

**I. KING JAMES (AUTHORIZED) VERSION.**

- A. Many problems raised by biblical revision stem from people's misunderstandings about the KJV. The KJV or AV is the translation by which all others are to be measured. The AV is not free from doctrinal error.
- B. In no sense has the KJV received divine authorization making it the Authorized Version. The preface simply says that it was authorized to be read in the English churches.
- C. The present day KJV is not the 1611 version. Updates came in 1612, 1613, 1616, 1629 and 1659. In 1727 the King's printer and Edinberg issued an edition in which several thousand errors in the marginal materials were amended and corrected.
- D. The KJV was translated from the Textus Receptus of 1516 by Erasmus who worked from the Latin Vulgate. Although not to be considered as errors the KJV contains many archaic phrases and words which prevent understanding.
- E. Most people who use the KJV understand it because they have been conditioned to its oddities through years of study. Therefore, it is not generally recommended for beginners.
- F. One can read the KJV and go to heaven. But there is no valid reason why the Bible should be frozen in 17th century English. It is possible to have a newer, more accurate translation than the KJV.

**II. AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION.**

- A. The English Revised Version was published in 1885 as a much needed revision of the KJV. Most of the work was by Britains who kept their style of wording. In 1901 the Americans published their version of this translation and called it the ASV.
- B. Westcott and Hort was used in word definitions along with many Greek and Hebrew texts. Many archaisms were dropped and the titles of books were in better harmony with the ancient manuscripts.
- C. The translation into English from the Greek and Hebrew is much superior to that of the KJV. The revisers rendered their text more accurately, and many misleading archaisms of the KJV were cleaned up.
- D. Unfortunately there are many places that the word order in the English is cumbersome due to the rigid translation from the Greek. And even though many of the archaisms of the KJV were done away with, the ASV has some of its own making understanding difficult.
- E. The copyright on the ASV expired in 1928. Ownership of the copywrite is by the same group that later revised the ASV and came out with the Revised Standard Version in 1946 (NT), 1952 (OT). It is likely that the influence and popularity of the ASV will decrease rather than increase in the years to come.

**III. REVISED STANDARD VERSION.**

- A. Because of World War II work on the RSV was greatly slowed and the revision of the ASV (NT) did not appear until 1946. There are three basic reasons for the RSV:
  1. Recognitions of inadequacies of the KJV.
  2. The failure of many English and American revisions to overcome these inadequacies.
  3. The discovery of new resources from which to translate.
- B. There was a massive publicity campaign to sell the Bible. Over 3,000 outlets had copies in the initial printing. Reaction was mixed to the new translation.
- C. The effort of Westcott and Hort were a definite plus, and many different manuscripts were consulted in the editing and translating process. The final product was printed in paragraphs, not verses and serious debate as since raged over the translations of Isa. 7:14 and Jn. 3:16.
- D. The RSV does not use italics to indicate words the translators supplied to the text, but did try and show by indentation the parallelism in Hebrew poetry found in the OT.

- E. The word order of the RSV was a great improvement over the ASV, and many of the archaic phrases were eliminated.
- F. One of the most important things about the publication of the RSV is that it marked the end of the KJV being "the Bible." At the time of publication the RSV seemed to be a "avant-garde" but in looking back over the years scholars now seem to agree that the translation was quite traditional.

#### **IV. THE NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE.**

- A. This particular translation appeared in July, 1970 published by the Lockman Foundation. It was done by 58 anonymous scholars, the majority of which held doctorates in Biblical languages. It also represented men from many different churches/denominations including the churches of Christ.
- B. One of the reasons for working on the NASB was the fact that the highly acclaimed ASV was disappearing and interest needed to be renewed. As the title implies, it is intended to be an update of the ASV.
- C. Although printed in verses, the beginnings of paragraphs are designated by the number of the verse being in bold print. The ASV did not use quotation marks, but the NASB has a very extensive system of quotations.
- D. An effort is made to recognize the Hebrew poetry of the OT, and OT verses that appear in the NT are printed in all capitals. The ASV carries over 170 more marginal notes than does the NASB, and this is to the discredit of the NASB.
- E. One of the interesting features of the NASB is its treatment of questions. The wording is awkward due to the extreme effort to have a formal equivalence in translating. Yet, consistently the NASB capitalizes all pronouns that the translators feel refer to deity. Italics are used to show when words have been inserted into the English text for easier readability.
- F. The English is grammatically correct but very difficult to read in spots. It has a kind of wooden style. It also retains the use of the words "thee" and "thou" which is a throw-back to the ASV and KJV. The NASB has however become what its name says, "standard" Bible for much of Christendom.

#### **V. THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION.**

- A. The main problem with the NKJV is the name itself. Sam Moore, an aspiring business man is now the owner of Thomas Nelson Pub. This once very prestigious printer of Bibles is now run by a man who seems to want to make some money in printing a translation that carries the name King James.
- B. Over 100 scholars from many denominations and the churches of Christ worked on this translation. One must remember, based on this information that the reader of the NKJV is not reading the "KJV revisited."
- C. But on the other hand, the reader needs to be aware that in many cases the laborers kept some of the KJV style and wording, thus putting a serious limitation on what they could do while translating. One wonders where the great treasures of this work are found--in the original texts or in the text of the NKJV.
- D. The words of Jesus are printed in red, as in many of the KJV Bibles. They strayed from the tradition of the KJV by using capitals on pronouns referring to deity.
- E. One of the serious errors of the NKJV is that they relied on the Textus Receptus rather than earlier and more reliable manuscripts. Very few scholars will even try to promote such a manuscript to be translated from today. The "majority" text, although late by some accounts is accepted by the majority of scholars as the most accurate.
- F. Because of the mixture of Greek and Hebrew influences. The reliance on the KJV and the enterprising publisher the NKJV is a Bible that will have to stand or fall by itself. Its very curious style, a mixture of Jacobean with glosses of 20th century vocabulary, is a genre all to itself.

- G. It is a literary monument to tradition. It easier to understand than the KJV, but who needs an updated KJV? Current textual studies and earlier manuscripts give translators a better shot at giving the public a good translation. In these areas the NKJV falls short.

## VI. THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.

- A. The NIV (NT) appeared in 1973. It was born out of a dissatisfaction with current translations. Some felt that the word "American" made the NASV strictly an American Bible that would not appeal to other nationalities. Thus the name, "The New International Version" came about. The OT appeared in 1978. The printing of the entire Bible in the NIV was the largest printing ever done for an English Bible.
- B. The NIV is easy to read and comprehend. Words of different speakers are put into paragraphs making it easier to follow a conversation. Marginal notes are not as extensive as the NASB but they do call attention to variant readings and the differences in older and newer manuscripts. Since the first printings over 105 notes have been added in subsequent printings.
- C. The NIV combines some very traditional renderings, some of other modern translations and some very innovative renderings. Some have countered that because of these three kinds of phraseology the NIV becomes inconsistent. Even the names of kings and other people in the Bible have been changed to make the reading easier.
- D. One can only speculate if this is going a little too far even if one is talking about dynamic equivalence over formal.
- E. But through it all the NIV has a very contemporary style that far surpasses its popular predecessors (ASV, RSV, NASB, NKJV). Even numbers for measurements are given in yards, feet and inches with only the tabernacle measured in cubits. References to time and days of the week are in the common usage of today.
- F. A very diligent effort is made to put the idioms of the Bible into native English. The translators have steered a middle of the road course in staying away from the literalness of the NASB and the excessive paraphrasing of Phillips, and the NEB. The NIV does stay away from anachronisms by using, for example, "cloak" and not "coat."
- G. Some conservative scholars have blasted the NIV for teaching some erroneous doctrines such as original sin, hereditary depravity, the restoration of national Israel, premillennialism, and predestination."
- H. To say that the NIV is in the 20th century what the KJV was in the 17th century is premature. But the NIV does help the reader who does not know English well to read and comprehend the Bible in an easier way than would be found in other translations.

## VII. LIVING BIBLE (PARAPHRASED).

- A. The Living Bible Paraphrased by Kenneth N. Taylor is the outcome of 16 years of work which began in 1954 when Taylor started paraphrasing Scripture for use with his children in family devotions.
- B. This paraphrased first appeared in 1962 when 2,000 copies were printed with the title, "The Living Letters." It has also been seen under the titles of "Reach Out Version" (1969), "The Way" (1972), and numerous segments. It is now available in 110 languages and is distributed around the world. More than 23 million copies have been circulated.
- C. Different than a translation, a paraphrase aims at restating in simplified but related ways the ideas conveyed in the original language. The paraphraser states in different language what he understands to be the author's meaning. The paraphrase expands or abbreviates where it seems advantageous in order to make the meaning clear to the modern reader. In this way it has the nature of a brief commentary on Scripture.

- D. Therefore, the major problem with a paraphrase lies not in the idea of paraphrase itself, but in men's failure to realize its purpose. Many treat it as a translation which it is not intended to be. Advertising claims of it being a translation have not helped this problem.
- E. Another problem with this paraphrase is that it comes from one author. The best and most reliable translations always come from a group or committee of men. The Living Word has the limitation of the theology (prejudices) of one author. Taylor claims to have began with the ASV of 1901, and that he used several Greek and Hebrew scholars when needed, but he never has named who these scholars are. Taylor's views do not represent the consensus of opinion of modern textual students or either the conservative or liberal persuasion.
- F. Taylor has used in several places the language of the street to convey his message. What many would consider to be profanity is found in 1Sam. 20:30; Jo. 9:34; 2Sam. 13:11. His rendering of Acts 2:38, "a public announcement of their decision to turn their backs on sin" is hardly equivalent to "the remission of sins." "Fit in with your husbands' plans" (1Pet. 3:1) may be quite pleasing to the women's liberation movement but is far from what Peter actually said.
- G. Taylor himself has said, "For study purposes, a paraphrase should be checked against a rigid translation." The Living Bible is easy reading and provides the general outline of the biblical story, but it is not sufficiently reliable to be useful for serious study by any person who is concerned over details of what the Word of God says about historical or doctrinal matters.

### **VIII. GOOD NEWS BIBLE (TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION).**

- A. The Good News Bible, otherwise known as Good News for Modern Man appeared in 1966 primarily through the work of Robert Bratcher.
- B. By 1976 more than 52 million copies had been sold. The books of the apocrypha were added in 1979. Not a revision of previous content and message in standard it is written in everyday English just as the NT was originally written in Kione Greek, the language of the first century common man. With the non-Christian reader in mind, the GNB is pitched at the elementary school reading level. The GNB is great for those who have English as a non-primary language.
- C. The GNV is to be classified as a common—language, Dynamic Equivalence translation, less paraphrasic than Phillips but more so than other current translations.
- D. Unique to the GNB is that it contains over 500 line drawings by a Swiss born artist, Mlle. Annie Vallotton to illustrate some of the biblical motifs. Interestingly enough the 1611 editions of the KJV also had mythological illustrations in it too.
- E. With new editions the editors of the GNB have been sensitive to needed changes making over 700. But the style reminds one of reading a newspaper and it does not lend itself to the different genres such as poetry and wisdom. To avoid slang and jargon the translation is highly colloquial, such as 1Sam. 17:38 which says, "You smart aleck, you."
- F. The strength of this translation is that it will fill the void of the millions of English speaking people who want to read the Bible. It is hoped that once the initial truths have been grasped that the serious student will go on to other translations for a deeper understanding of the text.

### **IX. THE JERUSALEM BIBLE.**

- A. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is the product of Alexander Jones and 27 Catholic scholars. It represents a rebirth of interest in biblical studies among Roman Catholics. Its appearance was a milestone in Catholic English Bible publication. This is true because the Douay version came from the Latin Vulgate, while the JB is a translation from ancient Greek and Hebrew manuscripts.
- B. The JB has a system of notes, Roman Catholic in persuasion, to help the reader. A large Bible, the first edition was issued in 1966, had over 2,000 pages, weighed 5 pounds, and sold for over \$16.00. A paperback edition with notes appeared in 1971.

- C. In recent years theological differences between Catholic and liberal Protestant scholars have largely vanished, and the notes of the JB reflect this change. In such an ecumenical atmosphere the JB represents the theological stance of liberal literary and historical criticism.
- D. On traditional Catholic doctrines the JB stands firm, the marginal notes guarantee that. Even when debatable texts are translated straightforward, extensive Catholic notes accompany the verses stating the Roman Catholic position. It is Dynamic Equivalence translation, with the books of the apocrypha included.
- E. The wording of the JB is very poor/clumsy in places. Many have felt that the JB should be read privately but not in public. The first edition was marred with printing errors and other problems, all of which were not corrected in the following editions.
- F. The JB refuses to acknowledge the doctrinal divisions of the Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism. It has value in showing the doctrinal positions Catholic scholars take on certain passages. But is much more liberal than even the RSV.

X. **GREG'S PICKS.**

Based on my personal study and reading here are my picks for and against the use of certain translations.

- A. Best for study purposes are:
  1. New American Standard Bible.
  2. Revised Standard Version.
  3. American Standard Version.
- B. Best for reading in private:
  1. New International Version.
  2. Good News Bible (TEV).
- C. Those to be cautious of for reliability or readability:
  1. New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.
  2. Living Bible (Paraphrased).
  3. Jerusalem Bible.
  4. King James (Authorized) Version.
  5. New King James Bible.
  6. Any translation done by one individual.
- D. The best way to study the scriptures in the absence of any reference material is to compare and contrast several translations.