

SCHOLAR'S CORNER

What translation of the Bible should I buy?

This question was easy to answer 200 years ago, when there was effectively only one English Bible for Protestants: the Authorized Version of 1611 (known in America as “the King James Version” or KJV). While some churches and individuals remain loyal to the KJV, there are many newer translations today, some of which are revisions of the KJV.

Here are some considerations when choosing an English Bible:

■ Do you prefer a revision of the King James Version or a new translation? People who were raised in churches that used King James or one of its revisions such as the Revised Standard Version generally are famil-

iar and comfortable with the traditional wording and style. They may prefer a translation in the King James tradition of biblical translation, while others may want a different translation.

■ Who will use the translation? Bibles are written with different audiences in mind. The New English Bible, for instance, is written in sophisticated, modern English that might be too difficult for someone with average or below average reading skills. The Good News Bible, in contrast, was designed for native English speakers who read at the eighth-grade level and for those for whom English is a second language.

THE REV.
WILLIAM G.
GARTIG



Bible, and have as many explanatory footnotes and cross-references to other relevant passages. A Bible for public reading should be easy to read aloud and easy to understand when heard. This means there should be no

■ What will be the main use of the translation? A Bible well-suited for Bible study should probably be fairly literal (word-for-word), have paragraph headings to help “navigate” around the

“tongue-twisters” to trip up the reader, and the sentences cannot be too long and complicated, or the people will “get lost” and lose the sense of the sentence. A Bible for public reading also needs to have large enough print to be read easily without having to be held up close to the face.

■ Do you want a translation that tries to be as literal (word-for-word) as possible, or one that tries to express the meaning of the verse in clear English? I’ll address this issue more in-depth in a future column.

The Rev. William G. Gartig, who holds a doctorate in Bible from Hebrew Union College, will answer your questions about the Bible, Episcopal life and other religious subjects. Send questions to 2146 Cameron Ave. Apt. 5, Cincinnati, OH 45212-3631 or at gartigwg@episcopal-dso.zzn.com.