

## THE USE OF ITALICS IN ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

WALTER F. SPECHT  
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan

A famous Venetian printer startled the educated world in 1501 by publishing the writings of Virgil in a new font of type, characterized by sloping letters somewhat resembling handwriting. That printer was Aldus Manutius (1450-1515), one of the most illustrious names in the history of printing, and the new font of type which he introduced was called "Italic."<sup>1</sup> It was discovered, as time went on, that the new type face was not as easy to read nor as restful to the eye as roman type, hence it is seldom used for the major text of a document today. It does, however, have a number of specialized uses. It is often used for the titles of books and magazines. It is used for foreign words and phrases, for scientific names of genera and species, and for the names of the plaintiff and the defendant in legal citations, etc.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps its commonest use is for special emphasis, or to point out words that demand more than ordinary attention.

The careful reader of the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible is aware of the frequent use of italics for certain words from Gn 1:2 to Rev 22:21. Every informed Bible teacher and minister is, of course, aware that these italics indicate words for which there are no exact equivalents in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, but which have been added to make the translation conform to English idiom. Unfortunately for the layman there is usually no preface or introduction explaining this specialized usage.

<sup>1</sup> The type was actually cut for Aldus Manutius by Francesco Griffo of Venice. *International Typographical Union Lessons in Printing* (Indianapolis, 1931), Unit I, Lesson 9, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 24.

Usually all he can find in the front of his Bible is the "Epistle Dedicatory" which is the translators' dedication "To the Most High and Mighty Prince, James, By the grace of God, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the faith, etc." Therefore, laymen and even theological students, at times, think that the italicized words in the Bible are intended to be the most important words in the sacred text.

But to place emphasis on these words not only distorts the meaning of many a passage, but can also lead to ludicrous results. The classic illustration of this is in the story of the old prophet who commanded his sons, "Saddle me the ass. And they saddled *him*" (1 Ki 13: 27). To stress the italicized *him* results in a ludicrous distortion of the story.

#### *History of the Use of Italics in the Bible*

The device of using a different font of type for words supplied by translators is relatively new. How did the idea originate?

*Sebastian Münster* (1489-1552). Apparently the man to whom we are indebted for this new device was Sebastian Münster of Basel. He devoted his lifetime to Hebraic studies and produced over 40 books. His Aramaic grammar was the first grammar of that language written by a Christian. He taught at Basel, 1529-1552, and while there he produced the first German edition of the Hebrew Bible, in 1534-1535. This Hebrew Bible was accompanied by his own Latin translation and notes. "This version," says Basil Hall, "gave an impetus to Old Testament study similar to that which Erasmus had given to the study of the New Testament."<sup>3</sup> "Münster's translation was not as extremely literal as Pagnini's Latin version." Though "it did not depart by a nail's breadth from the Hebrew verity," it was written

<sup>3</sup> Basil Hall, "Biblical Scholarship: Editions and Commentaries," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, S. L. Greenslade, ed. (Cambridge, 1963), p. 70.

in better Latin.<sup>4</sup> In this Latin version Münster conceived of the novel idea of printing inserted words in small roman type to distinguish them from the black letters used for the main body of the text. Münster's Latin translation of the Hebrew OT was used extensively by Miles Coverdale, and affected many of the renderings found in the Great Bible.

*Olivetán* (ca. 1506-38). The second person who seems to have made use of this idea was the cousin of John Calvin, Olivetan. He preached Reformation doctrines to the Waldenses in Piedmont in 1532-1535 and translated the Bible into French. The OT was translated directly from the Hebrew; the Apocrypha and the NT were a revision of the version of Faber Stapulensis. This version first appeared in June, 1535, as a large black-letter folio, printed by Pierre de Wingle near Neuchâtel, Switzerland. Olivetan used a smaller font of type to distinguish words which were not in the original but which were needed in the translation to complete the sense.

*The Great Bible*. In 1539, Miles Coverdale, at the request of Cromwell, edited a revision of the Thomas Matthew Bible, which became the first English Bible authorized by King and Parliament for use in the Church of England. In producing the "Great Bible" Coverdale made considerable use of Münster's Latin version of the OT. He also used Olivetan's French version. In the NT he made use of Erasmus' translation into Latin. To placate the conservatives Coverdale inserted additions into his translation from the Vulgate. These additions were put in smaller type and bracketed so that the reader would recognize their source.<sup>5</sup>

For example, to the words, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" in Mt 7: 1, he added in brackets and smaller type: "condempne not, and ye shall not be condempned," words found in some MSS of the Vulgate. In Mt 25 : 1, he translated "Then shall the kyngdom of heaven be like unto ten virgins, which toke their lampes, and went to mete the brydgrome,"

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> J. F. Mozley, *Coverdale and His Bibles* (London, 1953), p. 221.

and adds in brackets from the Latin "and the bryde".<sup>6</sup>

The Vulgate often adds to the Hebrew and Greek text. Coverdale's inclusion of these additions meant a certain decline of the scholarship of the Great Bible,<sup>7</sup> since usually there is little support for these readings.

*Theodora Beza.* Although the Great Bible made use of the device of a different font of type for certain words, it was for a different purpose than in Münster's or Olivetan's Bibles. Theodore Beza's Latin NT, published in Geneva in 1556, returned to Münster's original idea. Beza was Calvin's successor in Geneva, and that city had become an outstanding center of Biblical scholarship. From it came the first English Bible using Münster's original idea.

*Whittingham's New Testament.* In 1557 William Whittingham, Calvin's brother-in-law, prepared a revision of Tyndale's English NT. It was a small volume printed in roman type, contained verse divisions, and made use of italics for words not in the Greek but necessary in English. In the preface, Whittingham explains his procedure:

And because the Hebrew and Greke phrases, which are strange to rendre in other tongues, and also short, shulde not be so harde, I haue sometyme interpreted them without any whit diminishing the grace of the sense, as our langage doth vse them, and sometyme haue put to that worde, which lacking made the sentence obscure, but haue set it in such letters as may easely be discerned from the comun text.<sup>8</sup>

*The Geneva Bible.* Whittingham now took the lead in a scholarly revision of the whole Bible, which resulted in the Geneva Bible of 1560. It was printed in roman type and employed italics for the use of supplied words which had no equivalents in the original text. Again the procedure is explained in the preface:

<sup>6</sup> For other examples see Mt 4: 19; 6: 14; 7: 21, 29; 9: 25; 12: 2; 13: 47; 19: 21; 24: 7, 41; 26: 53; 27: 8; Lk 9: 39; 2 Cor 1: 6; 8: 20, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Mozley, *loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> *The Holy Bible (A facsimile in a reduced size of the Authorized Version published in the year 1611)* with an Introduction by A. W. Pollard and illustrative documents (Oxford, 1911), p. 118.

Moreouer whereas the necessitie of the sentence required any thing to be added (for suche is the grace and proprietie of the Ebrewe and Greke tongues, that it can not but ether by circumlocution, or by adding the verbe or some worde be vnderstand of them that are not wel practised therein) we haue put it in the text with another kynde of lettre, that it may easely be discerned from the common lettre. <sup>9</sup>

Thus Münster's novel idea found its way into the popular English Bible of the 16th century.

*The Bishops' Bible.* The Bishops' Bible of 1568 was greatly influenced by the Geneva Bible, even though it was a backward-looking version. It was printed in the customary black-letter type, "but roman type served the function of the italics which had been used in the Geneva Bible." <sup>10</sup>

*The King James Version.* The original KJV of 1611, like its predecessor, the Bishops' Bible, was printed in black-letter type. Use was again made of roman type for words supplied by the revisers, but not found in the original languages. Numerous changes have been made in subsequent editions of the KJV. A few were unintentional, but most were deliberate attempts to correct errors. <sup>11</sup> In 1612 an edition in octavo was printed using a small clear roman type, and introducing the use of italics in this version. This was followed by a similar edition in 1616 also in roman type. The 1762 revision by Thomas Paris, published at Cambridge, extended and improved in accuracy the use of the italics. In 1769 the Oxford edition by Benjamin Blayney made more corrections and further extended the use of italics, probably beyond the limits that the original famous 47 revisers would have approved.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>10</sup> Allen P. Wikgren, "The English Bible" in *The Interpreter's Bible*, George A. Buttrick, ed. (New York, 1952), I, 92.

<sup>11</sup> For a complete list of deliberate changes since 1611, see F. H. Scrivener, ed., *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible of the Authorized Version* (Cambridge, 1870-73), pp. lxviii-lxxxvi.

*The Revised Versions.* The practice of using italics for translators' supplied words was continued in the English Revised Version, (NT, 1881; OT, 1885), and the American Standard Version of 1901. These versions were characterized by a strong attempt at verbal consistency and accuracy, but the resulting translation was often stilted and unidiomatic. The Revised Standard Version (RSV, NT, 1946; OT, 1952) completely abandoned the practice of using italics for words added by translators. Words inserted to complete or clarify the meaning were regarded by the revision committee "as an essential part of the translation."<sup>12</sup> The New American Standard Bible (NT, 3rd ed., 1963),<sup>13</sup> which attempts to contemporize the English of the American Standard Version, has retained that version's use of italics.

None of the translators of private modern speech versions with which the present writer is acquainted has deemed it wise to follow the KJV and the English and American Revised Versions in the use of italics. Moffatt's NT makes use of italics but for an entirely different purpose, *i.e.*, to indicate passages quoted from the OT.

### *Examples of the Use of Italics*

A few specific examples of the use of italics in the KJV will serve to illustrate the principles on which the practice is based. In 1 Jn 2: 23 the entire clause, "[*but*] *he that acknowledgeth the son hath the Father also,*" is italicized evidently because there was in the minds of the translators uncertainty as to the genuineness of the text. The Textus Receptus on which the KJV is based lacked these words. However they are found in  $\aleph$ ABCP and there can be little doubt of their genuineness. Their omission in medieval MSS was due to a scribal error called by textual critics *parablepsis* (a looking by the side), facilitated by *homoioteleuton* (a similar ending of

<sup>12</sup> Millar Burrows, *Diligently Compared* (London, 1964), p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Published by the Lockman Foundation, La Habra, California.

lines).<sup>14</sup> It is to be noted that both clauses of this verse end with the words τὸν πατέρα ἔχει, and the scribe's eyes skipped a whole line which he unconsciously supposed he had already copied.

Another illustration of the use of italics in the NT to indicate textual uncertainty is in Jn 8:6, where the words "*as though he heard them not*" are italicized. This clause was not used in any of the great English versions before the Bishops' Bible, from which it came into the KJV. It is a rendering of the Greek μὴ προσποιούμενος found in the uncials EGHK and in numerous cursives. Robert Stephanus included it in his 1546 and 1549 editions of the Greek NT, but left it out of the 1550 edition, which became the basis of the Textus Receptus.<sup>15</sup> It is almost universally recognized today as a gloss which found its way into the *Pericope adulterae*, a passage whose place in the Gospel of John is disputed, but which appears to be a misplaced pericope with all the marks of genuineness.<sup>16</sup>

In a few passages the translators of the English NT felt obliged to supply the implied apodosis to a conditional clause, and such insertions were italicized in versions preceding the RSV. In Lk 13:9, for example, there is an implied conclusion to the conditional clause, "and if it bear fruit," which the KJV, following the Geneva Bible, renders as "well," and the Bishops' Bible as "*thou maiest let it alone.*" The position of the phrase εἰς τὸ μέλλον varies among MSS, but it is best taken with P<sup>75</sup>BL, etc., as preceding "and if not" (εἰ δὲ μὴ γέ), and means "in the future," or, more specifically, "in the next year" (ἔτος understood). Thus we arrive at the rendering of the RSV, "and if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."

<sup>14</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (New York, 1964), p. 189.

<sup>15</sup> A. Plummer, *The Gospel According to John* ("Cambridge Greek Testament," Cambridge, 1893), pp. 184, 185.

<sup>16</sup> Metzger, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

Similarly the clause "*he shall be free*" is inserted in Mt 15:6 and Mk 7:11 by the KJV following the Geneva Bible. In 2 Th 2:3, the KJV again following the Geneva Bible, inserts "*for that day shall not come,*" as compared with Tyndale's translation, "for the Lorde commeth not," and the Bishops' following the Great Bible's, "*for the Lord shall not come.*" The English and American Revised Versions here read, "for *it will not be.*"

In addition to elliptical conditional sentences such as those noted above, there are a few examples in the NT of aposiopesis, where a part of the sentence is suppressed due to strong emotion.<sup>17</sup> Jn 6:62 is an illustration of this type. Here the KJV supplies *what*, and appropriately renders the conditional clause as a question: "*What* and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend where he was before?" The implied answer seems to be, "Would you still be offended?" In Lk 19:42 the aposiopesis is rendered as an exclamation: "If thou hadst known . . . the things *which belong* unto thy peace!" The σου after εἰρήνην is of doubtful textual authority. "Peace" is probably to be taken in the Hebrew sense of *šālôm*, "welfare," "prosperity," and there is perhaps a paronomasia on the name Salem. "The things that *make* for peace" would be a better rendering than "*which belong* unto." The phrase "let us not fight against God" in Acts 23:9 rests on doubtful textual authority, and should be omitted. This leaves an aposiopesis which is best read as a question, "Suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

Lk 1:64 illustrates the italicizing of words supplied to clear up a special type of ellipsis known as *zeugma*, where one verb is used with two objects (or subjects) but suits only one. In this case the verb "opened" suits "mouth" but not "tongue," hence the verb "loosed" is supplied and the verse is rendered, "and his mouth was opened immediately and his tongue *loosed*, and he spake and praised God." A

<sup>17</sup> A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (New York, 1923), p. 1203.

similar difficulty in 1 Cor 3: 2 is solved by translating the verb properly, "I gave to drink," as "I fed." The *zeugma* of 1 Ti 4: 2 is solved in the KJV by the insertion of another participle and reading "forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats."

### *Inconsistencies in the Use of Italics*

There is an ellipsis of various nouns in the Greek NT. When they are supplied in the KJV they are often, but not always, italicized. In Mt 3: 5 ἡ περίχωρος is given as "the region about," with no italics. Likewise ἡ ὄρεινή (*scil.* γῆ or χώρα) is translated "the hill country" in Lk 1: 39, 65. However, when "part" is supplied in Lk 17: 24 it is italicized in both cases. In such expressions as τῆ ἐπιούσῃ (*scil.* ἡμέρα) the word "day" is italicized (Acts 16: 11; 20: 15; 21: 18). This is also true of such time expressions as "the first *day* of the week" (Mt 28: 1; Mk 16: 2 [9]; Lk 24: 1; Jn 20: 1, 19; Acts 20: 7; 1 Cor 16: 2), "the third *day*" (Lk 13: 32; Acts 27: 19), "the seventh *day*" (Heb 4: 4) and "the *day* following" (Lk 13: 33). In Rom 8: 34 ἐν δεξιᾷ is translated "at the right hand," and ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς in Mk 16: 5 as "on the right side," with no italics. τὸ τρίτον is rendered "the third part" with no italics to indicate a supplied word in Rev 8: 7, 8, 11, 12; 9: 15, 18; 12: 4. "*Water*" is italicized in Mt 10: 42 and Jas 3: 11, and "*clothing*" in Mt 11: 8, whereas in Jn 20: 12 no word is supplied after "white." "Olive" is supplied twice in Rom 11: 24 but this is not indicated by italics.

There is, then, no real consistency in the use of italics for words supplied in elliptical constructions. There is also considerable variation in the matter in the various editions of the KJV. In 1 Cor 9: 22, for example, the 1611 edition used no italics. The present-day edition published by Oxford reads: "I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some." The 1873 edition italicized both "*men*" and "*things*." Probably the 1611 was correct in leaving both

without italics. In today's KJV, Lk 17: 27 closes, "and destroyed them all" (πάντας). But exactly the same words in v. 29 are rendered, "and destroyed *them* all." The vocative of Lk 19: 17 is rendered, "thou good servant." A similar construction in v. 19 is given as "*thou* wicked servant." In Lk 10: 30 ἄνθρωπός τις is translated as "a certain *man*," but in Lk 15: 11 as "a certain man." Compare also "this *man*" in Heb 3: 3 with "this man" in Heb 8: 3. πάντα in Rom 8: 32 is rendered "all things," but ἐκ πάντων in 1 Cor 9: 19 as "from all *men*."

Should "things" be italicized in Col 3: 1, 2? The Greek has only the neuter plural article τὰ, but there can be little doubt as to what is to be supplied and the present-day KJV does not use italics, though the 1873 edition did. In v. 6 δι' ἃ is rendered "for which things' sake," and again "*things*" is in italics in the 1873 edition. In v. 8 τὰ πάντα is translated "all these" and "*these*" in the 1873 edition is in italics. In v. 10 τὸν νέον is translated as "the new *man*." Did the translators really add these words, or were they called for by the original?

Often the article is sufficient in Greek to suggest the idea of the possessive relation.<sup>18</sup> Hence, in Col 3: 19, 20; 4: 1, "*your*" need not be italicized as though it were supplied. The same applies to "*his* hand," Mt 8: 3; "*their* stripes," Acts 16: 33; "*their* heads," Acts 21: 4; "*his* letters," 2 Cor 10: 10. In Mk 14: 46 "their hands" is correctly rendered with no italics. In the next verse "a sword" should read "his sword" (RSV). In 2 Cor 12: 18 it is not just "a brother," but could well be "his brother," as could also "the brother" of ch. 8: 18.

Robertson has pointed out that the revisers of the KJV were under the influence of the Vulgate, where there is no article, and "handle the Greek article loosely and inaccurately."<sup>19</sup> Apparently no attempt is made to indicate when

<sup>18</sup> Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 684.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 756.

the definite article is supplied by using italics. There are numerous passages where the Greek has the definite article, but it is left out of the translation (Mt 24: 12; Php 1: 14; Jn 3: 10; Acts 8: 5; Lk 18: 13; Rev 7: 13, 14; Acts 9: 35; 1 Cor 5: 9; 2 Cor 12: 13; Lk 4: 9; etc. ). No one has yet invented a scheme by which words in the Greek which are not translated are to be indicated. But if we are to insist on a word-by-word translation, should not this be considered?

The principle that all words supplied in a translation to make it conform to English idiom should be italicized is very difficult to apply accurately and consistently. There may be a difference of opinion as to whether certain words are being added or whether they are actually inherent in the original. For example, the Greek NT, like the Hebrew OT, often omits the copulative verb "to be." When the translator supplies the copula, is he actually adding a word, and should that verb be in italics? In general the KJV has italicized the copula, but this has not been done consistently. 1 Ti 5: 18 contains the proverb, "The laborer *is* worthy of his hire," with the italicized copula, but in the similar proverb of Mt 10: 10, "the workman is worthy of his meat," there is no italicization, though the verb is supplied in both. Compare also Heb 9: 23 "*It was* therefore necessary," with Heb 9: 16, "there must also of necessity be" (no italics).

τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί in Mt 8: 29 is rendered, "what have we to do with thee?" (no italics). But τί πρὸς ἡμᾶς in Mt 27: 4 is rendered as "What *is that* to us?" and τί πρὸς σέ as "what *is that* to thee?" in Jn 21: 22, 23, while τί γάρ μοι in 1 Cor 5: 12, as "For what have I to do?" (no italics). Both of the questions of Rom 3: 1 lack the copula in the Greek: the first in KJV reads "What advantage then hath the Jew?" (no italics), the second, "Or what profit *is there* of circumcision?" In the two questions of 2 Cor 6: 14 the KJV twice supplies "hath," but does not italicize either.

The supplied copula in Rev 5: 2, "who is worthy?" is not italicized, but in Rev 13: 4, "who *is* like unto the beast?" it

is. The same is true of 1 Cor 9: 11, "Is it a great thing," as compared with 2 Cor 11: 15, "*It is no* great thing," in some editions.

Again we note the lack of consistency in the use of italics in supplying the copula to translate the idiom for giving a name. Note the following examples: Lk 1: 5, "her name *was* Elizabeth"; Lk 1: 27, "whose name was Joseph"; Mk 14: 32, "a place which was named Gethsemane"; Lk 1: 26f, "a city . . ., named Nazareth;" "the virgin's name *was* Mary"; Lk 2: 25, "whose name *was* Simeon"; Lk 8: 41, "a man named Jairus"; Lk 24: 13, "a village called Emmaus"; v. 18, "whose name was Cleopas"; Jn 1: 6, "whose name *was* John"; Jn 3: 1, "named Nicodemus"; Acts 13: 6, "whose name *was* Bar-jesus." Jn 14: 10, "that I am in the Father," does not have the copula italicized, but in v. 11 the same clause, "that I *am* in the Father," does. No italics are used for the supplied copula in Rev 21: 6 and 22: 13 in the statement, "I am Alpha and Omega." We would expect to find an italicized copula in Php 3: 15, "as many as be perfect"; Rom 1: 15, "as much as in me is"; and Mt 16: 22, "Be it far from thee, Lord." The translation of the last of these probably follows the Vulgate, *absit a te*.<sup>20</sup> A better rendering would be "*may God be gracious to you, Lord, i.e., may God in his mercy spare you this; God forbid!*"<sup>21</sup>

Usually in ascriptions of praise to God, the KJV italicizes the supplied copula as in Gal 1: 5; 1 Cor 15: 57; 2 Cor 8: 16; 9: 15. But there are exceptions. 1 Pe 4: 11 has "to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever." In Rom 6: 17 the KJV makes it read "God be thanked," and in Rom 7: 25 it gives "I thank God through Jesus Christ," which rests on the reading εὐχαριστῶ τῷ Θεῷ (NA Koine, sy), rather than χάρις τῷ θεῷ (B, etc.). Finally there are no italics in the message of Pilate's wife, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man,"

<sup>20</sup> F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, R. W. Funk, tr. and rev. (Chicago, 1961), p. 71.

<sup>21</sup> William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, 1957), p. 376.

Mt 27: 19, where the Greek has only μηδὲν σοὶ καὶ τῷ δικαίῳ ἐκείνῳ.

In many passages the italicization of words to indicate that they are supplied is not justified. In Mt 22: 46, for example, οὐδεὶς may well be translated as "no man," and apparently the original editors of the KJV, 1611 edition, thought so, for they did not italicize "*man*," as the present-day KJV does. Furthermore, the verb ἐπερωτάω means to ask a question,<sup>22</sup> hence there seems to be no valid reason for putting "*any question*" in italics. This same conclusion would apply to Lk 20:40 and Mk 12:34. The idea of asking a question is inherent in the verb.

Mt 10: 1 in the KJV reads in part: "and when he had called unto *him* his twelve disciples, he gave them power . . . to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." The verb here as in Mk 3: 13, 23; 6: 7; 7: 14; Lk 7: 19; Acts 6: 2; 23: 17f, is προσκαλέω used in the middle voice. The middle means "to call to oneself" and justifies the translation "unto him" and no italics are necessary for this expression or its equivalents in these passages. The 1873 edition italicized the word *manner* in both instances in Mt 10: 1. But the word πᾶς can mean "every kind of," or "all sorts of," as Arndt and Gingrich put it, "including everything belonging in kind to the class designated by the noun."<sup>23</sup> No italics then are necessary in Rom 7:8 (1873 ed.), "all *manner* of concupiscence" or in Mt 12: 31, "all *manner* of sin." Mt 23: 27 could well read, "are full of all sorts of uncleanness," and Mt 28: 18, "Every kind of authority has been given to me."

In the admonition of Col 3:21, "Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*," the italicized words could well be omitted. The verb ἐρεθίζω means "to provoke," "to irritate," "to embitter." Rom 11: 4 in the KJV speaks of those who had "not bowed the knee *to the image* of Baal." The italicized

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284 f.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, art πᾶς 1αβ.

words are an unnecessary addition which apparently goes back to the Great Bible, "to the ymage of Ball." Acts 27: 44 says that at the time of Paul's shipwreck some made their way to land "on *broken pieces* of the ship." The Greek has ἐπί τινων τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ πλοίου, "on some of the things (or people) from the ship." It is impossible to tell whether τινων is neuter as the KJV and RSV take it, or masculine. Lake and Cadbury suggest that it be taken as a masculine and translate the phrase, "and some on some of the crew."<sup>24</sup> F. F. Bruce also accepts this idea that some got to land on the backs of the ship's crew.<sup>25</sup> In Col 4: 16 the phrase τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικείας is translated as "the *epistle* from Laodicea." To italicize "epistle" here is pedantic, although literally the phrase reads, "the one from Laodicea."

Acts 26: 3 is difficult. The KJV reads, "Especially *because I know* thee to be an expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews . . ." The verse begins with a dangling accusative participle which Robertson calls an accusative absolute.<sup>26</sup> Some MSS (P<sup>74</sup>AC614) insert ἐπιστάμενος,<sup>27</sup> and others εἰδώς, but neither is accepted as original by textual critics.

In Luke's description of the great separation of the Last Day when "one will be taken and the other left" (Lk 17: 34 ff), the KJV italicizes "*men*" and "*women*" in the clauses, "there shall be two *men* in one bed," and "Two *women* shall be grinding together." But the insertion of these words is not really an addition to the text, but only a rendering of what is implicit there. In the first clause while the cardinal numeral δύο, "two," is used for all three genders, the use of the masculine ὁ εἷς, "the one," and ὁ ἕτερος, "the other," makes it clear that men are meant. In the second clause the use of

<sup>24</sup> Kirsopp Lake and H. J. Cadbury, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, ed., IV (London, 1933), p. 339.

<sup>25</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1965), p. 469.

<sup>26</sup> Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 490 f.

<sup>27</sup> Compare Acts 24: 10.

the feminine participle ἀλήθουσai for "grinding" shows that the reference is to women. This is further strengthened by the feminines ἡ μία, and ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα. V. 36 is wanting in most of the Greek copies, and it is doubtful that it belongs in Luke. If the verse is genuine the same principle would apply to the "Two *men* . . . in the field."

In the parallel passage in Mt 24: 40, 41 the KJV does not have *men* in the first clause. It reads simply "Then shall two be in the field." But "men" is implicit in the Greek text, as shown by the εἷς . . . εἷς, and the RSV puts it in. In v. 41 the KJV reads: "Two *women shall be grinding at the mill.*" Again the use of the feminines ἀλήθουσai and μία . . . μία justifies the insertion of *women*, and no italics are called for.

#### *Italics Used for Interpretative Additions*

Some of the supplementary italicized words in the English versions are interpretative in nature. In 1 Pe 5: 13 the KJV reads, "The *church that is* at Babylon, elected together with *you*, saluteth you." As the subject the Greek has simply ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι, although ⱼ vg sy<sup>p</sup> supply ἐκκλησία. "She who is in Babylon" could mean Peter's wife, or some prominent woman in the church, but is usually taken as a reference to the church itself. Tyndale rendered it, "The companions of your eleccion that are of Babylon," and the Great Bible reads, "The congregacyon of them which at Babylon are companions of your eleccyon." The Geneva and Bishops' Bibles inserted the word "church." The Revised Version and the American Standard Version have simply, "She that is in Babylon," with no interpretative addition, and the RSV followed them with the rendering, "She who is at Babylon." The exhortation to church elders in v. 3 of the same chapter contains another illustration, where the expression, "neither as being lords over *God's* heritage," is found in KJV, following in the last phrase the Geneva and Bishops' Bibles. Tyndale and the Great Bible had, "not as though ye were

lordes over the parishes," and Wycliffe translated, "neither as having lordship in the Clergie." The Greek for "God's heritage" is simply τῶν κλήρων, meaning, "the lots," and refers here to the respective charges or allotments assigned for pastoral care to the individual presbyters or shepherds. The explanatory addition of "God's" is unnecessary, and gives a wrong picture of the meaning of the passage. It is better to follow the Revised Version and read, "neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you," or the RSV with its "not domineering over those in your charge." It is the allotments or portions assigned to the respective ministers and not the church as God's heritage that is here in view.

Another passage in which an explanatory addition distorts the meaning is in the KJV of 1 Jn 3: 16: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." In adding the explanatory phrase, "of God," the KJV departed from the rendering of the historic versions beginning at Tyndale and extending through the Bishops' which had simply "love." The italicized addition is unnecessary. "Love" is here used in the absolute sense. The passage is apparently designed to teach that the sacrifice of Christ in laying down his life reveals what this thing we call love really is. The rendering of the RSV, "By this we know love," is therefore to be preferred (cf. 1 Jn 4: 19).

The KJV of Heb 2: 16 begins, "For verily he took not on *him the nature of angels.*" Again it may be doubted that the added explanatory words present a correct interpretation of the meaning of the passage. The verb ἐπιλαμβάνεται means primarily, "he takes hold of," "he grasps," "he seizes" (whether with beneficent or hostile intent). Westcott<sup>28</sup> points out that the ancient versions generally interpreted this taking hold of in the sense of appropriating. He cites the Syriac, "'he took not from angels,' *i.e.*, he did not appropriate their nature" and the *adsumpsit* or *suscepit* of the Old Latin. This

<sup>28</sup> Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London, 1928), p. 55.

is evidently the way in which Tyndale interpreted the passage with his rendering: "For he in no place taketh on him the angels; but the seed of Abraham taketh he on him." The same idea was carried in the Great, Geneva, and Bishops' Bibles. But another interpretation is more probable, *viz.*, that of taking hold of to help or deliver. He does not take hold of angels to deliver them but of men. The Revised Version and American Standard Version translate the verb as "doth he give help."

This sense fits the context. V. 14a has already spoken of the incarnation. The γάρ of v. 16 connects the verse with the deliverance just spoken of, and the plural ἀγγέλων is accounted for. The "therefore" of v. 17 also follows more naturally. This meaning also is in accordance with the usage of the verb in ch. 8: 9 and elsewhere. The force of the verb in the RSV rendering, "it is not with angels that he is concerned," is unduly weakened.<sup>29</sup>

In 1 Cor 14: 2, 4, 13, 14, 27, it is doubtful that the addition of the qualifying adjective "*unknown*" in the KJV is justifiable, however the glossalalia at Corinth is to be explained. Nor does there seem to be consistency in the supplying of the adjective. Apparently when "tongue" in the singular occurs it is qualified by "*unknown*," but when "tongues" in the plural is found, there is no such qualification, vs. 5, 6, 18, 22, 23, 39. But this principle is not consistently followed, for in v. 26 the singular "tongue" is not preceded by "*unknown*."

An extremely difficult passage to interpret is contained in 1 Cor 4: 6, the middle clause of which is translated in the KJV as "that ye might learn in us not to think of *men* above *that* which is written." Moffatt found this clause so difficult that he did not attempt to translate it, and explained in a footnote: "The text and the meaning of the phrase between

<sup>29</sup> Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1964), p. 51.

μάφητε and ἵνα μὴ are beyond recovery.<sup>30</sup> Howard thinks that the words are a marginal gloss, "which originally called attention to a copyist's error in the manuscript."<sup>31</sup> Ewald suggested that the clause was a "Rabbinical adage, as much as to say, *Keep to the rule of Scripture, not a step beyond the written word!*"<sup>32</sup>

The new *Jerusalem Bible* puts it in parentheses and translates, "(remember the maxim: 'Keep to what is written')". A footnote suggests that it was either a proverb familiar to the Corinthian Jews or "perhaps a gloss deprecating some insertion by a copyist."<sup>33</sup> In a very illuminating discussion of our passage,<sup>34</sup> Morna D. Hooker advocates that Paul is referring to passages from the OT, which he had used earlier in this letter. She further suggests that Paul is here quoting some saying which is familiar to his readers, either one he had himself coined and used in opposing those who elaborated his teaching, or a misquotation and "denial of the maxim of others, that one should go 'beyond the things that are written.'"<sup>35</sup>

In any case the φρονεῖν, "to think," of the KJV rests on doubtful MS authority, hence we are left with an elliptical construction, with no principal verb expressed. This leaves us with the four Greek words, literally, "not beyond the things, that (variant reading, "that which") stand written," preceded by the article τό, which apparently points to the whole clause. The rendering of the KJV, "to think of *men*

<sup>30</sup> James Moffatt, *The New Testament* (New York, 1935), p. 246.

<sup>31</sup> Wilbert F. Howard, "First and Second Corinthians" in *Abingdon Bible Commentary*, F. C. Eiselen, ed. (New York, 1929), pp. 1176 f.; Howard, "1 Cor 4: 6," *ET*, XXXIII (1922), 479.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted by G. G. Findlay, "St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians" in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, W. Robertson Nicoll, ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1956), II, 800.

<sup>33</sup> *Jerusalem Bible*, Alexander Jones, ed. (Garden City, N.Y., 1966), N.T., p. 295, n. 4a.

<sup>34</sup> Morna D. Hooker, "Beyond the Things Which Are Written," *NTS*, X (1963), pp. 127-132.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

above that which is written" seems to be an unwarranted interpretation, and the RSV rendering is unduly free, "to live according to scripture."

The KJV in Acts 7: 59 has Stephen at the time of his martyrdom, "calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Although in the Greek text there is no object expressed, the participle ἐπικαλούμενον calls for one, and the words spoken by Stephen leave no doubt as to whom he is addressing<sup>36</sup>—the Lord Jesus, not God the Father. Stephen's cry is reminiscent of our Lord's dying moment on the cross (Lk 23: 46). Both quote Ps 31: 5, but there is this striking difference: Jesus addressed the Father, while Stephen called upon Christ, the Lord.

There is no general agreement regarding the interpretation of Col 1: 19, where the KJV reads: "For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all the fulness dwell." The question here is whether πλήρωμα is the subject or the object of the sentence. If it is the object, as seems most likely, then either ὁ πατήρ or ὁ θεός may well be supplied as the subject. God saw fit that all the fulness should make its home in him.

Another passage in which to study the usage of italicized additions is in Mk 12: 1, where we note, to begin with the KJV rendering, "a *certain* man planted a vineyard." The RSV has simply, "A man planted a vineyard," though the MSS W and Θ actually read ἀνθρωπός τις. Of more interest is the clause, "and digged a *place* for the winevat." The Greek ὑπολήνιον refers to the vat or trough below the winepress which caught and held the pressed-out juice. Ancient winevats consisted of a pair of square (at times, round) pits usually hewn out of solid rock and connected by a channel. One of these pits (ληνός, Mt 21: 33) was higher and larger than the other and was used for treading out the grapes. The lower and smaller, but, at the same time much deeper

<sup>36</sup> Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1965), p. 180.

pit (ὕπολῆνιον) held the expressed juice.<sup>37</sup> Mark's clause could be translated simply, "and he dug a wine-vat."

### *Conclusion*

A careful study of the history of the use of italics in the English versions of the Bible makes it evident that the practice rests upon an idea that is almost impossible to carry out accurately and consistently. The question should also be raised as to the validity of the practice. Dewey Beegle has concluded "that from 75 per cent to 90 per cent of the italics in the King James Version are worthless."<sup>38</sup> A slight rewording of many passages would obviate the need for some added words. In many other cases the supposed supplied words are an essential part of the translation implied in the original. This is true of subjects and verbs which must be inserted in elliptical constructions to complete the sentence. Where a radical departure from the idiom of the original is necessary to make a passage speak in English idiom, an appropriate footnote could be used to explain the literal meaning of the original. Care should be exercised, when using additional interpretative words, that the original meaning of the text is set forth.

Finally, in the opinion of the present writer, the idea of italicizing added words rests on a false understanding of what is meant by translation. Only those who have tried it know how really difficult the task of translation is.<sup>39</sup> An exact rendering from one language into another is frequently impossible. The task of translating a Semitic document such as the OT into one of the Indo-Germanic languages has its special difficulties and problems.<sup>40</sup> Eugene Nida suggests

<sup>37</sup> J. F. Ross, "Wine," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, George A. Buttrick, ed. (New York, 1962), IV, 850.

<sup>38</sup> Dewey M. Beegle, *God's Word Into English* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1960), p. 115.

<sup>39</sup> See Ronald Knox, *The Trials of a Translator* (New York, 1949).

<sup>40</sup> See Ecclus, Prologue.

the following definition of translation: "Translating consists in producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language, first in meaning and secondly in style." <sup>41</sup> This is the law of equivalent effect, recognized as a sound principle by all present-day translators. The translator's business is to produce a translation that has the same effect on the readers of the translation as the original produced (or produces) on those who read it.

It is well known that there were two versions which circulated under the name of John Wycliffe. The first was an extremely literal rendering of the Latin Vulgate, which closely followed Latin constructions and Latin word order, rather than English. The second was a freer, more natural rendering made after Wycliff's death, probably by his secretary, John Purvey. In the prologue to the second version, Purvey explains, among other things, his philosophy of translation: "First, it is to knowe, that the best translating is out of Latyn, into English, to translate after the sentence, and not oneli after the wordis, so that the sentence be as opin, either openere in English as in Latyn." <sup>42</sup> By "sentence" he means "sense," "substance," "general significance." The general significance of the English translation must be as plain as the Latin. A translation is to make clear the thought of the original to one who does not know the original. It must therefore be idiomatic, and must not sound like a translation.

Postgate sets forth the prime requirement of a good translation as faithfulness. <sup>43</sup> But faithfulness does not imply literalness. A baldly literal translation may actually distort the meaning or convey no meaning at all. The translator will stick as closely as possible to the letter, while making sure that he sets forth the spirit. <sup>44</sup> A translation should be, as

<sup>41</sup> Eugene A. Nida, "Bible Translating," in *On Translation*, Reuben A. Brower, ed. (New York, 1966), p. 19.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in John Eadie, *The English Bible* (London, 1876), I, 67.

<sup>43</sup> J. P. Postgate, *Translation and Translations* (London, 1922), p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Cauer put it, "So frei wie nötig, so treu wie möglich!" That is, it should be as free as necessary, and as faithful as possible.<sup>45</sup>

Everyone who has studied languages is aware of the fact that there is no exact equivalent in a given language for the words in another language. A given word in the Hebrew and Aramaic OT or the Greek NT seldom has an exact equivalent in English. Yet the practice of italicizing words supposedly added seems to rest on the theory that this is the case. For this reason the revisers of the RSV and most modern translators have completely abandoned the practice. Although they have been criticized for this, it seems to be the only sensible course to follow.

This paper has not touched on the use of italics in the OT. There is room for an expert in Hebrew and Aramaic to make a judicious investigation, for italics are more extensively used in the OT than in the NT.

<sup>45</sup> Paul Cauer, *Die Kunst des Uebersetzens* (4th ed.; Berlin, 1909), p. 12.