

ENGLISH VERSIONS IN THE RESTORATION
MOVEMENT: 1935-1970

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Immediately prior to 1935, the brotherhood depended on English translations of the Bible for their understanding of God's word; few could read the original languages of the Bible. When new translations were presented to the public, the brotherhood would compare them to existing translations but they could not evaluate them as translations. After a period of confusion, strife, and dogmatism, two independent attitudes emerged; each had mutually exclusive ideals concerning the use of English translations and the value of the original languages of the Bible. The purpose of this paper is to trace the progress of these two groups within the Restoration Movement and to outline two issues dividing these two groups.

From 1930 to 1935, restoration periodicals reveal three significant attitudes toward the English Bible. Many members of the church distributed Bibles, New Testaments, and tracts on Bible study believing that the Bible would uproot denominational creeds.¹ From 1925 to 1932, S. F. Morrow reported that the Bible and Testament Fund had distributed over 50,000 Bibles and New Testaments² and had printed 105,000 tracts on Bible study.³ J. A. Allen stated this rationale when he wrote, "all we ask, and all we plead for, is that people read and study the Bible for

¹J. A. Hudson, "The Border Line of the Word of God," Gospel Advocate 72 (September 18, 1930):893.

²S. F. Morrow, "Bible Societies and Their Work," Gospel Advocate 74 (December 22, 1932):1,366.

³S. F. Morrow, "Where the Bibles Go," Gospel Advocate 72 (May 15, 1930):459.

themselves and that they stand candidly upon its holy teachings."¹

Another prominent attitude was that God had providentially preserved the Bible from corruption.² Greek studies were considered useful but not essential to studying the New Testament;³ R. H. Boll thought the ASV was accurate enough for any Bible student.⁴ According to J. T. Hinds, most of the brotherhood was wholly uninformed about the transmission of the Bible.⁵ Reviews of Bible translations during this period were comparisons with older English translations.⁶

The third significant attitude was that any translation was good enough to learn the plan of salvation. The KJV and the ASV were used together; the KJV was beautiful and reverent, the ASV was modern and precise.⁷ Those who pointed out the archaisms in the KJV as errors and those who questioned the modern ASV were advised to become better acquainted

¹J. A. Allen, "Coming to the Bible," Gospel Advocate 72 (May 22, 1930):481.

²W. S. Long, "How May We Know the Bible Is from God?" Gospel Advocate 72 (August 28, 1930):829, 836; 72 (September 11, 1930):877; 72 (September 18, 1930):901; 72 (September 25, 1930):925; 72 (October 16, 1930):997; E. H. Ijams, "Our Bible--A Product of Inspiration," Gospel Advocate 72 (November 6, 1930):1,068-69.

³R. H. Boll, "Why New Testament Greek Is Neglected," Word and Work 28 (May 1934):89; J. H. Childress, "The Value of Knowing Greek," Gospel Advocate 75 (March 23, 1933):274.

⁴R. H. Boll, "Why New Testament Greek Is Neglected," p. 89.

⁵J. T. Hinds, "What about the Translations," Gospel Advocate 75 (June 1, 1933):520.

⁶J. T. Hinds, "Private Versions," Gospel Advocate 74 (March 3, 1932):276-77; A. N. Trice, "Polychrone Bible," Gospel Advocate 74 (September 8, 1932):997; R. L. Whiteside, "The Lamsa Translation," Gospel Advocate 76 (June 14, 1934):573.

⁷J. A. Hudson, "An Inquiry about Books," Gospel Advocate 76 (September 6, 1934):854.

with the translation process.¹ Even though no one translation was elevated above the others,² the ASV was recommended as being more accurate than the popular KJV.³

1935-1945

Bible distribution and tract printing slowed during this period but the lack of Bibles was not the problem according to G. K. Wallace; he insisted that many people owned Bibles but they did not study them.⁴ A belief that God had providentially preserved the Bible continued to be strong.⁵ Abilene Christian College devoted an entire lectureship to this theme in 1936; many speakers vocalized this conviction⁶ but C. Hill summarized it well when he said,

I want to express my conviction that God has not only divinely inspired his word but that he has also providentially preserved

¹G. C. Brewer, "Inflated by Learning--Refusing to Learn," Gospel Advocate 74 (April 14, 1932):450-51; J. T. Hinds, "The Revised Version," Gospel Advocate 75 (March 9, 1933):226.

²J. A. Hudson, "An Inquiry about Books," p. 854.

³J. M. McCaleb, "The Bible in the Lead," Gospel Advocate 72 (April 17, 1930):367; J. T. Hinds, "Mark 16:16," Gospel Advocate 73 (March 26, 1931):364; H. L. Boles, "Faithfulness to the Word of God," Gospel Advocate 73 (August 13, 1931):1,000.

⁴G. K. Wallace, "The Bible Must Be Taught," in Abilene Christian College Bible Lectures, 1936, ed. C. A. Norred (Abilene, Tex.: Abilene Christian College Press, 1936), p. 69.

⁵H. L. Boles, "The Bible," Gospel Advocate 80 (September 1, 1938): 811, 830; W. W. Leamons, "The Book of Books," Gospel Advocate 82 (November 21, 1940):1109; S. H. Hall, "Every Scripture Is Profitable," Firm Foundation 61 (October 10, 1944):1-2; 61 (October 17, 1944):1-3.

⁶R. C. Jones, "The Church During the Dark Ages," in Abilene Christian College Bible Lectures, 1936, ed. C. A. Norred (Abilene, Tex.: Abilene Christian College Press, 1936), p. 33; C. C. Morgan, "The Genuineness and Credibility of Our English Bible," in Abilene Christian College Bible Lectures, 1936, ed. C. A. Norred (Abilene, Tex.: Abilene Christian College Press, 1936), pp. 50-57.

it. I believe that God intended for people living in the twentieth century to have an accurate revelation of his will the same as the people of the early centuries. Although some minor errors have been made, this one thing is clearly evident; in all the different versions the plan of salvation has been made plain. One can learn what to do to be saved in any of them. God's revelation was made in order to save mankind and man's part in the scheme of redemption is clearly set forth in every version.¹

While this conviction remained strong, some problems were confronting the brotherhood concerning the use of translations and sacred language. Questions concerning the need of Bible revision, the ASV as a version, and the reliability of the ASV began filtering into the papers.² In 1945, G. C. Brewer summarized into four points what most of the writers said. First, he wrote that he did not study from one translation to the exclusion of others; he compared them and used the ASV as the translation he quoted from the pulpit. Second, he refused to name one translation as authoritative over the others; there should be no official translation. Third, he thought that using a variety of translations helped clarify the Bible's meaning not confuse it. Fourth, he explained that words change their meaning over the years. When this happens, older translations lose their ability to communicate the true meaning of the Bible; this is why new translations are needed.³

Also, the form of the English language became a topic of

¹C. Hill, "The History of Our English Bible," in Abilene Christian College Bible Lectures, 1936, ed. C. A. Norred (Abilene, Tex.: Abilene Christian College Press, 1936), p. 34.

²R. H. Boll, "King James or Revised?" The Word and Work 30 (July 1936):132-35; F. B. Srygley, "Translations of the Bible," Gospel Advocate 78 (October 15, 1936):989, 997; H. L. Boles, "Translation of the King James Version," Gospel Advocate 84 (January 1, 1942):5, 13; S. H. Hall, "Every Scripture Is Profitable," Firm Foundation 61 (October 10, 1944):1-2; 61 (October 17, 1944):1-3.

³G. C. Brewer, "Why the Revised Version?" Gospel Advocate 87 (March 8, 1945):149-50.

discussion. Some brethren had been using Old English forms of language in their private and public prayers; the form of the language became as sacred as the KJV. They were troubled that some brethren were using modern terms in prayer; they believed that the Old English forms were more reverent. R. L. Whiteside answered by saying that there was no sacred language forms in English or in any other language; he refused to dictate any sacred language for use in prayers.¹

Another attitude growing in the brotherhood was a resentment toward modernism; some brethren knew enough about it to oppose it whenever they saw traces of the deadly presupposition.² Translations were carefully examined for modernism. In 1944, G. N. Woods reviewed Moffatt's translation of the Bible and began his review by stating that "Dr. Moffatt is a modernist."³ He outlined his objections thusly,

1. Dr. Moffatt accepts the so-called "assured results" of modern, rationalistic destructive criticism. This means that he rejects the traditional view of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and its early date, and thinks that it is a veritable patchwork of documents, none by the hand of Moses, but compiled by various hands from many sources, none earlier than the ninth century B.C. and priously palmed off on Israel as a genuine production.
2. Dr. Moffatt does not hesitate to alter the Hebrew text to support his subjective theories.⁴

His review of Moffatt's New Testament contained a comparison with the ASV and showed how Moffatt changed the task of translation into the act

¹R. L. Whiteside, "Thou, Thy, You, Your," Gospel Advocate 80 (July 21, 1938):674.

²A. N. Trice and C. H. Roberson, Bible Versus Modernism (Nashville, Tenn.: McQuiddy Press, 1935).

³G. N. Woods, "Moffatt's Translation of the Old Testament," Gospel Advocate 86 (June 8, 1944):385.

⁴Ibid.

of transliteration and paraphrasing.¹

1946-1950 (RSV: Round One)

Even though several translations were reviewed during this period,² the RSV New Testament became the focal point of the modern translation controversy. Early in 1946, Brewer wrote a brief article about the RSV New Testament but his article did not start the controversy;³ R. C. Foster wrote a series of critical articles accusing the RSV of several serious errors.⁴ Foster's objections became the standard objections to the RSV⁵ even though they were answered by G. C. Brewer, P. W. Stonestreet, and C. B. Douthitt.

Foster's criticisms included the theological beliefs of the translators, the use of thee and thou, the omission of some passages on textual grounds, and some instances of paraphrasing.⁶ Stonestreet and

¹G. N. Woods, "Moffatt's Translation of the New Testament," Gospel Advocate 86 (June 22, 1944):416-17.

²J. D. Bales, "Concordant Version," Gospel Advocate 89 (February 13, 1947):130-31, 139; B. C. Goodpasture, "Williams' Translation Available," Gospel Advocate 91 (November 10, 1949):706; R. C. Welch, "A New Jehovah's Witnesses Bible," Gospel Guardian 2 (January 11, 1950):10-11; W. L. Wharton, "The Bordeaux New Testament," Gospel Guardian 2 (May 18, 1950):3.

³G. C. Brewer, "The Revised Standard Version," Gospel Advocate 88 (March 21, 1946):266, 282.

⁴R. C. Foster, "The Revised Standard Version," Christian Standard 82 (February 23, 1946):118; 82 (March 2, 1946):133; 82 (March 9, 1946):150; 82 (March 16, 1946):164.

⁵O. L. Winborn, "The Revised Standard Version," Gospel Advocate 88 (July 18, 1946):672; "Paraphrase or Translate," Gospel Advocate 90 (July 15, 1948):680, 693; "Translations and Versions," Gospel Advocate 91 (January 27, 1949):54-55.

⁶R. C. Foster, "The Revised Standard Version," Christian Standard 82 (February 23, 1946):118, 133, 150, 164.

Douthitt challenged the idea that the translators necessarily inserted their theological beliefs into their translation; they pointed out that the KJV and ASV translators were confirmed denominational scholars and that fact has not been used against their work.¹ Douthitt insisted that a translation "should be judged on its own merits rather than on the character of the man who produced it."²

Changing the forms of thee and thou to you and your except when God was addressed or in the case of the glorified Christ (Mt. 25:37; Rev. 5:9), caused Foster to conclude that the RSV translators intentionally tried to minimize the deity of Christ. Brewer pointed out that Campbell's Living Oracles followed the same policy and no one charged Campbell with modernism.³ Also, Foster charged that the translators were trying to undermine the faith of Christians by omitting some passages; Brewer and Douthitt replied that printing the facts concerning manuscript support for a particular text did not destroy the faith of ASV readers.⁴

Foster's last objection was that when the RSV translators removed the italics from their translation, ordinary readers could not tell if the English text they were reading was an exact translation of

¹P. W. Stonestreet, "Revised Standard Version," Gospel Advocate 88 (June 27, 1946):612; C. B. Douthitt, "Revised Standard Version of the New Testament," Gospel Advocate 88 (July 18, 1946):674-75.

²C. B. Douthitt, "Revised Standard Version of the New Testament," p. 675.

³G. C. Brewer, "The Revised Standard Version and Modernism," Gospel Advocate 88 (April 18, 1946):366.

⁴G. C. Brewer, "The Revised Standard Version and Modernism," p. 366; C. B. Douthitt, "Revised Standard Version of the New Testament," p. 675.

the Greek text or a paraphrase.¹ Stonestreet replied that paraphrasing was commonly done by average readers and preachers to explain complex passages; paraphrasing is not wrong if it accurately explains the meaning of the Bible.² Brewer, Stonestreet, and Douthitt demonstrated that Foster's criticisms could be turned against any translation. With this defense of the RSV New Testament, Foster's articles did not impress many. Douthitt contended Foster was not being objective with his review; he wrote, "These articles were not up to the Foster standard; they were not well written; he wrote like an amateur and argued like a school-boy; his material was poorly arranged and he wrote in circles."³

1951-1956 (RSV: Round Two)

Up to this period of time, reviews of Bible translations had three characteristics in common: the reviewers used older English translations to review modern translations, they were unaware of current translation techniques, and they were dependent on secondary sources for their understanding of textual criticism. Since these reviews were based on the credibility of the reviewer instead of his scholarship, criticisms directed at the review were taken to be a critique of the reviewer. It is not difficult to see what could happen and what actually did happen in this time period. Many reviewers indulged in character evaluation instead of version evaluation. However, some brethren began to educate themselves and others by publishing extensive articles on the transmission

¹R. C. Foster, "The Revised Standard Version," pp. 118, 133.

²P. W. Stonestreet, "Revised Standard Version," p. 612.

³C. B. Douthitt, "Revised Standard Version of the New Testament," p. 675.

of the Bible, Bible study, and the nature of revelation and inspiration; it was their hope to bring scholarship into the debate.¹ This attempt did not affect the brotherhood in its early stages; from 1951 to 1956, the brotherhood wrestled with problems that they were untrained to handle.

F. Y. Tant began the conflict by publishing a critical review of the RSV taken from a Methodist periodical;² his editorial asserted that the "unreserved praise and commendation"³ of the RSV coming from some brethren was irresponsible and dangerous. He made three arguments (already offered by R. C. Foster) and concluded that the RSV was really a modernistic commentary instead of a legitimate translation.⁴ B. C. Goodpasture also wrote an editorial expressing doubts about the implication of the National Council of Churches naming the RSV as their official Bible and their translation of Is. 7:14; also, he did not like the paraphrase in some texts.⁵

¹F. Pack, "The Meaning of Revelation," Gospel Advocate 94 (November 6, 1952):713; "The Meaning of Inspiration," Gospel Advocate 94 (December 11, 1952):803-4; "General Texts on Inspiration," Gospel Advocate 94 (December 25, 1952):836; 95 (January 29, 1953):56; "Tools of Bible Study," Gospel Advocate 95 (October 8, 1953):655-56; 95 (October 22, 1953):694-95; 95 (November 5, 1953):732-33; 95 (November 19, 1953):777-78; 95 (December 3, 1953):812-13; 95 (December 17, 1953):857-58; 96 (January 7, 1954):11-13; 96 (January 28, 1954):70-72; 96 (February 18, 1954):132-34; 96 (April 22, 1954):308-10; J. M. Powell, "How We Got the Bible," Gospel Advocate 94 (December 4, 1952):794-95; "The Story of the English Bible," Gospel Advocate 94 (January 10, 1952):25-26; 94 (January 24, 1952):53-54; 94 (February 21, 1952):113; 94 (March 13, 1952):167-68; 94 (March 27, 1952):193, 199-200.

²O. T. Allis, "The New Version," Gospel Guardian 4 (November 6, 1952):1, 15.

³F. Y. Tant, "The Revised Standard Version," Gospel Guardian 4 (November 6, 1952):4.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁵B. C. Goodpasture, "The Revised Standard Version," Gospel

Tant continued to criticize the editors of the Gospel Advocate and the Firm Foundation for advertizing the RSV as a reliable translation; he could not understand why they wrote critical articles about this translation and continued to sell the translation to unsuspecting patrons.¹ Showalter and Goodpasture did not directly respond to Tant; they had problems of their own. Goodpasture had received reports that zealous brethren had made the KJV the only inspired translation; he responded that all translations were the products of men and were subject to errors in translation.² Showalter answered his patrons with only a general recommendation of the RSV for comparative study; he believed the RSV would never replace the KJV or the ASV.³

Tant did not drop the issue. Tant asked G. P. Estes⁴ and J. T. Overbey⁵ to write a series of articles exposing the errors of the RSV; Tant added an editorial to these articles explaining why the RSV was not

Advocate 94 (November 20, 1952):754.

¹F. Y. Tant, "Advertisements and Editorials," Gospel Guardian 4 (January 1, 1953):4.

²B. C. Goodpasture, "Inspiration and Translation," Gospel Advocate 95 (March 12, 1953):146.

³G. H. P. Showalter, "The Value of the New Version," Firm Foundation 70 (June 16, 1953):8-9.

⁴G. P. Estes, "What Does the RSV Think of Christ?" Gospel Guardian 4 (January 1, 1953):6; 4 (January 8, 1953):12; 4 (January 15, 1953):8-9; 4 (January 22, 1953):2-3; 4 (January 29, 1953):5; 4 (February 5, 1953):8.

⁵J. T. Overbey, "The Place of the Revised Standard Version among the English Versions," Gospel Guardian 4 (January 15, 1953):2-3; "The Revised Standard Version in the Light of Documentary Evidence," Gospel Guardian 4 (January 22, 1953):8-9; "The Revised Standard Version--Objections Considered," Gospel Guardian 4 (January 29, 1953):2-3.

a true translation. The KJV and the ASV were true translations because they were translated word for word from the original languages into English; the RSV translators, as Tant thought, paraphrased in idiomatic renderings the Hebrew and Greek into English. Therefore, he thought he had proved the RSV was a commentary not a translation.¹ Based on these conclusions, Tant wrote,

the Gospel Guardian has taken her stand forth-rightly and unequivocally against the claims of the promoters of the new translation. We will cross swords with our own brethren here just as quickly as we do with them on the issue of premillennialism or institutionalism.²

In the next eight months, the Gospel Guardian produced twenty-two articles dealing exclusively with the errors of the RSV. During this zealous period, the RSV translators were accused of communism³ and deliberate mistranslation.⁴ Tant challenged the brotherhood editors to debate the RSV issue or to publically retract their erroneous statements about the RSV.⁵

Into this hopeless tangle of arguments, G. C. Brewer attempted to answer the mountain of questions presented by the Gospel Guardian.⁶

¹F. Y. Tant, "Brother Overbey's Articles," Gospel Guardian 4 (January 15, 1953):4.

²Ibid.

³R. C. Copeland, "How Red Is the Devil," Gospel Guardian 4 (March 5, 1953):15.

⁴F. Y. Tant, "That More Accurate Tag," Gospel Guardian 4 (January 22, 1953):4.

⁵Ibid., p. 5.

⁶G. C. Brewer, "The Revised Standard Version of the Bible," Gospel Advocate 95 (February 5, 1953):69-70; "The Virgin Passage and Other Objections to the RSV Considered," Gospel Advocate 95 (February 26, 1953):118-19.

His articles were a substantial answer to the Gospel Guardian but Tant and his mercenaries were not satisfied with Brewer's explanation and the controversy continued.¹ The controversy involved the same arguments with more heat being added to each exchange. The issue was finally dropped when no one would respond to the Gospel Guardian. However, before the issue subsided, R. C. Welch found modernism in Gospel Advocate literature² and Tant saw modernism destroying the church.³

1957-1970

The efforts of some brethren to put scholarship into the modern translation debate became a strong influence during this period of time. Tant and the Gospel Guardian dropped their debating posture. What they once condemned, they began practicing; as a matter of record, the Gospel Guardian advertized modern translations and sold them while it published critical articles about them!⁴ J. Everett wrote an article in 1964 criticizing the KJV; this would not have been published ten years earlier.⁵

¹G. P. Estes, "A Review of Brewer's Article," Gospel Guardian 4 (April 2, 1953):1, 13; F. Y. Tant, "Suckers," Gospel Guardian 4 (April 16, 1953):4-5.

²R. C. Welch, "Modernism in Gospel Advocate Literature," Gospel Guardian 6 (April 28, 1955):785, 794-95; 7 (May 5, 1955):1, 10; 7 (May 12, 1955):17, 21; 7 (May 19, 1955):33, 47; 7 (May 26, 1955):49, 53; 7 (June 2, 1955):65, 79.

³F. Y. Tant, "The Threat of Modernism," Gospel Guardian 6 (April 28, 1955):788.

⁴"Special Editions and Translations," Gospel Guardian 17 (November 4, 1965):411; F. Gore, "Translation or Interpretation," Gospel Guardian 17 (December 9, 1965):488-89; "The Amplified Bible," Gospel Guardian 17 (February 3, 1966):590.

⁵J. Everett, "Paul's Own Version," Gospel Guardian 16 (November 15, 1964):423.

C. A. Holt reviewed and recommended N. Lightfoot's How We Got the Bible to the readers of the Gospel Guardian; even though Holt thought Lightfoot was a liberal, he considered the readers of the Gospel Guardian to be still uninformed about the transmission of the Bible.¹ D. Blackford expressed his frustration that he wanted to keep up-to-date with the advances in biblical scholarship but he could not bear to read any modern "perversion."² Some brethren even advocated learning Hebrew and Greek.³

The effects of having biblical language scholars debate the versions issue was a good example to the brotherhood; when Lightfoot and W. M. Green disagreed concerning the best translation of the Bible during the Abilene Christian College Lectureship in 1969, they traded arguments before an audience, stated their conclusions, and allowed the audience to choose for themselves. Personalities did not become part of the discussion; each man respected the other's opinion and they remained brothers in Christ.⁴

However, some attitudes remained the same. The idea that God had providentially preserved the Bible continued to be a strong belief.⁵

¹C. A. Holt, "How We Got Our Bible, by Neil Lightfoot," Gospel Guardian 16 (April 8, 1965):763, 765.

²D. Blackford, "A King James Preacher--What Is It?" Gospel Guardian 21 (June 26, 1969):138.

³G. White, "Is It Important for People to Know Hebrew and Greek?" Truth 28 (September 1962):139-41.

⁴W. M. Green, "Which Version Shall We Use?" Restoration Quarterly 12 (First Quarter 1969):26-36; N. R. Lightfoot, "Reaction to Dr. William Green's Paper 'Which Version Shall We Use?'" Restoration Quarterly 12 (First Quarter 1969):37-41.

⁵I. Himmel, "The Bible through the Centuries," Apostolic Doctrine 2 (November 1961):161-65; H. P. Reeves, "The Bible--Its Origin," Gospel Advocate 102 (March 10, 1960):151-53.

Additionally, sacred language in prayer became a topic of strong conviction.¹ Some were still convinced that advanced biblical scholarship was ruining the brotherhood.² Bitterness characterized some reviews; I. Himmel wrote, "You cannot beat the KJV and the ASV for accuracy. These are faithful translations of the original text--not commentaries--not perversions."³ C. Springer displayed this bitter spirit when he wrote,

Recently I had an idea for another translation that would no doubt make me a fortune in sales among the more liberal in the Church of Christ. As I know little about the English language, and nothing whatsoever about the Greek, it would have to follow the general text of the ASV. The catch would be to paraphrase like the NEB and add a good deal of interpolation like the others. Of course the sound brethren in the faith would withdraw fellowship and brand me as a heretic, but think of the fellowship I'd gain among the liberals!⁴

Many reviews of new translations appeared in Restoration periodicals; many reviews reflected an adequate knowledge of recent biblical scholarship, some did not.⁵ Most of these reviews gave the translator's

¹L. R. Wilson, "Let Us All Pray," Gospel Advocate 99 (June 27, 1957):401, 409-10; G. W. Tyler, "Use of the Bible in Public Worship," Gospel Guardian 11 (March 31, 1960):722-23; L. R. Wilson, "The Use of Solemn Terms in Prayer," Gospel Advocate 105 (May 23, 1963):321; 105 (July 11, 1963):442; C. E. Crouch, "Solemn Terms in Prayer," Gospel Advocate 111 (December 4, 1969):779-80.

²E. Lindsey, "The King James Version Versus Modern Translations," Truth 28 (September 1962):142-44; C. Ellis, "Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Talks to Young Lipscomb Preachers," Gospel Advocate 108 (April 14, 1966):233-34; W. Alexander, "The Modern Reversed Version," Gospel Light 38 (March 1968):35; W. Jackson, "Bible Perversions," Gospel Advocate 111 (July 17, 1969):463.

³I. Himmel, "The Bible through the Centuries," Apostolic Doctrine 2 (November 1961):161-65.

⁴C. Springer, "My New Translation," Gospel Guardian 18 (July 21, 1966):171-72.

⁵R. C. Welch, "Destructive Criticism," Gospel Guardian 16 (December 17, 1964):2; N. Midgette, "The New English Bible," Apostolic Doctrine

goals, strengths and weaknesses of translation, and scholarly reliability; the NASB,¹ the NEB² and the TEV³ received the most comment.

Some Crucial Issues

Since this survey was limited by length, it is general and broad in scope; however, two issues need a more detailed review. When the entire Bible was issued by the Revised Standard Translation Committee in 1952, their translation of 'alma' in Is. 7:14 provoked hundreds of articles in the religious world. Some brethren had already decided that the RSV was polluted beyond measure with modernism; this translation of Is. 7:14 just confirmed their convictions. F. Y. Tant recommended that the RSV should only be used "by careful Bible students, preachers, elders, and teachers exactly as they would use the works of other men. Its place is as a reference work, not as a Bible for daily

8 (June 1967):89-90; M. Ray, "Broadway, A.B.S. and TEV," Gospel Guardian 19 (January 4, 1968):539-40; A. S. Croom, "Beware of Translations," Gospel Light 38 (February 1968):21.

¹P. K. Williams, "The New American Standard Bible," Gospel Guardian 16 (February 4, 1965):616, 619; D. P. Ames, "The New American Standard Bible," Gospel Guardian 17 (September 23, 1965):312-13; K. A. Sterling, "Reviewing the New American Standard New Testament," Gospel Guardian 16 (October 22, 1964):371, 377, 380; J. D. Thomas, "The New American Standard Bible (NASB)--New Testament," Gospel Advocate 106 (May 14, 1964):308-9.

²J. B. McInteer, "The New English Bible," Gospel Light 31 (July 1961):100; C. Melling, "The New Translation," The Scripture Standard 27 (May 1961):49-51; J. P. Lewis, "The New English Bible," Firm Foundation 87 (May 19, 1970):312-13, 315; 87 (May 26, 1970):326, 332.

³J. D. Thomas, "Today's English Version," Gospel Advocate 108 (December 29, 1966):820-21; D. P. Ames, "Reviewing the Today's English Version," Gospel Guardian 20 (December 19, 1968):513-15; 20 (January 16, 1969):562-63, 565; 20 (February 20, 1969):652-53; J. D. Thomas, "Meeting on the TEV," Gospel Advocate 111 (January 2, 1969):7-8; C. N. Wright, "TEV and the Blood of Christ," Gospel Advocate 111 (May 1, 1969):287-88.

study and meditation."¹ Tant wrote as if other translations were not the work of men. G. H. P. Showalter tried to convince his readers that "alma" should always be translated "virgin"; however, his mathematics were totally invalid. He explained,

Of these four great versions (KJV, ERV, ASV, RSV) of the Bible, all render Matthew 1:23, "virgin"; three of them render Isaiah 7:14, "virgin"; the other renders this passage "young woman" with a marginal reading "virgin." The occurrence of the word is eight times for the four versions; seven of these times the translation is "virgin" and the other lone instance gives "virgin" in the margin. This gives an overwhelming evidence in favor of "virgin" being the correct translation.²

Serious arguments against the RSV and its rendering of Is. 7:14 can be grouped into three arguments. First, the argument was made that "alma" could mean virgin or young woman; however, since there is no documented evidence that "alma" was used to designate a married woman and since "alma" has been translated virgin, it can be inferred that "alma" means virgin.³ This case cannot be affirmed since "alma" can mean a woman who is no longer a virgin.⁴

The next argument assumes that a sign, especially in Is. 7:14, is a miracle; since a young woman having a child is no real miracle, a virgin must be the intended meaning.⁵ A sign, as used in Is. 7:14,

¹F. Y. Tant, "The Revised Standard Version," Gospel Guardian 4 (November 6, 1952):4.

²G. H. P. Showalter, "Virgin in Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23," Firm Foundation 69 (December 2, 1952):8.

³G. N. Woods, "The Revised Standard Version," Gospel Advocate 95 (October 22, 1953):695-96.

⁴J. P. Lewis, The English Bible from KJV to NIV: A History and Evaluation (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 112.

⁵G. H. P. Showalter, "The Revised Standard Version," Firm Foundation 69 (November 11, 1952):8; J. D. Phillips, "Isaiah 7:14 in

does not necessarily mean a miraculous sign.¹ However, if it is assumed that the prophet meant that a virgin would conceive as a miracle, some implications of this assumption would undermine its validity. If a child was born without a human father, would God be his father? If so, could Christ claim to be the only son, the only one of his kind (Jn. 3:16)? Why was this child neglected in biblical history if it was fathered by God?

Possibly the strongest argument for the virgin is that fact that Matthew cited Is. 7:14 in Mt. 1:23 and used "parthenos" which strictly means virgin.² Since an inspired writer quoted a disputed passage and clarified the meaning, this settled the question for many individuals. Several considerations have weakened this absolute argument. If Matthew quoted the Hebrew text, it necessarily means that a virgin conceived in Isaiah's day; this cannot be supported. If Matthew quoted the Septuagint, then he was quoting a fallible translation; since God inspired Matthew to record events in the life of Christ, why would Matthew need to quote a man-made translation? The best explanation seems to be that Matthew was using typological application of O.T. texts; other passages

Revised Standard Version," Truth 18 (January 1953):8; J. T. Overby, "The Revised Standard Version--Objections Considered," Gospel Guardian 4 (January 29, 1953):2-3; G. C. Brewer, "The Virgin Passage and Other Objections to the RSV Considered," Gospel Advocate 95 (February 26, 1953):118-19.

¹Lewis, The English Bible, p. 112.

²F. Y. Tant, "The Revised Standard Version," Gospel Guardian 4 (November 6, 1952):4-5; G. H. P. Showalter, "The Revised Standard Version," Firm Foundation 69 (November 25, 1952):8; B. C. Goodpasture, "The Revised Standard Version," Gospel Advocate 94 (November 20, 1952):754; G. N. Woods, "The Revised Standard Version," Gospel Advocate 95 (October 22, 1953):695-96.

show that Matthew did not literally use O.T. passages.¹ The meaning of "almah" in Is. 7:14 must be determined by word usage in context by Hebrew scholars; since the word "almah" is not well attested in extra-biblical sources, this question will have to be answered when more evidence becomes available.

The second issue concerns the general principle of translation; should translators attempt to translate the biblical languages into a word-for-word equivalent or should they attempt to produce an idiomatic translation? This question began to be discussed when the RSV New Testament was published; in the preface, the translation committee revealed their intentions to avoid the word-for-word, literal translation principles of the past. Two sides emerged on this question; some adhered to the traditional translation principle and others argued for idiomatic renderings.

Tant and Winborn accurately represented the traditional position. Tant argued that God had inspired his prophets to speak the words he directed them to say; if men can translate the original languages into the most accurate word-for-word equivalence, then average readers can read the word of God in their language. If men paraphrase or give an idiomatic rendering of the text, they change God's word order and give their understanding of the text. With this understanding, Tant wrote,

But it (RSV) is not to be accepted as a Bible as our age has come to use the word Bible. It is most certainly not an accurate translation; but is a free running commentary and interpretation. It has all the limitations of any commentary, plus the additional monumental burden of putting itself forth not as a commentary but as the very Bible itself!²

¹ Lewis, The English Bible, p. 112.

² F. Y. Tant, "Brother Overby's Articles," Gospel Guardian 4

Winborn's arguments concentrated on the idea of a translation versus the idea of a paraphrase.¹ He argues his position with questions; he wrote,

If the word of God may be freely paraphrased, and the paraphrase is a free and commonly amplified rendering, how much latitude is allowed the scholar in amplifying the passage? Who or what is to govern once we leave translation as the criterion? Is not the paraphrase in the final analysis what the scholars believe to be the same thing in other words? If so, is it not possible that in choosing the words, opinion as to the meaning of the passage may influence the choosing? If so, is it not possible for opinion to become a part of the text? Further, how is the average person to know whether the paraphrase is accurate and dependable?²

This question of translation principle was a direct product of higher education affecting the brotherhood. Those who learned the original languages of the Bible and modern translation techniques maintained that a literal translation was impossible; additionally, if one were to produce a near literal translation, it would be useless to the average reader. They maintained that those who condemn idiomatic translations and paraphrase renderings do not know the problems of translation. If they had to struggle with translating, they would not oppose modern-day attempts to make God's word readable in the English language.³

(January 15, 1953):4.

¹O. L. Winborn, "The Revised Standard Version," Gospel Advocate 88 (July 18, 1946):672; "Paraphrase or Translate," Gospel Advocate 90 (July 15, 1948):680; "Translations and Version," Gospel Advocate 91 (January 27, 1949):54-55.

²O. L. Winborn, "Paraphrase or Translate," Gospel Advocate 90 (July 15, 1948):680.

³R. Kelcy, "The Need for New Translation," in The Bible Today, ed. J. D. Thomas (Abilene, Tex.: Abilene Christian College Students Exchange, 1966), pp. 385-95; J. W. Roberts, "Evaluating Current English Translations," in The Bible Today, ed. J. D. Thomas (Abilene, Tex.: Abilene Christian College Students Exchange, 1966), pp. 396-409; N. R. Lightfoot, "Two Recent Translations: A Study in Translation Principle," Restoration Quarterly 11 (Second Quarter 1968):89-100.

N. R. Lightfoot explained this tension between these translation procedures by examining two modern translations, the NASB and the TEV. Lightfoot demonstrated that translators have always had difficulty producing a literal translation. Scholars like Purvey, Conybeare and Howson, E. J. Goodspeed, Jowett, and Knox pointed out the fallacy of imitating the characteristics of the parent language if it distorts the idiom of the receptor language.¹ Lightfoot concluded,

A choice has to be made by all translators today--either to be contemporary and sacrifice verbal precision or to be literalistic and lost the freshness and spontaneity and incisiveness of the original message. A translator cannot travel both roads. And in the end the standard by which all translations are judged will be, as James' men said in 1611, the extent to which a translation "openeth the window to let in the light."²

Conclusion

Even though this brief survey has not documented every reaction of the brotherhood to modern translations, it has shown that the translation controversy has benefited the Restoration movement. Prior to 1935, few brethren could use the original languages in their exposition of scripture; their ultimate authority was an imperfect English translation of the Bible. As intellectual challenges confronted the brotherhood, some relied on the traditional arguments and others learned the original languages. Many brethren thought these men who went to the universities were depending on denominational scholars to interpret the Bible for them; this dependence, as they reasoned, would eventually lead them into the errors of denominationalism. However, a careful student

¹N. R. Lightfoot, "Two Recent Translations: A Study in Translation Principle," pp. 89-97.

²Ibid., p. 97.

should be able to identify the group that actually depended on denominational scholarship. By learning the original languages, one depends on the original languages for his understanding God's word. If one depends on an English translation as his ultimate authority, he must depend on the scholarship of the translators. How can he check the reliability of their scholarship? He must depend on other scholars to review the scholarship of his translation. Who then is actually dependent on denominational scholarship? To one group, biblical scholarship has ruined the sound doctrine of the Restoration Movement. To the other group, biblical scholarship has enhanced the Restoration Movement's ability to speak where the Bible (the original languages) speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.

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