Is the Revised Version a Failure?

By the Rev. Principal Brown, D.D., Aberdeen.

As all that I require to read has now to be read to me, it may well be supposed that much which ought to be read is not read at all, or deferred till the subject is out of date. This will explain how the proceedings of the Northern Convocation on the Revised Version of the New Testament, and the articles in The Expository Times, escaped my notice, though I get that excellent medium regularly, until my esteemed friend the Editor called my attention to them a few weeks ago. He knew that the criticism of the New Testament, both textual and expository, had been a special subject of study with me from my earliest student days, that it had been the matter of my teaching as a Professor, and that I took as keen an interest in the Revised Version of the New Testament, having had the honour of being one of the Company of Revision; but, knowing my infirmity, he did not trouble me about the Bishop of Wakefield's motion on this subject, till we happened to meet, and the admirable article of the Bishop of Durham was referred to. Perhaps this may excuse my venturing to step in between the two prelates, the latter of whom I have the privilege of knowing as a friend.

The Bishop of Wakefield, it cannot be denied, has made good his position, that the New Testament Revisers exceeded their instructions. But those instructions were at once too *stringent* and too *indefinite*. They were required to make no other changes on the Authorised Version than, in the judgment of competent scholars, were "*necessary*." But necessary for what? Necessary to express the *fairly good* sense the Authorised Version gives of the passages, or the *more correct* sense which the Revisers believed to be meant? Let me give one example of what I mean, the best fitted to explain what occurred at the very outset of the work—Matt. ii. 2. The wise men of the East ask: "Where is He that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east and are come to worship Him." The question here is, What kind of worship is here meant? Is it the homage due to a superior among ourselves (as in Luke xiv. 10), or is it *religious* worship? The former, it was thought by one member, was the meaning intended, and therefore proper to be expressed. But, as it was believed by one member that verse 11 would throw light on this question, the Company agreed to wait till they reached that verse. On which it was stated that the phrase (προσφέρειν δῶρα) here rendered, "they presented gifts," is one used several hundred times in the LXX., and always in the sense of religious offerings made in worship to God; and that the only question here was, Is the phrase (προσφέρειν δῶρα) used in that sense in the New Testament. And the six passages, besides this one, in which it is found in the New Testament, are admittedly used in this sense. Hence (it was argued), it ought to be so understood there; and therefore, in verse 2, "worship" should be retained, and in verse 11, instead of "presented unto Him gifts," etc., we should render it "they offered unto Him," etc. This was accordingly done, if not unanimously, certainly without objection.

Now, was this change "*necessary*"? The member who suggested the *lower* sense of "worship" in verse 2, would perhaps say *No*, but we did not wish to divide at the outset. The rest would certainly say *Yes*, as in their view too significant to be overlooked. And thus, as all were aware, we found ourselves deciding on a change which might, or might not, be thought "*necessary*," yet not one thought of asking if we were exceeding our instructions. Once or twice afterwards the question was raised. But though the proper limits were thought by some of us to be trangressed, it was tacitly taken for granted that *some* latitude ought to be allowed, and we had acted on it, and could not but proceed on this principle. And I am perfectly sure of this, that if the changes made had been such as to command general approval, the stringent instructions would have been considered more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

So much we think is due to the Revisers, when we find such men as the Bishop of Wakefield not hesitating to estimate their misdemeanour by the miserable test of the *number* of the changes in particular sections of the work. Thus, in the passage we referred to (Matt. ii. 2), "We *have*

seen His star," say the wise men, in the Authorised Version: "We *saw* His Star" Was that change "*necessary*." No, certainly would most readers say—the perfect tense used in the Authorised Version ("we have seen") covering all that took place from the time the star was seen—the astonishment it excited, the meeting of the wise men to consider its meaning, and the appointment of the deputies to inquire where the new-born King was to be found, and go to worship Him. But the Revisers, observing that the *aorist* was used and not the perfect, thought that the emphasis lay on the sight itself, and that the wise men had this in their view when they told their errand, and translated accordingly — "We *saw* His star." Hundreds of readers would call this one of the "trivial" changes the Revisers have made, and in counting the number of the unnecessary changes would reckon it one of them. I may add that, in nine cases out of every ten, the authors of the Authorised Version prefer the perfect tense where the aorist ought to be used. If the present Revisers have done right in Matt. ii. 2, consequently they have exceeded their instructions, I believe, in hundreds of such cases. I am not here speaking of cases such as Rom. vi., in which even the Bishop of Wakefield, I hope, would agree with me, in regarding the use of the *aorist*, if not indispensable, yet far from unnecessary. As in verse 2, "How shall we (says the Authorised Version) who *are dead* to sin live any longer therein?" where the *present* tense expresses simply the sense we at *present* feel of the shamefulness of such a thing. What the apostle refers to is the *past fact*, that when he and his readers were baptized, *they parted for ever with the life of sin;* and he wants his readers and himself to have this memorable time and act ever before them, as a grand incentive to holy living. Believing this, the Revisers have used the *aorist* here, and in doing so, have taken the liberty of adopting the order of the original: "We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?" And if they were justified in using the aorist, who can blame them for changing the order of the words, so as to lay the stress of the question on the parties appealed to?

I need go no further in this line of argument; the object of which is to show that, once begun with their work, they found themselves insensibly —I would say, irresistibly—drawn into what cursory readers would regard as exceeding their instructions in almost every verse; while close students would themselves be able to justify most of the changes —the Bishop of Durham, I fancy; but some of them, of whom I am one, saw very early in the progress of the work that the public would never stand much of what was done in the first Revision, and even in the second; while only the third Revision (expressly designed to bring the English nearer to that of the Authorised Version) would make the work satisfactory even to good scholars, as a *people's* New Testament, or give it a chance of superseding the Authorised Version, either in the pulpit or the pew. I said this to my learned friend Dr. Moulton (he will allow me I am sure to refer to him as one who voted for the changes which others of us could not endure). "The public will never stand that," I said. "Oh, but in a few years, when accustomed to it, they will," he replied. "Never," answered I; and eleven years since have proved too well the truth of this.

I have not space to say what I fain would, of the admirable way in which Dr. Westcott has dealt with the subject in the June number of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES. He knows that on the changes, which I must call extreme, I could not vote with him. But from first to last he acted on principles which the studies of a lifetime had led him to adopt, but which in many cases led to results which some of us by degrees found good reason to refuse. I refer here particularly to the principle that the same Greek word should (as far as possible) be rendered by the same English word. In the Preface to the work this is adverted to as one of the fixed principles on which the work has been executed; and it is so taking that, so far as I remember, the work was half finished ere the conviction had grown upon some of us, that by adhering to that principle too rigidly we were making bad English. The opposite principle had been acted on by the 1611 Revisers; and, if I remember rightly (for I write from home), they claim credit for varying the translation of the Greek word by some synonym, and have thereby shown the richness of the English language. On one occasion when the English word, which had to be used, according to our principle, for the Greek, brought out what seemed to him most objectionable English, the member who was looked up to as the master of lexicography exclaimed, "We are impoverishing the English language," in response to which a whisper of "Hear, hear" was heard

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across the table. The one answer to this was, We are not here for the purpose of enriching the English language, but for translating the Greek.

Yet here there was need for that remark; for there are cases in which, by adhering to the same English for the same Greek word, an important gain is made. I refer to the example which Dr. Westcott quotes on the very subject—2 Peter i. 7. In the Authorised Version this is rendered, "To godliness [add] brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." Two objectionable renderings are there, if not three. Why not have used "brotherly love" here, especially as they do not render the next word "love," as they should have done. Then "charity" is most objectionable, because an ambiguous word, for ἀγάπη. But it will be said if they had used "love" it would have seemed little more than a repetition of the same word. Well, but they have thus lost the very idea which the apostle meant to express. The Revised Version translates thus: "In your love of the brethren [supply] love." The one kind of love embraces a narrow but precious circle—that of "the household of faith." But the other word "love" is intended to express what Christians owe to all mankind.[1] And I think Bishop Westcott has done right in contending that the Revisers did exactly as they ought in their Version. I said there was a third word which the Authorised Version rendered objectionably. Seven things Christians are to "add to" their "faith." Now, when a house is built, one stone is "added to" another. There is only a *mechanical* connection between the stone. But the same rare word used in the Greek means to bring in a supply of one thing to complete another. So that when the apostle bids us in our brotherly love to bring a supply of "love," he means that our "love of the brethren" is *not what he wants us to cultivate, if it stops there.* It must stretch itself out to the whole brotherhood of man. It is an *organic* connection between all the seven things here made to hang upon our "faith"; which alone completes the all-round Christian character.

I fear I have written too much; but I have touched only the threshold of the difficult question, How far the Revised Version of the New Testament has succeeded or failed in what the public had a right to expect from it.

[1] See THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, vol. i. p. 49.

The Notion of Divine Covenants in the Bible.

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR CANDLISH, D.D., GLASGOW.

IN a previous article it was shown that the notion expressed in the Bible by the term covenant as applied to God's dealings with men is that of a disposition, or declaration of the grace which He intends to show them, and of the allegiance which He expects at their hands. The two other questions mentioned at the outset remain to be considered.

II.

The second question is, Whether Scripture warrants us in applying the name and idea of a covenant, as thus understood, to God's dealing with man at the beginning? There are some theologians who acknowledge the notion of a covenant as a biblical one, and really applicable to God's dealings with Abraham, with Israel, and with believers in Christ, but yet think there is no warrant for speaking of any such thing in the case of our first parents; and as these are all various forms of the covenant of grace, this amounts to a denial of what has been commonly called the covenant of works or of law. Now, as far as regards express Scripture testimony, they have a plausible case. For there is no place where the word covenant is certainly used of God's dealing with man at first. It is applied to God's promise and precepts to Noah and his sons after the Flood (Gen. ix. 8–17); to those to Abraham (Gen. xv.), repeated and renewed to Isaac and Jacob; to His transaction with Israel after the Exodus (Ex. xix., xxiv., and *passim*); to His promises to Aaron and his sons as the priestly house (Num. xxv. 12, 13; Mal. ii. 3, 5); to those to David and his descendants (Ps. lxxxix. 39); and to His relation to Jesus Christ and those who believe in Him. But when this last is spoken of as a new covenant, the contrast is always with that of Sinai, not with one made with Adam at first. Hosea vi. 7 may con-