

The Revised Version of the New Testament.

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Christian Friend, vol. 8, 1881, p. 169.

It is surely significant that God should be calling, in these last days, such public attention to His own word. Never, perhaps, has there been such eager and widespread interest in the appearance of any volume as in the Revised Version of the New Testament Scriptures; and never certainly has any book obtained such a rapid sale. Its first delivery in London was counted by hundreds of thousands, and this huge supply, it is credibly stated, entirely disappeared in a few days. It has therefore acquired an unprecedented circulation, a circulation which by this time will have embraced every quarter of the globe. Whatever the causes of this, there are few spiritual minds who will not discern in the fact a distinct action of the Spirit of God; for whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, God has spoken, and so loudly, that His testimony has gone "out through all the earth, and His words to the end of the world." The Lord is at hand, and it may be that this testimony is the immediate harbinger of His coming.

It will not be without interest to our readers to enquire, What is the result of this revision of the English Testament? The result on the whole, it may be safely affirmed, is to the advantage of the truth of God. There are blemishes — errors indeed — arising from the want of spiritual understanding — that understanding which no scholarship can supply, because it is the fruit of the indwelling and teaching, the anointing, of the Holy Spirit; but while making allowance for these, many mistakes have been rectified, and many doubtful translations have been made more intelligible. Our readers will discover most of these improvements for themselves, and hence we shall simply call their attention to some passages that have been omitted, and to some of the mistranslations that affect the truth.

Several verses or parts of verses have been entirely rejected. The first of these is what is commonly termed the doxology of the "Lord's prayer:" "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." This has created much feeling in certain ecclesiastical quarters — as was to be expected; but there need to be no hesitation in accepting the exclusion on the ground of entirely insufficient evidence of its inspiration. No Christian would dispute the truth of the language; but the only question to be decided was, Is it a part of the inspired word of God?

The next passage omitted of any importance is Acts 8: 37: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." The context shows that this verse is by no means necessary to the narrative, and for many years past it has been admitted on all hands to be an unwarranted addition. To believe with the heart is a divine condition (Rom. 10: 9, 10), but let us thank God — for who could stand the test? — that we are not required to ascertain if we believe with the *whole* heart.

Passing onward to the first epistle of John, a part of the much-contested passage in 1 John 5: 7, 8 is also omitted, and it now reads, "For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one" — a change already anticipated in what is known to many as "The New Translation," and one which clears away a great difficulty in the apprehension of the teaching of the Spirit of God."

So far we can thank God for the alterations made; but in two passages, while not omitted, so much doubt, and very unnecessarily in our judgment, is thrown upon them, that it will lead in many minds to their positive rejection. The first of these is the narrative of the woman taken in adultery. (John 7: 53 - 8: 1-11.) It is freely conceded that this passage is not found in some very important manuscripts. It should be borne in mind, however, that the most ancient manuscripts do not reach back further than the time of Constantine; and Augustine expressly says that it was left out "for fear of allowing immorality." One can readily perceive, how that those who failed to understand the significance of this striking scripture, and the characteristic position of the Lord in it, should thus miss the mind of God, and be animated by such motives of prudence; but the spiritual mind, not governed by human feelings, but by the Spirit of God, will have no difficulty in rejecting their action, and in regarding the scripture as a precious unfolding of divine truth, of the Person, indeed, of our blessed Lord. The other passage alluded to is the close of St. Mark's gospel (Mark 16: 9-20), which, as the revisers inform us, is omitted "by the two oldest Greek manuscripts," etc. Even the casual reader will perceive that this passage does not follow on with the narrative, but forms a kind of appendix to the gospel itself, as it gives a general account of the special manifestations of the Lord to His own after His resurrection. This, no doubt, occasioned the difficulty; it would be sure to perplex human wisdom, and hence the attempt to obviate it. The source of much controversy of this kind has been the confusion of the question of authenticity with that of inspiration; that is, if the authorship of a part of any of the books of Scripture has been thought doubtful, the temptation has arisen to reject it. So here, instead of asking whether this close of the gospel were inspired, they discussed whether Mark penned it. Now it is quite clear, from many books of Scripture, that inspired additions may be made by those who were not their authors. (See Dent. 34; Jer. 52 etc.) Remarks of this kind need not therefore trouble simple souls.

*The omission of John 5: 4, although not of much importance, will hardly be so generally accepted.

In the translation many passages, as already remarked, have gained in clearness and accuracy, while others have lost both in respect of point and truth through the want of spiritual intelligence. A few examples of the latter class may be given. In Acts 2: 47 the Revised Version reads, "And the Lord added to them day by day those that were *being saved*." So in 2 Cor. 2: 15, and 2 Cor. 4: 3 we find, "them that are being saved," and "them that are perishing." There is no doubt whatever as to the tense of the verb, or that a hard literality, apart from the knowledge of divine truth, might so translate. But it is not difficult to conjecture that the origin of the translation in these cases is unbelief in the fact that man can either be saved or lost before death. Even evangelical Protestantism very unwillingly admits that the sinner is already lost, or that he may know he is saved during his life. It will press very earnestly that he *will be* lost if he does not believe in Christ. But this is another thing, and ignores the teaching of the word of God as to the truth of the cross — that the cross, indeed, was the demonstration of the fact that man was

both guilty and lost, and thus the termination of his history as man in the flesh, and as such responsible to produce fruit for God. It is this which displays the magnificence of God's grace. At the very moment when all that man is, in all the depths of his corrupt and totally depraved heart, was revealed, God revealed Himself as the God of grace through the death of Christ. But even if the revisers were ignorant of this, a little more knowledge of the Scriptures would have saved them from their mistake. To show this, we transcribe part of a note to Acts 2: 47, in the version known as "The New Translation" — "As to the form of the word, σωζόμενοι" (the word in Acts 2: 47), "etc., are all found in the LXX. The difference of σωζόμενος is that it gives the character instead of the fact; as I might say, 'the spared ones,' or 'those to be spared,' or the fact, 'those who have been spared.' It is not this last here. It is the class of persons then God was saving. It is not a doubt as to their being saved, nor a state, but a class. Compare Luke 13: 23, 'Are the σωζόμενοι, that class, few?' So the English means there, 'that be saved.' The Jews discussed thus point much as may be seen in Lightfoot and Schoetgen."

The translation of Ephesians 2: 6 is still more unhappy. It is as follows: "And raised us up with Him, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." This contains a double error. Although not put in italics, there is nothing in the Greek text to answer to the first "Him." In fact, the "Authorized" Version is correct, and the revision erroneous; for it is really "raised us up together" — not with Christ, albeit that is true, but believing Jews and Gentiles *together* — all distinction now having been abolished, as will be immediately seen if the apostle's use of the pronouns "you" and "we" is apprehended. The last clause of the verse is nothing but confusion, as we are said to be made to sit *with* Christ in the heavenly places *in* Christ Jesus. No; we are not with Him yet. We shall be when He has come to receive us unto Himself, not before; but we are *in* Him, as the Scripture states. The truth is, it should be, as in the first clause, "made to sit together" — i.e. Jew and Gentile — "in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." This is a striking example of the necessity of understanding the truth of God in the power of the Holy Ghost as a qualification for the translation of the Scriptures.

We had marked other passages for comment, but we must content ourselves, for the present, with reminding our readers of the need of care in accepting the alterations made by the revisers. At the same time we unfeignedly rejoice at the many improvements effected, and to some of these, if the Lord will, we hope to call attention at another time.

Part 2.

The more the revised version of the New Testament is examined the more apparent are the honesty and the industry of the revisers. The mistakes into which they have been betrayed are in no case, as far as can be seen, the result of either theological or ecclesiastical bias; but they have sprung rather from lack of spiritual understanding, and from dependence, perhaps, upon scholarship, instead of upon the teaching of the Holy Ghost. For example, Phil. 2: 10 now reads, "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow," etc. The Greek will undoubtedly admit this translation, as it would also that which the revisers have superseded; viz., "at the name of Jesus." This being the case, the decision must be grounded upon the truth involved, and once accepting this principle, the difficulty disappears. To bow the knee in the name of Jesus, and to confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father, would be salvation. But this could not be in this

Scripture, inasmuch as even infernal beings — "things under the earth" — are included. To bend at the name of Jesus would simply express, willingly or unwillingly, acknowledgment of His authority and supremacy, and this is what God has declared that all in heaven, earth, and hell shall do. Hence, while the alteration may seem to be slight, the truth implicated is of the gravest importance.

2 Cor. 3: 18 is another illustration of the misleading character of mere critical knowledge. As revised it runs, "But we all, with unveiled face reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." As an alternative translation it stands in the margin, "Beholding as in a mirror." Had the truth of the passage been understood, it would have been instantly perceived that etymological considerations could not govern, as in this case they appear to have done, the translation. The apostle had been drawing a contrast between the ministration of condemnation and death, and the ministration of righteousness and of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3: 7-14); *i.e.* between law and grace; and in connection with it, he recalls the fact that when Moses came out from the presence of Jehovah, he "put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished." For in truth, being under law, and having, moreover, failed under it, and become amenable to its righteous penalties, the very glory which shone in the face of Moses was their condemnation. They could not endure to behold it, because, as sinners, and without atonement, to come into contact with the holiness of God was to encounter destruction. But under grace all is changed. Christ has glorified God concerning the question of our sins, and God, having being glorified in Him, has glorified Christ in Himself (John 13: 31, 32), so that the glory that shines in His face tells not of condemnation and death, but of accomplished redemption, and the putting away of believers' sins for ever; for if the One who went down into death under our sins has been raised from the dead, and put into the glory of God, it is manifest that our sins are for ever gone. *The face of Christ is therefore unveiled*, and we, unlike the Israelites, in respect of Moses, can look upon the glory that is there displayed; indeed, we delight to gaze upon it, inasmuch as it is the indubitable proof that our sins are completely cleared away. Moreover, as the latter part of the Scripture tells us, we are transformed by the glory, through the power of the Spirit, in the very act of beholding it — transformed, changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit. The two thoughts are thus: that through grace we are able to look upon the unveiled face of the Lord, and that the glory we behold in that face is used to transform us into His image.

It will therefore be seen that to put the words "in a mirror," even after "beholding," as in the margin, confuses the teaching of the passage; while to translate "reflecting as in a mirror," is to miss it altogether. But more than this, it adds the error that we reflect the glory of the Lord before we are transformed, and that we are changed, or transformed, into the image of our glorified Lord by reflecting His glory!

It is a matter of great regret also that the Revisers did not use their opportunity to give the true sense of Col. 1: 19. They have retained the added words "the Father," rendering the passage, "For it was the good pleasure *of the Father* that in Him should all the fulness dwell." The very fact of the words being added shows that it is interpretation rather than translation, and this might have thrown them back to a more patient study of the context, which brings out in a special manner the glorious dignity of the Person, the pre-eminence and headships of Christ. They might

have then discovered the possibility of a rendering with which many of our readers are familiar; viz., "For in Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell" — the only one, it may fearlessly be said, that exactly represents the original, harmonises with the context, and expresses the mind of the Spirit of God.

We now turn gratefully to some very decided improvements; and, first of all, to those of an ecclesiastical character. In John 10: 16, the Revisers have rightly substituted "flock" for "fold." There is little doubt that ecclesiastical leanings led to the false rendering, with the object of bolstering up a particular church establishment, and thereby condemning all who should venture to stray from this human fold. But Judaism is the fold of John 10, and out of this our Lord expressly tells us that He leadeth His sheep. (v. 3.) The fold thenceforward ceases, and the sheep, whether gathered out from among the Jews, or afterwards from among the Gentiles, were to form *one flock*.

It is also a great advantage to have the word "ordained" (which was gratuitously inserted in the Authorised Version) omitted from Acts 1: 22. In Mark 3: 14, "ordained" has been exchanged for "appointed." So also in Acts 14: 23, the word "appointed," replaces "ordained." Knowing how largely the episcopal element was represented in the revision company, and the increasing pretensions of sacerdotalism, and its claims for priestly sanctity because of "ordination," such changes were hardly to be expected, and fill us with corresponding gratitude.

Another slight change in Acts 20 proves the sincerity of the Revisers: In verse 17, we find that Paul sends for the *elders* of the Church in Ephesus. When addressing them he says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*," etc. (v. 28.) In the revised version "bishops" supersede "overseers." This will make plain to the English reader that the *elders* of the assembly were *bishops*, and hence that modern episcopacy finds no support in the word of God.

Passing to other changes, we note with great satisfaction the faithful rendering of 1 John 3: 4. It ran, as our readers will remember, as follows: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law;" a translation not only serious in its consequences, but amounting to a falsification of the word of God. For inasmuch as the law was given to the Jews, and to them alone — if this were a true definition of sin — Gentiles could never have committed it! How different is the statement of the Spirit of God as now given by the Revisers, "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness: and sin is lawlessness." Sin is thus shown in its true character and essence — as consisting in independence of God, doing one's own will with freedom from every other law, and thus lawlessness. To the Jew sin, in addition, was transgression of the law; but sin in Jew and Gentile alike is lawlessness, a definition therefore that leaves no loophole of escape for any one upon the face of the earth, but brings in the whole world as alike guilty before God.

In 1 Cor. 9: 20 there is an addition of great importance. It formerly read, "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law," etc. The Revisers have restored the clause omitted after "as under the law;" viz., "*not being myself under law.*" Many of our readers know that all competent scholars have long confessed that this clause was most unjustifiably rejected;

but it is a great gain in the interests of the truth to have it now brought before the mass of believers in this country. Rightly interpreted, it is the settlement of that hotly-contested question as to whether the Christian is still under law; for while no additional evidence is needed for those who understand what Christianity is, and the truth of the Christian's position, the new place into which he is brought through the death and resurrection of our blessed Lord, it is of immense importance, in dealing with candid souls, to be able to point to the fact, that the apostle Paul himself carefully states that he himself was not under the law, which, is not, as he explains, to be "without law to God; but under law [a different word altogether from what he had employed before — one meaning "enlawed;" i.e. brought under authority] to Christ"

The alteration in Rev. 22: 14 — fully warranted — will be acceptable to most, and is most valuable as a closing testimony to the value of the precious blood of Christ. "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city."

There are many improvements and also defects other than those indicated. These our readers must note for themselves. But there are few who will not recognize in the whole result matter for thanksgiving to God. May He lead His people into an ever-increasing acquaintance with His word, and bring them more and more under its sanctifying power through the energy of the Holy Ghost! E. D.