

Editorial

Good News Bible.

We welcome to the family of translations of the Bible into English yet another new and vigorous looking member – the *Good News Bible*. The British edition of this was published by Collins in association with the British and Foreign Bible Society in October (£2.95/£1.50) and the American edition by the American Bible Society in December 1976. We are already familiar with a good deal of it because not only has the New Testament been published some years in advance (as is usual in the case of translations of the whole Bible) but there have also been previews of different Old Testament books which have been printed on their own in most attractive format. The GNB gives a considerable number of readers helps including section headings, references to parallel accounts, and similar passages, cultural and historical as well as textual notes, brief introductions to each book of the Bible, word lists and a time chart. The whole is splendidly illustrated with 600 line drawings by the Swiss artist Annie Vallotton.

Any Bible translation has to prove itself over the years, but it looks as if GNB will prove to be the best of the freer-style modern translations. There is a simplicity and directness about its language which contrasts with the preciousness of the *New English Bible*. It is not always precise or consistent in its renderings and anyone buying it ought also to have a *Revised Standard Version* as a second string. The Bible Society used to have a policy of publishing Bibles without note or comment and the change in this policy made in 1967 was debated by C.E.B. Cranfield and W.J. Bradnock in *The Churchman* of Winter 1968 and Spring 1969. It is certain that the extra notes add some matter which, while moderately stated, might not commend itself to all scholars and there are therefore difficulties in building these notes into the canon so to speak. It does however look as if the gains of this approach should outweigh the possible dangers. But now that we have this splendid new translation, may we not at long last call a moratorium on translations into English for at least fifteen years. Otherwise confusion may well overtake Bible study groups and a common language of English biblical allusion may disappear altogether.

Meanwhile the Bible Society also supply figures which show a slump in Bible ownership in Britain, particularly in the 16-34 age group. More disturbing than this, for 84% of households have a Bible, is the fact that 64% of the people who own a Bible or who live in homes where there is

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one do not remember reading it in the last year. It would be naive to suppose that GNB will solve the problem, but it should do something to ensure that more of those who open the Bible once will do so again fairly regularly. Some help to that end may be found in *Today's Story of Jesus*, (Collins 1976, 158 pp., £2.95). David L. Edwards has here abridged the Gospel Stories in GNB and arranged them in a continuous narrative. Some sections from Acts and Paul are added at the end. Despite the very real dangers of this sort of approach (especially where no reference is made to the different Gospels) the fact that it is designed as an *aperitif* for younger readers and its beautiful illustrations by Guido Bertello will save it from many of the structures which I make on a Gospel harmony in my review article in this issue.

Evangelical Conferences.

It may appear at times that Evangelicals are becoming compulsive conference-goers. In 1971 there was a congress in Amsterdam which was followed by another in Lausanne in 1974 (see Bruce Kaye's article 'Theology Comes Tomorrow?' In *The Churchman* October-December 1974). The latter with its 'Lausanne Covenant' has made a big impact on Evangelical thinking and was not without its repercussions at the Nairobi Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1975. It also paved the way for a European Conference of Evangelical Theologians held in Louvain in September 1976. Delegates from sixteen countries (including three from Eastern Europe) discussed the theme of 'The Kingdom of God and Modern Man'. While there was some unevenness about both papers and discussion most of those who attended had their vision enlarged by participating in a conference with a wide variety of confessional groups and with a good number of scholars who were very much in a minority in their own countries because of the political or religious scene there. The conference agreed to set up a Fellowship of Evangelical European Theologians. British Evangelicals have certainly much to gain in many areas from further contact with their brethren in Europe.

Soon after that twenty-two Evangelical leaders met near Basel in a world-wide consultation organised by the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship. They agreed to issue in the form of a pastoral letter their general findings on the subject of their conference: 'Church and Nationhood'. The letter seeks to define the limits within which the Christian should support the state, and when the state should be resisted. Copies may be obtained from the Evangelical Alliance, 19 Draycott Place, London SW3 2SJ.

For Evangelicals in the Church of England, and for a good number who do not share that label or membership of that church, a great deal of store is set by the National Evangelical Anglican Congress to be held at Nottingham University from April 14th to 18th 1977. This will reveal considerable progress since Keele 1967 and evidence of division in some areas over those last ten years. With their proportion of Church of England clergy steadily increasing there is a heavy responsibility laid upon Anglican Evangelicalism to give a distinctive lead to the Church as a whole in 'obeying Christ in a changing world' (to quote the sub-title of the conference).

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Here we are, somewhat late due to difficulties which could not have been foreseen, in our new style and format and still at the same price. We owe a great deal to Robin Leaver, Chairman of our publishers, Vine Books, who has recently joined our board and has in difficult circumstances supervised its production, which has been done almost entirely in Dean Wace House, and to our typist Jeanette Newson. I continue to hear appreciative comments about *Churchman* (notice that we have dropped the definite article! though there is no theological significance in that!) and yet find that our circulation is still very small. Can you introduce others to *Churchman*? Some of our articles and reviews are quite technical but each issue contains material which thinking Christians, especially those involved in synods at any level, should find of real value. The future of *Churchman* depends to some extent upon its present readers.

R.E.N.

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