

The New Testament In The Revised Standard Version: An Evaluation

By Frederic E. Blume

It will not be necessary here to dwell at length on the general aspects of the problem that has been before us especially since September 30, 1952, when the *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible was published.¹ The readers of the *Quartalschrift* are familiar with the developments that lie behind this new version: first, the change in English usage from Shakespeare's day to ours; secondly, the development of "what may be called both a science and an art"² in the theological discipline of New Testament textual criticism, a study that received marked impetus in western Europe shortly after the appearance of the KJV when, about in the year 1628, Cyril Lukar, then patriarch of Constantinople but formerly the patriarch of Alexandria, sent to George Abbott, archbishop of Canterbury, the famous Bible manuscript *Codex Alexandrinus* as a gift for the King of England; finally, the growing awareness during the last half-century that the Greek of the New Testament is "the *Koinē*, the Common Greek which was spoken and understood practically everywhere throughout the Roman Empire in the early centuries of the Christian era."³ At present the term "Hellenistic Greek" seems to be gaining favor as a designation for the Common Dialect as it appears in both Biblical writers and translators (the New Testament, and the Septuagint and other translators of the Old Testament) and in non-Biblical writers of literary and non-literary Greek.⁴ Nor will it be necessary here to review the promotional literature that was sent out by the publishers of the RSV in advance of September 30, 1952.⁵ Rather, with the knowledge before us that the RSV has been widely sold and is evidently being used also by members of our Synod, we are here faced with the question: How well has the Revision Committee carried out its charge to "embody the best results of modern scholarship as to the meaning of the Scriptures"?⁶ And, how has the Committee interpreted that charge?

I.

It would be neither correct nor fair to denounce the translation of the New Testament in the RSV in sweeping, categorical terms because of errors in fact or misinterpretations that we have found in it. We believe that there are such. But the fact remains that "there are many things that can and should be said in favor of"⁷ the RSV of the Bible and of its New Testament in particular. Professor Reim has promised to point such out in an early issue of *The Northwestern Lutheran*, and coming issues of our Synod's periodicals will no doubt publish articles on both the things to be commended and those to be criticized in the new version.⁸

1 *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, 1952.

2 Prof. E. Reim, "The RSV and the Manuscripts," *The Northwestern Lutheran*, January 11, 1953, p. 12.

3 Luther A. Weigle, "The Revision of the English Bible," *An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament* (Copyright, 1946, The International Council of Religious Education), p. 12. The several chapters of this *Introduction* have been prepared by members of the Revision Committee, Luther A. Weigle, Chairman, and "are designed to help the reader of the Bible to understand the main principles which have guided this comprehensive revision of the King James and American Standard Versions" (op. cit. p. 5). This *Introduction* and its companion, *An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament*, may be procured free from Thomas Nelson and Sons, 19 East 47th Street, New York 17, NY.

4 The language of the private documents found in the Greek papyri and ostraca (letters, receipts, etc.) would be classed as "non-literary Greek."

5 RSV *The Story behind the Revised Standard Version of the Bible*. a 14-page 10×13 attractively lithographed brochure, and a smaller 8-page 8½×11 brochure bearing the caption *Sermon ideas, Anecdotes, Back ground material on the RSV to help you*, containing in the main "Building a Sermon with the RSV" by Dr. Harold Bosley, and "The Revised Standard Version of the Bible Nears Completion" by Dr. John C. Trever.

6 RSV *The Story behind*, etc., p. 8.

7 Prof. E. Reim, op. cit. p. 12.

8 A "Committee on the RSV" has been appointed by President Brenner. It consists of the faculty of Thiensville Seminary and Professors Kowalke and Schumann of Northwestern College. "The Committee is to give careful attention to the various changes as they are noted, and welcomes comment and inquiries from the members of our Synod particularly concerning specific passages. It will report from time to time," and some of these reports will be in the form of periodical articles. Those who have comments or inquiries to make are invited to address the Chairman of the Committee, Prof. E. Reim, Thiensville, Wisconsin.

As the new version was being put before the public, the claim was made repeatedly that it was “authorized.” The front flap of the jacket of the RSV New Testament published February 11, 1946, states: “The Revised Standard Version is an authorized revision of the American Standard Version of 1901 and the King James Version of 1611.” On the front flap of the jacket of the 1952 edition the same claim is made for this version of the whole Bible. Whether this bit of promotion was stressed by the members of the Revision Committee or whether it was an original idea with the publishers, does not alter the fact that here an attempt was being made to capitalize on all the associations which the word “authorized” has come to have in the minds of the Bible-conscious American public. To it the KJV is in a preeminent sense “The Authorized Version.” Writers on the subject of English Bible translation (and members of the Revision Committee stand prominent among them) have in our day been emphatic on the point that the word “authorized” when used of a Bible version does really not mean what people have come to think of it as meaning. These writers point out that the KJV is only one of several “authorized versions” of the Scriptures, inasmuch as “authorized” here means no more than “authorized by the King of England for use in the churches.” The success of these writers in making this point known and appreciated by our contemporaries has, however, been very small. To a very great number of Bible-reading Americans, the KJV is in a very special sense the Word of God because it is “The Authorized Version.” They have heard little, and no doubt cared less, about the leading position taken by any earlier King of England in promoting an English Bible version. But to them the music of the Elizabethan KJV has come to lend to it a peculiar sanctity and churchliness all its own. They are fully aware that the English of the KJV is not altogether that in use today, and they will occasionally meet words and expressions that have little if any meaning to them (to say nothing of the misunderstandings that afflict them when they read their version as though it were present-day English). Still just those elements of the KJV that are always pointed to as the reasons why a new revision is necessary, are among the characteristics that have endeared it to their hearts and that make it seem to them the Word of God in a way in which no other rendering could be. To them the stateliness, the austerity, and the (to us) antique quality peculiar to the KJV, even when there is nothing stately, austere, or antique about the original, lend to this version a certain emotional value. They feel that “The Authorized Version” is truly Biblical language.⁹ This is not written to find fault with persons who hold the above-stated views. Least of all is there any intention to ridicule them. The writer finds that he shares their emotional evaluation of “Biblical” English and will probably carry this feeling to his grave, since also to him until his adult years Luther’s German and KJV English were the language of Scripture and of religion. So to many people the announcement that the RSV is “an authorized revision” will make for a strong sales appeal. They are virtually being told that in the new version they will find the same values they have treasured in the KJV but now in a language that is completely up-to-date. To find that the RSV is promoted as an “authorized revision” on the front flap of the jacket certainly can leave only the above-described impression. Yet at the bottom of the back flap of the jacket there is made, in smaller print, italicized, the statement: “The Revised Standard Version of the Bible is authorized by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and is recommended by the Canadian Council of Churches, Department of Education.” One wonders how many prospective buyers will read the bottom of the back flap after they have been told at the top of the front flap that this is “an authorized revision.”

Another false impression is left by the publicity material relating to the present state of textual criticism and to the use that has been made in the RSV of the known 4500 Greek manuscripts of the Scriptures. Chapter V in *An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament*, entitled “The Greek Text of the New Testament,” pp. 37–43, is by Frederick C. Grant, a New Testament scholar of international reputation and a specialist in textual studies. His description of the present status of textual studies is a fair and correct one. Professor Grant makes no extravagant claims for his particular field of knowledge but in a straightforward manner summarizes the situation in the study of the New Testament text as that situation is known to us who have been interested in following its development in recent years. The large publicity brochure on the RSV,

⁹ The writer has here merely been trying to summarize the opinions of people from various walks of life and of differing degrees of education with whom he has in the past several years personally discussed the problem.

however, while not making any false claims in the matter of text, still leaves the impression that today we know much more about the New Testament textual problem than we actually do, or even can, know. In the brochure a marginal statement reads: "Recent discoveries of ancient manuscripts aid recovery of the original text of the Scriptures."¹⁰ The discoveries referred to are the Old Syriac Gospels found on Mount Sinai in 1892, the Chester Beatty papyri discovered in 1931, and the Dead Sea Scrolls found in 1947. Certainly the impression left is that the RSV has translated the "original text of the Scriptures" thus discovered. That such is the case has been shown by Professor Reim in his article in the *Northwestern Lutheran* of January 11, 1953.

But just where do we stand today in the textual criticism of the New Testament? We no longer feel that we can find a "neutral" text, as Hort thought he practically had it in Vaticanus; nor do we believe with Tischendorf that we can prefer one manuscript above all others, as he preferred Sinaiticus, his great discovery. We see that the text behind these two great manuscripts has also undergone a certain amount of editorial revision and that the text type to which these two great "heavenly twins" belong is also not "infallible" nor to be preferred because of its "generally superior authority."¹¹ The other rules that are generally accepted today as safe guides to follow in textual criticism are also given by Professor Grant: "Each reading must be examined on its own merits, and preference must be given to those readings which are demonstrably in the style of the author under consideration"; and, "readings which explain other variants, but are not contrariwise themselves to be explained by the others, merit our preference." In the matter of text it is then an eclectic principle that the New Testament student and translator is forced to follow today. To Professor Grant's three rules, a fourth should unquestionably be added: "In the New Testament there is no room for *conjectural emendations* as these are known to the classical scholar." For somewhere, surely, in the many manuscripts of the New Testament the true reading has been preserved, so that it should not have to be supplied by means of a *guess* of the student.

Textual scholars now think that they can distinguish five main text types that existed at the end of the second century: (1) Western; (2) Caesarean; (3) Alexandrian; (4) Syriac; and (5) Other, i.e., "a classification for readings that do not fall into any of the preceding groups."¹² The fact that in the theory there is a text type like the fifth proves that there is a tremendous weakness somewhere in the whole structure itself. If the theory of "local texts" as now advocated is true, then there should be no such classification. But at present there is no way of testing whether the "local text" theory is true or not, or if true in part, to what degree it is acceptable. At best, it is today but a working hypothesis. For to date, all work in this field has been fragmentary, and there is as yet no one place where all the readings of all the authorities (manuscripts, versions, patristic references) have been collected. Naturally, all of these are important. The early versions, especially the Old Syriac and the Old Latin, and a number of the patristic writers are witnesses to a Greek text of the New Testament that is older than our oldest manuscripts. Before any really workable theory of what happened to the New Testament text in the second century can be evolved, it will be necessary to have all the facts before us at once. Work is just now getting under way to assemble all these facts. The undertaking is known as the "International Greek New Testament Project." It was initiated by Ernest Cadman Colwell, himself a ranking scholar of the New Testament text and language, while he was serving as President of the University of Chicago. Scholars are now at work in America and abroad collating all available materials. The work is being co-coordinated and directed by Dr. Merrill M. Parvis, Executive Secretary of the project. It will still be several years before the first volume, that on *Luke*, will be published. Then, with all the available materials before them, scholars will again re-orientate themselves in New Testament textual theory. What their conclusions will be, there is at present no way of telling. But in view of these facts is there not a degree of misrepresentation involved when the impression is left that the RSV has already recovered and translated *the original text* of the Scriptures?

Nothing that has been said here should be interpreted to mean that the new finds have in any way disturbed our confidence in the reliability of the Biblical text. F. C. Grant has reason again to point out that not a single variant reading has affected any Christian doctrine.¹³ The picture that we have of the textual problem

10 RSV *The Story behind*, etc., p. 6.

11 F. C. Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

12 *Id.*, p. 39.

13 *Id.*, p. 42.

today leads us to have all the more confidence in the reliability of the Sacred Word. For from early times there were Christian leaders who were intent upon recovering the true text, correcting every error and expunging all additions. Under the best conditions manuscript books will present a text-critical problem. Yet surely the same Lord who by His Spirit gave us His Word has preserved that Word for us as to its text. A number of “problems” will exist. But in every instance they exist because of men’s lack of faith or because of human frailty, never because of any shortcomings in Divine Providence. Detailed demonstrations of what has just been said will have to be given elsewhere since there would not be room for them in the present “evaluation.”

These paragraphs on the text of the New Testament ought also not be understood as promising any startling new departure in either methods or materials or theory on the basis of the work of the International Project. All experience with the text in the past has tended in the opposite direction. The Dead Sea Scrolls show a text that is “almost precisely the same”¹⁴ as the one we have always used, and the recent papyri finds have caused us to reverse our estimate of the “Western” text. Once we have all the materials before us, we shall be in a better position confidently to rule out things introduced into the text by human error (or vagaries) and by unbelief. But surely this is not saying the same as what is implied by the RSV publishers, who lay tacit claim to having recovered the “original text,” based upon 4500 Greek manuscripts, and consequently as vastly superior to the text used by the KJV translators with their “24 manuscripts” as is the proportion between 4500 and 24. This computation would give the KJV an accuracy of about 7/10 of 1%, and as we read the advertising literature for the RSV, we might get the impression that until now the English Bible was right in textual matters only about once in a hundred times.

But it is not only in matters of general consideration that the RSV is misleading on the problem of its Greek text. In the important matter of reading or omitting *en Ephesō* (ἐν Ἐφεσῶ) in Ephesians 1:1 its statement is a misrepresentation of fact. Much has been made of the omission of “at Ephesus” in Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Chester Beatty. The fact that the phrase is there omitted forms the keystone in the structure of at least one critical hypothesis concerning the authorship, nature, and destination of *Ephesians*.¹⁵ Now when we read RSV Eph. 1:1 and the accompanying note a: “Some ancient authorities read *who are at Ephesus and faithful*” (1946 edition of New Testament), or: “Other ancient authorities read *who are at Ephesus and faithful*” (1952 edition of the Bible), the impression given is certainly this that the manuscript evidence for the omission of *en Ephesō* is at least as good as the evidence for reading it. The “Some” of the 1946 RSV NT would make one think that the manuscript support for reading *en Ephesō* was decidedly weak. Actually the situation in the manuscripts is just the reverse. Almost all of the manuscripts read *en Ephesō*, and only a *very small* number, few enough to be counted on the fingers of one hand, omit it. Those that omit it are important manuscripts: Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Chester Beatty, and one minuscule. But are these enough to justify the note that “Some (or Other) ancient authorities read *who are at Ephesus and faithful*,” when *four* manuscripts omit the reading and *all the rest* have it? This discussion is not to be understood as advocating weighing or counting manuscripts as a sound method in textual criticism. The writer is willing to admit that the true reading may be found in one text type or even in one single manuscript. The facts adduced here are merely brought to show that in the matter of the text of Ephesians 1:1 the RSV is guilty of a misrepresentation of fact. Further study will reveal other matters of a text-critical interest.

Another area in which the RSV was to “embody the best results of modern scholarship” was the field of Biblical languages. For the New Testament that field is specifically that of Hellenistic (or *Koinē*) Greek. The *Introduction* to the New Testament has a chapter on “The Vocabulary and Grammar of New Testament Greek”

14 Prof. E. Reim, op. cit., p. 12.

15 This is the theory of Edgar J. Goodspeed, set forth in his *The Meaning of Ephesians* (Chicago, 1933) and his *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Chicago, 1937) pp. 222–239, which make *Ephesians* the work of some late first century Christian leader, who about A.D. 90 composed it by lifting a phrase here and a word there out of Paul’s other letters for the purpose of using it as an introduction to the collected Pauline letters, which were just then to be published. Naturally in such a pseudepigraphic composition there would, in the Goodspeed theory, be no *en Ephesō* in 1:1; its omission here is supposed to account for a similar omission in a few manuscripts, while the publication of the Pauline corpus at Ephesus is supposed to account for the reading of *en Ephesō* at 1:1 in all the rest of the manuscripts.

by Professor Henry J. Cadbury of Harvard (pp. 44–52). This chapter too is a calm factual presentation of the present status of work being done in New Testament language. Professor Cadbury speaks of those features in semantics, grammar, and syntax that characterize the Greek of the New Testament and of the light cast upon these matters by the new materials that have come to our attention. The opening statement indicates the tone of his article (p. 4): “Although the language of the Greek New Testament has been studied as long and as intensively as that of any body of writings, the resulting knowledge in any generation cannot be regarded as final. The translators of 1611 and 1881 included excellent scholars in this field and their judgments are usually only confirmed by later discovery and by re-examination, yet some additions to their knowledge have been made. These have been taken into account in the present translation.”

But the publicity material on the RSV does not leave the reader with the same impression of the fluid state of present-day studies in Hellenistic Greek. The large brochure has the marginal note: “Modern scholars understand Biblical languages better,” and Herbert Yahraes has written in a popular magazine: “After nine years of evaluating both old and new research material, the members of the New Testament section of Dean Weigle’s committee finished their work and that part of the Bible was published in 1946.¹⁶ Surely the impression is to be given that nine whole years are ample for the nation’s outstanding New Testament scholars to make complete use in their revision of all the materials that have been brought to light.

Actually only a good beginning has been made in the utilization of the materials and insights that have come to us since the days of Adolf Deissmann. In lexicography some excellent work has been done. We need mention here only the new editions of Liddell & Scott¹⁷ and Bauer,¹⁸ and the new Kittel,¹⁹ still not complete. The *Vocabulary* of Moulton and Milligan²⁰ has been very valuable. But in grammar and syntax the works of Debrunner,²¹ Radermacher,²² and Robertson²³ have only just begun to use the materials from the papyri, ostraca, and inscriptions. Even the best grammars have a general weakness in the discussion of syntax. This weakness is not due to any fault on the part of the authors. It is due rather to the fact that just in the area of grammar and especially of syntax the necessary spadework has not yet been done. For there is as yet no complete study of Hellenistic Greek grammar and syntax.²⁴ Such a general study there must be if Deissmann’s great discovery is to mean anything. For only when the language of the New Testament is being studied as part of the *Koinē* vernacular, is it being put into its proper perspective, and that perspective is impossible without an over-all view. Cadbury’s chapter in the *Introduction* has several paragraphs on syntax, and his wording shows that he wants to convey the impression that studies in syntax in particular are still in the research stage. He writes (p. 50): “The particle *ἵνα*, originally confined to purpose clauses (“that . . . may, or might, or would, or should”), we now realize was tending to replace other constructions that we should naturally treat as simple objects and translate by an infinitive.” Cadbury’s words *we now realize* describe the situation exactly. He cannot refer to published books, because such do not exist. What does exist is a growing realization and insight on many items of Hellenistic Greek grammar and syntax in the minds of researchers in the field.

16 “A Bible for the 20th Century” in *Reader’s Digest*, December, 1952 (condensed from *Collier’s*), p. 39.

17 Liddell, H. G., and Scott, R., *A Greek-English Lexicon: New Edition, Revised and Augmented by H. S. Jones and R. McKenzie*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1925–1940. This edition is very valuable to the student of the *Koinē*.

18 Bauer, Walter: *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literature*. 4th ed., Berlin: Toepelmann, 1952.

19 Kittel, R., ed. *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1932*. Exhaustive word studies, but not strictly a New Testament Lexicon.

20 Moulton, J. H., and Milligan, G. *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-literary Sources*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914–29. Likewise, not a New Testament lexicon, but a useful collection of material.

21 Debrunner, A. *Friedrich Blass’ Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*. 7th ed., Goettingen: Vandenhock & Ruprecht, 1943.

22 Radermacher, L. *Neutestamentliche Grammatik: Das Griechisch des Neuen Testaments im Zusammenhang mit der Volkssprache*. 2nd ed., Tuebingen: Mohr, 1925.

23 Robertson, A. T. *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*. 4th ed., New York: Doran, 1923.

24 i.e. something that in scope and method will do for the Hellenistic field what Smyth’s *A Greek Grammar for Colleges* and Goodwin & Gulick *Greek Grammar* have done for classical Greek.

Comprehensive and definitive works on these subjects still lie in the future, and the best we have at present are special studies.

It will be only fair to ask: Has the RSV used these special studies that have become available, in keeping with its charge to “embody the best results of modern scholarship”? Every Student of the Greek New Testament knows how troublesome the syntax of the Greek article can be. Even the larger grammars do not help him very much. But in 1933 Ernest Cadman Colwell, of the University of Chicago, the later chairman of the Department of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and president of the university, published an article, “A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament.”²⁵ At the close of his article he comes to discuss Matthew 27:54. His closing words are: “The evidence given in this paper as to the use of the article with predicate nouns strengthens the probability that the centurion recognized Jesus as *the* Son of God (so Weymouth and the older English translations), rather than as *a* son of God.” Yet even this article was ignored by the revisers, though it was published almost twenty years ago by a man whose work the revisers themselves would have to admit was to be reckoned among “the best results of modern scholarship,” and was printed in a journal that has a wide circulation among students and teachers of the Bible and assuredly too among the members of the Revision Committee. Yet they render Matthew 27:54b: “Truly this was a son of God!”

II.

We are now justified in asking: Just how did the Revision Committee interpret the charge given it to “embody the best results of modern scholarship as to the meaning of the Scriptures”? Were they inclined to let the Scriptures speak for themselves, or did they show a tendency, under the guise of “the best results of modern scholarship,” to inject into their revision just those things that modern American radicalism has been insisting on for the past decades and which strike at the very heart of the Gospel? It requires no proof that modern American radicalism has been leveling its best shafts at three basic tenets of our faith: the divinity of our Lord, the reliability of Scripture, and the monergism of grace. What Professor Reim has shown with relation to the translation of Isaiah 7:14,²⁶ and the above-quoted rendering of Matthew 27:54 should indicate that the RSV embodies at least some attempt to canonize just those elements in modern radical New Testament criticism that, if allowed to stand, would tend to undercut and eventually destroy our faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

We turn next to passages in which, to say the least, the RSV does not lend support to our faith in the reliability of Scripture, though both the Greek text and the older translations of the passages lend support to such a faith.

The translation of 1 Timothy 3:2 “married only once” does not grow out of a better knowledge of the original text nor out of a better understanding of the grammar and syntax of New Testament Greek than that possessed by the KJV translators, who here let Paul say that a bishop should be “the husband of one wife,” since the RSV footnote reads: “Greek *the husband of one wife*.” The RSV rendering rather grows out of the modern negative attitude toward the date and genuineness of the Pastoral Epistles and therefore toward their reliability as Scripture. To the modern critic the Pastorals could not have been written by Paul nor in the first century A.D. Our American critics commonly place them late in the second century and, while admitting that they may contain *Pauline elements*, regularly ascribe them to a late second century forger who, writing under the name and in the character of the Apostle Paul, used a few things written by Paul in order to concoct around them a whole corpus of Pastoral Letters, which, they say, reflect the ideas on asceticism and a degree of development in church government that did arise in the second century but which were not yet in existence in the days of Paul. Hence, their conclusion is, the Pastoral Epistles are not genuine letters of the Apostle Paul.

Now, we know that in the second century, when the influences that later led to medieval celibacy and asceticism made themselves felt, there was the insistence that a pastor (“bishop”) do not remarry if he should

²⁵ *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 52, Part 1, 1933, pp. 12–21.

²⁶ “Speaking of Translations,” *The Northwestern Lutheran*, December 28, 1952, p. 409f.

lose his first wife. Needless to say, such a thought was foreign to Paul and the other Apostles of our Lord. But in this passage an attempt has been made to pass off an item of radical unbelief as “modern scholarship”; and while it is admitted in the note that the KJV has rendered the Greek, the RSV here *interprets* the passage in such a way that not only is doubt cast upon the scripturalness of the Pastoral Epistles, but something has been injected that may well prove disturbing to many a good, faithful Christian soul who believes in his Bible but who knows very well that his particular “bishop” is now living with a second wife, having been married *more* than “only once.” The kind of “modern scholarship” that lies behind the RSV at 1 Timothy 3:2 has a definite tendency to undermine our faith in the reliability of Scripture.

Another passage to this point is the rendering in Galatians 4:3 “we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe.” Here again the translation *elemental spirits of the universe* is definitely an interpretation that follows the modern party line. *Ta stoicheia* (τα στοιχεια) are the ABC’s, the indivisible component elements that go to make up something else. The interpretation of the word here would scarcely seem to be as hard as it has been made to appear, but surely the rendering “elemental spirits of the universe” must be ruled out. Such a translation assumes a policy of accommodation on Paul’s part to the heathen belief in astrology and astral religion that creates such a bizarre picture for the student of the religion of the Near East during Hellenistic times. Are we to believe that Paul shared the superstitions of his time? Modern criticism assumes that he did; and if so, then his religion can at best be a noble *human achievement* and his words those of an enthusiastic converted Jew of the first century but not the Word of God to us, and the two-edged sword of the Spirit that Luther gloried in. Once again, we have to note that in this passage too the RSV implicitly fosters those assumptions and attitudes of modern radical scholarship that strike at the roots of our faith.

Finally, a brief look at a passage that teaches very plainly the doctrine of the monergism of divine grace, Philippians 2:13. It is rendered: “For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” Nothing could be plainer than that Paul here wants to convey the thought that “it is God who works in you both the willing and the doing, ” or as it is given in the modern German of the Menge translation²⁷: *Gott ist es ja, der beides, das Wollen und das Vollbringen, in euch wirkt, damit ihr ihm wohlgefallet.* As vv. 12–13 have been made to read in the RSV, they can become a *sedes doctrinae* for outright synergism and a pillar of support to the *opinio legis* that is the basic characteristic of natural man.

This attempt at evaluation of the RSV could be no more than a spot-check on what seemed to be some crucial points. Yet the spot-check has revealed, we think, that the New Testament of the RSV is not the New Testament in its pristine form laid before us in current American speech but rather another version that shows the theological or un-theological tendencies of present-day liberal American New Testament scholarship. A complete study of the entire version will show whether this evaluation is justified, or whether it needs to be seriously modified.

We shall continue to study the RSV together with all the other English and foreign language versions. At our seminary we shall continue to take it into account. We are sure that our pastors will use it, chiefly for purposes of comparison with the original text. But when we are asked the questions: “Is the RSV really the New Testament in modern American speech?” and “Is it the best that modern scholarship can produce?”, our reply shall have to be: “As we can see it now, the answer is No on both counts.”

What answers our pastors will give to the questions of those of their people who have bought and are reading the RSV poses a much more difficult problem. Since last September 30 this writer has become increasingly convinced that no answer to our people’s inquiries will be completely satisfactory to them or to us until we have given them a version of the New Testament that will do for our generation what Luther’s New Testament of 1522 did for the Germany of his day.

27 *Die Heilige Schrift Alten und Neuen Testaments übersetzt von D. Dr. Hermann Menge.* Stuttgart: Privileg. Württemb. Bibelanstalt, 1933.