

# Introduction

Many times I have been reading a verse in some version of the Bible and asked myself, “Why did they translate it that way?” The vast majority of the time, there is no way to know. Generally speaking, translators of the Bible are recognized scholars, and they translate without giving explanations for what their translation says. That is not our intention in the REV. There are different types of commentaries, but this commentary has two purposes: to give an explanation of why we translated as we did in the REV, and to explain biblical passages so the reader can better understand them.

Our multi-year goal is to produce a commentary that will be very helpful in Bible Study both from a text-critical standpoint (the transmission and meaning of the Greek text) and from an exegetical standpoint (setting forth major points of meaning in the biblical text). Our general pattern of commentary is that if our translation can be documented easily by logic or by looking at standard resources such as an interlinear Bible or Greek or Hebrew lexicons, then we do not take the time to comment on the verse. We comment when we feel that the translation would not be understood, or the understanding of a verse can be significantly clarified by commentary about it. If we feel that something has been adequately explained in another source, we often simply refer the reader to that source. I have found that when one understands the Bible, it becomes more fun to read and is easier to live by, and becomes a much more integral part of the person’s relationship with God.

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## **General Notes on the Translation Theory of the REV**

1. We started by using the ASV (American Standard Version of 1901) as a base text, so that we would have a version for Christians to read as the REV develops. This is different from the developmental process for most translations, which are generally not available to the public until they are finished. We are modifying the ASV when we feel we have logical, grammatical, lexical, or textual reasons to do so. As the REV translation develops, we will rely more completely on our own translation of the Greek and Hebrew texts.
2. We intend to produce a version that is more literal, such as the KJV or NASB, and not produce a “dynamic equivalent” version, paraphrased version, etc. There will be times when a literal translation of the Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic will not make sense, and we will do our best to represent the meaning of the original in our translation.
3. We are willing to use multi-word phrases if we feel they are needed to carry the accurate sense of a word in the Greek or Hebrew text. For example, we translate the Greek word *mysterion* as “sacred secret.”

4. We will ordinarily use the 27<sup>th</sup> edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece* edited by Nestle and Aland, and *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* as the Greek and Hebrew texts underlying our translation. However, we believe there are times when those works do not read as the original autograph did. A good example is John 1:18, where we believe that the Western text family, which reads, “only begotten son,” is original, not “only begotten God,” as the Alexandrian text family and *Novum Testamentum Graece* read.

5. Our mode of operation is to translate the text first, and as we translate to build a general lexical base that will influence other verses having the same vocabulary as the one we are working in. We do not build the lexical base first, but will build that base as we translate. We fully expect there to be some “back and forth” correction, *i.e.*, as we translate verses through the years there will no doubt be a modification of some verses we have already translated.

6. We represent the same Greek (or Hebrew) words by the same English words whenever that makes the best sense. However, we recognize the existence of semantic range, homonymic usage, and linguistic sense, as well as the fact that case, gender, etc., often influences the meaning of the word. We do not intend to produce an awkward English version just to maintain an artificial relation to the Greek or Hebrew text. There will be cases when the same Greek or Hebrew word is translated different ways, and there will be cases where different Greek and Hebrew words will be translated by the same English word.

7. It is our philosophy that God wrote the original in a way that pleased Him, and we do best if we stick as close as possible to that. There are many versions of the Bible available on the market today, and each serves a purpose. The Version of the New Testament that we of Spirit & Truth Fellowship International are producing is a more literal version of the New Testament. The Bible is easy to understand in some parts (*i.e.*, “do not steal,” Rom. 13:9), while other parts are much more complicated and require a broader knowledge of language, customs, history, etc. While many translators work to translate difficult material out of their versions to make them easier for beginning Christians, we intend to produce a more literal version and allowing the student to learn customs, culture, etc., directly from the text. That is also why we desire to produce this commentary. The commentary provides an explanation of the meaning of difficult verses.

- Many modern versions paraphrase the biblical text. We will do our best to avoid paraphrasing, fully realizing that the reader will have to be more educated in biblical language, figures of speech and customs to read and understand our version, but also realizing that same knowledge would be required to read the original text.
- Many modern versions simplify the vocabulary for easier reading. Our intention is to attempt to bring out the richness of the original, even if that means using a vocabulary that challenges some people. Understanding the Bible means growing in knowledge of many things, and vocabulary is one of them.
- Many modern versions make the Bible gender-neutralized. The Bible reflects the culture of the biblical times, which was much more male centered than our modern culture. Gender neutralizing removes the “feel” of the Biblical culture

- from the biblical text. It is our belief that this eventually leads to a loss of understanding of the Bible itself. We intend to represent the gender that is in the original text, believing that, because it is God-breathed, there is value in translating the text as it was written.
- *Yahweh*, the name of God, has been translated “LORD” in many modern versions. We correct this back to *Yahweh*. There are many words that can be, and are, legitimately translated “lord.” To us, something is lost when the personal name of God is replaced with a title. Historically, God is always trying to get close to people, and people are always trying to push him away or distance themselves from him. Many examples of this exist in the Bible, from Moses being afraid at the burning bush, to the Israelites telling Moses that they did not want God speaking with them, to Peter telling Jesus to depart from him. The idea that *Yahweh* is too holy to speak is not from God, but from men, and it originated late in the history of Israel. In the end, it adds further distance between us and God. We intend to restore *Yahweh* to the text.
  - There are some words in the Hebrew and Greek that have no English equivalent, and we believe that it best serves the interests of the Bible student to simply transliterate them from the Hebrew or Greek itself. An example is “Tartarus” in 2 Peter 2:4. Tartarus, a word taken from Greek mythology, was a prison for gods who displeased greater gods. As such, Tartarus is a fitting word to describe where God put the demons who sinned against Him at the time of the Flood. Translating it “hell” (KJV, NIV, NASB, ESV, etc.) misses the point, because many Christians believe that demons rule hell, they are not prisoners in it, and they come and go from it as they please. We say “Tartarus” and let the reader become educated, giving a wonderful look at the Bible and God’s truth.

8. We put in bold print the quotations of the Old Testament that appear in the New Testament, as the Companion Bible does. Commentators do not always agree on exactly what is a quotation from the Old Testament and what is not. And there are times when some commentators, E. W. Bullinger being one, call something a quotation when it is actually only a reference to the OT. We tried to be conservative, and call something a quotation only if we could reasonably document it as such.

9. We put in italics words that are not in the Greek text, as do the KJV, NASB, and original ASV. In the Greek language, certain omitted words are understood. For example, in a simple sentence the verb “is” is sometimes omitted, being understood by Greek speakers. We often put that verb in without putting it in italics. Similarly, Greek includes the gender in the noun, so we may say “he” or “she” in our version without a stand-alone pronoun in the Greek, drawing the gender clue from the context.

10. We put in brackets words or verses that were probably not in the original text, but the evidence about them is not conclusive enough for us to make a decision about them at this time.

11. Prepositions: It is very difficult to maintain any consistency when translating prepositions due to their extremely flexible use. This is true in English also. For example,

it is common for someone at a fast-food, drive-through restaurant such as McDonald's to hear the teller say, "Drive up to the next window." Of course, cars do not drive "up," and the next window is "forward," not "up." However, "forward" has become one of the uses of "up" in English. This is also true in Greek, and not recognizing the flexible nature of prepositions results in actually mistranslating and misunderstanding the text. The difficulty of maintaining constancy is exemplified by the word "wherefore" in the ASV, which is the translation of many Greek words; including *tis*, *hopos*, *hothen*, *hoste*, *diate*, *dioper*, *dia touto*, *charin tinos*, etc.