

structuring. There are seven oracles against Israel's neighbors, seven things the wealthy do in ch 8, seven empty ritual activities in ch 5, seven plagues in ch 4 — Dorsey finds 23 such groupings. The book itself consists of seven symmetrically arranged main units, each with three sub-units. Not only do the seven form a perfect chiasm, so do the 21 sub-units.

How does this help understand the message of Amos? First, the third and fifth matched units focusing on condemnation highlight the theme of Israel's social and ethical corruption, covering both sexes, and involving the abuse of the poor.

The matched units at the beginning and end of the book have judgment as their theme, which underscores the warning of divine punishment.

In the second and sixth units, Amos writes of his divine compulsion. This emphasizes that the messages are the Lord's, not Amos'. If Israel rejects Amos' message, they are rejecting Yahweh's message.

But the central thrust of the message is in chapter five, particularly vv 4 to 15, which is a strong call to repentance. "Seek good and live" is pretty much what Amos wants to say, and what anyone who reads the book must understand. The structure shows it.

Dorsey writes with a clear, uncomplicated prose that enhances the value of the book. The Hebrew forms, all transliterated and translated, are kept to a minimum. I would certainly recommend this for all Old Testament translators and anyone looking for a good introduction to issues of literary structures in the Bible.

PHILIP C. STINE

Thuesen, Peter J.: **In Discordance with the Scriptures. American Protestant Battles over Translating the Bible.** New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999. xi + 238 pp, \$25.00. ISBN 0-19-512736-6.

It could be claimed that this book should not be reviewed in *The Bible Translator*, since, as the author writes in his Introduction, "American Protestant battles over Bible translation...have usually been fought only incidentally over technical issues of translation or textual criticism. The true points of contention have most often been theological and institutional." (14) Yet it may help translators to be forewarned about the kinds of furore that their work can generate, even if hopefully on a smaller scale than those described in this book.

The structure of the book is clear. The first chapter takes the reader from Tyndale through the Authorized/King James Version to its "consecration" (37), particularly in a series of Protestant histories of the English Bible, generally marked by anti-Catholicism, Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrism, and hagiography, especially of Tyndale. The author next analyzes the "ecumenical, evangelical, and epistemological" (46) motivations of the translators of the Revised Version (RV); in other words, they believed that the revision would draw Christians together, draw others to Christ, and help them to "know and understand" (49, Jn 10.38) the faith. The initial impact of the American publication of the RV New Testament was tremendous, with a quarter of a million copies sold by three p.m. on the day of publication. Over the next fifty years, however, conservative opposition persisted and increased, nostalgia for the cadences of King James being reinforced by suspicion of New Testament textual criticism.

With hindsight, however, the debates of that period appear little more than preliminary skirmishes to the real battle over the Revised Standard Version (RSV). Its translators are described as exclusively male, and overwhelmingly academics from eastern or midwestern universities. Ten Protestant denominations were represented, plus a hostage to fortune in the person of Harry M. Orlinsky, a Reform Jew. Luther Allan Weigle, chairman of the committee from 1930 till 1966, was not primarily a biblical scholar, but proved fully capable of (as Thuesen puts it, in a mildly mixed metaphor) “[h]olding together the constellation of leading lights and placating the potential prima donnas” (73); his own main interests were ecumenical and educational. The complete Bible was launched in 1952 with a record promotional budget of half a million dollars, yet something less than the sensation of 1881 was achieved, and suspicions were soon expressed that the RSV would become a tool of the mainline Protestant establishment. (The subtitle of this chapter curiously changes from “Liberal Protestants and the Making of the RSV Bible” in the table of contents, to “The Protestant Establishment and the Making of the RSV Bible” on page 67, perhaps reflecting the author’s awareness of an ambivalent situation.)

The book reaches its climax in ch 4, entitled: “The Great RSV Controversy. Bible-Burning, Red-Hunting, and the Strange Specter of Unholy Scripture.” (93) The story has often been told, but never better. Thuesen digs under the surface of events to show how most moderate or “wavering conservatives” gave in to pressure against the RSV. “Since most ministers had forgotten most of whatever Hebrew and Greek they had once learned, they were forced to judge the RSV on other—often political—counts.” (118) Significantly, “prominent conservatives were now joining their liberal counterparts in deeming necessary the ecclesiastical certification of Scripture” (119)—though naturally from different associations of churches.

The title of ch 5, “The Virgin Text”, refers to the continuing controversy over the translation of *almah* in Is 7.14. The conflicting presuppositions were neatly stated in J. Oliver Buswell’s criticism of the RSV committee for saying: “We must translate what we believe the ancient writer said, regardless of our opinions”, whereas Buswell himself called for “‘sympathetic understanding’ of what certain passages meant in a specifically Christian context” (124); in other words, harmonisation of Old Testament texts with their use in the New. The publication in 1965 of a Catholic edition of the RSV confirmed conservative Protestants’ worst fears, but by that time an armistice in the battle was beyond hope. (The Catholic scholars caused Jesus’ “brothers” to be described as “brethren” “to safeguard, ironically, the perpetual virginity of Mary” (139), one of the changes which incurred the wrath of the eminent Catholic scholar R.E. Brown.)

The threads of the story are gathered together in an Epilogue entitled “Virginity Lost, Virginity Regained. Translation and Scripturalism since 1965.” This is mainly concerned with the New International Version, planned and launched as a conservative alternative to the RSV, which, as Robert Bratcher is quoted as pointing out, in fact it “‘closely resemble[d]” (151). The abandonment of plans for American publication of the NIV Inclusive Language Edition is briefly mentioned.

The morals of the story are plain. For liberals and conservatives alike, Scripture will “still be evaluated by modern standards of rationality”; history will “always

exist, to a greater or lesser degree, in discordance with the Scriptures” (154), and “truth-questions ultimately are settled not by the Book but by the Church” (155).

This is a coherently planned, clearly written, theologically and sociologically perceptive account. It is also thoroughly well documented, as 84 pages of notes and bibliography confirm. Thuesen is a historian rather than a biblical scholar, but this results in few and insignificant flaws (as when on page 116 he appears to confuse textual and translational problems). He does not attempt a complete account of Bible translations in America, so there are only one reference to the New Revised Standard Version, two to *Good News for Modern Man*, none to the Good News Bible (nor the *Good News Study Bible*, though the *Original African Heritage Study Bible* is mentioned among others), none to the New English Bible, the Revised English Bible, or the Contemporary English Version. But what Thuesen does, he does at the very highest level.

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