

How Reliable is Our Bible (6)

Last week we discussed some of the errors of the King James Version. Some errors are due to the fact that the King James Version rests on an “inadequate textual base.” We also discussed how the King James Version contains many archaic words “whose meanings are either obscure or misleading.” There are also several errors of translation in the King James Version because scholars had only begun to study the Greek and Hebrew languages in depth.

In February 1870 a call was issued by the *Convocation of the Province of Canterbury* to revise the King James Version. Two committees were appointed by May and were later joined by two American committees who “reviewed the work in progress and communicated their detailed suggestions to the English revisers.” (Lightfoot, p. 73) Work on the *English Revised Version* began in June 1870. The new testament part of the work was published in May, 1881, with the old testament released in May, 1885. The American counterparts continued to meet after this and put out the *American Standard Version* in 1901. This version differs little from the English Revised Version except for spelling, etc.

The American Standard Version

The ASV is based upon a Greek text which is far superior to that used by the KJV translators in 1611. Earlier and more superior texts were found in the 290 years between 1611 and 1901. The translators that put out the 1901 ASV had the benefit of advanced knowledge of the original languages. Gary Coles has observed that in the ASV there are literally thousands of changes from the KJV. For example, there are over 2000 changes in Psalms alone.. There are 1300 changes in Jeremiah; and 1400 changes in Job. There are over 36,191 changes in the New Testament.

The American scholars did a fair job in removing many archaic words. But, some have commented that the removal of these words is not consistent. Passages such as Mt. 6:2; Mk. 9:34; Lk. 5:17; and Acts 17:3 are mentioned where archaic words are left intact. Coles also mentions that the ASV “was issued just before significant manuscripts were discovered.” (p. 6) Lightfoot also adds that with the American Standard Versions, it was “possible for the English-speaking world to come closer than ever before to the original bible messages.” (p. 75)

The Revised Standard Version

In 1929 the International Council of Religious Education obtained the copyright of the 1901 American Standard Version. It was decided that a new revision should be made. Soon a committee of scholars was appointed—but nothing was done due to the Great Depression griping this country. In 1936 funds were finally secured and the committee began work. By mid 1943 the new testament had been completed but could not be published due to wartime restrictions. The complete Revised Standard Version (RSV) was published on September 30, 1952. The RSV attempted to overcome many of the inaccuracies of the KJV and used many new resources of knowledge. This version is easy to read. Lightfoot calls it an “unquestionably good, usable translation.”

The New American Standard Version

The New Testament was published in 1963, with the complete version being released in 1970. It uses modern grammatical structure and modern language. Coles observes that the discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls were also included in the margin notes, as found in Isa. 56:10. The translation is easy to read and is the one your author uses regularly.

The New Kings James Version

This was completed in 1982. 119 scholars worked on the translation. The archaic terminology of the KJV has been removed and the grammar and punctuation have been updated. The basic structure of the KJV is contained. This is a very popular bible version used by many Christians today.

The New International Version

This version was released in 1978 and was produced by 110 scholars. This is one of the best selling versions of the Bible. Some say the NIV is the easiest of all translations to read. The first printing was the largest ever done for an English Bible. However, there are some textual inaccuracies in the NIV. For example:

Psa. 51:5—Surely I was sinful at birth sinful from the time my mother conceived me. (NIV) The NASV says, *Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.* While there is a subtle difference here, one would have a hard time refuting the doctrine of original sin using only the NIV.

Mt. 16:18—And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. (NIV) While the NIV translates the verse properly, in its margin notes it inaccurately defines Peter as “the rock.” Coles says, “this would give support to the false teaching that Christ built his church upon Peter instead of Himself.”

Due to these textual inaccuracies—the NIV is not readily used in public worship in many churches of Christ. But, it can be an aid in personal study if one is aware of the inaccuracies here and there.

The Living Bible

This is a paraphrase Bible. It is merely a restatement of the text. The author of a paraphrase Bible sits down with a translation and rewrites it in language he feels is appropriate. This is different than literally translating words from the Greek and Hebrew texts. Coles observes, “paraphrase Bibles are nothing more than a commentary disguised as a translation.” Many paraphrase bibles are the work of one man. The Living Bible supports several doctrinal errors including original sin; faith only; and premillennialism. These Bibles are not suggested for use in public worship but might be good if used in personal study while keeping in mind that it is a paraphrase bible.

Concluding Thoughts

Some have mistakenly concluded that the King James Version is the “Authorized” version. This version was not authorized by God—but by the King of England—and is NOT the standard to judge all other translations by. For those who wish to be stubborn and insist that the KJV is the ONLY bible translation—consistency will soon demand that Greek and Hebrew be learned so we can study the Bible in it’s original language. My recommendations for Bible translations are presented in this order....(1) the New American Standard Version; (2) The New King James Version; and (3) The American Standard Version. I believe these to be accurate; reliable; and easy to read. Be sure to contact me if you are interested in doing further studying on this matter. I have used over twenty [sources](#) for this study—of which many interesting things have been learned!

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