

APPENDIX VI

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION, For General Synod - Toronto, 1974

MANDATE

Our committee received the following mandate:

- a. To invite the co-operation of all the church members to send in any criticism on the Revised Standard Version they may have.
- b. To receive, scan and judge the criticism thus received and to pass it on to the Standard Bible Committee and to do this before the deadline of September 1972.
- c. To continue with their work of checking the Revised Standard Version and to pass on also their own criticism of same.
- d. From time to time to inform the churches about the result of their investigations.

(Acts, Synod of New Westminster, 1971, Article 33)

Ad a - INVITING CO-OPERATION

We invited co-operation in the work by asking for submissions in the **Canadian Reformed Magazine** of May 13, 1972 and in the **Clarion** of June 16, 1973.

Ad b - RECEIVING CRITICISM AND MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A stenciled publication by C. Hoff **The R.S.V. and God's Revelation** was received. Unfortunately this booklet was of limited value especially because it chose to ignore and bypass the R.S.V. Committee report to our 1971 Synod which report had already dealt with many of the objections which were now simply raised again.
2. A study of A. Zuidhoff of Ottawa was received and many of his suggestions were used (the recommendations re Kings and Chronicles in Enclosure II).
3. Letter from G. den Bok informing us that the RSV N.T. revised edition (1971) was available.
4. On September 28, 1972 our first set of recommendations (enclosure I) was sent to the Standard Bible Committee and on January 10, 1974 a second set of recommendations (including the Hosea Study) (Enclosure II, III) was sent. Contrary to what was thought at first, there is no closing date of any kind for submissions to the Standard Bible Committee.

Ad c - CHECKING THE R.S.V. AND MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. a. The main body of our work can be seen in the enclosed recommendations and study sent to the Standard Bible Committee.
- b. In connection with our work, letters of inquiry were sent to (and answers received from) professors H.M. Ohmann (of the Theological College in Hamilton), J.P. Lettinga (of the Theologische Hoogeschool in Kampen) and T.A. Nicholas (of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia).

II - Recommendations to the Standard Bible Committee

It is obvious that it was impossible to evaluate the translation of every text in the R.S.V. Therefore, in addition to some specific recommendations, some more general recommendations were also sent. These more general recommendations (for these and the more specific ones see enclosures I and II for complete text with grounds) are:

1. Scripture portions considered insufficiently attested should be put in the text (rather than the footnotes) between brackets with an explanatory footnote.
2. Wherever the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity is mentioned, the pronoun referring to Him should be personal and not neuter.
3. The accuracy and value of the Massoretic Text should be reconsidered so that it is held in much greater respect in the translating process.
4. Retain the distinctiveness of the "Tetragrammaton" by rendering it "Yahweh".

5. Some consistent effort at reflecting the unity of the Old and New Testament should be made in the translating process where this is possible.
6. The second personal pronoun where referring to the Lord Jesus should be rendered "thou" and "thee" wherever this pronoun occurs.

III - Dissertation Studied

The following was studied: Robert L. Goddard, **An Objective Evaluation of the Accuracy of the Revised Standard Version in the Translation of the New Testament**. A dissertation presented to the faculty of the Graduate School Dallas Theological Seminary in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Theology, 1955. This dissertation was found to be basically sound.

Goddard concludes that an objective study of the R.S.V. would lead to the formulation of an accurate doctrine of theology proper, anthropology, ecclesiology, angelology and eschatology.

Of **bibliology** he concludes: "This investigation, it is felt has revealed that an unbiased study of the RSV would lead to a comparatively accurate doctrine of Bibliology, equal if not superior to that which could be derived from the AV, RV, or ASV . . ." (A Biblical understanding of Scripture follows.) (p. 71)

Of **Christology** he concludes: ". . . The chief weakness of the version in this field (of Christology) lies in the translation of words and passages bearing on the person of Christ. The use of the word "origin" (Heb. 2:11) in connection with Him is unwarranted in view of the many passages clearly expressing His deity. If He is God, He could not have had an origin." (p. 128) Goddard goes on to mention the poor usage of you/thou and Rom. 9:5. He goes on and notes: "In favor of the version it should be pointed out that many passages dealing with the person of Christ are accurately translated. In such verses as John 1:1 and Heb. 1:8 He is called "God". In Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 the RSV by virtue of accurate translation upholds the deity of Christ more than does the AV. In regard to the virgin birth of Christ is should be notes that the narratives in both Matthew and Luke are accurately translated." (p. 128) Of **Pneumatology** he notes that the translation of the AV has contributed to the lack of understanding that there is in the field. He concludes that "a purely objectively study of the N.T. as translated in the RSV would lead to the accurate doctrine of the Holy Spirit, both in regard to His person and His work. The only major defect in the version in this field of theology is the use of the neuter pronoun *it* to refer to the Holy Spirit in some instances." (p. 157) Of **Soteriology** he notes that "Much criticism has been made against the manner in which words and passages pertaining to soteriology have been translated in the RSV of the N.T." (p. 189) and concludes "This investigation has revealed that the RSV of the NT is, for the most part, accurate in the translation of the words and passages in the field of soteriology. The lone weakness in the translation of words and passages bearing on the work of Christ is the substitution of the term "expiation" for "propitiation". The version is very accurate in those translations having to do with the appropriation of salvation. The tenses of the Greek verbs are translated in a very acceptable manner. Passages dealing with Christian life truth are, in general, well translated." (p. 224)

At the end of the study he notes that if reckoned with the percentage of correct renderings, the RSV fares much better than the AV. "On the other hand, when the RSV is in error, the error is usually of considerable importance. In fact most of the glaring errors of the version have to do with the person of Christ and are, therefore, by virtue of this fact alone, serious." (p. 311)

The author concludes: "Thus while the RSV of the New Testament is accurate in most places, its errors are of such nature as to forbid its unqualified endorsement." (p. 312)

IV - The 1971 Revision of the New Testament of the R.S.V.

An in-depth evaluation of the 1971 Revision of the N.T. was not made, but preliminary studies showed:

1. Major changes include the restoration into the text of Mark 16:9-20, John 7:53-8:11. Also brought back into the text are Luke 22:19b-20 and Luke 24:51b, while Luke 22:43-44 and part of Luke 12:39 is taken from the text and put in into footnotes.
 2. The Christian Reformed Church's study committee of the RSV submitted 31 recommendations for the N.T. The 1971 revision shows that 10 of these were accepted (namely Matt. 18:24, Luke 14:5, 22:19b, 20, John 5:18, 16:8, Acts 20:28, 1 Cor. 7:25, 28, etc., 1 Cor. 7:26, 1 Thes. 4:4 and James 2:7).
 3. There seems to be no change regarding inconsistencies and translation problems surrounding the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Romans 9:5 is still wrongly punctuated and Hebrews 2:11 still has "of one origin" instead of the preferable "of one" (cf. A.V. and enclosure II). There is also still the inconsistencies regarding the usage of thou/you when referring to the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit is still in some instances referred to in the neuter (cf. Romans 5:5, 8:11, Ephesians 1:14, 1 John 3:24). Correct translations also exist however (as in the old edition) e.g. John 16:7, Romans 8:16, 26.
- Our conclusion** from seeing the revision of the New Testament is:
1. The Standard Bible Committee is responsive to recommendations made to it, and improvements have been made.
 2. However, the rather important and crucial corrections concerning the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit are still not made.

V - The Hosea Study (cf. Enclosure III)

While we must refer you to the study itself (enclosure III) for full details, some summary remarks can be made here. The **purpose** of the study was to examine emendations in Hosea (RSV translation) with view to seeing whether these emendations were justified and with view to determining what principles govern the emendations made.

Of the 31 places marked "correction" by the RSV, 23 of these corrections or emendations were found to be unwarranted, 2 corrections were definitely warranted, and 5 were possibly warranted.

Conclusion: After careful study, and in view of the other factors mentioned in the report, the final conclusion had to be that the emendations betray a theological position critical of the authority and trustworthiness of Scripture.

Ad d - NOTIFICATION OF PROGRESS

The churches were informed that in the fall of 1972 recommendations were sent to the Standard Bible Committee and that another submission was planned for the fall of 1973 (CLARION, June 16, 1973).

Furthermore, unofficial informative articles for **Clarion** were projected for March 1974 to describe some of the work etc. in a popular way.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions:

1. Goddard's dissertation shows clearly that there is much to commend about the RSV translation which in some cases is better than the King James and statistically is more accurate.
2. However, the committee must also conclude that our continued investigation over the past years since the 1971 synod has shown that there is also evidence of an unscriptural influence. As grounds for this we draw your attention to the following:
 - a. our recommendation that the unity of the Old and New Testament be recognized in translation. (cf. Recommendation 3, page 3 of enclosure 11. Also cf. relevant corrections in Enclosure 1)
 - b. the lack of consistency in the usage of "thou" and "thee" when addressing God, even when the Lord Jesus is explicitly recognized as divine. (cf. our recommendation on page 4, enclosure II)

- c. the lack of consistency regarding the usage of personal and impersonal pronouns regarding the Holy Spirit. (cf. page 4, 5 of enclosure 1 and Goddard's dissertation, cf. III above)
 - d. the absence of corrections in the 1971 revision of the R.S.V. New Testament in matters of the Son and the Spirit.
 - e. the Hosea study and our conclusion concerning the emendations. (Enclosure III)
3. We are confirmed by our studies that the previous synod did a good thing in not positively endorsing the R.S.V. but that it only recommended the R.S.V. in a negative way. It is the opinion of the committee that we do not tie ourselves down to the R.S.V.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue the committee for the R.S.V. grounds:
 - a. The Standard Bible Committee is receptive and while not necessarily implementing all recommendations does take them all seriously. (It meets every two years, including this year, in which suggestions for change are considered.)
 - b. Although the bulk of the work seems to be done and the major recommendations have now been made, yet, since there is no closing date and since it appears that the R.S.V. will be revised continually, we must not neglect opportunities to bring forward proposals to the Standard Bible committee as these come from our circles and committee.
 - c. Only the Christian Reformed Church and the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) have committees for this work. Our contribution will therefore not be lost in floods of other recommendations and our contribution could be substantial.
 2. As churches we should keep our options open as to an official and positive endorsement of a translation besides the King James Version. We therefore recommend that either the present R.S.V. committee, or another synodically appointed committee, be given the mandate by synod to study another (or other) modern translation(s), with view to possible usage in our churches.
- Grounds:
1. The weaknesses of the RSV as pointed out in our recommendation study and report.
 2. Our awareness of the existence of the New American Standard Bible and the New International Version (only the New Testament, 1973, available up to now). These translations appear to be worthwhile to be looked into.

Respectfully submitted by your committee

D. DE JONG, convener
 M. VAN BEVEREN
 C. VAN DAM, secretary