# A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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# PREFACE

Twelve years have passed since the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament was first published in 1946. This has been a period of testing for the new version--a period which is not yet complete, nor have the results of this period been clearly established. Twelve years have tempered loud voices both of praise and opposition into more reserved comments of approval or disapproval. Some who at first objected to the new translation now find in it a number of advantages over its predecessors, and likewise some who then accepted the new translation without hesitation now use it with a degree of reservation. In the course of twelve years also the final form of the new version has become established, for we now assume that after the 1952 edition there is to be no further correction of the version. All of which means that a critical examination of the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament at this time can take advantage of a twelve year testing

period and at the same time use the more permanent form of the version as a basis of its study.

I first became interested in this new version of the New Testament as a high school student in 1946. Although I had been nurtured on the King James Version, yet the new translation appealed to me because of its clarity. Later, however, I began to be suspicious of it, largely as a result of what others had said about it. In more recent years, I was led to examine it in comparison with the Greek text of Westcott-Hort. Thereafter I began to see its many positive values.

My aim has been to examine critically the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament in the light of the best scholarly research at my disposal. By "critical examination" I mean an evaluation of both good and bad factors of the translation, an examination that is "critical" in the true sense of the word. In a study of this kind there are many avenues open for investigation, but I have tried to concentrate on the manner in which the translators have dealt with their Greek text (Chapters IV-VIII and Conclusion). But no evaluation of a translation should be divorced from a consideration of its textual base (Chapter III). The groundwork of the dissertation is laid prior to this (Introduction and Chapters I-II).

In this work I have sought to be as objective and fair--to those who are responsible for the translation and to those who oppose it--as possible. My examination has been an independent one, although I have profited from the numerous

articles and reviews that have been written on the subject. Particularly helpful have been Kendrick Grobel's "The Revision of the English New Testament" published in the Journal of Biblical Literature and Allen Paul Wikgren's "A Critique of the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament" which appeared as a part of The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow, edited by Harold R. Willoughby. In addition, I am indebted to Dr. Kenneth W. Clark, Professor of New Testament Language and Literature, Duke University, Durham, N. C., for his keen observations related to this work and his many valuable suggestions.

Neil R. Lightfoot

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# A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

# INTRODUCTION

On February 11, 1946, the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament took its place among the other authorized editions of the English Bible. It was hailed as "the most important publication of 1946", an affirmation which in subsequent months proved to be true.

The appearance of the RSV New Testament was greeted with elaborate and impressive ceremonies in the Central High Auditorium of Columbus, Ohio. The formal publication date had been selected to coincide with the annual meeting of the International Council of Religious Education[1] which had been responsible for the creation of the new version. The services began

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1. On February 28, 1950, the International Council of Religious Education voted unanimously to be incorporated as the Division of Religious Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

with more than two hundred church officials and scholars wearing their black gowns and hoods displaying their faculties and degrees, marching in procession while the congregation sang the hymn "How Firm A Foundation". Dean Weigle, the chairman of the revision committee, presented the first copy of the New Testament to Harold E. Stassen, the President of the International Council. The Scripture text was Hebrews 11: 1-3, which was read by appointed representatives first in Greek, next in Latin, and then from Tyndale, the King James, the American Standard and the Revised Standard Version. Dean Weigle addressed the assembly on the subject "The Bible and Religious Education". He spoke of the background of the new version, reviewed its historical antecedents and gave sample readings of passages from it. At the conclusion of the meeting "O Word of God Incarnate" was sung as the recessional hymn. More than 1,300 people attended this service of dedication and thanksgiving.

The success accorded this new New Testament in total number of sales was indeed encouraging. The first 200,000 printed were sold out almost immediately; and it was not until several months later that the publishers, Thomas Nelson and Sons, were able to catch up with the demand. A vast advertising campaign was conducted by the Wertheim Advertising Associates in national magazines, newspapers and religious periodicals. Almost every one knew about the new translation. Thus Henry J. Cadbury, one of the members of the New Testament committee, could report that more than 800,000 copies

had been sold by the end of the first year of publication.[2] By the time of the publication of the complete version in 1952, no less than 2,000,000 copies of the New Testament had been sold.[3]

But the wave of favorable response for a new version was yet to reach its height. With the publication of the complete version on September 30, 1952, the number of sales reached an unbelievable figure. Preparations had been made by the publishers for a large volume purchase, but no one expected that within two days 1,000,000 copies would be sold. A second edition of 600,000 volumes was exhausted in eight weeks.[4] Again it took months for the publishers to match stride in production with the new version's acceptance.

A few days after the publication of the New Testament in 1946, the International Council of Religious Education passed a resolution expressing--

> To the members of the Standard Bible Committee its deep appreciation for the monumental work...already accomplished through their preparation of the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament and for the work already done on the Old Testament.[5]

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2. Henry J. Cadbury, "The New Translation's First Year", The Christian Century, LXIV (1947), 170-71.

3. "R. S. V.", The Christian Century, LXIX (1952), 1086.

4. "R. S. V. an All-Time Best-Seller", The Christian Century, LXIX (1952), 1461.

5. As quoted in Ira Maurice Price's Ancestry of Our English Bible. Third revised edition by William A. Irwin and Allen P. Wikgren. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 315.

It affirmed its belief "that this version is a worthy successor to the works of earlier translators which served well their own days"; and hoped that it would be "an effective instrument in making known God's will for men through Jesus Christ" and would "lead many to serious New Testament study and to fuller fellowship with Him of whom its pages speak".[6]

One of the advantages which first struck the eye was the physical makeup of the newly revised testament. It was bound attractively in blue cloth, with gilt lines and lettering. It was printed in large, clear type in lines that spanned the width of the page. Like the American Standard Version it was printed in paragraphs, overcoming all the disadvantages that go with the printing of the Bible in verses set off from each other. Unlike the American Standard Version it presented to the reader modern punctuation and phraseology--a kind of literary product that the reader was accustomed to see and therefore one with which he could feel at home. Its physical appearance gave foretaste of its purpose: it was a book for everybody. In Dean Weigle's address in Columbus, Ohio, on the publication day he said:

> We have been asked such questions as: Is the Revised Standard Version meant for children? Or is it meant for young people? Is it a version of the New Testament which is meant for the school-room? To which the answer is No. It is not meant for children specifically, or for young people, or for

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6. Ibid., p. 315-16.

the school-room. And yet the answer is Yes. It is meant for every one, for young and old, for people generally, for people in every situation, for the school-room and for the pulpit, for private devotions and for public worship.[7]

Not all of those who were book-purchasers, either of the 1946 New Testament or the 1952 complete Bible, came to be book-boosters. There arose at varying intervals voices of dissatisfaction. In some quarters it was labeled as "atheistic", "modernistic", "socialistic", and "blasphemous". One ingenious caption termed it "The old Devil and his new Bible".[8] But the translators were neither surprised nor alarmed at such action. It had taken half a century for the King James Bible to take the place of its popular predecessor, the Geneva Version; and even though the Revised Version of 1881 had sold at an unimaginable rate[9] yet it had never been received with open arms by the masses. The new version, like the others, had to confront the common problem of any new translation: a natural resistance to novelty and change.

Because of such conflicting judgments concerning the new revision and since it has been looked upon with suspicion es-

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7. Luther A. Weigle, "The New New Testament", International Journal of Religious Education, XXII (March, 1946), 31.

8. As quoted in Price's Ancestry of Our English Bible, p. 320.

9. When the Revised Version of the New Testament appeared in 1881, there were 2,000,000 copies sold in London within four days. Cf. Price, Ancestry of Our English Bible, p. 283.

pecially in conservative circles, it becomes a legitimate study for critical analysis to examine this translation in order to focus attention upon its gains and losses over its predecessors. Whereas a number of scholars have from time to time published limited criticisms, this dissertation proposes a fuller treatment of the subject.

## Chapter I

## THE MAKING OF THE VERSION

The year of 1611 is a monumental date in the history of the English Bible because it marks the appearance of the King James or "Authorized" Version. Since that time more than 300 translations of the New Testament, in whole or in part, have been published in English. Within the last fifty years the wave of new English translations has especially mounted. This number includes about 100 different versions, of which 45 are translations of the New Testament or the entire Bible.[1] Nor is this enthusiastic response limited to the English Bible. Eugene A. Nida, Secretary for Versions of the American Bible Society, says:

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1. These figures are given by Kenneth W. Clark. Cf. "The Making of the Twentieth Century New Testament", Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, XXXVI (1955-1956), 58.

There is scarcely a major language in the world in which Scripture revision is not now going on....In fact, there are major revisions now going on in more than 90 languages in the world, and further translating in another 175 languages, with other translators at work to produce the Scriptures in at least 200 languages which have never had anything of the Word of God.[2]

This phenomenon of Bible translating is described by Ronald Knox in the following manner:

The work of translating the Bible, really translating it, is being taken in hand in our day for the first time since Coverdale....The germ is spreading, and there will be more translations yet. Indeed, it is doubtful whether we shall ever again allow ourselves to fall under the spell of a single, uniform text, consecrated by its antiquity.[3]

In February of 1946, the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament made its debut as a revision of the American Standard Version. It was the first installment of the climax that was to be gained ultimately with the publication of the Old Testament in September of 1952. The road had been a difficult one, fraught with anxieties and struggles over a period of time that was much longer than had been anticipated. It does not stand alone for other private translations have continued to appear during and since the RSV. But the RSV is an "authorized" translation in a direct line from the KJV.

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2. Eugene A. Nida, "Why Revise the Scriptures?", Christianity Today, II (November 25, 1957), 3.

3. Ronald Knox, The Trials of a Translator (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1949), pp. ix-x.

## Organization and Early Work of the Committee

The year of 1929 saw the beginning of the Revised Standard Version.[4] The ASV had been printed by Thomas Nelson and Sons in 1901 and had been copyrighted to safeguard against later emendations by publishers. After twenty-seven years of publication Thomas Nelson and Sons offered the expiring copyright of the ASV to the International Council of Religious Education. On April 3, 1929, the International Council obtained the copyright and began making preparations concerning its use. In 1929 it was decided that a committee of representative scholars should be formed to consider the advisability of a revision of the ASV and to arrive at basic principles of procedure if such a revision were deemed necessary. In February, 1930, the names of thirteen scholars were announced as members of the committee which became known as the American Standard Bible Committee. The members of this original committee were: William P. Armstrong, Princeton Theological Seminary; Henry J. Cadbury of Bryn Mawr College and later of Harvard University; Frederick C. Eiselen, Garrett Biblical Institute; Edgar J. Goodspeed, University of Chicago; Alexander R. Gordon, United Theological College; James Moffatt, Union Theological Seminary; James A. Montgomery, Philadelphia

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4. Hereafter the following abbreviations will be used: RSV = Revised Standard Version, ASV = American Standard Version, ERV = English Revised Version, RV = Revised Version (agreement of ERV and ASV), and KJV = King James Version.

Divinity School and the University of Pennsylvania; A. T. Robertson, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; James Hardy Ropes, Harvard University; John R. Sampey, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Andrew Sledd, Emory University; C. C. Torrey, Yale University; and Luther A. Weigle, Yale University. At the first meeting of the committee in New York City on April 15 officers were selected: Luther A. Weigle, Chairman; William P. Armstrong, Vice-Chairman; and Hugh S. Magill of the International Council, Secretary.[5]

The main problem of the committee, the question of revising the ASV, was a subject of discussion for more than two years. The committee was composed of two exponents of opposite positions, James Hardy Ropes and Edgar J. Goodspeed. Ropes, on one hand, believed that the revisions of the KJV in 1881 and 1901 should not have been made in the first place and thus was opposed to further revision. Goodspeed, on the other hand, spoke out forcefully for a translation that departs from the style of KJV and ASV and instead uses colloquial English. A mediating position was held by the other members of the committee. Weigle says:

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5. The contents of this section, unless otherwise indicated, are based upon the chapter "The Revised Standard Version" in Ira Maurice Price's The Ancestry of Our English Bible. Third revised edition by William A. Irwin and Allen P. Wikgren. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), pp. 305-20. Hereafter cited as Price, Ancestry.

Between these, inclining toward the one side or the other, stood the other members of the committee, with Professor James Moffatt, perhaps, representing the position which finally won general acceptance--that there should be a thorough revision of the version of 1901, which would stay as close to the Tyndale-King James tradition as it could in the light of our present knowledge of the Greek text and its meaning on the one hand, and our present understanding of English on the other.[6]

When the decision to revise the ASV was definitely made, Professor Ropes resigned. By 1932 the committee had been enlarged. W. R. Taylor of the University of Toronto had been selected to fill the place of the deceased A. R. Gordon. J. A. Bewer of Union Theological Seminary and J. M. Powis Smith of the University of Chicago were also added. The work of revision had barely had its inception when the committee was forced to discontinue its labors due to lack of funds in a depression era. Dean Weigle and Hugh S. Magill tried in vain to raise $45,000 which they estimated would be necessary to complete the project.[7] In 1936, Dr. Roy G. Ross, who had succeeded Hugh S. Magill as the General Secretary of the International Council of Religious Education, was able to negotiate a contract with Thomas Nelson and Sons: the required funds for the work of revision would be provided with the understanding that Thomas Nelson and Sons would have exclusive

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6. Luther A. Weigle, "The Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XIV (1952), 311. Hereafter cited as Weigle, "The RSV Bible".

7. Weigle, "The Making of the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament", Religion in Life, XV (1945-46), 165. Hereafter cited as Weigle, "The Making of the RSV".

publication rights to the revision for ten years.[8] At the end of this time it would be open to other publishers under certain limitations.[9]

Now that the funds were provided, the committee could proceed with its work. In February, 1937, the International Council met and formulated the resolution that has served as a type of constitution for the RSV:

> That we record the conviction that there is need for a version which embodies the best results of modern scholarship as to the meaning of the Scriptures, and expresses this meaning in English diction which is designed for use in public and private worship and preserves those qualities which have given to the King James a supreme place in English literature. We, therefore, define the task of the American Standard Bible Committee to be that of revision of the present American Standard Edition of the Bible in the light of the results of modern scholarship, this revision to be designed for use in public and private worship, and to be in the direction of the simple, classic English style of the King James Version.[10]

Also it was stipulated that the committee be composed of not less than five or more than seven men qualified in the Old Testament field, not less than five or more than seven competant New Testament scholars, and not less than three or more than five representatives of religious education and public worship.

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8. The committee members served without any financial remuneration apart from their expenses. Cf. Price, Ancestry, p. 309.

9. Weigle, "The Making of the RSV", p. 165.

10. Price, op. cit., p. 308.

The lapse of several years had not only halted the work of revision but also took its toll of committee members. J. M. Powis Smith died in 1932, A. T. Robertson in 1934, and F. C. Eiselen in 1937. President Sampey and Professors Armstrong, Montgomery, Sledd and Torrey, for reasons of health or age, asked to be relieved of their positions on the committee. In 1937 and 1938 these vacancies were filled and additional members were appointed to the committee. The committee thus included in addition to its remaining members the following men: Walter Russell Bowie, Rector of Grace Church, New York; Millar Burrows and George Dahl, Yale University; Clarence T. Craig, Oberlin College, and later of Drew Theological Seminary; Frederick C. Grant, Seabury-Western Theological Seminary and later of Union Theological Seminary; William A. Irwin, University of Chicago; Willard L. Sperry, Harvard University; Leroy Waterman, University of Michigan; and Kyle M. Yates of Southern Theological Seminary. James Moffatt had been elected as Executive Secretary of the committee, a position he held until his death on June 27, 1944.[11]

On December 3, 1937, in the Directors' Room of Union Theological Seminary, the revamped committee convened once again. Questions of general procedure took precedence. The decision to revise and not to produce an independent trans-

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11. The position of Executive Secretary was left vacant for more than two years after Dr. Moffatt's death. In 1947, Fleming James, Dean Emeritus of the School of Theology, University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, assumed this position.

lation was confirmed. The consonantal Hebrew and Aramaic texts were to be followed in the Old Testament and the Westcott-Hort Greek text in the New Testament. "It was laid down as a guiding principle that textual emendation on the basis of the ancient versions was admissible, but conjectural emendation might be practiced only very rarely and with great caution".[12] Final changes from the ASV could be passed only by a two-thirds vote of the entire committee. Archaic forms of pronouns and verbs were not to be retained except in passages of divine utterance or in language addressed to God.[13]

There were three limitations of the American Standard Version. These are listed by Dean Weigle:

> (1) It was decided to break away from the literalism and mechanical exactitude which was the revisers' ideal of what they called "faithfulness" in translation, and to return to the relative freedom and naturalness of KJ....
> (2) It was decided not to accept the limitation under which the revisers of 1870 labored in view of their instructions "to limit, as far as possible, the language of alterations to the language of the Authorized and earlier English versions"....
> (3) It was decided not to follow the practice of ASV in the rendering of the Divine Name, the "Tetragrammaton". The American Standard Version used the term "Jehovah"....[14]

The rules adopted were more conservative in some respects than those observed by the ERV and ASV committees. Weigle

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12. Price, Ancestry, p. 310.

13. Later, archaic forms were restricted to language addressed to God.

14. Weigle, "The RSV", pp. 311-13.

speaks on this point:

> In two respects our rules of procedure were more conservative than those which were followed by the revisers of 1881 and 1901. Neither Section of the present committee is empowered to make changes without submitting them to the votes of the members of the other Section; and no change from the basic text--the American Standard Version--can be made unless it is favored by a two-third vote of the membership of the entire committee. In the former revision, the Old Testament Company and the New Testament Company had full authority, each in its own field; and changes were made if they commanded a two-thirds vote of those present at a meeting of one company.[15]

Several accounts of what was done in the work of the committee are in print. One of the most graphic of these accounts was written by William A. Irwin, a member of the Old Testament committee. Because of its acute detail it is quoted at length:

> The procedure of the meetings became a routine dictated by the character of their work. The members of the Old or New Testament section, as the case might be, chose seats around a long central table at one end of which the presiding officer, normally Dean Weigle, took his place. On other tables close at hand were accumulated a mass of commentaries, dictionaries, and other relevant material. The central table had a number of copies of Biblical translations, ancient and modern, in addition to the materials which the individual members brought. The meeting opened with prayer. Commonly a few minutes were consumed with business; and then the work of the meeting began. The Biblical passages to be considered were already known; commonly the agendum was agreed upon at the previous meeting. And so, with his copy of the revision to be studied lying open before each member, and his ancient texts close at hand, discussion began, verse by verse, or indeed phrase by phrase....No matter was too trifling for attention. On occasion there was lengthy debate over a preposition; sometimes even a comma provoked discussion.... Arguments frequently became earnest, sometimes heated; but it was recognized that there was no place for personal recriminations. Members who had opposed one another with

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15. Weigle, "Making of the RSV", p. 170.

intensity on the meaning of a Hebrew phrase or its most accurate and graceful rendering in English would be found, a few moments later, when the session had terminated, walking together in cordial conversation that manifested their genuine friendship. Cliques and partyism were non-existent.... In a given proposal no one knew in advance who would support or oppose him. Old friends found themselves frequently arguing in strenuous opposition. In the voting new alignments were constantly appearing; the men who had stood together on this issue split asunder on that. The total of votes showed a similar vacillation: all the way from unanimity--which was rare--to a minority of one, which often emerged. ...[16]

In 1939 Abdel Ross Wentz, Lutheran Theological Seminary, was elected to the committee; and in 1945 others were appointed: William F. Albright, Johns Hopkins University; J. Philip Hyatt, Vanderbilt University; Herbert G. May, Oberlin Graduate School of Theology; James Muilenberg, Pacific School of Religion and later of Union Theological Seminary; and Harry M. Orlinsky, Jewish Institute of Religion. Thirty-two scholars in all served on the RSV committee.

## The New Testament Committee

Nine men comprised the RSV New Testament committee. These men possessed unusual abilities, especially in areas of their major interest. When looking at the list in alphabetical order the first name which appears is that of James Russell Bowie. At the time of his appointment to the

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16. Price, op. cit., p. 312-13.

committee in 1937 Bowie, Protestant Episcopal, was Rector of Grace Church, New York, where he had served since 1923. Later he became Jessup Professor of Practical Theology at Union Theological Seminary. In recent years he has served as Professor of Homiletics at Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, Virginia. Some of his publications include The Story of the Bible, Preaching, and The Story of the Church. Bowie, along with Luther A. Weigle and Abdel Ross Wentz, was appointed to the committee because of his experience in public and private worship and his competence in English style. Clarence T. Craig, in a pamphlet published by the International Council of Religious Education entitled "Translating The Bible for Today", has given in a few words the outstanding contributions of each committee member in the revision of the New Testament. Craig says that Bowie was "a wholesome influence in keeping us on our charter, which was to provide a 'revision in the direction of the King James' in dignity and stateliness of language".[17] Dean Weigle describes Bowie as "a writer of impeccable English prose".[18]

Millar Burrows, Congregational, was the greatest authority

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17. Clarence T. Craig, Translating the Bible for Today (Chicago: International Council of Religious Education, 1947), p. 8.

18. Weigle, "Clarence Tucker Craig", Religion in Life, XXIII. (1953-54), 452. Hereafter cited as Weigle, "Clarence Tucker Craig".

of the New Testament committee in the field of Aramaic.[19] He has been associated with Yale University as Professor of Biblical Theology since 1934. In the years of 1931-32 and 1947-48 he was the Director of the American Schools of Oriental Research, Jerusalem. His main works include What Mean These Stones?, Outline of Biblical Theology, and The Dead Sea Scrolls. In 1943, after most of the work of the New Testament section had been completed, he was transferred to the Old Testament section.[20]

Henry Joel Cadbury, Quaker, was one of the members of the original committee. From 1934 to 1954 he served as Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard University. He has written such books as The Making of Luke-Acts, Jesus, What Manner of Man, and The Book of Acts in History. Craig says: "Henry Cadbury of Harvard is probably the world's greatest authority on the writings of Luke. His meticulous exactness was a great asset".[21]

Clarence Tucker Craig, Methodist, was the youngest member of the New Testament committee. He was appointed to the committee in 1938 while holding the position of Professor of New Testament at Oberlin Graduate School of Theology. From 1946-1949 he served in this capacity at Yale Divinity School. In

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19. Craig, op. cit., p. 5.

20. Weigle, "The Making of the RSV", p. 167.

21. Craig, op. cit., p. 5.

1948 Craig assumed the duties of Dean of Drew Theological Seminary in Madison, N. J., which position he retained until his death on August 20, 1953. Some of Craig's publications are: The Study of the New Testament, The Beginning of Christianity, and The One Church. Craig prepared the first drafts of the books of 1 Corinthians and Hebrews for the committee.[22] Weigle says of him: "No one among us commanded more respect and confidence than he did throughout the nine years of our study of the Greek text and face-to-face discussion of its meaning and translation".[23]

Edgar Johnson Goodspeed, Baptist, is perhaps the best known of all members of the committee. In addition to his best known achievement, The New Testament--An American Translation, he has produced an unbelievable number of books and journal articles. In 1898 he began instructing Hellenistic and Patristic Greek in the University of Chicago, where he served as chairman of the New Testament department from 1923 until the time of his retirement in 1937. Problems of New Testament Translation, A Life of Jesus and As I Remember are some of his later publications. Craig speaks of Goodspeed: "He was constantly on the alert to keep out needlessly archaic forms of speech. He brought to the work of the committee his

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22. Weigle, "Clarence Tucker Craig, p. 457.

23. Ibid., p. 452

long experience in manuscript study and work on the Hellenistic papyri".[24]

Frederick Clifton Grant, Protestant Episcopal, formerly President of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, is now Professor of Biblical Theology at Union Theological Seminary. He has written a number of works which include The Economic Background of the Gospels and An Introduction to New Testament Thought. His most recent publication, The Gospels: Their Origin and Their Growth, appeared in 1957. One of Grant's duties as a committee member was to preside over the English Hexapla, checking the English tradition from Wyclif and Tyndale down to the King James Version.[25]

James Moffatt, Presbyterian, one of the members of the original committee, died before the RSV made its appearance but after the committee work had been completed. He was Executive Secretary of the committee for seven years. He is known for his complete translation of the Bible and his Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament, a classic in its field. Craig writes of Moffatt: "As a Scotchman, he would not vote on questions concerning American idiom. Though he had made a translation of his own, he would never hold out for that rendering".[26] Moffatt is praised by his fellow-workers as a "scholar of rare judgment and learning" who

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24. Craig, op. cit., p. 5. 25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

"brought to this work the rich resources of his training and experience as a translator and the genius and devotion of a really great soul".[27]

Luther A. Weigle, ~~Lutheran~~ Congregational Christian, served as chairman of the New Testament committee and of the committee as a whole. Craig says: "His task was to drive the team, and I must confess that a group of eight theological professors makes a rather unruly team to drive, and I would pay my highest tribute to the success with which he has conducted the difficult enterprise".[28] Weigle began instruction at Yale in 1916, was made Dean of the Divinity School in 1928, and became Dean Emeritus in 1949. From 1940-42 he was the President of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ. His best known works are The Religious Education of a Protestant and The New Testament from Tyndale to the Revised Standard Version.

Abdel Ross Wentz, Lutheran, became a member of the committee in 1939. He taught church history at Gettysburg College and at Lutheran Theological Seminary for thirty years, before accepting the presidency of Gettysburg Seminary in 1940. He has written, among other things, When Two Worlds Met and A

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27. "Introduction", An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament (Chicago: International Council of Religious Education, 1946), p. 5. The quotation comes from the introductory statement of this booklet written by members of the committee. Hereafter it will be cited simply as Introduction, usually preceded by the name of the author who wrote the section to which reference is made.

28. Craig, op. cit., p. 5.

Basic History of Lutheranism in America. Craig says that Wentz--

> made a fine contribution in his constant plea for direct, concise English. When a statistician began to count words, he made what was to all of us the most interesting discovery that in almost every chapter this was the shortest version yet made.[29]

C. T. Craig has outlined the work of the New Testament committee.[30] First a book would be assigned to an individual or a pair to make the first draft. Copies would then be made of these drafts and distributed to the committee for study, each member noting in the margins his proposed alterations. When the committee assembled, Dr. Moffatt as Executive Secretary would read a paragraph; and then the group around the table would begin making its suggestions. "By the time they were through, it would be difficult to tell who had made the first draft, so carefully had it been gone over by the committee as a whole".[31] Afterward the corrected draft was mimeographed and given further study; it was revised a second and a third time. Numerous word studies were made of previously revised materials in order to overcome needless inconsistency. The many revisions finally reaching a halt, the mimeographed results were sent to the members of the Old Testament committee for their acceptance or rejection.

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29. Ibid. 30. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

31. Ibid., p. 8.

The New Testament committee met at various places in the course of seven years. In the summers of 1938 and 1939 the committee met at Dr. Goodspeed's summer home in Wisconsin. A number of other sessions were conducted in New York, New Haven and Northfield, Massachusetts. At a meeting in Northfield, Massachusetts, August 15-29, 1943, the complete New Testament was thoroughly examined and approved, the votes of the Old Testament committee being taken into account.

The endless minutiae of editing such a work and the restrictions of war-time conditions delayed publication for another two and one-half years. Altogether the New Testament committee assembled thirty-one times in meetings covering one hundred and forty-five days; sessions were held mornings, afternoons, and evenings, and averaged generally three hours each.[32] Much additional work was completed by means of correspondence and smaller meetings of the group. These men of the New Testament committee formed a group with unimpeachable credentials: scholarly, experienced, versatile, truly representative of the many layers of American society. More than this, it was a group that took pride in a group production. Dean Weigle emphasizes this:

> The Revised Standard Version is not a collection of individual revisions of the various books of the Bible. Like the King James Version itself, and like the English and American revision of 1881-1901, it was prepared by the slow, thorough method of face-to-face conference and discussion.

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32. Weigle, Introduction, p. 13.

> Every decision was reached, every word hammered out, by the procedure of free debate and final vote of the group. It is therefore impossible to say of any part of the Revised Standard Version, "This is the work of Moffatt", or "This is Goodspeed's", or "This is Craig's". The initial drafts of various books were made by individuals; but every draft was so changed in the course of the discussion as to make it a part of the whole for which the Committee, rather than any individual, is responsible.[33]

## The Need for the RSV New Testament

The RSV committee began its work by considering the question as to the need for revision of the ASV. For two years after the original committee was formed in 1930 its members wrestled with the question of revision and related problems.[34] It was decided that revision was a matter of absolute necessity--a decision that has been since confirmed by many other scholars and thoughtful people.

There are in general three reasons for the presence of the RSV New Testament: (1) a recognition of the many inadequacies of the KJV, (2) the failure of later translations, especially ERV and ASV, to overcome these inadequacies, and (3) the discovery of new resources of knowledge which would warrant, even if the ERV and ASV were adequate revisions of the KJV, a new revision which embodies the results of these discoveries.

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33. Weigle, "Clarence Tucker Craig", p. 456.

34. Price, op. cit., p. 306.

There are several outstanding faults with KJV. The text underlying the KJV was essentially a medieval text embodying the scribal mistakes and accretions that had accumulated over a period of fourteen hundred years. Of course many of these textual variants were small in significance and did not materially affect the message of the Bible; however, the errant scribe also incorporated a number of significant readings which have proved to be unreliable in the light of later textual study. The base of the KJV differed but little from Beza's text of 1598, which in turn was essentially the text of Erasmus first issued in 1516. Erasmus' text was based only on a few late manuscripts and even these were dealt with in a hasty manner.[35] Thus a corrupt text provided the groundwork of the KJV. Nor could the translators of the KJV be expected to consult older manuscript witnesses to improve their text. Such important uncials as Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, and Ephraemi Rescriptus were not yet known; and what older manuscripts were available, if consulted, were looked upon with suspicion. All of which means the text of the KJV was inferior in quality; and therefore a revision of the KJV based on an improvement of the Greek text is of supreme importance.

Moreover, English usage has undergone radical change

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35. Kenneth W. Clark, "The Transmission of the New Testament", Interpreter's Bible, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), XII, 621-22.

since the translation of the KJV. Obsolete expressions and archaic words are found throughout the KJV. Some of these archaisms are still intelligible, although they are extremely cumbersome and distracting to the reader: "whatsoever", "whosoever", "howbeit", "holden", "peradventure", "aforetime", "because that", "for that", "thee", "thou", "thy", "thine", and the verb endings -eth and -th, -est and -edst. These are unfamiliar forms to the modern reader and result in making the reading of the Bible a tedious and often monotonous task.

Other archaisms in the KJV include words that have drastically changed in their meanings. In the sixteenth century "allege" was used for "prove", "communicate" for "share", "suffer" for "allow", "allow" for "approve", "prevent" for "precede", "let" for "hinder", "conversation" for "conduct", "admire" for "marvel", "ghost" for "spirit", etc.[36] The trouble with these archaisms is that they are grossly misleading, since these terms are still in use today but carry a different connotation.

Much of the grammar of the KJV also is not in current usage. "Which" was characteristically employed for "who"; thus the KJV reads in Phil. 4: 13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me". Likewise "his" was used for "its": "salt has lost his savour".[37] "Cherubims"

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36. The archaisms of the KJV will be dealt with more extensively in a later section.

37. Mt. 5: 13.

is found in Heb. 9: 5 instead of the correct plural "cherubim".[38]

In addition, the translators of the KJV made a number of glaring errors in dealing with their text. In Mk. 6: 20 the KJV says that Herod, after putting John the Baptist in prison, "observed him", but what is meant is that he "kept him safe".[39] "Abstain from all appearance of evil" is the way the KJV had treated 1 Thes. 5: 22. A more correct rendering would be: "Abstain from every form of evil".[40] It is clear that the KJ translators did not know what they were doing when they rendered 1 Cor. 16: 22 as "let him be Anathema Maranatha" instead of "let him be Anathema. Maranatha" (Our Lord, come!).

The KJV also inaccurately represented the text by creating distinctions in English that do not exist in the Greek text. Who would know that "Areopagus" and "Mars' Hill" were different renderings of the same Greek word?[41] The KJV in Mt. 25: 46 reads, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal"--as though "everlasting" and "eternal" are from different roots. By reading "Jere-

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38. The grammar of the KJV will be considered more at length in a later section.

39. Wyclif's translation in 1380 based on the Vulgate was closer to the meaning of the passage than the KJV. Wyclif had translated simply "kepte hym".

40. The Geneva Version of 1557 had captured the true sense: "Abstayne from all kynde of euil".

41. Cf. Acts 17: 19 and vs. 22.

miah",[42] "Jeremias",[43] and "Jeremy",[44] it is possible for one to get the impression that there were several Old Testament prophets with similar names instead of one "Jeremiah". In 1 Cor. 3: 17 the KJV reads, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy"; yet no distinction is made between "defile" and "destroy" in the Greek text since both words are translations of φθερει.

On other occasions the KJV fails to convey in translation distinctions that are present in the Greek. One of the best examples of this is the persistent rendering of "hell" for both "Hades" and "Gehenna". In this way "death" and "hell" are made to be thrown into "the lake of fire",[45] but a more correct translation would substitute "Hades" for "hell". A careful translation shows a difference between "slaughter" σφαξουσιν of Rev. 6: 4 and "kill" αποκτειναι of Rev. 6: 8.[46] Nevertheless the KJV treats both verses the same way: "kill". The KJV also translates "beasts" in Rev. 4: 6 as well as in Rev. 11: 7; but the words are not at all the same nor do they apply to the same kind of beings. The former refers to heavenly beings around the Throne and should be translated "living creatures", while the latter points to the diabolical

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42. Mt. 27: 9. 43. Mt. 16: 14 44. Mt. 2: 17.

45. Rev. 20: 14.

46. Cf. the translations of Moffatt and Goodspeed as well as ASV. (RSV = ASV).

enemies of God which are appropriately termed "beasts".[47]

The Revised Version of 1881 and 1901 made it possible for people to overcome many of the handicaps of the KJV. It was a much more accurate and careful handling of the original. The Revised Version of 1881 and 1901, however, failed to fill all the major needs created by the KJV. From 1611 to 1870 studies in textual criticism had been revolutionized and naturally the Revised Version incorporated many of the results of this advancement.[48] Nevertheless there were those on the English Revision committee, F. H. A. Scrivener to name one,[49] who argued for the trustworthiness of the Textus Receptus. Also, the work of Westcott and Hort on the critical Greek text had not been completed when the ERV New Testament went to print. The ERV profited immeasurably by the labors of Westcott and Hort, since both were on the committee; but the ERV frequently corresponds with the Textus Receptus in contrast ~~from to~~ a critical text such as that of Westcott-Hort.

After the appearance of the ERV also the problem of

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47. Other shortcomings of the KJV could be cited, such as the anachronisms of Mt. 5: 15 ("candle" for "lamp") and Acts 12: 4 ("Easter" for "Passover"); but these are sufficient to show the need of revision.

48. Schaff gives a note to the effect that F. H. A. Scrivener counted 5,788 textual alterations of the RV from the KJV. Cf. Philip Schaff, Companion to the Greek Testament and the English Version (London: Macmillan and Co., 1883), p. 419.

49. Kenneth W. Clark, "The Effect of Recent Textual Criticism Upon New Testament Studies", The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), p. 43

obsolete terms had not been eliminated. Some misleading archaisms had been excised, but other archaisms not only were retained but were actually multiplied by the ERV translators.[50] The net result was that what the ERV gained in accuracy and consistency over the KJV it lost in naturalness and beauty of English style. The ERV breathed of stuffiness and lacked the poignant character of the original New Testament writings. The comment of Charles H. Spurgeon was typical of many criticisms of the ERV--"strong in Greek, weak in English".[51]

Even supposing that the ERV revision of the KJV was entirely adequate, the need would exist now for a new revision. Immediately after the appearance of the ERV a revolution occurred in the study of the Greek language of the New Testament. A number of papyrus manuscripts began to turn up in Egypt which were to cast light on the New Testament. In 1895, the German scholar Adolph Deissmann published his famous Bibelstudien in which he demonstrated that the Greek of the papyri was the kind of Greek found in the New Testament, the Koine, the language of the common man in the first century. Many words that previously had been regarded as "Biblical Greek" were now seen to be words of everyday intercourse. Further discoveries of papyri--deeds, bills of sale, formal and personal letters--confirmed Deissman's conclusions. The effect of these dis-

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50. These archaisms together with other literary shortcomings of the ASV will be discussed later.

51. As quoted by Weigle, Introduction, p. 12.

coveries of papyri was felt both in lexical and grammatical research. Goodspeed describes this effect:

> The last forty years have witnessed the production of a series of New Testament lexicons, in France, Germany, Britain, and America, that give the translator aids no previous group of New Testament scholars ever possessed. Grammars, too, have kept pace with lexicons. Young scholars disdain the dictionaries and grammars their fathers used, and older scholars have given up the ones they used thirty years ago for the better ones of today. Probably no field of philology has made more progress in the number and excellence of such new aids to its study than the New Testament field, with the lexicons of Preuschen (1910), Zorell (1911), Eberling (1913), Souter (1916), Abbott-Smith (1922), Bauer's thoroughgoing revision of Preuschen (1928, 1936), Moulton and Milligan (1930), and Kittel (1933--); while the new Liddell-Scott-Jones Lexicon (Oxford, 1940) is of greatly increased value for the New Testament. Progress in the grammatical field is almost as marked, with the works of Moulton (1906-29; Vols. I and II), Radermacher (1925), Debrunner (1931), Robertson (3d ed., 1919), and others.[52]

For these reasons, especially in view of the immense aid the discovered papyri had given, it was decided that a revision of the ASV was imperative. The papyri focused attention once again on the need for a translation of the Bible which spoke the language of the common man: if the writings of the New Testament were in the Koine, why should today's New Testament remain couched in a language and style not used by the common man? Goodspeed speaks on this point concerning the New Testament:

> It owes almost nothing to literary artistry, and everything

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52. Edgar J. Goodspeed, Problems of New Testament Translation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), p. 5. To his list of lexicons may now be added the excellent English work of Arndt and Gingrich.

to the ideas it had to convey. To convey them with the utmost directness, simplicity and vigor was the chief concern of its writers. And if that was indeed the aim of its writers, it should also be that of its translators. The New Testament then calls for a direct, familiar style in translation; an elaborate, elegant style is unsuited to it, and in propor-



research. Goodspeed describes this effect:

ceded by the Great Bible of 1539 and the Bishops' Bible of 1568. In "The Translators to the Reader" the KJV translators express their purpose very clearly:

Truly (good Christian Reader) wee neuer thought from the beginning, that we should neede to make a new Translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, but to make a good one better,

These needs--especially a desire to put the Bible in the spoken language of the people--demanded the RSV. The ASV had not completely met these needs. The modern-speech translations, such as those of Moffatt and Goodspeed, were indeed in the people's language but suffered the usual handicaps of private translations. It was hoped the RSV would not have to

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55. As quoted by B. F. Westcott, A General View of the History of the English Bible. Third edition revised by William Aldis Wright (London: Macmillan and Co., 1905), p. 27.

56. Edgar J. Goodspeed (ed.), The Translators to the Reader (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), p. 20.

57. Introduction, p. 6.

Modern Speech, and the translations of Moffatt and of Goodspeed,[11]

So I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me; and on turning round I saw seven golden lampstands and in the middle of the lampstands One who resembled a human being, with

[redacted]

with W in contrast to other translations. Mt. 2: 18 reads: "she refused to be consoled, because they were no more". The clause "because they were no more" is in exact agreement with W. Jesus says in Mt. 10: 10 that "the laborer deserves his food", which had been the rendering of W. Other translations have: "the worker is worth his food" (XXCNT), "the workman deserves his rations" (M), and "the workman deserves his food" (G). The RSV consistently substitutes "lose heart" for the ASV's "faint" (e.g. Lk. 18: 1), and "lose heart" is a

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14. G follows XXCNT.

shows a rich heritage from time-honored versions. From Tyn-

have reason to be proud of my work for God", "for I will

venture to speak",[18] and "by the power of the Holy Spirit".

in 2 Cor. 4: 1-2. Goodspeed renders:

our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the

The RSV adopts the ASV when the latter differs from the KJV at the following points: "teaching...and preaching the gospel" for "taught...and preached the gospel"; "a question" for "one thing"; "from men" for "of men" (two times). In this passage

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26. The underlining indicates exact verbal agreement, except in two points where the word order varies. Also, the RSV subtracts a few superfluous words from the ASV.

easy matter to class the RSV with modern speech versions, since it normally speaks in modern terms. Its desire to put the Bible in the spoken tongue of the common man does not disparage its heritage. Since it is based on the ASV, the RSV New Testament has a rich heritage indeed. The KJV drew upon the heritage of earlier translations; and the ASV drew upon the heritage of the KJV. The RSV draws upon them all.

study also. Scholars have become increasingly aware of the importance of the "Western" text, since it obviously originated very early and had extensive circulation in both East and West. All of this occasions the conclusion that what Westcott-Hort called "intrinsic probability" has attained a preeminent place in the present field of textual criticism. Frederick C. Grant discusses the Greek text used by the RSV and states the criti-

1. Although the Westcott-Hort Greek text was published in 1881, the ASV did not make full use of it. Therefore the influence of the Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus was not fully effective.

little time to discussing this variant. Hort writes:

> Both documentary evidence and the impossibility of accounting for omission prove these words to be no part of the text of Mt. They can hardly have been an altered repetition of the parallel Lc xii 54, 55, but were apparently derived from an extraneous source, written or oral, and inserted in the Western text at a very early time.19

Nevertheless the RSV has retained what modern scholarship as a whole looks upon as a definite interpolation.

The RSV of Mt. 19: 29 reads: "And every one...will receive a hundredfold...." The RSV selects the reading of εκατονταπλασιονα instead of πολλαπλασιονα. By this choice the RSV puts itself in the dubious category of the Textus Receptus in opposition to Tischendorf, Westcott-Hort and Nestle.

In Mt. 21: 12 the RSV selects the reading: "And Jesus entered the temple of God". The texts of Westcott-Hort and Nestle omit του θεου following B, Aleph and Lachmann; Westcott-Hort places του θεου in its list of "Rejected Readings". However the RSV follows CD, the Byzantine group and Tischendorf.

An unusual phenomenon occurs in Mt. 23: 38. Ordinarily the textual base of the ASV is fuller than that of the RSV, but here the RSV text is longer than the ASV. The ASV reads: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate". The RSV, however, reads: "Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate".

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19. Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, The New Testament in the Original Greek (London: Macmillan and Co., 1881), p. 13 (of Appendix).

The word ερημος is included in agreement with Aleph, CD, Theta and the Byzantine group of MSS (also the text of Tischendorf). In antithesis to the RSV's reading are the texts of Westcott-Hort and Nestle as supported by BL. Here the RSV goes back to the conflate text of the KJV and the Textus Receptus for the "longer reading" instead of following the ASV's "shorter reading".

The opening words of the Gospel of Mark read in the RSV: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God". In giving this reading the RSV goes contrary to the texts of Tischendorf, Westcott-Hort and Nestle as supported by Aleph. The RSV, following BD, retains the words υιου θεου.

The RSV omits "whom also he named apostles" in Mk. 3: 14. Here the RSV goes contrary to B, Aleph and Westcott-Hort and accepts the texts of Tischendorf and Nestle as supported by D.

Another reading of the RSV illustrating the eclectic principle at work is Lk. 22: 43-44. The RSV reads: "And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground". The RSV chooses to retain this reading in agreement with D, a number of Byzantine MSS and Tischendorf. Westcott-Hort and Nestle place double brackets around these verses on the basis of BA and other authorities. Again, what is apparently a later interpolation is retained in the text of the RSV.

The RSV of Jn. 1: 18 reads: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son...has made him known". The RSV follows the

reading ο μονογενης υιος in preference to μονογενης θεος. In choosing ο μονογενης υιος the RSV goes against the excellent witness of BC, Aleph and the texts of Westcott-Hort and Nestle. In addition, Papyrus Bodmer II reads μονογενης θεος. This witness which has recently come to light gives further evidence of the RSV's weak text at this point.[20]

In Acts 28: 13 the KJV's "we fetched a compass" is rendered "we made a circuit" by both the ASV and the RSV. The RSV accepts the reading περιελθοντες rather than περιελοντες. RSV thus retains the ASV reading against B, Aleph and Westcott-Hort.

A very questionable reading is adopted by the RSV in Rom. 5: 1. The reading εχομεν is preferred above εχωμεν. This results in the RSV's retaining the KJV-ASV "we have peace with God" instead of "let us have peace with God". Opposing the RSV reading are BCD and Aleph; in favor of the RSV reading are $B^3G$, $Aleph^1$ and a number of Byzantine MSS. Thus the weight of MS evidence, as well as the texts of Westcott-Hort and Tischendorf, is against the RSV reading. The Westcott-Hort text has εχωμεν without so much as allowing the secondary reading of εχομεν. The RSV's reading is due evidently to the Nestle text.[21] Thus the text of the RSV here is put in the class with the KJV and the ASV, rather than such as the Twentieth Century

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20. Cf. p. 67.

21. Up until the 17th edition (1941), the Nestle text had read εχωμεν instead of εχομεν.

New Testament, Weymouth, Moffatt and Goodspeed which all read "let us". Either its desire to conserve the ASV, or its use of the eclectic principle, explains this questionable reading adopted by the RSV.

1 Cor. 11: 24 presents an interesting case. The KJV based upon a medieval text had read: "This is my body, which is broken for you". With an increased knowledge of the science of textual criticism the ASV emended the KJV text and read: "This is my body, which is for you". An unusual phenomenon came to light with the publication of the RSV New Testament in 1946: the RSV had returned to the KJV as opposed to the ASV by putting "broken" back into the text. The RSV's desire to conserve the KJV had gone to such an extent that it had led the revisers to accept the reading of Aleph$^{3}$G and the Byzantine group of MSS in preference to ABC, Aleph and the critical texts of Tischendorf, Westcott-Hort and Nestle. Obviously this was a glaring mistake. In the 1952 edition therefore this is changed to read: "This is my body which is for you".[22] "Broken" is noted as an alternative in a footnote.

On the whole the RSV presents a text superior to that of the ASV. This is stated with the full realization that scholars disagree on this point. Ernest Cadman Colwell, in his work What Is The Best New Testament?, places the RSV New Testament

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22. Cf. Appendix for a discussion of corrections made in the 1952 edition.

sixth in line of accuracy.[23] In his view the following New Testaments, listed in order, are more accurate in text than the RSV: Goodspeed, Twentieth Century, Westminister, American Revised Version and English Revised Version. In fairness to the RSV two observations are necessary: Colwell's study is based upon the Book of John only, which may or may not be representative of all of the translations under consideration; and his appraisal of textual accuracy is made with the Westcott-Hort text as the standard. In the previous chapter, however, he says: "Scholars of distinction have demonstrated again and again the inevitable and important role of judgment--a subjective quality--in the appraisal of a New Testament's originality".[24] Using this "important role of judgment" the RSV varies from the Westcott-Hort text eight times in the Gospel of John (1: 15; 1: 18; 1: 39; 4: 15; 4: 35-36; 5: 12; 10: 29; 19: 39). In most of these cases there are good reasons for departures from the Westcott-Hort text. Colwell's alignment results in the Westminister Catholic Version, the American Standard Version and the English Revised Version taking precedence in accuracy over the RSV; yet all of these versions contain Mk. 16: 9-20 and Jn. 7: 53-8: 11.

Some scholars have pointed out that the text of the RSV

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23. Ernest Cadman Colwell, What Is The Best New Testament? (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 87.

24. Ibid., p. 76.

as a whole is remarkably like the Westcott-Hort text.[25] Grant says:

> It was a part of our commission to take into account the progress of modern Biblical research. This most certainly includes textual research or criticism. We have endeavored to discharge this part of our commission as faithfully as we could. And it is really extraordinary how often with the fuller apparatus of variant readings at our disposal, and with the eclectic principle now more widely accepted, we have concurred in following Westcott-Hort. Not that we agreed in advance in favor of Hort--quite the contrary, there was no such unanimity; our agreement is really a tribute to Westcott-Hort, which is still the great classical edition of modern times.[26]

Wikgren epitomizes the text of the RSV in the following manner:

> The R. S. V., then, may be said textually to have made a cautious advance in the direction of the Hort Text. Generally speaking, this also represents an improved text, not because the oldest text is necessarily to be defined as Alexandrian but because rational criticism was also to some extent a determining factor in the choice of readings.[27]

This is a fair appraisal by Wikgren. The textual base of the RSV is indeed "a cautious advance in the direction of the Hort text," but it is not the equivalent of the Westcott-Hort text. A study of a number of textual variants pointed out in the marginal apparatus of the RSV shows that there is to a

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25. The RSV text is not close enough to Westcott-Hort to please Goodspeed. He says: "I am pleased that Dr. Paschal thinks we have kept fairly close to the Westcott and Hort text; I only wish we had kept closer". Edgar J. Goodspeed, "New Light on the New Testament", Review and Expositor, XLV (1949), 157.

26. Grant, Introduction, p. 41.

27. Wikgren, "The Revised Standard New Testament", The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow, p. 387.

slight degree a stronger reliance upon the Nestle text than upon the Westcott-Hort text. This is illustrated by Table I below.

Table I

TEXTUAL VARIANTS IN AGREEMENT WITH TISCHENDORF, WESTCOTT-HORT AND NESTLE[a]

| Books | No. of Variants | Tischendorf | Westcott-Hort | Nestle | Independent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Matthew. . | 45 | 33 | 35 | 35 | 3 |
| John . . . | 14 | 10 | 9 | 11 | 2 |
| Acts . . . | 18 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 0 |
| Romans . . | 11 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 2 |
| 2 Corinthians . . | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Galatians. | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| 1 Thessalonians. | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Hebrews. . | 12 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Revelation . . | 12[b] | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 |

a. This table is prepared on the basis of those footnotes which point to textual variants in the Greek bases.
b. This number includes two variants indicated by one footnote in the RSV.

In the nine books examined, four show greater reliance upon Nestle than Westcott-Hort, three show equal reliance upon Westcott-Hort and Nestle, and only two show greater reliance upon Westcott-Hort than Nestle. The difference between the texts of Westcott-Hort and Nestle is not great, and likewise the RSV's dependence upon Nestle is only slightly more than upon Westcott-Hort. Also, Table I illustrates the role that independent judgment has played in forming the RSV text-base. In the book of Hebrews, for example, textual variants noted in the margin follow independent judgment an equal number of times (four) as the variants agree with the Westcott-Hort text. Yet it can be said that the RSV's textual base represents an approximation of the texts of Westcott-Hort and Nestle. And if perhaps the RSV is not always the "oldest Bible", it is at least the "oldest" of the authorized Bibles!

## Chapter IV

## IMPROVEMENTS OF TRANSLATION

There are many standards by which a translation is judged as good or bad. In addition to its textual base, there are other important factors by which the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament can be appraised. In the following chapters five other factors are considered: accuracy, idiomatic rendering, clarity, consistency and English style. These standards are not mutually exclusive, for one often involves the other: accurate and idiomatic renderings produce clarity, and clarity hinges in turn on English style. Nevertheless these five standards may be used as convenient reference points, upon the basis of which the material in the RSV New Testament can be analyzed.

Accuracy of translation is the first requirement of any

translation.[1] The reader of a translation desires to read the message of the original author. A good translation will allow him to do this as far as is possible; and to the degree in which it succeeds in this it is an accurate translation.

The accuracy of the ASV has long been recognized; in numerous instances it has successfully corrected the mistakes of the KJV. But a careful study of the RSV shows that in many places it has attained a mark of accuracy beyond the ASV. A number of examples[2] are presented in the following discussion to support this statement.[3]

Mt. 2: 13 reads: "Herod is about to search for the child". This translation is an improvement over the ASV since it gives strength to μελλει. The ASV had read: "Herod will seek the

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1. The Biblical passages considered in this chapter are presented in the order of their occurrence in the RSV. The method of research used was to begin with the book of Matthew and go through the complete New Testament verse by verse. When passages from the first books illustrate points or principles of translation found also in subsequent books, these are not repeated--though frequently references are made to subsequent passages. Thus more passages are discussed from the first books than from subsequent ones. This method means also that points of translation--small and large--are interspersed. Sometimes it is necessary to discuss a point of accuracy fully; but often the point of rendering concerns only one term, which can be dealt with briefly. Many of the points examined are small, but when added together they carry considerable weight.

2. The following examples concern only improvements of the RSV over the ASV. The many unquestioned errors and weaknesses of the KJV which had been emended by the ASV are not discussed here.

3. Quotations are from the RSV unless otherwise indicated. Often a verse is cited only in part.

young child"--with no suggestion of the imminence of Herod's action.

Mt. 2: 16 reads "region" for "borders" (ASV). The word οριον means "border" or "boundary"; but in the plural ορια, which is the form found in the New Testament, is often synonymous with "region" or "district".[4] Thus the RSV's rendering is better and clearer than that of the ASV.

In Mt. 6: 27 the question is asked: "And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life?" The ASV had read "measure of his life", with the footnote "or his stature". Here is presented, and in its parallel of Lk. 12: 25, the problem of ηλικια. Does it refer to physical stature (KJV, followed by W and M), or does it have reference to time of life (ASV, followed by XXCNT and G)? The RSV casts its lot in favor of the latter view, and for this it is to be commended. Liddell-Scott-Jones Lexicon lists five definitions for ηλικια.[5] The first four of these pertain to age, and the last reads: "Of the body, stature, growth, as being a sign of age".[6] Thus "stature" is a derived meaning from the root idea of the word and even so is to be understood "as a sign

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4. Cf. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 584-85. Hereafter frequently cited as A-G.

5. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon. Revised by Henry Stuart Jones. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 647. Hereafter frequently cited as L-S-J.

6. Ibid.

of Age". Walter Bauer places Mt. 6: 27 and Lk. 12: 25 in the category of age: "allg. von der bisher durchlaufenen Lebenzeit. Mt. 6, 27 = Lk. 12, 25...wo es sich η. nach dem Zshg. um eine geringfügige Sache handelt...kann sich nur auf die Lebensdauer...nicht auf die Körpergrösse, beziehen".[7] To this is added the testimony of the papyri as given by Moulton and Milligan:

> We are indeed unable to quote any example from these... in which "stature" is the natural meaning, and hardly any in which it is possible: while for "age" we can present a long list....The list of citations might be almost indefinitely increased, but it must be sufficient to summarize by stating that no one who reads the papyri can have any doubt that the word meant "age" in ordinary parlance....
> The Twentieth Century translators boldly render, "Which of you, by being anxious, can prolong his life a moment?"--and we cannot but applaud them".[8]

Thus the RSV's "span of life" is in agreement with current scholarship.

The verb τεθεμελιωτο in Mt. 7: 25 is rendered "it had been founded". This throws light on the tense of the verb as a Pluperfect Passive, whereas the ASV had read "it was founded".

The ASV of Mt. 12: 32 reads: "whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither

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7. Walter Bauer, Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch (Vierte Auflage; Berlin, 1952), p. 626.

8. James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), p. 279. Hereafter frequently cited as M-M.

in this world, nor in that which is to come". The RSV translates the word αιωνιος here as "age", a much better rendering in view of the context. This alteration of the ASV is made in many places, such as Mt. 28: 20.

In Mt. 13: 22 and Mk. 4: 19 "deceitfulness of riches" (ASV) is changed to read "delight in riches". Cadbury says:

> If the time-honored and truthful description of wealth as "the deceitfulness of riches" no longer appears a suitable translation at Mark 4.19 and Matt. 13.22, it is because we recognize (as Luke apparently did, Luke 8.14), that in the vernacular απατη had come to mean "delight" or "pleasure".[9]

Liddell-Scott-Jones does not list "delight" or "pleasure" as a possible rendering of απατη ; but Moulton and Milligan give a few examples in the papyri where απατη means "pleasure".[10] Although this sense of απατη is not found often, the RSV translation seems to be correct. "Dissipation" of 2 Pet. 2: 13 is a parallel case.

Mt. 16: 18 is a good example of the improvement of RSV over its predecessors. The ASV had corrected the KJV's "gates of hell" to "gates of Hades". The RSV has tried to convey more of the meaning of this expression by translating "powers

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9. Introduction, p. 48. However, some other passages that have απατη are translated by the RSV differently (e. g. "deceitful" in Eph 4: 22 and "deception" in 2 Thes. 2: 10). The statement of Cadbury is perhaps misleading, for it leaves the impression that "delight" or "pleasure" is the only meaning for απατη.

10. M-M, p. 54. However, according to M-M, "pleasure" is not a frequent meaning of απατη. But A-G says that απατη here refers to "seduction". Cf. A-G, p. 81.

of death" and placing in the footnote "gates of Hades".[11] Although an English translation cannot reveal the play of words in this passage, the RSV does the next best thing: it follows the ASV in noting "Greek Petros" and "Greek petra" respectively for "Peter" and "rock".

In Mt. 22: 18 the ASV reads: "Why make ye trial of me?" The RSV translates: "Why put me to the test?" The Greek verb πειραζω is thus treated in the sense of "test" or "try", rather than the conventional "tempt". Moulton and Milligan say that πειραζω is a poetic and late prose form for πειραω which means "try" or "attempt".[12] The word "tempt" of the ASV means "try" or "test", but this is not the normal connotation of the word.

The words of Jesus in Mt. 23: 31 are more forceful in the RSV. The passage reads: "Thus you witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets". The ASV had translated "slew", a general word for "kill" or "slaughter". The Greek word φονευω is more explicit and means "murder",[13] as rendered by the RSV.

In Mt. 27: 64 the ASV reads:

Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest haply his disciples come and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: and the

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11. This departure from the literalism of the ASV raises the question as to the freedom of the translator in dealing with his text. For a discussion of this, cf. 199ff. below.

12. M-M, p. 501. 13. A-G, p. 872.

last error will be worse than the first.

The word "error" does not fit well here and thus the RSV translates instead "fraud". The word πλανη means "error" but also is used for "deception";[14] and here in the context a word suggesting deception, such as "fraud", is much better than simply "error".

In Mt. 28: 1 of the ASV the women are pictured as coming to the tomb "late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week". This translation had posed the problem of how it could be "late on the sabbath" and yet dawning on the first day of the week, since days were counted by the Jews from evening to evening. The Greek word οψε ordinarily means "late", but it is evidently not used here in this way. Liddell-Scott-Jones says that οψε used as a preposition with the Genitive may mean "after" and thus perhaps Mt. 28: 1 is to be rendered "<u>after</u> the sabbath day".[15] Arndt-Gingrich concurs in this.[16] The problem present in the ASV is cleared up by the RSV: "Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week...."[17]

Accuracy in choice of terms is illustrated in Mk. 2: 4. For the word κραβατος the RSV translates "pallet" instead

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14. A-G, p. 671 15. L-S-J, p. 1282.

16. A-G, p. 606.

17. Cf. also Goodspeed, <u>Problems of New Testament Translation</u>, pp. 43-45.

of the general term "bed" found in the ASV. The word κραβατος was a Macedonian loan-word for a soldier's pallet and came to be used for a poor man's bed, a "mattress" or "pallet".[18] The RSV supplies this little detail not presented in the ASV.

In Mk. 3: 9 the word πλοιαριον is translated "boat" for the ASV's "little boat". The diminutive form apparently has no force here. Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon says: "πλοιον is used for the same kind of vessel 4: 1; hence it is prob. no longer thought of as a dim.; this is plainly the case in Ael. Aristid....where there are nothing but πλοιαρια in the harbor".[19]

Mk. 7: 3 reads: "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands...." A footnote is appended by the RSV translators explaining that "one Greek word is of uncertain meaning and is not translated". The word of uncertain meaning is πυγμη which literally means "fist". Many theories have arisen as to the explanation of πυγμη but all that have been posed are of a hypothetical nature.[20] The ASV had treated it as "diligently", with the footnote "or, up to the elbow"; but neither of these interpretations has lexicographical support. In the interest of accuracy the RSV has left the difficult πυγμη untranslated.

Mk. 9: 18 of the ASV reads: "he foameth, and grindeth

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18. M-M, pp. 470-71; A-G, p. 448. 19. A-G, p. 679.

20. Goodspeed resolves the problem with: "in a particular way".

his teeth, and pineth away". "Pineth away" is the ASV's translation of ξηραινεται. The RSV translates instead "becomes rigid". The word ξηραινω means basically "to become dry" or "dry up". The ASV took ξηραινεται to refer to languishing in suffering. Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon says, however, that it indicates the act of becoming stiff.[21] "Becomes rigid" of the RSV is therefore a more accurate rendering.

Mk. 11: 20 reads: "As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots". The ASV had treated εκ ριζων as "from the roots", a literal rendering. But Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon says εκ ριζων means "to its roots",[22] the exact manner in which the RSV handles it.

The words ο πολυς οχλος are found in Mk. 12: 37. "The great throng" (RSV) is an improvement over "the common people" (ASV) as a translation of this phrase.

In Mk. 15: 39 (= Mt. 27: 54) the KJV and the ASV read: "Truly, this man was the Son of God". Since the Greek is anarthrous ( υιος θεου ) the ASV inserted a footnote "Or, a son of God". The RSV, in agreement with the ASV footnote, M and G, has translated: "Truly, this man was a son of God".[23]

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21. A-G, p. 550. 22. A-G, p. 743.

23. The RSV has been severly criticized for this rendering by some "conservative" circles. For a discussion of "liberalism" in the RSV, cf. 195ff. below.

A. Clay Sicher[24] has done some computing on this point worthy of note. He finds that "son of man" with the definite article occurs twenty-eight times in Matthew, thirteen times in Mark, twenty-five times in Luke and twelve times in John--in all of these cases it is translated "the Son of man" by the RSV. In the book of Acts "the Son of man" and "the Son of God" are translated with the definite article two out of two times. In Paul's epistles "the Son of God" is found three times and is always so treated by the RSV. The rest of the New Testament uses "the son of God" ten times, all dealt with by the RSV committee as "the Son of God". Only Mt. 27: 54 and Mk. 15: 39 are exceptions--exceptions because the definite article is not in the Greek text.

"James the less" (Mk. 15: 40) is changed by the RSV to "James the younger". The difference of translation turns upon the word μικρος. Deissmann believed "James the younger" to be the correct translation.[25] Moulton and Milligan cite P Leid N$^{ii}$.[12] (B.C. 103) as an example of μικρος used in a context that indicates age rather than stature.[26] Nevertheless the RSV's rendering, although well supported, is not established beyond question.[27]

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24. A. Clay Sicher, "Is This Book 'Blasphemous'?", Christian Herald, LXXXVI (March, 1953), pp. 17-18, cont. 38-41.

25. Adolph Deissmann, Bibelstudien, p. 142.

26. M-M, p. 412.

27. A-G says "James the small or the younger", p. 368.

Lk. 4: 13 says: "And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time". The ASV had translated: "he departed from him for a season", with the attached note "until". "Until an opportune time" is the translation of αχρι καιρου. The RSV's rendering gives force to αχρι with the Genitive, translated "until". Arndt-Gingrich confirms the RSV.[28]

The RSV translates κολπον of Lk. 6: 38 as "lap" in place of the ASV's "bosom". Arndt-Gingrich says of κολπον : "the fold of a garment, formed as it falls from the chest over the girdle...this fold was used as a pocket....put someth. into the fold of someone's garment".[29] Thus "lap", which is also followed by XXCNT, Weymouth, M and G, is an excellent choice.

The ASV of Lk. 6: 40 reads: "The disciple is not above his teacher: but every one when he is perfected shall be as his teacher". "When he is perfected" is a translation of κατηρτισμενος . The word καταρτιζω means essentially to put in order or to restore to a previous state: then it means to complete, prepare, make or create.[30] The ASV's "when he is perfected" is a technically correct rendering but inappropriate in light of the context. The RSV alters the ASV and on the basis of context translates "fully taught". According to Arndt-Gingrich κατηρτισμενος is used in the sense of one's

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28. A-G, p. 128. 29. A-G, p. 443. 30. A-G, pp. 418-19.

being fully trained or practised.[31] The RSV's translation is congruous and clear: "every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher".

In the Parable of the Sower the statement is made: "and their fruit does not mature". This is an improvement over the ASV which had rendered: "and bring no fruit to perfection". The word τελεσφορεω occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from two familiar words τελος and φερω and means literally to bear to perfection or maturity. The word τελεσφορεω used in connection with fruit would obviously refer to "maturity" rather than "perfection". The RSV here is substantiated by recent lexicography.[32]

Lk. 9: 31 speaks of Jesus' "decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (ASV). But the Greek word εξοδος means a "going away" or "departure". The latter term, which was in the footnote of the ASV, is selected by the RSV.

In Lk. 15: 16 the Prodigal is pictured as one who "would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate". "Pods" is a substitute for the ASV's "husks". This substitution is a more accurate term for κερατιων. Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon says that κερατιον in the plural is used for the fruit of the carob tree; it is defined as "carob pods".[33]

Lk. 18: 3 reads: "and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Vindicate me against

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31. A-G, p. 418. 32. M-M, p. 629; A-G, p. 818.

33. A-G, p. 430.

my adversary'". The Iterative Imperfect here is handled in an excellent manner by translating "who kept coming to him".

The word δικαιος and its related forms has many shades of meaning in the New Testament. The ASV of Lk. 23: 47 presents the centurion as saying: "Certainly this was a righteous man". The RSV says: "Certainly this man was innocent". Such translations as W, M and G had preceded the RSV in this same rendering. The word δικαιος can and does have a more restricted meaning in this passage according to Arndt-Gingrich.[34]

Jn. 1: 14 reads: "we have behold his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father". The ASV had translated "only begotten". The word at question in this passage is μονογενης. The KJV and ASV render it as follows: "only" (Lk. 7: 12; 8: 42), "only child" (Lk. 9: 38), "only begotten" (Jn. 1: 14, 18; 3: 16, 18: 1 Jn. 4: 9) and "only begotten son" (Heb. 11: 17). By translating μονογενης everywhere with "only", the RSV demonstrates its consistency on this point in contrast to its predecessors. But more is at stake than consistency, for the RSV conveys the precise meaning of μονογενης by translating "only". Frederick C. Grant, in an article on the meaning of μονογενης ,[35] has cited ample illustrations from the writings of Hesiod, Herodotus, Plato and Josephus

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34. A-G, p. 195.

35. Frederick C. Grant, "'Only Begotten'--A Footnote to the New Revision", Anglican Theological Review, XXXVI (1954), 284-87.

showing that μονογενης means "only" rather than "only begotten". Liddell-Scott-Jones says of μονογενης : "the only member of a kin or kind: hence, generally, only, single".[36] Even an older lexicon like that of Thayer defines it as "single of its kind, only".[37] Though many may regret the loss of the familiar "only begotten", nevertheless accuracy of translation and faithfulness to the text demand this alteration.

"God is spirit" (Jn. 4: 24) is a distinct gain over ASV's "God is a spirit". The Greek word πνευμα is anarthrous and may be handled in either way (ASV or RSV), but the rendering of the RSV emphasizes more clearly the qualitative aspect of "spirit" as it is applied to God.

The Progressive Imperfect is brought out clearly in Jn. 11: 56: "They were looking ( εζητουν ) for Jesus and saying ( ελεγον ) to one another...." The ASV had dealt with the passage as though it were the action of the Aorist: "They sought...for Jesus and spake with one another". Other advances over the ASV in treating the Progressive Imperfect include: "he was preaching" for "he spake" (Mk. 2: 2), and "he was not following us" for "he followed not us" (Mk. 9: 38).

Jn. 12: 6 reads: "And as he had the money box he used to take what was put in it". The ASV says: "And having the

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36. L-S-J, p. 1144.

37. Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: Harper and Bros., 1889), p. 417.

bag took away what was put therein". Here is a case of the Customary Imperfect. The effect of the word εβασταζεν is precisely transmitted: "he used to take"--it was his habit or custom of taking what was put in the money box.

The word παρακλητος has occasioned considerable perplexity for the translator. Both the KJV and the ASV translated it as "Comforter". But the word "Comforter" is misleading, since it fails to suggest that παρακλητος means "helper" or "intercessor".[38] The RSV selects the word "Counselor" instead of "Comforter", a selection that is in perfect harmony with the Spirit's mission in the Gospel of John. What is the "Counselor" to do? He will be with the disciples always (14: 15); He will teach and remind the disciples of what Jesus has said (14: 26); He will bear witness to Jesus (15: 26); and He will "convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment" (16: 8). Since the Spirit does more than "comfort" the disciples, the choice of "Counselor" is a vast improvement over the ASV. "Helper" (XXCNT, MG) and "Advocate" (W) are also better than "Comforter", but they do not surpass the RSV's "Counselor".

The readers of the KJV in Jn. 18: 1 surely must get the wrong impression when they find Jesus crossing over the "brook Kidron" rather than the "Kidron valley" (RSV). The ASV had not altered the KJV, although it noted in its margin

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38. A-G, pp. 623-24.

"ravine" as an alternate. The word χειμαρρος is derived from χειμα (winter) and ρεω (to flow) and hence indicates "a stream of water that flows abundantly in the winter.[39] It corresponds to the Hebrew נַחַל ("torrent, winter-torrent, wady")[40] used in the Old Testament to refer to Kidron.[41] Thus "valley" (RSV) and "ravine" (MG) are more accurate descriptions of Kidron than "brook" of the ASV.

Jn. 18: 18 pictures Peter standing beside a "charcoal fire" warming himself. "Charcoal fire" is a more accurate choice of term for ανθρακιαν than the ASV's "fire of coals".

On many occasions the RSV New Testament renders the present tense of Greek verbs very graphically. One example of this is Jn. 20: 17: "I am ascending to my Father". The ASV had translated: "I ascend to my Father". Other examples showing the RSV's improved renderings of the present tense include Jn. 17: 9, 11, 13 ("I am praying" for "I pray"); 1 Cor. 3: 10 ("is building" for "buildeth"); 1 Cor. 14: 37 ("I am writing" for "I write"); and Rev. 22: 7 ("I am coming" for "I come").

Acts 10: 12 reads: "In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air". RSV's "reptiles" is a much better term to use in translating ερπετα than the vague

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39. A-G, p. 887.

40. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, cor. ed., 1955), p. 636.

41. Cf. 1 Ki. 15: 13.

"creeping things" of the ASV.

A marked difference is evident in the way the ASV and RSV handle the Greek in Acts 11: 2-3. The ASV reads: "And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them". This passage reads in the RSV: "So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, 'Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?'" The RSV translators make a question where the ASV had translated a declarative statement. The difference turns upon the function of οτι. The ASV regarded it as introducing a direct statement, a use which it often has in the New Testament. However the RSV looks upon it as introducing a question. Οτι is employed in this manner in such places as Mk. 2: 16; 9: 11, 28. Τι οτι is used in a similar way in such passages as Lk. 2: 49; Acts 5: 4, 9. The nature and urgency of the inquiry in Acts 11 would seem to require οτι as introducing a question rather than a direct statement. So the RSV rendering appears to be a very good one.

A major difference of translation is found in Acts 18: 17. The ASV says: "And Gallio cared for none of these things". The RSV reads quite differently: "But Gallio paid no attention to this". The Greek clause reads: και ουδεν τουτων τω Γαλλιωνι εμελεν. The word ουδεν is to be taken as in the nominative case and the subject of the sentence; τουτων is the Partitive Genitive. Thus the sentence as a

whole would be translated: "None of these things concerned Gallio"--the same thing as saying that "Gallio paid no attention to this".

The ASV's desire to be meticulously exact resulted in αμφοτεροι of Acts 19: 16 being translated "both", despite the fact that "both" refers back to "seven sons of one Sceva" (vs. 14). The Greek papyri have thrown new light on the use of αμφοτεροι and have demonstrated conclusively that it was often employed when more than two parties were involved. P Lond 336[13] (A.D. 167) uses αμφοτεροι in reference to five priests. P Gren I 67[5] (A.D. 382) and I 69[4] (A.D. 386) apply αμφοτεροι to four men.[42] Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon does not hesitate to define αμφοτεροι also in the sense of "all".[43] Therefore the RSV's translation "all of them" not only reads better but is in keeping with the use of αμφοτεροι in the Koine Greek. The same holds true for Acts 23: 8 where the RSV reads "all" for the ASV's "both".

Perfective compound verbs sometimes present problems in the Greek New Testament. Some verbs such as καταγγελλω by the time of the New Testament have lost their perfective force, but many others have maintained this original distinction. In Acts 21: 4 the compound ανευρισκω occurs. The ASV simply translates it in the sense of ευρισκω ("having found"). But the RSV renders "having sought out",

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42. M-M, p. 28. 43. A-G, p. 47.

giving emphasis to the perfective compound. The RSV portrays the deliberate effort of Paul and his company in seeking the disciples at Tyre.[44] Arndt-Gingrich says ανευρισκω means to look or search for".[45]

In Acts 21: 37 the ASV translates the word παρεμβολη as "castle". The word παρεμβολη is a military term and is used for an army camp, barracks or headquarters.[46] The RSV accordingly translates "barracks".

The ASV of Acts 26: 28 reads: "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian". This is a translation of the Greek clause: εν ολιγω με πειθεις Χριστιανον ποιησαι. The RSV translates this clause in a different manner: "In a short time you think to make me a Christian!" The expression εν ολιγω never seems to have the meaning of "almost",[47] but means with respect to time "in brief", "in a short time", or "quickly".[48] The ASV had recognized the meaning of εν ολιγω but had put it in a footnote: "Or, In a little time...." Goodspeed had translated: "You are in a hurry to persuade me and make a Christian of me". Although this passage remains

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44. For some reason, however, the RSV fails to convey the perfective compound force of this same verb in Lk. 2: 16. Here the RSV follows the ASV and renders ανευρισκω simply as "found". This fails to picture the seeking and searching essential to the meaning of this compound verb.

45. A-G, p. 65. 46. A-G, p. 630.

47. Cf. Goodspeed, Problems of New Testament Translation, p. 138.

48. A-G, p. 566.

a point of difficulty,[49] it is certain the RSV translation retains the message of the Greek to a fuller extent than the ASV's rendering.

Rom. 2: 20 speaks of the law as "the embodiment of knowledge and truth". The ASV had read: "the form of knowledge and of the truth". The word μορφωσις basically means "form" as rendered by the ASV. However, it also is used in the sense of "embodiment" or "formulation".[50] In light of the context this seems to be the meaning attached to it here.

Rom. 6: 5 is translated: "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his". The RSV translation is distinguished from the ASV mainly by the addition of the word "certainly". But this addition is not due to over-translation of the text. The RSV's rendering takes into account the Greek adversative particle αλλα. In the apodosis of conditional sentences, such as in this verse, αλλα has the meaning of "yet, certainly, at least".[51] Consequently the RSV's rendering is not only more forceful but is more accurate.

Rom. 8: 3-4 tells of the Son's condemning sin in the flesh "in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us". Instead of "just requirement" the ASV had translated "ordinance", with a footnote "requirement".

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49. The passage is made difficult by the reading of ποιησαι instead of γενεσθαι in MSS such as BA and Aleph.

50. A-G, p. 530. 51. A-G, p. 38.

δικαιωμα may be translated in either way, but the RSV's rendering of "just requirement" fits better contextually.

The ASV in Rom. 11: 24 translates καλλιελαιον as "good olive tree". Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon points out that καλλιελαιον was used from the time of Aristotle for a cultivated olive tree.[52] "Cultivated olive tree" is the translation of the RSV, which brings out the juxtaposition of the "cultivated olive tree" and the "wild olive tree".

1 Cor. 3: 9 reads: "For we are fellow workmen for God: you are God's field, God's building". In place of "field" the ASV had translated "husbandry". Arndt-Gingrich defines γεωργιον as "cultivated land, field".[53] Moulton and Milligan cite several papyri witnesses showing that γεωργιον was commonly employed for a cultivated field.[54] The English word "husbandry" connotes farming or agriculture. However the word γεωργιον does not refer to farming in general but to the "field" or cultivated land upon which the farming is done. The RSV's translation is an exact one.

The papyri have brought to light a number of substitutes for the Imperative Mood in the Koine Greek. James Hope Moulton discusses these in the Prolegomena of his classic grammar.[55] One substitute for the Imperative is the use of ινα with the Subjunctive. 1 Cor. 7: 29 is a good case of

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52. A-G, p. 400. 53. A-G, p. 156. 54. M-M, p. 125.

55. James Hope Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), p. 176ff.

this, a case that the RSV committee carefully observed. A comparison of the ASV and the RSV shows the ASV translates a Subjunctive while the RSV correctly translates an Imperative. "But this I say, brethren, the time is shortened, that henceforth both those that have wives may be as though they had none" (ASV). The RSV, however, translates: "I mean, brethren, that the appointed time has grown very short; from now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none". That the ASV missed the exact meaning of the Apostle Paul's direction is to be taken as no reflection on the ASV committee, who were scholars in their own right; nevertheless it serves as ample illustration of the advancement of knowledge furnished by the vast papyri sources in dealing with the Koine Greek. Other examples of this construction are found in Mk. 5: 23; 2 Cor. 8: 7; Eph. 5: 33.

Directions of Paul concerning marriage in 1 Cor. 7: 38 take on new meaning in the translation of the RSV. The ASV had translated: "So then both he that giveth his own virgin daughter in marriage doeth well: and he that giveth her not in marriage will do better". The key word that causes difficulty is γαμιζω which ordinarily signifies "to give in marriage". However, Moulton and Milligan point out that some ιζω verbs are used in the same way as εω verbs and that "consequently in 1 Cor. 7: 38 γαμιζω may = 'marry' and not 'give in marriage'".[56] The RSV concurs in its translation

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56. M-M, p. 121.

with this judgment when it renders the passage: "He who marries his betrothed does well...."[57]

The ASV had rendered 1 Cor. 13: 13 as "the greatest of these is love", but had noted in the margin "Gr. greater". Although the Greek word μειζων is the comparative form, the note of the ASV is misleading; for the comparative is often used for the superlative and the superlative for the comparative in the writings of the New Testament period. In Moulton's discussion of comparatives and superlatives, he says:

> In the NT the obsolescence of the superlative, except in the elative sense, is most marked. It is mere chance that only one example of the -τατος superlative has survived, for there are scores of them in the papyri. Of the genuine superlative sense, however, the examples there are very rare; practically we may say that in the vernacular documents the superlative forms are used to express the sense of our "very". ....It is in fact clear that μεγιστος is practically obsolete in Hellenistic: its appearance in 2 Pet is as significant as its absence from the rest of the NT. The Revisers' scrupulous margin in 1 Cor 13: 13 and Mt 18: 1 may be safely dispensed with, on the new evidence.[58]

On the basis of this evidence the RSV does not hesitate to translate "greatest"--and feels justified in omitting the footnote of the ASV.

The Greek papyri have established the meaning of the verb καπηλευω which appears in 2 Cor. 2: 17. The ASV had

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57. Since this point is not established conclusively, the RSV would have done well to allow an alternative in its footnote apparatus.

58. Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. 1, p. 78.

followed the KJV in giving καπηλευω the sense of "corrupt": "For we are not as the many, corrupting the word of God". The verb καπηλευω and its related forms occur many times in the papyri. It means to "trade" or "sell"; the noun form is used in the sense of a "dealer".[59] Thus καπηλευω means "to deal in for purposes of gain" rather than "adulterate".[60] With this in mind the RSV forcefully translates: "For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word".

An excellent rendering of the Conative Imperfect can be seen in Gal. 1: 13. "For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it". No indication is given in the ASV's "made havoc of it" that the verb επορθουν is an imperfect form. The RSV looks upon επορθουν as a Conative Imperfect and translates "tried to destroy". Another example of the RSV's proper rendering of the Conative Imperfect appears in Gal. 1: 23: "He...is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy".[61]

The ASV of Eph. 5: 18 reads: "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot". The phrase "wherein is riot" is not a clear translation. The RSV reads: "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery". The difference in trans-

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59. M-M, p. 321. 60. Ibid.

61. Other Conative Imperfects are not so clearly rendered by the RSV. Instead of saying "John would have prevented him" (Mt. 3: 14), it would be better to translate "John tried to prevent him".

lation is due to the different ways in which εν ω is regarded. The ASV looked upon it simply as "in which" ("wherein"). The RSV recognizes the causal use of εν ω and renders "for that is debauchery".

Phil. 3: 20 says: "But our commonwealth is in heaven". The Greek word πολιτευμα was translated "citizenship" by the ASV, a great gain over the KJV's "conversation". Yet the RSV's "commonwealth" is an advance over "citizenship", since the former term denotes a communal body of people. Many illustrations from the papyri show that πολιτευμα had the meaning of "community" or "commonwealth".[62]

Paul says to the Philippians: "I have received full payment" (Phil. 4: 18). This is a much more realistic and idiomatic translation than that of the ASV ("I have all things"). The word απεχω is used throughout the papyri in connection with drawing up receipts for payments; the substantive αποχη means "receipt".[63] To translate απεχω merely as "I have" loses the color of the word attached to it in ancient times. The RSV's "I have received full payment" conveys the fuller meaning of απεχω.

Col. 2: 17 of the ASV reads: "...which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's". The RSV varies from the ASV and translates "substance" for "body". It is justified in doing this, although σωμα is generally

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62. M-M, pp. 525-26. 63. M-M, 57-58.

translated "body". The contrast in this verse is between a shadow and the real thing itself: the opposite of "shadow" is "substance". Arndt-Gingrich understands the use of σωμα here in this sense and defines it as "reality".[64]

The words ατακτεω, ατακτος, ατακτως are words which appear in the New Testament only in the Thessalonian letters (1 Thes. 5: 14; 2 Thes. 3: 6, 7, 11). The KJV rendered these words as "unruly" and "disorderly"; the ASV is content with the rendering "disorderly". Since the discovery of the Greek papyri in Egypt, it has become increasingly apparent that the Apostle Paul was writing to the Thessalonians about a specific kind of disorderliness rather than disorderliness in general. Such papyri as P Oxy 11. 27584ff. (A.D. 66) and P. Oxy. IV. 72539ff (A.D. 183) use ατακτεω in the sense of idleness or failure to be present at work.[65] This is in agreement with Liddell-Scott-Jones which gives one definition of ατακτεω as "to neglect one's duty, fail to discharge obligation".[66] Thus these verses in Thessalonians are translated "in idleness" and "idle". The rendering of the RSV is in perfect accord with the general tenor of the epistles to the Thessalonians. This is seen by the reading of the RSV's translation of 2 Thes. 3: 6-15, a paragraph which often uses ατακτεω and its related forms. (The word ατακτεω and its related forms are indicated by underlining.)

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64. A-G, p. 807. 65. M-M, p. 89. 66. L-S-J, p. 267.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, we did not eat any one's bread without paying, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you. It was not because we have not that right, but to give you in our conduct an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: If any one will not work, let him not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living. Brethren, do not be weary in well-doing.

Thus recent research is reflected in the RSV's translation, which greatly illuminates the nature of the disorderliness present at Thessalonica. People there were guilty of idleness, which evoked the stern rebuke of the Apostle.

Many elliptical statements are present in the New Testament. 1 Tim. 5: 23 is an example where the RSV has rendered one of these ellipses very clearly. "No longer drink only water" conveys better the sense of the writer. "Be no longer a drinker of water" (ASV) is misleading--as though water was not to be drunk at all.

The ASV in following its literalistic pattern often failed to recognize the presence of the Epistolary Aorist in the New Testament. Rare exceptions are Gal. 6: 11 and Philemon 19. The RSV committee has been more careful in detecting the Epistolary Aorist, especially since it is often found in the papyri. Thus Paul says of Onesimus: "I am sending him back to you". The ASV by reading "whom I have sent back to thee" overlooks the Epistolary Aorist usage

and hence leaves the impression with the reader that the runaway slave has already been dispatched home. The RSV's treatment of other passages (2 Cor. 8: 17, 18, 22; 9: 3; Phil. 2: 28) is superior to that of the ASV for the same reason.[67]

"Change his mind" is a good way of handling the verb μεταμελομαι: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind" (Heb. 7: 21). This translation of the RSV is especially appropriate here since it refers to the Lord who has sworn.

The ASV had rendered Conative Imperfects in such passages as Mt. 3: 14; Lk. 1: 59; Acts 7: 26; 26: 11, not so treated in the KJV. With Gal. 1: 13, 23 may be included Heb. 11: 17, where the RSV adds to the ASV's list of Conative Imperfects. The Imperfect προσεφερεν is handled differently by the KJV, ASV and RSV: "offered up" (KJV), "was offering up" (ASV) and "was ready to offer up"(RSV). The KJV's "offered up" failed completely to convey the sense of the Imperfect. The ASV's "was offering up", although reflecting the Imperfect idea, is a cumbersome attempt at translating the passage. The RSV's "was ready to offer up" is much better and is so rendered because of its recognition of the presence here of the Conative Imperfect.[68]

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67. Why is not the Epistolary Aorist so translated by the RSV in Acts 23: 30; Eph. 6: 22; and Col. 4: 8? The translations of XXCNT, MG have recognized them as Epistolary Aorists.

68. Moulton had pointed this out fifty years ago. Maintaining the presence of the Conative Imperfect in Heb. 11: 17 he wrote: "The contrast between the ideally accomplished sacrifice, as permanently recorded in Scripture (προσενηνοχεν),

"Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us (Heb. 12: 1). "Perseverance" is a much better rendering for υπομονη than "patience" of ASV. Other ways in which the RSV treats υπομονη include: "endurance" (Rom. 5: 3-4), "steadfastness" (2 Pet. 1: 6) and "patient endurance" (Rev. 3: 10)--all of which convey very accurately the conception meant by υπομονη.[69]

In 1 Pet. 1: 7 the RSV reads "genuineness of your faith" for "proof of your faith" (ASV). Does the word δοκιμιος mean "proof" or "genuineness"? The papyri support the RSV's translation of "genuineness". Deissmann discusses δοκιμιος in his Neue Bibelstudien and concludes that it carries the sense of the adjective δοκιμος. He writes:

> Da wird δοκιμου kaum ein Schreibfehler sein, sondern eine leichte, für den Sinn ebenso unwesenliche Variante, wie Χρυσιου statt χρυσου : δοκιμιος hat die Bedeutung von δοκιμος erprobt, anerkannt, das ja ebenfalls gerade von Metallen gebraucht wird im Sinne von giltig, vollgiltig, echt....[70]

Moulton and Milligan say: "Hort's divination...detected that the needed meaning in the NT passages was 'what is genuine in your faith'; the papyri have given a welcome

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and the historic fact that the deed was not finished, makes an extremely strong case for this treatment of the word".--Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. 1, p. 129.

69. However, the traditional word "patience" is retained in Lk. 8: 15; Rom. 2: 7; 8: 25; 2 Cor. 12: 12.

70. Deissmann, Neue Bibelstudien, p. 88.

endorsement to the master's instinct...."[71] RSV's "genuineness of your faith" is in accord with modern scholarship.

How much better in 1 Pet. 2: 2 is "pure spiritual milk" than "spiritual milk which is without guile" (ASV) or "sincere milk" (KJV)! The common meaning of αδολος is "without deceit" or "honest"; but the papyri have unfolded many occurrences of αδολος in the sense of "pure", or "unadulterated". P Oxy VIII. 1124[11] (A.D. 26) speaks of "wheat that is new, pure, unadulterated (αδολος) and unmixed with barley".[72] "Pure spiritual milk" is therefore a precise rendering.

In 2 Pet. 3: 9 the ASV reads: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise". The word "slack" suggests "looseness" or "negligence". But the word βραδυνω means "to delay" or "hesitate". The papyri examples cited by Moulton and Milligan on the sense of βραδυνω all carry the meaning of "delay".[73] Consequently the RSV phrases the passage: "The Lord is not slow about his promise".

The above examples are illustrative of the many improvements in translation of the RSV over the ASV. Grobel's investigation leads him to the conclusion that the RSV in general attains a high degree of accuracy. He says: "As to the accuracy of the translation itself, comparing it to most books sentence-for-sentence with ARV and Nestle has convinced

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71. M-M, p. 168. 72. M-M, p. 10.

73. M-M, p. 117.

me that its general precision is high. Two note-books of notes substantiate that judgment".[74] This is one of the major contributions of the RSV New Testament--its accurate transmission of the Biblical message to its readers.

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74. Grobel, op. cit., p. 363.

## Chapter V

## INADEQUACIES OF TRANSLATION

No one translation, how ever much it may represent an improvement over its predecessors, reaches absolute perfection. Careful examination of the new revision reveals that it is no exception to the rule. Although the RSV at many points manifests improvements over the ASV, yet at other points it is inadequate in its renderings of the Greek text. In fairness to the RSV translators, however, it is to be noted that many of these inadequate renderings never would have appeared if the RSV had been an independent translation instead of a revision in line with the KJV-ASV tradition. A number of the RSV's shortcomings of translation can be seen in the passages discussed below.

In Mt. 2: 1 the traditional way of treating μαγοι as

"wise men" is preserved by the RSV.[1] "Astrologers" (G) or even "magicians" (M) are decided improvements over the RSV. Few readers of the Bible think of the "wise men" as astrologers rather than sages. The RSV has done nothing to overcome this confusion.

Mt. 3: 3 is one of the many places where the RSV has retained "wilderness" in translating ερημος. The word "wilderness" in English is capable of a variety of interpretations. For many people it connotes a region of dense woods of undergrowth. But the Greek word ερημος normally refers to a desolate or deserted region.[2] In such places as Mt. 15: 33 the RSV gives ερημος its proper sense.

More accurate knowledge of the land of Palestine has prompted the RSV to make some improvements over its predecessors. For example, the word ορος , translated usually as "mountain" or "mount" by the KJV and the ASV, often refers to no more than a "hill". The RSV treats it in this manner on thirteen occasions (Mt. 5: 14; 14: 23; 15: 29; 18: 12; Mk. 3: 13; 5: 11; 6: 46; Lk. 4: 29; 6: 12; 8: 32; Jn. 6: 3, 16; Rev. 17: 9). But the awareness of the Revisers was not consistent on this point. It is true that ορος is best translated sometimes as "mountain", as in Lk. 9: 37. However, ορος appears sixty-two times in the Westcott-Hort text. Thirteen out of

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1. The same word is translated "magician" by the RSV in Acts 13: 6, 8.

2. A-G, pp. 308-09.

sixty-two does not seem to be a suitable ratio in translating ορος as "hill". Surely other passages should be included in the number (e.g. Mt. 5: 1; 8: 1).

The RSV retains "bushel" for the translation of μοδιος in Mt. 5: 15. Arndt-Gingrich defines the μοδιος as a "peck-measure".[3] a meaning that Goodspeed had assigned to it previously.

In Mt. 5: 28 the RSV translates: "every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart". "Every one who looks at a woman lustfully" is a weak rendering since the construction is the articular infinitive of purpose (προς το επιθυμησαι).[4] "Lustfully" suggests manner rather than purpose. Something of the XXCNT's translation is required: "any one who looks upon a woman with an impure intention".

The RSV in Mt. 12: 40 keeps the familiar expression "belly of the whale", resulting in a lack of precision. Liddell-Scott-Jones says the word κητος means "any sea-monster or huge fish".[5] Arndt-Gingrich defines it in the same way.[6] The ASV had appended a footnote, "Gr. sea-monster". The RSV should have done this at least.

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3. A-G, p. 527.

4. The same construction is found in Mt. 6: 1, except in Mt. 6: 1 is an Aorist Passive Infinitive instead of an Aorist Active Infinitive. The RSV aptly translates this construction: "in order to be seen...."

5. L-S-J, p. 949. 6. A-G, p. 432.

Mt. 16: 24 reads: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself". The word "would" is a weak translation of θελει. Either "wants" or "wishes" is a preferable choice, since "would" is so frequently used as an auxiliary verb. The same holds true for Mt. 20: 26-27, as well as many other similar passages. Also the phrase "come after" does not express the concept of itinerant teacher and disciple. "If any man wishes to walk in my steps" (XXCNT) or "if anyone wants to go with me" (G) conveys more graphically the sense of Jesus' words.

In Mt. 21: 38 the Effective Force of the Aorist form σχωμεν is overlooked. The RSV reads: "Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance". The ASV on this passage is better: "take the inheritance". Something like "obtain" or "get" would render the force of the Effective Aorist.

The RSV translates διεξοδος as "thoroughfare" (Mt. 22: 9). Arndt-Gingrich says of διεξοδος: "prob. the place where a street cuts <u>through</u> the city boundary and goes <u>out</u> into the open country, <u>outlet</u>".[7] Something like Goodspeed's "where the roads leave the city" seems to be the exact idea, but this is not conveyed by the RSV's "thoroughfares".

In Mt. 26: 22 the RSV's translation says the disciples asked: "Is it I?" The expression μητι εγω ειμι implies more than this. The key word is μητι, an interrogative particle

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7. A-G, p. 193.

that ordinarily expects a negative answer.[8] The setting of this passage shows the disciples are persuaded of their allegiance to their Master: they could not betray him. It seems therefore they asked something like "surely it is not me?" (M),[9] instead of the RSV's "Is it I?"[10]

Mt. 27: 27 (=Mk. 15: 16) the Greek word σπειρα is translated "battalion". This is not the equivalent of ~~the~~ σπειρα. Arndt-Gingrich says of it: "In our lit. probably always cohort, the tenth part of a legion (the σπ. thus normally had 600 men, but the number varied...."[11] The English usage of "battalion" suggests a larger company than the cohort and is therefore misleading. "Band" (Jn. 18: 3, 12) is very vague. "Cohort" as in Acts 10: 1; 21: 31; 27: 1, is the best choice.

"Wait, let us see" in Mt. 27: 49 (=Mk. 15: 36) is the RSV's translation of αφες ιδωμεν. Yet αφες εκβαλω is translated "let me take...out" in Mt. 7: 4 (=Lk. 6: 42). Moulton maintained that all of these passages should be handled in the

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8. On rare occasions μητι like μηποτε expresses doubt, as in Mt. 12: 23 and Jn. 4: 29.

9. A-G puts Mt. 26: 22 with passages that imply a negative answer. Cf. p. 522.

10. This poses the question whether μητι should be indicated in translation. In cases such as Mt. 7: 16 and Lk. 6: 39, the questions raised are obviously rhetorical in nature and the reader automatically supplies the negative response. Where this is not the case, however, should not the translator use some means of conveying the negative response?

11. A-G, p. 768.

same way.[12] "Let us see" is undoubtedly the proper translation instead of "Wait, let us see".

The RSV fails to improve the ASV in Mk. 1: 23 and translates: "And immediately there was in their synagogue...."[13] The word ευθυς occurs in the first chapter of Mark ten times. It is translated consistently by the RSV as "immediately", except in vs. 28 where "at once" takes its place. Many times "immediately" is justified, as in vs. 42 ("immediately the leprosy left him"). In other cases the translation of ευθυς could be varied, especially in vs. 23. Goodspeed's "just then" is much better here.

The RSV fails to allow the force of the perfective compound verb καταδιωκω in Mk. 1: 36. "Followed" (RSV) is not as good as Goodspeed's "sought out". Moulton and Milligan say of καταδιωκω : "This perfective verb is confined in the NT to Mk. 1: 36, where it should be translated pursue after, hunt down, and not simply follow after (AV, RV)".[14]

In Mk. 3: 21 the RSV follows the ASV too closely and translates "friends". The Greek οι παρ αυτου properly refers to one's "family" instead of one's "friends". "Family" (M) or "relatives" (G) would be more accurate.

On several occasions, as discussed above, the RSV has

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12. Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. 1, p. 175.

13. The ASV reads "straightway" instead of "immediately".

14. M-M, p. 326.

given clear and forceful renderings of the Conative Imperfect, but it fails to do so in Mk. 9: 38. The words εκωλυομεν αυτον should be translated "we tried to prevent him", but the RSV reads: "we forbade him". Not only is the Conative Imperfect left untranslated, but the RSV's rendering leaves the impression that the verb is an Aorist instead of an Imperfect.

The force of the Iterative Imperfect is lost by the RSV in Mk. 11: 19 in translating: "And when evening came they went out of the city". This leaves the impression that the disciples' departure from the city was a single act, which is far from what Mark intends to say. Mark selects the Iterative Imperfect which indicates repeated exits from the city by the disciples. Even the ASV recognizes this and translates: "and every evening he went forth out of the city".[15] Other Iterative Imperfects poorly rendered are found in such passages as Lk. 5: 15, 16.

In the Lukan form of the birth of Jesus, when the angel tells Mary of the oncoming event, the RSV gives Mary's response in these words: "How can this be since I have no husband?" (Lk. 1: 34). The XXCNT, W, M and G deal with this verse in the same way. The Greek reads: πως εσται τουτο, επει ανδρα ου γινωσκω. The point of question is whether "since I have no husband" conveys the precise meaning of Mary's inquiry of the angel. The RSV's rendering obscures

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15. The difference between "they" of the RSV and "he" of the ASV is a matter of textual variant.

the meaning of γινωσκω. The real point here is that no physical intercourse can be the cause of conception, for the implication is that the Holy Spirit has caused it. Yet it is a difficult passage for the translator: either he must retain the Semitic idiom which is foreign to English-speaking people or he must find an English equivalent which will surely lack the pointedness of Mary's question.

In eighteen places the RSV changes the translation of πολις from "city" (ASV) to "town". But the word πολις appears in the Westcott-Hort text no less than 155 times. Even the casual reader of the Bible has come to know that Nazareth and Bethlehem were but small Palestinian towns in the first century, and yet the RSV reads: "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem...." (Lk. 2: 4).[16] The RSV is not only inconsistent at this point, but fails to attain the verbal precision characteristic of its efforts in other places.

The Greek of Lk. 3: 14 reads: μηδενα διασεισητε, μηδε συκοφαντησητε. This should be translated: "Do not rob by violence nor falsely accuse anyone". However the RSV reads: "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation", as though "false accusation" is a means of robbery.

"And there was given to him the book of the prophet

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16. It is obvious that the RSV is "revising" here and not translating".

Isaish" (Lk. 4: 17). The word βιβλιον may be translated either as "book" or "scroll".[17] "The scroll of the prophet Isaish" would be more in keeping with first-century conditions, especially since βιβλιον is translated "scroll" in Rev. 5: 1.

"As he went away" is the RSV's translation of εξελθοντος. This is an improper way to treat an Aorist Participle, as though the action was durative rather than punctiliar. "As he went away" should be replaced by "after he went away" or an equivalent expression. The ASV had corrected the KJV but the RSV has lapsed back into its fallacy. Such translations as Moffatt ("After he had gone away") and Goodspeed ("After he left") indicate more careful handling of the Aorist Participle.

"Remember me when you come in your kingly power" (Lk. 23: 42). The KJV had read: "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom"; while the ASV read: "Remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom". The difference between the KJV and the ASV hinged on "into" and "in". The KJV had rendered "into" from a text that read εν τη βασιλεια σου. The ASV, following its custom of using "in" for εν translated "in thy kingdom". The RSV's "in your kingly power" raises two questions. Does the RSV accept εν instead of εις following the Textus Receptus against Westcott-Hort and Nestle? If not, is

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17. A-G, p. 140.

it guilty of lessening the force of εις? The Greek prepositions εν and εις are used interchangeably sometimes in the New Testament, but in most cases a distinction is maintained between the two. Unless there is good reason otherwise, why not allow εις its natural force? Goodspeed has rendered: "Remember me when you come into your kingdom!"

Lk. 23: 45 says: "and the curtain of the temple was torn in two". This is in precise agreement with the parallel English accounts in Matthew and Mark, resulting in a spurious agreement. Matthew and Mark read the same in the Greek, except for a slight change in word order; but the Lukan narrative differs from Matthew and Mark since it has μεσου for εις δυο. The difference between Luke on one hand, and Mark and Matthew on the other is small; yet this difference is important to the careful student. A good translation should reflect disagreement in the Synoptics as well as agreement.

In Jn. 3: 10 Jesus asks: "and yet you do not understand?" The RSV adds "yet" which gives the passage a shade of meaning not present in the Greek. The RSV's translation makes the question put to Nicodemus practically the same as the one Jesus put to his disciples: "Do you not yet understand?" (Mk. 8: 21). The two passages should read differently in translation. The desired effect of the RSV might have been attained by following a translation similar to Moffatt's: "You do not understand this?--you, a teacher in Israel!"

The parenthetical statement of Jn. 4: 2 is translated by the RSV: "although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only

his disciples". Other recent translations are much more explicit and clarify the vagueness that appears in the Johannine narrative. The XXCNT is especially clear: "though it was not Jesus himself, but his disciples, who baptized". A translation similar to this would be of great advantage to the reader, making it clear that the disciples did the actual baptizing--not that Jesus baptized only his disciples.

Jn. 16: 8 speaks of the mission of the Spirit: "He will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment". The ASV had translated "convict" instead of "convince". The verb ελεγχω may mean either "convince" or "convict".[18] It is doubtful, however, whether the RSV's "convince" is a better translation than the ASV's "convict". Goodspeed translates "bring conviction" in agreement with the XXCNT and W; Moffatt translates "convict".

The ASV of Acts 7: 18 reads: "till there arose another king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph". The RSV reads: "till there arose over Egypt another king who had not known Joseph". The RSV deviates from the ASV, and its translation is not the better for it. The word οιδα is an old Perfect with the force of the Present Tense, and is translated "I know". The corresponding Pluperfect ηδειν has the Imperfect force and is normally translated "I knew". Robertson says: "Present perfects that had come to be mere presents through accent on the

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18. A-G, p. 248.

durative idea and loss of emphasis on the aoristic (punctiliar) are virtual imperfects when turned into the past".[19] Robertson lists ηδειν as one example of this. Other translations (XXCNT, WMG) render Acts 7: 18 as an Imperfect. The translation of the RSV does not do so.

In Acts 9: 6 the RSV reads: "you will be told what you are to do". This is a weak rendering of the Greek clause ο τι σε δει ποιειν, since it fails to transmit the full effect of δει. The full force of δει is conveyed in such translations as "what you have to do" (M), "what you ought to do" (G) and "what you must do" (XXCNT). The ASV also had rendered "what thou must do". The RSV's "what you are to do" fails to convey the urgency of the command given to Saul of Tarsus.

The RSV fails to improve on the ASV in Acts 9: 30: "And when the brethren knew it, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him off to Tarsus". Instead of translating επιγνοντες as "when the brethren knew it", the Ingressive force of the Aorist Participle might have been stressed by translating either "learned" (M) or "found this out" (G). In this way the passage would be more suited to English idiom.

"The disciples determined...to send relief to the brethren who lived in Judea" (Acts 11: 29). The word οριζω means

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19. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1914), p. 904.

to determine, but "decided" would be more natural for the English reader.

"They waited, expecting him to swell up" is the translation of the RSV in Acts 28: 6. This unusual treatment conflates Moffatt and Goodspeed: "waited" (M) and "expected" (G). A good translation of προσεδοκων αυτον μελλειν πιμπρασθαι should reflect two elements of syntax: (1) the use of the infinitive in indirect discourse, and (2) the use of μελλω with the infinitive to form a type of periphrastic future. A precise rendering would be: "they expected that he was about to swell up." This in turn would perhaps be more idiomatic if rendered: "they expected that he would swell up". This fills the requirements of the passage and is just as idiomatic as the treatment of the RSV.

The word τυποι in 1 Cor. 10: 6 is translated "warnings". This passage in 1 Corinthians is indeed designed as a "warning", but the word τυπος in itself does not mean "warning". Arndt-Gingrich lists a number of meanings for τυπος : "mark", "trace", "copy", "image", "statue", "form", "figure", "pattern", "model", "example" and "type".[20] 1 Cor. 10: 6 is listed under "type". Either "type" or "example" would be more exact than the RSV's "warning".

2 Cor. 1: 22 reads: "he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee". In the

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20. A-G, pp. 837-38.

two other places where αρραβων occurs (2 Cor. 5: 5; Eph. 1: 14), the RSV also has "guarantee". Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon says that αρραβων means: "first instalment, deposit, down payment, pledge, that pays a part of the purchase price in advance, and so secures a legal claim to the article in question, or makes a contract valid...."[21] The KJV and the ASV had translated αρραβων as "earnest". A glance at the dictionary shows "earnest" is still a good word for a token of what is to come. The RSV has altered the ASV because the average person does not think of "earnest" in this sense. Is "guarantee" an adequate substitute? The word "guarantee" suggests security, but does not connote a present instalment or further payment in the future. "Down payment" or "first instalment" would be better selections in translating αρραβων.

In 2 Cor. 2: 14 the RSV reads: "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph...." "Leads in triumph" does not draw adequately the picture of θριαμβευοντι. The noun θριαμβος originally referred to a hymn sung in festal procession to Dionysus.[22] Later, it came to be used for a triumphal entry for a victorious army. Other translations have tried to bring out the meaning of θριαμβευοντι: "triumphal procession" (W), "pageant of triumph" (M) and "in his triumphal train" (G). The RSV would have done well to translate this passage in a similar way.

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21. A-G, p. 109. 22. L-S-J, p. 806.

"Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2: 5). This lacks the direct appeal of "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (ASV), or better still "Have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had" (G). The RSV's rendering lacks the incisiveness embraced in the language of the Apostle.

The RSV in Phil. 4: 7 retains the ambiguity of its predecessors when it translates: "the peace of God, which passes all understanding". The passage would read much more clearly if "passes" were substituted by "surpasses" or "excels", for this is the idea of the verb υπερεχω.

In 1 Tim. 3: 2 and Tit. 1: 6 one qualification given for a bishop (elder) is that he must be "married only once". The Greek μιας γυναικος ανδρα literally says "a one-wife husband", which of course means "the husband of one wife" (ASV). "Married only once" makes clear the prohibition against bigamy and polygamy, but is objectionable because it may leave the impression that a widower who had been remarried would not be qualified for the office of bishop. The RSV translation says more than the writer intended.

In Heb. 3: 1f. the RSV has followed the usual rendering: "consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession". If however the participle ονται is understood as supplementary in indirect discourse, the passage may be treated:

"consider that Jesus...was faithful".[23] Goodspeed has taken the passage in this sense. Such a treatment would fit better into the context of the passage and at the same time make it more compact structurally. Although this translation was not preferred, the committee would have done well to indicate it as an alternative translation in a footnote.

Heb. 6: 4-6 reads: "For it is impossible to restore again to repentance...if they then commit apostasy". The RSV translation "if they then commit apostasy" is not a correct rendering of the Aorist Participle παραπεσοντας. The ASV had been more precise: "and then fell away". Such translations as W and M follow the ASV exactly, while G varies but little in translating "and yet have fallen back". The RSV in substance is a return to the KJV, whereas the ASV is the more accurate rendering.

The Greek word επισκεπτομαι has several uses in the New Testament. It has the meaning of going to see someone and is aptly translated "visit" by the RSV in Acts 7: 23; 15: 36. It is also well rendered as "pick out" in Acts 6: 3. However it is often employed in the sense of looking after or caring for someone.[24] Only on one occasion does the RSV translate επισκεπτομαι in this latter sense. A familiar passage in

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23. This is noted by Wikgren in his article on the RSV. Cf. Wikgren, "The Revised Standard New Testament", The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow, p. 389.

24. The English word "visit" has this meaning also, but rarely is used in this way.

Hebrews is altered to read: "the son of man, that thou carest for him" (Heb. 2: 6). But other appearances of επισκεπτομαι are not dealt with so carefully. One example is Js. 1: 27: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction...." Goodspeed translates επισκεπτομαι as "to look after"; Moffatt translates it as "to care for" and appends a note to the effect that the word implies "personal service and help". Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon places Js. 1: 27 under the meaning of "look after".[25] In other passages (Mt. 25: 36, 43; Lk. 1: 68, 78; 7: 16) it is probable that επισκεπτομαι should be translated in a way that suggests personal attention or care. In Js. 1: 27 particularly, the RSV relies too much upon the conventional rendering of the KJV-ASV tradition.

The RSV in Js. 2: 3 adopts a questionable translation which amounts to a conjectural emendation of the text. "Have a seat, please" is the way it renders συ καθου ωδε καλως. Although the RSV's translation had been "suspected" by J. H. Ropes in his commentary on the Book of James,[26] it remains a question whether the text as it reads can be translated in this way. Moulton and Milligan say that καλως ποιησεις often

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25. A-G, p. 298.

26. Cf. J. H. Ropes, International Critical Commentary, Vol. XVI The Epistle of St. James (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), p. 190.

means "please" in the papyri.[27] However, καλως by itself is unattested as "please" in the papyri sources. Arndt-Gingrich says this is to be translated: "be seated here in a good place".[28] Other translations (XXCNT, WMG) agree with this latter sense and thus disagree with the RSV.

The RSV reads in 2 Pet. 1: 19: "You will do well to pay attention to this". The Greek reads: καλως ποιησεις προσεχοντες. Here the RSV should have translated "please" instead of Js. 2: 3 because the construction is καλως ποιησεις with the participle, expressing entreaty.[29] The RSV indicates acquaintance with this principle in Acts 10: 33 and Phil. 4: 14; but fails to show any knowledge of it here or in 3 Jn. 6. The idea of the writer is not "you will do well", but "pray attend to" (M), or "please pay attention to" (G).

The passages considered in this chapter show that the RSV at points lacks the high degree of accuracy characteristic of its work as a whole. Some passages retain too much of the KJV-ASV tradition to be adequate renderings of the original Greek, while other passages in the RSV do not measure up to the accuracy of the ASV. And yet, notwithstanding these short-

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27. M-M, p. 319.

28. A-G, p. 402. Yet it notes the RSV's translation as a possibility.

29. Moulton says: " καλως ποιησεις c. aor. part. (sometimes infin., or even indic., but the participle greatly predominates) is the normal way of saying 'please' in the papyri, and is classical"--Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. 1, p. 228.

comings, the RSV represents another step in the right direction--an important step within the framework of the "authorized" English versions.

## Chapter VI

## IDIOMATIC TRANSLATION

A good translation not only requires accuracy but also demands an idiomatic treatment of the text. It is possible for a translation to be a word-for-word rendering and yet, when the words are put into sentences and the sentences are combined into paragraphs, for the translation as a whole to be inaccurate and misleading. Greek idiom is distinct from English idiom. The translator must first comprehend the Greek idiom before he can understand the idea expressed by the author; then in turn he must phrase the author's message in terms that correspond with English idiom. This means he must translate ideas as they fit into the author's framework rather than words as separate digits. A good translation depends on idiomatic renderings as it strives for accuracy. This is what is meant by Millar Burrows when he says that "the effective

expression of meaning for the modern reader demands the translation of idioms as well as words, the embodiment in idiomatic English of what was idiomatically spoken or written in Aramaic or Greek".[1]

A number of passages considered above may be treated also under the heading of idiomatic rendering, for accuracy and idiomatic rendering are coextensive. The passages discussed below are chosen as especially exemplary of the RSV's success and failure in reaching the mark of idiomatic translation.

Mt. 6: 34 of the ASV reads: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof". The RSV alters this rendering but little, yet the slight change transforms a cumbersome statement into an idiomatic saying. Since "unto the day" does not correspond with English idiom, the RSV alters it to "for the day". Also, the Greek idiom here has no verb and thus the RSV supplies "let...be" instead of "is". The result is a very appealing translation by the RSV: "Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day".

In Mt. 10: 41 the words ο δεχομενος προφητην εις ονομα προφητου are rendered by the ASV: "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet". The Greek idiom εις ονομα προφητου should not be translated "in the name of a prophet", but rather "because he is a prophet". This was recognized even

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1. Introduction, p. 28.

in the time of Thayer.[2] The RSV approaches this clause idiomatically when it translates "because he is a prophet".

The use of the Gnomic Future is frequent in the New Testament, but a usage that is not in accord with English idiom. For this reason the Gnomic Future is generally translated by the RSV as the Present Tense. Mt. 12: 11 is a good example of this. The ASV reads: "What man shall there be of you, that shall have one sheep...." The RSV translates: "What man of you, if he has one sheep...." This corresponds to the English idiom and removes all the obtuseness characteristic of any word-for-word rendering here.

The RSV has often been criticized for its rendering of Mt. 16: 23: "You are not on the side of God, but of men". The Greek reads: ου φρονεις τα του θεου αλλα τα των ανθρωπων. The ASV had translated literally: "Thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men". Contrary to the opinion of some, the RSV's rendering is not a careless paraphrase. Liddell-Scott-Jones gives many uses and meanings of the verb φρονεω. One definition reads: "of those who agree in opinion, τα τινος φρονειν to be of another's mind, be on his side, or of his party...."[3] Thus the RSV's translation is not a wandering interpretation, but an accurate and idiomatic rendering of thought in the Greek text.

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2. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 447.

3. L-S-J, p. 1956.

The ASV of Mt. 20: 15 reads: "is thine eye evil, because I am good?" The RSV does not follow such a literal rendering of the Greek but translates: "do you begrudge my generosity?" The οφθαλμος πονηρος has been the subject of much study. Should the translator construe it simply as "evil eye"? If so, is he fulfilling his obligation as translator to the reader? If not, what is the meaning of οφθαλμος πονηρος and what is its equivalent English expression? Arndt-Gingrich says of οφθαλμος πονηρος : "one that looks w. envy or jealousy upon other people....By metonymy for envy, malice Mk 7: 22 (but the mng. stinginess, love for one's own possessions is upheld for all the NT pass. w. οφ. πον. by CJCadoux... esp. for Mt. 20: 15...."[4] The RSV's translation is in agreement with this statement. If οφθαλμος πονηρος refers to "stinginess" or love for one's own possessions", the idiomatic way to express this would be: "do you begrudge my generosity?" The literal rendering of the Greek, however, is preserved in a footnote for the information of the student.

In Mt. 28: 14 the ASV reads: "And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and rid you of care". "Rid you of care" is a translation of υμας αμεριμνους ποιησομεν. The RSV translates idiomatically: "keep you out of trouble".[5]

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4. A-G, p. 604.

5. This is how A-G regards this passage.

The papyri have shown that the expression εν οικω means no more than "at home".[6] The ASV had translated it in this manner in 1 Cor. 11: 34, but for some reason translated εν οικω in Mk. 2: 1 as "in the house". The RSV changes this interlinear rendering and translates "at home".

"The measure you give will be the measure you get" (Mk. 4: 24) is a vast improvement over the ASV's pedantic "with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you".

Jesus says, according to the ASV: "Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition" (Mk. 7: 9). The word καλως translated "full well" by the ASV, seems to require a rendering that suggests irony.[7] The translation of the ASV does not bring out clearly this irony, but the translation of the RSV does: "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition!"

It has been observed previously that ινα with the Subjunctive is used in the New Testament as a kind of periphrasis for the Imperative. The RSV's recognition of this principle results in renderings that harmonize with English idiom: "Master, let me receive my sight" for "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight" (Mk. 10: 51); "But let the scriptures be fulfilled" for "but <u>this is done</u> that the scriptures might be

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6. Cf. M-M, p. 443; A-G, p. 563.

7. Καλως is employed ironically in 2 Cor. 11: 4.

fulfilled"; "Come and lay your hands on her" for "I pray thee, that thou come and lay thy hands on her" (Mk. 5: 23).

Jn. 1: 11 reads: "He came to his own home, and his own people received him not". The ASV followed the KJV in translating: "He came to his own, and his own received him not". The papyri have cast new significance on the use of ο ιδιος where often it is used as a "term of endearment to near relations".[8] Moulton and Milligan cite several papyri texts to show that ιδιος is employed in the sense of "home".[9] The RSV's "own home" is a much better rendering for ιδιος here than the ASV's "own". A similar passage is Lk. 18: 28 where the RSV translates αφεντες τα ιδια as "we have left our homes".

The word προσωπολημπτης (from προσωπον and λαμβανω) literally means an accepter (respector) of faces (persons). "Respector of persons", however, does not correspond to English idiom. The RSV therefore translates προσωπολημπτης in Acts 10: 34 as "partiality".

"Were you a slave when called? Never mind" (1 Cor. 7: 21). The ASV had followed the KJV and had rendered: "Wast thou called being a bondservant? Care not for it". The phrase μη σοι μελετω needs to be translated idiomatically in order to convey the meaning of the Apostle: if a man was converted as a

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8. Moulton, A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. 1, p. 90.

9. M-M, p. 298.

slave, he should not be grieved over his status or position in life. Thus the RSV's "Never mind", found also in WMG, is an excellent rendering. The ASV's "care not for it" not only fails to impart the true sense but leaves the wrong impression. "Care not for it" may be taken to mean "do not be content"--the direct antithesis of the intention of the writer.

By and large the RSV attains a high mark in its idiomatic renderings. Occasionally, however, passages fall short of this mark. A few examples of this may be considered briefly. "Ears of grain" (Mt. 12: 1; Mk. 2: 23; Lk. 6: 1) is not in keeping with the language of American people. Either "ears of corn" (in the strict English sense) or "heads of grain" would be better. "Whose name was Caiphas" would be more idiomatic than "who was called Caiphas" (Mt. 26: 3). "What is this word?" (Lk. 4: 36) is an over-literal translation of τις ο λογος αυτος. Λογος not only means "word" but also means "message" or "teaching". What is required is something like "What does this mean?" (M) or "What is the meaning of this teaching?" (G). "What have you to do with me?" (Mk. 5: 7) might have been translated more idiomatically as "What have we in common?"

To translate the idiom of one language into that of another often proves to be a very difficult task. This is especially true of the New Testament, for the idioms present here are not only of one language but are of two languages--Greek and Aramaic. The New Testament books were written in Greek, but much of their background, thought and language-

patterns took root in Semitic elements. The New Testament translator therefore deals not only with the Greek idiom, but also with Semitic idiom expressed in Greek.

How does the RSV treat the Semitic idioms of the New Testament? Does it translate the Semitic idiom into English idiom, or does it preserve the Semitic idiom in English translation? How does the RSV compare to its predecessors (KJV-ASV) in this respect?

Many time-honored Semitic idioms preserved by the KJV-ASV tradition have totally disappeared in the RSV New Testament. The introductory formula "it came to pass" ( εγενετο ) has been omitted.[10] For example, the ASV of Mt. 7: 28 reads: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching...." But this verse appears in the RSV simply as: "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching...."

The Greek αποκρινομαι which corresponds to the Aramaic ענה is consistently translated in the KJV (250 times) as "answer". The RSV is a decided improvement in this respect by rendering αποκρινομαι as "declared" (Mt. 11: 25), "spoke" (Lk. 14: 3), "said" (Jn. 2: 18), "addressed" (Acts 3: 12), or by similar expressions depending on the context. The Semitic "answered and said" is likewise reduced to "answered"

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10. The KJV uses "it came to pass" on sixty-three occasions, while the ASV uses it sixty-two times. The difference is due to a textual variant in Lk. 9: 57.

(Mt. 19: 4), "replied" (Mt. 12: 48), or other equivalent expressions.[11] The redundant "saying" has been eliminated.[12] Recognizing that the Semitic conjunction ו often has many functions and meanings, the RSV frequently translates και in whatever way best suits the context--"now", "then", "but", "when", etc. Corresponding with this fluid handling of the Greek conjunction, coordinate clauses in Greek sometimes become subordinate clauses in English for purposes of clarity.

Since the Semitic understanding of "heart" carried many shades of meaning, the RSV has not restricted the meaning of καρδια to "heart". Some examples of improvement over the ASV in rendering καρδια include: "says to himself" for "say in his heart" (Mt. 24: 48); "Settle it therefore in your minds" for "Settle it therefore in your hearts" (Lk. 21: 14); "They were enraged" for "They were cut to the heart" (Acts 7: 54); "with steadfast purpose" for "with purpose of heart" (Acts 11: 23); "as he has made up his mind" for "according as he hath purposed in his heart" (2 Cor. 9: 7). However, the RSV has kept "heart" even with such ideas as "thinking" (Mt. 9: 4), "understanding" (Mt. 13: 15), "questioning" (Mk. 2: 6), "doubting" (Mk. 11: 23) and "believing" (Rom. 10: 9).

The ASV made a marked improvement over the KJV in translating passages which contain the Greek word σπλαγχνα .

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11. Yet "cried out and said" (Jn. 12: 44) is retained in the RSV.

12. Except Rev. 7: 3 and a few other places.

The Semitic use of σπλαγχνα always rendered literally by the KJV as "bowels", is construed by the ASV as "affections" (2 Cor. 6: 12), "tender mercies" (Phil. 1: 8; 2: 1), "heart" (Phile. 7, 12, 20) and "compassion" (1 Jn. 3: 17). In treating these passages the RSV selects the words "affection" (2 Cor. 6: 12; Phil. 1: 8; 2: 1) and "heart" (Phile. 7, 12, 20; 1 Jn. 3: 17). Drawing upon the work of the ASV, the RSV expresses in clear thought the concept of the Hebrew idiom.

Burrows has explained[13] that the word "seed" has become in the RSV "children" (Mk. 12: 19-22; Rom. 9: 29), "offspring" (Gal. 3: 16, 19, 29; Rev. 12: 17), "descendants" (Jn. 8: 33, 37; Rom. 4: 13, 16, 18; 9: 7-8; 11: 1; 2 Cor. 11: 22; Heb. 2: 16), or "posterity" (Lk. 1: 55; Acts 7: 5-6; 13: 23; Heb. 11: 18). In other places "seed" is retained (1 Pet. 1: 23), or omitted (Heb. 11: 11), or is paraphrased in a different construction ( Rom. 1: 3; 2 Tim. 2: 8).

The Semitic idiom of the Epexegetical Genitive is often rendered adjectivally, thus conforming more to English usage and resulting in a smoother translation. The RSV translates "desolating sacrilege" for "abomination of desolation" (Mt. 24: 15; Mk. 13: 14); "his glorious throne" for "throne of his glory" (Mt. 25: 31); "gracious words" for "words of grace" (Lk. 4: 22); "sinful body" for "body of sin" (Rom. 6: 6); "glorious liberty" for "liberty of the glory" (Rom. 8: 21);

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13. Burrows, Introduction, p. 29.

"eloquent wisdom" for "wisdom of words" (1 Cor. 1: 17).

In the New Testament the word ωρα serves two purposes: one is synonomous with the English word "hour" and the other, corresponding to the Aramaic שעה, stands for a brief period of time or moment. With this latter use of the word ωρα in mind the RSV translates: "to them we did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you" (Gal. 2: 5). The rendering "for a moment" instead of the ASV's "for an hour" accurately reproduces the Semitic idiom.[14] In a similar fashion "for a while" (Jn. 5: 35; 2 Cor. 7: 8) results in a more effective translation.

The RSV "de-semitizes" the ASV at many other points. The crude and obscure "let him die the death" (Mt. 15: 4) becomes more intelligible when substituted by "let him surely die". Instead of the ASV's "before his face" the RSV reads "on ahead of him" (Lk. 10: 1). In Lk. 12: 56 the ASV's "face of the earth and the heaven" is altered to "the appearance of earth and sky". The Semitic "with desire I have desired" (Lk. 22: 15) simply reads in the RSV "I have earnestly desired". In place of "by the hand of a mediator" (Gal. 3: 19) the RSV translates "through an intermediary".[15]

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14. But the RSV's rendering of Rev. 18: 10 is disappointing: "Alas! Alas! thou great city, thou mighty city, Babylon! In one hour has thy judgment come." (Cf. also 18: 17, 19; 17: 12).

15. The Semitic "by the hand" is retained, however, in such passages as Acts 5: 12; 7: 25.

It is not an easy matter to translate in such a way that Semitisms in the New Testament will not be carried over into English, especially when such expressions have become commonplace due to the KJV. The task of the RSV committee was doubly difficult since it aimed at preserving when possible the KJV - ASV tradition, a tradition that has ingrained in it many Semitic idioms. It is not surprising therefore to find that the RSV retains a number of Semitisms despite the fact that it has successfully erased many others.

"Mammon" continues to appear in all cases of its occurrence in the ASV (Mt. 6: 24; Lk. 16: 9, 11, 13), although it is an unfamiliar word to many people. Since "mammon" is an Aramaic word for "riches" or "wealth", why should it not be so translated? This would be much better, especially since the ASV's "Lord of Sabaoth" (Rom. 9: 29; Js. 5: 4) has been changed to "Lord of hosts" and its "maranatha" (1 Cor. 16: 22) to the understandable "Our Lord, come!"

Other Semitisms are retained doubtless because of their customary use and deep-rooted associations. Some examples of these are: "they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy" (Mt. 2: 10); "his countenance fell" (Mk. 10: 22); "horn of salvation" (Lk. 1: 69); "son of peace" (Lk. 10: 6); "sons of the resurrection" (Lk. 20: 36); "son of perdition" (Jn. 17: 12; 2 Thes. 2: 3); "children of wrath" (Eph. 2: 3); "spirit of stupor" (Rom. 11: 8); "sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5: 6); "strength of his might" (Eph. 6: 10); "sons of light and sons of the day" (1 Thes. 5: 5); "word of power" (Heb. 1: 3).

Notwithstanding the presence of these Semitisms, which are retained as a part of the KJV - ASV tradition, the RSV commends itself to the reader because of its many idiomatic renderings. In this it is favored above its predecessors. It speaks in familiar English words and harmonizes with English idiom.

## Chapter VII

## CLARITY AND CONSISTENCY

Eugene A. Nida has stated in a perspicuous manner the demand for clarity when translating the Bible:

> It may be thought strange to insist that making some sense should be a basic requirement of translation. It seems too obvious to be necessary, but many translations are left unread because they do not make sense. It is not so much that they say the wrong thing, but that what is said has practically no meaning.[1]

The fault of the earlier English versions, even down to the time of the 1881 revision, was a failure to recognize fully the translator's obligation of making clear the sense of the original. The ASV was a genuine advance over the KJV in

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1. Eugene A. Nida, Bible Translating (New York: American Bible Society, 1947), p. 18.

respect to accuracy, but its gain over the KJV in clarity was negligible. No light was added whatever to many of the ~~adum-~~ obscure ~~brated~~ passages of the KJV. To what extent the RSV improves the ASV in clarity of translation becomes an important factor in determining the merits of the two versions.

Consistency is another standard by which a translation is often judged. There are of course many kinds of consistency, but here reference is made to consistency in the rendering of words. Ideals of consistency vary. At one extreme is the mechanical consistency characteristic of the ASV, always seeking to give each Greek word an unalterable English equivalent; and at the other extreme is a translation so free that it has no regard for consistent rendering of words. Both extremes have their disadvantages: the former results in monotony of style and the latter makes a systematic study of the New Testament impractical for anyone who is not able to handle the Greek text. Which of these extremes--if either--is reflected in the RSV is a subject of interesting study.

## Clarity

It has been indicated earlier that clarity[2] is interre-

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2. By clarity is meant a translation that expresses in unmistakable terms the sense of the Greek text. The passages considered in this section are cases in which the ASV's renderings were either unintelligible or ambiguous and where such have been replaced by lucid constructions in the RSV. Passages are not discussed in this section where clarity results merely from an improvement of English style.

lated with accuracy, for it is a product of accurate translation. Many of the passages dealt with under the heading of accuracy are also good examples of clear translation. Some passages, however, are especially made clear in the RSV where the ASV's renderings often caused misunderstandings.[3]

The Greek of Mt. 8: 12 reads: εκει εσται ο κλαυθμος και ο βρυγμος των οδοντων. The ASV renders this sentence as literally as possible: "there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth". The RSV makes a slightly different translation: "there men will weep and gnash their teeth". By supplying "men" as the subject, the RSV's rendering gives meaning to εκει. At the same time it gives force to εκει since it retains the Greek word order and leaves "there" at the head of the sentence. The ASV's rendering, however, weakens the locative force of "there" to the extent that it seems almost superfluous.

The ASV of Mt. 10: 8 says: "freely ye received, freely give". The Greek reads: δωρεαν ελαβετε, δωρεαν δοτε. The word δωρεαν is an accusative form used as an adverb and means "as a gift, without payment, gratis".[4] Since the word "freely" is an adverb of manner, the ASV translation is technically correct. However, the word "freely" may be taken in the sense of

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3. Although the passages to be exhibited in the following pages have generally been improved in private translations the ASV still required correction in the official RSV, and it is this comparison which will here be reported.

4. A-G, p. 209.

"generously" or "liberally". The RSV clears up this possible misunderstanding and translates: "You have received without pay, give without pay".

"He went up into the hills by himself to pray" (Mt. 14: 23). "By himself" is a clear translation of κατ ιδιαν. The translation of the ASV ("he went up into the mountain apart to pray") is misleading--as though the mountain was separate or "apart".[5]

According to the ASV, on the night of the Last Supper Jesus "took a cup and gave thanks, and gave to them saying, Drink ye all of it" (Mt. 26: 27). "Drink ye all of it" has often been interpreted to mean that the disciples were to drink all of the contents of the cup. What Jesus actually meant is brought out clearly in the translation of the RSV: "Drink of it, all of you".

The ASV of Lk. 16: 8 reads: "And his lord commended the unrighteous steward because he had done wisely...." How much better is the RSV which translates: "The master commended the dishonest steward for his prudence"--clearing up a possible false impression that the steward was complimented because of his dishonesty.

The woman of Lk. 18: 3 was not asking for vengeance when she requested the judge to "avenge" her of her adversary. Instead she was asking that justice might be done to her by her

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5. But "apart" is retained in Mt. 17: 1 when "by themselves" or "alone" would have been better translations.

opponent. The RSV makes this clear: "Vindicate me against my adversary".

The KJV in Jn. 1: 9 had translated: "That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." This poor rendering of the Greek left the impression that the verse was talking about each man who comes into the world rather than the true light which enters the world. The ASV improved the KJV by translating: "There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world" But even this is ambiguous, as is the Greek until the context is seen. How much clearer is the RSV which simply says: "The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world".

The ASV of Acts 2: 3 reads: "And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire". The Present Participle διαμεριζομεναι may be translated "parting asunder", but what does "parting asunder" mean? The reader is apt to conjure up all kinds of pictures in answering this question. The translation of the RSV makes distinct the vagueness of the ASV: "And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed".

The ASV's "joined hard to the synagogue" (Acts 18: 7) is susceptible to various interpretations. The RSV's rendering is intelligible: "next door to the synagogue".

The first Greek clause of Acts 22: 22, ηκουον δε αυτου αχρι τουτου του λογου, is clearly stated; but the ASV's rendering of it does not convey in a distinct manner the meaning of the

Greek. The ASV translates: "they gave him audience unto this word". This rendering lacks clarity since the English word "unto" has different connotations. The unambiguous Greek is made clear by the RSV's translation: "Up to this word they listened to him". "Up to this word" is an unmistakable rendering of αχρι τουτου του λογου.

"But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land" (Acts 27: 14). "Northeaster" is an understandable rendering of Ευρακυλων. The KJV's "Euroclydon" and the ASV's "Euroquilo" were only meaningless transliterations. The RSV's clear rendering was especially needed since neither the KJV nor the ASV had made any explanation in their footnotes as to the meaning of their transliterations.

The Greek Μελιτη is transliterated "Melita" by the ASV in Acts 28: 1. The word Μελιτη is actually the word used for the Island of Malta and is so translated by the RSV.

The ASV of Rom. 3: 19 says: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God". The phrase "brought under the judgment of God" may be taken to mean "brought under the condemnation of God". The RSV translates this as "held accountable to God", clarifying any possible misapprehension of the ASV's rendering.

"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" (Rom. 8: 33) is a forceful expression of Paul's question. The ASV's

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" lacks clarity because of its verbosity.

The ASV of Rom. 9: 31 reads: "But Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law". The ASV's "arrive" is normally a good translation for the verb φθανω. But the word "arrive" here does not transmit the meaning of the passage in a distinct manner. Since the word φθανω also means to come up to, reach or attain,[6] the RSV translates: "but that Israel who pursued the righteousness which is based on law did not succeed in fulfilling that law".

In Rom. 14: 1 the ASV's "not for decision of scruples" is scarcely intelligible. "Not for disputes over opinions" is a clear expression of the limitation μη εις διακρισεις διαλογισμων.

The ASV says: "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it to the Lord" (Rom. 14: 6). What does it mean to "regard" a day to the Lord? This question need not be asked when reading the RSV, for it translates: "He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord".

The command of the Apostle Paul in Rom. 16: 17 as given by the ASV, "mark them that are causing the divisions", has occasioned a variety of interpretations. Some people think that the command "mark" involves putting some kind of physical sign upon the disobedient; others have the idea that "mark"

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6. A-G, p. 864.

means to excommunicate the disobedient. But this passage means something entirely different from these interpretations. The verb σκοπεω translated "mark" by the ASV, means no more than to watch out for or notice.[7] The RSV construes this command in distinct terms: "take note of those who create dissensions".

In 1 Cor. 1: 21 the KJV's "the foolishness of preaching" sounded as though the act of preaching is foolish. The ASV had made a small improvement by adding the definite article and reading "the foolishness of the preaching". The RSV is a great advance over the ASV in translating "the foolishness of what we preach".[8] Now the reader understands that the content of preaching was regarded by men as foolish rather than the method of presenting the message itself.

According to the ASV in 1 Cor. 2: 2 the Apostle Paul says: "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified". The word "determined" here can easily be misunderstood, for it often suggests an unrelenting perseverance in the performance of some act. What this verse actually says is brought out clearly by the RSV: "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified".

Paul's statement in the ASV, "It is better to marry than

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7. A-G, p. 764.

8. The 1946 edition of the RSV read "folly" instead of "foolishness".

to burn", is another passage frequently misunderstood. Many people have unwittingly thought that "to burn" refers to condemnation. The verb πυροω does mean "to burn", but to translate it simply as "to burn" here leaves the wrong impression. The verb πυροω is employed in this passage in a figurative sense and means to "burn with sexual desire".[9] Any translation that fails to show the use of πυροω in this way falls short in fulfilling its duty of conveying the intended message of the Greek text. The RSV's rendering is to be complimented for its clarity: "For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion".

1 Cor. 9: 6 asks the question: "Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?" The ASV's "working" is replaced by "working for a living". This substitution results in a more lengthy rendering but is entirely justified in order to convey the precise meaning of the Pauline thought. The context of this chapter makes it manifest that the discussion is not merely about "working" but concerns "working for a living".

Concerning the woman's adornment in the worship assemblies, the RSV pictures Paul as saying: "If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God" (1 Cor. 11: 16). This translation may be termed a paraphrase, but the sense of the Greek is elliptical.

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9. A-G, p. 738.

All kinds of illusions ~~ont~~ have resulted from the literalism of the KJV and the ASV: "But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God". The RSV offers to the reader the clear meaning of the Apostle by deviating from a word-for-word rendering, and thus overcomes the shortcomings of a literal rendering that occasions confusion and misunderstanding.

The ASV reads in 1 Cor. 12: 7: "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal". The words "to profit withal" mean very little to the average reader. How much clearer is the RSV's rendering: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good"!

1 Cor. 12: 28 reads: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles...." (KJV-ASV). This kind of rendering may leave the impression that God "put" or "placed" the apostles and other designated officials in the church. The verb τιθημι is employed here in the sense of "appoint", which is made clear in the RSV's translation: "And God has appointed in the church first apostles...."

A difference of translation between the ASV and the RSV is found in 1 Cor. 15: 3. The ASV reads: "For I delivered to you first of all...that Christ died for our sins...." The RSV reads: "For I delivered to you as of first importance ...that Christ died for our sins...." The ASV's "first of all" is a vague and ambiguous rendering: "first of all" may refer to a sequence of events or may be equivalent to the RSV's translation ("as of first importance"). Arndt-Gingrich

says of ἐν πρώτοις : "among the first = most important things, i. e. as of first importance".[10] The RSV's rendering "as of first importance" clears up the ambiguity of the ASV.

In Gal. 5: 12 the ASV translates: "I would that they... would even go beyond circumcision". "Go beyond circumcision" is the ASV's rendering of ἀποκόψονται. The verb ἀποκόπτω means "to make a eunuch of, castrate".[11] The rendering of the ASV, "go beyond circumcision", is too vague and does not bear the precise meaning of the passage to the reader. The RSV's translation is both accurate and clear: "I wish those ...would mutilate themselves".

The ASV retains the translation of the KJV in Gal. 6: 6 and the result is a misleading rendering. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things". The most important word in the understanding of this passage is "communicate". "Communicate" has several connotations, but usually suggests an interchange of thoughts or an impartation of knowledge. The average reader of the Bible thinks of this when he sees the word "communicate". But the writer of Galatians is not talking of "communication" in this sense. The verb κοινωνέω is defined by Liddell-Scott-Jones as to "have or do in common with, share, take part in a thing with another".[12] Thus, according to Gal. 6: 6, the instructed man is not to impart knowledge to the teacher but

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10. A-G, p. 733. 11. A-G, p. 92. 12. L-S-J, p. 969.

is to "share all good things with him" (RSV). "Communicate" of 1 Tim. 6: 18 and Heb. 13: 16 is likewise to be understood as "share", and is so treated by the RSV. The ASV footnote gives an alternative translation at 1 Tim. 6: 18. The text reads "willing to communicate", while the footnote says "or, ready to sympathize". The latter is misleading. Liddell-Scott-Jones says it is used in the sense of sympathy "in medical writers".[13] Further, since 1 Tim. 6: 17-19 is a charge to be given the rich, it would appear more probable that κοινωνικους means the wealthy are to be ready to share their possessions"--thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future". The RSV expresses clearly the idea of 1 Tim. 6: 18 by rendering "liberal and generous".

The ASV's rendering of 2 Thes. 1: 7 is very vague: "... and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire...." The form of this verse is not only poorly constructed English, but reads as though "rest" were a verb instead of a noun. The RSV translates: "...and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire...." The structure of the whole passage is remarkably improved by the RSV, making it clear that "rest" is a noun and not a verb.

The word πρεσβυτερος is normally translated "elder".

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13. Ibid.

In 1 Tim. 5: 1, however, the word πρεσβυτερω occurs in contrast with νεωτερους and should be translated in a manner that indicates age and not that the reference is to an official of the church. The RSV's treatment of this passage makes this idea distinct: "Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father". "Older man" is much clearer here than the ASV's "elder".

The ASV reads in 2 Tim. 2: 24: "And the Lord's servant must not strive...." This translation is ambiguous, for the English word "strive" is often used in the sense of "make an effort" or "try". The Greek reads: δουλον δε κυριου ου δει μαχεσθαι. The verb μαχομαι means to fight and is used figuratively to mean "quarrel" or "dispute".[14] The RSV's rendering makes this verse clear: "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome...."

The KJV of Heb. 11: 40 reads: "God having provided some better thing for us". The ASV does not alter this misleading translation except in changing "for" to "concerning". The translation of the RSV clarifies the meaning of the writer: "since God had foreseen something better for us". The word προβλεπω means to "see beforehand, foresee".[15] The KJV translated it as "provide" since at one time "provide" meant to foresee".[16] Although the ASV reads "foresee" in its footnote,

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14. A-G, p. 497. 15. A-G, p. 710.

16. "Provide" is a combination of two Latin words: pro (before) and videre (see). The New Century Dictionary lists "foresee" as an obsolete usage of "provide".

it retains the misleading term "provide" in its text. Since the ASV had changed "prevent" to "precede", in the interest of clarity it should have also altered "provide" to "foresee". The RSV supplies this shortcoming of the ASV.

Innumerable passages and terms that are obscure in the ASV have been clarified in the RSV. The passages cited above are merely representative of the RSV's attainment of clarity over the ASV.

## Consistency

To make a fair evaluation of the RSV New Testament's consistency in rendering of words is a supremely difficult task. Often the RSV is labeled as "inconsistent" in its renderings when the critic fails to recall that the RSV makes no pretence of attaining the kind of methodical consistency characteristic of the ASV. A good translation will indeed vary its renderings of one Greek word as the occasion demands. In Greek as in English there are often many shades of meaning attached to one word.

Yet most translations aim at a degree of consistency. In the RSV this is especially apparent in its endeavor to maintain Synoptic parallelism. That the RSV has consciously sought to have some measure of consistency in its renderings is also apparent from C. T. Craig's chapter in <u>An Introduction to the</u>

Revised Standard Version of the New Testament.[17] In this chapter Craig rightfully castigates the KJV for its needless inconsistency, citing a number of examples from the KJV that are illustrative of its free treatment of the Greek text. This being the case, it would appear the RSV has not been unmindful of the values of a relatively consistent rendering of the text.

Recognizing that only a relative degree of consistency is desirable in a translation, the points discussed below are presented as mild criticisms against the RSV New Testament. In these points it seems that the RSV has lapsed back into the fault of the KJV--an unnecessary inconsistency in rendering that detracts from rather than improves the translation as a whole.

The word πορνεια is translated in Mt. 5: 32 and in four other places as "unchastity". Πορνεια occurs twenty-five times in all in the Greek text. In addition to "unchastity" the RSV renders πορνεια as "immorality" (eleven times), "fornication" (six times), and "impure passion" (two times).[18] It is especially interesting to note that in two lists of vices the word "fornication" is retained (Mt. 15: 19; Mk. 7: 21), but in a similar list in Gal. 5: 19; "immorality" is preferred as the translation of πορνεια. In the Book of Revelation πορνεια

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17. Craig, Introduction, p. 19.

18. In 1 Cor. 5: 1 where πορνεια is found two times, in the interest of good style it is left untranslated one time.

is translated three ways: "immorality", "fornication" and "impure passion". One or two words at best would be sufficient in translating

The RSV, as seen in Mt. 5: 47 (contrast with Mt. 4: 21), maintains a traditional but illogical distinction in the translation of αδελφοι. The RSV translates "brothers" when reference is made to physical kinship and "brethren" when reference is made to spiritual ties.[19]

The KJV and the ASV rendered the word δουλος as "servant" in every instance of its 120 occurrences. Goodspeed gives his strong objection to such a translation of δουλος in his chapter of the Introduction.[20] Yet the RSV, undoubtedly against Goodspeed's wishes, alters "servant" to "slave" in only thirty-one places--leaving "servant" no less than eighty-nine times.

The word ραββι is found in the New Testament fifteen times. The RSV transliterates it simply as "Rabbi" on ten occasions; but in Mt. 8: 19 (and 4 other times) translates it as "Master", with a footnote reading "Rabbi".[21] The manner in which the RSV deals with ραββι shows a strong dependence on the KJV as opposed to the ASV, the latter of which consistently transliterated "Rabbi". However the RSV is wavering

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19. The RSV doubtless makes this distinction in its interest of preserving terms of familiar association.

20. Goodspeed, Introduction, p. 34.

21. The 1952 edition substitutes "Teacher" for "Master", a distinct improvement.

in its reliance upon the KJV: in Matthew and Mark the KJV's "Master" for ραββι is followed but in the Gospel of John it is rejected, ραββι always being "Rabbi". Here the RSV is inconsistent in handling a term which can be rendered consistently without the danger of redundancy.

In most cases, as in Mt. 20: 2, the word δηναριον is simply translated "denarius". For some reason, however, δηναριον is translated "coin" in the Synoptic accounts (Mt. 22: 19; Mk. 12: 15; Lk. 20: 24) where Jesus is asked about paying taxes to Caesar. This is more remarkable when it is recalled that the δηναριον was a coin with Caesar's image on it. The RSV's "coin" fails to bring into focus this aspect of the account. It is hardly sufficient to put "denarius" in the footnote, for on all other occasions when δηναριον occurs it is translated "denarius" in the text of the RSV.

The term χιλιαρχος is rendered four different ways by the RSV: "officer" (Mk. 6: 21), "captain" (Jn. 18: 12; Rev. 19: 18), "tribune" (seventeen times in Acts 21-25) and "general" (Rev. 6: 15). It is interesting to note that χιλιαρχος appears in the KJV text in Acts 24: 7. Both the ASV and the RSV put this verse in their margins on textual grounds. However, in giving the translation of χιλιαρχος in the margin the RSV follows the KJV and the ASV and renders it as "chief captain". Surely a more consistent rendering of χιλιαρχος could have been given by the RSV.

The Greek σταδιον is treated in various ways by the RSV. In such passages as Lk. 24: 13; Jn. 6: 19: 11: 18, distance

is computed in "miles" and the number of "stadia" is put in the footnotes. However in Rev. 14: 20 and 21: 16, distance is counted in terms of "stadia" and the approximate number of "miles" is put in the footnotes. In Mt. 14: 24 the word σταδιους is translated by the unfamiliar "furlongs".

Too much variety is in evidence in the RSV's treatment of μη γενοιτο This expression appears ten times in Romans and is always translated by the RSV as "By no means!"; in 1 Cor. 6: 15 it is translated simply "Never!"; in the Book of Galatians (2: 17: 3: 21) it is translated "Certainly not!", although the construction of Gal. 6: 14 where it is found again necessitates "But far be it from me to....". For some unknown reason "God forbid!" is retained in Lk. 20: 16.

The word διωκω is translated nine times in the ASV as "follow after". This rendering undoubtedly needed improvement, but the RSV chooses six ways to translate these nine passages: "pursue" (Rom. 9: 30, 31; 14: 19), "follow" (Lk. 17: 23), "make ...your aim" (1 Cor. 14: 1), "seek to do" (1 Thes. 5: 15), "aim at" (1 Tim. 6: 11; 2Tim. 2: 22) and "strive for" (Heb. 12: 14). Variety is desirable in translating διωκω but this much variety does not seem necessary or helpful.

The same Greek in Synoptic parallelism is normally treated by the RSV in the same way. However, two passages in the Pauline epistles are handled differently, although these passages are identical in the Greek. The Greek of 1 Cor. 5: 6 and Gal. 5: 9 reads: μικρα ζυμη ολον το φυραμα ζυμοι. The RSV translates in 1 Cor. 5: 6: "a little leaven ferments

the whole lump of dough". But exactly the same clause is translated in Gal. 5: 9: "A little yeast leavens the whole lump". To render these passages in the same manner, especially since they were both written by the same author, would have been of great advantage to the careful student. To fail to do so manifests a needless inconsistency.

Similar Pauline expressions are handled in quite different ways by the RSV: "I want you to know" (1 Cor. 10: 1), "I do not want you to be uninformed" (1 Cor. 12: 1), "we do not want you to be ignorant" (2 Cor. 1: 8), and "we would not have you ignorant" (1 Thes. 4: 13). Even a careful student of the Bible might mistake the basic identity of these expressions treated so differently by the RSV.

The word μελος occurs thirteen times in 1 Cor. 12: 12-27. The ASV had rendered μελος in this passage consistently as "member", supplying "part" on four occasions. The RSV, however, renders μελος as "member" (seven times), "part" (two times but supplies it six other times), "organ" (two times), and in two instances leaves it untranslated (both in vs. 26). This appears to be an unwarranted diversity in rendering μελος XXCNT and G had translated μελος invariably as "part". The passage when rendered consistently may sound dull and perhaps monotonous, but the unrestrained use of synonyms takes away the continuity of the passage.

The above examples seem to indicate undue variation in the rendering of the Greek text. Other passages might have been cited were it not for the danger of over-stressing the

element of consistency.[22] Yet the fact remains that the RSV New Testament would be a more satisfactory translation had it shared a little more in the ASV's quest for consistency in the rendering of words.[23]

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22. E. g., the Greek verb περιπατεω is rendered twelve different ways by the RSV, but a word like this has of course many varieties of uses in the New Testament.

23. To the credit of the RSV it is to be noted that the 1952 edition corrects some of the inconsistent renderings of the 1946 edition. E. g., "fallen asleep" replaces "have died" in 1 Cor. 15: 18, in harmony with vss. 6, 20, and 51 of the same chapter.

## Chapter VIII

## THE LITERARY FORM OF THE RSV NEW TESTAMENT

In the Introduction to his translation of the Old and New Testaments, Dr. James Moffatt writes:

> Dr. Johnson once observed that the first excellence of a translator lay in producing pages "such as may be read with pleasure by those who do not know the original". But there is pleasure and pleasure, in this kind of work as in any other. The ideal of a translator is to let his readers enjoy part of that pleasure which the original once afforded to its audience in some far-off century, and I venture to hope that this translation may occasionally give such pleasure, in some degree, to those who cannot consult the Hebrew and the Greek scriptures.[1]

Dr. Moffatt here alludes to the fact that much of the "pleasure" of a translation depends on the form of expression it assumes. Accuracy of rendering is indispensable for the scholar and

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1. James Moffatt, A New Translation of the Bible (London: Hodder and Stoughton), p. v.

student, but in the long run the general use of a translation depends largely upon its appeal to the individual's needs and tastes. A translation by its literary form[2] must commend itself to the reader. Because of its unique form--unique in contrast to the other authorized versions--the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament commends itself to the average reader.

## External Form of Translation

The external form or mechanics of translation has been greatly improved in the RSV New Testament. One of the most noticable gains in this respect is the substitution of modern punctuation for the crude punctuation forms used in the ASV. The use of the colon has been greatly reduced and is found in the RSV rarely, except in introducing quotations. The comma likewise appears much less frequently, in keeping with present-day trends. The dash and the parenthesis are effectively employed to bring out the meaning of the original.

Improved punctuation occasionally throws new light on the meaning of Biblical passages. One illustration of this is in Lk. 19: 22-23 where the RSV follows the punctuation of the

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2. The term "literary form" is used here in a general sense. In this chapter the following subdivisions are made: external form of translation, "Biblical English", internal form of translation and use in public worship. These factors all relate to the "literary form" of the RSV New Testament.

Westcott-Hort and Nestle texts. The ASV committee translated this passage in the following manner:

He saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up that which I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow; then wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, and I at my coming should have required it with interest?

The reader of the ASV gets the picture that the master acknowledges the servant's statement that he is a hard man. This would tend to offset the force of the parable and put the lord in a "dim light". But the RSV phrases a question where the ASV had made a declarative sentence:

"He said to him, 'I will condemn you out of your own mouth, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money into the bank, and at my coming I should have collected it with interest?'"

The first question mark in the RSV makes a great difference. Instead of the master admitting his austerity he implies the hypothetical nature of the steward's accusation.[3]

In its use of capital letters the RSV does not differ greatly from the ASV. As a rule it does not capitalize the

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3. Another similar case of changed punctuation is Jn. 1: 42. The ASV reads: "Thou art Simon the son of John". The RSV reads: "so you are Simon the son of John?" The RSV subtitutes an interrogative for a declarative sentence. Here the RSV does not follow the punctuation of the Westcott-Hort and Nestle texts. Perhaps the RSV is influenced at this point by Moffatt's translation which makes this sentence read as a question.

possessive and personal pronouns in reference to Deity.[4] However, the word "Spirit" is capitalized more frequently.[5] Other typical examples of the RSV's use of capitals are: "Unleavened Bread" (Mt. 26: 17), "Passover" (Jn. 2: 13), "Dedication" (Jn. 10: 22), "Field of Blood" (Acts 1: 19), "Life" (Acts 5: 20), "Day" (Heb. 10: 25), and "Majestic Glory" (2 Pet. 1: 17). It is interesting to note that "son of man" appears in the RSV as "Son of man", following the KJV-ASV form.

The RSV continues the practice of the ASV in arranging its material in paragraphs, except that in the RSV the paragraphs are more numerous. The Book of Matthew in the ASV has 165 paragraphs; but there are 200 paragraphs in the RSV, an average of more than one paragraph per chapter. In the Book of Second Corinthians the RSV has fifty-two paragraphs as compared to the ASV's thirty-five; in Hebrews the RSV has fifty-seven, whereas the ASV has thirty-seven. The shorter paragraphs of the RSV are of practical benefit to the reader since the text is broken down into digestible parts.

It is likely that the introduction of quotation marks by the RSV committee is welcomed by most readers. All direct statements and quotations from the Old Testament are enclosed within quotation marks. Occasionally familiar statements or phrases are also placed within quotation marks: for example,

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4. An exception to this is 1 Jn. 5: 18 where "He" makes it clear that the reference is to Christ.

5. Cf. Rom. 1: 4; 1 Cor. 2: 12; 1 Tim. 3: 16, etc.

"all things are lawful for me" (1 Cor. 6: 12) and "bad company ruins good morals" (1 Cor. 15: 33). At other times the RSV uses quotation marks for reasons of emphasis and clarity. 1 Cor. 8: 1-6 reads:

> Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge". "Knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if one loves God, one is known by him.
> Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence", and that "there is no God but one". For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth--as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"--yet for us there is one God....

It is infrequent when the RSV employs quotation marks in this manner, but doing so here results in a clear and effective translation.

One of the chief merits of the Revised Version of 1881 was its incorporation of marginal references explaining such things as obscure terms, differences in the Greek text and alternative translations.[6] Although the number of marginal references is

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6. These footnote references were not only important because of their content but were especially significant because most of the KJV editions failed to include the notes of explanation appended by the KJ translators. These notes were not included in most KJV editions despite the fact that the translators had spoken out so openly in defense of their presence. They said: "Some peradventure would have no variety of senses to be set in the margine, lest the authoritie of the Scriptures for deciding of controversies by that shew of uncertaintie, should somewhat be shaken. But we hold their judgment not to be so sound in this point....Therefore as Saint Augustine saith, that varietie of Translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of the Scriptures: so diversitie of signification and sense in the margine, where the text is not so cleare, must needs doe good, yea, is necessary, as we are persuaded"--Edgar J. Goodspeed (ed), Translators to the Reader, pp. 34-35.

decreased in the RSV,[7] nevertheless many notations made are genuine helps to the reader. Lk. 22: 31-32 may be cited as representative of the particularly important notes. The text reads: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren". To verse 31 the note is attached: "The Greek for you here is plural; in verse 32 it is singular". Were it not for this explanation the reader would get the impression that Satan had made demands on Peter in particular rather than the disciples as a whole.

Probably the most significant change in the RSV as to external form is its omission of italics. This change was not new since most of the private translations, especially of this century, had done the same thing; but it is a significant change because it is a distinct departure from the KJV-ASV tradition.[8] Dean Weigle indicates[9] that the RSV committee did not follow the ASV in this respect because the use of italics for words not expressly represented in the Greek text is a misleading

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7. Wikgren has estimated that the footnotes of the RSV are 75 per cent less than those of the ASV. Cf. Allen P. Wikgren, The Journal of Religion, XXVII (1947), 124.

8. The departure by the RSV from the KJV-ASV tradition in the use of italics has drawn serious criticism from some quarters. One of the RSV's chief opponents at this point is Oswald T. Allis. Cf. Oswald T. Allis, Revision or New Translation? (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1948), p. 25ff.

9. Weigle, Introduction, p. 56.

practice.[10] Weigle explains that the "RSV omits italics altogether, on the principle that only words necessary to convey the meaning in English are used".[11]

## "Biblical English"

Some people feel that the Bible should be translated in a different type of literary form than that found in other books: that because the Bible is a unique book it should have a style all its own, phrased in words that may be termed "Biblical English". It is maintained that such a style is conducive to reverence for the Bible and is needed in order to draw a line of demarcation between it and other literature.

The revisions of 1881 and 1901 show that its committee members shared this persuasion. Although many misleading archaisms in the KJV had been altered by the ASV,[12] many others had been retained in the ASV translation. A few exemplary

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10. William L. Wonderly, among others, is in agreement with this judgment. Speaking of the use of italics, he writes: "In recent revisions, even in languages where italics were formerly used, the tendency is to abandon them as impractical if not positively misleading"--"What About Italics?" Bible Translator, VII (1956), 114.

11. Weigle, Introduction, p. 56.

12. A few noted examples of the ASV's improvement of misleading archaisms in the KJV are "spake first to him" for "prevented him" (Mt. 17: 25), "baggage" for "carriages" (Acts 21: 15), "made a circuit" for "fetched a compass" (Acts 28: 13), "hinder" for "let" (Rom. 1: 13), "in nothing be anxious" for "be careful for nothing" (Phil. 4: 6) and "grandchildren" for "nephews" (1 Tim. 5: 4).

archaisms found in the ASV include: "glory" for "praise" (Mt. 6: 2); "suffer"[13] for "allow" (Mt. 19: 14); "divers" for "various" (Mk. 1: 34); "dispute" for "discuss" (Mk. 9: 34); "amazed for "distressed" (Mk. 14: 33); "doctor" for "teacher" (Lk. 5: 17); "fashion" for "appearance" (Lk. 9: 29); "substance" for "property" (Lk. 15: 13); "gainsay" for "contradict" (Lk. 21: 15); "overcharge" for "weigh down" (Lk. 21: 34); "privily" for "secretly" (Acts 16: 37); "allege" for "prove" (Acts 17: 3); "quicken" for "come to life" (1 Cor. 15: 36); "table" for "tablet" (2 Cor. 3: 3); and "lucre" for "gain" (1 Tim. 3: 8).

The flavor of "Biblical English" was retained by the ASV with its preservation of other archaisms. The preposition "of" is still used in the ASV for "by". In the ASV the preposition "to" sometimes stands for "with" (Acts 5: 40) and "for" (Lk. 3: 8). The ASV uses "afore" (Rom. 1: 2) as well as "before"; "aforetime" (Jn. 9: 13) and "beforetime"; "afterwards" (Jn. 13: 36) and "afterward"; "specially" (Acts 25: 26) and "especially"; "mine" (Lk. 9: 38) and "my"--"mine" usually being employed before vowels.[14]

The ASV not only preserves the archaic language of the KJV but actually creates additional archaic words and phrases.

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13. The KJV uses "suffer" thirty-five times in the sense of "allow". Of these thirty-five cases, the ASV alters only eight: "Give leave" (Lk. 8: 32; Acts 21: 39), "leave" (Lk. 12: 39), "send" (Mt. 8: 31), "give" (Acts 2: 27; 13: 35) and "permit" (1 Tim. 2: 12). In other words, twenty-seven times the ASV retains the archaic "suffer".

14. Yet the ASV has such as "my oxen" (Mt. 22: 4) and "my affairs" (Eph. 6: 21).

Such words as "holden", "aforetime", "must needs", "sojourn", "behooved", "would fain", "lest haply",[15] "howbeit", "us-ward", and "you-ward" are multiplied by the ASV translators. Samuel Hemphill speaks of this unnecessary accumulation of archaisms in the following manner:

> I refer to the unnatural importation of an archaic flavour, as if a shower...had been sprinkled over the work, as a cook peppers her culinary preparations....It is no exaggeration to say that in at least five hundred and forty-nine places the Revised Version is more archaic than the Authorized Version, and that in all those instances the importation reminds us of the practice usual amongst certain dealers, of faking Sheraton shells, or devising wormholes in modern Chippendale.[16]

The many unfamiliar and unnecessary archaisms retained in the ASV often transform a poignant narrative in the New Testament into a colorless and methodical verbal skeleton. By such archaisms the New Testament takes on a halo of artificiality and ceases to speak in the kind of living terms in which it was originally composed. The RSV committee did not deem as essential the retention of these archaisms in preserving the KJV-ASV tradition. It felt that this tradition did not depend on strange, unfamiliar phraseology, but rather the transmission of the Biblical message in simple and meaningful terms.

The misleading archaisms of the ASV have been eliminated

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15. "Lest Haply" is found in the ASV seventeen times where the KJV does not use it. Cf. Introduction, pp. 55-56.

16. Samuel Hemphill, A History of the Revised Version of the New Testament (London: Elliot Stock, 1906), p. 85. Hemphill's remarks concern the Revised Version of 1881 but are largely applicable to the ASV.

in the RSV. Likewise archaic verbal endings in the third person are no longer to be found. Shorter forms are preferred: "to" for "unto", "on" for "upon", "whoever" for "whosoever",[17] "as" for "according as", "because" for "because that", "for" for "for that". Other characteristic ASV archaisms disappear in a similar way.

In at least one respect, however, the RSV New Testament has preserved "Biblical English". This is in its use of "thee", "thou", "thine", "thy" and the verbal endings "-est" and "-edst" in language addressed to God. The decision made by the RSV committee in this practice is described by Dean Weigle. He writes--

> we found ourselves faced, at the outset, with a major question: Shall we continue the use of the second person singular, "thou", with its correlative forms, "thee", "thy", "thine", and the verb endings "-est" and "-edst"? That question remained unsettled in 1932, after two years of discussion, the last vote on the subject being a tie. When the work was resumed in 1937 two years more of debate and experiment ensued before the decision was finally reached to use these forms only in language addressed to God, and elsewhere to follow modern usage.[18]

It was indeed a difficult choice to make, and one which subsequently was to receive criticism from many sources. Some voiced objections seemingly on the basis of personal preference. O. T. Allis says:

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17. All of the ASV's "-soever" words become "-ever" in the RSV.

18. Weigle, "The Making of the RSV", p. 168.

> We believe that the "thou" is too deeply embedded in the language of piety and religious devotion to be rudely displaced by the "you" of the modern colloquial. The fact that the diction of the AV differs from that of the daily newspaper is not necessarily a liability. Many regard it as a distinct asset. They enjoy the quaint and old-fashioned language of the Bible and want it changed as little as possible.[19]

Allis further says: "Both Hebrew and Greek distinguish between the singular (thou) and the plural (~~thee~~ ye). The 1611 version carefully observed the distinction, not because it was Jacobean, but because it was biblical. The ARV retained it for the same reason".[20] Allis fails to recall, however, that there are many other distinctions in personal pronouns in Greek and Hebrew: in Greek many differences in form of personal pronouns that have no English equivalents, and in Hebrew many differences in form and gender of personal pronouns that cannot be indicated in any translation. Many of these distinctions have been irretrievably lost for centuries in English versions. The changing form of the English language has made "thee", "thou", "thy", and "ye" obsolete. Why should a Bible for the people continue to harbor archaisms that are not only foreign to the common vernacular but are actually obtuse hindrances for many readers? Allis objects to "You are the Christ, the Son of God" on the ground that Jesus is made a man (by use of "you") while it is affirmed he is the Christ. He overlooks the fact that the "you" of the confession is the exact form

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19. Oswald T. Allis, "RSV Appraisal: Old Testament", Christianity Today, I (July 8, 1957), 6.

20. Ibid.

in the Greek of "you are Peter". Allis seems to be dissatisfied that the RSV does not read "Thou art the Christ" and at the same time read "You are Peter".

Others, such as Martin Rist[21] have pointed out the inconsistent application by the RSV translators of its rule on archaic personal pronouns. It is certain that the RSV uses "thee" and its correlative forms in language other than that addressed to God. In some cases the 1952 edition has changed passages from archaic to modern forms,[22] but in other cases the inconsistency of the RSV on this point is still apparent. In addition to language addressed to God, generally speaking the New Testament quotations of Old Testament passages preserve archaic pronoun forms.[23] This is true when Old Testament passages refer to such as Christ (Mt. 22: 44; Heb. 1: 5ff.), "daughter of Zion" (Jn. 12: 15),[24] "Jerusalem" (Gal. 4: 27) and "Babylon" (Rev. 18: 10). But even this practice of putting Old Testament quotations in archaic form is not always

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21. Martin Rist, "Should the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament Be Revised?", The Iliff Review, IX (1952), 98-101.

22. Cf. Mt. 2: 6; Lk. 1: 76.

23. Yet these same passages appear in the Old Testament (1952 edition) in modern form.

24. Jn. 12: 15 is put in archaic form: "Fear not daughter of Zion; behold thy king is coming, sitting on an ass's colt". A parallel passage, Mt. 21: 5, is put in modern form: "Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass". This inconsistency is not corrected in the 1952 edition.

followed.[25] The RSV committee would probably have done better by limiting the use of archaic personal pronouns to passages of prayer, which is the rule adopted by the British committee governing its present work of translation.[26]

## Internal Form of Translation

By its improvement of the mechanics of translation and its elimination of much of the "Biblical English" characteristic of the ASV, the RSV committee has produced a translation of the New Testament that appeals to the average reader. But the appeal of the RSV New Testament is more deep-rooted--it lies in the style of the translation itself. The style of the RSV represents a conscious effort to return to the simple, classic style of the KJV.[27] Thus its style is direct, understandable, and at times extraordinarily excellent.

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25. Cf. Mt. 21: 5 and Mt. 2: 6 (1952 edition).

26. Cf. W. Schwarz, Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation (Cambridge: University Press, 1955), p. 2

27. The beauty of the English style of the KJV has been a subject of much discussion. For a presentation of different views on the style of the KJV, Cf. Philip Schaff, A Companion to the Greek Testament and the English Version (London: Macmillan and Co., 1883), p. 345ff. In the Preface of the 1952 edition the translators of the RSV express their debt to the KJV: "The King James Version has with good reason been termed 'the noblest monument of English prose'. Its revisers in 1881 expressed admiration for 'its simplicity, its dignity, its power, its happy turns of expression...the music of its cadences, and the felicities of its rhythm'. It entered, as no other book has, into the making of the personal character and the public institutions of the English-speaking peoples. We owe to it an incalculable debt"--p. iii.

One of the troublesome features of the ASV is its excessive verbosity. It is safe to say that there is no unnecessary verbiage in the RSV. Pleonastic words, such as the conjunction και,[28] have been discarded; pleonastic phrases and clauses unnecessary in conveying the meaning of the text have likewise been eliminated.[29] The harmless but monotonous use of "even" to indicate apposition has disappeared, apposition now being indicated simply by punctuation. Whereas the ASV was a more lengthy reproduction of the KJV, the RSV is much shorter than its archetype. Dean Weigle speaks of this brevity of style:

> We must speak with caution, for there has been no set purpose to reduce the number of words and no sufficient count has been made. But a count of the words in a few chapters, chosen from various books, shows that the style of the Revised Standard Version is terse.[30]

In support of this statement a short table is presented by Weigle showing how the RSV compares with the KJV and the ASV on the number of words used in translation.[31] Wikgren says that the RSV has been estimated at 20,000 words less than the ASV.[32]

Another improvement that results in a more direct style is the shorter sentence structure found in the RSV as compared

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28. Cf. Lk. 6: 13, 14; Phil 4: 3; Heb. 4: 2; 1 Pet. 3: 21.

29. Cf. 1 Cor. 5: 1; 15: 1-2.

30. Weigle, Introduction, p. 56. 31. Ibid., p. 57.

32. Wikgren, "The Revised Standard New Testament", The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow, p. 399.

to the KJV and the ASV. One noted example of this is found in Eph. 1: 3-14. The ASV (but not the KJV) had linked the entire passage together as one sentence, but the RSV has broken it down into six distinct sentences with two paragraphs. Col. 1: 9-17 is another example. In the ASV it appears as one sustained sentence, but the RSV divides it into five sentences and two paragraphs. The ASV's work only made more clumsy the already cumbersome sentence structure of the KJV. The manner in which the RSV shortens the sentence length of the KJV and the ASV is illustrated by Table II below.

Table II

NUMBER OF SENTENCES IN THE RSV AS COMPARED WITH THE KJV AND THE ASV

| Books | Versions | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | KJV | ASV | RSV |
| Mark[a] . . . . . | 623 | 615 | 632 |
| Romans . . . . . | 397 | 354 | 423 |
| Ephesians. . . . . | 72 | 61 | 82 |
| Hebrews. . . . . | 220 | 198 | 258 |
| 1 Peter. . . . . | 64 | 61 | 96 |

a. Including Mk. 16: 9-20.

Thus in this respect the RSV is a vast improvement over the KJV and the ASV. Breaking down the length of the sentences aids the reader, especially the unskilled one, in his attempt to grasp the message of the New Testament.

The English style of the RSV is not only direct but it is also understandable. Terseness and intelligibility complement each other in the RSV translation. The RSV conveys the message of the New Testament in a succinct manner, in words that can be easily understood. The translators made a conscious attempt to phrase their work in words that could be understood even by children. Craig says:

> I doubt if any translation has been made before where competent educators analyzed the work in process from the point of view of the question, "Would a child of twelve understand this?" Of course all of the New Testament books were written for adults, and there is nothing which a translator can do to alter that fact. He can, however, avoid so far as possible words and expressions which would be unintelligible to youth. That has been the constant aim.[33]

In a number of passages the RSV by its choice of English terms has represented the Greek text in a more understandable manner.[34] "Thou shalt not forswear thyself" (KJV-ASV of Mt. 5: 33) becomes an intelligible command in the RSV: "You shall not swear falsely." The ASV's "sick of the palsy" (Mt. 9: 2) is simply a "paralytic" in the RSV; the ASV's "issue of blood"

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33. Clarence T. Craig, "The Word of God for Today", International Journal of Religious Education, XXII (February, 1946), 5.

34. Some of the following passages might have been included in previous sections but are used here to illustrate the intelligible English style of the RSV.

(Mt. 9: 20) becomes "hemorrhage" in the RSV. In Mt. 12: 20 "smoking flax" of the ASV is changed to "smoldering wick". The obscure "railings" (ASV of Mt. 15: 19) is made understandable by the RSV's "slander". The RSV's "who wished to settle accounts" (Mt. 18: 24) is more intelligible than the ASV's "who would make a reckoning". The ASV's retention of the KJV's "whited sepulchres" in Mt. 23: 27 may be a favorite turn of expression, but the RSV's "whitewashed tombs" is more easily understood. The reader of the ASV may not understand that "an alabaster cruse" (Mt. 26: 7) is the same thing as the RSV's "an alabaster jar." "A notorious prisoner" (Mt. 27: 16) is an improvement over the ASV's "a notable prisoner". The expression "undressed cloth" (Mk. 2: 21) might mean very little to the reader of the ASV; the RSV reads "unshrunk cloth". The ASV's "mount of Olives over against the temple" (Mk. 13: 3) becomes clear in the RSV: "mount of Olives opposite the temple". The RSV's "doorkeeper" (Mk. 13: 34) is a clearer term than the ASV's "porter." The context of Lk. 5: 4 might suggest that the ASV's "draught" is the same as the RSV's "catch" but the RSV is to be commended for this clarification of terms. The ASV's "ambassage" (Lk. 14: 32) becomes "embassy" in the RSV. Instead of the little used "malefactor" (ASV of Lk. 23: 32) the RSV substitutes "criminal". Since the average individual thinks of "meat" in the sense of "flesh", the RSV in Jn. 4: 34 alters the ASV's "meat" to "food". "In my Father's house are many mansions" (ASV of Jn. 14: 2) may be more appealing than the

RSV's "in my Father's house are many rooms", but the RSV's alteration is entirely justified.[35] The RSV's "hate" (Rom. 12: 9) is a more familiar term than the ASV's "abhor". In 1 Cor. 10: 25 the ASV's "shambles" is scarcely intelligible; the RSV reads "meat market." The word "dissembled" is too often associated with "disassemble", but the two words have no connection whatever. The RSV translates" acted insincerely" instead of the ASV's "dissembled."

In a few passages, however, the RSV selects terms that are not easily understood. In Mt. 17: 2 it is said that Jesus "was transfigured before them". The word "transformed" is more familiar than "transfigured"--better still would be "his appearance was changed". The word "rapacity" (Mt. 23: 25) has no meaning for "a child of twelve". Why not translate "intemperance"? The RSV's "mantle" (Mt. 24: 18) may not be any more familiar than the ASV's "cloak". The word "leaven" in 1 Cor. 5: 6 might have been improved by substituting "~~leaven~~ yeast".[36] "Paschal lamb" (1 Cor. 5: 7) is not as clear as "passover lamb."

As to what constitutes excellency of style in translation is a question that occasions a variety of opinions. Yet often a translation, in whole or in part, manifests obvious merits in diction and phraseology over previous works. Several passages below are cited to illustrate the artistic and euphonious

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35. The Greek μοναι means no more than "dwelling-place" or "room". Cf. A-G, p. 529.

36. "Yeast" is used in Gal. 5: 9.

gains of the RSV over the ASV.[37]

The crude style of the ASV, due to its pedantic literalism, is nowhere more evident than in Mt. 21: 41: "He will miserably destroy those miserable men". What the ASV gained by its consistent rendering of "miserably...miserable" it lost in euphony. By a slight change of the word order and the substitution of an equivalent noun the literary form of the RSV becomes simple and euphonious: "He will put those wretches to a miserable death".

The ASV reads in Mk. 2: 12: "We never saw it on this fashion." This stiff translation is put in a more natural form by the RSV: "We never saw anything like this!"

According to the ASV a part of the message of the centurion reads: "wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee". This is a cumbersome translation for several reasons: the word order is not natural to English style, the word "wherefore" is not in accord with modern usage, and "neither thought I myself worthy" is verbose and artificial to English-speaking people. The RSV simply translates: "therefore I did not presume to come to you".

The ASV of Lk. 17: 1 reads: "It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling should come". This tedious and laborious circumlocution is eliminated by the RSV. It translates: "Temptations to sin are sure to come".

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37. The number of passages illustrating the RSV's improved style over the ASV could be multiplied almost indefinitely.

At some points the style of the ASV is not only dull but approaches monotony. This is true because it often continues to repeat the same English word instead of using appropriate synonyms. For example, the ASV of Jn. 8: 42 reads: "for I came forth and am come from God, for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me". Here three successive verbs are rendered "came", "am come" and "have come". This repetition of rendering might be understandable, although it would never fit into good English style, if in the Greek there were a similar repetition of verb forms. But in the Greek this monotony does not exist. The Greek verbal forms are εξηλθον, ηκω and εληλυθα. The RSV reads: "for I proceeded and came forth from God; and I came not of my own accord, but he sent me". This rendering is not only in better English form but retains the flavor of the original.

Rom. 7: 15-20 is one of the many difficult Pauline passages, but the literary form of the ASV makes it almost impossible for the reader to understand. This passage appears in the ASV as follows:

> For that which I do I know not: for not what I would, that do I practice; but what I hate, that I do. But if what I would not, that I do, I consent unto the law that it is good. So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me.

This passage becomes a labyrinth of confusion in the ASV because: (1) Its literalistic exactitude which called for a re-

production in English of each Greek word results in an unnatural employment of relative and demonstrative pronouns. (2) The word "would" is used in the sense of "wish" or "want", whereas "would" is now used normally as an auxiliary verb. (3) The inverted Greek order is retained by the ASV even though it is unnatural for English style. The translation of the RSV overcomes these handicaps and presents a clear version of the Pauline passage:

> I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me.

In 2 Cor. 4: 17 the ASV reads: "For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory". The use of the definite article with "moment" and the expression "more and more exceedingly" are distracting features of style in the translation. The subordinate clause "which is for the moment" is rendered adjectivally and "more and more exceedingly" is construed idiomatically by the RSV. Its translation reads: "For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison".

1 Thes. 3: 9 of the ASV reads: "for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God". The same sentiment is expressed in the RSV's rendering and yet it avoids the repeti-

tion of "joy". The RSV reads: "for all the joy which we feel for your sake before our God".

Hebrews 12: 12 of the ASV reads: "Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the palsied knees...." How much better is the translation of the RSV: "Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees...."

In the Apocalypse the beast from the sea is described by the ASV in the following manner: "And I saw one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast" (Rev. 13: 3). In the RSV "seemed" takes the place of "and I saw...as though it had been", "mortal wound" stands for both "smitten unto death" and "death-stroke", and "followed the beast with wonder" is for "wondered after the beast". The RSV rendering is terse and clear: "One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth followed the beast with wonder".

In a number of clauses and phrases the RSV manifests extraordinary artistic excellence in its revision of the ASV. Some examples[38] of such literary improvement are: "harassed and helpless" (Mt. 9: 36); "every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 13: 52); "you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves" (Mt. 23: 15); "swept them all away" (Mt. 24: 39); "while the sun's light failed" (Lk. 23:

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38. A few of the following examples were suggested by Sherman E. Johnson. Cf. "The Revised Standard Version", Anglican Theological Review, XXX (1948), 87.

45); "stripped for work" (Jn. 21: 7); "and he stared at him in terror" (Acts 10: 4); "reap some harvest" (Rom. 1: 13); "sighs too deep for words" (Rom. 8: 26); "so bold as to say" (Rom. 10: 20); "outdo one another in showing honor" (Rom. 12: 10); "never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord" (Rom. 12: 11); "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God" (Rom. 12: 19); "emptied of its power" (1 Cor. 1: 17); "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8: 1); "Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom" (1 Cor. 2: 6); "Come to your right mind, and sin no more" (1 Cor. 15: 34); "we were so utterably, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself" (2 Cor. 2: 8); "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view...." (2 Cor. 5: 16); "Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves before you?" (2 Cor. 12: 19); "surpassing worth" (Phil. 3: 8); "I press on to make it my own, because Christ has made me his own" (Phil. 3: 12); "See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit" (Col. 2: 8); "Then I saw another mighty angel...wrapped in a cloud" (Rev. 10: 1).

Occasionally, however, the RSV manifests traces of style that is less artistic. Some examples of this are: "led up" (Mt. 4: 1) instead of the more idiomatic "led" or "guided"; "salute" (Mt. 5: 47) for "greet"; "trample them underfoot" (Mt. 7: 6) instead of "trample them under their feet" (XXCNT, WG); "be it done for you" (Mt. 8: 13) for "let it be done for you"; "lay hold of it" (Mt. 12: 11) instead of "take hold of it"; "whole" (Mt. 9: 21-22) in the sense of "well"; "put asunder"

(Mt. 19: 6) for "separate"; "thereon" (Mt. 21: 7) instead of "upon them"; "spat" (Mt. 26: 67) for "spit"; "wrought" (Mk. 6: 2) for "worked"; "mine eyes" (Lk. 2: 30) for "my eyes"; "he gave them leave" (Lk. 8: 32) for "he permitted them"; "fatted calf" (Lk. 15: 23) for "fattened calf"; "hid" (Col. 2: 3) for "hidden"; "clad" (Rev. 3: 5) for "clothed".[39]

Beyond the examples of excellent diction cited above stand a few passages which truly represent artistic beauty in English style.[40] One illustration of this is Rom. 8: 18-25:[41]

> I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God: for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

A comparison of this passage with the ASV reveals the

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39. Many of these examples are probably to be explained on the basis of what Burrows says: "tradition and associations were too strong for us"--Introduction, p. 24.

40. It is recognized that beauty of style is largely a subjective appraisal, yet the passages selected seem to be expecially noteworthy in illustrating the refinement of style present in the RSV.

41. The RSV's translation of Romans and 1 Corinthians are perhaps the best examples of good English style of all the New Testament books.

improved diction of the RSV. Some of these improvements are: "consider" for "reckon"; "bondage to decay" for "bondage of corruption"; "glorious liberty" for "liberty of the glory"; "we ourselves" for "ourselves also"; and "groan inwardly" for "groan within ourselves". Gains of the RSV's style over the ASV include: "the creation waits with eager longing" for "the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth"; "as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" instead of "waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body"; "for who hopes for what he sees?" in place of "for who hopeth for that which he seeth?" In all, these improvements of the RSV over the ASV go together in making a beautiful Pauline passage in Greek equally as artistic in English form.

A very forceful translation is found in 1 Cor. 4: 8: "Already you are filled! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you!" This well-chosen literary style brings the sting of Paul's sarcasm to the reader.

Another example of excellent English style is 1 Cor. 9: 24-27.

> Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Well, I do not run aimlessly. I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

A paragraph like this is readable. Its words move easily and naturally. Its diction is in perfect keeping with the

underlying background of the passage, the athletic games. Its message is concise and clear and thus needs little amplification by the exegete. By its use of understandable terms it commends itself to the reader. It illustrates the kind of literary beauty found in the RSV: a beauty that rests not upon artificial archaisms but rather upon simplicity, conciseness and contemporary forms of expression. This is the source of "pleasure" in reading the RSV New Testament.

## Use in Public Worship

With the year 1611 the KJV, which was "appointed to be read in churches", began its slow advance in taking precedence over its English counterparts. After several decades of slow but sure advancement the KJV attained an unchallenged supremacy as the Bible for use in public worship. Following the appearance of the ERV and later of the ASV this supremacy was challenged, but in most circles the KJV retained its reign in the public worship services.

The RSV offers once again a challenge to the KJV. This new revision was to "embody the best results of modern scholarship as to the meaning of the Scriptures, and express this meaning in English diction which is designed for use in public and private worship...."[42] Working with this objective in mind the translators were careful in their choice of words in

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42. Preface of the 1952 edition, p. iv.

order to present a revision especially suitable for public reading of the Bible. Dean Weigle says:

> A requirement that has constantly been kept in mind by the present Committee is that the Bible should be translated into language that is euphonious, readable, and suited for use in public and private worship. It must sound well, and be easy to read aloud and in public. The choice of words and ordering of phrases must be such as to avoid harsh collocations of sound, and consonantal juxtapositions over which tongues will trip and lisp--that sentence is an example of what must not be in the English Bible.[43]

The RSV seeks to break away from the long-established dichotomy between versions for "private" and for "public" use. The work of the RSV arises from the belief that the thoughts of the mind and the emotions of the heart which evoke worship are not incompatible. Weigle asks: "Must we use two translations of the Scriptures into English, one for the mind and another for the heart?"[44] Again Weigle says:

> To adopt the policy of using the unrevised King James Version in public worship and a revised version for education and evangelism, would be hurtful to both. It would be to make tacit assumption that truth and understanding are of little consequence in worship, and that the feeling of reverence is best elicited by archaic and obscure language. It would be to prevent the newer version from acquiring those associations in worship which are indispensable to its full meaning for the lives of those who read it. It would be to separate pulpit and pew, worship and life, church and education, yet farther, when these are already too far apart.[45]

If the misleading archaisms of the KJV and the cumber-

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43. Weigle, Introduction, p. 57.

44. Weigle, The English New Testament, p. 128.

45. Ibid., p. 143.

some language of the ASV are hindrances to the reader in his attempt to understand the Biblical message, then also these are hindrances to public worship that has content and meaning for the individual. Indeed, these hindrances are more formidable in public worship services. The person sitting in the pew does not have the Bible text before him so that he can contemplate dubious expressions or tedious English style, but must depend on the oral reading of the Biblical text: if the passage is phrased in clear English form and in unmistakable English terms he will understand the Biblical text, but if it is not set forth in a distinct literary form he will reamin in the dark and his worship at this point will be vacuous.

By its adoption of an improved external form of translation, its elimination of much of the "Biblical English" present in the ASV, and its employment of a literary style that is both contemporary and meaningful, the RSV has provided a version of the New Testament that is acceptable and even commendable for use in public worship. This is an important feature of the RSV and to what extent this feature is generally recognized will decide in a large measure the permanence of the RSV. Weigle points to this when he writes:

> In the end, the crucial test of the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament will be in worship. If men, women, and children are led by it to God, and if they find its phrases naturally upon their lips and in their hearts when they pray, it will endure.[46]

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46. Ibid., p. 126.

# CONCLUSION

In the sagacious Preface to the KJV the translators say:

> Many men's mouths haue bene open a good while (and yet are not stopped) with speeches about the Translation so long in hand, or rather perusals of Translations made before: and aske what may be the reason, what the necessitie of the employment: Hath the Church bene deceiued, say they, all this while? Hath her sweet bread bene mingled with leauen, her siluer with dross, her wine with water, her milke with lime?[1]

Before the celebrated KJV came from the press, voices of opposition had been heard and the translators had to anticipate their critics with a defense of the new version. This is significant because it illustrates the hesitancy of any group of people in exchanging an older version of the Scriptures for a newer one. Familiar associations that have been built up from generation to generation--Scripture passages that have been

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1. Goodspeed (ed.), The Translators to the Reader, p. 26.

memorized and prayers that have been uttered with set formulas—are not easily laid aside and given up to oblivion. And since the standardization of the KJV as the Bible for English-speaking people, the exchange of the old version for the new has become for many people tantamount to the changing of their religion--neither of which they intend to do.

Fully aware of this aversion to revision on the part of many people, the RSV translators have taken great pains to give assurance that their work does not preclude the use of the KJV and the ASV. Bowie writes:

> Finally...let it be said again that this article...would not for a moment seem to descend to anything so shallow and so silly as a belittlement of our heritage from the great Revisers of 1611. That version will never be eclipsed. Its reverence, its majestic movement, and the lovely cadences of language wrought into it by men who were attuned to the beauty of English literature as it had flowered in the Elizabethan age, will give it enduringly a place of honor of its own. The Revised Standard Version must be thought of not as opposition but as an addition to what has gone before.[2]

Weigle concurs in this by saying:

> There is no thought in our minds that the King James Version will cease to be used because this revision has been made. We have no thought, moreover, of discontinuing the publication of the American Standard Version. Each has its use, the first as a great literary and religious classic, and the second as a meticulously literal word-for-word translation.[3]

Yet the RSV New Testament has been the object of attack

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2. Bowie, "Some Preaching Values in the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament", Interpretation, IV (1950), p. 61.

3. Weigle, "The Making of the RSV", p. 172.

from many quarters. Chief of the allegations is the charge that the RSV committee has fostered its own theological presuppositions upon its readers. Oswald T. Allis and others[4] have found the RSV objectionable because it was translated by men of "liberal" theology, and in Allis' case it is inferred that this results in a "liberal" translation. Inferred is the proper word, for in his last chapter entitled "Is the Revised Standard Version A 'Liberal' Version?" Allis discusses only one passage, in which he finds fault with an alternative translation given in the RSV's footnote. Allis objects to the footnote "God is thy throne" in Heb. 1: 8 on the ground that this would make the passage non-Messianic. He maintains that if it were not for the "critical" positions of the translators this alternative reading would not so much as deserve attention in the margin. In the remainder of the chapter Allis discusses the "liberal" views of the RSV committee but fails to consider any other passages that would indicate "liberalism" in the RSV.

It has been said that the RSV's treatment of Rom. 9: 5

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4. William Carey Taylor's The New Bible Pro and Con (New York: Vantage Press, Inc. 1955), charges theological bias against the translators in a broader sense than "liberalism". He objects vociferously to any translation that affects the doctrines of Southern Baptists. (In his "Foreword" Taylor says: "This is a Southern Baptist study....I address myself to my people...."--p. vii.) Taylor's treatment is a kind of sensational display rather than a serious, objective study of the RSV. Some of his chapters are entitled: "Translations That Are Wrong, and Sometimes Wrongheaded", "Debunkers of Christ, the Bible, and Its Authors" and "Cunning Sectarian Attacks against Fundamental Baptist Truths".

5. Allis, Revision or New Translation?, pp. 152-153.

may be the result of theological bias.[6] The ASV had read: "...whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." The RSV reads: "...to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen." The ASV thus makes the term "God" apply to Christ, the result being that Paul acknowledges Christ as God; but the RSV makes the term "God" refer to the Father. The distinction between the ASV and the RSV is due to different punctuation. If the translator follows the punctuation of Westcott-Hort's text the result will be in agreement with the ASV; if the translator follows the texts of Tischendorf and Nestle he will concur with the RSV's reading. Objectors to the RSV at this point fail to realize that in either case the translator is in good company. The RSV allows in a footnote the alternative reading, "Or Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever". Yet the RSV's main rendering is well supported, especially since on all other occasions similar Pauline adulations are addressed to God the Father. The translation implies no denial of the deity of Christ, even if it be not affirmed by Paul in this passage. Theological bias is possible, but is no more possible here than in other places where choice must be made between equally attested readings or equally plausible punctuations.

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6. Cf. Everett F. Harrison, Bibliotheca Sacra, CIII (1946), 249.

Many scholars who have studied the RSV New Testament with care, including those from self-designated "conservative" circles, fail to find within its pages evidence of the committee's prepossessions. In his review of the RSV John Bright asks:

> But does RSV give evidence of a doctrinal bias? In other words, have the translators sought for subjective reasons to tone down passages which teach (or are held to teach) the deity of Christ, the Virgin Birth and the like?....Now the reviewer knows very few of the translators personally, and he does not know in detail the beliefs of any of them. It must, however, be kept in mind that the question is not: what do the various translators believe, but: did they, because of such beliefs as they may have held at any place wilfully or unintentionally distort the translation? To affirm the latter is tantamount to a charge of intellectual dishonesty, and no more serious charge than that can be levelled at any scholar's integrity. To make such a charge without solid factual proof would be unfair, irresponsible and--we had almost said--un-Christian.[7]

Floyd Filson concurs with this evaluation:

> Readers of Theology Today will ask whether there is any theological distortion in the new Version. In general, no evidence of partisan bias appears....I sense nowhere a desire to twist the language of the New Testament to favor a distorted theological interpretation. There are passages whose meaning is disputed, but this Version is an honest attempt to render into clear and vigorous English the meaning which the translation committee found in the Greek.[8]

Everett F. Harrison of Fuller Theological Seminary writes in his review of the RSV New Testament: "The question is likely to be raised as to the theological position of the translators. For the most part, they belong to the liberal wing

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7. John Bright, Interpretation, VII (1953), 341-42.

8. Floyd V. Filson, "The Revised Standard New Testament", Theology Today, III (1946-1947), 227.

of scholarship. Their task, however, is not the teaching of theology but the faithful reproduction of that achievement".[9]

More recently George Eldon Ladd also of Fuller Theological Seminary has made the following statement concerning the possibility of the RSV's reflection of "liberal" propensities:

> The charges have repeatedly been made that RSV reflects a liberal theological tendency and that the translators have misrepresented the original text in favor of lower theological positions. A critical study of RSV does not bear this out. There are verses which at first sight may seem to involve theological presuppositions of a nonevangelical character; but a thorough study will reveal that in practically every case there are objective factors which enter into the language or context of the problem so that the evidence does not look in a single direction.[10]

After discussing the good and bad features of the RSV Ladd concludes: "Nevertheless, it is this writer's judgment that while the New Testament of the RSV is liable to serious criticism, and has not yet provided us with a completely adequate version, it is the most useful translation we possess".[11]

The judgment of these men is not presented in order to vindicate the RSV, for one opinion plus another does not comprise authority. Rather these viewpoints are cited as indications of disagreement, even within "conservative" circles,

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9. Harrison, op. cit. Yet, as indicated above, Harrison allows the possibility that "theological bias may have played a part" in the RSV's handling of Rom. 9: 5.

10. George Eldon Ladd, "RSV Appraisal: New Testament", Christianity Today, I (July 8: 1957), 8-9.

11. Ibid., p. 11.

from those who allege manifestations of religious prejudice in the RSV. Such a passage as Rom. 9: 5 discussed above demonstrates that what might be discounted by one critic as the consequence of theological presuppositions might be considered an improved rendering by another. Indeed the charge of "theological bias" often reflects the theological bias of the critic. The RSV committee embraces scholarship of the first rank and this means that always good reasons can be found for a given rendering and that it is extremely precarious to point definitely to "evidence" of the committee's predilection. Scholars may disagree on a given rendering, as undoubtedly the committee must have done in its numerous sessions, but such disagreements should not descend to the intrusion of personal ecclesiastical preferment.

In judging the excellence of a translation competent scholars may be at variance with one another, for an appraisal of "good" or "bad" rests in part on a subjective basis. Some scholars, although recognizing the deficiencies of the KJV, nevertheless want to cling to it because of its long-established tradition and its sonorous tones. Others can tolerate any kind of translation so long as it does not inhibit their doctrinal persuasions, while others seek new translations only in pursuit of novel interpretations or turns of expression. Yet the most basic consideration in evaluating a translation is the degree of precision with which the original message is carried over to the reader. In establishing this, however, it is necessary to understand the theory of translation behind

the translation itself.

The RSV New Testament represents a fundamental departure from the principle of translation employed by the ASV committee. According to its ideal of what it called "faithfulness" the ASV revisers chose to render word-for-word the Greek text into English, even when the Greek idiom and structure did not correspond with English usage. The RSV translators felt, however, that such is neither natural, practical or necessary. Whereas the ASV focused attention upon English word-equivalents for Greek terms, the RSV concentrates upon translating the ideas of the Biblical message and in using English word-equivalents only when this expedites the meaning as a whole.

The RSV is not revolutionary in its theory of translation. As far back as 1388 John Purvey in the Prologue to his revision of Wyclif's translation had stated his conviction that a good translation takes into account more than mere rendering of words: "First it is to knowe, that the best translating is...to translate after the sentence, and not oneli aftir the wordis, so that the sentence be as opin, either openere, in English as in Latyn, and go not fer from the lettre".[12] According to Westcott, Purvey's "sentence" is the equivalent of "sense". Thus it was Purvey's express intention

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12. As quoted in Westcott's A General View of the History of the English Bible, p. 14.

to translate according to the sense and not merely according to the words.

W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson consider what they call a "free translation" essential in their rendering of the Epistles of Paul. In the Introduction of The Life and Epistles of St. Paul they explain:

> In order to give the true meaning of the original, something more than a mere verbal rendering is often absolutely required. St. Paul's style is extremely elliptical, and the gaps must be filled up. And moreover the great difficulty in understanding his argument is to trace clearly the transitions by which he passes from one step to another. For this purpose something must occasionally be supplied beyond the mere literal rendering of the words.
>
> in fact, the meaning of an ancient writer may be rendered into a modern language in three ways: either, first, by a literal version; or, secondly, by a free translation; or, thirdly, by a paraphrase....There remains the intermediate course of a free translation, which is that adopted in the present work; nor does there seem any reason why a translation of St. Paul should be rendered inaccurate by a method which would generally be adopted in a translation of Thucydides.[13]

In more recent times such men as Edgar J. Goodspeed have contended for a free translation of the New Testament writings. Goodspeed quotes Dr. Jowett of Oxford, the famous translator of Plato, as saying: "if translations are intended not for the scholar but for the general reader their worst fault will be that they sacrifice the greatest effect and meaning to

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13. W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, The Life and Epistles of St. Paul (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., new impression 1901), pp. xix-xx.

over precise rendering of words and forms of speech".[14]

Representing a different theological school, and yet agreeing that a good translation requires more than a word-for-word rendering, is George Eldon Ladd. He writes:

> The meaning of the original language must be carefully reproduced. We cannot emphasize too strongly that a literal translation, if by literal we mean a word-for-word equivalent, is impossible. Anyone who has had any experience with a foreign language knows that every language has its idiom, which is meaningless when rendered with wooden literalness.... The translator therefore must interpret. He must know the meaning of the original and seek its equivalent value in a different language. He must be a scholar possessing first-rate historical and philological equipment. No amount of devotion or piety can be a substitute for knowledge and technical skill, for we are dealing with historical facts which sometimes become very complex.[15]

To this may be added the witty but judicious comments of the late Ronald Knox. Knox speaks of translation based on the Latin Vulgate instead of a critical Greek text, but what he says applies here with equal force. He speaks of two methods of translation:

> Two alternatives present themselves at once, the literal and the literary method of translation. Is it to be "Arms and the man I sing", or is it to be something which will pass for English? If you are translating for the benefit of a person who wants to learn Latin by following the gospel in a Latin missal when it is read out in church, then your "arms and the man I sing" is exactly what he wants. If you are translating for the benefit of a person who wants to be able to read the word of God for ten minutes on end without laying it aside in sheer boredom or bewilderment, a literary

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14. Edgar J. Goodspeed, "New Light on the New Testament", Review and Expositor, XLV (1948), 167.

15. Ladd, op. cit., p. 8.

translation is what you want--and we have been lacking it for centuries.[16]

A few pages later Knox adds:

> The translator, let me suggest in passing, must never be frightened of the word "paraphrase"; it is a bogey of the half-educated. As I have already tried to point out, it is almost impossible to translate a sentence without paraphrasing; it is a paraphrase when you translate "Comment vous portez-vous?" by "How are you?" But often enough it will be a single word that calls for paraphrase. When St. Paul describes people as "wise according to the flesh", the translator is under an obligation to paraphrase. In English speech, you might be called fat according to the flesh, or thin according to the flesh, but not wise or foolish.[17]

These viewpoints are presented in some detail because they represent a cross-section of past and present scholarship, yet all these men are of the opinion that a translation of the New Testament cannot be good unless it departs from a word-for-word rendering. But a good translation involves accuracy! It is therefore not only possible but even desirable to have a translation whose accuracy depends on a free rendering of the original. A passage may be designated a "paraphrase" or an "interpretation"--such has been charged as imputations against the RSV--but this does not necessarily make the passage less accurate or the translator less "faithful" in keeping his obligation to the reader. It is right, and wrong otherwise, for the translator to make the ideas of his author stand out

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16. Knox, The Trials of A Translator, p. 4.

17. Ibid., pp. 14-15.

clearly. This has been the dominant objective of the RSV committee, an objective which at the same time has provided its basic principle of translation.

In this critical examination of the RSV New Testament six distinct criteria have been proposed by which a translation can be appraised:

1. A good translation must be formed upon a critically attested textual base. The textual base of the RSV is eclectic in nature, presenting at times a strange mixture of readings; yet without doubt its choices of variants comprise the framework of a Greek text which embodies much more of the results of modern scholarship than the respected ASV.

2. A good translation must speak in the idiom of its readers. To a marked degree the RSV has improved the ASV in this respect. The RSV committee can say with the KJV translators: "But we desire that the Scripture may speake like it selfe, as in the language of Canaan, that it may bee understood euen of the very vulgar".[18]

3. A good translation must be clear and intelligible. It should avoid expressions that are difficult to understand and terms that are easily confused. As a revision the RSV has cleared up many of the ambiguities of language found in the ASV and has sought to keep away from dubious constructions.

4. A good translation, and certainly an "authorized" version of the KJV-ASV tradition, should strive toward a

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18. Goodspeed (ed.), The Translators to the Reader, p. 37.

measure of consistency in its rendering of words. The RSV at times seems to manifest a needless inconsistency in its translations of the same Greek words and phrases; yet it is difficult to make any trenchant criticism against the RSV at this point, for it has consciously attempted to break away from the stereotyped consistency characteristic of the ASV.

5. A good translation must be phrased in a literary style that is suitable to the tenor of its message and yet familiar to its readers. The best English translation is an honest expression in contemporary English form. The RSV passes this test because it has discarded obsolete and unfamiliar turns of expression in favor of a literary style with flowing movement and comprehensible language. Its literary beauty is due to its simplicity and directness.

6. A good translation, above all, must be accurate in its reproduction of the original. As a whole the RSV <u>is</u> an accurate rendering of its text-base:--its accuracy does not hinge on pedantic literalism but on its full and meaningful expression of the Biblical message.

But no translation, however devoted and capable its translator may be, is without inadequacies. Always points may be selected in any translation that apparently lack precision of rendering. No translation attains perfection, and if it is fortunate enough to approach perfection it does not long remain so. This has been well expressed by C. H. Dodd:

> The art of translation is one in which complete success is for ever impossible. No translation is final, even if it be so brilliantly executed as to attain the status of a classic in

its own language....Each new version is criticized in turn, and often the criticisms turn upon presuppositions which the critic has hardly made clear to himself.[19]

It is not a startling conclusion to say that the RSV likewise has its shortcomings. It cannot be denied that at times its textual base seems unsupported, its renderings appear weak and its selection of words seems needlessly inconsistent. Beyond this, the gravest fault of the RSV lies in its failure to give attention to the small details of translation and explanation especially noteworthy in the ASV. For example, it would not have been amiss to have noted in the margin that "wife" in 1 Thes. 4: 4 is a translation of a Greek word which means "vessel"; nor would it have been improper to explain by a footnote, as the ASV does, that "Cananaean" of Mt. 10: 4 means "Zealot" and is not to be confused with the erroneous "Canaanite" of the KJV. It is true that the 1952 edition of the RSV reveals a greater concern for such particulars,[20] yet it is also true that the RSV committee could have profited more by the ASV's scrupulosity on these points.

However, before too harsh a criticism is made against the RSV two factors must be kept in mind: (1) the RSV is a revision in line with the KJV-ASV tradition, which undoubtedly restricts its alterations, and (2) the RSV is the product of

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19. C. H. Dodd, "Foreward", Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation, by W. Schwarz, p. vii.

20. Cf. Appendix below.

nine committee members and not one. Nine men have many differences of opinion, which means that no one man could be satisfied with every sentence of the translation. Craig says: "You must expect to find some readings with which you disagree. Every member of the committee has a list of such, where he is sure that the majority of his colleagues are mistaken. But long arguments through the years did not convince a majority".[21]

Defects in the new revision will continue to be found. Nevertheless the firm persuasion growing out of this examination is that such defects do not disparage the over-all value of the RSV New Testament. It must be viewed panoramically in order to be evaluated properly. It should be compared paragraph-by-paragraph and book-by-book with the versions it revises. Only when it is read with a desire to understand the message of each book does its true worth become fully evident.

The RSV was summoned into preparation to help in the communication of the Biblical message. This objective is now being reached. The translators express a sentiment that may serve as a recapitulation for the RSV's existence and a kind of conclusion for this study:

> The Bible carries its full message, not to those who regard it simply as a heritage of the past or praise its literary style, but to those who read it that they may discern and understand God's Word to men. That Word must not be disguised in phrases that are no longer clear, or hidden under words that have changed or lost their meaning. It must stand forth in language

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21. Clarence T. Craig, "The Revised Standard New Testament", Journal of Bible and Religion XIV (February 1946), 35.

that is direct and plain and meaningful to people today. It is our hope and our earnest prayer that this Revised Standard Version of the Bible may be used by God to speak to men in these momentous times, and to help them to understand and believe and obey His Word.[22]

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22. Preface of the 1952 edition, p. x.

# APPENDIX

## Appendix

## Corrections in the 1952 Edition of the RSV

In the Preface of the 1952 edition the translators explain:

> The present republication has afforded the Committee opportunity to review its work and to consider criticisms and suggestions from various readers. As a result, about eighty changes are made in the present edition. Most of these are in the interest of the identical rendering of identical Greek in parallel passages, especially in the Synoptic gospels; or in the interest of consistency in handling the textual evidence. The words "sanctify" and "sanctification" have been restored in some passages, to preclude mistaken inferences that had been drawn from their replacement by "consecrate" and "consecration", and to agree with our retention of the term "sanctify" in the Old Testament. Some additional notes offer alternative readings; and in some cases a word or phrase is changed in the interest of greater clarity or felicity. Examples of such changes are in Luke 24.28; John 8.53; 11.50; 17.2; Acts 17.28; 1 Corinthians 4.5; Philippians 1.7; 2 Timothy 3.8; 1 John 3.10.[1]

The passages cited above incorporate the following changes: "He appeared to be going further" (Lk. 24: 48) for "he made as though he would go further"; "Who do you claim to be?" (Jn. 8: 53) for "Whom do you make yourself to be?"; "and that the whole nation should not perish" (Jn. 11: 50) for "and not that the whole nation should perish"; "to give eternal life to all" (Jn. 17: 2) for "so that he might give eternal life to all"; "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17: 28) for "In him we live and move and are"; "the purposes of the heart" (1 Cor. 4: 5) for "the purpose of men's hearts"; "because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers

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1. Preface of the 1952 edition, p. viii.

with me of grace" (Phil. 1: 7) for "because I hold you all in my heart as partakers with me of grace"; "men of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith" (2 Tim. 3: 8) for "men of corrupt minds and rejected as regards the faith"; "whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother" (1 Jn. 3: 10) for "no one who does not do right is of God, nor any one who does not love his brother".

The kind of changes made in the 1952 edition also may be illustrated by the alterations found in the book of Matthew. In all, there are thirty corrections in this Gospel. This number includes corrections that are made more than once, as for example "Beelzebul" for "Beelzebub" (Mt. 10: 25; 12: 24; 12: 27). Also included in this number are technical corrections such as "Lord, lord" for "Lord, Lord" (Mt. 25: 11) and the clause "which means the place of a skull" enclosed in parentheses in place of commas.

The alterations made may be classified under several heads. (1) Corrections that are due to a change of the textual base. In Mt. 1: 10 "Amos" takes the place of "Amon". The reading "many furlongs distant from the land" (Mt. 14: 24) is substituted for "out on the sea". In both cases the corrections are supported by the Greek texts of Westcott-Hort and Nestle.

(2) Corrections made in agreement with the words of KJV-ASV. Examples of this group are "garments" for "clothes" (Mt. 21: 8), "door" for "entrance" (Mt. 27: 60) and "sepulchre" for "tomb" (Mt. 27: 64; 27: 66; 28: 1). In two other passages

changes are made in virtual agreement with the KJV-ASV: "came to land" for "landed" (Mt. 14: 34) and "nothing on it but leaves only" for "on it nothing but leaves" (Mt. 21: 19). "Man" takes the place of "fellow" (Mt. 27: 60) in agreement with the ASV as opposed to the KJV. "Shall" replaces both "can" (Mt. 5: 13) and "will" (Mt. 18: 18 two times) in agreement with KJV-ASV, but these changes may have been made for other reasons.

(3) Corrections made in the interest of better English form. In Mt. 6: 28 "why are you anxious" takes the place of "why be anxious". "Pharisees" replaces "the Pharisees" in Mt. 12: 2. Instead of "hold their peace" (Mt. 20: 31) the new edition reads "be silent". In Mt. 2: 6 the archaic forms "thou", "art" and "thee" are replaced by "you", "are" and "you". This is done not only in the interest of contemporary language but also in an attempt to be consistent in the use of archaic forms ordinarily employed only in address to God.[2]

(4) Other corrections: "herdsmen" for "swineherds" (Mt. 8: 33) and "Behold" for "lo" (Mt. 10: 16).

Samples from other portions of the New Testament point to alterations made in the interest of preserving Synoptic parallelism. An example of this is in Lk. 8: 43. The 1946 edition reads: "a woman who had suffered a flow of blood"; but the 1952 edition changes this to read: " a woman who had had a flow of blood"--in agreement with its 1946 translation in Mk.

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2. Cf. p. 173 above.

5: 25.

As the Preface of the new edition indicates, the words "sanctify" and "sanctification" have been restored in "some passages". The verb "consecrate" and the noun "consecration" occur twenty times in the 1946 edition. In the 1952 edition "consecrate" and "consecration" become "sanctify" and "sanctification" in fourteen places (Jn. 17: 17; Acts 20: 32; 26: 18; Rom. 15: 16; 1 Cor. 1: 2; 1: 30; 6: 11; Eph. 5: 26; 1 Thes. 4: 3; 2 Thes. 2: 13; Heb. 4: 4; 10: 10; 10: 14; 10: 29). Actually "some passages" really means most passages.

Many other changes of course have been made in the new edition, but these can be taken as representative of the differences between the current edition and the first edition of the RSV published in 1946.

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