

THE STORY BEHIND THE GREAT BOOK

(THE PLAIN ENGLISH BIBLE, NEW TESTAMENT)

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For more exciting information about The Great Book and how
it came to be, visit: www.theplainenglishbible.com

LOOK WHO LOVES THE PLAIN ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATION

It is one of the finest and clearest translations I have ever read!

— *W. A. Criswell*, senior pastor
The First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas

We are interested primarily...in rendering the Greek as faithfully as we can.

— *Dr. F. Wilbur Gingrich*, co-author
A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament

I do pray that God will greatly use it in a significant way to present the glorious truths of His everlasting love and redemption for mankind to people in a way that they will understand and accept.

— *Cliff Barrows*, team member
The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association team

The PEB is the best translation I have found as yet. I have compared this translation with the original Greek texts and other available translations. I wholeheartedly encourage its use by everyone.

— *Rev. Steve Munson*, pastor
Phoenix Village Baptist Church
Fort Smith, Arkansas

I am grateful to you for The Plain English Bible, which I feel is a great contribution to the Lord's work and will be a blessing to so many people throughout the world. I appreciate the translation because it is written at a level that will be easily understood by those who are learning English as a second language. I believe that the soundness of this translation, particularly in the use of such words as immersion for baptism will clear up a lot of confusion. May the Lord bless you in this work.

— *H. Glenn Boyd*, president
African Christian Hospitals Foundation

INTRODUCING

THE PLAIN ENGLISH BIBLE

The Plain English Bible is one of the clearest, easiest to read, and most accurate translations ever written. We at International Bible Translators, Inc., have created this little booklet to make our readers aware that a fresh new version of the New Testament portion of the Bible is slated to hit the bookstore shelves on August 1, 2003. We wanted you to know about this exciting new venture, why we considered it to be important, and what our objectives and goals were in creating this new Bible version.

EXCERPTS FROM
THE GREAT BOOK

We played a sad song, but you did not cry!’

¹⁸ John came neither eating *normal food* nor drinking *wine*. And they say, ‘He has a demon inside him!’ ¹⁹ I^e came eating and drinking. And they say, ‘Look, he eats too much and drinks too much wine! He is the friend of tax collectors and other sinful people!’ *True wisdom* is shown to be right by the things it does.”^d

People Who Won’t Listen

²⁰ Then Jesus began to criticize the towns where most of his miracles had occurred. The people had not changed their hearts. ²¹ “It will be horrible for you, O town of Chorazin! It will be horrible for you, Bethsaida! Many miracles have occurred in you. If these same miracles had occurred in the cities of Tyre and Sidon, then those people in Tyre and Sidon would have changed their hearts and actions^e long ago. ²² But on the Judgment Day, God will punish **you** more than the people of Tyre and Sidon. ²³ And you, Capernaum, do you think you will be lifted up to heaven? You will be thrown down to Hades!^f Many miracles have occurred in you. If these same miracles had occurred in Sodom, that city would still be standing today. ²⁴ But on the Judgment Day, God will punish you more than He will punish the people of Sodom!”

Jesus’ Prays to the Father

²⁵ At that time, Jesus said, “Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I praise You because You have hidden these teachings from the ‘wise’ and ‘intelligent’ people, but You show Your teachings to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, I praise You, because this is what You really wanted to do.

Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I praise You because You have hidden these teachings from the ‘wise’ and ‘intelligent’ people, but You show Your teachings to little children.

Matthew 11:25

²⁷ “My Father has given me all things. Only the Father knows who the Son is. And only the Son knows who the Father is. The only people who will know about the Father are those people whom the

Son chooses to tell.

11:19 ^c literally, the Son of Man

11:19 ^d literally, Wisdom is made right by her works.

11:21 ^e or, repented

11:23 ^f the world of the dead

about him. ¹⁷ What God said through the prophet Isaiah came true:

¹⁸ “Look at My special servant!

He is the one I have chosen.

I love him and I am very pleased with him.

I will put My Spirit upon him.

He will announce justice for the nations, too.

¹⁹ He will not argue or yell.

No one will hear his voice in the streets.

²⁰ He will not break the stem of a plant that has been bent.

He will not even put out the flame of a wick which is barely burning,

until he causes justice to win.

²¹ The nations will put their hope in his name.”

Isaiah 42:1-4

The Power of God

²² Then they brought a man with a demon to Jesus. This man was blind and he could not talk. Jesus healed him. The man was able to speak and see. ²³ All the crowds were amazed. They kept saying, “This man is not the son of David, is he?”

²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This man throws demons out only by using the power of Beelzebul,^b the ruler of demons!”

Every kingdom which is divided against itself will be ruined. Every town or family which is divided against itself will not hold together.

Matthew 12:25

²⁵ Jesus knew what they were thinking. He said to them, “Every kingdom which is divided against itself will be ruined. Every town or family which is divided against itself will not hold together. ²⁶ If Satan were throwing out Satan, then he would be divided against himself. How could his kingdom stay together? ²⁷ But if I throw out demons by using the power of

Beelzebul,^c then whose power do your own people use to throw them out? This is why your own people prove you are wrong! ²⁸ However, if it is true that I use the Spirit of God to throw out demons, then God’s kingdom has come upon you!

²⁹ “How can someone go into a strong man’s house and take away his possessions? He must first tie up the strong man. Then he can rob the strong man’s house.

12:24 ^b literally, the lord of the flies, a name given to the Devil

12:27 ^c the Devil

¹⁸ Jesus said, "Bring them here to me."

¹⁹ Jesus ordered the people to sit down on the grass. He took the five loaves of bread and two fish. Then he looked up to heaven. He thanked God for the food and divided it. Then he began giving the loaves of bread to his followers and they gave it to the people. ²⁰ Everyone ate and was full. They gathered up all the pieces of the food which were left over. They filled twelve large baskets with this food. ²¹ (There were about 5,000 men who were eating, not including the women and children.)

Walking on Water

²² Soon Jesus made his followers get into the boat. He wanted them to go on ahead of him across *the lake*, while he sent the people away. ²³ After Jesus sent the people away, he went up to a mountain to be alone and to pray. It was evening and Jesus was the only one there. ²⁴ The boat was already a long way from the shore. The waves were beating against the boat; they were heading into the wind. ²⁵ It was after three o'clock in the morning when Jesus came to them. He was walking **on** the lake. ²⁶ When Jesus' followers saw him walking on the lake, they were alarmed. They shouted with fear, "It's a ghost!" ²⁷ Immediately, Jesus spoke to them, "Be strong! It is I. Don't be afraid."

²⁸ Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is really you, tell me to come to you on the water!"

²⁹ Jesus said, "Come!" Then Peter got down from the boat and went toward Jesus, walking on the water. ³⁰ But when Peter saw the way the wind was blowing, he was afraid. He began to sink. Peter cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹ Immediately, Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him. Jesus said to him, "Oh, you have so little faith; why did you doubt?" ³² When they climbed into the boat, the wind stopped. ³³ They all worshiped him, saying, "You really are the Son of God!"

The people were begging him; they only wanted to touch the tassel of his robe. And all those who did touch it were made well.

Matthew 14:36

Jesus Heals Some Sick People

³⁴ After they crossed over, they came to the shore at Gennesaret. ³⁵ The men from that place recognized Jesus. They sent people all over that area, bringing all of their sick people to Jesus. ³⁶ The people were begging him; they only wanted to touch the tassel of his robe.^b And all those who did touch it were made well.

^{14:36} ^b Tassels were worn on four corners of a robe to remind the people of the law (Numbers 15:38-40)

God's Command or Man's Tradition?

15¹ Then some teachers of the law and some Pharisees from Jerusalem came to Jesus. They asked,² “Why are your followers breaking the old rules of the elders? When your followers eat, they do not wash their hands.”

³ Jesus answered them, “Why do **you** break God’s command for the sake of old rules of your own?”⁴ God said,

‘You must love and obey your father and mother.’ *Exodus 20:12*
and

‘The person who curses his father or mother must die.’ *Exodus 21:17*

⁵ But **you** say if anyone says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever you might have gotten from me, I have given *to God* instead!’⁶ So, he will never respect his father or his mother. Because of your tradition you are taking away the authority of God’s teaching!⁷ Hypocrites!⁸ How right Isaiah was when he prophesied about you:

*These people respect
me with their lips, but
their heart is far away
from Me*

Matthew 15:8

⁸ ‘These people respect me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me.

⁹ It does no good for them to worship Me. They teach rules made by men, *not God.*”

Isaiah 29:13

Evil Comes from the Heart

¹⁰ Jesus called the crowd. He said to them, “Listen, and understand!

¹¹ What goes into the mouth does not make a person unholy. No, it’s what comes out of the mouth that makes a person unholy.”

¹² Then Jesus’ followers came to him and asked, “Do you know that the Pharisees were insulted when they heard this teaching?”

¹³ Jesus answered, “Every plant which was not planted by my heavenly Father will be pulled up by the roots.¹⁴ Leave them alone! They are blind guides. If a blind man guides another blind man, both of them will fall into a pit.”

¹⁵ Peter said to Jesus, “Explain this story to us.”

¹⁶ Jesus said, “Do you still not understand?¹⁷ You know that everything which goes into the mouth goes into the stomach. Then it comes out as waste.¹⁸ But the things which are coming from the mouth are really coming from the heart—these things make a person unholy.¹⁹ These things

15:7 ^a those who act as though they are good when they are not

THE BIBLE IS A SACRED THING

The Bible is the message of God. It is the inspired, infallible, written record of God's will (see 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Through it, God speaks to mankind, revealing how He intends to redeem us from sin. The Bible says, "No prophecy of Scripture ever came about by a prophet's own ideas, because prophecy never came from what man wanted. No, those men spoke from God while they were being influenced by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:20-21). Scriptural wording cannot be "broken" or manipulated in any way (see John 10:35). That's why we call it "The Great Book." Familiarity and knowledge are not the same thing. We must never take God's Word for granted. We must all begin with a new-found appreciation for the Holy Bible.

Suppose someone came to you and said: "I'm going to take away everything you have—except one thing! What would you keep?" What would your response be? Your answer *should* be: "OK, I'm keeping my Bible!" What would your life be without your Bible? Let's face it, your life would be miserable. You would be like somebody lost in a wilderness without a compass!

How valuable is it? It is worth more than gold or silver (see Ps. 19:10; 119:72,127; Prov. 23:23).

The irreverent heart will not find the truth, because it is not looking for it (see Ps. 10:4; Jer. 8:9). One must respect and love truth if its riches are to be discovered (see Ps. 119:18). This is the only proper attitude, one that enables us to come to know what God has revealed in it.

The Bible is not just merchandise to be peddled (see 2 Cor. 2:17, RSV). It contains precious words of eternal life (see John 6:63,68). This is God's truth, which can make us holy (see John 17:17). And, truth can be known and can set us free from sin (see John 8:32). The authority of the Bible is supreme authority. If such a standard were not necessary, God would not have given it to us as a guide (see Ps. 119:105).

During a span of approximately 1,600 years, God used about 40 writers to write the 66 books, which we now call *The Holy Bible*. There is a total of 1,189 chapters with 31,101 verses in the Bible, originally written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. And, the entire Bible points to the central figure of the text—Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. He is our Savior.

Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life! The only way anyone can come to the Father is through me!” (John 14:6). Christ is the true light (see John 1:9) for the people of the world (see John 8:12). In contrast with the Law and its system of shadows that came by Moses (see Heb. 10:1), grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (see John 1:17; Col. 2:17). God is the only true God, and He sent Christ who spoke the truth that He had been taught by the Father (see John 8:26,28). The truth Jesus taught us was absolute truth, not relative truth. This is precisely why He came (see John 18:37). It is possible for God’s truth to be known because Christ revealed it to mankind.

Regarding the whole counsel of God (see Acts 20:27), each individual should listen to it diligently (see Rev. 1:3), properly interpret it (see 2 Tim. 2:15), commit it to memory (see Ps. 119:11), meditate upon it (see Ps. 119:99), and live by it (see 1 John 1:6-7) every day (see Luke 9:23).

DON’T TAMPER WITH IT!

So, one must never trifle with the Bible. “I am telling the truth to every person who is listening to the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds more words to these words, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book. And, if anyone takes away from the words of this prophetic book, God will take away that person’s share of the Tree of Life and the holy city, which are written about in this book” (see Rev. 22:18-19; Deut. 4:2; and Prov. 30:6). We must preserve *exactly* the meaning of what God said through His prophets and through His Son (see Heb.1:1-3; John 1:1-14)

The apostle Paul was set for the defense of this gospel and to publicly affirm and defend the truth of the Good News (see Phil. 1:16; Acts 17:3). A clear line of demarcation stands between right and wrong (see Matt. 6:24). Truth and error are not related in any way (see Matt. 12:30). Therefore, we are engaged in a battle (see 1 Tim. 6:12). For we must earnestly “fight for the faith which God passed on to the

holy people once for all time” (Jude 1:3) and plainly denounce evil (see Eph. 5:11). We ought to speak out boldly (see Acts 14:3).

WHAT DID GOD REALLY SAY?

The Word of God is the only offensive weapon that we possess. It is “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17, KJV), whose edge remains sharp and powerful. “God’s message is alive and active. It is sharper than any sword with two sharp edges. It can slice between the soul and the spirit or between the joints and bone marrow. It can tell the difference between the desires and the intentions of the human mind” (Heb. 4:12).

ACCURACY IN TRANSLATION

As faithful translators of the Bible, we are totally committed to accuracy. Just as people’s lives depend on the accuracy of the printed manuals and maps used by airline pilots during flight, carefully preserving biblical accuracy is vital for spiritual life. We must be absolutely certain that we are conveying to all readers what inspired biblical writers were saying, for souls depend on it. This is an awesome responsibility!

If people cannot know *precisely* what God has revealed in the Scriptures, then revelation becomes meaningless to them and, therefore, useless. “Revelation” should not be extremely difficult or nearly impossible to understand. Some spiritual teachings may be complex (see 2 Pet. 3:16), but many other truths are easily understood. There is milk for babes in Christ, as well as solid food for full-grown persons (see 1 Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:11-14), so everyone can learn and grow. Bible translators should make God’s Word as easy to understand as possible, while continuing to faithfully adhere to reliable standards of accuracy.

Jesus’ mandate to the Church was the Great Commission, a command to make disciples of all nations and peoples. That task includes translating the Bible so that everyone in the whole world can read it. God’s Word commands: “Therefore, after you’ve gone out, make followers for me from all nations [Greek: *ta ethne*, which means every cultural group]. Immerse them by the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I commanded you. Remember, I will always be with you—even until the end of time!” (Matt. 28:19-20). This commission from Christ Himself makes it

imperative that the Scriptures be carefully translated into all languages, including contemporary English. Through the Bible, God continues to speak to all people today.

In developing *The Plain English Bible* (PEB), not only have we tried to translate God's Word with the utmost accuracy, but we have also done this with love in our hearts for the Savior and for the salvation of precious souls. In Paul's famous chapter about love, he starts off by saying: "I will now show you the best way of all: Even if I speak with human languages or the language of angels, but do not have loving concern, I have only become like the noisy sound of a gong or the ringing sound from cymbals" (1 Cor. 13:1). The same apostle also said: "When we speak the truth with love, we will grow up into Christ in every way" (Eph. 4:15).

A GOOD TRANSLATION MUST BE UNDERSTANDABLE

When God revealed Himself to mankind, He expected to be understood. He inspired the writers of the biblical books to communicate exactly what He said. The various authors of the sacred writings also expected to be understood by their audiences. Therefore, it is not unreasonable that we should demand that a translation of God's Word be understandable. When God spoke a truth, He meant one thing by what He said, not many ambiguous things. We consider that our task as Bible translators is to capture the true meaning of what was originally intended, and then to convey that meaning in such a way that it will be clearly and easily understood by all hearers.

BUT WILL THEY LISTEN?

A Bible translation should communicate to the majority of people, believers and non-believers alike, regardless of cultural differences. It must be made intelligible to those who have never heard its message. If translators successfully hit that target, they will easily reach all audiences of a particular culture they are aiming to reach. Therefore, *The Plain English Bible* can be an effective instrument for evangelism.

Jesus showed many more proofs from God in front of his followers, but these are not written in this book. These proofs have been written, so that you, the reader, might believe this:

Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. If you believe this, you will have eternal life by his name (John 20:30-31).

A TRANSLATION MUST “MAKE SENSE”

If an audience thinks that something doesn’t “make sense,” then it may assume that it is “nonsense” and not worth the time. In order for people to follow God’s will, they must readily *understand* a Bible translation.

If Bible translators fail to reproduce the impact of the original message, they have failed to do their job adequately. To accomplish high fidelity, occasionally they must make necessary grammatical and lexical adjustments. For example, the Hebrew idiom “bowels of mercies” (see Col. 3:12, NKJV) is *not* talking about intestines. A meaningful English equivalent for this Hebrew idiom is “tender feelings.” Similarly, when we say we are speaking from “the bottom of our hearts” we are *not* talking about that part of our bodies that pumps blood!

Any idea that can be expressed in one language *can* be said in another language, unless the form itself is an essential element of the message. Nevertheless, we certainly cannot expect a perfect match between languages. ¹

We must strive for *equivalence of meaning* rather than literal identity. It is not important to conserve the strict grammatical form of the original expression. The best translations are not confusing and forced, but seem natural to the language in which it is read. A great translation helps people to really understand the meaning of ideas being conveyed in the original language. A conscientious translator works to achieve the closest, most natural equivalent. The transfer of essential meaning is given the highest priority. Therefore, both content *and* context must rule!

Though grammatical style is secondary to content, it is still very important. Translators are not allowed to translate poetry as if it had been prose, nor may they render expository material as though it were originally written as straight narrative. For instance, the book of Hebrews was a well-organized, logical treatise. Therefore, in translation its discourse structure should be rendered the same way.

A TRANSLATION MUST BE CLEAR

Jesus the Master Teacher was very careful not to give people more than they could grasp. Mark 4:33 says, “Jesus was telling them the message—but only as much as they were able to understand.” Jesus did not try to impress people with big words, yet He nevertheless was able to reach their hearts. (We are trying to re-capture that level of communication in *The Plain English Bible* too.) By using profound illustrations, Jesus communicated clearly, even with children. He attracted them, because they could feel His love (see Matt. 19:13-14). In fact, Jesus said that we ought to become humble as little children (Matt. 18:1-6).

In these busy modern times when messages assail people from many diverse sources, we know that many individuals have learned to “tune out” very quickly. Therefore, we must work to grab a reader’s attention quickly, before it goes somewhere else. If he or she cannot immediately perceive the relevance of a particular message to his or her daily life, then we can expect it to be “tuned out.”

With the rise of the World Wide Web, many modern people are suffering from what is called “information overload.” Folks feel overwhelmed by the sheer mass of information (or noise), which bombards them from every side. This sense of overload causes a lot of people to retreat from learning new things. Therefore, many individuals also acutely sense that there is an ever-widening gap between what they understand and what they think they should understand. They wonder, “Why isn’t the information we’re receiving telling us what we want (or need) to know?” The information explosion has backfired. People are flooded with facts but starved for insight, according to author R. S. Wurman.²

The PEB translation, unlike more complicated Bible translations, truly helps ordinary people to transcend their fear of not knowing everything that God has said. In short, they learn how to distinguish what is relevant from what may be irrelevant to them at a particular stage of their spiritual development. *The Plain English Bible* (N.T.) is one of the clearest translations ever written. It is the key to the treasure chest!

MEETING THE STANDARDS OF GOOD WRITING

In creating this new Bible version, we determined it was very important that it measure up to good writing standards. At the same time, our translation would need to communicate well to a general audience in popular vernacular or common language, but it should *not* be slang in print. The work would need to feel comfortable to most people, but not be too colloquial. We wanted to use a “common” vernacular that overlapped several socio-economic and educational levels so that both a college professor and a high school drop-out might enjoy reading it, since a 70 percent communication overlap exists between them.

Therefore, we determined that two extremes would need to be avoided: (1) “comic strip” language and (2) technical language that only a narrowly cast audience would understand. Using the first type of language could mark the message as unworthy of serious consideration. An example of this would be *Letters to Street Christians*, a “translation” targeted to a subculture in the vernacular, popular during the 1960s and 1970s. Employing the second type of language might guarantee that only a few scholarly individuals would understand it. *The Concordant Literal Translation* is an example of this kind.

WHAT WAS THE ORIGINAL GREEK LIKE?

We also determined that an English Bible translation should not come from another English Bible. It should be translated directly from the Greek language. The New Testament was originally written in a special type of Greek—Koiné Greek. It was not the Classical Greek of Homer or Plato or Socrates or Aristotle. No, it was in an everyday conversational language used by almost everyone in daily life and commerce throughout the Roman Empire during first century A.D.

What does this word *Koiné* mean? Well, it’s a Greek word itself. The Greek word *koiné* is used 14 times in the Greek New Testament and means “common” or “(ceremonially) profane.” For example, in the biblical narrative about Peter and Cornelius found in Acts 10, God showed to Peter in a vision some non-kosher animals and instructed Peter to eat them. That was unthinkable to an orthodox Jew! Peter responded, “I would never do that, Lord! I have never eaten food which is *koiné* (common or ordinary)” (Acts 10:14).

Originally, how might the New Testament have been written in English, if English had been the original language instead of Greek?

We determined that a good translation should evoke the same effects today as the original text did upon those who first heard it. It should be natural and normal. That is what *The Plain English Bible* (N.T.) has attempted to accomplish. God's message should be conveyed in *today's* mode of speech, not yesterday's. His Word ought to be expressed in the form that people use every day, a style that seems so ordinary to them that generally they are unaware it is a translation.

ENGLISH IS NOW SPOKEN ALL OVER THE WORLD

Following the conservative 18th century (the Romantic Period), in Britain, America, and other English-speaking areas, there was a time of liberalism in literature and language. Obsolete words were revived, and new words were coined. On both sides of the Atlantic, great social changes swept the world, making the English language more democratic. Both upper and lower classes were brought closer together by industrial reforms. Greater economic and cultural advantages came to the common man. Inexpensive newspapers flourished after 1820, and more people gained access to information about current events. The large circulations of these publications afforded the means necessary of renewing the language, and an informal style of speech gained wide acceptance. That form of colloquial English brought the spoken language standards into closer harmony with written standards. Also, cheap postage became available to the masses about 1840. Exciting advances were occurring in various fields of science. So there was much to read about.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the means of travel and telecommunication improved dramatically, which had the effect of bringing more people in the world even closer together. As a result, the total English vocabulary has now grown over recent centuries by leaps and bounds to about 750,000 words!

Most would agree that the English language is no longer the exclusive property of the British and the Americans. After World War II, English spread to the whole world, and practically every inhabited corner of the globe preferred it as the second language to tens of millions.

What has favored the ever-widening usage of English? Several things: Its sentence structure is based on a simple word order instead of the complicated inflections of many other languages. In addition, it uses a "natural" gender, instead of the "grammatical" gender system

of some other leading languages of the world. English is overwhelming in the richness of its vocabulary—such a variety of synonyms to draw from! From this vast storehouse, new users learn to quickly coin words or phrases to suit their changing needs or to give new meanings to existing words or phrases in novel ways that seem limitless. English lends itself to great flexibility. Action verbs can be linked with a variety of prepositions to convey either literal or figurative meanings. Also, one can easily use an English word to function as more than one part of speech. No other Indo-European language can compete with English in its ability to freely acquire new words from other languages. Whatever the future may hold for English, it has proved to be eminently suitable for almost all forms of written expression as well as for everyday use, according to Dr. Margaret M. Bryant (*Modern English and Its Heritage*, Macmillan, New York, 1962).

English has already become the most generally accepted language on planet earth. Eighty percent of all the information used in all the world's computers is written in the English language. I call it “International English[®]” or “Koiné English”.

WHAT GREEK TEXT WAS USED?

Not only must a translation make sense, but at the same time it must conform to the meaning of the original message. In creating *The Plain English Bible* version, we wanted the text to communicate as clearly as possible without giving up technical accuracy. Painstaking effort has been exercised so as not to deviate from the best available Greek manuscripts. Not one, but several editions of the Greek text were relied upon, including the following:

B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, Revised edition, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1891.

Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, and Kurt Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 26th edition, Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt; New York: American Bible Society, 1963.

José M. Bover, *Novi Testamenti Biblia Graeca et Latina*, 4th edition, Madrid, 1959.

Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, *The Greek New Testament*, 4th edition, London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1993.

Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982.

Textus Receptus (the Stephanus edition)

It has been an eclectic approach, letting each variant reading stand on the evidence presented for it. Dr. Bruce M. Metzger's *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, (London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), has been of inestimable value in assessing the proper weight (consideration) to give to the most important variant readings.

As far as the original Greek text is concerned, we are all indebted to the hundreds of anonymous scribes who have toiled to hand down accurate copies of the manuscripts to us today. They have transmitted the ancient texts to us with a high degree of integrity long before the modern age of printing. Also, much is owed to thousands of Bible scholars who have preceded us with their thorough research. Our deep appreciation goes out to all who helped in countless ways, small and great.

WHAT METHOD WAS USED TO DO THE TRANSLATING?

The PEB is a smooth-reading translation, but it is *not* a loose rendering. It is *not* a paraphrase, but a meticulously constructed translation that expresses the original Greek meaning accurately in natural English style. Every nuance of meaning can be accounted for through established linguistic methodology.

In the Gospel accounts, there are inspired examples of direct equivalence found in parallel sections (compare Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:7-8; Luke 3:16; John 1:27; and Acts 13:25).

Also, compare the three reports of another incident about Cornelius in Acts 10:1-23; Acts 10:30-32; and Acts 11:4-14.

The same inspired author (Luke) tells the same story three *different* ways, and yet it was never verbatim. Why? Because Luke could relate the essential facts of the narrative in different manners because of the richness of the Greek language. These examples provide an outstanding illustration of valid principles of translating.

Here is a practical example that we can all understand: When you get ready to leave for a vacation, have you ever had to repack the trunk of your car in order to accommodate the last-minute offerings

of luggage? If so, you *know*, to some extent, what a translator faces when he is trying to make all the ideas of language fit. He must do a little rearranging to get that lid closed!

Because languages differ so much in form, to translate properly, we must respect the grammatical rules of the receiving language in order to preserve the content of the original message. For example, the English phrase “a white horse” is reversed in order in Spanish—“caballo (horse) blanco (white).”

Here’s another illustration: It is well known that generally verbs come at the end of sentences in German, unlike English! The more diverse that the two languages are culturally and linguistically, the more difficult it is for translators to do their work.

For instance, most people understand that idioms do not translate well word-for-word from one language to another. Here are some examples:

The German expression, *Mit Wölfen muss man heulen* (literally, “One must howl with wolves.”) may be rendered in English as “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.”

The Spanish idiom, *rasgarse la barriga* (literally, “to scratch one’s belly”) could be translated in English as “to twiddle one’s thumbs.”

The Latin phrase, *manibus pedibusque* (literally, “with hands and feet”) is equivalent to our expression “tooth and nail.”

In the Yipounou language of Africa, the expression “having soldiers under me” (see Matt. 8:9, KJV) would suggest to their people that the centurion was a gigantic man standing upon other soldiers! Subordination needs to be stated in a different way—“having soldiers behind me.”

Fruit of his loins (see Acts 2:30, KJV) has no intelligible meaning for the Mazatec people of Mexico.

The error of his way (see James 5:20, KJV) becomes “the road of mistakes” in the Navajo language.

In the Luvale language, which is spoken in Angola, the phrase “false prophets” must be translated as “those who pretend the work of a prophet.”

In Shipibo, spoken in the Amazon, “confessing their sins” (see Mark 1:5, KJV) becomes direct discourse: “It is true we have sinned!”

Suppose this world was composed of only three cultures: (1) a square culture; (2) a round culture; and (3) a triangular culture. The people living inside the square culture could only think in “square terms”, i.e., square concepts expressed only in square words. And, the people of the round culture and the triangular people would think only in round ways and triangular words. How would they communicate *between* cultures? Would “round” people be able to conceptualize angles? Would “square” people or “triangular” people be able to understand curves? If there existed some bilingual individuals, i.e., those who are shaped with both angles and curves, cross-cultural communication would become possible through them.

WHY ANOTHER BIBLE VERSION?

There is no single translation for everyone, but *The Plain English Bible* may be the most useful one for a majority of English speakers. This new translation was designed primarily to communicate to a wide spectrum of people throughout the whole world. In the large selection of translations available today, there is still room for this appropriately-aimed translation to communicate in the universal language of modern times to the *masses* of people who speak English. And, it is very important that these people have a fresh, reliable translation which is both easy to understand and accurate.

To reach the greatest number of people, the PEB uses only easy phrase structures and draws from a vocabulary of about three thousand words. Sentences are purposely kept short, clear, and uncomplicated to promote greater understanding. Because of our approach, previously difficult portions of scriptures are now much easier to understand. The PEB’s style coincides nicely with spoken grammar. Try reading the text aloud, and you will find that it flows easily off the tongue. It is easy to listen to, like a conversation.

In translating the original words of the Holy Spirit, great care has been taken to find the exact English words that tell God's message both simply and precisely. Also, because some traditional "religious" words (e.g., saints, repentance, baptism, church, justification, redemption, etc.) do *not* teach the root meanings of the original Greek text, a special effort has been made to translate all these terms into expressions that can be understood by everyone, especially by those who have never read the Bible.

NOT YIELDING TO PRESSURE

God's sacred words must be handled in a special way. Church politics or the undue influence of money can have *no* place in this arena! Neither is it acceptable to give place to human "theological slants" and opinions in translating the text of the Bible.

The following examples help to illustrate the necessity of integrity:

Sports could not take place without impartial regulation. We *need* referees in football games and umpires in baseball who "call 'em as they see 'em." The games could not continue legitimately without the "unpopular" decisions from the officials. Even though the fans in the stands have definite opinions, they are not all experts! Somebody on the playing field (the officials) must make objective calls.

The same thing is true of journalists. They are obligated to report in an unbiased way what they themselves have witnessed or have gathered from first-hand testimony (even though the reporters may have their own differing, personal opinions). They are not supposed to impose their own agenda.

The apostle Paul said to the Galatian Christians, "Do you think I'm now trying to win man over? No! **God** is the One whom I am trying to please. Am I trying to please man? If I were, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). Alongside of Joshua of old, we must take a stand for God, regardless of what others may think or do (see Josh. 24:15). We must always speak the things that we know to be true and never allow earthly pressure to dissuade us (see Acts 4:20; 5:29). With the burning flame of the precious Word of the Lord in our hearts (see Jer. 20:9), we must never compromise the message of salvation!

FAITHFUL TO THE FIRST CENTURY MODEL

Being true to the text demands that we be faithful to the historical context of the first century. The Greek New Testament was written and understood within a first-century mold. Authenticity is essential to the task that Bible translators face. They must restore every detail of whatever lies beneath the surface. Historians appreciate the work of reconstruction, even though it is very hard work.

The Holy Bible contains the mind of God, the state of men, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrine is holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here Paradise is restored, heaven is opened, and the ways of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand object, our good its design, and the redemption of man its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet.

It is a mind of wealth, a paradise of glory, a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be open in the judgment, and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibilities, will reward the greatest labor, and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents."

— Author Unknown

A BRIEF HISTORY ABOUT THE TRANSLATORS

International Bible Translators, Inc. is located principally in New England. It has been established since 1975 and is comprised of a small body of scholars who specialize in theoretical linguistics, cultural anthropology, biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, in lexicography,

computer programming, exotic typography, and field testing (psycho linguistics).

The chairman of the translation committee of *The Plain English Bible* is Dr. Stanley L. Morris. He served as an editor in the Translation Department of the American Bible Society from 1968 to 1972 under the world-famous linguist Dr. Eugene A. Nida. While in New York City, Dr. Morris was also privileged to work directly with the renowned New Testament scholar, Dr. Bruce M. Metzger of Princeton University.

Here is the list of scholarly members of the Bible Translation Committee:

- F. W. Gingrich, Ph.D.
(the famous Greek lexicographer)
- Jack P. Lewis, Ph.D.; Ph.D.
- C. H. McCord, Th.D.
- Clyde M. Woods, Ph.D.
- S. K. Kang, Ph.D.
(a world-class expert on Sumerian)
- Gary T. Burke, Ph.D.
- Milo Hadwin, Ph.D.

SOME CONTROVERSIAL WORDS

Baptize, Baptism

Forms of “baptism,” “baptize,” etc. are not used in the PEB because they are not translations of the underlying Greek words, which they represent. Instead, they are transliterations, letter-by-letter representations of their Greek counterparts. They’ve been Anglicized, and therefore, have never communicated the historical meaning of the original Greek words.³

Nevertheless, the root meaning of *bapto* (“dip”) comes through clearly in Luke 16:24, where the rich man cried out from hades asking for Lazarus to “dip” his finger in cool water and cool the rich man’s burning tongue.

The root meaning of *baptizo* is clear in the Greek Septuagint rendering of 2 Kings 5:14, which incontrovertibly translates the Hebrew verb *tabal* as (Naaman) “dipped himself seven times in the Jordan.”

In 1525, William Tyndale, the father of the English Bible, translated *baptisma* as “immersion,” but King James I forced his translators (actually, only revisors) of the King James Version in 1611, to use the word “baptism.” This was done in deference to the Church of England, which has always practiced sprinkling or affusion. Even early Roman Catholic churches employed immersion for the first centuries; archeologists have found many large baptisteries at ancient sites.

Dr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley has pointed out that the original Greek verb *baptizo* “denotes the action of washing or plunging in water, which from the earliest days (Acts 2:41) has been used as the rite of Christian initiation.”⁴

Church

The English word *church* is a very poor rendering (therefore, an inaccurate translation) of the New Testament word *ekklesia*, which simply meant a “called-out group,” or a “congregation,” an “assembly,” a “gathering” of people. Again, historically, William Tyndale properly translated the Greek word as *congregation* in 1525. However, the monarch, King James I, being the official head of the Anglican Church, and having a vested interest in using the word *church*, commanded his 54 translators to replace Tyndale’s *congregation* with *church*.

This act instantaneously laid the foundation for the institutional connotation of the word *church*. Historically speaking, the English word *church* derives from the Middle English *cherche* or *chirche*, which in turn, comes from the Anglo-Saxon *circe* or *cyrce*, which is akin to the German *Kirche*. It can be compared to *kirk* in Scotland.

The etymological pedigree of all these words are traceable to a *different* Greek word—*kuriakos*, meaning “belonging to the Lord (*kurios*). cf. 1 Cor. 11:20, referring to the Lord’s supper, and Rev. 1:10, denoting the Lord’s day.

Webster’s dictionary states that the Greek word *doma*, “house,” must be added to *kuriakos* in order to make the English word *church* what it has come to mean today, “the Lord’s house,” i.e., an edifice consecrated for public worship, an idea that is totally foreign to the New Testament.

The original Greek word, *ekklesia* (which occurs more than a hundred times in the Greek New Testament) had nothing to do with our modern conception of *church*. Instead, it had within it the inherent meaning of “separation from others” (see 2 Cor. 6:17; John 17:14-16;

1 John 2:15-17). In the New Testament, there are at least 91 occurrences of *ekklesia*, a word closely related in meaning to another Greek word, *sunagoge* (a synagogue, a congregation, an assembly).

Sunagoge sometimes refers to the buildings in which the Jews met (see Luke 7:5), but, in the New Testament, *ekklesia* was **never** used to refer to a building. In fact, the early Christians generally did not have buildings for the first 300 years or so of their history. Stephen used the word *ekklesia* to denote a “congregation” (Hebrew, *qahal* or ‘*edah*) of about 3 million Jews that came out of Egypt (see Acts 7:38). Finally, *ekklesia* was used in a nonreligious sense in Acts 19:32,39,41, referring to a “lawful gathering of citizens” (but some thought of it as a “mob”). No matter what the varying contexts are, *ekklesia* **always** specifies people.

In the PEB, wherever *ekklesia* has a universal meaning (when it refers to the collective Body of Christ), the English word *community* is used to translate it (about nine instances).

SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS FIRST EDITION

Italics indicate words or phrases that are not overtly expressed in the original Greek text. In some cases where confusion might result (for example, the four different Herods or two different Antiochs), italicized words have been incorporated into the text to clarify referents (for example, Herod *the Great* in Matt. 2:1). Occasionally, **bold face** is used for emphasis. Often, extra Greek pronouns indicate that special stress should be put on these words. There are many short but very instructive footnotes to amplify certain aspects of the Bible text. These notes include: further concise explanations, more literal renderings, cross-references, textual variants, historical notes, and alternative translations. In the back of the book, there is a very helpful 16-page scripture index, which is full of citations pointing to scores of Bible topics.

IT'S IN PLAIN ENGLISH

In recent years, there has been a very interesting “Plain English Campaign” (PEC) initiated in England. It is an independent pressure group advocating that all public information be written in very plain English—or, no jargon.

The group alleges that the legal profession and finance industries are the worst offenders. What is meant by “public information?” That is defined as anything that people must read in order to get by in their daily lives. “Plain English” is the sort of language that the intended audience can understand and act upon from a single reading. People do have the right and the need to make informed decisions about what affects them, especially about their money and the law.

The Plain English Campaign subjects each document to 35 rigorous technical tests at their headquarters, as well as submitting it to independent examination by the general public. There is no substitute for testing a document on real people. In other words, it asks common people what *their* specific understanding of a document is, rather than just asking “Is it clear?” The PEC maintains that it does not give a document a formal score for being “Plain English.” Either it is crystal clear or it isn’t!

This development is good news for customers, companies, and government. Now they are working harder to make sure that information is presented in “Plain English” in the first place!

Here is a good example of how the PEC is attempting to simplify verbiage that is overwritten and difficult to read:

Intellectual Gobbledygook:

High-quality learning environments are a necessary precondition for facilitation and enhancement of the ongoing learning process.

Plain English:

Children need good schools if they are to learn properly.

In Washington, D.C. a consulting firm has picked up the torch, and is attempting to simplify complicated language so that everyone can understand it. The firm is called “In Plain English®.”

This company is one of our nation’s foremost writing firms. For 25 years “In Plain English®” has been turning government-ese, legal-ese, and technical-ese, into clear, easy-to-grasp, conversational, and correct verbiage. From books about company benefits to business plans, they have shown business, government, and other organizations that using plain language is more effective and gets better results than any other style of writing.

“In Plain English®” reviews, rewrites, and re-designs factual information to make it clear, easy to use, and understandable. Typically, it writes business information so that employees, customers, and other targeted audiences will comprehend what must be done, why it must be done, and how to do it.

One of the hallmarks of Jesus’ ministry is that He spoke *plainly* to people, the way most of us talk to each other in daily conversation. His words and actions were originally recorded in Greek in that same simple style.

WHEN WILL THIS BOOK BE AVAILABLE?

Although some samples of *The Plain English Bible* (N.T.), first edition, may be available for preliminary review, the attractive-looking hard-cover book will not be available to bookstores until August 2003. Until then, hundreds of reviewers on our advisory committee from virtually every religious group will be reading final drafts of this translation in order to insure the highest degree of accuracy and literary style.

COMPARATIVE SAMPLES OF THE PEB TEXT

John 3:16

KJV: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

PEB: *God loved the people of the world so much that He gave up His one and only Son. * Every person who commits himself to Jesus will not be destroyed. Instead, that person will have eternal life.*

*or, only begotten Son

2 Corinthians 6:11-12

KJV: *O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.*

PEB: *We have spoken plainly to you Corinthian people. We opened wide our hearts. We are not holding back our tender feelings from you. **You** are the ones who are holding back!*

Matthew 16:13-20

KJV: *When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.*

PEB: *When Jesus came to the area of Caesarea Philippi, he began to ask his followers, “Who do people say I^a am?” They answered, “Some people say you are John (the one who immerses people). Other people say you are Elijah. And some people say you are Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Jesus asked them, “But who do **you** say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!” “Upon this rock foundation,”^b Jesus answered, “I will build my community—those called out by God. Death^c will not overpower them. Blessed are you, Simon, son of John. My Father*

in heaven, not man, showed that to you. You are Peter.^d I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will have already been bound in heaven. And whatever you loosen on earth will have already been loosened in heaven.” Then Jesus warned his followers not to tell anyone that he is the Messiah.

Matt. 16:13 ^aliterally, the Son of Man

Matt. 16:17-18 ^bThe Greek word is “*petra*” (feminine gender). It means “bedrock” (Matt. 7:25)

Matt. 16:17-18 ^cliterally, the gates of Hades

Matt. 16:17-18 ^dThe Greek word is “*petros*” (masculine gender). It means “pebble.”

Colossians 2:16-19

KJV: Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

PEB: So, don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or a religious festival, or the new moon holiday, or Sabbaths. These are only a shadow of the future; Christ is real. Don't let anyone who likes to act “humble” and to worship angels disqualify you from the race. He talks in detail about what he has “seen.” His unspiritual mind makes him boastful—for no real reason. He is not holding onto the Head.^a The whole body grows the way God made it grow, held together by its joints and ligaments, getting its support from the Head.

^aChrist

SOME WAYS TO USE THIS NEW TRANSLATION

Here are some practical ways that *The Plain English Bible* may be used:

- Individual Bible study
- Small groups in homes
- Churches to use as pew Bibles
- Sunday Schools
- Vacation Bible School
- Youth groups (year round)
- Evangelism
- Prison ministries
- Missionary outreach
- Teaching the English language

WHAT ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT?

The Plain English Bible (O.T.) is scheduled to be completed in 2004. Several books are already finished, but more concentrated scholarly work is necessary to finish all 39 Old Testament books.

WE NEED YOUR HELP CONTINUALLY

All translations of the Bible are prepared by human beings, and human beings invariably can and do make errors. Though perfection is always the goal, imperfections persist. We offer this translation to the considerate judgment of all students of God's Word. Your suggestions for future improvements are sincerely invited. We implore all readers to point out, in writing, any needed corrections. We are constantly seeking God's help and wisdom through prayer.

OUR PRAYER TO GOD

Finally, we are thankful to Almighty God for His care and the strength that He alone supplies to accomplish such a task. What a joy and a privilege! Our earnest prayer today is that the PEB may be used by the Lord to bring salvation to many, so that every person on earth can know what God's will is and obey it.

*Achieving understanding of Scripture is a worthy goal, but a far more important aim is to apply what we learn from God's Word to our daily lives. **That** is the ultimate translation!*

—Dr. Stanley L. Morris,
Chairman, The Bible Translation Committee

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Dr. Morris is a 63-year-old scholar who has dedicated his whole life to translating the Bible. This particular project has taken more than 22 years to complete. He is qualified in New Testament Greek, Old Testament Hebrew and Aramaic, Biblical theology, theoretical linguistics, cultural anthropology, and typography. He was also one of the first to pioneer in the field of Bible software.

ENDNOTES

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4. See "Baptism," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1960), pp. 83ff.

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