

APPENDIX VI
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON BIBLE TRANSLATIONS
TO THE SYNOD OF THE
CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES MEETING
IN WINNIPEG, 1989

January 7, 1989

Esteemed brethren,

MANDATE

The Committee on Bible Translations that was appointed by Synod Burlington West in 1986 received "the same express mandate as decided by Synod Smithville 1980, *Acts*, Art 111, C, 4" (*Acts 1986*, Art. 60, D).

This mandate reads as follows:

- a. To continue to make recommendations to the Standard Bible Committee for changes necessary in the Revised Standard Version translation;
- b. To keep the Churches posted as to the developments in new editions of the Revised Standard Version;
- c. To report to the next Synod.

EXECUTION OF MANDATE

- a. The Committee met once, on September 10, 1987. (See enclosed minutes of this meeting.)
- b. According to information received from Dr. B.M. Metzger of the Revised Standard Version Bible Committee in a letter dated September 26, 1987 (see enclosed letter):
"our RSV Bible Committee will be very happy to receive any additional suggestions for improving the version. We are committed to the publishers to turn over to them our material by mid-1988, so that by Lent in 1990 the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible may be available to the public."
- c. In the light of this information, our Committee decided that the time schedule was too tight to make submissions to the Revised Standard Version Bible Committee before this Committee gives their work to the publishers by mid-1988. Our Committee was therefore unable to do the first part of their mandate.
- d. Since no new edition of the Revised Standard Version appeared, we were also unable to do the second part of our mandate, namely "to keep the churches posted as to the developments in new editions of the Revised Standard Version."

THE NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION (NRSV)

Although this edition will not be made available until 1990, Dr. B.M. Metzger of the Revised Standard Version Bible Committee provided us with the following information on the NRSV.

According to his letter to our Committee (September 26, 1987), "the NRSV will involve the entire Bible in a fresh revision." However, "contrary to certain rumors, we are *not* making changes in language pertaining to the Deity; we are, however, introducing some changes with regard to eliminating masculine biased language pertaining to people, where such changes do not violate the sense of the original text."

According to additional information which Dr. Metzger provided with his letter, those charged with providing the NRSV were given the mandate "to make a revision of the RSV involving necessary (1) changes in the paragraph structure and punctuation, (2) elimination of archaisms, while retaining the flavor of the Tyndale-King James tradition, (3) changes in the interest of accuracy, clarity, and/or euphony of English expression, and (4) the elimination of masculine-oriented language so far as this can be

done without altering passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture and of a masculine-oriented society."

More information can be found in the sheet entitled "Characteristics of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible" which Dr. Metzger sent us and which is also enclosed herewith.

REPORT TO SYNOD

With this report, we have passed on to Synod an account of our activities and whatever information we have about a new forthcoming edition of the RSV. We have herewith thus also fulfilled the final part of our mandate.

Respectfully submitted by

J. De Jong
J. Geertsema
P. Kingma
J. Van Rietschoten, convener
C. Van Dam

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON BIBLE TRANSLATIONS HELD ON SEPTEMBER 10, 1987 AT THE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

Art. 1 Opening

The convener, Rev. J. Van Rietschoten opens the meeting with the reading of James 1:1-12 and prayer. The brothers are welcomed. Besides the chairman, Rev. J. De Jong and Prof. C. Van Dam are present. Prof. J. Geertsema is absent with notification and Rev. P. Kingma was unaware that a meeting was scheduled.

Art. 2 Mandate

Since this is the first meeting, our synodical mandate was read (Art. 60.D of Acts General Synod 1986) which is the same as decided by General Synod 1980 (Acts, Art. 111.C.4). We have

- "a. to continue to make recommendations to the Standard Bible Committee for changes necessary in the Revised Standard Version translation;
- b. to keep the churches posted as to the developments in new editions of the Revised Standard Version;
- c. to report to the next Synod."

It is decided that Prof. C. Van Dam will act as secretary and write the Standard Bible Committee to find out if they are still receiving recommendations on the Old Testament. (A second New Testament revision has already been completed.) He will also request that the Standard Bible Committee keep us informed when new editions of the RSV appear.

Art. 3 Miscellaneous and Closing

- i. Prof. Van Dam will take care that mileage and other costs are eventually remunerated by the General Fund, c/o the Church at Carman.
- ii. Rev. J. Van Rietschoten will multiply relevant material from the previous Synodical Committee for those present members who do not have this.
- iii. There being nothing further for this meeting, Prof. Van Dam leads in closing

prayer and the chairman adjourns the meeting.

chairman

secretary

**PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY**

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September 26, 1987

Dear Dr. Van Dam,

Thank you for your letter of September 17th, which I received yesterday.

In reply to your query may I say that our RSV Bible Committee will be very happy to receive any additional suggestions for improving the version. We are committed to the publishers to turn over to them our material by mid-1988, so that by Lent in 1990 the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible may be available to the public.

May I say that, contrary to certain rumors, we are *not* making changes in language pertaining to the Deity; we are, however, introducing some changes with regard to eliminating masculine biased language pertaining to people, where such changes do not violate the sense of the original text. I enclose a sheet giving the characteristics of the NRSV.

With all good wishes and best regards,

Sincerely yours,

Bruce M. Metzger

P.S. A second edition of the N.T. appeared in 1971, which embodied a limited number of changes; e.g. we removed the word "men" from Luke 17:34, which got into the King James version although it was not present in any earlier version. The NRSV will involve the entire Bible in a fresh revision.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION OF THE BIBLE

The Revised Standard Version Bible Committee was charged by the RSV Policies Committee of the NCCC with the mandate "to make a revision of the RSV involving necessary (1) changes in the paragraph structure and punctuation, (2) elimination of archaisms, while retaining the flavor of the Tyndale–King James tradition, (3) changes in the interest of accuracy, clarity, and/or euphony of English expression, and (4) the elimination of masculine-oriented language so far as this can be done without altering passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture and of a masculine-oriented society."

The revision, which is expected to be finished by mid-1988 and given to the licensed publishers, has the following characteristics.

(1) The NRSV is still more accurate than the RSV (a) because the Committee has taken into account manuscripts of the Old and New Testament that came to light since 1946-1952, and (b) because the Committee has been able to consult lexical and syntactical studies of the original languages published during the past forty years.

(2) Inasmuch as attention had been given to matters of euphony, the NRSV embodies improvements here and there that will make the version still more suitable for public reading and liturgical use than it was before.

(3) Besides greater accuracy and euphony, and partly because of them the NRSV attains a higher degree of clarity and lucidity in presenting the word of God to the reader.

(4) Within the constraints of the original texts and the mandate of the Policies Committee, the Committee has followed the maxim, "As literal as possible, as free as necessary." As a result the NRSV remains essentially a literal translation, so that readers who are not acquainted with the original languages of Scripture can know what the Biblical authors wrote. At the same time, however, the Committee has tried faithfully to give the sense of the original writers in terms of inclusive language when referring to people.

The NRSV differs from all other Bibles in English in that it has been prepared by an ecumenical Committee of men and women who, besides representing a variety of Protestant denominations, include Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Jewish scholars. After devoting more than fifteen years to the work of revision, it is their hope that, like the RSV, the NRSV will come to be accepted as the standard rendering of the Bible.