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### A Critical Comparison of Luther's Bible Translation and the King James Version

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**A CRITICAL COMPARISON OF LUTHER'S BIBLE TRANSLATION  
AND THE KING JAMES VERSION**

**A Thesis presented to the  
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity**

**by**

**Martin Poch**

**Concordia Seminary,  
1926**

**A CRITICAL COMPARISON OF LUTHER'S BIBLE TRANSLATION  
AND THE KING JAMES VERSION.**

The value of any book may be determined (to coin the words) by its livability, its translatability, and its sellability.

Does the book live? Is it an influence for good? Even most of the so-called good books wither under this first acid test. For a time they cause a sensation, and even sell into hundreds of thousands of copies, but they soon die, and the next generation knows nothing of them. There are classics, of course, and the writings of a Homer, of a Cicero, of a Shakespeare, or of a Schiller, will live and sell for generations. These writings will in a measure also bear the test of translatability. Their viewpoint is not confined, as is so frequently the case, to the life, modes and habits of thinking of just one generation and just one period of time and just one nation. Their theme and content is such that they readily adapt themselves to changed circumstances and varied languages. So ancient Homer lives today, and we find the expression of his thoughts in the literature and language of our age in about twenty other languages and dialects besides the original Greek. Shakespeare's power is not only felt in the English-speaking world, but also among the continental tongues. As far as sellability is concerned, copies of these brilliant authors can be had in practically any good book store. In comparison, however, with the Bible, their value according to this three-fold test, fades into insignificance. It first of all antedates any of the works just mentioned by a considerable number of years. Then as to the life-giving influence that the Bible has ex-

2.

erted that cannot be exaggerated. Civilization as it is today, with its efforts to help the poor and unfortunate, with its endeavors to lighten the burdens of the oppressed, with its attainments in the field of humane treatment, with its elevation of woman in the social and moral scale - all this progress can be traced back to the Bible doctrines of salvation from sin through Christ Jesus, of love and service as breathed from the pages of Holy Writ. The history of civilization is the history of the Bible. Rise or decline of culture is traceable to adherence to or neglect of this Book. All of this, however, would have been impossible had the Bible not been translatable. But that is just the point, that although the Bible was originally written in the Hebrew and in the Greek languages, its thoughts are not limited to the confines of Jewish history and Hebrew culture, nor are its ideals restricted within the channels of the Greek-speaking world of the Savior's age. The Bible was translatable, the grace which it contained being as it itself claimed, universal. It was originally intended for all the people that could hear and read<sup>1)</sup> and was multiplied in the early centuries by translations into the Syriac, Coptic, Latin, Gothic and other languages, as the demand arose. During the Middle Ages, however, the Church, fearing loss of power, withheld the Book from the common people outside of those portions used in the public service. If translations were made they were supervised by an ecclesiastic with practically unlimited power of censorship, with the result that the common people were steeped in superstition and grossest ignorance.

The period of the Reformation, however, changed all this

<sup>1)</sup> Schaff, *Companion to the B. Test.*,

and with the shackles of Rome removed the Bible again came into its own, and so to this period then we owe the finest translations, foremost among these model versions being the German and the English.

To consider briefly the history of these two outstanding versions there is first the translation of Luther, the great Reformer of the Church. The beginnings of this monumental work can be traced to a letter which he wrote to John Lang of Erfurt, dated December 13th, 1521.<sup>1)</sup> Luther was at this time at the Wartburg, whereto the elector had sent him for safekeeping from the imperial edict that had gone out against him. In the quiet of this castle Luther began to carry out the previously conceived idea of translating the Bible, as aforementioned letter indicates, in which he says: "I am about to translate the New Testament into the German language, with which as I hear you are also active. Continue as thou hast begun."<sup>2)</sup> The work was not simple, as a letter dated January 13th, 1522, to his friend and colleague, Nicholas Amsdorf in Wittenberg, shows. He writes: "I have taken a burden upon myself that is going beyond my strength. I see now what it means to translate and why no one has previously attempted it and added his name. I would never be able to complete the Old Testament if you were not going to be with me and help along."<sup>3)</sup> It is true there were pre-reformation German translations of the Bible - eighteen in fact, but their language was so miserable and their diction so poor that they could hardly be regarded as German at all. Luther threw himself with great fervor into the work and with the completion of his stay at the Wartburg he had already translated the entire New Testament. In May, 1522,

1) Luther's Works, St. Louis XV. 2553 } Schaller, Book of Books  
 2) " " " " XV. 2559 }  
 3) " " " " }  
 2) Unseen, F. & H. L. F. 2

4.

the printer, Melchior Lotther, began to print and finally on September 21st, 1522, the first edition of the New Testament, consisting of three thousand copies, appeared on the market. The exact title of this memorable first edition reads: "Das Neue Testament Deutzsch Vuittonverg."<sup>1)</sup> Neither the translator, the printer, nor the year were mentioned on the title page. Already in December of the same year a second, but revised edition appeared. From 1522 until 1533 Luther himself supervised the publishing of sixteen editions, whereas in all fifty-four were put out during this time.

Not much time was wasted in getting busy with translating the more difficult and larger portion of Holy Writ, the Old Testament, and although a great deal of other work engaged the time of the great Reformer, the Books of Moses were printed in 1523. The Book of Psalms followed in 1524, the Prophets in 1532. The remaining portions of the Bible appeared in their first complete edition in 1534. With that the memorable work was completed, and so for four hundred years we have had the German Bible. For this great work we must not forget Luther had also accepted help, namely, that of the learned scholar, Melancthon, and among his advisers were such men as John Eughagen, Justus Jonas, Cruciger, Aurogallus. George Roerer served as proof reader. Now and then some scholar from another land who happened to be studying at Wittenberg at the time would assist him. The final decision, however, always rested with Luther, so that he, in the final analysis, deserves the chief credit for this monumental work.

Luther's work in translating the Bible paved the way for other translations, including also the other important translation,

<sup>1)</sup> *Umsatz E. j. teil. p. 25*

the Authorized or King James Version. This did not appear until 1611, but we can trace its origin to William Tindale (B. 1484), a student at the University of Oxford and Cambridge, where he probably studied Greek under Erasmus, the famous Greek New Testament scholar. Tindale realized the value of an English translation of the Bible, having himself come to accept the fundamental truths underlying the Reformation and now wished to render the Bible truths into his mother-tongue. He was on that account suspected of heretical tendencies and was forced to seek safety on the continent, but even there he found no rest, being forced to flee from one place to another in order to escape the Roman Inquisition. His flight also brought him to Germany, where at some time or other he most certainly must have come into contact with Luther at Wittenberg, where he imbibed the spirit of the Reformer as the succeeding events show, for at Worms, a later abode, he a year or two later managed to print two editions of an English New Testament, which were smuggled into England.<sup>1)</sup> The entire New Testament and the Pentateuch were finished in 1530. More he could not do, as he suffered martyrdom in 1534 by strangulation and burning at the stake. Although now every effort was made to completely destroy Tindale's Version, the seed was sown and his translation remained the basis of all versions to follow. In 1535 Miles Coverdale had the entire Bible published for the first time. Now followed a great number of translations in rapid succession. There was the Matthew Bible (Alias John Rager, the martyr), the Bible of Taverner, the revision by Coverdale (1539), known as the Great Bible. The accession of Catholic Mary to the throne in

*1) W. B. Cooper "William Tindale" in Princeton Theol. Review, Oct. 1925.*

England, however, forced all Protestants to flee to the continent. A number of them fled to Geneva in Switzerland, where one of them, Whittingham, prepared a revised New Testament. This was known as the Geneva Bible and was very popular, editions appearing even as late as 1611. Once more the Great Bible was revised by Bishop Parker and was known as the Bishop's Bible. The last and best of these translations is the King James Version. It was called into existence by King James I. at the Hampton Court Conference in January 1604, a gathering of the leaders of the Conservatives or Conformists and the dissenting Radicals or Puritans. The Puritans were for reforms, and among other things they insisted on a new translation of the Bible. Strange to say, the King accepted the proposition and afterwards appointed "learned men to the number of four and fifty"<sup>1)</sup> to prepare a new translation of the Bible.

Work was actually begun in 1607, the translators embracing many of the best Hebrew and Greek scholars of England at the time. They were divided into six companies, and the Scriptures were in like manner divided into six portions. We know very little of their method of translating, only the time spent at their work, this being referred to as "twice seven times seventy-two days."<sup>2)</sup> The whole was finally harmonized, the various members having with them translations in other languages, and in 1611 the King James Version, as it was called, finally appeared.<sup>3)</sup>

Almost four hundred years have passed since Luther gave the Germans the Bible in their own language and Tindale supplied the wants of his people over in England, and a little more than three

<sup>1)</sup> *John & Walter - 716-717. - names: "The English Bible"*  
<sup>2)</sup> *Schaff, T.: Companion to the Greek Testament and English Versions, p. 322. <sup>2)</sup> de. p. 529.*



hundred years since the Authorized Version made its first appearance in the British Isles. The fact that we still retain these versions in spite of attempts to have them superceded, clearly shows that there must have been merit in them. They have lived and this distinction is chiefly due to the influence of each on the forms of their respective languages. One glance at any German prior to Luther will prove the fact of the Reformer's statement: "In my youth I did once see an un-German German Bible which was dark and cloudy."<sup>1)</sup> It was Luther's Bible that actually made the German language and raised it to the eminence that it has to this very day. He gave it grace, beauty and power, and although, as is bound to happen in any living language, here and there words become obsolete and forms change, still the German of today is practically that of Luther. The same can also be said of the Authorized Version, which really traces its origin to Tindale's time, an era sterile in literature, and here again we find that it is the English Bible that has formed the English language. It was Tindale who gave it force, vigor, clearness and positiveness, and it was Coverdale who gave it beauty, melody and that rich rhythm for which it is known.<sup>2)</sup>

Comparing the two versions then we find that both made their respective languages as we know them today. They live today, but they would not were it not for the holy motive that prompted these translations. If we but consider the century in which these translations were formed, an age of which Andrew Fuller quaintly says: "Midnight now being passed, some early risers were beginning to strike fire and enlighten themselves from the Scriptures."<sup>3)</sup> It was an era of

1) *Unser K. Bibel - L. F. - p. 19*

2) *c.f. Schaff, Companion to the S. T. etc.*

3) *W. B. Cooper: "William Tindale" Trinitarian Review Oct.*

conflict. The people who had been led astray by the simony and immorality of the clergy and had been driven into ignorance and superstition by them, whose consciences had been tortured and flayed, had now begun to feel the dawn of that new era brought about by Luther's great work. The suddenness of it all, however, had dazzled them. In their bewilderment they did not always know whither to go or what to do. In this struggling mass of the common people anxious for the new light, we find both Luther and Tindale, not above the people, but among the people, fighting their battles, feeling their fears, realizing, men of vision that they were, what the people needed to restore them to rest and peace. It was love for their fellowman that prompted them to give the Bible to the people in the tongue that they could understand. As Luther himself once wrote: "For my Germans have I been born, I would also serve them."<sup>1)</sup> He could not bear to see them suffer the agonies of the soul that he had suffered, due to a lack of Scriptural knowledge, and, as Tindale says: "I have here translated for your spiritual edifying, consolation and solace."<sup>2)</sup> He wanted to bring about that even the most ignorant plowboy know the Scripture perfectly.

Another feature which again shows why these translations live is the spirit of faithfulness with which both Luther and Tindale adhered to the original text. Luther himself declares<sup>3)</sup> that in some cases it would have been better to use more idiomatic German, but he would rather break away from the German than to recede from the original meaning of the word, and as Tindale:<sup>4)</sup> "Howbeit in many places methinketh it better to put a declaration in the margin than

1) *Ulrich Eysenck* - L. F. - p. 32

2) W. B. Cooper: "William Tindale" - *Trinitarian Review* Oct. 1925

3) *de. 4) Schaller, Book of Books. 297*

to run too far from the text." In both then we find honesty and integrity which is also true of the revisors of 1611, who themselves said<sup>1)</sup> that their work was not to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one.

Attempts have been made to belittle the versions as handed down to us by Luthor and the authors of the King James translation,<sup>2)</sup> because of the enormous progress made in the last century in the field of Biblical philology. Biblical learning, such as geography, natural history, archaeology, critical introduction, has made tremendous advances and is way beyond the times of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. It is true that both translations are at times inaccurate in their rendition of Hebrew and Greek words. Luthor and the English translators were not equipped with the keen, explicit and splendid ancient manuscripts as are the scholars of today. In spite of this, however, both translations have positively fixed the character of their respective languages beyond the possibility of essential change. This is not to be wondered at when we hear of such sound rules of interpretation and translation as used for instance by the Reformer. He did not as he says,<sup>3)</sup> set aside the literal meaning too freely, but took great pains that when a certain word had special significance, that he retained it to the letter without departing from the language too freely, but on the other hand he says: "One must not ask the letters of the Latin tongue how to speak German - but one must inquire about it from the mother at home; the children in the street, the unlettered man in the market place; one must observe their mouth how

1) Schaff, Companion to the Sv. Test., 338 ff.

2) do. 248 ff.

3) Brief vom Dolmetschen Luthers Werke. St. Louis

they talk and translate accordingly, then they will understand and know what one is speaking to them in German," and as Tindale himself says <sup>1)</sup> that he wants the common plowboy to know the Scriptures, it is evident that he also, as well as Luther, wanted to give the people an idiomatic translation and not a stiff, mechanical transfer as all previous versions had been. This is also evident when we glance at the rules laid down for the revisers not quite a hundred years later, when the authors of the King James Version were told in their set of rules among other things:

1. The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the Bishop's Bible, to be followed and as little altered as the truth of the original would permit.
2. The names of the prophets and the holy writers, with the other names of the text, to be retained as nigh as may be, accordingly as they were vulgarly used.
3. Every particular man of each company to take the same chapter or chapters and have him translate them or amend them severally by himself where he thinketh good, all to meet together, confer what they have done and agree for their particulars what shall stand.

This careful approach to Holy Writ is the thing that has made for the tremendous influence of both of these translations, namely, that they live. <sup>2)</sup> It seems as though Christ and the Apostles

<sup>2)</sup> Schaff, *Companion to the Sw. V. T.*, 317ff.  
<sup>3)</sup> " " " " " 346ff.

<sup>1)</sup> Cooper: *William Tindale*  
 Princeton Pa  
 Oct. 1925  
 Oct. 1925

were speaking to us in the German or in the English instead of in the Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek and that although extant versions were referred to, still at all times the fountain-head, the Greek and Hebrew originals, were considered as basic for any kind of translation.

There is also no doubt as to the learning of the translators themselves. We need but to recollect Luther's years at Eisenach, Magdeburg and at the University of Erfurt, of his voluminous reading and his eagerness for study, as evinced in the cloister as well as in the years of his professorship at the University of Wittenberg. We have to but think of the tribute given Tindale by Sir Thomas More, who says of him: "He was well known for a man of right good living, studious and well learned in the Scripture." His years at Oxford and at Cambridge attest to that and going over to the revisors selected by King James, we know that among them were numbered the best Hebrew and Greek scholars of England at the time, such men as Dr. Reynolds (died 1607), Dr. Andrewes, Sir Henry Savile, eminent Hebrew, Greek and Latin scholars. With this background of scholarship and above all, piety and a devout attitude over against the Scriptures (which cannot be said absolutely in the case of the revisors of both translations in the early ages of the last century, many of whom approached Scriptures from the critical standpoint), it is small wonder that the spirit of these devout men still lives.

In comparing then the historical background dealing with these two prime versions from God's Holy Word, we find that there is a peculiar sameness in both. Both are the product, one directly -

1) W. B. Cooper: "William Tindale" *Princeton Revised Ed. 1925*  
 Oct. 1925.

2) Schaff: *Companion to the T. V.*  
 T. 320.

and one indirectly, of an overwhelming love for fellowman. Both have been prompted by the crying need of perilous times, the product of two big loyal hearts, who being of the common people felt their woeful ignorance and superstition, a condition with which they themselves had been fettered. In both we have a background of sound learning. In both we have sound rules of interpretation. In both we find a proper Christian approach to the Book. In both we find a going back to the original texts. Both live and the reports as given out by the various Bible Societies more than attest ~~to~~ their tremendous sellability, and among books both Luther's version and the King James translation are considered to be among the best sellers.

Going over the historical background once more we must grant practically the same value to each. It is then only in priority of inception that we can place Luther's translation first. After all, Tindale owes his translation to Luther, with whom he had come into contact and from whom he undoubtedly must have received the inspiration to further the propagation of the newly-regained Gospel by means of translation into the mother-tongue. This is very probable since Tindale's exile must have come some time after the appearance of Luther's New Testament and Tindale's marginal notes in some other of his writings agree so perfectly with Luther's that it is very evident that he learned from the Reformer, whose example goaded Tindale on to begin his great work.

When it comes to influence, however, the palm must necessarily go to the English version. After all, the German translation is restricted almost entirely to a country approximately one-third the

*1) Class Notes: Deutsche Bibel (I. Sem. 1925-26) Hertzmann.*

size of our state of Texas and to those scattered immigrants from that land, whereas the English language has become a world-dialect. It is spoken in three continents, and has assumed such a cosmopolitan character, that it is spoken throughout the world. Wherever trade has gone, there has the English language gone and has carried with it that precious gem that it possesses, its Bible. All in all then, the germ of translation goes to Luther. His German Bible showed the way for other versions, among which one, though later in appearance, was soon to supercede the original in influence - the King James Version of 1611.

Both versions clearly show that the original text was indeed translatable. The very fact that these translations live today is a proof of that. The fact is that they are very good translations, and, as mentioned previously, both have fixed the character of their respective languages beyond the possibility of essential change. Both are literary monuments. The style of both is universally admired, and both receive first rank among the English and German classics. Both are the purest and strongest expression of these two languages; they are elevated, venerable and sacred in diction, in thought, in phraseology. It seems as though every resource of the languages was exhausted in order to bring out clearly and to express so well the grace of God given to all men. Both translations are masterpieces in strength, in grace and in majesty. The words are simple and still not vulgar, and as hard as men may try to have these versions superceded by so-called better ones, people will nevertheless cling to the old versions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

We must not forget, however, that after all Luther, Tindale and the seventeenth century revisors were but men and that, therefore, we can naturally expect some mistakes. A language never remains the same and it is only natural that we find a number of obsolete words in both translations that are either no longer used, or have acquired a different meaning. So in the English Bible we have "shamefastness" (for "shamefacedness"), "kine" (the old plural of cow), "ouchos" (for "socket"), "swaddle" (for "bandage"). Other words have changed their meaning - as "to let" (for "to hinder"), "to prevent" (for "to precede"), "by and by" (for "immediately") and others. In the German we have "Kolter" (for "Decke"), "Koller" (for "Brusttuch"), "aufsetzen" (for "ueberreden"), "versprechen" (for "vorfluchen" or "tadeln"), "schier" (for "bald") and others. In neither case would the number of archaic terms run into more than three hundred words, few in comparison with Shakespeare or Milton.

In direct contrast also to the beautiful passages in each we find especially in the Old Testament several unseemly phrases that are of such a nature that they would not dare to be read in the pulpit or in family devotion. This comparison will show us that both Luther and the revisors are guilty here. Both versions also fail in the proper rendition of Hebrew weights and measures and Hebrew or Greek money values, i.e., Luther uses "Pfund," English: "pound;" "Pfennig, Groschen," "farthing, penny, pence" (but the exact values of some of these things have not even been determined in this day of archeological discoveries). In a number of cases both versions fail entirely in reproducing the proper word for the original, as

1) Schaff, Companion to The Sv. T.  
2) C. F. H. Bilingual Bible. Notes



Genesis 41, 43, where the Hebrew  $\text{כָּרַעַתְּ$  is wrongly translated by Luther: "Der ist des Landes Vator." The English translates a little better: "Bow the knee." But even there we cannot be certain since the exact equivalent of  $\text{כָּרַעַתְּ}$  has not been found, it being either an Egyptian or a Punic titular term. In I. Samuel 6, 19 both versions declare that "Fifty thousand and three score and ten men were killed of the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord." Anyone who is acquainted with the topography of the country and the situation at that time will realize that it was impossible for so many people to be living there, not to speak of being killed. The  $\text{כָּרַעַתְּ אֶתְּ אֲרֹנְתְּ הַיְהוָה$  is evidently an insertion by a Jewish scribe, who with this annotation (which it undoubtedly is) more than likely wanted either to show just how many words he had copied, or how many words were contained in a larger section just transcribed. Luther also makes a mistake in II. Chron. 6, 13, where he translates "Kanzel" for "Kessel." In Jeremiah 33, 15-16, the English renders correctly  $\text{פְּרָצְתָּ$  as "branch" of righteousness in speaking of the Messiah; Luther not so good: "Gerecht Gewachs." ("Zweig" would have been better here). So also in Ezek. 3, 15, the residence of the prophet in the Babylonian captivity is rightly given "Tel-Abib," whereas Luther speaks of "Mond Abib" and his: "da die Mandeln stunden" is unaccountable. In the same prophet, chapter 34, v. 16, in speaking of the Good Shepherd who will strengthen that which was sick, the King James Version correctly brings out the contrast when it continues: "But I will destroy the fat and the strong." Luther, however, continues with a parallel thought by using "behueten,"

mistaking the final  $\tau$  of  $\tau\delta\psi$  for a  $\gamma$ . In Hab. 1, 3 Luther has "Machsai" whereas the proper word is "iniquity," translated correctly by the King James authors. In Zeph. 1, 4, neither version translates the  $\tau\gamma\delta\psi$  but makes it a proper noun, whereas the meaning here is simply "unlovetical priests." Finally, Zech. 11, 7 where the two staves are referred to, the staff "Beauty," "Sanft" and the staff "Bands" (in order to show the blessings of true unity and brotherhood). It is the German which makes "Weh" out of "Bands," but the context clearly shows in v. 14 that "Bands" must be meant, since this staff is broken, i.e., the staff of brotherhood and unity dissolved, an act which would hardly fit with a staff called "Woe," "Weh."

Going over to the New Testament we find minor inaccuracies in respect to the omission or insertion of the article. A casual reader will not notice this, but a closer study of the text will clearly show that it does make a difference whether the article is used or not. This is most noticeable in I. Tim. 6, 10, where we read: "For the love of money is the root of all evil." The first "the" puts too much emphasis on avarice, although the Greek idiom here requires the  $\tau\eta$ . Luther has properly "Geiz," without the article. It is the second "the," however, that gives offense, for according to the article here, all evil must be traced to love of money. Luther translates properly, as does the Greek, with no article  $\tau\eta\zeta$  "eine Furzel." Matth. 4, 5, tells of Satan setting Jesus on a pinnacle of the temple  $\tau\eta\ \pi\tau\epsilon\rho\psi\iota\sigma\tau\eta\sigma$ . There could, however, be only one specific top (either spikes or the roof in general). Here Luther translates properly "die Zinne." John 6, 4, where the passover is emphasized as being the great

festival of Jowry, we find in the English: "A feast of the Jews." Luther helps himself by using a favorite German construction, the so-called "Sachsische Genetiv," "der Juden Fest." In I. Corin. 5, 9, the King James has "an Epistle" instead of "the Epistle" where Luther properly has "in dem Briefe." Rev. 7, 14, the martyrs are spoken of who have just been subject to the tribulation of the fifth seal. Both translations, however, make this statement indefinite, the English: "out of great tribulation," the German: "aus grosser Truobsal."

Again the definite article has been wrongly inserted and has given emphasis to a noun, which the writer did not intend. So in Matth. 1, 20, the messenger coming to Joseph is referred to as the angel, but it was not any special angel sent from God, but as Luther properly has it: "ein Engel." In John 4, 27, Jesus is referred to as speaking "to the (Samaritan) woman," German: "mit dem Weibe." The Greek has no article, simple μετὰ τῆς γυναῖκος. Here the wonder of the disciples was that Christ should, contrary to Rabbinical custom, speak with any woman, not necessarily just this particular woman, i. e., because she was a Samaritan.

The great divergence between the Greek verb and that of the English and German (and again between these two latter languages we have a great difference) makes absolute accuracy in the rendition of verbal forms impossible. The Greek has three voices, five modes and seven tenses, these latter being carried over into participial forms. Neither the English nor the German has a middle voice. The English has no optative mood, although "may" or "might" can be used

*1) Schaff, Companion To The N. T.*

as a good substitute. The difficulty comes in at the proper translation of the past tense, the Greek distinction in time, contemporaneous or subordinate being finer than that of the English or the German. It could, of course, not be expected that in all cases the translators would bring out the proper time relation or exact modal value, but wherever the sense of the passage becomes affected, a more careful study would have been desirable. So, for instance, the Greek is misrendered by the English "Perfect," Matth. 25, 8, where the English has "our lamps are gone out," *σβέννυται* proper: "are going out." Luther correctly: "verlooschen." The present mistranslated by the simple past. Hobr. 2, 16 *ἐπιλαμβάνεται* not "took on him," but "takes hold." Luther properly: "nimmt nirgend die Engel an sich." The perfect misrendered by the present, as in Matth. 5, 10, where it should read: "They that have been persecuted," instead of "are persecuted." Luther correctly again: "verfolgt werden." The Aorist is misrendered by the present as in Gal. 2, 19, where *ἐπέθανον* "Through the law I died to the law" would be proper and not: "am dead." The German has: "ich bin --- gestorben," which could also be misleading, and "starb ich" would perhaps have been better. The imperfect is sometimes misrendered by the simple past. Luke 1, 59 *ἐκέλευον* "they called," but: they were going to call the child Zacharias. Luther also translates wrong here when he says: "Sie hiessen ihn," and in Gal. 1, 13, where the *ἐδίωκον* does not mean "destroyed," but "I was destroying," i.e., I attempted to destroy. Luther also improperly: "verfolgte und verstoerete sie." Prepositions are at times confounded or mistranslated, especially the proposition *ἐν*. The vital union with Christ "in" is rendered, Romans 14, 14, with

"by the Lord Jesus," where the German again properly has "in." So also the proposition ὑπὲρ is rendered as though it were ἀντὶ. We read II. Cor. 5, 20: We pray you "in Christ's stead," be ye reconciled, where the proper translation would have been: "in Christ's behalf." Luther makes the same mistake with his: "an Christus Statt," where "um Christi Willen" would have been better.

Words are not always rendered the same. The word ἐπίσκοπος is rendered "bishop," Phil. 1, 20 and "overseer" in Acts. 20, 28, when there is really no distinction and a synonym out of place. Luther has correctly "Bischoefe" in both passages. The English variance may well be traced to Episcopalian high-church influence that wishes to make ecclesiastical distinctions. In Acts. 12, 3, Peter is spoken of as being taken prisoner during the time of the days of unleavened bread, ἡ ἑβδομάη . Both translations have this and in the very next verse they speak of Peter being brought forth by Herod after Easter, Luther: "nach Ostern," which festival was hardly known by that name at such an early date, nor does the Greek with its πάσχα warrant it. Then we have the almost blasphemous "God forbid," in Romans 3, v. 4, 6 and 31, for the Greek μὴ γένοιτο "may that not happen," which Luther translates inaccurately, but idiomatically correct: "das sei ferne" and finally in the Old Testament Jehovah's name is given far better in the King James Version, where in speaking to Moses He says of Himself: "I am that I am" and not: "Ich werde sein, der ich sein werde," the futuro, as Luther puts it.

When we now consider passages in their entirety, the real richness of both translations will become apparent. Its rhythm will

be noted as well as its strength and its majesty. The very first words in Holy Writ cannot be found any better, nor clearer, nor simpler anywhere: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Luther: "Am Anfang schuf Gott Himmel und Erde." The following verses contain fine rhythm and strength in both versions, i.e., the over-repeated: "And God said," "Und Gott sprach." Good are also the translations of the  $\text{לֶאֱלֹהִים וְרֵחַ$  "without form and void," and the German: "wüste und leer." The brooding,  $\text{וַיִּבְרַח רֹחַ אֱלֹהִים$  of God's spirit upon the face of the deep is given nicely by "moved" and by "schwebete." Finally the majestic statement: "and the evening and the morning were," although properly it would be: "and the evening was and the morning was," where Luther also translates idiomatically but well: "Da ward aus Abend und Morgen."

The Aaronitic blessing is perfect in both versions, only in v. 27 of this passage in Numbers the English Perfect Cal Rendition of  $\text{וַיְבָרֶךְ}$  is correct and Luther's imperative is wrong.

There is grace and beauty in the famous words of Ruth to her mother-in-law, Naomi, Ruth 1, 16 and 17. Especially interesting is the translation of  $\text{וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ יַעַשׂ כִּי יִשְׁאַל וְכִי יִשְׁאָל$ . It is idiomatic in both versions and shows the gift of correct rendition when aforementioned Hebrew is translated: "The Lord do so to me and more also." Luther again very nicely: "Der Herr tue mir dies und das."

In Job 11, 7-10, it seems as though both translations diverge somewhat from the original. In v. 8, for instance, Luther thinks of a different subject by using "Er" and the English, thinking of wisdom as subject uses "it." It is very difficult though to

really got the actual meaning of these passages in Job, due to the difficulty of the language which neither Luther nor the King James translators were able to render perfectly. Luther tells us of the trouble he had translating Job; how it would take weeks to translate but three or four lines - and we know that the seventeenth century English translators did not fare any better - and still, to the credit of both, each translation has given us a fine poetical rendition of this highly poetical work in the Old Testament.

Great work has been done by both translators in the song and prayer book of the Jews, the Psalter, and they have made it into a beautiful prayer book also for English and German-speaking peoples. The alliteration in Luther's German is especially marvelous, as for instance, Psalm 1: "Wohl dem der nicht wandelt," or his: "Spren --- verstreuet," or finally, in v. 6: "Der Herr Konnet den Weg der Gerechten --- Weg vergehet." The Great Shepherd Psalm has also been translated splendidly with a plainness and still with a beauty and a grace that has not been equalled anywhere. Luther uses "frisch" in v. 2 for "still," וַיִּשְׁכַּח i.e., of quietness, literally, but does this perhaps for the sake of alliteration to the previous "fuehret." "The valley of the shadow of death" is the correct translation of וַיִּשְׁכַּח וַיִּשְׁכַּח וַיִּשְׁכַּח וַיִּשְׁכַּח which Luther does not properly translate with his "finster." Still his thought is not wrong, since here is to be pictured the darkness of distress.

The opening verses of the second part of the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 40, are also very well translated. The "comfortably" in v. 2 for "to the heart," בְּרִיבְרִיב would not be understood today in the

sense that the translators intended, namely, to speak in a comforting manner, but it nevertheless fits into the spirit of the passage as does Luther's: "freundlich." "Warfare" in this verse is also much better than the German: "Ritterschaft." The grace and the plain comforting strength is not sacrificed at the expense of the original text, as in v. 5 no addition is made where the sentence sounds incomplete and the LXX version adds *Τὸ σὺν ἡμῶν ἐὶς τὸν θένον* although the English tries to help itself with an italicized "it" and Luther tries to make a "dass" out of the Hebrew *וְיָ*. Before going over into the New Testament, however, Is. 54, 10 is to be considered, where the idiom of both languages did perfect work in reproducing an intentional Hebrew play on words, namely, that of *וָיָנָה* "to depart" and *וָיָנָה* "to sway," and again show their individuality by not translating the participle *וְיָנָה* the same, the English dissolving the participle into a finite verb: "The Lord that hath mercy on thee," and Luther retaining the participle and forming the noun: "Dein Erbarmer." A simple passage here, but not stiff. On the contrary, highly poetical and swinging rhythmically, and a language so simple that this passage has become the lasting comfort of all those in sorrow and distress.

What holds good for the Old Testament is also true of the New. Throughout the pages of this second revelation of God, we find the translators using simple, yet impressive words in declaring the embodied Greek thoughts. So in Matth. 22, 15, the *παραδέουσιν* is quaintly put: "How they might entangle him in his talk." The German also very quaint: "wie sie ihn fingen." The "Whose is this image and superscription" and the "Wes ist das Bild und die Ueber-



schrift" is very well known and is a fine specimen of correct yet idiomatic rendition (although perhaps "inscription," "Inscription" would be better than "superscription"). The "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," and the "So gebet dem Kaiser, was des Kaisers ist" are also famous and are again correct translations without a trace of stiffness.

A comparison of the parable of the Prodigal Son shows also fine traits of good translation in both versions. There is a simple beginning with: "A certain man," "Ein Mensch." "Younger" in v. 12 is correct and Luther's "juongste" for νεώτερος is wrong. So also the "portion that falleth to me" conveys the thought of promised inheritance better than the German: "mir gehoert," although this latter simple translation is very effective. Note the strength in v. 13 with which  $\xi\omega\nu\ \lambda\omicron\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma$  is translated by "riotous living" and the German: "Frassen." The "darben" in v. 14 is also very good. That Luther should use "hueten" in v. 15 and the King James has "feed" is due to the broader and the narrower meaning of  $\beta\acute{\iota}\sigma\kappa\epsilon\upsilon$  which means to nourish as well as to tend. Fine is also the "came to himself," "er schlug in sich," as also the "bread enough and to spare,"  $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\ \lambda\epsilon\iota\tau\omega\nu$  "Brot die Fuelle haben." The same also holds good for the "I will arise and go," "mich aufmachen und gehen" in v. 18. A further fine specimen of good idiom is in v. 26 where the  $\tau\acute{\iota}\ \delta\epsilon\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\pi\eta\ \tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$  is rendered into fine English with: "what these things meant" and Luther again in very good German says: "Was das waere." V. 27 renders the alliterating "safe and sound" for the one Greek word  $\psi\chi\alpha\iota\omicron\nu\sigma\tau\alpha$  which Luther also gives with one word,

namely, "gesund." Finally in v. 32 we have the quaint "it is meet that" and Luther ends the whole story with a rich swing when he says: "Verloren und ist wieder funden," although this "wieder"-thought is not in the original Greek.

In John 1, 1-15, the description of the "Logos" is graphic and the short declarative sentences convey very impressively the eternal deity of the Son of God. Fine idioms we find in v. 5: "Comprehended it not;" "hats nicht begriffen," οὐ κατέλαβεν. or v. 11, the εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν "came into his own," "kam in sein Eigenthum." The English continues the rhythm with "and his own received him not," which Luther on account of the different language could not translate with the same swing, but had to use "die Seinen" which, however, is also very good. V. 15 also is a masterpiece with its majestic: "And the Word was made flesh," καὶ ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο. <sup>τίμη</sup> <sub>ἐγένετο</sub>. "Und das Wort ward Fleisch."

Finally, there is the consideration of that paean of praise in I. Cor. 13, where verse after verse grows richer in force of expression, in majestic grace and growing power. Unfortunate is the translation of the word ἀγάπη as "charity" instead of "love," "Liebe," as Luther correctly has it. Tindale originally translated "love" and so also the Geneva Bible of 1562. The Catholic Rheims Version had "charity" once more as Wyclif has it and, sorry to say, this Catholic influence was carried over to the Authorized Version of 1611. Note again the richness of v. 1, with its "sounding brass" and "tinkling cymbal," "toonend Erz," "klingende Schelle." In v. 3 the πάντα τὰ ὑπερόντα is translated idiomatically

voll with "all my goods" and "alle meine Habe." So also the "profiteth me nothing" and the "mir nichts nuetze" are also very good. Once again the "puffed up" of v. 4, "blaschet sich nicht" is very good and the psalm of love that now follows is very excellent, especially v. 7: "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." "Sie vertragen alles, sie glauben alles, sie hoffen alles, sie duldet alles." In v. 9 Luther uses nouns in the parallel thoughts, where the English uses verbs, but neither translation suffers in its beauty on that account. *Τὰ τοιαῦτα* in v. 11 could not be rendered more perfectly than "childish things" or the "was kindisch war" of Luther. In v. 12, the English would have done better with "mirror" than its "glass," "Spiegel" correctly in the German. "Darkly" is not the proper word for *αἰνιγματι*, as the marginal note in the King James Version indicates and Luther's "dunkle Wort" comes closer to it, though "Raetsel" would give it best of all. The chapter ends with a better poetical swing in the English, due to the placing of the verb before the noun and the archaic "th" ending, whereas the German ends with a plain declarative sentence.

From the above it would really be impossible to make a conclusion as to the higher standard of linguistic value that either the one or the other has over the other. That goes beyond the scope of this paper, and it is a point concerning which even the best of scholars are not agreed. The one will claim a higher perfection for the English, another for the German. In a way, it is really impossible to show a preference. Both the English and the German cannot in all instances render correctly the thought of the originals and neither

can it be claimed that the Greek is more translatable into German and the Hebrew into English or vice-versa. The English and the German, although both of indo-European origin, still vary greatly from each other. No matter how closely related any two languages are, there will always be differences in grammatical and idiomatic structure. The fact that the German translation is chiefly the product of one man and that of the King James Version a product of many scholars cannot be deemed as an argument in favor of either. The joint work of many learned minds is better perhaps than that of one man and, therefore, would seem to lessen the prevalence of possible error. Still the acid test of minute examination will show that the one-man translation of Luther is every bit <sup>as</sup> faithful a rendition as the King James Version is. On the other hand it is claimed that the work of a larger number of scholars with a division of work as was outlined, namely, six separate groups working on six separate parts of the Bible at the same time, makes for an unevenness in translation in spite of later comparison, because not all men are equipped with an equal gift of interpretation. Be that as it may, if we want to find fault we can pick out flaws in both, and we will generally find that where one errs and the other translates properly, in another place the former will translate properly and the latter will err. This much then is true of both, that there may be errors here and there; there may be words obsolete and phrases unintelligible; particles may have or may not have been given value; participles may have been translated adverbially or nominally; tenses may have been confused; prepositions may have been misunderstood, but be it to the translators' credit

that substantial changes do not occur, the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith are never blurred or obscure in either of the versions, and nowhere has the sense of the passage not been caught at all, even though it wasn't always rendered strictly according to Hebrew or Greek syntax. So in spite of these minor faults the almost intuitive accuracy of the translators can be seen throughout, and, therefore, it is no wonder that in spite of all attacks against these translations, Luther's German version and the English King James translation, though both over four and three hundred years old respectively, still live, still translate, still sell.

Martin Pooh.

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