

QUESTION:

If my memory serves me, you (as a graduate student?) were involved in the development of the NRSV Bible version in 1989. Could you describe your work please?

RESPONSE:

Yes, that's right. The New Revised Standard Version Committee was appointed by the U.S. National Council of Churches to produce a revision of the famous Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible, which had come out in 1952. Since the time when the RSV had been produced (mainly in the 1940s), many important developments had happened in the scholarship of the Bible.

- New discoveries had been made and partially published, especially: the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Scrolls contained a number of different kinds of writings, produced by Jews living at the turn of the Christian era, including a large number of copies of the Hebrew Bible, in Hebrew, as it was known in that day. These are very important for determining the oldest form of the Hebrew text of the Bible for some of its books.
- The English language had changed in important ways. That may seem strange, since we are talking only about a few decades, but changes had indeed occurred. For one thing, some of the language of the RSV seemed stilted and antiquated. For another thing, a major movement had transpired in the use of inclusive language, where the words "man" and "men" and the pronoun "he" were now taken to refer to males, not to females as well,, so that if one wanted to refer to both men and women, other terms had to be used.
- There had been an intense amount of research into the meaning of many, many passages in the entire Bible that helped scholars better understand what they were saying, and therefore how they ought to be translated.

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