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THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE 1970

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Reviewed by the Rev. Terence H. Brown, Secretary of
the Trinitarian Bible Society

ITS ORIGIN

THIS new translation has been produced under the direction of a Joint Committee set up in 1947 representing the major Protestant denominations, the British and Foreign Bible Society and the National Bible Society of Scotland. The Joint Committee appointed the panels of translators for the Old Testament, the Apocrypha and the New Testament, drawing from the universities "the best qualified scholars in their respective subjects". A panel of literary advisers was also appointed, as the Committee recognised that "sound scholarship does not necessarily carry with it a delicate sense of English style".

Dr. C. H. Dodd was appointed General Director in 1947 and Professor Sir Godfrey Driver became Joint Director in 1965. The process of translation began with a draft submitted by a member of the panel and this was discussed and agreed upon before being submitted to the literary panel for advice. The amended draft was then again checked by the translators to ensure that the meaning was not affected by any literary improvements, and the final version was then submitted to the Joint Committee for approval.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The translation of the New Testament was published separately in March 1961 and met with a mixed reception, notwithstanding the lavish publicity which heralded its birth. There were many favourable reviews, but in many quarters there was a feeling of disappointment with the long-awaited fruit of so much labour. Competent arbiters of literary taste were pungently severe in their criticisms of the language of the new version, which was also accused of weakening the testimony of several passages relating to the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The New Testament has been revised and the previous editions are being withdrawn from sale. As many readers may have some familiarity with this portion of the translation, the corrections which have been made will be considered first in the present review.

According to the Handbook, "no changes made as a result of this review were really extensive. They mostly concerned individual words, or at the most phrases". A careful comparison reveals no less than 250 changes, some of which attempt to improve the style, while others are made in order to achieve greater accuracy. In a few cases important doctrines are involved.

Changes Affecting Doctrine

Examples will be found in Matthew iv, 14 where "This was in fulfilment" is changed to "This was to fulfil". Similar instances are found in xii, 17; xiii, 35; xxi, 4. These changes show more clearly that the fulfilment was designed and not a mere coincidence. In Matthew v, 32 "a woman so divorced" is altered to "a divorced woman", and the prohibition is thus made complete, but another change in xix, 9 adds a footnote referring to "a woman so divorced", thus introducing an inconsistency. In Luke i, 34 "I have no husband" is changed to "I am still a virgin", and the miraculous character of the Redeemer's birth is more clearly affirmed than in the seven million copies already circulated.

Improvements In Style

In some passages the literary style has been improved. For instance in Matthew vii, 6 the strange rendering—"do not feed your pearls to pigs" becomes "do not throw your pearls to the pigs". Matthew xvi, 12 "not against the baker's leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, but against their teaching" is changed to "not against baker's leaven, but against the teaching . . .". Chapter xx, 31 "the people rounded on them" becomes "The people told them sharply". The "imperial powers" of Luke i, 52 change to "monarchs". In Luke ix, 45 the 1961 rendering is changed from "perceive its drift" to "grasp its meaning". In chapter xvi, 1 an anachronism is removed by altering "bailiff" to "steward"; and a similar improvement in John x, 23 changes "cloister" to "portico".

There are numerous passages in the N.E.B. New Testament where the translators' aim to express the meaning in "contemporary English" was not accomplished. Some of the changes in the 1970 revision were evidently made in order to rectify this fault, but many more changes could

have been made with profit. Acts xiii, 10 "You utter impostor and charlatan" becomes "you swindler, you rascal". In Romans x, 21 "recalcitrant" gives place to "defiant". In some places the improvement is not so evident. For example, "scion" in place of "root" in Romans xv, 12; Rev. v, 5, and xxii, 16; "gibbet" for "tree" in Galatians iii, 13 and for "gallows" in 1 Peter ii, 24; "coat of mail" for "breastplate" in 1 Thesalonians v, 8.

Important Details

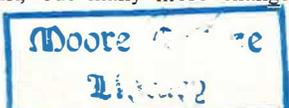
The revisers evidently sifted the translation quite thoroughly, and detected inaccuracies in Luke xvii, 6, where the "sycamore" changes into a "mulberry"; and in Chapter xix, 4 where the sycamore becomes sycomore. Apparently the 1961 edition was not very precise in its botanical terminology. Among other blemishes to which reviewers drew attention was the impossible "eclipse" of the sun in Luke xxiii, 45 and this has now been changed to "the sun's light failed".

Generations of translators have wrestled with certain passages in an endeavour to express their meaning clearly in English and it is always interesting to see what new variants appear in any new version or revision. Matthew xvi, 18 was rendered in 1961 "the forces of death shall never overpower it", and this has now become "the powers of death shall never conquer it." John i, 5 "the darkness has never quenched it" became on second thoughts "has never mastered it". 1 Corinthians i, 31 "he that glorieth" (in the A.V.) was changed to "if a man is proud" in 1961, and changed again to "if a man must boast" in 1970.

Here and there a familiar phrase or word of the A.V. has been restored to us, e.g. in Matthew vi, 21 where we may now read again, "Where your treasure is". The "swaddling clothes" are brought back into Luke ii, 12 to replace the expression "all wrapped up".

Changes In The Greek Text

Some textual changes have been made. The 1961 edition included in the text part of Matthew ix, 34 "He casts out devils by the prince of devils". This is now completely dropped and a footnote mentions that "some witnesses add (34) etc. . . .". In Matthew xxi, 9 the 1970 text restores without note "Blessings on him who comes in the name



of the Lord", which was omitted in 1961. In Mark xv, 39 a new footnote admits as an alternative "the Son of God" where the text reads "a son of God".

For a more complete examination of the N.E.B. New Testament the reader is referred to the Review published by the ENGLISH CHURCHMAN in 1961. Copies may be obtained from the Trinitarian Bible Society.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The English Style

The translators aimed to produce a version which would combine "the highest scholarly authority with an English style which would not put it at too great a disadvantage when set beside the classic English Bible". A few examples may serve to demonstrate to what extent their aim was accomplished.

"Israel poor louse (Isaiah xli, 14); that I may not be left picking lice (Song of Solomon i, 7); . . . cuts off his own leg and displays the stump (Proverbs xxvi, 6); You shall adorn yourself with jingles (Jeremiah xxxi, 4); trampled into a midden (Isaiah xxv, 10); a churl gorging himself (Proverbs xxx, 22); a passing cur (Proverbs xxvi, 17); his mother's bane (Proverbs x, 1)."

"Sheol and Abaddon (Proverbs xv, 11); her course is set for Sheol (Proverbs v, 5); Sheol gapes with straining throat (Isaiah v, 14); I will whistle to call them in (Zechariah x, 8); liniment for your limbs (Proverbs iii, 8); his stomach hollow with fear (Isaiah xiii, 8); The Lady Stupidity is a flighty creature (Proverbs ix, 13); Thou didst knit me together . . . when I was secretly kneaded into shape (Psalm cxxxix, 13, 15); They run to take post against me (Psalm lix, 4)"

The unusual "bedizened" which is found in the N.E.B. N.T. in Revelation xvii, 4 does not displace the more common "decked" in such passages as Hosea ii, 13 and Isaiah lxi, 10. In the latter place "decked in her jewels" is still regarded as contemporary English, and the same expression might well have been restored in Revelation.

Colloquialisms

Numerous colloquialisms contrast strangely with more stilted and unusual expressions. "Confirmed toppers hiccupping in drunken stupor (Isaiah xxviii, 7); You mighty toppers (Isaiah v, 22); David got wind of it (1 Samuel xxiii, 25); fallacious profit (Proverbs xi, 18); at odds with all his kinsmen (Genesis xvi, 12); wrapped in the shroud of his boundless folly (Proverbs v, 23); itches for a gift (Isaiah i, 23); wisdom goes with sagacity (Proverbs xi, 2); They are crazy (Hosea x, 2); There is a rod in pickle for the arrogant (Proverbs xix, 29); cut to the quick (Psalm cxxxix, 21); this bad luck (Jonah i, 7); batten on their iniquity (Hosea iv, 8); To have and to hold (Hosea ii, 20)". The last example is in

the words of the marriage service in the Book of Common Prayer and replaces "in faithfulness" in the A.V.

Inconsistencies

A criticism often directed against the King James Version is that the translators often used several different English words and phrases to represent identical expressions in the underlying text. It is claimed that the modern versions display more consistency in this respect. In the N.E.B. there are exceptions too numerous to list here and only a few examples can be given.

"Silent the merry beat of *tambourines*" (Isaiah xxiv, 8) betrays the posthumous influence of the R.C. translator Ronald Knox, who rendered it "Silent the *gay tambour*". The same word in Isaiah v, 12 is rendered *tabor*, in Ezekiel xxviii, 13 "*jingling beads*", and in Jeremiah xxxi, 4 "*jingles*".

"Testimonies"

"The Tabernacle of the *Tokens*" in Exodus xxxviii, 21 introduces a new rendering of *witness* in the A.V. The same Hebrew word is variously translated in the N.E.B. as "Solemn precepts (1 Kings ii, 3); warrant (2 Kings xi, 12); solemn warnings (Nehemiah ix, 34); testimonies (2 Chronicles xxxiv, 31); solemn charge (1 Chronicles xxix, 19); instruction (Psalm xix, 7); bounden duty (Psalm cxxii, 4); teachings (Jeremiah xliiv, 23)." The Hebrew word means *appointed, determined, prescribed*—and hence the Divine Law.

"For ever"

"Eternal is thy word, O LORD" (Psalm cxix, 89) replaces "For ever" in the A.V., but the same word is rendered in the N.E.B. as "Everlasting (Genesis xxi, 33); For ever (Exodus iii, 15); For all time (Leviticus iii, 17); Always (1 Samuel i, 22); from everlasting to everlasting (1 Chronicles xvi, 36); From of old and for ever (1 Chronicles xxix, 10); for life (Job xli, 4); times long past (Proverbs viii, 23); evermore (Isaiah xl, 8); endless (Isaiah xxxiii, 14); unending (Jeremiah li, 57)." Some of these renderings are quite suitable in their various contexts. They are listed here to show that the change in Psalm cxix, 89, although acceptable, is not essential and is not required in the interests of accuracy or consistency.

"Mercy" and "Mercies"

"The mercy of God" is not so much in evidence in the N.E.B. Old Testament as it is in the A.V. and other English versions. Several expressions are introduced in place of the underlying Hebrew word—"Steadfast love (Genesis xxxii, 10); loyal service (2 Chronicles vi, 42); great compassion (Nehemiah ix, 19); tender care (Psalm xxv, 6); great affection (Psalm lxix, 16); faithful love (Psalm cvi, 7); boundless love (Psalm cvi,

45); tenderness (Isaiah lxiii, 7); tender love (Isaiah lxiii, 15); true love (Lamentations iii, 22); fulness of his love" (Lamentations iii, 32). The word "mercy" is retained in 2 Samuel xxiv, 14 and Psalm li, 1. The irony of Proverbs xii, 10 is lost altogether, and "the tender mercies of the wicked" changed to "a wicked man is cruel at heart".

"Worship"

The Hebrew word for worship is translated in several different ways in the N.E.B. and it is significant that where the A.V. consistently uses "worship" in 96 places the N.E.B. changes 72 of them, including 47 which refer to worship offered to God. Sennacherib *worships* in the house of his god Nisroch (2 Kings xix, 37); Naaman *worships* in the house of Rimmon (2 Kings v, 18); the people *worship* Nebuchadnezzar's image in Daniel iii, 7; and Nebuchadnezzar himself "*worshipped* Daniel" (ii 46). The Lord's people, however, no longer worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness, but merely "bow down" (Psalm xxix, 2). Many other alternatives are found including—"make obeisance, fall down, make submission, pay homage and fall prostrate."

The N.E.B. renders Zechariah xiv, 16 "worship the King, the LORD of Hosts", and Isaiah xxvii, 13 "worship the LORD". If the identical Hebrew word is correctly rendered "worship" here, it is difficult to understand why seventy two other occurrences have to be changed. The treatment of "worship" in the O.T. in most cases results in the use of a weaker expression. In the N.E.B. New Testament worship is not offered to the Son of God, and even after His resurrection the disciples do not worship Him, but merely "fall prostrate before Him".

Needless Changes

If the avowed object of this version is to make the Bible intelligible to average readers it may be fairly asked whether this is achieved by such renderings as—"He may cloak his enmity in dissimulation (Prov. xxvi, 26); inaugurate a hereditary priesthood (Exodus xl, 15); summon discernment to your aid and invoke understanding (Prov. ii, 3); Those that curse you, I will execrate (Gen. xii, 3); The kisses of an enemy are perfidious (Prov. xxvii, 6); vanguard and rearguard—for before and after—(Joel ii, 3); vintagers—for grape-gatherers (Obad. 5); luminous—for shineth (Psa. cxxxix, 12); happy—for blessed—at least 43 times; impregnable—for strong (Psa. cviii, 10); runnels—for rivers (Isa. xxxii, 2); do not emulate a lawless man (Prov. iii, 31); fluent with calumny (Prov. x, 18)".

Uncommon words

In the interests of greater accuracy, "satraps, prefects and viceroys" are assembled in Dan. iii, 2; "shaking sistrums" rattle in Isa. xxx, 32; "mantelets are set in

position" in Nahum ii, 5; "marmots shall have their lairs" in Isa. xiii, 21; and "spelt" appears among the crops in Isa. xxviii, 25. The "chariot" becomes a "palanquin" in Song of Solomon iii, 9; and the "rose of Sharon" becomes "an asphodel" in Song of Solomon ii, 1. With the aid of a good dictionary the reader should not have too much difficulty in identifying these.

"Groves" become "sacred poles" in Exodus xxxiv, 13 and many other places. In Judges iii, 7 Asheroth is recognised as a plural of Asherah, a Canaanite goddess. Her images were wooden pillars or the stems of trees with the branches cut off, so the old rendering was not very remote from the truth.

Some improvements

Comparatively few of the well-known phrases of the A.V. have been retained although the translators' handbook acknowledges that "The A.V. still held the field because of its incomparable English". Psa. cxxx still begins—"Out of the depths have I called to thee, O LORD"; and Psa. cxlv—"I will extol thee, O God, my King".

"Shepherd thy people with thy crook" (Mic. vii, 14) is clearer than "feed thy people with thy rod". In Exodus xxviii, 32 "with an oversewn edge" is more meaningful than "the hole of an habergeon"; and "silver filigree" more precise than "pictures of silver" in Prov. xxv, 11.

The changed meaning of "prevent" since 1611 is often quoted as an example of "archaisms" in the old version. The N.E.B. translators found no less than ten different ways of dealing with this problem, including "confronted" in Psa. xviii, 18; "welcome" in Psa. xxi, 3, "I will rise before dawn" for "I prevented the dawning of the morning" in Psa. cxix, 147; "meet" in Isa. xxi, 14 and "come near" in Amos ix, 10.

Not for public reading

The translators state that this version "was not intended to supplant the Authorised Version in public worship" (Handbook p. 7), and "does not set itself up as a rival to the A.V." (p. 15). This is repeated on the jacket, "It is not a revision of the A.V. nor is it intended to replace it". These statements are likely to be largely ignored in practice, and as a result public readers and their hearers will have to wrestle with phonic difficulties like—"All for a wanton's monstrous wantonness" (Nahum iii, 4); "on their lips is spider's poison" (Psa. cxl, 3); "Not a beak gaped" (Isa. x, 14); and "a waste of fen" (Isa. xiv, 23).

Quite large sections of the N.E.B. are, admittedly, easily readable, and expressed in appropriate terms, but there are also many passages where readability is achieved at the expense of accuracy, and yet others where the style and language are not of a high standard.

The Hebrew Text

Although the changes in the English style and vocabulary make the N.E.B. radically different from the Authorised Version, the most important alterations are those which have been made to the underlying Hebrew Text. Professor Driver outlines the translators' view of the state of the transmitted Hebrew Text in the introduction, which makes it quite plain that they felt obliged to reconstruct the Hebrew to some extent before translating it. "It is certain that this text does not always represent what was originally written. The translators must often go behind the traditional text to discover the writer's meaning". (Introduction p. xvi).

The present translators felt free "to disregard the vowels whenever they seemed to yield no satisfactory sense, and to translate the consonantal text in accordance with . . . the ancient versions . . . About a quarter of the words of the O.T. occur but once, or in set phrases of which the sense is uncertain or can only be guessed from the context, from ancient translations, from Jewish medieval traditions, or by analogy with kindred languages" (G. R. Driver—*Times*, February 25, 1970).

Sources

In the opinion of the translators the Massoretic Hebrew text incorporated the mistakes of generations of copyists and many errors of later copyists found their way into it. To "correct" the Hebrew the translators had recourse to the Dead Sea Scrolls (which they acknowledge to be "to a large extent identical with the text of our Hebrew Bibles"), and to the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Greek Septuagint, the ancient versions in Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic and Latin, and the Targums. Where these throw no light upon the meaning "the translator may have to arrive at the sense of a word from the context alone or *emend what is demonstrably faulty*" (Intro. p. xvii). Footnotes indicate instances "where the translators adopted what seemed to them the most *probable* correction of the text where the Hebrew and the ancient versions cannot be convincingly translated as they stand" (p. xix). These statements reflect the views expressed by Prof. S. R. Driver (Sir Godfrey's father) in the preface to the Variorum Bible of 1888—"Here, then, nothing remains but to make a temperate use of critical emendation. However reluctant we may be to admit the principle of *conjecture*, an exceptional application of it is justified in the case of the O.T."

Conjectures

A careful examination of the N.E.B. Old Testament reveals more than eleven hundred of these conjectures, referred to in the notes as "probable readings". It needs to be emphasised that Biblical scholars are by no means agreed about the degree of probability in all these places. In the first 315

passages conjecturally amended in the Revised Standard Version a few years ago the N.E.B. disagrees with the R.S.V. in no less than 136 places. In 59 of these the N.E.B. adopts a reading approximating to that of the Authorised Version and in 77 instances the N.E.B. differs significantly from both. This shows the truth of a remark made by one of the 19th Century revisers that "the demonstrations of textual criticism are hardly as stable as those of Euclid".

Transpositions

The translators have rearranged the text to some extent on the assumption that through the inadvertance of copyists some passages have become displaced from their correct positions. No less than 136 verses are affected in this way, including Job iv, 21 moved to v, 4; part of xii, 6 to xxi, 17; xli, 1-6 to follow xxxix, 30; Psa. cxiii, 9 to cxiv, 1; Isa. v, 24, 25 to follow x, 4; xli, 6, 7 follow xl, 20; lli, 14 follow liii, 2; Zechariah iii, 1-10 follow iv, 14; and xiii, 7-9 follow xi, 17. This conjectural rearrangement of the text will be rather confusing to any who try to follow a public reading with some other version in their hands.

Completely new readings

In Genesis xviii, 19 "I know him" became "have chosen him" in R.S.V. and "taken care of him" in N.E.B. "Pieces of money" in Gen. xxxiii, 19, becomes "a hundred sheep" in N.E.B. "Sit in judgment" became "sit on rich carpets" in R.S.V. and "on saddle-cloths" in N.E.B. "The Lord hath sworn" in Exodus xvii, 16 changed to "a hand upon the banner of the LORD" in R.S.V. and "my oath upon it" in N.E.B. In Deuteronomy vi, 4 R.S.V. offers four ways of expressing the A.V. "The LORD our God is one LORD", and the N.E.B. rejects them all and offers, "The LORD is our God, one LORD". In 1 Kings x, 22 the "monkeys" in the R.S.V. note, which replaced the A.V. "peacocks", are elevated to the N.E.B. text.

Some A.V. readings restored

In Gen. xxi, 9 N.E.B. "laughing at him" corresponds with A.V. "mocking", rather than R.S.V. "playing with". In Gen. xxi, 16 "She sat . . . weeping" agrees with "She lift up her voice", rather than R.S.V. "the child . . ." In Ruth i, 21 "Testified against" in A.V. becomes "pronounced against" rather than R.S.V. "afflicted" (which comes from the Greek, Syriac and Vulgate). In 1 Samuel ii, 29 "Kick at" is rendered "show disrespect for", against R.S.V. "look with greedy eye" (again from the Greek). 1 Kings vii, 2 "Four rows" became "three rows" in R.S.V., but returns to "four rows" in N.E.B.; "seven years" in Jer. xxxiv, 14 became "six years" in R.S.V., but the N.E.B. restores the disputed year. "The seventh day" in Judges xiv, 15 was changed to "fourth" in R.S.V. and back to "seventh" in N.E.B.

Messianic prophecies obscured

In the rendering of Genesis iii, 15 it is now barely possible to see any Gospel promise. Following Moffat almost verbatim the N.E.B. reads, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your brood and hers. They shall strike at your head, and you shall strike at their heel"

The treatment of Gen. xlix, 10 eliminates every vestige of relevance to the Messiah—"The sceptre shall not pass from Judah, nor the staff from his descendants, so long as tribute is brought to him." The word *Shiloh* has caused difficulty to Biblical scholars for centuries. Some have adopted "until he (Judah) comes to Shiloh", but *Shiloh* must be the subject of the verb. Others have regarded *Shiloh* as a proper name meaning "Peace-maker" and have linked the text with the "Prince of Peace" in Isa. ix, 6.

The N.E.B. has been influenced by the ancient versions which assume that the word has been incorrectly vowelled. Christian writers from the 2nd Century, including Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Eusebius and Augustine, have regarded this verse as prophetic of the Messiah.

King or Son?

"Tremble, and kiss the king (note—mighty one)" stands in place of "Kiss the Son" in Psa. ii, 12. Here the R.S.V. has "kiss his feet", and the R.V. margin "worship in purity". The problem arises from the use of the Aramaic *Bar* instead of the Hebrew *Ben* for "Son". Two German scholars suggested the alternative favoured by the R.S.V. but Professor G. R. Driver himself suggested the rendering adopted by the N.E.B. It involves dividing the Hebrew word for *rejoice* in verse 11, reversing the order of two of the consonants, and re-assembling them before "Son" (*Bar*), and thus manufacturing "to the Mighty One" The result of this conjectural shuffling of the text is that another allusion to the Messiah is lost.

Young woman or virgin?

"A young woman is with child" replaces "A virgin shall conceive" in Isa. vii, 14. The debate regarding the meaning of this verse has been in progress since the dawn of the Christian era. On the one hand it is argued that the Hebrew word can bear the meaning "young woman", and on the other hand it is declared that the context requires "virgin", as the birth was to be a sign from the Lord. Justin Martyr was born in A.D. 114 and his writings show how Christians then understood this verse. In his first *Apology* and in his *Dialogues with Trypho*, a Jew, he expressly refutes the

"young woman" rendering. Irenaeus was born about A.D. 120 and devoted much of his time to exposing heresy. On Isa. vii, 14, he wrote "For what great thing or what sign should have been in this, that a young woman conceiving by a man should bring forth—a thing which happens to all women that produce offspring? But since an unlooked for salvation was to be provided through the help of God, so also was the unlooked for birth from a virgin accomplished".

Mighty God or "Godlike"

The testimony of Isaiah to the Deity of the Messiah in ch. ix is practically eliminated and this passage now reads, "in purpose wonderful, in battle God-like, Father for all time (note: or of a wide realm), Prince of peace". There is a great difference between "The Mighty God" and "Godlike", and between "for all time" and "everlasting". In Isa. xxvi, 4 the same Hebrew word is translated "for ever"—"Trust in the LORD for ever", and the same expression would have been more appropriate in Ch. ix, 6.

Psa. xlv, 6 is altered to "Your throne is like God's throne, eternal", which is vastly different from the same passage quoted in Heb. i, 8 "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever". Here the Son is addressed as God, but in the Psalm it is merely His throne that is like God's throne.

Doctrinal implications

"In the beginning of creation, when God made heaven and earth" in Gen. i, 1 is in harmony with an interpretation devised by Jewish scholars in the Middle Ages, but does not appear to be supported by the ancient versions. It implies the pre-existence of the matter out of which the heavens and the earth were created.

"Once upon a time" in Gen. xi, 1 adds a suggestion of folklore to the narrative of the confusion of tongues.

"Noah had won the LORD's favour" (Gen. vi, 8), and "If I have deserved your favour" (xviii, 3) introduce without any warrant a suggestion of human merit which the text does not imply.

"I love Jacob, but I hate Esau" in Mal. i, 2, 3 is quoted in Rom. ix, 13 as "Jacob I loved and Esau I hated". The tense of the verb is highly significant, and the N.T. quotation is made to disagree with its source, while the LXX, R.V., R.S.V., Moffat, Knox and Jerusalem versions all retain the past tense in Malachi.

The footnote on Isa. liv, 7 "On the impulse of a moment I forsook you" implies a measure of capriciousness on the part of the Almighty.

Inaccuracies

The translators did not attempt a word for word or sentence for sentence translation, but they assert that their version is "as truthful as human skill could make it" (Handbook p. 5). There are, nevertheless, many passages in which accuracy is lost in the paraphrase. Samson was to be a Nazirite unto God *from the womb* (Judges xiii, 5), but the N.E.B. reads "consecrated to God *from the day of his birth*". The Angel of the Lord said, "Thou shalt conceive and bear a son", and he was, in fact, consecrated to God "from the womb". The same Hebrew expression is so rendered in the N.E.B. in Ps. xxii, 10.

Radical changes

There are many passages which appear to bear no relation to the earlier English translations. For instance a sermon on Isa. xxx, 7 "Their strength is to sit still" would need to be adjusted to some extent in the light of the new rendering—"Rahab Quelled" (in R.S.V. "Rahab who sits still"; Moffat "Dragon Do-Nothing!" Delitzsch—"Great mouth that sits still"). Such passages illustrate the difficulty which often confronts the translator when the Hebrew is obscure.

Amos v, 9 provides another example—"who makes Taurus rise after Capella and Taurus set hard on the rising of the Vintager". Here a footnote offers the A.V. rendering as a possible alternative. Limitations of space forbid the inclusion of further examples, which are very numerous.

Recommendations

The promotional literature distributed in the U.S.A. quotes briefly the favourable comments of Dr. Sandmel of Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Dr. J. A. Sanders of Union Theological Seminary, New York; the Jesuit scholar P. J. King of St. John's Seminary and Professor F. F. Bruce of Manchester University. The translators themselves, according to the Handbook, would not suggest that their work is perfect, but simply "the best that the best available scholars could produce". The Authorised Version itself was a revision which embodied the fruits of nearly a century of labour, and gained by its own internal character a vital authority which could never have been secured either by legislation or by advertising. Time alone will show whether the N.E.B. or any of the numerous other modern versions will ever occupy a like place in the esteem and affections of English readers throughout the world.