

Religion in America Modern Translations Valuable For Understanding of Bible

By LOUIS CASSELS
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The King James version of the Bible, which was translated in 1611 A.D., has never been rivaled for poetic beauty and majesty of expression. From a purely literary viewpoint, it towers over all modern translations as Shakespeare does over a TV script.

But more than 1,000 English words and phrase used in the Bible have undergone significant changes of meaning since the King James was published 352 years ago.

That's why many people feel that a good modern translation is essential for anyone who plans to read the Bible seriously.

Which modern translation you choose is a matter of taste. The chief contenders for public and scholarly favor are the Revised Standard Version and the New English Bible.

The Revised Standard Version is essentially a re-write and up-dating of the old King James, using the same sentence structures but substituting contemporary for archaic English words where necessary to make the original

meaning clear. It is available in a vast variety of editions. One of the finest, for serious reading and study purposes, is the new Oxford Annotated Bible (Oxford University Press, \$7.95), which has helpful footnotes on every page.

Still Being Translated

The Old Testament portion of the new English Bible is still being translated, and won't be available for some years yet. The New Testament portion has been a best-seller since March, 1961. It is an entirely fresh translation of the original Greek into contemporary, idiomatic English. While it lacks literary grace at many points, it hits the reader right between the eyes as a message addressed to him in his own everyday tongue. Those who have ceased to get any real impact out of overly familiar passages of the King James will have the feeling that they are reading the Bible for the first time.

Where you begin reading is at least as important as the choice of a translation. Many people make the mistake of trying to read the Bible straight through from beginning to end, as if it were an ordinary book or novel. If you do that, you are apt to get "bogged down in the begats" when you reach the dull and endless genealogies of the Old Testament.

It is more accurate to think of the Bible as a whole library of books, written at various times over a span of 1,500 years. These books differ enormously in literary style, historical value and spiritual depth. Except in a very broad sense, they do not tell a consecutive narrative, so there's no need to "begin at the beginning" and plow straight through.

Instead, you can begin in the middle, with the part of the Bible which to Christians is the most important and exciting news ever reported upon earth — the story of Jesus Christ.

"The Bible is a book about God; it tells what He did for men, especially in Jesus Christ His son," says Prof. Floyd V. Filson of McCormick Theological Seminary in New York. "Read the whole Bible by all means, but get to the heart of the biblical message at the start."

Prof. Filson recommends beginning with the New Testament books of Luke and Acts. They were written by the same author, and although they are now separated in the Bible, it is clear that they were originally intended to go together, for they tell a single, connected story.

The first part—the Gospel according to St. Luke — is the story of Christ's life, death and resurrection, written especially for a Gentile audience by a man who seems to have been a very careful reporter with an eye for vivid detail and a gift for poetic expression.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the same writer tells how the

Christian church came into being under the awesome impact of the resurrection, and traces its spread throughout the Roman Empire, with particular attention to the missionary voyages of the Apostle Paul, with whom Luke travelled extensively.

Proceed To St. John

After reading Luke-Acts, you may want to proceed to the Gospel according to St. John. Here you'll find less concern with events and sayings, more emphasis on meaning and significance. To oversimplify, you might say that Luke is the reporter who tells you what Jesus did and said, while John is the theologian who tells you who Jesus was and why He came.

St. Paul's letters could well come next — especially those addressed to the young churches at Corinth and Rome. After that you can finish the other Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament in almost any order that appeals to you.

Eventually, you'll want to read the whole Old Testament, for Christianity cannot be truly comprehended without a thorough acquaintance with the Jewish scriptures which Jesus said he came "not to destroy but to fulfill."

But it may be best to ease your way into the Old Testament by reading first the book of Psalms — the greatest collection of devotional poetry the world has ever known.

After the Psalms, try Isaiah, the noblest and most moving of the Hebrew books of "prophecy." Then, when you are well acquainted with the sublime heights to which the children of Israel are destined to move in their knowledge of God, you can go back to Genesis and begin tracing the early story of this remarkable group who were chosen by God for a special role as light-bearers to mankind.

Chose Good Commentary

Whatever sequence you follow, you will find far more meaning in the Bible if you read it in connection with a good commentary. Before beginning to read any book of the Bible, find out from the commentary what scholars have discovered about its date and authorship, and the historical circumstances under which it was written. This background information will enable you to understand many otherwise-baffling passages.

There are dozens of Bible commentaries on the market. One new and relatively inexpensive one-volume commentary which has already found wide favor among Bible scholars is Harper's Bible Commentary (Harper & Row, \$5.95).

Two other valuable reference works that are available in inexpensive paperback editions are "A Theological Word Book of the Bible" (MacMillan, \$1.95) and "The Modern Reader's Bible Atlas" (Association Press Reflection Books, \$1.50).

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Biologist Speaks At Chamber Lunch

Ashtland — Howard Prairie is still the best lake for fishing this year, according to Ed Schwartz, Grants Pass, resident biologist with the state game commission, who spoke before the Ashtland Chamber of Commerce Tuesday.

Fishing at Hyatt lake has been only fair, he said, although the size of the fish caught there has been larger than average.

Willow Creek lake was good on opening week end but has been slumping off somewhat since, Schwartz said. On the opening week end, many fishermen caught their limits by 10 a.m.

Fish lake has been on and off, he added.

The opening of stream fishing season last week end did not turn out as well as hoped, Schwartz said. There were some trout in the Applegate river above the Ruch area, but the main Rogue itself was only fair. The Illinois river was good only in spots.

Prisoner Provided With Chauffeur Service

Ontario, Calif. — George W. Lund, 45, was charged Wednesday with picking up four unemployment checks totaling \$98 while confined to jail and having the police chief drive him to the unemployment office to get them. "He said his wife was bringing some papers there for him to sign," said Police Chief Herbert W. Swinney. "He didn't say he was going to get money."

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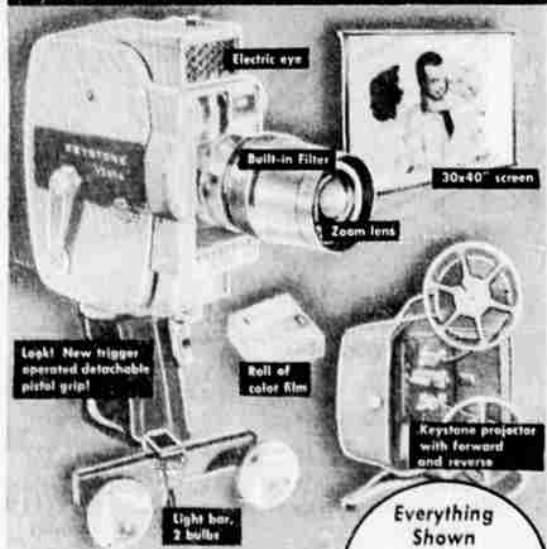


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