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Brief Studies

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BRIEF STUDIES

ANOTHER PARALLEL-COLUMN BIBLE

Parallel-column Bibles have had a long history, but never in such concentrated quality as in the last decade. The latest, *The Four Translation New Testament*,* offers one committee-type version (KJV), two private translations (C. B. Williams, not to be confused with Charles Kingsley Williams, who has done an excellent job in *The New Testament in Plain English* [Grand Rapids, 1963], and William F. Beck), and a revamped version of the American Standard Version of 1901 (NAS). Since a detailed critique of Beck's translation appeared in a previous volume of this journal, XXXV (1964), 343—46, this review is confined principally to the NAS and Williams' translation.

One of the principal aims of NAS is to "render the grammar and terminology of the ASV in contemporary English" in a "clear and accurate rendering" (pp. xvi—xvii). Is this goal achieved? 2 Cor. 10:13-15 reads in this version: "But we will not boast beyond *our* measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you. For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ; not boasting beyond *our* measure, *that is*, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we shall be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you." Since none of the other versions in this volume are appreciably clearer, we cite the New English Bible (NEB) as a sample

* *The Four Translation New Testament: King James; New American Standard Bible; Williams—In the Language of the People; Beck—In the Language of Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966). xxviii and 739 pages. Cloth. Price not given.

of how the passage might be rendered in understandable English: "With us there will be no attempt to boast beyond our proper sphere; and our sphere is determined by the limit God laid down for us, which permitted us to come as far as Corinth. We are not overstretching our commission, as we should be if it did not extend to you, for we were the first to reach Corinth in preaching the gospel of Christ. And we do not boast of work done where others have laboured, work beyond our proper sphere. Our hope is rather that, as your faith grows, we may attain a position among you greater than ever before, but still within the limits of our sphere."

James 3:1 in NAS is stilted: "Let not many of *you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment."

1 Cor. 11:19 reads: "There must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may become evident among you." All the parallel versions have "must," a word that might be interpreted as "there evidently are." NEB renders more precisely: "And I believe there is some truth in it (for discussions are necessary if only to show which of your members are sound)."

Matt. 6:7 is rendered: "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words." NEB strikes home with "do not go on babbling like the heathen, who imagine that the more they say the more likely they are to be heard."

NAS (and to the same effect Beck) reads in Matt. 5:37: "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; and anything beyond these is of evil." Williams is aware of the idiom, but is more stilted than NEB's "Plain

'yes' or 'no' is all you need to say; anything beyond that comes from the devil."

In John 13:23 all the versions in this book sound a saccharine note, which is tuned better in NEB, "was reclining close beside Jesus." "Righteousness" (NAS, Matt. 6:1) is not the type of word that pops into the average person's mind in describing religious behavior; NEB, "Be careful not to make a show of your religion before men," catches the point better than the parallel versions do. "Imperishable-perishable" (1 Cor. 15:52-53) will probably suggest a corpse secured against decay in eternal orbit, as in the motion picture *The Loved One*. What is a "horn of salvation," Luke 1:69? And what is "the regeneration" in Matt. 19:28? NEB, in line with intertestamental data, interprets this correctly, "in the world that is to be" (Beck's "new life" is not specific enough; Williams comes closer, "new order of life").

The papyri have been around long enough to remind us that the "unruly" (2 Thess. 3:6) is one "who falls into idle habits" (NEB). And NAS should not have tried to compete with the contractors of ASV for the unroofing job in Mark 2:4.

But in order not to detract from some of the real values of NAS by further citation of the many infelicities or inaccuracies in this version, I am happy to express my appreciation for numerous improvements. Among these is the rendering of Jude 7, where NAS displays more sense of grammar than Beck's free paraphrase or Williams' unclear syntax by clearly indicating that what is meant by *τούτοις* (masc.) are the angels in v. 6. Similarly, the NAS rendering of Mark 1:38, "that is what I came out for," catches the *ἐξ*, missed by Beck's "That's why I've come," in the compound verb. NAS also exhibits improved renderings of many tense forms, especially the historical present, as in Mark 1:12. On the other hand, "he was preaching, and saying" is a retained Hebraism, which Williams renders clearly,

"He kept preaching the following message." Since NAS lays much claim to accuracy, one might have expected *δοῦλος* to be rendered "slave" in a passage like Rom. 1:1, where ASV had "bondservant" in the margin, but which NAS now admits. The ASV did not use quotation marks for quoted speech matter. NAS has introduced them, but inconsistently. Col. 2:21, with the prohibitions set off clearly, is understandable in the three parallel versions, except KJV, but no marks appear in any of these versions in 1 Cor. 6:12. The placement of an apostrophe can be significant. Perhaps "master's" in Williams' rendering of Matt. 15:27 is a proof-reader's error. NAS, KJV, and Beck are correct.

In most instances NAS claims to follow the 23d edition of the Nestle Greek text. Criteria for adopting particular renderings are not, however, apparent. Thus Matt. 5:13 includes the doxology without a note on the manuscript problem (the only hint is the use of brackets), and similarly Matt. 12:47 is included without note, whereas a single phrase in Matt. 15:6 et passim is singled out for comment. "Many omit" says NAS on Mark 1:1, but not more than in Mark 1:34, where we read "some." John 7:53—8:11 is printed in the body of the text, but there is at least as much evidence for John 5:4, which is dropped to the margin; Williams, with his consistent omission, is more reliable here than any of the parallel versions.

A peculiar and otiose feature of NAS is the use of italics, especially notation of the use of the article when not in the Greek text, but the Greekless reader can never really be sure. Thus in Mark 2:17 *the* is added, but in v. 20 no italics appear for "*the* (italics are ours) days." In Col. 1:18 "the" before "head" should, on NAS principle, be italicized, or are we to assume that the translator, with a few MSS, omits the article? In that event a note should have been added. In Mark 4:3 a question of grammar is involved;

the article in δ σπείρων is generic, as correctly rendered in 4:21 (δ λύχνος, "A [italics are ours] lamp"). The list could be greatly extended. Consistent policy would also require some notation of the use of the article where it is found in the Greek text but omitted by the translator. But I see no evidence of such comparable precision.

The preface observes that "'Thou, Thy, and Thee' are changed to 'you' except in the language of prayer when addressing Deity." In Mark 1:11 "Thou" appears in language that is hardly prayer, or is God presumed to be praying to His Son? We would expect "Thy" in v. 2, but instead we find "Your." (See also 2:18.) In Acts 9:5 and 13 we read "Thou" and "Thy," but not in prayer; on the other hand, in Acts 1:6, "You." These are just a few examples chosen at random. Another confusing instance is the capitalization of Law. In Matt. 5:17 the word is capitalized, but not in John 8:17.

On the whole, C. B. Williams is the best of the four as a guide to the Greekless reader. The style is the smoothest, in spite of some pedantry in tense distinctions. There is apparently less free-wheeling criticism, and there is a fine sensitivity to grammatical nuances. (But Beck's rendering of Matt. 16:19 is a useful correction of Williams' erro-

neous translation of this verse, an error shared by NAS.)

This brings me to my final concern. How is the layman to know which rendering is correct, or, where divergent interpretations are apparent, whether any of the four is correct? The answer lies in directing him to translations that represent more adequately the scholarly resources of the world of Biblical scholarship. For this reason such committee-type versions as NEB and RSV, which utilize a far greater breadth of scholarly talent, are more reliable and lend profounder assurance to the reader that what he finds is "of no private interpretation." Having begun with these, the Bible student may profitably consult such versions as NAS, Williams, or Beck. Where NEB and RSV are at variance, he may rest assured, as a general rule, that where a plurality of private versions support one or the other, he has the correct interpretation. This is sound method for one who lacks the resources to participate in scholarly dialog.

One final footnote. In place of the KJV, the editors might well have included the excellent translation by either Moffatt or Goodspeed, both scholars of world repute.

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