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“New Translations of the New Testament.”

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In a recent notice of Moffatt's new translation of the New Testament (THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, Vol. 3, 323 ff.) we ventured the suggestion that all these modern efforts to re-English the New Testament have a direct value only for professional men to whom the Bible is the tool of their craft, so to speak. Even these will have to use the new renderings with caution, always measuring them against the Greek original, the same as scholars must now do when ascertaining the adequacy of a rendering in the King James Version. The mere fact that the recent renderings are new, that they embody the respectable results of textual criticism, and enlist the increased knowledge of Greek that has become available through modern philology, does not put these renderings in a privileged class, does not confer on them the dignity of a *norma normans*, does not render them infallible. Every translation, no matter how apt it is, will be only *norma normata* from the dogmatic viewpoint. Caution in the use of the new versions, moreover, is necessary also for the reason that every translation, as a whole, is virtually a commentary, and in difficult passages, where the translation is almost a paraphrase, it becomes distinctly and consciously an interpretative effort. Now, each one of the new translations is the work of a single individual, not, as in the case, for instance, of the translation of 1611, the work of a number of men and the result of many conferences with their exchange and critical weighing of varying opinions. Objectivity in intellectual pursuits is a consummation devoutly to be wished for, but it is more than questionable whether it is ever attained. Absolute objectivity seems to be beyond the power of any human being. In any discriminating device from among a number of possibilities the deliberative operation of the mind is pushed into its goal and crystallizes in a decision through some subjective element that appeals to the author more than any other. This subjective element may be, and frequently is, congruent with an objective fact.

That is the happiest outcome, for in that case the subjective decision tallies with the objective fact, and the result is practically objective. But the other possibility always remains open, *viz.*, that the mind under a strong subjective impulse may deviate from the objective and its genuine meaning. *Ergo.*

An article in the *Journal of Religion* (March, 1924), under the caption at the head of this paper, by Frank Eakin, of the Western Theological Seminary at Pittsburgh, concludes as follows: "Personally I entertain the notion — which possibly the translators themselves do not entertain — that these works will yield their greatest harvest of influence through their use by the student class. As *condensed practical commentaries* [*Italics ours*] they are invaluable, and, happily, serious students of the New Testament are making large use of them." To what extent the high opinion here expressed regarding the value of the new translations is true depends on the individual student. But in the body of his paper the author suggests a number of guide-lines by following which any one may arrive at a general evaluation of the new renderings.

To begin with, the new versions are *private* efforts and as such distinct from the *official* versions of 1611, 1881 (Revised Version), and 1901 (American Standard), which are the work of large and representative Protestant scholars and have gained recognition by their use in the pulpit, in church-schools, and in the private sanctuary — a distinction which none of the new translations enjoys nor is likely to enjoy for some time to come, if ever. The question is, Do the official translations fully answer the needs of the modern man? The author might have pointed out that the later official versions *ipso facto* argue the inadequacy of the former, or the later would not have been attempted at all. The scholars who prepared the Revised Version believed that they could improve upon the Authorized, and those who produced the American Standard were convinced that their work was better than that of their English colleagues. This observation applies, of course, with equal force to the various private translations: each translator thinks that his work meets the requirements of the age better than that of another. Looking at the situation from this angle, one is inclined to say that each translation, whether official or private, declares the preceding ones inadequate, and will, in turn, be declared inadequate by succeeding versions. This turns the question of adequacy into an endless chain.

Our author has a more practical way of arriving at a satis-

factory answer. He divides the "actual or potential users of the New Testament" into three classes: 1. church people in general; 2. scholars and students; 3. the general public without church affiliations. The King James Version is decidedly the great favorite with the first class, and because this class is universally stronger than the second, it is "overwhelmingly in the lead." The Revised Versions, in our country the American Standard, occupy a dominant position in colleges, universities, and seminaries, and, to a considerable extent, in Sunday-schools. The third group has no preference because it makes only a slight use of the New Testament in any form. The reasons for the greater love for the King James Version are "its classical English and its sacred associations." As regards the Revised Versions, they appeal to scholars because of their fidelity to "the greatly improved Greek text," and they are "remarkably literal" translations of that text. But these reasons are offset, as regards the King James Version, by these counter-reasons: the classical English of the seventeenth is not the English of the twentieth century, and — we would add — the Version of 1611 is admittedly faulty in quite a number of places. Accordingly, the use of this Version, says our writer, by "the rank and file of church people tends to foster and perpetuate a use of the Bible which is largely formal and which contributes very little to the realities of life." This assertion we consider an overstatement of the practical effects of the defects of the King James Version. It is remarkable what an immense amount of true enlightenment on every element of the true religion this version has afforded to a long line of generations of devout Christians, and what a power for good it has proved in their lives. The new versions have a great task before them if they are to raise a race of men as truly moral and religiously efficient as the old Version did. — As regards the Revised Versions, their very literalness has been procured at the sacrifice of idiomatic speech, which not infrequently requires a complete recasting of a Greek thought to give it a genuine English expression. — To reach the general public outside of the Church, a version would have to be presented that appeals to human interest by the manner in which the Biblical subject-matter is presented. In this the King James Version will always fail because of its peculiar English and its frequently insipid verse- and chapter-divisions. The removal of illogical verse- and chapter-divisions is a distinct merit of the new versions, and the paraphrasing — we might add, the distinctive type for citations and for poetry — appeal very much to the modern reader and aid

considerably in the mastering of the contents of the various writings.

It follows that none of the *official* versions is adequate for the modern reader. This might dispose of the contention sometimes heard in our own Synod that we are in a better position than other church-bodies to adopt the Revised Version, because our people have not become so firmly anchored to the Authorized Version as other church-bodies, which have for many generations used only the latter Version. Among us there is no version that has to be eradicated to give place to a new; we are planting in virgin soil. This contention assumes the absolute superiority of the Revised over the Authorized Version and overlooks the fact that the laymen, in particular, of our church-body, when using the Revised Version, would not be as easily understood by laymen of other church-bodies, who still cling to the Authorized Version, as the vast majority of them do. However, we do not wish to appear dogmatic by these animadversions and are open to conviction. Our writer remarks that saying the official versions are inadequate "is far from saying that they are valueless. There is no likelihood of their being displaced in our generation, and there is no need of their being displaced. [!] Fears on this score are groundless. But they should be supplemented that our equipment for the reading and study of the New Testament in English may be more complete."

The question now arises: Do the unofficial, or private, renderings furnish the desirable supplementary equipment for a truly beneficial reading of the New Testament? In our notice of Moffatt's Parallel Edition of the New Testament we limited our attention to only one of these private versions, and this notice was necessarily meager, not at all exhaustive. Dr. Eakin has examined five private versions: the Twentieth Century (1898—1904), Weymouth's (1902), Moffatt's (1913), Ballantine's (1923), and Goodspeed's (1923). Perhaps some of our professional Bible-scholars will furnish us with a critical review of one or the other of these translations, especially Goodspeed's. Our writer says: "The first two have had honorable careers of usefulness, but neither has wide use or great prestige at the present time. The case with Moffatt's translation is different. During the ten years following its appearance it gained steadily in the esteem of Bible-users on both sides of the Atlantic, so that, when in 1923 two new versions were put forth, — both of them American products, — Moffatt's was the one outstanding rival in the field." The last two most

recent translations our author subjects to a special examination, with frequent references to Moffatt's and occasional references to the two oldest unofficial translations.

We regret that we have not the space to exhibit *in extenso* the results of Dr. Eakin's examination; we can indicate them only in a general way. G. finds that the new versions contain 1. "changes in mechanical make-up": 1) T. C. adopts a chronological order of the New Testament writings, placing Mark at the head of the gospels and giving First and Second Thessalonians the first place among the epistles of Paul. M. arranges matter which he thinks had become misplaced, for instance, John 15 and 16 are placed after chap. 13, 31. T. C. and W. use topic headings. T. C., M., and G. paragraph each unit in a conversation. All five use quotation-marks, but the amount of matter treated as quotation differs, for instance, in John 3 and Gal. 2, B. omits verse numbers, G. gives them at the bottom of the page. Their object is "to give the New Testament the appearance of a book to be 'continuously and understandingly read.'" 2)

2. "Changes due to the progress of studies in the Greek New Testament": G. follows the Greek text of Westcott and Hort, B. that of Nestle, M. that of von Soden; but each departs occa-

1) For convenience' sake the five translations aforementioned are referred to by letters: T. C. = 20th Century, W. = Weymouth's, M. = Moffatt's, B. = Ballantine's, and G. = Goodspeed's.

2) Dr. Eakin cites John Locke's († 1704) *Essay for the Understanding of St. Paul's Epistles by Consulting St. Paul Himself* to show that the revolt against the old divisions of the Bible is of long standing: "The dividing of them into chapters and verses, as we have done, whereby they are so chopped and minced, and as they are now printed, stand so broken and divided that not only the common people take the verses usually for distinct aphorisms, but even men of more advanced knowledge, in reading them, lose very much of the strength and force of the coherence and the light that depends on it. . . . These divisions also have given occasion to the reading these epistles by parcels and in scraps, which has farther confirmed the evil arising from such partitions. And I doubt not but every one will confess it to be a very unlikely way to come to the understanding of any other letters to read them piecemeal, a bit to-day and another scrap to-morrow, and so on by broken intervals. . . . How plain soever this abuse is, and what prejudice soever it does to the understanding of the Sacred Scripture, yet if a Bible was printed as it should be and as the several parts of it were writ, in continued discourse where the argument is continued, I doubt not but the several parties would complain of it as an innovation and a dangerous change in the publishing those holy books. . . . They would, most of them, be immediately disarmed of their great magazine of artillery wherewith they defend themselves and fall upon others, if the Holy Scripture were but laid before the eyes of Christians in its due connection and consistency."

sionally from his chosen norm. In 1 Pet. 3, 19 G. and M. adopt the suggestion of Rendel Harris "that through a scribe's blunder the name of Enoch has dropped out of the text." M. and G. substitute "laziness" for "disorderliness" in 2 Thess. 3, 6—15 and "all" for "both" in Acts 19, 16 (R. V.) and 23, 8. All the new versions show improvement in the translation of the Greek article and the Greek tenses, especially the aorist.

3. "Changes due to the use of English like that of our present, every-day speech": In Mark 15, 25 M., G., and B. translate "the third hour" by "nine in the morning," "an issue of blood" in Matt. 9, 20 by "hemorrhage," "wrest" in 2 Pet. 3, 16 by "twist," "publicans" in Matt. 9, 10 by "tax-gatherers" or "tax-collectors." G., as a rule, uses "God's people" for "saints," and "heathen" for "Gentiles." G. drops "thee" and "thou" entirely, while M. retains it in prayers, and B. seems to follow no principle. The American translators change Moffatt's British idiom in a number of places, for instance, "ears of corn" (Matt. 12, 1) to "heads of grain" (B.) or "heads of wheat" (G.); "farthing" (Matt. 10, 29) to "penny" (B.) or "cent" (G.); "got baptized" (Mark 1, 9) to "was baptized." Matt. 1, 18 in M. reads: "His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph," in B.: "His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph," in G.: "Mary, his mother, was engaged to Joseph." Matt. 3, 4: "with a leather girdle round his loins" (M.), "wore a leather belt around his waist" (B.), "had a leather belt around his waist" (G.). Matt. 3, 7: "You brood of vipers" (M.), "Brood of vipers" (B.), "You brood of snakes" (G.). Matt. 4, 11: "and angels came up and ministered to Him" (M.), "and angels came and waited upon Him" (B.), "and angels came and waited on him." Matt. 6, 14: "For if you forgive men their trespasses" (M.), "For if you forgive men their wrong-doings" (B.), "For if you forgive others when they offend you." Matt. 6, 24: "You cannot serve both God and Mammon" (M.), "You cannot serve God and Mammon" (B.), "You cannot serve God and money" (G.). Matt. 7, 1: "Judge not that ye may not be judged yourselves" (M.), "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged" (B.), "Pass no more judgments upon other people, so that you may not have judgments passed upon you" (G.). Matt. 7, 6: "do not throw pearls before swine" (M.), "nor cast your pearls before swine" (B.), "do not throw your pearls before pigs" (G.). Matt. 7, 10: "Or, if he asks a fish, will you hand him a serpent?" (M.), "Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?" (B.), "Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a snake?" (G.) Mark 2, 3: "a paralytic . . . four

men carried him" (M.), "a paralytic, borne by four" (B.), "a man who was paralyzed, four of them carrying him" (G.). Mark 6, 11: "as a warning to them" (M. and G.), "as a testimony against them" (B.). John 14, 2: "In My Father's house there are many abodes" (M.), "In My Father's house are many abiding-places," (B.), "There are many rooms in My Father's house" (G.). Rom. 1, 7: "called to be saints" (M.), "called to be holy" (B.), "called to be His people" (G.). Gal. 5, 13: "do not make your freedom an opening for the flesh" (M.), "do not let your freedom be an opportunity for the flesh" (B.), "do not make your freedom an excuse for the physical" (G.). 2 Pet. 3, 1. 8. 14. 17: "beloved" (M.), "dear friends" (G.).

4. "Changes looking to the better rendering of thought especially through the freer rendering of words": In Mark 12, 10 "the head of the corner" becomes "the chief stone of the corner" (B.), "the corner-stone" (G.). John 2, 17: "Zeal for thy house will devour me" (B.), "My zeal for your house will consume me" (G.). Gal. 3, 2—4 reads thus in G.: "You senseless Galatians! . . . This is all I want to ask you: Did you receive the Spirit through doing what the Law commands or through believing the message you heard? Are you so senseless? Did you begin with the Spirit only to end now with the flesh? Have you gone through so much, all for nothing?—if it really is for nothing!" Jas. 5, 16: "The effective prayer of a righteous man has great power" (B.), "The prayers of a righteous man have a powerful effect" (M.), "An upright man can do a great deal by prayer when he tries" (G.), etc. In 1 Cor. 7, 36—38 "his virgin" becomes "his spiritual bride" in M. and "the girl to whom he is engaged" in G. The changes in this class are the most important of all; for here the new versions, in their efforts to remove ambiguities and obscure phrases and to express the thought rather than the words of the original, become interpreters pure and simple and show plainly that their work must be classified as commentary. At this point, too, the question of the adequacy of the new translations will be largely decided. It will be found that at best these new versions may serve as supplements to the old translation. Dr. Eakin thinks that they will induce a more general and intelligent use of the Bible by men of culture, and that they will "shock hardened Bible-readers out of their conception of the New Testament as a codification of doctrinal and ethical precepts" by showing them that the New Testament is rather "a collection of writings which throb with the life of primitive Christianity." If the new versions were

to accomplish this, that would be a great gain; but it is doubtful whether they will. The natural mind of man is too much averse to studying God's Word in any form. It were well, however, if natural man were deprived of the specious argument against Bible-reading, *viz.*, that one cannot get any sense out of it anyway. Bible-students should treat the new versions just as they treat any other Bible-commentary, *viz.*, as aids to the full understanding of Scripture and will apply to the use of these versions the apostolic rule in 1 Thess. 5, 21.
