

The REV New Testament

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Good News According to Matthew	7
The Good News According to Mark	61
The Good News According to Luke	95
The Good News According to John	153
The Acts of the Apostles	196
The Epistle of Paul to the Romans	250
The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians	272
The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians	292
The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians	306
The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians	314
The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians	322
The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians	328
The First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians	334
The Second Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians	340
The First Epistle of Paul to Timothy	344
The Second Epistle of Paul to Timothy	350
The Epistle of Paul to Titus	354
The Epistle of Paul to Philemon	358
The Epistles to the Hebrews	360
The General Epistle of James	376
The First General Epistle of Peter	382
The Second General Epistle of Peter	388
The First General Epistle of John	392
The Second General Epistle of John	398
The Third Epistle of John	400
The General Epistle of Jude	402
The Revelation of John	404

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Introduction

This New Testament, the Revised English Version® (REV®), is the version that we of Spirit & Truth Fellowship International are developing. We call it the Revised English Version because we are presenting to English Bible readers a version that is in large part based on earlier English versions, primarily the American Standard Version of 1901 (ASV), but with significant revisions.

The American Standard Version is an outgrowth of the translation project that produced the Revised Version of 1881 (NT) and 1885 (OT), which was itself a work designed to correct errors and mistranslations in the King James Version. The number of Greek texts that were available to the translators of the King James Version was quite small compared to what we have available today, and the texts themselves were not of the best quality. By the time the ASV translation was made, there were more, and better quality, Greek texts.

American revisers from nine denominations worked on the ASV: Baptist, Congregationalist, Dutch Reformed, Episcopal, Friends, Methodist, Presbyterian, Protestant Episcopal, and Unitarian. We believe that the ASV is the best choice for a base-text underlying our work. As with any version, it had avid supporters and avid detractors. We expect the REV will also have both supporters and detractors.

We have worked to keep the REV as a literal translation whenever appropriate, like the ASV or King James. It is not a “dynamic equivalent translation,” such as the NIV, although there are times when, to make good sense in English, we had to depart from a strictly literal translation. Our goal is to eventually have an “essentially literal” translation of the Bible that more closely represents biblical truth than any other translation currently on the market, and also one that is written in today’s English. We think we can do that because we believe a person has to understand the meaning of the

text correctly to be able to translate it correctly. Furthermore, one's theology always affects the way that person will translate the text. It is our assertion that there are theological issues that we understand more correctly than most translators, and thus our translation will reflect that theology.

For years I have stayed away from suggesting that Spirit & Truth Fellowship International (STF) have its own translation, being aware that it may further separate us from the mainstream Christian Congregation and perhaps even cause people to think of us as a cult. However, a number of things have changed my mind.

First and by far foremost, the more I concentrate on discipling others and raising people up in the Word of Truth, the more convinced I become that students need to be reading from a version that is accurate theologically, rather than from a Bible that has dozens and dozens of corrective marginal notes. Christians should be able to read the Bible and take what it says at face value.

Second, the plethora of new translations entering the market each year make producing another one not seem as drastic and partisan as it would have 30 years ago. Third, we believe that orthodox Christian doctrine has been compromised by error, and that error is reflected in the major translations of our day. Having a translation that handles verses from our theological viewpoint will be a great blessing to all those believers who have reached the same conclusion about doctrinal matters as we have.

Reading this version

Italics: Like the American Standard Version, the King James Version, and the New American Standard Version, we attempted to put words that are added to the text in italics. An italicized word is not in the original, but hopefully makes the version more readable. Due to the many differences between languages, doing this completely is impossible, but we, like the translators of the versions that also have italics, have tried to italicize the important additions.

Bold print: Like many versions, we put quotations from the Old Testament in a distinctive type so they can be readily seen. In the REV, quotations

from the Old Testament are in bold print, as E. W. Bullinger has done in *The Companion Bible*.

Present tense: Many verses, especially in the Gospels, are in the present tense even though it would seem that they should be in the past tense. A present tense narrative communicates more emotional energy than a past tense narrative. An excited person tends to speak in present tense. Imagine Jane Doe coming up to you, very excited, and telling you about Bob and Sue. Jane might well say, “So Bob says to Sue,...then Sue tells him,...then Bob calls Bill and talks to him,...” and so forth. She is speaking in the present tense. Had Jane not been excited, and reported the situation factually, she would have used the past tense and said, “So Bob said to Sue,...then Sue told him...then Bob called Bill and talked to him,...” This latter rendition is grammatically correct because the event happened in the past, but it does not have the emotional impact of the present tense. So too, narrative in the Bible often has the powerful emotional impact of the present tense even though the events happened two millennia ago, and we have tried to represent that in this version.

Vocabulary: The Bible has a rich vocabulary that is a window into the Biblical culture. When we felt it appropriate, we left that intact even though we realize it will produce a learning curve for the reader. For example, a “denarius” is a coin that is a day’s wage for a fieldworker or soldier. Translating that as a “penny” (KJV) causes obvious problems. A “yod” is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and when Christ said that not one yod would pass from the Law (Matt. 5:18), his hearers understood how important each letter in the OT was. Translating that as “jot” (KJV), “dot” (NJB), etc. is misleading. A glossary is found at the end of this version.

Masculine vocabulary: The culture of the Bible was dominated by men. Hence, the general tenor of the biblical text is male. Also, God is portrayed as a male (Gen. 18; Ex. 24:10; Dan. 7:9, 10), and masculine pronouns are used of God. We do not wish to be insensitive to women’s rights and issues in the modern world, but we believe that part of understanding the Bible is understanding the culture in which it was written, and so, while we have translated many words that are masculine in a way that includes both men and women, we have done that when we felt it the reading of the text would be awkward.

Brackets: Until the printing press was invented, every manuscript of the Bible was copied by hand from other manuscripts. As a result, changes were introduced into the biblical text. Thankfully, because of the hard work of scholars through the years, and especially in the 1900's with the discovery of more manuscripts and the advent of the computer, the text we have today is believed to be more than 99% correct, and no major doctrine is in doubt because of textual variants. Nevertheless, there are some verses in the text that are in doubt, and these we put in brackets.

Will the REV be a perfect version? No, there is no such thing. We are imperfect people, translating from an imperfect Greek text, doing our best to bring the sense of the Greek text into English, something that can only be imperfectly done. However, our prayer is that the REV will be a version that will help people come nearer to God, the Author of the perfect original text. We pray that you find the REV a blessing, and helpful in building your relationship with God.

John W. Schoenheit
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