

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

VOLUME 1

B. THE SCRIPTURES

A guide for the use of Bible translations

Prepared by the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations. Adopted by the General Synod 1984 as an interim report. Not edited.

The **Revised Standard Version** is generally accurate. However, in something like a thousand cases in the Old Testament, 'Cn' footnotes indicates that the translators have put their emendations and conjectures into the text (often on the basis of earlier versions in Greek and Syriac, and so on), and have put what the Hebrew has into the footnote. Some more modern translations like the New International Version keep far more closely to the Hebrew even when a passage presents difficulties.

The chief disadvantages of the Revised Standard Version are its archaic language, its semi-literal manner of translation, which keeps strictly to the forms and idioms of the original languages, and its high literary level.

The **Good News Bible** has some serious theological lapses. In certain key passages, the relationship of certain concepts has been wrongly skewed.

The advantages of the Good News Bible are obvious. It leaves the forms and idioms of the original, and translates the meaning in modern equivalent forms. Its language is simple, immediate, and intelligible. Sentences are shorter. However, the search for simplicity has led at times to loss of imagery, loss of emphasis, and occasionally, to the dropping of important connectives and keywords from the translation.

The **New International Version** occupies the middle ground. It is more intelligible than the RSV. However, it often keeps too close to the idioms and forms of the original; its sentences are often longer than they need to be; and its literary level is often above the level of people's immediate grasp. The New International Version is generally, however, an accurate version.

RECOMMENDATION

Since the Good News Bible communicates more readily than most other versions, it may be used for home study and in groups for Bible study. Since however, it has to be corrected at certain points, it is recommended that the New International Version should be used as a check on the accuracy of the Good News Bible, and itself used for Bible study on depths, where there is more need to take particular notice of important words and concepts, or to follow the forms of the original closely.

We are unable at this time to recommend any one version as entirely satisfactory for lectionary use. We do, however, advise that the New International Version and Good News Bible may be used as well as the Authorized Version and the Revised Standard Version. Where the Good News Bible is used, we advise that the New International Version serve as a check on its accuracy, and as a substitute where the Good News Bible is unsatisfactory.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the principles on which the Good News Bible is made can often be applied to produce an even more acceptable English translation than the Good News Bible itself offers. For example, modern English often prefers adjectives and adverbs to abstract nouns, verbs to event-nouns, shorter sentences to longer sentences, and actives to passives. In the area of liturgy, in introits and prayers, for example, these simple techniques can easily be applied to make the language more intelligible.

When passages are memorized in classes of instruction, it is obvious that students should use one version consistently. In general it is hardly debatable that, where the Good News Bible is accurate, it should be used. Even here, however, it is recommended that the New International Version be used as a reference for the accuracy of the Good News Bible. Besides the principle enunciated by Luther that only one text should be used, there is another valid educational principle that re-statement in different words of the same thing can often aid a person to form more accurate concepts.

PREVIOUS RESOLUTIONS CONCERNING TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL SYNOD WERE:

1968 Convention

Revised Standard Version (and Authorized Version)

THAT the following statement, adopted by the General Pastors Conference, be adopted: We recommend the use of the Revised Standard Version, apart from the Authorized Version, for liturgical readings for the following reasons:

1. Because it is generally a reliable translations;
2. Because it best preserves the phraseology and rhythm of the well-known Authorized Version;
3. Because it has been used in the new liturgy.

We do not favour the use of other translations in the pulpit because

- a. the sermon itself should make the text quite plain;
- b. the text of the sermon should be given in a form which is easily remembered. When another version is quoted from, this should be indicated by the pastor.

1972 Convention

The Living Bible

THAT the officials responsible for the publishing of the official publications of the Church be requested to publish statements in *The Lutheran*, advising members of the Church that *The Living Bible* cannot be recommended as a reliable and correct translation of the Holy Scriptures.

1978 Convention

Good News Bible

THAT the attention of the Church be drawn to the statement in the Report of the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations: 'Evaluation of the Good News Bible' (TEV); viz.

The chief criterion of a Bible translation is reliability. The CTICR therefore recommends that pastors and people should be cautious and discriminating in using the TEV for devotional and teaching purposes. Since, further, a number of inaccuracies that involve doctrine appear in the pericopes of the Church Year, the CTICR recommends that congregations continue to use either the RSV or the AV as versions from which lessons and sermon texts are read. Where in exceptional circumstances another version is used, this should be indicated by the pastor.