

HOW TO EVALUATE BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

By Pastor David Harness

- I. ANY TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE IN ANY LANGUAGE CAN BE EVALUATED.
 - A. *Fact*: There is much confusion and uncertainty caused by the multitude of Bible versions.
 1. In the last 120 years, over 100 English versions of the Bible have been produced. As well, there is a multiplicity of versions in other languages.
 2. “*God is not the author of confusion*” (I Corinthians 14:33).
 - B. *Premise*: Since the Bible **is** the Word of God, and since man is to live by **every word** that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4), and since God has promised to **preserve** His words intact down to the smallest letter (Psalm 12:6-7; Matthew 5:18; 24:35), we need to know for certain we have the Word of God.
 - C. *Further premise*: Since we **grow** by the Word of God (I Peter 2:2; I Timothy 3:16-17), since we are **sanctified** by the Word (John 17:17; Ephesians 5:26), and since we will be **judged** by every word of God (John 12:48), we need to have *every* word of God.
 - D. *Conclusion*: Either a translation will be found to be *the* Word of God or it will be shown only to contain *some* of the Word of God.

- II. BASIC CONCEPTS IN EVALUATING TRANSLATIONS
 - A. On a **spiritual level**, the basic conflict is between the God of Truth, and Satan, the father of lies.
 1. Satan casts doubt upon the Word of God and questions its authority. “*Yea, hath God said...?*” (Genesis 3:1-5).
 2. Satan steals the Word of God (Mark 4:15; Luke 8:11-12).
 3. Satan tries to corrupt the Word of God (II Corinthians 2:17).
 - B. On a **practical level**, most of the conflict occurs because of the Greek texts. There are two groups of text:
 1. **The Received Text** – the text received and used by the true church throughout the centuries. This text is also known as the Majority Text, Traditional Text, Textus Receptus, or Byzantine Text. About 98% of all Greek texts fall into this family.
 2. **The Critical Text** – the text used by modern textual critics. It is also known as the Alexandrian Text or Westcott and Hort Text. These texts often disagree among themselves and have over 8,000 deletions or changes of the original.
 - C. The Scriptures speak of **Christ**, “*In the volume of the book it is written of me*” (Hebrews 10:7). The spirit of antichrist does not abide in the doctrine of (teaching about) Christ (II John vs. 7-10), nor confess the deity of Christ (I John 4:1-3). Does a translation **exalt** Christ or does it **attack** Christ by altering verses concerning His deity, blood atonement, virgin birth, mighty works, worship, and call to repentance? Any translation that tampers with the doctrine of Christ is not of God.
 - D. Evidences that a translation is **bad**:
 1. Words will be omitted, even whole verses.
 2. Words will be changed.
 3. Words or passages will appear in the pages of the translation, but a footnote will cast doubt by questioning their authenticity.
 4. Poor choice of words. A word or verse might be grammatically correct but doctrinally wrong. (See I Timothy 6:10 – “...a root of all kinds of evil...” chosen rather than “...*the root of all evil.*”)
 - E. The problem of **copyists’ errors**
 1. No original manuscripts (autographs) exist today. What we have are copies of the original. A copy is authoritative if it is a faithful and accurate copy of the original. The Scriptures that Timothy had read as a child (II Timothy 3:15-16) were, no doubt, copies. Yet, they are called the “*holy Scriptures,*” and are “*given by inspiration of God.*”
 2. “Understandable” copyist errors.
 - a. The copyists or scribes, being human, are prone to make human mistakes.
 - b. Errors might be such things as repeating the same word or line; inadvertently missing a word, line, or section; misspelling a word. These errors can be easily determined because they do not make good sense. Furthermore, the copy in question can be easily compared with other proven copies. We have an example of this: a certain typesetter *did* inadvertently leave out the word “not” in Exodus 20:14 in an early edition of the King James Bible.

- c. No new words or verses are introduced when it is a case of “understandable” copyist error.
- 3. Deplorable copyist errors.
 - a. We are warned of those who wrest the Scriptures (II Peter 3:16), pervert the Scripture (Jeremiah 23:26), or add to or take away from the Scripture (Revelation 22:18-19).
 - b. These men have departed “*from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron*” (I Timothy 4:1-2). These men “*changed the truth of God into a lie*” (Romans 1:25). They changed the words of Scripture to fit their man-made doctrines. Such are Origen (A.D. 185-254) and Eusibius (A.D. 260-340), who promoted the false doctrine that Jesus was a created being, not God Almighty (Arianism).
 - c. These are not simple errors. They are deliberate perversions of the text of Scripture.

III. PROOF TEXTS

- A. The short list. This list can be used to make a quick check of a translation.
 - 1. I John 5:7 (Doctrine of the **Triune God**) – Should read: “*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*” Missing. Note: the corrupt translations divide either verse 6 or verse 8 into two parts, giving the false impression of not having tampered with verse 7.
 - 2. I Timothy 3:16 (Doctrine of the **Deity of Christ**) – Should read: “*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh...*” Not: “...he [or who] was manifest in the flesh...”
 - 3. Colossians 1:14 (Doctrine of **Salvation**) – Should read: “*In Whom we have redemption **through His blood**, even the forgiveness of sins.*” Phrase omitted: “...through His blood...”
 - 4. Acts 8:37 (Doctrine of **Believer’s Baptism**) – Should read: “*And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*” Missing.
 - 5. Acts 9:6 (the **Lordship of Christ**) – Should read: “*...Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*” Missing.
 - 6. John 1:14,18; 3:16,18 (Doctrine of the **Deity of Christ**) – Should read: “*...the only **begotten** son of God...*” Not: “...only son of God...”
 - a. Adam is called a son of God (Luke 3:38), but not begotten.
 - b. We are called sons of God (I John 3:1-2), but not begotten.
 - c. To be begotten of God is to be equal with God (John 5:18).
 - 7. John 7:53 – 8:11 (the woman taken in adultery) – the entire passage is missing.
 - 8. Mark 16:9-20 (the Great Commission) – the entire passage is missing.
 - 9. Luke 2:33 (Doctrine of the **Deity of Christ**) – Should read: “*And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.*” Not: “...his father and his mother...”
 - a. Attacks the virgin birth.
 - b. Isaiah 7:14 – Should read: “*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a **virgin** shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*” Not: “young woman” or “maiden.”
- B. The long list. For a more detailed check of translations. Includes the ‘Short List’ verses.
 - 1. This is not a complete list, and not every omission or change is found in every one of the new translations. In total, however, over 8,000 deletions or changes have been made to the *Received Text* and over 200 names of our Lord have been omitted. Important doctrines are **often** affected.
 - 2. Attacks against the Doctrine of Christ:
 - a. The Virgin Birth.
 - 1) Luke 2:33 – Should read: “*...Joseph...*” Not “...His father...”
 - 2) Matthew 1:25 – Should read: “*And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.*” Christ was Mary’s “*firstborn son...*” Not merely her “son.”
 - 3) Isaiah 7:14 – Should read: “*...virgin...*” It is essential to clarify that a “maiden” or a “young woman” might not be a “virgin.”

- b. The Deity of Christ.
- 1) John 3:13 (Christ's **omnipresence**) – Should read: "...the Son of Man **which is in Heaven.**" Missing the phrase, "...which is in Heaven."
 - 2) John 1;14,18; 3:16,18 (**Deity of Christ**) – Should read: "...the only **begotten** son..." Not: "...only son..."
 - 3) I John 4:3 (**Deity of Christ**) – Should read: "...Jesus Christ is come in the flesh..." Missing the phrase, "...is come in the flesh..."
 - 4) I John 5:7 (**Trinity**) – Missing. (See Point A.1. above.)
 - 5) Acts 17:29 (**Godhead**) – Should read: "...we ought not to think that the **Godhead** is like unto gold, or silver..." Not: "divine being," or "divine nature."
 - 6) I Timothy 3:16 (**Deity of Christ**) – Should read: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God** was manifest in the flesh..." Should not be: "he," or "who." The pronouns "he" or "whom" substituted for "God" are direct attacks on the deity of Christ.
- c. The Eternality of Christ.
- 1) Revelation 1:8 – Should read: "...the beginning and the ending..." Missing.
 - 2) Revelation 1:11 – Should read: "I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last..." Missing.
 - 3) Revelation 5:14 – Should read: "...Him that liveth forever and ever." Missing.
- d. His Lordship.
- 1) Acts 9:6 – Should read: "And he trembling and astonished said, **Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him...**" The entire phrase is missing.
 - 2) Luke 24:52 – Should read: "and they worshipped Him..." Missing this phrase in many modern translations. Only **God** is worthy of worship.
 - 3) I Corinthians 6:20 – Should read: "...and your spirit, which are **God's.**" Missing this phrase.
 - 4) I Corinthians 10:28 – Should read: "...for the earth is the **Lord's, and the fullness thereof:**" Missing this phrase.
- e. The Atonement of Christ.
1. Colossians 1:14 – Should read: "...by **His blood...**" Missing the blood. There is no remission of sin without the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22).
 2. Matthew 18:11 – Should read: "For the Son of man is come to **save that which was lost.**" Whole verse is missing.
 3. Luke 9:56 – Should read: "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to **save them...**" Phrase is missing.
- f. Christ's Bodily Resurrection.
- 1) Luke 24:6 – Should read: "He is not here, **but is risen...**" Missing, "but is risen," (or footnoted.)
 - 2) Luke 24:12 – Should read: "Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." Missing or footnoted.
 - 3) Luke 24:40 – Should read: "And when He had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet." Missing.
 - 4) Luke 24:51 – Should read: "...and carried up into Heaven." Missing.
 - 5) Ephesians 5:30 – Should read: "...of His flesh and of His bones." Missing.
- g. Christ the Creator. Ephesians 3:9 – Should read: "...God, Who created all things **by Jesus Christ:**" Missing the phrase 'by Jesus Christ'.
- h. Christ, the Fulfillment of Scripture.
- 1) Matthew 27:35 – Should read: "...that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture did they cast lots." Missing.
 - 2) Mark 15:28 – Should read: "And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors." Missing.

- i. Christ's Works.
 - 1) John 7:53-8:11 – the account of Jesus forgiving the woman taken in adultery. The **entire section** is missing or footnoted.
 - 2) Mark 16:9-20 – the account of Christ's appearances after His resurrection, the Great Commission, and the ascension. The **entire section** is missing or footnoted.
 - 3) Luke 5:4 – Should read: "...Launch out into the deep, and let down your **nets** for a draught." Not: "...let down your **net**..." By only letting down *one* net, rather than *all his nets*, Peter was disobedient to the command of Christ. This is why he said, "*Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*" (verse 8)
 - 4) John 5:3,4 – Should read: "...waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." Missing.
3. Attacks against other doctrines.
 - a. Believer's baptism. Acts 8:37 – Should read: "*And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*" The entire verse is missing.
 - b. Eternal punishment.
 - 1) Matthew 23:14 – Should read: "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widow's houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the **greater damnation.***" Missing this verse (or footnoted.)
 - 2) Mark 9:44, 46 – Should read: "*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*" The **entire verse** is missing both times.
 - 3) II Peter 2:17 – Should read: "...to whom the mist of darkness is reserved **forever**..." Missing the word, "forever."
 - 4) In the Old Testament, the modern versions often call Hell, "the grave."
 - c. Salvation by grace and not works. Romans 11:6 – Should read: "...*But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*" Missing.
 - d. Repentance. Matthew 9:13 and Mark 2:17 – Should read: "*I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to **repentance**...*" Missing the words, "to repentance," in both verses.
 - e. Conviction by the Holy Spirit. Acts 9:5 – Should read: "...*it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*" Missing.
 - f. Separation from false teachers. I Timothy 6:5 – Should read: "...*from such withdraw thyself.*" Missing.
 - g. Corrupting the Word of God. II Corinthians 2:17 – Should read: "...*which corrupt the Word of God...*" Not: "peddling the Word of God." It is ironic that those who corrupt the Word of God also peddle the Word of God as they copyright their perversions and publish them for profit!