

# TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

## The authority of Scripture

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,” (2 Timothy 3:16).

The above passage in simple terms means the Bible is the Word of God to us. The movement of the Spirit of God upon certain men in order to convey his will was clearly understood long before Timothy or any part of the New Testament was written. Many of the prophets were so clearly guided by God they were able to say, “The Lord Almighty says” (1 Chronicles 17:7). Expressions such as, or similar to, “The Lord says” are used over four hundred times throughout the Bible.

Scripture has its authority because of the one who stands behind it. At the end of World War II, General Douglass MacArthur along with other leading officers signed formal surrender documents aboard the battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay on 02 September 1945. Any person who continued hostile activities toward the former enemy after being made aware of the surrender faced the prospect of severe discipline because of the authority invested in the leading figures who signed the documents.

Imagine for a moment a situation where a small group of men receive a signal sent out by General Douglass MacArthur which informs them they must end all hostilities. Part of the message is missing, but it is still clear they are to stop fighting. One of the men foolishly suggests they should keep fighting because they do not have a good copy of the original message, but the others wisely point out they still have a clear message, and they had better not ignore the message because it comes from the highest ranking officer over them.

The above story highlights two issues when looking at Scripture. Authority, and the quality of the documents that have come down to us.

## The Reformation

Perhaps highest on the list of differences between evangelical Christians and others is that of the authority of Scripture. When the ancient Roman emperor, Constantine, bought to an end a long period of persecution against Christians and bought wealth and privilege to Church leaders, many non-Christians sought and gained a position in Church office. The most destructive effect the non-Christians had upon the Church was a weakening of the authority of Scripture. What man says, and the traditions of the Church, came to have greater authority than the Word of God. That is the very thing Jesus complained about in his time. He told the religious leaders, “You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.” (Mark 7:8).

Many of those who suffered and died during the period of the reformation did so because they held the Word of God to be more important to them than the words of the Pope. Those who followed the Pope were forbidden from reading the Bible in an attempt to exert his authority over the Word of

God.

In our day, some may argue that one translation is better than another, then fail to seriously apply the Bible to their own lives, preferring to follow their own desires, and doctrines that tickle the ears. (2 Timothy 4: 3-4). The Bible warns us to not merely listen to the Word of God. We must be careful to do what it says. (James 1:22).

## The reliability of Scripture

One of the attacks upon Scripture comes from the claim that it was written down more than a century after the event, and was therefore tainted by other beliefs. That claim can be proven to be false by looking at the evidence from within Scripture.

The Bible mentions the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr (Acts 7:54-60). It also mentions the death of James by the sword at the command of Herod (Acts 12:2). However, it does not mention the deaths of Peter and Paul, men who were much more prominent in the Bible.

Jesus foretold the destruction of the temple. “As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!’ ‘Do you see all these great buildings?’ replied Jesus. ‘Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.’” (Mark 13:12). See also Luke 19:42-43.

The Bible does not mention the fulfilment of the destruction of the Temple by the Roman military force under the command of Titus in 70 AD. Quite clearly, the Bible was completed before the deaths of Peter and Paul, and the destruction of the Temple.

Another point to consider is the fact that Scripture was regarded as Scripture at the time it was written, not many decades afterwards. Peter clearly refers to the writings of Paul as Scripture when he says, “He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.” (2 Peter 3:16).

It is with the above in mind that we will now turn to the subject of the translations of Scripture.

## Translation of the Old Testament Into Greek

There is some debate regarding the translation of the Hebrew O.T. into Greek, but one view is that it was completed by seventy-two scholars in seventy-two days at Alexandria in Egypt between 250 and 200 BC. This translation came to be known (inaccurately) as the **Septuagint**, often abbreviated LXX meaning seventy.

Many of the writers in the NT quote from the LXX, for instance, in Acts 15:16 Luke quotes from Amos 9:11-12 using the Septuagint version of Scripture. The LXX “...is often quoted in the New Testament. Luke and the writer to the Hebrews use it the most, Matthew least.”<sup>1</sup> The fact that this translation of the Old Testament (O.T.) is quoted in the New Testament (N.T.) means that faithful translations of the original Hebrew (O.T.) and Greek (N.T.) carry equal authority as the original documents. The ‘Word of God’ is

still the ‘Word of God’ regardless of the language it is translated into.

### Early Translators Into English

It is a common misconception that the Bible was first translated into English by John Wycliffe; that honour primarily belongs to Nicholas of Hereford (under the support and supervision of Wycliffe). He finished the Old Testament in 1382. The N.T. was finished by others in 1384. His translation (from the Vulgate) was difficult to read.

A more readable and much loved translation was that of John Purvey (secretary of Wycliffe), completed in 1395, and known as the Lollard Bible. As for John Wycliffe (c. 1329-1384), “...it is possible that he contributed directly no part to any translation, but he inspired the enterprise and supervised the writing of others from his rectory at Lutterworth...”<sup>2</sup>

Some other translations are: Tyndale 1526 (It was the first translation of the N.T. into English from the Greek), Coverdale 1535, Matthew 1537, Great Bible 1539, Geneva Bible 1560 (It was the first English Bible to be printed with verse divisions), Bishops Bible 1568.

From the Bishops Bible, we come to the King James Version (KJV) of 1611, otherwise known as the Authorised Version (AV). It was very popular, as it reflected very accurately the language of the people of that time. This is an important consideration with translation work, as the N.T. was originally written in koine (common) Greek. The language of the people in the street.

Some KJV Bibles make the bold statement, “translated out of the original tongues”, but that statement can not be taken too literally, as Bible scholars are able to say “The King James Version was itself a revision rather than a new translation.”<sup>3</sup> In reference to the earlier translations scholars say, “The translators of the King James Version took into account all of these preceding versions and comparison shows that it owes something to each of them.”<sup>4</sup> “...fully ninety per cent of the Authorised Version New Testament is taken from Tyndale’s 1534 revision.”<sup>5</sup>

John Ankerberg and John Weldon in their very helpful booklet titled, “*The Facts on the King James Only Debate*” quote from the preface of the 1611 edition of the KJV to show that the translators had a humble opinion of their translation. The KJV translators advise the Bible scholar to consult other translations so that “...if anything [in the KJV] be halting or superfluous, or not so agreeable to the original [Hebrew and Greek], the same may be corrected, and the truth set in place” (p. 7 of preface).<sup>6</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> century spelling is updated in this quote.

What many who push the King James Version do not realise is that the King James Version now in use is not the original 1611 version, it has thankfully gone through several revisions. The version now in use is the result of a revision carried out by Benjamin Blayney in 1769, a professor of Hebrew at the University of Oxford, it was therefore known as the “**Oxford Standard Edition**”. This revision followed three other revisions, these were carried out in 1629, 1638 and 1762.<sup>7</sup>

An obvious improvement that the current edition has over the original 1611 edition is in the area of spelling. For instance, 1 Corinthians 13:5-6 reads as follows. “*Doeth not hehaue it selfe vnseemly, seeketh not her owne, is not easily prouoked, thinketh no euill. Reioyceth not in iniquitie, but reioyceth in the trueth.*”

### The Apocrypha

At first the *Apocrypha* was included with the 1611 edition, much to the annoyance of the Puritans. In 1615 Archbishop Abott forbade anyone to issue an edition without this inclusion.<sup>8</sup> Most of the thirteen books of the Apocrypha were written in Palestine between 300 BC and 100 AD. The reformers rejected the Apocrypha as a collection of books not worthy of the same status as the sixty-six books of the Bible. The New Testament contains many quotes from the Old Testament, but none from the Apocrypha.

### The Divinity of Christ

Those who cling to the KJV sometimes assert that modern translations water-down the major doctrines of Scripture, but that is simply not true. The KJV is weak on the divinity of Christ when compared with the N.I.V. (New International Version).

KJV “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and **our** Saviour Jesus Christ;” (Titus 2:13). (emphasis on ‘our’ added). The word ‘**our**’ is not in the original Greek, this mistake in the KJV leaves a loophole for those who deny the deity of Christ.

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and **our** Saviour Jesus Christ:” (2 Peter 1:1, KJV). Here again, ‘our’ should not be there.

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared {him}.” (John 1:18, KJV). The N.I.V. is far better; it says, “No one has ever seen God, but **God the One and Only**, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.” (John 1:18, NIV).

### The Divinity of the Holy Spirit

The KJV does not show the divinity and personhood of the Holy Spirit in the following passage. “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit **itself** maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Rom. 8:26, KJV).

The word “itself” gives the impression that the Holy Spirit is simply a force. The NIV more accurately says, “...the Spirit **himself**...”

### Contradiction

In the King James version, there appears to be a contradiction between Acts 9:7 and 22:9.

“And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, **hearing a voice**, but seeing no man.” (Acts 9:7,

KJV).

“And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they **heard not the voice** of him that spake to me.” (Acts 22:9, KJV).

“The construction of the verb ‘to hear’ (*akouo*) is not the same in both accounts. In Acts 9:7 it is used with the genitive, in Acts 22:9 with the accusative. The construction with the genitive simply expresses that something is being heard or that certain sounds reach the ear; nothing is indicated as to whether a person understands what he hears or not.

The construction with the accusative, however, describes a hearing which includes mental apprehension of the message spoken. From this it becomes evident that the two passages are not contradictory.”<sup>9</sup>

When the meaning of the Greek is understood, it becomes clear that the *New International Version* has the better translation - there is no contradiction. The NIV says:

“The men travelling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone.” (Acts 9:7).

“My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.” (Acts 22:9). (NIV).

#### Other Weaknesses in the KJV

“And even as they did not like to retain God in {their} knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are **not convenient**,” (Rom. 1:28, KJV). ‘not convenient’ is very weak in the light of our modern understanding of the term. The N.I.V. more accurately says, “... to do what **ought not to be done**.” (Rom. 1:28, NIV).

The New King James Version has fixed many of the weaknesses in the KJV but it has not satisfactorily improved the translation of John 1:18 or Rom. 1:28. For John 1:18 the NKJV has “... The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” For Rom. 1:28 it says, “... to do things which are not fitting;”

#### Further Weaknesses

The KJV says ‘Holy Ghost’ e.g. Matt. 1:18, 20, 12:31-32, Mark 12:36, it should be ‘**Holy Spirit**’. The Holy Spirit is omnipresent, and is nowhere in the Bible referred to as a ghost. “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24).

Genesis 2:19 ‘God formed’, should be, ‘God had formed’, as in the New International Version. With this mistake in the KJV there is a conflict between the order of creation of chapter one and that of chapter two.

Matt. 13:40. Should be ‘age’, (Gk. *aiwnos*) not ‘world’.

Luke 12:49. The question mark should not be there.

Eph. 4:12. The semicolon should not be there.

1 Tim. 4:1. "devils" should be "demons".

Luke 22:31. "desired" should be "demanded".

Rev. 4:2. "spirit" should have a capital ‘S’ as it refers to

the Holy Spirit. John is certainly not stating that he is in his own spirit.

Psalm 88:13. The KJV says, “... and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.” Our prayers are not greater than God, they can not prevent God from doing what he has determined to do. The correct translation is “...my prayer comes before you.” (NIV).

Psalm 86:13. The word "Sheol" is incorrectly translated "hell".

Psalm 12:7. “Thou shalt keep *them*” should be “Thou shalt keep *us*”. Contextually and grammatically the pronoun should refer to people, not words.

Mark 6:20. “observed” should be “kept him safe” or “protected”.

1 Corinthians 4:4. “For I know nothing by myself” should be “For I am conscious of nothing against myself”.

Acts 5:30. The KJV says, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.” But Jesus was not killed, then placed on the cross. He was nailed to the cross, and later died on the cross as the NIV more accurately translates and makes clear. “...whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree.” (NIV).

Isaiah 14:12. The KJV says “Lucifer” instead of “morning star”. A figurative reference to the King of Babylon as the context clearly shows, see 14:16-19. The KJV translators referred to the Vulgate where the Latin word for “morning star” is “lucifer”.<sup>10</sup>

In several instances, the KJV supplies words that are not there. In Matt. 27:44 it says, "The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." (Mat 27:44) (KJV). The words "cast", "same", "his" and "teeth" are not found in any ancient Greek text. The bottles in Matthew 9:17 should be wineskins (Greek *askoi*).<sup>11</sup>

#### Change of Meaning

Those who use the KJV not only have inaccuracy to contend with, but they must also contend with the change of meaning of many words, e.g. The KJV uses the word "let" in the sense of "hinder", "prevent" to mean "precede", "allow" in the sense of "approve", "communicate" for "share", "conversation" for "conduct", "comprehend" for "overcome", "ghost" for "spirit".

A further difficulty is the change of name given to some people. Jonah in the Old Testament becomes Jonas in the New, and Timothy (1 Tim. 1:2) is translated Timotheus in Philippians 1:1, Elijah becomes Elias in Matt. 11:14 KJV.

Some words and phrases in the KJV have dropped completely out of use, for example:

"cieled" Haggai 1:4, "chambering" Romans 13:13, "crockback" Lev. 21:20, "tabret" Gen. 31:27.

#### Special pronouns

The KJV uses special pronouns such as *thee*, *thou*, *ye*, *thine* and *thy*, but the original manuscripts did not have special pronouns. Neither Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek use special pronouns.

### Koine Greek

It is important to keep in mind that the New Testament was written in the language of the common people (**koine Greek**), not in a special religious language. Therefore, any translation which does not reflect the language of the common people is not faithful to the original.

One writer says regarding Koine Greek, "As recently as the last century [19<sup>th</sup>] many did not understand the nature of the Greek used in the New Testament. They thought of it as 'Holy-Spirit' Greek, that is, as a language that the Spirit prepared especially for the NT. The reason was this: NT Greek was clearly not classical Greek. Where did it come from, then? One popular answer was: it must have been invented just for the NT! We now know, that the language of the NT was - roughly speaking - the language of the day. It is the kind of language that has turned up in personal letters and bills of sale from the first century. It is the 'koine' or 'common' language of the day."<sup>12</sup>

The New Testament writers did not use words or phrases that had dropped out of use over the previous three hundred years and the King James translators also did not use words or phrases that had dropped out of use in the previous three hundred years.

### Improved Translations

In 1611 there were many words in the original Greek and Hebrew which were difficult to translate accurately because it was not known precisely how and in what context the word was used. This situation has improved greatly over the years because archeology has unearthed thousands of manuscripts, some of which have revealed the way in which many words were used in biblical times.

The first improvement on the KJV came with the Revised Version in 1870. As we have increased our ability to get closer to the meaning of the original N.T. Greek, newer translations have come to us; some of these are:

The American Standard Version 1901, Revised Standard Version 1946 & 1952. New American Standard Version (NASV.) 1960, a very accurate translation. New International Version (NIV) 1978, Billy Graham has endorsed the **New King James Version** (1979) because of the many improvements which have been made.

Some look upon the use of the King James Version as a mark of spiritual superiority, but this version has been supported by cults such as the Mormons who believe in salvation by works.

### Gail Riplinger

In 1993, Gail Riplinger published a book titled "*New Age Bible Versions*". Her book is an attack upon modern versions. It is not a book that I can recommend. Several highly respected scholars have some strong comments to make about the book. "H. Wayne House, professor at large at Simon Greenleaf University, author and lecturer who holds earned doctorates in both theology and law as well as a master's degree in biblical and patristic Greek, comments, 'The foolishness of its various claims are transparent when one takes the time to study them...NABV is replete with logical, philosophical, theological, biblical, and technical errors ... Riplinger incessantly quotes people out of context...

[she] does this repeatedly, page after page..."<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Robert Morey says, "This is beyond all doubt the worst book I have ever read. Its pages bristle with so many logical fallacies and biblical, theological, historical and linguistic errors that one wonders where to start."<sup>14</sup>

Riplinger claims that B.F. Westcott who co-produced the 1881 edition of the Greek NT which set the pattern for almost all future editions of the Greek text, was involved in spiritism and that therefore his work should not be trusted. However, she confuses **B.F. with W.W. Westcott** who was born twenty-three years later in 1848.

A pamphlet which advertises "*New Age Bible Versions*" makes the claim that "The Antichrist will use the new versions to set up his One World New Age Religion, with its mark and worship of the Antichrist and the dragon." No scripture reference is given or could be given to support this statement.

The pamphlet also makes the astonishing claim that the King James Version is "... the easiest version to read according to computer analysis based formulas from the Flesch-Kincaid research firm." That statement ignores the fact that the huge popularity of the modern translations is because they are easy to read.

Gail Riplinger makes the claim that in writing her book, she was inspired by God. She says for instance, "... I used G.A. Riplinger, which signifies to me, God and Riplinger - God as author and Riplinger as secretary."<sup>15</sup>

The discerning reader will find her claim to inspiration from God hard to accept in view of the fact that her book contains hundreds of mistakes, and by her own admission, it took six years to write.

### False Accusations

It was reported in a May 97 edition of "*New Life*" Christian newspaper that someone was spreading the false claim that the NIV translation team was attempting to make the NIV gender neutral in future translations. A senior member of the team made the point that he grew up memorising 2 Corinthians 5:17 as, "Therefore if any **man** {be} in Christ, {he is} a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (KJV) (emphasis added).

He made the point that the NIV team has translated the verse so that it reads, "Therefore, if **anyone** is in Christ, he is a new creation; ..." (NIV).

He makes the point that no one complains about the change to 'anyone' because that is what the original Greek means (Gk. *ei tis en Christo*). He also gives the assurance that there is no attempt by the team to divert from the original Greek and make the NIV in future editions non-gender specific. The other modern translations also use the word 'anyone' in place of 'any man'.

Also, the claim by some that the modern translations do not clearly condemn homosexuality is false, as a check of the following references will show: Leviticus 18:22, 20:13,

Romans 1:26-27, 1 Cor. 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:10, Jude 7.

### Matthew 16:19

“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.” (Matthew 16:19, KJV).

A literal translation of the Textus Receptus and the Nestle Greek documents says “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatever you bind on earth shall occur, having been bound in Heaven. And whatever you may loose on the earth shall be, having been loosed in heaven.” (Matt. 16:19).<sup>16</sup>

The NIV also gives a wrong translation of the Greek. There is a big difference between the disciples acting according the pattern of heaven, and heaven acting according to the dictates of the disciples.

### KJV Strengths

The KJV has it’s strong points, particularly the fact that the texts on which it is based come from the Byzantine area rather than from the more fault prone region of North Africa.

Those who use the NIV are advised to read the alternate or missing texts in the margin, e.g. Acts 8:37, 1 John 4:9.

The KJV correctly uses a small ‘s’ in 1 Corinthians 14:2, thus clearly showing that the Apostle is talking about the spirit of a man and not about God’s Spirit. In 2 Samuel 5:21 KJV is better, also Matt. 9:13, Mark 1:14, 9:44, 13:14, Luke 7:29).

### Stumbling Block

Some people have used the King James Version for many years and prefer to stay with that version; they should not be forced to change. Unfortunately, some who use the KJV try to force others to use it. They need to recognise that many people - especially the young - have difficulty reading and understanding that version. If they force a young person to try and read that version, they may be inadvertently putting a stumbling-block in their path to reading and enjoying the Bible. Drawing on my own experience of reading the Bible from cover to cover more than ten times in various versions, I can confidently say that it is reading the Bible that has been the most significant help to me in grasping biblical doctrine, not the reading of one particular version.

### Recommended Reading

J. Ankerberg and J. Weldon, "*Facts on the King James Only Debate*", Harvest House Publishers, 48 pages.

Dr. D. Carson, "*The King James Version Debate*", Baker Book House, 128 pages.

James R. White, "*The King James Only Controversy*", Bethany House, 304 pages.

Kenneth L Baker, Ed., "*The NIV. The Making of a Contemporary Translation*", Zondervan, 1986.

Robert Martin, "*Accuracy of Translation and The New International Version*", Banner of Truth, 1989.

### End Notes

- (1) Text and Versions "*The New Bible Dictionary*", I.V.P., London, 1972, , p. 1261.
- (2) "*The Morning Star*", by G.H.W. Parker, Eerdmans, 1965, p. 45.
- (3) "*R.S.V. New Testament & Psalms*", B.F.B.C. preface p. 1.
- (4) "*R.S.V. New Testament & Psalms*", B.F.B.C. preface p. 1.
- (5) Brian Edwards, "*Nothing but the Truth*", quoted in "*Reformation Today*", No. 135, p. 26.
- (6) J. Ankerberg & J. Weldon, "*Facts on the King James Only Debate*", Harvest House Publishers, Eugene Oregon, 1996, p. 13.
- (7) Ralph Woodrow, "*Amazing Discoveries Within the Book of Books*", Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Assoc, California, 1979, p. 71.
- (8) "*Nothing but the Truth*", quoted in "*Reformation Today*", No. 135, p. 26.
- (9) Josh McDowell, "*Christianity: A Ready Defence*", Here’s Life Publishers, San Bernardino, 1991, p. 128.
- (10) "*The Facts On The King James Only Debate*", p. 21.
- (11) J.B. Philips, Foreword, "*The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*", Bagster, 2ed, 1959.
- (12) Tom Wells, "*Reformation Today*", No. 174, Leeks UK, March/April 2000, p. 4.
- (13) "*The Facts On The King James Only Debate*", p. 26.
- (14) J. Ankerberg & J. Weldon, "*Facts on The King James Only Debate*", Harvest House, 1996, p. 26.
- (15) G. Riplinger, "*Why I Wrote the Book*", p. 15.
- (16) J. P. Green, Sr. (Ed.) "*Interlinear Greek English New Testament*", 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., Baker, 1996, p. 54.

Unless otherwise indicated, the addition of **bold type** within quotes reflects the emphasis of the author of this article.

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## Appendix: Inspired Translation

The argument behind the view that the KJV is an inspired translation (thankfully held to by very few) seems to be that if you view the KJV to be inspired, then you can take Scripture - at least this version of it - more seriously.

The view taken by Bible scholars is that the *original* documents were inspired, and they are without error. What we have today in the KJV and modern versions are very faithful copies of the original documents. The accuracy is proven by comparing the many ancient documents that are available to us. In the very few instances where the meaning of a word is not clear, or a passage is missing or different, the disputable passage does not annul any doctrine or establish any new doctrine.

The view that the KJV is an inspired translation can bring about laziness. If the above is true, then why bother to engage in further research to uncover the meaning of Hebrew and Greek words at the time they were written down if what we have today is inspired? At this point we will look at several words and see how further study since 1611 has improved our understanding.

### Lucifer

On the use of the name "Lucifer" in Isaiah 14:12 (KJV), Ankerberg and Weldon say, "Why did the KJV use the term 'Lucifer' and modern versions the term 'morning star'? The term *Lucifer* came to us by way of Jerome's Latin Bible, the *Vulgate*, which the KJV translators sometimes used for their own translation. The Latin word for "morning star" is "Lucifer." This word was used to refer to Venus, the morning star, and was applied figuratively to the pride and fall of the king of Babylon." (Ankerberg, p. 21).

### Firmament

"And God said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters..." (Gen. 1:6) KJV.

The word '*firmament*' used by the KJV is a bad choice of words as it is based upon a false view of the universe. H. Vos says of this word. "The 'firmament' is a mistranslation due to the false astronomy of the Greeks of the third century B.C., who believed that the sky was a solid crystalline sphere. Hence the Hebrew word *rakia* was rendered *stereoma* in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Then when Jerome translated the Old Testament into Latin, he used the Latin word *firmamentum*, which in turn was rendered by the English word 'firmament' in KJV. The original word in the Hebrew, *rakia*, does not have the idea of something 'firm' but comes from a root meaning that which is 'stretched out,' or 'attenuated,' or 'extended,' and is best translated 'expanse,' as in the NIV. It perfectly describes the expanse of the atmosphere of our earth." (Joseph P. Free and Howard F. Vos, "*Archaeology And Bible History*", Zondervan, Michigan, 1992, p. 27-28).

Joseph Free (1910-1974) was professor of archaeology and history at Benidji State College in Minnesota.

Howard Vos is [1992] professor of history and archaeology at the King's College in Briarcliff Manor, New York.

### Hell

"The English word 'hell' is from a Teutonic root meaning 'to hide' or 'to cover'. ... In the KJV, the word hell is used thirty-one times in the OT; in each case it is a translation of Sheol, which was the place where both the ungodly and the godly were

to go at death." (Hell, H. Buis, M. Tenney G. Ed., *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 3, p. 114).

There are four different words which the KJV translates as hell. They are:

- Shoel: Hebrew word used 31 times e.g. Isaiah 28:18 and Psalm 16:10. It means, the unseen state.
- Hades: This word is translated to 'hell' ten times in the KJV. e.g. Luke 16:26 where it refers to a place of torment and Acts 2:27 where it simply refers to the place of death.
- Gehenna: This Greek word alludes to the Valley of Hinnom. Unlike the above two words, this word is used exclusively for the place of the damned. Therefore it is translated 'hell' in the NIV e.g. "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt. 23:33).
- Tartarus: This Greek word, translated 'hell' is used just once in Scripture. "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;" (2 Peter 2:4).

The KJV sometimes uses the word 'hell' when the word 'grave' should be used. In Acts 2:31 it does so even though it is misleading according to the modern understanding of the term. "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." (2:31, KJV). The soul of Christ did not go to hell (the place of eternal punishment) immediately after he died in order to endure further suffering. Just before he died on the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

The Greek word *tetelestai* translated 'It is finished' is in the perfect tense which means it is finished for all time, not just for the moment. Therefore, it would be wrong to suggest a further period of suffering is necessary in hell.

The NIV quite rightly avoids the word 'hell', it says, "Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave [Gk; *hades*], nor did his body see decay." (Acts 2:31).

Modern translations use the words, 'grave', 'Hades', and 'Shoel' where appropriate in place of the KJV 'hell' in order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding.

### Textus Receptus

In a 150 page work with the title "*A King's Bible*", Michael Drake of Whitcliffe Christian Schools, New Zealand, honours the King James Bible, (the Authorised Version), but exposes the complex and pervasive mythology that has enveloped it. Some have even insisted that it is the only valid English translation. He describes the historical background and those who did the work. He also looks at the important issue concerning which ancient texts were used as a reference for the making of the King James Version. He says, "The wonderful array of Bible manuscripts now available are grouped together by things they have in common, mainly to do with linguistic issues. One such group is known as the Textus Receptus, which means received text. This group is based on manuscripts that come from the Eastern or Byzantine Empire which continued to use Greek after it separated from the rest of the Roman Empire. Frequently, reference is made to the Textus Receptus as if it is a single New Testament Greek text, one that is said to be reliable to the exclusion of all

other manuscripts.

Such a text does not exist. Although there is obviously a group of texts called Textus Receptus, that they should have special powers associated with 'being received' is nonsense. For a start, this group does not produce a single Greek New Testament about which there is total certainty, even among those who treasure it. It is not simply a choice between Textus Receptus and other sources of manuscripts - choices have to be made even when translating from all the manuscripts within the Textus Receptus group.

Most advocates of Textus Receptus now recognise that it originates in a broader group of manuscripts in which there are about six to ten variants per Bible chapter about which these choices have to be made. In fact, the handful of manuscripts used to construct the Textus Receptus were not even all the manuscripts then available - its compiler, Erasmus, was in such a hurry he had to make do with what was at hand at the time, instead of making a comprehensive collection.

The idea of such a superior text of group of manuscripts upon which they could rely was completely foreign to the King's writers. They used other language versions of the New Testament based on manuscripts that were not Textus Receptus, openly bewailing the limited number of manuscripts available to them, and saying they would have consulted more texts had they been able to. Not only does a single, completely reliable Textus Receptus not exist, the concept was not invented until after the King's writers had completed their work. Although they made use of the texts now called Textus Receptus, they did not do so exclusively or consciously. They simply had no idea there would ever be a Textus Receptus! Too often the polemics of those who want to use the Textus Receptus go from the extreme to the foolish. Objection is made to alternative texts as coming from Roman Catholic sources - but so did the Textus Receptus!

Westcott and Hort are significant textual critics who favoured an alternative textual tradition. Their work has influenced modern translations. Their critics doubt the faith and integrity of these men and therefore reject their scholarship. Critics ask, 'How can we rely on the textual criticism of men who do not meet the high standards of our evangelical faith?' If that is the case, how then can we trust the work of the Roman Catholic who compiled the text that forms the Textus Receptus from sources that include Roman Catholic ones?

It is important to note that while there are minor variations in the texts from which our Bibles are translated that there is nothing of any importance with regard to Christian doctrine that is jeopardised by the variants. Agreement characterises the ancient texts." (Michael Drake, "The Kings's Bible and the Textus Receptus", *Reformation Today*, November - December 2001, # 184, p. 27-28) The above is part of a book review.

### Poor expressions of English in KJV

The KJV has many instances of poor English expression by 21<sup>st</sup> century standards. For instance it says, "And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord." (Matt. 9:27).

There are several errors of expression in this one verse. 'when he was come', 'Jesus saith', 'Believe ye' and 'Yea, Lord'. There are thousands of errors of the above type throughout the KJV. The NIV quite accurately says, "When he had gone indoors, the blind men come to him, and he asked them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' 'Yes, Lord,' they replied."

(Matt. 9:28).

The KJV sometimes uses measurements which are not in common use and are therefore not understood by most readers. For instance, it uses the term 'firkins' in John 2:6, instead of expressing the measurement in litres or gallons.

### Quotes from Septuagint

I made the point at the beginning of this article that the New Testament writers sometimes quoted from the Septuagint. Further to that point, Patrick Fairbairn (1805-1874) who for a time served as divinity professor at the Free Church College in Aberdeen, and then as principal of the Free Church College at Glasgow says of the quotations of the Septuagint in the book of Hebrews, "...they are uniformly taken from the Septuagint (i.e., the old Greek translation of the Old Testament), even where that differs materially from the original Hebrew. The New Testament writers generally, and the apostle Paul in particular, very frequently quoted from that version, because it was in common use in the synagogues, and had acquired a kind of standard value. But they also, in many cases, departed from it, when it did not give at least the general sense of the original. This, however, is never done in the Epistle to the Hebrews; the Septuagint version is almost uniformly quoted from, whether it gives or deviates from the exact meaning. Thus the words of the 97<sup>th</sup> Psalm, rendered in ch. 1:6, "Let all the angels of God worship Him," are literally, [in the original Hebrew] "Worship Him, all ye gods," (Patrick Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture*, Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1989, Vol. 1, p. 394).

Fairbairn further makes the point that Hebrews quotes from the Septuagint translation of Psalm 8:4-6 which says, "You have made him a little lower than the angels..." but the original Hebrew says, "Thou has made him want a little of God".

It is quite clear that the writer to the Hebrews who was inspired of God was given a great deal of freedom in quoting Scripture, so that he was able to quote from the Septuagint translation, even when it deviated from the original. What was important in the above examples was the message which was conveyed, and not the original words of the Hebrew.

I must emphasise at this point that the writer to the Hebrews was inspired of God, and had his authority from God to quote from the Septuagint.

I believe the message to us is that we should avoid being champions of using the correct words while losing sight of the message which each particular passage of Scripture is conveying to us.

Fairbairn says, "We must contend for every jot and tittle of the word, when the adversary seeks, by encroaching on these, to impair or corrupt the truth of God. But we are not absolutely bound up to that; we may freely use even a general or incomplete representation of its meaning, if by so doing we are more likely to get a favourable hearing for the important truths it unfolds. Correctness without scrupulosity should be the rule here, as in the Christian life generally." (Patrick Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture*, Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1989, Vol. 1, p. 395).

### How the Text of the New Testament is Established

An article presented to *New Life* Christian newspaper by Dr. Colin Kruse, lecturer in NT at the Bible College of Victoria. This is written in response to an article published on 4 March 99 entitled "Which Manuscript?"

Dr. Kruse makes the point that the small number of errors which have been found in the ancient manuscripts have occurred through various reasons including "...adding to it to make it consistent with Christian belief at the time (the longer reading of 1 John 5:7-8 is a classic example of this)."

"When what became known as the Textus Receptus (the editions of the Greek NT which became the basis for all Protestant versions of the NT prior to 1881) was produced, scholars only had access to very few Greek manuscripts. As a result the text they produced, though certainly not misleading theologically, was not as good as it might otherwise have been.

Erasmus, for instance, in producing his printed version of the Greek NT made use of only six relatively late Greek manuscripts. His work was incorporated by others who were responsible for producing what became known as the Textus Receptus. The Textus Receptus, in about a dozen passages, includes readings which have no support in any known Greek manuscripts."

"The two English scholars, Westcott and Hort, were the first to produce a version of the Greek NT which eventually established itself as a replacement for the Textus Receptus. The text they produced (in 1881) was based upon a careful analysis of the Greek manuscripts existing at that time. They worked for 29 years on a multitude of Greek manuscripts, comparing their variant readings. These included copies of the NT or parts of the NT, lectionaries, and quotations from the NT in the writings of the early Church fathers."

"Westcott and Hort did not decide arbitrarily to favour one or two manuscripts over others because of their early dating. Their approach involved the labourious comparison of hundreds of sets of variants, in hundreds of manuscripts and then classifying the manuscripts into groups according to their tendencies to support similar readings. It was only after 29 years of work along these lines that they came to believe that Codex Vaticanus (so named because it, along with many other important early Christian documents, is held in the Vatican Library) more often (but not always) contained what they believed were readings most likely to be original.

Things have moved on since the time of Westcott and Hort, and NT textual scholars today have access to manuscripts not available to them. The methods used by Westcott and Hort have been refined, and improved. The work of modern scholars tends to be less dependent upon the 'external' support alone (whether a particular variant has the support of such and such manuscripts) and takes more notice of the internal considerations (which variants can be explained as having developed from others, etc)."

"NT textual scholars have no axe to grind. They are seeking by scientific methods to make rational choices between the hundreds of sets of variants that exist in the hand written Greek manuscripts." (Dr. Colin Kruse, from Lillydale Vic., "*New Life*", Blackburn, Vic., 18-3-99, p. 4).

### Congregation or Church?

"King James set very specific rules for the writing of his Bible. One of the most important rules ensured that this would not be a translation at all, but a revision of the earlier Bishops' Bible. Instead of starting with the Greek and Hebrew, the translators were required to begin with the Bishops' Bible, and after consulting other English versions, versions in other languages, and the Greek and Hebrew, make as few changes as possible."

The king also directed that certain 'old ecclesiastical words be kept' specifying by way of example that 'Church' was not to be translated *congregation*. 'Church' was a recent inclusion in English translations and could hardly therefore be called an 'old ecclesiastical word', but to protect the High Church Anglican centralised 'Church' structure it was essential that no sense of congregationalism be allowed in the King's Bible.

The Roman Catholic humanist Erasmus had translated *ekklesia* as 'congregation', as did Tyndale in 1525. Modern readers might wonder how important just one word is, but it was very clear in Tyndale's day that this was fundamental. '... the gathering and hierarchies, were priest and bishop and pope are essential ... The bishops saw that this idea could make the whole Church structure fall apart.' This was one of Tyndale's 'heresies' for which he and his translation would be burned. Eighty-six years later King James and his bishops were as vehemently opposed to biblical doctrine and plain English translation as their predecessors." (Michael Drake, "*Reformation Today*", # 204, March April 2005, p. 23).

A Bible teacher may choose a text from a version which succinctly and clearly brings out a truth from God's Word. The task of those who seek to construct a faithful copy of the Bible in the original Hebrew and Greek is somewhat different. His goal is to determine, after looking at many manuscripts, what words are faithful to the original. Some of my memory verses are in the KJV. However, it is not my favourite version for reading large chunks of Scripture. All of the above are legitimate ways of handling the word of God.

I will close with a passage of Scripture which we all must heed:

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22)

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