

ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

THE PROBLEMS!

by Martin Emerson

Over the last few decades there has been a deluge of new Bible versions in the English language and no doubt many more are being planned. But are these translations reliable? The publishing companies and most of the Bible Societies (with the exception of the Trinitarian Bible Society TBS) would have us believe that they are. But do we know the full truth?

It is in the commercial interest of publishing companies to promote every new translation as the best one yet. But our faith, our doctrine, our very Salvation, which are more important than commercial interests, are based upon what we read in our Bible. It is important therefore, that we know that the Bible we use is reliable.

The simple believeth every word: but the prudent *man* looketh well to his going.
Proverbs 14:15 KJV

Many in the Church today are like the simple man of Proverbs; they accept what they hear without questioning it. Some even believe it is a sign of rebellion and thus a sin to ask such questions. Others view the theologians as great men of learning who cannot be wrong, ‘and who are we to question them?’ Yet the Bible tells us to:

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 KJV

If we apply this to the teaching of doctrine, should we not also apply it to the work of Bible translators? We base our doctrine on the Bible translations we use. We need therefore to ask “how reliable are our Bible translations?”

It may shock many to know that some of the translators of the most popular modern Bible versions do not hold to sound doctrine. Though we may not be able to reject a translation purely on the basis of the doctrine or morality of the translators, we do need to ask the question: **“Have the personal beliefs of Bible translators affected their resulting translation work?”**

The following information will not answer all questions, but I hope it will cause you to start asking questions and not be like the simple man who “believeth every word”.

There are three main problems with Bible translations. One is the reliability of the original texts from which Bibles are translated. The second is the method of translation. The third is the personal biases of the translators.

1. THE TEXTS

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The preservation of the Greek text for the New Testament has been an issue of great debate, particularly over the last two centuries. Theologians and textual critics have made this issue complicated and difficult for the layman to follow. But investigation of the issues surrounding the Greek texts for the New Testament brings to light some alarming facts about modern Bible translations.

The New Testament of all English Bibles currently available are translated from one of two different Greek Texts. One is the Received Text (or Textus Receptus) and is abbreviated TR. This is known as a Byzantine text-type due to the area in which it was most commonly found. The other is the Alexandrian text-type which has become known as the Critical Text. It originates from the area of Alexandria in Egypt and was not as widespread in its use as was the Byzantine text-type. The latest form of the “Critical” text-type are the Nestle-Aland 27th edition and the UBS (United Bible Societies) 4th edition, thus the abbreviation NU for Nestle/UBS.¹ There is a third form of Greek text available for the New Testament, which has not been used for any current

¹Nestle-Aland texts and UBS texts are revised by different committees, however, some textual critics serve on both committees. Nestle-Aland 27th edition and UBS 4th edition are identical down to the smallest detail of the Greek text. The first time Nestle-Aland and UBS editions agreed completely was with the Nestle-Aland 26th and UBS 3rd editions. The differences between the published volumes is not in the Greek text but in the “Critical Apparatus”, in other words the notes at the bottom of each page indicating which manuscripts had been quoted where a reading was in question.

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English translation; this is the Majority text, simply abbreviated M. It is similar to the Received Text as it is also a Byzantine text-type but has a few omissions and some minor differences when compared against the Received Text.² Both Byzantine text-types are known jointly as “Majority Texts” because of their common origin, but the abbreviation “M” refers only to that Majority Text which is distinctively different from the Received Text.

THE RECEIVED TEXT

The Byzantine texts were the most widely distributed text-type used by the early Church and even though most of the manuscripts of this type have been lost, they still represent the largest number of manuscripts existing today. The King James Version (or Authorised Version) and the New King James Version are both based on the Textus Receptus.

Most of the manuscripts from the first and second centuries AD have been lost. This is mainly because they were made of papyrus, which is very fragile. However, some of these very early manuscripts do still exist. Many of these early manuscripts do appear to support the readings of the Byzantine text-type. Also much evidence of the Byzantine nature of early manuscripts can be found in the Biblical quotations contained in the writings of the Early Church Fathers, which predate the Alexandrian manuscripts. Later Byzantine manuscripts are believed to be accurate copies of the very early manuscripts. The lack of early Byzantine manuscripts is actually a testimony to their authenticity rather than the other way round. It is because these manuscripts were so well used that they ceased to exist, but accurate copies were continually being made. Many of the Alexandrian manuscripts that have survived are on parchment or velum of very high quality. It is the lack of use of these corrupt manuscripts and the durability of the material they are written on which has aided their survival. The material used for many Alexandrian manuscripts may also indicate that they were created mainly for show rather than regular reading.

Over the centuries, from the time of the New Testament being first written until the beginning of the Reformation the Greek text for the New Testament had become corrupted, mainly by omissions, most of which are due to copying errors³ but some deliberate, particularly those which sought to deny the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ. For some three hundred years from the middle of the fourth century, men who did not believe in the Trinity or the divinity of Jesus Christ ran the official Church. Because of their influence, both political and religious, they were able to corrupt the Greek Text of the New Testament. However, they only made minor changes to the Byzantine texts over the centuries. The resultant text and the most widely used text up to the time of the Reformation was the Majority Text (M). However, there were still men who throughout the centuries had managed to preserve copies of uncorrupted manuscripts from which the textual critics of the Reformation were able to work.⁴

The Reformation came at the same time as printing. The reformers used this opportunity to produce the first ever printed text of the Greek New Testament. They did, however, want to be sure that the Greek text printed was the most reliable text available. So came on to the scene one of the first textual critics, Desiderius Erasmus.⁵ Erasmus, using a core of about 12 of the more reliable manuscripts, searched through many other manuscripts and the writings of the early Church fathers where they quoted scripture, checking every reading carefully to see where errors had crept in and changes had been made over the centuries.

²The Majority Text is published by Thomas Nelson under the titles: “The NKJV Greek/English New Testament” ISBN 0840783574 and “The Greek New Testament According To The Majority Text, 2nd edition” edited by Zane Hodges and Arthur Farstad ISBN 0840749635. Both distributed in the U.K. by STL/Wesley Owen.

³When copying documents the most common type of error are those of omission. One of the most common types of omission being due to two sentences, lines or phrases having the same ending, it is so easy to miss one out. Yet modern textual critics teach that the shorter reading is nearly always the correct reading, a theory which conflicts with common-sense and a wealth of manuscript evidence to the contrary.

⁴Though many of the manuscripts used by the Reformers still exist today, the Reformers had access to many manuscripts, which have since been lost.

⁵Surprisingly Desiderius Erasmus was a Roman Catholic and a personal friend and favourite friend of the Pope. Yet his work on the Greek text of the New Testament greatly aided the Reformation. Erasmus is frequently called a humanitarian, he should not though be considered an atheist, it appears that the Roman Catholic Church was of great importance to him. Yet Erasmus greatly served the cause of the Reformers.

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Erasmus produced five printed editions of the Greek New Testament. Erasmus' first edition was printed in 1516 and was the first ever printed edition of the Greek New Testament. His second edition, which Martin Luther used for his German translation, was published in 1519. Erasmus' third edition was published in 1522. The remaining two editions that followed contained just a few minor refinements to the third edition. Other printed editions of the Greek New Testament by other textual critics were based on the work of Erasmus and had only a few minor differences from Erasmus' third edition in 1522.

Using the second and third editions of Erasmus' Greek texts William Tyndale published the first printed edition of the New Testament in the English language translated from the original Greek New Testament in 1526. A second edition of the New Testament translated by William Tyndale followed in 1534.

The King James Version was first published in 1611. Though it is normally stated that the New Testament of the King James Version is based on the Received Text, the title "Textus Receptus" (Latin for "Received Text") was first attributed to the 1624 Greek Text produced by Abraham & Bonaventure Elzevir. As this text is almost identical to the texts that preceded it, the title "Textus Receptus" was retrospectively applied to all texts of this type from Erasmus' third edition in 1522 onwards.

The New Testament of the King James Version was translated from the 1550 & 1551 editions of the Greek New Testament by Stephanus. Stephanus, called Robert Stephens or Robert Stephanus, was actually Robert Estienne a printer from Paris and stepson of Simon Colinaeus who had earlier printed his own edition of the Greek New Testament in 1534. The 1550 edition of Stephanus is known as the "Royal Edition" ("*editio regia*") and is probably the most commonly used edition of the "Received Text" today. Stephanus is also famous for introducing the numbering of verses in the New Testament which first appeared in his 1551 edition (chapter divisions were already in existence). These verse numbers were then used for the Geneva Bible and the King James Version and are essentially the same verse numbers we find in all translations of the New Testament today.

THE CRITICAL TEXT

The Critical text-type came from a small area around Alexandria in Egypt. The earliest of these texts are dated very shortly after the time that the Arian heresy began. Arius was a bishop of Alexandria in the early 4th century AD and taught that Jesus was not God but a created being, and denied the divinity of Jesus Christ and consequently denied the Trinity.⁶ Thus this text-type has a significant number of references to the divinity of Christ and the Trinity missing. Though the textual revisers of the 16th and 17th centuries had access to Alexandrian manuscripts they would not use them because they considered them to be corrupt. It was not until the 18th century that anybody seriously considered using Alexandrian text-type for a new translation.

The great interest in the Alexandrian manuscripts began near the end of the 18th century and became popular in the 19th century with the discovery by Constantin Tischendorf in the early 1840's of the early 4th century manuscript Codex Sinaiticus, thus named because it was found in a monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai. This was a manuscript of the whole Bible in Greek, not just the New Testament (though some of the Old Testament has since been lost). The amount of attention and authority credited to this manuscript in the last century seems to be totally out of proportion, especially considering the large number of corrections made in at least three different hands to this manuscript.⁷ Also the manuscript contained apocryphal books and as such would not have been accepted by the majority of the Church of the time.⁸

⁶Arius tried at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD to make Unitarianism the official belief of the Church. He was defeated, mainly because of Athanasius' strong defence of the Trinity. To protect the Church against such heresy two creeds were introduced at that time, these being the Athanasian Creed and the Nicene Creed. However, the official Church still bowed the knee to the Arian heresy later that century, and so the Trinity was not accepted by the official Church for some 300 years.

⁷Frederick G Kenyon in his book *The Text of the Greek Bible* states of Codex Sinaiticus (S) "the codex is written by at least three different scribes, and has a large number of corrections in various hands" pg. 80 he continues on the following page to say "another (scribe D, whose orthography is quite the best) rewrote six pages in the New Testament where the first scribe, apparently, made serious mistakes, ... From the evidence of variations in spelling of the different scribes it appears that the MS was written from dictation. Several correctors' hands are discernible, some of who are identical or contemporary with the original scribes..."

⁸When Constantin Tischendorf discovered this manuscript the monks were about to burn it. Maybe they did not consider it as a reliable manuscript (probably because of the large number of corrections). It is almost certain that it was only the offer of money from Tischendorf that rescued this manuscript from the flames.

In 1881 Westcott and Hort published their Greek text⁹, which was based mainly on 3 Alexandrian manuscripts: Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Alexandrinus (though Codex Alexandrinus was ignored where it differed significantly from the others especially in the Gospels which are Byzantine).¹⁰ Westcott & Hort were liberal theologians and did not believe in the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the resurrection, the virgin birth etc. They especially did not believe in the atoning power of the blood of Jesus for our sins, and eternal punishment, all fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. Thus the already corrupted Alexandrian text-type of Arian origins suited their theology far better than the Byzantine text-type and so these Alexandrian manuscripts became the basis for their revision of the Greek text of the New Testament. It was these men who in 1881 introduced a new Greek text based on corrupted manuscripts, which better supported their own theological viewpoint.

Hort's views are well recorded, and we find that he specifically considered eternal punishment in the Scriptures as error, Graham A Patrick writes:

"Hort was only twenty-one when he wrote to Maurice (LL I pp. 116-23) confessing his own very serious misgivings about eternal punishment. He admits that it is sanctioned by the Gospels and the Apocalypse, as well as by the church's liturgy and the Athanasian Creed. He can see also that it is a sanction for morality. Belief in punishment beyond the grave is a strong reason for men repenting of their evil even on their deathbed. He is nevertheless deeply unhappy about it."¹¹

Hort also did not believe that any one else could act as substitute for us, by taking the penalty of our sins upon himself. Hort in effect has trodden under foot the Son of God and counted the Blood of Christ as unholy, as nothing.^{12-Heb 10:29} Graham A Patrick comments further:

"Another of his doubts centres on the question of Substituted Punishment. The most popular contemporary view of the atonement asserted that Christ suffered in our place. Hort cannot see how an acceptance of this can dispense with the need for our own suffering and punishment for our sins.

*'The fact is, I do not see how God's justice can be satisfied without every man's suffering in his own person the full penalty for his sins. I know that it can, for if it could not in the case of some at least, the whole Bible would be a lie; but if in the case of some why not of all? (LL I p.120)*¹³

Hort seems to have fluctuated in his belief over the divine inspiration of Scripture. He did, however, constantly hold to his belief that Scripture was not without error, and thus believed himself free to change Scripture to support his own theological and doctrinal views. To believe that there can be error in the Scriptures is to cast doubt on their inspiration. Hort's comments on Darwin's "Origin of the Species" poignantly show his view of the inspiration of scripture, he believed that the "science" of "Origin of the Species" shows us how to interpret the Bible.¹⁴

Westcott shared similar beliefs to Hort. What we do know of Westcott is that he believed the Canon of Scripture still to be open, in other words he believed that new books could still be added to the Bible and particularly (if justification could be found) apocryphal books previously rejected from consideration for inclusion in the canon. Westcott strongly denied the Pauline authorship of Hebrews because, he argued, that it is similar in nature and character to the Shepherd of Hermas (which was written after Paul's death), and if, as he believed, Hebrews was written by the same author as

⁹Though published in 1881 Westcott & Hort's Greek Text of the New Testament had been available a lot earlier (sometime in the early 1860's) to the translators of the Revised Version of the New Testament and to some commentators such as J B Lightfoot.

¹⁰Codex Sinaiticus [S]; Codex Vaticanus[A]; and Codex Alexandrinus [B] were three of the five manuscripts which were the core of Westcott & Hort's work, the other two are Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus [C] and Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis [D].

¹¹F. J. A. Hort, Eminent Victorian by Graham A. Patrick - Sheffield Academic Press 1987 p. 23

¹²The omission of "through his blood" in Colossians 1:14 may have been influenced by Westcott & Hort's view on the atoning power of the blood of Jesus Christ. However they did not omit the same phrase in Ephesians 1:7, possible because it occurred in too many manuscripts for them to justify omitting it.

¹³F. J. A. Hort, Eminent Victorian by Graham A. Patrick - Sheffield Academic Press 1987 p. 24

¹⁴F. J. A. Hort, Eminent Victorian by Graham A. Patrick - Sheffield Academic Press 1987 pp. 50-56.

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the Shepherd of Hermas, then if Hebrews could be included in the canon of Scripture, then by his argument, so also should the Shepherd of Hermas. Westcott strongly suggests that the book of Hebrews was written by Barnabas, which also would lend weight to including the Epistle of Barnabas in the Bible.¹⁵ This is doubly important to Westcott & Hort as the Shepherd of Hermas and the Epistle of Barnabas are included in the Greek manuscripts they used for the text of the Greek New Testament, meaning that unless they could justify including The Shepherd of Hermas and the Epistle of Barnabas in the canon of Scripture (books which would not have been accepted by the early church) then the manuscripts they have used could be rejected. This could potentially lead to a rejection of the text of Westcott & Hort and any texts, which followed their work. Westcott & Hort almost certainly saw this as a serious threat to their work and did everything to counter that threat, unfortunately, as time has shown successfully.

It was only the rise of liberal theologians in the 19th century that made it possible for the Alexandrian text-type to be accepted. Sadly many theological colleges still employ liberal theologians today. Other theologians of more orthodox doctrine, though they do not accept the beliefs of liberal theologians, have not thought to challenge the work of 19th century textual critics, often citing these men as great theologians. And so corrupted texts continue to find support today.

The ideas that have set out the form of textual criticism behind the Critical text are not those of men who love God and treasure the Scripture and Christian doctrine. Rather they are ideas drawn from a philosophy of higher criticism formed by men opposed to religion and particularly that of true Christianity. Edward Freer Hills has commented:

“For in the realm of New Testament textual criticism as well as in other fields the presuppositions of modern thought are hostile to the historic Christian faith and will destroy it if their fatal operation is not checked. If faithful Christians, therefore, would defend their sacred religion against this danger, they must forsake the foundations of unbelieving thought upon their faith, a faith that rests entirely on the solid rock of Holy Scripture. And when they do this in the sphere of New Testament textual criticism, they will find themselves led back step by step (perhaps, at first against their wills) to the text of the Protestant Reformation, namely, that form of New Testament text which underlies the King James Version and other early Protestant translations.”¹⁶

The result is that many references to the deity of Jesus are omitted along with reference to the Trinity. The word “God” is often replaced with “he”. The majority of modern Bible versions like the New International Version (NIV), Good News Bible (TEV or GNB), NASB and NASB’95, NEB, REB, RSV, NRSV, NCV, CEV, The Living Bible, New Living Translation, God’s Word, The Message, Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), English Standard Version (ESV) and Today’s New International Version (TNIV) are all based on this corrupted text and as such have many omissions and changes. One of the more noticeable omissions is the end of what is called the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:13, part of the beginning of that same prayer in Luke 11 is also missing. The NKJV is one of the few modern exceptions being based on the Received Text.

Some omissions made by Westcott & Hort have gradually been returned over a period of time to the Critical Text. The most significant of these being John 7:53-8:11.¹⁷ The end of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:13 is still omitted in the Critical Greek texts. However, the translators of the New American Standard Bible (NASB) have borrowed this reading from the Received Text, as it does in a number of other places where there are serious omissions in the Critical Text, though they do place these readings in brackets.¹⁸ This demonstrates that

¹⁵See The Epistle to the Hebrews, The Greek Text with Notes and Essays by Brooke Foss Westcott DD DCL, Macmillan and Co. 1892 pages lx11 to lxxxiv.

¹⁶The King James Version Defended - Edward Freer Hills, Fourth Edition 1984, The Christian Research Press, Des Moines, Iowa, U.S. pg. 1.

¹⁷ Sadly Today’s New International Version (TNIV) has reverted to the work of Westcott and Hort and places John 7:53-8:11 in italics to indicate that it is not in their Greek text.

¹⁸The Gideon editions of the NIV also include a number of portions of scripture otherwise omitted by the critical texts.

though the majority of modern Bible translators still use the Critical Text they do not all consider it to be without fault.

The reliability of the Alexandrian manuscripts used is highly questionable. Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus differ from each other over 3000 times in the Gospels alone. As these are the two main manuscripts on which Westcott & Hort and the majority of modern textual critics (including the committee for the UBS and the revisers of the Nestle-Aland texts) base their work I believe that we are more than justified in questioning the validity of their work.

The critical (NU) text also contains historical errors. Among these errors are Matthew 1:7-8 where it reads “**Asaph**” instead of “**Asa**” and in v.10 it reads “**Amos**” instead of “**Amon**” (attributed to scribal error). **Two historical errors in the first chapter of the New Testament!** Asaph was of the tribe of Levi and therefore could not be in the genealogy of Jesus. Amos was a prophet and not a king of Judah, thus he also does not belong in the genealogy of Jesus. Nearly all Bible translators are aware of these errors and have corrected them in their translations. The few exceptions to this are the New Living Translation,¹⁹ the RSV and NRSV. Another historical error can be found in Mark 1:2. This error is translated into the English of all translations that use the Critical text. The NIV reads “It is written in Isaiah the prophet...” then proceeds to quote from Malachi 3:1 and a quote from Isaiah 40:3 then follows it. This may not seem a major problem, but when we realise that the Received Text does not have this error we have yet another reason to question the validity of the Alexandrian manuscripts. Reading Mark 1:2 from the King James Version we can see the difference “As it is written in the prophets...”. Historical errors are a clear sign of a corrupted manuscript, and as this error requires an addition to the text it makes it even more suspect. It is incredible that theologians accept such a text today, especially when there is in existence a text with no historical errors.

Some would explain the error of Mark 1:2 away by stating that when there is more than one prophet quoted only the major prophet should be named. But to support this argument we must first find other examples that show this to be a biblical tradition, and then we still have to explain the existence of other manuscripts without this error. Though we find what could be assumed a similar error in Matthew 27:9 where even the King James Version (and thus the Received Text) state that a quotation from Zechariah 11:12 is from Jeremiah, there is another explanation for this which cannot be applied to Mark 1:2. Matthew 27:9 only quotes one prophet, thus quoting the major prophet only cannot be applied in this case. It is believed the reason that Jeremiah is named in Matthew 27:9 is because the book of Zechariah was commonly included on the same scroll as the book of Jeremiah, and thus Matthew 27:9 cannot be classed as error in the same way as Mark 1:2. Other explanations of Matthew 27:9 include the fact that it states “which was spoken” thus suggesting the possibility that there may have been a tradition that Jeremiah spoke these words which were later quoted by Zechariah.

Since Westcott & Hort’s text was published in 1881 there have been many more revisions of the Critical text of the Greek New Testament. There have been 27 editions of the Nestle-Aland text, four of the Bible Societies (United Bible Societies) text, plus numerous other texts which do not agree with the mainline Critical texts such as the editions by Alexander Souter. The latest of the NU texts have fewer omissions than the original work of Westcott & Hort (though many of the former omissions are now printed in brackets). However, as the Critical text is based on the shorter, corrupted Alexandrian manuscripts of the New Testament, it will always have serious omissions.

The dubious nature of the Critical text can be seen when reading “A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament” by Bruce M. Metzger. This book has editions to accompany both the UBS 3rd and 4th editions. It gives the reasons behind the choosing of particular readings by the committee for the UBS texts. One of the most commonly used phrases to justify a particular reading is “**the committee preferred...**”. It shows that many of the differences in the Critical text are not based on solid manuscript evidence but on the personal preferences of “**the committee**”. The consequences of personal preferences determining the text of the Bible can be very serious.

¹⁹The translators of the New Living Translation NLT claim in the notes for Matthew 1:7,8 & 10 that Asaph is just another variation of the name Asa and that Amos is likewise another name for Amon even though it has been universally accepted that they are different people.

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Many Greek New Testaments contain "Critical Apparatus". This Critical Apparatus gives a wide selection of various readings for many verses. These readings mainly come from a selection of different manuscripts, but occasionally include readings from early Church Fathers and some ancient commentaries. This means that it is possible for Bible translators to choose the reading they prefer rather than that found in the main text, or that which is supported by the greater number of manuscripts. The Critical Apparatus found in UBS and Nestle-Aland texts does not fairly represent the larger number of Byzantine manuscripts. This means that the Bible translators who relies on the Critical text of the New Testament does not have all the facts to help them make a reliable translation.

Though there have been many editions of the Received Text in the 16th and 17th centuries and a few in the 18th there have been no significant differences since the Royal Edition of Stephanus in 1550 until the editions of F.H.A. Scrivener in 1894 and 1902. The differences in Scrivener's texts were a few readings such as Luke 17:36, which though included in the King James Version, it was not in the Greek Text until Scriveners' editions.²⁰ The way in which the Critical text has changed and evolved over the last 100 years or more (though the changes have now slowed down greatly) can be seen as yet another reason to view the Critical text with suspicion. The thinking of the textual critics, who allow for constant changes of the Biblical text shows that they have little respect for the inspiration and particularly the **providential preservation** of the Scriptures. This can be observed in the preface to the Fourth edition of the United Bible Societies' text:

"The text of the edition has remained unchanged. This should not be misunderstood to mean that the editors now consider the text as established. Work on the text of the Holy Scriptures continues to be a task of concern for each of the editors who will offer the results of their research in future editions of the *Greek New Testament*. Yet the editors feel that at the present time this responsible research has not yet advanced sufficiently to authorise making specific changes in the text. The Committee is always genuinely grateful to readers for their proposals and suggestions."²¹

A similar statement can be found in the introduction to the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland text:

"It should naturally be understood that this text is a working text (in the sense of the century-long Nestle tradition): it is not to be considered as definitive, but as a stimulus to further efforts toward defining and verifying the text of the New Testament. For many reasons, however, the present edition has not been deemed an appropriate occasion for introducing textual changes."²²

If, according to the committee for these two texts the Greek New Testament text is not certain, then how can we trust what we read in our Bibles? It is men and women like those on this committee who undermine and cast doubt upon the validity of the Holy Scriptures. When theologians cast doubt on the reliability of the Scriptures we should not be surprised that many Church goers have no respect for the importance of the Bible. Partly as a result of this many today seek doctrinal influences outside of the Bible. As a consequence of this heretical teaching has gained footholds in many Christian Churches.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Though there are some differences with Hebrew texts for the Old Testament these are not generally considered to be significant. The Hebrew text has been preserved uncorrupted and thus all Bible translations are essentially using the same text. Some translations do make additions to the Old Testament from ancient Rabbinical commentaries and other similar sources. Though translators may give strong arguments for such additions, they should be viewed with extreme caution, e.g. the last two lines of Psalm 145:13 in the NIV. Some translations, including the NIV also omit some readings from the Hebrew text. However, whether they add to the text or omit from it, the Masoretic Hebrew text is the same text used for all translations of the Old Testament.

That the NIV is a serious offender in making omissions can be seen by examining the number of words in it compared with other translations. The KJV has 790,685 words and the NIV has 726,332 words, a difference of

²⁰The differences between the King James Version of the New Testament and the Received Text of the time were based on very strong historical evidence. There was and is today manuscript evidence for such readings as Luke 17:36. Though it was not included in the Greek texts of the time, the translators of the King James Version did consult other reliable manuscripts.

²¹Page vi, The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger - Published by the United Bible Societies 1983

²²Page 45* Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece 27th edition, edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, published by Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, Stuttgart, Germany 1993. It is interesting to note that the committee is identical to that of the UBS Fourth edition.

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64,353 words. You can realise how serious this is when you know that 64,353 words is approximately equivalent to 98 average length chapters of the Bible, or -8.14% word differences. Though naturally there is a difference in word numbers between different translations, the difference with the NIV is so large that it should be a cause of great concern. Just looking at a good parallel Bible, which contains the NIV along with more than one other translation, you will be able to see the difference. When compared to the other translations the NIV nearly always has the least amount of text observable.²³

The NIV has readings in both Old and New Testaments that have no support in any Hebrew or Greek text. Some of these readings are additions to the original texts. Yet these additions are far outweighed by the omissions.

The number of words in various translations will naturally vary. The NIV has many less words than the KJV. A paraphrase Bible because of its nature could have many more words than the KJV. Yet the KJV is a good standard to measure by as it uses reliable texts and is basically a literal word for word translation. This means the KJV does not add words to the text except where necessary for grammatical sense.

2. TRANSLATION METHODS

Translations methods vary greatly. There are three main classifications for Bible translations. 1. **Literal translation**, which aims at being a word for word translation, sometimes called “literal equivalence” or “**Formal equivalence**”. 2. **Dynamic Equivalence**, which is aimed at being a thought for thought translation. 3. **Paraphrase**. Paraphrases can be seen as a development upon the concept of dynamic equivalence.

1. FORMAL EQUIVALENCE - LITERAL

A literal translation needs little explanation. Such a translation would seem to make sense for accuracy, though it may not be easy to read. There can still be problems with a literal translation. The main problem is consistency of translation. It is important for the reader that a word or phrase is translated the same way consistently throughout the Bible within a similar context. (How a single word is translated will vary within different contexts.) The King James Version of the Bible is remarkable in its consistency (though not perfect), the translators of which are worthy of honour for their dedication and diligence. The greatest failings of the New King James Version (which is classed as a literal translation) are its inconsistencies of translation and lack of second person singular personal pronouns.

A distinguishing mark of a literal translation is that it places in italics words not in the original languages but required for grammatical sense. Greek and Hebrew grammar work differently to that of English Grammar. The Greek and Hebrew languages need fewer words than is required in English to portray the same message. Thus it is natural that it should be necessary to add extra words when translating into English for grammatical sense, all Bible translations do this. Literal translations such as the King James Version put many²⁴ of these extra words in italics so that the reader knows that these words have been added to the text. These words were originally placed in italics for the sake of accuracy. Thus where an addition may be questioned by the reader, they can see what it would read without the words which have been added for grammatical sense. (Occasionally a literal translation is printed without the italics, but this is an error on the part of the publishers, not the translators). The NIV likewise adds words for grammatical sense but the translators have not used italics, they give the reader no indication of where words have been added.

2. DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE

A dynamic translation may seem a good idea. It seeks to express the thoughts behind the words of the original writers. The problem here is how can we be sure that we can express the thoughts of the original writers? Such a translation is far more likely to portray the personal interpretations of the translators than to accurately translate the word of God for the reader. Thus a dynamic translation is no better in serious use than a commentary. Dynamic translations like commentaries differ according to the doctrine and personal opinions of the translators. In addition to personal interpretations, dynamic translations and paraphrases can still suffer from any fault which

²³My observation is based on the Comparative Study Bible Revised edition published by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A. 1999 ISBN 0310903335. This displays the same text of the King James Version, New American Standard Bible 1995 Revised edition, The Amplified Bible Expanded edition and the New International Version on two facing pages. The layout and translations used make this a suitable Parallel Bible for fair comparison.

²⁴Because of the differences in how the languages work italics are not required for all words which are added to a literal translation. The Greek never uses the indefinite article ‘a’ or ‘an’ but they are required in the English language. The Greek frequently uses the definite article when not required in the English language. Many single words in Greek and Hebrew may need two or even three words to translate them literally, italics are rarely required in such instances.

ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS - *THE PROBLEMS!*

can be levelled against a literal translation, specifically lack of consistency. The main dynamic translations are the New Century Version (NCV and children's version the ICB for International Children's Bible), the Contemporary English Version (CEV), the New Living Translation (NLT), and the Good News Bible (GNB of TEV for Today's English Version).

In the NIV, though largely considered a literal translation, we find that characteristics of a dynamic translation predominate it, and in many places the readings are those of a paraphrase. The translators of the NIV and the majority of the publishers consider it to be a literal translation. Though they generally accept that it is the least literal of the formal (literal) translations. With the mixture of translation methods found in it, the NIV cannot seriously be considered a literal translation. It is best classed as a Dynamic translation, though in a few places the readings are paraphrased.

Many Bible versions, which are called "dynamic" translations, are essentially paraphrases. Dynamic translations often fit more closely the dictionary definition of a paraphrase than do Bibles that are classed as paraphrases.

3. PARAPHRASE

The definition of a paraphrase is: **a restatement of a text or passage in other words, usually to clarify meaning.** A paraphrase as such can never be classed as a translation. It may start by taking a literal translation, but it then finds different words to say the same thing and is thus a **version** rather than a **translation**. The resulting version can never be literal nor accurate, but is the translators' restatement of what they believe the text says using different wording, which they hope will give a paralleled meaning, and thus aid the reader in understanding the passage. It represents the translators' (or editors') personal interpretation of Scripture. If their doctrine is not sound, then the resulting Bible may not be sound, and will contain many errors.

Because of the nature of a paraphrase it should never be used as your only Bible. The original purpose of a paraphrase may have been to aid your understanding of difficult passages when you are reading a more literal translation of the Bible. If you choose to use a paraphrase (or a dynamic bible) it should not be viewed with any more authority than a commentary, which represents the views of the writers. Sadly now paraphrases and dynamic translations are now marketed as the only Bible you will need. If a paraphrase or dynamic translation is the only Bible used by a person, then their resulting understanding of Biblical doctrine and principles may be very poor.

The main paraphrases are the Living Bible (TLB) and The Message. Though many other dynamic translations (especially the more recent ones) lean heavily towards being a paraphrase. Most notable of these are the New Living Translation (NLT) and the Contemporary English Version (CEV). The NLT claims to be a dynamic translation and not a paraphrase. It is, however, the revision (and possible eventual replacement) of the Living Bible. Though claimed as a translation, it appears far more like a paraphrase than a dynamic translation. The CEV like the NLT is classed as a dynamic translation but is very clearly a paraphrase.

The principles on which dynamic translations are produced are very close to those which are used in producing a paraphrase. It is not surprising therefore for a dynamic translation to appear more like a paraphrase.

One significant difference between a dynamic translation and a paraphrase is that paraphrases do not simply restate in different words what the original stated, but they also expound upon the original, thus the reason that many readings in a paraphrase are longer than in a literal translation. As dynamic translations fit better the literal definition of a paraphrase, paraphrases far exceed that definition by expounding the text with many words which are not justified in the original Greek and Hebrew texts. Such expounding is adding to the Word of God that which God has not spoken.

One of the distinguishing marks of a modern paraphrase is the merging of verses in such a way as makes it difficult to tell where one verse stops and the next starts.²⁵ As a result of this paraphrases either have no verse numbers (such as in The Message) or occasionally group a number of verses together with the verse numbers at the beginning of the group as in The Living Bible. The following statement is interesting:

"Whenever the contents of two or more verses have been joined together and rearranged in the poetic sections..."

²⁵Reformation translations of the Bible which do not have verse numbers should not be mistaken for Paraphrases. Many of these Bibles were translated before Stephanus added verse numbers to the New Testament in 1551.

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This statement describes the distinguishing mark of a paraphrase, but it comes from the preface of the Contemporary English Version (CEV). This Bible version is described as a Dynamic translation, yet contains a distinguishing factor of a Paraphrase. The merging of verses in the CEV appears to be far more frequent than in the Living Bible. This just demonstrates the facts that many so called Dynamic translations not only verge on being paraphrases but are paraphrases.

I believe that the only valid use of a paraphrases and dynamic translations is in accompanying a more literal translation to aid the reader in understanding the scriptures better. And even when used in this way they should be viewed with great caution as I do not know of any paraphrase that is wholly reliable. Also all paraphrases and dynamic translations in the English language are based upon the corrupted Critical Greek text of the New Testament.

Dynamic Bibles and paraphrases suit a culture where we expect everything instantly. A literal translation requires us to think harder and to study the scripture more thoroughly to gain an understanding of the scriptures. Neither dynamic Bibles, paraphrases or commentaries are required to understand the scriptures. Rather we need to apply ourselves to study the Bible and rely on the Holy Spirit to guide us. Applying ourselves to study has far greater rewards than looking for easy options.

OTHER TRANSLATION METHODS:

Optimal Equivalence - This is not truly another translation technique, but is a hybrid of **Formal** and **Dynamic Equivalence**. This is the method chosen by the translators of the Holman Christian Standard Bible. This technique is defined as follows:

“Optimal Equivalence: This approach seeks to combine the best features of both formal and dynamic equivalence by applying each method to translate the meaning of the original with optimal accuracy. In the many places throughout Scripture where a word for word rendering is clearly understandable, that literal rendering is used. In other places, where a literal rendering might be unclear in modern English, a more dynamic translation is given. The HCSB has chosen to use the balance and beauty of optimal equivalence for a fresh translation of God’s Word that is both faithful to the words God inspired and “user friendly” to modern readers.”

Optimal Equivalence suffers from all the problems and faults that of Dynamic translations, though in theory there should be less faults than can be found in a wholly Dynamic translation. However, the readings of the Holman Christian Standard Bible New Testament seem to prefer the Dynamic over the literal.²⁶

READABILITY

Readability is yet another problem of modern translations. The aim of most modern translations is to be easy to read. It may be a good idea to make a translation easier to read. Replacing archaic words and words which have changed their meaning and usage makes very good sense. If changes for readability were limited to this then there would be very few problems. But many other changes have been made. One is shorter sentences (especially in the NIV²⁷). The problem here is that in breaking up the longer sentences in the Bible, which are a particular characteristic of the Pauline epistles, continuity is disrupted and it is possible to interpret something differently simply by adding additional punctuation which is not indicated by the original text.

It is not impossible to create a translation that is literal, consistent and readable at the same time. It has been already done. In it’s time William Tyndale’s translation of the Bible (he did not finish all of the Old Testament) was easy for the common man to read, and apart from the change in usage of some words, still remains remarkably easy to read today.

Modern English vs. 17th Century English

The original Hebrew and Greek texts are very precise; they express much detail in just a few words. Even the most literal of English translations cannot translate into the English language everything which is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek. Those who study the Bible in its original languages find many treasures which can only be found by reading the Hebrew or Greek. This amount of detail is important. It is the precious word of God.

²⁶ The number of Dynamic readings found in the New Testament appear to be more frequent than those found in the NIV, making the NIV a more literal translation than the HCSB.

²⁷The Revised 1995 NASB has also introduced shorter sentence structures though there are only a few changes from the original NASB .

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Though it is impossible to translate everything accurately into the English language, to omit detail simply to make a translation more readable should be seen as a grievous sin. In the efforts to produce more readable translations much of the detail found in more literal translations is glossed over and covered up. And in the effort to explain other details (as in a paraphrase) much can be added that is not indicated in the original texts. In a number of places in the Bible we can find warnings against adding to or taking away from the Scriptures, yet many modern Bible versions do just this because of their methods of translation. Modern Bible translators have made compromises in accuracy for the sake of readability. William Tyndale stated in response to his critics, that:

“Saint Jerome also translated the Bible into his mother tongue [i.e., the Latin Vulgate]: why may not we also? They will say it cannot be translated into our tongue, it is so rude. It is not so rude as they are false liars. For the Greek tongue agreeth more with the English than with the Latin. And the properties of the Hebrew tongue agreeth a thousand times more with the English than with the Latin. The manner of speaking is both one; so that in a thousand places thou needest not but to translate it into the English, word for word;...”

When William Tyndale wrote this the structure of the English language was different to the English language we use today. Many people do not use the King James Version of the Bible because they claim it is too difficult to read. To claim you cannot understand the King James Version is to insult your own intelligence. Most people in reality should be able to cope with the more difficult translations. It may initially take more effort to cope with the King James Version, but that effort is well worth while. Readable translations may be easy to get on with, but are they really of any greater benefit to you than the King James Version?

In our modern societies we have advanced in technical and scientific knowledge, yet our language skills are far inferior to those of 400 years ago. Thus it takes more effort to understand the language of the 17th century found in the KJV. But the language of the KJV is very precise and tells us far more than the language of the dumbed-down modern translations of the 20th century, and surprisingly, research has shown that it is more readable than modern Bible Versions.

There are many advantages in a translation like the King James Version. Though some may find it difficult to read, the language that presents those difficulties makes the KJV far more memorable. With a more readily readable translation it is easy to forget what you have just read. But with the KJV its difficulties mean the reader has to stop and think about what he has just read. With continued reading of the KJV the reader will soon get to understand the difficulties of its archaic language and style and come truly to treasure it, for the language of the KJV reveals far more of the truth of Scripture than the language of modern Bible translations. Being a literal translation the KJV is also far better for study.

One specific criticism of the King James Version is the “thees” and “thous”. Yet this is one of the factors to the advantage of the KJV when it comes to accuracy, a factor that is lacking in nearly every other English version of the Bible. THEE, THOU, THY, THINE are second person singular personal pronouns which are no longer in current English usage. Today we only use the second person plural personal pronouns YOU, YOUR, YOURS. Yet most foreign languages and the languages of the original Biblical texts in specific have both the singular and the plural. At the time that the King James Version was published in 1611 the majority of the English population had already dropped the English usage of second person singular personal pronouns from everyday usage. In the works of Shakespeare, many of them earlier in date to that of the KJV, usage of the second person singular personal pronouns is intermittent showing that its use was already in decline. The 16th and 17th century Bible translators re-introduced second person singular personal pronouns into the English text of the Bible for the sake of accuracy. It is because of the wide usage of the King James Version that many peoples of the 17th and 18th century used second person singular personal pronouns in their writings and speech.²⁸

Modern translations have surrendered accuracy for readability. Yet often in their attempts at readability they actually make some portions of Scripture harder to understand.

In the preface “The translators to the Reader” from the 1611 King James Version the translators stated their belief that a translation could still be called the Word of God. Debra E. Anderson of the Trinitarian Bible Society commenting on those translators belief has stated:

²⁸The second person singular personal pronouns were still in common use in some sectors of English society as late as the early 20th Century. The usage continued even later, in some case into the 1970’s particularly in more isolated farming communities.

“It would be a most interesting debate, but must remain a matter of conjecture, whether the Authorised Version translators would have taken the same view of the plethora of translations and editions of the Scripture which abound today. Many such translations are based on altogether less sound textual and translational principals than those to which those men adhered and are, therefore in the view of this Society, unworthy of the designation of the Word of God.”²⁹

3. BIASES OF THE TRANSLATORS

During the Reformation, the aims of the Bible translators were to provide accurate and reliable translations, which were as close to the original texts as possible. They sought to make the truth found in the Scripture available to as many as possible. They approached their work in prayer and in the fear of the Lord.

The translators of the last two centuries are a very different story. As already mentioned, F.J.A. Hort believed that he was free to change the Greek text of the New Testament and thus change scripture where it did not fit in with his personal doctrines and beliefs. He believed that the “errors” of New Testament doctrine were due to errors in the copying of manuscripts over the centuries. He, therefore, believed that he was free to change the text of the Greek New Testament to fit in with his own doctrine. Hort with the aid of Westcott³⁰ produced a Greek Text which is the basis for all modern translation (with the exception of the NKJV and a few rarer translations), and they were both also on the committee of translators for the Revised Version, the New Testament of which was published in 1881.

Though not all translators have so clearly stated their purpose to change the doctrine of the Scriptures as Hort did in his private letters, many may still have their own agenda, and their theological and philosophical beliefs may well influence how they translate the Scriptures.

We do know that the individual beliefs of translators vary greatly. It is quite possible for their beliefs to affect their translation work. Among the committee of Translators for the NIV was at least one Unitarian, who did not believe Jesus is eternal God, but a created being. Such beliefs are not limited to translators of the NIV, and not believing in the Trinity or the Divinity of Jesus Christ our Lord and God, though among the more serious heresies, may only be the tip of the iceberg of heretical beliefs held by many Bible translators. What may not be so well known is that the committee of translators for NKJV is largely the same people that worked on the NIV.

MOTIVATION

The translators of the 16th and 17th centuries were motivated to translate the Scriptures by a deep desire to make the Scriptures available in the vernacular language of the peoples, so that all could read the Scriptures in their own language and come to know God. Their translating of the Scriptures was one of the greatest works of evangelism.

The motivations of modern translators vary greatly, some good, others not so good. They may be motivated to make Scripture more easy to read, but as already discussed this has its problems. They may wish to translate Scripture within their own philosophical or theological concepts, which is to deliberately change Scripture from the original. Their purposes may be more mercenary, simply to make money. Or they may be commissioned by a publisher to make a new translation.

Publishers are a leading force in the development of new Bible translations. Every new translation is a possibility for great earnings. New translations are brought out to compete with the sales of existing Bible translations. The 1995 edition of the New American Standard Bible was brought out with the express purpose of being a serious competitor for the NIV. No longer is the NASB designed as being one of the most literal Bible translations around (though it does use a corrupted text for the New Testament), but is now designed to be more accessible and readable than before, though in fact the changes are hard to find.

Publishers commission translators to produce a Bible that suits a particular market. Accuracy is now rarely the aim of a new Bible translation, but rather a product that fits a certain market. Translators who fulfil such commissions often prove that they have little respect for the truth of the Word of God.

²⁹From the article: The Septuagint - God's Blessing on Translation - The Quarterly Record No. 545, 1998, pg. 17 - The magazine of the Trinitarian Bible Society.

³⁰Hort did the bulk of the work on the Greek text. Westcott had his teaching commitments which limited the time he had to work on the Greek New Testament.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE VERSIONS

One particular characteristic of modern Bible versions is “Inclusive Language”. “Inclusive language” is just another way of saying “Politically Correct Language”. We now have a whole host of Inclusive language versions of the Bible. The problem is that they do not inform you that they are inclusive language editions. One of the first inclusive language versions of the Bible in mass print was the New Century Version (NCV) in 1987, it was followed within a couple of years by the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) 1989. The NCV only gives the briefest of statements in its preface as to its “Gender Language”. The only indication that the NRSV is an inclusive language edition is to be found in its’ introduction where Bruce M Metzger writes the following:

“During the almost half a century since the publication of the RSV, many in the churches have become sensitive to the danger of linguistic sexism arising from **the inherent bias of the English language towards the masculine gender, a bias that in the case of the Bible has often restricted or obscured the meaning of the original text**. The mandates from the Division specified that, in references to men and women, masculine-oriented language should be eliminated as far as this can be done without altering passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture. ...”

I have highlighted in bold what is a characteristically misleading statement from Bruce M. Metzger. That the English language is biased toward the masculine gender is certainly true, however, this is also true of nearly every language spoken today. The Masculine bias probably originates from the cultures of ancient time. We do know that the ancient world treated men with far greater respect than women. This bias toward the masculine gender is also common in both the Hebrew and Greek languages of the original texts of the Bible and is revealed in the writings of the Bible where the woman is considered of lower estate than a man. One of the strongest statements of this is found in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 where Paul forbids a woman to take authority, or to teach, but rather to learn in silence and to be fulfilled in childbearing. The Bible is full of statements like this, they may not be politically correct but they are the word of God and we do not have the right to change that to suit our own beliefs. Metzger states that the masculine bias of the English language “has often restricted or obscured the meaning of the original text”, but surely that cannot be true if both the culture of Biblical times and the original languages of the Bible are biased toward the masculine. The truth is that Metzger uses clever and misleading statements to justify his own preferences for political correctness. He has shown us the thinking of translators who try to justify changing the Biblical text to suit their own beliefs and practices.

The NCV and NRSV were among the first of the Inclusive language editions but nearly every modern Bible version published since then are inclusive language editions. The Message, NCV (and ICB), CEV, NRSV, the revised edition of the Good News Bible, the New Living Translation (NLT), God’s Word and the NIV Inclusive Language edition have all made changes in the gender of the language so as not to offend feminists and those that uphold politically correct beliefs. The only Bible version that openly declared itself to be gender inclusive is the NIV Inclusive Language edition. There was such opposition to this Bible because of its inclusive language that it was withdrawn from publication in America about two years after its publication in 1995, and by the end of 1999 it was withdrawn from publication in the United Kingdom³¹. Translators may feel the need for inclusive language, but the example of the NIV Inclusive Language edition shows that the people don’t want it. I wonder how many other modern Bibles would be withdrawn if they also printed “Inclusive Language” on the cover. The update for the New International Version (NIV) – Today’s New International Version (TNIV) is an Inclusive Language version of the Bible, yet this time it is not marked “Inclusive Language”.

Gender changes in these Bibles are usually to neuter gender forms. “Man” when used in reference to the human race is changed to “humankind” in the NRSV. This does not seem so bad a change, but many references to “sons” such as in Romans 8:14 are changed to “children”,³² this does have an effect on doctrine. In John 1:13 the King James Version reads “nor of the will of man”, The Message interprets that as “not sex-begotten”.

³¹Though some organisations still publish portions of the NIV Inclusive Language edition for outreach purposes, mainly the Gospel of John
³²In Romans 8:14,15 and Galatians 4:5-7 dealing with our adoptions as sons and the inheritance we receive as a consequence, changing “sons” to “children” does effect doctrine. Adopting a son in the ancient world would mean adopting a trusted adult into the position of a Son with a right to receiving the inheritance of the parents. It was then the responsibility of the adopted son to look after the parents in their old age. The Biblical principal is that all who believe in Jesus Christ are adopted as sons. In this there is no distinctions between male and female. The importance of the doctrine of adoption is not of gender but of position. By using “children” instead of “sons” an important doctrinal truth is removed from our Bibles.

ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS - *THE PROBLEMS!*

The Contemporary English Version refers to Matthew 16:24 as an example of how the changes work. Below you will find this verse quoted from six different Bible versions for your own comparison.

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." KING JAMES VERSION

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Those who would come after me must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." NIV INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE EDITION

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." TODAY'S NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

"Then Jesus said to the disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross, and follow me." NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

"Then Jesus said to his disciples: If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your cross and follow me. CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION

"Then Jesus went to work on his disciples. "Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how." THE MESSAGE

There is a progression through these versions. Each successive translation getting subtly further from the truth. The difference may not be much but it is the foot in the door, which makes way for greater perversions of the Scriptures. Another modern version "*The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*" published by Oxford University Press goes much further in its changes. The "Son of Man" becomes "the human one", "Our Father in heaven" becomes "Our Father/Mother in heaven". Al Dager in the Media Spotlight Vol. 16 No. 2 writes of this version:

"The editors of this abomination were mindful not to offend anyone except God Himself and those who love His Word."

A characteristic of inclusive language versions is changes from singular to plural. A change to neuter gender does not require a change from singular to plural, but most inclusive language versions do this. In the previous example from Matthew 16:24 you can see how the NIV Inclusive Language edition clearly changes the singular "If anyone..." to the plural "Those who..." and more clearly "must deny himself" becomes "must deny themselves". Psalm 1:1 in the NIV reads "Blessed is the man...", the NIV Inclusive Language edition reads "Blessed are those...". It is quite possible to have a gender neutral reading that is singular, e.g. "Blessed is the person...". The other inclusive versions all change singular to plural in places, but the NIV Inclusive Language edition and TNIV appear to be the worst offenders.

Many may argue that these changes are minor and have no serious effect, but it is still changing God's word which he has given for our good. What may seem minor in one place may in another context result in doctrinal error. One of the most common changes is using "we" for "man", this is not necessarily a change in number but does require a change in mood and tense which can subtly change what the Scripture actually says. Occasionally the change may not be so subtle.

Inclusive language editions are one of the latest fads in Bible Versions the TNIV being one of the latest. The desire of the translators to change the reading of translations to fit in with what they think people want to read, or to suit their own beliefs, rather than to accurately represent the original Hebrew and Greek texts show that the majority of modern Bible translators have little respect for the divine inspiration of Scripture and thus they very likely lack a personal fear of God. Nearly all new Bible versions are inclusive language editions, the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) and the English Standard Version (ESV) are among the few exceptions to this trend.

Making Sense

There is a problem, which is similar in its result to those made for political correctness, though the problem is not as prolific. The problem is trying to make Scripture fit beliefs and concepts that can be accepted and make sense. “Dragon” for example is only found in the KJV except in Revelation, in other translations we read “Monster”, “Leviathan” or “Serpent” or similar instead of Dragon. Many Creation Scientists believe this is because of the evolutionary beliefs of the translators. How many modern translators hold evolutionary beliefs we can not be sure, but we do know that the committee for the translation of the Revised Version did have a number of evolutionists among their number. They did remove “dragon” in some of its occurrences, but not all. Whether “Dragon” and also “Unicorn”³³ are changed because of evolutionary concepts or because the translators simply did not believe they existed, there is still a change made so that the translation makes sense to the mind of the translators.

Another change is found in Galatians 2:16 where it states that we are justified “by the faith of Jesus Christ...” in the King James Version, and every Greek text (including UBS and Nestle/Aland texts) agree with this. Yet all modern translations including the NIV and NKJV translate this phrase “by faith in Jesus Christ.” This error can also be found in we find in Romans 3:22; Galatians 2:20,22; Philippians 3:9 (Ephesians 3:12; Colossians 2:12). Regardless of the fact that every Greek text agrees with the translation “faith of” modern translations consistently translate it “by faith in.”³⁴ There is no excuse for Greek scholars to make this error. The difference between “faith of” which is in the Genitive case (possessive) and “faith in” which is in the Dative (or Locative) case and refers to location or position is so clear that only the poorest of Greek scholars could make the error which we find in these scriptures.

I can see two motivations for this change. One is the teaching of many of the theologians of the 19th and 20th centuries that Salvation is based on what we do not solely on the Grace of God. F.J.A. Hort was a highly respected theologian in his time, and may have had a significant influence in promoting such teaching. Many of the theologians of the last two centuries have been moving closer and closer to Roman Catholicism, which preaches a gospel of works. Thus “by faith in” would almost certainly be the preferred reading. Yet the scripture indicates that it is the faith of Jesus Christ, which is given to us as a gift, which we then apply, and we are thus justified by faith. Though it has become controversial to teach that it is the faith of Jesus by which we are saved and not our own faith in Jesus, the scripture does indicate that the former is correct. As we read Ephesians 2:8 in this light we can see that it can be read that it is faith which is the gift, the result being that our salvation is not of ourselves, not of works, we cannot even boast that we are saved because we have great faith. The truth is that nothing of ourselves is involved in our salvation and justification, not even our faith, it is all by the Grace of Jesus Christ.

The second motivation is simple; it just doesn’t appear to make sense to the translators. Another example which illustrates this problem can be found in Genesis 18:20,21 this is best illustrated by comparing the King James Version with the New King James Version:

And the LORD said, Because the **cry of** Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the **cry of** it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.
King James Version

And the LORD said, “Because the **outcry against** Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the **outcry against** it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.” New King James Version

The translators of the NKJV appear to have a problem believing that a city could cry out. The translators of the NKJV in common with the translators of all modern Bibles have changed the “cry of” to the “outcry against”. The language found here in the KJV can be found in many other places, not just in the KJV, for example we find in Romans 8:22 that the NKJV reads

³³ Numbers 23:22; 24:8; Deuteronomy 33:17; Job 39:9,10; Psalms 22:21; 29:6; 92:10; Isaiah 34:7

³⁴The few translations that agree with the KJV include Tyndale’s New Testament first edition published in 1526, second edition 1534, and Young’s Literal Translation first published in 1862.

“For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now.

Other passages such as Isaiah 55:12 do not make literal sense when they talk about mountains and hills singing and trees clapping their hands yet they are generally not changed. Though the translators have recognised the expressive language in Isaiah 55:12 and Romans 8:22 they have failed to recognise it in Genesis 18:20,21. I am sure that a careful comparison of translations would discover many more examples of the type of change we find in Genesis 18.

PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION

This is probably the most important factor in judging the validity of any text or manuscript and also in determining the correct method of textual criticism. Bible translators and textual critics who believe in the use of “higher criticism” and support the Critical Text bring into question God’s ability to preserve His own Word. Textual critics from Griesbach at the end of the 18th century onwards and Bible translators from the end of the 19th century onwards (with only a few exceptions) suggest by their work that we have never had a reliable Greek text to translate from until the development of the modern textual criticism, and thus they claim no translation of the New Testament before the Revised Version of 1881 was close enough to the first century manuscripts to be reliable. Such suggestions verge on blasphemy. It suggests that God who created all that exists; who is omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing) and omnipresent is unable to preserve his word intact and uncorrupted. It shows that they not only have little respect for God’s word, but that they have little respect for God Himself.

Textual critics who support the Critical Text may argue that they are only restoring it back to its original form in line with the Alexandrian manuscripts. However, their texts, though following the general trends of the Alexandrian manuscripts, depart from the Alexandrian readings in many places. The modern Critical text is actually a hybrid based upon Alexandrian manuscripts and the doctrinal beliefs of the textual critics.³⁵ It is a text form that never existed prior to the 19th century and as such is a direct assault against the principle of providential preservation.

There will always be those who seek to corrupt God’s word, and early Church history records the works of many men who sought to corrupt His word, yet God will always preserve His word so as to be found in uncorrupted form for those that love His word. It is the work of the translators of the 16th & 17th centuries that we should look to as being most reliable, for they were men with a deep commitment and love for God who suffered great persecution, many, like William Tyndale being put to death. The work of many, if not the majority of translators today puts to scorn the work of those who suffered such persecution in the past, and is at the least heretical, and at the worst utterly blasphemous.

There are a number of other attacks against God’s providential preservation of the Scriptures. An example of one of the more recent attacks is the work of Robert L Lindsey and Professor David Flusser, who suggest that the New Testament has never been translated correctly by the Gentile Church because the Church has never understood the Hebrew underlying the Greek text of the New Testament. These people have made many new translations of parts of the New Testament, which have never existed before, some of the translations even contradicting the context in which they occur.

The belief of those who state that translators in the Gentile Church have not had a proper understanding of Rabbinical teaching and hebraisms in the New Testament is false. William Tyndale was an excellent Hebrew scholar, and in translating the New Testament from the Greek he looked to the Hebrew and Aramaic behind the Greek New Testament. When comparing Tyndale’s translation to the Textus Receptus there are a number of places where his translations do not literally agree with the Greek³⁶, this is not because he made an error in translation, but rather because he understood the Hebrew idioms and customs from the Old Testament. Yet many today who believe in going back to the “Hebrew roots” are rejecting the work of Tyndale and

³⁵Because of the differences between manuscripts and the number of different readings found on many of the Alexandrian manuscripts it is possible for textual critics to choose a readings which suit their personal preferences.

³⁶This is also true of the King James Version. A frequently made mistake when reading the King James Version is to offer an alternative translation not understanding that often when the KJV does not always translate the Greek and Hebrew literally it does correctly translate the figures of speech correctly. As a result the King James Version is more accurate than a literal translation that is **only** word for word but fails to recognise figures of speech.

ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS - *THE PROBLEMS!*

other translators of his time. Tyndale's work underlies the King James Version and thus we already have a translation in which "Hebrew roots" are more than adequately understood, those who suggest otherwise cast doubt on God's ability to preserve His Word and are in danger of blasphemy.

There are errors to be found in even the best of translations, but the suggestion that the Gentile Church has never understood how to translate the New Testament is absolute nonsense. This should ultimately be seen as nothing more than another attempt of Satan to undermine faith in the Word of God.^{Gen 3:1ff}

The dubious revelations of the "Bible Code", brought to light only by the use of modern computers, could be considered as a more subtle attack on the principle of the providential preservation of the scriptures?

My comments may leave many to conclude that the King James Version is the best translations, and I would recommend using it, however, this is not because it is perfect, for I know of no translation that is without fault; but that it is the most reliable and accurate translation, using the most reliable source texts, that is commonly available in the English language. It does contain flaws, some on the part of the translators and other because of changes in the usage of certain words. But the flaws in the King James Version are nowhere near as serious as those found in modern Bible versions.

The KJV is also one of only a few translations that use second person singular personal pronouns, adding to its accuracy. The King James Version should be seen as essential for study. For thorough study of the Scriptures a translation, which is literal and consistent, is essential. Also the majority and the best of all Bible Study aids are keyed to the KJV. If you are put off the King James Version because of its language you may find the New King James Version a suitable compromise. However, if you persevere with the King James Version you will benefit richly from it.

It is my hope, that even if you disagree with my conclusions, you will at the least spend time studying the issues I have raised before reaching your own conclusion. If you have any questions do feel free to phone me. I can't answer all questions, but can at least point you in the right direction to find out more.

I have only given here a brief overview of the problem with modern Bible translations. The evidence against modern Bible translations is so vast that to begin to deal with them in a short report, I would not know where to stop. Details of further information on this subject are available on request.

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