

**REPLY TO DR. BOONE'S
VINDICATION OF COMMENTS ON
THE TRANSLATION OF EPHES. I; A
LETTER ON THE SAME SUBJECT,
FROM J. LEGGE, TO DR. TIDMAN**

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[Walter Henry Medhurst]

REPLY

TO

DR. BOONE'S VINDICATION

OF

COMMENTS ON THE TRANSLATION OF EPHES. I.

IN THE

DELEGATES' VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT:

BY

THE COMMITTEE OF DELEGATES.

ALSO,

A LETTER

ON THE SAME SUBJECT,

FROM THE REV. J. LEGGE, D. D.

TO DR. TIDMAN,

SECRETARY OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

SHANGHAE:

PRINTED AT THE LONDON MISSION PRESS.

1852.

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PREFACE.

As a considerable time has elapsed since the translation of the Scriptures referred to in the following pages commenced, it may be well briefly to narrate the leading circumstances connected therewith. In 1843, all the Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese that could at that time be assembled in Hongkong, amounting to fifteen, and representing five different institutions, met for the purpose of taking into consideration the then state of the Chinese versions of the Sacred Scriptures; when it was resolved, to "submit all that had hitherto been done to a Committee, for the purpose of being thoroughly revised." It was also resolved, "That any translation of the Sacred Scriptures into Chinese, issued with the approbation of the body of Protestant Missionaries, be in exact conformity to the Hebrew and Greek originals in sense; and so far as the idiom of the Chinese language will allow, in style and manner also." It was further resolved, "That the whole body of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese do form a general Committee, for the purpose above specified, to be subdivided into local Committees of stations, and that the work of revision be apportioned to such stations. When the whole of the New Testament shall have been thus revised, each station shall select one or more of its most experienced men to act as Delegates, it being understood that each station shall be entitled to one vote only,—and these shall be the final judges as to the propriety of each revision; after which the whole shall be submitted to the Bible Societies in Great Britain and America for their acceptance." Further it was resolved, that "the Bible Societies in England and America be requested to reimburse any reasonable expenditure which may be incurred by the brethren in making this revision."

As it appeared to the Meeting that it would be difficult to find any term that would suit the views of both Baptists and Pædobaptists on the rendering of the word *baptizo*, it was resolved, "to proceed harmoniously in the work of revision, employing the talents of Missionaries of both these sections of the Church to conduct it, and to bring it to as perfect a state as possible; that, when this is done, should difficulties still exist on this subject, each section shall be at liberty to recommend for publication separate editions of the same version, agreeing in all other respects, and only differing as to the rendering of this term; and that the revision go forth to the world, not as the work of one party or the other, but as the result of the combined efforts of the whole."

In 1846 the British and Foreign Bible Society passed the following Resolutions: "That an urgent request be addressed to the Directors of the London Missionary Society, to call the attention of their Missionaries to the importance of proceeding with the revision of the Chinese New Testament, on the principles laid down in the circular

received from Hongkong, with as little delay as practicable, and to authorize them to consider this, if not their exclusive, at least their primary work. 2. That the Directors of the London Missionary Society be informed, that the Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society are quite prepared to contribute a large share of the expenses that will be incurred by the adoption of the view above given, and indeed to take upon themselves the whole expenses of the Missionaries, if their whole time is devoted to the work. 3. That it be further pressed upon the Directors of the London Missionary Society, to urge their Missionaries to print portions of the New Testament, as they are prepared, and to assure them of the readiness of this Society to defray the expenses of printing such editions, or to assist by sending out a printer, whose whole expenses shall be defrayed, if his time be exclusively devoted to the printing of the Scriptures. 4. That this Committee having received, in this conference, as well as from former communications with the Directors of the London Missionary Society, and from the Directors of the Missionary Societies in America, sufficient information as to the competency of the parties now engaged in the revision, can cheerfully leave it to the united judgment of the Missionaries to determine, when the revision of any parts of the Chinese New Testament may be considered sufficiently perfected to justify their being printed. 5. That as it seems highly advisable that the Missionaries should have an opportunity of conferring together at an early period, in Hongkong, or such other place as may be deemed most convenient; and that as the distance at which they reside from each other will involve considerable expense in attending the conference, such expense be borne by this Society."

In the beginning of 1846, the Secretary to the General Committee of Missionaries issued a Circular to the parties concerned, informing them that the work of revising the Chinese version of the Scriptures, having been divided into parts, allotted to the Missionaries at the various stations, was then in an advanced stage, and would soon be ready for the inspection of the Delegates. It was therefore agreed, that a Meeting of Delegates should be held in Shanghai, in June, 1847. At that period, accordingly, the following persons appeared, and took their seats as Delegates:

1. From the Shanghai and Ningpo station,
The Rev. W. H. Medhurst, D. D. of the London Missionary Society.
The Rt. Rev. W. J. Boone, D. D. of the American Episcopal Mission.
The Rev. W. M. Lowrie, of the American Presbyterian Mission.
 2. From the Amoy station,
The Rev. John Stronach, of the London Missionary Society.
 3. From the Canton and Hongkong station,
The Rev. E. C. Bridgman, D. D. of the Am. Board of Com. For. Mis.
- On the 1st of July, 1847, the Delegates commenced the business of revision; and on the 3rd, it was resolved to postpone the choice of a proper term for *the Holy Spirit*, until the term to be used for

God had been decided on. On the 5th of July, the translation of *Theos*, in the 23d verse of the 1st chapter of Matthew came up, when it was proposed by Dr. Bridgman, seconded by Dr. Boone, that the word *Shang-te*, which stood in the copy previously prepared at one of the stations for that term, should be changed into *Shin*. An oral discussion ensued, which lasted during three days, when an adjournment was agreed to, for the preparation of arguments in reference to the term under consideration.

On July 16, the argument in favour of *Shin* was laid on the table; August 17, the reply was handed in; and Sept. 10, the rejoinder. Sept. 28, the argument in favour of *Te* was presented; Oct. 5, the reply; and Nov. 4, the rejoinder.

During the interval of adjournment, the Rev. W. M. Lowrie, on his voyage from Shanghai to Ningpo, was drowned.

On the 22d of Nov. the Committee met to record their votes on the question regarding the translation of *Theos*; when the vote of the delegate for Amoy was in favour of *Te*, and that of the delegate from Cantou and Hongkong in favour of *Shin*. The two remaining delegates for Shanghai and Ningpo, being divided in opinion, were unable to record their vote.

The advocates for *Te*, notwithstanding they considered their arguments in favour of that term sufficiently solid, yet for the sake of doing every thing that lay in their power towards preventing disagreement, proposed *Theen-te*, to be used generically for God, in the translation of the Scriptures; but this proposal, not being concurred in by the other party, was left in abeyance.

The following resolutions were then agreed to: "1. That when this Committee adjourn, it be until the first Monday in January, 1848, to allow time for the advocates of *Te* and *Shin* to prepare statements of their respective views for the public. 2. That on the day above named the Committee assemble again for the purpose of prosecuting the work of revision, the word *Theos* being left untranslated.

During the interval between the former meeting and the 5th of Jan. 1848, the Missionaries at the Shanghai and Ningpo station elected the Rev. William C. Milne, as a delegate, in the place of the Rev. W. M. Lowrie, deceased.

From the 5th of Jan. 1848, to the 24th of July, 1850, the Committee of Delegates were occupied with the translation of the New Testament, which was then brought to a completion. During this time the members present were, Dr. Medhurst 700 times, Mr. Stronach the same; Dr. Bridgman 673 times, Mr. Milne 620 times, and Dr. Boone once.

On the 1st of August, 1850, the whole of the members were present, when the following resolution, proposed by Dr. Boone, and seconded by Mr. Stronach, was passed unanimously:—

"The Committee of Delegates,—engaged on the revision of the translation of the New Testament in Chinese,—having now completed their work, the words *Theos* and *Pneuma* being left untranslated, accord-

ding to the Resolution of the Committee of Delegates passed in 1847, —do hereby *Resolve* :—

“That the version, as it now stands, be offered to the Bible Societies of Europe and America, and to all and every one of the Protestant Missionaries at present engaged, or who may hereafter be engaged in the work of evangelizing China; with the understanding that all parties, who shall make use of this version shall refrain from altering the text, as now given out by this Committee,—who reserve to a majority of their own body the right to make any alterations therein: this last restriction, however, not to extend to those who differ from us with respect to the rendering of the word *Baptizo*, which is to be left open to various renderings, according to the Resolution of the General Committee passed in 1843.

“The votes of the members of the Committee of Delegates, being equally divided on the rendering of the words *Theos* and *Pneuma*, this version must either leave their blanks with the blanks that have been left for these words, or be laid aside as useless, unless an appeal be taken to some other parties to fill these blanks; to which appeal this Committee cannot agree. Under these circumstances, being fully persuaded that several parties will issue, on their own responsibility, versions that differ in the rendering of the words *Theos* and *Pneuma*, and believing that said diversity of rendering will cause less injury, if all parties use the same version, instead of having different versions as well as various renderings of these important words :—

“The Committee of Delegates resolve, as before mentioned, to offer the version as it now stands to the Bible Societies of Europe and America, and to all the other parties above mentioned, throwing upon said parties all the responsibility of any action with respect to the version thus offered to them, which they may severally deem it best to take for the spread of the Gospel in China; the Committee of Delegates feeling themselves released from any further responsibility with respect to the rendering of the words *Theos* and *Pneuma*, by their inability to come to any decision in regard to it in their body.”

Also Resolved, unanimously. “That, as the Chinese have no definite article, the word *Shing* (holy) be prefixed to the word *Pneuma*, (at the discretion of the Committee, and this without regard to the word that may be used as a translation,) in all those cases where it stands absolutely and refers to the Holy Spirit, in order to render the sense of the text more definite.”

Sent. 11th, 1851. Present Drs. Medhurst and Bridgman, and Rev. Messrs. Milne and Stronach.

The Rev. Dr. Medhurst, Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society's Corresponding Committee in Shanghai, having applied to this Committee for a certified copy of its version of the New Testament, to be put to press under the direction of the Bible Society's Committee, it was moved by Dr. Bridgman, seconded by Mr. Stronach, and unanimously Resolved, “that the Chinese secretary of this Committee furnish the certified copy as requested.”

Also passed the following :—

"*Whereas* a diversity of opinion exists respecting the intention of this Committee in regard to criticisms and suggestions, which may be sent to them for the improvement of their version, after it shall have been put to press,—and *whereas* all the Delegates forming this Committee have been elected members of the Committee on the Old Testament, therefore unanimously—

"*Resolved*, that this Committee will give all due attention to the criticisms and suggestion which may be sent to them, as well after as before the version is put to press, and that they do not propose to put the version out of their hands finally, till such time as the Committee on the Old Testament is prepared to take the same step in regard to its version."

December 18th, 1850. The Committee met, this day—present Messrs. Medhurst, Boone, Stronach, Milne, and Bridgman,—when the fly-leaf of an edition of the New Testament was brought up for consideration; after some conversation, the following was agreed to: viz. "The New Testament in Chinese, translated by the Committee of Delegates; the text, exclusive of the words, representing THEOS and PNEUMA, being supervised by the Committee of Delegates; and the blanks, left by them for these words, being filled in by the Shanghai Corresponding Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society."

Shanghai, Jan. 10th, 1851. Present Messrs. Medhurst, Stronach, Milne, and Bridgman.

"Resolved that the Recording Secretary be instructed to call the attention of the Rt. Rev. Dr. Boone to the statement contained in the Church 'Missionary Register,' for March, 1851, page 121, that he (Dr. Boone) 'has continued, with very little remission, in the revision of the Chinese version of the Scriptures;'—and request him to correct the same."

Copy of the above was sent to Dr. Boone with the Register, who replied, that he "regretted very much that the mistake had been published;" adding that he had "never worked one hour on the said translation."

On the 5th of April, 1851, the Committee of Delegates met; present Messrs. Medhurst, Boone, Bridgman, Stronach, and Milne, for the purpose of considering some Resolutions adopted at a conference between deputations from the British and Foreign Bible Society, the London Missionary Society, and the Church Missionary Society, suggesting the principle of "marginal readings," for the controverted words for *God* and *Spirit*, in order to bring out thereby uniform editions of the New Testament; when it was the unanimous opinion of the Delegates, "that the adoption of such a plan is inexpedient, because giving one translation in the text, and another in the margin, wherever the words for *God* and *Spirit* occur, would, they think, make each party responsible for the term adopted by the other, and render the antagonism more marked."