

Speaking of Life...



with Joseph Tkach

Go into any Christian bookstore—or just a general bookseller in America today—and ask for a Bible. You will be offered a bewildering choice. There are sometimes literally dozens of versions to choose from. Which one is the best? Not all that long ago, there would have been only two or three choices. For most people, a “Bible” still meant the venerable King James Version, dating back to 1611. As the old preacher once said, “if the King James Version was good enough for Jesus, it’s good enough for me.” Well, the King James is a good translation, but it is old fashioned. About 150 years ago, the Revised Version updated the King James, and then 100 years ago, the American Standard Version updated that.

More recently, about 50 years ago, the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible was published; it was a comprehensive revision of all three of the earlier versions. It still had the flavor of the old King James, but its updated language was much easier to read. It came to be widely accepted and used in many denominations. But not everyone was enthusiastic about the RSV. In some quarters, it met with vehement denunciation, labeled everything from “questionable” and “biased” to “corrupt” and “a perversion of God’s Word.”

Be that as it may, today we have more than 100 English versions in circulation. These newer versions reflect growth in biblical scholarship, including discoveries of better, more reliable copies of ancient texts, as well as changes in the English language.

So—the question remains—which translation is best? Ac-

tually, if you are looking for perfection, no version measures up. As you probably know, the Bible was originally written in ancient languages, principally Hebrew and Greek. No translation can ever be a perfect rendition of the original. It always involves compromise. However, with the exception of versions published by some sects, who doctor the text to reflect their particular beliefs, the vast majority of modern translations stand squarely within traditional Christian orthodoxy and accurately preserve the historic doctrines of the faith. So, what it comes down to is that the use of a particular translation really is a personal choice. The important thing is that we *use* whatever translations we favor and read and study it. Or to put it another way, the most effective Bible is one that is open!

But actually, there is a much more expansive way to consider the question: Which is the best version? You see, the Bible is not just a textbook, written to fill you with knowledge. It is a guide to life. So even an open, read and studied Bible is not really of much use unless its teachings are reflected in the life of the owner. The best, most influential translation is the one *you* make—by putting the Word of God into practice every day, as a light to the world. That’s the most effective and convincing translation of all! ●

This article is derived from Speaking of Life, a weekly video program presented by Joseph Tkach on the Worldwide Church of God website. You can watch it online, listen online, or download the video, audio, or text. For all these options, go to www.wcg.org/av/spol.htm.