

APPENDIX VI
REPORT TO SYNOD 1992
FROM THE COMMITTEE ON BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

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1. C. Van Dam, "The New Revised Standard Version: Some First Impressions," *Clarion*, 40 (1991) 55-56.
2. J. H. Stek, "The New Revised Standard Version: A Preliminary Assessment," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 26 (1991) 80-99.

I. MANDATE and GENERAL ACTIVITIES

1. General Synod Winnipeg 1989 gave this committee the following mandate:
 - a. to scrutinize the NRSV Bible as soon as it becomes available with respect to faithfulness of translation, particularly in regard to the use of so-called inclusive language.
 - b. to provide information about its findings to the churches and report to the next General Synod. (Acts, Art. 88.D)
2. Once the NRSV became available this committee became active. Meetings were held at the Theological College on June 4 and Nov 26, 1990 and Oct 3, 1991. The result of these meetings and work by the different participants is this report.
3. a. In answer to correspondence from the Deputies for Bible Translations of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (September 29, 1990) we

expressed our doubts about the feasibility of the churches themselves undertaking the task of translating the Bible. Furthermore, our synods have never called for a translation from within our own churches. (See the Correspondence in the archival part of this report.)

- b. After this report had been prepared, a letter was received from the Deputies for Bible Translations of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (October 23, 1991). They informed us that their Synod 1990 declared that the New American Standard Bible, the New King James Bible, and the New International Version are deemed better translations than the RSV and that these translations are being further studied by their committee. They also wrote in the hope that Australia and Canada would not end up using different Bible translations and that they were open to any suggestions for cooperation. We herewith pass on their information and concerns to Synod. (A copy of this letter can be found in the archival part of this report.)
4. An article written by Dr. C. Van Dam on the NRSV (*Clarion*, 40 [1991] 55-56) informed the church membership about first impressions on the NRSV. These impressions have been not been contradicted by further study. (A copy of this article has been enclosed in the Appendix of this report.)
5. Also included in the Appendix for your information is an article by Professor J. H. Stek entitled "The New Revised Standard Version: A Preliminary Assessment," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 26 (1991) 80-99.

II. THE BACKGROUND OF THE NRSV

The background information we are here presenting is gleaned from the preface "To the Reader," written by the NRSV's chief translator, Bruce M. Metzger, and complemented with information from other sources. Our purpose is to pass on data of a more or less objective and official character respecting the background and translation procedure followed in the NRSV. At this point we are not primarily interested in evaluating this information.

The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible is an authorized revision of the Revised Standard Version, published in 1952, which was a revision of the American Standard Version, published in 1901, which in turn, embodied earlier revisions of the King James Version, published in 1611. This translation was sponsored by the National Council of Churches in the U.S. and expedited by a standing RSV Bible Committee, comprising about thirty members, both men and women. Ecumenical in representation, it includes scholars affiliated with various Protestant denominations, as well as several Roman Catholic members, an Eastern Orthodox member, and a Jewish member who serves in the Old Testament section. This also explains why there will be a variety of editions.¹ Some editions will print only the 39 Old Testament books recognized by Protestantism and Judaism, while others will include additional books that Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy regard as Scripture. In time, a Roman Catholic edition of the NRSV is expected.

Following the publication of the RSV Old Testament in 1952, significant advances were made in the discovery and interpretation of documents in Semitic languages related to Hebrew. The second edition has taken into account a fuller appraisal of textual evidence derived from the Dead Sea Scrolls, which had begun to come to light just before the publication of the RSV Old Testament in 1952.² Subsequent acquisitions from the same area brought to light many other early copies of all the books of the Hebrew Scriptures (except Esther), though most of these copies are fragmentary. A result is, for example, that four sentences based upon one of the Dead Sea Scrolls have been added to Chapter 10 of 1 Samuel.³

For the Old Testament the Committee has made use of the *Biblia Hebraica*

Stuttgartensia (1977; ed. sec. emandata, 1983) [the so-called Masoretic Text]. For the New Testament the Committee has based its work on the most recent edition of *The Greek New Testament*, prepared by an interconfessional and international committee and published by the United Bible Societies (1966; 3rd ed., corrected 1983). As for the style of English adopted for the present revision, among the mandates was the directive to continue in the tradition of the King James Bible, but to introduce such changes as are warranted on the basis of accuracy, clarity, euphony, and current English usage. The translation committee describes the English as English that is "direct and plain and meaningful to people today." Prof. John Stek (chairman of the Committee on Bible Translation that produced the NIV) observes, that the English is "without the heavy Hebraic 'brogue' that made so much of the biblical text seem strange and awkward."⁴ The Committee has followed the basic translation maxim "as literal as possible, as free as necessary." Paraphrastic renderings have been adopted only sparingly, and then chiefly to compensate for a deficiency in the English language — the lack of a common gender third person singular pronoun. The translation aims to circumvent what is considered the "inherent bias of the English language towards the masculine gender" During the 1980s the National Council of Churches (N.C.C.), in response to insistent feminist demands, published three sets of highly controversial rewrites of certain Bible passages ..., "but the NRSV translators (four of the 30 are women) refused to play games with God. They use inclusive terms only when the manuscripts clearly intend to speak of humans in general."⁵ Says the Rev. Bruce Metzger ... "The changes introduced in language relating to the Deity are tantamount to rewriting the Bible. As a Christian, and as a scholar, I find this altogether unacceptable. It will divide the church, rather than work for ecumenical understanding."⁶ However, where earlier English translations employed a heavily masculine-oriented phraseology, even when this is not demanded by the original texts, the translators adjusted what they considered overmasculinized language without changing what they perceived to be the intent of the original writers.⁷ Translators were given the mandate that, with references to humans, masculine-oriented language should be eliminated as far as this can be done without altering passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture. Only very occasionally has the pronoun "he" or "him" been retained in passages where the reference may have been to a woman as well as to a man; for example, in several legal texts in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In the vast majority of cases, however, inclusiveness has been attained by rephrasing or by introducing plural forms where this was thought not to distort the meaning of the passage.⁸ The gender aspect of the translation has been and remains controversial.⁹

Concerning another aspect of style, the traditional distinction between "shall" and "will" in English has been retained in the Old Testament, while in the New Testament the abandonment of such distinctions in the usage of the future tense in English reflects the more colloquial nature of the koine Greek used by most New Testament authors. The committee also voted to drop "thou, thee, thine which had been retained from the King James version in prayers and psalms addressed to God."¹⁰ Furthermore, in the tradition of the King James Version one will not expect to find the use of capital letters for pronouns that refer to the Deity. The head of the NRSV committee ends his account by stating that the Bible carries its full message to all persons and communities who read it so that they may discern and understand what God is saying to them. That message must not be disguised in phrases that are no longer clear, or hidden under words that have changed or lost their meaning; it must be presented in language that is direct and plain and meaningful to people today.¹¹

Our report can be considered our response (in the light of our mandate) to the more controversial guidelines set for the NRSV and our answer respecting the acceptability of this translation for the Canadian Reformed Churches.

¹Richard N. Ostling, "Farewell to Thee's and He's," *Time*, 21 May 1990.

²Bruce M. Metzger, "Trials of the Translator," *Theology Today*, 33:1 (1976), p. 100.

³See on this Rev. W. Huizinga, "A Missing Paragraph?," in *Una Sancta*, 38 (1991) 385-387. He reserves judgment on this addition.

⁴John H. Stek, "The New Revised Standard Version: A Preliminary Assessment," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 26:1 (April 1991), p. 81.

⁵Richard N. Ostling, *Time*, 21 May 1990.

⁶Richard N. Ostling, "O God Our [Mother and] Father," *Time*, 24 October 1983, p. 59.

⁷Bruce M. Metzger, "The 'Desexing' of Scripture," *Evangelical Newsletter*, Vol. 8:5 (March, 1981). Where the Hebrew and Greek refer to people in general the RSV committee employs a variety of expressions, including "those who," "all people," "everyone" and "human beings," rather than the traditional rendering "man."

⁸Stek (*op.cit.*, 90) observes that a proliferation of footnoting has taken place which might benefit the pastors and academicians (who do not need them, seeing that they are trained in the original languages and in text criticism), but which will be of little benefit to the average reader, puzzling them rather than enlightening.

⁹While not agreeing with all his terminology, we pass on the comments of John H. Stek (*op. cit.*, 94). "But the committee has gone well beyond that effort; it has taken great pains to undo also the sexual bias of the original languages and to conceal the male domination of social structures in the related cultures." Even a feminist like Phyllis A. Bird cannot be satisfied with the attempts made. In her article, "Translating Sexist Language as a Theological and Cultural Problem," (*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 42 [1988] 89) she writes: "But the problem it signals cannot be solved, in my view, by translation, because it is essentially a hermeneutical problem." She adds on p. 90: "The problem of androcentric language is essentially the same problem that Bultmann addressed in his attempt to free the gospel from the bondage of its mythological language and worldview."

¹⁰Bruce M. Metzger, *Theology Today*, p. 100.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 100, "having attempted, namely, conveying in the translation the same impression to its audience as the original did to its original audience."

III. PAST RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE NRSV

What follows is a comparison of the NRSV with recommendations made to the Standard Bible Committee by the Canadian Reformed Churches in past reports.

1. OLD TESTAMENT

1.A. SPECIFIC TEXTS

Genesis 1:1

original recommendation: Delete alternate translation ("When God began to create")

NRSV: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth ..." with alternate translations in note: "when God began to create" or "In the beginning God created."

response: The traditional translation is now relegated to final place in the note. The NRSV rendering understands $b^e r' t$ as a construct form. However, it should be noted that the Masoretic accent (the disjunctive Tipcha), the ancient versions, and the context favours the absolute understanding of $b^e r' t$ (See E.J. Young, *Studies in Genesis One*, 5-7). When $b^e r' t$ is understood as an absolute, verse one stands a declaration of the fact of creation. Translating $b^e r' t$ as construct, however, means that verse one becomes a subordinate clause to verse two, suggesting that the earth was already existing when God began to create. This is readily seen when one reads Gen 1:1,2 in the NRSV.

Genesis 1:2

Since we are busy with the first two verses of Genesis 1, it should also be noted here that the NRSV also departs from traditional rendering in verse 2.

NRSV: "the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God^D swept over the face of the waters."

note b gives two alternate renderings: "while the Spirit of God" or "while a mighty wind."

response: The RSV should have been retained "... the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters."

m^erahepet does not describe a mighty wind. *rhp* in the piel denotes the hovering of a bird over its young, as the NRSV correctly renders in Deut 32:11 ("hovers": the only other place where the piel is found).

Because this verb is not appropriate to describe a mighty wind, *r_ah e^el_h_m* should be rendered "the Spirit of God." Furthermore, it remains questionable whether *e^el_h_m* can ever be used as an indication of the superlative (cf., e.g., W. Baumgartner, ed., *Hebr_isches und Aram_isches Lexikon*, 52a).

Genesis 11:1

original recommendation: Replace "and few words" by "and the same words."

NRSV: "and the same words."

response: The recommendation was adopted.

Genesis 12:3 (similarly Gen 18:18)

original recommendation: Change the translation of the text to the one in the footnote and put in the footnote what is now in the text.

NRSV: "... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."^e Note e gives as alternative: "by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves."

response: The recommendation was adopted.

Genesis 24:67

original recommendation: Translate retaining the Hebrew. "Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother."

NRSV: "Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent."

response: The recommendation was adopted.

Genesis 25:27

original recommendation: Replace "quiet" by "plain." Add footnote Heb. lit. "complete." Alternative translation "upright, straightforward, undeviating."

NRSV: "... Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents."

response: The recommendation was not adopted.

Exodus 21:22

original recommendation: Translate "so that her child is born" instead of "so that there is a miscarriage." The verb is often used to refer to normal birth (e.g. 1 Kings 8:19) and in no case is it used to indicate a miscarriage (Num. 12:12 refers to a stillborn child).

NRSV: "so that there is a miscarriage."

response: The recommendation was not adopted.

Exodus 32:1,4,8

original recommendation: Translate "god" instead of "gods." This is a possible translation and there is no reason to assume that Israel turned polytheist.

NRSV: "gods"

response: The recommendation was not adopted.

Deuteronomy 11:14, 15

original recommendation: Retain Hebrew "I" for it makes perfectly good sense since God speaks through His prophets.

NRSV: "then he ... and he"

response: The NRSV has gone further than the RSV in also changing the first person in verse 13 to third person with respect to commandment. The recommendation was not adopted.

Deuteronomy 16:7

original recommendation: Change "boil" into "cook" since the RSV creates an unnecessary conflict with Exodus 12:9.

NRSV: "You shall cook it"

response: The recommendation was adopted.

1 Samuel 13:1

original recommendation: This verse cannot be read out loud in this way. There are two other possibilities. Leave this verse out of the text and place it in a footnote with an explanation why this is done. Or retain it but add an estimated number of years plus a footnote which explains why this has been estimated.

NRSV: It is unchanged from the RSV, except that one of the notes contains the additional information that "(the verse is lacking in the Septuagint)."

response: The recommendation was not adopted.

1 Kings 7:24

original recommendation: Translate "ten to a cubit" instead of "for thirty cubits." This is the obvious meaning of the Hebrew and technically 10 "gourds" to a cubit was not at all impossible.

NRSV: "each of ten cubits."

response: The recommendation was not adopted. Although the NRSV appears to be more sensitive to the Hebrew text, it is difficult to see how the Hebrew justifies this translation.

1 Kings 7:24

original recommendation: Translate *p^eq_`m* with "knobs" instead of "gourds." The word is vague in Hebrew. The meaning seems to be oval protusions which look somewhat like gourds or eggs.

NRSV: "panels."

response: The translation is more general. The matter remains difficult.

1 Kings 8:12

original recommendation: Omit the Greek addition "the LORD has set the sun in the heavens but."

NRSV: The Greek addition is omitted.

response: The recommendation was adopted.

2 Chronicles 4:3

original recommendation: Translate "figures like oxen" instead of "figures of gourds."

NRSV: NRSV renders "panels" (cf. 1 Kings 7:24) although *p^eq_`m* is not found and the word for oxen is ignored.

response: The recommendation was not adopted.

2 Chronicles 4:5

original recommendation: Translate "three thousand baths" instead of "over three thousand baths" since this is what the Hebrew says.

NRSV: "three thousand baths."

response: The recommendation was adopted.

2 Chronicles 4:10 and 1 Kings 7:39

original recommendation: Translate "at the right side of the house to the south-east." This is a more precise translation and therefore more fitting for the rather careful description of which this is part.

NRSV: Unchanged from the RSV: "southeast corner of the house."

response: The recommendation was not adopted.

2 Chronicles 21:2

original recommendation: Translate "of Israel" (instead of "of Judah") or at least add a footnote informing the reader that Israel is in the Hebrew text. Elsewhere the RSV does not substitute "Judah" for "Israel" (cf. 2 Chron. 12:6; 19:8; 21:4; 23:2).

NRSV: "of Judah" with a note that the Greek and Syriac is followed but that the Hebrew has "Israel."

response: Part of the recommendation was followed.

Job 17:3

original recommendation: Add a footnote: Heb. "strike hands with me."

NRSV: unchanged.

response: The recommendation was not adopted.

Job 36:21b (the uncorrected report read 26:21b)

original recommendation: Translate "because for this reason you were tested by affliction." (Using the pual of *bhr* clears up the difficulty which *`al* presents here, since this preposition never completes *bhr*.)

NRSV: "... because of that you have been tried by affliction."

response: The recommendation was adopted.

Psalms 2:12

original recommendation: Translate "kiss the Son," since the meaning of the Masoretic text is not uncertain as the footnote suggests.

NRSV: No change from the RSV in the disputed place.

response: The recommendation was not adopted.

Psalms 29:1

original recommendation: Instead of "heavenly beings" translate "sons of God." As grounds were given that this is a possible Hebrew translation which then refers to the believers (cf. Gen. 6:4). In Psalm 96:7-9 similar verses have "families of the peoples" instead of the phrase in question here suggesting that human beings and not heavenly beings are referred to.

NRSV: There is no change from the RSV.

response: The recommendation was not adopted.

Psalms 45:6

original recommendation: Translate "Thy throne O God." Reasons given were the quotation in Hebrew 1:8 and the fact that the Davidic throne was at bottom God's throne.

NRSV: "Your throne O God."

response: The recommendation was adopted.

Psalms 51:18

original recommendation: Translate "build the walls of Jerusalem" and if desired put "rebuild" in a footnote. The normal translation of the Hebrew is

"build," unless the context makes clear it is otherwise. As the translation now reads, it contradicts the heading "Psalm of David" and begs the question regarding the Davidic authorship of v v. 18ff.

NRSV: "... rebuild the walls of Jerusalem" (as RSV).

response: The recommendation was not adopted.

Psalm 109:8

original recommendation: Replace "his goods" by "his office" since this is the common meaning of the Hebrew word (cf. Septuagint).

NRSV: It renders the term in question by "his position."

response: The recommendation was adopted.

Isaiah 49:17

original recommendation: The translation "builders" should be footnoted to indicate that the Hebrew reads "sons."

NRSV: "Your builders outdo your destroyers' ..." with footnote 1 giving as alternative rendering: "Your children come swiftly, your destroyers."

response: The rendering in the text is essentially unchanged. New is the addition of the footnote. However, with respect to the point raised in the original recommendation, our objection still stands. "Builders" and "children" are not translations of the same Hebrew. To translate the former involves a slight emendation that should be acknowledged.

Ezekiel 27:19

original recommendation: The Hebrew should be retained with the translation "Vedan and Javan paid for your wares from Uzal."

NRSV: "Vedan and Javan from Uzal¹ entered into trade for your wares ..." footnote j: "Meaning of Heb. uncertain."

response: The NRSV is a great improvement and essentially follows the recommendation that the Hebrew text be followed.

Ezekiel 34:16

original recommendation: Retain Hebrew and translate "the fat and the strong I will destroy."

NRSV: "the fat and the strong I will destroy."

response: The recommendation was adopted.

Hosea 2:23 (Heb. verse 25)

original recommendation: The correction is unnecessary. Translate "I will sow her." No textual evidence exists for the emendation "him." It is unnecessary. Israel is seen as bride and therefore to be referred to as "her." This observation receives confirmation from the Septuagint, Vulgate and Peshitta which all translate "her." Later in this verse it switches to masculine ("he shall say") because of its close proximity to the masculine "people."

NRSV: "I will sow him¹ for myself." note q: Cn: Heb "her."

response: The recommendation was not adopted.

Hosea 6:7

original recommendation: Retain the Hebrew text "like Adam." In view of Genesis 3 there is no need to change the Hebrew. "There" (further in verse 7) could implicitly refer to Paradise or could also be taken in a temporal sense (e.g. Psalm 14:5).

NRSV: "But at^a Adam they transgressed ..." Note e: Cn: Heb "like."

response: The recommendation was not adopted.

Hosea 12:6 (Hebrew verse 7)

original recommendation: Translate: "So you, return to your God." Reasons include that k^e can often have the meaning "to" with verbs of motion (e.g. Isaiah 19:23).

NRSV: "But as for you, return to your God."

response: The recommendation was adopted.

Zechariah 6:13

original recommendation: Translate "and He shall be a priest on His throne." Although the RSV rendering is technically possible, it goes against the structure of verse 13. Now there is an abrupt change of subject. The fact that there will be a priest on the throne has already been said in different words earlier in this verse and therefore this last clause is a natural conclusion. The preposition *al* is now translated in two different ways in the same verse. This seems forced. Since the final "them" refers to the two offices there is no problem here (cf. Psalm 110).

NRSV: "There shall be a priest by his throne."

response: The recommendation was not adopted.

summary

The above can be summarized as follows. Of the above 31 recommendations made, 12 were adopted, two were partly adopted, and 17 were not adopted.

1.B. COMPARISON BETWEEN RSV AND NRSV ON CORRECTIONS IN HOSEA

legend: col II indicates same cn, although trans. may not necessarily be identical.

col III indicates emendation is warranted according to the report to Synod 1974.

col. IV notes instances where the NRSV no longer emends the text

* = a translation similar to our recommendation or one mentioned as a possibility in 1974 Report

? = NRSV notes that the Heb. is uncertain

cn = correction for which there is no text evidence

I TEXT	II SAME CN IN RSV AND NRSV	III EMENDATION WARRANTED	IV CN IN RSV BUT NOT IN NRSV
2:23 (25)	x		
4:4	x	x	
4:18(a)			x *
4:18(b)	x	x	
5:2	x	x	
5:8			x *
5:13	x (same as 10:6)		
6:7	x		
6:9(a)	x		
7:12			x * ?
7:16	x (different trans.)		
8:1			x * ?
8:13	x (different trans.)	x	
9:4			x *

9:6		x*?
9:13		x?
10:5	x	
10:6(A)	x (same as 5:13)	
10:6(B)	x	
10:10	x	
10:15		x*
11:6		x*
11:9		x*?
11:12 (12:1)		x (n. gives lit. Heb)
12:8 (9)		x*?
13:6	x	
13:10(A)		x*
13:10(B)		x*
13:10(C)		x*
13:15		x*
14:5 (6)		x* (rev trans, but still needlessly marked as cn)

14:7 (8) x

note: 9:7 (NRSV) is marked with a cn, but this is not a cn in the sense of the NRSV preface since LXX is followed.

Statistical Summary re Hosea

RSV had a total of 31 different corrections (cn).

NRSV has retained 14 of these (of which 4 were deemed responsible by the 1974 Report to Synod), but rejected the conjectural emendations in the other 17 cases, translating in a manner consistent with the possibilities mentioned in the 1974 Report to Synod.

The above indicates a greater respect for the integrity of the Masoretic Text (i.e. Hebrew Text). This development is as such no surprise considering current scholarly trends which show a greater appreciation for the Masoretic Text.

The NRSV is therefore an advance textually over the RSV in Hosea. It would seem reasonable to suppose that this more conservative attitude to the Masoretic Text is in all likelihood evident elsewhere in the OT of the NRSV. Although, to be sure, one would have to study this matter further.

2. NEW TESTAMENT

2.A. SPECIFIC TEXTS

- I TEXT
- II RSV
- III CAN REF RECOMMENDATION
- IV NRSV

- I Luke 4:22a
- II And all spoke well of him.
- III And all testified about him.
- IV All spoke well of (So NIV).

- I Luke 4:22b
- II and wondered at the gracious words

- III and were shocked at the words of grace
 - IV and were amazed at the gracious words (So NIV).
- I Rom. 3:9
 - II Are we Jews any better off?
 - III Are we any better off?
 - IV Are we any better off?
- I Rom. 3:25
 - II expiation
 - III "propitiation" or "satisfaction"
 - IV a sacrifice of atonement (So NIV).(The same for 1 John 2:2; 4:10; both NRSV and NIV: "atoning sacrifice.")
- I Rom. 3:30
 - II (Gr.: out of faith) on the ground of their faith
 - III by faith
 - IV on the ground of faith
- I Rom. 4:13
 - II The promise ... (as NIV)
 - III For the promise ...
 - IV For the promise ...
- I Rom. 8:10
 - II your spirits
 - III the Spirit
 - IV the Spirit
- I Rom. 9:5
 - II Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever.
 - III Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever.
 - IV Messiah, who is over all, God blessed for ever.
- I Heb. 2:11
 - II have all one origin
 - III all are of one
 - IV all have one Father (NIV: "are of the same family")
- I Heb. 6:14
 - II 'Surely I will bless you and multiply you.'
 - III 'Surely I will richly bless you and multiply you.'
 - IV 'I will surely bless you and multiply you.' (NIV: 'I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.'
- I Heb. 12:2
 - II (sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than) the blood of Abel
 - III (sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than) Abel
 - IV (sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than) the blood of Abel (NIV: "sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.")
- I 1 John 5:16ff.
 - II what is not a mortal sin ... which is mortal
 - III sin leading to death ... sin leading to death
 - IV what is not a mortal sin ... sin that is mortal (NIV: "sin that does not lead to death" or "that leads to death.")

Summary

Our committee made a total of twelve recommendations. In three cases the NRSV changed the reading of the RSV in agreement with our committee's recommendations (Rom. 3:9, 4:13, and 8:10). In five cases our recommendations were not complied with, although a slight change may have taken place (Luke 4:22a, Rom. 3:30, Heb. 6:14, 12:2, and 1John 5:16,17); hereby an unchanged Rom.3:30 weighs heavily. In one case our recommendation was not accepted but the NRSV's change is an improvement, while our recommendation was not (Luke 4:22b: "shocked" is too strong). In two cases the NRSV's change did not follow our recommendation and was no improvement (Rom. 3:25, Heb. 2:11). In one case the NRSV changed partially in agreement with our recommendation, but the new translation is ambivalent (Rom. 9:5; while the change from "Christ" to "Messiah" is the opposite of an improvement. In summary: there are four improvements in translation of which three are in agreement with our committee's recommendations. The eight other cases are either no improvement or no change took place.

2.B. TEXT QUESTIONS

An earlier Canadian Reformed report noted, in a comparison between the first (1952) and the second (1971) edition of the RSV, that Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11 were "brought back into the text." The same counts for Luke 22:19b- 20 and 24:51b. It also mentioned that Luke 22:43-44 and part of Luke 12:39 were still left in the footnotes. In the NRSV the former is restored into the text, but not the latter. Basis for the retaining of this omission is, probably, that three of the older Greek and some old Latin and other manuscripts omit the words. Since the great majority of the manuscripts contain the words concerned, there is no good ground to leave them out.

2.C. THE SON AND THE SPIRIT

An earlier Canadian Reformed Report mentioned that with the second edition of the RSV there was "no change regarding inconsistencies and translation problems surrounding the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit." It mentioned Rom.9:5 and Heb.2:11, which have been dealt with above. The problem of "inconsistencies regarding the usage of thou/you when referring to the Lord Jesus" does not exist anymore since all "thou"s and "thee"s are abandoned.

This report also noted that "the holy Spirit is still in some instances referred to in the neuter (cf. Romans 5:5, 8:11, Ephesians 1:14, 1John 3:24)."

Rom.5:5 reads in the NRSV: "...through the Holy Spirit that [RSV: "which"] has been given to us."

Rom.8:11 now reads: "...through his Spirit that [RSV: "which"] dwells in you."

Eph.1:14 reads in the NRSV: "(... marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit); this is the pledge of our inheritance"

In a note attached to "this" it says: "Other ancient authorities read who." The RSV reads: "(... the Holy Spirit,) which" The Greek text with the neuter relative pronoun (because the word for "Spirit" is a neuter word) is found in some older manuscripts; however, the majority of the manuscripts have here the masculine relative pronoun. The fact that the large majority of the manuscripts has the masculine relative pronoun, and the fact that in 2 Cor. 1:22 and 5:5 the Holy Spirit Himself, and not the act of the sealing with the Spirit, is called "the guarantee" lead to the conclusion that the masculine relative pronoun is to be considered the correct reading. This, in turn, stresses that the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal, neuter, power but a divine Person, and that He should be presented in this way in the translation.

In conclusion, respecting the points just mentioned, there is no improvement except in one instance.

2.D. COMPARISON BETWEEN THE RSV AND THE NRSV ON GALATIANS.

Legend: The following procedure is use in the "COMMENTS" column

* = the NRSV has resorted to inclusive language.

*RSV = the RSV is more literal and a definite masculine form or word is used in the original.

TEXT
RSV
NRSV
COMMENTS

1:1
not from men (pl.) nor through man (sg.)
neither by human commission nor from human authority
*RSV. In NRSV plural and singular obscured.

1:6
deserting him
deserting the one
RSV more literal.

1:8,9
let him be accursed
let that one be accursed
NRSV acceptable

1:10
favour of men (pl.)
human approval
*RSV. In NRSV plural obscured.

1:11
not man's gospel
not of human origin
*RSV.

1:12
not from man
not from a human source
*RSV.

1:13
no doubt
Not in text.
Perhaps translation of *gar*

1:14
tradition of my fathers
...my ancestors
*RSV.

1:15
But when he
But when God
Improvement. NRSV has opted for expanded reading.

1:16

not confer with flesh and blood
not confer with any human being

*RSV. In NRSV this change is inconsistent. —> 3:3, 5:13, 5:16

1:17

who were apostles before me

...already apostles before

"already" not in original.

went into Arabia

went at once

"at once" not in original.

and again I returned

afterwards I returned

Gk. *palin* NRSV transl. "afterwards" Seems more clear.

1:20

() parentheses removed

Improvement.

1:22

churches of Christ in Judea

churches of Judea that are in Christ

NRSV more literal.

1:23

He who ...

the one ...

RSV preferred even though original has "the one." But the reference is clearly to Paul.

Here elimination of masculine gender is carried to an extreme.

once persecuted

formerly ...

Improvement. Consistent with 1:13.

1:18

went up

did go up

Improvement. NRSV made choice to show contrast clearly. In v.17 did *not* go up. In

v.18 *did* go up.

2:2

but privately before those who were of repute

though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders

Paraphrase. So 2:6

2:4

false brethren

false believers

*RSV.

our freedom which we have

the freedom we have

RSV more literal.

2:6

what they were

what they actually were

"actually" not in original.

2:8

he who worked through Peter for the mission to the circumcised
for he who worked through Peter making him and apostle to the circumcised
NRSV inconsistent. It retains "he" and does not substitute "the one" as in 1:23.

2:9

to me and Barnabas
Barnabas and me
RSV more literal.

that we should go
agreeing that we ...
"agreeing" not in original. Confusing addition.

2:10

only they would have us
They asked only one thing
RSV more literal.

2:12

he ate
he used to eat
Improvement.
but when they came
but after ...
RSV better.

2:13

insincerity
hypocrisy
NRSV more literal.

2:14

were not straightforward
were not acting consistently
RSV better.

2:16

a man is not justified by
a person is justified not by
*RSV.

3:2

let me ask only this
The only thing I want to learn from you is this:
NRSV more literal.

3:2

or by hearing with faith?
or by believing what you heard?
So 3:5. NRSV seems clearer.

3:3

ending with the flesh
same
NRSV inconsistent. Why here 'flesh' while in 1:16 did not want to translate "flesh and blood" → 5:13, 5:16.

3:6

Thus Abraham
Just as Abraham
Improvement.

3:7

men of faith
those who believe
*RSV. So 3:9
sons of Abraham
are descendants of Abraham
*RSV.

3:8

In you shall all the nations be blessed.
All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.
NRSV uses Gentiles here as earlier in same verse.

3:11

He who through faith is righteous shall live
The one who is righteous will live by faith
NRSV has taken the footnote in RSV and put RSV translation in footnote RSV translation is better. We are righteous before God
by or through faith in Jesus Christ.
NRSV rendition can give the impression that faith is the result of righteousness. The most literal translation would have been: The righteous shall live by faith.

3:15

To give a human example
I give an example from daily life...
RSV more literal.
a man's will...
a person's will...
*RSV.

3:16

offspring
same
Like RSV but NRSV footnotes "seed." Good. So in 3:19
which is Christ
who is Christ
Improvement.

3:19

ordained by angels through an intermediary
ordained through angels by a mediator
NRSV more literal.

3:22

the scripture consigned all things to sin
has imprisoned all things under the power of sin
"the power" not in original. RSV uses "consigned" here and "confined" in 3:23. NRSV more consistent.

what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ
promised through faith in Jesus Christ
NRSV has footnote: "Through the faith of Jesus Christ"

3:24
so that...
therefore...
Improvement.

custodian
disciplinarian
Better. So v.25

3:26
you are all sons of God
children of God
*RSV.

4:1,2
I mean that the heir as long as he is a child (sg. form)
My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors (plural)
In vv.1,2 the NRSV has transposed all the singular forms into the plural to avoid reference to gender. To speak of minors seems to distance the relationship.

4:3
children
minors
RSV more literal.

we were slaves
we were enslaved
NRSV more literal. So in 4:9.

elemental spirits
same
NRSV has in footnote: "rudiments." Good. So in 4:9.

4:4
when the time had fully come
when the fullness of time had come
NRSV more literal.

4:5
receive adoption as sons
adoption as children
son(s) also translated by child(ren) in v.6,7 NRSV tries to avoid reference to gender.

4:10
You observe days
You are observing special days
"special" not in original.

4:20
I could wish to be present with you now and change my tone
I wish I were present with you and could change my tone
Improvement. "Could" switched places. NRSV flows better.

4:23
son of the slave / free woman
child of the slave / free woman
Literally "the one" in masc. gender. But this form is not used here because the NRSV tries to avoid reference to gender. RSV more literal.

4:24

One is from ...

One woman, in fact, is Hagar

RSV more literal.

4:26

But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

But the other woman corresponds to Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother.

RSV better. NRSV is a Paraphrase.

4:27 Both the RSV and NRSV take liberties here, especially in the last two lines.

Literally: because many (are) the children of the desolate one rather than of the one (the woman) who has a husband.

STRIKING: Whenever the masculine gender is used in this letter it is changed to the neutral form "the one." Where RSV has 'the one' as in this quote from Isaiah 54, the NRSV committee felt compelled to substitute 'the woman' when from the context this is obvious since only women, not men, give birth.

4:29

he who was born

the child who ...

Literally "the one." NRSV tries to avoid reference to gender.

persecuted him

persecuted the child

Literally "the one" NRSV tries to avoid reference to gender.

4:30

slave and her son

slave and her child

*RSV. In NRSV son changed to 'child' 3x in this verse. Again a clear indication how the NRSV tries to avoid reference to male gender.

5:2

Now, I, Paul, say to you

Listen! I, Paul, am telling you

Interesting! NRSV tries to do justice to Grk. ide = see! note! listen!

if you receive circumcision

if you let yourselves be circumcised

...Improvement. So v.3

5:10

I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine

I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise.

NRSV more literal.

5:13

opportunity for the flesh

opportunity for self-indulgence

RSV better. *sarki* points to a totally corrupt nature. Self-indulgence is a weakness.

be servants of one another

become slaves

NRSV more literal.

5:14

the law is fulfilled in one word

... summed up in a single commandment

RSV more literal.

5:16

flesh ... flesh

same

Here NRSV did not substitute another word for flesh. Good. —> 1:16, 3:3, 5:13.

5:16

walk by the Spirit

... live by ...

RSV more literal. —> 5:25

5:25 RSV and NRSV translate same. Yet NRSV is not consistent. In 5:16 it translated *peripateo* by "live" while RSV has "walk." Here NRSV renders *zaoo* also as "live."

The RSV is not consistent either. It does not show the difference between *peripateo* (walk) in v.16 and *stoixeoo* (follow, march in line behind the Spirit) in v.25.

6:1

overtaken in a trespass

detected in a transgression

Prefer RSV.

6:2

and so fulfil the law

in this way you will fulfill

Improvement. Reflects the future tense. NRSV has in footnote: "in this way fulfill"

6:3

if any one (sing.)

if those... (plural)

*RSV.

6:6

let him... with him who teaches

Let those ... with their teacher

Switch from sing. to plural. Literally "Let the one."

NRSV tries to avoid reference to gender.

6:8

he

you (2x)

Literally "the one." NRSV tries to avoid reference to gender.

6:14

Far be it from me to glory except in the cross

May I never boast of anything except the cross

NRSV more literal.

6:15

but a new creation

but a new creation is everything!

"is everything" not in original.

6:16

Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule

As for those who will follow this rule — peace be upon

NRSV more literal.

6:17

bear on my body the marks of Jesus
I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body
"branded" derived from stigma

EVALUATION:

The NRSV is inconsistent in translating *adelphos* (brother). It is rendered as: members of God's family (1:2); brothers and sisters (1:11, 3:15, 5:13, 6:18); false believers (2:4); friends (4:12, 4:31); my friends (4:28, 6:1).

Other inconsistencies in the NRSV are noted, especially regarding the translation for *sarki* (flesh). See comments by 1:16; 3:3; 5:13 and 16.

In chapter 4:23-29 the Greek text uses what we could translate by "the one." Only in 4:23 is the masculine gender used. Of course, the whole passage is governed by what Paul writes in v.22, that Abraham had two sons. Thus the following references to "the one" apply to these two sons. Therefore the NRSV, though technically correct in translating "the child," is not doing its readers a service. Here the gender bias is very evident. The RSV is here definitely better.

On the whole the RSV sticks closer to the original. At times the NRSV takes on the form of a paraphrase. This makes the NRSV more lucid in certain instances.

Several improvements are also noted. A definite improvement is in chapters 1:13,14 and 2:13-16 where the NRSV cuts the long sentences into smaller sections. In these instances the use of shorter sentences gives greater clarity.

This comparison between the RSV and the NRSV shows that the latter has taken too many liberties.

IV. INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

The most controversial aspect of the NRSV is the matter of inclusive language and the manner in which this "ideal" showed itself in the translation. It is chiefly in this area where our greatest concerns as Committee lie.

IV.1. GENERAL EXAMPLES

To be sure, no one will have any difficulty if the NRSV avoids reference to a particular sex if such a reference is not found in the original. For example, both the King James Version (KJV) and the RSV render "if any man" in Mark 4:23 (if any man has ears to hear ...) and in John 7:17 ("If any man will do his will ..."). However, the Greek original does not specify gender and so the NRSV can accurately translate "anyone."

Other examples that could possibly be justified or contested as being consistent or inconsistent with the intent of the text are as follows:

- a. Mt. 23:8 - "brothers" becomes "members of my family"
- b. Lk. 9:56 - "men's lives" becomes "the lives of human beings"
- c. Lk. 17:3 - "your brother" becomes "another disciple"
- d. Acts 7:37 - "brother" becomes "people"
- e. Rom. 12:1 - (and frequently elsewhere) "brothers" becomes "brothers and sisters" e.g. Gal. 5:13; 6:18; 3:15; 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:14; 2:17; 4:6; 4:10; Jas. 3:1; 2 Pet. 1:10; 1 Jn. 2: 10; 3:10; 4:20.
- f. Acts 3:17 - "brothers" becomes "friends" (also frequently elsewhere, e.g. Gal. 4:28; 2 Cor. 11:9, 3 Jn. 10, etc.)
- g. Gal. 2:4 - "false brethren" becomes "false believers" Gal. 1:2 also has "members of God's family" cf. 1 Jn. 2:11.

- h. Eph. 6: 23 - "brothers" becomes "the whole community"
- i. 1 Pet. 2:17 - "all men" becomes "everyone"; "Love the brotherhood" becomes "Love the family of believers." (Also see the examples at the end of § III.2.D above.)

In all the above examples, precision of translation is sacrificed for the policy of inclusive language. This point can be further underlined by two additional examples. In Rom.8:14 and 16-17 Paul writes that those who are led by the Spirit of God are "sons of God," and that the Spirit of God testifies that we are "children of God, and if children, then heirs." The NRSV translates both underlined words with the same English word "children," without indicating in a footnote that the Greek text uses two different words.

The same technique occurs in Gal.4:4-7: God sent "His Son" (v. 4) in order that we might "receive adoption as sons" (v. 5). "And because you are sons..." (v. 6). Then follows in v. 7 (RSV): "So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir." In these cases, too, the NRSV replaces the Greek word "son" with the neuter word "child" when it is used for believers in general.

These examples raise objections in our mind because the translations are determined by the ideology of feminism and are not demanded by the text. The NRSV, however, goes even further than the above examples for the translators appear determined to avoid gender references wherever possible, even if it means changing the plain meaning of the original language text, or hindering the understanding of prophecy, or introducing new doctrines.

IV.2. CHANGING THE INTENT OF THE TEXT

One result of the inclusive language policy is that the original text is sometimes no longer recognizable in the translated version.

The RSV of Psalm 55:20 reads: "My companion stretched out his hand against his friends, he violated his covenant." To avoid using a reference to a male, the NRSV renders: "My companion laid hands on a friend and violated a covenant with me." The sole footnote (Hebrew lacks "with me") is misleading for it only registers one of the places where the NRSV for the sake of inclusive language differs from the Hebrew text. The three references in the Hebrew text to the masculine possessive pronoun are left unmentioned. Such a translation can no longer be called either literal or accurate. Revelation 3:20 is correctly rendered in the RSV by "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." The NRSV however reads: "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me." What is noteworthy about examples such as these is that the translation is no longer determined by what the text says, but by what certain people like to hear. Apparently feminists no longer want to listen to language that they perceive as male dominated and so the Word has to be purged from what is considered a male bias.

IV.3. UNDERSTANDING PROPHECY

The deletion of male references is quite pervasive and it can even hinder an accurate understanding of Christ's identity as Messiah. In the RSV we read in Daniel 7:13 of "one like a son of man" who comes on the clouds of heaven and to whom is given everlasting dominion over all nations. The NRSV renders "one like a human being" (with a footnote giving the literal translation). However, it is important to keep the literal rendering in the text of Daniel 7. The literal translation "son of man" is necessary in order to understand Christ's words to His accusers when our Saviour says "you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the

clouds of heaven” (Mk. 14:62 [NRSV]; also see, in a different context Luke 21:27). Furthermore the references to our exalted Lord in the NRSV as “one like the Son of Man” in Revelation (1:13; 14:14) can only be properly understood if the background of Daniel 7 is appreciated.

IV.4. NEW TEACHINGS

The Scriptural exclusion of the sisters from the special office is not adequately safeguarded in the NRSV. For example, in Phil. 1:14 - “brothers” becomes “brothers and sisters” here in the context of the official proclamation of the word (*logon tou Theou lalein*). Also, the notes given in the translation betray a bias in favour of women in office. For example, with 1 Tim 3: 11, note *j* says “*Or their wives or women deacons,*” and with Rom 16:1 – note *j* says “*Or minister.*” It is also unclear why 1 Cor 14: 33b-36 has been bracketed. No justification is given.

Sometimes terms are introduced which have unbiblical connotations in the present modern context and thus raise questions. In Eph.4:24 and Col. 3:10, in the phrase “the new man” (KJV; in RSV: “the new nature”) the word “man” is interpreted, in the NRSV, by the modern philosophical and psychological term “self” which can easily be connected with ideas from the eastern religions. It is certainly not an improvement of the RSV’s translation, “the new nature.”

IV.5. CONCLUSION

The NRSV’s policy of inclusive language leads to results that are unacceptable. In key areas this translation is not governed by the language and thinking of Scripture, but by current ideology, especially feminism. Such cannot be called a faithful translation of God’s Word.

V ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE NRSV

The matter of inclusive language was considered of paramount and decisive importance by this Committee and hence other aspects of the NRSV were not dealt with in a consistent and thorough manner. We would however like to bring a few examples of improvements and deficiencies to your attention which were not covered in § III.

V.1. ADDRESSING GOD

A significant change in policy was the decision to drop the use of the archaic “thee,” “thou,” and “thine” in prayers addressing God. Also the antiquated verb forms “art,” “hast,” and “hadst” are no longer used. In evaluating this change, it must be noted that in none of the original languages of Scripture is any linguistic distinction made between addressing a human being and addressing God. Since Biblical usage is our norm, one cannot have principle objections against the deletion of these archaic forms.

V.2. IMPROVEMENTS

In several instances the NRSV is closer to the original text. For example, Gen. 3:6 now reads: “...she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate” (RSV lacked “who was with her”); Ps. 130:6 now has “Lord” (instead of “LORD”). Other examples of being more faithful to the Hebrew text are: Prov. 12:9; 13:8; 14:17; 15:26.

In the New Testament we can note that Col. 3:6 takes the expanded reading. “On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient.” (RSV lacked “on those who are disobedient.”) and 1 Cor. 15: 28 becomes “all in all.”

V.3. DEFICIENCIES

As a somewhat random sampling the following can suffice.

Ex. 20:7 now reads "a wrongful use of" which is a much broader and freer translation than the RSV "take in vain."

Ex. 20:4 now reads "you shall not make for yourself an idol" — creating more overlap between the first and second commandments.

It is questionable whether we need to follow the Greek translation of the Old Testament in Prov. 11:16 as the NRSV does with the result that there is the addition of two members to create two antithetical proverbs. MT is: "The gracious woman gets honour, but the aggressive (only) riches."

Mt. 6:13, now reads : "and lead us not to the time of trial." This rendition of *eis peirasmon* takes away the *present* thrust of the petition, and puts its focus in the future. It should read "And lead us not into temptation."

The quotation of Ex. 16:18 in 2 Cor. 8:15 is somewhat strange.

In the NRSV, Ex. 16:18 reads: "... those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage" while the quotation in 2 Cor. 8:15 reads as "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little." The RSV is more true to original. It translates: Ex. 16:18 "... he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack;" and reads 2 Cor. 8:15 thus "He who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack."

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

- A. There are good things about the NRSV. Improvements over the RSV are evident. These have been detailed in §§ III and V.
- B. However, the concern about inclusive language overshadows any gains made. Because the translation shows evidence of an overriding preoccupation with this gender issue, the NRSV is unacceptable for use in the Canadian Reformed Churches. The imposition of an artificial gender guideline for translation (which has its roots in ungodly philosophies like feminism) has resulted in a translation that changes the intent of the text, hinders an understanding of prophecy, and introduces new teachings. (See § IV).
- C. It appears likely that the RSV will go out of print within five years.

yours in Christ,
The Committee on Bible Translations

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