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PREFATORY NOTE.

THESE essays on the various aspects of the Anglo-American Bible revision now going on, are issued by the American Revision Committee as an explanatory statement to the friends and patrons of the cause, with the distinct understanding that suggestions and statements in regard to any particular changes to be made, express only the individual opinions of the writer, but not the final conclusions of the two Committees, who have not yet finished their work.

PHILIP SCHAFF,

NEW YORK, *March, 1879.*

In behalf of the Committee.

HEBREW PHILOLOGY AND BIBLICAL SCIENCE.

SHALL THE AUTHORIZED VERSION KEEP PACE WITH THE ADVANCES MADE IN HEBREW PHILOLOGY AND BIBLICAL SCIENCE?

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ADVANCES IN PHILOLOGY AND BIBLICAL SCIENCE.—Moses strictly charged the people, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it” (Deut. iv, 2; xii, 32). And almost the last utterance of Holy Scripture—Rev. xxii, 18, 19—is a like solemn admonition, neither to add unto, nor to take away from, the words which God had revealed. If, then, it is the imperative duty of the Church to give the heavenly oracles to men, each in his own language, it is equally her duty to give them to men in a pure and unadulterated form. The millions in both hemispheres who speak the English tongue are entitled to receive the Bible in a form which represents the inspired original with the utmost accuracy that it is possible to attain. This has always been recognized in the history of our English version thus far, which, as at present authorized, is the result of several successive revisions, each being an advance upon its predecessor. When the question is raised whether the time has now arrived for a fresh revision of the English Bible, one important consideration affecting the answer to be given is to be found in the immense strides taken in Biblical scholarship since the

reign of King James. The object of this brief paper is to indicate this in a few particulars relating to the Old Testament.

HEBREW PHILOLOGY IN 1611.—Hebrew studies were then in their infancy, and the entire science of Semitic philology has been developed since. When the first edition of the Authorized Version appeared, in 1611, the elder Buxtorf had just issued his larger Hebrew grammar, in 1609, his smaller grammar having been published in 1605, and his Hebrew lexicon in 1607. Buxtorf's Hebrew Concordance first saw the light in 1632. The two Buxtorfs, father and son, though men of immense learning and indefatigable industry, represent the first stage of investigation into the structure and meaning of the Hebrew language. They brought together all that could be gathered from Rabbinical lore and from traditional interpretations. But there their work ended. Since their time the knowledge of Hebrew has been greatly increased by the comparative study of the kindred dialects, the Syriac, Arabic and Ethiopic; the meanings of many of its words have been more satisfactorily established, and its various constructions have been elucidated. A long list of able lexicographers, from Castellus to Gesenius and Fuerst, and of distinguished grammarians, from Schultens to Ewald, have been pushing their researches more and more thoroughly into this venerable and sacred tongue. And commentators without end, approaching the subject from every different point of view, and of widely dissimilar opinions, have minutely discussed every word and sentence of the sacred text, and labored with various success to bring out the fullness of its meaning. The great polyglotts, particularly

that of Paris in 1645, and that of London in 1657, set the old Syriac and Arabic versions alongside of the Hebrew text, with a view to ready comparison and aid to interpretation, as Buxtorf's Rabbinical Bible, in 1618, had done with the Chaldee targums and the comments of the Rabbins.

MASORETIC TEXT.—The extensive and laborious collections of Hebrew manuscripts by Houbigant, Kennicott, and De Rossi have done little more than establish the substantial correctness of the received Masoretic text. And the long and earnest discussion relative to the Hebrew vowels has resulted in proving, if not their originality, at least their accuracy. We stand upon precisely the same text, therefore, as King James's translators used, only with a better knowledge of its value.

NEED OF IMPROVEMENT IN THE VERSION OF 1611.—But the helps to a better understanding of this text have accumulated immensely. Besides the philological aids already referred to, there is the increased knowledge of sacred localities, and of the natural history and archæology of the Bible, derived from travels and explorations in the Holy Land, and from the monuments exhumed in Assyria, Egypt and elsewhere. This, of course, assists us in the comprehension of passages in which such objects are referred to, and consequently enables us to translate them with greater accuracy and precision.

GEOGRAPHICAL ERRORS.—It would be clearly impossible, in a popular article of a few columns, to give an accurate conception of what has been accomplished, in

these various lines of scholarship, toward the elucidation of the Old Testament, and of the extent to which this renders it possible now to improve a translation made more than two hundred and fifty years ago. Only a few illustrations can now be attempted, taken very much at random. Thus, many geographical terms require correction. For example, "the river of Egypt," Numbers xxxiv, 5, and elsewhere, would naturally lead one to think of the Nile; it is not this, however, which is intended, but an insignificant stream that bounds Egypt on the east, "the brook of Egypt." The "Palestina" of Isaiah xiv, 29-31, and the "Palestine" of Joel iii, 4, is simply "Philistia," the territory occupied by the Philistines. The second river of the garden of Eden did not compass the "land of Ethiopia," but that of "Cush," settled by a people so called from their progenitor. Ezekiel xxix, 10; xxx, 6, does not speak of desolating Egypt "from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia," for Syene was itself on that border, but "from Migdol unto Syene," *i.e.*, from the extreme north to the extreme south of Egypt, "even unto the border of Ethiopia." The "mount Ephraim" of Josh. xxiv, 33, and elsewhere, is not a single summit, but an elevated tract, "the hill country of Ephraim." "The valley" of Josh. xi, 16, should be "the lowland;" "the south," Gen. xii, 9, and elsewhere, is not simply the general designation of a point of the compass, but the name of a definite tract of country, and as such should begin with a capital letter—"the South." The "rough valley" of Deut. xxi, 4, should be "a valley with an everflowing stream." The "nation scattered and peeled," "whose land the rivers have spoiled," Isa. xviii, 2, should be the "nation tall and shaven," "whose land the rivers

divide." Samuel's father was not "an Ephrathite," 1 Sam. i, 1, as though he were from Ephrata or Bethlehem, but "an Ephraimitè," so reckoned because he resided in the territory of Ephraim, though descended from Levi.

ERRORS IN PROPER NAMES.—Proper names have sometimes been mistaken for common nouns or other parts of speech, and translated accordingly; and, conversely, words which should have been translated are retained as though they were proper names. Thus, "the house of God," Judges xx, 26, should be "Bethel;" "an hollow place that was in the jaw," Judges xv, 19, should be "the hollow place that is in Lehi;" "populous No," Nah. iii, 8, should be "No-Ammon;" "an heifer of three years old," Isa. xv, 5, should have been left untranslated; so should "what he did," Num. xxi, 14. On the contrary, "the book of Jasher," 2 Sam. i, 18, is not by an author of that name, but is simply the book of the upright. "Rab-saris" and "Rab-mag," Jer. xxxix, 3, are not names of men, but titles of office. "Belial" is not the name of an evil spirit, but "men of Belial" ought to be rendered "worthless" or "base men." "Huzzab," Nah. ii, 7, is not a personification of Nineveh, or a name of its queen, but a declaration that the fate of the city "is decided." "Sheth," Num. xxiv, 17, should be "tumult;" "Bajith," Isa. xv, 2, should be the "house" or "idol temple;" "Gammadims," Ezek. xxvii, 11, should be "warriors;" "Pannag," ver. 17, is not a region of country, but a species of confection; and there was no such place as "Metheg-ammah," 2 Sam. viii, 1.

MISTAKES OF THE MEANING.—A few instances occur in which words of a peculiar formation have been en-

tirely mistaken by our translators, and divided into two words when they are in reality one. Thus, the word translated "thick clay," Hab. ii, 6, is not a compound term yielding this sense, but a reduplicated form from a single root, and means "pledges," or goods taken in pledge by an extortionate creditor; and "shameful spewing," ver. 16, is but a single word meaning "ignominy." The awkward expression, Hos. iv, 18, "her rulers with shame do love, Give ye," should be rendered, "her rulers are in love with shame." The "scape goat" of Lev. xvi, 8, is one word, not two, and has no reference to the goat at all.

The cases are frequent in which the meanings of words are altogether mistaken, although the forms are not misconceived nor the words improperly divided. Thus, the word translated "avenging," Judges v, 2, means "leaders;" "the plain of Moreh," Gen. xii, 6, ought to be "the oak of Moreh;" "the groves," so frequently spoken of in connection with idolatrous services, as Ex. xxxiv, 13, were not groves, but upright pillars. Job. xxvi, 13, does not speak of the "crooked," nor Isaiah xxvii, 1, of the "piercing" serpent; the epithet, which is the same in both cases, is "fleet." The psalmist does not say, Ps. lxxi, 22, "I will sing with the harp," but "I will play with the harp." Huldah did not dwell in the "college," 2 Kings xxii, 14, but in the "second ward" of the city. "Since that time," Isa. xvi, 13, should be "of old;" "flagons of wine," Hos. iii, 1, should be "cakes of pressed grapes;" "galleries," Cant. vii, 5, should be "curls" or "locks of hair." Hosea xi, 12, does not use the language of praise, "Judah yet ruleth with God," but of censure, "he roveth or runs wild in his dealings with him." Isaiah ix, 1, does not contrast a former

light affliction of Galilee with a subsequent more grievous affliction of the same region, but the period of dishonor with the glory that was to be shed upon that region by the coming Redeemer. "All that make sluices and ponds for fish," Isa. xix, 10, is a mere guess from the connection, and should be rendered, "all that work for hire are sad at heart." Samson did not go down to "the top of the rock," Judges xv, 8, but to the "cleft of the rock." The children of Israel did not by divine direction "borrow," Ex. xi, 2, of the Egyptians what they never intended to return; they "asked" for and received gifts. "Chariots with flaming torches," Nah. ii, 3, are "chariots with flashing steel;" and "the fir trees" of the same verse are lances made of cypress. "Hunt souls to make them fly," Ezek. xiii, 20, should be rendered, "hunt souls as birds;" and the "untempered mortar," ver. 10, should be "whitewash."

Such mistakes are especially frequent in articles of dress or in objects of natural history. The "headbands, and tablets, and earrings," Isa. iii, 20, should be "sashes, and perfume boxes, and amulets." Joseph's "coat of many colors," Gen. xxxvii, 3, was instead "a long tunic with sleeves." It was not a "veil" but a "mantle," Ruth iii, 15, in which Ruth carried the barley. "Pillows to all armholes," Ezek. xiii, 18, should be "cushions for the knuckles." The men that were cast into the fiery furnace were bound, not in "their coats, their hosen and their hats," but in "their trowsers, their tunics, and their mantles." The Chaldeans, Ezek. xxiii, 15, "exceeding with dyed attire," wore "flowing turbans," and the best illustration of the entire description is to be found in the figures portrayed on the palaces of Nineveh. The "mules,"

Gen. xxxvi, 24, ought to be rendered, "warm springs." The "unicorn," Num. xxiii, 22, is a wild ox. In Isaiah xiii, 21, 22, the "owls" are "ostriches;" the "satyrs" are "goats;" the "wild beasts of the islands" are "wolves," and the "dragons" are "jackals."

ERRORS IN HEBREW GRAMMAR.—There are, besides, many passages in which the rendering given in the Authorized Version is in violation of the laws of Hebrew grammar. The most frequently recurring error is the disregard of the tenses, particularly in the poetical and prophetic books of the Old Testament, to the serious detriment, and often to the total obscuration of the sense. In Ps. iii, 4, David does not say, "I cried" and "he heard," and ver. 5, "the Lord sustained," as though he were relating what had already taken place; but "I will cry," "he will hear," "the Lord will sustain:" it is the language of confident expectation. Ps. xxxvii, 40, should not be translated, "the Lord shall help them and deliver them," but he "has helped them and delivered them;" it is a fact of former experience, from which he then goes on to infer that he will do the same in the future, "he shall deliver them from the wicked and save them." By the neglect of the tenses the two clauses are made identical in sense, and the whole argument of faith is lost. In Ps. xl, 11, David does not say, "Withhold not thou thy tender mercies," but "thou wilt not withhold;" it is not the language of petition, but of faith. In Obadiah, vs. 12-14, the verbs should be rendered, "look not," "rejoice not," etc., instead of "thou shouldest not have looked," "thou shouldest not have rejoiced," etc. Hab. iii, 3, should not be "God came," but "God will come." The language of the Authorized

Version implies that these prophets were narrating or referring to what was past; whereas they are predicting the future.

This confusing of the tenses is of almost perpetual occurrence in the Psalms and in the Prophets, leading to serious inversions in the order of thought, and marring the beauty and force of the language used.

DISREGARD OF THE DEFINITE ARTICLE.—Another frequent inaccuracy is the disregard of the definite article, either failing to render it where it does occur, or inserting it where it is not. Sometimes this is attended with serious detriment to the sense, as where “an angel of the LORD” is substituted for “the angel of the LORD,” a created for the uncreated angel. Judges xxi, 19, should not read, “There is a feast of the LORD in Shiloh,” but “the feast of the LORD is in Shiloh;” it is spoken of not with vague indefiniteness, but as a definite, well-known observance.

INACCURACY IN THE CONSTRUCTION.—It may be added that there is frequently an inaccuracy in the construction, as where possessive pronouns are attached to the wrong noun. Thus, Ps. iv, 1, David addresses the Lord not as the Authorized Version has it, “God of my righteousness,” as though his meaning were the God who defends my righteous cause, but “my righteous God.” Ps. lix, 17, not “God of my mercy,” but “my merciful God.” Ps. xlvii, 8, not “the throne of his holiness;” Ps. xlviii, 1, not “the mountain of his holiness,” but “his holy throne,” “his holy mountain.” Isa. xiii, 3, not “them that rejoice in my highness,” but “my proud exulters.” Errors in relative constructions, *e.g.*, Isa. vii, 16, not “the land, that thou

abhorrest, shall be forsaken of both her kings," but "the land, of whose two kings thou art afraid, shall be forsaken." Ps. lv, 19, not "God shall hear and afflict them. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God," but "God shall hear and answer them, who have no changes and who fear not God," *i.e.*, as he heard me in mercy, ver. 17, so he will hear them in wrath, answering not their prayers, for they do not pray, but the voice of their malignant slanders. And other miscellaneous constructions, which it is needless to particularize in further detail, *e.g.*, Ezek. xxxiv, 31, not "ye my flock are men," but "ye men are my flock." Ps. vii, 13, not "ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors," but "maketh his arrows burning." Ps. x, 4, not "God is not in all his thoughts," but "all his thoughts are, There is no God." Ps. xix, 3, not "There is no speech nor language *where* their voice is not heard," as though the Psalmist were speaking of the universality of God's self-revelation in nature. The insertion of the italic word "*where*" entirely deranges the relation of the clauses, and introduces a totally different thought from that which David intended. He means that all nature has a voice, though it is not addressed to man's outward ear. "There is no speech nor language; their voice is not heard." Ps. xxii, 30, not "it shall be accounted unto the Lord for a generation," but "it shall be related of the Lord unto the next generation." Num. xxiii, 23, not "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to the time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!" The meaning is not that God's divine power will effectually guard Israel against all hostile arts of enchantment: but Israel has no need

to resort to deceptive and unauthorized modes of learning the divine will, for this will is disclosed to them as their needs may require. "There is no enchantment in Jacob, nor divination in Israel; at the time it shall be told to Jacob and Israel what God hath wrought." The italic words, *into a trance*, Num. xxiv, 4, obscure the statement of the overpowering physical effect produced upon Balaam by the splendor of the divine revelations. The italic words, *to wit*, improperly inserted in Josh. xvii, 1, precisely reverse the meaning of the clause: It is designed to explain why no lot was cast for Machir now; the reason is, because his possession had already been assigned to him east of the Jordan.

DUTY OF REVISIONISTS.—Such illustrations could be multiplied. Those which have been already given are sufficient to show that, with the light that has been shed upon the Hebrew language, and the increased information gained upon subjects collateral to the study of the Old Testament since the days of King James, a great number of passages are understood now in a sense different from that given by our translators. To make those corrections in the renderings which the general voice of the best scholars affirms ought to be made, is not to unsettle the Scriptures and to weaken their hold upon the public mind, but the reverse. Innovations are not to be recklessly or needlessly made. But the removal of palpable errors and mistakes is simply extracting the fly from the pot of ointment. The marvel is not that occasional changes are needed to increase the perfection of the Authorized Version and to bring it nearer to the standard of the best biblical scholarship of the time, but that, considering the period when it was

made and the scanty helps which were then possessed, the changes required are not more numerous and more radical. It is absolutely astonishing to find to how large an extent this grand old version must be confessed to be still the most adequate and accurate translation that can now be made; and how vast a proportion of its renderings can be subjected to the most rigorous tests that modern learning can apply without the detection of a single flaw.