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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—“HAS MODERN CRITICISM AFFECTED UNFAVORABLY ANY OF THE ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY?”

NO. III.

BY PROF. E. C. BISSELL, D.D., HARTFORD, CONN.

This question may be answered by yes and no. If it be understood to refer to the immediate effects of some forms of modern biblical criticism on the minds of men, that is, if it be understood in a subjective sense, the answer must be yes. If, however, it be taken in an objective sense, as referring to the doctrines of Christianity themselves rather than to the opinions of men respecting them, the answer should be, as unhesitatingly, no. It may, perhaps, be advisable to treat the question in both of these aspects. Moreover, we shall consider ourselves at liberty to discuss it almost exclusively from the point of view of the Old Testament.

Let it be premised that no exception can fairly be taken to biblical criticism in itself considered. Is is as legitimate as any other form of criticism. We often hear objections raised against it, especially against the so-called “higher criticism,” as though the thing itself were evil, a sure indication of hostility to the Bible. The mistake arises from ignorance of the sphere and aim of all legitimate biblical criticism. Its aim is not to discover grounds for censure. It is just as little to find excellences to admire. It covers a very limited field of inquiry. It concerns itself with certain definite questions which, however broad may be their ultimate bearing, are, in themselves, of narrow scope, and generally of a literary or historical character. It is supposed to deal with acknowledged facts.

It is the aim of criticism, for example, in the department of the Old Testament, to use all the means at its command, such as grammar and lexicon, literary analysis, archeological discoveries, doctrinal teaching, logical and chronological adjustments, to find out whether current opinions concerning the origin of its books be true or

thing as biblical truth and Christian truth; that to investigate and write and speak as a Christian is in no sense incompatible with investigating, writing and speaking with scientific candor and accuracy; that, in fact, the only presuppositions to be regarded as really safe for those whose aim in thought is truth and in life is duty, are the spirit and the teachings of Jesus Christ.

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

NO. II.

BY T. D. WITHERSPOON, D.D., LL.D., LOUISVILLE, KY.

The question submitted for our consideration in these papers is opportune. The Revised Version has now been for some time in the hands of the people. The charms of its novelty have worn off with daily use. The curiosity at first felt as to the innovations made by the revisers has been satisfied. All that was sensational in connection with its first appearance has died away. The Revision must now stand, if it stand at all, upon the simple basis of merit. The time has come when we may look dispassionately in the face the question as to the position it ought to occupy in the church and in the public mind.

The question proposed by the editors of this REVIEW is not only opportune but momentous. As far as the fate of the Revision in this country is concerned, it may be said to be decisive. Whilst the intelligent laity of the land have taken a deep interest in the revision movement from its very inception; whilst they have contributed freely towards its expenses, and have looked forward hopefully to its results, yet it must be apparent to all that the movement for revision has not grown out of any felt want on their part of a better version. It has been pre-eminently the ministry, the men whose lives have been devoted to the interpretation and exposition of the Scriptures, who have felt the defects of the Authorised Version, and have longed for one that would give more accurate expression to the mind of the Holy Spirit speaking through the written word. Should there be, therefore, on the part of the clergy an attitude of hostility, or even of lukewarmness towards the New Revision, there is no ground-swell of popular sympathy with it that would bear it on to established and authoritative usage amongst us. On the other hand, if the clergy, under a strong conviction of the superiority and helpfulness of the Revised Version, should throw the whole weight of its influence in favor of its adoption, and should persist in pressing its claims to recognition, there is little doubt that in due time the popular mind would be weaned from that reverence, almost bordering upon superstition,

with which the Authorised Version is regarded, and would heartily accept and learn to hold in equal veneration, the version upon which the scholarship of the present day has so assiduously labored. So that the question of the attitude of the American people towards the revision may be said to be involved in that of the attitude of the clergy.

It will be seen also that the question before us has a very different scope from that which would be legitimate if the revision were only a movement in contemplation, and not as now an accomplished fact. In the former case there would enter as an essential element the question whether the popular mind, now resting with some good degree of unanimity and contentment in the use of the old version, ought to be disturbed by the suggestion of a new one. In the present instance, the disturbance, incident to the proposal, whether considerable or inconsiderable, has already taken place. The wave of popular commotion, whether large or small, has broken over Christendom. Our discussion follows in its wake.

In the former case there would be reasonable ground of doubt whether a suitable body of men, selected from the various denominations and the different English-speaking peoples, of sufficient numbers and prominence to give weight to the movement, could be brought to unite in the recommendation of such specific changes as would be necessary to a true revision. Happily, we are relieved from all misgiving on this head by the substantial harmony that from the beginning has attended the revision which we are called to consider.

Last, but not least, in advance of the revision movement the advocates of a true conservatism, whilst fully appreciating the importance of certain changes in the received version, might well stand in dread lest, when once the flood-gates of revision were opened, the tide of innovation might sweep far beyond the safe limits contemplated when the movement was begun. This fear might be felt alike by the conservative theologian who dreaded lest some of the foundations of orthodoxy might feel the incoming tide, and by the conservative philologist who looked to our King James' Version as one of the bulwarks of pure Anglo-Saxon and classic English, and dreaded the radicalism that expresses itself in the "fonetics" and other follies of the day.

If any such fears were entertained when the present revision was proposed, they are at rest now. The old bulwarks of theology and of philology stand unshaken. No doctrine is affected; no latitudinarianism is encouraged; no provincialisms or impurities of language have crept in.

We thus approach the question of the attitude of the clergy under circumstances most favorable to an answer; and now what shall the answer be?

I. We are not prepared to advocate the substitution of the Re-

vised Version in the place of that which has so long been the standard of reference and quotation, whether this substitution be with or without the authorization of the proper ecclesiastical officers and tribunals. It is evident that such a substitution, if made at all, should be generally and even universally made. Anything else would tend to confusion. There must be some one standard from which quotations are to be taken and to which references are to be made. The course pursued by many of our more impulsive ministers in introducing the Revised Version into their pulpits immediately upon its appearance from the press, and in discarding altogether the use of the Authorized Version in the public reading and preaching of the Word, was subversive of that order which is "Heaven's first law." Until there shall be a general consent, through the action of ecclesiastical bodies or otherwise, that the new shall be substituted for the old, the old should occupy its place of honor and reverence as the version to be solemnly read and expounded in the public services of the house of God.

We go still further and hold that the clergy should not seek through acts of ecclesiastical bodies or otherwise to have the New Revision take the place of the Old. In saying this, I would by no means disparage the labors of the Revisers or throw discredit upon their work. They have done all that under the circumstances they could do, all that could probably have been done by the learning and scholarship of the day; but they have not produced a version which we could afford to substitute for the one now in use. The disabilities under which they labored were such as they were powerless to remove, but they were none the less real and vital. Some of these it may be proper briefly to review. The first and most serious one was the want of a proper *Textus Receptus* to form the basis of their work. They were like men set to correct the irregularities of a wall with no accurate square or plumb-line or measuring-rod. This defect they sought earnestly to supply, but in the nature of the case could not supply perfectly. Until a more thorough recension is made in the light of recently discovered texts and versions, the original text is too uncertain a norm for the delicate shades of revision which must be introduced into the version, which, as authorized, is to become the permanent heritage of the Church. If we should press our New Revision upon the acceptance of the Church it would be but a few years until, with the advancing light of critical study of the received text, its incongruities would become apparent and another revision be required. Better retain in its place the Old, with its manifest and admitted imperfections, (which, however, do not touch any vital point), than to introduce one which, by reason of the state of the original text, is necessarily uncertain with the probability that it also must soon be set aside.

So much for the first and most serious disability. Now we come to

a second, arising out of the state and tone of English literature at the present time. I am not much of a philologist, and may not be able to make myself as fully understood as I would like, but certain it is that the tone of the English language at the present time seems to be peculiarly unsuited to the construction of a version which shall retain the rhythm and melody of the one which it is proposed to supersede. If any man be in doubt as to this defect in the tone of our literature to-day let him only take the most approved forms of prayer, that have appeared within the last generation and compare them with the liturgies of the Reformed Churches written centuries ago. Let him compare the most attractive marriage service with that found in the Book of Common Prayer. And when I have said this by way of preface, none will, I trust, accuse me of disparagement when I say that there is a fearful inequality in smoothness, elegance and sonorousness, between the sentences which have felt the touch of the revisers' hands and those which they have permitted to pass untouched. And yet in a version which is intended for public reading in the ears of the people, these qualities to which I have referred are by no means to be overlooked. And so I conclude that this homely and matter-of-fact age of ours, when men are accustomed to call a spade a spade, is not exactly the day for a revision which is to present us with a version that shall be good for generations to come. A third hampering cause, and the only other one to which I will allude, is that occasioned by the peculiar form which the movement for revision assumed. It must be remembered that this movement was not œcumenical as far even as the English-speaking churches are concerned. The revision was undertaken under the patronage of the English Church. Our American Revision Committee sustained only advisory relations. They did not make a constituent part of the Revision Committee itself. Their suggestions were many of them adopted, but they were adopted simply as suggestions *ab extra*. Our American Committee was not in the heart of the movement. The result is that many of the most valuable suggestions made by them remain simply as suggestions, constituting a valuable "Appendix" at the close of the volume, reminding one of the kangaroo, which is said to be strongest in its hindmost parts. Certainly for the American people at least, the version would have been more acceptable if the revision had proceeded upon a more Catholic plan.

II. But whilst we are not prepared to recommend the Revision as the standard version of Scripture, there is a duty which we owe to the Revisers which we should not be slow in recognizing, or remiss in discharging. We should always and everywhere bear cheerful testimony to the scholarliness and fidelity of the service which they so laboriously and generously rendered to the generation in which they live. It is only necessary to run over the list of Revisers either in

the Old Testament or the New Testament Section to assure ourselves that they are representative men, thoroughly abreast of the learning and scholarship of the age. Their work was not hastily and inconsiderately done. They devoted time and labor without stint. The world owes them a debt of gratitude that it cannot easily repay.

III. There should also be hearty acknowledgment of the immediate and practical benefits resulting from their work. The brief space allotted to this paper will allow me to refer to only a few of these. First, our congregations have been very much at the mercy of young and half-fledged exegetes in the pulpit, who challenge for their crude and unscholarly renderings of Scripture the sanction of modern scholarship, as opposed to the old and superseded renderings of a version made nearly three hundred years ago. Now the plain layman, having in his hand a version just revised, expressive of the best scholarship of our day, may bring the interpretations of the young preacher to the test, and so his vagaries will pass for only their true worth. And on the other hand the modest but scholarly divine who feels that the truth is not fully and clearly brought out in the accepted version, and yet who hesitates to place his own authority or that of any single commentator in opposition to the text, finds an unspeakable advantage in turning to the New Revision and deferring to an authority ready at hand, one which all will acknowledge. This support and comfort given by the Revised Version goes much further still. It forms an effectual defence against many of the weapons of modern infidelity, especially those which come from the direction of the New Criticism of the day. When we take into consideration the honesty and integrity, as well as the erudition and scholarship of the men who made this revision, their authority may be wielded with tremendous power against those who would apply their destructive criticism to the word of God. An instance of this kind occurred with me not a great while ago. A very intelligent Christian lady came into my study and said to me with an evident expression of surprise and pain, "I have called to ask you about that beautiful passage in Job, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' I understand that Dr. So-and-so, (referring to a gifted Theological Professor), severely criticised one of our young ministers for using that passage as a text, saying that it was a disputed passage and it did not mean what the translators supposed, and ought not to be in the Bible anyway." Now, to have opposed my authority to that of the Biblical Professor would have done no good; to have undertaken to carry the good lady through all the meshwork of criticism upon the passage would have been pedantic and futile. A very plain course, thanks to the New Revision, was open to me. I first handed her a list of the Old Testament Revision Company, and, when she had looked over it, I said: "Do you think you could trust that array of divines and scholars as against the

young Professor?" And, as her face brightened up, I threw open the Revised Version at the disputed passage, and handed it to her. She read aloud: "But I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth, etc."; and when she had finished she looked up with a smile, and said: "Why of course it's there; it's all right;" and without another word from me, her mind was at perfect rest. In this aspect of the work of the Revisers it is impossible to put too high an estimate upon its value.

IV. Ordinarily, no criticisms of the Authorized Version should be made in the pulpit which cannot be substantiated by reference to the Revised Version. I have not time to elaborate this thought, or present with any fulness the reasons for it, some of which have been already indicated in the course of this article. Whilst I do not deny that we have amongst us Biblical critics and scholars who are the equals of those who sat in the Revision Committees; and whilst these men should not be restrained of their liberty to bring the light of their own prayerful investigations to bear in the interpretation of God's Word, yet the course is to be deprecated of a general and indiscriminate fault-finding with the Received Version. I once heard a grave and venerable Ruling Elder say of a young and scholarly divine under whose ministry he sat for years, that he did not remember ever to have heard him preach a sermon in which he did not find fault with the English version, and he added, as the result, that a great many of the young people came to look upon our English version as utterly defective and worthless, and had their confidence in the Scriptures seriously impaired. Our younger ministers would certainly do well to confine their variations from the received readings of the English text to the New Revision with its text and marginal readings, or, if need be, its appendix with suggestions of the American Revisers.

V. In conclusion, the aim of the American Clergy should, I think, be steadfastly directed to such an education of the public mind as will gradually prepare it for the reception of the more perfect Revision when it shall come. How poorly the popular mind is at present prepared, was abundantly evidenced by the response given all over the land to the sledge-hammer blows of Dr. Talmage, when he threw the weight of his great influence not only against the defects of the Revision, but against the Revision itself. When he hugged King James' Version to his heart in the full strength of his dramatic power, and declared that the Revisers should not take away from us the Bible of our fathers, he appealed to an unintelligent instinct of the people, powerful as a superstition, and from which they can only be withdrawn by education—an education that shall work intelligent conviction of the superiority of a version that gives more perfect expression to the mind of the Holy Spirit speaking through the Sacred Writers. Such a version we need. Such a one, free from the defects of this

recent Revision, I confidently believe that we shall one day have; but, without the education of the public mind to which I refer, I do not believe that a Revision, written with the pen of the Angel Gabriel, would take the place in the popular mind and heart now occupied by the Authorized Version.

III.—SYMPOSIUM ON THE "NEW THEOLOGY."

WHAT ARE ITS ESSENTIAL FEATURES? IS IT BETTER THAN THE OLD?

NO. III.

BY REV. PHILIP S. MOXOM, BOSTON.

THE title of this paper presupposes something that can be defined. But that which can be defined is already approaching completeness. Definition belongs to the critical process rather than to the formative. In the present case, therefore, the title will be misleading, unless it be understood at the outset that it is descriptive of a spirit and tendency, or even of "a sentiment,"* rather than of a comparatively finished product. For want of a better name, the "New Theology" designates a tendency of theological thought at the present time, a spirit that characterizes an increasing number of thinkers and writers on theological subjects, and a sentiment that widely prevails in the Christian Church of to-day. This paper is an attempt to give, not a detailed and exact, but a suggestive expression of this tendency and sentiment. It is a brief study of the theological *Zeit Geist*, and in no sense a deliberate defence of any theology, new or old; though, let it frankly be affirmed, the sympathies of the writer are profoundly with the new.

There is, properly speaking, no new theology "school." The brilliant group of thinkers at Andover, who find voice in *The Andover Review*, and the large number of men in New England and elsewhere, who sympathize with those thinkers in their attempt to formulate a "progressive orthodoxy," may, with some propriety, be called a "school;" but even they do not constitute an authoritative representation. There are many representatives of the spirit to which the name "New Theology" is attached. In America, the late Elisha Mulford, LL.D.—*magnum atque venerabile nomen*—the Rev. T. T. Munger, D.D., Professor A. V. G. Allen, Rev. Newman Smyth, D.D., President Bascom, and many others, might be named as leading exponents of current theological thought. But there is no one name that has created, or is now creating, an authoritative system which is analogous, for example, to Calvinism. The day of theological despotism has passed, or is passing. We begin to live in "the Republic of God."

It is assumed by a large number of people that the dogma of "probation after death" is the distinguishing tenet of all who sympathize

* HOM. REVIEW for JANUARY, p. 12.