

Bible Translations (don't be fooled)

(by Bob Pulliam)

How many different versions of the Bible do you have laying around the house? There are quite a number to choose from. Unfortunately, some of that number have no business being called *translations*. They are not scholarly or accurate, and amount to nothing but commentaries. Some were produced for no other reason than the agenda of a particular religious organization. Others may have been good hearted tries, but still shouldn't be masquerading as *translations*.

It would be helpful for you to know how we got our present day Bible in this study. And so, let me take a moment to give a very brief description. We begin with the original documents written by apostles and prophets. These were not written in English as you might well suppose. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew (a small portion in Aramaic), and the New Testament was written in Greek. None of the original writings survive to the present, but hand-made copies, not far removed from the original's times do exist. The original languages of these documents have to be translated into English for our use. Older translations (KJV, Coverdale, etc...) use an old style of English that is very awkward for us today. And so newer translations have been produced to reflect changes in the English language. At times, newer translations have had faulty theories at their base, which have tainted them (e.g. The Westcott-Hort theory). Others have tried to be true to the original, and produced a sound translation. Others have allowed doctrinal prejudices poison what would have otherwise been a monumental work. It is important that we choose our Bible version wisely. Is it not from this source that we will learn about salvation?

The King James Version...

Released in 1611, the KJV has been a time honored translation. At times it has been revered above what is fitting (making it seem that the apostles had spoken and written Shakespearean English). Although the old style of English is cumbersome for most, it is an extremely accurate and trustworthy translation. I know of only one truly memorable error in it's pages, and that is in Acts 12:4. There the word *Easter* is used rather than *Passover*.

The New King James Version...

This version was released in 1979, and has attempted to not only translate the original text accurately, but keep phrasing in such a way that one may easily follow someone else who reads aloud from the KJV. I'm not certain that the translators did that well in this regard, but overall the translation stands out as being very true to the original. Perhaps the nicest aspect of the NKJV is that it is not based on the erroneous Westcott & Hort theory. Some of the Newer translations have column and foot notes indicating that certain passages aren't in the "oldest and best manuscripts". These pesky notes were based on that theory, and still teach it's error. The New King James does have a few places where the translation could have been better, but is trustworthy overall.

The New International Version...

The NIV was released in 1976. When first published, a number of passages were incorrectly translated, using the words "sinful nature" for "flesh" (*sarx* - Rom 7:18, 25; 8:3-5, 8,9, 12, 13; Gal 5:13, 16f, 19, 24; also in 6:8; Eph 2:3; Col 2:11, 13). Paul used that word 18 times in Galatians alone. Of those eighteen times, they translated the word as *flesh* one time (6:13). That they knew the correct way to translate it was apparent from Ephesians 2:11 &

15. Fortunately, revisions have brought the count of mistranslated verses down to 2 (Rom 7:18 and 25).

The NIV does an outstanding job of translating many passages for English readers, making their choice to comment on the above passages so much more tragic.

The New American Standard Bible...

The NASB was released around 1960, and came into its own in 1977. It is a very good literal translation, allowing the reader to get the closest sense of what the original text means. Sadly, it contains numerous footnotes about added verses.

The Book; The Living Bible; The Way; etc...

These are not translations. Do not confuse them with translations. They are paraphrases. A man sat down and read a Bible in the English language and wrote down what he thought would sound better. Unfortunately, you cannot do that without allowing your doctrinal preferences to enter your work. It is tempting to read these because they seem to be so easy to understand. But what you are understanding is what the man who wrote it wants you to understand. Many of these have stopped calling themselves paraphrases. This is very deceptive.

The New World Translation...

Here we have the Jehovah's Witnesses bible. It is filled with translational errors that coincidentally confirm the doctrines of the Witnesses. Every time they went into a house with a KJV under their arm, the resident could pummel their doctrine with the truth. Now they try to pass off the NWT as a scholarly work of dependable character. This is the bible that never should have been.

Conclusion...

My first three choices would have to be the KJV, NASB, and the NKJV. They are time honored and trustworthy. They will tell you what God wants you to hear. If you want something more literal than the KJV, with much of the old world charm, you might opt for the ASV (1901 version).