

CHAPTER I

The Several Versions

THE common Version of the Holy Bible in the English tongue is more than three hundred years old; for it first appeared in 1611. It is sometimes called the "King James Version," but more commonly the "Authorized Version." It is usually designated by the letters A. V.

In the year 1881 a new Version of the Bible in English appeared; and a second and final edition thereof was issued in 1885. This Version was the result of the labors of a Revision Committee, composed of English and American scholars, well acquainted with the original languages. The labors of the Revision Committee extended over a period of ten years. This Version is usually designated by the letters R. V.

Twenty years later (1901) another Version, embodying the readings preferred by the American members of the Revision Committee, was published in the United States. It is known as the "American Standard Version," and is designated by the letters A. S. V.

There are many differences between these two new Versions, both of which resulted from the

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labors of the Revision Committee.* For example, in the American Version the Name LORD is changed throughout the Old Testament to JEHOVAH, which is the recognized English equivalent of the Hebrew original. This change we regard as a great improvement. But we shall not discuss herein the differences between the two modern Versions.

It should also be stated at the outset that our observations will be confined to the New Testament. The reason is that the differences of major importance which appear in the Revised Versions of the New Testament, and their importance is in some cases very great indeed, are not differences of *translation*, but are differences *in the Greek text* used as the basis of the translation, the text adopted by the Revisers of the 19th Century being different in many particulars from that which, three centuries previous, served as the basis of the A. V. In the case, however, of the Old Testament, the same Hebrew text served as the basis of both Versions. Therefore the changes made by the Revisers in the Old Testament are changes of *translation only*; and it is quite easy for anyone, with the help of a Hebrew Concordance, to form an opinion between the several translations of a passage. When, however, the original

* See "Preface to the Edition of 1885," and "Preface to the American Edition"; also the Appendix to the former, in which the readings preferred by the American members of the Committee were given.

text has been changed, he has no means of judging whether or not the change was warranted.

THE OCCASION FOR THE R. V.

The Bible is the one Book in the world which is constantly under scrutiny; and the scrutiny to which it is subject is of the most searching kind, and from the keenest and best equipped minds in the world—and this, by the way, is another strong, though indirect, proof that the Bible is not a human book. This continuous and microscopical examination of the Bible, and of all the circumstances and conditions connected with the origin of its various parts, has been carried on both by its friends, who value all the information they can gather concerning it, and also by its enemies, who are unremitting in their search for facts which might be used to discredit its statements or impugn its accuracy.

This unceasing scrutiny extends not only to every word of the original text, but to the more minute questions of prefix, termination, spelling, tense of verbs, and even to the very smallest matters, such as the placing of an accent. It would seem as if every generation of men was impelled, as by some strong but inscrutable influence, thus to recognize the importance of every “jot and tittle” of this Book of books.

As the result of this constant and painstaking study of the Scriptures during centuries following the appearance of the A. V., it became

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increasingly evident that, notwithstanding the excellencies of that great and admirable work, there were particulars wherein, for one cause or another, it admitted of (and indeed called for) correction. For those who translated it, though godly and scholarly, and though assisted, as we doubt not they were in large measure, by the Holy Spirit, were but human, and therefore compassed with infirmity. Moreover, in the course of the years following the completion of their labors, discoveries were made which affected the original text of the New Testament, and other discoveries which threw fresh light upon the meaning of obscure words and difficult passages. It was found also that corrections in translation were demanded here and there, particularly in regard to the tenses of verbs.

And beside all that, we have to take into consideration the fact (for which the translators of the A. V. were in no wise responsible) that changes had meanwhile occurred in the meanings of not a few English words and expressions.

For all these reasons it appeared desirable that our excellent and justly admired Authorized Version should have such a revision as that for which the Revision Committee was appointed in the year 1871. For it should be understood that what was contemplated by those who were responsible for the appointment