

THE
BIBLES OF ENGLAND:

A PLAIN ACCOUNT FOR PLAIN PEOPLE

OF

THE PRINCIPAL VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE
IN ENGLISH.

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P R E F A C E.

THIS work is not a scholastic work, nor is it intended for scholastic readers. It is meant for plain people who have no knowledge of either Hebrew or Greek. Many questions, therefore, are ignored, which scholastic persons may think should, in a review of English versions of the Bible, be brought to the front; and some trivialities are introduced which scholastic persons may think should have been excluded.

The special subject to which most space in this volume is devoted, is that to which in many published works on English versions of the Bible least space is given; namely, the differentiations of successive versions, and the literary peculiarities that in each translation may be supposed most readily to attract the notice of common English readers. It is attempted in this way to shew how dissatisfaction with one version led to the publication of another; and there is set forth as much of the history of each version as will indicate the persistent labour that for five hundred years has been spent on the perfection of the English Bible.

One thing that calls for explanation, if not apology, is that while the book is professedly non-scholastic it contains a considerable number of Latin words and even Latin sentences. It will be found, however, that in many cases the Latin words are self-explanatory, and serve to shew the source from which particular expressions in the several English versions were derived. In all cases, too, the Latin quotations are of simple construction, and will be understood and appreciated by many readers who do not reckon themselves classical scholars. And if in any instance the Latin interpolation should prove a stumbling-block, it may be passed over without causing a breach in the continuity of the narrative.

It will be observed that at the head of each chapter there is a note of the special editions from which examples of the

translation under discussion have been obtained. Such a note was necessary. Through misprints and corrections, there are scarcely two editions of any one English version of the Bible, except modern issues of the authorised and revised, that are absolutely identical. If the editions, therefore, from which quotations are taken had not been specified, some of these quotations might, on reference to a different edition, have been pronounced inaccurate. It is not to be supposed, however, that the editions specified at the heads of chapters in this volume are those that are most highly prized by book-hunters. They are simply those that I either happen to possess, or to which I have had most convenient access. But they are all sufficiently authentic for indicating the salient features of each version.

It can scarcely be expected that in a work like this, which abounds in details, there will not be some slips and oversights, misjudgments and mistakes. One mistake that may be thought inexcusable will be found on pages 215-216, in a note on a Hebrew word which an old Catholic controversialist alleges to be the original of the Church term *Mass*. That note was inserted without much consideration as the proofs were passing through the press. To undo the evil of misstatement in that note, a correction, to which the reader's attention is requested, is made in the Appendix, under letter D. Another passage that from awkwardness of expression is open to misconstruction, will be found on page 187. To prevent misapprehension on the subject to which that passage refers—the Theocracy established at Geneva in the days of Calvin—a brief account of Christian theories of Theocracy held by the Reformers is given under letter C in the Appendix.

Both for advice on special points of dubiety, and for access to valuable copies of old versions of the Bible, in Latin as well as in English, I have gratefully to acknowledge my obligations to the courtesy and kindness of friends and others that, although personally unknown to me, I take the liberty of counting friends.

A. E.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOLLARDS' BIBLE (Commonly called WYCLIF'S BIBLE).

First version by John Wyclif and Nicholas de Hereford, about 1380. Revised version by John Purvey, about 1388.

Popular interest in the Bible, 1—No Bible in English long after Christianity established in England, 2—Early English versions of parts of Bible, 2—Publication before invention of printing, 4—Wyclif's reasons for translating the Bible, 4—Wyclif's first version, 5—Wyclif's career and end, 7—Wyclif's Bible condemned, 8—Earliest printed copies of Wyclif's Bible, 9—First and revised versions of Wyclif's Bible compared, 9—Wyclif's and Purvey's English, 12—Peculiar words in Wyclif's Bible, 14—Obsolete words in Purvey's revised version, 14—In earlier version, 18—Words used in a sense that is now obsolete, in Purvey's version, 20—In earlier version, 23—Saxon compounds, 25—Translation of proper nouns, 26—Ecclesiastical terms, 27—Phrases in Wyclif's Bible, quaint and apt, 31—Crude and inapt, 33—Peculiar readings and renderings in Wyclif's Bible, 36—Use of articles by Wyclif, 39—Readings and renderings of Wyclif revived in revised version, 41—Homeliness of Wyclif's diction, 42—Anachronisms in Wyclif's Bible, 45—Merits of Wyclif's Bible, 47—Wyclif's order of readers and preachers, 47.

CHAPTER II.

THE REFORMERS' BIBLES.

TYNDALE'S TESTAMENT, 1526; Revised, 1534.

The fundamental doctrine of Protestantism, 49—New translation of the Bible needed at the Reformation, 50—William Tyndale, 51—Resolves to translate the Bible, 53—Goes to London, 54—Meets with Humphrey Monmouth, 55—Goes abroad, 56—Proceeds with translation of the New Testament, 56—Prints his translation, 57—Publishes his translation, 57—His translation denounced, 58—His translation confuted by Sir Thomas More, 62—His other publications, 63—Encouraged to return to England, 65—His apprehension resolved on, 66—Seized and charged with venting heresies, 68—His martyrdom, 69—The advantages he had over Wyclif in translating the Testament, 69—His qualifications for translating the Testament, 71—Editions of Tyndale's Testament, 72—Tyndale's English, 74—Obsolete words in Tyndale's Testament, 75—Common words used in an archaic sense, 76—Ecclesiastical terms used or misused, 79—Proper names translated and untranslated, 83—Expressions and phrases of Tyndale's still surviving in the authorised version of the Testament, 83—Some of Tyndale's phrases that are not retained in

authorised version good and forcible, 85—Paraphrastic renderings, 87—Tyndale's Germanisms, 88—Infelicitous renderings, 88—Homely phrases, 89—Use and misuse of articles, 91—Renderings of Tyndale's restored in revised version (1881), 92—Points of discordance between Tyndale's and the authorised version, 93—Causes of these discordances, 96—Other translations of Scripture by Tyndale, 98.

CHAPTER III.

THE REFORMERS' BIBLES (Continued).

COVERDALE'S BIBLE, 1535.

MATTHEW'S BIBLE, 1537.

TAVERNER'S BIBLE, 1539.

THE GREAT BIBLE OR CROMWELL'S BIBLE, 1539; Revised edition, with prologue by Cranmer, and therefore called Cranmer's Bible, 1540.

Miles Coverdale, 100—Publishes a translation of the whole Bible, 101—The text from which he translated, 101—His translation partly original and partly based on Tyndale's, 101—Account of the part that was original, 101—Account of the part based on Tyndale's translation, 106—The Latin and Dutch inspirations in Coverdale's Bible, 110—Dedication of Coverdale's Bible, 114.

Matthew's Bible, 114—Specimens of its annotations, 115.

Taverner's Bible, 117.

The Great Bible, 119—Its printing and publication, 120—Its different designations, 120—Steps taken to promote its circulation, 121—A plethora of Bibles, 122—The three constituent parts of the Great Bible, 123—New Testament in Great Bible follows Tyndale's more than Coverdale's translation, 125—Follows Coverdale's version in some passages, 125—Old Testament, from Genesis to Chronicles, follows Tyndale's more than Coverdale's translation, 127—Antique renderings in Reformers' versions of the Old Testament from Genesis to Chronicles, 128—Old Testament, from Ezra to Malachi, not much changed from Coverdale's, 131—Points of difference between Great Bible and Coverdale's Bible in second part of Old Testament, 134—Great Bible compared with the authorised, 136—Bracketed readings, 138—End of Coverdale, 139.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PURITANS' AND PEOPLE'S BIBLE (Otherwise termed the GENEVA OR BREECHES BIBLE).

First Geneva translation of New Testament, 1557.

Second Geneva translation of New Testament, with translation of Old Testament, 1560.

Third, or Tomson's revised translation of New Testament, 1576.

From 1540 to 1557, 140—Sir John Cheke's translation, 140—Its Saxon words, 141—Its Archaisms, 141—Its marginal notes, 142—Reign of Mary in England, 142—Persecution of Reformers, 143—Flight of Reformers to Geneva, 143—First Geneva version of the New Testament, 144—Its peculiarities, 144—Its

relation to previous versions, 145—The Geneva Bible in whole, 148—Authors of that translation, 149—Characteristics of that translation, 150—Its popularity, 150—Its interest to Scotsmen, 151—The first Bible in English printed in Scotland, 151—Hart's edition of Geneva Bible, 154—Popular designation of Geneva Bible, 154—Three Geneva versions of New Testament, 155—Only one Geneva version of Old Testament, 156—Second Geneva version of the New Testament compared with the first, 156—Inspired by Beza's Latin translation, 156—Its variations of two kinds, 157—The larger changes, 157—The lesser changes, 159—All the changes not improvements, 161—Majority improvements, 162—Third Geneva version of Testament, by Laurence Tomson, 162—Compared with the second version, 162—Accentuation of Articles, 163—Other amendments, 164—Geneva version of the Old Testament, 165—How framed, 165—Its sources of inspiration, 166—Compared with Great Bible, 166—Correction of renderings in Great Bible, 167—Refinement of renderings in Great Bible, 170—Changes that were not improvements, 173—The language of Geneva Bible, 176—Antiquated forms of words, 177—Obsolete words, 177—Current words in obsolete sense, 178—Ecclesiastical terms, 180—Phrases well chosen, 181—Renderings that are not good, 182—Marginal notes, 184—Anti-papal, 184—Calvinistic, 185—Puritanical, 186—Political, 187—Quaint and curious, 188—Good specimens of sound exposition, 189.

CHAPTER V.

THE BIBLES OF THE CHURCHES. No. I. BIBLE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND (Commonly called the BISHOPS' BIBLE).

First translation, 1568. Revised translation, 1572.

Need for a new version for public use in Church of England, 191—Resolution to revise the Great Bible, 193—Work of revision and its distribution, 195—Issue of the Bishops' Bible, 195—Bishops' Bible not licensed by Queen for use in Churches, 196—Successive editions, 196—Bishops' Bible a failure, 197—Crotchets of some of the Episcopal translators, 198—Limited and temporary circulation of Bishops' Bible, 199—Close correspondence between Bishops' Bible and Great Bible, 199—In Old Testament the text in some books in Bishops' Bible little, and in others much changed from the text in Great Bible. 200—Points of correspondence between the two texts in Old Testament more striking than points of difference, 205—Incorrect readings in Great Bible retained in Old Testament, 205—Imperfect renderings in Great Bible retained by Bishops, 207—Unapproved readings and imperfect renderings taken by Bishops from Geneva version, 208—Original renderings in Old Testament by Bishops, 210—Adoption in authorised version, 210—Not adopted, 211—Bishops' version of New Testament, 212—Incorrect readings and renderings in Great Bible retained, 213—Infelicitous renderings in Great Bible retained, 214—Infelicitous amendments in Geneva Bible rejected by Bishops, 217—Geneva amendments adopted by Bishops, 218—Wisely, 219—Unwisely, 219—Original renderings by Bishops, 220—Good, 221—Not good, 222—Received into authorised version, 223—Diction of Bishops' Bible, 224—Archaism in Bishops' Bible, 227—Marginal notes in Bishops' Bible, 228—Interpolations, 231.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BIBLES OF THE CHURCHES. No. 2. BIBLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (Commonly called the DOUAY BIBLE.)

NEW TESTAMENT, printed at Rhemes, 1582.

OLD TESTAMENT, printed at Douay, 1609-1610.

Modern revisions, by Challoner and others.

Necessity for a Catholic version of the Scriptures in English, 234—Issue of a Catholic version of the Bible in English, 237—The translators, 237—Source from which the Catholic version drawn, 237—Principles according to which the translation was made, 241—Character of the Catholic translation, 242—Latin words too frequently translated by their English derivatives, 243—Excessive literalness in translation, 246—Renderings that bear on controverted points, 248—Three alleged specially sacred terms, 252—The Douay Bible from a literary point of view, 254—Words used, 255—Phrases, 255—Catholic readings and Catholic renderings, 257—Rhemes readings and renderings in revised Testament (1881), 259—Annotations in Rhemes Testament, 260.

Douay version of the Old Testament, 261—Ecclesiastical terms in Douay Bible, 262—Latin words and Latin-English words, 262—Archaisms and colloquialisms, 265—Odd and queer readings, 269—Proper names translated as common nouns, 270—Readings different in meaning from the authorised, 271—The notes in the Douay Bible, 275—Merits of the Rhemes-Douay version, 276—Imperfections, 277.

Revisions of Douay Bible, 278—Catholic opinions on these revisions, 279—No authentic Catholic text of Scriptures in English, 279—Challoner's versions, 280—Inkhorn terms, 280—Inapt terms, 281—Challoner's conformity with diction of the authorised version, 281—Douay phrases retained by Challoner, 282—Challoner's freedom with Catholic terms, 283—Annotations in modern editions of Catholic versions of the Bible, 283.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NATIONAL BIBLE (Sometimes called the KING'S TRANSLATION, more frequently termed the AUTHORISED VERSION, 1611).

Bibles in England in 1600, 286—Still another translation wanted, 286—The King takes the matter in hand, 287—Some churchmen not in favour of the project, 289—The work planned and commenced, 289—The new version published and dedicated to the King, 290—The preface to the new version, 291—The declared aim of the new version, 291—The qualifications of the translators, 292—Helps used in the translation, 293—Principles on which the translation was made, 293—The new version not adopted everywhere at once, 295—Strange misprints in different editions, 296—Deviations from the text of the first edition, 299—Relation of the new version to former versions, 300—Inaccuracies in Bishops' Bible corrected, 305—Diction in Bishops' Bible improved,

305—Renderings appropriated from Geneva version, 306—Renderings appropriated from the Rhemes Testament, 308—Each English version an improvement on previous versions, 309—The true meaning of passages brought out better, 309—Happier words chosen and smoother phrases, 312—Importance of these improvements, 316—Archaic words and expressions that still remain in the authorised version, 317—Headings of chapters, 321—Marginal references and notes, 323.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INTER-NATIONAL BIBLE (Commonly called the REVISED VERSION).

NEW TESTAMENT, 1881. OLD TESTAMENT, 1885.

The King's translation not adopted at once, nor expected by the translators to be, 326—Rise and progress of dissatisfaction with the authorised version, 327—A revision proposed, 328—Project abandoned, 329—Demand for revision heard again, 330—Attempts in revision, 331—Doddridge's Expositor, 332—Mac-knight's translation of Epistles, 334—Thomson's translation of New Testament, 335—An international revision of the English Bible proposed, 337—Work of revision undertaken, 338—Time spent in revision, 339—Issue of new version and demand for copies, 339—Character of revised version, 340—New readings in Greek Testament adopted, 341—Amount of change on English text from adoption of these readings, 342—Ground on which these readings were adopted, 344—Amount of correspondence between new Greek text of Testament and the Vulgate, 344—Amended renderings in the English New Testament, 348—Stricter rendering of the Greek article, 352—Stricter rendering of Greek prepositions, 355—Stricter rendering of the different parts of the Greek verb, 357—Uniformity of rendering, 359—Diction of Revised New Testament, 363—New readings in Hebrew text of Old Testament adopted, 368—Diction of revised version of Old Testament, 370—Dissimilar English readings in authorised and revised versions of Old Testament, 373—Archaisms in authorised version removed or retained in revised, 380—Benefits derived from revision of English Bible, 382.

APPENDIX.

A. Early Scottish Renderings of Scripture,	385
B. Modern Scottish Versions of Scripture,	391
C. Theocracy in Geneva and Scotland, in explanation of a statement open to misconstruction on page 187,	393
D. The word Mass—correction of note on page 215-216,	399

ERRATUM—Pages 144, 347—For "Stephen," read "Stephens."