

## CHAPTER 4

# BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew. This is what Genesis 1:1 looks like (Hebrew reads from right to left):

בְּרֵאשִׁית      בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ׃  
,earth the and heavens the God created [when] beginning the In

The New Testament was originally written in Greek. This is what John 1:1 looks like (Greek reads from left to right like English):

ἘΝ ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν,  
In [the] beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,  
 καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.  
and God was the Word.

Was there a need for the Bible to be translated into the English language? If a person has proficient knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, he may not need a translation, but most of us are very thankful for a clear and accurate and reliable translation in the English language:

<b>Genesis 1:1</b>	<b>"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"</b>
<b>John 1:1</b>	<b>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"</b>

No translation of the Bible is perfect. The translators, though sometimes brilliant and God-fearing men, were nevertheless mere men with their frailties, limitations and ignorance. It was a very difficult task for the translators to find just the right English words which would bring out the **exact** meaning of the Hebrew or Greek, but good translators were able to communicate the sense of the original text very accurately.

**Illustration:** Think of bathroom scales used for measuring the weight of a person. No bathroom scale is absolutely perfect. The weight that is shown on the scale is rarely identical to the exact weight of the person. The scale may indicate that the person weighs 153.5 pounds but his exact weight may be 153.562 pounds. We would agree that this scale gave a very accurate weight and the inaccuracy in the measurement would not bother most people. Another scale might be very inaccurate and might show that the person weighs 164 pounds, and if the person being weighed wanted to lose weight, he (or she) would not be very happy about this scale. He would want a more accurate measurement. So it is with Bible translations. No translation is perfect. The original Greek and Hebrew Scriptures were penned by holy men of God as they were moved by

the Holy Spirit (compare 2 Peter 1:21). These original writings were absolutely perfect. Some translations are very accurate and reflect the Greek and Hebrew text very closely. Other translations are less accurate, and in some cases and in certain verses they give a poor rendering of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures.

Suppose a preacher went to a foreign country and spoke to a group of people with the help of an interpreter. Do you think the words of the interpreter would convey the **exact** meaning that was in the mind of the preacher or would some of the meaning be lost due to the interpreter? It would probably depend on the skill of the interpreter.

In spite of these problems, we can thank God for giving the English-speaking world some very excellent translations, such as Wycliffe's Bible (1382), Tyndale's Bible (1534), The Great Bible (1539), The Geneva Bible (1560; this was the Bible the Pilgrims used and was also the Bible of Shakespeare), The Bishops' Bible (1568), The King James Bible (1611), etc.

God has richly preserved His Word in a wonderful way. There are well over 5000 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament (each manuscript containing at least a part of the New Testament and some manuscripts containing the entire New Testament). Geisler and Nix explain it this way:

The classical writings of Greece and Rome illustrate the character of Biblical manuscript preservation quite strikingly. In contrast to the total number of over 5,000 New Testament manuscripts known today, other religious and historical books of the ancient world pale in significance. Only 643 copies of Homer's *Iliad* have survived in manuscript form. Titus Livy's *History of Rome* has only 20 manuscripts, and Caesar's *Gallie Wars* is known from a mere 9 or 10 manuscripts. *The Peloponnesian War* of Thucydides remains in only 8 manuscripts and the *Works* of Tacitus are to be found in only 2 manuscripts (*From God to Us--How We Got our Bible*, by Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, p. 139).

The quality and accuracy of a translation depends upon the translators. If the translators are God fearing men who love the Bible (Psalm 119:97), who reverence and respect the Bible (Isaiah 66:2), who believe that the Bible is divinely inspired (2 Timothy 3:16), who know the Christ of the Bible in a personal way, and who are skilled in the original languages, THEN we should expect to have a God honoring translation that is true to God's Word as given in the original languages. On the other hand, if the translators do not believe the Bible and if they reject some of the great truths of the Bible (the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, etc.) and if they do not have a personal relationship with the Christ of the Bible, THEN this will certainly be reflected in their translation. Let's look at some examples:

## **THE PROBLEM OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS**

### **THE REVISED VERSION (1881)**

2 Timothy 3:16—"Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching...." *This may imply that there are some Scriptures in the Bible which are not inspired of God.* See this verse in the King James Bible.

**REVISED STANDARD VERSION (1952)**

Isaiah 7:14—"A young woman shall conceive" *See Matthew 1:23 where they translate the verse correctly.* If a translator does not believe in the virgin birth of Christ, then one could understand why he might translate Isaiah 7:14 in such a way. There is nothing miraculous about a young woman conceiving. This happens all the time. It takes a miracle for a virgin to conceive. Christ's birth was nothing less than supernatural.

Psalm 2:12—"Kiss his feet, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way." *In this translation of Psalm 2:12, the Son of God is not mentioned.*

Romans 9:5—"To them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen." *Read Romans 9:5 in the King James Version and you will see that it teaches that Christ is God! Does the RSV teach this? Many other modern translations do the same thing with this verse. It is a clever game of re-punctuation! See our Study on Romans 9:5*

**NEW ENGLISH BIBLE (1970)**

Psalm 22:16—"They have hacked off my hands and my feet." *Does this seem like a description of crucifixion? Compare the KJV.*

Isaiah 9:6—"For a boy has been born for us, a son given to us to bear the symbol of dominion of his shoulder; and he shall be called in purpose wonderful, in battle Godlike, Father for all time, Prince of Peace." *Is He really the mighty God (compare the KJV) or is He just Godlike?*

Matthew 27:54—"Truly this man was a son of God." *Was He just one son of God among many, or was He the unique Son of God?*

Luke 1:26-27—"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, with a message for a *girl* betrothed to a man named Joseph." *The Greek word means "virgin" not "girl."*

**GOOD NEWS FOR MODERN MAN (TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION)**

Ephesians 1:7—"For by the *death* of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven." *The Greek word means "blood" not "death."*

Luke 1:27—"He had a message for a girl...the girl's name was Mary." *Not all girls are virgins. The Greek word means "virgin" not "girl."*

**THE CHRISTIAN COUNSELOR'S NEW TESTAMENT (by JAY ADAMS who does not believe that Jesus died for all mankind)**

1 Timothy 2:6—"Who gave Himself as a ransom payment for all sorts of persons."

Hebrews 2:9—"So that by God's grace He might taste death for all sorts of persons." *"All sorts of*

*persons" can mean that He died for Jews and Gentiles, males and females, rich and poor, slaves and free men, etc., but it does not necessarily mean that He died for all. The King James is correct when it says He died for "every man" (without exception).*

*Do you see how this man's defective theology has influenced his translation? See our paper, **For Whom Did Christ Die?***

#### **NEW WORLD TRANSLATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES (Jehovah's Witnesses)**

John 1:1—"the Word was a god." *Jehovah's Witnesses deny that Jesus was truly God. They believe that God created Jesus.*

Luke 23:43—"Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise." Compare the KJV. *Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe that when a believer dies he goes immediately to be with the Lord. They believe that the soul "sleeps" until the time of the resurrection. To try to support their wrong view, they have cleverly repunctuated this verse. But their translation is foolishness. When someone tells us something, don't we know that it is "today" when he is speaking? If someone says something, do we think that he said it yesterday? "Truly I tell you today"--this is the essence of redundancy!*

### **THE PROBLEM OF MODERN PARAPHRASED BIBLES**

There is a great difference between a careful translation of the Bible and a paraphrase of the Bible. When a person takes a verse of Scripture and then puts it in HIS OWN WORDS, he is paraphrasing. Obviously, when it comes to choosing a Bible, we do not want MAN'S WORDS; we want GOD'S WORDS.

Lawyers are extremely meticulous in the way they word contracts so that there can be no question as to the intended meaning. They would never allow anyone to paraphrase their carefully written contracts and they would refuse to add or subtract one word from such important documents. Likewise, God has given us some serious warnings concerning those who tamper with His Word (see Revelation 22:18-19; Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5-6).

#### **The Living Bible**

One of the most popular of the paraphrased Bibles is the LIVING BIBLE, paraphrased by Kenneth N. Taylor. Please examine Mark 1:1-7 from the LIVING BIBLE (as given below) and then compare this with your King James Bible (which is an accurate and careful translation). Can you find some words of God that have been taken away? Can you find some of Kenneth Taylor's words that have been added?

- 1) *Here begins the wonderful story of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.*
- 2) *In the book written by the prophet Isaiah, God announced that He would send His Son to earth, and that a special messenger would arrive first to prepare the world for His coming.*
- 3) *"This messenger will live out in the barren wilderness," Isaiah said, "and will proclaim that everyone must straighten out his life to be ready for the Lord's arrival."*

4) *This messenger was John the Baptist. He lived in the wilderness and taught that all should be baptized as a public announcement of their decision to turn their backs on sin, so that God could forgive them.*

5) *People from Jerusalem and from all over Judea traveled out into the Judean wastelands to see and hear John, and when they confessed their sins he baptized them in the Jordan River.*

6) *His clothes were woven from camel's hair and he wore a leather belt; locusts and wild honey were his food.*

7) *Here is a sample of his preaching: "Someone is coming soon who is far greater than I am, so much greater that I am not even worthy to be His slave."*

Some people are deceived into thinking that they are reading the Bible, when they are really reading a paraphrase of the Bible (the Bible put into Kenneth Taylor's own words). We do not want Kenneth Taylor's words; we want God's words.

Here are some other examples of what is found in the LIVING BIBLE:

1 Samuel 20:30—"You son of a bitch" *It's true that what Saul said was quite strong, but do you think such language should be found in the Bible? Later editions of the LIVING BIBLE changed this.*

1 Kings 18:27—"Perhaps he is talking to someone or else is out sitting on the toilet" *See the New American Standard Bible or the New International Bible for a much better translation of this verse. The Hebrew text does not use the word "toilet." Of course, when we think of the word "toilet" we think of a flush toilet which is connected to the plumbing system of the house, and such a thing was unknown in the ancient world.*

### **The New Living Translation**

The *NEW LIVING TRANSLATION* (1996) is a scholarly revision of *THE LIVING BIBLE* and is also a paraphrase. It seeks to translate "entire thoughts (rather than just words) into natural, everyday English" (from "A Note to Readers" in the *NEW LIVING TRANSLATION*). In contrast to this, the King James Bible is a word for word translation (for the most part) of the original Hebrew and Greek text.

1 Samuel 20:30 (NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)--"Saul boiled with rage at Jonathan. 'You stupid son of a whore!'" The NIV gives a much more accurate and dignified rendering: "Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, 'You son of a perverse and rebellious woman!'" [Note: The footnote in the *New Living Translation* acknowledges that the NIV rendering is correct, but apparently for shock value and for dramatic affect, they chose to keep their tasteless paraphrase in the main text.]

## **GENDER NEUTRAL BIBLES**

Radical feminism, which has infiltrated our society in so many ways, is now twisting and corrupting and changing God's Holy Word (compare 2 Peter 3:16). A leading example of this is

the *Today's New International Version*, abbreviated as TNIV (2005). This translation seeks to neutralize gender in the Bible, especially the male gender.

Here are some examples of what this Bible perversion does: 1) "he/him/his/himself" changed to "they/them/their/themselves" because they do not like masculine pronouns; 2) "he/him/his/himself" changed to "you/your/yourself" for the same reason; 3) "brother" changed to "(fellow) believer" because they don't want to offend female believers; 4) "brothers" (plural) changed to "brothers and sisters" even though "sisters" is not found in the original text; 5) "brothers" (plural) changed to "believers"; 6) "man" or "husband" changed to "other"; 6) "men" (plural) changed to "people"; 7) "men" (plural) changed to "people" even in Hebrews 5:1 when it is referring to male human beings (high priests); 8) "son" (singular) changed to "child" and "sons" (plural) changed to "children"; etc.

The following is an analysis of some of the inaccurate translations found in the TNIV. This analysis was done by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and can be found on their website (where they also give many other examples):

### **VERSE: Genesis 5:2**

KJV: Male and female created He them...and called their name Adam (man), in the day when they were created.

TNIV (2005): He created them male and female.... And when they were created, he called them "human beings."

**CHANGE IN MEANING:** God's activity of naming is important in the Bible. Here the TNIV has renamed the human race, refusing to use the male-oriented name "man." But in the previous four chapters this same singular Hebrew word "adam" has been used eight times to refer to man in distinction from woman (as in "The **man** and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame," Gen. 2:25), and also five times as the proper name "**Adam**." So Hebrew readers would hear clear male nuances when God named the human race "adam" in Genesis 5:2, and "man" is the best English translation. The TNIV incorrectly removes the male-oriented aspect of the name God gave the human race.

TNIV supporters say the change was necessary because the English language has changed. But people today still understand that "man" can mean the human race, as in the Wall Street Journal headline about the recent tsunami, "Man, Nature, and Disaster" (Dec. 28, 2004, p. A10).

### **VERSE: Proverbs 13:1**

KJV A wise son heareth his father's instruction, but a scorner (mock) heareth not rebuke.

TNIV A wise child heeds a parent's instruction, but a mocker does not respond to rebukes.

**CHANGE IN MEANING:** Hebrew **ben** (singular) means "son," not "child." Hebrew **ab** (singular) means "father," not "parent." The TNIV here is not using the best English equivalent to the Hebrew words, but is avoiding using the best English equivalent, and such translation choices happen hundreds of times in the TNIV with respect to the simple English words "father," "son," "brother," "man," and "he/him/his."

In verses like this the Bible is using individual male examples to teach a general truth, but the TNIV removes the maleness of the text. Of course it is also true that a wise daughter heeds her mother's instruction as well as her father's, but that is application, that is not translation, and that is not what this verse says. Why does the TNIV object to the Bible talking about the relationship between a father and a son in this verse?

**VERSE: Luke 17:3**

KJV: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him.

TNIV (2005): If a brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them.

**CHANGE IN MEANING:** The words "or sister" are inserted into the Bible but Jesus did not say them and they have no basis in the Greek text. (The Bible can say "brother or sister" when it wants to, as in James 2:15.) The words "them" and "they" hinder clear communication because they will be taken as plural by some people, as singular by others, and as bad grammar by many. A common reaction will be some uncertainty as to whether the original Greek was singular or plural. The TNIV is going through linguistic gymnastics simply to avoid the offensive word "him," but "him" is the most accurate translation of the masculine singular Greek pronoun autos.

I agree, of course, that "If your brother sins against you" also applies to sisters who sin, just as the parable of the Prodigal Son also applies to prodigal daughters, and just as "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (Exod. 20:17) also applies to not coveting your neighbor's husband! (And the TNIV did not change those passages.) But people have easily understood this for centuries: When the Bible uses an example of an individual man or woman to teach a general principle, the principle also applies to people of the opposite sex. We do not have to add the words "or sister" to understand this. We should not add to Jesus' words things that have no basis in the Greek text. In these kinds of changes, the TNIV is not just translating. It is adding to God's Word, something which the Bible strictly forbids (Rev. 22:18).

## BLASPHEMOUS, WEIRDO TRANSLATIONS

There is no end to the perversions of God's Word. One example of this is a blasphemous version called *Judith Christ of Nazareth, The Gospels of the Bible, Corrected to Reflect that Christ Was a Woman, Extracted from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John*. done by the LBI Institute. This heretical version refers to Jesus as "Judith of Nazareth" and includes the "Parable of the Prodigal Daughter," and instead of the Lord's Prayer has "The Lady's Prayer." It is obvious that there is no fear of God in the person (or persons) who so carelessly corrupted God's Holy Word and attacked the blessed Person of our Saviour. Someday this person will be JUDGED by the very Word which he has twisted to his own destruction. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: **the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day**" (John 12:48).

## THE PROBLEM OF ARCHAIC WORDS

The King James Version (Authorized Version) was published in 1611, more than 350 years ago. It has proven to be the greatest and most popular translation in the English language. It is still the standard Bible in use among many Bible believers, and no modern translation has ever been able to win a place in the hearts of the English speaking people as much as the King James has.

One of the problems with the King James Version is that some of the words are now "archaic" or out of date. Through the years and centuries the English language has been gradually changing so that some words no longer mean what they used to mean in 1611. Other words are obsolete or no longer in use, and though they were used commonly in 1611, they are no longer used by English speaking people today.

Here are but a few examples of the many obsolete or archaic words that are found in the King James Bible: Exodus 28:11 (ouches=settings); Deuteronomy 21:4 (eared=plowed); 2 Samuel

14:26 (polled his head=trimmed or cut his hair); Psalm 7:16 (pate=head); 1 Peter 3:1 (conversation=manner of living); Job 41:18 (neesings=sneezing); 1 Peter 3:11 (eschew=avoid, turn away from); Acts 7:40 (wot=know). For another example, consider the word "bishop" in 1 Timothy 3:1-2. What do people usually think of when you say the word "bishop"? (In 1611, an overseer in the Church of England was known as a "bishop").

If you have a good study Bible edition of the King James Bible, you will find that most of the archaic words are explained in the margin.

## THE BEST TRANSLATION OF ALL !

*You are the only Bible some people will ever read (2 Corinthians 3:2-3). "I am my neighbor's Bible, He reads me when we meet; Today he reads me in my home, Tomorrow in the street. He may be relative or friend, Or slight acquaintance be; He may not even know my name, Yet he is reading me."* As people read you, do they read a good and accurate translation? Are you LIVING what you read? If so, when others read your life, they will get a good idea about what the Bible really says.

We often hear praised various versions of the Scriptures for real or fancied excellencies, either as to faithfulness of the translation, the arrangement of the matter, or even the literary style. In our opinion **the best version of the Bible is the man or woman who lives not by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit.** It is vain and foolish for a man to talk of the sublime poetry of Job or the Psalms who has never felt the support of the rod and staff in the valley of the shadow of death or heard the voice of God speaking out of the whirlwind when all had been cut away except faith in the Lord of Hosts. It is but silly twaddle to compliment the Sermon on the Mount unless these words have become the spirit and life of personal experience. Let the Spirit of God so write Himself into your life that when sinners read you it will be like the Savior's message to the hypocritical accusers of the sinful woman — conviction deep and pungent will seize upon their souls. O that we were all living letters, indited by the Holy Ghost, known and read of all men!

—Florida Christian Advocate

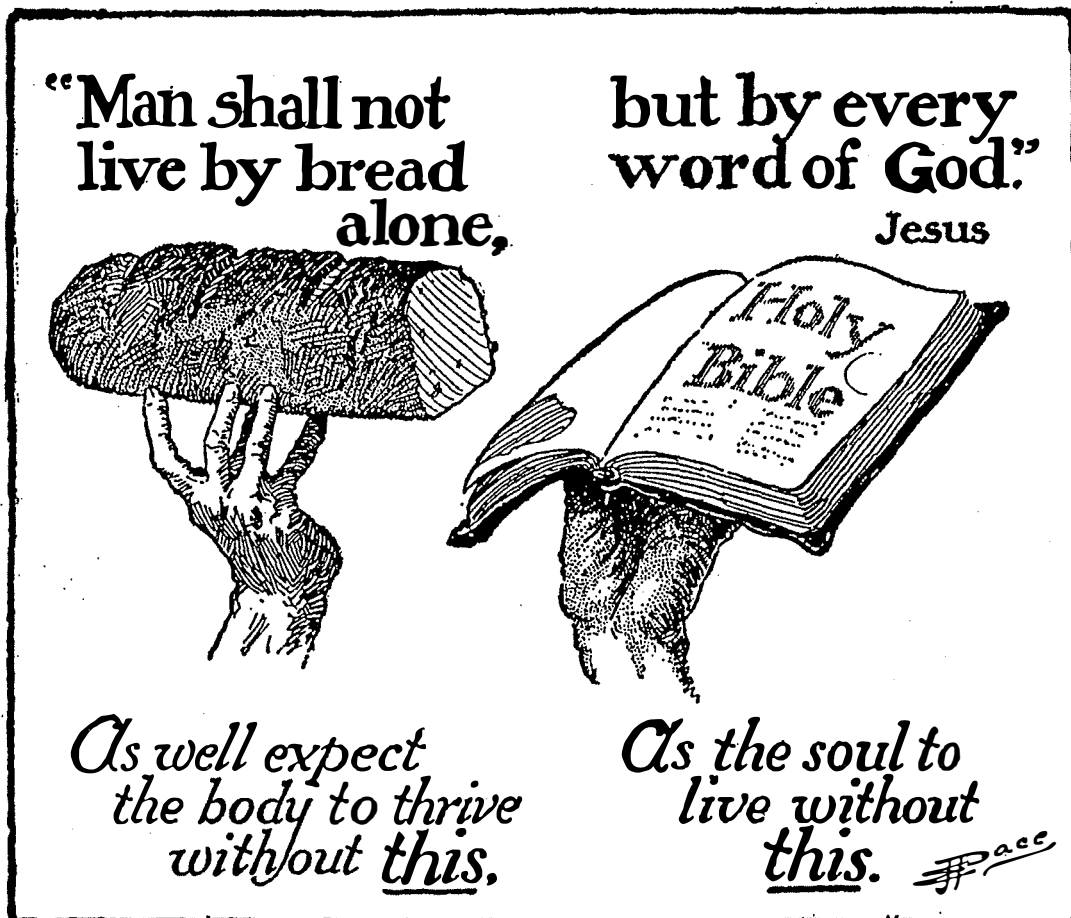
**Men read and admire the Gospel of Christ  
With its love so unfailing and true.  
But what do they say and what do they think  
Of the Gospel according to you?  
You are writing each day a letter to men -  
Take care that the writing is true;  
'Tis the only Gospel that some men will read,  
That Gospel according to you.**

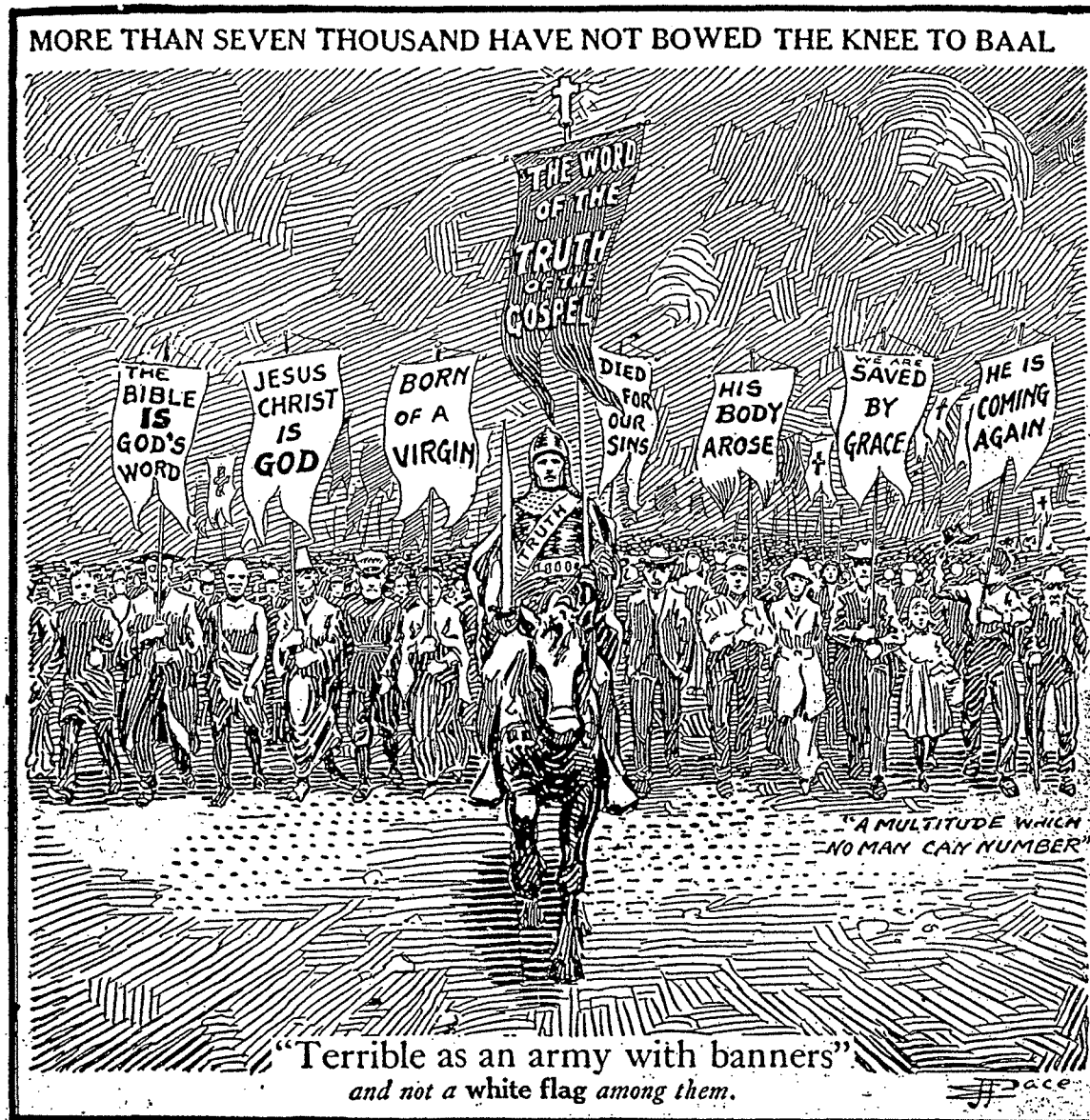


**Personal Testimony:** I came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour on the campus of Wesleyan University. My conversion came about as the result of reading the New Testament, especially the Gospel of John and also the writings of Paul. The translation that I read from was the Revised Standard Version. It was the only Bible I had at the time. As I read God's Word the Holy Spirit convicted me and convinced me that Jesus Christ was God, that He died for my sins and that He was the only Person who could save me. I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and was saved (Acts 16:30-31).

Today I would never recommend the Revised Standard Version to anyone. It was produced by translators who were liberals and did not hold to a high view of the inspiration of the Scriptures. The liberal bias of the translators has corrupted the translation in many places (Isaiah 7:14, etc.). Today I preach and teach and study from the King James Version, but I am thankful to God that He was able to use an imperfect translation to bring me to Himself. Read John 3:14-18 and Romans 5:6-10 in the Revised Standard version, and you will see that the gospel message shines forth, even through such a faulty version. --George Zeller

May we never cease to appreciate and value highly the Bible which we hold in our hands. As we will learn in Chapter 13 ("How We Got Our Bible"), there were men who suffered greatly and even gave their very lives so that we could have the Scriptures translated into our common language. God's Word should be very, very precious to us.





## Spurgeon's Solemn Warning

**T**HERE was a time when the Gospel of the free grace of God sounded forth from our pulpits as from a trumpet; but that time is past . . . The deity of our Lord and His great atoning sacrifice, His resurrection, and His judgment of the wicked never were moot points in the church; but they are questioned at this time. The work of the Holy Spirit may be honoured in words; but what faith can be placed in those to whom He is not a person, but a mere influence? God Himself is made by some into an impersonal being, or the soul of all things, which is much the same as nothing. Pantheism is atheism in a mask.

The plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture, as we have understood it from our childhood, is assailed in a thousand insidious ways. The fall of Adam is treated as a fable; and original sin and imputed righteousness are both denounced. As for the doctrines of grace, they are ridiculed as altogether out of vogue, and even the solemn sanctions of the law are scorned as bugbears of the dark ages. For many a year, by the grand old truths of the Gospel, sinners were converted, and saints were edified, and the world was made to know that there is a God in Israel; but these are too antiquated for the present cultured race

of superior beings. They are going to regenerate the world by democratic socialism, and set up a kingdom for Christ without the new birth or the pardon of sin.

Truly the Lord has not taken away the seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal, but they are in most cases hidden away, even as Obadiah hid the prophets in a cave. This latter day gospel is not the gospel by which we were saved. To me it seems a tangle of ever-changing dreams. It is, by the confession of its inventors, the outcome of the period, the monstrous birth of a boasted "progress", the scum from the cauldron of conceit. It has not been given by the infallible revelation of God; it does not pretend to have been. It is not divine—it has no inspired Scripture at its back.

Our country has flourished by the preaching of the Word; and under God she has been raised to eminence because of her Protestant Christianity; and when she departs from this, the reason for maintaining her greatness will have ceased. This makes us mourn. . . See to it that you do not encourage false doctrine, or wink at the modern apostasy.