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A Look at the NEB—OT

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I

THE CANONICAL BOOKS

Alfred von Rohr Sauer

A reviewer of the New English Bible (NEB) is inclined to compare this text with that of the 18-year-old Revised Standard Version (RSV) and the new Jerusalem Bible. Before he compares these three versions, he needs to note the difference in backgrounds in each case. The RSV is, of course, not a new translation, but as the name indicates, it is a revision of the old King James Version. Its purpose is to bring the Authorized Version up-to-date, modernizing words and phrases that might not be intelligible to the reader of the 20th century. The Jerusalem Bible, on the other hand, is largely the product of the Ecole Biblique, the Dominican School of Biblical Studies in Jerusalem. The English version of the Jerusalem Bible has passed through a number of hands, being translated by different personnel than the original Dominican priests of Jerusalem who did the French translation.

Those who engaged in the translation of the New English Bible, on the other hand, set out with the express purpose of producing a Bible translation in the modern vernacular. Deliberately they did not stay close to the King James Version, nor did they even approximate the English Revised Version of 1881—1885 or the American Standard Version of 1901. It is also to be

noted that the New English Bible was intended primarily for study purposes and private reading; it was not intended to become a pulpit or lectern Bible. The NEB differs also from earlier translations in the fact that one committee produced the original Old Testament translation, a second committee did the New Testament version, and a third committee consisting largely of specialists in English language and style provided the final wording of both Testaments.

The American reader will therefore need to be prepared for a number of phrases and idioms that are peculiar to the British style of the English language rather than the American. The exceptions, however, are far less common than the rule, and as a result the American reader will find himself quite at home in the English of this new translation. The best standards of modern Biblical scholarship are maintained throughout the translation; at the same time fidelity to the theology of the Biblical text is safeguarded. In the prose sections of the Old Testament paragraphs are used rather than parallel columns, and the divisions are established on the basis of content rather than along the traditional chapter lines. As a matter of fact, the references to chapter and verse are simply kept in the margins, where they need to be noted only in passing by the reader. This review will follow the basic sections of the Old Testament canon, pointing out the strengths and

the weaknesses of the translation and calling attention to particularly apt or theologically significant readings in the text.

GENESIS TO DEUTERONOMY

(Italicized words indicate the actual text of the NEB.)

Many new readings which are to be preferred to other translations appear in the Pentateuchal section of the NEB. In the garden scene Yahweh walked "in the cool of the day," according to the RSV; the NEB indicates familiarity with the late afternoon in the Near East, namely, *at the time of the evening breeze* (Gen. 3:8). In Yahweh's warning to Cain sin is identified as *a demon* by which he will *be mastered*, if he fails to do well (Gen. 4:7). Useful cross references at Gen. 5:9 and 10:2 indicate that the genealogy of Gen. 5:9-32 is also found in summary in 1 Chron. 1:2-4 and the genealogies from Gen. 10:2-11:26 are also covered by 1 Chron. 1:5-27. Yahweh's resolve never to curse the ground again after the deluge is based in the RSV on the fact that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from youth"; in the NEB the ground will not be cursed on man's account, *however evil his inclinations may be*. (Gen. 8:21)

After the accounts of the flood and the tower of Babel in Genesis 6-11 there is a helpful division of the Book of Genesis into patriarchal units: Abraham and Isaac, chapters 12-26; Jacob and Esau, 27-36; Joseph in Egypt, 37-50. All families on earth, according to the promise of Abram, would *pray to be blessed* as he was blessed (Gen. 12:3). The reason why Abraham's children will return to Canaan only after the fourth generation is the fact that *the Amorites will not be ripe for punishment till then* (Gen. 15:16). The command to

Abraham in Gen. 17:1, "Walk before me and be blameless," becomes in paraphrase *live always in My presence and be perfect*; the dialog concludes with the statement *God ascended and left him*. (Gen. 17:22)

Instead of complaining that there are no men to come in to them "after the manner of all the earth" Lot's daughters regret that males will not approach them *in the usual way* (Gen. 19:31). While Abraham's servant was waiting for Rebecca at the well outside Nahor's city, he spoke to God in his heart (so the Hebrew); the NEB has him *praying silently*, which makes much better English (Gen. 24:15, 45). Later in the same chapter the first meeting of Isaac and Rebecca is described; here the AV reading "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide" is preferable to the NEB's *he had gone out into the open country hoping to meet them* (Gen. 24:63). The translator of Gen. 32:23 recognized what the Jabbok River was like at Peniel; he had Jacob send part of his family *across the gorge*.

Of Shechem's lying with Dinah in Gen. 34:7 it is said in the RSV that "he had wrought folly in Israel"; the NEB charges that *he had done what the Israelites held to be an outrage*. After Tamar was mistaken for a prostitute by her father-in-law, she "put on the garments of her widowhood" (RSV); in the NEB she *resumed her widow's weeds* (Gen. 38:19). Potiphar's wife used quite contemporary idiom in withstanding Joseph: *I gave a loud scream! I screamed for help!* (Gen. 39:14, 18). Jacob's "heart fainted" when he heard that Joseph was alive (so the Hebrew); the NEB paraphrases admirably *he was stunned*. (Gen. 45:26-27)

During the famine in Gen. 47:21 the

NEB reads on the basis of the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint *as for the [Egyptian] people, Pharaoh set them to work as slaves*. This is rightly preferred to the Hebrew "Pharaoh gathered or removed them into the cities." In Gen. 48:22 Jacob speaks about some of the hill country in Palestine which he took from the indigenous Amorites with sword and bow. His words to Joseph in the NEB *I give you one ridge of land more than your brothers*, are preferable on archaeological and geographical grounds to the RSV's "I have given to you rather than to your brothers one mountain slope."

At the burning bush God introduced Himself to Moses as *I AM; that is who I am*, with a footnote giving an option *I will be what I will be* (Ex. 3:14). Of the bloody Nile plague the RSV says that Pharaoh "did not lay even this to heart"; in a better idiom the NEB states that Pharaoh *dismissed the matter from his mind* (Ex. 7:23). Yahweh told Moses that when Pharaoh was about to let him go, he would drive him away completely (so the RSV); the NEB has the Lord say that Pharaoh *will send you packing, as a man dismisses a rejected bride* (Ex. 11:1). On the basis of the Hebrew, sacrifice is to be brought "between the two evenings" in Ex. 12:6; here the NEB rightly paraphrases *between dusk and dark*. On the basis of the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint (LXX) Ex. 13:18 says that *the fifth generation of Israelites departed from Egypt* (thus agreeing with Gen. 15:16); this should be preferred to the Hebrew which has Israel leave Egypt "equipped for battle." At the Reed Sea Yahweh "discomfited the host" (RSV); the NEB says that Yahweh *threw them into a panic* (Ex. 14:24). Jethro used tact

and finesse in commenting on Moses' way of settling disputes and saying, *This is not the best way to do it* (Ex. 18:18). The prohibition of the Decalog *You shall not make wrong use of the name of the LORD your God* will be better understood than the traditional reference to taking the Lord's name in vain (Ex. 20:7). Exacting interest *in advance* was too much like a money-lender to be acceptable to the Covenant Code (Ex. 22:25). When the ancient tent is first mentioned in Ex. 27:21, it is designated *the Tent of the Presence* and a footnote lists the alternate "Tent of Meeting." Thereafter it is consistently referred to as *the Tent of the Presence*: 28:43; 29:4; 29:11; 29:32; 29:44; 30:20; 30:26; 33:7; 35:21; 38:8; 38:30. Only in Exodus 39—40 are tabernacle and tent of presence clearly identified with one another.

The names chosen for the sacrifices in the first three chapters of Leviticus, *whole-offering, grain-offering, shared-offering*, are more in keeping with the nature of the sacrifice than the traditional designations: burnt, meal, peace offerings. The command *to live in arbours for seven days* (Lev. 23:42-43) will probably be more readily understood today than an injunction involving "booths" or "tabernacles."

In Aaron's famous benediction *watch over you* replaces "keep you"; *look kindly upon you* replaces "lift up his countenance upon you" (Num. 6:24-26). The Song of the Ark in the NEB opens along traditional lines, but closes on a new note, *Rest, LORD of the countless thousands of Israel* (Num. 10:35-36). In the star of Jacob prophecy in Num. 24:17 the "sceptre" in the second line is replaced by *a comet*, which helps to complete the parallelism with star. *The*

lowlands of Moab is an improvement over "plains of Moab" in Num. 35:1, as any one will agree who is familiar with the terrain around Jericho and the Jordan.

The end of the Decalog in the Deuteronomic version properly avoids repetition by forbidding a man either to *covet* his neighbor's wife or to *set his heart on* his neighbor's house, etc. (Deut. 5:21). When a Canaanite city is put under the ban (Deut. 13:16), the NEB stipulates that *it shall remain a mound of ruins never to be rebuilt*, which is much better archaeologically speaking than "it shall be a heap forever" (RSV). Deut. 20:8 warns that if a fearful inductee into the military is not sent home, *his comrades will be discouraged as he is*; this is preferable to "lest the heart of his fellows melt as his heart" (RSV). *Squatting* outside and *scraping* a hole with a *trowel* affords a makeshift forerunner of today's more advanced plumbing facilities (Deut. 23:13). *A homeless Aramaean* gets the nod over "a wandering Aramaean" in Israel's earliest credo (Deut. 26:5). The curse of Deut. 28:20 is obviously heightened when it threatens *starvation, burning thirst and dysentery* rather than "curses, confusion and frustration" (RSV). The blessing of Moses in Deuteronomy 33 closes with the assurance to Asher, *Your enemies come cringing to you and you shall trample their bodies under foot*, whereas the RSV simply has "high places" get stamped upon. (V. 29)

A number of readings in the Pentateuch may be subject to criticism. According to the oldest Pentateuchal tradition it was at the time of Seth's birth that men began to *invoke the LORD by name* (Gen. 4:26). Would it have been useful to make some reference to the name Yahweh at this

point? In Ex. 3:15-16 the traditional name JEHOVAH is read twice in the text itself; a footnote indicates that in Hebrew the consonants read YHWH which probably was pronounced YAHWEH. Again in Ex. 6:3 God affirms that he did not let himself be known to the patriarchs by his name JEHOVAH. And in Ex. 34:5-6 God pronounced the name JEHOVAH to Moses and called the name JEHOVAH out loud. In all other instances the proper name of Israel's God, Yahweh, is simply translated *the LORD*. Even in the Great Shema the people are told, *Hear, O Israel, the LORD is our God, one LORD* (RSV places the copula "is" after "our God" rather than before it [Deut. 6:4-5]). Fairness to the tradition in this instance might have been tempered by more attention to the critical evaluation of the ancient divine name.

The translator at another point may have been too sensitive in having Isaac and Rebecca simply *laughing together* (Gen. 26:8) in the fields of Philistia (even the AV had them fondling). It may also be questioned whether the well-known Shilo text in Gen. 49:10 was properly interpreted to mean that the sceptre will not pass from Judah *so long as tribute is brought to him*. It would have been helpful to provide some clue to the significance of the word *precipice*, if that is the way Azazel is to be translated in Lev. 16:8, 10. Was it necessary finally to refer to a bastard as *a descendant of an irregular union* in Deut. 23:2?

JOSHUA TO SECOND KINGS

There are long, sometimes unwieldy paragraphs in the text of the Deuteronomic historian. Here a breakdown into shorter paragraphs would have been welcome. For the most part, however, the readings in this

section are to be commended. After the two spies had been sent *with orders to reconnoitre the country* and had been told by Rahab that the coming of the Israelites had *left no spirit in any* of her countrymen, it was little wonder that the Israelites *raised a great shout and down fell the walls* (Josh. 2:1, 11; cf. 6:20). Yahweh's command to Joshua to *make Israel a circumcized people again* has a more realistic ring than the RSV's "circumcize the people of Israel again the second time" (Josh. 5:2). It is charged that by stealing Achan "broke faith in regard to the devoted thing" (RSV); the NEB asserts much more curtly that he thereby *defied the ban* (Josh. 7:1). At the safe return of Israel to Joshua at Makkedah the RSV's "not a man moved his tongue against any of the people of Israel" is less decisive than the NEB's *not a man of the Israelites suffered so much as a scratch on his tongue* (Josh. 10:21). As in Deut. 13:16, the NEB reflects familiarity with a Near Eastern "tell" by translating Josh. 11:13 *the cities whose ruined mounds are still standing were not burnt by the Israelites*.

In Judges 2:3 the angel of the Lord warns his people that the Canaanites *will decoy you*, and that explains in part why the Lord *made no haste to drive them out* (v. 23). Tragedy and pathos are reflected in the statement that even as *Sisera's brains oozed out on the ground*, his mother was still thinking that Sisera and his men *must be finding spoil . . . a wench to each man* (Judges 4:21). At the Jordan crossing the 300 lappers are properly distinguished from *all the rest [who] went down on their knees to drink, putting their hands to their mouth* (Judges 7:6). To the Shechemites Jotham, the only surviving son of Jerub-

baal, said bitterly: *I wish you joy in Abimelech and wish him joy in you* (Judges 9:19). In plaintive terms it is said that Jephthah's daughter wants to *roam the hills and mourn that she must die a virgin*; more lustily Samson resolves: *I will settle my score with the Philistines* (Judges 11:37; 15:3). After Samson snapped the Philistine bowstrings, the RSV translates "the secret of his strength was not known"; the NEB uses paraphrase, *his strength was not tamed* (Judges 16:9). As the Levite and his concubine drew nigh to Jebus, *the weather grew wild and stormy*; the RSV states simply, "the day was far spent" (Judges 19:11). It may be questioned, however, whether the NEB's *Benjamite* is to be preferred to the more literal "Benjaminite" of the RSV in Judges 20.

When Ruth said to Boaz, *may I ask you as a favor not to treat me only as one of your slave girls*, this was not merely a "thank you" for having been treated as an equal to his own slave girls (so most past interpretations); it was really a winsome request to be treated like something more than any of Boaz's slave girls (Ruth 2:13). Naomi's offer to seek a home for Ruth that it might be well with her is put more succinctly in the NEB: *I want to see you happily settled*. (Ruth 3:1)

In sharp contrast to Yahweh's will in Ezek. 33:11 that the wicked should repent and live, it is said of Yahweh in 1 Sam. 2:25 that He *meant that they* [Eli's sons] *should die*. At the arrival of the ark of the Lord in the jubilant camp of the Israelites, the Philistines said, *these are the very gods who broke the Egyptians and crushed them in the wilderness*; this reading has more of a historical ring than "the gods who smote the Egyptians with every sort of

plague in the wilderness" (RSV, 1 Sam. 4:8). During the twenty years that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim "all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD" (RSV); in the NEB there is a national change of heart after 20 years: *there was a movement throughout Israel to follow the LORD* (1 Sam. 7:2). The translator's decision was a good one to replace "high place" by *hill shrine*, as is done for instance in 1 Sam. 9:19 and throughout the work of the Deuteronomic historian. Instead of simply stating that Saul began prophesying, the text of 1 Sam. 10:10 has Saul *filled with prophetic rapture*. In 1 Sam. 13:16 the NEB should have noted that it made the questionable change from Gebah to *Gibeah* as the place where the Israelite garrison faced the Philistines. The question whether it was simply the NEB's *a spirit from God* or "the evil spirit from God" (RSV) which possessed Saul in 1 Sam. 16:23 is not referred to in a footnote in either translation. The explanation of Nabal's name in 1 Sam. 25:25 finds more adequate expression in the NEB's "*Churl*" *is his name, and churlish his behavior* than in the traditional "Nabal is his name, and folly is with him." (RSV)

David, filled with consternation over the murder of Abner by Joab and Asahel, laments: *King though I am, I feel weak and powerless in face of these ruthless sons of Zeruiah* (2 Sam. 3:39). The words of Nathan to David, *the LORD has laid on another the consequences of your sin*, are charged with much deeper theological significance than the traditional "The LORD also has put away your sin" (2 Sam. 12:13). In typically Semitic fashion *Absalom has looked black ever since Amnon ravished his sister Tamar* (2 Sam. 13:32). By way of

demonstrating his protest Shimei *showered stones right and left on David* and those standing around him (2 Sam. 16:6). Hushai found satisfaction in saying of Ahithophel, his competitor, that *for once* his advice was not good. (2 Sam. 17:7)

In the light of recent research one might ask why the daily menu at Solomon's table did not include exotic "lark-heeled cuckoos" instead of the prosaic *fattened fowl* (1 Kings 4:23). To explain Rehoboam's refusal to listen to the elders in 1 Kings 12:15, it is affirmed *the LORD had given this turn to the affair* in order to make the earlier prophecy of Ahijah come true. After the reference to shrines, pillars, poles, hills, and trees in 1 Kings 14:23-24 there is an effective crescendo in the comment, *worse still, all over the country there were male prostitutes attached to the shrines*. *Time went by* is given preference over the literal "after many days" in the drought account of 1 Kings 18:1. Ahab's words to Ben-hadad, *the lame must not think himself a match for the nimble*, are quite a different quip than the more literal "Let not him that girds on his armor boast himself as he that puts it off" (RSV, 1 Kings 20:11). Instead of bidding Micaiah to let his word be like the word of one of Ahab's 400 prophets, the messenger summarily advises this hated prophet, *and mind you agree with them*. (1 Kings 22:13)

When the people of Jericho presented their cause to Elisha, they had a specific complaint: *The water is polluted and the country is troubled with miscarriages* (2 Kings 2:19); the RSV gives the impression that the soil is unproductive. At the sight of Ahaziah's flight following the death of Jehoram, Jehu gave the Mafia-like order, *Make sure of him too* (2 Kings

9:27). To reassure Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:11, the Lord caused the shadow to turn back ten steps *where it had advanced down the stairway of Ahaz*; here the RSV renders more correctly "by which the sun had declined on the dial of Ahaz."

JOB AND PSALMS

At the beginning of Job one may ask whether putting the Satanic question positively in 1:9—*Has not Job good reason to be God-fearing?*—is to be preferred to the more negative and literal "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Today's doubter, on the other hand, will surely agree with Job's plea to his friends that when one *despairs and loses faith in the Almighty, devotion is due [him] from his friends* (Job 6:14). In the well-known mediator texts the hero twice exudes great confidence, *for look! My witness is in heaven and I know that my Vindicator lives* (Job 16:19; 19:25). Moreover, although the original wording differs in Job 9:33 and 16:21, these two texts are made to express the identical wish, *If only there were one to arbitrate between (us) man and God!*

With all of its permissiveness America is still not ready to read unblushingly about a man being so scared that he has to *piss over his feet* (Job 18:11). Nor is it likely that the American reader will recognize what a *seam* or a *gallery* is in connection with the mining of metals (Job 28:3-4). Again the times of Job 24:1 are not necessarily *the day of reckoning*; they may well be the day desired by Job when God is available for a conference, as in Job 1:6 and 2:1. Job has matters well in hand when he says, *I have come to terms with my eyes, never to take notice of a girl* (31:1). At the other end of this great chapter of self-

clearance, however, Job's climactic boast that "he would draw near to God like a prince" is almost lost in the NEB paraphrase, *I would plead the whole record of my life and present that in court as my defence.* (Job 31:37)

Elihu is deftly introduced with the comment that he *had hung back* until the friends had finished and he could demonstrate that he too *had a furrow to plough* (Job 32:4,17). Was it an ultimatum, however, that he intended when he said in 33:14, *Once God has spoken He does not speak a second time to confirm it?* Or was he merely repeating a wisdom cliché, "God speaks once or twice"? Elihu could argue that if a man has the benefit of a *mediator between him and God [with] the price of his release, then that man will grow sturdier than he was in youth* (Job 33:23,25). Still Job was moved to respond *that it brings a man no profit to find favor with God* (34:9). Therefore Elihu gave Job the summary advice, *Take care not to turn to mischief; for that is why you are tried by affliction.* (Job 36:21)

In the Psalter reactions to the translation of the NEB are mixed. Psalms 73, 90, 114, and 139 will certainly have a place among the richest traditions of psalmody. The royal figure in 110:3 (LXX) is born *with princely gifts and apparalled in holiness*; he has *shone with the dew of youth* since his mother bore him. In 119:33 the poet *finds his reward* in keeping the Lord's statutes; in 119:57 the Lord is *all the psalmist has*. In 104:26 Leviathan is made a mere *plaything* of the Lord. On the less favorable side, the Great Nevertheless is practically buried in an inconspicuous "yet" in the middle of a sentence (73:22 to 23). Unfortunately the first two verses

of Psalm 91 are made subordinate to the third verse. There is no reference, even in a footnote, to ransoming the brother in 49:7. *How deep I am sunk in misery* takes the place of "Why are you cast down, O my soul?" in 42:5, 11. *Thou, LORD, art my felicity* replaces "I have no good beyond thee" (RV) in 16:2. Psalm 87 in the RSV appears to come much closer to catching the thrust of this disjointed poem than does the text of the NEB. The advice in Eccl. 7:16 not to be *over-righteous* or *over-wise* is given some basis in the conviction of 1:18 that *the more a man knows, the more he has to suffer*. A better understanding of the Song of Songs is assured by adding the names of all of the speakers including the bride, her companions, and the groom. The seventh chapter of Canticles is a classic reproduction of a dialog between lovers.

ISAIAH TO MALACHI

In the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets the preferred readings appeared to outnumber those which for some reason needed to be declined. A quick perusal of this writer's accumulated notes indicates that in the Latter Prophets the pro's and con's are about in balance: three pages of commendable reactions and three pages of critical comments. The writer cannot readily account for this on his part unless it be the fact that he is more at home in the section on the Prophets. The preferred readings will be taken up first.

Is. 5:22 derides the *mighty toppers, valiant mixers of drink* in Jerusalem even as Is. 28:1 speaks of the garlands and sprays *on the heads of the revellers dripping with perfume* in Samaria. Of the Davidic pact Yahweh says that *this time it will be for-*

ever, to love you faithfully as I loved David (Is. 55:3). The ideal fast in Is. 58:3-7 stands out as a first-rate translation. The happy marriage of the future will not be an incestuous one between Mother Israel and her sons, but rather between the bride Israel and her divine rebuilder (Is. 62:5). The victorious hero of Is. 63:1 is paid the compliment that *under his clothes his muscles stand out*.

Jeremiah recognized Yahweh's revelatory hand when he said of the plot of the Anathothians against him, *it was the LORD who showed me, and so I knew* (Jer. 11:18). The prophet chided Israel for forgetting her Lord and thus acting in sharp contrast to the snows that never cease to fall on Lebanon and *the cool streaming rains brought by the north wind* that never fail (Jer. 18:14-15). In his request to Jeremiah King Zedekiah expressed the hope that *perhaps the LORD will perform a miracle as He has done in past times* (Jer. 21:2). The 23d chapter of Jeremiah on the nature of prophecy is another superb piece of translation. Yahweh clearly took the initiative in the gracious overture, *if you search with all your heart, I will let you find me* (Jer. 29:13-14). Hanamel's offer to Jeremiah giving the prophet the right of purchase of his field in Anathoth was given in person, *as the LORD had foretold* (Jer. 32:8). The suffering saint in Lam. 3:24 spoke as a model of godliness, *The LORD, I say, is all that I have; therefore I will wait for Him patiently*.

The original text of Hos. 1:11 has the Israelites merely going up from the land, while in the NEB they *become masters of the earth*. The ambiguous Hebrew of Hos. 12:4 is understood as meaning that God met Jacob at Bethel, instead of Jacob's

meeting God there. "For three transgressions and four" in Amos 1—2 is neatly paraphrased, *for crime after crime*. "Thus the LORD Yahweh caused me to see" is rendered as *this was what the Lord GOD showed me* (Amos 7:1,4; 8:1). Four notes from the Qumran Habakkuk commentary are incorporated into the text of this prophet. The 30 silver pieces of Zech. 11:3 which were thrown into the temple treasury in disgust are dubbed *that noble sum at which I was valued and rejected by them*.

Some questionable readings in the prophets make it necessary to return to Isaiah. Unfortunately Is. 3:24 still has the women of Zion suffer *branding instead of beauty*. On the basis of the (unnoted) Qumran Scroll it would have been preferable to let "beauty" be replaced by "shame" and thus better to conform to the word order of the original. The bracketed conclusion of Is. 6:13 ought to have a reference to the Qumran Scroll on which it is largely based. Because this verse has such a direct bearing on the question whether the inaugural vision of the prophet included the idea of a saved remnant, the closing formula, "The holy seed is its stump" (RSV) ought to have been noted, even though the Septuagint omits it. Of the two texts in which Yahweh says that He forgives "for His own sake," Is. 43:25 and 48:11, the second in the NEB text makes forgiveness merely a matter of God's honor, *for My honor, for My own honor I did it*. The prayer of the saint in Is. 63:8 is usually remembered because it has Yahweh suffer along with His suffering people. Such fellow suffering on God's part unfortunately is left out and unnoted in the reading *He became their deliverer in all*

their troubles. If Jeremiah virtually accused Yahweh of raping him in 20:7, then *Thou hast duped me* falls quite short of the real meaning of this text. Could the reader of Jer. 31:22 possibly have an exchange of sexes in mind when he is told about *a new thing in the earth: a woman turned into a man?*

Quite a radical textual adjustment is made in Hos. 1:7 where the Judaeian addition is included in the footnote but omitted in the text. The pursuit of knowledge in Hos. 6:3 loses much of its urgency in the paraphrase, *let us humble ourselves, let us strive to know the LORD*. The repeated love motif in Hos. 9:13 in which Yahweh says that he saw Ephraim planted like a palm tree in a green meadow (cf. 9:10) is reduced to *lion-cubs emerge only to be hunted*. The charge against the Ammonites in Amos 1:13 is not that they ripped up the pregnant women of Gilead with the intention of extending their border, but merely that *in their greed for land they invaded the ploughlands of Gilead*. The doxology of Amos 4:13 says that it is Yahweh *who forges the thunder* [and] *showers abundant rain on earth*; the contrasting Hebrew has him form the mountains and tell man what his thoughts are. Instead of changing two of the three "seek" imperatives in Amos 5:5, 6, 14 to *resort to*, it would probably have been better to keep the triple emphasis: *Seek me, seek Yahweh, seek good!*

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

A review of the New English Bible would not be complete without some reference to the general theological tone that is reflected in this translation. What, for example, is the significance of the Law or the commandment of God in the Old Tes-

tament? One answer is given in Deut. 30: 11, *the commandment that I lay on you this day is not too difficult for you, it is not too remote*. Such a positive assertion contrasts sharply with the statement in Ezek. 20:25, *I imposed on them statutes that were not good statutes*. The explanation may be found in the distraught question of Lam. 3:38, *Do not both bad and good proceed from the mouth of the Most High?*

On the basis of a text like Ex. 20:5, it has long been taught that the jealousy of God has to do with punishing the children for the sins of the fathers of those who hate God. That there is a more positive jealousy associated with Yahweh, an intensive zeal, as it were, on behalf of His people is brought out distinctly in two passages in Zechariah. In Zech. 1:14 Yahweh observes, *I am very jealous for Jerusalem and Zion*. And in Zech. 8:2 Yahweh adds, *I have been very jealous for Zion, fiercely jealous for her*. Jealousy is thus seen as a protective or defensive hedge which Yahweh rings about his people.

Because of the significance of the donkey in the Palm Sunday Gospel in Matt. 21:4-5, the question has been debated whether the donkey symbolizes meekness and humility or whether it implies royal dignity and stature. A number of texts in the Deuteronomistic history suggest that the mule was indeed a royal mount. After the murder of Amnon by Absalom's servants, we are told in 2 Sam. 13:29 that *all the king's sons mounted their mules in haste and set off for home*. Again, when Absalom was being pursued by David's men, we are told in 2 Sam. 18:9 that *he was riding a mule*. After the head of the king's son was caught in the boughs of a tree, *the mule went on from under him*. It is especially significant

that when the question arose whether Adonijah or Solomon should succeed King David, David gave orders in 1 Kings 1:33, *Mount my son Solomon on the king's mule and escort him down to Gihon*. David's point was that if the public saw Solomon riding on the king's mule, they would recognize that he had been appointed king. The mule thus qualifies to be a royal animal and to be regarded as such in the New Testament Gospel.

Another question with which Biblical scholars have occupied themselves is the identity of the cherubim. Medieval art pictured the cherubim as chubby little babes with wings. Careful studies on the cherubim have shown that they were sphinxlike creatures with human heads and bodies of beasts with wings attached. That such cherubim were actually known in the Scripture is shown in the description of Ezekiel's sanctuary. Of the cherubim in the sanctuary it is said in Ezek. 41:19: *Each cherub had two faces: one the face of a man, looking towards one palm-tree, and the other the face of a lion, looking towards another palm-tree*. Similar figures displaying the head of a human and the body of a beast have been found on incense stands at Megiddo and Taanach. Also in the description of Solomon's ivory throne in 1 Kings 10:18, which included six steps leading up to it, the NEB reads, *there were arms on each side of the seat, with a lion standing beside each of them, and twelve lions stood on the six steps*. It seems clear, then, that lions and sphinxlike creatures were quite commonly known in the Bible as throne-bearers.

Idolatrous child sacrifice is another theme that is touched on in the text of the NEB. King Ahaz was severely censured by the

Deuteronomic historian because *he even passed his son through the fire* (2 Kings 16:3). That he had adopted such an abominable practice from the surrounding nations is indicated by another episode in the career of King Mesha of Moab. Faced with defeat in battle, Mesha *took his eldest son, who would have succeeded him, and offered him as a whole-offering upon the city wall*. So shocking was this to the Israelites that they broke camp and went back to their own land (2 Kings 3:27). How readily the Israelites themselves could inject an idolatrous note into what had originally been a legitimate tradition is indicated by the history of the famed bronze serpent. When Hezekiah came to the throne, he not only disposed of the Canaanite objects of idolatry but he also *broke up the bronze serpent that Moses had made*. Up to that time the Israelites had been burning sacrifices to it; they called it Nehushtan. (2 Kings 18:4)

The site of the tomb of Rachel is a geographical point that has been debated among scholars. From early times tradition has associated the tomb of Rachel with a spot about one mile north of Bethlehem, based on the texts of Gen. 35:19 and Gen. 48:7. In each of these texts Jacob says that he buried Rachel by the road to Ephrath, that is, Bethlehem. It is quite commonly agreed that the phrase "that is, Bethlehem" was an early gloss by the scribe who thought that Ephrath was the Ephrath in Judea. That the Ephrath is another Ephrath in the tribal territory of Benjamin is indicated in texts from both Jeremiah and the Deuteronomic history. In 1 Sam. 10:2 Samuel says to Saul, *You will meet two men by the tomb of Rachel at Zelzah in the territory of Benjamin*. According to Jer. 31:15

the voice of Rachel is heard from her tomb in Ramah in the tribe of Benjamin, and the text affirms, *Rachel weeping for her sons*. She refuses to be comforted; they are no more.

The text of the New English Bible shows that the translator was familiar with the change in location of the capital of the Northern Kingdom. No sooner had Jeroboam become king over all of Israel than he *rebuilt Shechem in the hill-country of Ephraim and took up residence there* (1 Kings 12:25). But it was not long before he transferred his capital to Tirzah. When Jeroboam's son Abijah took sick, the prophet Ahijah announced that as soon as the boy's mother returned to her home, the child would die (1 Kings 14:12). Five verses later the text states, *Jeroboam's wife went home at once to Tirzah and, as she crossed the threshold of the house, the boy died* (1 Kings 14:17). Shechem had thus given way to Tirzah as the site of the northern capital.

A high point of kingdom theology is reflected in the promise in Zeph. 3:15: *The LORD is among you as king, O Israel; never again shall you fear disaster*. The great resurrection breakthrough comes out unequivocally in Dan. 12:2: *Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will wake, some to everlasting life and some to the reproach of eternal abhorrence*.

II

THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS

Frederick W. Danker

The decision to publish the complete translation of the New English Bible simultaneously in various types of editions, one of which includes the Apocrypha, is certain to encourage study of a frequently neglected portion of the Scriptures.

Wiser than many who claim to follow in his footsteps, Luther followed the lead of long tradition in the Western church and exposed also nonprofessional readers of the Bible to a list of writings that has met with varying canonical fortunes. His good judgment was emulated by the publishers of the King James Version (KJV) of 1611, but many editions of the KJV subsequently reflected the attitude of St. Jerome, who gave to the Hebrew Old Testament canonical preference over books that had to a large extent enjoyed equal status in Hellenistic communities and also among writers of books of the New Testament, but which at his time were known only in a Greek text-form. In brief, the term "apocrypha" is today not so much a value judgment as an index to historical vicissitudes.

Since the books or parts of books identified as Apocrypha vary quantitatively and positionwise in various texts and versions, a rundown of the contents included in the NEB under the heading "The Apocrypha" is here first presented. Then some suggestion of the quality of translation is made at the hand of the text of the Wisdom of Solomon.

I

LIST OF THE APOCRYPHA

Fifteen books or parts of books are included in the translation. In Greek and Latin manuscripts of the Old Testament they are found dispersed throughout the Old Testament, ordinarily in places appropriate to their contents. However, as the policy of separating Scriptural material found only in Greek form gained in popularity it was only natural that such interpolations in the Hebrew text should in some cases be quite fragmentary. Part of

the editorial skill displayed in the NEB was engaged in preserving such orphaned wording from literary alienation. The list in the NEB is as follows:

1. The First Book of Esdras
2. The Second Book of Esdras
3. Tobit
4. Judith
5. The Rest of the Chapters of the Book of Esther
6. The Wisdom of Solomon
7. Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach
8. Baruch
9. A Letter of Jeremiah
10. The Song of the Three
11. Daniel and Susanna
12. Daniel, Bel, and the Snake
13. The Prayer of Manasseh
14. The First Book of the Maccabees
15. The Second Book of the Maccabees

Sorting out the books of "Esdras" (Ezra) is especially confusing for the amateur, since what the NEB, in keeping with well-established tradition (for example, Geneva Bible, 1560; KJV, 1611), calls I and II Esdras are also known as III and IV Esdras, and both sets of identifications are in this case to be distinguished from the books entitled Ezra and Nehemiah. As a simple rule of thumb, if a given version other than the Septuagint (LXX) has only a I and II Esdras, one may infer that these are the apocryphal books and that Ezra and Nehemiah are cited *seriatim* under their proper names.¹ Again, if the

¹ Note, however, that in the Clementine edition of the Vulgate, published in 1592 under the direction of Pope Clement VIII (as a revision of the Sixtine Vulgate, produced under

titles III Esdras and IV Esdras appear, it will be evident that these identify the apocryphal works. In Rahlfs' edition of the LXX, I Esdras denotes the apocryphal work and II Esdras includes under one title Ezra and Nehemiah in sequence. No confusion of any of the Greek works with IV Esdras is possible, for the latter is extant chiefly in Latin. The NEB with the title I Esdras presents, then, a translation of apocryphal I Esdras (LXX).

I Esdras consists of a paraphrase of 2 Chron. 35—36; most of Ezra variously transposed; Neh. 7:73—8:13a; and a piece (3:1—5:6) that has no correspondence in the Old Testament. This last piece is a story of a contest devised by three bodyguards to take advantage of King Darius' insomnia. Each of them wrote down what he considered the strongest thing in the world and all awaited their opportunity to support their choice with appropriate rhetoric in personal audience with the king. Wine was not in the running; a testimonial to the king's power failed to move the monarch; but a speech on woman and truth incited Darius to rebuild Jerusalem.

The Second Book of Esdras belongs to a class of documents known as pseudepigraphic. In judging ancient documents of this type, it is necessary to refrain from pejorative terminology, such as "forgery," except in cases where evident intent to de-

fraud can be determined, otherwise the would-be critic exposes himself to a cross-bill of semantic confusion and prejudgment of the data. For pseudonymity, as is evidenced by its appearance in the literary history of both Old and New Testaments, was a recognized and legitimate literary device. II Esdras is not only pseudepigraphic in style, but largely apocalyptic in content. The NEB includes 16 chapters under this title, but chapters 1—2 and 15—16 are certainly additions to the apocalyptic portion in chapters 3—14. The verses noted in brackets between 7:35 and 36 are not found in the KJV, but the NEB follows the RV and inserts them on the basis of the Latin text edited by R. L. Bensly, *The Fourth Book of Ezra* (Cambridge, 1875). Excision of these verses from a 9th-century manuscript (Codex Sangermanensis) was probably due to the "unorthodox" answer to the question whether intercession for the wicked will be entertained on the day of judgment. The fuller text emphasizes individual responsibility.

In Rahlfs' edition of Esther, letters of the alphabet accompany the numerical versification of the canonical text and readily identify departures of the Greek text from the Hebrew form. The NEB prints a translation of the entire book as found in the LXX, but puts in square brackets those portions of the text that are not ordinarily printed as part of the Apocrypha. Since the versification of the Masoretic text ends at 10:3, the KJV incorporated and identified the additions to the Hebrew text as 10:4—16:24. The NEB preserves this enumeration, but follows seriatim the text of the Greek version;

Pope Sixtus V in 1590), I Esdras is the title of the translation of the Hebrew book ascribed to Ezra, and the title Nehemiah is applied to the canonical book that appears from time to time in manuscripts under the heading "II Esdras." III Esdras, IV Esdras, and the Prayer of Manasseh do not appear in the Clementine Vulgate. For details, see the prefaces in *Biblia Sacra: Vulgatae Editionis Sixti V Pont. Max. iussu recognita et Clementis VIII auctoritate edita* (Rome, 1959).

and thus it is that the chapter-verse notation suggests at first sight a picture of textual dislocation, a point that is clarified by the note preceding the translation. The following collation with Rahlfs (R) displays the problem of sequence:

Chapters 11—12 are added at the beginning of the book.

13:1-7 added after 3:13 (=R3:13a-g)

13:8-18, after 4:17 (=R4:17a-i)

14:1—15:16 (=R4:17k—5:2b)

16:1-24 (=R8:12a-x)

10:4—11:1 (=R10:3a-1)

The Epistle of Jeremiah is in the KJV appended to Baruch. In Rahlfs it comes after Lamentations. This brief piece is not so much a letter as a satirical expose, à la Wisdom 13 and Isaiah 40 and 44, of idolatry in Babylonia.

Need of consolation in the face of oppressive edicts encouraged growth of a cycle of stories about Daniel. Three such accretions—"The Song of the Three," "Daniel and Susanna," "Daniel, Bel, and the Snake"—are included in the Apocrypha. The first of these is sometimes described as the "First Addition" to the Book of Daniel. In Theodotian, the LXX, the Vulgate, and other versions it comes after Dan. 3:23, and is noted in Rahlfs as vv. 24-90. The first two verses of the addition introduce Azariah and his two companions walking in flames. Vv. 3-27 (3:24-50, Rahlfs) include the prayer of Azariah and typical amplification found in miracle recitals of the hazards undergone by the confessors: the flames, fed by naphtha and other super-incendiary material, ascend to a height of 100 feet. There follows in vv. 28-68 (3:51-90, Rahlfs) what is known in liturgical usage as the "Bene-

dicite omnia opera," or "The Song of the Three Children."

Daniel's rescue of a woman from two lecherous, hypocritical, false witnesses in "Daniel and Susanna" is an arresting switch of a plot found in Genesis 39. In Rahlfs' text this story precedes what is generally known as Daniel.

"Daniel, Bel, and the Snake" exposes the fraudulent priests of Bel, a local idol. The first part might be called "The Case of the Idol's Footprints." Daniel is the Jewish Hercules and in part two of this addition gives a huge snake a fatal case of indigestion at the hand of an ancient equivalent of a Molotov cocktail. Enraged by this assault on their theology, the Babylonians threatened to ease the king out of office. It was either the king or Daniel. The choice did not require a Solomon, and Daniel was soon doing time with seven hungry lions. After six days he was hungry as the lions, but in Palestine a certain prophet called Habakkuk was told to take lunch to Daniel in the lions' pit. Habakkuk wanted no trouble from that source and pleaded that he had never been to Babylon, and he certainly would not be able to find Cyrus' zoo! Thereupon an angel took him by the hair and blasted him off nonstop to the lion's pit. Daniel got his meal. The king saw the light and reasserted his royal justice. And that made the lions lick their chops!

"The Prayer of Manasseh," which was never included in the LXX proper, is found in Luther's translation at the end of the Apocrypha after the additions to Daniel. It was rejected in the Bull of Sixtus V and is not found in Coverdale (1535) or the Geneva Bible (1560), but it does appear in the KJV between "Bel and the Dragon"

and I Maccabees. In Rahlfs' edition it appears as number 12 in the Odae. (II, pp. 180—81)²

The books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (or the Wisdom of Ben Sira), Baruch, and I and II Maccabees cause no difficulty as to placement, but next to the apocalyptic II Esdras the Wisdom of Solomon, a pseudepigraphon, and Ecclesiasticus are of special significance for understanding New Testament thought. Such demonstration, however, must give way to brief assessment of the quality of translation found in this section of the Old Testament portion of the NEB, a task to be done with circumspection, for, as Jesus son of Sirach (Sira) says:

Do not find fault before examining the evidence; Think first, and criticize afterwards. (11:7)

II

Since the Wisdom of Solomon offers special challenges to the translator, it serves well as a sampling base for evaluation of the type of effort that has gone into the rendering of the Apocrypha in the NEB. Some may think that the rhythms and structure of this book might have been exhibited to better advantage by following the format used for the rendition of Ecclesiasticus, especially since the translation not infrequently incorporates diction that has a distinctive poetic cast, including the Scottish "gird at" (2:12) in the sense of mock; and "durance" (17:16), imprisonment. On the other hand, patterns of the

sermonic diatribe penetrate to such an extent that the editors have perhaps wisely chosen a prose format.

To choose the word or phrase or syntax that at a given period in the linguistic history of the receptor language conveys the precise denotation or connotation of the original with sufficient range of usage so as not to limit the circle of those who are to understand—this is the beginning of the art of translation, a leap beyond dull literal correspondence. The rendering of 1:4, "Wisdom will not enter a shiftily soul, nor make her home in a body that is mortgaged to sin," illustrates the ability of the translators to make their work read like English in its own right. To improve on this one must devise a way to capture the alliteration of the kappas in the original, and after numerous attempts I question whether this can be done without suggestion of a tour de force. The rendering of 5:13 ("in our wickedness we frittered our lives away") is somewhat malleable. Here it is possible to conserve more of the economy of the Greek text and at the same time suggest with a different set of consonants the alliteration found in the original: "we wasted our lives in wickedness." "Squandered" would be even more precise, and one must weigh the relative advantages of connotation or stylistic form as vehicles for meaning.

Elegant is the rendering of 15:19: "Even as animals they have no beauty to make them desirable; when God approved and blessed his work, they were left out." Less fastidious is the rendering of 6:25: "Learn what I have to teach you, therefore, and it will be for your good." Since the universe of discourse here is similar to the one at 1:4, a better rendering would be:

² This section consists of songs used in liturgical rites. The first part includes nine canticles, used at lauds in the Orthodox and Roman rites. The second portion includes the prayer of Manasseh. See Henry Barclay Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge, 1902), pp. 253—54.

"Therefore heed my words and reap yourself a profit." In 5:9 some of the poetry in the metonymy is lost by transforming ἀγγελία (message) into its bearer. "Like a galloping rumor" is more arresting than "galloping messenger." Also, the word "degraded" in 13:10 misses the pathos of the text and does not capture the broad sympathies of the writer of Wisdom. As in Rom. 7:24 and Rev. 3:17, ταλαίπωροι describes people who are in such utterly wretched condition that no amount of lamentation could do justice to their plight. On the other hand, toil with the Greek syntax of 13:13 must be endured to appreciate how the NEB has there been shaped with leisurely skill.

It may be hoped, with no special ingredient of devoutness required, that the NEB has finally put to rest the ghost of the alleged evil of paraphrase in Biblical translation. Paraphrase has long been acknowledged as often the only means to preserve an original from inanity during transference to another language, but a few cultists of obscurity still think that obfuscation in a holy book is a means of grace and that the measure of its worth is in direct proportion to its ability to conjure up the spirits of the Salii. In worse state than these, however, are those who find some favorite interpretation threatened by exposure to fresh possibilities of meaning. In any event, a literalistic rendering, for example, of Wisdom 10:10, where the original has the phrase for "kingdom of God," would be less clear than the NEB's sensitive wording: "she showed him that God is king." Similarly 18:13 is well rendered: "they confessed that thy people have God as their father." In the rendering of 2:13 resources of modern type help

expose the satire in this verse: "he styles himself 'the servant of the Lord.'" But in 3:9, in place of the rendering, "Those who have put their trust in him shall understand that he is true," it is best to preserve the function of the noun ἀλήθεια and render: ". . . shall understand what truth really is." At 17:5 the jingle "light . . . night" is adroitly avoided by rendering νύξ with "darkness." But since this term is used in the same chapter to render σκότος, I would prefer to capture the mood with "hideous gloom." The text would then read: "No fire, however great, had force enough to give them light, nor had the brilliant flaming stars strength to illuminate that hideous gloom." In this case there is the added advantage of gradation to a lower key in the English vowels used toward the end of the verse, with a momentary assonance in "flaming" and "illuminate" that contributes to the pathos of the contrast pervading the entire verse. Finally, the masterful description of terror climaxing at 17:10 could through paraphrase have been rescued from some obscurity present now in the translation. Frightened people are said to be filled with such fear in their attempt to escape from all manner of noxious things that they even hesitate to look up at the air, as if it were an additional harassment; but the fact is, suggests the writer, no one ever considers the air an enemy from which one needs to make his escape. The translation as it now stands reads: "refusing even to look upon the air from which there can be no escape." Better: "Refusing even to look up to the air from which no man in his right mind attempts escape." And as a matter of taste I would prefer elimination of the discordant doubling of "was" in the

concluding verse of chapter 17 and render: "and each was to himself a burden heavier than the darkness."

Jesus, son of Sirach observed:

A craftsman is recognized by his skillful hand and a councillor by his words of wisdom. (9:17)

If the rendering of the Wisdom of Solomon is any indication of the general quality that pervades the whole in this new version of the Apocrypha, the first

part of Sirach's proverb must be applied to the translators. As for the second part, this reviewer would like to qualify by inviting the reader to enlarge his sympathies for the type of thought that helped shape the form and substance of the New Testament and that today puts in a strong bid for attention as an especially significant contribution to man's spiritual and social history.

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