

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

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## REVIEW SECTION.

### I.—SYMPOSIUM ON MODERN CRITICISM.

#### HAS MODERN CRITICISM AFFECTED UNFAVORABLY ANY OF THE ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY?

NO. II.

BY D. S. GREGORY, D.D., PRESIDENT OF LAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY.

OUR subject suggests three questions : (1) What is to be understood by Modern Criticism? (2) What are the Essential Doctrines of Christianity? (3) Has Modern Criticism affected these Doctrines unfavorably? The answers to the first two of these questions must of necessity shape that of the third.

#### I. WHAT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY MODERN CRITICISM?

All scientific forms of Criticism are of essentially modern origin. In its application to literature Criticism is the impartial judgment of productions of thought by certain accepted and accredited canons or principles. It aims to understand a production in its faults and excellences, in its parts and its totality, both as it is in itself and as it is in its vital relations.

It is manifest from this brief statement that Criticism is most likely to fail in point of comprehensiveness. As the application of certain canons in judging of a production, it may fail by the erroneous use of approved canons, or by the application of unestablished or indefensible canons. While, therefore, a true and broad criticism in dealing with the Bible leads to a profound and comprehensive knowledge and appreciation of it from every point of view, the result of defective criticism, unintelligent and rationalistic, has been shallow views of God's Word, and at least hesitant belief in its essential doctrines on the part of those who have accepted its conclusions.

It seems so obvious that a true criticism of the Bible, in a broad and generous sense, has been a source of such constant and incalculable enlightenment and enlargement of our Christian views, that it may be taken for granted that we are to understand by "modern criticism," in the question under consideration, criticism in its narrow

considered, the essential doctrine of Spiritual Influences has therefore been confirmed rather than shaken.

The results of Modern Rationalistic Criticism, as affecting the Essential Doctrines of Christianity, have therefore been, to sum them up in brief, both bad and good. The faith of the weak has too often been unsettled, their peace of mind destroyed and their morality and spirituality undermined. On the other hand, the old truths stand fast. The rationalistic canons that have been applied to them, whether professedly drawn from agnostic science, intuition, feeling, literary instinct, or naturalism, have been utterly false and baseless themselves, and have been demonstrated to be so; or they have led to erroneous and worthless results by false methods of application. With the advancing ages the Christianity of the Bible is seen more and more clearly to rest on such a solid foundation of fact in man, nature, and God, that the old revealed truth can no more be uprooted than the pillars of the universe. In fine, the words of one of the broadest-minded theologians of the age, the sainted Henry B. Smith, express the sound thought and firm faith of the strong men of the Christian Church of the day:

“The theology which is pre-eminently needed in our times is that whose substance and manner have met the needs of men in all times. This, in its essential principles, is the old, time-honoring theology of the Christian Church, with its two foci of sin and of redemption, all viewed as dependent on God. It is based upon the solid granite rock (the only true *petra*), and built up of living stones, in massive proportions, rising ever upward until its aspiring lines fade away in the bosom of the infinite, whither it leads us that there we may rest. That old theology—older than our schools, older than the earth and the stars—coeval with the Godhead; always yet never old, never yet ever new; it is dateless and deathless as the divine decree, yet fresh as the dawning light of a new day in every new-born soul; it has been known from the beginning to all penitent and believing souls.”

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## II.—WHAT SHOULD BE THE ATTITUDE OF THE AMERICAN CLERGY TOWARDS THE REVISED VERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES ?

NO. I.

BY PROF. BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD, D.D., ALLEGHENY, PA.

I MAY as well say frankly at the outset that I do not think the Revised Version perfect. Or, if this be deemed a barren assertion, I do not object to whittling it to a sharper point by putting it into the form of a confession that the Revised Version appears to me to be deformed by many faults which could have been avoided. The Revised Version needs revision. If any one felt it worth while, it would be easy to make out a bill of indictment against it very similar in appearance to those made out fifteen years ago against King James' New Testament, and collected by Dr. Schaff into an instructive volume.\* Take

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\* “The revision of the E. V. of the N. T.,” etc. Harpers. New York, 1873.

Dr. Lightfoot's treatise as an example: the necessity of a fresh revision is urged by him on account of errors in it arising from false readings, the creation of artificial distinctions and obliteration of real ones, faults of grammar and lexicography, archaisms, etc. Does any one doubt that items can be produced for every one of these heads from the Revised Version? Suppose, for an archaism, we turn to Nahum ii: 9: "There is none end of the store, the glory of all pleasant furniture." Is that nineteenth century English? Or is it good modern English to say "my inward friends" (Job xix: 19); or, "his neesings" (Job xlv: 18); or, "I will work and who shall let it" (Isa. xliii: 13)? As to artificial distinctions, it is the same word that is "goodness" in Hosea vi: 4 and "mercy" in verse 6. When Hosea (xii: 3) wishes to recall Gen. xxxii: 28 to his readers' minds, the revisers do what they can to prevent him by translating the one passage "thou hast striven with God," and the other, "he had power with God." The word that is "mercy" in Ps. ciii: 8 is "loving kindness," in Ps. li: 1, while "mercy" occurs twice in that verse as the translation of two other words. Thus the two faults of creation of artificial distinctions and obliteration of real ones go hand in hand—a matter that could be tolerably copiously illustrated. Examples of a certain coarseness of grammatical work are equally easy to adduce, as for instance such renderings of the aorist participle as "I beheld satan fallen as lightning from heaven" (Luke x: 18), and "I saw a light shining around about me" (Acts xxvi: 13, cp. also xv: 13, etc.)—renderings as inconsistent with each other, as both are inconsistent with good grammar; or the remarkable "that one of you hath his father's wife" (1 Cor. v: 1); or the inadequate treatment of the tense in "crieth" of Is. vi: 3, and "he made" of Ps. vii: 15. As to errors arising from the retention of a faulty text, quite a number could be gleaned from each Testament. And it may not be amiss for me to say frankly that I should personally like to see the whole text-critical portion of the margin of both Testaments swept into the waste-basket, where I think it belongs. What possible good purpose can all the talk about "most," "many," "some," "a few," "ancient authorities" (*sic*)—of which confused and confusing notes there are no less than 399, if my count be correct, in the New Testament, often inconsistently and misleadingly framed—or about "some ancient versions" serve? Such things are necessarily *caviare* to the general." Whenever a reading is so well witnessed that doubt arises whether it be not genuine, it should be put into the margin with a simple "or . . . ." The effort to make a show of text-critical processes in the margin of a popular volume is sure to breed misconception, even if it be not a pedantic impertinence.

This is scarcely the proper opportunity, however, for collecting the errors of the Revision. The samples that I have given are doubtless enough to illustrate my assertion that this revision is deformed by

errors of every one of the classes that were urged against the Authorized Version as reasons for its revision. If it be replied that the number of faults in the A. V. was a more potent reason for revising it, than their mere variety, I answer that I have not undertaken to show that the Revised Version is in need of revision to an equal extent, but only alike with the Authorized. And I am grateful for being led thus easily to the second assertion which I had in mind to make at the outset.

It is this: The Revised Version appears to me to be almost incomparably better than the Authorized Version. I desire to make this observation as pointedly as I made the former one. Some people seem to think that when they have collected and tabulated a number of petty faults (mixed often with a greater number of individual preferences) with the triumphant result of showing that the Revised Version is not perfect, they have settled everything. I beg leave, on the contrary, to remind the readers of this Review that the practical question before the English-speaking Christian world to-day concerns not absolute but relative perfection. It will not do to neglect to note, collect, appreciate (or try to get corrected, for that matter), the faults of the Revised Version; and I for one have no words but those of respect for the scholars who are doing this somewhat disagreeable work. But when they are collected and tabulated and tested and proved, they do not amount to a corporal's guard compared with the mixed multitude that rushes upon us from the noble and competently accurate but inexact version which we call the Authorized Version. And this fact it will not do to neglect either. The pity of the thing is that when the comparatively few and unimportant faults of the Revision are gathered together and spread out to view, many look upon them in so sadly one-sided a way that they never think of asking either of the two very important (or necessary, rather) questions: What proportion do these faults bear to the whole mass of matter in this version? and what proportion do they bear to the faults in other versions? I am not concerned nor inclined to minimize these faults; here they are and I am very sorry for every one of them, and would gladly see them removed. But it is quite impossible to overlook either of these two facts: they are inappreciable as compared with the great army of passages accurately and felicitously rendered, and there is no other version in any tongue that possesses so few of them. If on the one side, then, we must frankly own that the Revised Version is not perfect, on the other let us frankly own that it is the most perfect of versions.

As regards its purity relative to our Authorized Version, a very simple test suggested by the use I have made above of Bishop Lightfoot's treatise may be sufficient here. Dr. Schaff, in his valuable introduction to the volume there cited, gives, among other errors, twenty-one instances in which the A. V., to the hurt of the sense,

neglects the Greek article ; in every one of these cases the appropriate correction has been made by the Revised Version. In the immediately preceding pages he tabulated twenty-seven\* cases of mistranslation; all but three of these are corrected in the text of the Revision, and the remaining three in the margin. These again are but samples. The truth is, that it is but little appreciated how many the changes made by the Revision are ; and when men see a considerable list of inaccuracies gleaned from its pages, they begin to feel that the changes must be usually for the worse. The remedy is to realize how small a proportion of the whole number of alterations introduced, and how much smaller a proportion of the whole text these few and usually unimportant errors constitute. According to Mr. Wendell R. V. of the New Testament contains 179,914 words, 154,526 of which are retained from the A. V., so that about 86 per cent. of the R. V. is A. V. This leaves 25,388 words which are new to the Revision. What proportion of these 25,000 words have been challenged as inaccurate or unhappy by the critics of even the most trenchant pens? What proportion of them have been *proved* to be such? The case is similar in the Old Testament. A careful writer informs us that 830 changes have been made in Judges; 684 in Psalms i.-xli.; 335 in Hosea; 1,389 in Job. If we take Judges and Job as samples, this gives us an average of four changes to every three verses. But when the whole mass of renderings to which objection can be raised on any ground are gathered together, how far short they fall of this average! Let the most carping critic loose on Judges or Job, and will he be able to find a fault and a third in every verse, *which is not common to the two versions?* But if not, he confesses that the alterations made by the Revisers are in general good and serviceable, and therefore that the book is a better version than the old one.

I cannot take space to illustrate the nature of the improvements that have been made. They are pervasive and reach deeper than the surface. Much of the prophecy and poetry of the Old Testament now becomes for the first time clear, or even comprehensible to the English reader. But if testimony is worth anything, I can testify that having personally collated in the most exact way almost half of the New Testament, I have found the vast majority of the changes distinct improvements. Even in the matter of the English style of the Revision—and its bad English runs all the way from pure Cockneyisms up to such pedantic and stiff renderings that it ceases to be English at all, and becomes Greek in an English dress—the critics appear to me to have used very exaggerated language: the English is illegitimately harsh only in spots which might be easily revised, and generally needs only to become familiar to be loved. And in all that

\* I stop short, in this count, of the items regarding coins, etc., which the Americans only correct properly in the Revision.

goes to make a version of a divine book good—fidelity to the form and spirit of the original, accuracy and strength of rendering—it is a very marked improvement on any popularly used version in English before it.

Now, what should be the attitude of the American clergy towards this book? Primarily, I should say, an attitude of even-handed justice. This means, on the one side, that its faults should be frankly and readily confessed; and it means, on the other side, that its excellences should find equally ready and hearty recognition. And it means, still further, that the real proportion that exists between these faults and excellences should be correctly estimated and allowed to govern our thinking and action towards the version. If the relative excellence of the two versions actually be as I have represented, this even-handed justice will mean nothing less than the hearty acceptance of the Revised Version and the substitution of it in our use, private and public, for the Authorized Version, just as rapidly as the vested love of our flocks for the old form of words will permit us to make so great a change.

This acceptance, of course, must not be allowed to tie our hands against the effort to get the Revised Version itself so revised as to free it from the faults that mar its perfection. Just in proportion to the heartiness with which I accept it as my version does my zeal grow to have it perfected. And I see no good reason why its recognized errors should wait until the twentieth century for correction. No time for correcting them so good as the present can be hoped for; they are not yet so entrenched in our use and wont as to appear old friends whose "removal" seems murder; and the making and criticising of the New Version has prepared a race of scholars to perform the work, such as a new generation may not produce. I see no reason why the Revised Version should not pass through a series of improved editions as rapidly as the first English translations in Tyndall's and Coverdale's time—resulting now, as then, in a fixed form of greater excellence. Let the twentieth century correct the errors she discovers; let us correct those that disturb us.

Nor, on the other hand, must this acceptance be so overzealous as to trample on the rights of the old version to our admiration for its own excellences, or on the right of God's people to have God's Word dealt out to them in an accustomed and beloved form. It does not in the least follow, because the Revised Version is much better than the Authorized, that the latter is therefore worthless. Not only is it the well of English undefiled above all other fountains, but it is God's Word competently exact in its rendering for all practical purposes. It has been the instrument of the Spirit for the saving and sanctifying of millions of souls, as well as the admiration and despair of all masters of English style. He who, because in God's grace he has

got a better version than even this "Queen of Versions" itself, can condemn this, or fail to be enraptured with its majestic cadences and balanced harmony, betrays great littleness of spirit. We still read Coverdale's Psalms with delight and reverence. But a greater than Coverdale is here. Just because it is such, we cannot afford to drive it out of the house of God with cords. Men love it; even its faulty renderings start vibrations in thousands of souls: and the saint whose rebellious heart has been conquered by it, and whose broken heart has been comforted by it, has a right to hear its doubly precious words so long as he longs for them. Let us honor this truly honorable sentiment, and be governed in our supplanting the good with the better by both wisdom and tenderness. To wean need not be to take away nourishment. Let the taste of the better be so wisely imparted that the hungry soul shall gradually seek and prefer it.

To those of our clergy who cannot, like me, so heartily prefer the new to the old, I should say, At least, give this version a fair chance. It may be that its failure to command our immediate acceptance is due to something in us rather than its own shortcomings; an unreasoning, though certainly not unreasonable devotion to the Bible of our youth and inheritance and associations—a certain amount of shocked resentment at alterations in familiar and precious texts—a general sense of newness, like the smell of new paint—a, so to speak, away-from-home-ness in its pages. We should not act hastily. All these are excellent reasons for temporary hesitation; but none of them are sound grounds for a permanent attitude. When the Revised New Testament first appeared I substituted it for the old in my private and devotional reading, just with the design of discovering how it would stand so severe a test. After four years it is so entrenched in my affections that I could not return to the familiar use of the old version without the sense of a great loss. My heart, as well as my judgment, prefers the new. I believe that this experience awaits all who try a like experiment. Our memories are kept filled with the sweet sounds of the dear old wording, because we keep them refreshed by constant re-reading; the favorite texts of this year are to a considerable extent supplanted by a new set of equally precious ones next year; and these new ones, gradually taking the place of the old—though perhaps never entirely displacing them all—may as well as not come from a new version. Above all, the superior exactness of the Revised Version brings the heart one step nearer to the Word itself. Shall we lightly estimate this gain?

We owe it to our people, too, to give the new version a chance among them. Let the people see whether they really do prefer the old to the new. My own pastor appears to me to have admirably managed this. He does not obtrude the Revised Version, but it is always in the pulpit, and sometimes one, sometimes the other, some-

times both are used: and, as both are constantly appealed to and frequently compared, the people are led to realize that both represent the Word of God. I have never heard of any one who objected to this process. Everybody seems pleased, instructed, edified: and, meanwhile, the Revised Version has its chance. Each parishioner gradually acquires a grounded notion of the comparative value of the two; and better than that, no one can fail to acquire, whichever version he finally prefers, a respect for the other and a regard for the preferences of others.

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### III.—BOOKS FOR THE CLERGYMAN'S LIBRARY.

#### NO. I.

BY LYMAN ABBOTT, D.D., EDITOR OF "CHRISTIAN UNION."

THE editors of the HOMILETIC REVIEW ask me to give its readers a paper on the books which should be in the libraries of all clergymen. To recommend a book to another is almost as difficult and delicate a proceeding as to recommend a friend or a wife. The value of a book depends upon the mind which is in it, as does the value of a friend; and the value of mind is always relative, not absolute. The mind which is helpful and stimulating to one is vapid or irritating to another, and the book which is meaty to one is an empty shell to another. Carlyle, Ruskin, Emerson, George MacDonald, Madam Guyon, Fenelon, Thomas a Kempis, Jeremy Taylor, Henry Ward Beecher, John Milton (prose works), are all, in my personal experience, authors to be taken up for the half-hour; but some of the friends whom I most value and esteem are irritated by Carlyle, wearied by Ruskin, dazed by Emerson, impatient of MacDonald, and so on to the end of the list. My friend likes raw oysters, and I with difficulty endure them. There is no disputing about tastes.

Instead, therefore, of attempting to give a list of books which should be in the libraries of all clergymen, and which, if I were to give a literal interpretation to the phrase, would be a very small list indeed, I shall content myself with speaking of certain types or styles of book, with some specific illustrations. And perhaps I may best do this in a semi-autobiographical manner. I am writing these words in a small library-room looking out upon the Hudson, with my literary companions about me. This is my workshop, and the shelves which now extend from the floor to the ceiling and over every door and every window, leaving as the sole blank space a little wall room over the fire-place for pictures, contain about three thousand volumes. It is not a large library; but it has in it very few books that are not at times practically useful. Its foundation was laid some twenty-five years ago. Going into the ministry and having then but fifty dollars to invest in a ministerial library, I asked Dr. Thompson, of the Broadway Tabernacle, Professor Stowe, of Andover, and Henry Ward