujours attentif au bien public, par report
 “ à la Religion et à l’Etat, nous fit l’honneur
 “ de jeter les yeux sur nous pour entre-
 “ prendre ce Travail, et de nous l’ordonner
 “ par un Decret.”

We learn a similar anecdote from the *
 preface to Dr. Kennicott’s Hebrew bible,
 published in 1780. “ Honorificum sane
 “ est quod Rex Sueciæ Augustissimus,
 “ primus omnium, illustre posuit exemplum ;
 “ facto mandato, ut inchoaretur Veteris Testa-
 “ menti examinatio, et accuratissima Ver-
 “ sionis Suecicæ recensio : quò parata esset
 “ ea Versio, ut in se admittat commoda,
 “ quotquot administraverit hæc Variarum
 “ Læctionum editio.”

* § 185.

P R E F A C E. ix

May the Allwise God, in his fit time, dispose the Sovereign of the first Protestant Churches, and of the most learned countries, in the world, to complete his acts of piety by promoting equal attention to the English bible.

Waterford. September 20.

1792.

E R R A T A.

Page	5	Line	6	Read intelligible.
	21	—	18	— year 1529.
	23	—	4	— a tittle.
	24	—	9	— Nehemiah or the first of Esdras.
	30	—	8	— tranquillity.
	45	—	16	— Fulke.
	84	—	14	— Place a comma after Rochester.
	96	—	19	— written.
	114	—	11	— Place a comma after not.
	116	—	13	— erant.
	123	—	4	— Add A. D. 1734,
	130	—	7	— Place a comma after interpretationibus
	144	—	2	— Anglis.
	206	—	20	— Lettres.
	214	—	13	— Place a comma after yet.
	258	—	20, 22, 23	— than, have, practice.
	264	—	2	— f'agit.
	270	—	5	— whosoever.
	274	—	6	— sometimes.
		—	8	— appears.
	279	—	7	— conjunction.
	294	—	5	— often.
	303	—	22	— Greek.

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