

A REVIEW OF THE VERSIONS—WHICH ARE RELIABLE?

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Introduction

It is always a joy supreme to appear on this lectureship each September. Genuine gratitude is expressed to the elders, Jack Williams and the 39th Street congregation for the gracious invitation to speak on this current one.

Three thousand years ago wise Solomon observed that of the making of “many books there is no end” (Ecclesiastes 12:12). Were the Sage of Jerusalem still among us, he might as well say, “of the making of many English translations or versions there is no end.” And indeed there is no end in sight. People have long prided themselves in having the church of their own choice; now we have Bibles available for everyone’s choice. With but few exceptions they get worse and worse.

Brief Explanations of Some Well Know Versions

Some fourteen will be numbered and noted briefly.

1. **THE KING JAMES VERSION.** This version came out in 1611 and is nearly four centuries old. It is readable, dependable and accurate. The average word in it is five syllables. It contains no damnable errors. It has been by far the most popular English translation ever made. It is my conviction that it will be responsible for populating Heaven with more English readers than any of its ancient or modern competitors. I have used it all my life, preach from it, write from it, do all my memory work from it and love it loyally and favor it fundamentally.
2. **THE AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION.** It came out in 1901 and was the work of 101 men. It is scholarly, dependable and exceptionally close to the Greek original in the New Testament. It is not as easy to read or memorize as is the smoother-flowing language of the stately KJV. It is not used as much as it was a generation ago and this is sad.
3. **THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION.** This is a fairly recent product. It updates words in the KJV that have changed meanings like prevent to precede and wist to know. It has some weaknesses but is safer by far than most of the ones which have come out the last thirty to fifty years. Yet, I find no compelling reason to give up my beloved KJV for it.
4. **MCCORD’S NEW TESTAMENT TRANSLATION OF THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL.** This version first came out in 1988. He asked me to be a consultant for it as he worked on it during the 1980’s. I made many suggestions some of which he accepted and others which he rejected. It has a number of things to commend it. I do appreciate his inclusion of Acts 8:37, though bracketed, in the text and his defense of it in notes at the back of his work. The way he dealt with *monogenes* (Greek term for only-begotten) and his total elimination of the word church are two of its’ most serious deficiencies in my judgment. I begged him repeatedly not to follow the RSV on this word staying with only-begotten in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; I John 4:9 and to retain the word church in its’ more than one hundred

occurrences in the New Testament. He desisted in both of these. He opted for you and your in prayer language instead of thee, thou, thy and thine. Such is not a plus to many of us who still love the ring of these solemn forms which are not outdated or archaic in the least. Who objects to “My Country Tis of Thee” in this patriotic lyric? Any number of religious songs recently written still retain thee, thou, thy and thine, such as “How Great Thou Art.” Would it really enhance this stately song to sing, “How Great You Are?” If so, how?

5. **THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION.** The main trouble with it is its’ modernism. An early critic of it said that its’ success in sales would be a triumph for modernism. One of its’ translators, Harry M. Orlinsky, said in 1978 that the RSV is “the Bible of the liberal Protestant Community.” He called it correctly. The RSV New Testament came out in 1946 and the RSV Bible made its’ literary debut in 1952. It is highly dangerous as a Bible for study and guidance. It has lost much of the popularity it had in the 50’s, 60’s, and 70’s. The quicker it dies permanently, the better!
6. **THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE.** This is a Lockman Foundation Bible and is very wordy. It is difficult to separate the actual text from the abundance of words they have added. At times it is contradictory and teaches fatal error. It is far from being “the best study testament on the market” as Billy Graham once assessed it. Graham is a novice when it comes to recommending reliable Bibles! It is far too dangerous to use as one’s spiritual guide. A quick look at Ephesians 5:19 tells why in just one verse.
7. **THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MODERN ENGLISH.** J. B. Phillips is the translator. A serious examination of his preface remarks about Biblical penman not knowing they were writing Scripture, that Paul was inconsistent and did not care whether his later writings were in harmony with earlier writings, how he dealt with Acts 8:20 with its’ fatal footnote and how he mutilated I Corinthians 14:22 with its’ fatal footnote gives a fair sampling of his translational perversions. Though a wizard with word his product is far too dangerous to use as a study testament. I will not recommend it.
8. **THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE.** This English product came out more than forty years ago. It is way out in left field with its’ modernism and liberalism. Were I a modernist or liberal in religion, this would be my Bible by all means. I would want no other. It not only promotes and abets modernism and liberalism, but is defensive of Romanism and Protestantism. In its’ rendering of Matthew 16:18 it actually “out-Romed Rome and out-Poped the Pope.” Were I a Catholic I would give it a hearty recommendation on just Matthew 16:18 alone. This product really messes up Acts 20:7 as touching the proper time for observing the Lord’s Supper. It leaves I Corinthians 14 in shambles. It is a lethal, literary product. C. H. Dodd was the Chairman of the producing committee and he was a staunch modernist. Truth was not safe in his hands nor the hands of his fellow committee members. It is a perversion personified in a literary product.
9. **TODAY’S ENGLISH VERSION (TEV) OR GOOD NEWS FOR THE MODERN MAN.** This poisonous product spelled bad news for man at its’ literary debut in 1966. It was misnamed. It should have been called **BAD NEWS FOR MODERN MAN.** The Old

Testament is bad; if anything, the New Testament is even worse. Robert Bratcher, the one man translator of the New Testament, was a thorough-going modernist and infatuated with Protestantism. His modernism shows in how he dealt with the blood passages linked with Christ. Denominationalism reeks in numerous places. Like the NEB he really tampered with Acts 20:7 having the supper on Saturday and changing it to a fellowship meal! Fellowship, *koinonia*, does not even occur in the Greek text of Acts 20:7. In the initial printing he has line drawings in Matthew 2 and Acts 9. He has three wise men coming to see Jesus and Saul falling from a horse. My initial reaction over the line drawing in Acts 9 was, “Have I been reading and preaching from Acts 9 all these years and missed a thing as big as horse therein?” There is no horse in Acts 9. Bratcher “horsed” around with Saul’s conversion in fullness on the Damascus Road instead of in Acts 22:16 where, three days later, he was commanded to be baptized for the washing away of his sins. He was not saved on the Damascus Road. Frequent are his contradictions. He contends for faith only in Romans 1, 3 and Galatians 2 and refutes his own lethal error in James 2:24. If right in Romans and Galatians, he was wrong in James 2. If right in James 2, he was wrong in Romans 1, 3 and Galatians 2. Here is a case of where he cannot be right without being wrong or wrong without being right! What a dilemma for a so-called Biblical translation or more correctly, Biblical mistranslation! He has castigated severely those of us who believe in verbal inspiration. It is far too dangerous to use as a study Bible.

10. THE LIVING BIBLE PARAPHRASED. Kenneth Taylor is its’ paraphraser. My, but what he has done to the Taylor name. For thirty years I have wished he had a different last name! In LBP his Calvinism and premillennialism are dominant in both testaments. At times he is quite vulgar. Baptists, in Nashville, once became very upset with his vulgarity and protested against their big Baptist book store in Nashville selling it. Yet, another Baptist, Billy Graham, was pushing it into prominence both nationally and internationally about that same time. Graham’s endorsement of it should alert us to its’ obvious dangers. Truth has never been safe in Graham’s hands. Taylor was totally inept as a translator. He frequently complained about the difficulty of getting up his Calvinistic sermons with a KJV in hand. Furthermore, he said his children had difficulty in understanding the KJV. My wife and I have Taylor children and they grew up reading and learning from the KJV. Both were baptized in youth and both are faithful today with our daughter married to a faithful gospel preacher and our son a deacon where he attends. The LPB is very, very, dangerous. It is not even a fifth-rate commentary. Like the magic books in Acts 19 it needs to be burned world-wide!
11. THE NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE. This is also a Lockman Foundation Bible. It is considerably superior to its literary predecessor, THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE, but it runs a poor, poor second to the great translation after which it is named and which it apparently hoped to supplant one day. It has too many serious problem areas to be one’s study and directional Bible. How it deals with Amos 7:14; Matthew 5:17; Ephesians 2:15 and Mark 16:9-20 are enough for me not to recommend it, period! A number of conservative religious leaders in other religions, especially among some Baptists, have filed objections to the NSB. Why it has caught on with some of our professors, preachers and congregations is baffling to me. Why exchange a good one which we have in the KJV for one that is questionable in some key renderings? I am not opposed to accepting a good reliable one,

should one EVER come along, but am opposed to exchanging a good one for an inferior one which is what many ask us to do. It is strange that brethren will ask us to do this but they have, do and will out there in the future.

12. THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. This new darling, as many of our brethren view it, has been around about thirty years. Its' New Testament came out before its Old Testament. Both made their debut during the 1970's. This is how long I have been opposed to it. During the 1970's Noel Merideth and I conducted a week-long seminar for a West Tennessee congregation dealing with version matters. In that study we dealt with both the RSV, it was still popular then, and the NIV, which was just emerging within Bible buying markets. Both of us spoke each night and then fielded questions from the audience at the end. We were asked to evaluate the RSV and NIV. We agreed that the main thing wrong with the RSV is its' modernism and the main thing wrong with the NIV is its' sectarianism or denominationalism. About the same time we said this about the RSV, Harry M. Orlinsky said in a speech on the West Coast that "the RSV is the Bible of the liberal Protestant community." He should have known his product for he was one of the RSV translators yet believing the New Testament did not belong in the Bible at all. He was blasphemous relative to Mary and the virgin birth of the Christ child.

The NIV reeks with Calvinism in Psalm 51:5; Romans 7-8 and Galatians 2. In just one opening one can count nearly a dozen times it uses "sinful nature" from the Greek word sarx. This is Calvin's total hereditary depravity doctrine that every baby, no exceptions, is born totally depraved and the depravity is inherited. Be it kept fixed firmly in mind that this is total, entire and whole. But we get our nature from God. Does He, as the Father of our spirits, bequeath us a sinful nature? If so, then we start out bad and due to no fault of our own, not a particle of our own.

The NIV's rendering of Romans 1:16-17 is just the old Protestant error of "faith only" warmed over and made palatable for the naïve.

The way it handles, more aptly mishandles, Acts 2:27, 31 is inexcusable translation. Were I a Jehovah's Witness, I would prefer the NIV on these two verses over what the Watchtower version has!

The NIV really messes up the gospel plan of salvation. It has people included in Christ at the point of hearing in Ephesians 1:13, justified at the point of faith in Romans 10:9-10, saved at the point of confession in Romans 10:9-10 and then baptized into Christ in Galatians 3:27. If included in Christ at the point of hearing, then the person must become lost again in order that he might be justified at the point of faith. But subsequent to faith he must become lost again in order that he might be saved at the point of confession. However, subsequent to the confession, he must get totally out of Christ again in order that he might be baptized into him. What a jumbled-up mess they have made with the simple, sublime plan of the gospel for saving aliens. Reliable versions have the person believing unto, repenting unto, confessing unto and then baptized into Christ. In hearing, faith, repentance and confession we are traveling unto or toward salvation. Baptism puts us into,

a term of transition, Christ, into His death and into His church where all the redeemed are enrolled.

Shortly after the New Testament portion of it came out I asked brother Guy N. Woods his assessment of it. This is what he told me personally, “Brother Taylor, as little as I thing of the RSV I would prefer it over the NIV. The NIV is shot through with error!” And it is! It is highly dangerous and yet it is preferred by over growing numbers of our professors, preachers, elders, deacons, Bible teachers and people in the pews. It is shameful they do not know better. I adamantly refuse to recommend it. It is not reliable, period!

13. THE READERS DIGEST BIBLE. It is correctly named. It is not Jehovah’s Bible, Jesus’ Bible or the Spirit’s Bible. It is human in origin and perverted by design. It removed about 50% of the Old Testament and 25% of the New Testament. This meant a reduction of 40% or 300,000 words. Who gave Bruce Metzger and his Jehoiakim crew authority to leave out a single syllable? Deity surely did not. This product should be a stench in the nostrils of every person who believes God’s Word is inviolable. Its’ vast deletions make it a lethal product from the word go. It is a spiritual murderer; it is a Bible destroyer. It is a spiritual NO, NO to anyone who wants to go to heaven in yonder’s world.
14. THE NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION. It is modernistic like its’ predecessor and adds the literary crime of being a Feminist Bible. It is unworthy of any sort of recommendation among every modern Theophilus — one who is a lover or friend of God (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1). It is lethal and dangerous to the nth degree and then some!

Conclusion

Before his death in 1975 brother Gus Nichols of Jasper, Alabama, great preacher and a walking Bible among us, advised our staying with the KJV and ASV. Today’s religious society is general and the Lord’s church in particular would be ten thousand times better off if his sage counsel had been followed by preachers, professors, schools, colleges, congregations and people in the pews. But alas, they have not followed his sage counsel.