

Gospel Gleaner

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WRITERS FOR THIS ISSUE

John Board

Elizabethtown, Kentucky

Andy Erwin

Fayetteville, Tennessee

Steve Gibson

Nashville, Tennessee

David Hester

Montgomery, Alabama

David O'Connell

Rogersville, Alabama

Denny Petrillo

Denver, Colorado

Roger Shepherd

Montgomery, Alabama

Inside this Issue

Andy Erwin

In this issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* we will be critiquing a few of the most popular English translations of the Bible. You will notice that we are doing our best not to promote one translation of the Bible over another translation. Our aim in this issue is to present the pros and cons of each version in a fair and balanced way. If a particular version has a unique quality, our desire is to highlight it. If that same version has some flaws, we wish to note them. Our objective is to give our readers some history and some understanding of the differences between the various translations and why these differences exist. It is up to each student to handle the word accurately (2 Timothy 2:15).

You will also find in this issue an article written by Steve Gibson concerning the “core beliefs” of present-day Lipscomb University as compared to the founding principles and desires of the school as stated in David Lipscomb’s hand written deed in which he gave his farm to the school.

No one can read brother Lipscomb’s wishes set forth in the deed of his farm to the Nashville Bible School (predecessor to Lipscomb University) while knowing the actions and teachings of the present board, administration, and Bible faculty and conclude that his wishes are being honored. I

believe you will find their actions to be in breach of the trust of the Lipscomb family and in violation of the deed he penned so many years ago.

A Review of the King James Version

David Hester

In our day and time, there is a multiplicity of English translations of the Bible. Some of them are excellent; some have definitive problems; and some are (for lack of a better term) pitiful. I do not claim to be an expert on translations; Rodney Cloud, my main PhD Professor and Dean of the Turner School of Theology, fits that description perfectly. However, I do know enough to make clear distinctions (or, as clear as I can make them).

In my short time on this earth, perhaps no translation has been more vilified and lauded than the King James Version. I won't get into the details; others can do a far better job than me. I also won't recount the history of the making of the KJV (as fascinating as it is); I urge the reader to learn all you can on that. It's a rewarding study. I'm fully aware of all the shortcomings in the KJV. And, I well know those who think the KJV is somehow the original Bible used by the Lord.

The fact is that the KJV is a translation. The scholars who were involved in the process were not inspired of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, no translators are. Only the writers of Scripture can make claim to that. The Scriptures themselves are indeed fully inspired of God, and inerrant, as far as they are correctly translated.

The KJV contains errors. The translation has Isaiah saying, "But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and **satyrs** shall dance there" (Isa. 13:21). Further, it has the prophet declaring, "The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the **satyr** shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest" (Isa. 34:14).

In Deuteronomy 33:17, the translators have Moses proclaiming, "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of **unicorns**: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh."

Job is made to say, "Will the **unicorn** be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the **unicorn** with his band in the furrow? Or will he harrow the valleys after thee?" (Job 39:9-10)

Three times in the Psalms—22:21, 29:6, 92:10—David mentions the unicorn. Isaiah does not escape it, either; "And the **unicorns** shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked

with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness” (Isa. 34:7).

The perceptive reader knows that the two beasts referred to in the KJV are mythological animals. They do not exist, and have never existed. They were inventions of man. Yet, the KJV mentions them as if they are real. The actual animals referred to are the wild goat and wild ox, respectively. One might think this is trivial; but, consider this. Our society is more biblically illiterate than ever. If one is inclined to not believe Scripture, and he comes across the above passages and knows the beasts referred to by the KJV translators are mythical, then what does that do for his trust in the Bible?

But, there are far more serious errors in the KJV. Quite often, the KJV apologists will affirm that there are no doctrinal errors in the translation. That is not true, to say the least. Consider Acts 2:47 in the KJV: “The Lord added to the church daily **such as should be saved.**” That highlighted phrase is Calvinistic. The actual phrase is “those who were being saved.” There is a BIG difference.

Further, in 1 John 3:9: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and **he cannot sin**, because he is born of God.” That highlighted phrase is most definitely of Calvinism. Our brethren of old had to deal in public debate with denominational preachers on the subject of “once saved, always saved;” invariably, one of the “sugar

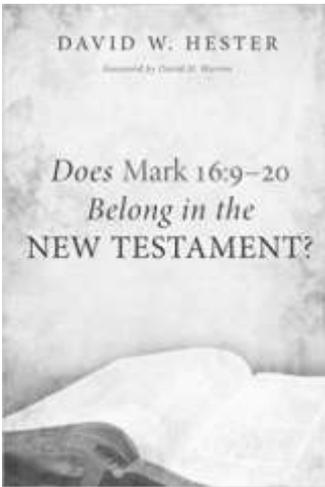
stick” passages those erring preachers would use was 1 John 3:9. Our brethren had arguments to answer them, to be sure; yet, it does not help matters when a translation contains fatal error, which the KJV does.

Having said all of that, I was reared on the KJV. I memorized Scriptures in KJV prose. When I think of Scripture, it's still in KJV style. Mind you, I have numerous translations in my library. Yet, there's something about the majesty of the prose of the KJV that continues to enthrall me. I will say that the rationale of the KJV translators needs to be read by everyone concerned with proper translation work. You can access it online at <http://www.ccel.org/bible/kjv/preface/pref1.htm>.

You will be amazed at what the translators of the KJV had to say about their work. They made mistakes, to be sure; they inserted error in the translation, no doubt; yet, they were trying to produce the best translation possible for the day in which they lived.

For all its flaws, the KJV has possibly had more influence on Western culture than any other piece of literature (besides Shakespeare). Think of “A house divided against itself,” from the lips of the 16th President from Illinois. Consider also the magisterial tone of “Prepare to meet thy God,” or, “Woe to them who are at ease in Zion,” or the sublime rendering of Psalms 23 (still, in my mind, the best

translation of that chapter). Multiplied thousands of people have been converted to Christ as a result of study of the KJV. Many of them had no formal education; yet, they were able in general to understand the translation (which speaks more about the quality of education then, as opposed to the declining standards of today). And yet, we are treated to those who make a habit of dismissing the KJV altogether, and even belittling those who still use it. Don't count me in that number. It's contributed much good.



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A Review of the New King James Version

John Board

Unless one has the ability to read the languages in which the Bible was originally penned (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) he is dependent upon a translation. A translation is simply the rendering of the language of the original document into one's own native language. Translations have served a wonderful purpose; they have provided to many, who otherwise would be unable to read the Bible, a precious privilege.

Different translations also hold different philosophies of translation. Of course in any translation there is involved more than simply a literal word for word rendering of the Greek/Hebrew text otherwise the result would be a rather choppy, difficult to follow, text. So humans, to the original inspired text, must apply some translation process.

One philosophy of translation known as Dynamic Equivalence seeks to use more free and idiomatic English without as much concern for the exact wording of the original. Dynamic Equivalence then allows for more human interpretation of the original.

The lack of concern for the exact wording of the original is problematic when one considers that the original languages, especially Greek, made points based upon the tenses and the plurality or singularity of certain

words (cf. Mt.22:32 "I am the God of Abraham" and Gal. 3:16 "seed" vs. "seeds").

The NKJV employs a different philosophy of translation—Formal Equivalence. In this philosophy of translation great effort is made to translate the words and the nuances of the original languages as literally as possible. I prefer this method of translation and would consider the translation philosophy of Formal Equivalence to be a positive trait of the NKJV.

A translation is not without its problems. Because the translation process involves a "human element," the potential for error exists. As a result, there is no such thing as a perfect translation. Though minor imperfections can be found in the best of translations, still men have benefitted immensely from the translation of Scripture into one's native vernacular.

The purpose of this article is to examine briefly the New King James Version (NKJV). In order to attempt to fulfill this purpose a few preliminaries must be considered.

Many Changes

When one speaks of the NKJV there must be an understanding that there have been several editions issued by Thomas Nelson Publishers.

The New Testament was copyrighted in 1979. Later in 1982 and then again in 1990 the entire Bible was copyrighted. In the intervening years literally thousands of changes have been made in the text of the NKJV. It is important to understand that though thousands of changes were made to the text of the NKJV, the changes did not always result in a new copyright. So, as one reads this review, his NKJV edition, may or may not include the element discussed.

While I do not use the KJV as my translation of choice, a strength of the KJV as a translation is that only one edition, the 1769 Oxford Standard, is most often used. Since this one edition is most used, the KJV presents a consistency of reading not found among the users of the NKJV.

Unlike Other Modern Translations

A majority of conservative reviewers usually acknowledge that the NKJV does not present as many problems as the New International Version, the Revised English Bible, or the New Revised Standard Version. It is not a loose translation of the original and it does not remove the hundreds of words, phrases, and verses that are often a criticism of some modern translations. I consider all of these to be strengths of the NKJV.

Yet, the NKJV is not without criticism. The criticisms below are more than the often-noted criticism that the NKJV is not simply the KJV with

updated modern language, as many are led to believe.

Though there are legitimate criticisms in translation, sometimes critics get overly zealous. For example, though some critics object to the NKJV translation of “they” instead of “he” and in Isaiah 53:9 such may not necessarily be an incorrect translation as much as it is a translator preference. The Hebrew reads “one assigned his grave with criminals.” But the subject of the singular is impersonal, and in these instances English typically uses “they” instead of “he.”

The translators here chose to provide a more English reading while providing a marginal note that “they” is literally he or He. Whether this writer agrees with the choice of the NKJV translators, a claim that it is an error in translation might be a stretch. In my opinion there are other concerns with the choices of the NKJV translators that are much more difficult to overlook.

The Historical Present Tense

Due to the brevity of this article allow one such example from the NKJV New Testament that highlights the failure of the NKJV translators to convey the historical present contained in the Greek. Greek writers for the sake of heightened vividness often used the historical present. In doing so they hoped to bring their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. This nuance of the original language was conveyed in the

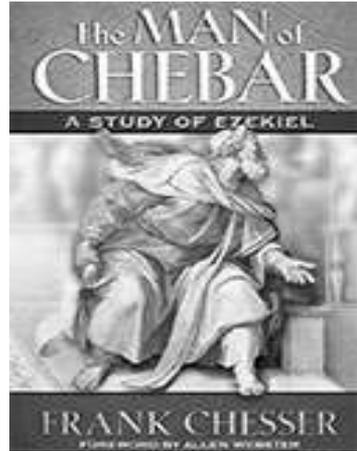
English of the KJV and ASV. The translators of the NASV, though they used the past tense in the text, they marked it with an asterisk to convey the nuance of the Greek.

An example is found in John 1:29. John through inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote, “on the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith...”

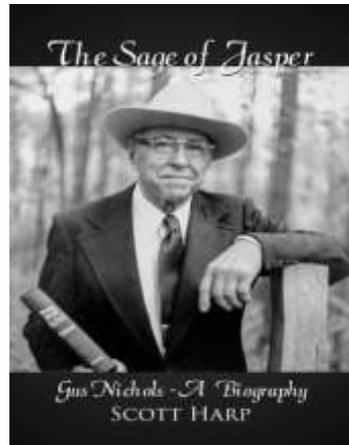
The NKJV translators chose to render the passage with a more modern vernacular: “The next day John (supplied for he) saw Jesus coming towards him, and said...” This rendering might provide an ease of reading (one part of the translation process) but here it seems to remove an important element of the Greek text. The intent of the NKJV seems to be to use the past tense to make the reading conform more to modern English usage. Such, in this writer’s opinion, is a weakness of translation.

In conclusion, the NKJV is not this writer’s choice of translation. Though it employs Formal Equivalence as a translation philosophy, the NKJV at times seems to forget this principle; instead they seek to use language that they believe will provide a greater readability for the English student of Scripture.

In my opinion, the NKJV does not provide enough of an enhanced readability to offset the choices of departure from the text.



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A Review of the New American Standard Bible

Roger Shepherd

I have used the New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1995) translation for over thirty years. I started with the American Standard Version (ASV) that is the most literal (word-for-word) translation. The translators smoothed out the English with some good and bad results. Christians must work from translations except those who know the Hebrew and Greek languages.

This translation began in 1959 by Lockman Foundation with a four-fold purpose. One, it shall be true to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages as inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). Second, it shall be grammatically correct using good contemporary English. Third, it shall be understandable. Four, translators shall give Christ His proper place, the place that the Word gives Him; therefore, no work will ever be personalized.

In this process they used the latest edition of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* for translation of the Hebrew in the Old Testament (OT) and the 26th edition of Eberhard Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece* in translating the Greek of the New Testament (NT).¹ Both were used in addition with the lexicography, cognate languages, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

¹ Preface to the New American Standard Bible, v-vii.

Old Testament Translations

In the Old Testament, there are some passages of great interest. First, the proper name for God is most significant and translated very well. This translation reminds us that it is inconceivable to think of a spiritual relationship with God without a proper designation for the Supreme Deity.

Thus, in this translation the most common name for the Deity is God from *Elohim*. One title for God is "Lord," a translation of *Adonai*. There is another name that is assigned to God as His proper name, that is, the four letters YHWH (Exod. 3:14; Isa. 42:8). This name has not been pronounced by the Jews because of reverence for the great sacredness of the divine name, thus, consistently translated LORD. The only exception to this translation of YHWH is when it occurs in immediate proximity to the word Lord, that is, *Adonai*.² In that case it is regularly translated "GOD" to avoid confusion.

God manifests the nature of the Supreme Being (I AM) who rules the universe and the hearts of obedient child of God. The term "LORD" conveys God's sovereignty and lordship in preparation for the coming kingdom of heaven. In this respect to God

² Ibid.

it is strong to translate the masculine for God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit in both testaments.

The NASB also translates Psalms 51:5 accordingly, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.” Scholars argue four options. One, this is a hyperbolic expression acknowledging the sinfulness of his life and everything around him. Two, His mother was a sinner. Three, He asserts he was born into a world of sin. Four, as in this translation, he was born a result of his mother’s adultery.³ One thing is for certain, David was not born a sinner. If he was born a sinner, this denies Ezekiel’s argument that a person is not born with his/her father’s sin (Ezek. 18:18, 20). The Bible teaches that children go astray in sin after birth (Job. 14:4; Ps. 58:3; Eph. 2:3).

The translation of Isaiah 7:14 is a good one, but the footnote is faulty. The translation is “a virgin will be with child and bear a son and call His name Immanuel.” The footnote for virgin adds just simply “a maiden” that does not exactly represent the virgin birth of Christ.

The footnote for *Immanuel* is strong, for “God is with us.” Matthew and Luke, inspired authors of the gospel, agree that this is an accurate translation (Matt. 1:23; cf. Luke 2:27).

Isaiah’s context is centered upon God being with us beginning with the virgin birth. I caution the serious Bible student to be aware of the footnotes that are the opinions of the translators.

New Testament Translations

Likewise, in the New Testament we have a weakness in that they translated the word “fornication” (Matt. 19:9) as simply “immorality.” This could be any act of immoral behavior that is too liberal. The word *porneía* is the root of the English terms “pornography, pornographic (*pórnos*) which is derived from *pernaō*, “to sell off”) or properly, a *selling off* (surrendering) of sexual purity; *promiscuity* of any (every) type. The primary translation is unlawful sexual intercourse such as sexual unfaithfulness and prostitution.⁴

The NASB also transliterates *Christos* as Christ, rather than translating it “Messiah” or “Anointed One of God” emphasizing His deity. The term *baptizo* is transliterated as baptism (Acts 2:38) instead of “immersion” in order to obtain the forgiveness of sin. We would have fewer problems with this requirement for salvation if it was correctly translated.

We find a hierarchy for church leadership represented by the word

³ Cloer, Eddie, *Truth for Today Commentary Psalms 51-89* (Searcy, AR: Resource Publication, 2006), 8-9.

⁴ Walter Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, ILL: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 854.

“office” in 1 Timothy 3:1, which is not in the Greek text. The word *episkopa* is correctly translated if anyone is seeking the work of an overseer. The ecclesiastical loanwords “office” and “bishop” are too technical and loaded with late historical baggage for precise signification of usage of *episkopos*.⁵

The common meaning is care, protection, and spiritual shepherding. It is God who grants gracious care and protection. People are directed to it through shepherds who oversee their spiritual lives. In context, an overseer is described as a shepherd (*episkopa*).⁶ The correct usage of *episkopa* is for men to function as spiritual shepherds involved in the lives of the people. Shepherds are not hierarchal and administrative lords. They are examples of personal teaching, serving, and ministry to the spiritual needs of the people. Shepherds smell like sheep in the fold of God and must be involved in the lives of the people.

Strengths of the NASB

I will mention three strengths. First, concerning the church: the “keys of the kingdom” is translated “shall have been bound and loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:18-19). It correctly translated the perfect passive action that is the authority of God concerning the church existed with God in the

beginning, stood firm in the present, and will continue in the future. Second, they strongly translate “buried” in baptism; as baptism is certainly a burial in water that results in a new life or salvation in Christ (Rom. 6:4; Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Third, faith or belief is translated (Rom. 10:9-10) as “believe” that results in righteousness and salvation. Therefore, faith only does not save. It translates salvation by grace through faith accurately (Rom. 5:2; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-10).

Conclusion

In an overall review, I recommend this translation, especially as a study Bible, for three reasons: One, it represents the original language in a word-for-word translation with good flowing contemporary English. Second, the scholars who did the translation had doctorates in biblical languages. Third, it has the reputation of being the most accurate translation of the Hebrew and Greek Bible.



⁵ Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker, 379.

⁶ Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of The New Testament, Vol. II* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 606-08.

A Review of the New International Version

David O'Connell

The beginnings of the New International Version go back to the 1950's when there was a negative reaction among some evangelicals concerning the Revised Standard Version. In the late 1960's, an overseeing committee was formed and serious work began on the new translation. The New Testament came out in 1973, followed by the Old Testament being published in 1978. There have been over four million copies sold of the New International Version.

The translation was named "International" because the translators came from several English-speaking countries: the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. Almost one hundred people worked on the original project. After the whole Bible was published, a standing committee of about fifteen scholars has met annually to discuss changes that should be made in the work. These translators come from America, Great Britain, India, et al.

Currently, the translation team is made up of thirteen men and two women. Originally, the translators were from thirteen different religious groups. The current group of translators is from eight different religious bodies. Each translator was asked to sign a document affirming their belief in the inspiration of Scripture and also

submitting to the authority of the Word of God. Their high view of Scripture was to be one of the main safeguards in their translation process.

The text which the NIV translators used was an eclectic text. This does have much to commend it. However, the idea of taking a "middle road" between the "Textus Receptus" and recent textual discoveries has its own set of problems. We want to show some of the strengths and also the weaknesses of the New International Version.

Strengths

The main strengths of the NIV are threefold: (1) use of recent texts, discoveries, and scholarship in translation, (2) the commitment of the translators to a high view of scripture, and (3) its readability. The New International Version provides easy reading and comprehension. Some also believe a strength of the NIV to be its availability in a number of different attractive and inviting formats. This variety of formats and editions partially accounts for its popularity. However, these qualities are probably due to decisions by the publishers rather than the translators.

Weaknesses

We also want to point out some of the weaknesses in the NIV.

In the Old Testament, the NIV reads in Psalm 51:5: “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” An earlier edition of the NIV reads: “Surely I was a sinner from birth.”

The KJV of this passage reads: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

The American Standard Version (1901) and the New American Standard (1963, 1971) both translate it: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity. And in sin my mother conceived me.”

It seems that the NIV was influenced more by Calvinistic theology than actual translating of this verse. There is no doubt that this is a difficult verse, but the NIV translation supports original or Adamic sin.

The New Testament has several places that are problematic. Some have criticized the very first verse of the NIV in the New Testament because it reads: “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ,” whereas the KJV and ASV have: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ.” The NIV nowhere else uses the word “record” in the sense of a book. This seems to be an inconsistency, but is not an effort to change the Word of God as some have charged.

In several places, the NIV translators left out the word “begotten” in reference to Christ. These passages are: John 1:14,18; John 3:16,18; and 1

John 4:9. The word “begotten” is in the footnote of each of those verses. The NIV translators have the phrase “one and only son” in the text, but this is not quite strong enough. All Christians are sons or daughters of God, but we are not His “only begotten” sons or daughters. It would have been a better translation if the text read “only unique Son” or “His divine Son.” These are difficult passages because the Greek word for “only begotten” is “monogenes,” and the word “begotten” is rarely used in contemporary society.

One of the greatest faults of the New International Version was the translation of the word “sarx.” The KJV and ASV translated it “flesh,” but the NIV translated it “sinful nature.” Sixteen times, the NIV translates “sarx” as “sinful nature.”

It also translates it once as “sinful man,” once as “standards of the world,” and once as “live in the world.” This seems to be a clear instance of Calvinistic thinking on the part of the translators.

In most places, the NIV has “flesh” in a footnote. The word “flesh” is a word that can mean muscles and bone (human physical flesh), or it can mean that part of a person which makes a decision to live out of harmony with God’s will.

John Calvin taught that all human beings inherited a “sinful nature” from Adam and his sin. However, the Scriptures are clear that no one inher-

its sin or a sinful nature from another (cf. Ezekiel 18:4-20; Deuteronomy 1:39; Matthew 19:14).

In all fairness to the NIV, the 2011 edition reversed positions and put “flesh” in the text and “sinful nature” in the footnotes. Some may feel that this does not matter, since the idea of “sinful nature” was in the text from 1973 until 2011. This certainly was the case, but they have changed the translation and did this because of the different thinking on the part of the current translation committee.

The NIV has the phrase “marital unfaithfulness” in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 instead of the word “fornication.” In other instances, the NIV has “sexual immorality” (Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21; Acts 15:20,29; Romans 13:13; I Corinthians 5:1; 6:13,18; 7:2; Galatians 5:19; etc.). While “marital unfaithfulness” might convey the idea of sexual infidelity, it might mean something else as well. It is clear that the word “pornea” in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 14:9 can only mean sexual infidelity. The NIV translators should have been consistent and used “sexual immorality.”

The New International Version has Phoebe as a “servant” of the church in Romans 16:1, with the word “deaconess” in the notes. However, in the 2011 edition, the word “deaconess” has been put into the text, and “servant” is in the notes. A footnote in the 2011 version also states that “deacon

refers to a Christian designated to serve with the overseers/elders of the church in a variety of ways.” In this same regard, the earlier editions of I Timothy 3:11 had “wives” of the deacons but had “deaconess” in the footnotes. The 2011 footnote reads “Possibly deacon’s wives or women who are deacons.”

The earlier rendition of Psalm 23:4 in the NIV reads: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.” The updated NIV of 2011 reads: “Even though I walk through the darkest valley.” A valley may be dark, it may be scary, but this does not necessarily connote “death.”

The earlier NIV readings of Malachi 2:16 had: “I hate divorce says the Lord God of Israel, and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with a garment.” The updated NIV has: “the man who hates and divorces his wife, says the Lord, the God of Israel, does violence to the one he should protect.” In one, God is the subject and speaks saying, “I hate divorce.” In the newer one, “the man” is the one who hates. This is quite a difference and not an improvement.

There are some times when the updated NIV makes an improvement in the text. In Isaiah 16:6 and Jeremiah 48:29, the old NIV had “overweening pride.” The 2011 NIV has “great arrogance.” The KJV has “haughtiness” and “exceeding pride.”

Another edition of the NIV has made an attempt to be a “gender neu-

tral” translation. It is called “Today’s New International Version” (TNIV). The translating committee of the TNIV tried to make the translation “gender neutral” when certain texts included men and women. The older translations always had “he” or “him.”

An example of this is found in Hebrews 12:7, which says: “God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father” (NIV). The TNIV has: “What children are not disciplined by their parents?” The TNIV is obviously not making an effort to be closer to the Greek. Instead, it is a compromise with those in our society who are changing all differences between men and women. God’s prohibition to adding to His Word needs to be heeded (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18,19).

Conclusion

We would not use the NIV as our only translation, but it certainly is helpful as a comparison version for study and, on occasion, to quote from when the text of the NIV is clearer.

Because there is no divine inspiration today, no translation is perfect. Every single translation has its strengths and its weaknesses. None are absolutely perfect. There is one area that, even though imperfect, is the most important part of the translation process. The ultimate goal of all translations is to translate the sacred Word of God from the text into the conduct of daily life. We pray we will all accomplish this goal.

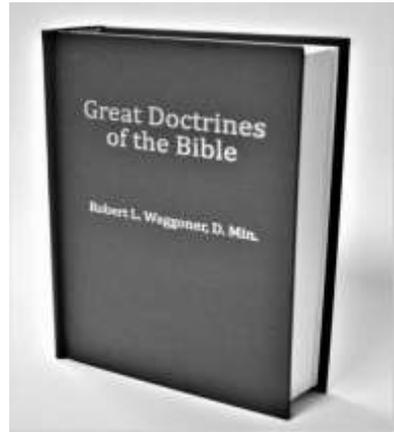


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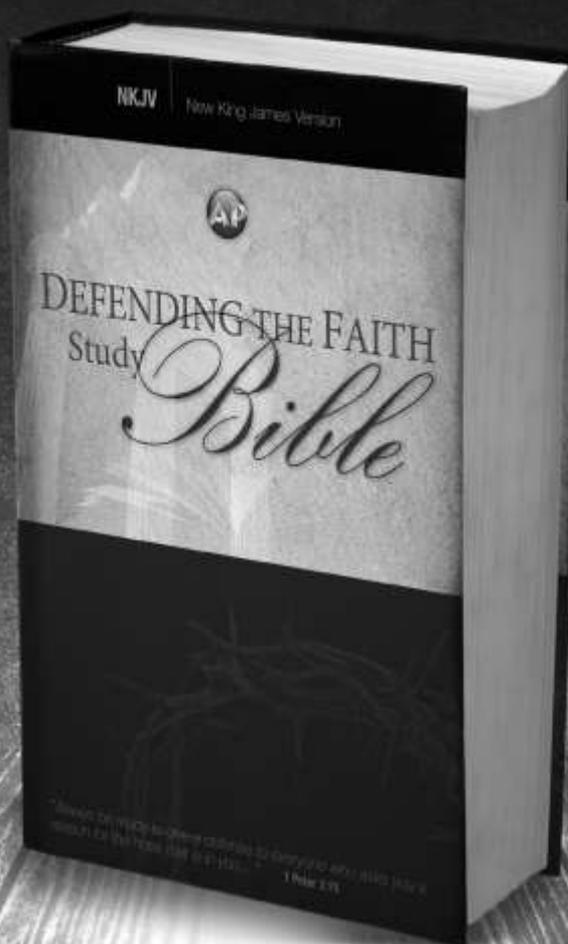
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A Review of the English Standard Version

Denny Petrillo

Reviewing a translation is always perilous work. There are those who have become emotionally connected to the translation, thus to criticize it is to attack them personally. To commend it is to suggest that it is without flaw and should be embraced categorically. Yet it needs to be stated clearly upfront: *there is no perfect translation*. Every translation known to man has its flaws. Failure to acknowledge this is equivalent to burying one's head in the sand, refusing to face the facts.

Background of the ESV

The English Standard Version (ESV) is a good translation (Standard Bible Society, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books and Bibles, 2001). It has received recommendations from many. It really is not a new translation, but is almost completely a duplication of the Revised Standard Version.

Approximately 95% of the ESV is a reproduction of the RSV. This point alone is neither good nor bad. Many are unaware that the KJV of 1611 was basically the Bishop's Bible (1568) which was a revision of Matthew's Bible (1537). All of these Bibles leaned heavily on the work of William Tyndale and his Bible (1534). Even the modern edition of the KJV is the product of several revisions.

The textual basis of the English Standard Version (ESV) rests on eclectic critical Greek texts (the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament, 4th ed. and the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece, 27th ed.). Thus, it uses a different textual base than the KJV and the NKJV which used the Textus Receptus (the edition of the Greek New Testament first edited by Erasmus, and revised by others through the centuries). However, since the ESV is virtually a reproduction of the RSV, it should not be implied that it is a "new" translation that started from scratch with either the Hebrew text or eclectic Greek texts.

The editors of the ESV all claim to believe in the inspiration of Scripture and maintain a conservative fundamentalist perspective. Their translating philosophy was to produce a version that was "essentially literal." They are openly critical of "dynamic equivalence," where the translator is not really attempting to translate the words, but rather to convey the idea. This philosophy is known as a "thought for thought" translation, and describes translations like the New International Version, the New Living Bible Translation and the Holman Christian Standard Bible. While they achieved their goal of being "essentially literal" (following other versions

like the KJV, NKJV and NASB), there are some verses that read more like a paraphrase.¹

Evaluation

In an article this size it is impossible to provide a comprehensive evaluation. However, I will divide this section into considering three areas in which the ESV falls short.

Inaccurate Translations:

1. **Matthew 16:18** – says the “gates of *hell* shall not prevail against it.” The Greek word is *αδου* (HADES). This word does not mean hell. This was an unfortunate error made in the KJV as well. However, they do correctly translate this word in Acts 2:27! Why the inconsistency in translation?
2. **1 Corinthians 14:12** – says: “So with yourselves, since you are eager for *manifestations* of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.” The word translated “manifestations” is not in the Greek. It is the simple *πνευματων* correctly translated “spiritual gifts” in most translations.
3. **1 Corinthians 12:7** – In conjunction with #2, the ESV also translates this verse as follows: “To each is given the *manifestation* of the Spirit for the common good.” This is not the word *πνευματων* as in 1 Corinthians 14:12, but the word *φανερωσις*. One would incorrectly assume that the same Greek word is being used, since both passages say “manifestation.”
4. **1 Corinthians 8:4** – inexplicably translates the word “world” (Greek: *κοσμος*) as “real existence.” This is the only place the word is so translated, and it is totally unnecessary.
5. **Deuteronomy 15:18** – The ESV renders this “for at half the cost of a hired servant he has served you six years.” This is neither an accurate rendering of the Hebrew (which literally reads “he has given you six years with double the amount of service”) nor a correct interpretation of the verse. The ESV would have been better served just translating the verse instead of trying to interpret it.
6. **Malachi 2:16** – The ESV has it where it is not God who “hates divorce” but the man “hates and divorces.”
7. **Romans 10:9-10** – the ESV translation of these verses has helped support the doctrine of ‘faith only.’²

¹ Kyle Pope, "A Review of the English Standard Version" *Biblical Insights* 11.3 (March 2011): 25

² As a result, Wayne Jackson specifically addressed the problem with the ESV rendering here:

8. **Proverbs 3:3; 14:22; 16:6; 20:28; 29:14** – translates the Hebrew word *‘emeth* as “faithfulness,” which gives a totally different understanding of these verses than the usual meaning of *‘emeth* as “truth” (which is the way most major translations translate it, except the NIV which also goes with “faithfulness”).
9. **Hebrews 6:5** - “goodness” is a noun, and the word *kalos* used here is an adjective. Therefore, “goodness” is an incorrect translation (the ESV is the only version I found that makes this mistake. The others correctly render

it as an adjective: “the good word....”).

10. **Psalms 94:9** - The ESV reads: “He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?” What does “planted the ear” mean? Are we talking about an ear of corn? The idea is that God has made, formed or fashioned the human ear.

Examples of Dynamic Equivalence (which is not a good translating approach)

11. **1 Corinthians 11:30**, translates the Greek “fallen asleep” as “died” (whereas it translates the same Greek word as “fallen asleep” in 1 Thessalonians 4:14)
12. **Romans 8:37** – translates the strong adversative *alla* as “no” instead of the more common “but” (the NIV makes the same mistake)
13. **Matthew 7:13** – translates the Greek *eurucwros* as “easy.” Whereas that is the idea, is not a faithful translation of the word itself. The Greek says “the way is *broad*.” That is the literal meaning of the word.
14. **Matthew 7:14** – similar problem with Matthew 7:13. Translates the word “narrow” as “hard.”
15. **Romans 6:19** – The ESV says: “I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations.”

Inasmuch as the Scriptures are verbally inspired of God (i.e., the words themselves are divinely-directed; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21), even their grammatical forms (e.g., nouns, verbs, prepositions, tense, voice, mood, singular, plural, etc.) are important. It is, therefore, a perilous venture for a translator to substitute his own wording for sacred forms, by radical changes in the text.

For example, in verse 10, the ESV translators alter the text by changing two “nouns” (righteousness and salvation) into “verbs” (justified and saved), and by transforming the twice-used preposition “unto” (Greek, *eis*) into conjunctions, “and.” Whereas in reality, the prepositions point to a goal towards which both the believing and the confessing are progressing — a goal not reached by either of these actions alone.

Jackson made the following conclusion regarding the ESV here: “No, this rendition does not teach the erroneous doctrine of “salvation by faith alone,” though it is not rendered as precisely as it ought to have been.” (Wayne Jackson, “Does the ESV Translation Promote “Faith Alone” Salvation?”

<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1078-does-the-esv-translation-promote-faith-alone-salvation>

The Greek has the word “flesh” (*sarkos*). “Natural limitations” is a perfect example of a dynamic equivalent rather than a translation. Besides, the insertion of the word “natural” makes it sound (and support) the Calvinistic doctrine of total depravity.

Poorly Translated Verses

16. **Ephesians 3:6**: The Greek here is beautifully written with three “*σύν* (*sun-*) phrases. Unfortunately, the ESV fails to show this symmetry by translating it as follows: “This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” By contrast, note the excellent rendering of the NAS: “that the Gentiles are **fellow** heirs and **fellow** members of the body and **fellow** partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (emphasis mine).
17. **James 1:25** – The Greek says “whoever *abides*” by the word (Greek: *meno*), but the ESV translated it “endures.” The word is not *hupomone* like in 1:3, 12. The point is that you need to abide/remain in the Word.
18. **Romans 1:17** – the ESV renders the phrase “from faith for faith.” The Greek here is ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, literally “out of faith into faith.” Translating the Greek preposition εἰς as “for” makes an

already difficult phrase nearly impossible to comprehend.

19. **Prov. 30:25-26** - “the ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer; rock badgers are a people not mighty, yet they make their homes in the cliffs.” Are ants and badgers “people”? Plus the word order is clumsy and difficult.
20. Some verses are funny (although certainly not meant to be!): **Psalms 147:10** - “His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man.” **Amos 4:6** - “I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities.”

Conclusion

These few illustrations (there are many more)³ demonstrates that the ESV has its share of translating issues. That being said, the translation did a good job in a majority of verses. It demonstrates a high regard for the inspiration of Scripture. It certainly is not perfect, but one can learn and teach the truth from this version.

³ Mark L. Strauss, “Why the English Standard Version (ESV) Should not become the Standard English Version.”

<https://zondervan.typepad.com/files/improvingesv2.pdf>

A Summary of Thought on Bible Translations

Andy Erwin

Seeing that we have been briefly reviewing a few of the most popular English Bible translations in this issue of the *Gospel Gleaner*, it seems appropriate to provide a summary of thought to what has been said. Much of the debate pertaining to Bible translations has to do with the Greek text being translated for the New Testament and the method used to translate the selected text.

The Hebrew text used to translate the Old Testament into English is not discussed nearly as much. In fact, modern English translations use essentially the same Hebrew text for the Old Testament, even though they may vary occasionally and in translating certain words or phrases.

Such is not the case with the New Testament. Modern English translations of the New Testament are derived from one of three Greek texts.

THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS

The story of the Greek text that came to be known as the Textus Receptus¹ begins with Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536). Erasmus was a Latin and Greek scholar who is credited with publishing the first printed Greek New Testament in 1516. Erasmus' New Tes-

tament consisted of parallel columns of Greek on the left and his own Latin translation on the right. Erasmus had hoped to find one Greek manuscript for the entire work but was unable. Therefore, he compiled half a dozen or so² minuscule-style³ manuscripts which were dated no later than the tenth century. None of these manuscripts contained the entire New Testament. The only copy of Revelation available to Erasmus lacked verses 22:16-21, which caused him to translate these verses from the Latin Vulgate into his Greek text. Erasmus revised his Greek text four times (1519, 1522, 1527, and 1535). A second spurious manuscript appeared by the time of his 1522 revision which included 1 John 5:7-8. It is believed that both Luther⁴ and Tyndale⁵ used the 1522

² Accounts vary as to just how many manuscripts Erasmus had when he first began this process. It is generally believed he had between six and eight. Although some have suggested he had as many as twelve documents.

³ In his book, *God's Word into English*, Dewey Beegle notes: "About the ninth century A.D. a very attractive, smooth-flowing type of handwriting was developed which made it possible for scribes to connect many letters without raising the pen" p.19.

⁴ Martin Luther translated the Bible into German in 1522.

⁵ William Tyndale translated the New Testament in English in 1525.

¹ In English, this Latin term is translated "Received Text."

edition for their respective translations.

Improvements to the Textus Receptus continued to be made throughout the nineteenth century as new manuscripts were discovered and added as variant readings to the text. In 1881, Frederick Scrivener (1813-1891) collated the Codex Sinaiticus⁶ with the Textus Receptus. Scrivener compared the Textus Receptus with the editions of Stephanus (1550), Theodore Beza (1565), and Elzevier (1633) and enumerated all the differences. The Scrivener text was produced in an attempt to reconstruct the Greek text underlying the King James Version of 1611.

Amazingly, the translators of the King James Version never published the Greek text from which they worked. Therefore, Scrivener attempted to formulate the text they would have used by examining the various texts that would have been available to them. Scrivener matched various readings (primarily the Beza and Stephanus texts) to fit the English used by the translators. Thus, the Scrivener text properly belongs to the family of Textus Receptus. It can be rightly said that Scrivener's text was the best and most recent update for his time.

⁶ The Codex Sinaiticus dates to the middle of the 4th century. It contains the earliest known complete copy of the New Testament.

The Textus Receptus as it appeared in Erasmus' 1522 edition was the Greek text for the early English translations of the New Testament, beginning with William Tyndale's translation of 1526.^{7 8}

Translation	Date
William Tyndale's Translation	1526
Miles Coverdale's Translation: The Coverdale Bible	1535
John Rogers' Translation: The Matthew Bible	1537
Miles Coverdale's Second Translation: The Great Bible ⁹	1539 ¹⁰
William Whittingham's Translation: The Geneva Bible	1557 ¹¹
The Bishops' Bible ¹²	1568
The King James Version	1611

⁷ John Wycliffe's translation of the New Testament (1380) was derived from the Latin Vulgate rather than any Greek manuscripts.

⁸ Tyndale also revised his translation of the New Testament in 1534 and 1535. In these revisions, he made corrections when needed, included fewer marginal notes, and shortened the introductions to each book.

⁹ The Great Bible could be viewed as more of a revision of the Coverdale Bible than a new translation.

¹⁰ Extensive revisions of this translation occurred through 1540-41

¹¹ The New Testament was completed in 1557. The entire Bible was finished in 1560.

¹² This version was done by a committee of Anglican Bishops overseen by Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Hence the name "Bishops' Bible" was supplied.

When the decision was made by Sam Moore and Thomas Nelson Publishers that the King James Version was to be revised and brought into twentieth century English, it was decided that the Textus Receptus would be the textual basis for their translation of New Testament.

THE CRITICAL TEXT

The process of formulating a second Greek text of the New Testament began in the 1830s with the work of the German scholar Karl Lachmann (1793-1851). Lachmann published three editions of a Greek New Testament from 1831-1850, in which he used only uncial Alexandrian and Old Latin manuscripts. Lachmann's work was the first to break from the Textus Receptus which was based largely upon Byzantine manuscripts. Samuel Tregelles also published a text around this time using nearly the same principles as Lachmann.¹³

Constantin von Tischendorf (1815-1874) followed in the footsteps of Lachmann in that he gave decisive weight to the oldest manuscripts without balancing their testimony against that of the Textus Receptus. Tischendorf discovered and published more manuscripts in his day than any other scholar. He examined everything available to him – manuscripts, versions, church fathers, etc. His Greek

text was published and revised during the years 1867-1872. Eight editions in all were published. In 1881, B.F. Westcott (1825-1901) and F.J.A. Hort (1828-1902), took the work of Tischendorf and those who followed him, and revised it further in their text titled *The New Testament in the Original Greek*. Westcott and Hort were also able to rely heavily upon the Codex Vaticanus which was not accessible to Tischendorf or his revisers.

The Critical Text also underwent revisions. In the late 1940s, Erwin Nestle (1883-1972) employed Kurt Aland (1915-1994) to assist in revising the text which would be known as the Nestle-Aland text. This text is now in its 28th edition.

During this period, Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce Metzger, Allen Wikgren, Eugene Nida, and Barbara Aland worked together as a committee for the United Bible Societies to produce *The Greek New Testament* which was first published in 1966. It is now in its fifth edition.

THE MAJORITY TEXT

In 1982, Thomas Nelson Publishers produced *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*. Zane Hodges and Arthur Farstad were the principal editors. The Majority Text has also undergone revision. Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont produced *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform*, in 1991 and a revision in 2005.

¹³ Philip Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts: An Introduction to New Testament Paleography and Textual Criticism* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2005), 293.

THE TRANSLATION PROCESS

With three possible Greek texts to choose from, a translating committee must decide which text they will use. Having decided on the text they are to translate, they must then decide how they will proceed in the translating process.

Does the translating committee have a high view of scripture? Will they treat the text with the reverence deserving of the word of God? Will they use an idiomatic approach? Will they seek to paraphrase the text or to translate the text as closely to the Greek as translation will allow? On this point we have the debate of thought-for-thought (dynamic equivalency) or word-for-word (literal) translations.

Many Bible students prefer thought-for-thought translations such as the Open Bible, NIV, Living Bible, or even The Message. However, these students must proceed with caution. I would recommend having a literal translation as well. Sadly, not every English translation has been produced by people with a great regard for inspiration. Many modern scholars deny the verbal inspiration of the Bible and are very reckless in the translations they publish.

Our desire as Bible students should be to know the word and to apply the word. Of course, application will prove impossible without knowledge.

I recommend that you have a good study Bible with an accurate translation, a Bible dictionary, and a good concordance. These three tools will help you immensely in your studies.

IN CONCLUSION

Today, the overwhelming number of scholars, schools, and even Bible translations support the Critical Text. Certainly much work has been done and many pieces of evidence have been discovered since the time of Erasmus and even Scrivener.

While we continue to debate which Greek text is most accurate, there remains approximately 80% agreement between the texts. It is the 20% for which we disagree that includes passages whose authenticity must be settled. It could be said that these disputed passages do not affect the plan of salvation, and that one can be led to the truth without them. While others deem such an answer unsatisfactory and believe the issue is much deeper than that. These would maintain that *every* word of God must be represented in the Bible and that not one jot or tittle should be removed.

Emotions tend to run high with this discussion. Dialogue and study is what is needed most. Let us continue to study this issue and listen to others. Our desire should be to learn and to uphold the word of God, regardless of which version's name is imprinted on the cover.

Is Scriptural Worship a “Core Belief” for Lipscomb University?

Is Lipscomb University in violation of her founding purpose and guilty of a breach of contract? You be the judge.

Steve Gibson

In July 2005, Lipscomb University inaugurated its seventeenth President, Dr. L. Randolph Lowery III. He has since brought unprecedented change to the school. After his ascension to leadership, Faculty Handbooks began to proclaim, “Indeed, a new day has dawned . . . People are already saying, ‘If you haven’t seen Lipscomb lately, you haven’t seen Lipscomb!’” It is not surprising, therefore, that the President and Board of Trustees of Lipscomb University have now initiated a formal process to reassess “how Lipscomb defines itself.”

A document is presently being circulated by one of the school’s Spiritual Formation officers entitled “Lipscomb University’s Centering Core: A Campus-wide Conversation.” In it the following observations are made: “For the most part Lipscomb has defined its Christian character the same way Churches of Christ have defined theirs—through a distinct core of beliefs and practices, though not formalized in an official creed. Further, in setting the qualifications for employment at Lipscomb, the University historically has assumed that declaring membership in a Church of Christ

provides a clear and adequate measure of Christian commitment . . . However, we face in the twenty-first century changing and challenging times . . . Churches of Christ themselves have experienced a ‘crisis of identity’ over the last several decades, becoming much more diverse in belief. Lipscomb, too, has undergone change. It is no longer the case, as it was for many years, that 100% of the members of the Lipscomb faculty belong to Churches of Christ . . . the President and Board of Trustees have asked us to re-engage the powerful vision for Christian unity that launched and guided the Stone-Campbell movement over two hundred years ago.”

Under the heading of “The ‘Centering Core’ of Churches of Christ” the document goes on to highlight ten essential doctrines, saying, “Something close to the following list is what counted as orthodox in the first several generations of the Stone-Campbell movement.”

Under the heading of “Lipscomb University’s Current Centering Core,” the proposal then continues, in part: “The university’s founders were lead-

ers in a fellowship that was becoming known in the late nineteenth century as the Churches of Christ. These churches grew from the American Restoration Movement, which sought to restore unity among believers by rejecting creeds and returning to the Bible, excluding all human opinions and philosophy, as the only rule of faith and practice. Churches of Christ are autonomous, non-denominational congregations associated by common core beliefs as recorded in the New Testament. Lipscomb University is not a church. Because of its strong heritage of association with the Churches of Christ, Lipscomb University adheres to the central doctrinal interpretations that characterize these churches . . . While we endorse and seek to teach absolute truths of scripture, we also acknowledge that the study of scripture results in questions on which there will never be consensus.”

Reconsidering How Lipscomb Defines Itself

On information and belief, private meetings of invited faculty members are scheduled to begin in May 2019 for the purpose of assisting present administrators to better define, articulate, and update “Lipscomb University’s Current Centering Core.” Why is a progressive President now asking new faculty members that he himself has selected and hired (like Dr. Rubel Shelly) to reconsider “how Lipscomb defines itself”?

The document invites faculty members to gather and discuss the question, “In light of Lipscomb’s close 125-year connection to Churches of Christ, what are the key convictions you think most important to insure an intentional, and vibrant Christian university?”

While it remains to be seen what results this process will yield, a voice from the grave would surely answer that a continuing commitment to exclusively scriptural worship is among the University’s most important “key convictions.”

The Lipscomb Deed

On September 17, 1904, David Lipscomb and his wife Margaret deeded portions of their farm on Granny White Pike to the Nashville Bible School subject to certain restrictions governing the land’s future use. The restrictive clause signed by David Lipscomb’s own hand states, in part:

“The land hereby conveyed is to be used for maintaining a school in which in addition to other branches of learning, the Bible as the recorded will of God and the only standard of faith and practice in religion, *excluding* all human systems and opinions, and *all innovations*, inventions and devices of man *from the* service and *worship of God* shall be taught as regular daily study to all who shall attend said school, and for no other purpose inconsistent with this object, this condition being herein inserted at the re-

quest of said Nashville Bible School, of which David Lipscomb was one of the founders, and the same is hereby declared *fundamental* and shall adhere to the premises conveyed as an *imperative restriction* on their use so long as the same shall be owned by said Nashville Bible School . . .

“All directors of said corporation, or trustees of the school, and regular members of the faculty, shall be *members of the Church of Christ, in full sympathy with the teachings above set forth*, and desirous to carry them out. Any one failing to have those qualifications shall resign or be removed.” Mr. and Mrs. Lipscomb also made it clear that the same restrictions would apply to any successor organization using the property or funded by its sale, “it being our purpose and intention to *impress* the trust declared by said limitations and restrictions *perpetually* upon the property” (1904 Deed Book of Davidson County, Tennessee, pp. 560-562 [handwritten]; same restrictions repeated in Deed No. 55646 to Nashville Bible School, signed by David Lipscomb and wife on Dec. 30, 1913; recorded on Jan. 12, 1914, per 1914 Deed Book, pp. 181-182 [typewritten]; emphasis added).

The By-Laws

Sometime between April 1903 and January 1905 in connection with the Newbern church property trial held at Dyersburg, Tennessee, David Lipscomb affirmed under oath his conviction that a “church that adopts the

organ goes into apostasy” and that “a church that does this is not a church of Christ” (“Deposition of David Lipscomb: Cross-Examination,” Vol. 1, pp. 23-24; per microfilm in Beaman Library of transcripts “faithfully compiled and arranged for library use by H. Leo Boles”).

Forty years after it took his name in April 1918, the school continued to honor brother Lipscomb’s stance of excluding all human innovations from the worship of God by enacting corporate by-laws: “All members of the Board of Directors shall be members of the church of Christ in good standing with their congregations. Each member shall be *opposed to all innovations* and departures *in the work and worship* as taught in the New Testament” (By-Laws of Board of Directors of David Lipscomb College, Article 2, Section 2, as cited in David Lipscomb College Faculty Handbook 1958-59, p. 8, emphasis added).

A New “Centering Core”

Beyond doubt, the school’s historic opposition to *innovations in the worship of God* included and was intended to condemn “the use of instrumental music in worship” (DLC Faculty Handbook 1962-63, p. 8). However, the new “Centering Core” advanced by current administrators appears to at least float the option of relaxing this historic conviction of the school. How so? “Lipscomb University’s Centering Core” proposes that the school simply state, “We respect and endorse the

first-century practice of non-instrumental worship.”

But as a declaration of principle this is a half-truth that even the enemies of David Lipscomb could have approved. For the core concern of the school’s founder was that any innovation added to this practice be excluded! Unlike the school’s prior declarations, the present proposal stops short of labeling instrumental worship as an innovation, digression, or false doctrine not in accord with school policy.

Among items allegedly “counted as orthodox in the first several generations of the Stone-Campbell movement” the new proposal concludes with “(10) Worship without musical instruments is commanded by God (among those who became Churches of Christ in the latter nineteenth century).”

However, did nineteenth century opponents of instrumental music really believe that God had explicitly “commanded” them not to worship with it?

Does this language not resurrect the instrumentalists’ old straw-man that can be answered by a simple retort that there is no direct command explicitly forbidding its use?

Does the proposal’s summary not characterize opposition to instrumental music in worship as merely a fringe opinion in a much larger movement whose majority vision the

present administration now asks the University to re-engage?

Reflecting upon “The Heritage” of the school, the college said of itself in 1962:

“It is imperative that those of us who devote our strength to the work of David Lipscomb College understand and share the convictions which brought it into being. This is especially true in view of the fact that many of the spiritual perils which prevailed in 1891 exist today, although often in more sinister form. The history of higher education in the United States reveals that many religious groups have founded colleges to offset secularism and promote their interests. It is sobering to realize that few of these colleges have completed even one century in loyalty to its original purposes, with the exception of Catholic institutions. This tragic denial of founding ideals must not befall David Lipscomb College.

“The decade of the 1880’s saw the loss of many of the accomplishments of the Restoration Movement. A lack of fundamental understanding of the nature of the effort, coupled with a desire to be ‘like the nations around about,’ unleashed a wave of digression which swept congregations everywhere into departure.

“In Nashville only the South College Street congregation, where David Lipscomb was an elder, withstood the tide. In 1888, James A. Harding, perhaps the most widely known evange-

list in the brotherhood, stayed in the Lipscomb home while conducting a meeting at College Street church. The two men talked at length about the problem of rebuilding the cause on a foundation which could not again be swept away.

“They reached the conclusion that the answer was to be found in the establishment of a school whose central purpose would be to teach the Bible to every student every day. These two spiritual giants agreed to combine their abilities for this work. The result was the opening of the Nashville Bible School on October 5, 1891” (DLC Faculty Handbook 1962-63, pp. 6-8)

A Different Solution?

Do “changing times” faced “in the twenty-first century” really call for a different solution than what David Lipscomb and James Harding conceived when the Restoration Movement was dividing in 1888?

How does the fact that some congregations associated with Lipscomb University “have experienced a ‘crisis of identity’ over the last several decades, becoming much more diverse in belief” differ from the critical decade of the school’s founding when “the 1880’s saw the loss of many of the accomplishments of the Restoration Movement” and “a wave of digression which swept congregations everywhere into departure”?

Is not a school modeled after David Lipscomb’s original vision pre-

cisely what is needed in the Nashville of 2019 as well?

Henry Leo Boles, a personal associate of David Lipscomb and sixth President of his school when its name was officially changed to David Lipscomb College, once commented on Jesus’ condemnation of hypocrisy in Matthew 23:29-31:

“This seventh woe pronounced upon these scribes and Pharisees condemns them for building ‘the sepulchers of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous.’ They built domes and columns over the graves of the prophets, and adorned or garnished them. They made it appear that they were honoring the prophets and righteous men of old, yet at the same time they were dishonoring them with their teachings and examples” (*Commentary on Matthew*, 1936, p. 453).

Will the current administration and faculty now bless under his name the very digression which brother Lipscomb himself so strenuously and sacrificially opposed? Does treating instrumental worship as a non-issue not amount to hypocritically adorning his tomb in lieu of honoring his teaching?

Basic Conditions and Commitments

After distinguishing the founders’ convictions from certain anti-doctrines of “recent origin,” the 1962 statement went on to note:

“...there have been developed through the years a number of basic conditions and commitments which distinguish David Lipscomb College from many other institutions. A prerequisite for membership on the faculty is loyalty to New Testament Christianity as understood and traditionally practiced among churches of Christ. This includes complete and unwavering acceptance of the Bible as the divinely inspired word of God; opposition to such *false doctrines as the use of instrumental music in worship, premillennialism, and missionary societies . . .* Acceptance of a position on the faculty is considered a commitment to these principles. Opposition to them either in teaching, personal life, or influence would have to be judged a violation of the contract between a teacher and the College” (p. 8).

Remember Doug Varnado?

Perhaps, the most celebrated test-case of Lipscomb University’s opposition to the use of instrumental music in worship arose in 1999 when faculty-member Doug Varnado was forced to resign for having lent his “influence” to acceptance of the practice at his home congregation, Hendersonville’s Community Church of Christ.

“If Community church is going to be an instrumental congregation, that’s not in accord with our policy,” Lipscomb’s sixteenth President Steve Flatt told a reporter, “Our identity for the last 108 years has included a cap-

ella. It still characterizes who we are and Doug understood that” (Ray Waddle, “Lipscomb, minister at odds—Bible teacher resigns over church’s musical tradition,” *The Tennessean*, August 29, 1999, p. B-1).

By including a carefully-worded restrictive clause in his deed, did David Lipscomb succeed in being able to rebuild the cause of restoration “on a foundation which could not again be swept away”? Ominously, the newspaper reporter concluded his article by noting that an elder at Community Church “predicts the music issue in Churches of Christ will fade away once young churchgoers, awash daily in music, become church leaders” (Ibid., p. B-8).

Twenty Years Later

Almost twenty years after the Varnado controversy, it appears that a number of “young churchgoers” have indeed grown into “church leaders” who would now like to see “the music issue in Churches of Christ” simply “fade away.”

After all, the 2019 document freely admits:

“It is no longer the case, as it was for many years, that 100% of the members of the Lipscomb faculty belong to Churches of Christ”—despite the founders’ express decree that all “regular members of the faculty, shall be members of the Church of Christ, in full sympathy with the”

strict “teachings” emphasized in the school’s property deed!

Indisputably, many Lipscomb faculty members now belong to congregations that have recently developed a new identity by adding an “instrumental” service to their program of worship. President Lowery is often seen attending Otter Creek or Harpeth Hills, both of which began offering instrumental worship in 2015.

That same year he hired as Lipscomb’s “Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and Religion” Dr. Rubel Shelly, whose Woodmont Hills church introduced instruments in 2018, shortly after Shelly moved to preach at the Spring Hill campus of the Maury Hill Church, where he now follows a full band with his sermons. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Khi8tUiy3Mk>).

In 2016, Lipscomb Bible Professor John Mark Hicks helped begin the All Saints Church of Christ, which meets on Sunday afternoons at the Vine Street Christian Church and alternates instrumental services.

The congregation presently boasting perhaps the greatest number of Lipscomb students and faculty members is still the Ethos Church, a mission work funded by Harpeth Hills in 2008 which “has multiple worship services, all with instruments” (*Christian Chronicle*, April 1, 2012).

Can Lipscomb University still say that “A prerequisite for membership

on the faculty is loyalty to New Testament Christianity as understood and traditionally practiced among churches of Christ,” including their historic “opposition to such false doctrines as the use of instrumental music in worship”? Or, was Varnado simply a victim guilty of being ahead of his time, paving the way for a new President to do penance for his firing through the even wider “influence” of successors like Shelly and Hicks?

Re-affirm or Conform

In the past, Lipscomb University regularly reaffirmed the school’s commitment to scriptural acapella worship as one of the “distinguishing features of the institution.” Will it now respect its founder’s wishes enough to measure its new practices by its old policies? Will it, like its founder, insist that administrators and teachers betraying “sympathy” for instrumental worship “resign or be removed”? Or, will change its old policy to conform to its new ecumenical practice, watering-down its principles to tolerate the very species of rebellion David Lipscomb admonished it to guard against?

Will it disown his legacy and surrender the fortress he constructed in order to “re-engage” his ideological enemies, effectively returning his property to the mainstream of the digressing movement he himself felt constrained to abandon?

As the 1962 Faculty Handbook emphasized, such distinguishing fea-

tures as opposition to instrumental music in worship

“...are essentials which compose the very warp and woof of the College. They are not subject to modification, but rather the effort to make them a reality in the hearts of all is a fundamental part of our work. Any compromise or surrender of these commitments would leave no logical justification for the existence of the institution. They are received by us in sacred trust from all who have labored to make possible the campus we enjoy, and must be passed untarnished to those who will come after us. How faithfully we discharge this trust will determine our continuing ability to stand as an institution of peculiar purposes and holy aspirations. If we should fail, the College would lose its identity and become only another small unit in the vast complex of mass education” (pp. 2-3).

Let us pray that this sacred trust will not be tarnished by the upcoming “Campus-wide Conversation” over “Lipscomb University’s Centering Core;” for, it constitutes a critical juncture that will likely determine whether the school will reaffirm the distinguishing features of scriptural worship memorialized in its founder’s deed, or else forever “lose its identity” as David Lipscomb’s school.

Lipscomb University’s Breach of Trust

Andy Erwin

With his own hand, David Lipscomb wrote, “The land hereby conveyed is to be used for maintaining a school in which in addition to other branches of learning, the Bible as the recorded will of God and the only standard of faith and practice in religion, *excluding* all human systems and opinions, and *all innovations*, inventions and devices of man *from the service and worship of God* shall be taught as regular daily study to all who shall attend said school, and for no other purpose inconsistent with this object, this condition being herein inserted at the request of said Nashville Bible School, of which David Lipscomb was one of the founders, and the same is hereby declared *fundamental* and shall adhere to the premises conveyed as an *imperative restriction* on their use so long as the same shall be owned by said Nashville Bible School . . .

“**All directors** of said corporation, or **trustees** of the school, and regular members of the **faculty**, shall be *members of the Church of Christ, in full sympathy with the teachings above set forth*, and **desirous to carry them out**. Any one **failing to have those qualifications shall resign or be removed**...it being our purpose and intention to *impress* the trust declared by said limitations and re-



strictions *perpetually upon the property*” (1904 Deed Book of Davidson County, Tennessee, pp. 560-562).

Now read a recent posting for an adjunct Bible professor in Costa Rica as part of Lipscomb’s study abroad program:

“Lipscomb University is a private, Christian university associated with the fellowship of the Church of Christ and governed by religious tenets held by the Church of Christ. Hiring Statement For graduate, adjunct, and visiting faculty positions, **preference will be given** to applicants who are members of the Church of Christ, and **consideration will be given to applicants who are committed to the Christian faith.**”

Two things stand out to me in this job posting: (1) it is laughable to say that Lipscomb University is “governed by religious tenets held by the Church of Christ” as long as Randy Lowery is the president. He and his wife have even preached for various denominations and denominational functions in the Nashville area.

Moreover, you would be hard-pressed to find even one Bible teacher who is sympathetic to the school’s founding purpose, or the doctrines which the mainstream of the brotherhood believe. The faculty of Lipscomb is full of revisionist historians who are attempting to rewrite our history in order to justify their transgressions.

(2) Lipscomb University is in violation of the restrictive clause in their original deed to consider those who are not “*members of the Church of Christ, in full sympathy with the teachings above set forth.*”

According to brother Lipscomb’s own handwritten deed, every person now associated with Lipscomb University who is not in full sympathy with and desirous to carry out the school’s founding purpose of maintaining a school which excludes “all human systems and opinions, and *all innovations, inventions and devices of man from the service and worship of God*” should “**resign**” or “**be removed.**”

If they are not removed, the land which was the Lipscomb farm should be returned to an heir of the Lipscomb family. This is the right thing to do. I would prefer to see the digressive faction at Lipscomb resign – from the board down to the custodians if that is what it takes. If this means closing the school for several semesters in order to return to these founding principles, so be it.

If Lipscomb University will not do what is honorable then they should be forced to do what is lawful and return the land to the family. Now this raises another question: is there a member of the Lipscomb family who remains loyal to the founding purposes of the school and will hold the board and administration to the fire and force the issue?