THE BIBLE TRANSLATOR

Published Quarterly by the United Bible Societies

Vol. 22 No. 3 July 1971

EDITOR: William D. Reyburn
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Jean Dundas
EDITORIAL BOARD: C. Arangaden, Jean-Claude Margot, Heber F. Peacock, William A. Smalley, Roland C. Stevenson, William L. Wonderly.

ROBERT G. BRATCHER

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IN TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION

Dr. Robert G. Bratcher, the translator of the TEV New Testament, is currently director of the TEV Old Testament project.

In preparation for the third edition of the TEV New Testament Dr. Bratcher was requested by the American Bible Society to provide an explanation of the basis for this version and for some of the changes which have been introduced into the text of the TEV. Because the TEV is so widely used by translators, particularly in the preparation of common language versions, Dr. Bratcher's explanation of the nature and purposes of the TEV is presented in this issue of The Bible Translator. *Ed.*

For many years the Bible Societies have been convinced that languages spoken by a large Christian constituency need more than one translation of the Bible. In particular, a translation should be provided which will meet the needs of people who are not Christians, and of Christians who have a low level of formal education, for whom the standard translation may be difficult to understand.

On 15 September 1966, such a translation was published in English, called *The New Testament in Today's English Version*, "Good News for Modern Man". Although this translation has had an unprecedented record of distribution, and has received a warm welcome from many individuals and churches (including the *imprimatur* of Richard Cardinal Cushing, of Boston), there has been some criticism of it based largely on what seems to be a lack of understanding about the principles employed in preparing this translation. We will try, therefore, to explain in this paper the principles on which the TEV New Testament is based, in the hope that it will help people understand its nature and purpose.

1. *A Common Language Translation* The TEV New Testament is a "common language" translation, and as such conforms to the principles set forth and discussed by Dr. William L. Wonderly in *Bible Translations for Popular Use* (United Bible Societies, 1968). This means that it deliberately avoids technical terms wherever possible, and refrains from employing difficult polysyllabic words, using that part of the English language that is common to all who read and write it, irrespective of degree of formal education or of national origin. Several matters are involved in this use of "common English". (1) This is written, not spoken, English, and so conforms to the written style of the language. (2) The range of the vocabulary used is not artificially restricted, and reflects the difference in range between the vocabulary that a reader can produce and one that he can consume; the consumer vocabulary is always greater than the producer vocabulary, that is, people can understand more words than they themselves ordinarily use. (3) Where a rarely used word or expression must be used, what is called "redundant information" may be included in the sentence in order to help the reader understand the word or expression. (4) Slang is avoided, since it is quite short-lived and is usually severely restricted in terms of geography and culture. (5) Regionalisms and provincialisms are avoided, since the translation is intended for people everywhere, so that a "world English" (we could call it a *Koiné* English) is called for. (6) For this same reason, idioms are avoided or else used very sparingly. Idioms are vivid and meaningful for native speakers of the language, but may be misleading or unintelligible for those who know it as a foreign language.

2. *The Principle of Dynamic Equivalence* The TEV New Testament follows what is called the dynamic equivalence principle of translation. Dr. Eugene A. Nida, Executive Secretary of the Translations Department of the American Bible Society, has succinctly defined this principle in the following way: "To translate is to try to stimulate in the new reader in the new language the same reaction to the text as the one the original author wished to stimulate in his first and immediate readers." (See also the article "Good News for Modern Man", a reprint from *The Bible Translator* of October 1967, available from the Translations Department of the American Bible Society.) This means that no attempt is made to translate a given Greek word by the same word in English but always to use the English word or expression that most faithfully and naturally represents the meaning of the Greek word in the context in which it is used. Nor does the translator try to follow the word order or imitate the word classes of the Greek, but seeks to express the meaning of the original as naturally as possible in English. Consequently, the TEV (like the New English Bible and, to a lesser degree, the Jerusalem Bible in English) differs considerably from the King James Version—American Standard Version—Revised Standard Version tradition, in which verbal consistency and formal equivalence often take precedence over natural and idiomatic usage of the English language.

This is not so novel a principle as is sometimes thought; one need only read Luther's translation (New Testament, 1522; Bible, 1534), and his comments on his translational principles, to realize that this was the major

factor in his choice of German language and style. As he said, "Whoever would speak German must not use Hebrew style. Rather, he must see to it—once he understands the Hebrew author—that he concentrates on the sense of the text, asking himself, Pray tell, what do the Germans say in such a situation? Once he has the German words to serve the purpose, let him drop the Hebrew words, and express the meaning freely in the best German he knows." And, more briefly and vividly he said, on translating the Pentateuch, "I endeavoured to make Moses so German that no one would suspect he was a Jew." As Ronald Knox, the British translator of the Bible from the Vulgate, has said: "A translation is good in proportion as you can forget, while reading it, that it is a translation at all."

The translator must follow this principle in the attempt to reach his ideal, which is that the readers of his translation understand as much and as well as did the first readers of the original text. In this attempt, the translator is confronted with the obvious fact that the original writer and his readers had shared information which he did not need to elaborate or specify. This shared information may not be available today, so that at times the modern exegete may not know what the text refers to, although he understands the words. In 1 Cor. 7:36-38, for example, our lack of precise information about the situation in Corinth makes it impossible to know what is the exact relationship between a man and his *parthenos*. It could be a father and his unmarried daughter, or a man and his fiancée. William Barclay, in his recently-published translation of the New Testament, gives three alternative renderings of this passage.

But where there is information implicit in the text itself, the translator may make it explicit in order to allow his readers to understand the meaning of the text. Contrary to what some might think, this does not add anything to the text: it simply gives the reader of the translation explicit information which was implicitly available to the original readers. To identify "myrrh" as a drug in Mark 15:23 is not to add anything to the text; it simply tells the modern reader what the ancient reader knew, that myrrh was used as a narcotic to dull the senses. And to identify "Asia" in Acts 16:6 as a province keeps the modern reader from taking it to mean the modern continent of Asia.

The meaning of idioms and figures of speech must be set forth plainly so that today's readers will understand them as did the readers of the original. Since we do not share the Semitic culture of most of the writers and original readers of the books of the Greek New Testament, we may miss the force and meaning of the figures used. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, for example, we read that Lazarus died and was carried by the angels "to the bosom of Abraham". A literal translation tells nothing to the reader who does not know of the way in which people at that time reclined at feasts, and does not realize that in Jewish circles the hereafter for the righteous was sometimes portrayed as a great banquet in heaven, with Abraham as the host of God's people. The meaning of the phrase is that Lazarus was taken by the angels to occupy the place of honor and intimacy at the right side of Abraham at the heavenly feast. That is why the TEV has, "The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side, at the feast in heaven" (Luke 16:22).

In Matt. 5:41 we read, "If any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles." The verb translated "forces" reflects the right which a Roman soldier in Palestine had of compelling a Jew to carry his pack one mile; this is made clear by translating, "And if one of the occupation troops forces you to carry his pack one mile, carry it another mile."

Even such a slight literary idiosyncrasy as the use of the passive voice will pose problems, if translated literally. Wishing to avoid naming the holy name of God, the Jews would often use a title ("heaven", "power", "the Blessed One", "the Almighty"), or else use the passive voice of the verb, thus making it unnecessary to name God as the actor. But if a translation simply reproduces the verb in the passive, the reader will not know, as did the original readers, that this is a literary convention and that the real actor is God. Matt. 5:7 reads, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." It is probably true that some will understand that the mercy received is from God, not from men. But in order to avoid any uncertainty or ambiguity, it is better to translate straightforwardly, "Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them." So in the other Beatitudes: "God will comfort them . . . God will satisfy them . . . God will call them his sons" (Matt. 5:4, 6, 9). In the same way God is the actor in Jesus' warning against judging others (Matt. 7:1-2): "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" (see also Mark 4:24, Luke 6:37-38).

3. *The Greek Text* The Greek text from which the TEV New Testament is translated is a text based on the most ancient manuscripts now available. It differs considerably from the text used by the King James revisers, which is known as the *Textus Receptus*. This Greek New Testament, which was essentially the work of Erasmus (1516), was based on late and corrupt Greek manuscripts, replete with changes, additions and deletions made by copyists during the centuries when the manuscripts were copied by hand. Many of the changes were accidental, and many were intentional. We now have a Greek New Testament that is much older than the text available in 1611, because it is based on much older and much better manuscripts. It should be remembered that the British scholars, when they revised the King James New Testament in 1881, made over 5,000 changes on the basis of the Greek text; and now even further changes must be made, as a better text is available. The United Bible Societies in 1966 published the Greek New Testament edited by four Biblical textual scholars, Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, and it is this text from which the TEV New Testament was translated. In some places the TEV prefers a marginal variant over the reading which appears in the text itself. (For a list and discussion of these passages, a reprint of "The T.E.V. New Testament and the Greek Text", from *The Bible Translator* of October 1967, is available from the Translations Department of the American Bible Society.)

Most of the differences between the Greek text from which the TEV and other modern translations have been made and the Greek text from which the King James New Testament was made, are the result of additions to the

text made through the centuries by the copyists, which have been removed in modern editions of the Greek New Testament. One of the best-known additions is the doxology at the end of the Lord's Prayer in Matt. 6:13: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." It should be noted that this addition was not in Jerome's Bible, and so is not in Roman Catholic translations, and is omitted by Roman Catholics when they recite the prayer. The passage known as "The Three Heavenly Witnesses" in 1 John 5:7b-8a is perhaps the most famous addition to the Greek text: it was made very late, and is found in one sixteenth-century Greek copy of the New Testament which appears to have been intentionally prepared in order to provide a Greek manuscript witness for this addition, which appeared formerly only in Latin manuscripts. Other spurious additions, now removed on the basis of the witness of older and better manuscripts, are: "through his blood" (Col. 1:14), which was added from the parallel passage in Eph. 1:7; "her firstborn" (Matt. 1:25), added from the parallel in Luke 2:7; the addition of the word "wife" to the phrase "his betrothed" (Luke 2:5); "by Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:9); "and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. 1:2); "from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 1:1); "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last" (Rev. 1:11).

In other passages the scribes changed the original text. In Matt. 19:16-17 the rich young man addresses Jesus as "Teacher" and goes on to ask what he must do to receive eternal life. Jesus replies, "Why do you ask me concerning what is good?" This was changed by copyists to make it conform to Mark 10:17-18, making the young man address Jesus as "Good Teacher" and making Jesus answer him "Why do you call me good?" This harmonizing of parallel passages was widespread in the Gospels. The Lord's Prayer in Luke 11:2-4 is considerably shorter than in Matt. 6:9-13; the scribes added to the Lucan version all the extra petitions in the Matthæan version, so that in the King James the two are similar. In John 6:69 the original "the Holy One of God" was changed to the language of Matt: 16:16, "the Christ, the Son of the living God".

Other changes reflect the desire of the scribes to avoid any statements that might seem inappropriate, or that might appear to conflict with other passages. In Luke 2:33 the evangelist wrote "his father", which the scribes changed to "Joseph"; in 2:43 the evangelist wrote "his parents", which was changed to "Joseph and his mother". Interestingly enough, however, a similar change was not made in 2:41, 48, and the text was left as written by the evangelist, "his parents" and "your father and I". In Matt. 24:36 the scribes omitted the clause "nor the Son", but failed to do the same in the parallel passage in Mark 13:32. In John 9:35 the original "the Son of Man" was changed to "the Son of God". In 1 Pet. 2:2 the concluding words "and be saved" were omitted by the copyists, and thus do not appear in the King James, although they are part of the original text.

In some instances the manuscript evidence is not conclusively in favor of any one of several readings, so that modern translations will differ. The number of men sent out by Jesus (Luke 10:1, 17) is given as 70 by some manuscripts and 72 by others. In John 7:8 the manuscripts are almost evenly divided on whether Jesus said "I am not (*ouk*) going to this feast"

or "I am not yet (*oupō*) going to this feast". In such cases the variant reading may be included in the list of Other Readings and Renderings. Such a list is provided in the appendix of some editions of the TEV New Testament.

4. *Exegesis and Interpretations* Commentators and translators will often not all agree on the meaning of the original text, and this lack of agreement is reflected in the various translations. Consequently, the TEV New Testament will sometimes differ from one or the other of the better-known versions, leading some readers to infer that it is not a faithful and accurate translation of the Greek. Passages which are particularly important, or whose meaning is especially difficult to ascertain with any degree of assurance, may have an alternative rendering, reflecting a different interpretation, in the list of Other Readings and Renderings. Some examples may be cited.

In Phil. 2:6 there is a Greek word (*harpagmos*) which occurs nowhere else in the Greek New Testament, or in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (known as the Septuagint). The text reads, "He was in the form of God, but did not think that equality with God was *harpagmos.*" The King James translated it "robbery", but very few scholars and exegetes would agree that this is the correct meaning of the word in this context. From ancient times commentators and expositors have disagreed over whether the word means (1) something to be kept by force, or (2) something to be acquired by force. The idea of force is present in the word and its cognate verbal and substantival forms, but it is impossible to determine assuredly whether here it means something to be acquired or something to be retained. What did Paul mean? That Christ did not think that equality with God was something to be obtained, or something to be retained? A translator must decide, and make the meaning quite clear. The TEV (along with the American Standard Version, the Revised Standard Version, Weymouth, Knox, Goodspeed, and the New English Bible) gives the idea of acquiring: "but he did not think that by force he should try to become equal with God." Other translations (such as Twentieth Century, Moffatt, Phillips, and the Jerusalem Bible) have the idea of retaining equality with God. In the list of Other Readings and Renderings the TEV supplies this meaning: "but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God."

In Rom. 9:5 the concluding doxology may be read as a separate sentence, referring to God: "May God, who is over all, be praised forever. Amen." Or it may be joined to the preceding clause and taken to refer to Christ: "May he, who is God ruling over all, be praised forever. Amen." Here, again, it is a case where interpreters divide, and where a decision must be made in favor of one or the other interpretation. The TEV has in the text a separate sentence, referring to God; as an alternative rendering in the appendix, it is made to refer to Christ.

Some have charged the TEV with mistranslating the adjective *monogenēs* in John 3:16 by "only" instead of "only begotten" as in the King James. The word is used of Jesus in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9. The word is formed of *monos* "one, only," and the stem (*gen-*) of the verb *ginomai* "to become" (not of *gennaō*, "to beget"). It means "only," "unique," "only one of its kind"—it does not mean "only begotten". It is used of the son of

the widow of Nain (Luke 7:12), of the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:42), and of the boy at the foot of the mountain of Transfiguration (Luke 9:38). It is also used of Isaac (Heb. 11:17) who is called "Abraham's *monogenēs* (son)". Actually Isaac was not the only son that Abraham begot; before Isaac was born Abraham had begotten Ishmael, and much later Abraham begot other sons by Keturah (Gen. 25:1-2). In no sense was Isaac Abraham's "only begotten" son—he was Abraham's unique son, the only one of his kind, the "son of promise" (Gal. 4:22-23). The most appropriate translation of *monogenēs* when applied to Jesus Christ is "only". He is God's unique Son, his only Son in a way that no one else is. Believers in Christ are called God's sons (Rom. 8:14-15); they are begotten by God (1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18), but they are not God's sons in the same way that Jesus Christ is uniquely God's only Son. Those who suppose that the TEV is guilty of innovation in translating "his only Son" in John 3:16 are apparently unaware of the fact that in the first translation of the New Testament from Greek into English in 1525, William Tyndale translated "only Son" (although elsewhere he used "only begotten").

In trying to be clear, a modern translator avoids being vague and ambiguous, and attempts to represent the meaning of the text as simply and precisely as possible. This means that he must make more choices, and more difficult choices, than those made by traditional versions, which often are (deliberately, sometimes) ambiguous. One such passage will illustrate this problem. In Acts 20:7-12 we have the account of Paul's meeting with the Christians in Troas. The passage begins the account of this long evening service with the words, "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread". The first day of the week was then, as now, Sunday; but it began and ended, not at midnight, but at sunset: the first day of the week extended from sunset of (our) Saturday to sunset of (our) Sunday, at which time the second day of the week began. Did the author mean that this evening service began on Saturday night or on Sunday night? Most translations are quite ambiguous, translating simply "On the first day of the week". Commentators and expositors are not unanimous as to the precise day meant by the phrase, and the translator must make a choice. The TEV (along with the New English Bible, the Jerusalem Bible and William Barclay) has Saturday, with Sunday as the alternative rendering.

5. *Contextual Consistency* The precise meaning of a word is determined by the context in which it is used. The practical application of this simple and obvious rule is that it is worse than folly always to translate a given Greek word by the same word in English. The word *dikaiosunē* "righteousness" means one thing in Matthew, another in Paul's letters; *pistis*, usually translated "faith", may mean "faithfulness" or "loyalty" or "pledge"; *sōzō* "to save" may be used in a physical and temporal sense, as well as a spiritual and eternal sense; *kurios* (and its vocative form *kurie*) may mean "Lord" or "lord" or "sir" or "master" or "owner". A translator must decide the precise meaning a word has in the context before venturing to translate the passage.

The word *parthenos* is a case in point. It may have the more general

meaning of a young unmarried woman (or man), or the more restricted sense of one (female or male) who has had no sexual experience. In the first edition of the TEV New Testament "virgin" was used to translate the word in Luke 1:27. This, however, was a case of over-translation, because it is used there only to identify Mary as a young, unmarried female, for which the appropriate word today is "girl", not "virgin", which is used only when lack of sexual experience is emphasized. It was changed, therefore, to "girl" in the second edition, and many readers have seen this as a subtle attempt to minimize or deny Mary's virginity. Such readers appear not to have read on through the paragraph to Mary's response to the angel's announcement of the birth of Jesus in v. 34: "I am a virgin. How, then, can this be?" It is significant that in Greek Mary's answer is not "I am a *parthenos*", but quite idiomatically and explicitly in Greek "I know not a man," for which the natural and precise counterpart in English is "I am a virgin." In Matt.1:23 the meaning of *parthenos* in the quotation from Isa. 7:14 (the Septuagint) is clearly "virgin"; in 2 Cor. 11:2 Paul compares the church at Corinth to "a pure virgin". In the parable in Matt. 25:1-13 the more restricted sense of "virgins" is not intended; the young ladies are simply identified as "girls". Some modern translations have "bridesmaids" but this involves a bit of modernization. In Acts 21:9; 1 Cor. 7:25, 28; and Rev. 14:4 the word is used to designate "unmarried" people. "Virgin" is meant in 1 Cor. 7:34, and "girl" in 1 Cor. 7:36-38.

The greatest number of criticisms have been directed against the translation of the Greek *haima* by "death" or its equivalent in eleven passages about the redemptive death of Christ (Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20; Heb. 10:19; 13:20; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 1:5; 5:9). Some people have charged that the TEV is guilty of distorting the teaching of the New Testament about salvation through the sacrificial death of Christ, insisting that in these passages the only accurate translation is "blood" and nothing else. A rather complete explanation may be given.

In the Bible, both in the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, the word "blood" (*dam* in Hebrew, *haima* in Greek) is often used of the violent death of animals or men, a death caused by something or someone. In Matt. 27:24, 25, for example, Pilate washes his hands before the crowd and says, "I am innocent of the *haima* of this man." The crowd answers back, "May his *haima* be upon us and our children." It is clear and obvious that the subject is the execution, the death, of Jesus, and in Greek it is natural and clear to speak of Jesus' execution as his *haima*. In English, however, the word "blood" does not mean death: it means only the liquid that flows in the veins and arteries of men and animals. Such compound expressions in English as "bloodthirsty", "bloodguiltiness", "spilling blood", "bloodletting" do mean death, but the simple word "blood" alone does not. In translating Matt. 27:24, 25, then, it is only natural that a common language translation that tries to be simple and clear for all readers will use "death" in Pilate's statement and the crowd's reply: "I am not responsible for the death of this man! This is your doing! . . . Let the punishment for his death fall on us and on our children!" The same is true in Matt. 23:35, which speaks of "the murder of all innocent men . . . , from the murder of

innocent Abel to the murder of Zechariah . . . " (see also Matt. 23:30; 27:4; Luke 11:50, 51; 13:1; Acts 5:28; 22:20; Rom. 3:15; Rev. 6:10; 19:2).

There are two passages in which *haima* refers, not to physical death, but to spiritual death. In Acts 18:6 Paul confronts the Jews in Corinth who are opposing him and his message with the words, "Your *haima* be upon your head; I am innocent." Paul does not mean their physical death—he means their spiritual death: "If you are lost, you yourselves must take the blame for it! I am not responsible." In Acts 20:26 he similarly warns the Ephesian elders in his meeting with them in Miletus: "I am innocent of the *haima* of all." The meaning is quite clear, "if any of you should be lost, I am not responsible."

In the passages in which *haima* refers literally to the blood of animals used in sacrifice, the appropriate translation in English is "blood": see Heb. 9:7, 12a, 13, 19-22, 25; 10:4; 13:11.

And there are passages in which *haima* is used of Christ's redemptive death, where the spiritual and symbolic significance of the word is quite clear in the context. It is quite appropriate, then, and accurate, to use the English word "blood" in such passages as John 6:53-56 which speaks of drinking the blood of the Son of Man. No one supposes that the word is used literally in that passage, or in others which speak of being cleansed with the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:14; 10:29; 13:12; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 7:14); of Christ's "sprinkled blood" (Heb. 12:24; 1 Pet 1:2); of his blood, which he took into the heavenly holy of holies (Heb. 9:12); of the blood through which he came (1 John 5:6, 8); of his blood by which the martyrs conquered the Devil (Rev. 12:11). In all these it is obvious, from the context, that "blood" is not meant literally.

The same is true in the passages about the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:25, 27). The blood of Christ is there the symbol of his sacrificial, redemptive death for men.

It is clear, then, why in the eleven passages cited the TEV uses "death" or its equivalent for the Greek *haima*: what the Greek word means is not the liquid that flowed in the veins and arteries of Jesus Christ, but his sacrificial, redemptive death for men. In Col. 1:20, for example, it is much better to translate "God made peace through his Son's death on the cross" than to translate literally, "making peace by the blood of his cross". This is especially true in a translation that wants to be clear to all who read it, including those who have little if any knowledge of the Scriptures or the Christian faith. (N.B.: it should be noted that in Col. 1:14 the words in Greek "through his blood" are not part of the original text; they were added later by Christian scribes, who copied them from the parallel passage in Eph. 1:7.)

There are other passages, of course, that have been criticized, but it would prolong this study unduly to explain them all one by one. All letters which raise questions about any passage in the TEV New Testament are answered.

It may be helpful to conclude with a brief description of the way in which the TEV New Testament was prepared.

For several years the American Bible Society had received requests from Africa and the Far East for a translation specially designed for those who

speak English as an acquired language. It is estimated that some one billion people in the world today speak English as a second language. Late in 1961 a secretary of a Board of Home Missions in this country wrote the Society asking if there were Scriptures available which would be appropriate for use among new literates and among foreign language groups in the United States. As a result of these requests, the American Bible Society decided that the time had come to publish a common language translation of the New Testament in English.

Initial drafts of the translation were sent by the translator to Translations Consultants of the American Bible Society and to the Translations Department of The British and Foreign Bible Society. Comments and suggestions were sent to the translator who had the responsibility of using them as needed. The Gospel of Mark was done first, and in its meeting of 16 September 1963, the Translations Committee of the American Bible Society recommended the publication of Mark. The Board of Managers authorized the publication on 3 October 1963, and the book was published on 16 October 1964, under the title *The Right Time.*

In its meeting of 15 April 1964, the Translations Committee appointed a Consultative Committee to help the translator, consisting of the Rev. Howard M. Beardslee (formerly a missionary in West Africa); the Rev. Dr. Hugo Culpepper (formerly a missionary in Latin America and the Philippines); the Rev. Harold K. Moulton, M.A. (at that time the Deputy Translations Secretary of The British and Foreign Bible Society); Dr. Frederic J. Rex (of the Literature and Literacy Department of the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A.); and the Rev. Dr. Howard Clark Kee (at that time a professor at Drew Theological Seminary and a member of the ABS Translations Committee). Copies of the drafts at various stages were sent individually to these men who responded with comments and suggestions on several portions of the text. Professor Kee, helped by an editorial assistant who went over the manuscript for matters of style, read the whole New Testament and made suggestions on questions of exegesis.

Miss Dorothy Tyler, of Detroit, a literary critic of wide experience, read the whole manuscript and made suggestions concerning correct English usage and natural style. Occasional comments were received from other members of the Translations Department, and some members of the Translations Committee made comments on selected books.

At its meeting of 24 September 1965, the Translations Committee recommended the publication of the New Testament in Today's English Version, "on a provisional basis, subject to revision based on comments from scholars and suggestions from those who use it on the field". The recommendation was approved by the Board of Managers on 7 October, 1965. On 15 September 1966, the American Bible Society published *Good News for Modern Man*, The New Testament in Today's English Version.

Comments and suggestions from readers started coming in, and on 1 October 1967, the second edition of the TEV New Testament was published, incorporating many changes both in style and substance, aimed at making the translation more faithful and accurate, more natural, and easier to

understand. As a result of its use in many parts of the world, and of further comments received since then, a third edition is now being prepared.

No translation ever claims to be perfect, and no one more than the translator himself is aware of a translation's faults and deficiencies. That is why the Bible Societies always welcome positive constructive criticism of the translations they publish. The TEV New Testament has profited immeasurably from the comments and suggestions made by readers in this country and elsewhere. It is in order to demonstrate our gratitude for the help received from so many friends, and to help explain to all interested readers the nature and purpose of the TEV New Testament, that this paper has been written. It is hoped that this will help make this translation even more effective in communicating the Good News of salvation to everyone, as the Bible Societies provide the Bible to all peoples everywhere at a price they can pay and in a language they can understand.

JAN DE WAARD

DO YOU USE "CLEAN LANGUAGE"? Old Testament Euphemisms and Their Translation

Dr. Jan de Waard is a UBS Translations Consultant based in Yaoundé, Cameroun.

I. Introduction

"Clean language" (*lašon naḳî*) is the Hebrew equivalent for "euphemism", and this term is already used in the Midrash Rabba on Genesis. So when it is said of Potiphar (Gen. 39:6) that "he had no concern for anything but the food which he ate", Midrash Rabba on Genesis, Section 86, comments that the expression "the bread which he ate" is a "decent expression" or euphemism for "his marital life".[1]

This raises the question what a euphemism exactly is. Several definitions have been proposed. E.g. a euphemism is a figure by which a less distasteful word or expression is substituted for one more exactly descriptive of what is intended.[2] Or, a euphemism is a figure of speech in which an unpleasant or coarse phrase is replaced by a softer or less offensive expression.[3] However, both definitions are merely descriptive and they do not explain why certain substitutes are used. On the other hand, such an explanation is given in the following definition: a euphemism is a word or expression which is used in ordinary circumstances as a substitute for a taboo word.[4] In the case of a

[1] We are only concerned here with the use of the terminology *lašon naḳî*, not with the question whether it is correct to see here the use of a euphemism. Modern exegesis is inclined to take the expression "the food which he ate" literally, or to see in v.6 a ritual separation, Joseph being in charge of everything except the kitchen.

[2] William Little and C. T. Onions, *The Oxford Universal Dictionary*, Oxford, 1955.

[3] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1955.

[4] E. A. Nida and C. R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Leiden, 1969, Glossary. For a fuller description see the chapter on connotative meaning, esp. p. 91.