The quotations of the OT in the book of Hebrews are taken from the LXX and not from the Hebrew Bible. This means that at times there is some variation between the English translation of an OT citation and that of the OT passage itself. This is true in any secondary translation, for the translation of a translation will differ, sometimes considerably, from the original. However, there are three instances where an OT passage and its citation have been translated in the same way by the AV when clear differences would be expected in the translation. Superficially these look like definite attempts at harmonizing the OT passage with its citation in the NT; however, a closer look reveals a different cause.

The first of these passages is Ps 104:4, which is quoted in Heb 1:7. The AV reads, "Who maketh his angels spirits: his ministers a flaming fire." Heb 1:7 reads the same except that it has "flame of fire" instead of "flaming fire." The latter is accounted for by the fact that the Hebrew has the reading אֲשֶׁר לְהַלֵּךְ, which the LXX has translated literally by πῦρ φλέγων, while Heb 1:7 reads πῦρ ἐφ’ ἄγλα. But the significant thing in this case is that AV has translated Ps 104:4 as "who maketh his angels spirits." The Hebrew and the Greek for "angels" and "spirits" are both ambiguous. The former (נַפְשׁוֹת – ἀγγέλου) can mean any ordinary messengers or angels, i.e., heavenly messengers. The latter (πνεύματα) can mean either "winds" or "spirits."

In Heb 1:7 the context is clearly speaking about "angels" and not "messengers." The author is contrasting Christ and
the angels in this chapter, so ἄγγελοι can only mean "angels." "Spirits" for πνεύματα is permissible, but again the context clearly calls for "winds," which is the translation in RV, RSV, and NEB. The word "winds" corresponds to "flame of fire" in the parallelism. The translation "spirits" was probably due to the influence of Heb 1:14 where the expression, "ministering spirits," is found. Ps 104:4, on the other hand, is clear in suggesting "messengers" and "winds" instead of "angels" and "spirits" since the previous verse speaks about the use that God makes of the forces of nature to accomplish His ends. Even the AV of verse 3 has "who maketh the clouds His chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind" (νῦν). RV and RSV both have "winds" and "messengers."

Here is an interesting case where the Hebrew and the Greek are virtually identical and yet a difference in translation was called for because the NT writer used two words with entirely different meanings from those intended by the OT writer. The deviation is not due to the LXX translator but to the NT writer. Identical translation of the passages was possible only because of the ambiguity of meaning in the two words. Does the fact that the agreement is with the NT passage show that the translation of this passage influenced that of the OT? Did the AV translators follow a policy of harmonization? So it appears on first sight. But that this is unlikely is seen from other citations in the book of Hebrews which could have been harmonized with equal ease, but were not.\(^1\) It is also apparent from the slight differences preserved in these verses under consideration. Besides, Ps 104:4 is translated in this manner in all the previous "authorized" English versions (Bishops' Bible, Great Bible, Matthew Bible, and the Coverdale Bible).\(^2\) The question now must be, "Where

\(^1\) Heb 1:5 and 2 Sam 7:14; Heb 1:8, 9 and Ps 45:7; Heb 1:10-12 and Ps 102:26-28 and others.

\(^2\) When the revision of the Great Bible was planned by Archbishop Parker, Guest, Bishop of Rochester, was sent the book of Psalms to revise. In his response the Bishop wrote, "Where in the New Testament one piece of a Psalm is reported, I translate it in the Psalms..."
did Coverdale get his translation?" He did not know Hebrew so he had to rely upon translations of the Hebrew. According to Willoughby, Coverdale used as his main base for the Psalms the Swiss-German Psalter from Zürich, modifying and interpolating it with the Vulgate.³

The Zürich Psalter has wind and botten while the Vulgate has spiritus and angelos. Clearly, Coverdale followed the Vulgate.⁴ The book of Psalms in the Vulgate is the Gallican Psalter translated by Jerome from the fifth column (LXX) of Origen's Hexapla.⁵ Coverdale's translation (and so also the AV) is a tertiary translation, i.e., a translation of the Vulgate which was a translation of the LXX which was a translation of the Hebrew.⁶

Our investigation settles down to the question, "Where did Jerome get his translation?" Was he harmonizing with the NT passage or was he misled by the ambiguity of the words according to the translation thereof in the New Testament, for the avoiding of the offence that may rise to the people upon divers translations." Apparently, however, this alarmed the Archbishop so that the book was sent to someone else to revise, for the initials at the end of Psalms in the Bishops' Bible are T.B., which Dr. Aldis Wright assigns to Thomas Bickley. Cf. Alfred W. Pollard, ed., Records of the English Bible (London, 1911), pp. 31, 290-1. This suggests that the official position at least was opposed to such harmonizations.

³ Harold R. Willoughby, The Coverdale Psalter and the Quartocentenary of the Printed English Bible (Chicago, 1935), p. 28. For the OT Coverdale also used Tyndale, Luther, and Pagninus (cf. J. F. Mozley, Coverdale and His Bibles [London, 1953], p. 79). Tyndale did not translate Psalms, and Luther differs in his translation of this passage, reading "winds" and "angels."

⁴ Coverdale followed the Vulgate in the numbering of the Psalms since in this and the third instance they are numbered 103 and 94. But the Zürich Bible also follows this numbering. In the Matthew Bible and succeeding Bibles they are numbered 104 and 95.

⁵ B. M. Metzger, "Ancient Versions," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, IV, 753.

⁶ It is interesting to note that the Geneva Bible, which was revised on the basis of the Hebrew text, reads, "Which maketh the spirits his messengers." In the other two passages under consideration, the Geneva Bible forsakes its predecessors more completely and follows the Hebrew.
\( \text{γγέλους} \) and \( \text{πνεύματα} \) which are more often translated “angels” and “spirits”? When Jerome later translated this passage from the Hebrew itself, he translated it exactly the same way. The ambiguity of the Hebrew text, the LXX translation of it, and the use of it in the NT may have combined to give this result.

The second of these passages is Ps 8:5 which is quoted in Heb 2:7. The AV reads, “For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels.” The point of consideration is the translation of the word \( \text{∝ηλας} \). The translation “angels” goes back again to Coverdale. Where did Coverdale get his translation? Again the Vulgate is the source. The Vulgate has \( \text{ab angelis} \) while Zürich reads \( \text{van Gott} \). The Vulgate is clearly a translation of the LXX \( \text{ππρ' γγέλους} \). The question here goes back beyond Jerome to the LXX translators, so the influence of the NT can be entirely discounted. But it is difficult to know exactly why the LXX translated thus. It may be that the transcendental conception of God which was prevalent at this time, with a corresponding increase in angelic mediators, could not allow man and God to be compared with so little difference between them.

The AV translators, if they were not following their predecessors, could have translated \( \text{∝ηλας} \) as “God,” as RV and RSV


8 The AV translation follows exactly that of the Bishops’ Bible and the Great Bible. While the Matthew Bible and the Coverdale Bible have “angels,” their translation had an obviously messianic application with Heb 2:7 definitely in mind. They translated this passage thus: “After thou haddest for a season made him lower then the angels, thou crownedest him with honor and glory.” Coverdale must have been influenced by Luther in this direction: see Luther’s translation below.

9 Jerome, translating from the Hebrew, had \( \text{a Deo} \). The New Latin Psalter reads \( \text{angelis} \). The Targum and Syriac also read “angels,” while Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion read “God.”
have done. The Geneva Bible, following the Hebrew rather than the Vulgate, again corrected the former English versions by translating it as “God.”

Among recent commentators, only William R. Taylor and W. Stewart McCullough in *The Interpreter’s Bible* understand it as “angels.”\(^{10}\) A. Cohen,\(^{11}\) Artur Weiser,\(^{12}\) H. C. Leupold,\(^{13}\) Hans Schmidt,\(^{14}\) A. F. Kirkpatrick,\(^{15}\) and Elmer Leslie\(^{16}\) regard it as “God.” Most of these do not even consider any other possibility. They see the expression as an allusion to the “image of Elohim” in Gen 1:27. The term *ֶלְוֶהֵם* is nowhere else translated as “angels” by AV.\(^{17}\)

Luther’s translation of this passage must have partly affected the translation of Coverdale and Matthew. He translated Ps 8:5 thus: “Du wirst ihn lassen eine kleine Zeit von Gott verlassen sein.” The passage was considered as directly messianic from its use in Hebrews so that to the difference in degree is added the fact that this difference will be for only a little while, a clear reference to the incarnation. Coverdale and Matthew followed him in this detail,\(^{18}\) but followed the Vulgate in translating *ֶלְוֶהֵם* as “angels.”

The third instance where a difference in translation is...
expected but is not found is Ps 95 : 8, which is quoted in
Heb 3 : 8. AV translated it thus: “Harden not your heart,
as in the provocation: and as in the day of temptation, in the
wilderness.” With very slight differences (“heart” is changed
to “hearts” and the second “as” is omitted) the same trans-
lation is found in Heb 3 : 8. The point at issue here is the
translation of מְרוּבָּה and מַסָּחַ. The AV by translating מְרוּבָּה as
“provocation” and מַסָּחַ as “temptation” in Ps 95 : 8 considers
these words as common rather than proper nouns.

What is the reason for this, since wherever these two words
occur in the OT, AV has consistently translated them as
Meribah and Massah, proper place nouns, except here? 19
Again this translation goes back to Coverdale 20 and through
the Vulgate to the LXX. For the sections involved the Zürich
Bible is the same as the Vulgate, but for the verse in its
entirety Coverdale is closer to the Vulgate. RV and RSV
translate, “as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the
wilderness.” The dependence upon a secondary translation
is apparent. The Vulgate consistently translates מְרוּבָּה as
temptatio, as it does also in Ps 95 : 8. However, while it
translates מְרוּבָּה as contradictio in every other passage, it
translates it in Ps 95 : 8 as inritatio. The reason for this seems
to be that the LXX translated מְרוּבָּה here as παραπτωματικός
instead of ἀντιλογία, which is the usual translation except
for Ex 17 : 7, where it is λοιπονησία. 21 The Vulgate, following
the LXX, translated it inritatio 22 instead of going back to the
Hebrew מְרוּבָּה; Coverdale, following the Vulgate, translated

19 Ex 17 : 7; Num 20 : 13, 24; 27 : 14; Deut 6 : 16; 9 : 22; 32 : 51;
33 : 8; Ps 81 : 7.
20 The Bishops’ Bible and the Great Bible are identical with AV,
but Coverdale and Matthew read, “as when ye provoked in tyme of
temptacion in the wildernes.”
21 The Vulgate omits מְרוּבָּה in Ex 17 : 7.
22 Jerome goes back to contradictio when he translates from the
Hebrew. The New Latin Psalter reads “ut in Meriba, ut die Massa
in deserto.”
it as a verb, "provoke," and later in the Great Bible as "provocation,"23 which the Bishops' Bible followed. This translation influenced the translation of ה'פ as "temptation" instead of "Massah," as it is transliterated elsewhere.

The translation of Heb 3:8, 15 is also called into question. Should not παραπληράσμος here read "Meribah" and πείρασμός, "Massah," instead of "provocation" and "temptation"? The problem is somewhat complicated in that the understanding of the author concerning these words must be taken into account. Verses 9 and 16, the former referring to "temptation" and the latter to "provocation," would lose their effect if the translations were not used. Meribah and Massah would not be as appropriate. Moffatt may have chosen the best way to deal with the problem when he capitalized "Provocation" and "Temptation," following the LXX pattern of translating proper nouns. In this way, the effect of verses 9 and 16 would be kept and the words still maintained as proper nouns.

The harmonization in translations of these passages with their corresponding NT passages is not due to a conscious, deliberate policy. Rather, it is due to the influence of the Vulgate which in turn was influenced by the LXX. The Vulgate Psalter, as we have mentioned, is a translation of the LXX, from which the book of Hebrews quotes. Therefore, it can easily be seen how these passages could be translated similarly. This explains the similarity since these passages are all from the book of Psalms. Instead of direct harmonization, we have indirect harmonization, i.e., the passages are not harmonized by comparing directly the English translation of the OT passages with that of the NT, but somewhat unconsciously by translating two passages whose basis is the LXX text.

There are OT passages in modern translations which are

23 The Geneva Bible alone had "Meribah" and "Massah." It is to the credit of its translators that in the three cases discussed here they went back to the Hebrew text for their translation instead of to the Vulgate.
dependent on the versions instead of the Hebrew text. These are passages where the Hebrew is either obscure or where the versions seem to give a better reading. This study indicates, however, that the AV has some passages where it is dependent upon the Vulgate and indirectly on the LXX where such is not the case. The Hebrew is certainly superior in these three cases cited. The Bishops' Bible and the AV were purportedly brought into harmony with the Hebrew text, and though the latter version had outstanding Semitic scholars on its committees, some of these tertiary translations slipped through. Even the better readings of the Geneva Bible which they had at their disposal did not direct them to the right renderings. At this stage the translation of the NT passages may have had some influence in preserving these readings.