The Revision of the Reference System in the New Luther Bible

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In 1955 the long task of the revision of the Luther New Testament came to a close; a short article on this subject appeared in The Bible Translator.[1] *The author of the following article was also a member of the revision committee. Readers engaged on or planning a system of references for a new translation or the revision of an older one will be specially interested in the principles followed by the German Committee. They will want to reflect upon the great value of references and yet the inherent possibility that the very selection of references may indicate extensive theological bias.*[2] *Ed.*

New Testament References

The Luther Bible is used today in Germany and in the German speaking diaspora, such as Austria, Rumania and North and South America. The original text of the Luther Bible of 1534 underwent a thorough revision both in 1892 and in 1912 in order to bring it into line with the changed form of the language and developments in scientific research on the original text of the Bible.

In these revisions the system of references and indication of parallel passages found in most editions was retained unchanged. However, in the 1955 revision these were compared with those in Nestle, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (1952) and in the *Tentative Text of the New Testament* (1949, Evangelisch Haupt-Bibelgesellschaft[3]) and revised along the following lines:

1. *References to parallel passages in the Gospels, and to quotations from the Old Testament were retained.* These fall into three categories:
   a. References to parallel passages in the Synoptic Gospels: these were retained virtually unchanged. Nestle provided the criterion for this category. The references were given, as customary, under the section heading, e.g. Mark 6:7-13:

      The sending out of the twelve disciples
      (Matthew 10:1, 9-15; Luke 9:1-6)
      7 And he called to him the twelve . . . etc.

[1] Vol. 8, Oct. 1957, p. 155: Ernest Gess, Conclusion of the Revision of the Luther New Testament.

[2] Principles and procedures regarding a system of references have already been discussed in *The Bible Translator* in the following articles: Pakózdy, The New Revision of the Hungarian Bible, Vol. 3, Jan. 1952, p. 1; Dijk, A New Apparatus of References for the Bible in the Netherlands, Vol. 6, Oct. 1955, p. 169; Matthew, The Revision of the Amharic New Testament, Vol. 7, April 1956, p. 72; Nida, Marginal Helps for the Reader, Vol. 9, Jan. 1958, p. 1.

[3] The *Tentative Text of the N.T.* (1949) attempted to utilize the experience gained through the *Tentative New Testament* (1938); since the chairman of the former committee was very sceptical of the practical use of references, he had reduced their number to a minimum. It was now necessary to examine the matter and decide which point of view was right and carried the most weight.

b. References in the Synoptics to John, and vice versa; in cases of parallel passages these were also placed under the section heading; e.g. at Mt. 14:22-36 is a reference to Mk. 6:45-56 and Jn. 6:16-21. In the case of single verses which are parallel, the reference is put in the margin next to the verse; e.g. at Lk. 22:3 is a reference to Jn. 13:2, 27 and conversely.

c. Quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament: the committee decided to put these references in the text itself, *preceding* the words concerned in the case of literal quotations, e.g. Mt. 21:42,

> Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures (Ps. 118:22-23): 'The very stone which the builders rejected . . . in our eyes'?"

and *following* the words concerned in the case of looser citations, e.g. Jn. 1:23,

> He said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord', as the prophet Isaiah said" (Is. 40:3).

2. *References which facilitate and increase the understanding* of a particular verse or verses were retained, so that Scripture may be interpreted *by* Scripture; these include references which aid:

   a. Identification of persons and places so as to exclude any confusion. At Mt. 11:2, for example, there is a reference to Mt. 14:3, so that there is no doubt as to which John is meant. At 1 Cor. 1:2 there is a reference to Acts 18:1-17 to make clear to the reader when and under which circumstances Paul was in Corinth.

   b. Identification of similar situations in the life of Christ, the apostles or in the Old Testament, e.g., at Acts 7:59-60 (Stephen's death) there is a reference to Lk. 23:34, 46 (the death of Jesus), and conversely. In order to explain the origin of the feast of the Passover, there is a reference at Mt. 26:17 to Ex. 12:18-20.

   c. Identification of similar themes, e.g., compare Lk. 6:20 and Jas. 2:5; Rom. 5:18 and 1 Cor. 15:21-22. The references also show the relationship to the Old Testament of the "sermons" in Acts (such as Acts 2:14-36), the passages in Paul describing the history of the saving activity of God (Heilsgeschichte) such as Rom. 3, and passages in Hebrews and Revelation, wherever the relationship was not given in connection with literal quotations in the text itself.

3. *References were omitted which were either concordance-like, or were references to verses within the chapter.* The revisors found it too much to ask of an ordinary Bible that it should also be a concordance. Often references to names of persons and places and to frequently recurring expressions of little theological importance were omitted, such as the references to the Herodians, Mt. 22:16 and Mk 3:6, and the references to the holy city, Mk. 4:5 and 27:53. Furthermore, references to verses within a chapter were omitted unless the chapter was especially long or difficult in its line of thought.

During the whole of the work of revising the references, it was more the reader who has the wholesome habit of reading passages in their context, that was borne in mind, rather than the reader who looks up isolated verses. The purpose was to interpret Scripture by Scripture. Even though a number of concordance-like references were dropped, the total number of references increased in comparison with the 1912 edition of the Luther Bible. The General Committee examined and approved this revision of the references, and included them in the revised text of the New Testament.

Old Testament References

Meantime the revision of the Old Testament has been begun, including the revision of the references and parallel passages. For the latter the General Committee indicated that the basis should be the Luther Bible of 1912, the Tentative Old Testament of 1955, and, for everything to do with the New Testament, the revised New Testament of 1955. Wherever there is a reference in the latter to a word for word quotation or an allusion to the Old Testament, there *must* be a reference to the New Testament at the O.T. passage.

The work on the New Testament was relatively simple compared with that on the Old Testament. The diverse historical character of the materials composing the Old Testament documents, requires a much greater flexibility in the principles on which it is decided where references are necessary. On the basis of experience with the New Testament and in consideration of these special Old Testament problems, the following principles were decided upon, according to which the work is being completed:

The *purpose* of the references in the Old Testament is, as far as it is possible, to elucidate for the ordinary Bible reader words, sentences, and entire paragraphs in the Old Testament scriptures from these scriptures themselves, and at the same time to bring them under the light of the New Testament by giving references to their influence on the New Testament wherever this can be seen. Because of these very practical aims, references to parallel passages which are of interest purely on the grounds of form criticism or literary criticism are omitted.

The *task* is therefore twofold:

1. To make plain the interrelationships within the various O.T. writings and between these writings themselves, in regard to certain words, sentences, and short passages, and to do this in such a way that these relationships are shown in their historical order of context, namely the primeval history, the history of the patriarchs, the Sinai tradition, the compilation of the Law, the time of the Judges or tribes, the history of the Kings, the Prophets, the Exile, the post-Exilic period and the period of the Wisdom literature.

2. To indicate, in as far as this is possible by means of references, the influence of these words, sentences and narratives with their theological implications, on the Apocrypha and above all on the New Testament.

In order to effect the first of these two requirements, references were given which indicate:

a. *Formal connections* with previous and subsequent passages, e.g., at Gen. 3:2 is a reference to Gen. 2:16.

b. *Parallel words,* if they illuminate the sentence or expression concerned (otherwise this is a matter for a concordance), e.g., at Gen. 21:8 is a reference to 1 Sam. 1:22f. and 2 Macc. 7:27.

c. *Topical parallels,* (or parallels of 'content'), even if the wording or form is quite different, e.g., at Gen. 1:15 is a reference to Is. 40:26, and at Gen. 18:17 to Amos 3:7.

d. *Parallels which expand and develop a thought,* e.g., at Gen. 1:2 is a reference to Ps. 139:12.

e. *Parallels in the tradition,* where the same theme recurs even though it is to be understood in a different sense (this corresponds sometimes to the Synoptic parallels in the New Testament), e.g., at Gen. 12:10-20 there is a reference to Gen. 20:1-18 and Gen. 26:8-11.

f. *Antithetic parallels,* e.g. at Gen. 18:8 there is a reference to Judges 13:16 and Tobias 12:19.

In order to fulfil the second of the above requirements, references were given which indicate:

g. *Quotation parallels,* where passages in the O.T. are verbally or almost verbally quoted, e.g., at Gen. 2:24 there is a reference to Mt. 19:5.

h. *Parallels of fulfilment,* i.e. where an O.T. passage is explicitly stated as fulfilled in the New Testament, e.g., at Is. 40:3 is a reference to Mt. 3:3.

i. *'Transformed parallels',* i.e., passages which are understood in a new way 'in Christ' in the New Testament, e.g.: in the epistles of Paul (at Ex. 13:21 and 14:22 there are references to 1 Cor. 10:1-2); these also occur especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews (e.g. in ch. 9, where the O.T. sacrifices are compared with the sacrifice of Christ), and in the Revelation of John; this kind of parallel occurs least in the Gospels.

Our experience up to now tends to show that the references of the Old Testament must be thoroughly revised, on a theological, not merely formal, external basis, and in particular for obscure places in the text. In following the principles set out above, we decided it was unnecessary to make use of systems of references in foreign language editions. The number of references will, as in the New Testament, be slightly higher than previously. This appears to be justified, if thereby the earnest Bible reader finds easier access to the Holy Scriptures.