

## REVIEW ARTICLES

Barker, Kenneth L. (ed.): **The Making of a Contemporary Translation.** Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1986. 177 pp.

This collection of essays written by fourteen of the translators of the *New International Version* Bible is published in memory of Dr. Edwin H. Palmer, who served as Executive Secretary for the Committee on Bible Translation for the NIV from 1968 until his death in 1980. The last chapter in the book is an article written by Dr. Palmer, which appears here for the first time: "Isn't the King James Version Good Enough? (The KJV and the NIV Compared)."

The essays deal with various aspects of the translation, from literary style to the footnoting system; translation of poetry and Old Testament quotations in the New Testament; textual and exegetical problems, including a chapter explaining and defending the translation of *monogenēs* (*huios*) by "the one and only (Son)," including Heb 11.17, where it refers to Isaac.

Until I read this book I was not aware of the fact that NIV normally translates *Sheol* by "grave." Every place the Hebrew word is used, a footnote ("Hebrew *Sheol*") appears. Dr. Harris finds the notion that Sheol was the vast, underworld dwelling-place of the dead completely out of keeping with the data in the Old Testament itself. "That the Hebrews believed in some underworld like that of the ancient Near East cannot be gotten from the Bible" (pp. 70-71). That "Sheol refers to the place of departed spirits" is for him a rather weird view (p. 69).

Not everywhere, however, is *Sheol* translated "the grave". In Dt 32.22, for example, it is translated "the realm of death below"; Job 17.16a has "down to the gates of death", and Job 26.6a "Death is naked before God". "Sheol and Abaddon" in Pr 15.11, 27.20 is translated "Death and Destruction." In two other passages the whole notion of grave, or the like, is completely abandoned: Is 7.11, "in the deepest depths" (where the Hebrew is "deep as Sheol", contrasted with "high as heaven," which NIV translates "the highest heights"); and Ps 139.8b "if I make my bed in the depths."

The synonymous terms *shachat* and *bûr* are usually rendered "the pit." In Is 14.15 the parallel *Sheol* and *bûr* are translated "the grave . . . the pit" and in Ps 30.3 the parallel *Sheol* and *shachat* are also translated "the grave . . . the pit". And the phrase *'erets tachti* (see Ezek 26.20, 31.14, 16, 18, 32.22) is consistently translated "the earth below." As one NIV translator stated in a public lecture, there is a distinct bias in NIV against the idea of a three-tiered universe, as commonly represented. In Ex 20.4 (//Dt. 5.8), for example, the Hebrew "in heaven above . . . on earth beneath . . . in the waters beneath the earth" is translated "in heaven above . . . on the earth beneath . . . in the waters below."

Some revealing information is given in connection with the translation of O. T. passages that are quoted in the N. T. Here we are told (p. 94) the thinking that guided the translators in rendering "his [that is, the LORD's] Anointed One . . . You are my Son . . . Kiss the Son" in Ps 2.2, 7, 12 (see notes in the *Study Bible* edition):

Although on the historical level one might rightly opt for rendering the references to the king by lower case, on the canonical level one rightly opts for upper case, as in the NIV text. By using upper case in Psalm 2, the NIV

translators expose their orthodox views, not only of inspiration, but also of christology . . . With regard to theology the NIV is matched only by the NASB in its orthodoxy. Moreover, with regard to other kinds of exegetical problems, the NIV is unmatched in its use of proven, modern scholarship.

In Ps 2.9a NIV reads: "You will rule them with an iron scepter . . ." The verb "rule" follows LXX, not MT, which has "you will break them." NIV thus harmonizes this text with Rev. 2.27, 12.5, 19.15. And Ps 4.4a is translated "In your anger do not sin," in keeping with the language of Eph 4.26, where this dictum is placed within quotation marks. The comment is made (p. 91):

This preference of the NIV is based partially on the theological desire to harmonize the Testaments, as can also be seen by its rendering of the imperative as an adverbial phrase ("In your anger do not sin"), conforming the text exactly with Ephesians 4.26.

A quotation from B. B. Knopp aptly states the underlying rationale: "When the Holy Ghost in the New Testament quotes something He says in the Old, He is completely independent of all human versions. He is His own infallible interpreter" (p. 118).

The whole matter had already been neatly summarized by a translator, Dr. Stephen W. Paine, in his comments on the translation of Is 7.14 (printed in the Houghton College Bulletin *Milieu* of December 1978): "We said we must all believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. This was a life-saver because it wiped out a lot of nitpicking." With specific reference to *ha'-almah* he said it could mean "young woman" or "virgin." Since it is quoted in Mt 1.23, he said, "if you believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, you have to believe that Matthew correctly reproduced Isaiah and came out with the Greek word which means only virgin." So if the translator believes that "Matthew is inerrant as well as Isaiah . . . there's only one way the translation can come out to make them both correct." And that's the way NIV comes out, translating both the Hebrew Isa 7.14 and the Greek Mt 1.23 by "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son . . ."

In Dr. Palmer's essay, the King James Version comes in for some rather severe strictures. Dr. Palmer points out that from the point of view of text and language the KJV is no longer satisfactory; he speaks of "verses that the KJV added to the Word of God, even though it did so unwittingly and in all innocence" (p. 143); again (p. 156): "Yet the KJV adds to (and so alters) God's Word . . ." He cites the textual basis of Jn 1.18, which KJV translates "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father." NIV has "but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side." Dr. Palmer, however, cites this as follows: "but God the One and Only [Son], who is . . ." The bracketed word "Son" is not necessarily implied in the NIV text. Dr. Palmer lists 90 words and phrases in the KJV which the current reader will find either unintelligible, or nonsense, or misleading. He cites "judgment" in Am 5.7 as a case in point. Here, and elsewhere, the meaning is "justice." Comments Dr. Palmer: "This misleading KJV translation is found in many other places . . . Think of how the KJV has held back the true meaning of God's will . . ." (p. 146).

This book will reassure those who see the NIV as a translation that combines

sound scholarship with rigid Christian orthodoxy. For those not so convinced, the book may, instead, raise further questions about the validity and merit of many textual, exegetical, and translational decisions.

ROBERT G. BRATCHER

Peter Masumbuko Renju, *A semantic analysis of 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:18*. Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap, 1986. x+122 pp, no price stated.

Or Renju's brief opening sentence is welcome reading for anyone involved in translation work: "This study is translation orientated." The author comes from Tanzania and is obviously familiar with the various translations of the Bible into Swahili. This analysis of 22 verses from 2 Corinthians is his doctoral dissertation at the University of Utrecht.

In *TBT* 35 (July 1984) Hollander, de Jonge and Tuinstra recommended a new type of help for translators which, they said, should contain the following: a formal equivalence translation, an analysis of the entire text, a detailed analysis of individual pericopes, discussion of important lexical items and a summary of issues involved in translating the material analysed. To quite an extent, Renju's work meets these criteria (not altogether surprising, as de Jonge was one of the men who provided help with the thesis).

The Greek text is divided into short spans or units, each span containing either a verbal form or an abstract noun that represents an event. The words in each span (Renju himself refers to the spans as "nuclear structures" or "propositions" or "kernel sentences") are classified semantically using the labels E(vent), O(bject), A(bstract) and R(elation). Renju also gives evidence for dividing the 22 verses into five paragraphs (his term) and for each paragraph he gives a chart on which he groups the spans by means of vertical brackets, the bracketing being being layered, i.e. smaller brackets combine to form larger brackets up to the immediate constituents of the paragraph itself. Each paragraph display is backed up by a detailed discussion of the meaning of its individual spans. The following brief review of some of the issues considered will immediately indicate the value of this information to the translator.

Figures of speech are carefully discussed. For examples, in the first paragraph, 2.14-17, the metaphor of a "smell" or "fragrance" is used and this is explained, along with associated genitive constructions such as "the smell of the knowledge of him". In the next paragraph, 3.1-3, the readers are said to be "our letter", and this, too, is explained, together with the difficult following phrase "written in our hearts".

Similarly, the rhetorical question in 2.16 and the double rhetorical question in 3.1 are carefully considered as to their role in the epistle at this point.

The author is also well aware that the various spans, and bracketings of spans, are linked together semantically and he regularly comments on what these links are. For example, in moving from 3.1 to 3.2, where the Greek uses asyndeton, he says: "This item (the opening statement of verse 2) is in fact the **reason** adduced to support the negative answer implied by the previous rhetorical question" [my