



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume VII  
Issue 174

## A Brief Introduction to the Principles of Bible Translation

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*“The Word of God is not bound”* (II Timothy 2:9).

This is designed to be a challenge to the believer; an encouragement to establish a genuinely personal understanding of the nature of Scripture itself and of its translation; to awaken the outliving of the divine sonship responsibility that accompanies this truth.

Dare to study.  
Dare to have other translations.  
Dare to translate.

### GOD’S WORD IS ALIVE

*“For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrews 4:12).

The simple fact is that God’s Word is *alive*. It is not frozen somewhere in history’s past. It is always able to adapt and adjust into the language of its contemporary hearers. After all, it is **God’s** Word!

### GOD SPEAKS IN THE LANGUAGE OF TODAY

One of God’s names in the Bible is the great “I AM.”

He is not the “I WAS,” nor is He the “I WILL BE.” He is the God of the ever present – He is the “I AM.” Being so, He speaks to men as they are, where they are. Regardless of how He has been presented by dead, cold religious institutions, He is the *contemporary*

God,<sup>1</sup> He is the God of the NOW.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God; we are the sons of God. He showed us the work of a son of God when He sat at the well with the woman and spoke to her in her language, in a way that she could hear and identify with what He was saying. He sought to identify with her.

He spoke to fishermen. He spoke with the soldier. He spoke with the tax collector. He spoke with the harlot. He spoke to children. He spoke to the common man.

Here is how one author has put it:

That Word must come to people in a language they can understand – and not only *can* understand, but **will not misunderstand** ...

It is amazing how many unnatural and artificial expressions Bible readers are willing to put up with. Perhaps it is because ... we have read them so often in the Bible that we are not even aware of how strange and foreign they sound to a person ▶

1. *i.e.*, this is the meaning of the “*everlasting God*,” the “*eternal God*” (see the author’s article “Laying Hold on Eternal Life,” *Bible Student’s Notebook* #113).

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listening to the message for the first time ... I refer to simple matters of everyday mundane grammar and usage ...

People read each other's letters, their daily newspaper or the latest paperback in the **language of daily life**. Why should they not have God's Word available to them in a language they can understand and respond to?<sup>2</sup>

These words express the desire of William Tyndale that the words of God could be read and understood by the common man. This was actually at the very heart of the "New Testament" itself.

The "New Testament" was originally written in Koine Greek. The word "koiné" is a Greek word meaning "common." The authors of the New Testament did not write in Classical Greek, but in Common Greek – the simple every-day language of the common man.

It was the will of God that the common man who had a heart for truth would be able to read and understand His words. He did not want language to be a barrier. So the inspired books of the "New Testament" were written in the common Greek of the people.

In like spirit, Tyndale's passion was that the most common of his fellow countrymen – in particular the plowboy – could have a translation of God's Word in their own familiar tongue. Even though there were earlier English translations, he wanted them to have a translation so that they could easily grasp the truth of God for themselves without the assistance of any professional clergymen. Thus the meaning of his famous words,

I defy the Pope and all his laws; and, if God spares me, I will one day make the boy that drives the plow in England to know more of the Scriptures than the Pope does!

His heart's passion was the publication of a common-language Bible – a "Plowboy's Bible."

## A MOST NOBLE CAUSE

Translating God's Word into the contemporary vernacular of the common man as Tyndale did is indeed a most noble cause. Without a doubt it should be the opportunity of every man, in every age to ►

2. Eugene H. Glassman, *The Translation Debate*, 1981, pp. 20, 114, 117.

## ***Bible Student's Notebook***<sup>™</sup>

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
  - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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### Patriarchs

Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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have access to God's Word in a form that can be easily grasped and understood in his own dialect. This is an honorable, ongoing process to which believers have been given charge.

## A SACRED TRUST COMMITTED TO US

Those of us, who have received and live in the abundance of God's glorious grace and reconciliation, have its very word committed to our trust as well. Just like Paul and Timothy, we too are the divine trustees – the sacred stewards of God's Word.

*“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation”* (II Corinthians 5:19).

Israel of old had the Hebrew Scriptures committed to their trust.

*“... Unto them [Israel] were committed the oracles of God”* (Romans 3:2).

Now we who have been made members of Christ's Body – *“of His flesh, and of His bones”* – have become partakers of Israel's spiritual things, foremost the stewardship of God's Word.

*“... the Gentiles have been made partakers of their [Israel's] spiritual things”* (Romans 15:27).

Just like Israel had the Scriptures committed to their trust, so we too have now been divinely entrusted with them.

The Word of God does not belong to kings, colleges or universities, religious organizations, or publishing houses. The care for and transmission of God's Word to the common man belongs to God's sons. We are responsible for the understanding, preservation and communication of our Father's words. Our Father's words belong to us. We are His sons. This is our responsibility and duty. This is our honor and privilege.

Translating the Scripture into the contemporary vernacular of the common man is indeed a most noble undertaking. Our calling as sons of God encompasses the care of our Father's words. God is active and contemporary; we are His vessels to that end. What lies before each of us is indeed a great adventure in

faith; expecting to have our lives changed the more we devote ourselves to this most noble task.

Translator J.B. Phillips wrote of this experience:

After translating the Gospels, I find behind these four portraits someone far greater than words could express. – J. B. Phillips, *For This Day* (1975), p. 15

Maybe the reason why many of us do not see the Lord Jesus Christ in this great and moving way – “far greater than words could express” – is that we have given up. We have given up to religion, to be satisfied with someone else's *version* of Him. We have resigned ourselves to a dry, cold expression that has been *bound* for decades, or centuries, instead of basking in the Living (Hebrews 4:12), Unbounded (II Timothy 2:9) words of our Father!

The Bible is not a fragile, historical document, but a vibrant, living expression of the Father; and His words are our words. They belong to us. They have been committed to our trust.

## WORDS EASY TO BE UNDERSTOOD

*“So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air”* (I Corinthians 14:9).

What a clear principle Paul teaches us here. Unless we speak words that are *easy to understand*, then how can anyone possibly know what we are talking about? If we do not speak words that are *easy to grasp*, then we are just speaking into the air. Our words are without profit because they can find no understanding ear to receive them.

If Paul says that this is true of our own words, how much more this is true of our Father's words. Many words from four centuries ago are little more than an “*unknown tongue*” to the contemporary, common man.

What a heartbreaking state of affairs that those to whom we minister the Father's words do not have those words in a form that they can easily understand. Let's fully see and embrace our responsibility and privilege as sons, to arise and study the Word of God in such a way as to really know our Father and then to make His words clearly and simply available to the common man of our own day. ►

Let's embrace the ongoing process – generation to generation – of freeing others from the senseless bondage of the *unknown tongues*. We must allow our Father's words to be “**easy to be understood**” (I Corinthians 14:9).

The Word of God does not belong exclusively to a generation thousands of years ago, or even four centuries ago. Nor does it belong to a committee of professional clergyman. It is ours; divinely entrusted to us.

### PRINCIPLES OF TRANSLATION

What follows here is but a suggestion of guidelines in the personal study and individual translating of God's Word. I trust that they will serve to communicate to our hearts what needs to be done to purify our Father's words to yet another generation.

#### Keep it Contemporary

Remember that our Father is the great “I AM.” His original writings were not “old;” but informal and contemporary. Our English translations should be the same. So, as far as possible, the language used in our translations should be that which is current and common.

Readers should not feel like they are attempting to get to know a God that is centuries old. Out-of-date language will tend to promote an impression that He is out-of-date and out-of-touch as well – instead of “I AM.”

Take Paul's “epistles” for example. They should read like the “letters” that they are, and not like theological treatises.

#### Keep it Clear

Translation should flow simply and be easy to read. The plainest and clearest words possible should be used.

A good translation will not read like something that has been translated. The reader should never be overtly aware that they are reading a translation.

In an effort to preserve and convey the original meaning, as closely as can be established, translations should, as necessary, expand or clarify the words of

the text.

The words of our Father are about relationship – relationship with Him and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must ask ourselves as we read our English translations:

Does this convey the true nature of our Father, along with the very heart of His truth; and does it do so with clarity?

Does the passage reveal clearly (or conceal) what I have come to know about my Father; about what He has taught me about His glorious person, and the amazing good news of His wonderful plan with mankind? And does it express that in a way that my family, friends, and neighbors can easily understand it?

#### Keep it Contextual

Individual words must be translated based upon their context. Other translations are well aware of this principle. The *King James Version* translators didn't hesitate translating *ekballo*<sup>3</sup> in such different shades of meaning as: *bring forth, cast forth, cast out, drive, drive out, expel, leave, pluck, pull, take out, thrust out, put forth, put out, send away, send forth, and send out*.

As with other translations, there will at times be the need for paraphrase, as sometimes a literal translation of original words would be unintelligible. Even the *King James Version* used an English figure of speech - “*cast the same in his teeth*” – as a paraphrase of – *reproached him*. Of course that *King James Version* paraphrase is meaningless to us today.

### ELEMENTS FOR CONTEMPORARY CLARITY

In closing, here are a few basic examples of ways that a translation can make the Bible communicate in contemporary clarity.

#### Religious Terms

Many translations were done under the religious obligation to maintain ecclesiastical and theological terms. We should be free from such institutional bondage. Examples of religiously induced words are:

3. *Strong's Greek Lexicon, #1544.*

Church	Hell
Easter	Office
Eternal	Ordain
Eternity	Pastor
Everlasting	Preach
Forever	

### Transliteration:

Transliteration is the practice of not translating an original word from Hebrew or Greek, but, instead, of simply spelling out the original word with English letters. We should seek to avoid transliteration (except for the possibility of proper names); choosing rather to actually translate words (unless translated words have become such an active part of contemporary English as to convey the true and proper meaning of the original words). Examples of transliterated words are:

Angel	Bishop
Apostle	Deacon
Baptize	Presbytery

### Quotation Marks

Quotation marks can be used whenever it can be determined that something, or someone is quoted, as follows:

*Marvel not that I said unto you, "You must be born again."*

### Plural and Singular Pronouns

The English of 1611 had a way of communicating plural and singular pronouns. This method has become archaic and awkward. Instead of using *thee*, *thou*, *thine* to demonstrate plural pronouns, plural and singular pronouns could be noted with the superscript "p" for plural, and an "s" for singular, as follows:

*Marvel not that I said unto you<sup>s</sup>, "You<sup>p</sup> must be born again."*

### Capitalization

Translations could capitalize the first letter in personal pronouns for God (to distinguish Him from other "gods") and Jesus Christ (to distinguish Him from other "men"): He, Him, His, Who, Whom, Which, Thee, Thy, Thine, etc.

They could capitalize the first letter of any title of God or Jesus Christ for the same reasons listed above: Creator, Lord, King, Shepherd, Word, etc.

They could capitalize the first letter of other words as well, such as: Scripture(s), Word (as a reference to the Bible, or when referring to the "Word" spoken of by God), etc.

### Geography

Many places in the Bible are identified without clarity to a modern reader unfamiliar with the geography of the Bible. Clarity could be assured for the reader, as seen in these two examples:

Jordan = the Jordan River

Jerusalem = the city of Jerusalem

### The Possessive "Of"

The abundant use of "of" as possessive could be eliminated. Generally, we don't talk that way any more. Examples of changes:

Son of God = God's Son.

Faith of Christ = Christ's faith.

King of Israel = Israel's King.

Mother of Jesus = Jesus' mother.

Word of God = God's Word.

Word of the Lord = the Lord's Word.

# Some Common Changes to the King James Version

As Supplied by Noah Webster (1758-1843) in His 1833 Revision

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

**T**he “Father of American Scholarship and Education,” Noah Webster is best known for the dictionary associated with his name. At the age of 43, Webster began a twenty-seven year task of producing *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828).



What many do not know about Noah Webster is that just five years after publishing his famous dictionary he also published a revision of the *King James Version*. He focused on replacing archaic words and making basic grammatical changes.

His translation has sometimes been called the *Webster Bible*, the *Noah Webster Bible*, and the *Common Version*.

What follows here is a list of some of the basic changes that he made in his revision:

*Who* for *which*, when it refers to persons.

*Its* for *his*, when it refers to plants and things without life.

*To* for *unto*. The first syllable *un* adds nothing to the signification or force of *to*; but by increasing the number of unimportant syllables, rather impairs the strength of the whole clause or sentence in which it occurs.

*Why* for *wherefore*, when inquiry is made.

*My* and *your* for *mine* and *thine*.

*In which*, *in that* or *this*, *in it*, *on which* for *wherein*, *therein*, *whereon*, *thereon*.

*Know* or *knew*, for *wist*, *wit* and *wot*.

*Go* or *depart*, for *get thee*, *get you*, *get ye*.

*Evening* for *even* and *eventide*.

*Perhaps* for *peradventure*.

*Severe*, *grievous* or *distressing*, for *sore*, and corresponding adverbs.

*People* or *persons*, for *folk*.

*Hinder*, restrain for *let*.

*Ate*, in many cases, for *did eat*.

*Invite* for *bid*.

*Advanced* for *stricken*, in age or years.

*Food* for *meat*. *Meat* never signifies flesh only, but *food* in general, provisions or whatever is eaten for nourishment.

*Shun* for *eschew*.

*Provisions* for *victuals*.

*Afflict*, *harass*, *oppress*, *distress* for *vex*.

*Afflict* for *plague*.

*Multiply* for *increase*.

*Killed* for *slew*.

*Anxious* for *careful*. *Carefulness* is now always a virtue; formerly it had the sense of anxiety.

*Revive* for *quicken*.

*Living* for *quick*.

(See **WEBSTER**, page 1724)

# Abraham Lincoln, Universalist

(February 12, 1809 – April 15, 1865)

## Independent Testimonies of Abraham Lincoln's Belief in the *Salvation of All*

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., Editor

*“That in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matthew 18:16).*

Occasionally over the years, my study of *Universal Reconciliation* has led me to the man, Abraham Lincoln. As our country celebrates the bicentennial of his birth, I thought it might be appropriate to share some of the resources I have found regarding his belief in the *salvation of all*.



Many do not know that for almost all of Abraham Lincoln's life he held a firm conviction that I Corinthians 15:22 was the bedrock of Christ's redemptive work. He found great hope, expounding upon its theme.

What follows is a list of five independent testimonies spanning a period of thirty years of Abraham Lincoln's life, witnessing to his belief that *all men* would ultimately be saved through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Mentor Graham's Testimony

Mentor Graham (1800-1886) was an early schoolmaster of Abraham Lincoln who eventually became intimate friends with him. Lincoln boarded with him for two years. In later years he assisted Lincoln in his speech writing.

Abraham Lincoln was living at my house at New Salem, going to school, studying English grammar and surveying, in the year 1833. One morning he said to me, "Graham, what do you think about the anger of the Lord?" I replied, "I believe the Lord never was angry or mad and never would be; that His loving-kindness endureth forever; that He never changes." Said Lincoln, "I have a little manuscript written, which I will show you," and stated he thought of having it published. The size of the manuscript was about one half quire of foolscap, written in a very plain hand, on the subject

of Christianity, and a defense of universal salvation. The commencement of it was something respecting the God of the universe never being excited, mad or angry. I had the manuscript in my possession some week or ten days. I have read many books on the subject of theology, and I don't think, in point of perspicuity and plainness of reasoning, I ever read one to surpass it. I remember well his argument. He took the passage, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," and followed up with the proposition that whatever the breach or injury of Adam's transgressions to the human race was, which no doubt was very great, was made just and right by the atonement of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

### Erasmus Manford's Testimony

Erasmus Manford (1815-1884) was a capable Bible teacher, author and publisher, who taught *the salvation of all*. His periodicals had extensive circulations.<sup>2</sup> He is best known for his 1849 work, *150 Reasons for Believing in the Final Salvation of All Mankind*. Abraham Lincoln was one of his supporters, himself attending his lectures.

In Manford's autobiography he recounts Lincoln's attendance to one of his addresses on universal reconciliation:

I remember well seeing Mr. Lincoln then punctually every day and night. He often nodded his head to me when I made a strong point.<sup>3</sup>

1. A signed letter of Mentor Graham, published by William Eleazar Barton in *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, Barton, (1920) pp. 346-347.
2. Among his periodicals: *Christian Teacher*, *Golden Era*, *Manford's Monthly Magazine*, *Western Universalist*.
3. *Twenty-five Years in the West*, Erasmus Manford (1867), p. 219.

## Jonathan Harnett's Testimony

Jonathan Harnett was a Lincoln associate and business man from Pleasant Plains, IL.

Harnett retold of his 1858 conversation with Lincoln and some of their associates:

... closed with the restitution of all things to God, as the doctrine taught in the Scriptures, and if anyone was left in doubt in regard to his belief in the atonement of Christ and the final salvation of all men, he removed those doubts in a few questions he answered and propounded to others. After expressing himself, some one or two took exceptions to his position, and he asked a few questions that cornered his interrogators and left no room to doubt or question his soundness on the atonement of Christ, and salvation finally of all men. He did not pretend to know just when that event would be consummated, but that it would be the ultimate result, that Christ must reign supreme, high over all. The Savior of all; and the supreme Ruler, he could not be with one out of the fold; all must come in, with his understanding of the doctrine taught in the Scriptures."<sup>4</sup>

## Isaac Cogdal's Testimony

Isaac Cogdal was a longtime friend of Lincoln, who recounts his 1859 conversation with Lincoln:

"Lincoln expressed himself ... He did not nor could not believe in the endless punishment of any one

4. William J. Wolf, *The Almost Chosen People*, (Doubleday & Company Inc, 1959), pp. 105-106.

**WEBSTER** (continued from page 1722)

Vomit for spew.

Ask, or inquire, for demand.

Immediately for by and by and presently.

Insane for mad.

Healed for made whole.

Agitate, or stir, for trouble.

Labor or toil for travail

Hungry for an hungred.

Convicted for convinced.

Constrain, for compel.

of the human race. He understood punishment for sin to be a Bible doctrine; that the punishment was parental in its object, aim, and design, and intended for the good of the offender; hence it must cease when justice is satisfied. He added that all that was lost by the transgression of Adam was made good by the atonement: all that was lost by the fall was made good by the sacrifice."<sup>5</sup>

## James Shrigley's Testimony

James Shrigley (1813-1905) was a Universalist minister, U.S. Army chaplain, historian, and author. He served churches in: Exeter, New Hampshire, 1838-39; Baltimore, Maryland, 1841-48; Reading, Pennsylvania, 1850-54 and 1856-58; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1854-56; and Richmond, Virginia, 1858-61.

During the Civil War, Shrigley was appointed by Abraham Lincoln as a United States Army chaplain. A group of Protestant ministers traveled to Washington hoping to dissuade President Abraham Lincoln from making the appointment. The President asked on what grounds they were opposed to Shrigley. They replied that Shrigley believed in the salvation of all souls, and that even the rebels would be saved! Lincoln's response was that, if that be so, then Shrigley deserved to be a Chaplain in the U.S. Army.<sup>6</sup>

5. William J. Wolf, *The Almost Chosen People*, (Doubleday & Company Inc, 1959), p. 104.

6. Nelson C. Simonson, *Dictionary of Unitarian & Universalist Biography*, Unitarian Universalist Historical Society.

Earnestly for instantly.

Man for fellow.

Many people for much people.

Foreign for strange.

Boat for ship.

Living beings for beast.

Spirit for ghost.

Teacher for master.

Incite, excite, or instigate for provoke.

Testimony is substituted for record.