

Behind the Versions

Written by Peter Harris
Friday, 11 January 2013 13:39

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Editor's Note, 2013: This article was first published by BTM twenty five years ago. It accurately illustrates that the men behind the new versions of scripture are and were godless in the extreme. Their godlessness continues to this day as new 'bible' after new 'bible' arises on the scene, further confusing and detracting men and women from the genuine word of God. If you can read the quotes below and remain staunchly a follower of new versions, then I pity you, for you are profoundly deluded.

"... Learn to put away from your souls that vile indifferentism which is becoming the curse of this shallow and unlearned age. Be as forgiving as you please of indignities offered to yourselves; but do not be ashamed to be very jealous for the honour of the Lord of Hosts, and to resent any dishonour offered to Him with a fiery indignation unlike anything you could possibly feel for a personal wrong. Every form of fashionable impiety is one and the same vile thing in the essence of it - still Anti-Christ, disguise it how you will..." W. Burgon

The following quotations have come from a number of sources - mostly from men who sat on modern Bible translation committees or, in some cases, from men who published their own translations of the Holy Scripture into "the vulgar tongue" (i.e. the language of the people).

They gave to a dying world the fruit of their "vast labours" and "monumental scholarship" (their own words!), in an effort to try and "improve" God's word. Judge for yourselves if they were standing in awe of that word.

I welcome the charge of being 'out of touch', 'old fashioned', 'legalistic', 'inflexible', 'pharisaical', 'unloving'. I know I will be given other epithets, too, by upholders of modern translations. Let me simply put it this way... these quotations represent, to me, some of the best specimens of lies, heresy, false readings, aborted texts, phoney exegesis and twisted private interpretations ever to have come off the printing presses of the 'Age of Aquarius'. By comparison, they make the fabrications of JW'ism seem positively enlightened!

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But God is not subject to the whims and caprices of hack 'Bible translators', the 'plausible conjectures' and the 'dynamic equivalents' of the higher critics. Nor is He affected by any other twentieth century counterfeit, shabby, motley collection of pedlars of His word, whose 'help' to Christians is as effective as that offered by an Egyptian mummy! These pretenders wreck and twist scripture to suit their own particular financial and doctrinal fantasies, forever stimulating itching ears that are not content with what God really says. Let us now see what these 'holy translators' say....

"Evangelicals seem to me perverted rather than untrue." (F.J.A. Hort. 1858)

"The popular doctrine of substitution is an immortal and material counterfeit." Hort. 1860

"No-one now, I suppose, holds that the first three chapters of Genesis, for example, give a literal history - I could never understand how anyone reading them with open eyes could think they did."

Westcott, writing to the Archbishop of Canterbury, March 4th., 1890 - Westcott, 'Life of Westcott', Vol. 2, P69.

"I am inclined to think that no such state as 'Eden' ever existed..."

Hort. 'Life of Hort', Vol. 1, p78.

"... Certainly nothing could be more unscriptural than the modern limiting of Christ's bearing our sins and sufferings to his death; but indeed that is only one aspect of an almost universal heresy."

Hort. 'Life of Hort', Vol. 1, p430.

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Such were the views of the two men who gave us a Greek text in 1881 from which all modern translations have sprung. Most translators since have based their methods on the work of these two men.

In the 'Introduction to the Literature of the O.T.' by **Dr. S.R. Driver** (who prepared, with Brown and Briggs, the famous 'Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament', and who sat on the committee who gave us the 'Variorum Bible'), Driver writes:

"In the Old Testament we have no assurance that an event was recorded until many centuries after its occurrence..."

To Driver, the Old Testament consisted of traditions, a modified and coloured text, hopelessly corrupt.

Keunen (1828-91), was Professor of Hebrew at Leyden in 1855. In his book, 'Religion of Israel', he wrote:

"The account of the forty years wandering through the peninsula of Sinai must be set aside as unhistorical... Indeed, the representation of Israel's earliest history, presented to us in the books named after Moses and Joshua must be rejected as in its entirety, impossible."

According to **Wellhausen**, Moses knew nothing of the Books ascribed to him by the Jews. These Books, he said, were of a very late origin and were no more than a collection of legends and inventions. Isaac and Jacob never existed. Abraham may possibly have been an historical character, but he certainly had no connection with these mythical figures. There was no historical Passover, no consecration of an historical Aaron as priest, no manifestation of God at Sinai, the Tabernacle was copied from the Temple, there was no Ark, no altar and no sacrifice ordained of God.

The extent to which this rationalism has dominated Biblical scholarship in the twentieth century is illustrated by quotations from **Dr. C.H. Dodd's** two books, 'The Authority of the Bible' and 'The Bible Today'. Dr. Dodd was responsible for the production of the New Testament 'New

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English Bible' (N.E.B.). He was Chairman of the translation and was for many years Vice-President of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Here are a few examples:

"It long ago became clear that in claiming for the Bible accuracy in matters of science and history, its apologists had chosen a hopeless position to defend."

"God is the Author, not of the Bible, but of the life in which the authors of the Bible partake, and of which they tell in such imperfect human words as they could understand."

"There is the almost prehistoric period of Moses. We have no literature which can with any probability be attributed to that period. Moses has left us no writings, and we know little of him with certainty."

"Moses: He was a magician, a medicine man, whose magic wand wrought wonders of deliverance and destruction. That was how the people regarded him. To separate history from legend in the stories of his career is impossible and not very profitable."

"Ezekiel: Appears subject to trance and catalepsy. He feels himself like a psychic 'medium' lifted into the air and transported to distant places. The strange episode of the death of Pelatiah may perhaps be interpreted as a case of clairvoyance."

"In the 9th Century BC., Jehovah is still cruel, capricious, irritable, unjust (by human standards of justice), and untruthful. The prophets of the classical period brought the overdue advance in ideas of Jehovah's character. The prophets' remoulding of the idea of God is indeed, as we must frankly confess, partial."

"No-one not blinded by superstitious bibliolatry could possibly accept for truth, as they stand, many elements of Old Testament Prophecy."

Re. Isaiah 9:17 and 60:12:

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"Any theory of the inspiration of the Bible which suggests that we should recognise such utterances as authoritative for us, stand condemned."

"Certainly the prophets were sometimes mistaken... That is why it behoves us to let them speak for themselves, with eyes open to the element of error in their teaching."

"The Old Testament contains not only the epoch-making writings of the great prophets, but legends and traditions which reflect the elementary piety of common man."

"One evangelist, for instance, suggests that when Hosea wrote 'Out of Egypt have I called my son', he was foretelling a temporary exile of Christ in that country, instead of alluding to a well-known episode in the early history of Israel (Mt. 2:15). But such aberrations... should not blind us to the truth which underlies the appeal to prophecy."

Re. John 3:16:

"The expression is evidently anthropomorphic (i.e. the giving of human characteristics to what is not human). It is a mythological way of saying that in Christ God gives of His own being the utmost that it is possible for humanity to receive of God, and that the giving involves for him what we can only describe as a sacrifice."

Of the writer of any particular story of Jesus:

"We know of course that neither his experience nor his way of relating it to history was perfectly pure, and we shall be quite prepared for an element of error."

With reference to the sayings of Jesus:

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"There are sayings...which either simply are not true, in their plain meaning, or are unacceptable to the conscience or reason of Christian people."

"We need not doubt that Jesus shared the views of His contemporaries re. the authorship of the books in the Old Testament, or the phenomena of 'demon possession' - views which we could not accept without violence to our sense of truth. We readily recognise that so far He was a man of His time."

"In the fullness of time, Jesus came. Believing Himself called to be the Messiah of His people, He gathered up their highest traditions..."

"When the Gospel of Matthew uses the story of Jonah as a symbol of resurrection from the dead, it is not very far from the original intention of the myth."

"Critical analysis... shows that the first chapter of Genesis is a relatively late composition. We have in the second chapter an earlier, and cruder, Hebrew story of creation. The account in the first chapter was written after the prophets had done their great work towards a purer and more spiritual religion."

With reference to Creation and Judgement:

"In referring to them the biblical writers make free use of mythology... Creation, the Fall of Man, the Deluge and the Building of Babel are SYMBOLIC MYTHS."

"As every human being lies under God's judgement, so every human being is ultimately destined, in His mercy, to eternal life."

"The strange legend of the destruction of the cities of the plain has its vital centre in Abraham's

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encounter with God."

Other influences...

For years the National Council of Churches/World Council of Churches, has been dominated by modernistic leaders. Any organisation can be judged by its leaders. Here are some of the men it exalts to places of leadership and authority:

Dr. Harry E. Fosdick, for years an outstanding spokesman for this Council:

"Of course, I do not believe in the Virgin Birth, or in that old-fashioned substitutionary doctrine of the Atonement; and do not know of any intelligent minister who does..."

Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin, President-Emiritus of Union Seminary in New York City and former moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the USA., who has been active in the Council. He writes:

"Certain... hymns still perpetuate the theory that God pardons sinners because Christ purchased that pardon of His obedience and suffering... there is no cleansing blood which can wipe out the record of what has been... The Cross of Christ is not a means of procuring forgiveness."

Dr. George A. Buttrick, Presbyterian, Federal Council President in 1940-2:

"Literal infallibility of Scripture is a fortress impossible to defend: there is treason in the camp. Probably few people who claim to 'believe every word' of the Bible really mean it. That avowal, held to its last logic, would risk a trip to the insane asylum."

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Below are some of the leaders of the National Council. They are the men who authorised a new version of the Bible, known as the Revised Standard Version (RSV)...

Edgar J. Goodspeed, one of the RSV translators and who had previously brought out his own translation in 1935 with Smith, wrote in 'A Life of Jesus':

"Jesus' youth was probably one of dawning and increasing dissatisfaction with the prevalent form of the Jewish religion in Nazareth and in his own home. He did not in those early years see what he could do about it, but he must have felt a growing sense that there was something deeply wrong about it, which should be corrected."

"From boyhood he had learned to think for himself, as Hosea had said, as a son of the living God."

Professor Goodspeed, like the Watchtower (JW's), taught that Jesus 'became' a son of God and so he continually attacks the Deity of Christ. He also describes the 'demons' of Scripture as 'delusions'. Thus he writes:

"My name is Legion! cried the man, 'for there are many of us'. This was clearly the man's own conviction of his emotional instability; he felt himself to be in control of a multiple personality. He could only beg Jesus to send all the hordes of demons that he felt possessed him into a great drove of pigs that were feeding on the neighbouring headland. Jesus humoured him, and the man's cries and movements so frightened the animals that they rushed in panic over the edge of the lake."

Goodspeed also tells us, concerning the feeding of the 5,000:

"He took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven and blessed the loaves and broke them in pieces, and gave them to the disciples to pass to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate, and had enough. Jesus' simple example of sharing all he and his disciples had with their guests must have moved those Galileans as it moves us still. They could not do less than he had done. They followed his example. He did not have to bully

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or abuse them – he simply showed them the way..."

Speaking of the death of Christ, Goodspeed has Him 'planning' His death:

"He faced the question of his next step in his work. He had no mind to die obscurely in some corner of Galilee, to no purpose. A bolder plan was now taking shape in his mind. He would present himself to Jerusalem... publically offer them their Messianic destiny, and take the consequences. And he would never be forgotten, but would carry on this message to the end of time. Yet, how could this be done?"

"That he is to be with them always, to the very end, shows that it is not as a physical presence, that he has come back to them, but as a spiritual one."

In another book, Goodspeed calls Genesis the product of an "*Oriental story-teller at his best*"; describes Ruth as a little Idyl belonging to "*Israel's fiction - rather than to history, and should be read among the tales and stories.*"
; the book of Job is "*religious fiction*"
; and of Jonah he says:

"Jonah is the first missionary book in the world. If people would recognise it as fiction, they might get from it its meaning, which was never more needed than today."

Another translator, **Julius A. Brewer**, tells us solemnly that:

"The dates and figures found in the first five books of the Bible turn out to be altogether unreliable."

Dr. James Moffatt, who in 1935 published his own complete version of the Bible wrote:

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"The writers of the New Testament made mistakes in interpreting some of the New Testament prophecies."

William F. Albright, another 'translator' who figured prominently in the production of the RSV., NASB (Study Version) wrote that:

"One cannot of course place John on the same level with the synoptic Gospels (Matthew/Mark/Luke) as a historic source."

He also maintained that each individual must decide for himself whether the details of Jesus' birth and resurrection are literal or only spiritual.

Henry F. Cadbury:

"Much of the most appreciative writing about him runs the risk of putting him into the introvert class. Indeed, as is well known, the emphasis of orthodoxy... upon his messianic claims and messianic consciousness led some psychiatrists to doubt his sanity. He was given to overstatements - in his case not a personal idiosyncrasy, but a characteristic of the oriental world."

In another book, he writes:

"As to the miraculous, one can hardly doubt that time and tradition would heighten this element in the story of Jesus. Later gospels (than Mark's) plainly move in this direction, and the evidence is familiar to all students of synoptic parallels."

"His (Jesus') gospel was in brief, a social gospel."

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Walter R. Bowie, another RSV translator, wrote in his book 'Great Men of the Bible':

"According to the enthusiastic traditions which had come down through the folklore of the people of Israel, Methuselah lived 969 years... Methuselah has become, not only a legend, but a proverb... It appears that he was drowned in the Flood."

(He deduces this by showing from the Genesis account that the year of his death was the year of the Flood. A man professing to be an Oriental scholar should know that Methuselah's death was the *precipitant* of the Flood and was not the *result* of it. His name means 'when he is dead it shall be sent' and was given to Enoch, his father, in prophetic warning...as soon as Methuselah died, judgement would fall. And that is exactly what happened).

Mr Bowie states concerning Abraham:

"The story of Abraham comes down from ancient times and how much of it is fact and how much of it is legend, no-one can positively tell."

Re. Jacob's night of wrestling with the Angel of God:

"The man of whom these words were written (Genesis 32:31) belongs to a time so long ago that it is uncertain whether its records are history or legend."

As far as Moses and the burning bush is concerned, they were, to Mr Bowie, mere legends - to be ranked with "King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table."

Clarence T. Craig. This translator has written a book called 'The Beginning of Christianity', which sets forth his view of the inspiration of the Bible:

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*"Revelation has sometimes been understood to consist in a holy book... Even on Christian soil it has sometimes been held that the books of the Bible were practically dictated to the writers through the Holy Spirit. The idea goes back to the Jewish conception of the law as created by God before the world, and communicated to Moses on Mt. Sinai: I do not think that this is the distinctively Christian position. If God once wrote His revelation in an inerrant book, He certainly failed to provide any means by which this could be passed on without contamination though human fallibility... The true Christian position is that the Bible **contains** the record of revelation."*

He also writes that:

"Traditions about Jesus were used - to ground the Christian faith."

Talking about John's Gospel, he says:

"Much good tradition has been embodied in the 4th Gospel."

Of the resurrection, he says:

"It is to be remembered that there were no eye-witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus or of his emerging from the tomb. The mere fact that a tomb was found empty was capable of many explanations. The very last one that would be credible to a modern man would be the explanation of a physical resurrection of the body."

As far as the return of Christ is concerned, he tells us:

"In other words, the coming of Christ is to the hearts of those who love him. It is not a hope for some future time, but a present reality of faith."

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Frederick C. Grant, another 'eminent critic and translator' tells us that:

"We may admit at once that the older view of Jesus' life and ministry was not entirely historical."

(Grant also believed in purgatory!).

William L. Sperry, concerning several passages of scripture, writes:

"Some of these sayings, it is true, come from John's Gospel, and we do not press that Gospel for too great verbal accuracy in its record of the sayings of Jesus."

William A. Irwin. In his book 'The Problem of Ezekiel', he takes considerable time to discover how much Ezekiel actually wrote of the book that bears his name. With reference to the words "Therefore thus saith the Lord" he states:

"This phrase is an almost unfailing mark of spuriousness."

The same writer puts Zoroaster and other heathen prophets on the same level as Moses, Isaiah, etc. In his revision of J.M. Powis' book called 'The Prophets and their Times', he says:

"Only bigotry could bring us to deny an equal validity with the prophets of Israel in the religious vision of men such as Zoroaster or Ikhnaton, or on a lower level, the unnamed thinkers of ancient Babylonia."

He also wrote:

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"The prophets were forced by the disasters that befell to do some hard thinking. They were forced by the history of their own times to revise their messages again and again in order to keep up with the progress of the age: The Assyrians and Babylonians forced them to revise their conception of Yahweh from time to time - until they made him finally God of the Universe."

Fleming James. This translator who, along with Grant, gave the world 'The beginning of Religion', has this to say about Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch:

"This idea has been shown by scholars to be untenable on many grounds. The view that now prevails is that through these five books, there run four different strands of narrative which have been pieced together to make the present story... Two are older and more reliable as history, two proceed from a later time and are so coloured by later ideas that they can hardly be called history at all."

On the crossing of the Red Sea, he writes:

"What really happened at the Red Sea we can no longer know; but scholars are pretty well agreed that the narrative goes back to some striking and portentous event which impress Moses and the people with the belief that Yahweh had intervened to save them. The same may be said of the plagues."

With reference to Elijah in 2 Kings 1, he has this to say:

"The narrative of calling down fire from heaven upon the soldiers sent to arrest him is plainly legendary."

Similarly, another translator, **Millar Burrows**, in his book, 'Founders of Great Religions', refers to the crossing of the Red sea by Moses and the Children of Israel as "Not necessarily miraculous". He says that the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night was a "volcano far off on the Eastern horizon, to which they were guided by the smoke it emitted in the daytime

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and by its red glow at night."

The same writer, in his 'Outline of Theology', makes a good summary of what the various translators believe concerning the Bible:

"We cannot take the Bible as a whole and in every part as stating with divine authority what we must believe and do."

A few years ago, **Dr. Ralph Elliott** stirred-up a furore in a book called the 'Message of Genesis'. In his book, he categorically denies the historical accuracy of the first twelve chapters of Genesis; 'Adam' merely refers to 'mankind' as a whole; Moses is denied the authorship of the first five books of scripture (which every true Jew affirms without question); the Tower of Babel is regarded as a 'parable'; Enoch was not translated; and the age of men before the Flood is relegated to the realm of 'myth and legend'. These, as well as other unbiblical views, are contained in Elliott's book. Where did Elliott get his ideas from? In the introduction to his book he says:

*"Though the material in this book is mine, and I do not wish for anyone else to be charged with its deficiencies, I do wish to express my appreciation to **Dr. Clyde T. Francisco**, my teacher and later a colleague on the faculty of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. It was in a course on the Pentateuch under his guidance that I first gained inspiration and purpose to attempt a serious study of the Book of Genesis. Thus, I am sure that many of the insights which culminated in my own mind were placed there in seed-bed fashion by him."*

To this day, Dr. Francisco, who was one of the translators of the NIV, has not denied this.

Finally, one church leader (quoted in an NIV promotional brochure) said:

"I have read the NIV and found that it preserves the dignity of the KJV and the accuracy of the RSV and the NASB Bible, along with the free-flowing readability of the Living Bible."

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I believe he put the NIV in the right class! It takes more skill than I can tell to extract gold from a lump of clay. On the other hand, some people will believe (like the character in 'Alice') as many as *six* impossible things before breakfast - every morning!

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