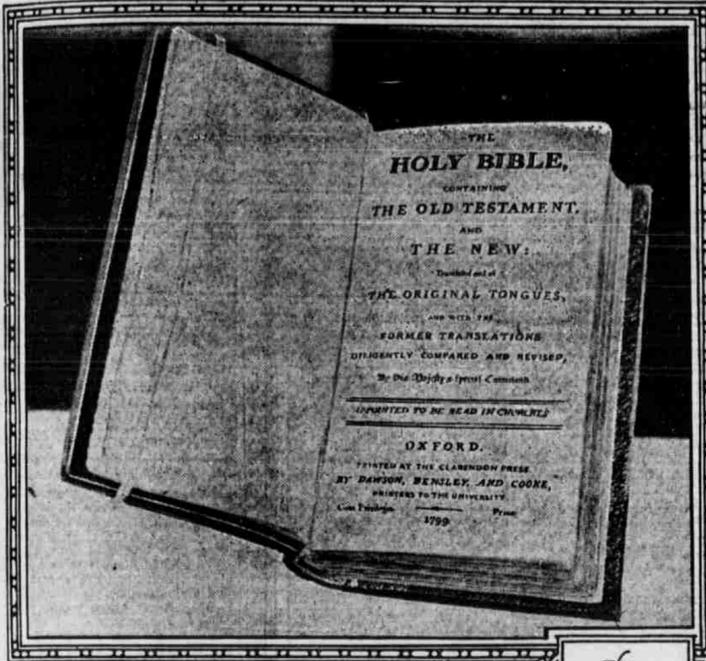




CAN REWRITING IMPROVE THE BIBLE?



The creation Chap. j. of the world.

THE FIRST BOOKE OF MOSES, called GENESIS.

CHAP. I.

The creation of Heaven and Earth, 1 of the light, 6 of the firmament, 9 of the earth separated from the waters, 11 and made fruitful, 14 of the Sunne, Moone, and Starres, 16 of fish and fowle, 24 of beaſt and cattell, 26 of Man in the Image of God. 29 Also the appointment of food.

In the beginning God created the heaven, and the earth.

2 And the earth was without forme, and voyde, and darknesse was upon the face of the deepe: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

3 And God ſaid, Let there be light: and there was light.

4 And God ſaw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darknesse.

5 And God called the light, Day, and the darknesse he called Night: and the evening and the morning were the firſt day.

6 And God ſaid, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters: and let it divide the waters from the waters.

7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters, which were under the firmament, from the waters, which were above the firmament: and it was so.

8 And God called the firmament, Heaven: and the evening and the morning were the ſecond day.

9 And God ſaid, Let the waters under the firmament be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appeare: and it was ſo.

10 And God called the dry land, Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called ſea: and God ſaw that it was good.

11 And God ſaid, Let the Earth bring forth graſſe, the herbe yielding ſeed, and the fruit tree, yielding fruit after his kinde, whole ſeed: as it is ſaid, upon the earth: and it was ſo.

12 And the earth brought forth graſſe, and the yielding ſeed after his kinde, and the tree yielding fruit, whole ſeed was in it: after his kinde: and God ſaw that it was good.

13 And the evening and the morning were the third day.

14 And God ſaid, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night: and let them be for ſignes, and for ſeaſons, and for dayes and yeeres.

15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth: and it was ſo.

16 And God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the leſſer light to rule the night: he made the ſunne and the moon.

17 And God ſet them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth:

18 And to rule over the day, and over the night.

19 And it was ſo.

20 And God ſaw that it was good.

The FAMOUS SUPREME COURT BIBLE (OXFORD REVISION) ON WHICH PRESIDENTS HAVE BEEN SWORN IN SINCE 1801

HENRY FORD MAY HAVE BEEN PONDERING THE PRESENT BIBLE'S SHORTCOMINGS AT THIS VERY MOMENT



Most People, Including Notable Scholars, Are Content With King James Version, Henry Ford to the Contrary, Notwithstanding

REMARK made on the witness stand by Henry Ford to the effect that he had considered making a plan to have the Bible rewritten in simple language started to life again the rumor that a committee of scholars, unknown or undesignated, was at work somewhere upon a revision of the Holy Book.

To discover a band of linguistic divines working in secret on a task of so great and universal interest would be a sensation indeed, but if they exist and are so employed they have left no trail. The great publishing houses whose main output is Bibles and religious volumes deny with one accord that there is any such work being done.

The King James version of the Bible issued to the people in 1611, five years before the death of Shakespeare, is the one still in general use.

Published 300 years ago, is it possible that the Scriptures do not contain words and phrases that have sunk out of current use and become almost impossible to understand? It is of course highly possible, but it is not strange that despite these neologisms people brought up on the King James version give a scant welcome to any other. The Bible as it reads there was their religious wet nurse just as their poetic wet nurse was Shakespeare. Commentator after commentator has wrought his will with the text of Shakespeare's plays, but the poet's Molators pay little attention to these labors. They go on reading the hard whether they get his meaning or not in the obscure passages.

Bible House Denies Tale.

Secretary Chamberlain of the American Bible House had this to say regarding the rumor that a new revision of the Bible was under way and something more about the Bible in general:

"This rumor is constantly cropping up, but we believe that we would be among the first to hear of any new committee appointed by a religious body to go back to the sources and revise the Scriptures. I think that it may be definitely denied.

"In our distribution of Bibles, free or at a nominal cost, amounting in number to millions a year, we are prepared to say what version is wanted, and that is the St. James version. It still serves as the basis for revisions and in new translations made for non-English speaking people it is an authority.

"For an instance, the Arabic Bible, the latest translation into a tongue for use among the Moslem races, is taken from the King James Bible. Between three and four millions of these Bibles

in Arabic have been distributed. The first missionary Bible was translated from that version by John Elliot for the American Indians. It is the King James version in Indian.

"What people forget is that there has been thorough revision, so far as it was expedient or necessary, in the text of this authorized version, nor do they remember the labors of the great English and American committees, carried on during the years 1881-85. If they did remember these things and would consult the standard edition of the Bible which resulted from these labors they would not talk so freely of the necessity of making a new version by going over translations and reverting to the source manuscripts.

The Revised Text Copyrighted.

"This American Standard Bible is copyrighted to insure purity of texts, and the date of copyright being 1901 it will soon expire. Then it is possible that the cost of this Bible, coming down, it may rival in popularity the King James version. I cannot prophesy as to that and can but repeat that the King James Bible is what the public wants.

"On the question of simplifying the text of that version I may add that this was done by the great and comprehensive committee to which I have referred. Changes were not so great as many Hebrew scholars anticipated, but where simplicity was the object it was sought without weakening the dignity of the older and revered version."

In the frontispiece of the American Standard Bible may be read the following:

"Being the version set forth A. D. 1611, compared with the most ancient authorities and revised A. D. 1881-85, and newly edited by the American Revision Committee A. D. 1901."

The latter phrase demands explanation. It is given in the words of Samuel F. Arson, secretary of Thomas Nelson & Sons: "At the completion of the work of revision latest to date the American revision committee was not satisfied that enough time had been given to the work, but accepted the plea that the university presses of Oxford and Cambridge were calling for it, and claimed to be satisfied if the Americans' preferences in readings were published as an appendix to the volumes. This being acceded the American committee agreed not to publish or to countenance the publication of any other revised edition of the Bible for a period of fourteen years. That embargo of time expired in 1899.

"In the interim the American committee continued its labors. They did



MARTIN LUTHER—WHO HAD HIS OWN IDEAS ABOUT SCRIPTURAL REVISIONS—

so without compensation and with an unselfish desire to benefit their fellow men. They were divided into two companies, one taking the Old Testament and the other the New Testament.

Expenses Met by Subscription.

"The expenses of the enterprise were met solely by the voluntary subscriptions of friends of the work in this country. In the prosecution of its task the American committee had the written notes, records and opinions of every one who had served on either the English or American boards. The members had in addition the advantage of the criticisms which the English revision had evoked and of the new light thrown on the subject by the aroused interest of Hebrew and Greek scholars.

"This continuous work to 1901 is, I believe," said Mr. Arson, "what has given rise to the rumor you are trying to trace that a religious body is at work on a new revision. In that year the standard revision issued from the printing press. It has been so well received that another version should seem to be unnecessary, at least until the language changes.

"And as for simplicity of language this latest edition is really a simplified Bible. It appears in language of everyday use, but without weakening the dignity of the old King James version. The copyright on the volume is not placed for commercial protection, but to insure the text purity. It has had no effect on the price of the Standard Bible, which is sold in its cheapest form for 50 cents. Therefore neither to procure a better nor a cheaper Bible need the labors of any new committee be utilized."

George E. Day, secretary of the American Revision Committee and of the Old Testament Company, and J. Henry Thayer, secretary of the New Testament Company, certify to the aforesaid Bible being the only one authorized by the American Committee of Revision.

The Pioneers' Trying Task.

By comparison with the toil of these modern revisers some notion may be gained of the all but impossible task that the assembly of divines called together at Hampton Court undertook. They had no such aids as their modern brethren in discoveries in the scientific and archaeological worlds, they wrought over impure texts that were

English Bible, and he was followed by John Rogers, who issued his "Matthew's Bible," which was almost wholly copied from Tyndale's. In 1539 appeared Taverner's, another Tyndale imitation. The famous "Great Bible" was issued under royal authorization and was compiled from Tyndale's, Rogers' and Coverdale's. The Geneva Bible and the Bishops' Bible followed in 1560 and 1568 respectively.

When James VI of Scotland became James I. of England by choice of Parliament and began to reign over Scotland, which was Presbyterian, and over England, which was Anglican or Episcopalian, he foresaw a religious schism which might prove disastrous to both realms. In 1604 he summoned a conference at Hampton Court to settle the religious policy of the Government. He was petitioned to authorize a new translation of the Bible and did so, entrusting the work to Archbishop Bancroft of Canterbury, who appointed a commission of forty-seven eminent scholars to prepare what is known as the Authorized or King James version.

There Were Poets Among Them.

The Bishops' Bible was made the groundwork of the new translation; but among the forty-seven scholars were poets who saved for us the vast reaches and sweeps of the old Hebrew poets and the cadence and rhythm of the Bible which gives out a sound of music reminding of orchestras. Our debt to them because of their care of words is immeasurable. By means of this nice choice they added something of moral purity as well as beauty to the version.

If the rhythm and cadence these ancient divines put into their translation were to be taken out of it the English language would lose some of its most wonderful prose. The English tongue would be poorer by harmonies and felicities unsurpassed and unrepeatable.

An illustration said to be of prime importance in the text of the King James version is the substitution of the name Jehovah for the words Lord and God wherever they appear in the old text. This was in deference to an ancient superstition which regarded the Divine Name as too sacred to be uttered. This superstition had not hitherto been allowed to dominate the translations, although it prevailed in the Hebrew manuscripts.

A few changes may be shown to

Revision of Scriptures Constant From Beginning—What Linguistic Divines Have Accomplished in Simplifying Text

exhibit the style of speech that the moderns call improvements: In Genesis the King James version says "Let the water bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth." The latest version is: "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth."

A passage of Exodus in the King James version: "Every woman shall borrow of her neighbor." The American and English Revising Committee went back to the original and restored these words: "Every woman shall ask of her neighbor."

In the XIXth Psalm the King James version reads: "There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard," while the new version says this: "There is no speech nor language; their voice is not heard."

A Grammatical Change.

And in the CXXIst Psalm the change is grammatical only: "Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" is altered to "Behold he that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."

In the following two passages real obscurities are removed: In Isaiah xxxv. 5 we find "The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for them." This has been changed to read "It shall be for the redeemed."

In Hosea ii. 2, "As they called them, so they went from them," now reads, "The more the Prophet called them the more they went from him."

There is no assertion made anywhere that the Bible itself is changed, but that a general rectification has been made of translations and a return to originals the meaning and spirit of which had not been caught. Words have been changed only when they were obsolete and served as stumbling blocks. Frequently there appear in the King James version words and phrases thought to be of somewhat questionable taste to the present generation. In the original the words from which these are taken are often unobjectionable and the fault, if it is one, is to be found in the broader or grosser standards of Shakespeare's day. The newest translators have found modern equivalents for the words in the Hebrew which do not offend the nineteenth century, and so these obstacles fade away.

Such instances of changes as have been shown occur in the collaborated version put out by the British and American committees. The continued study of the latter committee is said to have been fruitful and to throw new light upon the manuscripts of the Bible, while the contemporary labors of Assyriologists have brought discoveries of times anterior to Moses. The famous "Sayings of Jesus," although fragmentary, proved highly valuable in establishing the verity of "The Acts," and by similar discoveries, Daniel, whose very existence had been doubted, is shown to have been a veritable person. Sargon, too, an Assyrian king, over whose name the earlier translators hesitated, several of them doubting that such a monarch ever reigned, was revealed as a historical monarch. In brief, the mass of new Biblical evidence, new manuscripts, new meanings of words, while highly interesting to the scholar, did not strike the ordinary readers as involving a new version of what so long had been their Bible.

Ordinary Readers Uninterested.

That this view was taken of the matter generally is shown by the way the ordinary Bible reader acted. He displayed a languid curiosity over all these finds and he went on buying and reading the King James version. He didn't know how to account for his preference, perhaps, but realized that the simple old Bible of his forefathers had held its own, in fact had been strengthened in its own by modern research and discovery.

In so far as he is not dissatisfied that the early manuscripts have been again so carefully scrutinized with the result that the truth of the historical Bible has been completely attested and holds the highest credence of minds not naturally sceptical, minds that resent and discourage doubt and call it disaster. The simple are rarely sceptical of moral truths. Doubt unsettles, scares and shocks them. They would be apt to resent, too, any attempt to "simplify" the "Book," which in a limited way but a sufficient way they comprehend. A really new and different Holy Book would smack to them of sacrilege. It would shake to its foundations their respect for the printed Word.

We have to go back to the Bible if we wish to know (and it is not always easy to know) what is responsible for mankind's faith in the printed Word. In truth it dates from the first book that is, from the Bible. Literature began as religion. Every nation's earliest books are sacred books. Thus springs the almost pathetic belief men hold in books. "I read it in a book" is equivalent to saying a thing is true. By its qualities of inspiration and sincerity the Bible in the King James version and its children, the modern versions, reaches the ear of the people