

*THAT WONDERFUL KING JAMES VERSION,  
TODAY*

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Just over 392 years ago the English speaking world was graced with the publication of the King James Bible of 1611. When it was produced, the English language was at the pinnacle of its classical beauty; the KJV glows from within lit by its melodious and exalted expressions. It was an ideal period for the production of an English Bible. Note this quote from an author in 1858:

The Bible [the KJV] has ever since been the grand English classic. It is still the noblest monument of the power of the English speech. It is the pattern and standard of excellence therein.<sup>1</sup>

Any serious student of the Scriptures would agree to the above estimates of the KJV. Its eloquence is unmatched. Note these examples taken from the standard revision done by Dr. Blayney in 1769.

And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem *it*. Now this *was the manner* in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave *it* to his neighbour: and this *was* a testimony in Israel. Ruth 4:6,7

The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, *that* instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; *and* burning instead of beauty.  
Isaiah 3:22-24

Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; I Corinthians 13:4,5

These three quotes reveal a serious problem with this majestic translation. Today's reader must attempt to determine the meaning generated by antiquated forms. Instead of comprehension, confusion usually results. Not only are archaic forms utilized but inaccurate "synonyms" are presented—note *Charity* (above) which is actually *Love* stemming from the Greek *αγαπη*. Hundreds of such translation

problems could be demonstrated, and such demonstrations can be illustrated from nearly all or any English translations. However, since this paper focuses upon the KJV, its strengths and weaknesses shall be exploited.

There are groups in America which revere the venerable KJV as *the preserved Bible in the English language*. They hardly tolerate other versions in their congregations, especially if someone challenges their KJV. Typical groups viewing this version (the KJV) as such would be the Bible Baptist Churches, several Charismatic groups, and a sect of the Grace Gospel dispensationalists (led by Richard Jordan). In conversation with various members of these groups, one learns that many consider the translation itself as *inspired*, containing no errors! Many also consider the 47+ scholars who did the revision for King James as uniquely inspired as well! Hence, when they encounter other translations they often consider such as the devil's work. Some claim that the doctrine of Inspiration applies as well to translations, and that the KJV is an inspired English translation. They will support this notion by stating that the Greek LXX (Septuagint) is often quoted by Jesus and Paul in the NT. This is true, but it is naïve to suppose that the entire LXX Bible is inspired! Certainly the tiny portions quoted are, but it is quite a leap to state that therefore all of the LXX translation is "God-breathed". It is easily demonstrated that *no* translations are inerrant or "God-breathed", all need to be examined in the light of the original languages.

It is entirely understandable as to why the KJV-only folks zealously hold to such perceptions. Many of the 450 translations of all or part of the Bible in English today are blasphemous distortions! Many are simply business ventures, often created by "scholars" who have no personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. By clinging to the "KJV only" dictum these groups are sheltered from the many foul and perverted translations currently available. A solidarity is felt amongst the congregation, and all are placed on the same footing as no deviations from the KJV are tolerated. This thus provides a strong bond of unity within these groups. This is

commendable. Yet, there is a penalty to pay for such isolation. Amongst the 450 or so translations available today, are some (a few) which are God-honoring, linguistically accurate and formed by a cadre of committed believers.

It is to be noted too, that all translations are just that, *translations*. Enhanced meaning can be achieved when the original languages are consulted, when the original texts are examined. Not only can enhanced meaning be achieved, but at times the English translation utilized can be tested and even corrected if needed. The above mentioned groups abhor using the original languages. Part of their reasoning is that if the KJV is the preserved English Bible, it cannot be improved upon, and contains no errors! Thus, why waste time trying to learn Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic? Further, their view of the KJV translators is such that they are nearly divine, exalted above the typical translators—as God used them in the supposed preservation process. Who can add to their sanctified work? Would God allow them to inject error into this supposed preservation process? Hence, they do not value original language studies. When any mention of Greek is made, it is usually in reference to the Received Text (TR), as they accept this as the preserved Greek text lying beneath the NT portion of the KJV, even though (sadly) many of them cannot read Greek.

Readers of the KJV must resort to dictionaries to fathom the meanings of these KJV words: *tow* (Judges 16:9), *ravin* (Nahum 2:12), *daysman* (Job 9:33), *earing* (Genesis 45:6), *bestead* (Isaiah 8:21), *ouches* (Exodus 39:13), and many more words such as: *Hades*, *habergeon*, *knop*, *tache*, *gins*, *conversation* [for *conduct*], *sackbut*, *swaddle*, *meteyard*, *pransing*, *sith*, *sottish*, *bruit*, *concupscence*, *emerods*, *hough*, *withs*, *neesing*, *ghost* [for *spirit*, *Spirit*], *hale*, *pill*, *tire*, *booties*, *bowels*, *cholier*, *cockatrice*, and on and on we could go. Many users have no idea, at times, of just what they are reading in portions of the KJV!

Translation aside, let us examine from what the KJV was actually formed, what resources were used in its creation? Gustavus Paine states that they had at their disposal the following:

the Complutensian Polyglot of 1517  
the Antwerp Polyglot of 1569-1572  
the Latin Vulgate  
Beza's Greek text, circa 1598<sup>2</sup>

Edward F. Hills adds:  
Erasmus's Greek editions  
Stephanus' Greek editions<sup>3</sup>

Philip Schaff adds:  
use of French, Hebrew, Latin, Spanish, Syrian, Italian, Dutch and German  
translations, and commentators, including the works of Chrysostom.  
the Bishop's Bible  
the Rheims (Roman Catholic) New Testament<sup>4</sup>

As can be seen from the above lists, the KJV translators relied upon existing printed texts, and did not consult any ancient authorities (Greek or Hebrew manuscripts). I might add this fact; they used *much* of William Tyndale's work, borrowing extensively whole phrases and verses, they did this without even giving credit to this man. It was Tyndale who gave his life creating an English Bible formed from Greek and Hebrew texts. In contrast to Tyndale, most of the KJV translators (actually revisors) were rewarded for their effort, rewarded with wealth, prestige, and high church appointments. Many of the KJV's eloquent passages are from the pen of William Tyndale, and not those of the KJV revisors. David Daniell provides some examples of **Tyndale's** work:<sup>5</sup>

And God said, Let there be light, and there was light  
Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you  
With God all things are possible  
In Him we live and move and have our being  
Fight the good fight of faith

Looking unto Jesus the Author and finisher of our faith  
Behold I stand at the door and knock  
The salt of the earth  
The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak  
Eat, drink and be merry  
The powers that be  
Filthy lucre  
Clothed and in his right mind

As Daniell points out many more examples could be shown, examples which illuminate the skill of this special man. The KJV translators seem to have stolen much of Tyndale's work. It bears repeating, some of the distinctive beauty of the KJV's language was not due to any of the KJV translators, but rather to the martyr—William Tyndale.

When confronted with the Greek manuscripts (or Greek New Testaments) and the variants they expose, KJV-only folks will usually state, as noted above, that the Majority Text, or the Received Text, is the Divinely preserved one, and thus attempt to avoid and or eliminate all versions which use different texts (such as Nestle's Text, or Tregelle's *et cetera*). They have been told that the Received text (or the Majority text) is that which underlies the KJV. Hence, this Greek text alone has their stamp of approval. They will not support or accept other Greek texts! This objection too stems from their understanding of preservation. Consequently readings which are preserved amongst the other texts are normally not accepted by these folks. (Note: Personally, I believe that God has preserved His Word, complete, scattered throughout the mass of surviving manuscripts, not in one single manuscript *or* text. Thus, I search all of the evidence, relying upon the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide me through His Word. I examine all manuscripts, not only those underlying the Received Text but all other ancient Greek and Hebrew texts, giving preference to actual copies (films, facsimilies *et al*) of ancient manuscripts).

Not only are the KJV-only adherents shackled by their preference for one late English translation, but they are also restricted from examining and evaluating other ancient Biblical manuscripts which God brings to light. (And yes, the enemy

too can bring forth corrupt manuscripts, but this simply promotes additional and careful analyses. Avoiding such study limits the KJV-only followers. Their fears are unfounded, and can be cured by a little education).

However *is* the KJV based solely upon the Received Text (or Majority Text)? Let us examine some passages, and discern their source(s). If found to be solely based upon the Received Text, then they are justified, in part, in clinging to their preference for the Received Text as that one which undergirds the New Testament portion of the KJV. It is well known that the KJV does often follow the Received Text (TR), but it also follows other sources. Note these:

The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well. II Timothy 1:18

*The "unto me" is not in the Received text (in each case by Received Text, I am referring to the text of Stephens of 1550). It is found in a few Greek minuscules: 69, 256, 1836, and a few others; which the KJV revisors did not make use of. But they did use the Vulgate, and it is in the Vulgate as "mihi", thus in this instance the revisors use a text from the Roman catholic version.*

So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. Acts 19:20

*"God" is not in the Received text. The Received Text reads "Lord". A few Greek manuscripts do read "God" such as D, E, 88 and 927. But again the KJV revisors took from the Vulgate.*

That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. I Thessalonians 2:12.

*"Hath called" is a perfect tense. The TR has a present tense participle του καλουντος "(God) Who is calling you...". The perfect tense form again comes from the Latin Vulgate, "vocavit".*

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

James 3:14

*The TR has a singular "heart". The plural "hearts" is again from the Roman Catholic Vulgate.*

Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) John 7:50

*The TR reads "came to Him", the KJV's "Jesus" is not any type of translation, and it does not exist in any known manuscripts.*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. I Corinthians 16:23

*The TR does not have "our", it is in two codices (A and P) and in about a dozen minuscules. However the KJV revisors got it from the Roman Catholic Vulgate.*

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers: Romans 15:8

*"Was a minister" should be "has become a minister" if the TR is here correct. The TR has a perfect tense, the KJV displays an aorist form. Herein is exposed a great weakness amongst all the KJV translators, they did not understand the Greek aorist tense. They often followed Latin grammar when confronted with aorists, especially faulty are they when several verbs coexist in the same sentence. The aorist form is seen in a number of Greek manuscripts including codex Vaticanus.*

Nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. Matthew 10:10

*"Staves" plural is not per the TR, which has a singular, "a staff".*

And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? Acts 7:26

*"Would have set them" is an imperfect form, the TR has an aorist tense—"joined, or set them at one again", the Greek term is a form of "reconcile". Though some Greek manuscripts do have an imperfect tense here, P<sup>74</sup>, Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, D, et al: the KJV revisors followed the Latin Vulgate here with its "reconciliabat" an imperfect tense.*

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. John 10:16

*The second "fold" should be "flock" per the TR. Again the KJV revisors followed the Roman Catholic Vulgate's "ovile" and not the TR.*

(For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Ephesians 5:9

*"Spirit" is found in some ancient Greek manuscripts, the KJV revisors did follow the TR here, yet the context demands that "light" would be preferred to "Spirit". Light is the reading adopted by Elzevir and John Chrysostom and numerous Greek manuscripts.*

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Acts 17:30

*"This ignorance" is per the Latin Vulgate, the TR has simply a genitive article and noun, the Latin has the demonstrative "this"—"hujus". Though "this" is possible in the Greek, the article serves to make "ignorance" specific, making it demonstrative is too specific. Best as "the times of the ignorance".*

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. Luke 1:35

*"Of thee" is not in the TR, it comes from Beza's Greek text, or the Latin Vulgate (ex te).*

Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. II John 3

"Grace be with you", is not per the TR, rather a future tense is in the TR, "Grace shall be...". Here the KJV revisors followed the Latin Vulgate's present tense "sit".

And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set *him* thereon.

Matthew 21:7

"They set" is per Elzevir, the TR has "he sat upon".

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

Acts 24:25

"Trembled" is from the Roman Catholic Vulgate, the Greek has "becoming afraid".

He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. Revelation 13:10

The first "into" is not in the TR, but it is in the Latin Vulgate—"qui in".

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Romans 8:11

Stephens text has, "because of his Spirit" (δια το, accusative). Others read δια του.

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of *them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

Acts 4:32

The TR reads, "were of one heart and soul", the added second "one" is via the Latin Vulgate.

But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter. Romans 7:6

"That being dead" should be a plural as in the TR, which would point the reader to the "we" who have died. The Law has not died, we died!

These few examples serve to illustrate that the TR was not as faithfully followed by the KJV revisors as some suppose. Many more examples are given in Philip Schaff's work<sup>6</sup>, which when examined should frighten any KJV-only advocate! The Roman Catholic's Latin Vulgate, of Jerome's efforts, was quite often preferred to any of the Greek texts! Most notable is the omission of the Greek articles, resulting in a semantic loss, a direct result of following Latin texts, as Latin has no definite article.

Another failure of the KJV revisors is their limited knowledge of the Greek tenses, especially the aorist. Temporal functions are often confused or lost when the

KJV revisors saw and "translated" the aorist (especially when juxtaposed with other tenses). Note this passage in the KJV:

In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Ephesians 1:13

Here is a breakdown of the verb forms actually existing in this quote:

ye heard . . . . . aorist, active participle. . . . . ακουσαντες

ye believed . . . aorist, active, participle. . . . . πιστευσαντες

ye were sealed. . aorist, passive, verb . . . . . εσφραγισθητε

Note that all are aorist tense, signifying a complete act, occurring in a time prior to Paul's writing of this epistle. All of the acts are contemporaneous with each other, simultaneous; thus the "after"(s) confuse Paul's teaching here. This is more accurate: "In Him also when you heard the word of truth, the good-news of your salvation, and when in Him you believed—you were sealed by the Holy Spirit of the promise." The beautiful teaching is now clear, when we first believed, the indwelling Holy Spirit "sealed" our minds (helped to convince us) when we heard the gospel. In the next verse we also learn that the Holy Spirit also functions as a mark or seal, marking us permanently as God's possession. All this happened at once. The inserted "after"(s) destroy the full effect of the single event.

Note too, the article in the above quote is again a "that" ("that holy Spirit") a contamination from the Latin Vulgate. These types of errors are common in the KJV, yet for those who shun original language studies, the errors go unnoticed, and corrupt doctrine can result, and is resulting. In a sense the KJV-only followers are operating blindly. It is amazing that such a notable as Edward F. Hills could declare:

Judged even by modern standards, their [ the KJV translators ] knowledge of the biblical languages was second to none.<sup>7</sup>

Despite Hill's declaration, it is a patented fact that the KJV revisors were handicapped in their knowledge of Koine Greek. They did however try their very best, and considering their limitations, they did quite well in most respects. Still more evidences of their inabilities are here presented.

Again observe the perversion of the simple aorist in I Corinthians 12:13,

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we *be* Jews or Gentiles, whether we *be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Rather it should read, "...we were all baptized...", the present tense "are...baptized" can promote many false notions.

In a discussion of one of the KJV translator's notes (the notes of John Bois) Ward Allen implies and supports the fact that Latin grammar held some sway in the minds of the translators of the KJV.<sup>8</sup> In Ward's example we read a part of the KJV's text of I Peter 1:12:

Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

Bois's note alters the English preposition used in the phrase "*with* the Holy Ghost", ( $\epsilon\nu$  + the dative); in his note he has "*through* the Holy Ghost". A "through" would lighten (but not remove) the heavy ambiguity seen in the KJV—"with". A "through" can signify the *Person* of the Holy Spirit, a "with" may signify agency or accompaniment or instrumentality. Perceiving the Holy Spirit here as the Agent is viable, as He is the instigator of the action of the verb—"announce", it was the prophets of verse 10 who served as actual instruments! Ward suggests that the final rendering as "with" in the KJV, may have been done so as not to impinge upon the rules

of Latin grammar! Ward states that, "it would be wrong in Latin to treat the Holy Ghost, a person, as an instrument." The Latin is ambiguous also, reading:

...Spiritu Sancto misso de caelo... — ...Spirit Holy sent from heaven...

According to Ward, the Latin Vulgate avoids the preposition and renders the phrase as a nominative absolute. This avoidance seems to have been followed by the KJV revisors, they do render the preposition but, the resulting ambiguity stemming from "with" shows a lack of ability with Greek syntax. In the Greek it is acceptable to utilize a person as an instrument, however in I Peter 1:12, the Holy Spirit as a dative preceded by the preposition *ev* is seen as the personal, animate, instigating Agent in the context. Hence "by the Holy Spirit" is the preferred translation, a translation which the KJV translators feared making, according to Ward.

Inconsistency in rendering various Greek and Hebrew words in the KJV can also generate misunderstandings. The "Easter" of Acts 12:4 is famous, but it was accurate in the 1600s, it was a fine translation of passover (*πασχα*), it is also seen in Tyndale's work and in Luther's edition. The problem is that elsewhere in the KJV *πασχα* is not rendered as Easter, but as "passover". Tyndale and Luther are much more consistent, as in John 6:4, et al. Consider "bishop" and "overseer" both from the same Greek original. *Παρακλητος* is "Comforter" in John 14:16,26 (of the Holy Spirit), but is "Advocate" in I John 2:1 (of Christ). "Soul" *Ψυχη* is translated as: "life", "soul", "lives", "minds", "heart", and "heartily". Proper names are notoriously varied, "Agar — Hagar", "Elijah — Elias", "Jeremias — Jeremy", "Jonah — Jonas", "Marcus — Mark", "Korah — Core" and on and on! Also famous is the corruption generated when "Hades" and "Gehenna" are both translated as "hell"; these are very different places, and Gehenna is not yet in existence.

It should be apparent that today's Bible students and those who desire to understand the Holy Writ, would do well to learn the original languages or find someone (a trusted brother or sister) who can assist with the Greek and Hebrew, or

utilize **several** good English translations! The Holy Spirit does lead us into the written Word, but why willfully (or ignorantly) hinder His work?

It was noted that some users of the KJV prefer the edition of 1769, as revised by Blayney. Blayney added further improvements to the earlier editions. In fact many thousands of errors were corrected in the several editions between 1611 and 1717. The American Bible Society counted over 24,000 changes and errors in the text *and* punctuation between six different editions of the KJV.<sup>9</sup> In 1825 the lamentations of the Presbyterians and Puritans prevailed, and the Apocrypha was finally omitted in most of the subsequent editions of the KJV. One wonders why the original KJV revisors even accepted such literature, could it have been because some of the translators still favored their past popish positions and beliefs? If the 1769 edition is to be accepted by all KJV-only advocates, then Blayney too must be seen as equally inspired as they claim the 1611 revisors were! Beautiful ear-tickling words and prose aside, the KJV needs a thorough revision, a revision which should approach the accuracy of the venerable ASV and NASB versions!

Both the 1901 ASV and the NASB are recommended, especially the NASB (New American Standard Bible) which was instituted by a desire of a Mr. Lockman (a rancher in southern California) to upgrade the 1901 ASV. His not-for-profit foundation was began with his own income, and it helped support the committee of over 63 evangelical scholars, all of which members had PhDs except for a Rev. Eduardo Hernandez. Each NASB translator supported the doctrine of literal translation, and the inerrancy of the Scriptures.

As a literal translation, the KJV is still one of the best in English. Its accuracy far exceeds the NIV paraphrase, and is authoritative when compared to the Living Bible, the CEV or the NLT (New Living Translation). Its language register is superior, and it still speaks powerfully to today's readers, despite the fact that few fully understand its rather archaic vocabulary.

KJV-only folks should welcome Greek and Hebrew language studies, they should support saints who are led by God to do this unpopular but necessary work.

Instead their prideful attitudes, intolerance of other believers and naïve ejaculations only divide. As such they seem to fit the definition of a sect. Let us hope that their eyes may be opened! for many of these KJV-only folks are true brothers and sisters in Christ. Hence, the motivation for this brief essay, to reach out to them, and to inform others of the need to utilize and consider other translations alongside of the venerable KJV.

## REFERENCES CITED

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- (3) Hills, Edward F.. *The King James Version Defended*. Iowa: The Christian Research Press, 4th edition, 1984. p. 220.
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- (5) Daniell, David. *Tyndale's New Testament: Translated from the Greek by William Tyndale in 1534*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989. pp. ix, x. (Note: The British Library publishes a complete copy of Tyndale's 1st edition).
- (6) s.v. #4 above. pages 341 ff., 348 ff.. (Though out of print, this volume is of great value, and is highly recommended for those wishing more information on the KJV, its text and history).
- (7) s.v. #3 above. page 114.
- (8) Allen, Ward. ed., & trans.. *Translating for King James: Notes made by a Translator of King James's Bible*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1993. pp. 15f..
- (9) s.v. #4 above. page 325.