

**A COMPANION TO
THE REVISED OLD
TESTAMENT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649035953

A Companion to the Revised Old Testament by Talbot W. Chambers

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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TALBOT W. CHAMBERS

FUNK & WAGNALLS

NEW YORK

1885

LONDON

10 AND 12 DEK STREET

41 FLEET STREET

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PREFACE.

THE design of this book is expressed in the title. It is intended to furnish a convenient manual to those readers of the Revised Old Testament who wish to inform themselves of its origin and aim, and of the principles upon which it has been made.

It was no part of the author's purpose to defend or advocate the work of the revisers. Even if such a thing were required, he is not the person to undertake it. But it is not required. A revision of the English Bible for popular use must stand or fall by its own merits, and no efforts, whether of friends or foes, can prevent this result. If the book is worthy—that is, if it accomplish the object for which it was undertaken, no amount of opposition can overthrow it. However learned or skilful or acute its assailants may be, they will only beat the air. The Christian public will slowly but surely find out the truth, and act accordingly. They will accept and adopt that form of the Bible which best answers the purposes for which the Bible was given. If, on the other hand, the work is a failure, if it is no advance upon its predecessor, if its gains in one direction are outweighed by shortcomings in another, it will pass into

neglect and oblivion. No amount of argument can save it. All the resources of scholarship, wit and dialectic skill will utterly fail to reverse the popular verdict.

There is reason, however, to believe that the labor bestowed upon the work will not prove to be in vain. It scarcely admits of a doubt that the Revised Bible is a more accurate representation of the original than the common version, since its authors are acknowledged to be among the most accomplished scholars of our day. It is true the edge of this statement was neatly turned by some of those who criticised unfavorably the New Testament on its appearance in 1881. They said that the revisers were excellent in Greek, but poor in English. This meant that they strained the resources of our noble English tongue, and sometimes sacrificed the vernacular idiom to an ideal exactness of translation. But surely the fault, if it existed, was one of those that "lean to virtue's side," and besides can hardly have occurred very often. But even admitting its existence to the full extent that is claimed, the question then arises whether the Christian community will prefer elegance to faithfulness, and choose rather to have a fine old English classic than a studiously correct English Bible. It was in view of this fact that, in a public discussion of the subject two or three years ago, an eminent clergyman * of Boston remarked that it was not so much the book as the church that was on trial.

* The Rev. Phillips Brooks, D.D.

The writer is one of those who believe that the church will stand the trial, and that in the end it will be willing to surrender life-long attachments and very sacred associations for the sake of learning more exactly the terms and meaning of the Revelation God has been graciously pleased to make of Himself.

Of course this will not be done at once. The present adult generation, even the revisers themselves, the most of whom are on the descending scale of years, will find it hard to abandon the book endeared to them from infancy. But the coming generation will grow up with the knowledge that there are two revisions of the English Bible, that of 1611 and that of 1885, and that they are at liberty to choose between them. Nor will this be because of any special efforts made by the authors of the later revision. It will follow in the natural course of events. Writers on subjects connected with the theory or practice of religion will find incessant occasion to quote and comment upon the revised text. And the discussions will bring out clearly the fact that that text represents the results of more than two and a half centuries of study bestowed by the scholars of all Christian nations upon the original Scriptures. It has a right, therefore, to claim a candid and dispassionate consideration. Moreover, the immense numbers of children and youth in Sunday-schools and Bible classes will see in the aids provided for the prosecution of their studies a continual reference to this revision, and for the most part a frank acknowledgment of its superior accuracy. This cir-

cumstance will keep the book from being overlooked or forgotten. It cannot possibly be shelved. If therefore the book be what it is claimed to be, it will gradually work its way to general acceptance, just as its predecessor did in the first half of the seventeenth century. That book at first was received with cold indifference by some and with violent opposition by others, yet it survived both. Although universally known as "the Authorized Version," no trace of such authorization has ever been found in any records of the time, whether civil or ecclesiastical. Neither the crown nor Parliament nor the privy council nor the convocation appear to have given it any public sanction. Yet without the aid of legal enactments, and entirely upon its own merits, it quietly superseded all its predecessors and rivals. It is therefore not unreasonable to expect that the present revision will in time noiselessly accomplish the same result, and at length come to be generally recognized as the Bible of English-speaking peoples.

In the mean time, while the verdict of the people is forming, there is need of such works as the present. For it is a fact that, notwithstanding all that has been said on the subject during the last ten or fifteen years, there are multitudes of persons, well-informed in other respects, who do not know why the revision has been attempted, or how it has been carried on, or what it was expected to accomplish. There are others who, while aware of the leading facts in the case, yet would be embarrassed in judging particular instances. An example may be taken

from the experience of the Revised New Testament. Soon after that volume appeared, two clergymen took it up from a bookseller's table, and casually opened it at the close of the fifteenth chapter of Mark. Here they observed that the 43d verse spoke of the *body* of Jesus, while the 45th called it the *corpse*, the Authorized Version having *body* in both places. Desirous to see the reason of the change, they turned to the nearest Greek Testament, where they were surprised to find that the original had the same word in both verses. The case then seemed inexplicable, and was so until one of the two consulted a critical edition, where it appeared that the correct text had one word (*sōma*) in the 43d verse and another (*ptōma*) in the 45th. Consequently the revision reproduced exactly the form as well as the meaning of the original.

It is with the design of meeting cases like this that the present volume has been prepared—not indeed by any means with the view of explaining all the points wherein alteration has been made, but simply to state the circumstances that led to the work, and the means and method used to accomplish it. After a brief statement concerning the text of the Old Testament, a series of chapters takes up instances of the various changes made, and suggests in a short and general way the reasons for these changes. This is only a selection of passages, and possibly not the most judicious that could have been made. Yet these examples, however ill-chosen, will doubtless illustrate all or nearly all the principles involved,