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By Rev. Wm. C. Robinson, D.D.*

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Revised Standard Version: Nelson, 1946. Pages 553. Price \$2.00.

It is difficult to evaluate this work. Every careful translation of the Book is worthwhile. This one is very worthwhile. It is made in the light of fresh studies in the Greek and Aramaic and the background out of which the New Testament was written. For example, current studies in the Greek word, *helikia*, show that it is more often used with reference to one's age than of his stature. Accordingly, Matthew 6:27 reads: "And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to the span of his life?"

The revision is the fruit of a rich command of the current English or American way of speaking and this often serves to bring out the meaning of the text in a fresh way, e.g.: "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve." "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood."

On the other hand the translators have taken liberties with the text in accord with their premise that they are translating ideas rather than words. Sometimes these are their own ideas and not the ideas of the Apostle. For example, in First Corinthians 15 Paul repeatedly asserts that the body which is sown in death is a **psychical** body. Former translators rendered this "a natural body." The 1946 revisors seemed to have great difficulty with this Greek adjective in First Corinthians. In 2:14 they render it "unspiritual" and place the word "natural" as an alternative in the margin. In the fifteenth chapter they mis-translate it each time as, **physical**. Now these two English words **psychical** and **physical** are simply transliterations from the corresponding Greek words. The words are equally different in the two languages, and to render one by the other is to change the text. For some time, the "liberals" have been interpreting First Corinthians 15 as if Paul had said that the present body is a physical or a material body. This permits them to foist upon Paul their "liberal" view that the resurrection body will be only a ghost "body" without corporeality. Now the Revised Standard Version comes to their support by this mis-translation of the Apostle.

When Paul is fairly read, he says that both the body which is sown and the body which is raised is corporeal. The Latin has **corpus** for both. When the true adjective **psychical** is read of the body which dies it is seen that the Apostle is not talking about the substance of the body at all, but about its control. Our present bodies are controlled by the sinful psychology which comes from Adam and the fall, that is, they are psychological, "soulish" bodies. Then the resurrection body is to be controlled by the Holy Spirit who comes from Christ the life-giving Spirit. They will thus be **Spiritual** bodies. Our fallen sinful humanity cannot inherit the Kingdom of God as we inherit possessions by flesh and blood descent from our human parents. We receive eternal life from Christ by the saving acts of His life-giving Spirit.

Again the Revisers have changed the great word **propitiation** to the more ambiguous and less lofty word **expiation** in the passages where it occurs, Rom. 3:25, I John 2:2, and I John 4:10. Apparently, they thus seek to remove the idea that the death of Christ propitiates the wrath of God and satisfies His justice. But the Apostle Paul ties the Gospel of salvation to Christ's satisfaction of God's justice and averting of His wrath not only in Romans 3 but also in Romans 1:16-18 and in Romans 5:9-10 as well as in other epistles. And the thought and word are current in the New Testament times as the following from IV Macc. xvii:21-22 shows:

"They (the Jewish martyrs) have become as it were a substitute for the sin of the nation, and through the blood of these pious ones and their propitiatory death (tou hilasteriou thanatou auton) the divine providence preserved Israel which before was evilly treated."

The thing that causes greatest concern in the whole translation, however, is the treatment of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. After all this book is **the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**. These things are written that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing we may have life in His Name. What says this book of Jesus, the Christ?

After years of debate the Revisers decided to use the terms thou, thine and thee only of God and the terms you and your of man. Then they decided to use the human terms for Christ, but with a few exceptions, perhaps, required by the votes of the larger Council. Thus even when the Risen Lord arrests Saul on the road to Damascus in a veritable Theophany and speaks to him in the dignified Hebrew speech, Saul is made to reply: "Who are you, Lord?" As a matter of fact the Revisers have wholly missed the meaning of this event. While his heart is full of the Old Testament Theophanies, a heavenly One appears to Saul. The pious Hebrew answers, no doubt in the same Hebrew language, and asks the Lord of the Old Testament who He is. Only in answer to this question, "Who art Thou, Lord?" does Saul learn that the Lord is Jesus.

There is also good ground to criticise the earlier places where Jesus is called by demons or by His disciples, "you." John tells us that even when He was here among us we beheld His glory and that it was glory as of the only begotten of the Father—the Divine glory that requires the reverential, "Thou."

The Revised Standard Version will not allow "only-begotten" to stand. In every case they erase this precious word of faith, even though it is an idiomatic translation from the Greek that has become steeped in Christian hymn and prayer and creed, and substitute for it the lower term, "only."

In the third chapter of John no one knows exactly where the discourse of Jesus with Nicodemus stops and where John begins to comment for himself. Most believers hold that our Lord's own

words extend at least through John 3:16. I have taken the trouble to run through the Fourth Gospel and find that after the Prologue there are no extended sentences of comment by John, even according to the Revised Standard Version, except in the third chapter. The Revisers assume two considerable paragraphs of comment in Chapter III, one after Jesus' discourse and one after one by the Baptist. One wonders whether they put in the second to prevent the first from appearing too unique and arbitrary. By their assumption of these two paragraphs of comment—so different from other parts of the Gospel—the Revisers take John 3:16 away from Jesus and give it to the writer of the Gospel. There is nothing in the Greek text to support their assumption that John 3:16-21 was not spoken by Jesus. The analogy of other parts of the Gospel would make the comment of the writer to be only the last sentence of this paragraph and the earlier sentences, including John 3:16, the words of our Lord.

The lowered Christology of the Revision appears unmistakably in the opening verses of Hebrews. Instead of rendering the Greek that Jesus is "the outshining or the effulgence of God's glory and the very image of His substance," they weaken it to: "He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of His nature." Dr. B. B. Warfield properly says: "By 'the glory of God' is meant here just the divine nature itself: and by its 'effulgence' is meant not a reflection, but, so to speak, a reduplication of it." The nature of the Son corresponds precisely with the nature of the Father, so that there is no trait to the nature of the Father which does not find itself in perfection also in the nature of the Son, and *vice versa*. In the light of this high meaning of the context it is very misleading to render the second verse, God has spoken unto us "in a Son." Of course, the definite article does not precede the word translated Son, but neither does an indefinite article precede it. Several times the Greek word for God does not have a definite article before it, but the Revisers never translate, "a God." What follows in Verses 2-3-4 render the Son quite definite and it should be translated either "the Son" or "his Son." Even the Zurich translation of 1937, which delights to magnify difficulties into alleged errors, renders the Greek here "*den Sohn*," the Son.

Finally, of the ten or twelve places where Nestle's Greek Testament addresses Christ as God, the Revised Standard Version four times avoids giving this term to Christ, by one method or another. Several times where the text is questionable and the text gives the term "God" to Christ the margin offers an alternative rendering. But on at least two occasions where the Greek of Nestle's Text gives the term "God" to Christ this is indicated by the Revised Standard Version neither in the text nor in the margin. These two places are II Thess. 1:12 and John 1:18. The other two which Nestle gives and the Revisers consign to the margin are Acts 20:28 and Rom. 9:5. John 20:28 is not translated so as to refer as directly to Christ as the Greek does and Hebrews 1:8 has a footnote suggesting a translation that does not call Jesus God.

The Revisers have recognized the Granville Sharp rule that where there is only one definite article in the singular it makes the whole phrase refer to one and the same person or thing even though the phrase have the word "and" in it. This rule the Revisers have used in II Peter 1:1, in Titus 2:13 and in Jude 4. Under it they recognize

that these passages call our Lord Jesus Christ: "Our God and Saviour," and "our great God and Saviour," and "our only Master and Lord." But they refuse to apply the same rule to II Thess. 1:12 or even to indicate that there is ground for its application by a marginal rendering. Indeed the Greek requires the application of the whole phrase to Christ more clearly in II Thess. 1:12 than in two of the other passages. Paul here describes Jesus Christ as "our God and Lord." Why are the Revisers willing to allow the Greek to speak as it is written in Second Peter and in Titus and then shift the definite article in II Thess. 1:12 so as to make it seem that Paul spoke of two persons there? Well, some of the Revisers say that Titus and Second Peter are Second Century and they know that Ignatius regularly spoke of Christ as "our God" in the second century. They recognize that Second Thessalonians is one of Paul's earliest epistles and they are apparently unwilling to let Paul's unquestioned Greek speak for itself. In the teeth of Romans 9:5, Acts 20:28, II Thess. 1:12 and Titus 2:13 some writers dogmatically assert that Paul never called Jesus God!

The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament is a good book, because it is a carefully wrought-out translation of **The Good Book**. It is a useful book. My two boys and I bought copies as soon as it appeared and used them in our summer's study. It would be a better book if it had rendered more closely the Greek New Testament and spoken more definitely from faith to faith.

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CHRIST AND MAN'S DILEMMA

By George A. Buttrick. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, Nashville, Tenn. 224 pages. Price \$2.00.

Dr. Buttrick poses this as our dilemma: "We are ignorant, but aware of our ignorance, yet unable to lighten our darkness; we need a revelation. We are wicked, but we know our wickedness: we need a redemption. We are mortal, and chained to mortality, though with a long enough chain to see it for what it is, yet we cannot break the chain: we need deliverance." That the natural man is aware of such a problem is extremely doubtful. Such awareness is the result of renewing grace.

In successive chapters the author deals with man's ignorance, wickedness, and mortality, pointing out that the solution is to be found in Jesus Christ alone. He is the Light for our ignorance, Pardon for our wickedness, Life for our mortality. In other chapters Dr. Buttrick relates Christ to the modern problems of business, education, and the machine. The concluding chapter treats of man's proper response to Christ, which is faith.

The author stresses that he pleads for the real Christ: "Not for Christ as a vague ideal, for that would be no match for our selfishness; not for Christ as a name for our good intentions, for they are less than straws in our modern tempest; but for Christ as the Incarnate God." But he misses relating Christ as our Light to the written Word of God. He comes short of showing Christ as our Pardon, because of a careful refusal of the vicarious atonement. While there is much in this book for which to be grateful, it is not the strong and obviously evangelical statement today's troubled world requires. —Adrain De Young.