

A REVIEW OF THE NEW AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION

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Another of the multiplicity of the so-called Bibles that has added to the confusion of God's word is the New American Standard Version. It was put out by the Lockman Foundation, of La Habra, California, which also was responsible for its predecessor, The Amplified Version. The New American Standard's New Testament appeared in 1963. The entire Bible was presented to the public on July 31, 1970. A portion of this version was put out in 1960, according to my three copies of it. There have been many editions of this version since 1963.

"The Fourfold Aim of the Lockman Foundation," found in the First Edition, states:

1. These publications shall be true to the original Hebrew and Greek.
2. They shall be grammatically correct.
3. They shall be understandable to the masses.
4. They shall give the Lord Jesus Christ His proper place, the place which the Word gives Him; no work will ever be personalized.

The last statement in the aim indicates why to this day the fifty-eight translators remain anonymous. But attaching one's name to a translation no more removes Christ Jesus from his place than when the inspired penmen attached their names to various books of the Bible in the first century. This anonymity of the translators of the NASV reminds us of the nameless translator(s) of the New World Translation, the Bible of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Supposedly, the body of translating scholars for the NASV represents a cross-section of religious groups, including the

Church of Christ. I am sorry the Lord's church was in some way attached to this version. It would have been best if any member of the church who were involved in this work had declined the invitation to have a part in it just as H. Leo Boles saw the direction of the translating committee for the RSV and wanted nothing to do with it.

The title of this Bible, The New American Standard Version, would make one think that it is merely a revision of the American Standard Version of 1901. Few people have access to the American Standard of 1901; so, it would be difficult for them to compare. But Jack Lewis states, "The NASB is nearer in text to the RSV than it is to the ASV." (*The English Bible: From KJV to NIV*, p. 172). Earlier, the same critic wrote, "...in actuality, the gulf separating the ASV and the NASB is such that the NASB must be evaluated as a new translation. One cannot assume that it is what its title seems to imply—an update of the ASV" (p. 167).

One of the claimed advantages of the NASB is the treatment of the verb tenses. Though this would be good to include in our study, it is not within the scope of this review to delve into a detailed discussion of this supposed plus for the version.

The fundamental problem with most translations since 1881 is the text upon which they are based. The New American Standard is no different. If the source of the river is polluted, the river will be polluted. It just cannot be otherwise. The translators of the NASV followed a critical text and claimed to have followed the twenty-third edition of the Nestle text for the New Testament. The Nestle text is basically the same as the Westcott and Hort text which is based, in the main, on two or three of the oldest manuscripts to the total rejection of

the vast majority of manuscripts.

These few manuscripts called Sinaiticus (fourth century), Vaticanus (fourth century) and Bezae (sixth century), according to the great textual critic, John William Burgon, “are *three of the most scandalously corrupt copies extant*: — exhibit the most *shamefully mutilated* texts which are anywhere to be met with: — have become, by whatever process (for their history is wholly unknown), the depositories of the largest amount of *fabricated readings*, ancient *blunders*, and *intentional perversions of Truth*, — which are discoverable in any known copies of the Word of God.” (*The Revision Revised*, p. 16). Jack Lewis has said that other scholars replied to Burgon; but when I asked him to name them, he refused to name one that had answered Burgon.

The fundamental problem with the New American Standard is that it is based on the wrong text, an inferior text, a corrupt text that omits many words, phrases, verses, and passages. Please consider a few of them now.

Luke 4:4 in the King James Version reads, “And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” But the NASV reads, “And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone.’” The translators omitted “but by every word of God,” evidently, thinking that every word of God is not important. The Sinaiticus and Vaticanus omit the words, but the overwhelming majority of manuscripts, including the Alexandrinus, a fifth century manuscript, have the words in the text.

Luke’s reference to the trilingual superscription (“in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew”) is omitted in the New American Standard. The Authorized Version reads, “And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS” (Luke 23:38). The p75 (a papyri of the third century), Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Ephraemi Rescriptus (a fifth-century manuscript) omit this superscription; but the overwhelming majority of manuscripts and the Codex Alexandrinus (of the fifth century)

include these words.

The latter clause of Matthew 19:9 is omitted in the New American Standard Version. The faithful King James Version reads, “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” But the NASV says, “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” This last clause in the KJV is omitted in the ASV, NASV, RSV, NIV, NRSV, NEB, and others. But this does not bother me. I prefer the support of the majority of manuscripts which include the clause.

The New American Standard version has John 7:53–8:11 placed in brackets in the text with this footnote: “Most of the ancient authorities omit John 7:53–8:11. Those which contain it vary much from each other.” The American Standard of 1901 treats the passage the same way. But of the more than 900 available copies of the passage collated by Von Soden, the overwhelming majority include it. Most of the Egyptian witnesses; namely, p66, p75, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, the Codex Ephraemis Rescriptus, and the Alexandrinus, omit the passage. To be consistent one cannot be critical of the NASV’s treatment of this passage but defend the ASV’s handling of the same. I have no intention of defending either one. Both are wrong.

Another passage placed in brackets is Mark 16:9-20. The footnote reads:

“Some of the oldest mss. omit from verse 9 through 20. A few later mss. and versions contain this passage, usually after verse 8; a few have it at the end of the chapter: “And they promptly reported all these instructions to Peter and his companions. *And after that, Jesus Himself sent out through them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.*”

The truth of the matter is that only two manuscripts, the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, omit the passage; but the overwhelming majority of the manuscripts include it. This includes the codices Alexandrinus and the Ephraemi Rescriptus, both of the fifth century. The Vaticanus leaves space for the verses to be placed in the text, evidently, because the scribe knew they belonged there. It is useless to speculate as to why he failed to add the verses. The blank space speaks volumes. John William Burgon, the peerless textual critic, stated in his wonderful defense of this passage:

But on the other hand, what are the facts of the case? (1) The earliest of the Fathers,—(2) the most venerable of the Versions,—(3) the oldest MS. of which we can obtain any tidings,—all are observed to *recognize these Verses*. ‘Cedit quaestio’ [The question falls, there is no further question] therefore.... (*The Last Twelve Verses of St. Mark*, p. 168).

Though there are many omissions in the New American Standard, let me just mention a few that relate to the atonement. Colossians 1:14 omits “through his blood.” Hebrews 1:3 excises “by himself.” I Peter 4:1 cuts out the prepositional phrase, “for us.” I Corinthians 5:7 leaves out “for us.” The gospel would not be good news if one omits the expression “for us.”

Another egregious error is the changing of “only begotten Son” to the “only begotten God” in John 1:18. This is inexcusable. Four unreliable witnesses support the rendering “God”; the overwhelming majority support the rendering “Son.”

Romans 11:26 is rendered this way in the NASV: “...and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.’” Check this with the King James Version: “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” It can be seen that “so” is

changed to “thus” in the NASV and “shall” is changed to “will” in the same. “So” is an adverb of manner. In the same way or manner that the Gentiles are saved, so will all Israel be saved, i.e., by individual obedience to the gospel of Christ.

The difference between “will” and “shall” is not as discernable as it once was. Jonathan Rigdon wrote:

(4) **Shall** in the first person expresses only **futurity**; in the second and third it expresses also **determination, command** or **promise**; as, I *shall* see you tomorrow. You *shall* have a good time. Thou *shalt* not lie. He *shall* regret it. You *will* understand it. He *will* explain it to you. I *will* not submit to such treatment.

(5) **Will** in the second or third person expresses only **futurity**; in the first it expresses also **determination, command**, or **promise**: as, You *will* understand it. He *will* explain it to you. I *will not submit to such treatment*. (*The English Sentence*, p. 123).

So, the New American Standard changes the “shall,” which expressed futurity with determination, to “will,” which expresses only futurity.

Both the ASV and the NASV miss it on Psalm 8:5, replacing “angels” for “God.” Hebrews 2:7 quotes the passage and renders it “angels,” applying the passage to Jesus Christ. Christ was not made a little lower than God, for he was God (John 1:1-2; I Tim. 3:16).

Matthew 5:32 is rendered, “[B]ut I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” The word “chaste” primarily implies a refraining from acts or even thoughts or desires that are not virginal or not sanctified by marriage vows; it may imply avoidance of anything that

cheapens or debases. “Unchastity” is not an equivalent to “fornication” as the faithful rendering in the King James Version. “Unchastity” is too broad. Likewise, did the translators of the NASV miss it on the same word in Matthew 19:9. “Immorality” is not equivalent to “fornication.” A thief is immoral, but he may not be guilty of fornication.

In Amos 6:5 the NASV reads, “Who improvise to the sound of the harp, [and] like David have composed songs for themselves.” The King James Version reads: “That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David.” There is no justifiable reason for the NASV’s rendering of this verse. Though I am not in agreement with Jack P. Lewis on much that he says concerning translations, and neither do I accept his views that elders have no authority, but his comments on this passage are worthy of note:

Amos 6:5 reads in the ASV, as in all current English Bibles, “invent for themselves instruments of music, like David;” but the NASB has “composed songs for themselves” and then has “invented musical instruments” as a

marginal reading. The translation follows the unsupported conjecture of the notes of Kittel Bible that *kale* (“instruments”) is a gloss in the text.” (*The English Bible: from KJV to NIV*, p. 1709).

The First Edition of the NASV taught faith only at Romans 11:20. It reads, “Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, and you stand *only* by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear.” Though the word “only” is in italics, it still does not belong in the text. The King James version says, “Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear.” To the credit of later editions of the NASV, “only” was removed.

The fact that the New American Standard Version is based on an inferior text and because of its many errors, I cannot recommend it as a faithful translation.

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