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OF

THE BIBLE AND PARTS THEREOF

In English,

FROM THE YEAR MDV. TO MDCCCL.

WITH

AN APPENDIX

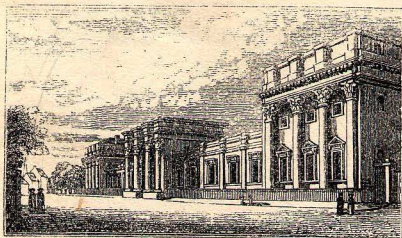
CONTAINING SPECIMENS OF TRANSLATIONS, AND
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTIONS.

SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

BY

THE REV. HENRY COTTON, D.C.L.

ARCHDEACON OF CASHEL, &C.



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M.DCCC.LII.

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TO THE MEMORY
OF
THAT FRIEND,
TO WHOM, UNDER PROVIDENCE,
I WAS INDEBTED
FOR MOST IMPORTANT ASSISTANCE
IN EARLY LIFE,
DR. CYRIL JACKSON,
DEAN OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD,
THIS PUBLICATION IS INSCRIBED,
WITH FEELINGS OF UNABATED GRATITUDE
AND DEEP RESPECT.

P R E F A C E.

THIRTY-ONE years have elapsed, since the appearance of the former edition of this work. During that period, the public attention has been largely directed towards this department of Biblical literature; not merely on the score of a taste for Bibliography; but with the far higher object, of tracing with exactness the steps by which the great work of the Reformation was accomplished in the British dominions, and of further elucidating the characters of many eminent persons, who were raised up by Providence to take leading parts in those memorable transactions.

In the course of the researches which Scholars have undertaken for the above-named objects, many interesting particulars have been brought to light respecting the publication of the earliest and rarest editions of the English Scriptures. And the accidental discovery in 1831, by Mr. Rodd, a London bookseller, of a fragment of Tyndale's first printed New Testament with Glosses, led to a series of careful and connected investigations, which have resulted in placing that portion of our Ecclesiastical history upon a clearer and more satisfactory basis than before.

Do not let us forget, that the *first* person, who systematically undertook to bring together such information as could be gleaned from scattered sources respecting the several English translations of the Scriptures, and to add to it some historical notices of the authors and editors of those versions, was the Rev. John Lewis, Minister of Margate; well known as the author of the lives of Wicliffe, of bishop Reginald Pecock, of William Caxton the first English printer,—and of several other literary pieces.

In the preparation of that laborious work, he received material assistance from the learned Dr. Daniel Waterland, Master of Magdalene College Cambridge; ample evidence of which may be seen, in the correspondence of the two friends, published in the last

volume of Dr. Waterland's works, printed by the University of Oxford in 1823.

Mr. Lewis at first prefixed his account of English Bibles to a folio edition of Wicliffe's version of the New Testament, in 1731. Seven years afterwards, he published it by itself, with some additional information, in an octavo volume. And it was reprinted in 1818.

The *first* part of his work treats of ancient *manuscript* translations of the Scriptures, in Saxon and English; the labours of Abbat Ælfric, of Richard the hermit of Hampole, of John Wicliffe and some of his followers. The *second* part is employed in describing the translations made, and *printed*, from the reign of king Henry VIII. to the year 1729.

It has been somewhat the fashion, in late years, to speak slightly of those labours of Mr. Lewis. Orme, in his "Bibliotheca "Biblica," is pleased to style the History of English Translations "a dull but important book." But it ought to be remembered, that in compilations of that kind the object is rather to convey exact information than to delight the fancy. And few persons, except those who have been actually engaged in similar researches, have any idea of the amount of labour requisite to be undergone in order to bring that detailed information before the public in a tangible and intelligible shape.

It is quite true, that Lewis' account of those matters is imperfect, and in numerous instances inaccurate. Yet competent judges have felt not only gratitude, but surprise that he was able to amass so large an amount of information respecting particulars which the difficulties of those troubled times had surrounded with obscurity; and to discover copies of so many of those interesting editions of our Scriptures, which stole forth in secrecy and silence, from unknown presses, and were dispersed by unknown hands. We read with deep interest, how these were watched, and seized, and suppressed, immediately on their appearance; how jealously they were guarded by their possessors, and frequently were concealed with the utmost care, upon any sudden outburst of the persecuting spirit which then unhappily prevailed.

The five and thirty years from 1525 to 1560, by which time Queen Elizabeth was firmly seated on the throne, comprise the most stirring and interesting period of our Ecclesiastical history. Those years furnished Mr. Lewis with abundance of curious and valuable materials; but they likewise presented most formidable