

# Deal Pentecostal Church Training School

Reference Material

## Study 1 The Bible

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# Which Translation Can I Trust?

*An examination of modern English translations especially compared to the King James (Authorised) Version of the Bible by Dr. Andrew N. Corbett*

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## Abbreviations

<b>ASV</b>	American Standard Version
<b>EDT</b>	Evangelical Dictionary of Theology
<b>ESV</b>	English Standard Version
<b>GLCC</b>	Great Leaders of the Christian Church
<b>IBD</b>	Illustrated Bible Dictionary
<b>KJV</b>	King James Version
<b>LXX</b>	Septuagint
<b>MS</b>	Manuscript
<b>MSS</b>	Manuscripts
<b>NAB</b>	New American Bible
<b>NASB</b>	New American Standard Bible
<b>NCV</b>	New Century Version
<b>NIV</b>	New International Version
<b>NRSV</b>	New Revised Standard Version
<b>RSV</b>	Revised Standard Version
<b>RV</b>	Revised Version

## **Modern Concerns About Modern Translations**

### **Overview:**

- The traditional predominance of the KJV
- The popularity of recent translations
- Sincere questions about the integrity of modern translations

### **Objectives:**

1. To explore whether there are sincere concerns about modern English translations, and investigate any such concerns.
2. To examine whether modern English translations are becoming more popular than the King James Version, and to decide whether this has implications for those who regard the King James Version as the only legitimate translation.
3. To investigate any broad concerns about apparent discrepancies in modern translations and consider the validity of these concerns.

## **The King James Traditional Predominance**

For almost the entire history of the English Bible, the King James Version has proven to be the most widely accepted and read version throughout the English speaking world. It has formed the basis of hymns, choruses, and poems, often being quoted verbatim. It has had a litany of other reference tools built around it, such as, the Strong's Concordance, the New Englishmen's Hebrew Concordance, the Wigram's Greek Lexicon, and the Matthew Henry Bible Commentaries. It has been the undisputed standard of popular Bible translation for most of the past four centuries.

The historical development of the King James Version shall be investigated in proceeding chapters. Suffice to state that it was during a rather turbulent political and ecclesiastical period

in the early 1600s, that King James I of England authorised the proposal of the translation of the Bible into the vernacular of the common people. He appointed 54 men, drawing on England's two main centres of learning, Cambridge and Oxford. They were instructed to follow the Bishops' Bible, a previous English translation. They also drew on other previous English translations for reference.

The finished result was published in 1611, and dedicated to King James in his political battle with the Roman Catholic Church. Most literary historians regard the King James Version as a high point in the history of translated Biblical literature. It has served the English speaking Christian community for nearly 400 years. One Bible commentator has said of the King James Version-

*“It was finished after 7-8 years of diligent work. It has been the most popular and accepted version of the English speaking world from that day until now. There have been several revised versions since then, and a number of Bibles in the so-called modern English, but none have been as well accepted and as lasting as the King James Version and perhaps never will be.”<sup>1</sup>*

The language of the King James Version is now regarded as classic English. Its poetic portions are ranked alongside Shakespeare for its use of the English language.

## **The Popularity Of Recent Translations**

Without doubt, the King James Version of the Bible has been the most influential translation in the English speaking world. It is estimated that up to 160,000,000 English speaking Christians still use the King James Version as their primary source of Scripture reading.<sup>2</sup> But its popularity is, based on

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<sup>1</sup> Dake, pg. 520

<sup>2</sup> Turnbull: 33

sales figures, now waning fast. The modern era has witnessed a vast array of fresh translations of the Bible into English. There are now organisations whose translations have been produced because they consider the King James Version outdated in both its English and its source Manuscripts. Like the aim of the original King James Version translators, they have attempted to put the original language into modern language. Many of these translations do this while recognising the prominence and importance of the King James Version translation. The Revisers of the *Revised Version* (who produced the *Revised Standard Version* between the years 1946 to 1952) paid tribute to the King James Version when they said-

*“The translators of the King James Version took into account all these preceding versions; and comparison shows that it owes something to each of them. It kept felicitous phrases and apt expressions, from whatever source, which had stood the test of public usage. It owed most, especially in the New Testament to Tyndale... The King James Version has with good reason been termed “the noblest monument of English prose.” Its revisers in 1881 expressed admiration for “its simplicity, its dignity, its power, its happy turns of expression... We owe it an incalculable debt.”<sup>3</sup>*

There are other translations that also view the King James Version as outdated and rather than seeking a literal word-for-word translation, they seek to put the original *meaning* into modern *meaning*. While these two different approaches result in different translations, they both purport to be God’s Word while at times they appear to differ widely from the translation of the King James Version.

To add to the possible confusion, modern marketing has produced Bibles for children, youth, women, men, singles,

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<sup>3</sup> Contained in the Preface of the Revised Standard Version, page 3

and students. So prolific are the new Study Bibles that one scholar has said-

*“Today there is a glut of Bible versions on the market. Just about everywhere you turn, there are all sorts of specialised Bibles. Not only are there a lot of translations, but each translation appears in several different forms. There are Bibles packaged as devotional aides for men, women, children, singles, and teens, and there are study Bibles for end-times enthusiasts, Lutherans, Orthodox Christians, Charismatics, and Catholics, and there are even bride’s Bibles that are intended to be used as wedding gifts. If someone told me there was a special devotional Bible for divorced charismatic Lithuanian plumbers with brown hair, I’d be inclined to believe it.”<sup>4</sup>*

Judging by a visit to the local Christian book-store and a perusal of their catalogues, these new translation packages appear to be extremely successful. While there have always been reference and commentary-Bibles (as distinct from commentaries or reference works) this century, there has been an amazing deluge of them in recent times. Again these are proving very successful. As a pastor in a local church I see people bringing into church services a wide selection of these modern Bibles which reinforces the anecdotal evidence that they are increasing in popularity.

The Bible is still the best-selling book around the world. No doubt, modern translations and marketing methods have helped to perpetuate this. Large sales of the Bible also shows us that there is a modern hunger for God’s Word (despite what mainline church attendance may indicate) and the fact that many of these Bible sales are “Study Bibles” of one kind or another, seems to confirm this. But do the prolific number of modern Bible translations hold to the original integrity of God’s message to man?

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<sup>4</sup> Collins

## Sincere Questions About Modern Translations

Over the last few years serious allegations have been made against certain modern translations of the Bible. Most of these allegations have come from some parts of the Evangelical sector within the Christian community. The most common assumption made by those casting these allegations is that the King James Version is the only legitimate English Bible. The claim is that the integrity and purity of the original manuscripts is only captured and preserved by the King James Version.

*“The TEXTUS RECEPTUS, original Greek text from which the Authorised King James Bible was translated, has been the target of critics since 1611. Yet copies of it substantially exist today without error. This is the Bible you can trust. All this talk about older and more dependable manuscripts, like the theory of evolution, hangs upon an UNPROVEN HYPOTHESIS”<sup>5</sup>*

According to the proponents of this argument, all modern translations are based on faulty and corrupted manuscripts. These manuscripts are faulty because they have deliberately omitted elements of the original text. And they are *corrupted* because they have been deliberately altered in certain ways, especially in regard to essential Christian doctrine. One concerned critic of modern translations states that there is a simple litmus test to apply to modern translations-

*“Any version of the Bible which omits Acts 8:37, or ‘Through His Blood,’ in Col. 1:14, evidently has for its foundation a corrupted manuscript. This corruption can be traced to 200 AD, when there lived one of the world’s foremost theologians whose name was Origen. Being a TEXTUAL CRITIC he is supposed to have corrected numerous portions of the sacred manuscripts. Evidence to the contrary shows that he changed them to agree with his own human philosophy of mystical*

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<sup>5</sup> Clarke: 1

*and allegorical ideas. Thus certain original MSS became corrupt and it is evidently from this source the revised Bibles of this generation have come. Read pages 900-902, Vol. 16, 1936 edition Encyclopedia Britannica and you will see that Origen taught the “LOGUS” is “KTISMA”, meaning the Lord Jesus Christ is a created being. Thus, he could easily omit Acts 8:37 and other texts which testify to Christ’s deity.”<sup>6</sup>*

Mr Clarke, of the Bible Truth and Trinitarian Bible Societies, claims that modern translations have deviated from the true word of God in at least 6,000 places.<sup>7</sup> He lists in his booklet various examples of what he calls deliberate deviations from the truth of God’s Word. He is not alone in his concerns

*“Yet many today are troubled by the general acceptance given by their ministers and elders to modern versions of the Scriptures. They are troubled. Because they recognise that these new versions differ markedly from the Authorised Version which was the means of their conversion, and which has been revered as the Word of God by them and their forefathers for many generations. They are alarmed when they when they hear it said that their Bible contains mistakes and errors, or that textual experts are still looking for the pure Word among a multitude of manuscripts. They are grieved, when from their own pulpits, they hear their Bible subjected to criticism from self-appointed doctors of texts, who ought to be teaching them the Scriptures are the unchanging Word of God.”<sup>8</sup>*

There is therefore a genuine need to examine the process of Biblical translation into the English language. The purpose of such an examination is to examine the claims of the ‘King James only’ proponents, and to investigate the integrity of modern translations. The aim of the author is to evaluate

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<sup>6</sup> Clarke: 1

<sup>7</sup> Clarke: 3

<sup>8</sup> Turnbull: 5



modern translations in the light of the criticism that they are not the integral Word of God for today. To do this, an overview of the history of the English Bible will be presented. Particular attention will be paid to the translation of the King James Version. An investigation will be made into the philosophy of translation, while determining what tools the translator has, and requires, in order to make a translation that has integrity. A critical examination will be made of significant twentieth century translations and versions. From this investigation a conclusion will be drawn regarding the validity of having contemporary English versions as against remaining with the King James Version as the only English Bible to be trusted.

## **The Inspiration Of The Bible**

### **Overview**

- The various theories about Biblical inspiration
- How the theory of Biblical inspiration affects the translation process
- The superiority of the Plenary Inspiration Theory.

### **Objectives**

1. To investigate the theology of Biblical inspiration from an historical viewpoint.
2. To analyse the historical data and determine whether the Church's understanding of Biblical inspiration has developed throughout the ages.
3. To survey the Church's response to Liberalism in the era of "enlightenment" with the formulation of the *Mechanical Dictation* or *Verbal Inspiration* theory.
4. To discover from the Scriptures themselves the correct view of Biblical inspiration.

## **The Various Theories About Biblical Inspiration**

The English word ‘Bible’ comes from the Greek word *biblion*. This word meant “roll” or “book”. It was usually a roll of papyrus or reed-like plant that was dried and fashioned into a writing material. This word occurs in the LXX copy of Daniel 9:2, and in Revelation 10:2. But today the word “Bible” means much more than just a book. It carries a sense of majesty as being the ultimate book par excellence.

The Bible was penned by men. Although written by men, the Bible claims that the Holy Spirit was its author (2Timothy 3:16). In a way that can only be described as mysterious, He was able to take the personalities, experiences, emotions and poetic talents of various men and use them to precisely express God’s revelation to man. Theologians, however, debate the process of this inspiration. Some refer to it as *Plenary Inspiration*. It stands in contrast to another view called *Natural Inspiration* (the product of highly intelligent men), *Partial Inspiration* (only some parts of the Bible are inspired), and *Mechanical Dictation/Verbal Inspiration* (God commanded men to write verbatim the very words He uttered).

The theology of Biblical inspiration was not formerly developed until about 1580.<sup>9</sup> Prior to this, inspiration of the books within the Canon were taken for granted. There are some elementary thoughts about inspiration in early Christian theology that reflect a general understanding of what is commonly accepted today.

The theory of *Plenary Inspiration* considers that God inspired the writings of various authors (as distinct from the authors themselves). Within the inspiration process of their writings God was able to take the creative abilities of these authors and inspire them to produce the *perfect* Word of God (Psalm 19:7). The result of this process was that we now have a Bible that often exposes the heart, emotions, and trials of its authors. We

find this throughout the Psalms of David and the epistles of Paul. Within this theory, the inspiration of God's Word is more concerned about conveying the mind of God through the literary expression of its authors, than it is about the mechanical dictating of precise words.

The Mechanical Dictation theory of inspiration says that God gave precise words to His Biblical authors to record in Scripture. It is also referred to as 'Verbal Inspiration'.<sup>9</sup> This theory paints a picture of God being like a manager dictating to his secretary. The 'secretary' is required to copy down exactly the very words used by the one dictating the message. Passages such as- "*Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.*" (Proverbs 30:5-6) seem to support this theory. This view regards the Biblical authors as having no input into the text at all. This seems to run contrary to the Biblical text itself where the emotions, personalities and events of the Biblical authors are noted. This view was largely articulated by the Reformers and is held in modern times most predominantly by Plymouth Brethren.<sup>10</sup> For example, the Reformed minister, the Reverend E.S. Turnbull angrily attempts to rebuff Dr. J.I. Packer's teaching against the Mechanical Dictation theory when he says-

*"In point of fact this objection is a bogie, a red-herring, a myth. Packer takes great pains to try to show that Fundamentalists just do not believe and never have believed that God dictated his Word. He is very critical on p. 178 of a certain Dr. Richardson for daring to define Fundamentalism as a theory of the mode of Biblical inspiration which regards the written Word of the Bible as divinely dictated. Packer writes 'The fact that Protestant defenders of the divine origin of the Bible*

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<sup>9</sup> EDT: 1139

<sup>10</sup> EDT: 1140

during the past century have uniformly been at pains to disclaim any mechanical doctrine of the mode of inspiration...’ And on p. 179 comments, ‘The dictation theory is a mare’s-nest; it never existed at any time during the past century, save in certain people’s imagination.’ That of course is an unguarded, far too sweeping statement. Well might we enquire also, What about all the centuries, especially those in which God so greatly prospered and blessed His people? Packer goes on to call the dictation theory ‘hoary error.’”<sup>11</sup>

Turnbull cites Psalm 119:89 (the Word of God was settled in heaven from all eternity) as proof that inspiration must have been of a mechanical nature. He claims that King David endorsed Mechanical dictation when he said “*The Spirit of the Lord spake by me and his Word was in my tongue.*” (2Samuel 23:2). Likewise he claims that Paul the apostle taught Mechanical Dictation when he said “*Which things we also speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth;...*” (1Corinthians 2:13). And Peter, when he wrote that the Bible penmen were “*moved by the Holy Ghost*” (2Peter 1:21), also endorsed the Mechanical Dictation theory.<sup>12</sup>

Taking the above thought to the opposite extreme results in another theory called the ‘Natural Inspiration’ theory. This regards the Bible as the product of extremely gifted or intelligent men. The Biblical authors merely attained a standard of excellence in spiritual literature to the point where their work even appears to be ‘inspired’. The problem with this theory is that the Bible itself claims that man is spiritually bankrupt, not able to attain the dizzy heights of spiritual literature claimed by this theory. The Bible also asserts that it is God speaking through it, and not the high ideals of intelligent men. The Bible does not pander to the classic wisdom of men. It states that its

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<sup>11</sup> Turnbull: 29

<sup>12</sup> Turnbull: 29

wisdom is opposite to the wisdom of intelligent men (1Corinthians 1:20 -21). The Natural Inspiration theory therefore does not make sense Biblically.

The ‘Partial Inspiration’ theory suggests that only parts of the Bible are inspired. It says that some portions of it are of little or no value to the modern reader because these passages (such as the genealogies of First Chronicles) are not inspired by God, according to this view. Prior to the discovery of many Biblically confirming archaeological finds in recent times, liberal scholars generally denied the inspiration of the Bible’s geographical details and ancient history (including its characters). This denial supported their assertions that the Bible was only partially inspired. But the discovery of an overwhelming number of significant archaeological finds erodes this theory.

The Partial Inspiration theory is also fraught with subjectiveness. Who determines what parts of the Bible are inspired? Again this theory is clearly not what the Bible claims about itself (2Tim.3:16).

## **How The Theory Of Biblical Inspiration Affects The Translation Process**

When a translator is confronted with translating the original text, his view of Biblical inspiration will have a major bearing on his translating philosophy. If he regards the text as being mechanically dictated, he will pay careful attention to words, rather than meanings. He will leave the search for meaning within the precise words up to the reader. He will consider that his job to provide the reader with the right “words”. Thus he will strive to get the precise word in the English language. Technically we call this *Literal (or Formal) Equivalence*.

If the translator, on the other hand, believes that the Bible

was only the product of highly intelligent men, he will pay less attention to exact words and strive more for poetic justice. If he believes that the Bible is only partially inspired, he will also not be as careful in his translation of the Bible as he should be because his subjective judgment will cause inconsistencies. He may even deliberately alter the textual translation to fit his own preconceived ideas (eg. Isaiah 7:14, the virgin birth prediction of Christ could be translated as if it was not an inspired prediction. This was an accusation made about the Revised Version's translators).

If the translator believes that the Bible is the result of plenary inspiration, the translator will strive for *meaning*, rather than precise words. He will aim to convey the message of the text rather than the wording of the original text. This is the translation philosophy behind paraphrase editions of the Bible and most the recent translations of the English Bible (such as the Living Bible, and, the Contemporary English Version).

### **The Superiority Of The Plenary Inspiration Theory**

Serious examination of the inspiration of the Bible didn't occur until the Reformation Period.<sup>13</sup> Partial and Mechanical Dictation (Verbal) theories were growing in popularity. The Partial theory of inspiration gained a strong foothold during this period as the Renaissance culture questioned anything that didn't seem to fit natural reason. It therefore considered the Biblical accounts of miracles and godly phenomena as unreasonable and consequently not inspired. The reaction to this was the rise of the Mechanical Dictation (Verbal) Inspiration theory.

Theological inquiry delved into this issue, firstly among the Jesuits.<sup>14</sup> They concluded that inspiration was a matter of God

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<sup>13</sup> EDT: 860

<sup>14</sup> EDT: 860

using men to communicate His Word (plenary). This accepted the basic elements of Verbal Inspiration that God was clearly the Author of the Bible, and that the Bible was infallible and inerrant. Where it differed significantly from the Verbal Inspiration theory is in its view that God and man produced the Bible. In the Verbal Inspiration theory, man is merely the mechanism for writing down God's dictated Word.

The Plenary Inspiration theory accepts that the Bible is totally the work of God. But it accepts the clear statements within the text that God used men: their thoughts, their emotions, and sometimes their limited understandings, to communicate His Holy Word. Thus, the written Word of God was of God and man. To parallel this, the Living Word was also both God and man (John 1:14). This parallel is not altogether appreciated by such men as E. S. Turnbull. He strongly denounces any suggestion of Plenary Inspiration, preferring to accept the early Reformation view that the Bible was the result of Mechanical or Verbal Inspiration.

*The penmen wrote as they were directed, were dictated to, and inspired by the Spirit of God ... Their human temperaments, characteristics and abilities were overruled, guided, directed by the mighty power of God ... they wrote exactly, word perfectly, what he would have them write ... No, there is nothing human in the Bible! To Packer and others like him, the Scriptures are both human and divine. We believe God's book is altogether divine.<sup>15</sup>*

Despite Mr. Turnbull's claims, the Scriptures *do* reflect human input. The fact that God can fully use a person's emotions, and at times their understanding, to perfectly articulate His Word makes the Scriptures that much more glorious. It actually reflects the stamp of God, rather than detracting from it. The Plenary theory of inspiration is therefore closest

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<sup>15</sup> Turnbull: 30

to the Biblical revelation of inspiration. It accommodates Second Timothy 3:16, which says every word of God is inspired, and yet the thoughts and prayers of men which are expressed within its pages. It explains the inclusion of statements like “*the LORD speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets*” (Psalm 50: 1). These statements reflect *man’s* understanding of his world (the sun does not “rise” and “set”) and were included within the pages of inspired Scripture as such. We conclude by noting that the Plenary Inspiration theory is the superior inspiration theory. Put simply, the Scriptures are entirely the Word and message of God, yet have been penned by men whom God was able to use. He used not only their hands to write the Scripture, but also their emotions, experiences, and understandings.

## **Early Translations**

### **Overview**

- The origins of Manuscripts
- Early translating of the Bible
- The origins of the English Bible

### **Objectives**

1. To investigate Biblical Manuscript production, and to ascertain whether this was considered a sacred task.
2. To determine the earliest point when the Bible was translated into English and to measure the value of John Wycliffe and William Tyndale’s place in the history of the English Bible.
3. To survey the translation of the Bible into English up until the time of King James I of England.

## **The Origins Of Manuscripts**

To understand the development of Biblical translation, a brief overview of its transmission is needed. Almost immediately



after, what is now regarded as, the canonical literature was received into the church community it was regarded as God's Word. Great care was taken to copy it down and circulate it among the other churches. Thus churches collected the various writings of the Gospel authors, and the apostolic epistles so that they held copies of what was to become known as the New Testament. These early copies of the originals were fiercely guarded even under the threat of death from the Roman Empire's authorities who perceived Christianity as the threat to the stability of the empire.<sup>16</sup> A particularly ruthless purge was made in North Africa in the second and third centuries AD. When some Christians capitulated and handed over their Greek New Testament manuscripts, they were ostracised by their fellow Christians. Thus two groups developed in Northern Africa in regard to the transmission of the New Testament text. The group that surrendered their manuscripts became known as the *Traditors*, and the group that preferred death and persecution to surrendering their New Testament manuscripts became known as the *Donatists*.<sup>17</sup> This historical episode clearly illustrates just how serious and fervent the early Christians were at preserving the New Testament text.

Despite the easing of persecution, it became increasingly common for those seeking a holy life to recluse into a monastical lifestyle. Prayer, study, and the preservation of the Scriptures became the major tasks of these monks. Monastical centres developed in both the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire. The vastness of the Empire meant that there were some differences in monastical orders between the east and west. The east placed a greater emphasis on asceticism. Curiously this became reflected in

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<sup>16</sup> Cairns: 94

<sup>17</sup> Cairns: 94

some of the eastern scribal transmissions of the New Testament text. An example of this is found in Matthew 17:21, and Mark 9:29 (compare the King James Version with the New International Version).

While the early textual transmission of the Bible was carried out by monks who took a great deal of care, discrepancies did emerge throughout the process of transmission. As we have noted, some discrepancies can be traced to cultural adaptation, while as we shall see others came innocently as the result of human scribal error. The task of the modern translator is to consider as wide as possible a selection of the earliest manuscripts and derive the closest original intent. This is no easy challenge. Today there are over 5,338 ancient Greek manuscripts, either whole or in part, of the New Testament.<sup>18</sup> No two of these ancient manuscripts are identical!

The task of MSS (manuscripts) research is rapidly growing with each new discovery. For example in 1957 there were 4,680 MSS. By 1969 there were 5,261.<sup>19</sup>

The much lauded *Textus Receptus*, from which the King James Version was supposedly translated, was obviously compiled from a narrow selection of ancient sources. It was largely based on Erasmus' (depicted right) Greek New Testament (1514 - 1516). Yet the manuscripts that Erasmus used to compile his Greek New Testament were unable to provide the Greek text for certain portions of his work. For example, he could not find a source manuscript for the last six verses of the book of Revelation. Erasmus simply referred to the Latin Vulgate translation of this passage and proceeded to translate it into Greek and then insert into his Greek New

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<sup>18</sup> Harrison, Waltke, Guthrie, Fee: 128

<sup>19</sup> Haman: 12

Testament.<sup>20</sup> Even the translators of the King James Version acknowledged that they found the *Textus Receptus* less than adequate as being their *sole* source document when they wrote the Epistle Dedicatory-

*"...translated out of the original tongues, and with the former translations diligently compared and revised... Your Highness... out of deep judgment apprehended how convenient it was, that out of the original sacred tongues, together with comparing of the labours, both in our own, and other foreign languages, of many worthy men who went before us, there should be one more exact translation of the Holy Scriptures into the English tongue"*<sup>21</sup>

It will be necessary to further discuss Manuscripts at a later point to gain an appreciation for the implementation and development of their translation into English.

## **Early Bible Translations**

The English language has its roots in German, which has its roots in Latin. It began as the Germanic Angles started their migration to Britain about the year 450 AD.<sup>22</sup> Over the next few centuries, the blending of Celtic (the language of the indigenous Britons), Angles, and Saxon languages produced a new language called Anglo-Saxon or, *Old English*. The Celtic influence was diminished by their military retreat to the north and west of Britain (modern Scottish and Welsh is derived from this).

The English language was confined largely to the island of Britain. Consequently the need for the Bible to be translated into the English language was not seen as an urgent need by the church authorities. Even as time passed and the Roman

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<sup>20</sup> Harrison, Waltke, Guthrie, Fee: 141

<sup>21</sup> Moulton: 1

<sup>22</sup> Grolier's Encyclopaedia on CD ROM

church transferred its headquarters to France, their concern was more for Biblical transmission, rather than translation into other languages, even including French.<sup>23</sup> This was a painstaking task as it had to be done by hand-writing.

Because of the Roman Catholic Church's domination of the Medieval world, the Bible was not made available to people in their vernacular. Obviously if people could have read for themselves what God had commanded and especially what Christ had prescribed for His Church, it would have eroded the basis of support for the Roman Church which was claiming to be the voice of spiritual authority on earth. While common people were denied access to the Scriptures, priests were not. This resulted in the beginnings of the Bible being translated into English when certain godly priests undertook the task, and then eventually the acceptance of the Reformation principles by those people who had access to the Bible in their own tongue. The nineteenth century English historian, Mrs Bayly, narrates a fictional scene of the early 1300s in England which serves to illustrate how desperately the English needed the Bible in their vernacular:

*“Ah me!” some poor man with a sorrowful face might say, “I wish our priests here could do that, and would tell us about the blessed Jesus. I look at the beautiful picture of Him in the church window, and I wish I knew something about it, and what it has to do with the crucifix. But we could never pay the priests enough to make them tell us things. I have paid them every groat I can spare to get my poor mother's soul out of purgatory, and they say she is not out yet; and I have neither son nor daughter to pay for me, so I may stay in those*

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<sup>23</sup> Some unauthorised translation work from the Latin Vulgate into French had partly been done, but it was not a work of the Roman Church, (Moulton: 38) Moulton notes that some parts of the Bible had been translated into a dialect of Southern France as early as the year 1294

*fires for ever, for all those priests could care. I wish I could get some one to read me that wonderful book, that I might see if it tells of any way for us poor people to get to heaven, without starving ourselves to pay the priests.*"<sup>24</sup>

John Wycliffe was an English priest serving within the Church of Rome during the Medieval years of the late 1300s. As he studied the Scriptures he became disgusted at the Church's blatant disregard for the Bible. He asserted that the Bible was the sole authority for the Christian, not the Church of Rome. Wycliffe proceeded to translate the Bible into English, apparently from Latin.<sup>25</sup> By 1382 the first complete manuscript translation of the New Testament into English was done.<sup>26</sup> Two years later the Old Testament was translated into English by Nicholas of Hereford.<sup>27</sup> Realising that he would be attacked by Rome for such a thing, he organised a lay group, called the *Lollards*, to itinerate around England preaching the Bible in English. In 1401 the pro-papal English Parliament passed the death penalty for anyone preaching Lollard ideas.<sup>28</sup>

To Wycliffe is given the honour of being the first known<sup>29</sup> man to translate the Bible into English. It is generally accepted that while he was mainly the organiser of the effort,

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<sup>24</sup> Bayly: 7

<sup>25</sup> Moulton: 21, 23

<sup>26</sup> Cairns: 252

<sup>27</sup> Cairns: 252

<sup>28</sup> Cairns: 252

<sup>29</sup> In the preface to the Authorised Version (1611) our translators speak of John Trivisa (who died about 1397) as having translated the Scriptures (or the Gospels) into English in the time of Richard II; Fuller writing in 1655, ascribes to the same 'godly and learned servant of God', a translation of the whole Bible... Wycliffe and his followers evidently knew of no version prior to their own." [Moulton: 32]

he also did have a significant role in its translation. Scholars refer to the *Wycliffe Translation* today as either the *Early Wycliffe Translation* or the *Later Wycliffe Translation*.<sup>30</sup> This signifies a distinction between two texts that are acknowledged as being that of Wycliffe. Toward the end of Wycliffe's life his supporters realised that the original translation was too aligned to the syntax of the Latin. They set about revising it into more readable contemporary English. This was published shortly after Wycliffe's death. The main force behind this move was John Purvey, Wycliffe's assistant pastor.<sup>31</sup> In many respects it can be said that John Purvey was the next to translate the Bible into English. An example of the original language of Wycliffe (*the Early Wycliffe Bible*) is on the left, while John Purvey's translation and revision of the earlier translation is on the right (*the Later Wycliffe Bible*), the sample is 2 Samuel 23:3-4 –

<p>3. He seyde, God of Yrael to me hath spokyn, the strong of Yrael, the lordshipper of men, the rigtwise lordshipper in the dreed of God.</p>	<p>3. <i>David</i> seide, God of Israel spak to me, the stronge of Israel, the iust Lord of men, <i>is</i> Lord in the drede God</p>
<p>4. As ligt of morwtide, springinge the sunne eerli with out clowdis, gliterith; and as bi reynes buriouneth the eerbe of the erthe.</p>	<p>4. As the ligt of the morewtid, whanne the sunne risith eerli, is bright with out cloudis; and as an erbe cometh forth of the erthe bi reynes</p>

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<sup>30</sup> Moulton: 18

<sup>31</sup> Moulton: 23

This comparison of English translations done relatively close together illustrates two major issues in Biblical translation: firstly, the English language changes rapidly, and secondly, better source manuscripts become available as time goes on. The second sample is taken from John 7:14-15 ~

14 Forsothe now the feeste day medlinge, <i>or goynge bitwixe</i> , Jhesu wente vp in to the temple, and taugte	14 But whanne the myddil feeste dai cam, Jhesus wente vp in to the temple, and taugte
15. And the Jewis wondriden, seyinge, Hou kan this man lettris, sithen he hath not lernyd?	15 And the Jewis wondriden, and seiden, Hou can this <i>man</i> lettris, sithen he hath not lerned

The first problem however that Wycliffe faced with his translation of the New Testament into English was that it could only be published in manuscript form (hand written). Very few copies were made. Today there are only one hundred and fifty extant (still existing) copies of the “Later Wycliffe” version.<sup>32</sup> Printing was not invented until fifty years later and not introduced to England until 1477.<sup>33</sup> Consequently while Wycliffe broke ground with his translation<sup>34</sup> it wasn’t until the English Bible was published with the printing press that it was able to have a greater impact upon English opinion.

The second problem Wycliffe faced was in his source documents. He relied almost entirely upon the Vulgate (the

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<sup>32</sup> Moulton: 31

<sup>33</sup> Moulton: 19

<sup>34</sup> The lack of Manuscripts remaining from Wycliffe's translation had caused some nineteenth century scholars to question whether Wycliffe had indeed translated the New Testament into English. But it was apparently known to the King James Version translators and is referred to in a 1612 work called "Treatise of the Corruption of Scripture" by Dr. James. [Moulton:19]

Latin translation by Jerome done several hundred years previously). “*The Latin language is incapable of representing the beauty and fulness of the Greek, and (that) the Vulgate is in some places disfigured by serious errors.*” says Dr. W. F. Moulton.<sup>35</sup>

Moulton points out though, that the English speaking world is still indebted to Wycliffe for his efforts. In the “Later Wycliffe” version, Purvey attempted to draw more from the Greek New Testament to make the necessary improvements. But he was hampered by the limited stock of quality Greek manuscripts.

Even to this point in history there were no complete copies the Greek New Testament. Scribes drew upon many sources to enable them to research the original languages of the Scripture. As we have seen, slight variance in Greek manuscripts existed. It is important to note that these variations, while often reflecting the cultural background of the monastic scribes from where they derived, made no significant inconsistency with orthodox Christian doctrine. One example of a clear scribal error in the early MSS is cited at this point to illustrate that while there were some transmission errors, the doctrine of God’s Word is intact—  
Revelation 1:5 in the King James Version MSS reads —

*And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed (Greek = *lousanti*) us from our sins in his own blood,*  
In the New International Version it reads —

*and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed (Greek = *lusanti*) us from our sins by his blood,*

The King James Version manuscript has the Greek word *lousanti* which means *to wash*. However, modern textual

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<sup>35</sup> Moulton: 29



researchers favour other manuscripts which use the word *lusanti* which means *to free*. In either case, the doctrine is unaltered: *Christ has washed us clean and set us free from our sin*. Either word is appropriate.<sup>36</sup>

The vast majority of the errors in the New Testament manuscripts occurred during the period that is also the most difficult to reconstruct- the first four Christian centuries.

*Much of the difficulty stems from the work of the earliest Christian copyists. In a time when the majority of people were illiterate and when Christianity periodically underwent severe persecution, there were probably few professionally trained scribes in the service of the church. Moreover, seldom were the scribes possessed by the spirit of the scribes of the later times who worked according to the instructions of the Lord given in Deuteronomy 12:32 - "Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish therefrom." In fact, the opposite seems to have been true of the scribes in the first two centuries. They introduced thousands of changes into the text. To be sure, the majority of their errors were unintentional and easily discernible slips of the eye, ear, or mind. Hundreds of changes in the text were, however, made intentionally. Yet we should not think of these scribes as having acted from evil motives. If they often took many liberties in copying their texts, apparently they did so in most cases in an attempt to "help out." They were more interested in making the message of the sacred text clear than in transmitting errorless MSS.*<sup>37</sup>

The role that the early available manuscripts played in the formation of the translation of the earliest English Bible is worth noting. During the late 1400s many Greek professors relocated to Italy and England for political reasons. In 1497 Erasmus of Rotterdam, aged thirty, came to Oxford, attracted by the fame of its teachers of Greek. After twelve more years of

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<sup>36</sup> Hamann: 18

<sup>37</sup> Harrison, Waltke, Guthrie, Fee: 138-139

study in Italy, he returned to England and accepted a professorship of Divinity at Cambridge. He undertook several translation works of the writings of Jerome. In 1516 at the insistence of a printer, he undertook to complete an edition of the New Testament in Greek. This was done so in great haste. The result was that it was published with many errors because it drew upon inferior manuscripts. Three years later a revision was completed and published. Luther used this to make his German translation. Another three years passed and Erasmus had completed his third revision.

It was this third edition made in 1522 which became the basis for the translation by William Tyndale into English.<sup>38</sup> He was an Englishman who completed studies at both Oxford and Cambridge. We know very little about him. What we do know is that he studied the New Testament text and became convinced that the Bible was the sole authority in matters of Christian belief. This resulted in him having a bitter dispute with “a learned man” which eventually led to him fleeing England for his life.

*...Master Tyndale happened to be in the company of a learned man, and in communing and disputing with him to that issue that the learned man said, 'We are better to be without God's law than the Pope's.' Master Tyndale hearing that, answered him, 'I defy the Pope and all his laws;' and said, 'If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou doest.'*<sup>39</sup>

In May 1524 Tyndale arrived in Hamburg. One year later he was supervising the printing of his New Testament English translation at Cologne. This was thwarted by enemies. Tyndale

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<sup>38</sup> Moulton: 36

<sup>39</sup> Moulton 46

fled to Worms, which was a Lutheran city.<sup>40</sup> Sponsored by English merchants who had agreed to smuggle these New Testaments into England, they published some 3,000 copies. Despite the English authorities' best attempts at destroying these copies, many copies were bought for large sums of money.<sup>41</sup> This funded further reprints and new editions.

In 1529, after Tyndale had lived a life “on the run” from the English authorities, he ventured on a ship from Antwerp, Belgium, to go back to Hamburg with his manuscripts, books and money. But there was a shipwreck in which all of Tyndale’s possessions were lost. With the help of Miles Coverdale he set upon the translation of the Pentateuch into English. This was published in 1530 and printed in Antwerp.<sup>42</sup>

Tyndale then made arrangements to translate the entire Old Testament and publish this in English. In 1535 he was betrayed by a fellow Englishman, Henry Phillips who lured him into the open where he was ambushed, imprisoned, strangled and burnt at the stake after eighteen months of confinement.<sup>43</sup> His associate Miles Coverdale completed Tyndale’s Old Testament work. Thus the first complete English Bible was printed in 1535. By this time the political flavour of England had turned aggressively against Rome. The Arch Bishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer and the Vicar-General, Thomas Cromwell, were both committed Protestants. They persuaded King Henry VIII to approve the publication of the revised Coverdale translation, The Matthew Bible (the work of Tyndale’s associate, John Rogers, published

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<sup>40</sup> Moulton 51

<sup>41</sup> Moulton 53

<sup>42</sup> GL CC, Woodbridge, (Ed): 203

<sup>43</sup> GL CC, Woodbridge, (Ed): 204

1537)<sup>44</sup>. By 1539 every parish church in England was required to make a copy of it available to its parishioners. Thus, England at last had a freely available copy of the Bible in English for all to read. This would now form the basis for the immediate development of the English translation of the Bible.

By this time several revisions of the English translation of the Bible had taken place. Two years after John Rogers' *The Matthew Bible*, Coverdale was asked by Thomas Cromwell to complete a fresh translation.<sup>45</sup> This became a revision of the Matthew Bible. It has variously been designated as *the Cromwell Bible*, and when its later edition arrived in 1540 with a preface from Archbishop Cranmer, it was referred to as *the Cranmer Bible*. Due to its large size once published, it is generally referred to as *the Great Bible*. The Book of Common Prayer, used by Anglicans, perpetuates the translation of the *Great Bible* through its publishing of the Psalter.

In ye begynnyng God created heauen and earth: ye earth was voyde and emptie, and darcknes was vpon the depe, and ye sprete of God moued vpo the water.

Genesis 1:1-2 from the *Coverdale Bible*

Even after King Henry VIII decreed that the English language Bible be made available in every parish church throughout England, there was a great deal of upheaval that followed. After Henry died, his son Edward became king. He advanced the Protestant cause. He was succeeded by Mary I who despite having earlier sided with the Protestants and endorsing her fathers divorce of Catherine, moved to reinstate Roman Catholicism as the state religion. Her marriage to Philip of Spain fuelled her desire to extinguish

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<sup>44</sup> I B D : Vol. 1: 451

<sup>45</sup> I B D: Vol. 1:452

Protestants from the realm. She ordered the confiscation of English language Bibles from all churches throughout England.<sup>46</sup> Toward the end of her reign she ordered the death of hundreds of clergy-men who supported Protestantism.

Religion in England had been unsettled since Henry VIII's break with the pope in 1533. Moderate Protestantism had been practiced under Henry, and more radical Protestant programs were implemented under Edward VI; but Mary had restored the Roman Catholic faith and papal jurisdiction to England.<sup>47</sup>

Some Protestants fled to Geneva. They produced a fresh translation into English under the leadership of the Biblical scholar, William Whittingham. This English translation marked the introduction of verse divisions which Robert Stephens had used in his fourth Greek edition of the New Testament (published 1551).<sup>48</sup> This translation was largely a revision of the Tyndale Bible. They published the New Testament in 1557 and was referred to as the Geneva Bible.

Queen Mary became known as “Bloody Mary”. After her death, in 1558, she was succeeded by Elizabeth I (a Protestant sympathiser), who had been quietly waiting her turn to rule. William Whittingham continued in Geneva to translate the entire Bible. The work was completed in 1560 and dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I. It was extremely popular in England between 1570-1620.

The Geneva Bible did not gain official approval, despite its greater accuracy than the Great Bible. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, organised his bishops to undertake a revision of the Great Bible. Ironically, they based their revision

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<sup>46</sup> I B D: Vol. 1:452

<sup>47</sup> Grolier's Encyclopaedia on CD ROM

<sup>48</sup> Harrison, Waltke, Guthrie, Fee: 141

upon the Geneva Bible. Their work was published in 1568 and became the officially authorised version of the English Church and was known as "The Bishops Bible".<sup>49</sup>

Under Elizabeth's reign, some Roman Catholic scholars fled from England to the Continent. In an effort to counteract the growing momentum of Protestant translations of the Bible, these Roman Catholic scholars, headed by Gregory Martin, and William Allen, published their translation of the New Testament in Rheims.

*"...Their work for addressing themselves to this task was not that which actuated Protestant translators i.e., a zealous desire to make the Word of God accessible to all men in the vernacular), for in their preface they held that, on the contrary, the translation of the Bible into the 'Vulgar tongues' was not an absolute necessity, or even necessarily profitable." Dr. J. H. Skilton, "English Versions" article in the IBD.*

They based their translation on the Latin Vulgate and showed little concern for clear English. Their Old Testament translation was published in 1610 at Douay. Thus this version of the English Bible is referred to as the Rheims-Douay Bible. Elizabeth left no heirs or successors. It was however her expectation that Mary's son (i.e., the Queen of Scots' son), King James VI of Scotland, who was a Protestant sympathiser would take the throne of England and become King James I of England.

King James set about to finally resolve the Catholic - Protestant (Puritan/Anglican) tension by endorsing the plan of "updating" the Bible into modern English. He was aware of the *Geneva Bible's* popularity which contained marginal and foot notes which King James viewed as seditious.<sup>50</sup> The result was the "Authorised"

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<sup>49</sup> I B D : Vol. 1:452

<sup>50</sup> Comfort: 47

Version, which is commonly called the *King James Version*. We will investigate its translation in the next chapter when we survey the task of the Biblical translator.

## **Translating The Bible**

### **Overview**

- The task of the translator
- The resources of the translator
- The efforts of modern translators

### **Objectives**

1. To survey the particular constraints of the King James Version translators.
2. To examine the concept of Dynamic Equivalence, and its various factors, and see how it affects the translation process and result.
3. To explore what resources the translator has available to him today.
4. To note some of the more popular modern translations.

### ***The task of the translator***

The translators of King James' day were commissioned to translate the Bible into the language of the common man. The political reasons for this have already been mentioned: to diffuse the hostility between Roman Catholics and Protestants. The translators felt that this would be achieved when common lay people could read the Bible in their own mother tongue. Their mission to expose the wickedness of the papal system is covertly stated in their epistle to King James when they state-

*"...by writing in defence of the Truth, (which hath given such a blow unto the man of sin, as will not be healed)..."*

In their Epistle Dedicatory, which continues on from their letter to King James, they state overtly that their mission to

translate the Bible into English would aggravate the Roman Catholic authorities-

*"...So that if, on the one side, we shall be traduced by Popish Persons at home or abroad, who therefore will malign us, because we are poor instruments to make God's holy Truth to be yet more and more known unto the people..."*

While the translators of the King James Version strived for simplicity and integrity they saw their task as providing a clear English version of the Bible that would deliver a fatal blow to Catholicism.<sup>51</sup> Their task was to provide a translation of the Bible that would be published and read in all the English churches.

The King James Version translators based their translation upon the *Bishops Bible* after being instructed to so by King James I. His commissioning to translate the Bible resulted after the Hampton Court Conference in 1604. He appointed fifty four learned men, divided them into six companies and instructed them to make only slight modifications as the truth or emphasis required.<sup>52</sup>

Much space has been given to the history of the King James Version because of its undeniable influence on English speaking Christianity. This serves as a basis to explore the task of the Biblical translator. The King James Version translators were very inconsistent in their philosophy of translation. We have previously mentioned the term: Dynamic Equivalence. At this point it is necessary to explain this term further.

### ***Dynamic equivalence***

Dynamic equivalence is where the clearest meaning of the

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<sup>51</sup> "...given such a blow unto the man of sin, as will not be healed." From the translator's epistle to King James.

<sup>52</sup> I B D : Vol. 1:453



original language is achieved in the receptor language. The factor that makes Biblical translation even more challenging than modern language translation is historical distance.<sup>53</sup> The Biblical languages are not spoken today. They are *dead* languages in that respect. If we consider that the translator is aiming for Dynamic Equivalence, he can adopt one of two extreme positions to achieve this. Firstly, he could feel that a word -for-word (literal) translation would achieve his aim. Alternatively he could adopt a word -for- meaning (free) translation approach. This partly explains how we could have so many varieties of the English Bible ranging from the King James Version (an attempt at a literal translation) to the Living Bible (a free translation).

Two eminent modern Biblical scholars, Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, point out that there are several issues in achieving Dynamic Equivalence for Bible translators.<sup>54</sup> These include-

- (i) **The original language-** naturally the translator must be familiar with the Biblical languages.
- (ii) **Receptor language-** (in our case English). Translators must be thoroughly familiar with the receptor language into which they are translating.
- (iii) **Historical distance-** the use of ancient idioms, words, grammar, and cultural expressions need to be understood by the translator of the ancient Biblical languages.
- (iv) **Theory (Philosophy) of translation-** the translator needs to decide whether they will adopt a theory of literal, free, or dynamically equivalent translating. The dynamic equivalent translation seeks to translate the words, idioms, and grammatical constructions of the original language into

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<sup>53</sup> Fee, Stuart: 35

<sup>54</sup> Fee, Stuart: 34-35

the precise equivalent of the receptor language.

In pursuing Dynamic Equivalence, the translator must grapple with the following factors-

**Weights, measures and money.** Does the translator use the Hebrew transliterated words such as homer, or ephah or try to find English equivalents? If going for English equivalents, does the translator use pounds and feet or grams and metres? Translating money into English could lose its significance if merely transliterated (eg. Matthew 18:24-28; Isaiah 5:10), but with inflation, monetary equivalents in today's commercial realities could lose their significance when the Bible is making a point of contrasts or results.

**Euphemisms.** Almost all languages have euphemisms. Fee and Stuart point out that this is generally the case in regard to sex and toilet.<sup>55</sup> We note the differences in translating theories of euphemisms of the N IV and KJV with Genesis 31:35 as one example-

N IV “...I’m having my period.”

KJV “...for the custom of women is upon me.”

**Vocabulary.** The general opinion of lay people in regard to Biblical translation is “What’s so hard about finding the exact English word for the Greek or Hebrew word?” The problem arises in vocabulary. For example, the Greek word *sarx*. Literally this word means “flesh”. In the vocabulary of the New Testament *flesh* rarely refers to what it means in the English vocabulary. What it does mean is “sinful nature” (when contrasting the flesh and the spirit), “human nature” (when referring to the Davidic descent of Christ in Romans 1:3), and “from a worldly point of view” (when referring to having a spiritual understanding in 2Corinthians 5: 16).

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<sup>55</sup> Fee, Stuart: 38

**Grammar and syntax.** This is the way words are put together. It has to do with the order of words within a sentence. The translator could translate from the original language using its grammar and syntax, but it would result in an awkward English rendering. For example, Genesis 1 contains thirty nine verses in the King James Version which commence with the word “and”. This was a Hebrew grammatical device similar to a full stop (at the end of a sentence) and capital letter (at the start of the next sentence). The translator should have as the translation objective to produce a readable, easily understood translation in the vernacular of his receptor audience. To this end, the task of the translator is the same no matter what the receptor language is. For our purposes we will continue to concentrate on the process of English translation.

### **The resources of the translator**

The modern English translator now has a wealth of resources available to him that the earlier translators, such as Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, Rogers, Whittingham, Lancelot Andrewes (the chief translator of the KJV) did not have. These include more accurate ancient MSS, ancient foreign language versions, ancient Patristic writings, the benefit of prior English translations, and improved exegetical and hermeneutical skills.

### ***The Greek Manuscripts***

The Greek MSS that we have available today are copies of copies. The original MSS have long since been lost. Nevertheless, the available MSS are the primary sources of the Biblical translator. There are four types of ancient MSS. These include papyri, uncials, minuscules and lectionaries. The extant MSS are in the form of codices (a codex is a book

with leaves). No ancient scrolls of the Greek New Testament have been discovered yet, although scholars are still analysing the scrolls of the Qumran caves (the Dead Sea Scrolls).<sup>56</sup>

The papyri MSS are rare due to their highly perishable nature. Despite this, fragments from every New Testament book except Second Timothy have been discovered, according to Professor Fee. The Uncials, that is MSS written in capital letters, were produced on vellum or parchment (leather). They provided a much larger and more durable writing medium than papyrus. There are two hundred and sixty eight extant today, which date back to 350AD. The Minuscules are MSS where the newly created lower case letters were used in a cursive script style. These date back to the ninth century AD. There are nearly three thousand of these extant MSS. The early and developing church used “lessons” (Scripture readings, called *lectionaries*) either daily or weekly. These lectionaries contain excerpts from the Gospels and the Epistles. There are just over two thousand of these available today.

### ***Ancient Versions***

As the church spread its missionary activity to furthest parts of the known world, it needed to make copies of the Gospel available in the languages of these nations. By the end of the second century most of the New Testament had been translated into Latin, Syriac and Coptic. The following centuries saw the translation of the New Testament into Gothic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, Slavonic and Arabic. The translator is able to use these ancient versions to compare with the ancient Greek MSS available to him. These various language versions of the New Testament text give the

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<sup>56</sup> Harrison, Waltke, Guthrie, Fee: 129

translator clues as to the origins of certain textual corruptions. He is thus able to sift out these corruptions and arrive to a closer representation of the original text.

### ***Patristic Writings***

The writings of the early church fathers can be used to compare with MSS, Lectionaries, and Versions. The modern translator needs to discern the Patristic writings to find genuine textual reconstructions. These can be very helpful. This is a painstaking task for the translator as most of the Patristic writings contain references to the New Testament made from the memory of the writers.

### **Improved exegetical and hermeneutical skills**

Translators are forced to interpret when they translate. They must decide “What does the text mean?” in order to present the text in the receptor language. While the early scribes often did this to “help” the text they were copying, they were not always successful. The modern scholar has the benefits of much wider exegetical tools to conclude what the meaning of the original text was.

Add to this such things as confirming archaeological evidences, and the discoveries of ancient classical literature (which has resulted in improved modern Lexicons), and the modern translator is in a far superior position to previous translators.

### ***The Efforts Of Modern Translators***

The translation of the King James Version marked a significant monument in English translations. It placed the Textus Receptus in a place of unequalled authority for nearly two hundred years. It was the result of Erasmus’ Greek New Testament, which was heavily influenced by Theodore Beza’s

Greek New Testament. Yet the term “Textus Receptus” wasn’t used until twenty two years after the publication of the King James Version Bible. In the edition of the Greek New Testament, edited by Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir, they referred to it as the *Textus Receptus*, or, the “Received Text”.<sup>57</sup> It contained many errors. Some of these were even acknowledged by Erasmus himself when he declared that he could not find any Greek MSS prior to 1500 AD which contained certain textual additions (1 John 5:7-8 being an example).<sup>58</sup>

One hundred years after the *Textus Receptus*, J. A. Bengel was the first to suggest a classification of MSS into text- types. This classification enabled translators to discern between available MSS as to their origins and therefore to their variations. By 1881 many more MSS had come to light and the production of The New Testament in the Original Greek, by B. F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort, took into account the most up to date discoveries.<sup>59</sup> This edition was taken into account when Eberhard Nestle published his Greek New Testament in 1898. This has become the standard Greek text today. It had twenty five editions (revisions) published until 1963, and since then under the supervision of German scholar, Kurt Aland, has had four editions.

From these tools, modern translators have rapidly produced fresh English translations. The next major English translation after the King James Version was the Revised Version (RV). The RV New Testament was published in 1881. This translation was done by a committee of Anglicans and invited scholars. It commenced in 1870. It later enlisted the

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<sup>57</sup> Harrison, Waltke, Guthrie, Fee: 142

<sup>58</sup> Moulton: 75

<sup>59</sup> Harrison, Waltke, Guthrie, Fee: 143

cooperation of eminent American scholars. It deliberately kept to the style and language of the King James Version attempting only to correct any errors and then add explanatory marginal notes. The complete edition was published in 1885. It claims to be a *revision* rather than a *translation*.

Dr. James Moffatt completed a fresh translation of the New Testament, which was published in 1913. His translation of the Old Testament was published in 1926. This was revised by Moffatt and published in 1935. Some of the translations which have also appeared this century include- the *Book of Books* (produced by *The United Society for Christian Literature* 1938), the *American Standard Version* (1946-57), *J.B. Phillips* (1952-63), the *New American Standard Bible* (1960-1977), the *New English Bible* (1961-70), *Jerusalem Bible* (1966), the *New American Bible* (1970), *Today's English Version* (1966-76), the *Revised Standard Version* (1946-1971), the *New International Version* (1973-1978), the *New Revised Standard Version* (1989), the *New Century Version* (1987-1991), and the *Contemporary English Version* (1995).

The steady flow of fresh translations is still continuing. It bears out two basic points for the need for the ongoing translation of God's Word: (i) our language is changing, and (ii) textual scholarship is improving. In the next chapter an examination will be made of the purposes and differences of many of the influential English translations.

## **Translating with integrity**

### **Overview:**

- The on-going challenge to deliver the Word of God.
- A comparison of the approaches taken by C20 versions

### **Objectives**

1. To survey the internal testimony of the Scriptures to determine the responsibilities of translators
2. To evaluate the efforts of modern translations and how they perceive their task
3. To collect the translation data to determine how the translation approach of twentieth century translators bears out in various translations.

### **The On-Going Challenge To Deliver The Word Of God.**

If the Reformation of the sixteenth century brought anything back to the Church, it clearly reinstated the Scripture as the primary basis of authority for the believer. The Latin motto adopted by the Reformers was *sola Scriptura*: the Scriptures alone! Thus, Protestants with a Reformed heritage usually regard the Scriptures in the highest possible light. Any attack on the Word of God is fiercely defended by them. Little wonder then that they generally regard any modern translation which omits verses of the Bible, like Acts 8:37, as less than the whole of Scripture. Any translation which robs the Almighty of His sovereign power of the natural course of the universe is seen as affront by them also. Such a case might be the RSV's rendering of Isaiah 7:14 which says that the LORD would use *a young woman to conceive and bear a son* as distinct from the King James Version's "virgin". Naturally a young woman conceiving and bearing a son is not the same display of the Almighty's power like a *virgin* conceiving and bearing a son is! The blanket answer on behalf of the Reformed element of Christendom is: *the King James Version is the only version of the Bible to be trusted.*

The problem that the King James Version faces today is firstly that its language is out dated. As the Preface to the RSV points out -



*The King James Version uses the word “let” in the sense of “hinder”, “prevent” to mean “precede,” “allow” in the sense of “approve,” “communicate” for “share,” “conversation” for “conduct,” “comprehend” for “overcome,” “ghost” for “spirit,” “wealth” for “well-being,” “allege” for “prove,” “demand” for “ask,” “take no thought” for “be not anxious,” “purchase a good degree” for “gain a good standing,” etc. The Greek word for “immediately” is translated in the King James Version not only by “immediately” and “straightway” but also by the terms “anon,” “by and by,” and “presently.” There are more than three hundred such English words which are used in the King James Version in a sense substantially different from that which they now convey. It not only does the King James translators no honour, but it is quite unfair to them and to the truth which they understood and expressed, to retain these words which now convey meanings they did not intend.*

The translators of the RSV saw that for the King James Version to be presented as the only legitimate version of English Scripture was doing it an injustice because it would no longer be conveying the integral Word of God. In fact it could be quite misleading. Add to this the possibility that some of the euphemisms in the King James Version are now offensive in ordinary language (note 1Sam. 25:22) and we find that the King James Version no longer supplies this generation with the integral Word of God. If we continue to use words or euphemisms that rob the reader of a correct understanding of what the text is saying, we are in danger of violating the Scriptures themselves-

*(Deut. 4:2 NIV) Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.*

*(Deut. 12:32 NIV) See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.*

*(Prov. 30:6 NIV) Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.*

*(Rev. 22:19 NIV) And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*

The Scriptures charge us to teach these things to the next generation. The implication is taken from the following Scriptures that the precise message of God was more important than the precise words-

*Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. (Deut. 4:9 NIV)*

*Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Deut. 11:19-20 NIV)*

The Scriptures were largely taught in an oral fashion in the ancient times (obviously due to the lack writing media). As in any oral tradition, the precise message is more important than conveying exact words. This oral reporting philosophy is seen in the account of Paul's conversion as recorded in Acts. We compare the accounts -

**ACTS 9:3-8**

As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It *is* hard for you to kick against the goads." So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord *said* to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into Damascus.

**ACTS 22:6-10**

"Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. "And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' "So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. "So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.'

We note that the wording of this same account differs, in fact, quite starkly. Yet the message of the incident remains unchanged despite the wording being different. For example, in this incident, who was that it appeared to Paul? Was it as Acts 9

says, “I am Jesus”, or was it as Acts 22 says, “I am Jesus of Nazareth”? Did the men who were with Paul hear a voice and see nothing as Acts 9 says, or did they see something and not hear anything as Acts 22 says? This example illustrates clearly from Scripture that precise words are not the object of God’s Word to mankind because not even the Scriptures themselves use the exact wording to recount the same event. Numerous examples from the Old Testament could be cited to make this same point. This principle, as seen in Scripture itself, frees the translator to provide a translation that conveys with integrity the Word of God- as God intended.

For a translator to translate the Scriptures while knowing that the translation he has produced is not going to convey the true meaning of the text, even though it is an accurate rendering, is to deny justice to the Scriptures. This form of translation lacks integrity. The translator of necessity is required to interpret the source MSS as accurately as possible in order to translate them into the receptor language. This requires the translator to be familiar with the language of the source MSS, the hermeneutical implications of it, and the receptor language.

For the translator to get one of these factors wrong, the result will be a translation that does not convey the integral Word of God. In this respect, the King James Version fails to be an integral translation of the Word of God in today’s English speaking societies. We note that the King James Version translators (i) did not have available adequate source MSS with which to make reasonable comparisons, (ii) they did not have adequate exegetical tools with which to make the soundest hermeneutical judgments, and (iii) they were deliberately inconsistent with their use of colloquial English.

## ***A Comparison Of Twentieth Century Versions***

The three elements to achieving a dynamically equivalent translation have all been approached differently by the translations of the twentieth century. The predominant variety of translations appears to be the “free” translations. These translations strive to capture the meaning of the text while maintaining integrity with the original MSS. They include, *The Complete Bible In Modern English* (Fenton), *Weymouth’s (New Testament in Modern Speech)*, *Moffatt’s, The Book of Books*, *J.B. Phillips, The Living Bible*, *The New Century Version*, *The Contemporary English Version*, *The Message (by Eugene Peters)*, *God’s Word*, and, *the New Living Translation*. An overview of some of these significant translations will serve to illustrate that there has been a recognition among scholars that the Scriptures require ongoing translation or revision.

### ***The Complete Bible In Modern English***

This is the remarkable work of one man, Ferrar Fenton, published in 1903. As a young man in 1853, Ferrar Fenton found the King James Version unintelligible, even to the educated. He saw that Christianity was waning and concluded that it must have been because the Scriptures were not available in readable English. He vowed that he would make it his life’s object to give the English speaking world, but especially the British Empire (which he dearly loved) a translation of the Bible which was understandable. Of the King James Version he said-

*“It has never been altered to adapt it to the evolution of our Mother Tongue. It has consequently become especially unintelligible to our educated classes, and also to the greater number of the masses, and is daily becoming more so. In fact, only the most illiterate portion of our villagers, in the remote mining or sheep-farming districts in the North of England, can mentally follow its meaning; for they still in their*

*daily life speak a similar dialect, but are fast ceasing to do so under the influence of our State Education.*”<sup>60</sup>

Ferrar Fenton was trained in linguistics (*philology* as it used to be called). His parents wished for him to enter the Anglican priesthood (*orders*). Curiously he felt that this would hinder his task of bettering the spiritual state of the British Empire! He decided upon a life of commerce, all the time devoting his spare moments to the study of the Biblical languages. His devotion to the task led him to abstain from reading any English until he thought in Biblical Greek. His career led him around the world. He saw this as one of the greatest advantages that he as a linguist could have. For, he contended, he learnt how men both speak and think in different lands. His translation was largely acclaimed by the press, divines and academics. He himself said of the earlier edition that-

*‘I may add that, contrary to my expectation, my version of the Bible, so far as issued, has been very favourably received by all classes and countries, from the most accomplished scholars to simple villagers, colliers, factory hands, soldiers, seamen, military and naval officers, and educated men of foreign lands, royal personages, university professors, bishops and divines, and has thus, I hold, justified my contention, that an intelligible Bible means a restoration of Faith.’*<sup>61</sup>

He largely transliterated place and people names. He used “The EVER-LIVING” for Yahweh, and the more common “LORD” throughout the Psalms. So fresh was his translation that he was accused by some of not translating at all, but rather of paraphrasing. To this charge he rebutted by noting that he was one of the world’s leading linguists, and that those

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<sup>60</sup> Fenton: 11

<sup>61</sup> Fenton: 22

who brought such a charge were ignorant of linguistics.<sup>62</sup> In a less aggressive tone he said that his approach to translation was to capture *the spirit* of the text not *just* the *letter* of the text. Among his innovations was the arrangement of the Old Testament books into the ancient order of the Septuagint. According to Ferrar Fenton the arrangement in the King James Version was a hangover from the Dark Ages when some scribe muddled the order, and the result was a confused arrangement which doesn't lend itself to a logical continuation. Perhaps the reason for the short lived popularity of this translation was that it was largely self-published. Fenton would have stepped on a lot of toes when he claimed that no-one had ventured to dare translate the Scripture into modern English, except for himself.

### ***The New Testament In Modern Speech***

This translation was done by Dr. Richard Francis Weymouth. It was edited and revised by Ernest Hampden-Cook in 1909. It was a fresh translation rather than a revision of a former version. (It came after one of the first New Testament translations published in the twentieth century, called *The Twentieth Century New Testament* which was published in 1902 and produced by twenty scholars.)<sup>63</sup> Dr. Weymouth was the first man to receive a doctorate for literature from the University of London. He had previously published a Greek New Testament called the *Resultant Greek Text* (published 1862). He then had a desire to translate this work into English.

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<sup>62</sup> Fenton: 23

<sup>63</sup> Comfort: 62-63

The translator took the approach of aiming for a translation “that the inspired writer himself would have expressed his thoughts, had he been writing in our age and country.”<sup>64</sup> Dr. Weymouth was a master of Greek, Hebrew, and English. He notes that English at his time, consisted of what was proper, and also of what was actually spoken. The proper English may have been the language of the elite, but it was not the language of the masses. He cites a translator of Aristotle’s work on *Ethics* who said “I have deliberately rejected the principle of trying to translate the same Greek word by the same word in English, and where circumstances seemed to call for it I have sometimes used two English words to represent one word of the Greek;” for supporting his approach to *reverent* Biblical translation. He defends his non-literal approach by criticising the Revised Version as having a “*strong tendency to mislead*”. He supports his translation, into what was then, modern English by extensive explanatory footnotes of the translation. He viewed this as absolutely necessary. He states that this system is not a commentary, but a vital aid to the reader so that they may understand the text. Dr. Weymouth fell ill before the completion of his translation. He saw the completed work which was finished by the Rev. Hampden-Cook, but died before its publication. He expressed the desire that his translation would be used for further fresh translations into modern English as a reference tool. His translation is a very scholarly work. The amount of explanatory and textual footnotes would soon tire the casual reader though. It also embraced the curious quoting of Old Testament passages which refer to God by using “Thee”, and “Thou”. This may have later influenced the New American Standard translators who did the same thing. Nevertheless, it

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<sup>64</sup> Weymouth: Preface page 5



would have been a remarkably fresh translation in its day. It drew upon the resources of the finest available Greek MSS and was extensive in its footnotes of variant readings.

### ***Moffatt's***

Dr. Moffatt, like Dr. Weymouth, was also a doctor of literature as well as theology. He adopted a different approach in the presentation of his translation to that of Dr. Weymouth. While they both aimed for a translation that the *ordinary reader* could understand, Dr. Moffatt opted not to include the translator's footnotes that at times actually take up more of the page of Weymouth's New Testament than the actual text!

*"It would have swollen the book inordinately to have justified either the readings or, for the matter of that, the renderings, one after another. Besides, to do this would be, in the words of the translators of the Authorized Version, to 'weary the unlearned, who need not know so much, and trouble the learned, who know it already.'"*<sup>65</sup>

Moffatt translated the entire Bible, unlike Weymouth who just translated the New Testament. He too continued the practice of Weymouth by translating divine pronouns into Old English (thee, thou, thine, etc.). He sought to clarify pronunciation of Biblical names by rendering them into English in a more transliterated fashion. For example, *Job* is rendered as *Eyob* to capture the oriental sound of his name. He states in his preface that the name of God is certainly not *Jehovah*, but rather "Yahweh". But for the purpose of appealing to his audience he felt that this Hebraistic name would be lost on modern readers, so he rendered it "*The Eternal*". The translation is certainly more readable than the King James Version, although it has many Northern English idioms throughout it. Words like "ere", "aye", and "churl"

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<sup>65</sup> Moffatt: Preface page 9

would leave the modern reader wondering what was meant. Moffatt's New Testament translation suffered from its basis upon Hermann von Soden's Greek New Testament, which Dr. Comfort calls "defective".<sup>66</sup>

### ***The Book Of Books***

This translation was done after Dr. Moffatt commenced his translation. It was produced by *The United Society For Christian Literature* in 1938. Their aims were similar to Dr. Moffatt's and the translations are very similar. They also use Old English personal pronouns in reference to prayers to God. They have omitted chapter and verse divisions through out the text, arguing that a translation in paragraphs with thematic headings is more understandable to the contemporary reader. Each New Testament book is introduced with a brief historical background. Monies, weights and measures are simply transliterated with a contemporary English equivalent inserted in brackets after it. This is a very readable translation but has aged somewhat over the last sixty years.

### ***J. B. Phillips***

Dr. Moffatt's translation was completed after the Second World War. J.B.Phillips, an English clergyman, produced the first of his translation efforts about the time Moffatt was completing his. He released his translations of the New Testament Epistles called *Letters To Young Churches*, then, *The Gospels Translated Into Modern English* in 1952. In his translator's preface there is an explanation that the New Testament was written in Koine Greek. He points out that this was *street Greek*, the Greek of the common people. Therefore, any translation of the Scripture should be in the language of the

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<sup>66</sup> Comfort: 64

common people. He later translated the book of Acts (*The Young Church In Action*), and *Four Prophets* (Amos, Hosea, First Isaiah, Micah) in 1963. His translations are organised into sections with headings. He also adopted the use of Old English pronouns to refer to God in prayer.

### ***The Living Bible***

Kenneth N. Taylor began the work of paraphrasing the Bible in 1956. He commenced this largely because he felt that his own children didn't understand the Bible in the available translations of the day. What began as a work for his own children developed into a fourteen year project to paraphrase the entire Bible. This was completed in 1970. Over thirty five million copies have been sold. Several editions have been marketed of the *Living Bible* with various prefaces making reference to scholarly linguistic assistance. Yet, the *Living Bible* has generally failed to capture the approval of theologians. This is despite some very prominent Church leadership giving it their support (eg. Dr. Billy Graham). But overwhelming support has come from the public. Indeed it was through reading this version of the Bible that I myself came to know the Lord as a young teenager.

The *Living Bible* broke ground as one of the first internationally appealing paraphrases. But it suffered from the demeaning tag "paraphrase". Nowadays, many "translations" are actually just as much, if not more, of a paraphrase than the *Living Bible* was. As translators have moved from being literalists, to being conveyors of intentional meaning, their efforts are looking more like paraphrases than the traditional translations! Yet the term "paraphrase" became a theologically dirty word in Bible versions. Modern translations, like the New Century Version, go to great lengths in their

promotional material to state that they are not “paraphrases”, but “translations”.

The Living Bible suffers from one common flaw. It was the work of one man. Several factors make this a flaw in Biblical translation. Firstly, no one man can produce a translation that has the integrity of being true to the original meaning of the text without personal bias (or limited understanding) being included. Secondly, the time it takes for one man to complete such a task often means that the result is outdated before it is published. Even Kenneth Taylor said in his final preface-

*For now, at last, I lay down my commission and my pen- the task is finished to the best of my ability after these fourteen arduous years. In some strange way I look around again as one from prison, and see how the world has turned over many times since I bowed my head to begin. Living Letters, the first volume in this series.*

An example of how outdated even Taylor’s language had become by the time he completed his work is found in Matthew 23:28.

*You try to look like saintly men, but underneath those pious robes of yours are hearts besmirched with every sort of hypocrisy and sin.*

In recent times, the *Living Bible* has undergone a major revision. Recognising its original flaw, it was revised by a team of scholars. To avoid the original reception it received among the ecclesiastical intelligentsia, who patronised it as a “paraphrase”, this revision is being marketed as a “translation”. This is reflected in its title: *The New Living Translation*. As an example of their revision efforts, the *New Living Translation* revises Matthew 23:28 to read-

*You try to look like upright people outwardly but inside your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness*

## ***Today's English Version***

This translation is commonly known as the *Good News Bible*. It began in the early 1960s. It was largely the work of Robert Bratcher, (a research associate of the Translations Department of the American Bible Society). The American Bible Society published the New Testament in 1966. To show just how much the attitude of translation had shifted from translating ancient foreign words into contemporary vernacular words, the translators stated their plain aim-

*The primary concern of the translators has been to provide a faithful translation of the meaning of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.*

In doing this, the translators did what Kenneth Taylor had done in the *Living Bible*, they translated the Scriptures according to the thoughts and meanings contained in it, rather than being rigidly locked into translating verse for verse. This meant that they often combined two or more verses into a single statement if it was clear that the thought and meaning contained in the original verse divisions was best translated into one statement in English. The other major thing that the *TEV* translators did was to use simple English. That is, they deliberately limited the vocabulary used in the translation. This made their translation far more internationally appealing. This was supplemented by the American Bible Society releasing an Americanised version, while the British and Foreign Bible Societies released a British edition.

## ***The New International Version***

The New International Version is easily the most successful of recent translations. It outsells all other versions of the English Bible and has become the standard text in many churches. It was a fresh translation. The work was done by

over one hundred translators. It was sponsored by the New York Bible Society and published by Zondervan. It had the advantage of drawing upon the latest MSS discoveries that were coming to light. These included the Dead Sea Scrolls. Its goal was to convey the thought or meaning of the Biblical author. To do this they aimed at a text that was deliberately between the *New American Standard Bible* and *The Living Bible*.<sup>67</sup> Of recent times there has arisen a translation called the *New Century Version*. This is widely regarded as an excellent modern version. It does suffer from various Americanisms, such as the grammar of translating large numbers (Americans tend to neglect the use of “and” in large numbers, something that the Anglicised reader may find annoying). Eugene Peters, a well known author and Presbyterian scholar, is currently working on a translation called *The Message*. Currently it is only available in the Psalms and the New Testament.

Literal translations (formal-equivalent translations) have not been dealt with here, as they have proved to be far less popular than the more *dynamically equivalent* translations. Nevertheless, these include: *The American Standard Version* (1901), *The Revised Standard Version* (1946-1971), the *New American Standard Bible* (1960-1988), and the *New Revised Version* (1989). Roman Catholic translations are not considered here, but they include: *the Knox Version* (1944-1955), *The Common Bible* (1965), *The Jerusalem Bible* (1966-1968), and *The New American Bible* (1987). Neither have versions produced by the cults been considered. Most prominently this includes *The New World Translation* by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah’s Witnesses).

The plethora of translations this century indicates three things, as the Chairman of the revision committee for the *New*

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<sup>67</sup> Comfort: 79

*Revised Standard Version* Bruce Metzgar said- (i) better and older manuscripts, (ii) greater linguistic and textual understanding (enabling improved exegesis and hermeneutics), and (iii) changes in preferred English .<sup>68</sup> The summary and overview of the mentioned translations shows how these three factors have been embraced this century. To see how Weymouth's New Testament differs from the *New Living Translation* while they both lay claim to the same objective, further illustrates how much twentieth century translation approaches have changed. Perhaps more detail and background regarding the older twentieth century translations has been necessary because in many respects these were ground breaking translations. So entrenched was the popularity of the King James Version that not even the Revised Version could dent its popularity.

Despite the literal (or formal) translations that have appeared this century, they have proved to be most unpopular. Of these the *New American Standard Bible* stands out as an excellent example of formal translation, yet without the popular support of the international consuming Christian community. The same producers of the NASB also produced the *Amplified Bible*. This was more popular than the NASB, yet it lacked the same credibility. The *New King James Version* has been a good stepping stone for those wanting to remain true to the comfortable style of the King James Version without the archaisms. Yet it has not gained the acceptance or the popularity of the NIV.

In the most recent times, there has been a reluctance to produce any new literal translations. Publishers have opted for revising rather than re-translating. Even the NIV has been revised several times since its original publication. And perhaps wisely, in the fast paced age where things are easily

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<sup>68</sup> Comfort: 85

discarded, they have continued to promote it as the NIV not the “revised” NIV. Ironically it has now been proven that within the first 100 years of the King James Version publication, a similar revising/refining process discreetly took place on it.

### ***21<sup>st</sup> Century Bibles***

From the year 2000 some exciting developments have taken place in Biblical textual scholarship. More manuscripts have been discovered which have clarified difficult passages. Theological rigour has also aided in the pursuit of textual accuracy. For example in Matthew 24:3, what did the disciples ask Christ? *Later, Jesus sat on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and asked, “When will all this take place? And will there be any sign ahead of time to signal your return and the end of the world?”* New Living Translation

The NLT has the disciples asking –

- I. When will the Temple be destroyed?
- II. What will be the signs of your return?
- III. What will be the signs of that the end of the world is near? Entire doctrinal systems have been built around this type of translation of this passage. But note how one of the most recent and accurate English translations renders this same passage-

*As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?”*



## ***English Standard Version***

This translation is much closer to the original intention of the passage and the questions the disciples ask are profoundly different to what the NLT would lead readers to believe.

Note the contrasting differences-

- I. When will the Temple be destroyed
- II. What will be the signs of Your coming (not return)
- III. When will the Old Covenant Age (not world) end?

This is but one example of why the English Standard Version has become the new standard in English Bible translations. It is precise yet readable. And this is exactly what all Bible translators aspire to achieve.

## **The Case For Revising And Translating**

### **Overview**

- The three factors necessitating continual revision and translation
- The need for the independence of translators
- The changing media for Bible publishing
- The doctrinal integrity of post KJV translations
- Fresh Translating and Revising considered

### **Objectives**

1. To evaluate the data and conclude what, if any, are the necessitating issues involved in revising and translating.
2. To examine the translation approach of the significant translations and revisions to determine their independence or possible bias.
3. To investigate the changing media forum for Bible publication and how this might affect the future role of Bible translation.
4. To conclude about the validity modern translations and revisions and their future role.

## **Continual Revision And Translation**

It appears from the study of Biblical translation history, that at each stage of the English Bible's development, there have been three consistent necessitating factors. The earliest translations of the Scriptures into English were done by Caedmon, a seventh century monk.<sup>69</sup> He apparently only translated certain New and Old Testament passages. This was done because there was a need for at least some Scripture in the English language. (At this stage monks used the Latin Vulgate.) Upon closer examination, we can see three factors necessitating the first translation of the Scriptures into English. Firstly, the available source documents were not understood by the masses. Secondly, the current translation (in this case the Latin Vulgate) was not the language of the English speaking people. Thirdly, even if English speaking people could have read Latin or the ancient Biblical languages, the idioms, euphemisms, and metaphors would have meant little to them.

Until the translation done by William Tyndale, all English Bibles were translated from the Latin Vulgate. The first complete translation of the Bible into English was done by John Wycliffe. The same necessitating factors for translation were involved. Yet it was William Tyndale's translation where these three factors were clearly evident. They may be stated in this instance as- (i) the available source documents were superior to previous source documents; (ii) the previous translations were not readily understood by the masses; (iii) the translator was better positioned to translate the text due to superior exegesis and hermeneutics.

The relatively rapid production of English Bible translations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also bears out these

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<sup>69</sup> Comfort: 38

three factors. This includes the translation of the King James Version. In the twentieth century the translations of the English shows that these three factors may be stated as- (i) superior MSS are now available; (ii) the receptor language (English) has changed dramatically even within the lifetime of one generation (thus, what was intelligible to one generation is no longer understood in the same way by the next); and, (iii) translators possess superior textual devices (such as lexicons which have developed from archaeological and classical manuscripts discoveries), which enables them to do superior exegesis and hermeneutics. These are the three issues that are now stated in the preface of recent translations and revisions. Even the King James translators wrote that the reason for their translation effort was to improve on previous English Bibles. In the Preface to the *New King James Version* they record-

*...the translators of the Authorised Version, known popularly as the King James Bible, state that it was not their purpose "to make a new translation... but to make a good one better."*

Even the King James Version itself was revised within two years of its publication. More than 300 changes were made for the 1613 edition. Many more revisional changes were made in the eighteenth century. Interestingly, John Wesley saw limitations with the King James Version, and published a revision of it in 1755.<sup>70</sup> These revisions were necessitated because of the three factors mentioned. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw several of the first paraphrased translations published. The fact that scholars saw the need to produce such translations so soon after the publishing of the King James Version points again to the three factors necessitating on-going translation. One such translation was John Worsely's *New*

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<sup>70</sup> I BD, Vol. 1: 454

Testament. He was desiring to translate into the *“Present Idiom of the English Tongue”*. His New Testament was posthumously published in 1770.

### ***The Need For The Independence Of Translators***

Establishing the historical evidence that scholars have seen the need to consider the three factors necessitating fresh translation or revision of the Scriptures almost immediately from the time of the King James Version, (including the King James Version translators themselves) leads us to consider the independence of their works.

Generally, where one person alone has undertaken the task of translation, there is the criticism that the translator’s own biases and theological preferences may pervade the text. The modern trend is away from this approach of one man translations. On the other hand, where a church committee produces a translation there is the danger that they too will inflict their communal bias into the text. An example of this is seen in the King James Version. This was the product of Anglican scholarship. We refer to their translation of First Timothy 3:1- *This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*

The word rendered “bishop” is the Greek word *episcopay*. This word *never* meant “bishop”. But the Anglican scholars had to put it into their translations because that was the title given to members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy at that time. Secondly, the translators inserted the word “office”. Again that was because the Anglican church had been teaching that these positions were *offices* that they could sacramentally invest men into.

The RV was tainted from the beginning when it allowed Unitarian scholars (they denied the orthodox view of the

Trinity) onto its translation committee.<sup>71</sup> Criticisms have abounded of several references to be found in the RV which could be used to support such a stand. The clearest form, however, of ecclesiastical bias in translating is found in Roman Catholic editions (apart, of course from the New World Translations of the Jehovah's Witnesses which are perhaps the most blatant forms of textual tampering to align with their sectarian beliefs).

For example, in Matthew 3:1-2 the Douay Version reads- 1. *And in those days cometh John the Baptist preaching in the desert of Judea.* 2. *And saying: Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

“Do penance” is an exclusively Roman Catholic concept within Christendom. It even has a translator's marginal note which says-

*“...according to the use of the Scriptures and the holy fathers, does not only signify repentance and amendment of life, but also punishing past sins by fasting, and such like penitential exercises.”*

The Greek word *metanoeo* (repentance) does not convey the concept of penitential exercises. Rather it conveys a change of heart and mind resulting in a different course of direction. Later Roman Catholic translations have conceded this point.

The N IV has been accused of being too “Pre-millennial” in its translation of certain eschatological passages. Ken Collins says-

*For example, some translators put the first half of Revelation 20:5 in parentheses and others do not. There are no punctuation marks in the original Greek, so why do they do this? Without parentheses, the verse says:*

*“The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.”*

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<sup>71</sup> I B D . Vol. 1: 455

*This is not a problem for Lutherans and other Christians who believe that the 'first resurrection' happens at baptism and the 'second resurrection' on the Last Day and that the 'thousand years' refer to the period between the first coming and the second coming, when Christ reigns on earth through the church, because people are being converted throughout all of church history. However, if you are a premillennialist, you believe in two physical resurrections before and after a thousand-year period that follows the time of the church. Without parentheses, the verse seems to say that the first resurrection will take place after the millennium, which does not fit the doctrine. With parentheses, the verse says:*

*"(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection."*

*Either way is a good rendering, but they both draw battle lines.<sup>72</sup>*

Yet, translations and revisions done by broad committees of scholars are less likely to produce doctrinally biased texts. Future translation and revision works will almost of necessity have to be done by committees if they are to have credibility. Caution must be exercised with any translation that contains annotations. Much damage has been done when people have failed to distinguish the Biblical text from the commentator's notes. It is my preference to use a Bible free from any comments or references for this reason.

## **The Changing Media For Bible Publishing**

From manuscripts to the printing press, the Bible has undergone vast changes in its presentation. In our age of rapid international communication we can expect that the English language will change constantly. One needs to only think of what the word "gay" used to mean in the middle of the twentieth century to recognise that our language is

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<sup>72</sup> Ken Collins internet home page.

changing rapidly. This change will be accelerated with new forms of publishing media. We now have the Bible on audio cassette, video cassette, CD, DVD, internet, and digitally available in various forms such as personal data appliances (PDA's). For those advocating a universal return to the King James Version as the only trustworthy Bible, this presents a dilemma. One novel approach is suggested by E.S. Turnbull. Firstly, he says that the reason people can't understand the King James Version is not because of the language, but because of their spiritual blindness. *No, it is not simplicity of English that is needed. It is an enlightened mind, a new heart.*<sup>73</sup> He says that the language of the King James Version is still the finest expression of English even today. He presumably therefore feels that we should return to this *enlightened* form of English as our current means of expression. But with all the new technology being invented and made readily available, this is impossible. For, not only is the current generation being provided with text, they are being provided with audio as well. My own Greek Tutor *speaks* to me through the means of a CD ROM! With this technology it is possible for the Bible to be published with simultaneous text, audio, graphics and animation! Samples of this are starting to be published now (1996). This will open up previously unimagined challenges for Bible translators who may well have to consider the services of a movie director as seriously as the choice of lexicon. More probable is that multi-media Bible translation will have a coordinator, or coordinating committee, to pool together the various aspects of this new media forum. That is, they will probably organise translators, artists, actors, set producers, computer graphic artists to produce a new generation of Bible translation.

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<sup>73</sup> Turnbull: 34

## The Doctrinal Integrity Of Post KJV Translations

One the chief criticisms of post KJV translations is that they are doctrinally corrupt. It is claimed that references to the trinity, the blood of Christ, and the deity of Christ have been omitted or altered to weaken a Biblical doctrine. Other citations are made to claim that these modern translations teach a salvation by works, and water baptism for unrepentant infants. An examination of the modern translations in the light of these criticisms is needed. These concerns reflect the general criticisms that are raised by most KJV only proponents.

(a) Does the rendering of the NIV in Acts 8:36-38, foster a belief in infant baptism or the baptism of unbelievers? The KJV passage is compared beside the NIV-

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?	36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"
37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.	37
38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.	38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.



Missing verses are cited as evidence of corruption. Most modern translations do not have Acts 8:37 in the main text. In fact, there are up to 200 such omissions. Is this proof of corruption? It would be if *all* or even *most* such verse were also omitted. To the contrary, there are many supporting verses in the NIV which endorse water baptism preceded by repentance. We note the following –

**Mark 16:16** “Whoever **believes** and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

**Acts 2:38** “Peter replied, "**Repent** and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

**Acts 8:12** “But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women”

(b) Does the NIV endorse *walking in the flesh* ? We compare Romans 8:1-

<p>There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (KJV)</p>	<p>Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, (NIV)</p>
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The rendering of the NIV here is based on the oldest known MSS. But is the NIV suggesting removal of condemnation is attainable by walking after the flesh? Note the following NIV references-

**1John 1:6-7** “ If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.<sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” (also 1John 2:6; 2Jn 1:6)

(c) Do modern translations deny the Trinity? The most oft

quoted reference to support this claim is their rendering of 1John 5:7.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. (KJV	For there are three that testify: (NIV)
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Is the NIV, and other modern translations, suggesting that God is not Triune? Hardly. If this was the case, Jehovah's Witnesses would swiftly embrace it as their translation. Again, the oldest MSS do not contain the additional phrase found in the KJV. Erasmus was challenged over this verse in the early sixteenth century. When he pieced all the available Greek MSS together to form one complete Greek New Testament, he could not find any ancient MS which included the remainder of the verse. He agreed that he would include it in a revised edition if someone could produce a MS prior to the fifth century which included it. When this was done, he expressed his sincere concern over the genuineness of the MS. Nevertheless he kept his word and included it in the revised edition.

The NIV clearly presents with integrity the meaning of God's Word as found in the most ancient MSS. Therefore, note the following-

**Matthew 28:19** "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**,"

**Galatians 4:6** "Because you are sons, **God** sent the **Spirit** of his **Son** into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father.""

**Ephesians 2:18** "For through **him** we both have access to the **Father** by one **Spirit**." (also John 10:30; 17:11, 22)

(d) Do modern translations promote a doctrine of salvation by works? The KJV states in 1Corinthians 1:18 that we *are* saved. Most modern translations state that we are *being* saved.

*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (KJV)*

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (NIV)*

The word which is rendered “are saved” by the KJV and “being saved” by the NIV is the Greek word *sozomenoi*. It is legitimate to translate this word “being saved”. Firstly though, we will examine the modern translations to determine whether they teach a doctrine that salvation is by works. In which case their rendering of such passages as 1Corinthians 1:18 must be viewed very suspiciously.

*(Acts 15:11 NIV) “No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we **are saved**, just as they **are**.”*

*(Rom. 10:10 NIV) “For it is with your heart that you believe and **are justified**, and it is with your mouth that you confess and **are saved**.”*

*(1Cor. 15:2 NIV) “By this gospel you **are saved**, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.”*

*(Heb. 10:39 NIV) “But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and **are saved**.”*

Clearly these verses taken from the NIV (which are fair representations of other modern translations) do not teach a doctrine of salvation by works. It shows that when a person puts their faith in Christ for their salvation, they *are* saved. This is plainly stated in the following passage of the NIV-

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Eph.2:8-9)*

Secondly, the KJV itself renders certain passages that present salvation involving a present continuance of something that God is doing in the saved. It then also presents salvation with a

future aspect. Theologically it is orthodox, and Biblical, to say that we *are* saved, we are also *being* saved, and we are *yet to be* saved fully. This becomes apparent when we realise that the resurrection is a fundamental component of our salvation. And obviously, our resurrection is yet to happen (1Corinthians 15). We note the following King James Version renderings which refer to salvation in the future tense-

*Acts 15:11* “But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we **shall be saved**, even as they.” (KJV)

*Romans 5:9* “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we **shall be saved** from wrath through him. ” (KJV)

*1Peter 1:5* “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready **to be revealed in the last time.**” (KJV)

(e) Do modern translations weaken the theology of the blood of Christ? We understand that it was through the shedding of Christ’s blood that we have been redeemed. Yet in Colossians 1:14 the NIV suspiciously omits the expression “*through his blood*”. Again if there was a conspiracy to corrupt this fundamental doctrine of Christianity, we could expect that every (or even some of the) New Testament reference(s) would be corrupted. But this is not the case. We note that the NIV in Romans 5:9, and Ephesians 1:7 says-

“Since we have now been justified **by his blood**, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!”

(Eph. 1:7) “In him we have redemption **through his blood**, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace”

All of the orthodox doctrines of Biblical Christianity are to be found in modern translations. In fact, one stands a safer chance of not moving into erroneous doctrine with a translation that is understandable than one does with a translation that uses language over three hundred years old. It must be clearly stated that modern translations are not part of

a New Age conspiracy to undermine the truth of Biblical/Christian doctrine. Most of those who criticise these modern translations do so out of sincere concern, yet regrettably out of ignorance. The overwhelming weight of MS evidence supports the renderings of the modern translations as has been shown throughout this paper. What we need to consider is how these modern translations and revisions should proceed from here.

### ***Fresh Translating And Revising Considered***

There certainly is a plethora of English translations available today. The bulk of these are freer translations as distinct from formally equivalent ones. The NIV, though nearly twenty years old, still seems to be the most popular of the modern translations. It has maintained its freshness in several ways. Firstly, it was completed by scholars from nearly every major English speaking country of the world. This gave it international acceptance and appeal while avoiding peculiar words which may have aged noticeably. Secondly, it has undergone several discreet revisions in which it has removed possible archaisms and brought greater clarity. Instead of being marketed as a “revised” NIV, it has done exactly what indeed the KJV did after it was first published.

It’s worth noting, at this closing point, that the revisers of the KJV made many changes to it between 1611 and 1800. Perhaps the most significant change was the dropping of the Apocrypha from the 1611 edition, in 1644.<sup>74</sup> Other examples of changes included –

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<sup>74</sup> John Berchmans Dockery’s article, “**The English Versions of the Bible**”, in the NAB page 1457

1611 edition	Later KJV revised editions
[Matt.16:16] “Thou art Christ”	“Thou art the Christ”
[Matt.26:75] “The words of Jesus”	“the word of Jesus”
[Mk.2:4] “For press”	"for the press”
[Mk.5:6] “He came and worshipped”	“He ran and worshipped”

This indeed appears to be a fatal blow to any who would espouse the King James Version on the grounds of a Mechanical Dictation Inspiration theory. This is one of the pivotal arguments against modern translations, and for the King James Version.

There is a need for the ongoing translation and revision of the Scriptures. This need is based on: (i) the ongoing discovery of ancient MSS (which enables textual critics to more accurately discern the form of the Biblical autographs); (ii) there is an increasing understanding of the Biblical languages due to the discovery and subsequent study of ancient classical literature (and this has enabled scholars to do superior exegesis and hermeneutics which is vital in the process of translation); and (iii) the English vernacular is rapidly changing, even within one generation which necessitates at least constant revision of previous translations. We can be assured that modern translations and revisions will be doctrinally pure when done by objective translation committees who view their task as sacred. Coupled to this, the conviction of the orthodox theological position of Plenary Inspiration which makes Mechanical Dictation erroneous, and we can look forward to quality translations and revisions in the future. This is why we *need* constant translating of the Bible today. *Amen.*

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## A Good Translation

The sixty-six books of the Protestant Bible were originally written in three different languages: Hebrew (most of the Old Testament), Aramaic (a sister language to Hebrew used in half of Daniel and two passages in Ezra), and Greek (all of the New Testament). We assume that most of the readers of this book do not know these languages. That means, therefore, that for you the basic tool for reading and studying the Bible is a good English translation, or, as will be argued in this chapter, several good English translations. As we noted in the last chapter, the very fact that you are reading God's Word in translation means that you are already involved in interpretation—and this is so whether one likes it or not. But to read in translation is not a bad thing; it is simply inevitable. What this does mean, however, is that in a certain sense, the person who reads the Bible only in English is at the mercy of the translator(s), and translators have often had to make choices as to what in fact the original Hebrew or Greek was really intending to say.

The trouble with using only one translation, be it ever so good, is that one is thereby committed to the exegetical choices of that translation as the Word of God. The translation you are using may be correct, of course; but it also may be wrong. Let's take, for example, the following four translations of 1Cor. 7:36:

*KJV: "If a man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin. . . ."*

*NASB: "If a man think that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter. . . ."*

*NIV: "If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to. . . ."*

*NEB: "If a man has a partner in celibacy and feels that he is not behaving properly towards her. .."*

The KJV is very literal, but not very helpful, since it leaves the term "virgin" and the relationship between the "man" and "his virgin" ambiguous. Of one thing, however, one may be absolutely certain: Paul did not intend to be ambiguous. He intended one of the other three options, and the Corinthians, who had raised the problem in their letter, knew which one—indeed they knew nothing of the other two.

It should be noted here that none of these other three is a bad translation, since any of them is a legitimate option as to Paul's intent. However, only one of them can be the correct translation. The problem is, which one? For a number of reasons, the NIV reflects the best exegetical option here. However, if you regularly read only the NASB (which has the least likely option here) then you are committed to an interpretation of the text that may not be the right one. And this kind of thing can be illustrated a thousand times over. So, what to do?

First, it is probably a good practice to use mainly one translation, provided it really is a good one. This will aid in memorization, as well as give you consistency. Also, if you are using one of the better translations, it will have notes in the margin at many of the places where there are difficulties. However, for the study of the Bible, you should use several well-chosen translations. The best thing to do is to use translations that one knows in advance will tend to differ. This will highlight where many of the difficult exegetical problems lie. To resolve these problems you will usually want to have recourse to your commentary.

But which translation should you use, and which of the several should you study from? No one can necessarily speak for

someone else on this matter. But your choice should not be simply because "I like it," or "This one is so readable." We want you to like your translation, and if it is a really good one, it will be readable. However, to make an intelligent choice, you need to know some things both about the science of translation itself as well as about some of the various English translations.

### **The Science of Translation**

There are two kinds of choices that a translator must make: textual and linguistic. The first kind has to do with the actual wording of the original text. The second has to do with one's theory of translation.

### **The Question of Text**

The translator's first concern is to be sure that the Hebrew or Greek text he or she is using is as close as possible to the original wording as it left the author's hands (or the hands of the scribe taking it down by dictation). Is this what the psalmist actually wrote? Are these the very words of Mark or Paul? Indeed, why should anyone think otherwise?

Although the details of the problem of text in the Old and New Testaments differ, the basic concerns are the same: (1) no original copies (manuscripts) exist; (2) what does exist are thousands of copies (including copies of very early translations), produced by hand, and copied by hand repeatedly over a period of about fourteen hundred years; (3) although the vast majority of manuscripts, which for both testaments come from the later medieval period, are very much alike, these later manuscripts differ significantly from the earlier copies and translations. In fact, there are over five thousand Greek manuscripts of part or all of the New Testament, as well as thousands in Latin, and no two of them anywhere in existence are exactly alike.

The problem, therefore, is to sift through all the available material, compare the places where the manuscripts differ (these are called "variants"), and determine which of the variants represent errors and which one most likely represents the original text. Although this may seem like an imposing task—and in some ways it is—the translator does not despair, because he or she also knows something about textual criticism, the science that attempts to discover the original texts of ancient documents.

It is not our purpose here to give the reader a primer in textual criticism. This you may find in convenient form in the articles by Bruce Waltke (OT) and Gordon Fee (NT) in *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978). Our purpose here is to give some basic information about textual criticism so that you will know why translators must do it and so that you can make better sense of the marginal notes in your translation that say, "Other ancient authorities add. . . ." or "Some manuscripts do not have. . . ."

**For the purposes of this chapter, there are three things you should be aware of:**

1. *Textual criticism is a science that works with careful controls.*

There are two kinds of evidence that the translator considers in making textual choices: external evidence (the character and quality of the manuscripts) and the internal evidence (the kinds of mistakes made by copyists). Scholars sometimes differ as to how much weight they give either of these strands of evidence, but all are agreed that the combination of strong external and strong internal evidence together makes the vast majority of choices somewhat routine. But for the remainder, where these two lines of evidence seem to collide, the choices are more difficult.

The external evidence has to do with the quality and age of

the manuscripts that support a given variant. For the Old Testament this usually amounts to a choice between the Hebrew manuscripts, nearly all of which are medieval copies, and manuscripts of the Greek translations (the Septuagint [LXX]), which are much earlier. Scholarship has demonstrated that the Hebrew manuscripts by and large reflect a very ancient text; nonetheless, it often needs correcting from the Septuagint. Sometimes neither the Hebrew nor Greek yields a tolerable sense, at which times conjectures are necessary.

For the New Testament, the better external evidence was preserved in Egypt. When that early evidence is also supported by equally early evidence from other sectors of the Roman Empire, such evidence is usually seen to be conclusive.

*The internal evidence* has to do with the copyists and authors. When translators are faced with a choice between two or more variants, they usually can detect which readings are the mistakes because scribal habits and tendencies have been carefully analyzed by scholars and are now well known. Usually the variant that best explains how all the others came about is the one we presume to be the original text. It is also important for the translator to know a given biblical author's style and vocabulary, because these, too, play a role in making textual choices. As already noted, for the vast majority of variants found among the manuscripts, the best (or good) external evidence combines with the best internal evidence to give us an extraordinarily high degree of certainty about the original text. This may be illustrated thousands of times over simply by comparing the KJV (which was based on poor, late manuscripts) with a contemporary translation like the NRSV or NIV. We will note three variants as illustrations of the work of textual criticism:

1 Samuel 8:16

*KJV: "your goodliest young men and your asses"*

*NIV: "the best of your cattle and donkeys"*

The text of the NIV ("your cattle") comes from the Septuagint, the usually reliable Greek translation of the Old Testament made in Egypt around 250-150 B.C. The KJV follows the medieval Hebrew text, reading "young men," a rather unlikely term to be used in parallel to "donkeys." The origin of the miscopy in the Hebrew text, which the KJV followed, is easy to understand. The word for "your young men" in Hebrew was written *bhrykm*, while "your cattle" was *bqrykm*. The incorrect copying of a single letter by a scribe resulted in a change of meaning. The Septuagint was translated some time before the miscopy was made, so it preserved the original "your cattle." The accidental change to "your young men" was made later, affecting medieval Hebrew manuscripts, but too late to affect the pre-medieval Septuagint.

Mark 1:2

*KJV: "As it is written in the prophets. . . ."*

*NIV: "It is written in Isaiah the prophet. . . ."*

The text of the NIV is found in all the best early Greek manuscripts. It is also the only text found in all early translations (Latin, Coptic, and Syriac) and is the only text known among all the church fathers, except one, before the ninth century. It is easy to see what happened in the later Greek manuscripts. Since the citation that follows is a combination of Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3, a later copyist "corrected" Mark's original text to make it more precise.

1 Corinthians 11:29

*KJV: "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily"*

*NIV: "anyone who eats and drinks"*

The word "unworthily" is not found in any of the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. Its presence in the Latin translations and later Greek manuscripts can easily be explained as an addition brought in from verse 27, where all known manuscripts have "unworthily." There is no good way to explain how it might have been dropped out of verse 29 in all the early manuscripts had it been there originally.

It should be noted here that for the most part translators work from Greek and Hebrew texts edited by careful, rigorous scholarship. For the New Testament this means that the "best text" has already been determined by scholars who are experts in this field. But it also means, for both testaments, that the translators themselves have access to an "apparatus" (textual information in footnotes) that includes the significant variants with their manuscript support.

2. *Although textual criticism is a science, it is not an exact science, because it deals with too many human variables.*

Occasionally, especially when the translation is the work of a committee, the translators will themselves be divided as to which variant represents the original text and which is (are) the scribal error(s). Usually at such times the majority choice will be found in the actual translation, while the minority choice will be in the margin.

The reason for the uncertainty is either that the best manuscript evidence conflicts with the best explanation of the corruption or that the manuscript evidence is evenly divided and either variant can explain how the other came to be.

We can illustrate this from 1 Corinthians 13:3:

*NIV text: "surrender my body to the flames"*

*NIV margin: "surrender my body that I may boast"*

In Greek the difference is only one letter: *kauthesomai/kauchesomai*. Both variants have good early

support, and both have some inherent difficulties in interpretation (1 Corinthians was written well before Christians were martyred by burning; yet it is difficult to find an appropriate meaning for "that I may boast"). Here is one of those places where a good commentary will probably be necessary in order for you to make up your own mind.

The preceding example is a good place for us also to refer you back to the last chapter. You will note that the choice of the correct text is one of the *content* questions. A good exegete must know, if it is possible to know, which of these words is what Paul actually wrote. On the other hand, it should be also noted that Paul's point here finally is little affected by that choice. In either case, he means that if one gives the body over to some extreme sacrifice, or the like, but lacks love, it is all for nothing.

This, then, is what it means to say that translators must make textual choices, and it also explains one of the reasons why translations will sometimes differ—and also why translators are themselves interpreters. Before we go on to the second reason why translations differ, we need to make a note here about the King James Version.

3. *The KJV is not only the most widely used translation in the world, it is also a classic expression of the English language.*

Indeed, it coined phrases that will be forever embedded in our language. However, for the New Testament, the only Greek text available to the 1611 translators was based on late manuscripts, which had accumulated the mistakes of over a thousand years of copying. Few of these mistakes—and we must note that there are many of them—make any difference to us doctrinally, but they often do make a difference in the meaning of certain specific texts.

*This is why for study you should use almost any modern translation rather than the KJV.* How to choose between modern



translations takes us to the next kinds of choices translators have to make.

## **The Questions of Language**

The next two kinds of choices—verbal and grammatical—bring us to the actual science of translation. The problem has to do with the transferring of words and ideas from one language to another. To understand what various theories underlie our modern translations, you will need to become acquainted with the following technical terms:

*Original language:* The language that one is translating from; in our case, Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek.

*Receptor language:* The language one is translating into; in our case, English.

*Historical distance:* This has to do with the differences that exist between the original language and the receptor language, both in matters of words, grammar, and idioms, as well as in matters of culture and history.

*Theory of translation:* This has to do with the degree to which one is willing to go in order to bridge the gap between the two languages. For example, should lamp be translated "flashlight" or "torch" in cultures where these serve the purpose a lamp once did? Or should one translate it "lamp" and let the reader bridge the gap for himself or herself? Should holy kiss be translated "the handshake of Christian love" in cultures where public kissing is offensive?

**Notice how these three terms apply to the following basic theories of translation:**

*Literal:* The attempt to translate by keeping as close as possible to the exact words and phrasing in the original language, yet still make sense in the receptor language. A literal translation will keep the historical distance intact at all points.

*Free:* The attempt to translate the ideas from one language to another, with less concern about using the exact words of the original. A free translation, sometimes also called a paraphrase, tries to eliminate as much of the historical distance as possible.

*Dynamic equivalent:* The attempt to translate words, idioms, and grammatical constructions of the original language into precise equivalents in the receptor language. Such a translation keeps historical distance on all historical and most factual matters, but "updates" matters of language, grammar, and style.

Translators are not always consistent, but one of these theories will govern the translators' basic approach to their task. At times the literal or free translations can be excessive, so much so that Clarence Jordan in his Cottonpatch Version can translate Paul's letter to Rome as to Washington (!), while Robert Young, in a literal translation published in 1862, can transform 1 Corinthians 5:1 into this impossible English (?): "*Whoredom is actually heard of among you, and such whoredom as is not even named among the nations—as that one bath the wife of the father [!]*"

The best translational theory is dynamic equivalence. A literal translation is often helpful as a second source; it will give you confidence as to what the Greek or Hebrew actually looked like. A free translation also can be helpful—to stimulate your thinking about the possible meaning of a text. But the basic translation for reading and studying should be something like the NIV.

The problem with a literal translation is that it keeps distance at the wrong places—in language and grammar. Thus the translator often renders the Greek or Hebrew into English that is otherwise never written or spoken that way. It is like translating *maison blanc* from French to English as "house

white." For example, no native English-speaking person would *ever* have said "coals of fire" (KJV, Rom.12:20). That is a literal rendering of the Greek construction, but what it *means* in English is "*burning coals*" (NIV) or "*live coals*" (NEB).

A second problem with a literal translation is that it often makes the English ambiguous, where the Greek or Hebrew was quite clear to the original recipients. For example, in 2 Corinthians 5:16 the Greek phrase *kata sarka* can be translated literally "*(to know) according to the flesh*" (as in the NASB). But this is not an ordinary way of speaking in English. Furthermore the phrase is ambiguous. Is it the person who is *being known* who is "according to the flesh," which seems to be implied in the NASB, and which in this case would mean something like "by their outward appearance"? Or is the person who is "*knowing*" doing so "according to the flesh," which would mean "from a worldly point of view"? In this case the Greek is clear, and the NIV correctly translates: "So from now on [since we have been raised to a new life, v. 15] we regard no one from a worldly point of view."

The problem with a free translation, on the other hand, especially for study purposes, is that the translator updates the original author too much. Furthermore, such a "translation" all too often comes close to being a commentary. A free translation is *always* done by a single translator, and unless the translator is also a skilled exegete who knows the various problems in *all* of the biblical passages, there is a danger that the reader will be misled. This is especially true of the popular, but unfortunately not altogether accurate, *Living Bible*.

We can live with such translations as "flashlights" (Ps. 119:105), or "handshakes" (1 Peter 5:14), or "pancakes" (Gen. 18:6), but to translate the Greek word *charismata* ("spiritual gifts") as "special abilities" in 1 Corinthians 12-14 is to take

too much liberty. The Living Bible translation of 1 Corinthians 11:10, "as a sign that she is under man's authority," is especially misleading since the original implies that she is the one who has the authority. In 1 Peter 5:13, the biblical author deliberately used the cryptic designation *Babylon* for Rome; it is surely better to have that explained somewhere than to translate it "Rome" and destroy Peter's purposefully cryptic usage. As readable as the *Living Bible* is, it simply has too many inaccuracies and rewritings for it to be one's only—or even primary—Bible.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is much more accurate than the Living Bible and is not a free translation, but it has taken certain liberties with the text in order to be gender neutral when speaking about people. This results in sometimes abnormal English that is "politically correct" but not very idiomatic. Thus in John 3:4 the NRSV has the awkward sentence "*Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?*" compared with the more normal original RSV: "*Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?*" Likewise, for Psalm 1, whereas the RSV helpfully preserves the intended contrast between the lone righteous person ("*Blessed is the man who . . .*," v. 1) and the many who are wicked ("*The wicked are not so . . .*," v. 4), this contrast is eliminated by the NRSV'S pluralizing of the entire psalm ("*Happy are those who . . .*," etc.) in an effort to avoid the gender distinctions that can occur with singular pronouns.

**The way various translations handle the problem of "historical distance" can best be noted by illustrating several of the kinds of problems involved.**

1. *Weights, measures, money.* This is a particularly difficult area. Does one transliterate the Greek and Hebrew terms ("ephah," "homer," etc.), or try to find their English equivalents? If one

chooses to go with equivalents in weights and measures, does one use the standard "pounds" and "feet," or does one look to the future and translate "liters" and "meters"? Inflation can make mockery of monetary equivalents in a few years. The problem is further complicated by the fact that measures or money are often used to suggest contrasts or startling results, as in Matthew 18:24-28 or Isaiah 5:15. To transliterate in these cases will likely cause an English reader to miss the point of the passage.

The KJV, followed closely by the RSV and NRSV, was inconsistent in these matters. For the most part they transliterated, so that we got "baths" "ephahs," "homers," "shekels," and "talents." Yet the Hebrew *'ammah* was translated "cubit," the *zereth* a "span," and the Greek *mina* (mina) became the British pound, while the *denarius* became a mere penny. For Americans all of these have the effect of being meaningless or misleading.

The NASB uses "cubit" and "span," but otherwise consistently transliterates and then puts an English equivalent in the margin (except for John 2:6, where the transliteration is in the margin!). This is also the way the NIV chose to go, except for "cubits," which are turned into feet, and all the marginal notes are given both in English standards and in metric equivalents. Unfortunately they give no note at all in Matthew 20:2, where the fact that the denarius was a regular day's wage is important to the parable; moreover, in Mark 14:5 they abandon this principle altogether by translating the three hundred denarii into the equivalent, "more than a year's wage."

*The Living Bible*, as may be expected, turns everything into equivalents, but often they are not precise, and the turning of denarii into dollar amounts of the 1960s is a precarious procedure at best.

We would argue that either equivalents or transliterations with marginal notes would be good procedure with most weights and measurements. However, the use of equivalents is surely to be preferred in the passages like Isaiah 5:10 and Matthew 18:24—28.

Note how much more meaningful the GNB renders these verses than does the NASB: Isaiah 5:10

*NASB: "For ten acres of vineyard will yield only one bath of wine. And a homer of seed will yield but an ephah of grain."*

*GNB: "The grapevines growing on five acres of land will yield only five gallons of wine. Ten bushels of seed will produce only one bushel of grain."*

Matthew 18:24, 28

*NASB "There was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents... But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii."*

*GNB: "One of them was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. . . . Then the man went out and met one of his fellow servants who owed him a few dollars."*

2. *Euphemisms.* Almost all languages have euphemisms for matters of sex and toilet. A translator has one of three choices in such matters: (1) translate literally, but perhaps leave an English-speaking reader bewildered or guessing, (2) translate the *literal equivalent*, but perhaps offend or shock the reader, or (3) translate with an *equivalent euphemism*.

Option 3 is probably the best, if there is an appropriate euphemism. Otherwise it is better to go with option 2, especially for matters that generally no longer require euphemisms in English. Thus to have Rachel say, "*I'm having my period*" (Gen. 31:35 NIV; cf. GNB) is to be preferred to the literal "*the manner of women is upon me*" (NASB, cf. KJV, RSV). For the same idiom in Genesis 18:11 the GNB is

consistent ("*Sarah had stopped having her monthly periods*"), while the NIV is much freer ("*Sarah was past the age of childbearing*"). Similarly, "*He forced her, and lay with her*" (2 Sam. 13:14 KJV) becomes simply "*He raped her*" in the NIV and GNB.

There can be dangers in this, however, especially when translators themselves miss the meaning of the idiom, as can be seen in the NIV, GNB, and LB translation of 1 Corinthians 7:1: "*It is good for a man not to marry.*" The idiom "*to touch a woman*" in every other case in antiquity means to have sexual intercourse with a woman, and never means anything close to "marry." Here the NAB, which has found an equivalent euphemism, is much to be preferred: "*A man is better off having no relations with a woman.*"

3. *Vocabulary.* When most people think of translation, this is the area they usually have in mind. It seems like such a simple task: find the English word that means the same as the Hebrew or Greek word. But finding precisely the right word—that is what makes translation so difficult. Part of the difficulty is not only in the choosing of an appropriate English word, but also to choose a word that will not already be filled with connotations that are foreign to the original language.

The problem is further complicated by the fact that some Hebrew or Greek words have ranges of meaning different from anything in English. In addition some words can have several shades of meaning, as well as two or more considerably different meanings. And a deliberate play on words is usually impossible to translate from one language to another.

We have already noted how various translations have chosen to interpret "virgin" in 1 Corinthians 7:36. In chapter 1 we also noted the difficulty in rendering Paul's use of the word *sarx* ("flesh"). In most cases, almost anything is better than

the literal "flesh." The NIV uses "*sinful nature*" when Paul is contrasting "flesh" and "spirit," but "*human nature*" in Romans 1:3 where it refers to Jesus' Davidic descent, "*from a worldly point of view*" in 2 Corinthians 5:16 noted above (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26 "*by human standards*"), and "body" when it means that (as in Col. 1:22).

This kind of thing can be illustrated many times over and is one of the reasons why a translation by dynamic equivalent is much to be preferred to a literal translation.

4. *Grammar and Syntax.* Even though most Indo-European languages have a great many similarities, each language has its own preferred structures as to how words and ideas are related to each other in sentences. It is at these points especially where translation by dynamic equivalent is to be preferred. A literal translation tends to abuse or override the ordinary structures of the receptor language by directly transferring into it the syntax and grammar of the original language. Such direct transfers are usually *possible* in the receptor language, but they are seldom *preferable*. From hundreds of examples, we choose two as illustrations, one from Greek and one from Hebrew.

a. One of the characteristics of Greek is its fondness for what are known as genitive constructions. The genitive is the ordinary case of possession, as in "my book." Such a true possessive can also, but only very awkwardly be rendered "the book of me." However other "possessives" in English, such as "God's grace," do not so much mean, for example, that God owns the grace as that he gives it, or that it comes from him. Such "non-true" possessives can always be translated into English as "the grace *of* God."

The Greek language has a great profusion of these latter kinds of genitives, which are used, for example, as descriptive adjectives, to express source, to connote special relationships



between two nouns, etc. A literal translation almost invariably transfers these into English with an "of" phrase, but frequently with strange results, such as the "*coals of fire*" noted above, or "*the word of his power*" (Heb. 1:3 KJV). Both of these are clearly adjectival or descriptive genitives, which in the NIV are more accurately rendered "*burning coals*" and "*his powerful word.*" Similarly the NASB'S "*steadfastness of hope*" (1 Thess. 1:3) and "*joy of the Holy Spirit*" (1:6) are translated in the NIV "*endurance inspired by hope*" and "*joy given by the Holy Spirit.*" These are not only to be preferred; they are in fact more accurate, because they give a genuine English equivalent rather than a literal, Greek way of expressing things, which in English would be nearly meaningless.

Interestingly enough, in one of the few places where the KJV (followed by the RSV, but not the NASB) offered something of an equivalent (1 Cor. 3:9), the translators missed the meaning of the genitive altogether. Apparently they were led astray by the word *fellow-workers* and thus translated, "*For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*" But in Paul's sentence each occurrence of *God* is clearly a *possessive* genitive, with an emphasis on both we (Paul and Apollos) and you (the church as God's field and building) as belonging to him. This is correctly translated in the NIV as, "*For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.*" Paul's point is made even more clearly in the NAB: "*We are God's co-workers, while you are his cultivation, his building.*"

b. Thousands of times in the Old Testament the KJV translators woodenly followed the Hebrew word order in a way that does not produce normal, idiomatic English. Did you ever notice, for example, how many verses (or sentences) in the KJV begin with the word *and*? Read Genesis 1, and note that with the single exception of verse 1, every verse of

the chapter begins with *and*, a total of thirty times. Now compare the NIV. It reduces the number of occurrences of *and* to eleven, while at the same time improving the flow of the language so that it sounds more natural to the ear. The NIV translators produced an improved translation by taking seriously the fact that the vast majority of prose sentences in Old Testament Hebrew begin with one of the two Hebrew forms for the word *and*. The word for *and* appears even when there is absolutely nothing preceding to which the sentence logically connects. In fact, six books of the Old Testament (Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, Ezra, Ruth and Esther) begin in Hebrew with the word *and*, though they obviously do not follow anything. Accordingly, it is now recognized by Hebrew grammarians that *and* at the beginning of a sentence is virtually the equivalent of the use of capitalization at the beginning of English sentences. This does not mean that the Hebrew *and* should never be translated by the English *and*, it simply means that "and" is only *sometimes*, and certainly not a majority of the time, the best translation in English. The simple English sentence beginning with a capital letter will do nicely in most cases.

Another example is the KJV'S "*and it came to pass.*" This is not used in normal English speech anymore, and it was rare even in the seventeenth century when the KJV was undertaken. Because this Hebrew narrative verb form was followed literally and woodenly, the resulting translation was "*and it came to pass,*" which thereafter occupied a prominent position in Old Testament style but nowhere else in English speech. We once heard a sermon on the concept that all things are temporary and shall eventually pass away (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8—10) based on the frequency of the clause "*and it came to pass,*" which the preacher misunderstood to mean: "And it came *in*

*order to* pass away." In fact, the NIV translators rightly do not translate the Hebrew clause as such. Judiciously rendering Hebrew into English requires an equivalent *meaning*, not an equivalent word or clause pattern.

## **On Choosing a Translation**

We have been trying to help you choose a translation. We shall conclude with a few summary remarks about several translations.

First, it should be noted that we have not tried to be exhaustive. There are still other translations of the whole Bible that we have not included in our discussion, not to mention over seventy-five others of the New Testament alone that have appeared in the twentieth century. Several of those latter are excellent, and well worth using (e.g., Weymouth, 1903; Helen Montgomery, 1924; Williams 1937). Among these also are several free translations, two of which are much to be preferred to the Living Bible because of their higher degree of accuracy (Phillips, 1947; F. F. Bruce [epistles of Paul only], 1965).

Among the whole Bible translations not discussed are some that are theologically biased, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses' *New World Translation* (1961). This is an extremely literal translation, filled with the heretical doctrines of this cult. Others of these translations are eccentric, such as that by George Lamsa (1940), who believed that a Syriac translation from around A.D. 400 held the keys to everything. One should probably also include here the *Amplified Bible*, which has had a run of popularity far beyond its worth. It is far better to use several translations, note where they differ, and then check out those differences in another source, than to be led to believe that a word can mean one of several things in

any given sentence, with the reader left to choose whatever best strikes his or her fancy.

Which translation, then, should you read? We would venture to suggest that the NIV is as good a translation as you will get. The GNB and NAB are also especially good. One would do well to have two or all three of these. The NIV is a committee translation by the best scholarship in the evangelical tradition; the NAB is a committee translation by the best scholarship in the American Catholic tradition. The GNB is an outstanding translation by a single scholar, Robert G. Bratcher, who regularly consulted with others, and whose expertise in linguistics has brought the concept of dynamic equivalence to translation in a thoroughgoing way.

Along with one or more of these, you would also do well to use one or more of the following: the NASB, the RSV, or the NRSV. These are attempts to update the KJV. The translators used better original texts and thereby eliminated most of the non-original matter in the KJV. At the same time they tried to adhere as closely as possible to the language of the KJV and yet still modernize it some. The RSV and NRSV are by far the better translations; the NASB is much more like the KJV and therefore far more literal—to the point of being wooden.

Along with one or more of these, we recommend you also consult either the NEB or JB—or both. Both of these are committee translations. The NEB is the product of the best of British scholarship, and is therefore filled with British idioms not always familiar to American readers. The JB is an English translation from the French *Bible de Jerusalem*. Both of these translations tend to be freer at times than the others described here as dynamic equivalent. But both of them have some outstanding features and are well worth using in conjunction with the others.

Fee, Gordon G. and Stuart, D., *How to read the Bible for all its worth*, Bletchley, Scripture Union, 1993. The Basic Tool: A Good Translation pp 28-44

## **Bible History**

The Bible is a true record of God’s Kingdom. It is not meant to be an exact biography or a scientific textbook.

Dionysius Exigeus, a 6th Century monk, introduced our dating of time according to the Birth of Christ. It is not possible to accurately date the OT events without reference to secular history. Allow a margin of error of at least 10 years up to 1000 BC and 100 years up to 2000 BC. Beyond 2000 BC dates are approximate. Dating by the Masoretic text and the LXX texts differ by @ 1000 years between Adam and the Exodus so no accurate dating can be made

The book of Genesis is a collection of 10 tablets written by the stated authors at the end of their biography and handed down to the next generation. Moses who inserted explanations and the current names of the towns in the land the Israelites were about to occupy, compiled these tablets. The recurring phrase “this is the account of...” was the normal ending of an autobiography in ancient times

<b>Tablet</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>The Account of</b>
1.	1v1 - 2v4	Heavens & Earth (God dictated to Adam)
2.	2v5 - 5v1	Adam
3.	5v2 - 6v9a	Noah
4.	6v9b - 10v1	Noah’s sons
5.	10v2- 1v10a	Shem
6.	11v10b- 11v27a	Terah
7.& 8.	11v27b- 25v19a	Ishmael & Isaac
9. & 10.	25v19b- 37v2a	Esau & Jacob

## Time Chart of OT

c 4000 Creation & Adam	c 931 Divided kingdom.
c 2350 Flood and Noah	c 720 Israel goes into Captivity (Assyria)
c 2000 Abraham	c 605 Jehoiakim goes into exile
c 1700 Jacob	c 586 Judah goes into Captivity (Babylon)
c 1445 Exodus & Moses	c 538 Judah returns from Captivity
c 1405 Entry in Canaan	c 433 Nehemiah returns from Captivity
c 1050 King Saul	
c 1010 King David	
c 970 King Solomon	

*Note that Jeremiah's prophecy of 70 years Captivity (Jer.25:12; Dan.9:2) if taken from 586 is only 48 years; if taken from Jehoiakim's exile is still only 67 years. The 70 years are more symbolic than literal: 7 = complete.*

*The Temple built in Solomon's 4<sup>th</sup> year - 480 years after left Egypt (1Kings 6:1) and took 20 years to build. (2Chron.8:1)*

After the **Babylonian Exile** the world power was **Persia** followed by **Greece** under *Alexander the Great* (c330 BC) and then **Egypt**.

**Jewish Independence** under *Maccabees* from 166 BC to 63 BC  
**Roman Empire** captures Jerusalem in 63 BC.

Under Roman rule the Provinces (from word meaning Office of carrying on the war or Post of Command) were ruled in 2 ways: If the Province was peaceful they were led by **Proconsuls** who were responsible to the Roman Senate (Acts 13:7; 18:12). If the province was turbulent like Palestine they were led by **Procurators** (*Pilate*) who were responsible to the Emperor himself. The Procurator would often leave a national Puppet-King in office (such as *Herod*). The provinces would have their own currency along side the Roman

currency and/or Greek currency, retain the local religion but pay heavy taxes to Rome and have a large Roman army presence.

**Herod the Great** was King in Palestine until his death in 4BC. *Herod* rebuilt the Temple in 19BC and although the main structure was completed in 10 years, the building work continued until AD64 - just 6 years before its destruction by *Titus* in AD70

## Roman Emperors

**Augustus Caesar** 27BC-AD14 (*1st Emperor to be deified by vote of Senate.*)

**Tiberius Caesar** AD14 - 37

**Caligula** AD37 - 41

**Claudius** AD41 – 54 *Acts 18:2; 23:26*

**Nero** AD54 – 68 *Paul & Peter's death, John's exile to Patmos\**

**Galba** AD68

**Otho** AD69

**Vitellius** AD69

**Vespasian** AD69 – 79 *Destruction of Temple*

**Titus** AD79 – 81

**Domitian** AD81 – 96 (*1st Emperor to insist on being treated as a god.*)

## Time Chart of NT

c 19BC Herod's Temple began

c 6BC Birth of Jesus

c 4BC Death of Herod the Great

c AD 29 Baptism of Jesus

(*Lk.3:1 - 15th year of Tiberius Caesar AD14 -37 hence AD 29*)

c AD 33 Crucifixion of Jesus

c AD 35 Conversion of Paul

c AD 44 Death of Herod Agrippa 1

< AD 50 Letter of James

AD 48-49 Paul's 1st missionary journey

AD 49/50	Jerusalem Conference
AD 50	Paul's 2nd missionary journey
AD 50-52	Paul at Corinth
AD 51	1 & 2 Thessalonians from Corinth
AD 52	Galatians from Corinth
AD 54	Paul's 3rd missionary journey
AD 54-57	Paul at Ephesus
AD 57	1 Corinthians from Ephesus
AD 57	2 Corinthians from Macedonia
AD 57/58	Romans from Corinth
AD 58-60	Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea
AD 58	Paul's arrest at Jerusalem
AD 60-61	Paul winters at Malta
AD 61	Paul arrives at Rome
AD 61-63	Paul's imprisonment at Rome
AD 62	Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon from Rome
AD 63	Philippians from Rome
AD 63-65	Paul's release & further ministry
AD 63	1 Timothy & Titus
AD 64	Hebrews
AD 64	Herod's Temple finished
< AD 65	Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts
AD 64-68	1 & 2 Peter from Rome
AD 65	Peter's death in Rome
AD 66	Paul's 2nd imprisonment at Rome
AD 66	2 Timothy from Rome
AD 66/67	Paul's death at Rome
< AD 65	Gospel John, 1, 2, & 3 John, Revelation*
AD 67/68	Jude
AD 70	Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus
AD 98/100	Death of John

\* The evidence for Revelation actually being written before



70AD includes a quote from Clement of Alexandria (150-220 AD) who plainly states that it was Nero who banished John to Patmos, not Emperor Domitian

*And to give you confidence, when you have thus truly repented, that there remains for you a trustworthy hope of salvation, hear a story that is no mere story, but a true account of John the apostle that has been handed down and preserved in memory. When after the death of the tyrant (previously identified as Nero) he removed from the island of Patmos to Ephesus, he used to journey by request to the neighbouring districts of the Gentiles, in some places to appoint bishops, in others to regulate whole churches, in others to set among the clergy some one man, it may be, of those indicated by the Spirit. ("Who is the Rich Man that shall be Saved?", Section 42)*

Cerinthus was a first century AD author who wrote *The Pseudo-Apocalypse*. He died well before John, that is well before 95AD, but his Pseudo-Apocalypse contains many references to John's Apocalypse (the Book of Revelation).

The internal evidence supports a pre-64AD authorship. This includes Rev. 17- There are "seven kings, five have fallen, one now is." Nero was the 6th Roman King. He reigned until 68AD.

## **Canon**

The word **Bible** comes from the Greek *biblia* meaning collection of books or library. The OT was written in Hebrew except for a few parts in Aramaic from the Exile.

Our OT is the same as the Hebrew Bible of Jesus times but has a slightly different order. The Hebrew OT had 24 books (instead of our 39 which is based on the Greek version) due to some books being grouped together.

N.T. is a compilation of 27 separate writings by 8 or 9 authors over a period of about 50 years. They can be divided into 4 groups: **Historical** (4 Gospels & Acts), **Doctrinal** (most of

the Letters), **Personal** (1&2Timothy, Titus, Philemon, 1,2&3John) and **Apocalypse** (Revelation).

Originally there were no chapters and verses in the Bible. For convenience of reference, pre-Talmudic Jews divided the OT into sections corresponding to our chapters and verses. Stephen Langton Archbishop of Canterbury who died in AD1228 made the chapter divisions we use today. The printer *Robert Stephens* divided his Greek NT into verses in AD1551. In AD1555 he published an edition of the Latin **Vulgate** which was the first edition of the Bible to appear with our present chapters and verses. The first English Bible with chapters and verses was the **Genevan** edition of 1560.

After the books included in our NT were originally written they were in general use through out the churches as were other books (similar to books of sermons, testimonies etc. of today.) Soon an **accepted standard** needed to be recognised - a **CANON** - (from Greek meaning **reed** or **measuring stick**).

The **Inspiration** of the 27 books was the **standard** used - 2Tim.3:16. Inspiration was evaluated & demonstrated by these 3 ways:

1. **Intrinsic Content** All have the work & person of Jesus Christ as their central subject & are historically correct.

2. **Moral Effect** Transforms people for the good.

3. **Testimony** The Church had accepted them. This did not determine inspiration but merely recognised it.

a. **Internal Testimony:** 1Thes.2:9 & 13 2Thes.3:14  
2Pet.3:15

b. **External Testimony:** Early Church Fathers: *Clement* cAD95 makes allusions to 1Cor. Rom. & Matt.; *Ignatius* cAD116 knew of all Paul's letters & quoted Matt.;

*Polycarp* cAD150 knew Paul's letters, Matt. & Acts and quoted from 1Pet. & 1Jn.;

In AD140 *Marcion* sought to free the Church of Jewish influence. He disowned the OT, Hebrews & Pastoral Letters, made Luke the main Gospel but rejected the virgin birth. This caused a great reaction but it also meant that the Church began to formally recognise Scripture. (The fact that he rejected certain books showed that they were already accepted.)

Formal discussion by **Councils** about the **Canon of Scripture** didn't take place until AD363 at the **Council of Laodicea** (which rejected the **Apocrypha** as being inspired) but not all the Churches were represented. The **Council of Carthage** in AD397 submitted a list of the 27 books of our NT to be accepted as **Canon**. They were accepted. This was repeated in AD419 at the **Council of Hippo**. Prior to these Councils there were some disputes over James, Jude, 2Peter, 2&3John & Philemon.

The OT was already recognised as inspired in its entirety. The inclusion of the **Apocrypha** was the disputed right up to the Reformation. The **KJV** originally included the **Apocrypha**.

### **The Languages of NT time**

**Latin:** Language of Rome; legal use, used most by West; became language of Theology because of its accuracy.

**Greek:** Language of the people esp. the East (a legacy from *Alexander the Great*); universal use meant the rapid spread of the gospel. NT written in Greek.

**Aramaic:** Language of the N. East (some of the OT was written in Aramaic during the Exile)

**Hebrew:** Dead language since Ezra, only used by priests; language of OT.

## Important Ancient Versions and Texts

The NT was mostly written in **UNCIAL** (all capitals) Greek with no punctuation, chapters or verses. There is 1 small fragment (1.5" x 1.5") from cAD150, a few fragments from around cAD200-300 and most of the NT from c AD450. (**Codus Sinaiticus** - in the British Museum and **Codus Vaticanus** - in the Vatican Library)

There are also many manuscripts in **Cursive** Greek (joined writing) from AD1000 - 1500. Below is John 1:1-5 in the cursive Greek **Textus Receptus**. Note that there is no punctuation, sentences or capitals!

**en arch hn o logo" kai o logo" hn pro" ton qeon kai qeo"  
hn o logo" outo" hn en arch pro" ton qeon panta di  
autou egeneto kai cwri" autou egeneto oude en o  
gegonen en autw zwh hn kai h zwh hn to fw" tw  
anqrwpwn kai to fw" en th skotia fainei kai h skotia auto  
ou katelaben]**

**LXX (Septuagint):** This is a translation of the OT from Hebrew into Greek from c250 - 150BC, in Alexandria. Called **LXX** from the 70 translators, it was in common use in NT times. As the translators were paid by “volume”, they translated any Hebrew writings they could lay their hands on including the **Apocrypha**!! The Alexandrian Jews accepted the **Apocrypha** but Palestinian Jews rejected it.

**Samaritan Pentateuch:** This not really a version but Hebrew text perpetuated as Samaritan characters.

**Pershitta:** In AD411 *Rabulla the Bishop of Edessa* sponsored the translation of the whole Bible into the common language of Syria (pershitta = simple). Also known as the *Syriac Vulgate*

**Vulgate:** As Christianity spread across the Roman Empire the

NT was translated into *Latin* (esp. the west) and *Syriac* (the east). Many fragments of these remain today. In AD384 *Pope Damasus* commissioned *Jerome* to produce a new Latin version. By means of the oldest Greek manuscripts he could find, he corrected the Latin text and produced the Latin Vulgate Version (*vulgar* meaning *common*). Until recently this was the basis of all translations of the Bible including the KJV.

**Masoretic:** The Masoretes (lit. transmitters) were Jewish scholars who were active up to AD950 and were meticulous in their resolution to hand on the text as they had found it. They inserted vowels and punctuation or accentual marks into the consonantal ancient Hebrew text of the Hebrew OT. As a reaction to the Christian use of the LXX, the Masoretes said that the Greek text was inaccurate and meticulously transcribed the OT into Hebrew producing a painfully literal rendering. It was the equivalent of the literal English in our interlinear Greek New Testaments! Hence the differences between the almost casual translation of the LXX and the Masoretic Hebrew texts.

**Dead Sea Scrolls:** In 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in a cave west of the Dead Sea consisting of over 500 manuscripts and 1000's of fragments of writings. One third of these are the OT (with the exception of Esther) and date from 100BC - AD68 - much earlier than any other existing documents of the OT. These scriptures differ very little from our OT.

## **Our English Bible**

For a long time the only Bible in England was the **Vulgate** written in Latin, a language not understood by most people. *Alfred the Great* (AD849-901) translated the 10 Commandments, Ex.21-23 and Acts15 into English and was translating Psalms when he died. The four Gospels were also

translated into continuous English before AD1000 but were not readily available to the public.

**Wycliffe Bible:** *John Wycliffe* born in Yorkshire made the first translation of the Bible into English: NT AD1380, OT AD1382.

**Tyndale Bible:** *William Tyndale* born AD1494, studied at Oxford and Cambridge. He was unable to get support to translate the Bible in England and so he went to the Continent where he visited *Luther* at Wittenburg By 1525, after much opposition, he published the English NT and smuggled them into England. The KJV reproduced about 90% of the NT from *Tyndale*. He was martyred for his work before he finished the OT.

**Coverdale Bible:** This version was a revision of *Tyndale's* work with *Coverdale* completing the rest. *Miles Coverdale* published the Bible (OT & NT) in AD1535 and *Henry VIII's* break with Rome allowed it to be introduced into England. It was dedicated to *Henry VIII*. However during the latter part of *Henry VIII* reign both the *Tyndale* and the *Coverdale* Bibles were banned from public use.

**Matthew's Bible:** In AD 1537 *John Rogers* published this Bible under the pseudonym of *Thomas Matthew*. The whole of the NT and half the OT was *Tyndale's* work and the rest *Coverdale's*. This was the first edition of the whole English Bible to be printed in England. In 1555 *John Rogers* was burnt at the stake by *Queen Mary*.

**Great Bible:** This was really a revision of **Matthew's Bible** by *Coverdale*. It was prepared by *Coverdale* on the invitation of *Thomas Cromwell* (hence it is sometimes called **Cromwell's Bible**) The printing began in Paris but the Inquisition stepped in and so it was completed in England in 1539. It was called the **Great Bible** because of its size. The 2nd edition in 1540 had a

preface by *Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury* so it is also called **Cranmers Bible**. In 1547 *Edward VI* succeeded his father *Henry VIII*. No new translation work was done in his short reign but great encouragement was given to reading the Bible and printing existing versions. *Edward VI* ordered that a copy of the **Great Bible** be placed in every parish church and this version of the Psalms is still used in the **Book of Common Prayer**.

**Genevan Bible:** With the accession of *Mary* in 1553, Bibles were taken from churches and hundreds of Protestants lost their lives (including *John Rogers* and *Thomas Cranmer*). Others (including *Coverdale*) fled to the Continent. *William Wittingham* went to Geneva, married *John Calvin's* sister and in 1557 produced a revision of the English NT in Roman type with the text divided into verses. The whole Bible appeared in 1560 and was dedicated to *Queen Elizabeth I*. It was also known as the "**Breeches Bible**" from Gen.3:7 - "*sewed fig leaves ...made themselves breeches*". This version was very popular and continued to be published after the **KJV** of 1611.

**Bishops' Bible:** *Queen Elizabeth* succeeded *Mary* in 1558 and restored *Edward VI's* arrangements to place Bibles in every parish church. The excellence of the **Geneva Bible** showed up the deficiencies of the **Great Bible** but some of its renderings and the marginal notes made it unacceptable to many clergy. *Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury*, together with 8 Bishops and other scholars revised the **Great Bible** and produced the **Bishops' Bible** in 1568.

PSAL. XXIII.

1 Because the Prophet had proued the great mercies of God at diuers times, & in sundrie maners, he gathereth a certaine assurance, fully perswading himselfe that God wil continue the very same goodnes towards him for euer.

A Psalm of David.

1 The Lord is my <sup>\*</sup> shepheard, <sup>a</sup> I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to rest in greene pasture, and leadeth me by the still waters.

3 He <sup>b</sup> restorēth my soule, and leadeth me in the <sup>c</sup> pathes of righteousnesse for his Names sake.

4 Yea, though I shoulde walke through the valley of the <sup>d</sup> shadowe of death, I will feare no euill; for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staffe, they comfort me.

5 Thou doest prepare a <sup>e</sup> table before me in the sight of mine aduersaries: thou doest <sup>f</sup> anoint mine head with oyle, and my cup runneth ouer.

6 Doubtles kindnes and mercy shall follow me all the dayes of my life, and I shall remaine a long season in the <sup>g</sup> house of the Lord.

<sup>e</sup> Albeit his enemies sought to destroy him, yet God deliuereth him, & dealeth most liberally with him in despite of them. <sup>f</sup> As was the maner of great feastes. <sup>g</sup> He setteth not his felicitie in the pleasures of this world, but in the feare & seruice of God.

Isa. 40. 11.

iere. 23. 5.

ezech. 34. 23.

iohn 10. 11.

1. pet. 2. 25.

a He hath care ouer me and ministrēth vnto me all things.

b He comforteth or refresheth me.

c Plaine, or streight wayes.

d Though he were in danger of death, as the sheepe that wandreth in <sup>y</sup> darke valley without his shepheard.

*Psalm 23 from the Bishops Bible*

**Douay (Rheims & Douai) Bible:** When *Elizabeth* became Queen some Roman Catholics left England and settled in France. Here they translated the Latin **Vulgate** into English, the NT was published at Rheims in 1582 and the OT in Douai in 1610/11. It contains controversial notes, was revised in 18th Century and until recently was the generally accepted English Version of the Roman Catholic Church.

**King James Version (KJV) or Authorised Version (AV):** When *Queen Elizabeth I* died in 1603, *King James VI of Scotland* became *King James I of England*, uniting the 2 countries. At the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, Dr John Reynolds proposed that a new translation of the Bible be made. Although not well received, this proposal appealed to *King*



*James* who authorised the translation of a new English version of the Bible to replace the **Bishop's Bible**. The translators stated that it was not their purpose to make a new translation but to make a good one (**Bishop's Bible**) better. They used **Tyndale's Bible** extensively as well as the Latin **Vulgate**, Greek & Hebrew Texts and other translations. The **KJV** or **Authorised Version** was published in 1611 and included the **Apocrypha**. It took 50 years to replace the **Geneva Bible** in popular favour. The 1613 Revision made over 300 changes to the 1611 version. Many other English revisions and Translations have been made over the last 400 years. John Wesley revised the AV in 1755.

**Revised Version (RV):** NT published in 1881, OT in 1885. This was produced because the language of the **KJV** was obsolete. Greek manuscripts had been discovered which were far more superior to those available to the **KJV** translators and improvement in the knowledge of Hebrew made more accurate rendering of the OT.

**American Standard Version (ASV):** The American scholars of the **RV** were not satisfied with the end result because of the large number of words and phrases kept whose meanings were antiquated and the use of words that were English but not American in meaning. They published their version - the **ASV** - in 1901.

**Other 20th Century versions:** The discovery at the end of the 19th century of thousands of Greek papyri, written in the every day language of the Greek people had a revolutionary influence upon the study of the Greek of the NT. Understanding NT Greek had always been a problem because it was neither the Greek of the **LXX** nor was it Classical Greek. Now it was shown to be the Greek of the papyri and therefore the colloquial language of Greek speaking people of the 1<sup>st</sup>

Century. It was felt that the NT should be translated into the everyday speech of the common man, not in stilted and antiquated English. These developments created a keen interest to bring out fresh translations of the NT in the spoken English of today.

Most of the 20th Century versions are either revisions of existing works or the work of individuals. The **ASV** was revised in 1952 to produce the **Revised Standard Version (RSV)**, which was revised in 1971 to produce the **New American Standard Bible (NASB)**. The **KJV** was revised in 1982 to produce the **Revised Authorised Version (RAV)**. In 1978 the **New International Version (NIV)** was published. This was a completely new translation rather than a revision. It was produced by an international team of Evangelical scholars, all of whom were committed to the infallibility of the **Bible as God's Word** in written form. They used the best of the Early Copies and the Ancient Copies. Each Bible book was assigned to a team of scholars to translate and several committees carefully checked the work for accuracy, clarity and literary style. Other modern translation include: **The Jerusalem Bible** – a Roman Catholic work produced originally in French at the Dominican School in Jerusalem in 1956 and was known as “La Bible de Jerusalem”. The English version was translated from Hebrew and Greek texts but follows the French version on most matters of interpretation and includes the Apocrypha. **Living Bible** by Kenneth Taylor, which is a paraphrase. **The Message** by Eugene Peterson, which again is a paraphrase. **Today's English Version (TEV)** or **Good News Bible** – this is a translation into clear, natural and simple contemporary English.

## Curious Bibles!

*Printers' errors that will make you smile!*

**The Printers Bible 1702:** Printers (instead of Princes) have persecuted me. Psalm 119.161

**The Place-Makers Bible 1562:** Blessed are the place-makers (instead of the peace-makers). Matthew 5.9

**The Bug Bible 1551:** Thou shalt not be afraid for the bugges (bogies) by night (instead of terror). Psalm 91.5

**The Treacle Bible 1568:** Is there no treacle (instead of balm) in Gilead? Jeremiah 7.22

**The Unrighteous Bible:** Know ye not that the unrighteous shall inherit (instead of not inherit) the kingdom or God. 1 Corinthians 6.9

**The Wicked Bible 1631:** Do commit adultery (instead of do not). Exodus 20.14. The printer was fined £300 for omitting the word not. All copies were ordered to be destroyed by Charles 1.

**The Breeches Bible:** They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves breeches (instead of aprons). Genesis 3.7

**The Murderers Bible 1801:** There are murderers (instead of murmerers). Jude 16. Let the children first be killed (instead of filled).

**The Ears to Ears Bible 1810:** He that hath ears to ears, (instead of hear) let him hear. Matthew 11.15

**The Vinegar Bible 1717:** The parable of the vinegar (instead of vineyard) in the headline about Luke 20.

**The Wife-hater Bible 1810:** 'If any man come to me, and hate not ... his own wife (instead of life) also.' Luke 14.26

## **What Bible Version Did Jesus Read?**

Evans, Craig A., “What Bible Version Did Jesus Read?”  
Christianity Today, 1999.

In what language was the Bible Jesus read? If, as most scholars today believe, Jesus spoke primarily in Aramaic, though he sometimes might have also used Greek and perhaps even Hebrew, what Bible was he likely to have read and heard read in the synagogue? The answer is that he likely heard Scripture read in Hebrew and occasionally in Greek, and then paraphrased and interpreted in Aramaic. How much of this paraphrase was actually written down in Jesus’ day is difficult to tell. It is probably safer to assume that most of this Aramaic tradition circulated orally and only generations later was committed to writing.

The Dead Sea Scrolls—a collection of biblical and other texts from around the first century—have shown that our Old Testament existed in several forms at the time of Jesus. There could have been as many as four Hebrew-language versions: one that lies behind the Hebrew text of the Bible that Christians and Jews use today (the Masoretic Text); a second that lies behind the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which is called the Septuagint, or LXX (and is the Old Testament of the Orthodox churches today); a third distinctive Hebrew version of the Pentateuch (the first five books of our Old Testament) used by the Samaritans; and a fourth version scholars did not know existed until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls 50 years ago.

In addition, the discovery of Greek manuscripts and inscriptions have also led scholars to believe not only that Greek translations of the Old Testament, such as the LXX, were available, but that Greek was widely spoken in Palestine,

even among Jews. The one time we are told that Jesus himself read Scripture in the synagogue, the text he read followed the LXX (see Luke 4:16–19). To make matters more complicated, Aramaic paraphrases of Scripture (called Targums) have also been found. Because of these and other literary texts from late antiquity, scholars believe Aramaic was also widely spoken in Palestine. Aramaic words in Jesus’ sayings, such as boanerges, ephphatha, talitha qumi, and eloi eloi lama sabachthani, have survived in the Greek Gospels.

Further evidence for this can be seen in the fact that when Jesus alludes to Scriptures in the Gospels, he usually does so in a manner that agrees with the Aramaic Targum, not the Greek or Hebrew versions. Some examples: In Mark 9:42–50, Jesus warns of judgment by speaking of Gehenna and alluding to Isaiah 66:24, “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.” The word Gehenna does not appear in the Hebrew or Greek, but only in the Aramaic. In Matthew 26:52, Jesus commands his disciple to put away his sword, “for all those who take the sword, by the sword they will perish.” These words, which aren’t in our Hebrew-based Isaiah, probably allude to the Aramaic paraphrase of Isaiah 50:11: “all you who take a sword—go fall on the sword which you have taken!” Jesus’ well-known saying “Be merciful as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36) reflects the Aramaic expansion of Leviticus 22:28: “My people, children of Israel, as our Father is merciful in heaven, so shall you be merciful on earth.” And Jesus’ very proclamation of the gospel, namely, that the kingdom of God has come (Mark 1:14–15), probably reflects the Aramaic paraphrasing of passages such as Isaiah 40:9 and 52:7. In these Aramaic paraphrases we find the distinctive words “The kingdom of your God is revealed!” Understanding the usage of Aramaic in Jesus’ time explains

another often puzzling passage. In the parable of the wicked vineyard tenants (Mark 12:1–12), Jesus alludes to Isaiah 5:1–7. In the Hebrew version of Isaiah (on which our English translations are based), the people of Judah as a whole (and not their leaders) are condemned as guilty of bloodshed. But when Jesus told the parable, the ruling priests understood that Jesus had told the parable “against them.” This is because Jesus applies the passage in his parable in a way that reflects the Aramaic Targum’s interpretation of it, in which God’s judgment is directed primarily against the temple establishment. (The tower of Isaiah’s parable is understood as the temple, and the wine vat is understood as the altar.)

What does the knowledge that Jesus used different versions of Scripture mean for us today? For one, it can be taken as an endorsement of Bible translations—we do not all have to learn Hebrew or Greek to read the Bible. It also points to a dynamic quality in God’s revealed Word that allows it to invade every culture and tongue with the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. And what is just as important, it reminds us that we cannot truly hope to understand the New Testament without reading the same Scriptures Jesus did, and with the same expectation of encountering God in them.

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## **Excuse Me, Do You Speak Bible?**

Corbett, A., *Excuse Me, Do You Speak Bible?* [www.andrewcorbett.net](http://www.andrewcorbett.net)

Language is more than just words. Each time I travel to another country where English is not the national language, I like to learn a few phrases in that language to help me get by. The hardest language I have attempted is Vietnamese. I was quite proud that I had learned the phrase- "How much is this?" and found that amazingly I was understood by the first Vietnamese shopkeeper I tried it on. But then my limited

grasp of Vietnamese was exposed when the shopkeeper responded in Vietnamese (with words that meant nothing to me)! Like many Asian dialects, it not only uses sounds, it also uses tones. Depending on how you say a word, like "ma" will determine whether you are referring in Vietnamese to your mother or a family ghost! When we try to understand a *foreign* language from the perspective of our *familiar* language we make certain assumptions that will actually hinder us from both appreciating the foreign language and translating it correctly. For example, in a Belgrade elevator was a sign for English-speakers-

**To move the cabin push button for wishing floor. If the cabin should enter more persons, each one should press a number for wishing floor. Driving is then going alphabetically by national order.**

Even more confusing are some of these foreign signs-



Any wealthy person with a dangerous lump would dread a sign like this! The rest of us though would be left wondering what on earth this could mean? Translating from one language to another is more than just finding the equivalent words. The richness of language is in its use of idioms (figures of speech, like "*the sun goes down*"), metaphors (word pictures, like "*it's raining cats and dogs*"), and analogies (comparing

something with another, like "*he runs like the wind*"). The problem for translators is conveying these language devices into another language. It necessarily means that translators become interpreters. That is rather than just translating words, they are translating the *intended* meaning.

## **Understanding The Bible As A Language**

When it comes to understanding the Bible we are thankful to diligent translators who convey the intended meaning of a passage from the original Biblical language (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) into English. But there is an aspect of the Bible's "language" that goes beyond just the words that are used. If you really want to understand the Bible, you have to appreciate its language. In fact, much of the Old Testament serves the purpose of establishing the language of Scripture. Almost immediately the it teaches us the language of *numbers*. Its opening chapter teaches us that "7" relates to "complete". Knowing this helps the reader to understand why John's Gospel contains: 7 "I AM" statements by Christ; 7 miracles of Christ; 7 sermons by Christ; in a book of 21 chapters. By the middle of Genesis we told that Joseph dreamed of Israel (his family) as being like "the sun, moon, and stars" (Gen. 37). And the prophets, including Christ, would use this same metaphor for Israel as *becoming darkened, falling from the skies, and no longer giving forth its light* whenever Israel ceased to fully obey God and reflect His light (Joel 2, Matt. 24). In Genesis 3 we are introduced to Christ as The Seed, a term filtered through Abraham then applied to all the redeemed in Christ (Galatians 3:28-29). The Biblical term "the elect" relates to this Seed not by ethnicity but by spiritual redemption through Christ.



## **Biblical Idioms, Analogies, & Metaphors**

In recent times the Bible has undergone several severe attacks. One newly released book, by a former graduate of Wheaton College, who now denounces Christ and the Bible, claims that the Bible is unreliable, scientifically faulty, historically inaccurate, and not preserved to its original edition. This attack on the Bible by someone who had one of the finest evangelical educations available is bewildering. He confuses *preservation* with *inspiration* when it comes to understanding God's Word. He fails to identify and distinguish idioms, analogies and metaphors in the Bible. A failure in this regard is an admission of literary-laziness when it comes to understanding the language of the Bible.

## **Reading The Bible Literally**

When the Bible says that the trees of the field "clap their hands", or that the sun "rises" and goes "down", or that the stars of the heavens "fall from skies", we are in danger of misunderstanding these statements if we claim that they must be understood in a wooden literal sense. To read the Bible *literally* means that we accept the *intended meaning* of a passage. To do this we must identify and distinguish Biblical idioms, analogies and metaphors. If we fail to understand that certain Biblical genealogies are more *analogical* than genealogical (such as the one in Matthew 1 which divides the genealogy of Christ into three groups of 14 generations, where "14" is an analogy to *David* - the Hebrew word for David is *DWD*, which in Hebrew [Gematria](#) equals 14) we will fail to appreciate what the Biblical author was intending to communicate. Biblical genealogies served a purpose greater than merely detailing a family lineage which is why Great Grandfathers are sometimes referred to as being "the father of..." That's why

many of the Bible's genealogies are not *exhaustive* (not every generation is listed) but rather *particular*, making it very difficult to make accurate chronological calculations based on them.

Reading the Bible "literally" involves converting these idioms, analogies and metaphors into their intended meaning. Critics of the Bible who fail to do this present what they consider to be the "errors" of Scripture when they cite supposed scientific errors within Scripture, such as Ecclesiastes 1:5 -

*The sun also rises, and the sun goes down,  
And hastens to the place where it arose.*

Critics of the Bible claim that verses like this erroneously claim that the Bible teaches that the earth is stationary and the Sun revolves around it. But the expression "the sun rises", "the sun goes down", are accepted idioms for the start and end of a day. The writer intends to convey a timeframe reference, not a cosmological argument!



## "Plenary" Inspiration

The Bible claims to be inspired by God (2Timothy 3:16). But unlike the claims of other religions, the Bible presents its inspiration as "plenary" not "mechanical". *Mechanical Inspiration* is the idea that God dictated every word of the Bible to men who merely wrote them down in a mechanical fashion. Plenary Inspiration on the other hand is the idea that God inspired men to write His Word in their words with the result being totally inspired by God. This means that Scripture contains expressions, figures of speech, and words that both

the author and his original audience understood.

*"The biblical authors did not simply take dictation from God. They were not mere secretaries or automatons, but they were faithful to proclaim the whole message from God without adding to it or taking away from it (Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19). God used the individual personalities, vocabularies, literary styles, and conscious desires of the biblical authors to produce His Word. Thus, while being completely from God, the words of Scripture are also human words in particular human languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic) expressed in distinctive human literary forms that include narrative (Samuel), poetry (Psalms), and parables (Gospels), as well as metaphor (John 15:1-8), some allegory (Galatians 4:21-5:1), and even hyperbole (Psalm 6:6; Luke 14:26)."*

**Dr. Norman Geisler, ["Who Made God?: And Answers to Over 100 Other Tough Questions of Faith"](#), Zondervan, 2003, page 108**

Plenary Inspiration means that God allowed human perspective into His Sacred Text. From a human perspective certain Biblical expressions make sense (like the sun rising and setting), and even certain time-frame references (the Hebrews regarded a new day beginning at sunset while Romans regarded it as sunrise which explains why some time-frame differences occur between the various Gospel accounts).

## **Translation Errors?**

One of the strongest attacks made against the Bible is that it is full of errors due to copying mistakes (both deliberate and unintentional). Some of the treasured doctrines of Christianity, it is claimed, by people like Bart Erman in his book, *"Misquoting Jesus"*, were never endorsed by Christ but were invented centuries later and added to Scripture then. But we know with the highest degree in certainty that the Bible we have today is indeed what God has originally inspired. This is because of the vast number of ancient manuscripts of the Bible that have been discovered (over 5,000) concur with

what we have today. But another attack on the Bible is that no two of these manuscripts agree in the exact wording of their text. Firstly, this is not true. These manuscripts reveal amazing agreement regarding the original text of Scripture. In the occasional verses where certain words are different, translators are able to use a literary reconstruction device called "Textual Criticism" to determine the original text. They do this by comparing the all the available manuscripts. Dr Norman Geisler illustrates Textual Criticism this way-

"Yo# have won 20 million dollars."

"You #ave won 20 million dollars."

"You h#ve won 20 million dollars."

Dr Geisler goes on to say that because the error is in a different place each time, it actually helps us to be *more* sure of what the intended message is (page 121). According to New Testament Textual Critics such as Sir Frederick Kenyon and Dr A.T. Robertson, we can be 99.9% certain that our modern Bibles are completely faithful to the original text.



Thus, the language of Scripture is comprised of more than just *words*. Reading the Bible "literally" doesn't just mean taking its words in a wooden literal sense - it means taking it the way the author

intended. This is one reason why doing "word-studies" can actually be detrimental to arriving at a correct understanding of Scripture. Pursuing the intended meaning of Scripture demands that we become more than just *readers* of the Bible and become *students* of the Bible as well. Those who take the time to do this will find that the Bible is truly God's Word and that it is without error. And for those seeking to hear the voice of God, understanding the *Word of God* helps us to

become familiar with the *language of God* so that we can recognise the voice of God.

May God grant us the understanding we need to learn the language of His Word.

*And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. 1John 5:20*

Dr. Andrew Corbett, August 14th 2007

## **Can We Seriously Take The Bible Literally!**

Asking a believer if they "take the Bible literally" is like asking a husband if he still beats his wife! The issue of Christians taking the Bible "literally" has become a major point of ridicule - even more recently by President-Elect Obama, who joined the chorus of ridicule by claiming during his election campaigning-

*"Which passages of Scripture should guide our public policy? Should we go with Leviticus, which suggests slavery is okay and that eating shellfish is an abomination? Or we could go with Deuteronomy which suggests stoning your child if he strays from the faith." [Catholic News Agency]*

President Obama should know better! He is, after all, a self-confessed believer who has been attending church for years. It is incomprehensible that in all that time he never heard a preacher describe Christianity as being the "New" Covenant. Since Christianity is a "new" covenant, why would President Obama ridicule Biblical Christianity by quoting from the "Old" Covenant? By doing this he perpetuated the myth that it is absurd and unreasonable for any rational person to "take the Bible literally." Perhaps ironically though, in attempting to make his case about the absurdity of taking the Bible literally, President Obama actually committed an error by not citing the Bible literally. That is, the Bible actually does not say that slavery is OK - neither does it say that a child should be

stoned if he strays from the faith. But due to the dire lack of Biblical literacy in Western society too few people would even recognise this!

It's fairly obvious why so many opponents of the Bible are so shrill in their ridicule of Christianity. The claims of Jesus Christ do not sit well with these opponents. In fact, they are downright repulsive! No wonder these adversaries of Christianity want to dismiss the Jesus of the Bible and replace Him with an all-tolerant, non-judgmental, effeminate Jesus. One group called The Jesus Seminar (made up of 150 liberal scholars) rejects any of the Bible as being divinely inspired and nearly all of the New Testament's record of Jesus' life and teaching- in fact, of the Lord's Prayer they claim that only the words "Our Father" are authentic!

But try as they might, the real Jesus - as described and cited in the New Testament - just won't go away. It's almost as if there is an invisible Spirit that metaphysically connects with people's souls about the truth of the words of Jesus in the New Testament- despite how nonPC they might sound today. Can we take the Bible's message "literally"? After all, if we do, we all stand condemned because it literally tells us that despite everything being originally created "good" and "very good", mankind rejected God's best and exchanged it for Satan's grand lies: You can make your own rules and be your own god - that is: you can invent and maintain your own religion! Ever since that original lie was swallowed there has been something not quite right about this world. What was originally good became less than good. Yet the goodness of what God originally created - and the original goodness within each one of us - can still be seen by those who are still. And if a person was to look close enough at Jesus of Nazareth in the pages of the Bible they would marvel at how

different He is to the rest of us and wonder how any person could be so good.

It is then perhaps incomprehensible to post-moderns how the Jesus of the Bible could be called "good" if He was intolerant - which He clearly was, since He did not tolerate hypocrisy, injustice, or sin. Similarly, post-moderns find the Jesus of the Bible abhorrent because He judged others and even condemned some. In fact, He made the audacious claim that He would ultimately judge the whole world!

*The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, John 5:22*

Yet the goodness, wisdom, and moral purity of Jesus of Nazareth is undeniable even by post-moderns so they seek to distance their picture of the acceptable-Jesus from the Biblical Jesus by claiming that the Bible is incoherent, nonsensical, and morally outdated. If post-moderns can achieve this then they can continue to live as if Satan did not originally lie. This is why they claim that the Bible cannot be taken "literally" because a literal observance of its teaching contradicts science, common sense and even compassion. One such example by a blogger who objects to the sexual morality of the Bible is-

*Now, of course, what most people won't tell you because they are scared to death of being un-PC about this is that the Bible is full of s---. It also says you can sell people off to slavery, as long as they are not Israelites. Eating shrimp is also an abomination to God (God is one finicky dude). There are dozens of offenses that get you stoned to death in the Bible including cursing at your parents, mixing the wrong types of cloths or plants ... and adultery. Oh yeah, adultery. How come no one is going on a national campaign to pass a constitutional amendment against that? Oh, that's right, a lot of straight Americans do that, so they would like to ignore that part of the Bible. Look, I know the right-wing abuses the Bible for their own seedy purposes. They selectively quote the Bible and leave out whole chunks of it, including the many positive verses about helping the poor and your fellow man. They emphasize the things that divide us and are full of hate. That*

*being said, read the Bible, it's not a pretty book. It is full of outrages, injustices, violence, mayhem and pure utter nonsensical crap. The Huffington Post (Blog)*

This blogger has joined the new chorus of attempting to paint the Bible as absurd if it is taken "literally". Therefore, when the Bible places restrictions on sexual activity, it surely can't be taken "literally". I'll conclude in a moment by briefly looking at the connection between how the Bible is to be understood and the moral implications or otherwise of this. For now, let's look at what "literal" means...

### **Can We Seriously Take The Bible Literally?**

Do you expect people to take you literally when you tell them that you are sick to death of taxes? What about telling someone that you laughed your head off at a joke? When a sportscaster says during a football game- "This is literally a massacre!" - what does he mean? What about the blogger cited above? What he mean when he writes that the Bible is full of s - - -? Is he being "literally" correct?

The problem of taking the Bible literally that these post-moderns are presenting is ironically caused because they do not take the Bible literally! To take the Bible "literally" does not mean to take it in a wooden literal sense, rather it means to read it as literature. That is, we are seeking to understand its intended meaning not its range of possible meanings.

Thus, in everyday conversation we know that being sick to death means severe frustration. Laughing your head off means that you laughed almost uncontrollably. A massacre on the football field means that the game is totally one sided and one team no longer has a chance of winning the game. We know this because we understand the intended meaning. This is also how we are to read the Bible: understand the intended meaning. President-Elect Barack Obama supposedly cites the Bible as teaching that shell-fish are an abomination to the Lord. He is



alluding to Deuteronomy 14. In this chapter, God gives the Israelites Old Covenant Food restrictions which emphasize that they are not to be like pagan, idolatrous, immoral nations who practiced routine child abuse and degradation of women. These dietary restrictions served a symbolic purpose for a time. But that time ended when God did away with the Old Covenant and established the New Covenant-

*Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Colossians 2:16-17*

President-Elect Obama sounds like he is citing the Bible when he claims that the Bible says a child who strays from the faith is to be stoned. This is not even a question of taking the Bible literally- because its not in the Bible! And as for slavery, no where does the Bible say this is "OK" and in fact, the New Testament lists slave-trading among other vile sins-

*We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine 1Timothy 1:9-10 NIV*

Added to this, it was Christian Bible-believers in the 19th century who began the campaign to end slavery in Western Society. Surely President Obama is aware of this? His statements then about the Bible teaching that it is "OK" to own a slave does not come from a literal reading of the Bible! To take the Bible literally means that we understand the genre of the literature being employed within the Bible. Is it hyperbole? Is it metaphorical? Is it allegory? Is it apocalyptic?

## **Opponents Of The Bible Are Desperate To Make Literalism Sound Like Lunacy!**

Does the Bible literally teach that shellfish are an abomination

to the Lord? The word "abomination" occurs 16 times in the Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the Bible). "Abomination", according to Strong's Concordance of Bible Words, means "morally disgusting".

Among the list abominations mentioned in the Pentateuch are-

- Idolatry (Deut. 7:25)
- Not observing the prescribed diet (Deut. 14:3)
- Offering a defective animal sacrifice (Deut. 17:1)
- Cross-dressing (Deut. 22:5)
- Male and female prostitution (Deut. 23:18)
- Divorce and adultery (Deut. 24:4)

If post-moderns can make these requirements seem ancient, out-of-place, archaic, and old-fashioned, then the one other item, homosexual activity, on this list abominations might also be considered in the same way. This is why many post-moderns have a vested interest in making the Bible sound irrelevant. If it is relevant then it is sexually restrictive!

Which items on this list of abominations are to be still regarded as divine abominations? Can we take a literal understanding of this passage and discover principles for how we should live today? The New Testament teaches that the Sacrificial Laws of the Old Covenant were 'symbolic' of Jesus Christ's ultimate sacrifice and have thus been done away with. The New Testament also teaches that the dietary restrictions of the Old Covenant have been done away with. But it not only does not teach that the sexual restrictions of the Old Covenant have been abolished, it actually repeats them as still binding within the New Covenant. The Laws of Sexual Morality are described in Leviticus 18. To break one of these laws was to be "sexually immoral". It was this list of what defined sexual immorality that Jesus endorsed for mankind when He said-

*For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. Matthew 15:19*

Therefore the New Covenant upholds the sexual laws of Leviticus 18 and forbids -

- Incest (Lev. 18:6-9)
- Adultery (Lev. 18:16, 20)
- Polygamy (Lev. 18:18)
- Pedophilia (Lev. 18:21)
- Homosexuality (Lev. 18:22)
- Bestiality (Lev. 18:23)

The New Testament reveals that being human is not a matter of having the right DNA or chemical make-up, it is a matter of having a soul. This spiritual nature of every human is activated when we think, dream, create, worship, love, and connect with another person sexually.

*There's more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, "The two become one." 1Corinthians 6:16, TM*

Ultimately, sexual union is one of the most beautiful ways that God has chosen to reveal Himself to mankind. In the act of two diverse people: a man and a woman, forming an unbreakable covenant (marriage) and joining together in ultimate intimacy, they are sample-tasting who God is: the diverse members of the Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) who eternally experience ultimate togetherness and unity. This is why Satan is so keen to distort God's gift of sexual intimacy through the encouragement of sexual immorality as condemned in Leviticus 18 and by Jesus of Nazareth.

Therefore, when we truly take the Bible "literally" we do NOT find that God condemns the eating of shellfish, or that He encourages slavery, or even that He commands children "who stray from the faith" to be stoned to death!

What we do find is that the God of the Bible had a set of regulations about clothing, diet, animal sacrifices, that have expired because they were symbolic of what Jesus was to do. But we also discover that the Bible literally forbids sexual immorality, including pedophilia, bestiality, incest, prostitution and adultery. Yet, it does more than simply condemn these violations. It offers hope. Hope that brings forgiveness. Forgiveness that brings cleansing and freedom to those who are bound in sexual sin.

*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1Corinthians 6:9-11*

If you realise that you do not have the kind of peace you long for and have unwittingly bought the lie that the Bible cannot be taken literally when it comes to sexual guidelines, there is good news. Jesus Christ offers you His life in exchange for yours. You are literally just one prayer away from discovering that what the Bible literally offers: a new identity, peace with God and eternal life is literally true.

[Dr. Andrew Corbett, November 22nd, 2008]

## **Words in Scripture are equivocal**

Andrew Corbett, Legana, Australia 2009.

*it's not that Christianity has been tried and found wanting, it's been found difficult and left untried... (G.K. Chesterton)*

When it comes to understanding the Bible, *simple* interpretations often end up becoming *simplistic* instead. A simplistic understanding of Scripture overlooks important facts which (often innocently) leads to a *misunderstanding* of the text.

For example, in Galatians 5:4 we read the expression *fallen from grace*. A simplistic understanding of this expression says this as describing a *Christian who sins*. But this cannot be what the text means. The context of the Epistle to the Galatians is salvation by grace rather than by works. If a believer sins, they don't *fall from grace*, rather they *fall into grace*! To fall from grace is instead to *fall into works and legalism*.

The other thing that requires the Bible to be read with care is its usage of very precise *big* words. Unlike the general words of the Bible, which are equivocal, there are some very deliberate and selectively used words that are *unequivocal*.

## **The Bible's Little Big Words...**

### ***The Little Big Words: LOVE***

There are some big words in Scripture that actually look deceptively small. For example - "Love" is perhaps the biggest word in the Bible. Yet there's probably not a person on the planet who understands what the Bible means by this word. We live in a world where people "make" love when what they may actually mean is that they "fornicate". When a man says to his wife that he would "love" to go shopping with her, what he actually may mean is that he doesn't want her to spend too much. We use this word in ways that are quite foreign to the way the Bible uses this word. "Love", as used in the Bible, is more akin to *giving, caring, unconditional kindness, sacrificial serving, joyful delight in the presence of*. Biblically the word love is either of three Greek words: *agape* (unconditional giving regardless of the response), *phileo* (brotherly love), or *storgos* (kindness toward another, Rom. 12:10). Therefore, this "big" word is not unequivocal. The Bible reader must consider the context to understand the way in which this word is being used.

### ***The Little Big Words: SIN***

"Sin" is a big word in the Bible. "Sin" was an archery term. If an arrow missed its intended target it was *harmartia* - 'missing the mark' - or in English: *sin*. This idea is carried over into our moral condition before an infinitely holy God. We all miss the mark of His target of moral and spiritual perfection. This apparently little word can damn a person's soul for eternity if left unforgiven or un-atoned for.

### ***The Little Big Words: HELL***

"Hell" is a big word in Scripture. Some Bible teachers have sought to redefine Hell as something other than degrees of eternal torment by teaching what is called *Anihilationism* (the idea that God doesn't eternally punish anyone, rather, He simply ends their existence). This is closely associated with another idea called *Universalism* (that all people are actually saved by virtue of Christ's atonement). As Dr Tony Campolo said in his book, "*Speaking My Mind*", that he *warmed to the idea of there being no Hell, the only problem he had was that the Bible says there is!*

### **But the BIG Words in Scripture are unequivocal**

Every good English teacher will tell his students "*Don't use a big word when a small word will do.*" Similarly, they will teach their students to write *concisely* - don't use a lot of words when you can say the same thing with just a few. But sometimes it is a big word that is both simple and concise. This is especially so if the big word is *unequivocal* (it can only mean one thing). Scripture very carefully uses such big words. Let's look at four of these and then we'll conclude with Christianity's biggest word.

## ***The Big Words of Christianity: PROPITIATION***

"Propitiation" is used just five times in the Bible.

*"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have **mercy** on me, a sinner.' (God be **propitious** to me—the sinner! <sup>YLT</sup>) Luke 18:13 whom God put forward as a **propitiation** by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. Romans 3:25*

*For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make **atonement** for the sins of the people (to make **propitiation** for the sins of the people <sup>NASB</sup>). Hebrews 2:17 He is the **propitiation** for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 1John 2:2*

*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an **atoning sacrifice** for our sins (to be the **propitiation** for our sins <sup>NASB</sup>). 1John 4:10*

To understand what this powerful word means, we need to first understand just how strongly God feels about sin and justice. Perhaps the word that most aptly sums up how God feels about sin and what level of justice is required to appropriately deal with sin is: *wrath*. Imagine being angry. Now imagine being really really angry about something you hate. However angry you can imagine getting, you are still only experiencing an infinitesimal amount of how angry God feels about, and how much He hates, injustice caused by sin. The closest word we have in English to describe this emotion is: *wrath*. Propitiation is God unleashing His fury and wrath upon someone so that His need for justice is satisfied and the guilty can receive mercy. This word does not occur in the Old Testament. Instead the Old Testament word is: *atonement*.

The Old Testament pre-illustrates the truth of the New Testament. It dramatically portrays propitiation and atonement in a ritual ceremony called *Yom Kippur*. Described in Leviticus 16, on this most holy day, two goats were presented to the High Priest. Lots were cast for which goat would be made the sacrificial offering for the sins of the people. The goat *not* chosen to be sacrificed (by the short straw) then witnesses the High Priest lay his hands on the head of the doomed goat and pronounce *the sins of the people be upon you*. It then witnesses its fellow caprine have its throat slit. As the bloodied and slain goat was lifted onto the Brazen Altar, the blood-splattered-yet-living goat would be released to flee through the open gate into the wilderness. This is where the expression "Scape-Goat" comes from.

It is a picture of us on Judgment Day before God. We approach God's Altar like the two goats being brought before the High Priest and have our sins read against us. Two things become immediately clear: (i) We are unjustifiably guilty; and (ii) God is furious about our guilt! But we are not standing before God alone. As God pronounces judgment against us, the One standing beside us steps in front of us to take our punishment and bear the wrath of God. The One standing beside us is Jesus Christ. He was the Yom Kippur Goat. We who have accepted Him as our propitiation are like the goat that is allowed to escape. And this Old Testament illustration serves to illustrate another big word of the Bible...

### ***The Big Words of Christianity: JUSTIFICATION***

If you turned up to our appointment and I said to you, "Justify yourself!" I would be asking you to give a reason for your actions that could excuse your poor behaviour. To justify yourself is to give a good enough reason to be



considered innocent. Returning to our Yom Kipur illustration, if we were standing before God on Judgment Day and heard Him say "Justify yourself!" we would soon realise why the Scripture says "*every mouth will be stopped*"-

*Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. Romans 3:19*

In other words we won't be able to answer God. But for those who have received Christ, they won't have to answer because Christ will step in front of us and be our justification before God. What can we possibly say before God to justify ourselves? The only satisfactory answer is: Jesus.

*And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. Romans 5:16*

Not only is Christ our propitiation, but He is also our justification.

*[Jesus] who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Romans 4:25*

### ***The Big Words of Christianity: REGENERATION***

"Regeneration" is both a long and a big word in the Bible. It is one of the distinguishing hallmarks of Christianity. Without being spiritually regenerated you cannot be a Christian. Jesus used this term in different words when He told Nicodemus that he must be *born-again* (John 3:3). This is why becoming a Christian is not merely an intellectual exercise. Neither is it merely *turning over a new leaf* morally. The Bible teaches that regeneration is not the result of anything we do. It is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit gracing a spiritually dead person.

*he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:5*

In order to understand why people need regeneration, Paul the apostle explained to the Ephesians that all people are spiritually dead without Christ.

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins Ephesians 2:1*

"Dead" in Biblical terms doesn't mean *cease to exist*; rather it means "separated" (from a life source). To be spiritually dead is to be separated from God by sin.

*But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear. Isaiah 59:2*

When a person's body is separated from their spirit, they are dead.

*...the body apart from the spirit is dead...James 2:26*

To be spiritually regenerated by the Holy Spirit is to be reconciled to God through having our sins forgiven and a relationship of adoption established and a warmth of divine fellowship commenced through prayer. Have you been regenerated? It is what the New Testament calls our **First Resurrection**:

*I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. John 5:25 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Rev. 20:5*

or as Paul puts it:

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— Ephesians 2:4-5*

## ***The Big Words of Christianity: SANCTIFICATION***

"Sanctification" is only used about six times in the New Testament. It means to purify. Most Christians use this word to talk about their Christian growth. In this sense, sanctification means to grow holier or spiritually purer.

*But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.*

*Romans 6:22*

There is no doubt that we are to grow in this way. But this may not be the most accurate usage of this word in the New Testament. It seems that sanctification has two aspects. Firstly, there is its judicial aspect. In the eyes of God the reconciled, regenerated adopted child of God is sanctified (made holy) by virtue of Christ. This sense of sanctification is therefore a *past* event. The second sense of the word is the practical aspect. This sense of sanctification is therefore a *present* event.

*For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 1Thess.4:3*

## ***The Biggest Word of Christianity: GRACE***

But the biggest word in Christianity is not propitiation, justification, regeneration, or even sanctification. The biggest word in Christianity is **GRACE**. Why would a God who demands our happiness and complete joy and that we be at peace with Him and others, be so furious when we replace true happiness for idolatry or peace with others for selfishness? This is partly because this is mutiny in the highest order. It is like saying to God, "*You are inept at running the universe! You are the biggest loser in the cosmos! You do not deserve credit for anything! I know more than You. Don't You dare make any rules for me to keep! I want nothing to do with You -Your words - Your*

*will - or Your ways!"* From God's perspective, this is the stance of the morally good, decent, civil, educated, caring and even religiously devout person who has chosen to ignore God and His offer of reconciliation. Spiritual deadness ranges from denying there is even a problem (this is called lying - 1John 1:10) to blatant indifference to the consequences of such choices (1Tim. 4:2 - *speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron*). No matter where a person is on this range of spiritual mutiny and treachery, they are completely unable to rectify their situation and find peace with God. But God has chosen to rescue His enemies. What great love! What great grace! This concept of God is unique to Christianity. This is why we can say that *grace* is the biggest word in Christianity. Have you received the grace of God? You don't need to use big words in your prayerful petition to God for it.