

Bible Translations Reports

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Bible Translations Report I

[Prepared by Joel C. Gerlach in July 1971]

“What history may call the beginning of a golden age of Bible translations,”—that is how Don Wharton concludes an article entitled, “Latest Word in Bibles,” in the June 1971 issue of the *Reader’s Digest*. He contends that “today, the Bible reader has at his disposal the richest selection of reliable translations ever available.” Whether the translations he discusses are reliable or not is open to serious question.

Our people and our pastors have been raising questions about the reliability and the “recommendability” of the new translations ever since the advent of the New Testament of the RSV in 1946. The proliferation of translations in recent years together with the sometimes indiscriminate use of untested and unreliable translations makes the answering of these questions a matter of increasing urgency.

It was with this concern in mind that the Commission on Christian Literature addressed an overture to the Conference of Presidents requesting an opinion on the subject of Bible translations. Specifically, the Commission requested an opinion regarding an attempt to produce a translation of our own as well as a critique of existing translations which might prove helpful to our people. The Conference of Presidents considered the Commission’s request and answered as follows:

Subject: BIBLE TRANSLATION

The Commission on Christian Literature has addressed a letter to the COP requesting advice on initiating a study of various Bible translations with a view to pin-pointing the weaknesses and the strengths of each and with the hope of retaining uniform use of the best available translation throughout our Synod. The Commission further asks, “Are we able and is it advisable to produce our own translation?” Your Committee deems it impractical for our Synod to produce its own translation because of the high cost involved and because of the limited field of distribution.

THE CRITIQUE OF PRESENT BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Your Committee recommends that the seminary faculty give a critique of the English translations of the Bible in common usage today.

- a. That a general evaluation of each translation be made.
- b. That the individual members of the faculty supply detailed critique of the translations of specific books of the Bible which are studied in the respective exegetical courses taught by them.
- c. That known errors or weaknesses in translations of other books of the Bible be pointed out.
- d. That the faculty present a progress report to the Commission on Christian Literature prior to the convention of the Synod in August 1971.

The referral of the matter was presented to the faculty in March of this year. A faculty committee (Professors Blume, Becker, and Gerlach) was appointed to expedite the study. We offer herewith a report of the progress to date.

Primarily the faculty (1) agreed upon the criteria for determining the acceptability of a translation, (2) decided upon the translations to be given consideration in the evaluation, and (3) determined the procedure to follow in fulfilling its assignment.

The translations recommended for evaluative consideration were: 1. The Revised Standard Version, 2. The New English Bible, 3. The New American Standard Bible, 4. The King James Version, 5. The New

Berkeley Version, 6. Today's English Version, and 7. A Contemporary Translation. The last two were included despite the fact that they have not yet been published as complete Bibles. The Old Testament of the TEV is in production and will be available. The Psalms have already been published. The ACT was included because two of our faculty members are serving as translation consultants, one for the Old Testament and one for the New. The Old Testament of the NASB will be available by the time this issue of the *Quarterly* is posted. Handbound copies were made available by the Lockman Foundation to the faculty committee for review purposes.

The criteria for determining the acceptability of a translation were expressed by means of these four questions: 1. Is the translation doctrinally acceptable? 2. Is it faithful to the original? 3. Is the quality of the receptor language acceptable? and 4. Is the original text an appropriate one?

Seven touchstones were set down for determining doctrinal acceptability. They are: messianic prophecy, the deity of Christ, the vicarious atonement, justification, reference to the term blood (something for which the TEV displays an obvious antipathy), creation, and finally, inspiration. While these seven touchstones are by no means to be considered exhaustive of essential doctrine, it was agreed that any translation which proved itself acceptable regarding these points of doctrine would be worthy of further consideration.

The second criterion concerns itself with fidelity to the original text. Editions which the authors themselves acknowledge as paraphrases are not a legitimate concern of the committee. Or, for example, the Jerusalem Bible's reference to Goliath as a "shocktrooper," while it may have a ring of modernity, does not have the ring of fidelity.

The third criterion requires that the receptor language be acceptable. In other words, the style is important. The language employed is expected to conform acceptably to the language of religion, and it must be characterized by a dignity of speech. Which is not to say that "thee," "thou," and "verily" must be retained. But neither may it go to the extremes of Clarence Jordan's "Cotton Patch" versions (Associated Press).

Fourthly, it is essential that the original text employed by the translator be an appropriate one. And that means also that the translator must be an adequate textual critic. He must have a feel for determining judiciously what is to be relegated to the footnotes and what is not.

After the criteria and the different versions to be studied were agreed upon, faculty members were requested to undertake a cursory reading of Romans and Genesis in the several versions, and to record the pros and cons for each. It is expected that following these preliminary studies, unacceptable versions will be eliminated from the list. Then the men of the exegetical department will be asked to undertake a more critical study of the books they teach in the versions still being given consideration.

As of the date of this writing, the evaluation of the letter to the Romans in the several versions has been completed. We conclude with a summary of the faculty's findings.

We are limiting our references to a few key verses for brevity's sake.

The Authorized Version translates Romans 3:25: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." For ready reference's sake, we offer the same verse from the several versions.

The RSV: "Whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance, he had passed over the former sins."

The NEB: "For God designed him to be the means of expiating sin by his sacrificial death, effective through faith. God meant this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had overlooked the sins of the past."

The New Berkeley Version: "whom God put forward as a reconciling sacrifice through faith in His blood. This was for the vindication of His righteousness in forgiving the sins that previously were committed under God's forbearance."

The TEV: “God offered him so that by his death he should become the means by which men’s sins are forgiven, through their faith in him. God offered Christ to show how he puts men right with himself. In the past, God was patient and overlooked men’s sins.”

The NASB: “Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.”

The verse offers three checkpoints. The first is the rendering of ἱλαστήριον. The New American Standard follows the KJV. Both have “propitiation.” The rest reveal the influence of C.H. Dodd, who insists that the word has reference to the cancellation of sin (expiation), and not to the turning away of God’s wrath (propitiation). Thus the concept of God’s wrath, so prominent in the Old Testament, is obscured. The TEV paraphrases in favor of expiation, and the Berkeley version straddles the fence.

The second checkword is αἷμα. The TEV and the NEB translate it “death” instead of “blood” in deference to modern theology’s depreciation of the blood atonement. They do so consistently.

The third comparison involves διὰ πίστεως. The NEB’s “effective through faith” is completely unacceptable; TEV’s “through their faith in him” can be misleading. The RSV’s “to be received by faith” gets closest to Paul’s thought.

We proceed to Romans 5:18 and the words, “the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” The RSV and the NEB disqualify themselves by translating, “leads to” (RSV) and “is” (NEB) “acquittal *and life* for all men.” The RSV further confuses the thought of the verse with its tense change from “*led to* condemnation” to “*leads to* acquittal.” Berkeley also is unacceptable: “There is for all men justification and life.” The NASB is acceptable, but stylistically poor: “There resulted justification of life to all men.”

In Romans 9:5, “Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen,” the NASB and the Berkeley are the only two of the contemporary versions which preserve Paul’s reference to the deity of Christ. The others follow the lead of the RSV.

Romans 11:12 is not an easy verse to render, although the Greek is not unclear. The King James is literal to a fault: “Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?” The TEV, RSV, and NEB suggest a millennial bias, while the NASB is acceptable, but vague. The TEV says, “How much greater the blessings will be, then, when the complete number of Jews is included!” The RSV asks, “How much more will their full inclusion mean?” and the NEB, “How much more their coming to full strength!” Thus these latter three follow the lead of name commentators Haldane, Nygren, Hodge, et. al. who find in the word πλήρωμα a reference to “the restoration of the Jews” (Hodge). In the case of this verse, the vagueness of the NASB makes it the most acceptable. “How much more will their fulfillment be!”

Thirty-three passages were considered by the faculty in the manner of the three cited. Some general conclusions were reached on the basis of the comparisons. The most widely read of the contemporary versions are the RSV, the TEV, and the NEB. Of those three, the RSV is unquestionably the most acceptable. While the RSV has many things to commend it to the church, yet it must be noted that there is an evident introduction into it of concepts peculiar to and favoring neo-orthodoxy, and that numerous Old Testament passages dealing with Messianic prophecy are inadequate and unacceptable.

In all of the passages to which consideration was given, the version which consistently proved itself most accurate was the New American Standard Bible. The few objections raised to it concerned themselves with points of style and clarity rather than with questions of fidelity to the Greek text.

It is hoped that the study of the Old Testament will have progressed far enough by convention time in August so that some kind of tentative report can be given to the Conference of Presidents and to the Commission on Christian Literature.

Worth mentioning also is the fact that the Lockman Foundation of La Habra, California, publisher of the NASB, has indicated to the faculty committee that it would welcome critical evaluation from our faculty, and

that suggestions for variant readings, in places where they are warranted, could be included in the marginal notes in a future edition.

From our vantage point at this time we are cautiously optimistic that this study may lead to the approval of a contemporary translation which will present God's Word faithfully in the language of our times so that all who search the Scriptures may more readily understand what God is saying to them without having to surmount the hurdle of a language which, while beautiful in its own way, has become archaic and difficult for many.

Bible Translations Report II

[Prepared by Joel C. Gerlach in April 1972]

During the course of the current school year, the faculty has studied Genesis in the several translations giving special attention to the NASB. In this article we wish to share with our readers some of the findings of that study.

Noteworthy in Genesis 1:1 is the fact that AV and NASB treat the verse as a unit while NEB translates with a temporal clause, thus making a concession to higher criticism. Since v.2 does not begin with a *waw* consecutive, NEB is also textually unsatisfactory. "The heaven" in AV, ("upper regions" in the Hebrew) is translated "heavens" in both RSV and NASB. This is an improvement.

In v.2 "The Spirit was moving" (NASB) is an improvement over "moved" (AV). The NEB is unsatisfactory when it says that the Spirit "swept over the waters." The marginal reading of the NASB "hovering" is the preferred reading and agrees with Young's view of the Spirit's activity as a "protective hovering" over the surface of the waters.

The *waw* consecutive is invariably and monotonously translated "and" in AV. Contemporary translations offer a distinct improvement in this respect, as in v.3, where NASB regards it as temporal and translates, "Then God said."

The familiar but misleading word "firmament" in v.6 of AV has been eliminated in favor of "expanse" in NASB, a distinct improvement NEB renders the same word as vault, an unhappy choice which might be intended to suggest that the Genesis account reflects the crude conceptions of the universe prevalent at the time the account was written.

The fruit trees mentioned in v. 11 are said to yield "fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself." The AV's construction is an involved one. NASB translates it idiomatically rather than literally, "with seed in them." The Berkeley version is likewise smooth, "with their respective seeds in the fruit." The preferred reading is the marginal reading in NASB, "fruit, in which is its seed."

The 20th verse in AV has sometimes been cited as offering evidence in support of theistic evolution's contention that life originated in the sea. "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that they may fly above the earth." Moses, however, does not say that the waters *brought forth*. Here NASB offers a definite improvement by translating, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures." NEB uses the word "countless." This makes the meaning clear, although it makes an adjective out of a noun. It should be noted that a cognate accusative need not be reproduced in English. Thus the verse could be rendered, "Let the waters swarm with living creatures" rather than in the redundant manner of NASB'S marginal reading, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures."

In the remaining verses of chapter one, the contemporary versions offer these additional improvements: sea monsters for whales in v. 21; fill for replenish, and rule for have dominion in v. 28; food for meat in vv. 29 and 30 and numerous other places.

The study and discussion of chapter 2 involved chiefly points of personal preference. Three items of particular significance were noted. In verse 2 **וַיִּבְרָא**, on the seventh day, is translated "By the seventh day God completed His work," in NASB thus making it a paraphrase to exclude activity on the seventh day. Secondly, the **תּוֹלְדוֹת**'s are properly rendered in NASB, "This is the account of" in place of AV's "These are the generations." NEB attaches verse 4 of chapter 2 to the first chapter thus failing to recognize that Moses supplies

his own outline and that the תולדות begins a new part or chapter. It is not intended to indicate the conclusion of a preceding section. Thirdly, NASB was cited with approval for translating v.7 with the words, “and man became a living being,” thus underscoring the fact that וַיֵּחַיֵּם does not say man has a soul.

In chapter 3 a number of stylistic improvements were noted such as NEB’s “is it true that God has forbidden you,” (v.1); NASB’s, “You will be like God” in place of AV’s “You will be as gods.” In v.8 NASB says, “They heard the *sound* of the Lord God walking” in place of “the *voice* of the Lord God walking.” The first promise is, of course, the crucial verse in the third chapter. NEB erases the Messianicity when it speaks of the woman’s Seed and says, “*They* shall strike at your head.”

In the same verse the Hebrew verb, פָּשַׁע, is broad enough to allow the use of two different words. It suggests a violent action. Both AV and NASB use “bruise” twice thus failing to make clear the difference between the violent action of the Savior in crushing the Serpent’s head and the violent action of the Serpent in bruising the Savior’s heel. The faculty committee will suggest to the Lockman Foundation a marginal reading for this verse which would read, “He shall crush your head, and you will strike His heel.”

In this same verse NASB does not capitalize “*him*” when it is clearly a reference to the Messiah. In the Explanation of the General Format on page x of the Preface, the publishers state that, “Personal Pronouns are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.” We are convinced that the failure to capitalize “*him*” in this verse was due to an editor’s oversight. In numerous other passages the capital “H” does appear in pronouns referring to Christ, e.g., Isaiah 9:6 and Micah 5. The same inconsistency occurs in 1:26, “Let *us* make man,” while v.22 of this chapter has, “The man has become like one of *Us*, knowing good and evil.”

In chapter 4:1a, RSV retains the wording of AV “Now Adam *knew* his wife,” while NASB says, “Now the man had relations with his wife.” A marginal reference acknowledges that literally the word is “knew.” Berkeley also translates “knew” with an explanatory footnote. The Hebrew verb suggests experiential knowledge and thus to enter into a close, formal relationship. Here, therefore, we favor RSV and Berkeley. In this same verse both RSV and NASB quote Eve as saying, “I have gotten a man (manchild) with the help of the Lord.” The verb, הֵרָאָה, may mean either to acquire or to produce. Its most common meaning is to acquire. If acquire is the intended meaning in this verse, then אִתּוֹ should be read as the sign of the accusative, as Luther did. But in a half dozen instances, הֵרָאָה means to produce, and that seems to be most natural here. However, then אִתּוֹ should be translated as a preposition, “together with” rather than “with the help of.” Thus the RSV-NASB rendering is objectionable. A less objectionable rendering would be “I have *produced* a manchild with the help of the Lord.” The preferred translation is, “I have produced a manchild *together with* the Lord.” Since God is always the subject when הֵרָאָה means to produce, we understand Eve to have said in faith that the Lord produced a child in accord with His promise using Eve as His agent.

In 4:15 NASB translates, “And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain,” in place of AV’s and RSV’s “set (put) a mark on Cain.” The NASB is the superior reading.

The several versions agree on the translation of the last words of the chapter, “men began to call upon the name of the Lord.” The Hebrew, וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה is commonly understood to mean to use the name of Yahweh in worship, and that is all that is suggested in the several translations. However, it appears that more is meant. The preposition בְּ is identified in Koenig’s *Syntax* as a ב of interest suggesting the idea, “to call out in the interest of the name of Yahweh.” Moses means to say that Seth’s people proclaimed God’s name, not just that they called upon it in joint or public worship. The faculty resolved to recommend a marginal reading for this verse to the Lockman Foundation. The marginal reading would offer “call out” as an alternative to “call upon.”

In chapters 4 and 5, the familiar “begat” of the AV is replaced in RSV and NASB with the phrase “became the father of.” The question was raised as to whether this limits the idea to the son’s being a direct descendant of the father whose name is mentioned.

Verse 29 of chapter 5 in NASB is a good literal translation, but it is stiff. “This one (Noah) shall give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising out from the ground which the Lord has cursed.” NEB

offers a more free translation which is smooth and readily understood. “This boy will bring us relief from our work and hard labor ... because of the Lord’s curse.”

The תולדות in 6:9 is translated “generations” in both NASB and RSV. The NASB translates, “These are the records of the generations of Noah.” Generations is not a proper translation of the Hebrew. תולדות signifies that which developed from someone, a *Geschichte*. Noah is already 600 years old when his תולדות begins. That is when his great “history” begins, a thought which neither “generations” nor “account” (as in 2:4) conveys. We propose to recommend to the Lockman Foundation that consistency be employed in translating the ten תולדות’s in Genesis, since they provide us with the author’s own outline of the book. We find the word “account” acceptable, but the word, “history” is preferable. (Cf. also 11:27.)

In chapter 7:2–3 both NASB and RSV speak of seven *pairs* of clean animals which were to be taken into the ark. This is not a correct translation of the Hebrew expression “seven seven,” and is not consistent with the translation of שְׁנַיִם שְׁנַיִם in verse 9. Noah was instructed to take seven clean animals into the ark, not fourteen. He was to take three pairs plus one, the supernumerary being the one which Noah might conveniently sacrifice when the flood water subsided. The publishers of NASB will be urged to offer a correction in future editions.

In the interest of brevity, we shall limit ourselves in the remaining paragraphs to references to errors in the translations, and to a consideration of passages in NASB which ought to be improved or clarified with a marginal reference.

Noah is incorrectly called “the first tiller of the soil” in RSV, 9:20. NASB correctly says, “Noah began farming,” while NEB makes it more clear, “Noah, a man of the soil, began the planting of vineyards.” In 12:3 RSV relegates the correct translation to a footnote, “all the families of the earth will be blessed,” and elevates an objectionable translation, “will bless themselves,” to the text proper. In 17:2 NEB’s clause, “so that I may,” is unsatisfactory because it suggests that God’s covenant with Abraham was a bilateral one. In 37:35 both RSV and NASB quote Jacob as saying, “I will (shall) go down to Sheol” in mourning for my son. AV translates “For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.” Discussion concerning this verse and of others in which *Sheol* occurs resulted in a faculty resolution to make a comprehensive, comparative study of the terms *Sheol* and *Hades* in NASB. The Old Testament department will study the one and the New Testament department the other term. Thus this report offers no evaluation of NASB’s treatment of *Sheol*.

Two further verses in chapters 17 and 22 require comment. Both RSV and NASB translate 17:1, “I am God Almighty; Walk before me and be blameless.” AV says, “Walk before me and be thou perfect.” All three translations make the words sound like law rather than gospel. However, the idea that God is asking for moral perfection simply is not in the context of this passage. Blameless, like perfect, diverts attention away from the real meaning. It appears that there is no adequate way to express the thought here without a paraphrase. The thought is, “I am אֵל שְׁדַי; walk before me and be complete in this” or “do this in completeness, in the awareness that I am אֵל שְׁדַי.” The blamelessness of which God speaks is the blamelessness which He imputes to us as אֵל שְׁדַי. An adequate translation ought to contain a marginal paraphrase to make the meaning of blameless apparent. The faculty will recommend that such a marginal note be added to the NASB text.

In 22:18 RSV translates the hithpael form, הִתְבָּרַכְוּ, as a reflexive, “By your descendants shall all nations of the world bless themselves.” NASB translates the verb as a passive, “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” The Septuagint lends its influence to those versions which translate the verb as passive. Of greater concern in this verse is the fact that both RSV and NASB translate בְּזַרְעֵךָ as a plural, “descendants.” That RSV does so is not surprising, but it is surprising to find the plural in NASB. Paul has reference to this verse in Galatians 3:16. The inspired commentary of the New Testament involving this verse requires that seed be translated as a singular, especially since NASB lists Galatians 3:16 as a cross reference. Consistency also suggests that Genesis 22:18 be included with the references for Galatians 3:16. If the latter passage is listed as a cross reference for Genesis 22:18, then the Genesis passage ought to be listed as a cross reference for the Galatians passage.

In conclusion we are still favorably impressed with NASB, at least more so than with any of the other versions. It is apparent that much editing remains to be done. The format also leaves something to be desired.

The present edition is a fine study edition, but not a popular one, since it divides the text into verses rather than paragraphs. Each verse begins at the margin with the result that the only grouping of verses is by chapter division. We hope that future editions will include some of the changes we have noted and which we will recommend as well as a grouping of verses into paragraphs.

Meanwhile the members of the exegetical departments of the faculty will continue their comparative study of the several versions in those books which they teach in their classes. As further developments warrant, these reports will be updated.

Bible Translations Report III [Prepared by Joel C. Gerlach in July 1973]

The following series of articles will bring our readers up to date on the progress made thus far. It will also serve as a preliminary report from the faculty to the Conference of Presidents providing the COP with a basis for information to be shared with the Synod in convention next month.

During the school year just concluded the faculty completed a study of the terms *Sheol* and *Hades*, began a study of the Messianic prophecies, and then reached the conclusion that a practical way had to be found to speed up the evaluative process and to complete the assigned task. A decision was made to study in the several versions all of the passages used as proof texts in the Catechism. To facilitate the study, the faculty formed three study groups: an OT and two NT groups. Professors Blume, Hoenecke, and Lawrenz served as team captains for the three groups. They completed their work during the third quarter of the school year. A report of their findings and evaluations appears in the companion articles in this issue of the *Quarterly*.

Readers may be interested to know how the evaluation was made. The 627 separate passages employed in the catechism were studied individually and rated according to an arbitrary rating key. The key employed a numerical rating scale from 0 to 6 as follows: 0, superior; 1, acceptable; 2, marginal reading acceptable; 3, acceptable with reservations; 4, objectionable without disqualifying; 5, unacceptable; 6, marginal reading unacceptable. The versions listed on the tabulation sheets were the NASB, RSV, NEB, Berkeley, and TEV plus space for other versions including KJV, and space for comments. The comments noted especially why a particular verse was rated as objectionable or unacceptable.

In short summary, the tabulations indicate that the most reliable and acceptable of the several contemporary versions is the NASB. Somewhat surprisingly, in the NT studies, the RSV consistently rated high. However, its unacceptable treatment of OT Messianic prophecies raises a serious question about its acceptability. The Berkeley OT qualified itself as a good translation, about on a par with NASB. However, the Berkeley NT is not as consistently good as the OT. The version accorded the greatest number of superior ratings was the RSV. Style-wise, the NEB rates highest. While selected NEB passages also garnered a high number of superior ratings, the composite tabulations reveal that NEB is second only to TEV in the total number of objectionable and unacceptable passages. The TEV's penchant for paraphrase raises serious questions about its acceptability. But aside from that, the number of objectionable and unacceptable ratings it earned for itself disqualify it as a worthy successor to the KJV.

We refer our readers to the three accompanying articles for the data on which these general observations are based.

It is apparent that each of the versions under consideration has certain strengths and certain weaknesses. The same is true, of course, of the KJV. Everything considered, it appears that there is no contemporary version completely acceptable. And in all probability there never will be such a version. Two things we look for in a contemporary translation are fidelity to the original text and beauty of style. But as our committee chairman has observed about the many modern translations, "If they are beautiful, they aren't faithful; and if they are faithful, they aren't beautiful." Beauty is optional; fidelity is not—just as in a wife. Beauty is subjectively determined; fidelity is objectively determined. Where subjective judgment is involved agreement is unlikely. Thus any modern version that may ultimately be recommended for use in our churches and publications will be one that

contains features with which we shall have to learn to live. In that respect it will be no different from the King James Version.

The Various Versions

Since we have not previously presented background information about the several versions under consideration, we include that information herewith as a part of our report to the Synod. The versions are listed in the order of their appearance.

1 - *The Berkeley Version (1945, 1959, 1969)*

The Berkeley Version in Modern English is chiefly the work of one man, the late Dr. Gerrit Verkuyl, who prior to his death had served as a member of the Presbyterian Board of Education. Dr. Verkuyl resided in Berkeley, California, hence the name. The NT first appeared in 1945, and the OT in 1959. A staff of 19 scholars assisted Dr. Verkuyl in the work on the OT.

In general this version is more dependable and more faithful than NEB or TEV, but less so than NASB and RSV (except in Messianic prophecies where Berkeley is usually reliable). The NT exhibits some of the idiosyncrasies one might expect in a one-man version. In an attempt to eliminate some of these idiosyncrasies and to update the version, the NT was extensively revised and reissued in 1969 together with the OT as *The Modern Language Bible*, subtitled, *The Berkeley Version in Modern English*. The new edition is paragraphed with verse numbers raised at the beginning of each verse. It is footnoted with subject headings at the top of each page. It includes dates for each book as well as for the individual events recorded in the book of Acts.

2 - *The Revised Standard Version (1946, 1952)*

Without question the best known and most widely accepted of the modern versions is the RSV. The RSV is a revision of the ASV of 1901 that in turn was a revision of the English Revised Version of 1881. The NT was published in 1946, the entire Bible in 1952. The text has been revised on several occasions, and a second edition appeared in 1971. The translation was originally authorized by the International Council of Religious Education representing 40 Protestant denominations. In 1929 the Council appointed a Standard Bible Committee to be responsible for the task of studying Bible translations, and in 1937 the Committee was authorized to produce its own revision of the ASV. Authorization for publication of the completed work came from the National Council of Churches in 1951.

More recently a Catholic version of the RSV was approved for use among Roman Catholics. In April of this year the RSV text was employed in the publication of *The Common Bible*, an edition which includes the Apocrypha and is intended for Protestant-Catholic use.

From the very outset the RSV has met with opposition. Some of the opposition stems from those who have a preference for the diction and style of the King James. Others are opposed to it because the National Council of Churches holds the copyright and profits from its sales. Still others oppose it because they contend that the translators were modernists whose higher critical views are arbitrarily reflected in the translation. While it is true that the 32 translators included numerous theological liberals, it is also true that the ultimate test of a translation is not: who did it, but rather: does it say in English what the inspired text says?

As noted previously, numerous OT Messianic prophecies are not adequately translated. The translators' low view of Scripture is also apparent in their tendency to "correct" what they regard as a "corruption" of the original text.

The NT, particularly in later editions, is a generally acceptable translation - not just acceptable, but good. The use of the Nestle text has eliminated the inadequacies of the *Textus Receptus* incorporated into the KJV (cf. Jn 5:4; Ac 8:37; 1 Jn 5:7-8). Objectionable features in the NT include the elimination of the word "begotten" in translating the word *μονογενής* in the familiar John passages. The accusation, however, that the RSV consistently eliminates the deity of Christ cannot be maintained. No translation which lays claim to

scholarship could effectively erase His deity. Yet the rendering of such passages as John 1:18, Acts 20:28, and Romans 9:5, as well as others, does seem to betray the modernistic theological bias of the translators.

The RSV groups thoughts into paragraphs with verse numbers at the head of each verse. Notes and references appear at the bottom of the page.

3 - *New English Bible (1961, 1970)*

The NEB is the product of the churches of the British Isles. The overture to undertake the work originated in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The Assembly invited the Church of England, the Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational churches to join in the venture. These churches authorized the formation of the Joint Committee on Translation in 1947. The original group was augmented a year later by other church bodies in England, Wales, and Ireland, and still later by the Roman Catholic Church, which appointed several representatives to serve as observers.

It was the intention of the Joint Committee that “a completely new translation should be made, rather than a revision, . . . and that the translators should be free to employ a contemporary idiom rather than reproduce the traditional ‘biblical’ English” (Preface). The NT appeared in 1951, the entire Bible with the Apocrypha in 1970. Like most contemporary translations, it is paragraphed. Verse numbers appear in the margins only, notes at the bottom of the page.

The most noteworthy characteristics of the NEB are its pleasing style and its lack of fidelity. It surpasses all the others in readability, but it also surpasses all the others with the possible exception of TEV in the liberties it takes with the original texts. The translation does not reflect a belief in verbal inspiration on the part of the translators, especially in its treatment of Messianic prophecy. (cf. Gn 3:15; 49:10; Is 7:14). We would describe it as a seductively beautiful translation.

4 - *New American Standard Bible (1960, 1971)*

The NASB is a production of the Lockman Foundation of La Habra, California. Like the RSV, the NASB purposes to “present to the modern reader a revision of the American Standard Version in clear and contemporary language” (Foreword). In the preface the producers of NASB state their conviction that interest in the ASV “should be renewed and increased.” They confess to a “disturbing awareness that the *American Standard Version* of 1901 (is) fast disappearing from the scene.”

Those who served on the translation team have remained anonymous, choosing to identify themselves only as conservative Bible scholars. They candidly acknowledge their commitment to the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God. The NASB, they say in the Foreword, “has been produced with the conviction that the words of Scripture as originally penned in the Hebrew and Greek were inspired by God.” Their twofold goal was to adhere as closely as possible to the original languages of the Holy Scriptures and at the same time to obtain a fluent and readable style according to current English usage.

In format the first edition of the NASB is a throwback to the KJV. Verses are printed separately rather than in paragraphs. This seems strange since NASB is a revision of ASV of 1901, and that version has the verses grouped in paragraphs. However, in the World Wide Publications’ *Four Translation New Testament*, the NASB text is presented in paragraph form. In the regular edition notes and references appear in the outer margins of each page.

The NT first appeared in 1960; the complete Bible in 1971. In our judgment the NASB comes closest of those versions under consideration to qualifying as a reliable contemporary version of the Bible.

5 - *TEV and The Jerusalem Bible*

Two other versions which received attention in the faculty study were the NT of the American Bible Society’s TEV, popularly called-*Good News For Modern Man*, and *The Jerusalem Bible*, a production of Roman Catholics in England.

The TEV is not yet a complete Bible, and therefore warranted only limited consideration. The NT appeared in 1966, the Psalms in 1970. Like the Berkeley version, TEV is primarily the work of one man, Dr.

Paul Bratcher of the American Bible Society. An evaluation of the TEV that reflects the faculty's convictions appeared in the March 11, 1973, issue of *The Northwestern Lutheran*. The format of the TEV is most appealing. It is paragraphed with bold type headings for each section. Parallel accounts are indicated in parentheses beneath the headings. Verses not in the best manuscripts are bracketed. Simple line drawings illustrating the text make for a delightful bonus.

The Jerusalem Bible appeared in 1966. In essence it is an English version of *La Bible de Jerusalem*, published by Les Editions du Cerf of Paris in 1961, a product of the Dominican Biblical School in Jerusalem. Its introductions and notes are translations from the French, while the text itself was translated from the original texts by many of the same scholars who produced the French version. It is of interest primarily because it reflects the viewpoint of modern Catholic scholarship.

In Conclusion ...

1. A previous article in this series noted that the Lockman Foundation had indicated that it would welcome comments on its NASB translation from our faculty. Nine recommendations for corrections, changes, or marginal readings were forwarded to the Foundation for consideration after the faculty had concluded its Genesis study. Four of the nine recommendations were adopted by the revision board for inclusion in the next edition of NASB. The four recommendations involved Genesis 3:15; 4:1; 7:2, 3 and 22:18. We are appreciative of the board's willingness to consider our suggestions and comments.

2. The adoption of a contemporary translation for use in publications of our Synod would involve us in the use of copyrighted materials. In all probability royalties would have to be paid to the publishers for the privilege of using such materials. The Publishing House is presently seeking to ascertain whether feasible arrangements for our purposes could be arranged with publishers. The payment of royalties for the privilege of quoting one or another translation in a new edition of the Small Catechism could involve considerable sums of money—another factor with which we may have to reckon.

3. The suggestion has been proposed that for a variety of reasons we defer the adoption of any contemporary translation for the time being. For one thing, the adoption of one version could lead to the neglect of others before they are adequately studied and tested. For another thing, the granting of "official status" to one version could curb the free testing of other versions in worship and in the classroom. And finally, to sanction the use of one version before it has been tested practically and adequately in real situations could result in the premature choice of a version later found to be deficient or less satisfactory than another version. The consequence could be the official acceptance of one version and the private employment of another. Thus it is suggested that we do not settle on any one translation now, but that we test various good translations on the grass roots level in the natural setting of chapel and classroom.

How then shall the decision for a successor to King James be made? Shall it be made by going to the arena of practical use, or through evaluative study by a commission or committee resulting in a recommendation to the Synod? Practical need seems to point to the second alternative as the one that best answers the need of the hour. We readily grant that readability and listen-ability can best be determined through practical use in worship and in actual teaching situations. But is it realistic to assume that reliability can be determined in that manner? The test of fidelity is one that must be made by those equipped linguistically to do so.

What is at stake in this matter demands that we proceed with cautious haste. The final decision will in all probability be one with which we will live for years to come.

Report of the Old Testament Team

by John C. Jeske

Anyone who undertakes to review a contemporary Bible translation—let alone four of them—is in for some surprises. Some of the surprises will be pleasant, some will not be pleasant.

The four members of the Seminary faculty in the Old Testament Department (Professors Lawrenz, Vogel, Gawrisch, Jeske), were often pleasantly surprised when they checked Catechism proof passages in the four versions: NASB, RSV, NEB, and Berkeley. (Of TEV, only the Book of Psalms is available). The Committee was so pleased with the translation of more than twenty Old Testament proof texts that it gave them a “superior” rating—denoting a distinct improvement over the translation of the King James Version. A few examples:

“I will make him a helper suitable for him” (Gn 2:18, NASB) is surely preferable to “a help meet for him” (KJV).

“The Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain” (Ex 20:7, NASB) speaks more clearly than KJV’s “hold him guiltless.”

“You shall rise up before the gray-headed, and honor the aged” (Lv 19:32, NASB) will certainly require less explanation when the passage is assigned to school-age children for memorization.

NEB’s rendering of Genesis 32:10 was rated superior: “I am not worthy of all the true and steadfast love and all the faithfulness which Thou hast shown to me, Thy servant. When I crossed Jordan, I had nothing but the staff in my hand; now I have two companies.”

The translation of Deuteronomy 7:9 in the King James Version contains some remarkably imprecise English (“Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations . . .”) Here again NEB has done what to us seems like a superior job of translating: “Know then that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God; with those who love him and keep his commandments he keeps covenant and faith for a thousand generations . . .”

A discovery which furnished a pleasant surprise for the Committee was made when it tabulated its ratings of the four versions. Of the 160 OT Catechism proof passages, RSV was rated satisfactory or better in all but two instances. All that this proves, however, is that the criterion for measuring the caliber of any new Bible translation must be broader than the proof passages of the synodical Catechism. When one studies RSV’s rendering of Messianic prophecies, its shortcomings become painfully apparent. According to RSV, God said to Abraham (Gn 12:3): “I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all families of the earth will bless themselves.” According to this translation, what God is saying is that the nations of the world will point to Abraham as their ideal, either in blessing themselves or one another. The Messianicity of the passage is lost. The same basic misunderstanding of God’s promise to Abraham is evident in RSV’s version of Genesis 22:18, 26:4, and 28:14.

Pastors who have been reluctant to assign Passage 230 to confirmands for memory will recognize Berkeley’s rendering of Leviticus 19:16f. as superior: “You must not go around among your people as a gossip . . . Correct your fellow man lest you incur sin on his account.”

There were, however, a number of unpleasant surprises for the Committee as it carried out its assignment. A good many of these important Old Testament proof passages had to be rated “unacceptable” in their contemporary form, for any one of a number of reasons. The Committee found the following to be the five most common faults:

1. Not faithfully reflecting the thought of the original

Genesis 3:15 (NEB): “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your brood and hers. They shall strike at your head, and you shall strike at their heel.” In this translation, the passage is not Messianic.

Genesis 9:6 (NEB): “He that sheds the blood of a man, for that man his blood shall be shed.” This version loses the truth that God places into *the hands of man* the duty of punishing a murderer.

Genesis 15:1 (NASB): “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great (RSV and Berkeley have a similar rendering). This translation, while grammatically permissible, destroys the parallelism between “shield” and “reward.”

Exodus 31:12f. is rendered by NEB in a way that lends support to Sabbatarianism: “... the Sabbath is a sign between me and you in every generation.”

Job 19:25–27: NASB and NEB both received “unacceptable” ratings. NASB translates מִבְּשָׁרִי “without my flesh” instead of “from within my flesh,” thus removing this Old Testament support for the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. NEB’s translation is based on conjectured readings in the Hebrew text Isaiah 7:14 (NEB): “A young woman is with child ...” No support here for our Lord’s Virgin Birth.

Micah 5:2 (NEB): “... one whose roots are far back in the past, in days gone by.” This translation of Micah’s well-known prophecy predicates antiquity but not eternity for Bethlehem’s most famous Son.

2. Introducing a thought foreign to the original text

Exodus 35:2 (Berkeley): “There are six days for work, but the seventh day shall be a sacred day to you, a day of impressive rest” Introducing the idea of “impressive” finds no support in the original.

Psalms 14:1 (TEV): “Fools say to themselves, ‘God doesn’t matter!’”. The text speaks of the folly of atheists, not the folly of those indifferent to God.

Proverbs 18:22 (NEB): “Find a wife, and you find a good thing; so you will earn the favour of the Lord.” “Earn” introduces the thought of merit, a thought foreign to the words of the sacred writer.

Using the term *Sheol* in a contemporary translation appears to the Committee to be inadvisable, since it introduces a problem into the text. *Sheol*, a transliteration of a Hebrew word, has several meanings in the Old Testament It may mean “deaths,” “the grave,” even “hell,” depending on the context. In profane literature, however, *Sheol* often connotes a shadowy afterworld, the realm of the spirits of the dead. To introduce this term into a contemporary translation is, we fear, to invite misunderstanding of the Scripture, e.g., of Psalm 16:10 (NASB): “Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol.”

3. Omitting important words

Proverbs 1:10 (NEB): “My son, bad men may tempt you and say ...” The Hebrew has a prohibition: “Do not consent.” This prohibition is lost in NEB.

4. Basing the translation on an unacceptable reading

Proverbs 30:17 (NEB): “The eye that mocks a father or scorns a mother’s old age will be plucked out by magpies or eaten by the vulture’s young.” NEB here calls the Masoretic text “unintelligible” and translates a conjectured reading.

Lamentations 3:22 (NEB): “The Lord’s true love is surely not spent” Again, a footnote calls the Hebrew “unintelligible.” The Hebrew verb form is simply a pause form; it should be translated, as does KJV, “... we are not consumed.”

5. Paraphrasing instead of translating

Proverbs 13:13 (NEB): “Mind what you are told, and you will be rewarded.” The TEV version of the Psalms is the version which is most often guilty of paraphrasing instead of translating.

A summary of the Committee’s findings is included in the tables on the concluding page of this article.

Report of New Testament Team I

by Gerald Hoenecke

New Testament Team I included Professors Balge, Becker, Fredrich, and Hoenecke. The committee was assigned the evaluation of translations of passages in our revised Catechism taken from the following New Testament books: Matthew, Luke, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, James, 1 Peter, and the three epistles of John. The study compared the translations listed in the lead article of this issue of the *Quarterly*. Grading of the individual passages was done according to the key set up by the faculty committee on Bible translations.

A total of 219 passages came under consideration. Our tabulations showed the following results:

| | NASB | RSV | NEB | TEV | MLB (Berk) |
|-----------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|------------|
| Superior | 3 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Acceptable | 200 | 185 | 129 | 105 | 174 |
| Acceptable with Reservation | 9 | 21 | 50 | 48 | 29 |
| Objectionable | 3 | 3 | 16 | 25 | 7 |
| Unacceptable | 2 | 3 | 20 | 35 | 6 |

The percentages for the foregoing figures are given in the tabulations at the conclusion of this article. The discrepancy in the total passages is accounted for by the fact that not all of them followed the same readings of the original text, resulting in the omission of a verse in a few instances.

The evaluations or ratings as given are based only in part on style, rather chiefly on fidelity of translation and correctness in presenting the doctrinal content of the individual passages. Thus when two of the versions considered have as large a percentage of unacceptable passages as the NEB (20 or over 9%) and the TEV (35 or 16%), the question must in all seriousness be asked whether they merit further consideration as translations which can be recommended for regular use. This is being said in spite of the fact that both of these versions have many excellent translations.

Our report will of necessity concern itself only with passages from the Catechism which in the translations were found unacceptable, and only with a select number of them.

The two passages found unacceptable in the NASB are: Luke 22:19, 20 and Galatians 3:24. Our objection in the Luke passage is the translation in verse 20: “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.” The Greek reads: τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἢ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματι μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυννόμενον. While grammatically defensible, since the participial clause, το ... ἐκχυννόμενον, agrees in case and number with the word for “cup”, τὸ ποτήριον, the NASB translation cannot be defended on the grounds of usage. Moule (*Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, p 31) gives ten other New Testament passages where participial clauses do not agree in case with the word to which they obviously belong, seven of them in Paul (2 Cor 1:7; Eph 3:17, 18; 4:1–3; Php 1:29, 30; Col 2:2; 3:16). Incidentally, the RSV and NEB have the same translation in a footnote, where they give the variant reading which they did not incorporate into the text itself. The Meyer New Testament Commentary asks with respect to this translation: “What is this supposed to mean?” There simply is no reason for rejecting the translation found in the King James Version: “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”

In Galatians 3:24, the NASB offers no improvement over the KJV, which reads: “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ” While “tutor” (in the margin, “Lit., *a child conductor*”) comes closer to the original παιδαγωγός than “schoolmaster,” the words in the NASB “to lead us to Christ” are no less misleading than the KJV’s “to bring us unto Christ.” In this verse the NEB makes a good attempt in rendering the word παιδαγωγός in understandable English: “a kind of tutor in charge of us.” Following the RSV it also reflects properly the temporal idea of the preposition εἰς, “until Christ should come.” However, without reason, in fact giving a wrong idea, it renders the ἵνα of the next clause as temporal also: “When we should be justified by faith.”

Another unacceptable translation in the RSV is found in Colossians 2:8, where the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου is rendered “the elemental spirits of the world.” All that can be said about this translation is that it is at least consistent with the RSV rendering of the same words in Galatians 4:3. In both of these passages also the NEB and TEV have this unacceptable translation. Just what is the reader to understand by “the elemental spirits of the world”? Besides, quite obviously in both instances (Ga 4:3 and Col 2:8) where Paul uses the expression στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, it has reference to law, or more specifically to legal ordinances. Thus Galatians 4:3 speaks of the legal ordinances under which God’s Old Testament people were “held in bondage” until the coming of Christ and so is another way of describing what Paul had said about their state in 3:23, 24. That this is the meaning also in Colossians is evident from the fact that Paul later in the same chapter, where again στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου occurs, writes: “Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using)?”

Entirely inexcusable and unacceptable is the NEB translation of the Greek λύω with “allow” in Matthew 16:19, correctly translated by both KJV and RSV as “loose.” Here Berkeley follows the NEB, and TEV uses the synonym “permit”. All three have the same unacceptable translation in the parallel passage, Matthew 18:18.

Not only weak, but wholly inadequate and unsatisfactory is the NEB rendering of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Romans 1:17 with “God’s way of righting wrong.” Even worse is its translation of the same words with “God’s justice” in Romans 3:21, followed again by “God’s way of righting wrong” in verse 22. Also in Romans 14:17, “the kingdom of God is ... righteousness, peace ... ” (KJV), δικαιοσύνη is translated as “justice.” Going back to Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:33, we note the same unacceptable translation of this word: “Set your mind on God’s kingdom and his justice before everything else.”

Both the NEB and TEV translations of Romans 3:23, 24 were rated unacceptable. NEB reads: “For all have sinned, and are deprived of the divine splendour, and all are justified by God’s free grace alone, through his act of liberation (this for ἀπολυτρώσεως “redemption”) in the person of Jesus Christ.” TEV reads: “All men have sinned and are far away from God’s saving presence (this for τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ). But by the free gift of God’s grace they are put right (NB!) with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free (this for ἀπολυτρώσεως).”

With the Greek reading διὰ πίστεως and not διὰ πιστῶν in I Peter 1:5, it is strange, to say the least, that the NEB should translate this verse: “and you, *because you put your faith in God*, are under the protection of his power until salvation comes” (italics ours).

Following are some of the other Catechism passages for which we found the NEB translation unacceptable: Matthew 16:26 (“true self” for “soul”); 2 Corinthians 5:18 (“has enlisted us in this service of reconciliation” for, as RSV correctly reads, “gave us the ministry of reconciliation”); 2 Corinthians 5:21 (“so that in him we might be made one with the goodness of God himself” for “that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”). As our tabulation totals show, there are also many other Catechism passages for which we found the TEV translation unacceptable. We call special attention to but one more. In Romans 7:18 TEV translates: “I know that good does not live in me—that is, in my human nature (this for the Greek σάρξ).” To be consistent they do the same in verse 25: “This, then, is my condition: by myself I can serve God’s law only with my mind (here also “by myself” gives a wrong idea), while my human nature serves the law of sin.” Actually they make the same mistake in a number of other passages where σάρξ means the sinful flesh, the old Adam of the Christian. So in Galatians 5:16ff., where they even use as heading for the section: “The Spirit and

Human Nature.” This certainly would be difficult to reconcile with what the Formula of Concord has to say about the distinction that must be maintained between man’s (human) nature and original sin. A number of paragraphs in Article I “Of Original Sin” are devoted to stressing the necessity of observing this distinction (Trigl. 779,2f.; 869,33; 873,47). Suffice it to quote only the first of these: “We believe, teach and confess also that this distinction should be maintained with the greatest care, because this doctrine, that no distinction is to be made between our corrupt human nature and original sin, conflicts with the chief articles of our Christian faith concerning creation, redemption, sanctification, and the resurrection of our body, and cannot coexist therewith.” We might also add that an earlier comparison of translations of Paul’s letter to the Romans revealed further unacceptable renderings, some few in the RSV, a greater number in the NEB and TEV.

Report of New Testament Team II

by Frederic E. Blume

A second team, consisting of Professors Albrecht, Habeck, Schuetze, and Blume, compared the renderings in the same five modern versions of the catechism passages as quoted from the Gospels of Mark and John, the Book of Acts, First Corinthians, Ephesians, First and Second Thessalonians, The Pastoral Epistles, Hebrews, Second Peter, and the Revelation.

A word would be in place as to our team’s thoughts with regard to the terms in which the evaluations of the renderings are expressed: “superior,” “acceptable,” “acceptable with reservations,” “objectionable without disqualifying,” and “unacceptable.” It will be noticed that there is no evaluation termed “accurate.” Though this word is often used to describe a translation, it is hardly a satisfactory one because of the nature of the work of translation itself. Only rarely does an expression in one language bear *exactly* the same thought and connotations in the other language into which it happens to be translated. A good illustration in Bible translation would be the Greek word φοβός, often rendered “fear” but which to the Greek had a range of meaning varying all the way from “reverence” and “respect” to downright “terror.” In English there simply is no single term that would convey the wide range of thought expressed by the Greek φοβός. Another reason why the word “accurate” should not be used to describe a translation is that each language has its own idioms, its own special ways of saying things. So, if the thought of the original is conveyed in the receptor language as well as may be, that translation may be described as “adequate,” or “usable,” or “acceptable,” but it should not be described in terms of “accurate” or “inaccurate.”

In our review of the passages used in the catechism from the New Testament books mentioned we found as they were rendered in the NASB that 91.5% were “acceptable” as renderings; 6.7% were “acceptable with reservations.” This means, in general terms, that the reading standing by itself would fall short of our wholehearted approval, but that if it were part of a larger text in use among us, we could accommodate ourselves to it, “learn to live with it” as it were. The “acceptable with reservations” category would fit many passages in the time-honored KJV. While they may reflect the Calvinistic-Reformed theology of the 1611 translation committee and may even lie strongly under the influence of the Latin Vulgate (like “charity” in 1 Corinthians 13), yet they are not incapable of being understood in our Lutheran sense, in the way we must have been understanding the KJV at Galatians 3:24, one quite contrary to that rendering’s verbatim sense. An example of the “acceptable with reservations” rating in the NASB would be John 18:36 “not of this realm,” where however the margin is quite acceptable: “from here.”

In the NASB two readings, or 1:1% of the total, were found “objectionable without disqualifying.” Example: 1 Corinthians 10:16, which could readily open the way to a false understanding of the Lord’s Supper. We found none in the NASB to be “unacceptable,” though twice marginal readings were deemed to be so: John 20:23 and 1 Thessalonians 4:7. One rendering in the NASB received the “superior” rating: “Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name every one who believes in Him has received forgiveness of sins (Ac 10:43).

The NASB, we found, contained few flashes of brilliance and at the same time a relatively small number of places where serious questions or objections could be raised. It is a level, perhaps better, a steady rendering. The language is commonly not so different from our usual language of religious usage as to call attention to itself, but—as must be said of any Bible not from our own confessional fellowship—it simply cannot *in toto* be accepted in the way the *Lutherbibel* was accepted and used by our fathers.

Our team was not quite prepared for the comparatively favorable showing that the RSV made in our tabulations of the results of our evaluating studies. Previous studies had rather warned us that we might expect that the results would be otherwise. However, here are the totals for the RSV in the passages compared by us: “superior,” none; “acceptable,” 89.9%; acceptable with reservations,” 6.7%; “objectionable without disqualifying,” 1.6%; “unacceptable,” none. In four places the margin brought an acceptable reading; there was no unacceptable margin. Our acceptance with reservations had to do with such things as the “ages ago” at 2 Timothy 1:9. Objection without disqualifying was registered for John 1:18, Ephesians 1:13, 1 Corinthians 10:16.

No doubt our totals for the RSV are affected by the fact that ours was a study of select passages. Had certain others been included, the number of objections raised by us would surely have mounted, like one to the “elemental spirits of the universe” of Galatians 4:3 and the interpretation of Philippians 2:13. In the latter case our criticism would have to do also with the choice of manuscript reading which the revisers chose for their version. Earlier editions of the RSV had given Matthew 27:54 as: “Truly this was a son of God!” Later editions have made this: “the Son” and put “a son” on the margin. Something similar has happened at 1 Timothy 3:2, where earlier the reading was: “married only once” but is now: “the husband of one wife.”

Since September 30, 1951, when the RSV was published, certain changes have been made, obviously in response to objections raised. But its text still reflects the insights, and the prejudices, of the scholarly men who worked on it. Our evaluation of it shall have to be that it could not be taken over as our Bible for church and school, for study and devotional reading. There are many splendid things in it; unfortunately it reflects the theological presuppositions of its producers, men who in the ‘50’s were quite thoroughly on record so far as their theological stance goes.

Our studies in two other of the more widely-used modern-speech versions likewise yielded remarkably similar results, but this time in the opposite direction. These two were the NEB and the TEV.

Only 55.5% of the passages in the NEB were rated “acceptable;” 23.6% got the “acceptable with reservations” rating; 9.0% were deemed “objectionable without disqualifying,” and 10.7% were declared “unacceptable.” On the other end of the scale, three passages in the NEB were called “superior.” In three instances marginal alternate readings were found “acceptable.” Viewed as “unacceptable” were John 1:18; John 18:37; 1 Corinthians 8:4, and Ephesians 1:17. “Objectionable without disqualifying” were, for instance 1 Corinthians 15:17; and 1 Timothy 5:4.

The three NEB readings thought “superior” were John 20:23; Acts 7:51, and 1 Thessalonians 4:7.

The NEB is in many ways an exciting version: crisp, sometimes almost breezy, with renderings that call a great deal of attention to themselves. Some are so felicitous as to make a worker in Bible interpretation wish that he had thought of them himself; in other cases the translators display a masterful insight into the finer points of New Testament grammatical and syntactic structure. Occasionally their insights into the problems of textual criticism make one wish that other translators had attained a like degree of competence in this important discipline. Edited by R.V.G. Tasker, the text translated in the NEB has been published in an easily-readable font of Greek type as *The Greek New Testament*, Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, 1964.

Unfortunately, though the revisers show a high degree of attainment in many qualities prerequisite to a good translation, they are so captivated by the demands of linguistic style on the one hand, and on the other are so “turned off” by the requirements of confessional theology, that, while their version often makes good reading and is readily understandable, the earnest theological content of the text is either misrepresented or drastically understated.—The NEB is not our answer.

A study of the TEV (The New Testament) was included in this project because it has been so readily available, is apparently so widely used, and is, at least in many parts, so appreciatively received by many

people. The raciness of its narrative portions is something to which our young people can relate. And to us of more mellow years its line drawings scattered throughout the text can be a sheer delight. But what of the text? Here the box-score reads: 2.8% “superior,” 54.2% “acceptable;” 25.4% “acceptable with reservations;” 9.4% “objectionable without disqualifying;” 8.3% “unacceptable.” This score-sheet runs strangely parallel to that for the NEB, and apparently for somewhat the same reason: contemporary readability is the first consideration rather than a faithful and adequate rendering into English of what it is that the sacred text says.

John 18:36 mishandled elsewhere is found “superior” here. So are 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5:12, and Hebrews 13:7,8,9.

“Unacceptable” because doctrinally misleading are such renderings as Ephesians 5:26 and 1 Timothy 1:9. In the latter, the main thrust of the passage’s thought is missed. Here also belong: Acts 21:18; 1 Corinthians 10:13, and 1 Corinthians 11:24–26.

The TEV, we find, shows a strange mixture of approaches. Occasionally it comes forward with a beautiful application of Luther’s principles of *Dolmetschen* (translating): find out what the text says and means; put that into the language of the people for whom the translation is intended. At other times it would seem that interest in ease and surface clarity has misled the translators into a disregard for what Luther speaks of as the principal difficulty in translating: to find words adequate to reproduce *the solemn majesty, the profound simplicity, the glory and strength* of the Divine Word. He insisted that the translator must approach his task with “the mind of Christ,” and to Luther this meant that to read and translate the Scriptures aright was to keep ever in view the thought that Luther had rediscovered for himself when he had come to a true Scriptural understanding of the words of Paul Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11. Any translation of the Bible not made from this standpoint of Martin Luther’s simply must fail of being acceptable to us. Perhaps in this consideration lies the crux of the matter and our contemporary problem.

Occupying a position halfway between the NASB and RSV on the one hand and the NEB and TEV on the other stands *The New Berkeley Version, The Modern Language Bible* (MLB). From it, 76.4% of the passages are regarded as “acceptable;” 16.8% as “acceptable with reservations;” 3.4% as “objectionable without disqualifying” and another 3.4% as “unacceptable.” None come in for “superior” rating. The MLB has marginal notes but no marginal alternate readings in the usual manner.

This rendering doesn’t often either excite you or irritatingly repel you. Rather than striving to call attention to itself as translation, it rather quietly steers a middle course. A theology of the Reformed persuasion seems to color the thinking and wording of the translators at times, such as at 1 Corinthians 10:16; 1 Timothy 1:9; 1 Corinthians 11:28, 29, yet over three-fourths of the passages tested could be used also in catechetical instruction as they stand in this New Berkeley Version (MLB). It is the other one-quarter that gives us pause.

Tabulation of passages:

| | NASB | RSV | NEB | TEV | MLB (Berk) |
|--|------|-----|-----|-----|------------|
| 0. Superior | 1 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 0 |
| 1. Acceptable | 163 | 160 | 98 | 98 | 136 |
| 2. Marginal Reading Acceptable | 7 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| 3. Acceptable with Reservation | 12 | 12 | 42 | 46 | 30 |
| 4. Objectionable without disqualifying | 2 | 3 | 16 | 17 | 6 |
| 5. Unacceptable | 0 | 0 | 19 | 15 | 6 |
| 6. Marginal reading acceptable | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Separate Team Findings

(The figures in this tabulation are all percentages.)

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------|-----|-----|------|-----|
| <i>Old Testament Team</i> | NASB | RSV | NEB | Berk | TEV |
| Superior | 5 | 4.3 | 6.2 | 6.9 | |
| Acceptable | 85 | 81 | 47 | 81 | |
| Acceptable with Reservation | 8.1 | 11 | 26 | 9 | |
| Objectionable | 6 | 1.3 | 8.8 | 2.5 | |
| Unacceptable | 1.3 | 2.4 | 12 | .6 | |
| <i>New Testament Team I</i> | NASB | RSV | NEB | Berk | TEV |
| Superior | 1.3 | 3.6 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 2.3 |
| Acceptable | 91 | 84 | 59 | 79 | 48 |
| Acceptable with Reservation | 4 | 9.5 | 23 | 13 | 22 |
| Objectionable | 1.3 | 1.3 | 7 | 3.1 | 12 |
| Unacceptable | .9 | 1.3 | 9 | 2.7 | 16 |
| <i>New Testament Team II</i> | NASB | RSV | NEB | Berk | TEV |
| Superior | .6 | 0 | 1.7 | 2.7 | 0 |
| Acceptable | 91 | 90 | 55 | 76 | 55 |
| Acceptable with Reservation | 6.7 | 6.7 | 24 | 17 | 25 |
| Objectionable | 1.1 | 1.6 | 9 | 3.4 | 9.3 |
| Unacceptable | 0 | 0 | 11 | 3.4 | 8.2 |
| <i>COMPOSITE SCORE</i> | NASB | RSV | NEB | Berk | TEV |
| Superior | 2.4 | 2.7 | 3.1 | 3.7 | 1.2 |
| Acceptable | 89 | 85 | 54 | 79 | 51 |
| Acceptable with Reservation | 5.6 | 9.2 | 25 | 12 | 24 |
| Objectionable | 1 | 1.4 | 8.3 | 3.1 | 11 |
| Unacceptable | .8 | 1.7 | 10 | 2.2 | 9.4 |