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SOUTHERN BAPTIST MISSIONARIES
40 YEARS IN BRAZIL

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OUR TYNDALE

Portuguese is a universal language. It is spoken by half of South America, by tiny Portugal, by half a million Portuguese in the United States, in New England, Illinois and California, by much of Africa, in Xavier's Goa, surrounded by India but as yet not conquered by Nehru's arrogance, in China's Macao and in many islands of the sea. In the days when Spain and Portugal almost divided the world between them, Portuguese was also the prevalent language in some of the revolting Dutch colonies that threw off the Spanish yoke in the Orient. Yet for all this, Portugal had no Bible in its native speech till there arose a Portuguese Tyndale, who did for this vast Portuguese world what the forerunner of the King James Version did for the English-speaking world. But what a difference! Tyndale, nine years after Erasmus' Greek New Testament came from the press (1516), got off to England, from his refuge in exile, 6,000 of his English New Testaments. And the whole Bible in 1539 came over, and enjoyed the marvel of seven printed editions in three years. But this Portuguese-speaking world had no Bible of its own till 1681, more than a century and a half later, the thirty second nation to have the Bible in its own tongue, and then it came not from, or to, any Catholic land. Of this almost unbelievable act of the providence of God I now write.

Our Tyndale was named John Ferreira de Almeida. The name, in primitive writings, occurs as having both «de» and «a», that seem to be the equivalents of the Dutch van, the German von. In a village near Lisbon, in 1628, there was born of humble parents this boy John, who early in life moved on to brilliant Lisbon, capital of world empire and large vision and imagination in those piping times. There he lived with an uncle cleric who educated him, presumably «for the Church». The lad, however, had other ideas and seems to have fled the priest's protecting — and perhaps domineering — care and to have found refuge in Holland. From there, still only fourteen years of age, he emigrated to Dutch Java, now part of the island nation of Indonesia. There he settled in Batavia, Dutch capital of their island colony, built by them in 1610. Here he was converted, in the Dutch Reformed faith, the same as our Theodore Roosevelt's, and at 16 years of age he translated the New Testament, just for himself. He married the daughter of a Dutch pastor, became proficient in the use of Dutch, Hebrew and Greek, as well as his native Portuguese, and was pastor of the great religious community in Batavia from 1663 to 1689. He died in 1691. He had translated Aesop's fables, with notes, the liturgy of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Heidelberg catechism, and a tract or booklet on how Christianity is different from Romanism, which had led to his own conversion, and the Bible, through Ezekiel, plus all the New Testament, all in Portuguese, the prevailing tongue.

The version had hard sledding. It was a mountain of typographical errors. He pointed out a thousand, in a moaning complaint; others a thousand more. The Dutch East Indies Company, like their British East Indies counterpart in reference to Carey, were hostile to the venture in an alien tongue, even though it was more used in Java than the Dutch. They suppressed a large part of the first edition. Portuguese, however, had defenders. The Dutch Governor, in 1664, Maetzuyker, informed the Company, in Amsterdam, that only three percent of the colony in that capital understood Dutch. And Almeida's successors, Op de Akker and Thornton, sent back a petition to let Portuguese be the language of public worship, saying: «From 1668 to 1708 there were baptized in the Portuguese Church 9,578 adults and infants, and during this time 4,426 members were received in the Portuguese community, while only 306 joined the community of the Malay tongue». This Portuguese Dutch Reformed Church lasted for 175 years. From Batavia this Bible passed back to Portugal, where a Harmony of the Gospels was published from it first. To sum up, the Bible translated by a Portuguese pastor, in a Dutch East Indies colony, published in Amsterdam, came from there back to Java and a part of a subsequent edition reached Brazil 70 years before it reach Portugal. At last it came back to the mother country, via Amsterdam.

The almost unbelievable romance of the Portuguese Bible has these other romantic features. It so happened that the Dutch Reformed, in Java, and the Lutherans in Tranquebar, both called their pastors «padres», as do the Anglicans today, and that is the Portuguese word for priest. So when the Portuguese Bible reached Portugal finally, bearing the title *Bíblia*, with «Padre» João Ferreira de Almeida named as its translator, it was for a long time supposed to be the translation of a priest. My first Bibles in Brazil had this legend also, translated by «Padre» Almeida, etc. So a Catholic writer, intent on glorifying Romanism, boasts that the Protestants did nothing to give the Bible to Portugal and, as proof, he cites that the first Portuguese Version was by the «padre Almeida». Really, only recent investigations have brought to light in our day all these facts herein set forth.

But how did it happen that part of the Bible reached Brazil before it did Portugal? When the Almeida version was printed in a new edition in 1710, on a new press, given by a «Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge» — a work promoted jointly, it seems, by Frederick IV of Denmark, his missionaries in the Orient and some German and British missionary enthusiasts — the ship sailed that should have taken that edition, before it was ready. So only a thousand copies of the Gospel of Matthew got on board. That ship was captured by the French and taken in to Rio de Janeiro and those gospels were distributed here seventy years before the Bible in Portuguese reached Portugal, the mother country.

What was John Almeida doing before he got to be the pastor of that great Portuguese-speaking colony in Batavia? The Dutch first refused to ordain him. Then they did, but would not allow him to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Then they made him a visitor of the sick. Then the Consistory sent him on missionary tours among their amazingly scattered Dutch Reformed stations of work. During these nine years of apprenticeship, he preached in Ceylon (Ponta de Gale), in Tutorim, Costa dos Pescadores, among the Parruas, in the Southern tip of India and in other places, whose names I copy in Portuguese, Jafanapatão, in 1658, Colombo and Paleacate, etc. He preached in Portuguese, French and Dutch. It would seem thus that he was a missionary to India long before Carey. I take these data from articles published in the «*Revista Teológica*» of our Rio Seminary, the «*Jornal Batista*», and the Bible Society publications here, by Dr. Paul Schelp and a famous article of the authorship of Eduardo Moreira, copied in the «*Jornal Batista*» April 3, 1952. Dr. Schelp made long and untiring investigations in the National Library, here in Rio, which has a marvelous collection of ancient Bibles, specially in the Portuguese tongue. The introduction to the Almeida Bible was a sturdy course in the quintessence of Calvinism.

Now one more bit of romance about this Portuguese Bible. When I was a young missionary, forty years ago, there soon came out to Brazil a young couple, named Robert and Mary Ruth Jones, strong, brilliant and utterly devoted. He had a tendency to a chronic bronchitis and could not stay in our very humid climate. But he would go home and get well and come back for a second and a third try at it. In Pernambuco he did signal service to the cause as missionary educator and in co-operation with all in every way. There his daughter Carmen, as we call her in Brazil, was born. Later the Jones served devotedly their Savior and Southern Baptists in Richmond and Dallas and all over the South, Carmen studying in Westhampton and in Baylor. Time rolls on and Southern Baptists decide to open work in Indonesia, the former Dutch colony where Almeida wrought. They wanted to start with a medical missionary, as part of our pioneering force. No man offers. But there is a very brilliant and capable young woman doctor, Dr. Kathleen Carmen Jones, already in a most successful career in Texas. She, our Brazilian Carmen, offers to go. Batavia is Djakarta today, and there is Dr. Kathleen Jones and her Southern Baptist co-pioneers, opening up our Baptist work and witness where, centuries before, John Almeida did his heroic, learned and far-reaching pioneer work, giving to the Portuguese world its Bible. And so the tide turns again home.

The original Portuguese Bible was far more vigorous than it is today. I had a copy over a century old, which I gave to the Bible Society museum. It translates John 6:44 thus: «No man can come to me unless the Father who has sent me pulls him.» Now that is exactly what the Greek word means. It is used of drawing (pulling) a sword out of its scabbard, John 18:10. Just so God pulls men out of the world to his Son, our Savior. Much of the original vigor of Almeida has through the centuries been smoothed down to conformity with the King James Version. The trend of revisors is to shun anything that sounds different, however true. Generations of men in office planed off Almeida's salient points. Yet today, he is held by great Brazilian and Portuguese authorities to be a supreme model of vocabulary and style. He wrote the Portuguese of his cultured boyhood, unspoiled by the artificialities of a period when Portugal was conquered by Spain and many alien usages encumbered the language. His Portuguese was as vital and stirring as Tyndale's English. God made him in a beautiful mold, and took him far away where it could not be marred or spoiled.

Since 1943, invited by the Bible Societies in London, New York and Rio, I have given largely of my time and thought to a revision of Almeida. Our work is done. The whole Bible is to be given to the printers about the time you will be reading this, or a few weeks later. Next year all the Bible Societies of the world will be meeting in Rio de Janeiro, on the occasion when our new version is to be given to the world. I think it is the most beautiful and most accurate Bible I know — and I use some forty versions constantly in my work. Yet I have protested against many errors in it which a Baptist would love to see eliminated. For the most part they were far worse and more numerous in the old Almeida and other versions, new and old. The last thing any Baptist wants is a «Baptist Bible», which would be repudiated by all others. We tried that once in the States and fled from the consequences. Any study Bible is useful, but for our public worship and work we want the Bible of the people, a common basis of fellowship, life and appeal. Where we cannot get words translated, or rightly translated, we can always appeal to the original, through an educated ministry who will inform the people.

The head of the hard, hard work now being done to bring things to completion is a Missouri Synod Lutheran, Dr. Paul A. Schelp, as much at home in Hebrew as in Greek, in German as in English, in modernist literature as in conservative, but sharing with our Southern Baptist people both our anti-modernist and our anti-unionist convictions. He is a very gentle and exceedingly patient man. He had three predecessors, Matatias Gomes dos Santos, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church here, competent, lovable and untiring till his untimely death, by all of us mourned sincerely. Then young Bible Society Secretary, Egmont Machado Krischge, elevated soon to the episcopacy by his denomination, and often visiting in the States in Episcopal councils. I do not recall his ever having been wrong on the Greek, in our work. Then bright, witty and competent Presbyterian editor, educator and preacher, Galdino Moreira, of this city, led in the translation of the latter half of the New Testament, the best work we have achieved. The Lutherans were starting a translation of their own, but came in with us all and so we got the services of Dr. Schelp. With these, has worked straight through the years scholarly, wise, resourceful, encyclopedic Antonio de Campos Gonçalves, secretary of the Committee. I think he knows the Portuguese language better than any man I have ever seen, and I knew Eduardo Carlos Pereira, the nation's great grammarian, sturdy Presbyterian pastor, and a lot of other great teachers. But brother Gonçalves has the feel of his native tongue more than any human being I have ever seen. Already, our New Testament is used in classrooms, in national institutions, as a model of Portuguese beauty and fidelity to the genius of the native tongue. Brother Gonçalves stands like an armed guard when we would seem to be driven by the Greek or Hebrew into any translation with an awkward, horrible or smutty association of words. Over all our gatherings presides Methodist Bishop Cesar Dacorso Filho, now being retired, like myself. He is well known in the United States, where he often attends Methodist gatherings. Other teachers of Greek and Hebrew, learned experts in Portuguese, leaders of thought, our own Dr. Crabtree, eminent in Greek and Hebrew, like Dr. Schelp, and others of Lutheran, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Baptist and Episcopal denominations make up the Committee; and as large a Committee goes over our work, in a consultative capacity. Counsels come from men and women from all over Brazil.

I want to assure you that it is a privilege to know and work with these men. They are the flower of Brazilian Christianity. The currents of Christian feeling and thought flow deep, strong and in common in their heart and speech. They disagree at length, appoint investigations to see who is right, make prolonged studies, argue warmly, hotly at times. But no man has ever had to apologize for unbrotherly words, and every discussion ends in the same fellowship in which it began. Every man is as independent in thought as if he were alone, and usually as happy in the common decisions as if they were solely his own. We are often surprised at unity in decisions that seemed for a long time impossible.

As we look to next July and that great gathering of the Bible Societies of the world here, we feel a tremendous gratitude to these mighty agencies that have furnished Southern Baptists the Bibles we use in our eighty years of work in Brazil, and we give them our love, loyalty and prayers, just as they have given us the printed Word that is basic to all our work and hope. The Bible Society of Brazil is the newest of these mighty agencies. It already has 40,000 cooperating Brazilian members, and in its eight years of existence has circulated ten million copies of the Scriptures. The meeting of all its sister societies in the world, on the occasion of the publication of the new Portuguese Version, will be one of the most memorable events in the religious history of this continent. Southern Baptists cooperate fully and whole-heartedly with the American Bible Society, and, of course, in spirit, with all of these others, for all over the world, in the thirty two nations where we do mission work, they furnish us Bibles, in large gifts, in colportage they aid, and all of them far

below cost. For them all we have only admiration, love and gratitude and the American Bible Society has a special secretary who works among Southern Baptists and our eight million people, and speaks every year in a special hour at the Southern Baptist Convention.

«Watch the providence of God», my mother used to say. See it in Almeida. Born in rural simplicity. Grounded in Lisbon culture. Fled to Dutch evangelical vigor, fervor and victory against Spain's Inquisition and popery. Married into a pastor's family. So loving the Bible as to translate it at sixteen years of age for himself, from Bede, the Vulgate and Spanish and Italian Scriptures. Missionary and preacher in many a mission field. Student of many tongues, a polyglot who anticipated Carey in his capacity. His Bible turns back to Amsterdam; then out, in a portion of it, to Rio, through the trials of war, then at last to Lisbon, whence we received it fully from the mother country, or perhaps rather from the British and Foreign and American Bible Societies. Now missionaries join with cultured and devoted Brazilians in a better version to this great land, which is next to the United States, we are told, in the number of Bibles it demands every year. And in the fulness of time there go to Batavia (Djakarta) missionaries with the full New Testament message and church life, which Almeida never knew. And a young woman, born in Brazil, carries with this initiative both the healing of men's bodies and the leaves of healing for their souls, as Almeida taught, translated and preached that gospel so long ago.

Watch the providence of God.

Faithfully yours,

William Carey Taylor.

Dear Dr. Cox:

I came home from a glorious week in Elizabethton last night at midnight and — here I was interrupted and soon got away to Dry Ridge, near Covington for another school of missions.

It will be a pleasure to fulfil your request that I write on the subjects mentioned. I have two more schools of missions, with a week's interval, that will take me to Dec. 1. I plan to save Dec. for writing and will try to get the articles to you by Christmas or as I write them.

This is the bit of history we were talking about, that Dr. Latourette seemed to think so significant. The other two also have sidelights on our history.

More from Louisville. Cordially, W. C. Taylor

Dry Ridge, W.
Oct. 14, 1957