

BIBLE TRANSLATION

The above subject has been much before the public lately, and indeed many translations of the Bible or its parts have been published by various scholars or committees in recent years.

Some seem to have had their day or vogue, except for reference purposes. It may be asked why all this continuous labour and learned scholarship expended on the Bible? Why not on some other book? The continuous labours and research are in themselves a witness that the Bible is unique, different from all other books.

The casual reader, not giving much thought to the subject, may be perplexed because of the many translations available, though we need to remember that the true object of Bible translation is to express correctly from available manuscripts what was originally written by the inspired men of God, as prophets and apostles; just the opposite from a needed revision, say, of a scientific text book.

And need we wonder that men cannot leave alone these lively oracles of God, whether they be true men or otherwise. The promises of God are contained therein. The Bible unfolds the past, it reveals the future. It answers, "the reason why," of life, and is able to meet man's deepest yearnings, and wherever in this dark and uncertain world its truth is believed and its precepts obeyed it brings light and healing whether to man or nations.

But as to translation, in one sense every preacher or Bible-class teacher is a translator. The preacher reading, say, from the Authorised Version may refer to the Greek, and seek to substitute an alternative or fuller rendering. A child may ask the teacher the meaning of a certain word, and the teacher, according to the age and understanding of the child, supplies a simple or better known word or phrase. And thus of course with modern translations there can be words or expressions more easily understood than in the older versions. Words do sometimes change their meaning over the course of years and the way they are spelt may be altered.

Due to the issue of recent modern translations, especially since the issue of the N.E.B. New Testament the Authorised Version has come in for a good deal of needless, and sometimes childish, abuse with the cry that modern youth cannot understand its antiquated language. Somewhat strange this outcry when for the past, say, hundred years the words and expressions complained of

were just as archaic then as now, and the boast today is of superior education generally. We do well to remember that the Authorised version has been singularly blessed of God, and still the way-faring man like multitudes before him shall surely become wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, *if he read devoutly its sacred pages*. Passing slang or vulgarities which some seem to favour are no more likely to arrest the soul than dignified language which may well befit the words of God in His revelation to His fallen creature, man.

A free translation may have its appeal to those who do not consider deeply the words of God, but the value of a translation should not be judged from minor aspects. We need to delve deeper than the surface and to consider the rendering of fundamental texts which carry important doctrinal statements concerning our most holy faith. It is through these that the enemy seeks to undermine the faith once for all delivered to the saints, and to deny the Lord His glory. And it is through these that the true character of a translation is to be assessed, be it clothed in ever such flowing language.

This brief article does not pretend to touch upon the merits or demerits generally of the various modern versions which sometimes involves the need of high scholarship.

Neither does it question the need of critical study and revision since the Authorised version, due for instance to additional manuscripts being found. It simply endeavours to give a lead as to the true standpoint from which a version or translation should be regarded or assessed.

It could be also asked whether, in the endeavour to assess the "value" of the N.E.B. New Testament, it is right to speak in praise of the "translation" of the less important passages if the rendering of the more important proves to be subversive to God's holy gospel? Satan's deceptions can be clothed with light, and any versions which transgress in this way should, apart from reference purposes or critical study, be shunned for public use and its deceptions exposed, not glossed over.

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