

Priest researches ancient Hebrew for new Bible translation

COFFIELD (AP) — The Rev. Henry Stransky believes that no work of man is perfect. That includes the King James Bible, the most popular English translation of the New Testament.

"The King James Bible, even being Catholic myself, I must say is one of the most honest translations compared to the Greek it came from," Stransky said.

The problem is that the Greek version itself came from the ancient Hebrew.

"These people who wrote it in Greek were not Greek," Stransky said. "They were Jews. Therefore, some of the phraseology is wrong."

Stransky's own translation of the New Testament, based on his research of ancient Hebrew dic-

tion, is under review by the Vatican. He said initial reaction to his work has been positive.

The 64-year-old priest, born in Czechoslovakia, is chaplain at the Texas Department of Corrections Coffield prison in Tennessee Colony.

He said he has been puzzled for more than 20 years by contradictions he found in the King James Bible. In 2 Corinthians 5:21, the King James Bible translates that God made Jesus "to be sin for us."

Stransky translates the passage as saying that God made Jesus to be a sacrifice for our sins. In Hebrew, the same word for "sin" also translates as "sacrifice for sin."

Another contradiction he notes is between Romans 4:5, where Paul

says God justifies the wicked, and Exodus 23:7, where God says that he will not justify a wicked man.

The contradiction is clarified by taking into account that the word for "declare innocent" in old Hebrew later acquired the meaning "to deal with mercifully" in Talmudic Hebrew, Stransky said.

"My translation will be like a supplement to the King James Bible, only my translation is (more) understandable," Stransky said.

He began research on his translation in 1976 when he visited the Holy Land.

He later found some of the same Hebrew dictionaries available in Jerusalem at the library of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

Stransky admits that of the many languages he has said Mass in — including Spanish, Italian, Czech, Croatian and Arabic — English is his weakest tongue. Assisting him in proofreading copy were Franklin Williams and Dr. Curtis Jordan of Palestine.

Even some Coffield inmates lent a hand in proofreading copy, Stransky said.

"Most of my proofreaders were Protestant," Stransky said.

His interest in language stems from his childhood in Czechoslovakia. Despite an infection that damaged his hearing, Stransky developed an "acoustic memory" that aided him in learning other languages.

"Czechoslovakia is a very small na-

tion," Stransky said. "The village I lived in had Germans, so I learned German from them. Later as a child I learned Latin and Greek."

His grandmother influenced young Stransky to study for the priesthood.

He had been raised in a home that was tolerant of all religions, he said.

"My father always said that any religion is good if you keep it," Stransky said.

At the seminary in Prague, Stransky's interest in foreign languages intensified. He briefly served as an interpreter to the Soviet troops that occupied his country after World War II.

His opposition to Czechoslovakian communists led to his being sent to Rome to complete his training as a

priest.

He was ordained in Rome in 1949, but the communist takeover prevented his return to his home land.

"On my way to Czechoslovakia, I spent a short time in Austria," Stransky said. "My brother fled from Czechoslovakia and sent me notes warning me not to return."

From Austria, Stransky immigrated to Chile in 1951. In 1968, he traveled to Germany and then came to the United States. After working in Chicago and Gary, Ind., Stransky was appointed pastor of St. Bernard Parish in Fairfield.

In 1979, he became part-time pastor at Coffield prison. Eventually he became the prison's full-time chaplain.

Composer Berlioz celebrated in 'classic' biography

LONDON (AP) — He was the son of a country doctor who rebelled against his father, went to Paris with no musical training and within eight years had written one of the world's greatest symphonies.

Now the life of Hector Berlioz, the grand 19th-century romantic, the Frenchman of whom Paganini once said, "You begin where the others leave off," is celebrated in a new biography that already is being hailed as a classic.

The plaudits should please the University of California. Author David Cairns, a London music critic, drafted more than a third of "Berlioz 1803-1832: The Making of an Artist" at the university in Davis where he spent two terms as a visiting professor.

Kern Holoman, chairman of the music department there, arranged it and it meant I was free from journa-

ism," Cairns said.

"He's one of the world's leading Berlioz scholars and is writing a life-and-works of the composer."

About why he got such help on what might be seen as a rival project, Cairns said: "Holoman is a friend of mine and it's good for the prestige of a university to be able to say a book that might be well regarded was written on its campus."

Cairns, 62, spent nearly 20 years on the book, which covers the first half of the composer's life.

He claims disarmingly to have discovered nothing really new about Berlioz, but this hasn't dampened the critical acclaim.

"Elderly Berliozians will pray that they live to read its successor," wrote Peter Heyworth in The Observer, likening the project to Ernest Newman's life of Richard Wagner.

That book is regarded as one of

the great 20th-century biographies.

Berlioz was famous for the "Symphonie fantastique," which mirrors his passion for the Irish actress Harriet Smithson and which always can fill a modern concert hall.

Cairns sees parallels between Berlioz and Daniel Barenboim, the Israeli pianist and conductor, who was fired in January as musical and artistic director of the new Paris Bastille Opera for allegedly demanding too much money and not providing the required repertory.

Berlioz often complained of French bureaucratic interference in musical life.

When he was commissioned in 1837 to write a requiem for the 1830 revolution, he said he had to camp out in the government offices to get paid.

Cairns, who also retranslated Berlioz's own autobiography, "Memoirs," is most pleased with his picture of the composer's early life, which he unearthed from the family archive of letters and papers and by spending time in the composer's hometown, La Cote St. Andre near Grenoble.

"It's an extraordinary story. Berlioz didn't have a musical upbringing so we don't quite know where his genius came from."

"He goes to Paris knowing almost nothing about music and in seven or eight years writes the 'Symphonie fantastique.'"

"My book is about how this happened," the author said.

"He found it difficult to find a woman to feel as passionately about him as he was about her."

"Most people don't live on that intense high plain. It was a disappointment to him but it helped make him what he was as a composer."

Jack Daniel's distillery began with preacher's whiskey still

LYNCHBURG, Tenn. (AP) — This remote corner of the Cumberland land is not a likely place for major industries to want to locate.

And the way Jack Daniel's distillery happened to get here is not apt to be repeated.

Jasper Newton "Jack" Daniel was born in 1846, the last of 10 children.

When he was six his widowed father, hard pressed, sent him off to live with a neighbor, Dan Call.

Call ran a store on Louse Creek and needed an apprentice for his black slave, Nearest Green, who was a superb maker of the store's most prominent product, whiskey.

Dan Call was also a preacher.

When Jack Daniel was 14 a traveling evangelist named Lady Love borrowed Dan Call's pulpit and told Dan's congregation that their pastor had better decide whether to preach or make whiskey because in the eyes of the Lord he couldn't do both.

Jack bought Dan's still, on credit, and went in business.

When the Civil War ended he moved his still a few miles to a lonely spring outside Lynchburg, brought with him Nearest Green's son, George, and prospered.

A new federal law in 1866 required all distilleries to register with government tax collectors and Jack Daniel's became the nation's first.

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