

REVISED VERSION  
OR  
REVISED BIBLE?

*A Critique of the Revised Standard Version  
of the Old Testament (1952)*

By

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*The Scripture cannot be broken*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AV	Authorized or King James Version (1611)
ARV	American Revised Version (1901)
RSV	Revised Standard Version (1946, 1952)
AT	American Translation (1927)
Moffatt	New Translation by James Moffatt (1922-26)
OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
Heb	Consonantal Hebrew Text of the OT
MT	Massoretic Text of the OT (i.e., the Consonantal Hebrew Text as vocalized (pronounced) by Jewish scholars called Massoretes)
Gk	Greek Septuagint Version (LXX)
Sam	Samaritan-Hebrew Text
Syr	Syriac Version
Tg	Targum
Vulg	Latin Vulgate
Cn	“Correction”
Ms	Manuscript
Vers	Versions
Introduction	An Introduction to the RSV Old Testament (1952), by Members of the Revision Committee

## PREFACE

Every lover of the Bible must deplore the fact that the appearance of a version of it should become the occasion of such controversy throughout American Protestantism as has resulted from the publication of the completed RSV Bible in the autumn of 1952. But this was inevitable for three reasons.

The first reason is the tremendous pressure which has been and is being exerted in behalf of the RSV by the Publishers and by the National Council of Churches which is the owner of the copyright. They have not been willing to allow the new version to speak for itself and stand on its own merits. They are using every possible means to persuade Bible readers to accept it as a vast improvement on AV and ARV, and to induce Church Boards and Agencies to adopt it as the Standard Version for use by their respective denominations. And this pressure drive began before this version, three-fourths of which (the Old Testament) was entirely new, was published and available for careful examination. Such a situation is almost unprecedented; it is both dangerous and ominous.

The second reason is that as a "modern speech" version the RSV has made drastic changes in the diction and style of the AV, of which it purports to be a revision, which cannot but give offense to the lovers of that time-honored version.

The third reason is that the RSV, especially the Old Testament, is not merely a "modern speech" but a "modernist" or "higher critical" revision of the version of 1611. As such it proceeds upon quite different principles from those which governed the preparation of the AV and ARV. It makes many changes in the text of the Bible, either on the authority of the ancient versions or simply on the basis of conjecture. And its marginal notes are at times inaccurate, inadequate, and [p. iii] misleading; and they tend quite definitely to undermine confidence in the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible.

These are the main reasons which have led to this controversy. They show not only that it was inevitable, but also that it was justifiable and necessary. If some of the readers of this brief Critique feel that its criticisms of the new version are too severe, they will do well to bear in mind that the RSV is being widely and authoritatively proclaimed as "the greatest Bible news in 341 years." A version which its promoters expect and intend to become the Standard version for English-speaking Protestantism, at least in this country, challenges and must expect the most careful testing as to whether it is entitled to such a preeminent and unique place among English versions of the Bible. In such a version defects, especially serious ones, cannot be treated with lenity or passed over in silence.

This Critique brings together most of the material contained in articles recently contributed by the writer to *Eternity*, *United Evangelical Action*, and *The Southern Presbyterian Journal*. The writer wishes to express to the Editors of these journals his appreciation of their willingness to permit him to do this. Much additional material has also been included. It is intended to be a supplement or sequel to the critique of the RSV New Testament (1946) which was published in 1948 under the title *Revision or New Translation?*

May this controversy, much as we deplore its necessity, lead Christian people everywhere to a deeper realization of the importance and necessity of drawing a clear and sharp distinction between what the *Bible* says and what some modern scholars think it ought to say!

## THE TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ITS TRANSLATION

In dealing with any version of an important work, there are two questions which are of major importance. The first concerns the text of the document itself—Has the true text been made the basis of the translation? The second concerns the translation—What principles and rules have been observed in making the version?

### *The Text of the RSV Old Testament*

Since RSV claims to be a revision of AV, the first point to be noted is the radical difference between the two versions as to the Text to be translated. It was the generally accepted view of the Reformers that it is the Hebrew Scriptures that are authoritative. They were familiar with the Latin Vulgate, less familiar with the Greek Septuagint. Hebrew had been for centuries an all but unknown tongue. Origen and Jerome, both of whom lived more than a thousand years before the Reformation, were the two Hebrew scholars among the fathers of the Church. So the Reformers studied Hebrew in order that they might make their appeal from the traditions and even from the translations of men directly to what Jerome called “the Hebrew verity.”

This attitude finds clear expression in the preface entitled “The translators to the reader,” which appears in the 1611 Bible but is omitted in most copies of the AV today. There they call the Hebrew of the OT and the Greek of the NT “the two golden pipes, or rather conduits, wherethrough the olive branches empty themselves into the gold.” And they tell us: “These tongues therefore, the Scriptures we say in these tongues, we set before us to translate, being the tongues wherein God was pleased to speak to his Church by his Prophets and Apostles.” They point out that they did [p. 2] not think it too much trouble to consult the well-known versions, both ancient and modern, a statement which is borne out by the words of the title page “With the former translations diligently compared and revised.” They refer particularly to the Greek (LXX) and point out that “the Seventy were Interpreters, they were not Prophets; they did many things well, as learned men; but yet as men they stumbled and fell, one while through oversight, another while through ignorance, yea sometimes they may be noted to add to the Original, and sometimes to take from it.” In other words they tested the Greek (LXX) by the Hebrew and found it wanting. The LXX it will be remembered is the most ancient version of the OT and consequently the one most often appealed to by the scholars.

The same viewpoint is expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) which appeared less than forty years after the AV. There we read: “The Old Testament in Hebrew, (which was the native language of the people of God of old,) and the New Testament in Greek, (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations,) being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so as in all controversies of religion the Church is finally to appeal to them.”

The attitude of the ARV is quite similar to that of AV. We read in the Preface such statements regarding the use of the versions as these: "On account of the extreme difficulty of correcting the Hebrew text by means of those (ancient) versions, we originally decided that it would be better to make no reference to them at all." The reason given for such a radical proposal is quite significant. "The case is radically different from that of the New Testament, where the variant readings are mostly found in Greek manuscripts of the New Testament itself. The authorities referred to in the Old Testament are translations from the Hebrew; and though the date of these translations is more ancient than any extant manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, yet there is no means of verifying with certainty the text of these translations; [p. 3] and one can never get beyond plausible conjecture in attempting to correct the Hebrew text by means of them." They go on to state that they reduced to "about one-sixth the references to the ancient versions which appeared in the margin of the ERV," a statement which makes it plain that in ERV as in ARV the variant readings favored by the versions were usually, but not always, placed in the footnotes, not inserted in the text. Consequently we find in the footnotes of ARV less than 50 references to the Versions, only a very few of which are introduced into the text of the version.

All competent scholars will admit that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament as it has come down to us is not errorless. Errors have crept in in the course of centuries of copying and transmitting manuscripts. But these errors are relatively few and unimportant. We know that the Jews greatly revered their Scriptures as the Oracles of God, and preserved them with the utmost care. Probably few scholars will deny that the Hebrew text which we have today is practically identical with the standard text of the second century A.D. Especially important is the fact that our Lord, while denouncing the Jews for misusing, misinterpreting, disobeying the Scriptures, and making them void with their "traditions," accepted these very Scriptures, as they did, as the Word of God and declared "the Scripture cannot be broken." It is this which has given the Hebrew Scriptures their unique authority for the Christian Church. Consequently the aim of the translator should always be to ascertain the meaning of the Hebrew text as it has come down to us, always to give it the benefit of the doubt and to correct it as little as possible.

When we turn to RSV we find that the situation is quite different. The references to the versions are far more numerous than in ERV or ARV, and these various readings, are not placed in the margin but introduced into the text. We also find that there are numerous instances where the abbreviation "cn" ("correction") appears in the margin. This refers to *conjectural* changes which are made in the text, "reconstructions" for which RSV can cite support neither [p. 4] in Hebrew mss. nor versions. Furthermore there are, despite the assertion of the preface to the contrary, passages apparently many of them where the text is changed without any indication being given in the margin.

The reason for this different attitude toward the OT text is not far to seek. Dr. James Moffatt was a member of the RSV Committees (both OT and NT) for 14 years (1930-44). In 1924-25 he had published his version of the Old Testament, in the Preface to which the statement is made that "The traditional or 'massoretic' text of the Old Testament, though of

primary value, is often desperately corrupt.”<sup>1</sup> He held that there were passages so corrupt that they could not be corrected even with the help of the versions. So in some cases he left gaps. “But wherever I was satisfied with some correction or conjecture, which at least made tolerable sense, I preferred to adopt it. When the choice lay between a guess or a gap, I inclined to prefer the former, feeling that the [p. 5] ordinary reader, for whom this version is designed, would have a proper dislike of gaps.” That there is a “gap” amounting to a chasm between this attitude toward the text of the Hebrew Bible and that which was taken by AV and ARV must be obvious to anyone. Yet it was undoubtedly with full knowledge of this attitude, an attitude shared by many or most so-called “higher critics,” that Dr. Moffatt was one of the first men chosen to serve on the RSV committees. How clearly this attitude is reflected in the RSV Old Testament will appear as we proceed.

### *Principles Governing the Translation*

Second only in importance to the question of the text, is the method of translating the text. The translator may have a perfect copy of the original before him. But unless he gives an accurate rendering of it, the result will be unsatisfactory and may be disastrous. “Idiomatic” and “intelligible” are important features of a good translation. But the basic requirement is *accuracy*. This is the reason that both AV and ARV made use of italics to indicate words which were not in the original but were supplied to make an accurate translation intelligible to the English reader. They recognized that there were expressions in the Hebrew which were too “Hebraic,” we may say, to be readily understood by “Gentile” readers. So they used italics to indicate what they supplied to make the sense clear and the diction pleasing. E.g., Ps.141:5, “Let the righteous smite me; *it shall be* a kindness: and let him reprove me; *it shall be* an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also *shall be* in their calamities.” Without the italicized words the verse is intelligible. But the

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1. For the benefit of the reader who does not know Hebrew, a word of explanation will be helpful. Hebrew, being a Semitic language differs from the Indo-European family of languages in a number of ways. The most fundamental is the root. The Hebrew root consists entirely of consonants of which it ordinarily has three. Hence Triconsonantalism is distinctive of Hebrew roots. It is the root which gives the basic meaning of the word. The vowels and various formative additions simply modify or apply the root meaning. E.g., *GDL* expresses the idea of “great.” It may be pronounced in several different ways: *GaDaL* (he became great). *GoDel* (greatness), *GaDoL* (great [as adjective]), the small letters supplying the vowels needed to pronounce the word. Similarly *MiGDaL* means a “tower” (great place); *HiGDaLTa* means “Thou has made great.” When Hebrew was a spoken language these vowels or “pointings” were not needed, because the syntax of the sentence would usually make the meaning clear to anyone who knew Hebrew. The vowel-points were added, centuries after the OT canon was closed, by Jewish scholars (the Massorettes) for the purpose of indicating the exact pronunciation. They represent an ancient and valuable tradition which is not lightly to be disregarded. But the pointings supplied by the Massorettes in the Massoretic Text are to be distinguished from the Consonantal Text and do not have its Divine authority.

It is also to be noted that: (1) ’ and ‘ represent guttural sounds not used in English; (2) *S* may be pronounced as sh (Š); (3) *H* may represent the sound of h in “house,” of ch in “loch” or it may merely indicate a long vowel; (4) Consonants which are to be doubled in pronunciation are written only once in Hebrew; (5) Hyphenated English words represent a single word or word group in the Hebrew.

italics serve the double purpose of making the meaning clearer and of indicating just what has been supplied to make it so. RSV never uses italics. Yet it is a far freer translation than either AV or ARV.

RSV aims to be an “idiomatic” version. By this is meant that it aims not merely to translate the Hebrew into idiomatic English, but that it does not hesitate to modernize or we might say to Americanize the Hebrew forms of [p. 6] expression. It inserts words, leaves out words, recasts sentences, puts a modern meaning on OT words. It insists that many of the changes which it introduces are due to our “greatly enlarged” knowledge of the “vocabulary and grammar of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic.” But it fails to make mention of the far more obvious fact that many, perhaps most, of the changes which it has made were known centuries ago, but were not introduced into AV or ARV simply because AV and ARV were governed by a radically different conception of the trustworthiness of the Hebrew text and of the way in which it should be dealt with by the translator. The best Hebrew text available to scholars today differs very little from the text which was used by the scholars who prepared the version of 1611. The most important of the “ancient versions” to which RSV constantly refers, the Septuagint and the Vulgate, were known to them; and all the other versions appealed to in RSV were known to the revisers of 1901.

The average reader, when he picks up the RSV, will probably feel that it is not so very different from the familiar King James Version. It is true that much of the beauty of the AV has been retained. Such familiar passages as Pss. 23 and 103, Isa. 6 and 40 and 55 have been changed comparatively little. Indeed so great is the similarity and so slight are the differences, in many familiar passages, that the reader may well wonder whether the claim is true that the language of the AV is so unfamiliar and unintelligible to the average American of today that a radical revision of AV and ARV is really necessary. But this general and superficial similarity does not offset and should not conceal the fact to which we have referred and which we shall now proceed to prove by chapter and verse, that RSV represents a radical departure from the standard set by AV and ARV, that it is not merely a modern translation but a *modernist* translation, which belongs in a class with the Moffatt and the so-called “American”<sup>2</sup> translations and not with AV and ARV. [p. 7]

## THE RSV TEXT AND FOOTNOTES

In reading and studying the RSV there are two features which are constantly presented to the reader: the text of the version and the footnotes. Very many Bibles today are supplied with marginal notes and cross-references. Sometimes they are very helpful, at other times rather superfluous. How much attention the average reader pays to footnotes is hard to determine. It would probably be safe to say that usually they receive far less attention than they deserve. In the case of the RSV the marginal notes are especially important, because they indicate many of the places in which the RSV rendering departs from the Hebrew text. These notes are both helpful and confusing. They are helpful when they simply clarify the meaning of a Hebrew word or phrase by giving an alternative rendering, or when in the case of a

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2. A more accurate title would be, “A Chicago University Translation,” since the translators (Powis Smith, Meek, Waterman, Gordon, Goodspeed) were all more or less closely connected with that institution.

rendering in the text which departs from the Hebrew, they indicate fully and adequately the reason for the change. They are confusing and misleading, when for example, they again and again use the versions to “correct” the Hebrew text, but ignore completely the far more numerous instances in which they have followed the Hebrew against the versions. This gives a quite false impression as to the relative dependability of the Hebrew text and the versions. They are misleading when they give only the evidence which supports the reading which they prefer and ignore the evidence which opposes it. The frequent assertion that the Hebrew “lacks” something that the versions supply, that it is “obscure,” “uncertain,” and the refusal at times to give the Hebrew the benefit of even reasonable doubt tends to undermine confidence in the authority of Scripture. Most serious of all are the cases—and there appear to be many of them—where RSV changes the Hebrew text without giving in the margin any indication that it has done so. Our task will now be to examine some of the readings in the text of RSV and some of the marginal notes, where they occur, which are the basis for the criticisms which have just been briefly summarized. For convenience these [p. 8] examples will be grouped under the captions which are used in the marginal notes.

“Or -----”

In the footnotes to RSV, “or” is loosely and misleadingly used. Sometimes it simply gives an alternative rendering of a Hebrew word or phrase: e.g., “window” (Gen. 6:16), “see” (22:14), “of” (27:39), “its chariot” (Ex.15:1). Sometimes it involves a change in the pronunciation of the Hebrew: “Molech” (Isa. 30:33) instead of “king” (*melech*). Sometimes it involves a change in the dividing of sentences and words as in Ps. 25:17; 73:1, or the change of consonants as in Ps. 51:17; 68:4 (passages which are discussed below).

Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created” has the margin, “Or *When God began to create.*” This is a possible rendering of the Hebrew text. It can be traced back to Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages. But no support has been produced for it from the ancient versions. A serious objection to it is that it at least suggests the pre-existence of the matter out of which the heavens and the earth were created, which is contrary to the consistent teaching of the Bible. The reason this rendering is given here is probably that it is the opening sentence of the AT. The fact should not be overlooked that four of the five men who prepared the AT were subsequently chosen to membership on RSV committees.

Genesis 9:26, “Blessed by the LORD my God be Shem,” with margin, “Or *blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem.*” Here the “or” is misleading because the rendering in the text involves a different pronunciation (pointing) of the Hebrew. No support in the versions is cited. While possible, it is decidedly awkward, and not as good as AV. This is shown by Gen.14:19 where “blessed be Abram by God Most High” uses a preposition to express the “by” and not a simple genitive as would be the case here.

Psalms 51:17, “The sacrifice acceptable to God,” has the margin, “Or *My sacrifice, O God.*” The one rendering involves the dropping of a consonant, the other a change in the pronouncing, of the Hebrew text. “Acceptable to” is paraphrase. [p. 9] AV gives a correct and quite intelligible rendering of the Hebrew, despite the fact that RSV ignores it. The plural



(sacrifices) is justified by the fact that the Mosaic Law prescribes several different kinds of sacrifice.

Psalm 68:4, “Lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds,” has as margin, “Or *cast up a highway for him who rides through the deserts.*” The word rendered “lift up” is ambiguous. That it may mean “cast up (a highway)” is proved by Isa. 62:10; 57:14 (cf. Job 19:12; 30:12). That it is used here in this sense is favored by the word *‘aRaboT*, which occurs about 60 times in the OT and has the meaning, “desert, plain, steppe.” The marginal rendering, which is similar to ARV, is strongly supported by Isa. 40:3-5 where the idea is presented in detail. The rendering “lift up (a song)” is perhaps favored by the preceding context, “Sing to God, sing praises to his name.” But the other meaning is equally suitable. “Upon the clouds” requires a change or changes in the consonantal text, which are unnecessary. The fact that a Baal hymn from Ras Shamra describes him as “riding upon the clouds,” does not justify a change in the Hebrew text in order to introduce this epithet here. Elsewhere in this psalm the God of Israel is described as “riding upon the heaven of heavens.” But this likewise does not justify changing the Hebrew text of verse 4. It is perfectly proper to use two figures in the same psalm. It may be noted that the AV rendered “upon the heavens,” following a Jewish interpretation which on the basis of vs. 33 explained *‘aRaboT* as the name of the seventh heaven. But ARV text and RSV margin give the correct rendering.

Psalm 73:1, “Truly God is good to the upright, to those who are pure in heart,” has the margin, “Or *Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.*” The “or” suggests or implies that this is simply a different rendering of the Hebrew. Such an inference would be mistaken. The RSV rendering is obtained in the following way. It cuts the word “Israel” in two, dividing it into *YaSaR* and *’eL*, i.e., into “upright” and “God.” This it would justify by the claim that it makes no change in the consonantal text, but [p. 10] simply divides the letters of the Hebrew text differently and pronounces them differently. But more is involved than this, radical as such a change in rendering would be. Following the Hebrew order this verse reads “Truly good to Israel is God (*Elohim*), to the clean of heart.” If “Israel” is divided into *YaSaR* (upright) and *’eL* (God), then “God” is named twice in this verse, as both *El* and *Elohim*. But RSV has “God” only once. So either *El* or *Elohim* is omitted. There is no indication of this in the note, which makes it both misleading and inadequate. This is an example of the cases where RSV ignores the versions. It regularly ignores them when it prefers the Hebrew reading to theirs. So here where the versions support the Hebrew, this important fact is ignored and RSV follows neither.

Psalm 139:11, “If I say, ‘Let only darkness cover me, and the light about me be night,’” illustrates the inconsistency of RSV as regards alternative renderings. E.g., in Ps.27:1 it gives “stronghold” the alternative rendering “refuge,” although the difference is so slight as to be almost negligible. But in Ps.60:7 “helmet” does not have the margin “defence of my head” (ARV). And here in Ps.139, where RSV gives a rendering which differs from both AV and ARV (text and margin), both of these possible renderings are entirely ignored.

“*Heb -----*”

This formula appears many times in the footnotes of RSV. Sometimes it stands alone. Sometimes it is preceded by the name of a version or versions which support the reading

given in the RSV text. It serves to inform the reader briefly and bluntly that RSV prefers another rendering or reading to that given by the Hebrew text.

Judges 14:15, “on the fourth day,” with margin: “Gk Syr: Heb *seventh*.” AV and ARV simply follow the Hebrew. The reading of Gk and Syr is probably a harmonistic change, made on the assumption that Samson’s guests, after giving up the attempt to solve the riddle on the third day, must at once have applied to his wife for help. This fails to do justice [p. 11] to the “seven days” of vs.17, which show that the wife was just as determined as were the “companions” to learn the secret and that she began her efforts at once. The guests were probably quite aware of this fact. So they brought no pressure to bear on her during the six days. Then on the seventh, being desperate, they terrified her with dire threats to make her redouble her despairing and perhaps flagging efforts; and they finally succeeded. Another emendation has been proposed: to read “six” instead of “three” in vs.14. But both are unnecessary. The Hebrew is quite intelligible and self-consistent when properly interpreted.

1 Kings 7:2, “and its height thirty cubits, and it was built upon three rows of cedar pillars,” has the note to the word “three,” “Gk: Heb *four*.” This note is inadequate and misleading. It ignores the fact that the Hebrew is supported by Syr, Vulg, and Targ. It also ignores the fact that in the Gk Codex B omits the words “and its height thirty cubits.” These words are supplied by Codex A. But this variation in the Gk would certainly counsel caution in accepting the Gk of this passage in preference to the Hebrew.

1 Samuel 14:33, “roll a great stone to me here,” has margin, “Gk: Heb *this day*.” This involves the change of a consonant in the Hebrew. It is no improvement. For it makes Samuel’s words tautological and repetitious: the idea of “here” being expressed in the words “to-me.” “The day,” which means “this day,” i.e., “now” adds the idea of time to that of place. Since the words sound much alike, the Gk may easily have confused them. But that is no reason for preferring the version to the Hebrew original.

1 Samuel 17:12, “and advanced in years” has the margin “Gk Syr: Heb *among men*.” This is the kind of “reconstruction” which is calculated to shake confidence in the scholarship of RSV. The reading “in years” does not occur in either of the great Greek Codices. Vss. 12-31 are lacking in Codex B. Codex A agrees with the Hebrew reading “among men.” The “Gk” apparently rests on the assumption that the Lucianic recension of the LXX, which was made more than 500 years after the version was finished, is more [p. 12] correct than is Codex A. Against the reading of the Syriac it has been pointed out that the expression “advanced in years” occurs nowhere in the OT. The usual phrase is “come (or gone) into days.” Consequently the reading of RSV text, “advanced in years,” was described many years ago by an eminent “critic” (S. R. Driver) as “extremely questionable.” What evidence is there that it is any less questionable today?

Psalms 51 :8, “Fill me with joy and gladness,” has the margin to the word “fill”: “Syr: Heb *Make to hear*.” Compare AV and ARV. “Fill” does not represent a newly discovered meaning of the Hebrew verb. It is the result of a change in the text, the change of a M into a B. The familiar rendering “cause me to hear” is supported by both Gk and Vg, two of the principal versions often referred to in the notes. The rendering “fill” has the support only of Syr. This is significant because the Syriac language is Semitic and closely resembles the Hebrew; and the same change of M to B in the Syriac would and does give the rendering of the RSV text. Gk which is centuries older than Syr agrees with the Heb. The only difference is that “cause

me to hear” is somewhat poetic and figurative, while “fill” is more nearly literal. But by adopting “fill” RSV adds to its list of passages which are in need of reconstruction because the Hebrew is “often desperately corrupt.”

Psalm 75:9, “rejoice” has margin “Gk: Heb *declare*.” This also illustrates the readiness of RSV to follow the versions, especially the Greek, against the Hebrew. “Declare” is a perfectly proper word in the context. It is used repeatedly in the Psalms, in such expressions as “declare thy righteousness,” “declare his doings,” “declare his wondrous works,” “declare his mighty acts.” The fact that “declare” is used here absolutely, with no object expressed, is not unnatural. To change it into “rejoice” involves the change of a D to an L, which is not probable since both in sound and in script these letters are quite dissimilar.

Psalm 80:15, “The stock which thy right hand planted” has the note: “Heb *planted and upon the son whom thou hast reared for thyself*.” [p. 13] This means that the entire second half of this verse is omitted in RSV. No support in mss, or versions is cited. But it is claimed that this half-verse breaks the connection and is a doublet of vs.17b. So RSV omits it without mentioning the fact that it has the support of Gk Vg Syr Targ, i.e., of the ancient versions most frequently appealed to by RSV in support of its changes in the Hebrew text. The similar disappearance of Ps. 7:12b may be intentional, but looks a good deal like an accidental omission.

Psalm 85:8, “to those who turn to him in their hearts,” with margin: “Gk: Heb *but let them not turn again to folly*.” This requires drastic changes in the Hebrew. But the latter makes good sense (a better rendering than “folly” might be “self-confidence” which is of course the utmost folly); and there is no sufficient reason for changing it or for giving preference to the Gk unless it be found in the desire to keep constantly before the reader the thought that the Hebrew text is frequently in need of “reconstruction.”

Jeremiah 34:14, “at the end of six years” has margin “Gk: Heb *seven*.” This means of course that the Hebrew is incorrect and is corrected by the Greek. But many able scholars accept the “seven” without question. ARV does not even have a footnote. Ex. 21:2 declares that “in the seventh year” the servant is to go out free for nothing. Deut. 15 uses the expressions: “at the end of seven years” (vs. 1), “the seventh year, the year of release”(vs. 9) and “in the seventh year” (vs. 12). It would harmonize all these statements, were we to assume that “at the end of seven years” means during the seventh year. We never read “in the beginning of the seventh year” or “at the end of six years.” Ex. 21:2 says simply, “six years he shall serve and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.” This may mean that, since the six years of labor were normally followed by a seventh year of rest (Ex. 23:10f), the servant on his release was entitled to spend the year of rest in the house of his late master. This would be especially natural when his year of release corresponded with the sabbatical year, during which there was to be neither sowing nor reaping and the household was to live from the [p. 14] “old yield.” Such an interpretation would provide for his freeing at the beginning of the seventh year and for his maintenance during it. RSV simply assumes that the Hebrew is wrong and “corrects” it. But if “seven” is the obvious blunder which RSV assumes, it is strange that we find it in Vulg Syr Targ. It is far more natural to assume that we are dealing with an idiom which the Greek misunderstood.

Jeremiah 47:5, “O remnant of the Anakim,” with margin to the word “Anakim”: “Gk: Heb *their valley*” is the RSV substitute for “with the remnant of their valley” (AV). The AV is quite

intelligible. But various conjectural emendations have been proposed. RSV follows AT in adopting the reading of the Greek. Moffatt substituted “Ekron,” apparently simply because it was the name of another Philistine city with a somewhat similar sound. Each of these emendations retains two of the four consonants of the Hebrew and changes two. These changes are quite unnecessary. This is illustrated by the fact that quite recently another rendering has been proposed, “their strength,” which accepts the Hebrew text but pronounces it differently. The word rendered “strength” occurs frequently in the Babylonian and may have been known to the Hebrews. The last century of archaeological research has restored to us the meanings of not a few Hebrew words which were forgotten by later Jewish scholars and were apparently unknown to the translators of the ancient versions. Again and again it has been shown that the emendations of the critics, whether based on the versions or purely conjectural, are both unwarranted and unnecessary. The Hebrew should always be given the benefit of the doubt. Since “strength” does not change the Hebrew text, it is worthy of consideration. But only the context can determine whether or not it is superior to the usual rendering.

Ezekiel 34 :16, “and the fat and the strong I will watch over” with margin “Gk Syr Vg: Heb *destroy*.” The RSV text involves the change of a D to an R. It is to be admitted that these letters are somewhat frequently confused in Hebrew mss. since they were written much alike. But there is no [p. 15] sufficient reason for preferring the reading of these versions to that of the Hebrew. It is quite proper to regard this final clause as adversative or antithetic rather than cumulative; and there is good warrant for taking “fat” and “strong” in a bad sense, especially in view of the immediate context (vss. 20f.). Here as in many other cases AV and ARV give the Hebrew the benefit of any doubt which may exist. RSV prefers to treat the Hebrew as corrupt.

Joel 3 :21, “And I will avenge their blood, and I will not clear the guilty” has margin, “Gk Syr: Heb *I will hold innocent their blood which I have not held innocent*.” The reading of RSV text involves changing a consonant in the Hebrew (Y into M). It was favored by Gesenius more than a century ago. But Keil denied that it finds support in the Greek. The change, like so many others is not the result of new light, but of a new attitude toward the authority of the Hebrew text.

In all of the above passages this note, “Heb ----,” indicates a change in the Hebrew text. But it is to be noted that like the “Or ---- ” it may merely indicate an alternative (more literal) rendering of the Hebrew (e.g., Num. 12:11; Deut. 3:11; 32:18, 41; Ps. 44:14; 137:1). Sometimes it indicates that RSV has inserted words to clarify the meaning. For example, 2 Chr. 14:13 substitutes “the men of Judah” for the simple “they” of the Hebrew (cf. Ex. 15:25; 2 Chr. 23:3). But at other times there is no such note (e.g., 2 Chr. 24:22 [Zechariah], vs. 23 [Joash]: Ps. 105:37 [Israel], Jer. 46:26 [Egypt]). RSV presupposes a lower grade of intelligence on the part of the reader than AV and ARV do. Thus in Ps. 7:12 where the Hebrew has “he” twice, RSV reads “a man” and “God” with “he” in the margin. But if such explanations are really needed, the place for them is in the margin. not in the text.

### *“Heb obscure”*

That there are passages in the Old Testament which are hard to understand is a generally recognized fact. One of the principal aims of the commentary is to clarify their [p. 16] meaning wherever this is possible. AV and AR V frequently use italics to indicate the words which are supplied for this purpose. RSV uses no italics. But in a good many places it adds the note “Heb obscure” or “Heb uncertain.” We much prefer the other method. Sometimes RSV raises difficulties where it is unnecessary and charges the Hebrew with obscurity or uncertainty without any sufficient warrant.

Deuteronomy 18:8, “besides what he receives from his patrimony” has margin “Heb obscure.” Yet this is almost exactly the rendering which AV, ARV give without considering it necessary to comment on the Hebrew text.

Psalms 37:35b, “like a cedar of Lebanon” has margin “Gk: Heb obscure.” AV renders by “like a green bay tree,” which ARV changes to “like a green tree in its native soil.” The word which AV renders by “bay tree” is *'eZRaH*, which means “native” as distinguished from “foreign.” It occurs 17 times in the OT; and there is no doubt as to its meaning. Elsewhere it is used of a person, here of a tree. Hence the ARV rendering, “tree in its native soil.” The figure is a natural and beautiful one. The word rendered by “green” is *Ra'aNaN*. It Occurs 19 times. Consequently “like a green tree in its native soil” (ARV) gives the correct meaning. RSV substitutes “like a cedar of Lebanon.” This involves reading *'eReZ* for *'eZRaH* (dropping the final harsh guttural [ch] and transposing Z and R), also reading *Lebanon* for *ra'anan*, which involves changing the first two consonants of the word. This is done on the authority of the Greek. But the Hebrew is clearly preferable. That a translator or copyist would substitute the less common word “native” (as used of trees) for the familiar “cedar” and “green native tree” for “cedar of Lebanon” seems decidedly improbable. It is far more likely that the author or authors of the Greek version of the Psalms, failed to understand the Hebrew and used “cedars of Lebanon” as a suitable and in their opinion permissible paraphrase. Yet RSV prefers to follow the Greek against the Hebrew. It goes still further. It asserts that the Hebrew is “obscure.” The Hebrew is not obscure. But RSV's change in the text and its marginal comment [p. 17] illustrate the readiness of RSV to find fault with the Hebrew and to “correct” it on the basis of the versions or of conjecture, as it sees fit.

### *“Heb lacks -----”*

These words appear many times in the margin to indicate that RSV has inserted the reading of one or more of the versions (especially the Gk) into the Hebrew text. It is important to notice that this use of the versions is both one-sided and misleading. Dr. Orlinsky, a member of the OT Committee of RSV, points out in his essay on “The Hebrew Text and the Ancient Versions”(Introd., p.29) that “There are hundreds of instances where the Septuagint version differs from the Masoretic Hebrew text. Most frequently this is due to the fact that the translators paraphrased the text.” He also points out that “On numerous occasions, the text of the Septuagint differs from the preserved Hebrew text because the former, rather than the latter, has experienced corruption.” There is nothing in the RSV Old Testament to indicate that such is the case. The “Gk” and other ancient versions are appealed

to again and again to correct the Hebrew. About 70 times in the Psalms we find notes to this effect. Again and again we are told in the margin that “Heb lacks” something which the versions supply. But the writer has not found a single case where it is indicated that the Hebrew is to be preferred to the reading of the versions. This is very significant in view of the dogmatic way in which RSV appeals to the versions.

Genesis 4:8, “Cain said to Abel his brother, ‘Let us go out to the field,’” has margin: “Sam Gk Syr Compare Vg: Heb lacks *Let us go out to the field.*” This, as the margin indicates, is a very old variation. Neither AV nor ARV mentions it, although it was undoubtedly familiar to both. It may be due to an attempt to smooth over the somewhat abrupt transition (cf. 3:22; 2 Chr. 1:2; 32:24). Similar insertions are: “These are the sons of Japheth” (Gen.10:5), which is inserted apparently simply to make the genealogies of the three sons of Noah uniform in style; “playing with her son [p. 18] Isaac” (Gen. 21:9) instead of “sporting” (AV): “and the pillar Mizpeh” (31:49) instead of “and Mizpah”; “Why have you stolen my silver cup” (44:4). Of these five insertions, the second is made without any external evidence, the others with more or less support in the versions. In the case of every one of them the note says “Hebrew lacks.” This amounts to saying that the Hebrew text is corrupt and needs to be “reconstructed” by means of the versions, or even without their help. Yet in every case the Hebrew is defensible and may be correct. The insertions are not important in themselves; their chief significance lies in the fact that if accepted they tend to support Dr. Moffatt’s thesis, that the text of the OT is “often desperately corrupt” and is to be corrected by means of the versions or by conjectural emendation.

On the other hand the RSV margin makes no mention of the fact that in Gen. 11 the Greek includes a Cainan-link in the genealogy of the Shemites, a fact which is important because in Lk. 3:36 Cainan is included in the genealogy of Jesus. But at Gen. 11:12 we do not find a note “Gk adds.” The variation is simply ignored. Similarly the fact that the ages assigned to the ancestors of Abram at parenthood differ in the Hebrew, the Greek and the Samaritan, is passed over in silence. The Hebrew is accepted as correct without comment. This gives an utterly false impression as to the relative dependability of the Hebrew text and the versions which RSV so often uses to “correct” it.

An especially noteworthy example of this policy of ignoring all variations in the versions which are not accepted as corrections of the Hebrew text is Ex. 12:40 where we read: “The time that the people of Israel dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.” This is one of the few “long dates” in the OT. Students of OT history and especially of its chronology are accustomed to speak of the “long” and the “short” chronology for the sojourn in Egypt. According to the one, the sojourn was 430 years, according to the other it was 215 years. The difference is due to the fact that according to Sam and Gk (two of the authorities appealed to in support of the insertion at Gen. 4:8), the 430 years include [p. 19] the 215 years which the patriarchs spent in Canaan before the descent into Egypt. The Sam has “in the land of Canaan and in Egypt,” the Gk “in Egypt and in the land of Canaan.” This is an important variation. The Ussher Chronology which still appears in some editions of AV adopted the Short Chronology, following Sam and Gk against the Hebrew text. AV and ARV ignore these various readings, which is in accord with their policy of basing their translation on the Hebrew and using the versions exclusively, or nearly so, for the purpose of interpreting it. But it is little short of amazing that RSV which appeals to the Versions hundreds of times and

usually or nearly always places their rendering in the text, should completely ignore this important variation. We would be tempted to regard the omission of a marginal note as a printer's or editor's slip, were it not for the fact that it is so clearly the policy of RSV to ignore all variant readings of the versions except those which it uses to "correct" the Hebrew text.

1 Samuel 12:3, "a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me" has the note: "Gk: Heb lacks *Testify against me.*" This note seriously misrepresents the facts. "A bribe to blind my eyes with it" (cf. AV, ARV) is a fairly literal rendering of the Hebrew. The Greek has "and sandal(s). Testify against me." This means that the Greek has read "sandal(s)" (*Na'aLaYiM*) instead of "to blind" (*'aLiYM*), by changing one letter and pronouncing the word differently; that it has read "testify" (*'aNuW*) instead of "my eyes" (*'eNaY*) by changing a Y to W; and finally that it has secured "against me" (*BiY*) from "with it" (*BoW*) by changing a W into a Y. From this it is clear that the Greek is based on approximately the same text as the Masoretic Hebrew (exactly the same number of words and approximately the same number of letters), but differed in the reading of several of the letters and "pointed" (pronounced) the words differently. In rendering "to blind my eyes with it" RSV has followed the MT and rejected the Greek. But then on the authority of the Greek it has inserted the words, "testify against me," which as we have seen represent a misreading [p. 20] of the words "my eyes with it" of the Hebrew text, which RSV has already accepted as correct. Consequently it appears that RSV secures the reading "testify against me" by reading the words of the Hebrew twice: once as "my eyes with it" and then as "testify against me." It puts both in its text and asserts in the note that "Heb lacks *Testify against me.*" In other words it rejects and ignores part of the rendering of the Greek, which it properly regards as a misreading of the Hebrew; and then it adopts a part of the Greek rendering, despite the fact that this involves a dittography (reading the same words twice, with different meanings), and declares that the Hebrew text which it has already accepted as correct by the rendering "to blind my eyes with it" is now to be corrected by the Greek, by adding, "Testify against me." Moffatt and AT follow Gk consistently. RSV tries to follow both. Such erratic and arbitrary treatment of the Biblical text by RSV will, when it becomes generally known, serve to discredit RSV in the eyes of those who hold to the position of AV and ARV that the Hebrew text is superior to the versions and is not to be "corrected" by them. except where it is plainly at fault.

1 Samuel 14 is a chapter in which there are a number of differences between the Hebrew and the Greek texts. In vs. 18 the rendering of the Hebrew is "Bring hither the ark of God." The *Variorum Bible* lists "the ephod" as a various reading, supported by the Gk, and gives the names of nine scholars who prefer it to the Heb. RSV ignores this various reading completely. Similarly in vs. 24 where the Gk text is about twice as long as the Heb., RSV ignores the Gk completely. But in vs. 41, where the Gk and Vulg are in general agreement and much longer than the Hebrew, RSV has adopted a reading which does not follow either of them exactly and inserted it in the text with the note "Vg Compare Gk: Heb *Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel.*" Since this is an example of the obscurity which is characteristic of many of the marginal notes in RSV, a word of explanation may be welcomed by some readers. Vs. 41 reads as follows in the text of RSV: "Therefore Saul said, 'O LORD God of Israel, [p. 21] [why hast thou not answered thy servant this day? If this guilt is in me or in Jonathan my son, O LORD God of Israel, give Urim; but if this guilt is in thy people Israel,] give Thummim." The words enclosed in brackets represent the insertion. The rendering "give Thummim" involves a

change in the pointing of the Hebrew (from *TaMiM* to *TuMMiM*). Tamim is rendered in AV by “a perfect lot,” in ARV by “(Show) the right” with the AV rendering in the margin. Such arbitrary treatment of the Hebrew text as we find in RSV cannot fail to be offensive to conservative scholars; and it may well be doubted whether “critical” scholars will be satisfied with it.

1 Kings 8:12, “Then Solomon said, ‘The LORD has set the sun in the heavens, but has said that he would dwell in thick darkness.’” This has the marginal note: “Gk: Heb lacks *has set his sun in the heavens, but.*” This means that the reading of the Greek is here used to correct the Hebrew, which implies that the Hebrew is defective at this point. The second thing to note is that the statement of the margin is incorrect because inadequate. The words supplied by the “Gk,” in fact the whole of vs. 12-13, are lacking in the Vatican Ms. (Codex B) of the Greek version, the Codex which Swete made the basis of his text of the LXX. This is perhaps the reason that this insertion which RSV makes in the text of vs. 12 is not even mentioned in the margin of the *Variorum Bible*. RSV inserts it in the text and adds a note which is to say the least decidedly inadequate. A third point to be noted is that while RSV seeks to improve or restore the text of Kings at this point, it makes no effort to do the same with 2 Chr. 6:1f., which despite the fact that in the Hebrew there is a slight difference in phrasing, is rendered in RSV in exactly the same way in both Kgs. and Chr., except for the insertion made in Kgs. at the beginning of the quotation. This may be due to the fact that Kings and Chronicles were assigned to two different sub-groups of the OT Committee, and that no sufficient effort was made to harmonize the work of these groups. It might also be due to the fact that as “critics” the members of the Committee having a low regard [p. 22] for the historical trustworthiness of Chronicles were not averse to having it conflict with Kings.

Psalms 84:5, “in whose heart are the highways to Zion,” has margin “Heb lacks *to Zion.*” Here no version is appealed to. There is apparently no evidence for the words “to Zion.” If the interpretation is correct that the highways mean or refer to the roads by which the pious Israelite went up to Jerusalem to the appointed feasts, then “to Zion” clarifies the meaning and may be regarded as paraphrase. But to say that “Heb lacks *to Zion*” as if the Hebrew text were defective is utterly unwarranted.

Psalms 145 is an Alphabet Psalm; the verses begin with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in regular sequence. There are twenty-one verses in the Psalm, but there are twenty-two letters of the alphabet. This means that there is no verse beginning with one letter, the N. Why this is so we do not know. The Greek has such a verse. But whether that verse is original or was simply an attempt to supply the loss or lack of such a verse in the Hebrew is not known. The existence of this verse in the Greek was certainly known in 1611. But the AV ignores it, as does ARV, because it is not in the Hebrew. A Bible with extensive marginal notes or a commentary might very properly mention it. RSV inserts it in the text. Consequently, it is worthy of mention that while the *Variorum Bible* lists this “insertion,” as a “various reading” in its margin, it adds: “but most modern critics reject the verse.” Apparently the still more modern critics of today, have changed their opinion, since RSV inserts it in the text.

In this connection it is to be noted that we have a somewhat similar problem in Ps. 25. It also is an Alphabet Psalm. It has 22 verses, the correct number for the Hebrew alphabet. But vs. 18 and 19 both commence in Hebrew with the same verb (a verb which begins with R)



instead of with two different verbs beginning with Q and R respectively. AV renders the one verb by “look upon” and the other by “consider,” which are suitable idiomatic renderings. Critical scholars have suggested at least five different Hebrew verbs beginning with Q for vs. 18. We might expect that RSV [p. 23] would adopt or mention at least one of them. On the contrary it begins both verses with “consider,” as if to call attention to the fact that the Hebrew begins both verses with the same verb; and it makes no reference at all to this break in the alphabetical sequence. Such inconsistencies are hard to account for in a version which claims to be accurate and scholarly.

Isaiah 3:24, “instead of beauty, shame” has margin: “One ancient Ms: Heb lacks *shame*.” This statement is misleading. ARV has “branding instead of beauty.” The word for “branding” (AV, “burning”) is *KiY* in Hebrew. Elsewhere this frequently occurring word is the conjunction meaning “that, because.” But while it occurs only here in the sense of “branding,” this rendering is justified by the cognate languages, and *KiY* and *YoPiY* (beauty) form an alliterative pair, a rhetorical form of which Isaiah is fond. The Isaiah Scroll has the word *KiY*, but apparently because the scribe was ignorant of its special meaning in this passage and thought it meant “that,” he added the word “shame” (*BoŠeT*). RSV omits the word “branding” or “that” (*KiY*), and adds the word “shame,” declaring that the “Heb lacks” it. It omits the word which the “one ancient MS” retains and adopts the word which the “one ancient MS” inserts; and implies or asserts that the Hebrew text is corrupt.

In view of this appeal to the recently discovered Isaiah Scroll, it is interesting to read the estimate of this ms. recently expressed by Dr. Orlinsky of the RSV Old Testament Committee. Writing in *Religious Education* (1952, p.257) he declares that this scroll “was ultimately only an utterly unreliable oral variation on the theme of the Hebrew text of Isaiah. It has no value for the textual criticism of our Book.” Since the RSV margin appeals to this ms. more than a dozen times in support of its readings, there must have been considerable difference of opinion among the members of the Committee on this subject.

“Cn: Heb -----”

According to RSV, “Cn indicates a correction made where [p. 24] the text has suffered in transmission and the versions provide no satisfactory restoration but the Committee agrees with the judgment of competent scholars as to the most probable reconstruction of the original text.” It will be noted that the word “correction” stands in rather sharp contrast with the explanation which follows. “Corrections” can only be made on the basis of knowledge. Where, as in these cases, there is no clear objective evidence either in text or versions, scholars have been accustomed to speak of “conjectural emendations.” The changes which are referred to as “cn” should not be described as corrections; they are conjectures or “guesses.”

2 Samuel 1 :21, “upsurging of the deep” has the margin: “Cn: Heb *fields of offerings*.” This new reading is not based on mss. or versions, but on a phrase in a recently discovered Ras Shamra tablet. It requires the change of two consonants in one Hebrew word and of one in the other. The word “upsurge” apparently is secured from an Arabic root which does not occur in Hebrew. Both of the words in the Hebrew text are of frequent occurrence in the OT; and “fields of offerings” makes excellent sense. It would naturally refer to fertile fields which

yielded rich and early crops, fields from which the “first fruits” were usually gathered. “Upsurging of the deep” suggests a mythological interpretation which would be quite out of place here. Yet this new rendering is listed by the revisers (Introd. p. 55), as an example of the new light which archaeology is throwing on the OT. We should of course welcome new light from whatever source it may come. But we should also remember that the Bible is a unique book and a self-explanatory book, which owes nothing to pagan myths or legends. Fifty years ago the Pan-Babylonianists sought to derive the distinctive features of the OT religion and culture from Babylon. When one of the RSV committee (Dr. Albright) tells us that Ps. 29 “is a relatively little changed adaptation of a Baal hymn to the cult of Yahweh,”<sup>3</sup> it becomes clear that Evangelical Christians must be on their guard against a Pan-Canaanitism, which [p. 25] would make Israel more or less dependent upon the Canaanites for her religious beliefs and practices, despite all the warnings of Moses and the Prophets against such “borrowings.”

2 Chronicles 11:23, “and procured wives for them,” has the margin, “Cn: Heb *sought a multitude of wives*.” The Hebrew is somewhat ambiguous because of the context. AV renders by “and he desired many wives,” leaving it to the reader to decide whether the wives were for his numerous sons, as the immediate context suggests, or for himself as seems almost equally probable (vs. 21), or for both. ARV renders: “and he sought *for them* many wives,” indicating by the italics that “for them” is not in the Hebrew but is supplied to make the meaning clearer. ARV also adds a footnote giving the literal rendering, “Or, sought a multitude of wives.” The rendering placed by RSV in the text, “and procured wives for them,” involves several changes in the Hebrew Text. The word rendered “sought” or “desired” is *YiS’aL*, which literally means “asked.” RSV secures the rendering “procured” by cutting away the final *L* and reading the remainder as *YiSSa’*. It joins the *L* to the word *HaMoWN* (multitude) and by dropping the ending *-oWN* secures the word “to-them” (*LaHeM*), thus obtaining the rendering given in the text. No support in mss. or versions is claimed for this reading. It is pure conjecture and it is listed as “cn.” But it is given a place in the text of the RSV; and the reading of the Hebrew is relegated to the margin as inferior. This is a good illustration of the difference between the attitude of RSV to the Hebrew and that of AV and ARV; and it shows the freedom with which RSV feels justified in treating the Biblical text.

Job 24:14. “The murderer rises in the dark” has the margin, “Cn: Heb *at the light*” (cf. ARV). No warrant for the change is cited. The thought in the Hebrew is plainly of the eagerness of the murderer to be about his evil business. RSV apparently feels that murder should be a work of darkness, and that the phrase “with the light” should be in synonymous parallelism with the “in the night” which follows. So it makes the change as a “cn.” Needless to say, antithetic parallelism [p. 26] is of frequent occurrence in Old Testament poetry.

Psalms 2:11f., “with trembling kiss his feet,” with margin, “Cn: the Hebrew of 11b and 12a is uncertain,” is the RSV substitute for “and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son” (AV; ARV, son). In order to understand this rendering it is necessary to refer to the Hebrew words which are rendered “and rejoice ... son.” They may be transliterated as follows: *WeGiYLuW ... BaR*. “His feet” is *RaGLaYW*. This is secured by placing the word *BaR*, which follows *WeGiYLuW* and is separated from it by other words, before it. If this is done and the vowels are omitted, we secure *BRWGYLW*. By transposing two consonants and dropping one *W*, the result is

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3. In *Studies in O.T. Prophecy* (1950), ed. by H. H. Rowley, p. 6.

*BRGLYW*, which can be read *BeRaGLaYW*. This would be literally “in his feet,” the *Be* representing the preposition “in.” But in Hebrew the verb “kiss” is usually construed with the preposition *L* meaning “to” (kiss to his feet) or with the simple accusative of the direct object, as in “kiss the son.” Consequently the *B* must either be dropped or changed to *L*. It is in this way that the RSV rendering, “kiss his feet,” is secured.

This reading of the text of RSV is described in the margin as “cn,” which means that there is no evidence in either mss. or versions in support of it. It was first proposed some fifty years ago by two German scholars (Bertholet and Sievers) working independently. If it were correct, the further statement of the margin, “The Hebrew of 11b and 12a is uncertain,” would be very mild, to say the least. But there is no sufficient warrant for the assertion that the Hebrew is uncertain. Origen undoubtedly had before him the same text as we have today (the Hexapla transliterates the Hebrew as *nescu bar*); and while the ancient versions had difficulty in translating these words, it seems fairly clear that they had the same text before them as Origen did.

The only real difficulty is with the word *BaR*. It is the usual Aramaic word for “son”; the regular Hebrew word is *BeN*. That an Aramaic word, in this case a very common one, should be used in this psalm is not nearly so strange as might at first be supposed. Hebrew and Aramaic are two [p. 27] closely related Semitic languages. The Hebrews and the Aramaeans (Syrians) were in more or less close contact with one another for centuries. The recently discovered Ras Shamra tablets show that the language spoken by Israel’s northern neighbors at about the time of Joshua, closely resembled Biblical Hebrew and had some quite marked Aramaic features. The idea that “Aramaisms” in Hebrew are a proof of late date will have to be greatly modified in view of recent discoveries. But there is a special reason for believing that *BaR* may be the Aramaic word for “son.” In vs. 9 the rendering “you shall break” assumes that “break” represents the Aramaic form of a verb which is more common in Hebrew in a slightly different form. The Gk Jerome and Syr pronounce the word differently (i.e., with different vowels) and render by “thou shalt shepherd,” which may have the sense of “rule” or “feed”—a good Hebrew word and a meaning which makes excellent sense. This rendering finds support in Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15. But RSV accepts the “Aramaic” rendering “break” without demur; and it adds no footnote to call attention to the fact that three of its important and oft-cited versions support another rendering. Yet it is so opposed to the idea that *BaR* may be the Aramaic word for “son,” despite the fact that it occurs in Prov. 31:2, that it does not even mention in the margin the rendering “kiss the son,” which is so familiar to readers of AV and ARV, and which scholars of the first rank have defended as a perfectly legitimate rendering of the Hebrew text.

That the “cn” just discussed is conjecture, pure and simple, is indicated by the “improvement” upon it recently proposed by an English scholar (G. R. Driver). Using the same two words as did the two German scholars referred to above, Driver takes “and-rejoice” (*WeGiYLuW*) apart, reverses the order of the G and the L and places them before the word “son” (*BaR*), thus securing the reading “to the Mighty One” (*LaGGiBBoWR*), referring for confirmation of this reconstruction to the “mighty God” (*’El gibbor*) of Isa. 9:6. So his reading is “with trembling kiss the Mighty One.”

When it is remembered that the words these scholars use [p. 28] to work out their new combinations do not stand together but are separated by two words or phrases, both of

which they accept as they stand (“with-trembling. Kiss”), these emendations must be characterized as wild. They are clever, very clever. But they practically make the textual study of the Old Testament a game of Anagrams; and one which is easier than the regular game because they can reject and discard any letters which they do not need to form the new combination. Such reconstructions can be justified only on the assumption that Moffatt was correct when he declared that “the Hebrew Massoretic text ... is often desperately corrupt.” And every “correction” of this nature which is introduced into the RSV Old Testament serves to confirm and support this claim of the radical critics.

Psalm 22:29, “Yea, to him shall all the proud of the earth bow down,” has the margin, “Cn: Heb *they have eaten and.*” The literal rendering of the Heb. is “Have eaten and worshipped (bowed down) all the fat ones of the earth” (cf. AV, ARV). The rendering of RSV goes back to Graetz of whose commentary on the Psalms (1882-3), Driver, a distinguished higher critic of a generation ago, said tersely “alters the text much too freely.” Graetz secured this rendering by splitting the verb “have eaten” (*’aKeLuW*) into two words (*’aK* and *LoW*), and dropping the following “and.” There is no warrant for it in mss. or versions. RSV calls it a “cn,” but puts it in the text. It is an old guess. It is not the result of new knowledge.

Psalm 73:10, “Therefore the people turn and praise them,” has margin: “Cn: Heb *his people return hither.*” The “and” is secured by cutting away the last letter of “his people,” joining it to the next word and reading it as “and.” “Praise them” instead of “hither” (*HaLoM*) is secured by reading *HiLLeLeM*, which would require a change in the consonantal text.

Psalm 73:10b, “and find no fault in them,” with margin: “Cn: Heb *abundant waters are drained by them*” (cf. AV). This rendering, like that of the first part of the verse is secured partly by regrouping the letters which make up the [p. 29] consonantal text, and partly by changing the pronunciation of the verb. It also has to be listed as “cn.” But it is put in the text of RSV.

Psalm 97:10, “The LORD loves those who hate evil,” has the margin: “Cn: Heb *You who love the LORD hate evil,*” for which compare AV, ARV. The Hebrew makes excellent sense. No support for the new reading is cited from the versions. It is a “cn” which requires two changes in the Hebrew text; and by adopting it RSV shows its low esteem for the “Hebrew verity.”

Psalm 99:4, “Mighty God,” has the margin, “Cn: Heb *and the king’s strength.*” The rendering of AV-ARV, “The king’s strength also loveth justice,” is a perfectly proper rendering of the Hebrew. The word “strength” is personified; and “the king’s strength loveth justice” is a beautifully poetic way of saying that the prime motive and aim of the king in the exercise of his strength is justice. We have a somewhat similar figure in Ps. 85:10, “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” The RSV rendering, “mighty king, lover of justice,” is an impossible rendering unless the Hebrew sentence is recast. There is no warrant for this. Scholars whose minds are so prosaic that such an expression as “the king’s strength loveth justice” seems questionable to them or in need of clarification should not attempt to translate the Psalms or to improve on a translation which enters so fully into their true spirit as the AV does. Here again we note the inadequacy of the marginal note. It covers only the first two words “Mighty King” although the following phrase is equally involved. The note should at least read, “Cn: Heb *and the king’s strength loves.*”

Isaiah 2:12b, “against all that is lifted up and high,” has margin: “Cn Compare Gk: Heb low.” but note “and it shall be brought low” (ARV). Be or become low occurs in this passage in vss. 9, 11, 17. It is quite appropriate here, and has the support of the recently discovered “Isaiah Scroll,” which elsewhere in Isaiah the RSV margin appeals to 13 times, with the words “one ancient Ms.” There is almost no support for the RSV rendering “high” in the versions, as is indicated by [p. 30] the words “Compare Gk.” The corresponding words in Hebrew are as different as in English. It is admitted to be a conjecture and is listed as “cn.” But it is put in the text of RSV.

### *Marginal Notes Inadequate, Unfair, Unintelligible*

RSV is not a commentary and as in the case of ARV the notes are relatively few in number and very brief. They aim also to be objective and not interpretive. This is commendable in a version intended for general use. But they should be adequate, they should be fair, and they should be as understandable as possible.

Genesis 24:67. “Then Isaac brought her into the tent,” has the margin. “Heb adds *Sarah his mother.*” This note makes no mention of the highly relevant fact that these words which “Heb adds” are also added by Gk, Sam, Vulg, Syr, and are apparently presupposed in Targ. We might infer from the note that the Hebrew has no support in the versions upon which RSV lays so much weight and which it so often uses to “correct” the Hebrew. Here where they support the reading which RSV rejects, this important fact is completely ignored; and the Hebrew is “corrected” in spite of them.

Genesis 49:10, “until he comes to whom it belongs,” has the margin, “Syr Compare Tg: Heb *until Shiloh comes* or *until he comes to Shiloh.*” The RSV is professedly intended for the average reader, who supposedly has difficulty with the old-fashioned diction of the AV and knows no Hebrew or Greek. Yet no real effort is made to make its footnotes intelligible to such a reader. In the *Variorum Bible* which uses the text of the AV and places its various readings and renderings in the margin, some effort is made to make these notes intelligible. Thus, in dealing with this passage, it says “shelloh for shiloh” in explaining the marginal rendering, “to whom it belongs,” thus indicating the similarity between the two expressions in the Hebrew. RSV leaves the average reader completely in the dark as to the connection, if any, between the reading it places in the text and those given in the margin. [p. 31]

Ruth 1:21, “when the LORD has afflicted me” has the margin “Gk Syr Vg: Heb *testified against.*” It is to be noted that the verbs “afflict” and “testify (or answer)” have the same consonants in Hebrew. “Testify against” makes good sense in the context; and the presence of the preposition “against” favors that rendering. The versions may easily have been confused by the ambiguity of the Hebrew word. Here is a case where the Hebrew should certainly be given the benefit of the doubt, if doubt there be. But RSV as often prefers to follow the versions, even when it requires as it would here a change in the text (the dropping of the preposition).

2 Samuel 12:14, “Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD” has margin, “Heb *the enemies of the LORD.*” This suggests that the Hebrew reads: “Nevertheless because by this deed you have utterly scorned the enemies of the LORD,” which is nonsense. The rendering of AV is: “Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given

great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme” (cf. ARV). This makes excellent sense and all that is required to justify it is that we assume that the verb rendered “scorn” has here the causative force, “caused to scorn,” i.e., provoked them to blaspheme. Such a sense is practically required by the phrase “enemies of the LORD”; and it is to be noted that Gk Targ Syr Vulg all include “enemies-of” in their translations. RSV in defiance of its favorite versions omits these words and makes the Hebrew appear ridiculous. Such a rendering as RSV gives in the text should at least be listed as “cn” in the margin. But it is not.

Isaiah 10:27, “and his yoke will be destroyed from your neck. He has gone up from Rimmon,” has the margin, “Cn: Heb *and his yoke from your neck, and a yoke will be destroyed because of fatness.*” Here RSV drops one of the “and”s and secures the rendering “he has gone up from Rimmon” by reading ‘*aL* (gone up) instead of ‘*oL* (yoke) and changing “fatness,” which is literally “oil” (ŠeMeN) into RiMMoN. The Isaiah Scroll supports the Hebrew in all three cases. The “cn” makes it clear that there is no [p. 32] support for the change in mss. or versions. The Hebrew makes good sense as is indicated by the AV-ARV rendering. Yet RSV changes it; and it adds a footnote which is utterly meaningless to the average reader for whom the version is primarily intended.

Jeremiah 27:3, “Send word to the king of Edom” has the margin, “Cn: Heb *send them.*” The reference is to the wooden yokes which Jeremiah made. An adequate note would read somewhat as follows: “Cn: Gk Syr Vg Tg support Heb *send them.*” But as elsewhere the witness of the versions is ignored when it does not favor the rendering adopted in the RSV text. It is quite obvious that RSV wants to avoid saying that Jeremiah was commanded to send actual yokes to the kings whose names follow. But the “send word” of the RSV text is not translation but revision or interpretation of the Hebrew text.

Amos 6:12, “Do horses run upon rocks? Does one plow the sea with oxen?” has the marginal note, “MT *does one plow with oxen?*” The RSV rendering is secured by dividing the word “oxen” (*BeQaRiYM*;—*iYM* being the plural ending) into two words and pronouncing them *BaQaR* (ox or oxen; the singular is used collectively and the plural is rare) and *YaM* (sea). Apparently no support has been discovered in mss or vers for this change. It was proposed in 1777 A.D. by J. D. Michaelis of Göttingen, and has gradually gained general acceptance among critical scholars. But the rendering of AV-ARV, “will one plough *there* with oxen?” is equally good and does not require the slightest change in the Heb. It assumes that the thought of the “rock” carries over from the previous question and does not require repeating (as, for example, the force of the negative in Ps. 9:18; 13:4; 35:19; 38:1). So AV and ARV, for the sake of clarity, insert the word “there,” but place it in italics because it is not expressed in the Hebrew. In other words, AV and ARV assume that the Hebrew is correct and translate it as it stands, while at the same time endeavoring to make its meaning as clear as possible. RSV assumes that it is incorrect and proceeds to correct it. This rendering which we find in RSV is, [p. 33] as has been pointed out, not new. It was known more than a hundred years before the ARV. But ARV ignored it. Since it finds support neither in mss nor vers it should be listed as “cn.” But it is not. In the *Variorum Bible* (1888) it is listed as a “various reading” and the note adds “one word read as two.” That is to say, the *Variorum Bible* made an attempt to make its “various reading” intelligible to the reader. RSV makes no effort to do so despite the fact that it places this reading in the text!

Zechariah 12:10, “so that when they look on him whom they have pierced” has margin, “Theodotion: Heb *me*.” This note fails to mention the fact that Gk (LXX) Syr Vulg Targ all support the Hebrew in reading “me.” The version of Theodotion dates from the 2nd century A.D. But the exact relation in which it stood to the LXX and to the Hebrew text is not known. The fact that this version (or revision of the LXX) is the only warrant given from changing the Hebrew from “me” to “him” will be significant to scholars. But to the average reader the note will be either meaningless or misleading.

### *Footnotes Make Hebrew Absurd*

Sometimes the marginal notes are so worded as to give the reader the impression that the meaning of the Hebrew is so impossible that the text must be corrupt and require “reconstruction.”

Psalm 60:4, “to rally to it from the bow” has the margin: “Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *truth*.” This suggests that the Hebrew reads “to rally to it from the truth” which sounds ridiculous. But the AV-ARV rendering, “that it may be displayed [raised up as a banner] because of the truth,” makes sense and is linguistically defensible. It is to be noted, however, that the meaning of this Hebrew word is not certain. It occurs only twice in the OT; and the versions are not agreed as to its meaning. RSV asserts that it means “truth” but treats it as a misspelling of the word “bow.”

Psalm 74:11, “Why dost thou hold back thy hand, why dost thou keep thy right hand in thy bosom?” adds the marginal [p. 34] note to the word “in”: “Cn: Heb *consume thy right hand from*,” which is apparently to be completed by “thy bosom,” i.e., “consume thy right hand from thy bosom,” a rendering which makes nonsense. But the Hebrew does not make nonsense. It is simply an example of pregnant construction. The rendering of ARV, “Why drawest thou back thy hand, even thy right hand? Pluck it out of thy bosom and consume them” makes good sense and is quite justifiable. The “cn” requires two changes in the Hebrew text. It is to be constantly remembered that “cn” means that RSV is not prepared to cite any support in the versions for a reconstruction, which is so designated.

Isaiah 21:8, “Then he who saw” has the margin, “One ancient Ms: Heb *a lion*.” This suggests that the Hebrew says “Then a lion cried,” which sounds absurd. But the Hebrew may be rendered, “Then he cried like a lion” (cf. ARV) which is not at all absurd (Rev. 10:3). The rendering “lion” is supported by Vulgate and Targ. The “one ancient Ms” is the recently discovered Dead Sea Scroll, the dependability of which is still a matter of debate among scholars.

Jeremiah 25:38b, “because of the sword of the LORD” gives the word “LORD” the margin: “Syr: Heb. *the dove*.” AV renders “because of the fierceness of the oppressor.” ARV has “because of the fierceness of the oppressing sword.” That is, AV has “the oppressor,” ARV “the oppressing sword” where RSV asserts the Hebrew has “the dove.” How is this to be explained? The answer is a simple one. The Hebrew word for “dove” is *YoNaH*. According to Young’s Concordance, it occurs 21 times in the OT. Its etymology is unknown. There is another word in Hebrew which is written in exactly the same way. It comes from a root *YaNaH*, which means to “oppress” or “maltreat.” The active participle of the simple stem (Qal) in the fem. sing. is *YoNaH*. Consequently, as in the case of all words which are ambiguous, because

homonymous, the context must decide as to the meaning. In the context the meaning which is suitable is “oppress.” AV simply renders “oppressor,” leaving it uncertain as to who or what oppresses. ARV renders by “oppressing sword,” [p. 35] putting the word “sword” in italics because it is not in the Heb. The reason it supplies the word “sword” is because the word “oppressing” is feminine, as is the word sword, and because the “sword” is referred to repeatedly in Jeremiah (e.g. vss. 16, 27, 29 of this chapter) as one of the Lord’s weapons of punishment, a fact which makes it quite suitable in the immediate context. On the other hand in Zeph. 3:1 this same word is joined with the word “city,” which is also feminine; and AV, ARV and RSV all render by “oppressing city.” Yet here RSV makes two conjectural changes in the Hebrew text. It changes the word “fierceness” (*HaRoN*)<sup>4</sup> into “sword” (*HeReB*) and “the oppressor” (*HaYoWNaH*) into “LORD” (*YHWH*). One of these changes (“fierceness” to “sword”) it ignores completely in the footnote, the other it seeks to justify by making the Hebrew appear ridiculous, by giving it the rendering “dove,” which is absurd in the context. The change in the text is entirely unnecessary. The marginal note is absurd.

### *No Marginal Note*

The most serious of the changes which RSV makes in the Biblical text are those which it leaves entirely unindicated and unexplained, since the reader who does not have the AV or ARV rendering before him or stored in his memory may fail to notice them and consequently accept them without question.

Numbers 22:5, “in the land of Amaw” is RSV’s substitute for “in the land of the children of his people.” Here RSV omits “children of” as superfluous and takes “his people” (*aMMoW*) as a proper name (*aMaW*). It ignores the MT. It ignores the fact that “13 mss Sam Syr Vulg” read “Ammon”; and it gives the reader no hint as to the warrant for its novel reading *Amaw*.

Ruth 3:15, “then she went into the city.” Special interest attaches to this reading, because the earliest printings of the 1611 Bible are called “He” and “She” Bibles because of their rendering of these words. The variation is a very old one. [p. 36] “He” is the reading of MT. Gk is ambiguous. Vulg and Syr have “she.” So ARV in following the Hebrew adds margin “Acc. to Vulg and Syr, *she went*.” RSV gives “she” without any comment.

1 Kings 10:19, “and at the back of the throne was a calf’s head,” is RSV’s substitute for “and the top of the throne was round behind” (AV, ARV). Here RSV follows the Gk in reading “calf” (*eGeL*) instead of “round” (*aGoWL*). But the MT makes good sense and is more suitable in the context. But RSV prefers to correct it by the Gk. Here where RSV introduces a very different meaning into the passage, there is no note of any kind. Yet a few verses lower down on the same page, the word “peacocks” (vs. 22) is given the margin “Or *baboons*.”

Psalms 28:8, “the strength of his people” instead of “their strength” is secured by a change in the text, reading *Le’aMoW* instead of *LaMoW*. This reading finds some support in mss. and versions. And there should be a footnote giving it.

Psalms 36:1, “his heart” instead of “my heart” requires the change of a consonant (Y to W). It has considerable support in mss. and versions. But the reading of the MT which is followed by AV and ARV makes good sense and should not be simply ignored.

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4. In this word *H* has the sound of *ch*.



Psalm 48:14, “he will be our guide for ever” instead of “until death” assumes that the two words “until” (*aL*) and “death” (*MuWT*) are to be read as one word “for ever” (*aLaMoWT*). But this form does not occur with this meaning in Hebrew. The change has some support in the versions. But a note is certainly in order.

Psalm 49:20, “Man cannot abide in his pomp.” Like a number of other psalms, this one has a refrain verse. In the one (vs. 12) the verb is “abide,” in the other “understand.” The verbs are quite similar in Heb, one having *L* as first radical letter, the other *B*. Each makes good sense in its context. The analogy of other passages indicates that in such verses similarity rather than identity is what is required, indeed that a certain amount of variety is appropriate. RSV makes [p. 37] the refrain verses identical here and also in Ps. 24:7,9. But in the latter case it has a marginal note.

Psalm 73:4, “For they have no pangs; their bodies are sound and sleek,” is RSV’s substitute for “For there are no pangs to their death, but firm is their strength (body).” This rendering is gained by dividing “to their death” (*LeMoWTaM*) into “to them” (*LaMoW*) and “sound” (*TaM*). It must be admitted that the change seems to improve the sense. But it is opposed by MT Gk Syr Jerome Targ. To introduce it without comment is decidedly daring. But it is quite obvious that RSV does not wish to call attention to the fact that it is made in opposition to all the versions which it so often appeals to for support.

Psalm 108:1f. RSV makes several changes in the beginning of this psalm, on the assumption, apparently, that it should correspond exactly with Ps. 57:7f. In reading “My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready,” the second “my heart is ready” is not in this psalm but is supplied from Ps. 57. Similarly in the words which follow, “I will sing, I will sing praise! Awake my soul” the last phrase, “awake my soul” is also taken from that psalm. Ps. 108 has “even my glory.” RSV substitutes “awake” for “even,” although the words in the Hebrew are as different as in the English; and in both psalms it translates or rather paraphrases “glory” by “soul.” In other words it assumes that these two passages must have been originally the same and proceeds to make them so, despite the obvious fact that they are not the same in the Hebrew; and, it goes without saying, there is no need that they should be. It makes these changes without indicating in any way the liberties which have been taken with the text. It is rather significant that while the revisers have made these changes in the text of Ps. 108 in order to make it correspond exactly with Ps. 57, in the one they translate by “My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready,” in the other by “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast.” And the one continues, “I will sing, I will sing praises,” while the other reads, “I will sing and make melody.” They have changed the text of Ps. 108 in order to make it agree exactly with Ps. 57; [p. 38] and then they have proceeded to translate the same words differently in the two passages. This is either remarkable inconsistency or else it is carelessness. Finally, it may be noted that while RSV has no footnote to Ps. 108:1 it adds a footnote to the words “in his sanctuary” (vs. 7) which reads “Or *by his holiness*.” Such vagaries speak for themselves.

Psalm 137:5b, “Let my right hand wither” is not the rendering of the Hebrew. AV has “let my right hand forget *her cunning*.” ARV simply changes “cunning” to “skill.” Both use italics to indicate that the words so distinguished are not in the Hebrew text. RSV “wither” is not an example of rendering “a Hebrew word in a sense quite different from that of the traditional interpretation,” as the words of the Preface would lead us to expect. It is

something quite different. “Forget” comes from a Hebrew root which is spelled SKH (the H has the sound of ch). “Wither” is secured by changing these letters around, making SKH into KHS, a totally different root with a quite different meaning. Yet RSV neither indicates nor justifies the change. If the omission of a marginal note, when so radical a change is made, is defended on the ground that the three letters of the root are retained, only in different order, it should suffice to point out that even such changes may produce a radically different result. In English there is only a change in the order of letters between “tea” and “eat,” “near” and “earn,” “live” and “vile,” but the difference in meaning is considerable!

Isaiah 49:5, “to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him” differs from AV “though Israel be not gathered”(cf. ARV marg.). The reading of the Hebrew text is “not,” but the marginal reading (Qeri) is “to-him.” The words are pronounced alike in Hebrew but written differently. Hengstenberg, the great German evangelical scholar, pointed out more than a century ago that the reason the Jews wanted to read “to him” instead of “not” was because of their “carnal national pride.” They could not endure the thought of the rejection of Israel and the calling of the Gentiles. And he pointed out that the same explanation had been given by Jerome. The versions are divided [p. 39] in their testimony. Yet RSV, while calling attention to many minor differences in its notes, ignores this important one completely.

Daniel 7:25, “a time, two times, and half a time.” The “two” is doubtful, because the word in the Aramaic may be “pointed” either as dual or plural. RSV settles the question arbitrarily and against both AV and ARV.

Daniel 9:24, “seventy weeks of years are decreed.” In view of the debate which has gone on for centuries as to the meaning of the word “week” as used in this prophecy, it is surprising that RSV should insert the words “of years.” There is no textual warrant for it.

### *Old Testament and New Testament in Conflict*

Genesis 12:3, “and by you all the families of the earth will bless themselves,” has the margin, “Or *in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*” As it stands in AV and ARV, this is one of the most luminous statements in the OT. It makes clear very early in redemptive history that the particularism of the OT dispensation is preliminary and preparatory to the world-embracing Gospel of the NT. In Rom. 3 and Gal. 4 the Apostle Paul makes it plain that the proclamation of the Gospel to the Gentiles is in fulfillment of the covenant made with Abraham. RSV changes the passive voice of the AV-ARV rendering to reflexive. The implications of this change are indicated by the paraphrase offered some years ago by T. H. Robinson in his *Genesis in Colloquial English*, “all the nations of the earth will regard you as the type of a prosperous man,” i.e., they will say “May I be as prosperous as Abraham was.” What is the reason for toning down this glorious promise?

This promise is recorded five times in Genesis: and the following facts regarding it are to be noted:

(1) The Hebrew uses two forms or conjugations of the same verb in these passages. In three (12:3; 18:18; 28:14) it uses the *Niphal*, which while originally reflexive in meaning is very frequently used as a passive. In two (22:18; 26:4) the *Hithpael* is used. It was originally reflexive, but like the [p. 40] *Niphal* it is also, though much less frequently, used as a passive.

RSV recognizes the passive sense in a number of instances (cf. Gen. 37:35; Num. 31:23; I Sam. 3:14; 2 Kgs. 8:29; 9:15; Job 31:20; Ps. 92:9; Prov. 26:26; Jon. 3:8; Mic. 1:4). Furthermore in all of the five passages (except 26:4, cf. Ps. 72:17) RSV gives the passive as an alternative rendering, while ARV gives the reflexive as an alternative only in the case of the two *Hithpael* passages. Consequently, we may conclude that RSV regarded the passive as a permissible rendering in all five passages.

(2) The Greek, which RSV follows so frequently, uses the passive in rendering all five passages.

(3) The NT quotes this promise twice. Gal. 3:8 quotes Gen. 12:3 (a *Niphal* passage), while Acts 3:25 quotes Gen. 22:18 (a *Hithpael* passage). In both cases the verb is rendered as passive in the Greek and in the English (AV, ARV, RSV).

(4) The rendering “will bless themselves” (RSV), in the sense of seeking for themselves blessings such as Abraham enjoyed, is contrary to the facts of history. Abraham was not a striking example of a “prosperous man.” Judged by worldly standards his life was pretty much of a failure. He was a stranger and sojourner in the land promised to his seed. The innumerable seed lay in the distant future. His contacts with the nations brought them trouble, not blessing. He “died in faith, not having received the promises.” The “passive” rendering is the only one which is in harmony with both the life of Abraham and the subsequent course of Biblical history. Furthermore the passive rendering brings out the essential and beautiful harmony between the OT and the NT. Why change it?

Genesis 47:31, “bed” appears in Heb. 11:21 as “staff.” This involves only a difference in pronouncing the Hebrew (*MaTTeH* instead of *MiTTaH*). AV and ARV according to their custom follow the MT. But since RSV does not hesitate to disregard the Massoretic pronunciation, it is rather strange that it has not followed the Greek as it so often does and read “staff” in both places. [p. 41]

Exodus 12:8f. “They shall eat the flesh that night roasted ... Do not eat any of it raw or boiled with water, but roasted.” The word rendered “roasted” is a rare word which occurs elsewhere only in 1 Sam. 2:15 and Isa. 44:16,19. Here and in Sam. “roasted” is in contrast with “boiled” (AV, “sodden”). “Boiled” is used also in Deut.16:7, and there RSV renders, “And you shall boil it.” This looks like a flat contradiction between Ex. and Deut., since what is commanded in the one seems to be prohibited in the other. This makes it necessary to examine carefully the use of the word “boil” in the OT. It is used of boiling in a pot or vessel, (e.g., Lev. 6:28), and in Ex. 12:9 the words “in water” definitely imply boiling, as does also the command not to “seethe (boil) a kid in its mother’s milk” (Ex. and Deut.). On the other hand in 2 Chr. 35:13 the words “in the fire” are added as if to make it clear that roasting is meant; and there RSV follows AV and ARV in rendering, “roasted with fire.” These passages seem to make it reasonably clear that the word “boil” is sometimes used in the broader sense of cook, it being left to the context to decide just how the cooking was to take place. Since Ex. 12 declares emphatically that the cooking is to be roasting (vs.8) and also indicates a very practical reason for this requirement, “neither shall ye break a bone thereof” (vs.46) —it required a large cauldron to boil a lamb whole, while roasting on a spit over the fire was a relatively simple and inexpensive matter—it seems quite possible, even probable, that in Deut.16 “boil” is to be understood as used in the broad sense of cook, and therefore, in view of the usage established by Ex. 12, is to be regarded as equivalent to roast. So AV and ARV

render by “roast,” the latter adding the margin, “Or *boil*.” They do this on the basis of the valid and important principle of interpretation that Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture and that apparent conflicts are to be harmonized wherever possible. RSV makes no effort to harmonize these passages. Since most or all of the OT Committee accepted the general conclusions of the Higher Critics, which assign Deut. 16 to the time of Josiah, some 800 years after the time of Moses, and Ex. 12 to the Priest Code [p. 42] which they assign in its completed form to about the time of Ezra, some 200 years later still, they have made no effort to harmonize these statements, neither of which they regard as Mosaic, and prefer to allow the two passages to contradict one another flatly.

Deuteronomy 18:15, “a prophet like me” (cf. AV, ARV “like unto me”). This is the natural rendering of the Hebrew. This promise is quoted twice in the NT (Acts 3:22; 7:37), where AV and ARV render by “like unto me,” while RSV has “as he raised me up” (with no italics to indicate the words which are supplied). While it must be admitted that this is a perfectly possible rendering of the Greek, it must also be recognized that the other rendering is both possible, and that in view of the fact that we are dealing with a quotation from the OT, it is preferable to the one adopted by RSV. For RSV renders the Greek particle (*hōs*) by “like” many times, in some cases even changing the “as” of AV to “like” (e.g., Matt. 22:30; Lk. 11:44). The fact that the pronoun is in the accusative (me) may be due simply to the fact that the word “prophet” is in the accusative; and it does not necessarily imply that the verb “raise up” should be repeated in thought (it is not expressed in the Greek) in order to govern it. In Rev. 18:21 where RSV renders by “a stone like a great millstone,” “millstone” is in the accusative because “stone” is in the accusative. But certainly no one would render “Then a mighty angel took up a stone as he took up (i.e., as he would have taken up) a mighty millstone.” And if “like a great millstone” is a proper rendering in its context, “like me” is equally proper in the two passages in Acts. Here as in not a few other passages RSV goes far beyond ARV. ARV retains the rendering of AV (“like unto me”) in the text and places “Or *as he raised up me*” in the margin. RSV adopts the ARV margin for its text and gives no alternative rendering. Here again RSV is quite willing to have the NT differ from the OT, and thus raise difficulties in the minds of the readers which it makes no attempt to solve. Finally, it is to be noted that “like me” does not imply identity, but merely similarity; and it is left to the reader [p. 43] to determine the extent of the similarity and the greatness of the difference. “As he raised me up” restricts the meaning in a way which is neither justified by the Hebrew nor required by the Greek.

### *Dogmatism*

Jeremiah 25:26, “Babylon” has the margin, “Heb *Sheshach*, a cipher for Babylon.” The word “Sheshach” has been a puzzle for centuries. The Rabbinical explanation, which goes back to the Middle Ages or earlier, is that it is simply the word Babylon (Babel) with the letters of the alphabet reversed (as for example, in English using A for Z, B for Y), according to the rule known as Athbash. Whether this is correct is still a matter of dispute. If Sheshach simply means Babylon, it is certainly strange that in Jeremiah we should find this cipher only twice (cf. 51:41), when Babylon is mentioned by name about 200 times. Why should we read “Babylon is taken” in 50:2 and “How is Sheshach taken” in 51:41? No satisfactory answer has

been given to this natural question. So AV simply accepts Sheshach as a proper name. ARV does the same. RSV “decodes” it as “Babylon” and asserts positively, “a cipher for Babylon.” What new light have the revisers acquired which justifies them in speaking so positively?

### *Theological Bias*

Psalm 45:6, “Your divine throne” has the margin: “Or *your throne is a throne of God, or your throne, O God.*” There is no question as to the reading of the Hebrew text; and the rendering of AV and ARV, “Thy throne, O God,” is the natural rendering; and many able scholars have declared it to be the only correct one. Nevertheless it is a “much controverted passage.” Three or four different renderings and seven or more reconstructions of the Hebrew text have been proposed, all with a view to avoiding the admission that the occupant of the throne is addressed as God. “Your throne of God” as an ellipsis for “your throne which is a throne of God,” i.e., “divine” is awkward and unnatural; [p. 44] and the aim is simply to shift the idea of divinity from the occupant of the throne to the throne itself. Yet in Heb. 1:8 the Greek is rendered “thy throne, O God,” with the margin “God is thy throne.” The aim of the writer of Hebrews was obviously to establish at the very outset the utter uniqueness of the “Son” of God. He quoted from this psalm to prove it. RSV has assigned to the psalm verse a meaning which does not prove it, and which conflicts with the obvious sense of the Hebrew and with the rendering of the Greek (LXX) which is quoted in the NT. RSV prefers to have the OT and the NT conflict, rather than to admit that Ps. 45 is Messianic and addresses the Messianic king as God.

Psalm 51:18, “Rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,” has no margin. The word in the Hebrew is the usual verb for “build.” That “build” may have the sense of “rebuild” is of course correct (e.g., 1 Kgs. 16:34). But this rendering should be adopted only when the context clearly requires it. The title of the psalm assigns it to David. For his time and situation, “build” is quite appropriate. But the critics have long been concerned to prove that vss. 18f. are a later addition to the psalm, which, whatever the date of the rest of the psalm, must have been made when Jerusalem was in ruins, i.e., in exilic or post-exilic times. This need not be the case. So the “re-” begs the question. So arbitrary a rendering should at least have a footnote giving the usual meaning of the word.

Isaiah 7:14, “Behold a young woman shall conceive and bear a son,” has the margin, “Or *virgin.*” Both the reading of the text and of the margin are very significant.

We shall look first at the margin. “Or *virgin*” is ambiguous because, as has been shown above, the simple “or” of the notes may mean several different things. It is possible to interpret it as simply introducing an alternative rendering. But this is not the case here, because Dean Weigle has declared very positively that the reason the revisers render by “young woman” is because the Hebrew word means that. Why, then the “Or *virgin*”? This may be partly due to the feeling on the part of the revisers that the simple change [p. 45] from “virgin” to “young woman” would be too drastic and that a concession should be made to the “unlettered” public by giving the old rendering in the margin. But there is another reason. The rendering “virgin” is supported by Gk Syr Vulg, three of the ancient versions most frequently appealed to by RSV in support of its “corrections” of the text. Consequently it would be injudicious, to say the least, to ignore them completely in so important a passage

as this. But RSV never appeals to the versions except when it adopts or uses their readings. Consequently to say “Gk Syr Vulg support Heb *virgin*” would violate their rule with regard to the use of the versions and it would also advertise the fact that here they have ignored the witness of their favorite versions. Hence the simple “Or *virgin*,” despite the fact that it can convey a meaning quite different from the one which they intend.

We come now to the question of the meaning of the Hebrew word, which AV renders by “*virgin*” and RSV by “*young woman*.” The word is *’alma*. It is a comparatively rare word in the OT, occurring less than ten times. That it can properly be used of a virgin is made unmistakably plain by Gen. 24:43 when we compare vs. 16. In vs. 43 Rebekah is called an *’alma*, in vs. 16 she is called a *bethula* (the usual word for virgin) and her virginity is definitely affirmed. The fact that vs. 43 simply says *’alma* may be regarded as implying that this word is quite suitable to describe one whose status has been more fully stated in vs. 16. AV renders by “*virgin*” in both places. ARV has “*virgin*” in vs. 16 and “*maiden*” in vs. 43. RSV uses “*virgin*” in the one case and “*young woman*” in the other. Both words refer to the same person, in the same situation! In Ex. 2:8, the word *’alma* is used of Moses’ sister. Her age is not stated. But the fact that she was set to watch her infant brother would seem to make it clear that she was unmarried and living with her parents. The use of the word *’alma* may imply also that she was of marriageable age.

The view has been widely current in critical circles for many years that *’alma* means “a young woman old enough for [p. 46] marriage.” Prof. A. B. Davidson of New College, Edinburgh (died 1902) was a leader among the critics of his day. He admitted that Isaiah’s offer of a sign implied that the prophet “was prepared to give Ahaz something miraculous” and the rendering of *’alma* by *parthenos* in the Greek (LXX) “may be considered in some sense providential.” As to the meaning of the word he made this decidedly ambivalent statement: “But probably the word, though apparently always used of an unmarried woman, means properly an adult young woman.” This means that Davidson, while admitting that the OT usage favored the rendering “*virgin*” was not prepared to adopt this rendering in this passage where the exact meaning is of such vast importance. “Unmarried young woman” is equivalent to “*virgin*” unless the chastity and honor of the young woman in question is impugned. “Adult young woman” implies nothing in itself, but in the context of Isa. 7:14 it clearly implies that the meaning is “adult young married woman,” which is a complete surrender to the naturalistic interpretation of the verse, despite the fact that the context clearly implies that an extraordinary, a supernatural, sign is being offered the unbelieving king.

Some twenty-five years ago, when the question of the virgin birth of the Lord was particularly to the fore, because of the Fosdick controversy and the Auburn Affirmation, Dr. Robert Dick Wilson, then Professor of Semitic Philology in Princeton Theological Seminary, published an article in the *Princeton Theological Review*, entitled, “The Meaning of ‘Alma (A.V. ‘Virgin’) in Isaiah 7:14.” After a thorough discussion of the use of the word in the OT and in the versions, as well as in the cognate languages, Dr. Wilson stated his conclusions as follows:

“Finally, two conclusions from the evidence seem clear; first, that *’alma*, so far as known, never meant ‘young married woman’; and secondly, since the presumption in common law and usage was and is, that every *’alma* is virgin and virtuous, until she is proved not to be, we

have a right to assume that Rebecca and the *'alma* of Isa. 7:14 and all other *'almas* were virgin, until and unless it shall be proven that they were not. If Isa. 7:14 is a prediction [p. 47] of the Conception and if the events recorded in Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38 are true and the Holy Spirit of God really overshadowed the Virgin Mary, all difficulties are cleared away. The language is not the difficulty. The great and only difficulty lies in disbelief in predictive prophecy and in the almighty power of God; or in the desire to throw discredit upon the divine Sonship of Jesus."

Dr. Wilson concluded with this statement, which is especially significant when we remember how utterly opposed Mohammed was to the idea that God could have a Son.

"In the third Sura of the Koran, Mohammed represents Mary as saying to the angel: 'Lord, how can I have a son when man has not yet touched me?' And the angel said: 'Thus God creates what He pleaseth. When He decrees a matter He only says BE and it is.' Mohammed was a better Theist than many who profess to be followers of Christ today."

The situation has not changed nor has the evidence presented by Dr. Wilson been weakened or nullified during the quarter-century which has elapsed since he penned these words. But he being dead yet speaketh to bear his testimony against that assault upon the article of the creed of Christendom, "born of the Virgin Mary," which is now being renewed in the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament.

In his essay on "The Hebrew Text and the Ancient Versions of the Old Testament" (see Introduction, p. 30), Professor Orlinsky of the Jewish Institute of Religion (New York) goes out of his way to attack the historic position of the Christian Church as stated in the Apostles' Creed, "conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." Speaking of one of the ancient Greek versions, that of Aquila, he tells us:

"Early in the second century A. D., Aquila, a convert to Judaism, made an independent and unique Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. He incorporated that kind of Jewish interpretation which was current in his day, and he avoided the Christological elements which had been introduced in the Septuagint text. Thus Aquila rendered the Hebrew word *ha-almah* in Isaiah 7:14 literally, 'the young woman' in place of the word 'virgin' which Christians had substituted for it. Unfortunately, only fragments of Aquila have survived."

This means, to state it bluntly, although Professor Orlinsky cannot be accused of trying to spare the feelings of Christians [p. 48] in his statement of the case, that the presence of the word *parthenos* (virgin) in the Septuagint is an alteration or forgery of the Septuagint text, a "Christological element" which was "introduced" into it in the interest of the Christian interpretation of Isa. 7:14 which is given in Matt. 1:23. As to this Addison Alexander pointed out a century ago in commenting on the word *'alma*:

"That the word simply means a young woman, whether married or unmarried, a virgin or a mother, is a subterfuge invented by the later Greek translators, who, as Justin Martyr tells us, read *neanis*, instead of the old version *parthenos*, which had its rise before the prophecy became a subject of dispute between the Jews and Christians."

It has been the claim of Christians throughout the centuries, and there is no reason for changing it or relinquishing it today, that there is no evidence that the Christians tampered with the text of the Septuagint, but that it was the Jews who adopted a different rendering in order to avoid finding in Isa. 7:14 a prediction of the virgin birth of Jesus.

There is nothing new, nor is there anything surprising in this charge of falsification which is now renewed by Professor Orlinsky. It is an old calumny which red-blooded Christians in the past have not hesitated to brand as malicious and false. It is not surprising that Professor Orlinsky, having been asked to serve on the RSV committee, which entitled him to contribute an article to the Introduction, should regard this as giving him an unprecedented and unparalleled opportunity to state and defend this distinctly Jewish claim in the forum of Christian opinion. The amazing thing is that he was asked to serve on the committee. The still more amazing thing is that Dean Weigle and his other colleagues permitted him to air this old calumny in their joint Introduction. The most probable explanation is that they were more or less fully in agreement with the Jewish interpretation which he has presented. However explained it represents a bill of indictment against RSV which will hardly be answered to the satisfaction of Evangelical Christians.

It is important to note in this connection, that in the NT, the RSV Bible which has introduced a considerable number [p. 49] of changes (about 80) in the edition published in 1946, has added a marginal note at Matt. 1:16: "Other ancient authorities read, *Joseph, to whom was betrothed the virgin Mary, was the father of Jesus who is called Christ.*" This is practically the same as the reading given in the Moffatt version. Its main, some would say, its only clear support is the Sinaitic Syriac Ms., a palimpsest of about the beginning of the 5th century. Consequently the statement, "other ancient authorities read" is both vague and misleading. Furthermore, the reading in question is decidedly doubtful, since it is self-contradictory. It mentions Mary the virgin, but also says that Joseph "begat." That RSV should use the opportunity of the publication of the completed RSV Bible to insert this footnote at Matt. 1:16 indicates clearly how little warrant there is for the hope expressed in some quarters that changes can or will be made in RSV which will make this version acceptable to Evangelical Christians. The version was prepared by Liberals, it is owned by Liberals; and they will see to it that this hope is not realized!

Isaiah 52:15, "startle many nations" has the margin, "The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain." This is a thoroughly biased statement. The rendering "sprinkle" (AV, ARV) is the regular rendering of the Hebrew verb, which occurs 24 times in the OT. The mere fact that the substance sprinkled (blood, oil, water, are all mentioned elsewhere) is not specified and we have the expression "sprinkle many nations" instead of "sprinkle ... upon many nations" is no sufficient excuse for departing from the regular meaning of the word. ARV gives "sprinkle" in the text and "startle" in the margin, primarily because the Gk suggests such a rendering. RSV is so opposed to the rendering "sprinkle" that it will not even mention it in the margin. This can only be explained as due to the determination of the revisers to eliminate from the description of the Suffering Servant the idea of an expiatory sacrifice, as far as it is possible.

Zechariah 6:13, "It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD, and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule upon [p. 50] his throne. And there shall be a priest by his throne, and peaceful understanding shall be between them both," illustrates the danger when the translator assumes the role of interpreter and commentator. A literal rendering of the verbs would be: "And he shall build ... and he shall bear ... and he shall sit and he shall rule ... and he shall be ..." In each case the same form of the verb is used; and in the case of the first two the pronoun is emphatic. There is every indication that the subject continues the same. This



is indicated by AV and ARV. RSV changes the subject of the last verb by rendering “and there shall be a priest,” which would be literally “and a priest shall be.” This rendering is possible. But it involves an abrupt change of subject which is not prepared for in any way. Besides this RSV reads: “and there shall be a priest beside his throne.” This means that RSV has translated the same phrase in two different ways in the same context, “upon his throne” and “by his throne.” Yet “rule upon his throne” would favor if not require “be a priest upon his throne.” The objective in the RSV rendering is clearly to imply that two persons are referred to, despite the fact that the literal translation of the Hebrew implies that one and the same person is the subject of all these verbs. The reason is of course to be found in the last clause of the verse, “and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” RSV takes this to mean that two different persons, a king and a priest are referred to, and it has therefore endeavored to discover, or introduced, this distinction into the sentences which precede. But certainly most Evangelical scholars are agreed that the aim of the prophet’s words is to describe only one person who will be both king and priest. This person is the Branch (cf. Jer. 23:5; 33:15, also Isa. 11:1). This identification is clearly foretold in Ps. 110, which speaks of the king who is a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec, a passage which is repeatedly appealed to in Heb. 5-7. It will be through this union that the goal of “peace on earth” will ultimately be attained. RSV by interpreting the passage as referring to two persons robs it of its most precious meaning. [p. 51]

#### MODERNIZING THE STYLE OF THE BIBLE

One of the great arguments which are used for a new version of the Bible and in behalf of the RSV is that the English language has changed to such an extent that the AV is difficult reading, not to say unintelligible, to the average American of today. In view of this claim and with a view to clarifying the issue it will be well to quote a paragraph from Professor Irwin’s contribution to the Introduction to the RSV Old Testament:

“The greatness of the King James Version of the Bible—and beyond all cavil it is one of the great Bible translations—lies, as every reader recognizes, in its superb literary qualities. Commonly it has been pointed out that the King James Version was created in the great, the classic age, one might say, of the language. But what is almost as commonly overlooked is that it owes its merit, not at all to seventeenth century English—which was far different—but to its faithful rendering of the original. The style of the English Bible is the style of the Hebrew, and of the Koiné Greek of New Testament times. Rather than a child of seventeenth century English, it is parent of the English of today. Its lucid clarity has established itself as the standard of good writing; its great phrases have passed over into common usage; many of its figures of speech have established themselves in the language as indigenous English.”

This tribute to the King James Version is very significant as coming from the pen of one of the RSV Committee. It should be needless to point out in view of Professor Irwin’s long years of service on the Committee, that he was strongly of the opinion that despite its many excellences the AV was in need of revision and probably of the kind of revision which is given to us in the RSV. But the words which have been quoted serve to center attention on a very important issue: the difference between revising the diction and rhetoric of the AV and revising the diction and rhetoric of the Bible itself, the faithful retention of which Professor

Irwin tells us is one of the great excellences of the version of 1611. Does the RSV restrict itself to modernizing the English of the AV? or Does it attempt to modernize the Biblical style which the AV so admirably reproduced?

### *The Use of “Thou” and “You”*

In view of the fact that the use of “thou, thee, thy” and [p. 52] related forms is a special target of criticism by all the advocates of “modern speech” versions, it may well take first place in any discussion of this subject. Consequently, it is to be noted at the very outset, that the words of Professor Irwin, which were just quoted, apply particularly to their use. The claim that AV used “thou” because “thou” was customary in the days of King James of England does not tell the whole story and is definitely misleading. The AV used “thou” and “you” for the simple reason that they correctly represent the Hebrew and Greek, both of which make a distinction between the forms of the second person singular and second person plural. A very slight examination will serve to convince anyone that the AV uses “thou” and its related forms when the Hebrew and the Greek have the singular, and “you” and its related forms when they have the plural. Consequently, this question of English usage did not bother the 1611 translators in the slightest. They simply followed the usage of the text which they were translating. They tried to give what Professor Irwin calls “a faithful rendering of the original.” ARV followed the same principle, regardless of the fact that in nearly 300 years secular usage had changed considerably.

In the Introduction to the RSV New Testament (1946), Dean Weigle speaks of this problem as “one of the great issues” which the revisers faced; and he tells us that “After two years of debate and experiment it was decided to abandon these forms and to follow modern usage, except in language addressed to God” (p. 56). This of course at once raised the question as to the usage to be adopted in the case of language addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ; the rendering of the words of Peter’s confession by “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” has been severely but justly criticized. And the fact that the Babylon of the Apocalypse is addressed by “thou” (chap. 18) shows that the NT Committee did not follow its own rule carefully. For certainly they had no intention of deifying apostate Babylon!

In the Introduction to the RSV Old Testament, Professor Dahl has modified the rule as stated by Dean Weigle, making [p. 53] it read: “The forms thou, thee, thy, thine, and verb endings -est and -eth are not used except in language addressed to God or in exalted poetic apostrophe” (p. 23). The words, “or in exalted poetic apostrophe” would cover such a passage as Rev. 18, although Professor Dahl is writing primarily with reference to the Old Testament. Yet when we turn to the Woe on Tyre (Ezek. 27-28) which is similar to that on Babylon and treated in RSV largely as poetry, and hence might be regarded as “elevated poetic apostrophe” we find that “you” is used. This is a striking but rather harmless inconsistency. It becomes serious when we turn to such a passage as Ps. 110. There in a psalm which generations of Christians have, on the express authority of our Lord as reported by the three Synoptists, regarded as Messianic, the revisers use “you.” Even if, as apparently was the case, they were unwilling to regard the psalm as Messianic in the full sense, they might have justified the use of “thou” as “elevated poetic apostrophe.” But since the “thou” might then be interpreted as used of Deity, they apparently preferred to use the unambiguous “you.” How then are we to

understand the use of “thou” in the NT passages where this psalm is expressly quoted? Has it acquired a richer meaning than it had in the OT? Or, are we to assume that while the OT committee did not apply the rule of “elevated poetic apostrophe,” the NT committee have done so.

The aim of this brief discussion of an important subject is simply to point out the extreme difficulties in which RSV has involved itself in the effort to depart from the “style of the Hebrew and of the Koiné Greek,” in favor of modern secular usage. We say secular usage, because the “thou” and “thee,” as reflecting the Biblical usage, is so firmly embedded in the language of devotion, in our hymns, prayers, liturgies, and books dealing with Biblical subjects, that the attempt to eliminate it entirely would be almost impossible. RSV has gone part way. It has offered a solution which is so complicated and inconsistent and carries often such serious implications that it cannot be accepted as satisfactory. Would it not be better to retain or restore the Biblical usage which [p. 54] is so simple and plain and raises no difficulties just because it is the Biblical usage?

### *Other Kinds of Revising or Editing*

Genesis 1:2, “The earth was without form and void.” The “and” at the beginning is omitted. It is also omitted in vss. 5, 10, 12, 18, changed to “so” in vss. 21, 27, and to “then” in vs. 26. The “and” is omitted because, according to the dictum of Weymouth, “and” is used less frequently in English than in NT Greek (or OT Hebrew). So this Hebraism must be eliminated. The reader will find very many “and”s omitted in both OT and NT; also many other words eliminated; e.g., “answered” instead of “answered and said” (Gen. 18:27, etc.): “when men began to multiply” (Gen. 6:1) instead of “And it came to pass, when men began to multiply.” Such omissions are very frequent and are made at the will of the revisers.

1 Chronicles 1:51ff. “And Hadad died. The chiefs of Edom were: chiefs Timna, Aliah, Jether, Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, Kenaz, Ternan, Mibzar, Magdiel, and Iram; these are the chiefs of Edom.” AV renders as follows: “Hadad died also. And the dukes of Edom were: duke Timnah, duke Aliah, duke Jether, duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon, duke Kenaz, duke Ternan, duke Mibzar, duke Magdiel, duke Iram. These are the dukes of Edom.” These renderings are quoted in full (omitting pronunciation marks) for only one reason. Whether “chief” is a better, more modern, more intelligible word than “duke” does not now concern us. The point to be noted is, that AV places the title before the name of each of the ten dukes mentioned. It does this simply because that is the way it stands in the Hebrew. RSV changes the singular to the plural before the first of the ten (“chiefs Timna”) and omits it before all the others. Whether or not this is a departure from 17th century usage is a matter which does not directly concern us. The important point is that it is a departure from Biblical usage, which the AV clearly aimed to reproduce without regard to 17th century usage.

1 Chronicles 6:62. “To the Gershomites according to their [p. 55] families were allotted thirteen cities out of the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh in Bashan.” The AV rendering is “And to the sons of Gershom throughout their families out of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities.” In RSV the forty words of AV are reduced to twenty-three. It may be admitted that RSV gives the gist of AV. It tells us what the Hebrew

means and expresses it much more tersely. But AV tells us what the Hebrew says. It preserves the Biblical style. It gives us that “faithful rendering” which Professor Irwin so highly commends.

Jeremiah 8:1f. “At that time, says the LORD, the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of its princes, the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be brought out of their tombs.” Here RSV follows the AV and the Hebrew, except that it changes the active form into the passive; and it uses the expression “the bones of” five times. This may be due to the feeling that these words are emphatic here, while in 1 Chr. 1:51ff. and 6:62 no emphasis attaches to the repeated words. But these passages serve to show the liberty which RSV claims in editing the Hebrew text and the arbitrary way in which it can be exercised.

### *Paraphrase*

Exodus 4:13, “But he said, ‘Oh, my Lord, send, I pray, some other person.’” Compare this with “And he said, O my Lord, send I pray thee, by the hand *of him whom* thou wilt send,” (AV), which is a literal rendering and uses italics to indicate words supplied to clarify the meaning. The RSV rendering may perhaps be called paraphrase. But even this may be questioned. For RSV does not tell us what Moses said, but rather what Moses wanted to say, but did not dare to put into words. This is something quite different. Yet Professor Irwin warns us that “the translator must be on guard against paraphrase” (Intro. p. 14). That the warning was not taken very seriously by the revisers is indicated by [p. 56] such examples as the following: Ps. 32:3, “When I declared not my sin” for “When I kept silence”; Ps. 61:4, “O to be safe under the shelter of thy wings” instead of “I will take refuge in the covert of thy wings”; Ps. 69:1 “for the waters have come up to my neck” instead of “for the waters are come in unto my soul”; Prov. 23:35b “When shall I wake? I will seek another drink,” in place of “When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.”

### *Biblical Diction and Phrasing*

The rendering of many words and phrases in RSV will require careful study. It is a mistake, for example, to tone down Jeremiah’s striking and vivid expression “and I spake unto you rising up early and speaking” (7:13) into “and when I spoke to you persistently”; or to change “bring again the captivity of” into “restore the fortunes of” (Jer. 30:3). The occasional substitution of such words as “victory, victorious, deliverance” for “salvation, righteous, righteousness” will have to be carefully tested. “I will uphold thee with my victorious right arm” (Isa. 41:10), instead of “with the right hand of my righteousness,” eliminates the moral factor completely, and without any warrant. “Steadfast love” is no improvement on “loving kindness,” and in the phrase “for his steadfast love endures for ever” (26 times in Ps. 135) it is tautological and becomes wearisome.

## Quotation Marks

One of the characteristics of “modern speech” versions of the Bible is the use of quotation marks. They are not used in AV or ARV. Probably there are at least two reasons why ARV did not introduce them: they are at times definitely interpretive (cf. John 3:15 in RSV), and their use tends to become complicated, cumbersome, and confusing. Thus in RSV we sometimes find quotes within quotes within quotes (“... ‘... “...” ’...”) This is the pattern, or example, of Ex. 8:1-4, 20-23; 9:1-4, 13-19; Josh. 7:10-15; I Sam. 2:27-36; Jer. 13:12-14. Consequently the reader may find now and then a paragraph or sentence ending with three bunched quotation [p. 57] marks (” ’ ”). Entire consistency would at times require at least four.<sup>5</sup> The following example will illustrate the complexity of the problem.

Jer. 22 is very complicated. It begins as follows<sup>6</sup>: (vs. 1) Thus says the LORD: “Go down ... (vs.2) and say, ‘Hear the word ... (vs.3) Thus says the LORD: Do justice ... (vs.6) For thus says the LORD ... “You are as Gilead ... (vs. 8) “And many nations ... “Why has the LORD ... city” ... “Because ... served them.” ’ ” It will be noted that the second “Thus says the LORD” does not introduce a quote (“) as the first does. Furthermore the quotes (“ ’) in vs. 6 and at the beginning of vs. 8 apparently merely continue the quotes of vs. 1 (“) and vs. 2 (‘). If so, then all these quotations end with the three quotes (” ’ ”) at the end of vs. 9. Vs. 10 is printed as poetry but is not in quotes. Vs. 11 introduces a brief quotation which apparently concludes with ... see this land again.” Vss. 13-17 are printed as poetry and resemble vs. 10 in content but are in quotes (“ ...”) and enclose a brief quotation in vs.14 (‘ ... ’). Vs. 18 introduces a quotation which is in poetry, is placed in quotes (“ ...”), encloses two short quotations (‘ ... ’; ‘ ... ’) and continues through vs. 19. Vss. 20-23 are separated from the preceding verses, placed in quotes (“ ...”) and enclose a brief quotation (‘ ... ’). Vss. 24-27 are printed as prose and put between quotes: “As I live, says the LORD, though ... shall not return.” We would naturally expect: “As I live,” says the LORD, “though ... shall not return.” Vss. 28-29 are printed as poetry, but not placed between quotes. Most of vs. 30 is printed as poetry and placed between quotes.

This is very confusing and arbitrary. Why are vss. 10 and 28-29 not in quotes? AT places them in quotes; Moffatt does not. It is instructive to compare RSV with these two versions. [p. 58] No two are in entire agreement as to the use of quotes. Like the “Thou” and “You” problem, introducing of quotes may seem at first sight a simple matter. But it becomes extremely complicated, which is a good reason for not attempting to introduce it.

## Versification

The division of the OT into verses goes back to very ancient times. The Massoretes, who vocalized and punctuated the Hebrew text, used a different system of punctuation for the

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5. Isa. 36:13-20 ends in Moffatt with two quotes (’ ”), in RSV with three (” ’ ”), in AT with four (’ ” ’ ”). Here AT is the most consistent. But it goes so far in this instance as to make the whole subject rather ridiculous. How often in modern books does the reader find four quotes, or even three?

6. These quotations from Jer. 22 are not put in quotes, because this would either be confusing or require the changing (stepping-up) of all the quotes within our quotes. They are printed exactly as they are in RSV.

Poetical Books (Psalms, Proverbs, Job). But only in a few cases (Ex. 15, Deut. 32, Jgs. 5, 2 Sam. 22) did they introduce a metrical arrangement of poetical passages found in the other books. The AV makes no distinction between poetry and prose as far as the printing of the Bible is concerned. ARV prints all the above mentioned books and passages as poetry. RSV does the same. E.g., Ps. 19:11 reads as follows:

ARV  
Moreover by them is thy servant warned:  
In keeping them there is great reward.

RSV  
Moreover by them is thy servant warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.

Here the difference is that RSV indents the second line and does not begin it with a capital. But RSV also shows a great fondness for dividing up sentences. E.g., Ps. 23:4 is arranged as follows:

ARV  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;  
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

RSV  
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I fear no evil;  
for thou art with me;  
thy rod and thy staff,  
they comfort me.

Here ARV has three lines, each of which begins with a capital letter, without indentation. RSV begins with one long line, exactly as ARV does. The other two lines (as given in ARV) it divides in half, making four short lines. Three of the four are indented; [p. 59] one is not indented but begins with a small letter (“for”). So there are two degrees of indenting. We cannot regard it as an improvement on ARV.

The special innovation in RSV, as compared with ARV is the printing of large portions of the Prophetical Books as poetry. This is not really new. Two centuries ago (1753) Bishop Lowth advanced the theory that the Prophets ought to be treated as being largely poetry; and he later applied this theory especially to Isaiah. This view was adopted by others, e.g., by James Nourse in his Paragraph Bible (1834). Addison Alexander of Princeton denounced it as a “fantastic and injurious mode.” It led to a rather intensive study of Hebrew Metrics; and poetical arrangements of the Prophets have been extensively used by R. G. Moulton and others, especially in “modern speech” versions. Recently the study of the Ras Shamra (Canaanite) mythological texts has stimulated interest in this subject. The tendency is now, as illustrated in RSV, to divide up verses which show the slightest indication of parallelism in subject matter and rhythmical form into a kind of blank verse. Sometimes there is warrant

for this, but often it seems artificial and arbitrary, breaking up words and phrases which belong together and printing them in a complicated and confusing style. The following will serve as illustration:

Isaiah 1:24  
Therefore the Lord says,  
the LORD of hosts,  
the Mighty One of Israel:  
“Ah, I will vent my wrath on my enemies,  
and avenge myself on my foes.

Isaiah 2:5  
O house of Jacob,  
come, let us walk  
in the light of the LORD

Jeremiah 2:12-13  
Be appalled, O heavens, at this,  
be shocked, be utterly desolate,  
says the LORD,  
for my people have committed two evils:  
they have forsaken me,  
the fountain of living waters,  
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,  
broken cisterns,  
that can hold no water.

Here words and phrases which belong closely together are split up; and the two, in Jer. 2:12-13 three, different indentings are likely to be confusing to the reader. One trouble with this [p. 60] “metrical” arrangement is that it changes lofty, impassioned and rhythmic prose into the lamest of blank verse and tends to break down the distinction between poetry and prose. This is illustrated by the following examples:

Amos 3:2 (RSV)  
“You only have I known  
of all the families of the earth;  
therefore I will punish you  
for all your iniquities.”

Amos 7:11 (RSV)  
“For thus Amos has said,  
‘Jeroboam shall die by the sword,  
and Israel shall go into exile  
away from his land.’ ”

Amos 7:12f. (AT)

Then Amaziah said to Amos,

“O seer, take your flight to the land of Judah,  
And there eat bread, and there prophesy;  
And never come again to Bethel to prophesy,  
For this is the king’s sanctuary, and the royal palace.”

It will be noted that the arrangement of Amos 7:12f. is from AT. The RSV prints these verses as prose, despite the fact that it has just treated the words of Amaziah as poetry. As a matter of fact there is no more reason for printing one as poetry than the other. Both should be treated as prose. This attempt to “metricize” the Prophets is being carried to a ridiculous extreme.

### CONCLUSION

No elaborate summing-up is needed. The evidence speaks for itself. It shows that the RSV differs from the AV in one all-important respect. It is not “a faithful rendering of the original.” On the contrary, it treats the Old Testament with a freedom which is incompatible with that high regard for its trustworthiness and divine authority, which is so marked a feature of the version of 1611. This is the great reason that this “revision,” however excellent it may be in some other respects, cannot be satisfactory to Bible-believing Christians and cannot be accepted by them as a “standard” version. A version to be acceptable to them must tell them as accurately as possible what the *Bible* says and not what some consensus of scholars, who however learned are after all mere mortals like themselves, think it ought to say.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Oswald Thompson Allis (1880-1973) received the A.B. degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1901; the Bachelor of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1905; the A.M. degree from Princeton University in 1907; and the Ph.D. degree from the University of Berlin in 1913. He served as Instructor in Semitic Philology at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1910-1922; Assistant Professor of Semitic Philology at the same institution from 1922-1929; Professor of Old Testament History and Exegesis at Westminster Theological Seminary from 1929-1930; and as Professor of Old Testament at the same institution from 1930-1936. He was the editor of *The Princeton Theological Review* from 1918-1929.