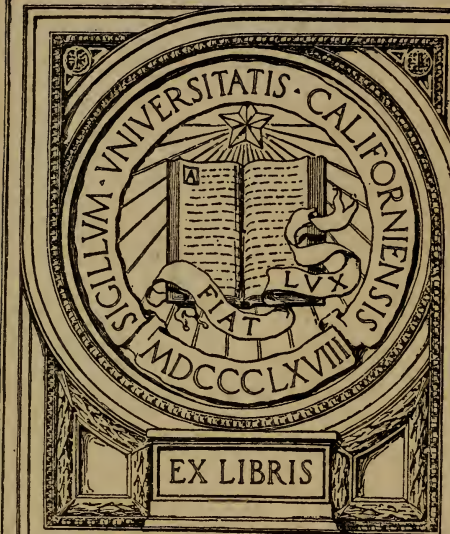
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THE ENGLISH BIBLE

Some Account of its Origin and Various Versions

BY

GEORGE HENRY NETTLETON

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN THE SHEFFIELD SCIENTIFIC SCHOOL OF YALE UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

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NOTE

THE following pages are a reprint of the Introduction to the original edition of *Old Testament Narratives* (Henry Holt and Company, 1909). The aim has been to indicate briefly the processes by which the Bible has come into its modern English form. I have tried to present to the general reader many of the chief results of scholarship in fields in which I can make no pretense to original investigation. Of the more general and popular works which I have found helpful I may mention especially *A General View of the History of the English Bible,* by Brooke F. Westcott, D.D., and *The Bible as English Literature,* by Professor J. H. Gardiner. I am indebted to Professor C. C. Torrey, of Yale, for valuable comments on my manuscript and proof.

January 28, 1911.

INTRODUCTION

THE most obvious fact about the English Bible is that it is a translation. Translation usually implies distinct loss in both the letter and spirit of the original, but the English Bible has been the most vital influence upon the thought and expression of the English race. Its vigor and spontaneity animate alike religious and secular literature. Its vocabulary and phrase are part of the genius of the language. Since it is, however, a translation, some account should first be given of the origin and development of the original Bible.

I. THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BIBLE.

The word "Bible," singular in usage, but plural in derivation, suggests at the outset that "The Book" is really a unified collection of books. The most casual reader cannot fail to note division not merely between the Old and New Testaments, but between different parts of the same Testament. Certain current phrases, furthermore, emphasize the group-relationship of individual books—"the books of Moses," "the Gospels," "the Epistles." One of the most familiar verses in the Sermon on the Mount reads thus: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

Later in the Gospel of Matthew occurs this passage: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." In each quotation the final phrase is significant. It points to a distinction between parts of the Old Testament as familiar then as the distinction between the two Testaments is to-day. In its more extended form, "The Law, the Prophets, and the Other Writings (or, the Rest of the Books)," the phrase marks with reasonable accuracy the three major divisions in the formation of the Old Testament.

The processes of development within each division may be illustrated sufficiently by some comment upon the so-called "five books of Moses." Whoever reads the account of the death of Moses in the last chapter of Deuteronomy sees that the tradition which ascribes the authorship of the first five books of the Bible to Moses cannot be accepted literally in complete detail. In an earlier chapter in Deuteronomy, where Moses bids the Levites place the "book of the law" which he had written "in the side of the ark of the covenant," the reference is evidently not to the complete Pentateuch, or "five books of Moses," in the form now known to the English reader. Obviously the Pentateuch developed gradually, assuming final form only after many transitional stages. Hebrew literature followed a natural course. With primitive peoples records are transmitted rather by oral tradition

than by written document. With progress from a nomadic state to more formal political organization comes the need of permanent laws and records. It has been claimed that the earliest written record in the Pentateuch was probably the "ten words of Moses," afterwards expanded into the Ten Commandments. At all events, as the legal and ceremonial aspects of Hebrew life and religion developed, there was a growing necessity for definite written documents. Broadly speaking, the process that went on was the constant transmission and revision, from age to age, of ever increasing literary material—history, law, poetry, religious ritual—until the original elements were moulded into a composite mass.

Higher Criticism has been busy with the task of resolving this composite into its original elements. Its general conclusions may be briefly indicated. The Pentateuch, in its final form, comes chiefly from the hands of priestly writers during and after the Hebrew exile in Babylon. Previously the various documents included in it had undergone several revisions. Four writers, or sets of writers, can be distinguished in the final composite. Of these the earliest are designated as the Jahvist (or Jehovist), who uses "Jahveh," and the Elohist, who uses "Elohim," to render "God." They date respectively from about 850 and 750 B.C. Their work, found chiefly in the Pentateuch and Joshua, was united by a later hand. The third writer, the Deuteronomist, dates from Josiah's promulgation of the original Deuteronomy in 621 B.C. Finally come the Priestly revisers, especially about the time

of Ezra and Nehemiah, in the fifth century B.C. Various considerations of statement, style, and viewpoint aid the Biblical scholar in distinguishing the original elements thus merged in the final composite record.

After the student of literature has become somewhat familiar with the general processes of evolution of the text of the Bible, his inquiry is apt to turn toward the reasons for the inclusion of some and the rejection of other books in the formation of the accepted Bible. The word "Canon," meaning in the original Greek a "straight rod," is figuratively applied to those Scriptures which are accepted as genuinely of sacred authority, in distinction from the "apocryphal" books of uncertain authority. In 621 B.C. King Josiah took the "book of the law" found by the high priest, read it in solemn assembly to his people, and "made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant." (2 Kings xxiii. 3.) The act marks the acceptance of certain written words as invested with peculiar sanctity.

During the period of the Babylonian exile, in the sixth century B.C., the priests developed more and more the authority of the Law. About the middle of the next century there returned from Babylon to Jerusalem with the second section of the Hebrew exiles, "a ready scribe in the law of Moses" named Ezra. He had "prepared his heart to seek the law

of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." It has been suggested that he was "the final redactor of the Pentateuch, separating it from the historical work consisting of Joshua and the subsequent writings." He seems at least a central figure in the establishment of the "Law" as the final authority for the guidance of his race.

The second division, or "layer," in the Old Testament Canon—the "Prophets"—is linked with the name of Nehemiah. The second chapter of the second book of the Maccabees records that Nehemiah, "founding a library, gathered together the acts of the kings, and the prophets, and of David, and the epistles of the kings concerning the holy gifts." Nehemiah's collection included probably the historical books beginning with Joshua, most of the prophetic books, and some writings that did not establish themselves in the Canon. Later works, like the book of Jonah, were afterwards added, but in the second century B.C. the frequent use of the phrase, "The Law and the Prophets," seems to show that the second division of the Old Testament had been completed, and accepted side by side with the "Law."

The third division of the Old Testament includes the "Other Writings," or "The Rest of the Books." Their varying character and contents raise many details of controversy, but the general basis for their inclusion in the Canon is largely their connection with the previously accepted books. Thus the Psalms gain authority by association with David, and Proverbs with Solomon. Disputes as to the

inclusion of such books as Esther and Ecclesiastes did, indeed, persist vigorously until about the end of the first century of the Christian era, and spasmodically even later. Furthermore, even the final establishment of the regular Hebrew Canon did not settle the matter for all sects. The Samaritans accepted only the Pentateuch, while the Alexandrian Jews used the Greek version of the Scriptures, the "Septuagint," which intermingled canonical and apocryphal books.

Josephus, the historian, in a memorable, but not wholly accurate passage (*Contra Apion.* i. 8), shows the attitude of many toward the Hebrew Canon in the latter part of the first century A.D.: "For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us . . . but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times: which are justly believed to be divine." His added statement, that since the days of Artaxerxes—in whose reign Ezra returned from Babylon—"no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them," is disproved by the history of his own century, but there were many to share the belief that the Hebrew Canon was closed. The modern reader notices the discrepancy between the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, as they now stand, and the number given by Josephus. His list includes five books of Moses, thirteen of the Prophets, and four of "hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life." The number twenty-two corresponds with the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and is usual with early Christian writers. In the

Hebrew Bible, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles counted as single, not double, books and there was other coupling of books which stand separate in the English Bible—as, for instance, Ezra and Nehemiah, Jeremiah and Lamentations. Questions of order and arrangement remained accordingly for later settlement, but, for present purposes, the history of the Hebrew Old Testament ends with the establishment of the Canon.

II. THE SEPTUAGINT AND THE VULGATE.

Two versions of the Bible in other languages have special significance in the history of the English Bible. The most important Greek version, the "Septuagint," owes its name to the tradition that it was the work of some seventy men. In its elaborated form the story went so far as to claim that the translation was made independently by seventy-two Jews, working in separate cells, and that their results when compared were found identical, and hence accepted as inspired. The marked inequalities of different parts of the work sufficiently disprove this legend and seem to support the belief that the version was the product of different times as well as of different hands. Probably begun about three hundred years before the Christian era, the Septuagint was the version used by the Alexandrian Jews and by the early Christians. From it were taken practically all the quotations from the Old Testament which occur in the Greek New Testament. In the first place, then, it ultimately, though indirectly, influenced the English translations of the

Greek New Testament in form of literary expression. In the second place, it gave the modern order of arrangement of the Old Testament books. The Hebrew Canon, it will be recalled, had arranged its three layers in chronological order of development—the Law, the Prophets, the Other Writings. The Septuagint substituted a literary rearrangement —the historical books in proper sequence, then the poetic and wisdom books, and finally the prophets. In the third place, the Septuagint supplied to English translators the apocryphal books, which were not included in the Hebrew Canon but which possess at least marked literary importance.

Far more significant, however, in influence upon the English Bible was the great Latin version known as the "Vulgate." The name, derived from the Latin "vulgata" (supply "editio" or "versio"), signifies that it was the commonly known version. Down to the time of the Reformation, in fact, it was the Bible of the European Church. Toward the close of the fourth century A.D., the various Latin texts of the Scriptures had become so much corrupted that revision was imperative. For this important work the Pope selected the great scholar best known as Saint Jerome. Jerome's work consisted partly of revision of previous texts and partly of direct translation from the original Hebrew of the Old Testament. At first Jerome's Bible encountered violent opposition in some quarters, but eventually it established itself as the recognized version of the Western Church. In process of time errors of copyists and commentators corrupted Jerome's text so that there grew up various dis-

cordant versions, and there was authoritative revision of the Vulgate text at the close of the sixteenth century.

The Vulgate vitally influenced the English Bible because it was the Bible of the Early English translators. The virile strength and rich beauty of Jerome's Latin animated and colored the literary style of Tyndale and his followers. Jerome's Latin was not classical, but that Low Latin which admitted more colloquial forms and greater flexibility of word-order and construction. Furthermore, Jerome's work was important in giving to the varying styles of earlier hands a common unity of expression. The Vulgate influenced directly the phrasing of specific passages even in the King James version, and in a larger sense stamped its impress infallibly on the general literary style of the English translators.

III. ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE.

Anglo-Saxon literature contains various versions of parts of the Bible, ranging from the free Paraphrase of Cædmon, the seventh-century monk who, according to the venerable Bede, " sang the creation of the world, the origin of man, and all the history of Genesis," together with many other things, to Bede's own translation of the Gospel according to St. John. It is characteristic of that devout spirit which linked naturally the sacred with the secular that Alfred the Great prefixed to his " Book of Laws," in somewhat altered form, the Ten Commandments of Moses. In general, the Anglo-Saxon

Biblical versions now extant include the Psalter, the Gospels, the Pentateuch, and some of the Old Testament historical books. Doubtless there were other versions now lost, but though such works may have fostered the spirit of devotion, they can have had little tangible influence upon the letter of the text of the English Bible. After the Norman Conquest there were poetical paraphrases, like the *Ormulum,* written by the monk Orm, or Ormin, about the beginning of the thirteenth century, and finally some fourteenth-century versions of the Psalter, the earliest in English prose.

The first complete English translation of the Bible was primarily the work of John Wycliffe, the "Morning Star of the Reformation." Assisted by Nicholas of Hereford, who translated much of the Old Testament and of the Apocrypha, he rendered the Bible from the Latin of the Vulgate into English, about 1382. Wycliffe died in 1384, and a few years later John Purvey revised the work. Copies of the versions circulated in manuscript, despite the opposition of the Church and its prosecution of many who persisted in owning or reading the Bible in English.

From the scholarly standpoint the chief defect of Wycliffe's Bible is that it was translated not from the original Hebrew and Greek, but from the Latin of the imperfect Vulgate texts then current. From the popular standpoint its chief drawback was that it had to circulate in manuscript. Two mighty influences of the fifteenth century tended to remove these obstacles to the advance of the English Bible. The Renaissance, or revival of learning in Europe,

spread the study of Greek among scholars; the discovery of the art of printing heralded the time when the Bible should become generally accessible to the people. The fall of Constantinople, in 1453, turned the tide of Greek scholarship to Italy. Thence, scholars like Colet and Grocyn, who had studied in Italy, brought to England the new enthusiasm for learning. Oxford and Cambridge began to teach Greek, and finally, in 1516, Erasmus published the first edition of his Greek New Testament. Later editions were used by Luther and Tyndale. Fortunately, to Colet and Erasmus, scholarship was the means to a great end. For centuries theologians had been, to use Bacon's phrase, *cymini sectores,* "hairsplitters." Colet and Erasmus declared that the Bible could be readily understood by all and should not be reserved for a handful of theologians. "I totally dissent," wrote Erasmus, "from those who are unwilling that the Sacred Scriptures, translated into the vulgar tongue, should be read by private individuals, as if Christ had taught such subtle doctrines that they can with difficulty be understood by a very few theologians, or as if the strength of the Christian religion lay in men's ignorance of it."

The teachings of Colet and Erasmus found yet more powerful utterance in William Tyndale. Whether he studied directly under Colet at Oxford and under Erasmus at Cambridge is questionable, but at all events his years at both universities brought him close to the enthusiasm they had kindled. The desire of Erasmus that the husbandman might sing parts of the Scriptures at his

plough is echoed in Tyndale's remark to a "learned man": "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest." Believing that "it was impossible to establish the lay people in any truth except the Scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order and meaning of the text," Tyndale set himself to translate the Bible into English. Unable to accomplish his task either in the country or in London, where he vainly sought the aid of the Bishop of London, he left England forever. Even on the Continent danger threatened. Enemies interrupted his attempt to print his work in Cologne, but in the Lutheran city of Worms he completed both the annotated quarto edition of the New Testament begun at Cologne and an octavo edition without marginal notes—the first English versions translated from the original Greek.

Despite warnings to Henry VIII. of the impending "infection and danger," despite determined efforts to destroy or to exclude Tyndale's translation, copies of his New Testament arrived in England early in 1526, and circulated rapidly. Attacks upon the translation as heretical and confiscation and burning of copies of the work were alike ineffective in stilling the tide of awakening popular interest. Some four years later Tyndale published a translation from the Hebrew of the Pentateuch, and in 1534 a revision of his New Testament. When Tyndale's Testament was burned in England he wrote: "In burning the New Testament, they did none other thing than I looked for; no

more shall they do if they burn me also, if it be God's will it shall so be." The words were prophetic. Betrayed in Antwerp, Tyndale met death at the stake in 1536. In his *Book of Martyrs,* Foxe rightly called him "an apostle of England."

Tyndale was the father of the modern English Bible. He fixed essentially its literary style. Study of his vocabulary and phrase emphasizes the resemblances rather than the differences between his text and later versions. Clearness, simplicity, vigor, vividness, dignity—these were the qualities which Tyndale impressed upon the English Bible. To other revisers we owe countless and important changes in detail; to Tyndale we owe the very character of the noblest English prose. Scholarly research has shown the remarkable influence of Tyndale upon the Authorised Version, even in the reproduction of faults and inconsistencies in his rendering. Partisans of Wycliffe have sometimes sought to transfer to him much of the credit due to Tyndale, but few who study the biography of Tyndale will be disposed to question the sincerity of his statement that he had "no man to counterfeit [imitate], neither was holpen with English of any that had interpreted the same or such like thing in the Scripture beforetime."

Tyndale never translated the entire Bible. The first complete translation into English by a single hand was published by Miles Coverdale, in 1535. In the decade since Tyndale's New Testament had appeared, Henry VIII. had been proclaimed supreme head of the Church of England, and had broken with the Pope, who had refused to sanction his

marriage to Anne Boleyn. Tyndale's work had gone forth without even bearing his name; Coverdale was able to issue his work under the patronage of Thomas Cromwell, and with a dedication to the king. Coverdale's translation was not direct, but was based on "sundry translations, not only in Latin, but also of the Dutch [German] interpreters," and on Tyndale. His own modest disclaimers show that he spoke not with authority, but as one of the scribes. His chief services were in maintaining Tyndale's simplicity of diction, while imparting greater finish and rhythm of phrase, and in completing the Old Testament translation.

In 1537 appeared Matthew's Bible. Possibly the name of Thomas Matthew, which stands on the title-page as that of the translator, was only assumed by John Rogers, who edited the work. In all probability Matthew's Bible contains for the first time a translation by Tyndale of the books from Joshua through Chronicles, which he might readily have intrusted to Rogers during his association with him in Antwerp. In general, Matthew's Bible followed the translation of Tyndale, supplying the missing parts from Coverdale's complete version.[1]

Tyndale's translation had been vigorously assailed by the king; Coverdale's first edition, though not directly sanctioned by the king, was not suppressed, and the editions of 1537 were "set forth with the king's most gracious license;" Matthew's Bible, though it contained Tyndale's condemned work, was "allowed by his [the king's] authority to be bought

[1] Of minor importance is Taverner's Bible, printed in London in 1539, based chiefly on Matthew's.

and read within this realm." Still more authoritative sanction by the government was accorded to the "Great Bible" of 1539. Thomas Cromwell, who had been instrumental in securing the king's license for the English Bible, sent Miles Coverdale to Paris to prepare a new version based on Matthew's. The work was interrupted by the power of the Inquisition, but Coverdale and Grafton, his printer, escaped to London with workmen, presses, and most of their printed sheets, and completed the work. In 1540 a second edition appeared, with a preface by Archbishop Cranmer, and though the "Great Bible" was due mainly to Coverdale's labor and Cromwell's zealous support, the work is frequently known as "Cranmer's Bible." When the king issued a favorable declaration "to be read by all curates upon the publishing of the Bible in English," when six Bibles were set up in St. Paul's Church to be read by the people, and when six editions of the Great Bible were printed in 1540 and 1541, it seemed that the English Bible had become at last an open book.

The current so favorable to the English Bible soon turned. In 1543 Parliament passed a stringent act restricting the reading of the Scriptures, proscribed Tyndale's work, and required the excision of notes in other copies of the Bible. Three years later Coverdale's New Testament came also under the ban. The death of Henry and the accession of Edward VI., in 1547, checked the reaction. In the six and a half years of Edward's brief reign there appeared thirteen editions of the entire Bible and thirty-five of the New Testament. The young

king not merely removed Henry's restrictions upon the use of the Bible, but required that copies should be set up for reading in the churches.

In the reign of Mary the pendulum swung back again to the side of reaction. Rogers and Cranmer suffered death, Coverdale and many other English Protestants became refugees on the Continent, and the English press was shut against the Bible. Geneva, the home of Calvin, was a natural refuge for the English Calvinists. From that little band of exiles came a new translation of the Bible of wide-reaching significance. The Genevan Testament, probably the work of Whittingham, who had married Calvin's sister, was published in 1557. An interesting detail connected with the work is that it gave to English readers for the first time the modern system of short verses in the arrangement of the text. With the accession of Elizabeth, in 1558, most of the Protestant exiles returned to England, but two or three remained with Whittingham to complete the Biblical translation. The Genevan Bible[1] was printed in 1560. Everything seemed to conspire in favor of its success. The work had been accomplished under circumstances in reality favorable. The very exile of the translators deepened their solemn devotion to their task, and in Geneva their labors were uninterrupted by political turmoil at home. The work was brought forth after Elizabeth had succeeded to the throne. It was printed in Roman letter, with chapters divided

[1] Popularly, it is known as the "Breeches Bible," on account of the rendering "made themselves breeches," in the third chapter of Genesis.

into verses, and in quarto form instead of in the unwieldy folios that had preceded it. The marginal comments were clear and to the point. The dominant note of the translation was faithful accuracy to the original texts. Although it did not supplant the Great Bible in English ecclesiastical use, the Genevan Bible was so popular that some seventy editions of all descriptions were issued during Elizabeth's reign. For the larger part of a century it was the household Bible of the English people.

The popularity of the Genevan Bible soon brought to light the imperfections of the Great Bible, which was still in Church use since the Genevan Bible was colored by traces of Calvinistic theology in its notes. Archbishop Parker determined with the aid of various scholars to make a satisfactory revision. Since many of his helpers were bishops, the work which finally appeared in 1568 was known as the Bishops' Bible. As different books were assigned to different men, the translation was not uniform, and though it obtained the sanction of the Church, it deservedly failed to supplant the Genevan Bible in general use.

In 1582 was published at Rheims a translation of the New Testament made by Gregory Martin and other Oxford scholars, of the Roman Catholic faith. William Allen, founder of the Romish Seminary at Douai, which was transferred, in 1578, for a time to Rheims, sought to reëstablish the power of the Church of Rome in England. The translation which he doubtless suggested was, accordingly, to be based on the Vulgate, the accepted text of the Roman Catholic Church. The appearance of the

Old Testament translation, at Douai, was delayed until 1609-10. These works are usually known as the Rhemish New Testament and the Douai Bible. In versions based on the Vulgate it was natural that Latin diction should strongly color the translation. Many renderings of the Rhemish New Testament were retained in the Authorised Version, with marked gain in richness and variety of phrase. Thus the work of scholars on the Continent directly aided the next translation in England, the King James or Authorised Version.

IV. THE KING JAMES OR AUTHORISED VERSION.

At the accession of James I., the two English versions of the Bible in widest use were the Bishops' Bible, sanctioned for ecclesiastical use, and the Genevan Bible, the common version of the people. This unfortunate conflict of authority was soon to be settled. In January, 1604, there was held the Hampton Court Conference, convoked by the new king to settle differences between the Puritans and the Church of England. Among the minor proceedings one developed ultimately into paramount importance. Dr. Reynolds, President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, a Puritan leader, "moved his Majesty that there might be a new translation of the Bible, because those which were allowed in the reign of King Henry VIII. and Edward VI. were corrupt, and not answerable to the truth of the original." Although the Conference adjourned without further steps in this matter, the king evidently approved the suggestion. On July 22 he wrote to the Bishop of London that he had "ap-

pointed certain learned men, to the number of four and fifty, for the translating of the Bible," and instructed him to enlist the aid of learned scholars, and to provide preferment in the Church for the translators. Serious work on the revision hardly began before 1607. The lists of translators now extant give but forty-seven names instead of the fifty-four of the king's letter, and doubtless there were various modifications of the original plans. The work was finally executed by six companies, two at Westminster, two at Cambridge, and two at Oxford. They divided among them the books not merely of the Old and New Testaments but of the Apocrypha. The rules of revision provided that the Bishops' Bible "be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit," but "these translations to be used when they agree better with the text than the Bishops' Bible: Tindale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Whitchurch's,[1] Geneva." No marginal notes were to be affixed save for explanation of difficult Hebrew and Greek words, but cross-references from one part of the Bible to another were provided. In each company the different scholars were at first to work independently, then to compare notes, and then to submit their joint results to the other companies. Knotty points were to be adjusted in a general meeting "of the chief persons of each company." The final revision occupied nine months, and was followed by the publication of the work in 1611.

It is natural to ask what were the chief reasons for the supremacy of the Authorised Version. It

[1] Whitchurch was the printer of the Great Bible.

should, indeed, be remembered that it did not win immediately unanimous favor. Puritans missed the Calvinistic tinge of the notes and commentary of the Genevan Bible; others objected because they thought that parts of it were unfairly rendered. Within half a century, however, the Authorised Version grew steadily into general acceptance. Three main characteristics, at least, account for the enduring vitality of the Authorised Version—depth of scholarship, breadth of spirit, and beauty of diction. In the first place, no previous translation of the Bible had been made with equal labor or scholarly research. The Address to the Reader contrasts the slowness of the work with the "posting haste" of the Septuagint, and the careful revision with the uncorrected work of Jerome. Previous translations and commentaries of English and Continental scholars and the Aramaic and Syriac versions were used in connection with the original Hebrew and Greek texts. "Neither did we disdain," wrote the translators, "to revise that which we had done, and to bring back to the anvil that which we had hammered: but having and using as great helps as were needful, and fearing no reproach for slowness, nor coveting praise for expedition, we have at the length, through the good hand of the Lord upon us, brought the work to that pass that you see."

In the second place, the Authorised Version was executed in a broad and sympathetic spirit. The provision for the rigid restriction of marginal notes tended to substitute for the Calvinistic tone of the Genevan Bible and for the sectarian bias

elsewhere discoverable a spirit of wider tolerance. Testimony seems to prove that King James objected to the inclusion of marginal notes because some annotations in the Genevan Bible showed scant respect for the doctrine of the divine right of kings, but in any case the omission of matter that might excite controversy was a decided gain. It is characteristic of the broad spirit in which the revisers worked that, instead of holding to the letter of their instructions, they availed themselves of the best in works like the Roman Catholic Rhemish Version. Puritan, Churchman, and independent scholar worked in common accord, and struck a happy mean between what they termed "the scrupulosity of the Puritans" and "the obscurity" of some scholars. Conceived in such spirit, the Authorised Version became the Bible not of a particular sect, but of the English people.

In the third place, the Authorised Version set the highest standard in simplicity and beauty of diction. Through the process of years the English Version of the Bible had grown steadily in wealth of vocabulary and flexibility of phrase. Objection has been made to the frequent practice of rendering the same word in various ways, but the loss in strict accuracy is, from the literary standpoint, more than offset by the gain in richness and variety of expression. Never probably was the English vocabulary better fitted for the translators' purpose than when it was surcharged with the rich, virile, and concrete words and imagery inherited from the Elizabethan period. Age cannot wither it, nor custom stale its infinite variety. Subsequent additions have enormously

increased the vocabulary of scientific, philosophical, and abstract terms, but these would have clogged rather than enriched the Biblical style. The Elizabethans and their immediate successors had to a marked degree the faculty of choosing the right word for the right place. The phrasing of the Authorised Version has that inevitableness which carries conviction. The matchless simplicity of the Biblical style has been a powerful factor in maintaining its influence. Not even Bunyan, who felt so strongly its potency, makes such an immediate and direct appeal.

Striking testimony as to "the uncommon beauty and marvellous English" of the Authorised Version is found in the words of the Romanist Father Faber:[1] "It lives on the ear like a music that can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells, which the convert scarcely knows how he can forego. Its felicities seem often to be almost things rather than words. It is part of the national mind, and the anchor of the national seriousness. . . . The memory of the dead passes into it. The potent traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its verses. It is the representative of a man's best moments; all that there has been about him of soft, and gentle, and pure, and penitent, and good speaks to him for ever out of his English Bible."

V. THE REVISED VERSION.

For some two centuries and a half the Authorised Version held the field with little challenge to its

[1] Quoted in J. Paterson Smyth's "How we got Our Bible," pp. 110-111.

supremacy. When the Book of Common Prayer was issued in revised form in 1662, the Psalter of the Great Bible was still retained, but with few exceptions the text of the 1611 translation was adopted elsewhere, as in the Gospels and Epistles. In the nineteenth century, however, the multiplication of ancient manuscripts hitherto unknown, the advance in textual scholarship, and the inevitable changes in the English vocabulary began to present themselves increasingly as reasons for a revision of the Authorised Version. These tendencies culminated in February, 1870, in the action taken by the Convocation of Canterbury: "That a Committee of both Houses be appointed, with power to confer with any Committee that may be appointed by the Convocation of the Northern Province, to report upon the desirableness of a revision of the Authorised Version of the Old and New Testaments, whether by marginal notes or otherwise, in all those passages where plain and clear errors, whether in the Hebrew or Greek text originally adopted by the translators, or in the translation made from the same, shall, on due investigation, be found to exist." Though the Northern Province declined to cooperate, it was determined to proceed with the work of revision, dividing it between an Old Testament Company and a New Testament Company. A distinguished array of divines and scholars undertook the work, both companies holding their first meetings in June, 1870. Not long afterwards steps were taken to enlist the aid of American scholars, and two American companies began their labors in October, 1872. The revision of the New Testa-

ment was completed in 1880, and the entire Revised Version of the Bible appeared in May, 1885.

The very name, Revised Version, shows that the intent was to make not a new translation of the Bible, but a revision of the accepted translation. Of the general principles adopted by the revisers it is significant that the first two are these: "1. To introduce as few alterations as possible into the text of the Authorised Version consistently with faithfulness. 2. To limit, as far as possible, the expression of such alterations to the language of the Authorised and earlier English Versions." Whether the Revised Version will ultimately supplant the Authorised Version is a question to be determined in the future. The superior scholarship and textual accuracy of the revision is conceded almost without question. From the literary standpoint, the greatest gain seems to be in the emphasis upon literary construction, as in the grouping of many verses into a single paragraph with reference to the thought, and in recognition of the distinction between prose and verse in Hebrew literature. Notwithstanding the many merits of the Revised Version, the fact remains that from the literary viewpoint it must still concede the pride of place to the Authorised Version. It is the Authorised Version which for almost three centuries has been an integral part of English literature, the source of endless literary reference, the crowning achievement of English prose. Gain in precision of rendering in the Revised Version has not outweighed the sacrifice of somewhat of the breadth and elemental vigor of the King James

Version. Whether, as has been suggested, the spirit of scholarly revisers in these latter days sinks inevitably below that of men who stood close to martyrs whose blood had consecrated the pages of the Bible translation, or whether modern imitation lacks Elizabethan virility of diction are questions not to be settled by mathematical proof. But, at least for our day and generation, the Bible of English Literature is still the Authorised Version of 1611.