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## THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION: HOW IT CAME TO BE

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*John H. Stek*

“Who despises the day of small things?”

ZECARIAH 4:10

The beginning of the New International Version (NIV) was truly a “day of small things.”<sup>1</sup> The soul of one man grew so frustrated that it finally stirred him to action. He began to make noises that aroused others—eventually a host of others. And their efforts produced an English version of the Bible that for the first time in three centuries successfully challenged the dominance of the King James Version.

That lone soul was Howard Long. He was not a biblical scholar or a well-connected ecclesiastic. Although a man of many parts—inventor, pilot, engineer, college physics instructor, businessman, traveling representative for General Electric—he was first of all a devout Christian who seized every opportunity to point others to Jesus Christ. The Bible that had long nourished his faith was the King James Version. It felt comfortable in his hands, sounded familiar and sweet in his ears, and much of it was “written on his heart.” But when he opened it to show others the Way, he met with incomprehension—or worse. The Bible he read to them and urged them to read was to them sometimes quite unintelligible, generally rather strange and quaint, and occasionally even hilarious.

With such a version in hand, anyone who wished to spread the gospel through one-on-one evangelization could only know frustration. And loneliness. Howard Long tried out the more recent English versions, but for various reasons found them unsatisfactory. He also tried translating the old English Bible into

more modern idiom as he witnessed to others, but that failed to serve. However good his effort, it had no weight, no authority. His was only a lone voice against an old and greatly venerated text.<sup>2</sup>

But this lone soul was really not alone. Howard was a member of the Christian Reformed Church in Seattle, Washington, a congregation of a modest-sized denomination that had sprung up among Dutch immigrants in the 1850s. And Howard had a pastor—just the right pastor as it turned out. Pastor Peter De Jong was a man of firm convictions with a ready pen who did not hesitate to take on the establishment whenever he felt the cause warranted it.

## THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Howard turned to De Jong when he could no longer restrain his frustration. With that, the ball began to roll. The pastor brought the matter to the consistory (the governing body of his congregation) and convinced the elders and deacons to carry the matter to the classis (the denomination's regional judicatory). The consistory specifically proposed that the classis overture the general synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) "that the Christian Reformed Church endeavor to join with other conservative churches in sponsoring or facilitating the early production of a faithful translation of the Scriptures in the common language of the American people."<sup>3</sup>

Their proposal failed to gain sufficient support in the classis. But that didn't stop De Jong and his consistory. Utilizing a right accorded them in the Church Order of the CRC, they brought their overture directly to the general synod of 1956. Whether or not a majority of the delegates to that synod were inclined to favor the overture is not recorded, but sufficient interest was present to assure that the synod did not reject it out of hand. It referred the matter "to the teaching staff of the Old and New Testament departments of our Seminary [Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan] for thorough consideration and report to the Synod of 1957."<sup>4</sup> And so it was that the future of one man's dream of a modern English version of the Bible that he could use effectively and without embarrassment came to be on the agenda of an American denomination.

The arena was expanding but not explosively; the CRC was still in large part an ethnically bounded communion that remained somewhat aloof from the larger ecclesiastical world around it. And the committee charged to study the matter was neither large nor particularly illustrious. It had but four members—Henry Schultze, Ralph Stob, Martin Wyngaarden, and Marten Woudstra. All were well regarded within their own communion, but none of them were widely known beyond it. They held advanced academic degrees from leading institu-

tions, but they were churchmen, preachers, and educators rather than focused academicians.<sup>5</sup>

If any delegates to the Christian Reformed synod of 1956 thought that the Seattle consistory had confronted them with a wild, unrealistic dream, and that shunting the matter off to the small committee of these four men would be a good way to put it quietly to rest, they were in for a surprise. The report this committee submitted to the synod of 1957 made quite clear that the proposal “had legs” and that the committee itself was ready to press forward toward the fulfillment of Howard Long’s dream. In the course of their studies and consultations, that lone soul’s dream had become their own.<sup>6</sup>

It had taken little persuasion to convince the committee that the need was real. They had not been trained in linguistics, but they all had a well-developed sensitivity for language. The three older scholars had all been bilingual since childhood. Schultze, in fact, had grown up in a home where German, Dutch, and English had all been commonplace. Woudstra’s early training in the schools of Holland had made him familiar with German, French, and English, in addition to his native Frisian and Dutch. So all four had picked up an early feel for the complexities and subtleties of language and the ways in which languages differ. Additional studies of Latin, Greek, Syriac, Hebrew, Aramaic, and other Semitic languages later sharpened their awareness and their insights. Subsequently, as educators, their extensive contact with post-World War II students reminded them daily of changes that had taken place in English just since their own early years.

But it was not enough that they were convinced. The synod had charged the committee to seek out also the views of others among American Evangelicals. Through extensive correspondence (with churches, Bible societies, biblical scholars, evangelistic agencies, and publishers of Christian periodicals and church education materials), the committee learned that there was widespread interest among the burgeoning Evangelical community in the production of a new version that spoke the language of twentieth-century English. Many shared their judgment that the King James Version had long since become antiquated, that the language of the American Standard Version (ASV) of 1901 was also too archaic and too obviously “translation English” to ever replace the old literary jewel, and that the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of 1952 stood little chance of gaining wide acceptance among Evangelicals.<sup>7</sup>

The committee was particularly encouraged by a communication from the secretary of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), informing them that a sizeable number of the society’s members had endorsed the idea of an extensive revision of the ASV. Somewhat surprisingly, the committee’s report made no

mention of the soon-to-appear Berkeley Version in Modern English (1959), an effort on the part of some Evangelicals to fill the need so widely felt. Contributors to that version even included members of the CRC—Martin Wyngaarden himself, as well as Leonard Greenway and Gerard Van Groningen, with Peter De Jong serving as one of the consultants. Most likely the committee judged that both the process and the selection of translators for this project left much to be desired and held little prospect of producing a satisfactory version.

So the committee's advice to the synod in 1957 was that it endorse the Seattle overture and appoint a committee to carry out the overture's intent. In standard synodical procedure, all such reports are examined by an advisory committee appointed from the synod's own delegates; these overtures come to the table of the synod only as accompanied by that committee's advice. In this case, the synod's advisory committee was not persuaded. Its recommendation was that the synod not endorse the overture of the Seattle consistory, because the study committee had not demonstrated "an urgent necessity" for a new translation and had "not demonstrated that there are sufficient conservative churches interested in this project."<sup>8</sup>

As a delegate to that synod I, with others, expressed dismay that a project of such import for the English-speaking church and world would be dismissed with so little consideration. (Little did I realize that within a few years I would be among those charged with seeing the project through.) Happily our voices prevailed. The synod decided to defer action until the next year, because the judgments of other communions had been solicited and official answers hadn't yet been received.

Howard Long's dream was ebbing but still alive. At the synod of 1958 the study committee finally received the endorsement it desired.<sup>9</sup> Thereafter, the members of the Bible department of Calvin Seminary carried on, reporting their activities each year to the synods and receiving annual extensions of their mandate—though, it must be said, at times without much positive encouragement. It was a demanding task. During the 1958–59 academic year, the committee met almost weekly, as they reported:

[We are working on] preparing an extensive document for circulation through the English-speaking Protestant evangelical world, both in the United States and in the British Commonwealth. In this document several of the major angles of the work of Bible translation are discussed. General directives are suggested for each of these areas. The document draws widely on published reports concerning the experience gained by experts in this field. This experience was carefully evaluated by

the committee. It was adapted to the specific needs of the moment as understood by the committee.<sup>10</sup>

This document has nowhere been published,<sup>11</sup> but it served well to advance the committee's discussions with the representatives of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), who soon became part of this story. In 1960 the committee told the synod the following—in light of the translation projects recently completed (the RSV and the Berkeley Version) and those currently underway (New English Bible, New American Standard Bible, Jerusalem Bible, and New American Bible), as well as the magnitude and complexity of such an undertaking:

[It is our judgment that it is] wise not to aim at an immediate production of a new version at this point. This would indeed be an impossibility. But on the other hand, no opportunity must be lost in exploring the entire field of Bible translation. The general requirements for such a translation must be considered and subjected to careful study. The value of what is available must be weighed. The interest in producing a translation of high caliber must be kept alive and strengthened. Contacts with promising prospects for future translation work must be made and renewed. Trial translations of selected portions of Holy Writ must be circulated for thorough scrutiny and improvement. A general desire to be satisfied with nothing but the best must be aroused.<sup>12</sup>

It is clear that the committee, while not having second thoughts about the urgent need for a new modern English version, was feeling its way very cautiously and growing in its awareness that a great deal of groundwork still needed to be done before it could send to the synod a prospectus for a well-designed translation project for that body to endorse.<sup>13</sup>

## **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICALS' COOPERATION**

Enter the National Association of Evangelicals. Organized in 1942 as an Evangelical response to the National Council of Churches, in the late 1950s it included more than thirty (mostly very small) denominations in its membership and hundreds of individual congregations from more than thirty other denominations (many of them mainline); affiliated with it were upwards of a hundred other organizations such as seminaries, Christian colleges, and parachurch evangelistic and Bible-distribution agencies. It was the major ecumenical organization through which American Evangelicals from across a broad spectrum of the fragmented Evangelical community could act jointly.

It is surely no mere coincidence that it was the year 1957 that saw the establishment of a Bible translation committee as a subcommittee of the NAE's educational commission. This took place at the very next annual gathering of the association following the letter of inquiry from the CRC committee concerning interest in the production of a new English version. Upon the urging of Earl Kalland of Denver's Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, a committee of three was charged with assessing whether or not there was a need for such an undertaking and, if so, how it might best be implemented. Those appointed to serve were Stephen Paine, president of Houghton College, Burton Goddard, dean of Gordon Divinity School, and John Walvoord, president of Dallas Theological Seminary—with Dr. Paine designated as the chairperson.<sup>14</sup>

Stephen Paine bore the main burden of the NAE committee's work for the next few years, carrying on extensive correspondence and serving as the chief facilitator of the ongoing discussions. Not least among his correspondents was the CRC committee, since the interests of that committee and his converged. The two committees met in April 1961 when the NAE annual conference convened in Grand Rapids. Representing the NAE were chairperson Paine, Earl Kalland, and Wheaton College's Merrill Tenney, as well as—by special invitation—H. A. Hanke and Herbert Mekeel. Bastiaan Van Elderen, who had recently replaced the deceased Henry Schultze on the Calvin Seminary faculty, had succeeded Schultze on the CRC side.<sup>15</sup>

During the rather informal discussions between the two committees at that initial meeting, which lasted only three or four hours, it became apparent that the CRC committee was well ahead of its NAE counterpart in its reflections on the many issues involved in launching such a daunting venture. The CRC representatives were, however, in no hurry to rush ahead. They had become sufficiently aware of the extensive groundwork still to be laid and of the many potential pitfalls ahead. Their willingness to give time for the NAE representatives to catch up, as well as to explore more fully the mind of the NAE itself, opened the way for fruitful joint efforts. In fact, the two committees needed each other. The CRC committee needed the broader ecumenical base that the NAE could provide and facilitate, and the NAE committee recognized that it could build on the research and studies already undertaken by the CRC committee.

The most important outcome of the first conversation between representatives of the CRC and the NAE was a consensus that the next step to advance the related mandates of the two committees was to facilitate some kind of general meeting of interested organizations and denominations, reaching as far as possible beyond the limited confines of the CRC and the NAE. However, such a meeting, it was judged, should be called under the official sponsorship of nei-

ther the CRC nor the NAE, lest attendance be prejudiced in any way. When the NAE representatives proposed this procedure to the larger education commission of the NAE, it obtained the commission's approval. From that day forward, the NAE and CRC committees had a shared focus for their joint efforts.<sup>16</sup>

When next the two committees met (21 December 1962, at Calvin Seminary), the NAE was represented by Paine, Kalland, Tenney, and Goddard and the CRC by Stob, Woudstra, Van Elderen, and John Stek (the last named having replaced Martin Wyngaarden on the Calvin Seminary faculty). At this meeting the two committees constituted themselves as the Joint Committee on Bible Translation and established as their single agenda "to call a Bible Translation Conference for the purpose of exploring the need for a new English version or revision of the Bible." That done, subcommittees were appointed to do preparatory work for the conference in three areas: programming, personnel, and translation policy.<sup>17</sup>

On 29 December 1964 the joint committee met at Nyack Missionary College, Nyack, New York, to take up the reports of the three subcommittees and finalize the plans for the Bible translation conference. Present from the NAE committee were Goddard, Kalland, Paine, and Mekeel. The CRC committee was represented by Woudstra, Stek, and Andrew Bandstra (Bandstra had replaced Ralph Stob on the Calvin Seminary faculty). Although considerable follow-up work had to be left to designated subcommittees of the joint committee, a number of decisions were made to shape the future course of events:

1. A Bible translation conference would be scheduled to be held in the greater Chicago area sometime in August 1965.
2. Invitations to the conference would be sent to some fifty biblical scholars drawn from a list prepared by the personnel subcommittee.
3. Ten to fifteen individual cosponsors of the invitation would be sought.
4. A general concept of the program of the conference was developed and committed to a subcommittee to implement.
5. The basic content of a letter of invitation was approved; it included the statement that those extending the invitation "are inclined to suggest a prompt and persistent effort in the next decade or two toward a better translation of the Scriptures than the various existing translations, whose merits we do appreciate."
6. The joint committee formalized its understanding that in calling together a meeting of scholars, "we envision the possibility that from this meeting there will arise initiative and action which will take the project beyond the need for further guidance by this commission."<sup>18</sup>

As it turned out, the joint committee had no need to meet again. Shortly the baton would be passed, and a new, more broadly based committee would take the matter in hand.<sup>19</sup>

## A DECISIVE BIBLE TRANSLATION CONFERENCE

As anticipated, the baton was passed the following summer at the Bible translation conference initiated by the joint committee. The committee's December 1964 decision set in motion a flurry of activity by its subcommittees and officers (especially chairperson Woudstra and secretary Goddard). Then, on 26 August 1965, thirty-two biblical scholars (from the fifty-some who had been invited) gathered near Chicago for a two-day conference on the campus of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois. The conference's specific purpose was to consider what, if anything, should be done by the broader Evangelical community to provide a modern English version of the Bible that would be acceptable throughout the English-speaking world for both personal and liturgical use and for evangelistic outreach in the late twentieth-century context. Invitations to the conference had been endorsed by a number of well-known Christian leaders,<sup>20</sup> and conferees came from twenty-eight different Bible institutes, colleges, and theological faculties—Assemblies of God, Baptist (Conservative, Southern, Northern, Canadian), Presbyterian (United, Reformed, Orthodox, "Covenanter"), Lutheran (Missouri-Synod), Wesleyan Methodist, Nazarene, Mennonite, and Christian Reformed. Seven members of the joint committee were present: Bandstra, Stek, Woudstra, and Wyngaarden (CRC), and Goddard, Kalland, and Paine (NAE).

The day was hot and humid, and that night "the windows of heaven were opened," intense lightning lit up the darkness of the night, heavy thunder shook the earth, and tornadic winds downed large oak trees on the campus. It was a reminder that mere humans should not presume to deal lightly with what had come through the sovereign word of the Lord. And the conferees approached the matter at hand soberly. Prepared papers assessed various areas of concern: Martin Wyngaarden the RSV, Stephen Paine and William Lane the New American Standard Bible (NASB) then in progress, John Stek the human resources available, Charles Pfeiffer certain developments in biblical and related studies that bore directly on Bible translation, and Marten Woudstra various problems faced by translators of the Bible. These papers stimulated wide-ranging discussions that prepared the way for decision time.

Of the several factors brought under consideration, beyond all doubt the most decisive was the conferees' assessment of the various modern English ver-

sions already available or sufficiently advanced to be responsibly evaluated. Although a few were unhappy that the Berkeley Version had not been given more attention, most agreed that the papers prepared on the RSV and the NASB had fixed the conference's attention on the two most likely versions to replace the KJV and the ASV (among those willing to allow the KJV to give way to a modern English version).

For most of those present, the NASB, which was currently being produced under the sponsorship of the Lockman Foundation, held the greater promise. A few of the conference attendees were contributing to its production. Many others were members of the Evangelical Theological Society, whose central statement of faith stressed the verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture (in the autographs). To these the main attraction of the NASB was its attempt to meticulously reproduce as fully as possible a word-for-word, clause-for-clause mirror reflection of the original-language texts, retaining their word order and reflecting their every grammatical nuance—to reproduce form as well as content in the service of “accuracy.” But others were convinced that this supposed great strength of the version was in fact its major weakness. It was founded on unsound linguistic assumptions concerning how languages differ from each other in communicating meaning. And it resulted in an artificial English style that aggravated the very features that had rendered the ASV unattractive to most readers.

As for the RSV, the very makeup of the gathering was an expression of discontent with it, at least in its current form. This discontent was more strongly felt among the Old Testament scholars present than among those who worked mainly in the New Testament. That the RSV represented an advance on many fronts in Old Testament scholarship and was a significant updating of the English language were generally recognized. But many found too many evidences that the translators worked from the Charles Briggs tradition of biblical scholarship rather than the B. B. Warfield tradition.<sup>21</sup> The version reflected many higher-critical conclusions that Evangelical scholars did not share. At the same time it failed to reflect the canonical unity of the Scriptures to which Evangelicals held. Rather clearly, the translators of the RSV viewed it as their task to translate the sense intended by the several human authors—as these had been “discovered” by higher-critics. For many of the Evangelicals at the conference, the task of Bible translators was to translate the sense intended by the one transcendent Author, the inspiring Holy Spirit. For them, the lines drawn in the Liberalism-Fundamentalism conflict were still very much in place.

There were some present, however, for whom this contrast was too sharply drawn. Or, stated differently, while the one position was too historicist, the other was too supernaturalist. Yet, for them, too, the RSV was significantly flawed. It

clearly was only a half step toward a modern English version. Of this the retention of the archaic “thee” and “thou” in all words addressed to God—most notably in the psalms—was a stark example. But there were other rather glaring weaknesses as well. For example, little attention had been paid to intertextuality within the canonical collection, either within the same book, the same Testament, or linking the New Testament with the Old.<sup>22</sup>

When on the afternoon of August 27 the assembled conferees considered all that had come on the table, they took two actions that launched the new translation project. They formally adopted the following consensus: “It is the sense of this assembly that the preparation of a contemporary English translation of the Bible should be undertaken as a collegiate endeavor of evangelical scholars.” Then, to advance the project, they decided that to implement the work of the conference “a continuing committee of fifteen be established” by the following ten key persons: Goddard, Kalland, Mekeel, Paine, Tenney, Bandstra, Stek, Van Elderen, Woudstra, and Wyngaarden.

This was effectively the full membership of the joint committee, but the members of this temporary commission were deliberately named individually to mark beyond question that the joint committee was no longer the agent to carry the project forward. In fact, those named were themselves given only a single mandate: to put in place a committee of fifteen, including “at least five of the members of the appointment committee” (to ensure continuity), to which would be entrusted the implementation of the wishes of the conference.<sup>23</sup>

## **THE FORMATION OF THE COMMITTEE ON BIBLE TRANSLATION**

And so the project was launched. It was not a venture sponsored by any single denomination or by any ecumenical association or council of churches, but by an ad hoc conference of biblical scholars from a wide spectrum of confessional traditions. They in turn entrusted it to an independent “committee of fifteen” (soon to take the name the Committee on Bible Translation), which was responsible before God to fulfill its commission in such a way as to keep faith with the conference that mandated it. While this committee of fifteen was also charged with exploring ways of establishing communication with the committee of the RSV with a view to making suggestions for revision in that version, the committee’s main task was clear.

With a commission and mandate now in place, events began to unfold rapidly. Several major steps forward were taken in Nashville, Tennessee on 29 December 1965. The commission appointed in Palos Heights established the

called-for committee of fifteen. That committee then went to work immediately. To advance its work, it appointed an interim editorial committee, chaired by R. Laird Harris, to begin formulating goals, procedures, and translation policies. And to broaden the base of interest and involvement in the project, it decided to call together a general conference on Bible translation in the summer of 1966.<sup>24</sup>

The momentum was building. Most important, a number of biblical scholars had committed themselves to making the production of a new modern English version of the Bible the central focus of the rest of their productive lives, and they were organized to go forward unitedly. To authorize their joint efforts they had the mandate of the Palos Heights conference; to sustain them they had the simple trust that the Lord would provide both the human and financial resources required.

March 25 and 26 saw the committee of fifteen together again, this time at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois. At this meeting it decided many matters of consequence. It filled out the authorized complement of fifteen members, with the following scholars consenting to serve:

- E. Leslie Carlson, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
- Edmund P. Clowney, Westminster Theological Seminary
- Ralph Earle, Nazarene Theological Seminary
- Burton L. Goddard, Gordon Divinity School
- R. Laird Harris, Covenant Theological Seminary
- Earl S. Kalland, Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary (Denver)
- Kenneth S. Kantzer, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
- Robert Mounce, Bethel College (St. Paul)
- Stephen W. Paine, Houghton College
- Charles F. Pfeiffer, Central Michigan University
- Charles C. Ryrie, Dallas Theological Seminary
- Francis R. Steele, North Africa Mission
- John H. Stek, Calvin Theological Seminary
- John C. Wenger, Goshen Biblical Seminary
- Marten H. Woudstra, Calvin Theological Seminary

To have a public face that was more indicative of its specific purpose, the committee took as its name the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT). Groundwork was also laid for the planned general conference of Christian leaders, biblical scholars, and publishers of Christian literature. Sensing the need to present to the conference more than just the general idea of a new modern English version, the committee formulated a tentative statement concerning the goal it had in mind, the original-language texts to be employed, the style of English to be achieved,

and the *modus operandi* of the translation process. Then, to further the same purpose for which the conference was being called, the committee decided to establish a broad advisory board made up of those who wished to publicly promote the work and to be consulted along the way for advice and counsel.

Two other matters were also addressed. First, with a view to the immediate task of engaging translators for the work, the committee decided that “everyone [engaged in the work of translation] is to subscribe to the following doctrinal statement (or to a similar statement expressing an equally high view of Scripture): ‘The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written, and is therefore inerrant in the autographs.’”<sup>25</sup> Since this statement had the appearance of linking the project too closely to the Evangelical Theological Society (its key sentence echoes the doctrinal basis of that organization), it was revised at the CBT’s next meeting (held 26–27 August 1966).<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, article 7, section 1 of the constitution of the CBT, which was adopted in July 1967, reads, “All those engaged by the Committee as translators or editors shall be required to affirm the following article of faith: ‘The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written, and is therefore inerrant in the autographs’; or the statement on Scripture in the Westminster Confession, the Belgic Confession, the New Hampshire Confession, or the creedal basis of the National Association of Evangelicals; or some other comparable statement.”

Second, in response to a communication from Eugene Nida of the American Bible Society, the committee put on record its intent that “in the event of the achievement of a successful translation and its being copyrighted we make some provision for its availability to the Bible societies and similar mission agencies apart from the normal channels of trade.”<sup>27</sup>

At the meeting of the general conference on Bible translation held at Moody Memorial Church (August 26–27), everything was achieved that the CBT had hoped for—and more.<sup>28</sup> Some eighty interested persons attended. About fifty were spokespersons for or representatives of various Christian organizations involved in evangelism, Bible distribution, church education, and publication of Christian periodicals or other literature. Thirty were biblical scholars. Their prepared papers surveyed the events that had led to the convening of the conference, outlined the CBT’s tentative plans for implementing its mandate, explored many of the challenges the venture posed, and proposed how the broader Evangelical community might be of assistance.

These presentations triggered spirited discussions. As could be expected, at this stage the choir was not yet in perfect harmony. But it did become abundantly evident that there was a widespread conviction among Evangelicals that a new modern English version of the Bible was very much needed and that those ver-

sions recently produced, as well as those in process, did not have much prospect of attaining such widespread acceptance as to take the place of the King James Version. There also emerged a general consensus that the undertaking outlined by the CBT held sufficient promise to warrant wide support. Many of those in attendance offered to serve on the proposed advisory board to support and help shape and promote the project.

And a relationship was born that would soon become a strategic partnership. Going into the conference the CBT had a treasurer but not a penny in the bank and no source of funds on the horizon. All those who attended did so at their own expense or of that of the agencies they represented. To these conferees the CBT's executive secretary suggested five possible ways the project might be financed but acknowledged that every one of them could well prove to be impractical. Then he added this simple appeal: "Perhaps some of you who are far more experienced than we are in financial matters can counsel us in the problem of financing."

In God's good providence the New York Bible Society (NYBS) was represented at the conference by two men of vision. Youngve R. Kindberg, its general secretary, and Morris M. Townsend, a member of its board of managers, had come to investigate firsthand the new venture in Bible translation they had heard about. For some time they had been looking—in their minds, unsuccessfully—for a new modern English version for use in the society's ministry. When they heard how the CBT's project had come to birth, what its specific goals were, and what its envisioned *modus operandi* was for the translation process, they were sufficiently impressed to approach the officers of the CBT with an offer to recommend to the board of managers of the NYBS that it underwrite the entire project.<sup>29</sup>

That prospects for full funding of the project should come to the CBT so quickly—and do so "out of the blue"—was seen by the committee as a gift from heaven. That the offer came not from a commercial publisher but from an agency devoted to the distribution of Bibles and the spread of the gospel made it all the more attractive—a true Godsend. Careful negotiations ensued throughout the rest of 1966 and all of 1967.<sup>30</sup> The CBT was concerned, first, that its efforts to achieve the best possible translation of the Scriptures not be compromised by interference from any outside institution or agency—not even by one that "held the purse." Second, it was insistent that the committee continue to have sole editorial control over the text of the translation and over all later revisions. Third, the CBT desired that no encumbering restrictions be placed on the availability of the version to evangelistic agencies and those devoted to Bible distribution.

For its part the Bible society had a number of major concerns of its own:

1. that the CBT remain true to its purpose, confessional basis, and policies as set forth in its own constitution and bylaws (finalized and adopted by the committee on 11 July 1967),
2. that the NYBS recover all the funds it invested in the project,
3. that the work be pushed forward as rapidly as possible without compromising quality, and
4. that the society hold the copyright.

At a plenary meeting held on 5 December 1967, the board of managers of the NYBS endorsed the recommendation of its executive committee that the society underwrite the entire translation project. It did not flinch at the estimated cost in current dollar value of \$850,000. Accordingly, in the summer of 1968 a written agreement specifically addressing all the basic concerns of both parties was formalized.<sup>31</sup> This agreement, without amendment, continued to govern the relationship throughout the years of cooperative effort that followed. At the invitation of the CBT, and further to strengthen the bonds between the two bodies and to assure free communication between them, Youngve Kindberg became a member of the Committee on Bible Translation.<sup>32</sup>

## THE TASK PROCEEDS

Meanwhile, the CBT was also busy with other matters. The conferees at the Palos Heights meeting had instructed the committee of fifteen to establish contact with both the committee in charge of revising the RSV and the Lockman Foundation (which was engaged in producing the NASB). The purpose was to explore the possibility that either one or both might be open to input from the committee of fifteen sufficient to make the major effort of a completely new translation unnecessary. At the August 26 meeting of the CBT, Burton Goddard reported that a two-hour conversation with Luther Weigle, then-chairman of the RSV committee, had brought to light that his committee was considering only very minor revisions (primarily only matters of punctuation and capitalization).<sup>33</sup> And a later communication from the Lockman Foundation made clear that, since its project was nearing completion, it was not open to any kind of cooperative effort.<sup>34</sup>

This left the CBT free to pursue its mandate with a single focus. There was much to be done, and the committee met during every break in the academic year—December 1966 at The King's College, New York; March 1967 at Moody Bible Institute; July 1967 at Calvin Theological Seminary; November 1967 at

Moody Bible Institute; and December 1967 at the headquarters of the NYBS. And all the while, members of the executive committee of the CBT, as well as special subcommittees, were hard at work. Before the end of 1967 the committee had, in addition to matters already noted, approved a position paper through which the CBT could inform all inquirers concerning its goals and policies; completed putting in place an advisory board made up of those who were willing to support the project with counsel, prayers, encouragement, and publicity; and begun the formulation of a translation manual for the guidance of translators. In addition, the CBT had prepared sample translations of chapters 1–9 and 15 of Exodus and chapters 1–10 of Acts as initial models for translators to follow. It had also designed the process through which the translation would be produced, appointed ten translation teams (five Old Testament teams and five New Testament teams), and assigned to each its initial area of responsibility. Finally, it had made provision for the appointment of intermediate and general editorial committees, formulated basic guidelines for their separate functions, and established a tentative schedule for their initial meetings in the summer of 1968.

Of these achievements, the preparation of sample translations and the designing of the translation process were the most decisive for the project. To detail all the matters taken up in the translation manual (both initially and later as the need for more and more policy decisions surfaced) would expand this account beyond its allotted space. In any event, what these were can be discerned from a careful reading of the final product. But no history of the NIV would be complete without an account of the process by which it came to be.

The basic texts adopted by the CBT were, for the Old Testament, the Leningrad Codex B19A as published in Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (later in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*), and, for the New Testament, the critical edition published by United Bible Societies under the editorship of Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce Metzger, and Alan Wikgren (1966, 1968), together with the latest edition of Eberhard Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece*.<sup>35</sup> These texts were assigned, book by book, to translation teams made up of two translators, two translation consultants (trained biblical scholars), and a stylist consultant (when available)—each team to produce an initial translation in accordance with the translation manual. These initial translations were then carefully scrutinized and revised by intermediate editorial committees of five biblical scholars, drawn from the translation teams, to check them against the original-language texts and conform them to the policies and style called for in the manual. Each edited text was then submitted to close reading by a general editorial committee of eight to twelve members, including representatives of the intermediate editorial committees, other biblical specialists in both Old and New Testaments (initially two

or three of them members of the CBT), at least one theologian (whose main responsibility was to represent the concerns of the various confessional traditions), and an English stylist.

Thereafter, the text as edited by the general editorial committee was distributed to selected outside critics and to all members of the CBT in preparation for a final review by the committee. In its editorial review, the CBT established the text to be published and took full responsibility for it. This final step itself had three stages:

1. The committee worked through the tentative translation of each book in plenary session, making final decisions on all translation problems still unresolved and revising the English to achieve a uniform style.
2. The committee read the Englished text orally to make sure that its rhythm flowed well, to eliminate monotonous repetition of sounds and the immediate juxtaposition of harsh consonants, and to remove obstacles to oral reading by nonprofessional readers.
3. The text as revised by the CBT was submitted to one or more English stylists for a final check, with their criticisms and proposals subsequently acted on by the CBT.<sup>36</sup>

Such, at least, was the process the committee designed. And for the most part it was honored in the execution, though adjustments and modifications were often required by the exigencies of particular circumstances.

## **AN EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENT**

As the work began, it soon became evident that if a “machine” of this complexity was to work efficiently, a central office was required, with a full-time person in charge, who through training and experience could fully appreciate the task at hand and the process by which it was to be accomplished. In July 1967 the CBT began exploring the possibility of establishing the full-time paid position of executive secretary.<sup>37</sup> At its meeting on November 25 it drew up a list of those who would be approached to serve in this capacity.<sup>38</sup> When the committee met in April 1968, Edwin H. Palmer, the committee’s first choice, was in attendance as the newly appointed executive secretary.<sup>39</sup>

Ed Palmer—ex-marine, occasional instructor in systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, at the time of his engagement as executive secretary the pastor of a large Christian Reformed congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan—soon proved himself to be a happy choice. Because of his quick mind, boundless energy, bold spirit, engaging personality, and intense

enthusiasm for the project, he quickly became an indispensable adjunct to the committee. His was a daunting task. He carried on virtually all the correspondence between the CBT and the translators and editors. He kept the one hundred plus members of the advisory board informed of developments through periodic “inform-o-grams.” He received, duplicated, and distributed the initial translations and all their subsequently edited forms as they moved up through the editing process. He set up the various meetings of the intermediate editorial and general editorial committees (preparing, duplicating, and distributing typescripts of the translation texts in the various stages of their evolution; establishing agendas and work schedules; arranging for times, places, and transportation). Finally, he prepared all the materials that made up the agenda for the CBT’s final editing of the text.

This last task was no small one in itself. All the changes made by the general editorial committee had to be inserted into the emerging text. That text then had to be distributed to all members of the CBT and to a number of additional critics. All the revision proposals submitted by these persons had to be collected and collated and sent to each member of the CBT to vote on them in the privacy of his own study. These votes had to be recorded and collated, and a list of all the proposals—with the “mail vote” recorded—had to be prepared and sent to the members of the committee prior to its editing meetings. All this and more fell to Palmer to accomplish—without computer, fax machine, or modern copier. It was an impossible task, but he did it, always efficiently and on time—with the help of his wife “Peter,” eager teenage sons, and a good secretary.

The year 1968 was the one in which everything began to come together. Palmer started his work as executive secretary on April 1. The Old Testament and New Testament intermediate editorial committees met July 1–10. The general editorial committee met July 15–26, and the CBT met for its editorial review July 29–August 8. All who were involved learned much that summer. Procedures were refined and significant progress was made toward fine-tuning the basic style of the final product. The intermediate and general editorial committees treated portions of several books from both the Old and New Testaments. They gave priority, however, to the Gospel of John, and the CBT devoted all its editorial work to that book in order to establish a model for the style of the version as a whole. Capitalizing on the experiences of the summer, the CBT finalized its basic translators’ manual when it met in November.<sup>40</sup> Also in 1968 two changes of long-term significance occurred in the membership of the CBT: Robert Preus of Concordia Theological Seminary replaced Edmund Clowney, who had resigned due to heavy responsibilities at Westminster Seminary,<sup>41</sup> and

Larry Walker of Southwestern Baptist Seminary replaced Leslie Carlson, who had died the previous year.<sup>42</sup>

In 1969 the tempo of the work increased on all levels. By the end of the year, teams of translators, including scholars from Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, had been formed for almost all sixty-six books of the Bible. The members of the various editorial committees gained valuable experience in the art of editing by committee. And the CBT became aware that certain adjustments in procedures were necessary in order for the editorial process to function more efficiently and more effectively. The year also brought further changes in the membership of the CBT. Francis Steele and Kenneth Kantzer both resigned due to heavy responsibilities elsewhere. Richard Longenecker replaced Kantzer, while the Steele vacancy was left open to be filled at a later date.<sup>43</sup>

## SELECTING A NAME

In its own editorial work that year the CBT concentrated on completing the Gospel of John. In this it was significantly aided by an experiment conducted by Burton Goddard in a public high school in Boxford, Massachusetts. Members of the freshman and sophomore classes (twenty-one from each class) were asked to read portions of the emerging text of John's gospel, indicating their level of comfort with its style and marking all words, phrases, and idioms they did not readily understand.<sup>44</sup> By summer's end the text of the Gospel of John was ready for submission to the New York Bible Society. And before the end of the year the NYBS published a paperback edition under the title *The Gospel According to John: A Contemporary Translation*.

This name was the result of extended discussions and consultations. The CBT had first taken up the matter of naming its version in December 1966,<sup>45</sup> and subsequently various names had been under consideration. In March 1967 the following were proposed:

- The Holy Bible: Common English Version
- The Holy Bible: A Contemporary English Translation
- The Holy Bible: International Translation
- The English Bible: An International Version
- The Holy Bible: A Translation by Evangelicals.<sup>46</sup>

At its July meeting the CBT decided to drop from consideration the last three suggestions and replace them with Twentieth Century English Bible.<sup>47</sup> In November 1967 still more names were put on the table:

- The Holy Bible in Contemporary English
- Plain English Bible
- An English World Bible
- The Holy Bible: A Translation for Today
- The Bible Translated by Evangelical Scholars
- Twentieth Century American Bible
- The Holy Bible: An English Version
- The Holy Bible: Twentieth Century Version
- The Holy Bible: Contemporary English Version
- The Holy Bible in Basic English
- The Holy Bible in Today's English
- The Holy Bible: Twentieth Century Authorized Version
- The Holy Bible: Twentieth Century Standard Translation
- The Holy Bible: God's Word for Today.<sup>48</sup>

After weighing all these possibilities, the committee at its 1968 summer meeting found a preference among its members for *The Holy Bible: A Contemporary Translation (ACT)*.<sup>49</sup> Final action, however, was deferred until later. That came in August of 1969 when the CBT and the New York Bible Society agreed on tentatively adopting this name.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, the new version came to be popularly known initially as “The ACT Bible.”

The early 1970s were years of intense effort. There were still some translation teams to be put in place and books to be assigned, and all existing translation teams were under pressure to complete their assignments as quickly as possible. The editorial committees, as well as the CBT, were also hard at work, meeting for extended periods during the spring, summer, and year-end academic breaks. To provide some sense of the pace of the work, between June 21 and July 8 the CBT spent over 118 hours editing *Habakkuk*, *Amos*, and the *Gospel of Mark*.<sup>51</sup> But highly favorable reviews of the *Gospel of John* encouraged all to press on. At its summer meeting, the CBT decided “to expedite the translation of the New Testament with a view to completing it as early as possible in the year 1972.” Due to mounting indebtedness, the New York Bible Society was growing impatient for a marketable product.<sup>52</sup> With that in view, the executive committee of the CBT, in consultation with the society, decided that the CBT should devote the entire summer of 1972 to its final editing of the New Testament.

Besides the translating, editing, and policy making, other developments of consequence were under way. William J. Martin of Regent College, Vancouver, was invited to join the CBT to fill the Steele vacancy.<sup>53</sup> The NYBS had expanded its sphere of ministry and correspondingly added to its name the descriptive

adjective *international*. It thereby became the New York Bible Society International (NYBSI), which in turn triggered a change in the name of the translation to *The New International Bible: A Contemporary Translation*.<sup>54</sup> Provisions were made for the production of a United Kingdom edition of the version.<sup>55</sup> Zondervan Publishing Company entered into formal agreement with the NYBSI to be the sole American licensee for commercial trade editions.<sup>56</sup>

## PRESSING TOWARD PUBLICATION

June 1972 found the members of the CBT and their spouses housed in Pension Kuebler in the little village of Martinsmoos in the Black Forest of West Germany, southwest of Stuttgart. While the intermediate and general editorial committees were meeting at other venues in the United States, as had been the custom also for the CBT up to this point, the Committee on Bible Translation met at this quiet European site to be away from the distractions of institutional duties and to provide some vacation time in what would otherwise be an utterly exhausting summer. The daily schedule typically ran from 6:30 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. In addition, the committee's members usually devoted a few hours of every evening to individual preparation for the work of the next day. Occasionally the committee met again from 7:30–9:00 P.M. And this lasted with only a few short breaks for ten weeks.

In that time the CBT edited Hebrews, Galatians, First and Second Thessalonians, the Johannine epistles, First Corinthians, Colossians, Philippians, First and Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Jude, and Revelation, and it made a number of revisions in the Gospel of John. On 25 August 1972, at 8:30 A.M., the committee completed its work on the New Testament, gave thanks to God for his sustaining mercies, and rose to sing the doxology.

One more step remained, however. The results of the CBT's editorial work on the text still needed to be submitted to English stylists for a final review. When the CBT met again in December 1972, it considered all the proposals offered by the stylists, and on 1 January 1973 it completed its final editing and committed the text to the executive secretary to convey to the publishers.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, at the urging of the representatives of Zondervan Publishing House and the NYBSI, the CBT authorized a final change of name to *The Holy Bible: New International Version*.<sup>58</sup>

Throughout 1973, while the translation teams and lower editorial committees busied themselves with advancing the work on the Old Testament, the CBT dealt mainly with oversight of the production of the New Testament and other administrative responsibilities. Widespread distribution of prepublication page

proofs among advisory board members and other gatekeepers brought a flood of very favorable reviews but also many proposals for revision, all of which the CBT had to assess. The big push for completion of the Old Testament came in 1974 and following.

But the well had run dry. Initially the overall cost was estimated to be somewhat in excess of \$500,000—if, as proposed by the Bible society, translators and editors were to be remunerated at the modest rate of five dollars per hour.<sup>59</sup> Given the state of the economy at the time and the connections that members of the NYBSI's board of managers had with movers and shakers on Wall Street, this seemed within relatively easy reach when spread over the ten years estimated for completing the project. A more detailed calculation undertaken in mid-1967 put the estimated cost at \$850,000.<sup>60</sup> But the pace at which translation teams and editorial committees could work had been overestimated.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, the combination of a bear market and double-digit inflation brought significant shrinkage to both the Bible society's reserves and the sources of its income. By the end of 1973 it was apparent that new sources needed to be tapped. At this point Executive Secretary Palmer took it upon himself to establish the 450 Club and set out to find 450 donors who would commit to contributing \$250 each year for four years. These efforts met with moderate success, but it was not enough to avert the growing crisis. The NYBSI's financial statement relative to the project issued early in 1976 indicated that by the end of 1975 total expenses had amounted to \$1,266,809, of which only about half had been covered through various sources of income. The rest had been covered by loans from several banks.

Late in 1975 the NYBSI put before the CBT the full depth of the financial crisis it faced. At a special meeting with the CBT held on November 8 in Kansas City, Missouri, it presented the committee with the distinct possibility that it would have to abandon the project. It had reduced its staff by more than half and had mortgaged its property to the limit, and it saw no way to raise the significant amounts of money needed to cover the estimated remaining costs. The CBT's response was to readjust procedures and schedules so that the project could be finished by the end of 1977 rather than the projected 1979. This gave the society sufficient relief to hang on for the time being. However, the crisis did not pass until a series of meetings held early in 1976 between the CBT, representatives of the NYBSI, representatives of Zondervan Publishing House, and a Florida businessman resulted in assurances that the needed funds would be forthcoming. Most significantly, Zondervan guaranteed the society that it would advance royalties for up to \$250,000 through 1978.<sup>62</sup> With a great sense of relief and many prayers of thanksgiving, the committee could turn its attention without distraction to completing the project.

That it did get done—on schedule—was due to the readiness of many scholars to devote most of their summer breaks to the work. In 1974 twenty-six Old Testament scholars gathered at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland for ten weeks (June 19–August 22) of intense effort. In 1975 twenty-eight scholars worked for ten weeks (June 18–August 21) at the Metsovian Polytechnical Institute of Athens. The following summer saw thirty-five scholars gathered from June 25 to August 27 at the Colegio Mayor Montellano, a residential complex associated with the University of Salamanca in Spain. And finally, in 1977, sixteen scholars met from June 13 until August 18 at the Belgium Bible Institute in Heverlee, Belgium, just outside of Leuven. All of these individuals had contributed to the project earlier as members of translation teams or editorial committees (or both) and consequently had a vested interest in seeing it through to completion. The European venues were an added attraction. These venues were also attractive to the Bible society due to the economies realized.<sup>63</sup>

From year to year, the work of the editorial committees shifted as the editorial process progressed. Intermediate editorial committees were at work alongside the general editorial committees and the CBT through the summer of 1976. That summer two general editorial committees worked side by side to complete that level of editorial review. Meanwhile, because it had not been able to meet the necessary schedule of its work, the CBT invited four Old Testament scholars (Elmer Smick of Gordon-Conwell Seminary, Bruce Waltke of Dallas Theological Seminary, Herbert Wolf of Wheaton College Graduate School, and Ronald Youngblood of Bethel Theological Seminary)—all of whom had worked on translation teams, intermediate editorial committees, and the general editorial committee—to assist it in the final editorial review.

A precedent had been set for this as early as 1974, when Kenneth L. Barker of Dallas Seminary had been invited to sit with the CBT during its editing work.<sup>64</sup> Shortly thereafter he was appointed a full member of the CBT to replace the long-inactive Charles Pfeiffer.<sup>65</sup> For the 1977 summer session in Belgium, Gleason Archer (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) and Roy Hayden (Oral Roberts University) were also invited to assist. This expansion of the CBT for editing purposes allowed the committee to divide into two sections and thus to double the pace of its work. To broaden the base of exegetical insight and to assure consistency of style, the decisions of each section were reviewed by the members of the other section before the text was finalized.

Even these accelerated procedures were not enough to enable the CBT to complete its work by the end of the session in Heverlee. Its chosen deadline—the end of 1977—had kept it under constant pressure but did not cause it to rush its work. The final editing of Isaiah, for example, took the committee virtually

the whole ten weeks of the summer of 1975 (approximately three verses an hour). This was an extreme case, resulting from the fact that the text the CBT had received from the general editorial committee was more paraphrastic than the established policy allowed. Even so, the CBT continued to the end to work at a deliberate pace. In the months following the Heverlee meeting it met for approximately twenty-two weeks to finish all its editorial work.<sup>66</sup> This included assessing the criticisms and proposals for revision of the New Testament that various readers and scholars had submitted since its publication in 1973.

## AN ONGOING TASK

And so the translation project set in motion by the Palos Heights conference in 1965 was completed. More than one hundred biblical scholars had contributed to the work, and they had been assisted by a number of English stylists at various levels.<sup>67</sup> Most notably among these were Margaret Nicholson and Frank Gaebelien. The former had read and criticized the edited text at every level of its development; the latter had sat for many years with the general editorial committees as they did their work. With the translation finished, the conversion of manuscript into book form was promptly and efficiently carried out by the publishers (New York Bible Society International, Zondervan Bible Publishers, and Hodder & Stoughton [for the U.K. edition]), so that before the end of 1978 the completed version was presented to the reading public.<sup>68</sup> And Howard Long's dream, which had started it all, was finally realized.

Yet that was still not the end of it—the task of translating the Bible is never finished. The CBT realized this from the beginning. Already in its agreement of cooperation with the NYBS it had provided for its continued oversight of the text. And in early 1977 it had tentatively set aside the third week of May 1979 to consider revisions of the complete Bible.<sup>69</sup> However, when it met on 28 May 1979, it decided to authorize no new revisions until 1983, the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the New Testament. That year, the CBT<sup>70</sup> met from June 23 until August 6 at the Spanish Bible Institute in Castelldefels, Spain, and worked through all the criticisms and proposals for revision that had accumulated through the years. In this revision, whatever changes were made had to be approved by at least a seventy percent majority of the CBT.<sup>71</sup> Even so, some scores of changes were adopted, giving rise to the addendum to the committee's Preface to the NIV (revised August 1983) and to the new copyright date of 1984.

This, then, is how the NIV (1973, 1978, 1984) came to be. It is, of course, not the whole story. It is, really, little more than the bare, dry bones of the story. How the translated text was formatted and produced in bound forms is a story untold

here, as is the story of the Anglicization of the text. And the flesh-and-blood story of the translators at work—the agony and the ecstasy of translating the ancient sacred texts, the exhilarating challenge and humbling effect of doing it while sitting around a table with learned peers, the sacrifices made, the stress and strain of meeting endless deadlines, the utter fatigue that at times set in, and yet the deep satisfaction of laboring at the task as a community of fellow believers devoted to a work that lay close to the heart—this, too, is another story.<sup>72</sup> Space constraints prohibit telling the full story here. The whole story would, no doubt, require many volumes—or else the skills of a poet.

### NOTES

1. The story of the NIV has been told elsewhere: Carolyn J. Youngblood, “The New International Version Translation Project: Its Conception and Implementation,” *JETS* 21 (September 1978): 239–49; Burton L. Goddard, *The NIV Story: The Inside Story of the New International Version* (New York: Vantage, 1989); Richard Kevin Barnard, *God’s Word in Our Language: The Story of the New International Version* (Colorado Springs: International Bible Society, 1989). Youngblood’s account is based on primary sources; Goddard’s, largely on personal reminiscences and his private files; Barnard’s, primarily on interviews with many of the principals in the project. For the early history (1956–66), see also Stephen W. Paine, “Background of This Bible Translation Project” (unpublished paper, Bible translation conference, Moody Memorial Church, Chicago, Illinois, 26–27 August 1966).

2. For a fuller account of Howard Long’s frustration, see Barnard, *God’s Word in Our Language*, 15–18.

3. *Acts of Synod 1956 of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Publishing House, 1956), Overture 27, 539–40.

4. *Acts of Synod 1956*, 61.

5. The first three named were all born in the 1890s, and of them only Wyngaarden lived to see the actual launching of the translation project; Woudstra was a post-World War II immigrant from the Netherlands, and thirty years their junior.

6. See “The Possibility of a New Translation of the Bible,” *Acts of Synod 1957*, 348–56.

7. Why? Because it was produced by scholars who stood in the Charles Briggs higher-critical tradition of biblical scholarship rather than in the confessional tradition of Benjamin Warfield (“what Scripture says, God says”). These two men are mentioned here because they epitomized the Liberalism-Fundamentalism conflict that raged in the mainline churches in America during the first three decades of the twentieth century, a conflict that cast a long shadow throughout that century.

8. *Acts of Synod 1957*, 24.

9. *Acts of Synod 1958*, 102–3.

10. *Acts of Synod 1959*, 292–93.

11. It exists in mimeographed form (seven single-spaced pages, titled “The Committee on Bible Translation: Christian Reformed Church,” addressed to “Dear

Reader(s),” and signed by Schultze, Stob, Woudstra, and Wyngaarden). The paper is undated, but since an attached note informs the reader that Schultze died “before the final draft was presented,” it is to be dated in March/April 1959 (Schultze died 6 March 1959).

12. *Acts of Synod 1960*, 155.

13. The committee never had in view that the Christian Reformed Church, either alone or in concert with other churches, would be the *sponsoring* body for the production of a new English version of the Bible.

14. Goddard, *The NIV Story*, 8–9. Three of these four names will appear frequently in the narrative that follows.

15. *Ibid.*, 9.

16. *Ibid.*, 11–12; *Acts of Synod 1962*, 162.

17. Minutes of the Joint Committee on Bible Translation (21 December 1962); Goddard, *The NIV Story*, 13–14; *Acts of Synod 1963*, 196.

18. See “Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Joint Committee on Bible Translation” (29 December 1964).

19. For that reason the Christian Reformed committee made its final report to the synod in 1966—including a “Survey of the Bible Translation Project” dating back to 1956. See *Acts of Synod 1966*, 374–85.

20. Among them were John Bradbury, editor emeritus of the *Watchman Examiner*; Gordon W. Brown, dean of Central Baptist Seminary (Toronto); V. Raymond Edman, chancellor of Wheaton College; Carl F. H. Henry, editor of *Christianity Today*; Peter Eldersveld of “The Back to God Hour” (international broadcast voice of the Christian Reformed Church); David Hubbard, president of Fuller Theological Seminary; J. Theodore Mueller of Concordia Seminary; Harold John Ockenga of Park Street Church (Boston); W. Stanford Reid of McGill University; and John Wenger of Goshen Biblical Seminary.

21. See note 8.

22. For example, Daniel 11:31 and 12:11 refer to “the abomination that makes desolate,” but in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14, though they clearly refer to these Daniel passages (expressly so in Matthew), the reader finds references rather to “the desolating sacrilege”—even though the relevant Greek noun is rendered “abomination(s)” in Luke 16:15; Revelation 17:4–5; 21:27.

23. For other accounts of the conference see Goddard, *The NIV Story*, 15–19, and “Brief Report of the Activities of the Bible Translation Conference Held at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights (Chicago), Illinois on August 26 and 27, 1965,” by John Stek and Marten Woudstra (mimeographed, four pages, single-spaced). The “more comprehensive digest of the conference” to which this report refers was never written because the Committee of Fifteen decided that the Stek-Woudstra report was sufficient (see Paine, “Background of This Bible Translation Report,” 5–6).

24. Paine, “Background of This Bible Translation Report,” 5–6.

25. Minutes of the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT), 25–26 March 1966.

26. Minutes of the CBT (26–27 August 1966), minute 13.

27. Minutes of the CBT (25–26 March 1966).

28. For brief accounts of this conference, see Goddard, *The NIV Story*, 20–27; “Summary of Proceedings: Conference on Bible Translation: Moody Church, Chicago” (26–27 August 1966 [mimeographed, four pages, single-spaced]).

29. Minutes of the CBT (26–27 August 1966), minute 24.
30. Meanwhile, the Bible Society underwrote the cost of the CBT's meetings during 1967, up to \$5,000 (Minutes of the CBT [24–25 March 1967], minute 19).
31. Minutes of the CBT (29 July–8 August 1968), minute 20. For the process through which this basis of cooperation was developed, see Minutes of the CBT (24–25 March 1967), minute 25; Minutes of the CBT (10–14 July 1967), minutes 16, 38, 39, 42; Minutes of the CBT (24–25 November 1967), minute 8; Minutes of the CBT (12–13 April 1968), minutes 19, 22, 29.
32. Minutes of the CBT (24–25 November 1967), minute 13; Minutes of the CBT (29–30 December 1967), minute 6. The committee had a vacancy to fill due to the resignation of Robert Mounce (Minutes of the CBT [26–27 August 1964], minute 7).
33. Minutes of the CBT (26–27 August 1966), minute 5(c).
34. Minutes of the CBT (28 December 1966), minute 10; see also Goddard's attached report (as temporary executive secretary).
35. Minutes of the CBT (24–25 November 1967), minute 33; cf. Minutes of the CBT (24–25 March 1967), minute 40 (1), (2).
36. Minutes of the CBT (24–25 March 1967), minute 47 (1); Minutes of the CBT (10–14 July 1967), minutes 31–34, 46.
37. Minutes of the CBT (10–14 July 1967), minute 10.
38. Minutes of the CBT (24–25 November 1967), minute 37.
39. Minutes of the CBT (12–13 April 1968), minute 2.
40. Minutes of the CBT (29–30 November 1968), minute 22. Many policy matters still required later consideration, and the manual grew as the years passed.
41. Minutes of the CBT (29 July–8 August 1968), minutes 12–17.
42. Minutes of the CBT (29–30 November 1968), minute 12.
43. Minutes of the CBT (5–6 August 1969).
44. See "Report on Experiment with the New Bible Translation at Masconomet Regional High School, Boxford, Massachusetts" (5 March 1969), attached to the Minutes of the CBT (1–5 April 1969).
45. Minutes of the CBT (28 December 1966), minute 12.
46. Minutes of the CBT (24 March 1967), minute 37.
47. Minutes of the CBT (10–14 July 1967), minute 40.
48. Minutes of the CBT (24–25 November 1967), minute 28.
49. Minutes of the CBT (29 July–8 August 1968), minute 25.
50. Minutes of the CBT (4–7 August 1969).
51. Minutes of the CBT (21 June–9 July 1971), minute 56.
52. Minutes of the CBT (22 June–2 July 1970), minute 32.
53. Minutes of the CBT (21 June–9 July 1971), minute 21.
54. *Ibid.*, minute 25.
55. Minutes of the CBT (5–9 April 1971), minutes 22, 27, 28; minutes 15, 16: Minutes of the CBT (27–31 March 1972), minutes 15, 16.
56. Minutes of the CBT (5–9 April 1971), minute 21.
57. Minutes of the CBT (28 December 1972–1 January 1973), minute 24.
58. *Ibid.*, minute 7.

59. Minutes of the CBT (28 December 1966), minute 27.

60. See budget attached to the Minutes of the CBT (10–14 July 1967).

61. As it turned out, the pace of initial translation varied considerably, depending on the makeup of each translation team and the book for which it was responsible. On the editorial levels, the intermediate editorial committees averaged five verses per hour, the general editorial committees averaged eight verses per hour, and the CBT averaged twelve verses per hour. See communication of the executive secretary to potential donors, dated February 1974.

62. Minutes of the CBT (5 February 1976).

63. The cost per person for room and board per day was \$6.00 (St. Andrews), \$8.00 (Athens), \$5.50 (Salamanca), and \$9.50 (Heverlee).

64. Minutes of the CBT (19 June–17 July 1974), minute 10.

65. Minutes of the CBT (28 August 1974), minutes 4, 8.

66. September 28–November 16; November 28–December 23; December 27–January 20; February 3–March; March 13–25; April 3–May 11; May 27–June 2.

67. Those who contributed are listed in Goddard, *The NIV Story*, 119–24; for an even more complete list, see Barnard, *God's Word in Our Language*, 191–98.

68. Zondervan's release date was 27 October 1978. Because of the wide acceptance of the New Testament, Zondervan's first pressrun of the whole Bible was 1,200,000 (see Goddard, *The NIV Story*, 112).

69. Minutes of the CBT (18 March 1977).

70. The CBT's membership had changed somewhat since 1978. Charles Ryrie had resigned in 1977 (Minutes of the CBT [April 1977]), and Ronald Youngblood (Bethel Seminary, San Diego) was added in 1979 (Minutes of the CBT [28 May 1979]). In the spring of 1980 Bill Martin died and was replaced that same year by Bruce Waltke of Regent College, Vancouver (Minutes of the CBT [November 1980], minute 3). At the CBT's meeting in 1983, Youngve Kindberg resigned and his place was taken by Donald Wiseman of the University of London (Minutes of the CBT [2–3 August 1983]). Wiseman had for many years chaired the committee that Anglicized the text of the NIV for the Commonwealth edition published by Hodder & Stoughton, and he was present for part of the CBT's review of the NIV in 1983.

71. "The proposed revision may be adopted in committee if at least eight members are present and if the following majorities for the proposed revision are attained: 6 votes from 8 members, 7 from 9, 7 from 10, 8 from 11, 9 from 12, 9 from 13, 10 from 14, or 11 from 15" (Minutes of the CBT [1 November 1980], minutes 4–5).

72. This story has been told in part by Goddard and Barnard in their cited works.

### MEETINGS OF THE CBT 1965–1983

1. 29 December 1965, Nashville, Tennessee
2. 25–26 March 1966, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois
3. 26–27 August 1966, Moody Memorial Church, Chicago, Illinois
4. 28 December 1966, The King's College, Briar Cliff Manor, New York, New York
5. 24–25 March 1967, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois

6. 10–14 July 1967, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan
7. 24–25 November 1967, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois
8. 29–30 December 1967, New York Bible Society Headquarters, New York, New York
9. 12–13 April 1968, Philadelphia College of the Bible, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
10. 29 July–8 August, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan
11. 29–30 November 1968, New York Bible Society Headquarters, New York, New York
12. 1–5 April 1969, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri
13. 4–7 August 1969, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois
14. 28–29 November 1969, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois
15. 23–27 March 1970, Houghton College, Houghton, New York
16. 22 June–2 July 1970, Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Georgia
17. 5–9 April 1971, St. Paul's School of Theology, Kansas City, Missouri
18. 21 June–9 July 1971, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan
19. 27–29 December 1971, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois
20. 27–31 March 1972, Bibletown, Boca Raton, Florida
21. 19 June–25 August 1972, Pension Kuebler, Martinsmoos, West Germany
22. 24–25 November 1972, Trinity Evangelical Theological Seminary, Deerfield, Illinois
23. 28 December 1972–1 January 1973, Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota
24. 9–19 July 1973, The Firs, Bellingham, Washington
25. 31 December 1973–4 January 1974, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois
26. 8–15 April 1974, St. Paul's School of Theology, Kansas City, Missouri
27. 19 June–22 August 1974, David Russell Hall, University of St. Andrews, St. Andrews, Scotland
28. 27 December 1974–11 January 1975, Bibletown, Boca Raton, Florida
29. 24–29 March 1975, St. Paul's School of Theology, Kansas City, Missouri
30. 18 June–21 August 1975, Metsovian Polytechnical Institute, Athens, Greece
31. 9 November 1975, St. Paul's School of Theology, Kansas City, Missouri
32. 5 January–7 February 1976, Bibletown, Boca Raton, Florida
33. 23 February–27 March 1976, Fort Worth, Texas
34. 12 April–15 May 1976, Liberty Corners, New Jersey
35. 25 June–27 August 1976, Salamanca University, Salamanca, Spain
36. 10 January–12 February 1977, Bibletown, Boca Raton, Florida
37. 28 February–2 April 1977, Eules, Texas
38. 18 April–21 May 1977, Liberty Corners, New Jersey
39. 13 June–19 August 1977, Belgium Bible Institute, Heverlee, Belgium
40. 26 September–16 November 1977, Liberty Corners, New Jersey
41. 28 November–23 December 1977, Cape Coral, Florida
42. 27 December 1977–20 January 1978, Bibletown, Boca Raton, Florida
43. 13 February–3 March 1978, Wycliffe International Linguistic Center, Dallas, Texas
44. 13–25 March 1978, Wycliffe International Linguistic Center, Dallas, Texas

45. 3 April–11 May 1978, Liberty Corners, New Jersey
46. 27 May–2 June 1978, Liberty Corners, New Jersey
47. 28–31 March 1979, Liberty Corners, New Jersey
48. 2 November 1980, Ramada Inn O'Hare, Rosemont, Illinois
49. 20 June 1981, Ramada Inn O'Hare, Rosemont, Illinois
50. 26 June 1982, Ramada Inn O'Hare, Rosemont, Illinois
51. 23 June–6 August 1983, Spanish Bible Institute, Castelldefels, Spain

UNDERSTANDING THE THEORY, HISTORY,  
AND PRACTICE

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THE

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CHALLENGE

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OF

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BIBLE

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TRANSLATION

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COMMUNICATING GOD'S WORD TO THE WORLD

GLEN G. SCORGIE, MARK L. STRAUSS,  
STEVEN M. VOTH

GENERAL EDITORS

ESSAYS IN HONOR OF RONALD F. YOUNGBLOOD

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