AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TRANSPARENT ENGLISH VERSION (TEV)
PRODUCED BY THE ORIGINAL BIBLE PROJECT

The Original Bible Project (OBP) is a decade-long effort (1994-2004) to produce an entirely new and independent English translation of both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament known as the **Transparent English Version** (TEV).[1] Despite the plethora of recent high quality scholarly Bible translations on the market, serving the widest range of tastes and interests, the TEV is distinctively and refreshingly different in that it allows the English reader to "peer through" to the original Hebrew and Greek texts.[2] Its unique concept, and special features, will strongly appeal to a wide and diverse audience, including general readers, life-long Bible students, and professional academics.

The Concept

Translation Theory

There is an ancient Jewish adage regarding translating the Scriptures, "One who translates a verse literally is misrepresenting the text, but one who adds anything of his own is a blasphemer." Modern translators of the Bible continue to echo, in more sophisticated debate, the dilemma of this ancient bit of wisdom. The literal method of translation seeks to convey an exact sense of the words *and* the structure of the original language, while the paraphrase, or "dynamic equivalent" method, purposely recasts the essential "thought" of the original into the natural idiom and flow of the second language. The problem is that an overly naïve literalism easily becomes nonsense, while "recasting thought" can end up obscuring or even altering the richness of the original text.

The TEV is decidedly on the "literal" side of this spectrum, although the concept of **transparency** better conveys its theory and method. The basic idea of transparency is that one should be able to "*peer through*" the English translation, and, to whatever extent possible*, see, hear, and even feel*, the dynamics of the original text. This includes alliteration, puns and word plays, idioms, rhythms, redundancies, and even obscurities—

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[1] For the history of the OBP and further information see the Web site: www.originalbible.com

[2] The major ones, listed roughly in order of influence based on their success, are: New International Version (NIV 1985); New Revised Standard Version (NRSV 1993); New American Standard Bible (NASBU 1995, updated); New King James Version (NKJV 1988); Jewish Publication Society (JPS 1999, updated); Revised English Bible (REB 1989, formerly New English Bible); New Jerusalem Bible (NJB 1985); New American Bible (1970); Contemporary English Version (CEV 1995); Good News Bible$_2$ (GNB 1992, formerly Today's English Version).

allowing the English reader an entrance into the complex world of the host languages, that all too often is the privileged domain of the specialist. Here are a few examples:

Genesis 1:11 (TEV) reads: And ELOHIM said, "Let the land sprout *the* sprout, a plant seeding seed, a fruit tree making fruit, according to its type, its seed, within it, upon the land." Here the play between noun and verb, reflecting the flow and rhythm of the Hebrew, is preserved. In contrast, the NIV has: "Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds," and the NRSV reads: Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." All three translations are roughly equivalent in meaning, and the NIV and NRSV surely convey the Hebrew in good contemporary English, but they are opaque, rather than transparent, vis-à-vis the original text. The verbs "bring forth," "produce," "yield," and "bear," are fine in English, but "sprouting sprouts," "seeding seed," and even "making" fruit, wonderfully convey the flavor one gets when reading the Hebrew, while remaining easily comprehensible in English. In verse 20 the waters "swarm a swarm" of living beings, and "flyers fly" upon the earth.

In Genesis 2:25 (TEV) the man and woman are "nude," while the serpent in the next verse is "shrewd"—in Hebrew the root word is the same, so there is a consistent attempt to point out such cases of a "play on words." In Genesis 2:7 God "shapes the *soil*-man (Adam)—dust from the *soil* (adamah)." The root words are the same, and it is fascinating to see how this comes through in the English, as God later curses the *soil*, and sends the *soil*-man forth to work the *soil*, until he returns to the *soil*, from which he was taken!

Both Eve and Adam experience "distress"—hers in bringing forth children, and his in bringing forth bread from the earth (Gen 3:16-17)—but the Hebrew word is *the same*. The NRSV has "pain" for the woman, but "toil" for the man, interjecting a subtle but significant difference that the original text does not support.

In Genesis 6:11-13 (TEV) the earth is "ruined" through wickedness, because all flesh has "ruined" its way, thus God will "ruin them" with the great Flood. This sequence of interconnected ideas is important to bring out the narrative signals of the writer.

Genesis 2:22 (TEV) says that God "built the side that he took from the *soil*-man into a woman" in contrast to "made a woman from the rib" (NIV) or "made into a woman" (NRSV). The verb "build" here might not be our most natural English way of expression, and it clearly *means* that God "made" the woman, but the TEV allows the English reader to "see" through the English. There is a common Hebrew word for "make" (indeed God "makes" the land creatures in Gen 1:25), but the writer does *not* choose that verb in this sentence—so why should the English? The verb "build" is readily understandable, and is used throughout the Hebrew Bible in the most natural English sense, whether referring to a house, a boat, or here—a woman.

In Genesis 4:3 (TEV) we have the phrase: "And it came about, at an end of days." This is translated "in the course of time" in both the NIV and the NRSV. Here the TEV explains

in a note that the phrase in Hebrew refers to "an unspecified period," but the literal Hebrew expression remains intact in the text, which also opens interpretive possibilities to the reader.

In Genesis 2:7 (TEV) "man became a living life-breather" which is the *precise term* used for the breathing animals in Genesis 1:20. The NIV and the NRSV not only lose the idiom, but, for the man they put "living being" and for the animals they put "living creatures," injecting an interpretive notion into the English that is completely absent from the Hebrew. Older translations, such as the KJV, even have here "man became a living soul," interjecting an unwarranted theological element. Here is a case where the loss of the idiom robs one of more than the colorful beauty of the language, it also interjects notions that one assumes are there when they are not.

In Genesis 2:16-17 (TEV) Adam is told "eating—you shall *surely* eat!", referring to all the trees of the garden but one, but "dying—you shall *surely* die!", if he eats the forbidden fruit. This colorful double use of the verb in Hebrew is common, and is a way of showing emphasis. The TEV retains this flavor and flow of language for the English reader. There is a refreshing "oral" quality to the text throughout. Many times the explanation "Look!" is used in Hebrew, to draw attention to a narrative. The TEV also translates the single conjunction "vav" consistently, in all places, as "and," rather than supplying a whole list of conjunctions common in modern translations, such as: "then," "but," "so," "when," "or," "now," and "that." Although these conjunctive ideas might be implied by the context of a given phrase or sentence, there is a wonderful "disjunctive" narrative flow in the Hebrew, as one moves through the texts, with the simple repeated flow of the English "and." (see Gen 1:1-5). One has the impression that one is listening to a story teller, moving in rapid fire fashion from one vivid scene to another, allowing the hearer to paste it all together in his or her mind. The effect is rather extraordinary.

Throughout the TEV one constantly encounters refreshing and fascinating idioms that are found in the original Hebrew. For example in Genesis 29:1 we read: "And Jacob lifted his two feet, and walked toward the land of the sons of the east " The NRSV has: "Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the people of the east," while the NIV has: "Then Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples." In Genesis 12:9 the TEV reads: "And Abraham pulled up stakes, walking, and pulling up stakes toward the Negev," The NRSV simply has: "And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negev," while the NIV has "Then Abram set out and continued towards the Negev." When you get up early in Hebrew you "cause to shoulder up" (see Gen 22:3), a reference to packing up and loading the animals for a journey. All three versions are understandable in terms of the basic meaning, but the TEV offers the English reader a glimpse into the colorful way that Hebrew actually expresses such common ideas.

There are hundreds of such examples, almost on every page, and reading the TEV makes reading the Bible itself a new experience, even for those who are intimately familiar with the standard English translations: "And the nose of Jacob burned against Rachel," when she complains about her lack of a child (Gen 30:2); Lot bows to the mysterious visitors who come to destroy Sodom, "two nostrils toward the soil" (Gen 19:1); Vindication is

called a "covering of eyes" (Gen 20:16); and when Joseph's hostile brothers see him they declare, "Look! the lord of the dreams yonder comes!" (Gen 37:19).

There are many cases, especially in the Hebrew Bible, where the text is simply unclear, uncertain, or obscure. The tendency of a translator is to provide some "solution," or a kind of "best judgment," as to the proper meaning. The TEV takes quite the opposite approach—where the original is uncertain or obscure, the English should reflect the same, remaining transparent for the reader, and leaving open a range of possible meanings. In Genesis 6:3 Yahweh declares (TEV) "My spirit will not contend with man for an age, in that he also is flesh—so his days are a hundred and twenty years." The meaning remains obscure and possible variations of meaning are left for the footnotes rather than incorporated into the text. In Genesis 4:7 God says to Cain (TEV) "Is there not, if you do well, a lifting up? And if you do not do well, at the door is sin—a crouching one—and to you is his desire, but you shall rule over him." The "lifting up," possibly meaning forgiveness, is in contrast to Cain's "fallen" face, in the previous verse. The noun "sin" is feminine, while the verbal form "a crouching one" is masculine—making their agreement problematic. The phrasing in Hebrew is choppy and disjointed, with the referents unclear, but the essential possibilities are left open with variations left to the notes. One of the most engaging examples is in Genesis 29:20 where Jacob serves seven years to earn Rachel as his wife, and, according to the TEV "they were in his eyes as single days, in his love of her," which might imply the very opposite of the standard translation "but a few days," or "only a few days" (NRSV, NIV). Perhaps Jacob is watching the days pass one by one, painfully waiting for the period to pass. At any rate, the TEV allows the reader to at least consider other interpretive possibilities.

The Biblical texts at times can be extremely repetitious, both in narrative style and vocabulary. Often translators are tempted to "smooth things out" a bit, forcing the original languages to conform more closely to modern English usage. Genesis 2:23 reads: (TEV) "This one, this time—bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh! This one will be called woman, because from a man this one was taken." In Hebrew the feminine demonstrative pronoun ("this one") is repeated three times in a single sentence. Genesis 11:6 (TEV) says: "This they begin to do, and now nothing is restrained from them of all that they have planned to do." Both the NIV and the NRSV put "nothing will be impossible for them," which is surely the meaning, and even much smoother English, but it removes the "flavor and flow" of the Hebrew text. In Genesis 11:10 (TEV) Shem "brought forth" Arpachshad, he subsequently lived five hundred years after his "bringing forth Arpachshad," and he "brought forth" sons and daughters. The NIV tries to offer a bit of variation: Shem "becomes the father of" Arpachshad, then he "has" other sons and daughters, even though the same verb "brought forth" is repeated three times. The TEV attempts to be as consistent with vocabulary as good Hebrew or Greek usage allows. Genesis 27:4-14 mentions the tasty food that Isaac "loves" three times, but the NRSV varies between food he "likes" and food he "loves," although the Hebrew words are precisely the same, and either expression is fine in English. There is no good reason to translate a single word, even if it occurs a dozen times in a short context, by several different English expressions in an attempt to interject variety. Often the very redundancy

of the original text conveys a certain effect that is broken and lost by less precise translations.

In general the TEV attempts to render Hebrew and Greek words, wherever they occur, in a consistent manner, based as much as possible on their root meanings. This includes tying Hebrew and Greek together, conceptually, through the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. Obviously, there are contexts in which a word can have more than one meaning, but there is no attempt in the TEV to multiply English terms in an attempt to produce a complexity that simply does not exist in the original language. For example, in Hebrew there are seven different words for the various types of moral failure, translated in most traditional versions rather arbitrarily and inconsistently by such English terms as sin, iniquity, wickedness, evil, and trespass. The TEV tries to get at the root meaning of *each* term, whether to "miss the mark, or err," "to rebel," "to twist or pervert," "to be unjust," and so forth, and then consistently stay with that English concept so that the reader can easily distinguish between this complex of terminology. English is an incredibly rich language with dozens of words for any given concept, reflecting subtleties sometimes absent from the Hebrew, and as often as not from the Greek as well. Even though classical Greek is quite rich in vocabulary, the Greek of the New Testament has its conceptual roots in the Hebrew Bible (as witnessed by the Septuagint vocabulary), and reflects a relatively simply spoken Greek, known as *koine*, that was common in the 1st century.

Theological and Ecclesiastical Vocabulary
Most modern translations are intended for liturgical and devotional use and incorporate a whole range of theological vocabulary that is far removed from the original historical and cultural contexts of the texts. In other words, the ancient text is made to serve our traditional assumptions and modern premises, rather than the other way around. Surprisingly, a long list of comfortably familiar theological terms, so common to all English translations, do not even occur *a single time* in the TEV—atonement, sanctification, covenant, soul, angel, Christ, church, redemption, salvation, baptism, and so forth. The word "atonement" comes from the Hebrew verb "to cover," and whether one is burying a corpse with dirt, or symbolically "covering" sins with the pouring out of blood, the same term is used (see Gen 6:14 where Noah's vessel is "covered" with pitch). The English word "soul" carries with it concepts of human uniqueness, and even immortality, in contrast to the Hebrew term that can refer to animals and even a human corpse (Num 6:6)! The words translated "angel" simply mean a "messenger," and the same words, in Hebrew or Greek, are used for messengers of all types, whether they be human or from beyond this world. The word "Christ" or "Messiah," is not a proper name, but a title or designation for an "anointed one," and used in both Hebrew and Greek for a long string of priests and kings, sometimes in a "messianic" context, but often not. The Greek term translated "church" (*ekklesia*) throughout the New Testament, is used for an angry mob in Acts 19:32, and thus refers generically to an "assembly," with no special connotations of "holiness."

The idea here is neither to be different for the sake of being different, nor to indulge oneself in iconoclastic jabs at the religious establishment, but something much more

fundamental is involved. Not only do these theological terms interject a "flavor" absent from the original languages, more often than not they carry connotations that are misleading and simply incorrect.

A Manuscript Edition
The TEV will put the books of the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament in their original manuscript order.[3] This means that the Hebrew Bible (which Christians call the Old Testament), will follow the order of the Tanakh (Jewish canon), even in editions of the OBP that contain both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. This ancient division makes better sense, even for Christians, as it is the order known and reflected in the New Testament itself (Luke 24:44). The Hebrew Bible is divided into three divisions of 22 "books" or scrolls: **Torah:** Genesis through Deuteronomy; **Prophets:** Joshua/Judges, Samuel/Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Twelve Prophets; and **Writings:** Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth), Esther, Daniel, Ezra/Nehemiah, Chronicles. The New Testament will contain the traditional 27 books, but in the five-fold division and order found in the oldest complete manuscripts: **Gospels:** Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; **Acts**; **General Letters:** James, Peter, John, Jude; **Paul's Letters:** Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Hebrews, Timothy, Titus, Philemon; **Revelation**.

The TEV is based on the *two oldest **complete** manuscripts* of the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament: the Leningrad Codex and Codex Sinaiticus, respectively. In other words, much like the Jewish Publication Society translation of the traditional Masoretic text, the TEV will *not* be based on an eclectic text—even when it comes to the New Testament. Obviously, for the Hebrew Bible, we have not only variants of the Masoretic tradition, but the Greek Septuagint, the Dead Sea Scrolls, plus the various versions such as the Samaritan (Pentateuch) and the Syriac. In the case of the New Testament we have the other great Codices (Vaticanus, Alexandrinus), Bezae, the so-called Textus Receptus, the thousands of papyri fragments, plus the versions (Syriac, Vulgate et al.). Rather than create an eclectic base text from these many dozens of sources, based on the principles of textual criticism, the basic English text of the TEV will be a translation of our two oldest complete manuscripts, with significant variant readings put into footnotes. The advantage of this method is that the reader *always* knows what text he or she is considering at any point (either Leningrad or Sinaiticus), and is still exposed to the rich and complex legacy of our multiple textual witnesses. Most modern translations end up being an eclectic blending of many manuscript readings in a scholarly attempt to "recover" the most original reading. The problem is that the English reader is easily lost with vague notes about the Hebrew or Greek being "uncertain," the resulting translation labeled as "conjecture," or references such as "other ancient authorities read" without any specifics. The TEV method is as clear as it is simple, and *all* significant variants will be cited in the notes. In fact, the TEV will be the first modern English translation to include *all* significant variants from the newly released Dead Sea Scrolls. Once again, the TEV offers the reader access to textual matters usually resolved by the translators, and imbedded, without sufficient explanation, in the resultant English text.

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[3] For a full discussion of this "manuscript order," see Ernest L. Martin, *Restoring the Original Bible* (Portland: Associates for Scriptural Knowledge, 1994) ISBN: 0945657838 (www.centuryarchive.com).

Special Features of the Hebrew Bible[4]

Names of Deity

Most modern translations, in keeping with traditional prohibitions against pronouncing the name of God, have adopted a complicated and confusing system of translating the names and designations for Deity in the Hebrew Bible. The Tetragrammaton (Yahweh) is thus translated LORD in all capital letters. The problem with this practice is that it then creates confusion with the Hebrew term "Adonai," which does mean "Lord." Accordingly most modern translations distinguish this without the capital letters. This is fine until you have the terms used together: YHVH Adonai—which would then become the nonsensical "LORD Lord." To address this redundancy the translators, in such cases, opt for GOD (all caps) for YHVH. But here another problem is created—the normal terms for God (El, Eloah, and Elohim) are also rendered "God" throughout, with no distinction, so that you can end up with GOD being redundant with "God," if Adonai is also used. The simple solution is to reflect, in every case, the Hebrew terms actually used, without attempting translations that only further confuse. So in the TEV you will find, written in all CAPS, these special names or terms for Deity:

YHVH (Yahweh or Yehovah)
YAH (shortened form of YHVH)
ADON ("Master" or "Lord")
ADONAI (plural of ADON)
EL, ELOAH, and its plural ELOHIM (the terms for "God")
ELYON ("Most High")
SHADDAI ("Breasts" or "Protector/Destroyer")

The TEV has also included notes on the 134 places where it is said that the scribes (Sopherim) removed the name YHVH for theological reasons, altering it to ADONAI, in the standard Masoretic text (MT). For example, in Genesis 18:3, 27, 30, and 32, where Abraham is speaking to Yahweh, the traditional text has "Adonai" or "Lord," to avoid what was considered an extreme anthropomorphism. The TEV notes the 18 emendations of the Sopherim, for example, see Genesis 18:22.

White Spaces

The TEV is not divided according to standard chapters and paragraph divisions common in all major English translations. Hebrew manuscripts contain special "gaps" or "white spaces" in the text. They are found in every book of the Hebrew Bible except the Psalms. Such divisions are very ancient, and are also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (dating from 200 B.C.E.). These are of two types: the **major breaks**, called *Petuchot* ("Open"), are much like our paragraph breaks, and are indicated in the TEV with a full space and new flush paragraph; and the **minor breaks**, called *Setumot* ("Closed"), that are indicated with fifteen unbreakable spaces. The smaller divisions are perhaps the most fascinating, as they seem to suddenly appear to block off or emphasize portions of the text—

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[4] See the READER'S GUIDE following this Introduction.

sometimes even a single verse. For example, in Genesis 3:16, this single verse is separated from the text by these minor spaces before and after. Although these are well known and discussed by the ancient rabbis, they do not appear in modern translations of the Bible, including the Jewish Publication Society's *Tanakh*. Apparently the temptation is quite strong to divide and section the Hebrew text according to a modern Western sense of breaks and transitions. This is unfortunate, since the divisions in the Hebrew manuscripts often strike one as wholly removed from our assumptions about how a text should be divided. For example, there is *no* chapter division in the Hebrew text between Genesis 2 and 3, while there is a major division between verses 21 and 22 of chapter 3, and then only a minor break as you begin chapter 4. Often even new chapters have no break, for example, 41-44:17, which is a single extended section, through four chapters, then suddenly a major break after verse 17. This shows how important verse 18, which follows, is to the narrative flow of the original manuscript. It is interesting that modern authors, such as Beckett and Pinter make use of such breaks, pauses, and "silences" to draw attention to key elements of their narratives. (see the READER'S GUIDE).

The TEV is the first major translation to reflect in its page appearance the actual "white space" divisions of the ancient Hebrew manuscripts. Just thumbing through its pages offers the reader a new and unique experience; to be able to "peer through" the English to the original Hebrew text. Rather than following the official divisions established by Maimonides (*Hilkhot Sefer Torah* 8:4), and found in all "Rabbinic Bibles," the TEV faithfully reproduces the *actual divisions* of the most ancient Hebrew manuscript—the Leningrad Codex. The differences between this manuscript and the Rabbinic tradition are not that great, and a list will appear in the preface of the published versions of the TEV, however they certainly are significant and worth preserving in this translation. For example, the Leningrad Codex sets off the unique account of the "disappearance" of Enoch with full paragraph breaks (Gen 5:21-24), while the Rabbinic tradition simply puts the minor breaks at this point. The TEV is the first English translation to reflect these unique and ancient breaks, based upon the Leningrad Codex.

Superscripts
One unique and fascinating feature of the TEV allows the reader at significant places in the text, to know whether a key word is masculine, feminine, singular, or plural, or whether a noun is definite or indefinite, with tiny superscript letters [m f s p d] placed at the end of the word. There are many times where this can make a crucial difference in interpretation, or expose the reader to an aspect of the original text that would otherwise be completely lost in English. For example, in Gen 4:7 quoted above, the "sin" at the door is feminine, while the one crouching is masculine—indicating the one is *not* a modifier of the other: "And if you do not do well, at the door is sin[f]—a crouching one[m]—and to you is his desire, but you shall rule over him." How to make sense of this difficult text remains open, but the reader is at least provided with the grammatical facts available to someone able to read the Hebrew text. There are even passages where the masculine Yahweh is nonetheless spoken of with feminine pronouns or verbs, ignored by all modern translations as some kind of absurdity or corruption of the text. There are other cases where the plural word for God, ELOHIM, which usually takes a singular verb, does indeed have a plural verb (see Gen 31:54). The English reader of the TEV will at least be

able to recognize such cases, and draw his or her own conclusions. Although the use of definite and indefinite nouns in Hebrew is not precisely the same as English, it can be of both interest and importance. Once again, the reader of the TEV can see this at a glance.

Supplied Words
The TEV makes use of the feature pioneered by the King James Version, and still included by the very successful New American Standard Bible, as well as the New King James Version. Words that are *supplied* by the translators, in order to produce a smooth English style, are nonetheless, in the interest of meticulous "transparency," indicated by a special *italic type*. Often this is as simple a matter as supplying an intransitive verb or a definite article when none is needed in Hebrew, but sometimes it is more interesting than that, reflecting the rhythm and flow of the Hebrew or Greek. This translation can easily be read aloud *without* these terms and the reader begins to hear the flow of the language, with its frequently staccato edge.

Bold Italics
In normal Hebrew usage the verb contains within its structure the pronoun subject, whether 1st, 2nd, or 3rd person, and singular or plural. In other words, one does not have to specifically express the pronoun. For example, in Gen 3:16 God says "I will surely multiply your hardship," but the pronoun "I" does not appear in the Hebrew text, since the verb itself is put in a grammatical form that indicates 1st person singular (see the READER'S GUIDE). However, there are many places where the pronoun *does* in fact appear anyway. What this tends to do is add emphasis. We find just such a case in this same verse in Genesis. In the concluding phrase "and **he** will rule over you, " the pronoun "he" is understood from the verb, and thus is not necessary, but here it does occur. In this translation such words are placed in **bold italics** to indicate the increased emphasis.

Footnotes
Every page of the TEV contains a rich supply of notes. However, these notes are exclusively related to linguistic matters, intended to clarify the translation itself, or indicating textual variants. In other words, the notes are intended to supply the reader with enough information to make an informed judgment regarding the *translation*, but not necessarily the interpretation of the text—certainly not in any theological manner. The notes contain a few simple abbreviations: Lit (Literal meaning); Heb (transliteration of the Hebrew text); MT (Masoretic Text); DSS (a reading from the Dead Sea Scrolls); LXX (a reading from the Greek Septuagint); I.e. (further explanation of meaning).

Production

All of the major translations of the Bible over the past few decades have been produced by committees of scholars. Various books and sections of the Bible are assigned to teams, with these parts merged into a final editorial product. The challenge that this method presents is the difficulty of drawing together the parts into a consistent whole. No matter how closely the principles of translation are set forth, or how carefully the various teams go over one another's work in an effort to harmonize things, the process is never wholly

successful. The quality and consistency varies from book to book, and section to section, and often remarkably so.

The TEV has taken a wholly different editorial path. One person, Prof. James D. Tabor, was appointed overall editor with the mammoth task of producing a *draft* version of the whole, based on a tight set of overall translation methods and principles. The project has been funded by contributions to a non-profit organization of the same name—The Original Bible Project. Many of the supporters of the Project are life-long students of the Bible, non-specialists for the most part, but with an avid interest in the concept and approach of this translation. One advantage of this unique production method is that the translation has been exposed to a highly committed group of "readers" who function as a constant "Beta-testing" market, long before it even approaches a final stage. The hundreds of comments that interested readers have sent in are all carefully considered and filed away. It is often the case that what the experts might miss, the mass of readers tend to catch or notice.

The OBP is just entering the final stage of its production (Fall, 2002). During the year 2002-2003 it will be "officially" released in this preliminary, pre-publication edition (loose-leaf notebook format), which will be distributed to supporters of the Project. It is this edition that will also be subject to formal academic and scholarly review. The entire draft of the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament will be reviewed by two general editors, one of the Hebrew Bible and other of the New Testament. Each book of the Bible will be evaluated, in addition, by two qualified scholars with special expertise in a given section of the Bible. Prof. James Tabor, General Editor, in consultation with the Board, will then have the final say on all decisions, in keeping with the overall plan of the Project.

The next stage of the OBP is full trade publication, in several editions, including the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament together, as well as separately. Because of the non-theological nature of this enterprise, the two Testaments can be separated and stand alone, or combined and fit together quite well, since the central translation method is historical and critical rather than theological.

Audience

The unique aspect of the Original Bible Project is its ability to appeal at once to the academic market, as well as to the non-specialist general reader. Anyone who has taught Bible in an academic setting, whether secular or parochial, has lamented that *none* of the current translations, including the more scholarly NRSV, NAB, or JPS, really provide what is needed for a careful, *historical* reading of the text by the English student. Teachers who know the original languages find themselves constantly correcting these translations and telling the students, "Well, this is actually not what the original says…." Then there are the millions of devoted students of the Bible, who, without training in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, are constantly comparing a half-dozen or more modern English translations, consulting concordances, and poring over various reference works.

Through great effort these dedicated Bible students seek to painstakingly arrive at what they will get at a glance with the TEV. These are people who want to make their own judgments as to interpretation, but need first to have the accurate linguistic and historical tools with which to approach their Biblical issues. In between there is a huge market of more general readers (Jewish, Christian, and secular), who will find this translation endlessly fascinating for it unique and refreshing, non-theological literary quality.