

IV Some Issues Arising From The Implementation Of DE Theory

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE AND NATURAL COMMON LANGUAGE

This chapter takes up the first of the issues raised in the preceding chapter, where we investigated DE translations and their handling of problems presented by the language of the ST.

A. LANGUAGE VARIETIES AND THE DEMAND FOR NATURALNESS

1. Language Varieties

Differences in language vary all the way from idiolectal curiosities to related but mutually unintelligible varieties. No language is completely homogeneous. Nida has pointed out that varieties differ in terms of time (older vs newer forms, archaisms, neologisms, etc.), geography (dialects), socio-economic classes or castes, circumstances of use, oral and written usage, types of discourse and literary genres.¹ Catford has categorized these varieties into two major classes: (i) those which exemplify permanent characteristics such as Idiolects (language variety related to the individual performer) and Dialects (language variety related to geographical, temporal or social provenance); and (ii) those which are transient in that they adjust to the situation of utterance such as Register, Style and Mode. Register is the variety related to the wider social role being played by the performer at the moment of utterance, e.g. 'scientific', 'religious', 'civil service' etc. Style refers to the performer's relation to the addressees, e.g. 'formal', 'colloquial', 'intimate'. Mode is the variety related to the medium, e.g. spoken or written, in which the performer is operating.²

All languages can be described in terms of a number of varieties then, but the number and nature of these differs from one language to another—a fact of great importance to be noted in connection with translation. Bible translators have to recognise this fact both with regard to the ST and to the RL. Nida himself has devoted much study to the subject. Thus in his earlier book *Bible Translating* (1947) the third chapter discusses the problem of translating the Bible into pre-literate languages. Similarly in

¹ E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 120-123 cf. W.L. Wonderly, *Bible Translation for Popular Use*: (Helps for Translators, Vol 7; London: United Bible Societies, 1968) 6-19

² J.C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965) 84-85

TAPOT: Chapter 7 he focuses on the question of the literary status of the RL, differentiating situations in which a language has a long literary tradition, from those where the language has only recently been reduced to writing, or has only an oral literary tradition. He proposes appropriate strategies for each.

Firstly, with regard to the Biblical corpus itself 'one must recognize certain quite different styles and attempt to produce something which will be a satisfying dynamic equivalent.'³ This should be reflected, he says, even in common language translations such as the TEV:

The common language range is not a narrow band of monotonous usage. It contains a relatively wide variety of forms, so that a common language translation of the Gospel of Mark sounds different from the common language translation of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Mark and the writer to the Hebrews used widely differing literary styles when they wrote in Greek, and the differences are clearly carried over in a common language translation. Likewise, the narrative style of Joshua is quite distinct from the poetry of Job and the Psalms, both in the original Hebrew and in the common language translation.⁴

Secondly, Nida recognizes the varieties present in the RL and he advocates a number of different Bible translations in accordance with the needs of each group. Thus a major language such as English needs a number of different translations:

- (a) a translation with ecclesiastical orientation;
- (b) a common language translation which will reach out beyond the church constituency;
- (c) a translation on a literary level which will exploit the total resources of a language.⁵

2. The Concern for Naturalness and Common Language

Despite this theoretical sensitivity to language varieties in both the ST and the RL, one has to ask whether in practice DE translations can do justice to the language varieties found in the ST. Furthermore there would seem to be a questionable assumption in DE theory that the ST always exhibits the quality of naturalness.

The concern for intelligibility, naturalness and simplicity is not of course a novel one in the history of the English Bible. Following Luther and Erasmus, William Tyndale, according to the well-known account, maintained that if God spared his life, before many years had passed he would cause a ploughboy to know more of the Scripture

³ E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, (Helps for Translators, No.8; Leiden: Brill, 1969) 129

⁴ E.A. Nida, *Good News for Everyone*, How to Use the Good News Bible, (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1977) 107

⁵ Personal letter to the author from Dr Nida, September 25, 1979

than the learned men with whom he was contending. It has been said of Tyndale that he "fixed the type according to which the later labourers worked" and that "his influence decided that our Bible should be popular and not literary, speaking in a simple dialect, and that so by its simplicity it should be endowed with permanence".⁶ Thus the KJV translators in their Preface to the Reader, acknowledge their debt to their predecessors and showed themselves true heirs of Tyndale by expressing their desire that the Scripture "may speak like itself, as in the language of Canaan, that it may be understood even of the very vulgar." Likewise the advocacy of the need for clarification and revision which produced the ERV (1881) and its American counterpart ARV (1901) helped prepare the way for the host of modern translations which were to follow in the twentieth century. In fact it was precisely the widespread feeling that these revisions had failed to fulfil the need they had publicised that encouraged others to try their hand.

In addition to the Tyndale tradition of simplicity and intelligibility in the history of the English Bible, another powerful influence in this direction has been of relatively recent origin. I refer to the manuscript discoveries of Greek papyri at the close of the nineteenth century and the consequent growing conviction that the NT was written, at least in the main, in the vernacular dialect of the market place.

B. THE APPEAL TO NT KOINE AS A MODEL FOR CONTEMPORARY BIBLE TRANSLATORS

The discovery in Egypt of masses of Greek papyri in the early decades of this century, written mainly in the unliterary, spoken Koine, led to the claim that the main feature of NT Greek was that it was the ordinary vernacular Greek of the period. Until then the Greek of the NT stood almost alone as a peculiar form of Greek, perhaps even a special 'dialect of the Holy Spirit'. True, there had been scholars who showed remarkable perceptiveness. Thus in 1863 Bishop Lightfoot referring to a Greek word occurring in the NT but not found in classical literature outside Herodotus (5th century BC) said:

You are not to suppose that the word had fallen out of use in the interval, only that it had not been used in the books which remain to us; probably it had been part of the common speech all along. I will go further, and say that if we could only recover letters that ordinary people wrote to each other without any thought of being literary, we should have the greatest

⁶ B.F. Westcott, *A General View of the History of the English Bible* (3rd ed. revised by W.A. Wright; New York: Macmillan, 1927) 158

possible help for the understanding of the language of the New Testament generally.⁷

Lightfoot's prophecy was soon to have a remarkable fulfilment. From the 1880s onwards large numbers of the very sort of ordinary letters and documents he referred to have come to light after two millennia in the sands of Egypt. Scraps of papyrus and pieces of pottery recovered from ancient rubbish dumps provide witness to a kind of Greek strikingly similar to the Greek of the NT.

The person responsible for first pointing out the affinity between vernacular Koinē Greek and the NT idiom was the great German scholar, Adolf Deissmann, whose monumental work was translated into English as *Light from the Ancient East*.⁸ In Britain the study of the papyri was taken up by some distinguished scholars, outstanding among whom were J.H. Moulton and G. Milligan, joint editors of *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, a work in which the lexical information supplied by these papyri and other non-literary sources is arranged alphabetically.

The wonder that divine revelation should come via the language of the common man was something which gripped the imagination, and perhaps suited the spirit of the age—'the Age of Common Man'.

Adolf Deissmann argued 'that the old literary style of classical Attic differed markedly from the New Testament style in its elaborate and cultivated refinement', whereas in the New Testament 'the underground stream of the people's language springs up powerfully into the daylight'. This prevented Christianity from becoming 'a privileged esoteric affair of a small and exclusive upper class'.⁹

Deissmann continued, 'Jesus spoke of the light and the candlestick, of the city on the hill, of father and child, bread and fish, egg and scorpion, of asking and giving, of seed and crop, of hunger and thirst. No long sentences, no speculative questions, transparent, pithy, plastic...The Gospel, because it was the message of God to humanity could only reveal itself in the simplest of garments...Whoever has eyes to see can learn much from the linguistic facts which meet us in the New Testament. The linguistic estimation of the New Testament shows us that our Holy Book in its classical, creative period is in close contact with the middle and lower classes and in

⁷ quoted by J.H. Moulton in *A Grammar of NT Greek, 1 Prolegomena* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908) 242

⁸ A. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1908 translated as *Light from the Ancient East* by L.R.M. Strachan this edition (New York: Harper, 1927)

⁹ A. Deissmann, *The New Testament in the Light of Modern Research: The Haskell Lectures, 1929*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co Inc., 1929) 80

sharp contrast to the old artificial Atticistic culture which struggled for a new lease of life in the surrounding world. Had the Gospel leagued itself with this ancient culture from the beginning it would have endangered what is best in it, and, especially, its future as a message to humanity would have been impossible.¹⁰

Nida himself, who received his Master's degree in Greek New Testament in 1939 (before taking up studies in linguistics under Charles C. Fries at the University of Michigan) was clearly inspired by this perspective:

Putting eternal truths in the speech of everyday life reflects exactly the style of the Greek New Testament. The New Testament books were not written in the high flown Asian style of the school masters of the first and second centuries A.D.; they were couched in words of the common people, who were seeking the truth about the living, risen Christ. For those who sought life, the dead forms of outmoded grammatical styles were useless.¹¹

This view of NT Greek was also assumed by Nida's former colleague and distinguished linguist, Kenneth L. Pike. (They worked together for some twenty years as principal teachers at the Summer Institute of Linguistics where Nida taught the morphology-syntax strand while Pike took the phonetics-phonemics). Expounding "Axioms concerning the Language of Scripture" Pike writes:

It is observed empirically—by linguistic methods—that the language of the Scriptures is natural language. One cannot differentiate the Greek used in the NT from the language of the man in the street. It is ordinary language, spoken by ordinary linguistic rules such as those studied at the Summer Institute of Linguistics by persons preparing to analyze unwritten languages.¹²

However, few scholars, now, would give unqualified assent to this view of the nature of NT Greek. Few would be so bold in the use of the word 'natural' or equate it with "the language of the man in the street"—the view that encouraged Nida and other DE practitioners to promote common language Bible translations for which 'Koine, the common Greek of the writers and the receptors of the NT writings, presents not only the content but the model'.¹³

¹⁰ A. Deissmann, *The New Testament in the Light of Modern Research: The Haskell Lectures, 1929*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co Inc., 1929) 94, 105-106.

¹¹ E.A.Nida, *Good News for Everyone: How to Use the Good News Bible* (Waco: Word Books, 1977) 19

¹² K.L. Pike, 'The Linguist and Axioms Concerning the Language of Scripture', *Interchange*, 3:2, (1971) 77

¹³ G. Schulze, *Effective Impact in Dynamic Equivalence Translation with Special Reference to the Imbabura New Testament* (PhD dissertation for Fuller Theological Seminary; Pasadena, 1979) 38

In fairness to Deissmann, we need to recognise that he published his findings over against an overwhelming Hebraist position that had held sway from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Moreover, as Silva has pointed out Deissmann himself acknowledged that he had overstated the facts in the original excitement of discovery. He never denied semitic features. Rather his concern was to show that Semitisms do not place the Bible outside the scope of Greek philology; they are merely birthmarks.¹⁴

Here we can do no more than trace the gradual modification of Deissmann's thesis and the subsequent revival of the assumption of the existence of a special dialect of Jewish Greek. As early as 1933 Professor A.P. Nock of Harvard was writing:

Any man who knows his classical Greek authors and then looks into the papyri is astonished at the similarities he finds. Any man who knows the papyri first and then turns to Paul is astonished at the difference.¹⁵

A British scholar, E.K. Simpson, was to be more specific—though his own English style does not encourage confidence in his objectivity:

In recent years we have been flooded with testifications to the vernacularity of the New Testament; so much indeed that methinks the balance needs to be somewhat redressed. Unquestionably we owe a debt to the Egyptian papyri and inscriptional lore that cannot be ignored. They have shed light on many incidental points in the sacred text and supplied parallels to many anomalous grammatical forms. When we wish to ascertain the exact sense of *logia* or *apographē*, or of a phrase like *synairein logon* (Mt 18:25), 'to square accounts', or *hoi anastatountes hymas* (Gal 5:12), 'your upsetters', the papyri stand us in good stead. They illustrate the language of the market place or the courts of law, wherever such aspects of life crop out in the Gospels or Epistles. *Ti skylleis ton didaskalon?* (Mark 5:35), 'Why do you bother the teacher?' matches with the lips in which the sentence is placed. It tallies perfectly with its popular environment, and, needless to say, can be plentifully paralleled from the papyri, so large a proportion of which are scribbled waste-papers, which betray by their mis-spellings the hand of illiterate scrawlers. As long as Scriptural writers hug the coast of mundane affairs, the Egyptian pharos yields a measure of illumination to their track, but when they launch out into the depths of divine counsels, we no longer profit by its twinkling cross-lights.¹⁶

Other writers¹⁷ have joined Simpson in pointing out that there are wide differences in style within the NT, and that one must not exaggerate the extent to which NT Greek resembles the idioms of the vernacular papyri as was done by earlier writers impressed

¹⁴ Silva, M, 'Bilingualism and the Character of Palestinian Greek', *Bib* 61 (1980) 200.

¹⁵ A.D. Nock, 'The Vocabulary of the New Testament', *JBL* 52 (1933) 138

¹⁶ E.K. Simpson, *Words Worth Weighing in the Greek New Testament* (London: Tyndale Press 1944) 6

¹⁷ B.F.C. Atkinson, *The Greek Language* (London: Faber and Faber, 1931) 280f.; C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom-book of New Testament Greek*, (2nd ed; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959) 1-4; N. Turner, 'The Literary Character of New Testament Greek', *NTS* 20 (1974) 107-112

by Deissmann's researches. They have also drawn attention to suggestive parallels in style and diction not only with famous Hellenistic writers such as Polybius, Strabo, Epictetus, Lucian and Plutarch, and the Jewish writers Philo and Josephus, but also with less important writers such as Vettius Valens the astrologer, and Philodemus, the Palestinian rhetorician.

However, it is not so much the parallels with the literary Koine of the Hellenistic writers that is underlined by some modern scholars. It is rather the claim that the Semitic cast of biblical Greek sets it apart from the language of the market place. Thus in 1935 Britain's distinguished biblical scholar, C.H. Dodd, published his *The Bible and the Greeks* in which he provided many examples of the modification of Greek terms through their use in the Septuagint translation of the Jewish Bible. In the 1940s the Swedish scholar Albert Wifstrand was claiming that Luke had modelled his style very clearly on that of the Septuagint. As to the authors of James, 1 Peter and Hebrews, he claimed they had mastered the grammar of Koine Greek as it was written by educated people, but their stylistic home was the edifying language of the Hellenized synagogue.¹⁸ In America Henry Cadbury of Harvard was acknowledging that the Greek of the NT 'is not always a native Greek but a Greek from which another idiom shines through'. He acknowledges the fact of the 'Semitic element' but says 'Today no unanimous appraisal of its source and extent is forthcoming.'¹⁹ His contemporary of the University of Chicago, F.W. Gingrich, claimed that the Greek NT was a landmark in the course of semantic change and instanced a distinctly Christian usage of words like ἀγάπη, πίστις, χάρις, κοινωνία, διαθήκη, δικαιοῶ, κληρονομία, etc.²⁰ Metzger of Princeton was more definite still:

The meaning of many of the richest and most significant words in the New Testament cannot be found in the ordinary Greek dictionary. Instead of going to Athens for help the interpreter must go to Jerusalem for in the pregnant phrase of Albert Ritsch 'the Old Testament is the lexicon of the New Testament'. It is a fact that most of the religious terminology of the New Testament can be understood only as it is read against the background of the Hebrew Old Testament and its Greek translation the Septuagint.²¹

Subsequent research has taken account not only of the vocabulary but more so of the syntax and style of NT Greek. As a result of the writing of British and continental scholars such as G. Johnston, N. Turner, H.S. Gehman, M. Black, P. Katz, J.N.

¹⁸ A. Wifstrand, 'A Problem concerning the Word Order in the NT', *Studia Theologica* 3 (1949) 172-184

¹⁹ H. Cadbury, 'The Vocabulary and Grammar of NT Greek', *TBT* 2:4 (1951) 154

²⁰ F.W. Gingrich, 'The Greek New Testament as a Landmark in the Course of Semantic Change', *JBL* (1954) 189f

²¹ B.M. Metzger, 'The Language of the New Testament', *The Interpreter's Bible* 7, (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press 1951) 51

Sevenster and K. Beyer a consensus was developing that biblical Greek has a character of its own which was imparted to it by Semitic influences. Until recently only the classicist Lars Rydbeck seems to have protested that the reaction against Deissmann and man-in-the-street Greek had swung the pendulum too far in the direction of a 'peculiar language of a peculiar people.'²² 'The NT texts were written down in Greek and they were understood by Greek speaking pagans in the second century A.D. Still there is much to say for a peculiar Jewish tinge to NT Greek'. He appealed for a reappraisal of the evidence from both the Hellenist and Jewish materials and more balanced integration.²³

G.H.R. Horsley laments that the notion of a special Jewish Greek dialect continues to have widespread influence among Biblical scholars. He cites the example of S. Thompson's SNTS monograph, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax* (Cambridge: 1985).²⁴

However, Rydbeck's qualms that the pendulum had swung too far in the direction of a separate Jewish Greek dialect have found recent support in the writings of M.Silva²⁵ and G.H.R. Horsley²⁶ both of whom bring a more sophisticated linguistic analysis to bear. They seek to account for the semitic influence in the Greek of the NT writings by reference to bilingualism, both passive and productive, and related phenomena (interference, diglossia, dialect, register etc) as well as the undoubted literary influence of the Septuagint. The whole subject is a fascinating one and I believe their treatment is more convincing than that of those such as Nigel Turner who postulate a separate Jewish Koine dialect. S.E. Porter has provided a helpful anthology of this century's major treatments of the character of the Greek of the NT with a wealth of bibliographical information. His introduction provides the historial context, clarifies the issues to be resolved, and calls for a sounder linguistics approach.²⁷

Inevitably there arises the tantalizing question as to what language Jesus and his apostles used in their daily lives. Was it Palestinian Aramaic, Koine Greek or even Hebrew? The question has more significance than the mere satisfactions of pious curiosity. If Jesus spoke Aramaic rather than the Greek of the NT writings then this

²² so M. Black, 'The Biblical Languages', *Cambridge History of the Bible*, (Cambridge University Press, 1970) 11

²³ L. Rydbeck, 'New Testament Greek after Debrunner', *New Testament Studies* 21 (1975) 425

²⁴ G.H.R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* 5, (Sydney: Macquarie University, 1989) 5f.

²⁵ M. Silva, 'Bilingualism and the Character of Palestinian Greek', *Bib* 61 (1980), 198-219.

²⁶ G.H.R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* 5, (Sydney: Macquarie University, 1989)

²⁷ S.E. Porter (ed.) *The Language of the Greek New Testament: Classic Essays*, JSNT Supplement Series 60, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

means that the records we have are already a translation. This may well influence our interpretation of them. Many scholars have adopted this view, so impressed were they by the Semitisms of the Gospels. These include great names such as J. Wellhausen, G. Dalman, C.C. Torrey, C.F. Burney. M.H. Segal, T.W. Manson and M. Black. These have held that Jesus and his disciples normally used Aramaic although they were probably acquainted with Greek and perhaps Hebrew. Black summed up the conclusion of Dalman which he regarded as firmly established: 'Jesus may have spoken Greek, but he certainly did speak and teach in Aramaic.'²⁸

Again Dr Nigel Turner who completed the third and fourth volumes of Moulton's *Grammar* took a different view from that of his distinguished predecessor, arguing that Jesus actually spoke a Jewish Greek dialect, a Biblical Greek akin to that of the Septuagint.

It is not inconceivable that, whatever the language of Jesus, it was influenced by all of those spoken in Galilee at that time, viz. Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and perhaps Latin. It was biblical Greek, of a kind not very different from the Septuagint—a branch of the Koine, but very different from what we read in the Egyptian rubbish heaps or on the papyrus of more literate people. Since 1949, intense study of vocabulary and syntax seem to me to establish that there was a distinguishable dialect of spoken and written Jewish Greek. That is to say, the biblical language was more than a written product of those whose mother tongue was Semitic and who floundered in Greek because they knew so little of it that they must copy Semitic idioms as they penned it. I am not the first to suggest that the Greek of the Old Testament was a language distinct from the main stream of the Koine, yet fully understood by the Jews. Perhaps as Gehman suggests, those who used this dialect of Greek were bilingual; it may have been a temporary phase in the history of the language, representing a period of transition for those Jews who were passing from a Semitic speaking to a Greek speaking stage, and coinciding with the New Testament period. However, as works of much later date, like the *Testament of Abraham*, exhibit exactly this kind of diction, I do not think it was merely transitional. Certainly it was not artificial. Biblical Greek is so powerful and fluent, it is difficult to believe that those who used it did not have at hand a language all ready for use. This, I submit, was the normal language of Jesus, at least in Galilee—rather a separate dialect of Greek than a form of the Koine, and distinguishable as something parallel to classical, Hellenistic, Koine and Imperial Greek.²⁹

Certainly diverse literary and archaeological data have shown the linguistic situation in Palestine to be far more fluid and complex than was previously assumed. The Dead Sea Scrolls show that Jewish scribes sent letters in Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek to the same Jewish leaders from the same Jewish centres. Sevenster concluded that there is no reason to doubt that Jesus could have taught in Greek, particularly in areas such as

²⁸ M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, (3rd ed.; Oxford: OUP, 1967) 137

²⁹ N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, 4: Style* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976) 114, cf. S. Thompson, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1985)

the Decapolis of Transjordan or when he faced Pilate, and that a Palestinian Jewish Christian like James, the brother of the Lord, could write an epistle in good Greek.³⁰ J.A.T. Robinson went even further by questioning the common assumption that Aramaic-speaking Christianity was prior to Hellenistic Christianity. He suggested that the majority of the early Jewish Christians, whether from Galilee, Jerusalem or the Diaspora spoke (or even most naturally spoke) Greek. 'There is nothing inherently impossible about the notion that both the epistle of James and the first draft of the gospel of John could be very Jewish and very early and were written in Greek.'³¹

Two recent articles, both closely argued and well documented, have re-examined the wider question of the language of Jesus.

Randall Buth concludes:

Jesus was most probably trilingual. He certainly knew Hebrew and Aramaic (Luke 4:16-20; Mark 5:41). Probably he used Hebrew most of the time for parables, for legal and religious discussions (e.g. Mark 2:1-12), and for daily matters in Judea. Probably he used mainly Aramaic and Greek in daily matters in Galilee. Even in Galilee it appears that His teaching to Jewish audiences would have been in Hebrew, although present evidence is incomplete. His travel to Tyre and Sidon would presuppose ease with Greek.³²

Jerome A. Lund concludes somewhat more tentatively:

It appears that Jesus spoke both a dialect of Middle Hebrew and a dialect of Middle Aramaic. He undoubtedly was versed in biblical Hebrew as well. What His home language was is impossible to tell. However, His choice of language depended to a great extent upon His audience. To Judean and Samaritan farmers and villagers and to the Pharisees and sages of Jerusalem, he probably spoke Hebrew. Then, too, He probably spoke a dialect of Middle Aramaic to Eastern diaspora Jews and to Aramaic speaking Jews of the Galilee, like Jairus. He probably used Greek to speak to the Romans and to Western diaspora Jews, but probably not in teaching. The issue of Hebrew versus Aramaic in the Galilee in the first century is far from settled...³³

Needless to say our concern is with the written language of the NT documents and not with what lies behind them. Of this we can say that the Greek shows the same diversity and varying quality as that in the books that make up the LXX. The NT documents represent an established corpus that can be subjected to linguistic analysis in their own right; yet they are clearly related to a wider group of Hellenistic Greek texts of the first century AD. Like the papyri, ostraca and inscriptions from Egypt which

³⁰ J.N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek?*, (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1968) 190

³¹ J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, (London: SCM, 1976) 364-7

³² R. Buth, 'Language Use in the First Century: The Place of Spoken Hebrew in a Trilingual Society', *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 5:4 (1992) 310

³³ J.A. Lund, 'The Language of Jesus', *Mishkan* 17-18 (2/1992-1/1993) 149

were subject to bilingual interference (e.g. from Coptic, and possibly Hebrew), so biblical Greek often has a Semitic flavour, adopts Semitic modes of expression and reflects some Semitic interference in such things as word order, style and to a lesser extent, grammar. Most of the morphological and syntactical peculiarities of LXX Greek are to be found in the NT. But the clearest examples of Semitic influence are probably found in the vocabulary. We shall look at examples of this in the next chapter.

Clearly the final word on the nature of the Greek of the NT has not yet been spoken. Suffice it to say that while there is no denying the widespread presence of Semitic features, the evidence falls short of supporting the notion of a special Jewish dialect of Greek. Future research must keep abreast of developments in linguistics. Silva's utilization of recent studies in bilingualism may go some way to resolving the earlier controversy. Silva has suggested the Semitisms in the NT generally affect style or *parole* rather than grammatical structure or *langue*, to use Saussure's distinction. Another factor that warrants more attention in language choice is **register**. Register refers to the type of language chosen in relation to the wider social role being played by the performer at the moment of utterance i.e. what a person is speaking or writing, determined by what he is doing at the time.³⁴ Porter has made the practical suggestion of distinguishing three kinds of Semiticisms: instances of clear translation (e.g. Mark 15:34); instances of intervention when a Greek form must be attributed to the influence of a Semitic construction; and instances of enhancements when what rarely occurs in Greek is found frequently (e.g. the adjectival attributive genitive in Romans 8:21). On the broader canvas he has drawn attention to the need for more consideration of the place of **literacy** in the ancient world.³⁵

C. THE ROLE OF THE GREEK SEPTUAGINT TRANSLATION

It has long been a commonplace that Luke, the main writer of the NT (in terms of length), together with the writer to the Hebrews, is steeped in the Septuagint.³⁶ Turner has boldly claimed a more extensive influence—'the style of Mark recalls parts of the Septuagint', the Gospel of John 'is directly influenced by the Septuagint'; the Greek of the Pauline letters is Jewish, 'much influenced by the Septuagint'; 'I Peter is firmly

³⁴ M.A.K. Halliday, 'Categories of the Theory of Grammar', *Word* 17:3 (1961) 241-292 and M.A.K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1978).

³⁵ S.E. Porter (ed.), *The Language of the Greek New Testament: Classic Essays*, (JSNT Supplement Series 60) (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991) 35-37.

³⁶ J.N. Birdsall, 'Language of the New Testament', and 'New Testament Text and Versions', *NBD* (1962) 714; F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, 3rd ed. (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1971) 154; L. Rydbeck, 'What happened to NT Greek after Albert Debrunner?', *NTS* 21 (1975) 427

Septuagintal and Semitic despite the likely efforts of a lettered amanuensis'; 'II Peter is more Semitic in style' (than Jude), 'more patently influenced by the Septuagint, and a degree more pompous.'³⁷

But the Septuagint influenced the NT at other levels. Many of the terms used (and sometimes created) by the LXX translators became part and parcel of the language of the NT. Furthermore the NT quotes the LXX frequently and some of its theological arguments are based on the wording of LXX passages.³⁸ Accordingly in view of the significant influence on the NT writings that the Septuagint is commonly assumed to have had, we shall consider it briefly.

The Septuagint is the earliest written translation of the OT, made in the third and second centuries BC. It was primarily intended to meet the needs of the millions of Greek speaking Jews of the Dispersion. Acts 2 provides a list of countries represented by pilgrims to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost and reminds us that in the century before the birth of Jesus, the Jewish diaspora extended from the west coast of India to the south coast of Gaul and probably to the major ports in Spain. There were possibly a million Jews in Egypt alone³⁹ and it was in Alexandria, the great commercial and cultural capital (where two out of the five wards were known as Jewish districts), that the Septuagint translation was made.

The history of the translation is obscure. Different ancient sources mention 72, 70 or 5 translators of the Pentateuch, though the main tradition of its origin is preserved in the *Letter of Aristeas* (100 BC).⁴⁰ This document purports to have been written over a century and a half earlier by Aristeas, an official at the court of King Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt (285-246 BC) to his brother Philocrates. Ptolemy was renowned as a patron of literature and it was under him that the great library at Alexandria, one of the world's cultural wonders for 900 years, was inaugurated. The letter describes how Demetrius of Phalerum, said to have been Ptolemy's librarian, aroused the king's interest in the Jewish Law and advised him to send a delegation to the High Priest, Eleazar, at Jerusalem. The High Priest chose as translators six elders from each of the twelve tribes of Israel and sent them to Alexandria, along with an accurate and beautiful parchment of the Torah. The elders were royally dined and wined and proved their wisdom in debate, then they took up their residence in a house on the island of Pharos (of lighthouse fame) where, in 72 days, they completed their

³⁷ N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. 4: Style* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1976) 2-4

³⁸ E. Tov, 'The Septuagint', *Mikra*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988) 163

³⁹ Jeremiah 41-44 records how many inhabitants of Judah fled to Egypt after Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC. Ptolemy I, heir to Alexander's empire in Egypt, was to settle many more garrisons there.

⁴⁰ See M. Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates*, (New York and London: Harper and Row, 1951).

task of translating the Pentateuch into Greek, presenting an agreed version, as the result of conference and comparison. It is plausible that the kernel of the legend has a historical basis. The Ptolemaic kings and their learned men were known to have shown great interest in foreign cultures and could well have commissioned a translation of the law. There is no need to doubt that it was made in Alexandria and that it was begun in the third century BC.

From at least the time of Ezra (450 BC) it had been customary to translate into Aramaic the portions of the Hebrew Scriptures read in public.⁴¹ Actually these Aramaic *Targums* were oral interpretations rather than translations and were not at first written down. They gave the official view of what the sacred text meant and were intended to be used together with it.⁴² Some scholars, such as the late Paul Kahle, think that the Septuagint began in the same way, as an oral explanation accompanying the public recitation of the Hebrew text in the synagogues. Others such as Tov find no evidence for comparison with the Aramaic Targums.

The Contents of the Septuagint

The canon of the Septuagint contains three types of books: a) a Greek translation of the 24 canonical books of the Hebrew Bible; b) a Greek translation of the books not included in the Hebrew canon; c) books written in Greek such as the Wisdom of Solomon and the additions to Daniel and Esther.

The latter two groups together form the so-called "Apocrypha" (Greek plural adjective "hidden"). Following Jerome the term was applied in a pejorative sense to the 15 documents found in the Greek and Latin Bibles but not in the Hebrew. The Western church in general rejected Jerome's championship of the Hebrew Canon of the OT and affirmed a Canon of the OT based on the LXX. The Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century revived the view of Jerome and segregated out the "Apocryphal" books.⁴³

The Septuagint canon is arranged differently from the Hebrew canon. While the Hebrew books are arranged in three groups reflecting different stages of the process of canonization, the books of the Greek Bible are arranged according to their literary character: a) Pentateuch and Historical Books; b) Poetical and Wisdom Books; c) Prophetic books.

⁴¹ S. Olafsson, *The LXX Version: A Guide to the Translation Technique of the Septuagint*, (CB (OT Series) (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1991).

⁴² C. Rabin, 'Cultural Aspects of Bible Translation', *Babel*, 18:3 (1972) 16

⁴³ The Ethiopian version of the OT, however, contains two books, Jubilees and Enoch, not found in either the Hebrew or Greek canons.

Within each group the sequence of books differs from that of the Hebrew canon.

The names of many of the books of the LXX differ from their counterparts in the Hebrew Bible, but they, too, do reflect early Jewish traditions. For example, the Greek name of the fourth book of the Pentateuch, Ἀριθμοὶ 'Numbers', has its counterpart in the Mishna and Talmud.

The Language of the LXX

The language of the LXX is not straightforward Koine Greek. At its most idiomatic it abounds with Hebraisms; at its worst it has been said to be little more than Hebrew in disguise. The Pentateuch, translated by Jewish translators, is fairly idiomatic and consistent. For the Jews it was the most important of the three divisions of the OT. It was read straight through in the synagogue, sabbath by sabbath, according to a triennial lectionary cycle (whereas only selections from other parts of the OT were read in public). Of the other books, it seems, some were divided between two translators working simultaneously, while others were translated piecemeal at different times by different men using widely different methods and vocabulary. As a result the style varies from fairly good Koine Greek, as in Isaiah, part of Joshua and I Maccabees, to indifferent Greek, as in Chronicles, Psalms, Sira, Judith, the Minor Prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and parts of Kings, to literal and sometimes unintelligible renderings as in Judges, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Lamentations and other parts of Kings.⁴⁴

Nor does quality of translation necessarily coincide with quality of Greek style. The Pentateuch again ranks high. It is a generally competent translation, though as in the *Targums* it occasionally paraphrases anthropomorphisms objectionable to Alexandrian Jews. For example, "Enoch walked with God" (Gen 5:22, 24) appears in the LXX as "Enoch pleased God" (which is quoted in the NT at Hebrews 11:5f). Again, the Hebrew text of Exodus 24:10 says that the elders of Israel "saw the God of Israel", but the Septuagint reads, "they saw the place where the God of Israel stood". Few of the other books are translated as well as the Pentateuch and some, such as Isaiah, are very poor. Esther, Job, Proverbs and I Esdras are free paraphrastic renderings and the original version of Job was much shorter than the Hebrew. The Greek Proverbs contain things not in the MT at all, and Hebrew sentiments are freely altered to suit the Greek outlook. The LXX rendering of Daniel was so free that it was replaced in the first century AD by a later translation. One of the translators of Jeremiah sometimes rendered Hebrew words by Greek words that conveyed similar sound but utterly dissimilar meaning. Of the apocryphal books, as we have seen, some are not translations at all, but free Greek compositions.

⁴⁴ D.W. Gooding, 'Text and Versions', *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas, (London: I.V.F., 1962) 1259

There is an interesting example of a DE rendering in the LXX of Judg 12:6 where the Hebrew shibboleth/sibboleth is replaced by the Greek noun *στάχυς*. The point being that Greek like other languages (but not English) does not distinguish between the sounds /s/ and /sh/.⁴⁵

However, with regard to the language of the LXX generally, Grant and Rowley sum up:

The general tendency of the LXX translators was to be very literal and they repeatedly followed Hebrew usage (notably in the use of pronouns, prepositions and participial constructions) to an extent which runs entirely counter to the genius of the Greek language.⁴⁶

The Jews themselves were to lose interest in the Septuagint altogether. For from the first century AD onwards, it was adopted by Christian Jews (and subsequently by Gentile Christians) as their version of the OT and they used it freely to support their contention that Jesus was the promised Messiah. We can see this taking place in several NT passages. For example, in Acts 15:16-18, James, presiding over the council of the mother church in Jerusalem, gives his decision that the mission to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, should be continued. He cites the prophet Amos to confirm the decision but uses the Septuagint version which gives more explicit support to his argument than the Masoretic Hebrew text. In the Hebrew the role of the Gentiles in the promised restoration of Israel is vague, whereas in the LXX the purpose of that restoration is "that the remnant of men, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, may earnestly seek me, says the Lord" (Amos 9:11-12).⁴⁷

Another reason for subsequent Jewish abandonment of the Septuagint was the establishment of a revised standard Hebrew Bible by Jewish scholars c. 100 AD. This was the beginning of the process of revision and editing which lasted for several centuries culminating in the production of the Masoretic text. Variant forms of the Hebrew text which had existed before 100 AD were allowed to disappear, with the exception of the Samaritan Pentateuch which was preserved outside Jewish circles. As a result of this standardisation of the Hebrew consonantal text it was expected that versions in other languages conform to it. Clearly the existing Greek version did not.

⁴⁵ I owe this example to John Ellington's 'More on 'Shibboleth'', *TBT*, 43:2 (1992) 244-245

⁴⁶ F.C. Grant and H.H. Rowley, *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, 2nd ed revised (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963) 348

⁴⁷ The LXX version quoted by James presupposes Hebrew *יִרְשׁוּ* (will seek) for Masoretic *יִרְשׁוּ* (will possess) and *אֶדָּם* (man) for Edom: and it neglects the particle *אֵת* the mark of the accusative case, which precedes, *שְׁאֵרִית* (remnant). But the LXX could represent a variant Hebrew text now lost.

New translations of the Bible into Greek were provided in the second century AD, first by a Jewish proselyte named Aquila, and then towards the end of the century by another proselyte, Theodotion.

Inevitably they revised the translation of Isaiah 7:14, a Septuagint text much used by early Christians as a proof of the virgin birth of Christ. The LXX translation of Hebrew עַלְמָה was παρθένος (a virgin), which was quoted in Matt 1:23. The later Greek versions replaced παρθένος by νεάνις (a young woman).⁴⁸

The Significance of the LXX

The Septuagint was one of the great translation enterprises of antiquity. It was the first major translation from an oriental language into Greek and it was the first written translation of the Bible. Biblical scholars prize the Septuagint as a witness to an underlying Hebrew text over a thousand years older than the Masoretic manuscripts. F.F. Bruce gives three convincing examples where the LXX preserved the true text obscured in the (usually more reliable) Hebrew transmissions.⁴⁹ But as has been pointed out,⁵⁰ a reading in the Greek is no infallible guide to the original Hebrew form. The evidence afforded depends on the translation techniques employed. As we have seen these do not seem to have been uniform. Nevertheless since the recent finds of Hebrew manuscripts at Qumran, the LXX remains, after the MT, the most important complete source for the text of the OT.

Secondly, although this version was intended to meet the needs of Greek speaking Jews, it did incidentally make the OT available to the Gentile world. The Hebraistic style of its Greek could never have been pleasing to a Greek ear, but its contents had their own appeal. That it was known and appreciated in some Greek circles is indicated by allusion to it in pagan authors.⁵¹ "It acts also as a linguistic and theological bridgehead between the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New".⁵²

This is of importance for our purpose, namely that the LXX was the Bible of the NT writers and their readers. Every part of the NT shows some knowledge and use of the

⁴⁸ עַלְמָה is in fact strictly 'young woman' and בְּתוּלָה is the term for virgin in Hebrew. Yet in the OT עַלְמָה, which occurs seven times, does not seem to be used in a markedly different way from בְּתוּלָה, which occurs fifty times.

⁴⁹ F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, 3rd ed. (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1971) 157-8

⁵⁰ J. Barr, *The Typology of Literalism in Ancient Biblical Translations* (MSU 15) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979).

⁵¹ F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, 3rd ed. (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1971) 161

⁵² D.W. Gooding, 'Text and Versions', in *New Bible Dictionary* ed. J.D. Douglas, (London: IVF 1962) 1261

Septuagint and the vast majority of OT citations are drawn from it. As Sidney Jellicoe stated

For the Greek speaking Jew of the pre-Christian era and over a century beyond, and for the Christian church from the time of its birth, this Jewish-Greek Bible held its place as the inspired Scriptures.⁵³

When the NT was complete, they did not jettison the Old, but added the new Greek original to its Greek translation, making one Greek Bible. Thus the NT writers' task of communicating their message in Greek was facilitated by the role of the Septuagint. They did not have to invent a Greek theological vocabulary; such a vocabulary lay ready to hand in the Septuagint. Pagan vocabulary had been taken over by the Alexandrian translators and used as equivalents of the great words of the OT revelation. Thus in Greek speaking Jewish circles these words no longer bore their original pagan significance but acquired new senses in the context of the OT corpus and from the Hebrew vocabulary which they represented.⁵⁴

The Greek word νόμος, usually translated 'law', is an example of a term which acquires a new sense as a result of its use in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew תּוֹרָה. In non-biblical Greek, νόμος means custom or convention. To the Greeks, in fact, law was codified custom. But in the OT, law is divine instruction mediated through Moses and the prophets. The NT writers inherited and utilised this Septuagint usage.⁵⁵

A similar phenomenon took place with regard to a number of other words including names and titles of divine beings, psychological terms and 'salvation' vocabulary. It is to the last of these that we shall turn in the following chapter because the existence of such technical terminology developed in the LXX, and, deliberately appropriated by the NT writers, has important implications for Bible translation and for our evaluation of DE translations in particular.

Finally, in view of our interest in the kind of language that is appropriate in translations of Scripture we note that this first and immensely significant translation did not employ natural common language. In the course of his magisterial survey of the literature on the LXX translation technique Emanuel Tov comments in passing that in all the

⁵³ S. Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1968) 353

⁵⁴ F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, 3rd ed. (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1971) 159, D.W. Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings: Studies in Semantics of Soteriological Terms*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 295; H.M. Shires, *Finding the Old Testament in the New*, (Philadelphia: Westminster 1974) 82

⁵⁵ F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, 3rd ed. (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1971) 159-60

voluminous writings of Eugene Nida, no treatment is found of the translation technique of the Septuagint.⁵⁶

D. CONCLUSION

Nida's theory seeks to do justice to the fact of varieties in languages both with regard to the biblical text itself and the modern languages into which that text has to be translated. In practice, however, it is the latter that predominates in his writings—a feature which is consistent with his emphasis on communication. There is a problem here, which we mention in passing: the notion of group varieties knows no limit. As DE practitioners identify more and more groups of readers, so the number of types of translations must multiply. Thus we have special translations for children and for women, for prisoners, and many other groups. The notion of group varieties reduces ultimately to the language system of the individual—the idiolect.⁵⁷ Needless to say this would have immense implications for the believing community and for their liturgy.

However, the concern of this chapter has been rather with the language of the ST, the Bible itself, which by Nida and his associate is assumed to be "natural", "couched in the words of the common people", "the language of the man in the street", with "not even elevated style". The background to this assumption was the dramatic discovery at the end of the nineteenth century of vast numbers of papyri in the sands of Egypt, which proved to be written in Greek strikingly similar at many points to the Greek of the NT. These affinities were well publicised through the research and writings of Adolf Deissmann, J.H. Moulton and G. Milligan and provided a timely caveat to those who were inclined to evaluate the Greek of the NT according to the canons of classical (Attic) grammar. But we have seen that Deissmann's thesis was overstated. Subsequent research has not supported the notion of a unique biblical Greek. In this respect Deissmann (and Moulton) have been vindicated. But the Semitised Greek style of the NT has to be conceded.

We have noted too the profound influence of the Septuagint on the Greek of the NT though just how this influence was mediated is not completely clear. Presumably it was a factor in some continuing social process.

⁵⁶ E. Tov, 'The Nature and Study of Translation Technique of the LXX', in C.E. Cox, *LXX: VI Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press 1987) 339

⁵⁷ D. Crystal, 'Some Current Trends in Translation Theory', *TBT* 27 (1976) 326

This brings us back to the issue of 'naturalness'. To what extent can we assume that the writers of the NT used language that was natural to themselves, let alone to their receptors, many of whom were Gentiles for whom biblical Greek must have been strange? The deliberately Biblical style of Luke is a case in point.

The truth is that the NT was written in a somewhat Hebraised Greek. Similarly the Bible which so profoundly influenced English culture did not come in natural English. Thus a distinguished advocate of idiomatic translations Mgr Ronald Knox, complained that "there are hundreds and hundreds of Hebraisms which we do not notice, because we have allowed ourselves to grow accustomed to them"⁵⁸—surely a salutary warning to us not to absolutise 'naturalness'.

The same could be said of the DE theory's aversion to technical terminology. The original text was clearly not written on this assumption. The translator is confronted by words which occur only once in the Scriptures, words unattested in extra-biblical literature. He finds in the NT Hebrew loan words which supply the lack of certain technical terms in Greek (e.g. *σάββατον*). He is confronted by untranslated Hebrew or Aramaic words such as *Σαβαώθ* in the Rom 9:29 translation of Isaiah 1:9; *μαρانا θα* in I Cor 16:22, not to mention the more well known examples: *μαμωνᾶς, ἀλληλουϊά, ὡσαννά, χερούβ, ῥαββί, Ἐμμανουήλ*.

The point is that a language is not a closed circle so uniquely shaped by the history of its speech community as to be totally incomprehensible to an outsider. Nor is it impervious to influence from other cultures.

What about the literary quality of the NT writings? Not every translation of a literary text is necessarily literature. Here we shall be content to recognize the importance of Stylistics for translation theory. Nida, too, would endorse this, and has in fact done so in his later writings.⁵⁹ However, the definitive manuals talk about 'the conflict between the dictates of form and content',⁶⁰ and describe words as mere vehicles of meaning,⁶¹ thus denigrating the form of the ST and with it the significance of style. Yet style is part of the total meaning of the text.⁶²

Applying this to the translation of the NT writings the translator has not only to reproduce the higher literary level of language used in such writings as Hebrews,

⁵⁸ R.A. Knox, *On Englishing the Bible*, (London: Burns and Oates, 1949) 8.

⁵⁹ E.A. Nida, J.P. Louw, A.H. Snyman, and J. Cronje, *Style and Discourse* (Capetown: Bible Society of South Africa, 1983), ii.

⁶⁰ E.A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating*, (Leiden: Brill, 1964) 91

⁶¹ E.A. Nida, *Language Structure and Translation*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975) 91

⁶² N.E. Enkvist, *Linguistic Stylistics*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1973) 87

James, Luke, Acts and I Peter but also to recognise that even those compositions written in non-literary Greek are not devoid of literary merit. The Bible did not take on literary merit only in the KJV, though it may be true, as has been suggested, that the KJV is a greater literary achievement than the original.⁶³ Thus in I Corinthians, an epistle in which Paul reminds his readers that his speech has been simple and unadorned, we find some of the most eloquent and moving passages ever written. In fact it has been said that in Rom 8:31-39 and I Cor 13 'the diction of the apostle rises to the heights of Plato in the *Phaedrus*'.⁶⁴ The four gospels too, particularly Mark and John, were written in a simple Greek at the level of vocabulary and syntax, but the classicist, E.V. Rieu has drawn attention to their literary art and rhythm, and says this must be reflected in 'the best contemporary English at our command.'⁶⁵ Mark has been hailed as an artistic genius who invented the gospel genre.⁶⁶ The Book of Revelation has been said to be written in barbarous Greek. But however unnatural the Greek, no-one could doubt the literary impact of the Apocalypse.

The point of the foregoing discussion of the nature of the language of the NT writings has not been to denigrate 'intelligibility' as a worthy aim of Bible translation or to defend the use in our day of such renderings as "Jacob sod pottage"(KJV Gen 25:29). Rather, the aim has been to show that the Greek of the NT cannot be completely identified with the language of the man in the street. Apart from the strange Jewish imagery and thousands of OT allusions, much of the NT is written in a Biblical idiom which must have been quite unnatural and foreign to those who had not been nurtured in the synagogue milieu. This fact should be fully appreciated by translators and help free them from any mistaken subservience to the speech of the market place. In the case of English versions one might also ask why the heritage of Biblical piety and ecclesiastical usage should be excluded from the resources of contemporary English.

However much we might wish to make our version clear and intelligible, the very nature of the original at times will mean the modern reader is sure to strike problems. The first readers of the gospels probably found them just as difficult as we do.⁶⁷ Certainly the writer of 2 Peter acknowledged that some of the things written by "our beloved brother Paul...[are] hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction as they do the other Scriptures" (2 Pet 3:16). It is not the job of the Bible translator to simplify the original or to make it easier to understand.

⁶³ F.C. Grant, *Translating the Bible*, (Greenwich Conn.: Seabury Press, 1961) 72

⁶⁴ B.M. Metzger, 'The Language of the New Testament', in *The Interpreter's Bible* VII:43-59 (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951)51

⁶⁵ E.V. Rieu, 'Translating the Gospels', *TBT*, 6:4 (1955) 155

⁶⁶ B.M. Metzger, 'The Language of the New Testament', in *The Interpreter's Bible* VII:43-59 (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951)49

⁶⁷ E.V. Rieu, 'Translating the Gospels', *TBT*, 6:4 (1955) 154

Furthermore, if the modern reader is to be presented with a Bible in common language, he will have been deprived of so much that not only puzzled its first readers but also arrested and challenged them.