

noticed, first, that HOTTP recommendations did not always coincide with readings adopted by TEV (though some adjustments will be made in future editions); second, that a number of the problems discussed in the *Preliminary and Interim Report* were not serious problems for the translator; and third, that many of the proposed solutions seemed to show little concern for the problems of dynamic equivalence translation.

An analysis of the 155 texts of Exodus discussed in HOTTP showed that in 70% of the cases where TEV did not follow the recommendations of the Preliminary Report, the reason was that TEV was following the Septuagint and/or the Samaritan Pentateuch. In 14 other cases, the problem was avoided by dynamic equivalence translation. Dr. Osborn also analysed divergences between HOTTP and RSV.

He recognized that this kind of analysis did not explain *why* the TEV translators and the HOTTP textual critics were at variance so much of the time. One of the most important factors would be a difference of objective: while the TEV translators are concerned primarily with communicating the *meaning* of the Hebrew text, the members of the HOTTP committee are concerned primarily with the *establishment* of that Hebrew text in its earliest attested form. This entailed a difference of method: while the TEV translators used the method of dynamic equivalence translation, the HOTTP scholars concerned themselves with the formal characteristics of the various witnesses to the text.

Dr. Osborn concludes: "My purpose has not been to draw a 'distinction' into a 'division', but rather to bring some light to a growing uneasiness that is being felt, I suspect, by translators and consultants the more they get into the results of the HOTTP. Both the HOTTP and the Good News Bible are invaluable aids to translators when properly used and understood. May the inevitable 'distinction' between the two become and remain a positive and creative factor in the hands of the translation consultant in contributing to better quality in translation."

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THE "WEAK" AND THE "STRONG" AND PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMAN CHRISTIANS

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It should be axiomatic for the translator of any of Paul's letters to read carefully through the entire letter to discover its contents, themes, and structure prior to beginning to translate. This article is not intended to be a substitute for such careful study, but it is written to help the translator better understand one of the situations in the Christian community at Rome which led Paul to write this letter as he did,¹ and to suggest ways in which an understanding of that situation may lead to more meaningful translations, especially of chapters 14 and 15.

¹ Sam K. Williams has recently written, "The Apostle says quite clearly why he writes (Rom 1.9-15; 15.22-28); what is not clear is why he writes *what* he writes." "The 'Righteousness of God' in Romans," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 99: 245, 1980.

The claim is frequently made that Romans is unlike Paul's other letters in that it was not written to deal with any particular problems in the church there. A. M. Hunter succinctly expresses the view of many scholars: "... none of his letters is so little occasional ... No pastoral concern moves him to write, as in the case of 1 Corinthians."² A number of recent studies have challenged this view and have taken the position that Romans was not written primarily as a summary of Paul's theology but rather because of a specific problem in the Christian community at Rome.³ Paul Minear has written a significant monograph in which he argues that the Christian church in Rome was divided into five factions and that Paul formulated both the content and structure of this letter specifically to deal with these divisions.⁴ I am greatly indebted to Minear's analysis in the study which follows.

New Testament scholars have frequently observed that chapters 1-8 contain the main theological part of the letter. Chapters 9-11 are seen as an aside in which Paul discusses the problem of Israel's rejection of the Christ, and chapters 12-16 are the practical implications drawn from the first eight chapters. A widely-held assumption has been that the exhortations in chapters 12-16 are not directly related to a specific need or problem in the church in Rome.

Minear, on the contrary, argues that chapters 14 and 15 are the "target of the whole epistle."⁵ The Christians were divided into groups of "strong" Christians who despised their "weak" brothers and sisters and "weak" Christians who judged the "strong" Christians. Rather than being a summary of Paul's theology, chapters 1-11 are the theological foundation which is preparing the Roman Christians for the direct admonitions of chapters 14 and 15. As we will soon see, the strong Christians were primarily Gentile Christians and the weak Christians were primarily Jewish Christians. Throughout the letter Paul alternates to which group he speaks more directly.

A careful study of Romans 15:7-13 shows that the problem between the weak and the strong was between Gentile and Jewish Christians.⁶ In verse 8 Paul states that Christ became a servant to the Jews in order to confirm God's promises to the patriarchs, and in verse 9 he states that Christ also became a servant to the Jews so that the Gentiles might glorify God.⁷ Therefore the Jew should praise God among the Gentiles (15:9b), and the Gentiles should rejoice

² A. M. Hunter, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: SCM Press, 1955), 15. Günther Bornkamm expresses this view even more strongly, "... the idea that the theme of Romans and Paul's reflections on it were dictated by conditions obtaining in the church at Rome gets us nowhere." *Paul* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 93.

³ See the essays on both sides of this issue in *The Romans Debate* edited by Karl P. Donfried (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977).

⁴ Paul S. Minear *The Obedience of Faith* (London: SCM Press, 1971).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶ Eugene H. Maly, in a recent commentary on Romans, doubts that such an equation should be made. *Romans* (Wilmington, Del: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1979), 119.

⁷ Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-289, argues that *peritomēs* in 15:8 should be translated as a genitive of origin, expressing that Christ has become a servant from the Jews. This does have the advantage of giving the perfect *gegenēsthai* its full force. Even if Williams is correct on this point, that would not alter the fact that here Paul is trying to show both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians that neither has reason to look down on the other. Christ's ministry was for both Jews and Gentiles.

with the Jews (15.10). Since this was God's purpose in sending Christ, the strong and the weak are to accept one another just as Christ accepted them (15.7). With this attitude there is no basis for either group judging or despising the other group.

In 14.2 Paul says that one person's faith allows him to eat all things, but the person whose faith is weak eats only vegetables. This does not mean that some Christians were vegetarians who would not in principle eat meat, but rather these are Jewish Christians who were concerned about eating meat which may have been offered to pagan gods.⁸ Rather than risk eating meat which may not have been ritually clean, these Jewish Christians abstained from eating meat when they did not know whether it had been previously offered to pagan idols. The Gentile Christians ("the one who eats"—14.3) who came from a pagan background and did not share the scruples of the Jewish Christian must not despise the one who does not eat everything. Nor should the Jewish Christian judge the Gentile Christian, thinking that he is living in a manner more pleasing to God.

The Greek of 14.14 reads, "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. Except to the one who thinks something to be unclean, to that one it is unclean." Verses 14.15-23 as well as 14.2-6 make it clear that *unclean* in verse 14 refers specifically to food.

Paul indicates an additional point of tension in 14.5. Jewish Christians continued to observe Jewish holy days such as the Sabbath and days for fasting. Gentile Christians did not. This led the Gentile Christians to despise their Jewish Christian brothers and sisters who did not fully accept the freedom of the gospel. On the other hand, the Jewish Christians felt a sense of righteous superiority and judged the Gentile Christians as guilty of sinful behavior.

Chapters 14 and 15 are quite explicit in referring to two groups in the church at Rome: (1) the "weak"—14.1, and (2) the "strong"—15.1. But as we said above, Minear finds five groups among the Christians in Rome, and he argues that Paul focuses his one group to another, and at times addresses all Christians at once.

Minear divides the letter as follows:⁹

Section	Primary Audience of Paul's Arguments
1.1-17	All readers, with distinctions recognized
1.18-4.15	Group One
4.16-5.21	All readers, with distinctions recognized
6.1-23	Group Two
7.1-8.8	Group One
8.9-11.12	Group Three

⁸ John W. Drane argues that in Corinth it was the Jewish Christians who did not eat meat sacrificed to idols, and that the Gentile Christians did, since "it was an integral part of their Gentile Christians' doctrine of spiritual freedom and liberty in Christ that was at stake." *Paul: Libertine or Legalist?* (London: SPCK, 1975), p. 123. However, Drane is surely wrong regarding the situation in Corinth. 1 Cor. 8.7 clearly indicates that the "weak" cannot be of Jewish origin. Cf. C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 194.

⁹ Op. cit., 45, note 8.

11.13-13.14

Group Two

14.1-15.32

Alternating between Groups One, Two, and Three

16.1-27

All readers

We cannot here indicate in detail the exegesis which leads to such a division of the letter, but a few comments may help the reader better understand the basis for this division.

1.18-4.15

In this section Paul addresses primarily the weak in faith. The pronoun “you” so prominent in 2.1-6 and 2.17-24 applies to this group, not to all of the Christians in Rome. A key word in this section is *krinō* (2.1, 3, 12, 16, 27; 3.4, 6, 7); it appears elsewhere in Romans only in chapter 14. In this section, when Paul says “we” he means “I, Paul, and you Christians who are Jews.” (Cf. 3.9, “What then? Are we any better?” and 4.1, “What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather according to the flesh discovered?”)¹⁰ In 2.1 Paul says, “Therefore, you are without excuse, you who judge someone else.” The word *judge* is the word used in chapter 14 to describe the action of the weak in faith.

4.16-5.21

In 4.16 Paul clearly shifts his focus from addressing Jewish Christians and turns to address all Christians. In this verse Paul addresses those who are the spiritual children of Abraham, whereas 4.1 spoke to those who are physical descendants of Abraham. Nothing in this section requires us to see a shift in audience until 6.1. Notice what Paul writes in 5.6-8: “Christ died for the ungodly while we were still weak” (5.6). The Greek word translated *weak* (*asthenēs*) is the same word used for the weak in faith in chapter 14. This is a direct reminder to Group Two that Christ died for those Christians whom they despise. Verse 8 says, “Christ died for us while we were still sinners.” This is a direct reminder to Group One that Christ died for those Gentile Christians whom they judged as sinners.

6.1-23

This chapter is primarily addressed to Group Two. The Gentile Christians were reminded by Paul that even though we have freedom in Christ, we do not have freedom to continue to sin. Members of Group Two were despising the weak in faith who continued to hold to the Law of Moses. But Paul refutes what was either the slogan of Group Two or the accusation of Group One against Group Two: “Let us go on sinning so that God’s grace may abound!” (6.14-15). By dying with Christ in baptism, we have died to sin.

7.1-8.8

The Jewish Christians must have been all smiles as they heard chapter 6 read. Surely this would set the Gentile Christians straight! But now in chapter 7, Paul turns to address his Jewish brothers and sisters in the faith. Verse 1 is the clue to recognizing this transition: “. . . for I speak to those who know the

¹⁰ NIV omits the words “according to the flesh” in 4.1 and obscures the fact that 4.1 speaks of Abraham as the father of Jewish Christians (Group One) while 4.16 speaks of Abraham as the father of us all (all Christians in Rome).

Law . . ."¹¹ He now says that just as we died to sin which once held us (6.17), so now we have also, in baptism, died to the Law which once held the Jews captive (7.6).¹² If the strong in faith will accept Paul's teaching in chapter 6, and if the weak in faith will accept his teaching in chapter 7, then there should no longer be tension between the two groups. Rather, they should be able to have "a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom 15.5b-6).

7.7-25 are parenthetical verses in which Paul finally answers the question which has been building up in his readers' minds: Is the law sin (7.7) or did the law which is good cause me to die (7.13)? Surely the impression given by Rom. 3.20; 4.15; 5.13,20; 6.14; and 7.5 would lead one to expect a "yes" to both questions. Paul emphatically answers "no" to both questions (7.7, 12, 13).

8.1 follows naturally from 7.6. In Christ there is no condemnation. The righteous demands of the Law are satisfied not by being enslaved to the Law, but by living according to the Spirit (8.4).

8.9-11.12

Minear thinks that Paul now focuses more directly on Group Three, the Doubtters. It is really impossible to say where exactly Paul slides over from addressing Group One to addressing Group Three. He does state explicitly a change in audience in 11.13. Chapters 9.1-11.12 would be most relevant to Jewish Christians, especially Group Three, who were concerned that God had not been true to his promises to his people if now God accepted all people as his children apart from the Law, as Paul was teaching. Members of Group One were pressuring the members of Group Three to hold fast to the Law. The weak in faith were claiming that to follow Paul's teaching, as they heard it from people such as Aquila and Priscilla (16.3f), would be to assert that God's word had failed (9.6). Paul very carefully refutes such a view in his compact argument in chapters 9-11.

¹¹ The Greek *nomos* does not have the definite article, so many interpreters claim that this is a reference not to the Torah but to law in general, i.e., the legal order. See, e.g., Wm. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 5th ed. 1902), 172. Käsemann says, "Insofar as the Roman community consisted mainly of Gentile-Christians, even the existence of an active Jewish-Christian minority and liturgical contact with the OT could hardly justify our referring this predication to the Torah." *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 187. As for the first objection, we need only indicate that Paul on other occasions used the anarthrous *nomos* to refer specifically to the Law of Moses (e.g. Rom 2.13, 17, 25; 3.31; 5.13, 20). This interpretation is supported by Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon* and by C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 333. As for Käsemann's objections, we would agree that the Christian community in Rome at this time was mainly Gentile, but he fails to notice that Paul shifts back and forth between groups throughout the letter. Such a shift in focus would not have been missed by the Roman Christians.

¹² The recent commentary by Roy A. Harrisville is one of the few which recognizes that Paul alternates to whom he writes in this letter, and although his analysis does not entirely agree with Minear's, he does note that at 7.1 "Paul singles out his Jewish hearers." *Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1980), 99. Harrisville correctly sees that "the argument in chapter 7 . . . is identical to that in chapter 6, though in regard to another aspect of existence apart from Christ . . ." *Ibid.*, 100.

11.13-13.14

Paul explicitly states that he is now addressing Gentile Christians in 11.13ff.¹³ They have no right to be conceited (11.25) or to despise their Jewish Christian brothers and sisters, since it is God's will to have mercy on all people (11.33)—Jews and Gentiles. Minear argues that chapters 12 and 13 are also directed primarily to Group Two. This is difficult to prove, and it may be that all Christians are equally addressed in these two chapters. Certainly some of the exhortations would be more applicable to Christians coming from a pagan background (e.g. 13.13).

14.1-15.32

Beginning with chapter 14, Paul openly addresses the problem which has been a concern throughout the entire letter so far. Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians are in conflict over the place of the Law in the Christian faith. Paul never tries to persuade members of either Group One or Group Two to adopt the position of the other group as regards the Law, although he himself identifies with the strong in faith (15.1). The problem in Rome does not seem to be that Jewish Christians were claiming that observance of the Law was necessary for salvation. That was the situation in Galatia. The problem in Rome seemed to be that Jewish Christians felt that keeping the Law was essential to expressing the Christian faith.¹⁴ The real danger for Paul was that members of Group Three, who had not come to a firm conviction on this matter, would be pressured into acting in a manner inconsistent with their conscience (14.19-23). In these two chapters, he alternates between Groups One, Two, and Three.

If this brief analysis of Romans is correct, then this has a direct relationship to the translation of numerous verses. Some recent translations have taken steps in various degrees to reflect this understanding. In the remainder of this paper I propose to do three things: (1) Indicate those passages and some of the translations which have made this background explicit, (2) indicate some translations of passages which have obscured or, worse, have completely changed the meaning, and (3) suggest additional passages where the translator may need to make this background more explicit in order to preserve the correct meaning.

Rom. 3.22-23

In these verses Paul says that the righteousness of God, which was testified to by the Law and the Prophets, has now been made known apart from the Law. This righteousness of God is through faith to all who believe; and there is no difference, for all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. In the historical context of Paul's ministry and in the context of this letter, when Paul wrote, "there is no difference," he meant that there was no difference between Jews and Gentiles, i.e., between those who tried to observe the Old Testament laws and those who did not (cf. 3.9 and 10.12). The translator could correctly make this explicit by translating the end of 3.22 as "for there is no difference

¹³ Malcolm D. Tolbert incorrectly takes this as a confirmation of his view that the Roman church was entirely Gentile at the time that Paul wrote. "Life Situations and Purpose of Romans," *Review and Expositor* 73:397, 1976. Rather, as in 7.1 this is Paul's way of addressing a specific group within the church in Rome.

¹⁴ Cranfield, op. cit., 690-697, convincingly argues this view.

between Jew and non-Jew.” The *Living Bible* obscures this historical aspect and turns Paul into a twentieth-century evangelist who shows people “a different way to heaven” and calls upon all people to come to Christ “no matter who we are or what we have been like” (3.22b).

Rom. 4.1

As indicated above, Paul is here addressing those Christians in Rome for whom Abraham is “our forefather according to the flesh,” i.e., he is addressing Jewish Christians. The pronoun *our* includes both Paul and the Jewish Christian readers but excludes Gentile Christians.¹⁵ The *Good News Bible* correctly translates this as “What shall we say, then, of Abraham, the father of our race?” The *New International Version* and the Spanish *Versión Popular* translate simply “Abraham our forefather” and “Abraham, nuestro antepasado.” These translations obscure the fact that Paul here means the physical ancestor of those to whom he is speaking at this point rather than the spiritual ancestor.¹⁶

Rom. 4.16

As stated above, Paul now turns to address all readers. The first person plural pronoun at the end of this verse includes both Jews and Gentiles. The translator may want to make this explicit by translating this part of verse 16 as “He is the father of us all—Jews and Gentiles.”

Rom. 7.1

By failing to recognize that Paul shifts back and forth between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, many translations of this verse are incorrect. *Good News Bible* implies incorrectly that Paul is speaking directly to all Roman Christians: “Certainly you will understand what I am about to say, my brothers, because all of you know about law.” *Versión Popular* subtly changes the focus of the verse. While Paul is actually speaking only to those who know the Law¹⁷ *Versión Popular*¹⁸ implies that he is addressing all the Roman Christians and assumes that those among them who know the law will especially understand: “Hermanos, ustedes que conocen la ley ya saben que la ley tiene poder . . .” The French *Bonnes Nouvelles Aujourd'hui* is similar to *Good News Bible*. The *New English Bible* incorrectly translates “law” rather than “Law of Moses.” Lest one think that the *Living Bible* is always wrong, let me point to it as one of the better translations of this verse: “Don’t you understand yet, dear Jewish brothers in Christ, that when a person dies the law no longer holds him in its power?”

¹⁵ The *Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (London: United Bible Societies, 1973), p. 74, states that in languages which must choose between the inclusive or exclusive first person plural, the exclusive form should be used here. But that assumes that Paul is here addressing the whole church which is admittedly “largely Gentile.” The translator should, rather, use the inclusive form of the pronoun *our*.

¹⁶ The *Translator’s Handbook*, 74, states that the words “according to the flesh” may be confusing or superfluous in a number of languages “since a term for *ancestor* indicates specifically this kind of human relationship.” But for Paul, it was necessary to add *kata sarka* to indicate that he does not yet refer to Abraham who is the spiritual ancestor of all Christians. “The implicit thought is that, while we (i.e. the Jews) are Abraham’s children *kata sarka*, Abraham has other children who are his in a different way.” Cranfield, vol. 1, 227.

¹⁷ *É agnoeite, adelphoi, ginōskousin gar nomon lalō . . .* (7.1a).

¹⁸ This and other quotations follow the Latin American edition, but the point made applies equally to the Castilian edition (Ed.)

Rom. 14.5-6

While working with several translation teams in various countries of West Africa, I discovered that most of the translators did not understand the meaning of these verses. One translator explained that Paul was stating that on some days things go better than on other days. For example, before independence in this African country, people would say, "After independence comes, we'll have a better day." The translators simply did not have a sufficient background in Jewish religion to understand verses 5 and 6. From what we have already said, we can now understand that the Roman Christians who thought that some days were more important than other days were probably Jewish Christians. Gentile Christians in Rome did not share the convictions of their Jewish Christian brothers and sisters that the observance of the special days of the Old Testament ceremonial law was binding on Christians. In order to preserve the religious aspect of thinking some days more important than others, the translator may find that he or she needs to make this explicit. A translation of 14.5a might read something like "One person thinks that God considers a certain day more important for worshipping him than other days."¹⁹

Rom. 14.10

It is surprising to discover how many translations have failed to translate the first half of this verse correctly. Paul asks two questions: (1) Why do you judge (*krineis*) your brother? (2) Or why do you (*su*, emphatic) despise (*exoutheneis*) your brother? Here Paul is addressing the weak in faith with the first question. (Cf. 14.3b, "And the one who doesn't eat, let him not judge (*krinetō*) the one who eats.") With the second question he is addressing the strong in faith. (Cf. 14.3a, "The one who eats, let him not despise—*exoutheneitō*—the one who does not eat.")

Beck, in his translation, subtitles this chapter "Weak Christians" and thereby gives the false impression that both questions of verse ten are addressed to the weak in faith. *Living Bible* completely misses the point by translating, "You have no right to criticize your brother or look down on him." The Portuguese *A Boa Nova* similarly mistranslates, "Sendo assim, por que julgas tu o teu irmão ou por que o desprezas?"

Other translations likewise do not clearly indicate that each question is asked of a different person. If one reads Barclay's translation, he would naturally think that Paul was asking two questions of one person, "As for you, why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or, why do you regard your brother with contempt?" Similarly, the *Versión Popular* is an inadequate translation.

Good News Bible correctly makes the distinction in its translation: "You then, who eat only vegetables—why do you pass judgement on your brother? And you who eat anything—why do you despise your brother?"

¹⁹ *LB* correctly captures the meaning in translation: "Some think that Christians should observe the Jewish holidays as special days to worship God. . ." It must be admitted that some interpreters consider the observance of particular days to be a subdivision of the question of food in verse 2, i.e. the reference would be to days of fasting. Others consider this a reference to the distinction made between lucky and unlucky days based on astrology connected with fear of demons. Cf. Käsemann, 368. Cranfield, vol. 2, 690-699, presents a convincing case for the interpretation which I have followed.

Rom. 15.7

All translations which I have examined give a rather literal translation of the first three Greek words of this verse: *dio proslambanesthe allêlous* ("Therefore, accept one another . . ."). In the context of chapters 14 and 15, it is clear that Paul is not stating a timeless principle for all Christians (although it is that, of course), but rather he is saying, "Therefore both you who are strong in faith and you who are weak in faith, accept one another for the glory of God, just as Christ accepted you."

Surely the Christians in Rome would have recognized that in different passages Paul was directing his words most directly to the different groups among their number. We can see this most clearly in chapters 14 and 15, but we have also shown how this is true for the entire letter. The translator of Romans will need to be alert to this fact, and where necessary, make this explicit in the translation.²⁰

²⁰ This article was completed before J. Christiaan Beker's *Paul the Apostle* (1980) became available to the author. It gives some support to the argument stated here.

New from the UBS Information Office

In July 1981 the UBS Information Office, Box 810340, 7000 Stuttgart 80, West Germany, published an important Background Paper by Dr. Heber F. Peacock, UBS Translation Research Coordinator, entitled "Translation Consultants in the United Bible Societies." This paper gives details of the purpose, function, work, qualifications, and selection of UBS translation consultants, and is an invaluable guide for anyone thinking of taking up this work. The Background Paper is available from the UBS Information Office, price \$1.00 per copy including postage.