

nique from his study of the history of literature or the prefaces to various translations of the Bible, will know that many of the assumptions discussed above did not originate with linguistics, and are not exclusive to people with linguistic training. In what sense can they be linked with linguistic science?

Linguistic science gives them body and form, makes them explicit, provides a theoretical base for them and the means of discussing them in less subjective and emotional terms than was possible before. By showing the range of actual language phenomena it demonstrates the arbitrariness and relativity of the structure of language, and provides the evidence which can contribute to a more thorough, less subjective theory of translation. In doing so linguistics joins with the broader study of human culture as well, with insights drawn from cultural anthropology, from psychology, from the mathematical theory of communication. The result of the mixture has seemed a hopeless hodge-podge of scientism to some, but efforts to formulate the translational implications of the study of linguistics in this broader context are maturing.¹ The results are being taught at Translators' Institutes and in the process of teaching are being clarified, and methods of presentation improved.

We are learning to take untrained translators, or translators with other presuppositions than those we feel are valid, and in a short period of time train them in much more thorough translational procedures based on much sounder understanding of the translation task. This is being done through the use of concepts formulated primarily in linguistic terms and based on ethno-linguistic knowledge. This, I believe, is the significant place of linguistics in Bible translation. I believe that some translations of the Scriptures are sounder, more readable, more faithful because of the effort.

J. N. SCHOFIELD

'RIGHTEOUSNESS' IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The following material is taken from Mr. Schofield's book Introducing Old Testament Theology, and is printed here by kind permission of the author and the publisher. Ed.²

The Hebrew word (root: SDQ) usually translated as 'righteousness' is one of the most fascinating and important words to express the revolutionary theology of the Old Testament. In modern English 'righteousness' is seldom used outside the churches and even there it often has a derogatory sense, coming from the thought of self-righteousness, the attitude of someone who, in his own opinion, is always in the right and living by the right standard; one who, to his own satisfaction, can always justify himself. We often speak of 'my

¹ The most complete and important discussion of this field is Nida, *ibid.*

² J. N. Schofield, *Introducing Old Testament Theology*, London: SCM Press, 1964; 9s. 6d. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964; \$2.75. Extracts quoted here are from pp. 41 ff. and 93 ff.

rights', a 'rightful heir', or we say 'I have a right to do this'. These all tend to be legal uses, referring to what we believe would be a favourable verdict in a law-court. They concern the demands which legally we could successfully make. But once in a Yorkshire tram I heard a child use the word in a completely different sense. The youngest of three small children had lost his penny and his elder brother, brought up to believe that if you look after the pence the pounds will look after themselves, refused to give him another. An older girl said to the elder brother, 'Give him a penny; you've a right to; he's your brother'. Here 'right' meant obligation or duty; it had nothing to do with what we mean by 'my rights', what is due *to* me so that I can demand it from others. The meaning was what is due *from* me, what others have a right to demand from me. It expressed what the brother ought to do because of a family relationship rather than because of a legal requirement. It is almost the same meaning that was given to the word by Thomas Huxley when urging the claims of the Bible in 1892:

'Throughout the history of the story of the western world, the Scriptures, Jewish and Christian, have been the greatest instigators of revolt against the worst forms of clerical and political despotism. The Bible has been the Magna Charta of the poor and the oppressed; down to modern times no state has had a constitution in which the interests of the people are so largely taken into account, in which the duties so much more than the privileges of rulers are insisted upon, as that drawn up for Israel in Deuteronomy and Leviticus; nowhere is the fundamental truth that the welfare of the state, in the long run, depends on the uprightness of the citizen so strongly laid down. Assuredly the Bible talks no trash about the rights of man; but it insists on the equality of duties, on the liberty to bring about that righteousness which is something different from struggling for rights; on the fraternity of taking thought for one's neighbour as for oneself.'¹

That meaning is nearer the basic idea of the Hebrew word translated 'righteousness'; it expresses social duty rather than legal obligation.

The fundamental thought in the word appears to be what is congruous, fitted for a purpose, or conforming to a standard. It can be used of telling the truth, being straight, or perfect. When used of a sword or javelin it means 'trustworthy', to be relied on to fulfill its purpose: it is often used in the Old Testament of weights and measures as conforming to the necessary standard (Deut. 25: 15; cf. Psalms 51: 19). S. A. Cook sums up the meaning of the word when used on inscriptions as expressing 'conformity to the obligations which bind together not merely the social unit, but that organic unit of which the deity formed part'.² In that community the true member is loyal rather than legal (these two words come from the same Latin root), and the test of being legitimate is not legal rights but being worthy of one's birth—the test Jesus applied to the Jewish claim to descent from Abraham (John 8: 39).

¹ Thomas Huxley, *Essays upon some Controverted Questions*, London and New York 1892; prologue, p. 52.

² W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, London: A. & C. Black, 1927; 3rd edn., p. 660.

The Greek equivalents have the same meaning of conformity to an established order, or, from the standpoint of pedigree, breeding true.¹

In the Old Testament a righteous man is one who is loyal in his duties to his group, which includes his fellows and his God. It is only because that was the right standard of conduct and the legal requirement that the word can be treated as a legal as well as a social word, and is commonly used to describe the man who is, or deserves to be found 'not guilty'. A righteous man who had fulfilled the requirements of his community was innocent and could obtain acquittal or victory in the tribal court. Today we would not always call such a person innocent. When Judah failed to make his sons fulfill their obligations to their sister-in-law Tamar, she played the harlot, seduced her father-in-law, and was condemned to death. But when she produced his pledges and explained by whom she was pregnant he exclaimed 'She is more righteous than I'—she had fulfilled her community obligations more than he, even though by so doing she had committed an act punishable by death (Gen. 38: 26). So also the brothers of Joseph who had failed so miserably in their loyalty to him years before, when the divining cup had been found in Benjamin's sack, exclaimed, 'What can we do to show that we are righteous?' The legal guilt was clear, the cup was found, Benjamin was caught red-handed; the problem was, what does our loyalty to the family demand from us now? (Gen. 44: 16).

Abram's reliance on God was treated as an act that showed him to be righteous, trusty, loyal to his obligations to God and so a member of the God-community. Basic to all Old Testament theology is the belief that God is united to, one with, his faithful people—and 'faithful' does not mean perfect, but people or individuals whom God is able to treat as righteous or trusty because of their childlike reliance on him. The necessary other side to this belief is that God is opposed to, and must in some way eliminate, everything and everyone who would harm his people; Abram's friends were God's friends and on his side; Abram's detractors or enemies were God's enemies, fighting against God, attempting to frustrate his purposes, and so must either be destroyed or made to cease to be enemies. The unrighteous man must forsake his ways or perish; a loving God cannot force obedience. In the historical writings we see this idea applied to the enemies of Israel. Some Old Testament stories depict God as commanding Israel's leaders ruthlessly to destroy his people's enemies. Some prophets foretell that God himself will destroy them; others that they will be changed, converted, or won by Israel's revelation of her God who delights not in the death of a sinner. Although the consequences of this belief probably cause more offence than any other theological concepts of the Old Testament, it is an essential element of the theology of the whole Bible—New as well as Old Testaments. The wrath of God is the necessary corollary to the love of God. His gracious mercy is part of the permanent character of God, but his wrath flashes out for a moment against all that would send a streak of evil through his creation or destroy it, or against anyone who persistently identifies himself with that evil. His constant cry is 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?'; the way is always open

¹ S. A. Cook, *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. 2. Cambridge University Press, 1924; p. 398.

out of the circle of his wrath into the love of the God who is plenteous in mercy and long-suffering if the sinner will turn to him.

God's Righteousness

Like man, God too had his 'righteousness', or the loyalty that was required of him. We have seen that 'righteousness' cuts right across our narrow ideas of justice. In the Old Testament, judgement is not simply punishing the wicked, but coming to the rescue of the needy:

'Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;
Maintain the rights of the afflicted and the destitute.
Rescue the weak and the needy,
Deliver them from the hand of the wicked.' (Psa. 82: 3 f.)

In justice there was more mercy than we recognize, and in righteousness, justice and mercy were not opposed terms. So strong was this element of mercy or benevolence in 'righteousness' that in later Hebrew the word becomes the usual term for almsgiving (cf. Matt. 6 : 1 f.)—that is, for gifts to needy members of the group, which cannot legally be demanded, but are an obligation. Righteousness was within man's power to attain, and without it there was woe and social wrong (Jer. 22: 3, 13). The Psalmist thinks of man as possessing this divine quality, speaking of the 'God of my righteousness' (Psa. 4: 1) and pleading that God will judge him according to his righteousness and integrity (Psa. 7: 8). It is the ground on which man is confident he will see God and the reason he claims reward. There are good descriptions of the righteous (Pss. 37; 92); and the righteous of Psa. 37: 29 become, in the teaching of Jesus, the meek who will inherit the earth (Matt. 5: 5). Between the righteous and God there is a special relationship; he delivers them when they cry, is their refuge and sustains them so that they are never moved; he loves them and they are glad and trust him. One Psalmist uses a metaphor similar to Paul's when he says that the righteous enter the house of God's righteous acts from which the wicked are shut out, and that their names are written in the book of those who live (Psa. 69: 28). It seems probable that in the New Testament when the word was used by both Jesus and Paul it carried a broader meaning than legal justice, including loyalty to family relationship and needs.

God too has his righteousness (Ex. 9: 27; Deut. 32: 4), and nearly always when God's 'righteousnesses' are mentioned the reference is to his loyal acts. At the wells, women recounted God's righteous acts in delivering Israel (Judg. 5: 11). Samuel's farewell address reviewed the past national history under the title, 'The righteous acts of the Lord' (1 Sam. 12: 7). Isaiah revolutionized the idea of God's holiness by declaring that it was revealed by his historical acts (Isa. 5: 16), proving that he fulfilled his obligations to the nation to which he was linked. When he saved men he gave them, as a blessing, righteousness together with loving-kindness and faithfulness. It was the subject of men's preaching and, like Paul who determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2: 2), so the Psalmist declared he would talk of nothing but the righteous acts of God (Psa. 71: 16). It is Isaiah

40–66 that speaks most often of God's righteousness. Facing great opposition because he claimed that Cyrus, the heathen conqueror, was the Messiah or the Christ, the prophet stated God had called Cyrus in righteousness—in full accord with his loyalty to Israel (45: 13). Often the word can be translated there as 'victory' (41: 2, 10). God's righteous acts bring success and, as the Hebrew thought in terms of consequences not causes, righteousness, deliverance, salvation, and victory were synonymous words.

God's righteousness is also especially linked with the glories of the hoped-for golden age or messianic kingdom. It will be upheld by judgement and loyal acts (Isa. 9: 7); the messianic ruler will judge by it and wear it as a garment (11: 4 f.). It will bring peace, quietness and security (32: 15 ff.), and is one of the foundations of God's throne (Psa. 89: 14). But the Bible knows nothing of a universe that includes heaven and not hell; nor of a theology of a loving God who does not destroy evil. The puritan preacher who talked of taking men by the seat of their trousers and shaking them over hell-fire, and thought of the joys of the saved being increased by the sight of the damned, could find ground for his beliefs. 'The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance' (Psa. 58: 10). The wonderful book of Isaiah 40–66 ends with a similar picture:

'For as the new heaven and the new earth, which I shall make, shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your descendants and your name remain. From new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the Lord. And they shall go forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against me: for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched: and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh.'

Perhaps the fact that Jesus quoted from this passage suggests that the truth in the words passed over into Christianity, and cannot be conveniently discarded as a superseded idea from the Old Testament (Mark 9: 48). Yet the God who ruthlessly destroys evil and the malignant evildoer shows his righteousness by forgiving the sinner. He confers on man righteousness, the right standing in the community (Isa. 50: 8). The new name for the Messiah will be 'God is our righteousness' (Jer. 23: 6), a title comparable with 'Christ is our peace' (Eph. 2: 14). Though in Exodus (23: 7) it is stated that God does not declare the wicked to be righteous, yet in bold contradiction Paul claims that now God does just this.¹ As the righteousness of ten men could have saved Sodom, and the suffering and death of the righteous servant could put into a position of having been loyal to their obligations many who clearly did not deserve it, so 'in Christ' we can be restored to the fellowship of God. With Second-Isaiah (45: 24) we can exclaim, 'In the Lord I have righteousness and strength', or with Bunyan we can cry of the Christ, 'There is my righteousness'.

¹ Romans 4: 5.