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GOOD NEWS FOR MODERN MAN

Many translators who have come to value the version of St. Mark's Gospel in Today's English, *published by the A.B.S. under the title* The Right Time, *will be eager to acquire the New Testament in the same version. In this article the translator introduces the new version. Perhaps in a further contribution he may be able to tell us more about the procedures which were employed. It would be interesting to know, e.g. the extent of assistance received from consultants. Ed.*

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The New Testament in Today's English

Any new translation of the Scriptures into English must justify itself. Why this translation? What need will it meet which has not already been adequately met by existing translations?

Recognizing that, in order to satisfy the needs of all Bible readers in major languages today, at least three different versions are required, the American Bible Society is engaged in preparing and sponsoring translations which will serve the needs primarily of people who have little formal education or who speak the language as foreigners. So the recently published Spanish *Versión Popular* is, in form, style, and vocabulary range, intelligible to all who read Spanish. As Dr William L. Wonderly, who has prepared this translation, says:

> '(It is) a straightforward translation which uses correctly that part of total language resources common to both upper and lower educational levels. It is an auxiliary version for new literates, laboring people, and others unfamiliar with the literary language. But it is also for educated persons who are unused to the archaic language of the traditional church versions, or who desire a plain translation in contemporary language *that places greater emphasis on clarity of meaning than on literary form.*[1]

Today's English Version (T.E.V.) is meant to fill the same needs. It is intended to be accessible and intelligible to all who read English, including both native speakers of a lower level of formal education and those for whom English is an acquired language. It is not a 'simple English' translation, as the term is popularly understood. It is rather a translation into standard 'common' English—by which is meant that form of literary English that is common to all those who speak the language, native and non-native speakers, of a high or a low level of education.[2]

[1] *Bible Society Record*, Vol. III, No. 4 (April 1966), p. 59.

[2] The rationale for such a translation is developed by Dr Wonderly in his forthcoming *Bible Translation into Common Language*, of which notice will be given to readers of this journal when it is published.

To quote from the Preface:

'This translation of the New Testament has been prepared by the American Bible Society for people who speak English as their own mother tongue or as an acquired language. As a distinctly new translation, it does not conform to traditional vocabulary or style, but seeks to express the meaning of the Greek text in words and forms accepted as standard by people everywhere who employ English as a means of communication. *Today's English Version* of the New Testament attempts to follow, in this century, the example set by the authors of the New Testament books who, for the most part, wrote in the standard, or common, form of the Greek language used throughout the Roman Empire. As much as possible words and forms of English not in current use have been avoided; but no rigid limit has been set to the vocabulary employed.'

Format

The text is arranged according to modern practice governing paragraphing, punctuation, capitalization, and quotation marks. The spelling is American.[1] The text is divided into sections; section headings have been adapted from the U.B.S. list. In the Gospels the parallels to the sections are cited immediately underneath the section headings. There are no marginal notes, either for variant readings or alternative renderings. There are no asterisks in the text for the purpose of marking the words defined in the Word List at the end of the volume. It was felt that there is a rather serious psychological disadvantage in having asterisks in the text which outweighs the obvious advantage of such a device. Verse numbers are inserted within the text, at the beginning of the verse (as in the R.S.V.), not in the margin (as in the N.E.B.). Both systems have their advantages, but it was felt that for this edition it was better to enable the reader to know the exact limits of each verse.

The Word List at the end of the volume contains short definitions of some 144 persons, places, and subjects. An Index allows the reader to locate, by page numbers, some 344 different items.

The line drawings illustrating the text are by Mlle Annie Vallotton, a Swiss-born artist living in Paris. Reactions to the use of her illustrations in *The Right Time* (the T.E.V. Gospel of Mark) have strengthened our original conviction concerning the immense value of her drawings, done with so much artistic skill and imagination. They are of such a nature as to be meaningful to the sophisticated and unsophisticated reader alike, irrespective of nationality or culture.

Text

The text followed is that of the Bible Societies' Greek New Testament. There are several passages in which the T.E.V. departs from this text. Space does not permit expounding the reasons for each decision to differ from the text in favor of a variant; perhaps a separate article on this will be of interest.

[1] It is anticipated that a British edition, conforming to British spelling and word usage, may also be eventually printed

It is sufficient here to list some of the more important passages, giving first the reading of the Greek text, followed by the reading adopted by the T.E.V.: Mark 6: 20 *epoiei*, he was doing/*ēporei*, he became disturbed; Mark 6: 22 *tēs thugatros autou Hērōdiados*, his daughter Herodias/*tēs thugatros autēs tēs Hērōdiados*, the daughter of Herodias; Mark 15: 44 *palai*, for a long time/*ēdē*, already; Acts 7: 46 *tō oikō Iakōb*, for the house of Jacob/*tō theō Iakōb*, for the God of Jacob; Acts 10: 19 *duō*, two/*treis*, three; Acts 12: 25 *eis Ierousalēm*, to Jerusalem/*ex Ierousalēm*, from Jerusalem; Rom. 8: 28 *panta sunergei*, all things work together/*panta sunergei ho theos*, God works in all things with; 1 Cor. 13: 3 *kauchēsōmai*, I should boast/*kauthēsomai*, I should be burned; 2 Cor. 8: 7 *tē ex hemōn en humin agapē*, our love in you/*tē ex humōn en hēmin agapē*, your love in us; Heb. 10: 34 *heautous*, yourselves/*heautois*, for yourselves; 2 Pet. 3: 10 *heurethēsetai*, shall be found/*aphanisthēsontai*, shall disappear; Jude 5 *Jēsous*, Jesus/*ho kurios*, the Lord.

In most of these instances a marginal variant was preferred to the text because the textual reading makes little, if any, sense in the context—at least if the Greek words and grammatical construction carry their normal meaning. One of the most notable of these is the textual reading in 2 Pet. 3: 10, which is a well known *crux interpretum*. (One wonders whether P^{72} *heurethēsetai luomena* 'shall be found destroyed' is the true reading, or an ingenious scribal correction; standard rules of textual criticism make one suspect the latter.)

There were also several departures from the text in matters of punctuation. One example is enough: John 4: 35–36 *therismon. ēdē ho therizōn*, harvest. Already the harvester . . ./*therismon ēdē. ho therizōn*, the harvest already. The harvester . . .

There were other departures from the text which do not fall into the normal category. Given the nature of this translation and its intended readers, it was decided that where the omission in the Greek text of clearly secondary material involves a whole verse or more, the passage should appear in the T.E.V. in brackets. There are seventeen such passages: Matt. 17: 21; 18: 11; 23: 14; Mark 7: 16; 9: 44, 46; 11: 26; 15: 28; Luke 17: 36; 22: 43–44; 23: 17; John 5: 3b–4; Acts 8: 37; 15: 34; 24: 6b–8a; 28: 29; Rom. 16: 24.

In a class by themselves are Mark 16: 9–20, and John 7: 53–8: 11. The former appears in the Greek text within double brackets, and it appears in the T.E.V. between brackets; the latter is printed in the Greek text within double brackets at the end of the Gospel of John, while in the T.E.V. it appears within brackets in its traditional position. For purely aesthetic reasons it was decided to combine 7: 53 with 8: 1 as one verse, and suppress the verse number 53, as follows: 'Then everyone went home, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives'.

The T.E.V. also departs from the Greek text in one more particular: all passages in Greek which appear within brackets appear in the T.E.V. text without brackets (excepting the two long ones listed above), including also those rare cases where double brackets are used in the Greek text (e.g. Luke 22: 19b–20).

The T.E.V. has no variant readings, either in margin or in an Appendix.

Vocabulary

No rigid limit was set to the range of vocabulary used. Vocabulary-frequency lists have been used by *The Bible in Basic English*, as well as in Kingsley Williams' *The New Testament in Plain English*. A word list is based upon the frequency with which words occur in written materials; this relies upon external circumstances and does not necessarily demonstrate that a speaker of that language is unacquainted with words less frequently used. Of course it is true that frequently occurring words will more likely be better known—but many words that do not appear in such lists will be just as well known; it just so happens that the occasion for their use is not as frequent. To cite an example: in one set of word lists the noun 'degree' appears in the 1,000-words list, while the verb 'to kneel' does not appear until the 4,000-words list is reached. Yet one may safely assume that 'to kneel' is as well known to the average speaker of English as the noun 'degree'.

The greatest difficulty in employing word lists as authoritative for such a translation is due to the fact that they are drawn up from the gross frequency with which a word is used, without regard to context. But the important factor is whether a given word is normal in the specific context in which it appears. The element of predictability is most important; even in cases where a word is not well known, the context should provide some clue to its meaning. On the other hand, an unusual collocation will make a well known word difficult to understand. One assumes that the two words 'familiar' and 'spirit' are known by most speakers of English; but when the two are brought together by Kingsley Williams in Acts 16: 16, one doubts whether the result is plain English: '. . . we were met by a slave-girl who had a familiar spirit, and brought large profits to her masters by her fortune-telling'.

In preparing the T.E.V., word-frequency lists were consulted, but were not held to be final in determining whether or not a given word was used. In particular, use was made of the lists prepared by the United States Information Agency in its program of editing books into simple English for distribution overseas. Five such lists were made available, ranging from one thousand to five thousand different words.

Obviously it is not possible to translate the New Testament without occasional resource to rarely-used words; in such instances in the T.E.V. these words are defined in the Word List.

Technical and Cultural Terms

It was felt that in the interest of faithfulness most of the technical terms for such items as Jewish and Christian feasts, institutions, and customs should be preserved—such as *Sabbath, Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Tabernacles, Pharisees, Sadducees, elders, Rabbi, prophet, apostle, parable.* All these terms are defined in the Word List. Some technical terms, however, were not retained: 'meeting house' is used for *synagogue*, 'council' for *Sanhedrin*, 'teachers of the Law' for *scribes.*

Such cultural items as weights, measures, money, and hours of the day were given their modern equivalent. The question of money in terms of modern

purchasing power, poses a problem only too well known to translators. This was handled in a variety of ways:

(1) Where the actual worth of the unit is not relevant, the term is represented by a functional equivalent which does not specify its value. In Matt. 17: 24, 27 *didrachma* and *stater* are rendered 'the Temple tax' and 'a coin worth enough for my Temple tax and yours'. In Luke 10: 35 two *denarii* is rendered 'two silver coins'; in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20: 1–16) the *denarius* is first represented by 'the regular wage, a silver coin a day', and subsequently by 'a silver coin'.

(2) Where only the relative worth between two or more sums is the point, an identical relation is maintained in translation, with no strict regard for actual value. In Matt. 18: 24, 28 ten thousand *talents* and one hundred *denarii* are represented by 'millions of dollars' and 'a few dollars'; in Luke 7: 41 five hundred *denarii* and fifty *denarii* become 'five hundred dollars' and 'fifty dollars'; in the parable of the Talents (Matt. 25: 14–30) the relation is expressed by five, two, and one thousand dollars; in the parable of the Minae (Luke 19: 11–27), one, five, and ten gold coins express the relation.

(3) Where the actual worth, or the purchasing power, of the money is important, a culturally relevant equivalent is employed. In Mark 12: 42 two *lepta* and a *quadrans* are represented by 'two little copper coins worth about a penny'; the *assarion* in Matt. 10: 29, Luke 12: 6 is rendered 'penny'. As for the *denarius*, it was arbitrarily assigned the value of one dollar (Mark 6: 37; 14: 5; Luke 7: 41; John 6: 7; 12: 5); the same was done for the *argurion* in Acts 19: 19. In Rev. 6: 6 *dēnarion* was translated 'a whole day's wages'.

All measures were given their modern equivalents: capacity (Matt. 13: 33; Luke 13: 21; 16: 6, 7; John 2: 6; Rev. 6: 6); length (Matt. 5: 41; John 21: 8; Acts 27: 28; Rev. 21: 17) and distance (Luke 24: 13; John 6: 19; 11: 18; Rev. 14: 20; 21: 16). 'A Sabbath day's journey' (Acts 1: 12) is translated 'about half a mile'. In Rev. 14: 20 'blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia' (R.S.V.) was translated 'and blood came out of the wine press in a flood two hundred miles long and about five feet deep'. The hours of the day all appear according to modern usage; specific hours are also used where watches of the night are referred to (Mark 6: 48; 13: 35; Luke 12: 38).

Translational Procedures

Sentences and Clauses. Next in importance to using familiar and non-technical vocabulary is the matter of length and complexity of sentences and the relation of clauses and phrases within the sentence. It is not length as such that makes a sentence difficult to understand; it is rather the complexity of the various parts which make the whole sentence. A long sentence may be easy to understand, a short one hard to understand. Other things being equal, however, a short sentence is easier to assimilate than a long one.

The guiding principle in this is that clarity of meaning and ease of understanding take precedence over form. Faithfulness, of course, is the translator's first, second, third, and last obligation. The question, however, is:

Faithfulness to what? To form or content? Where both can be preserved, the translator has attained the ideal; but where, as is most often the case, the two cannot be preserved together, the T.E.V. takes for granted that it is form which must be sacrificed in the interests of meaning. This raises a whole set of questions, one of which is: Is the translation easier to understand than the original?—that is, than the original was to the original readers. Of course this question admits no final answer; this, in part, is what makes translation an art, not just a science. And any conscientious translator is aware of and admits his subjectivity, compounded of his own prejudices, predilections limitations, and interests. It is the translator himself who knows better than anyone else how poorly he has done his job! But one must be satisfied with less than perfection—or else give up the job altogether.

Unusually long sentences are regularly divided into two or more shorter sentences. Examples of this are: Eph. 1: 3–14 (14 sentences); Rom. 1: 1–7 (7); 1 Pet. 1: 6–9 (5); Heb. 12: 1–2 (5); Heb. 10: 19–22 (4); Acts 8: 14–16 and Gal. 1: 15–17 (3 each).

Chronological or logical order of events or argument is preferred to inverse order. In John 1: 48b the text has: (1) Before Philip called you, (2) when you were under the fig tree, (3) I saw you. The order of events is 2–3–1. T.E.V. translates 3–2–1: 'I saw you when you were under the fig tree, before Philip called you'. The text of John 4: 1–3 has the following: (1) Jesus knew, (2) the Pharisees had heard, (3) Jesus made and baptized more disciples, (4) Jesus left Judea, (5) Jesus went to Galilee. The order here is 3–2–1–4–5. In the T.E.V. the order is 2–3–1–4–5: 'The Pharisees heard that Jesus was making and baptizing. . . . When Jesus heard what was being said, he left . . . and went back. . . .'

Sometimes a sentence which includes more than one verse is so restructured that the material in one verse is shifted to another. Such a case is Acts 8: 27–28, which reads (R.S.V.)[1]: 'And behold, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a minister . . . , had come to Jerusalem . . . [28]and was returning; seated. . . . he was reading. . . .' The T.E.V. has (4 sentences): 'Now an Ethiopian eunuch was on his way home. This man was an important official in charge. . . . He had been to Jerusalem . . . , and was going back in his carriage. As he rode along he was reading. . . .' Another instance is Luke 23: 50–51: 'Now there was a man named Joseph. . . . He was a member of the council, a good . . . man, [51]who had not consented . . . , and he was looking for the kingdom of God.' The T.E.V. has: 'There was a man named Joseph. . . . He was a good . . . man, and waited for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Although a member of the Council, he had not agreed with their decision and action.'

Parataxis is preferred to hypotaxis. This is not a hard and fast rule, but in general co-ordinate clauses are easier to understand than subordinate clauses. Care must be taken, however, not to carry this to extreme, lest the result be a tiresome succession of clauses joined by 'and'. The circumstantial participle may be especially difficult, inasmuch as it is used to denote accompanying circumstances, time, cause, and result. In Mark 1: 5, for example, we read:

[1] Rather than quote the text in (transliterated) Greek, it is preferable to use the R.S.V., which usually follows the Greek in word order and uses the same classes of words as the Greek. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations of the text are from the R.S.V.

'and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins'. What is the relation of 'confessing' to 'they were baptized'? It seems simpler to read, 'They confessed their sins and he baptized them in the Jordan river.' In Luke 20: 36 'they are . . . sons of God, being sons of the resurrection' becomes clearer when translated: 'They are the sons of God, because they have been raised from death'. In Acts 20: 18–21 the text reads: 'You . . . know how I lived . . . , [19]serving the Lord . . . ; [20]how I did not shrink from declaring . . . , and teaching . . . , [21]testifying . . ..' Again, co-ordinate clauses and separate sentences make for greater ease in understanding: 'You know how I spent the whole time I was with you. . . . [19]With all humility and tears I did my work. . . . [20]You know that I did not hold back . . . as I preached and taught. . . . [21]To Jews and Gentiles alike I gave a solemn warning . . .'

The embedding of subordinate clauses, whether governed by participles or adverbs, requires of the reader the ability to keep the information properly stored up and sorted out, as to make sense when the principal part of the sentence (finite verb) is finally reached. Luke 1: 1–4 is a rather complex sentence: 'Inasmuch as many have undertaken to complete a narrative . . . [2]just as they were delivered to us . . . , [3]it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely . . . , to write an orderly account . . . , [4]that you may know . . .' All these different items of information are more easily retained by converting some of the embedded clauses into co-ordinate clauses: 'Many have done their best to write a report . . . [2]They wrote what we have been told . . . [3]And so . . . , because I have carefully studied all these matters . . . , I thought it good to write an orderly account . . . [4]I do this so that you will know. . . .'

Rhetorical questions may be understood by the inexperienced reader as requests for information, not as a way of stating a fact. Not all rhetorical questions are transformed into statements; but in many instances such transformation is required in the interest of ease of understanding. Matt. 5:46 'Do not even the tax collectors do the same?' is translated 'Even the tax collectors do that!' Mark 8: 37 'For what can a man give in return for his life?' becomes 'There is nothing a man can give to regain his life.' Heb. 1: 5 'For to what angel did God ever say . . . ?' is transformed into 'For God never said to any of his angels . . .'

This last example serves to call attention to those questions in which the question mark is placed at the end of a lengthy sentence, of which the greater part is not a question. Such are the cases in which Jesus asks 'Have you never read . . . ?' followed by the Old Testament quotation. Mark 12: 10–11 is one such case: 'Have you not read this scripture:

> "The very stone . . .
> . . . marvelous in our eyes"?'

Here the question mark must be placed outside the quotation mark, because the quotation itself is not a question. It seems simpler to render: 'Surely you have read this scripture?

> "The stone which. . . .
> How wonderful we think it is!"'

Conditional clauses are another rhetorical device for stating an obvious fact. Though formally in doubt—'if' this is true. . . . —yet such a 'determined as fulfilled' conditional clause implies no doubt as to the truth of the matter. Luke 11: 20; 'If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons. . . .' may be rendered, 'No, it is rather by means of God's power that I drive out demons . . .' John 10: 35 'If he called them gods . . .' can be restated, 'and he called them gods. . . .' Rom. 2: 17 'But if you call yourself a Jew. . . .' becomes, 'You call yourself a Jew. . . .' Luke 11: 13 'If you then, who are evil, know how to give. . . .' is translated, 'As bad as you are, you know how to give . . .'

Negative statements may sometimes be transformed into positive statements for ease of understanding. Mark 9: 41 'will by no means lose his reward' may become, 'will certainly receive his reward'. Rom. 1: 16 'I am not ashamed of the gospel' may be rendered, 'I have complete confidence in the gospel'. Such transformation is especially valuable where double negatives are employed: Mark 6: 4 'A prophet is not without honor, except. . . .' —'A prophet is respected everywhere, except. . . .' The common figure of litotes, or understatement, may also be changed into a positive statement: Luke 15: 13 'not many days later'—'after a few days'; Acts 19: 24 'no little business'—'a great deal of profit'; Acts 21: 39 'no mean city'—'an important city'.

Chiasmus is not too frequently used, and in most instances it may be allowed to stand. Sometimes, however, a change will make the statement easier to understand. Phil. 4 'I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints'—'For I hear of your love for all God's people and the faith you have in the Lord Jesus'. Perhaps the most interesting example of chiasmus is the one in Matt. 7: 6: 'Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.' Here the T.E.V. has: 'Do not give what is holy to dogs—they will only turn and attack you; do not throw your pearls in front of pigs—they will only trample them underfoot.'

Figurative Language

The metaphors and similes in the New Testament are so familiar to translators that their meaning seems obvious and apparent. Yet they may offer real difficulty to the reader who has little or no acquaintance with the Scriptures, or to one for whom English is an acquired language. Mark 1: 17 furnishes an example: 'I will make you fishers of men.' So runs the traditional rendering, from A.V. and Douay, through R.V., A.S.V., R.S.V., to N.E.B. and T.T., and including also such other modern language translations as Knox, Schonfield, Montgomery, Berkeley, Confraternity, and Beck. Weymouth varied it with 'fishers for men'. The difficulty is not simply in the metaphor itself, but also with the word 'fisher'. This is not a word that is ever used, outside that particular context, to denote a man who makes his living by catching fish. 'Fisherman' is the *only* word that is appropriate.

Why, then, should Scripture use a word that is otherwise never used? Why, indeed? The answer, of course, is that 'fisherman of men' sounds slightly ridiculous.[1] Charles B. Williams translated 'I will make you fishermen for catching men'—certainly a ponderous rendition! Others have used the verb: 'I will set you to fish for men' (Twentieth Century); 'I will make you fish for men' (Moffat, Goodspeed); 'I will make you go fishing for men' (C. K. Williams). Phillips has 'I will teach you to catch men'. This is what the T.E.V. reads, yet one wishes to preserve, if possible, the immediate verbal relation between 'fishermen' (in verse 16) and 'catch men' (in verse 17)—which Phillips does not do. In verse 16 he has, 'He saw two fishermen . . . casting their nets into the water'. It would seem that a satisfactory relation between the actual and the figurative can be preserved by translating: 'He saw two fishermen . . . catching fish in the lake with a net. Jesus said to them, ' "Come with me and I will teach you to catch men" '.[2]

Metaphors may be changed into similes. Luke 11: 34 'Your eye is the lamp of the body'—'Your eyes are like a lamp for the body'; Rom. 3: 13 'Their throat is an open grave. . . . The venom of asps is under their lips'—'Their throat is like an open grave. . . . And deadly words, like snake's poison, [roll] from their lips'; 2 Cor. 2: 15 'we are the aroma'—'We are like the sweet smell'; Jas. 3: 6 'And the tongue is a fire'—'And the tongue is like a fire'.

Metaphors may also be changed into non-metaphors. There is no need to multiply examples: Luke 1: 32 'the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David'—'The Lord God will make him a king, as his ancestor David was'; Luke 11: 20 'finger of God'—'God's power'; Rom. 1: 13 'I may reap some harvest among you'—'I have wanted to win converts among you'; Rom. 3: 15 'Their feet are swift to shed blood'—'They are quick to hurt and kill'; Rom. 13: 4 'he does not bear the sword in vain'—'his power to punish is real'; 1 Cor. 16: 9 'a wide door'—'a real opportunity'.

Abstract qualities functioning as subjects or objects of events may be replaced by persons having those qualities or attributes. Rom. 13: 10 'Love does no wrong to a neighbor'—'Whoever loves his neighbor will never do him wrong'; 1 Cor. 1: 26 'consider your call'—'remember what you were . . . when God called you'; Jas. 2: 13 'For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy'—'For God will not show mercy when he judges the man who has not been merciful.'

Sometimes it is not necessary to substitute a person for the quality, but only transform the abstract noun into a verb which, by implication, supplies a personal agent. Jas. 4: 4 'friendship with the world is enmity with God'—'to be the world's friend means to be God's enemy'.

[1] It makes no difference whether or not 'fisher' was regularly used in the sixteenth century in that sense; the point is that it is not so used in 1966.

[2] In this connection it should be said that no deliberate attempt has been made in this translation either to imitate or to differ from any other version. With the multiplicity of English versions now existing, it is only inevitable that in many places the wording of the T.E.V. will be identical with one or another version; but none was ever copied. As a matter of practice, other modern versions were consulted only after the first draft had been revised at least once. The versions most often consulted were Twentieth Century, Goodspeed, Weymouth, C. Kingsley Williams, and N.E.B.

Passives

It is sometimes useful to change the passive of the verb into the active voice, and specify the subject of the action. So in Mark 1: 2 'As it is written in Isaiah the prophet' may be rendered, 'As the prophet Isaiah had written'; Matt. 19: 13 'Then children were brought to him' can be translated, 'Some people brought children to Jesus'. Even where the subject is supplied, it may still be useful to transform the passive into the active: Mark 1: 9 'Jesus . . . was baptized by John in the Jordan'—'John baptized him in the Jordan'; Rom. 2: 24 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles'—'The Gentiles speak evil of God's name'.

Under this category may be included those places in which the use of the passive voice in Greek is due to the Semitic tendency of avoiding the use of the name of God. It is not always necessary to transform the verb into the active and name God as the subject of the action, but this is highly desirable where there may be ambiguity, or where by implication the actor may be thought to be human. In the Beatitudes, for example, it is clear that God is the implied actor of the passives in Matt. 5: 4 (shall be comforted), 5: 6 (shall be satisfied), 5: 7 (shall obtain mercy), 5: 9 (shall be called sons of God). Here, then, it is highly desirable to specify God as the actor: 'God will comfort them! . . . God will satisfy them fully! . . . God will show mercy to them! . . . God will call them his sons!' Other instances of the passive used as a circumlocution for divine activity are in the passages which speak of judgment: Matt. 7: 1–2 'Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.' The T.E.V. reads: 'Do not judge others, so that God will not judge you—because God will judge you in the same way you judge others, and he will apply to you the same rules you apply to others' (cf. also Mark 4: 24; Luke 6: 37–38).

Idioms

There is hardly any need to deal with this problem, since it is one that every translator is aware of and deals with. No modern translation will imitate the literal rendition of the A.V. in Mark 2: 19 'the children of the bridechamber'. In other places where this Semitic idiom 'son/child of' is used, a literal translation will not be as ludicrous as 'the children of the bridechamber', but may prove difficult or misleading to readers unacquainted with the Biblical idiom. Some examples follow: Luke 7: 35 'wisdom is justified by all her children'—'God's wisdom . . . is shown to be true by all who accept it; Luke 10: 6 'if a son of peace is there'—'if a peace-loving man lives there'; Luke 20: 36 'sons of the resurrection'—'they have been raised from death'; Matt. 23: 15 'you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves'—'you make him twice as deserving of going to hell as you yourselves are'; Eph. 2: 2 'sons of disobedience'—'the people who disobey God'; Eph. 2: 3 'children of wrath'—'bound to suffer God's wrath'.

Word Classes

Traditional versions in English tend to use the same class of words—substantive, adjective, verb, preposition, *et cetera*—as found in the original. This is a normal tendency, since both English and Greek belong to the Indo-European family of languages; but the result may prove difficult to an inexperienced reader, and it is often more satisfactory to shift to another class. This is particularly true in the cases where nouns (which may be classified as 'object words') are used for events, which may be more clearly represented by verbs, or where nouns are used for abstract qualities, which may be more clearly represented by adjectives or adverbs.

As examples of the first one may cite Rom. 1: 5 'to bring about the obedience of faith'—'in order to lead people . . . to believe and obey'; Jas. 1: 1 'the Dispersion'—'people scattered over the whole world'; 1 Pet. 1: 13 'at the revelation of Jesus Christ'—'when Jesus Christ is revealed'; 1 Pet. 1: 2 'for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood'—'to obey Jesus Christ and be made clean by his blood'.

As examples of the second we may notice Rom. 11: 22 'the kindness and severity of God'—'how kind and how severe God is'; Eph. 4: 2 'with all lowliness and meekness, with patience'—'Be humble, gentle and patient always'; 1. Pet. 3: 20 'God's patience waited'—'God waited patiently'; Rev. 2: 9 'I know . . . your poverty'—'I know that you are poor'.

Ambiguity

Sooner or later the translator comes to grips with this problem. It should not be confused with obscureness, which is quite different. There are some passages in the New Testament which are obscure, that is, of which we—or most of us—don't know the meaning. What does 'because of the angels' in 1 Cor. 11: 10 mean? This is not at all ambiguous—it is obscure. And what about 'being baptized on behalf of the dead' (1 Cor. 15: 29)? What does 'woman will be saved through bearing children' (1 Tim. 2: 15) mean? Or the dative of *pugmē* 'fist' in Mark 7: 3? In these cases the translator, in the picturesque language of a participant in the Translators' Institute in Peru, 'just grits his teeth and translates literally!'

Obscure passages, however, are relatively few. And many that are at first sight quite difficult can be given some relevant sense in their context.

But there are many passages which are ambiguous. Not those that are a deliberate play on words—such as *pneuma* in John 3, or *diathēkē* in Galatians and Hebrews. Such play on words is usually easily recognized, and all the translator has to do (!) is to try to reproduce the word play in his language.

By ambiguity we mean those many places where words or phrases may be understood in two or more different ways. Many translations deliberately perpetuate the ambiguity in the target language; such is the prevailing policy of most committee translations. Other translations settle for one meaning in the text and provide alternative renderings in the margin. Notice, for example, that N.E.B. gives four different renditions of *entos* in Luke 17: 21.

The question posed by an ambiguous passage, of course, is, 'What did the

author mean?' One must assume that the writers of the New Testament books meant to be clear and explicit; one must at least grant that they thought they were being explicit. One must further realize that many passages may be ambiguous for us, separated as we are by time, culture, and language from the original communicative event, but that they were not ambiguous to the original readers. To take one simple example: surely the writer of 1 John meant to be quite unambiguous in writing *hē agapē tou theou* (2: 5), and surely the meaning was quite unambiguously understood by the original readers. For us, however, the literal rendition 'the love of God' is quite ambiguous, for we do not know whether this means the believer's love for God or God's love for the believer. And in such an instance no one will argue that a 'literal' translation is faithful! If the original was unambiguous to its readers, and the translation is ambiguous for its readers, then the translation is not faithful even though it is one hundred per cent literal.

The T.E.V. has no alternative renderings in margin. The translator, therefore, had to choose from among the various possibilities the one meaning which seemed to him most probable, and attempt to express it quite unambiguously in translation. To quote a few examples: Eph. 2: 20 'the foundation of the apostles and prophets'—'the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets'; 2 Cor. 12: 1 'visions and revelations of the Lord'—'visions and revelations given me by the Lord'; 1. Tim. 3: 6 'the condemnation of the devil'—'to be condemned, as the Devil was'; Rev. 1: 1 'the revelation of Jesus Christ'—'the things that Jesus Christ revealed'; Acts 15: 20 'the pollutions of idols'—'food that is unclean because it was offered to idols'.

The problem of ambiguity in the pronominal referents in 1 John is well known; the translator is often hard put to decide whether the pronoun (explicit or implicit in the verb) refers to God or to Christ. Should he not supply it? There is no need to make invidious comparisons; in many places even the N.E.B. consistently clear and unambiguous as it is, is ambiguous. Beginning at 2: 25, for example, and on through verse 29, the modern reader of the N.E.B. cannot tell whether the writer is speaking of God or of Christ. One must simply assume that it was the opinion of the N.E.B. translators that the original readers were also faced with this same ambiguity. But if a translator does not agree with this opinion then he must supply the subject he believes the writer intended. We may cite 2: 27 as an example; the R.S.V. reads: 'But the anointing which you have received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him'. The T.E.V. reads: 'But as for you, Christ has poured out his Spirit on you. As long as his Spirit remains in you, you do not need anyone to teach you. For the Spirit teaches you about everything, and what he teaches is true, not false. Obey the Spirit's teaching, then, and remain in Christ'.

Making Explicit What is Implicit

This brings us, then, to a subject potentially troublesome, and that is the extent to which a translator may legitimately go in making explicit what is

implicit. The need for this is obvious: modern readers do not have the same background information, cultural, historical, and theological, which the original readers shared with the authors of the New Testament books. If, then, the New Testament is to communicate as much to modern readers as it did to the original readers, some of this implicit information must be made available in explicit form.

Some will argue that this should be done only in the margin, or in appendices, or introductions, or any other number of 'Helps for the Readers'. Certainly not all information can be made available in the text; but is no such information allowed in the translated text itself? It does not seem likely that anyone would object to translating the Greek place name *Asia* in the book of Acts by 'the province of Asia', so the modern reader will know that the continent is not meant; nor does it seem likely that anyone would quibble at tendering *esmurnismenon* in Mark 15: 23 by 'mixed with a drug called myrrh'. In neither instance is new information being added to the text; the translator is simply making available to the modern reader, in explicit form, information that was implicitly available to the original reader.

But in dealing with theological issues great caution must be exercised lest the translator introduce into the text interpretations foreign to the author. This salutary caution, however, may keep the translator so tied to the form of the original that the modern reader may be quite at a loss to understand the text. We may take Gal. 5: 5 as example; the R.S.V. reads, 'For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness'. One assumes that 'we wait by faith' is clear; 'we wait through the Spirit', however, is less than clear—still, it may make some sense; but what does 'we wait for the hope of righteousness' mean? It would appear, to one reader at least, to mean that we are waiting to have, sometime, the hope that we shall have righteousness; that is, we do not yet have this hope, but wait to have it some day. It is hard to believe that this was the apostle's meaning when he wrote *hēmeis gar pneumati ek pisteōs elpida dikaiosunēs apekdechometha.* What is the relation of 'hope' to 'righteousness' and what does 'righteousness' refer to? If the translator is convinced that the original readers were able to read this verse with a much greater degree of understanding than the modern reader will have in reading the R.S.V. he may attempt some such rendering: 'As for us, our hope is that God will put us right with him; and this is what we wait for by the power of God's Spirit working through our faith'.

Here, as everywhere else, it is the translator's whole understanding of his task that will determine his method and guide his procedures, as he does his best to attain the ideal of being faithful to his source as a translator, and faithful also to his readers as a servant of the Lord of the Scriptures.

Deficiencies

Here one speaks without any false modesty. It is quite evident that any translation using only a small portion of the total resources of the target language is bound to have deficiencies. The use of a limited vocabulary makes it quite unavoidable that there will be a loss of certain shades of meaning and certain fine distinctions in the original. A translator working under this

handicap hopes, of course, that these are not serious losses—certainly not of such a nature as to distort or weaken the total message of the Scriptures.

There is no small amount of frustration in not having variant readings or alternative renderings. Here again, the translator is restricted by his purpose, and cannot avail himself of the interesting and valuable possibilities afforded by these two devices.

There is a lack of grace in style which one regrets. One would like to have everything—but where clarity and directness of meaning is paramount, the other must often-times be discarded. Notwithstanding this obvious defect, one can only hope that there are places where the text itself is of such a nature as to enliven, dignify and adorn the simple and unpretentious style, and make it pleasing and arresting to the reader.

Given the fact that this version is meant for those who speak English as an acquired language, vivid idioms and figurative language, which are so powerful and meaningful to the native speaker, must be very sparingly used. 'Tis a pity indeed. For the native speaker of English one of the great values of such translations as Phillips and the N.E.B. is their skilful and effective use of idioms and figures of speech. How vivid, arresting, forceful and meaningful is such a rendering as 1 Tim. 1: 6 in the N.E.B., '. . . some people have gone astray into a wilderness of words'; or, 'religion should yield dividends' (1 Tim. 6: 5) or, 'perdition waits . . . with unsleeping eyes' (2 Pet. 2: 3). And one could quote literally dozens of vivid illustrations from the foremost practitioner of the picturesque phrase and happy idiom, J. B. Phillips. What a debt translators owe him!

A translator can do no better, at the end of his work, than to make his own the prayer that Augustine wrote at the end of his treatise on the Trinity:

> My strength and my infirmity are in Thy sight: preserve the one and heal the other. My knowledge and my ignorance are in Thy sight: when Thou hast opened to me, receive me as I enter; when Thou hast closed, open to me as I knock. May I remember Thee, understand Thee, love Thee . . . O Lord the One God, God the Trinity, whatever I have said in these books that is of Thine, may they acknowledge, who are Thine; if anything of my own, may it be pardoned both by Thee and by those who are Thine. Amen.