

WHY THE KJV IS BEST

by Laurence A. Justice



Psalm 119:140

Today we no longer have one recognized version of God's word. There are now more than 20 from which to choose. Propaganda in favor of the new versions of scriptures is very strong. They are promoted as being contemporary, up to date, easy to read, and in the language of today.

But people who speak of translating the Bible into "the language of today" never seem to define the language of today. What is the language of today? Is it the slang of the street? Is it Ebonics¹? What exactly would be language for today? Would it be the RSV of 1952? The Living Bible of 1971? The Good News Bible of 1976 or the New International Version of 1978?

God's word is not a modern human book! It is not as new as the morning newspaper as some are fond of saying. The Bible is an ancient, divine book in which God reveals Himself.

We must remember that God's word can never be understood by natural men, and it was never intended to be. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, "But

¹ Ebonics simply means 'black speech' (a blend of the words ebony 'black' and phonics 'sounds').

the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." People will not even understand the plainest scripture until the Holy Spirit works in them. This is why the so-called textual critics just keep trying in vain to discover the meaning of the words of scripture. They never will get a spiritual understanding of God's word until the Holy Spirit of God regenerates them and illuminates their minds!

Many of these new versions have been revised since they first came out--some several times! Some are no longer being printed. Like everything else that is designed to be instant, modern, and accessible, the new versions go out of date faster than last fall's dress styles. Some of the new versions that are already out of date include the RSV, Goodspeed, Berkley, Beck, Moffatt, the New English Bible, The Phillips Version, TCNT, Weymouth, Williams, and the Amplified Version. Our church, the Central Baptist Church of Grenada, Mississippi, uses the King James Version of the scriptures. We do so because we strongly believe that the KJV is the best version of the inspired word of God.

In this message I want us to think about just why the KJV is the best version of God's word. As we do so, we shall consider three things as the heart of this message.

SOME IMPORTANT PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

There are two of these that we must understand in thinking about versions of God's word.

First there is the matter of ***the manuscripts from which Bible versions are made.***

There are two groups of manuscripts from which all versions of scripture are translated. The first group is often called the traditional text and is made up of the Masoretic Hebrew Text of the Old Testament and the Greek New Testament or Textus Receptus as it is often called.

The Masoretic text is so called because it was copied and handed down by the Masoretes. The Masoretes were Jewish scholars and scribes active from 500 AD to 1000 AD. Their purpose was to copy and hand on the Hebrew text of the Old Testament as they had received it. The Masoretic text and the Textus Receptus are faithful copies of the texts used in New Testament times. The KJV is a translation of the Masoretic Hebrew Text of the Old Testament and the Textus Receptus Greek text of the New Testament, and this is called the traditional text. The KJV translators sought to stay as close as possible to the traditional text. In addition to the KJV, the French, Dutch, and German Protestant Churches all used Bibles based on the traditional text.

The second group of manuscripts from which versions of scripture are translated is what we sometimes call **the Alexandrian texts**: most prominent among these are the Vatican Codex and the Sinai Codex. The Vatican Codex is a manuscript that was found in the papal library in Rome. The Sinai Codex is a manuscript that was found in a Catholic monastery on Mt. Sinai. The new versions are all, with one exception, translations of the Vatican and Sinai manuscripts. The reason the new versions are based on this group of manuscripts is because, they say, these are the oldest manuscripts that we have. These translators rely on the theory of two men named Wescott and Hort who argued that the oldest manuscripts of the Bible are the most reliable. This is simply not true! The two oldest manuscripts we have are the Vatican Codex and the Sinai Codex -- that is true!

But these older manuscripts were found in excellent condition while the old manuscripts of the KJV are all long gone. The reason for this is that the manuscripts used in the KJV were used so often and for so long that they wore out and had to be copied again and again. The Vatican and Sinai manuscripts on the other hand were recognized early to be faulty texts and were soon laid aside to gather dust in libraries and were not recopied.

These two faulty texts contain many errors. They even contradict each other. There are **many** differences between the Vatican and Sinai

manuscripts. In the four gospels alone there are 3,000 differences between the two. In following these texts, the new versions have revived many ancient doctrinal errors that are included in them.

There are in existence today, far more manuscripts based on the traditional text than on the Alexandrian text. There are actually 5,210 manuscripts based on the traditional text, while there are only 45 manuscripts based on the Alexandrian text, the Vatican and Sinai Codexes.

The other important preliminary consideration here is that ***the method of translation used for a bible version is of critical importance***. There are two basic methods of translation used in the various versions of God's word:

There is the ***formal equivalence method*** of translating God's word. This method seeks to be as literal as possible in translating the words of scripture. The formal equivalence method translates the texts word for word, seeking to tell the reader the very words God has inspired.

Formal equivalence accepts every word of the original languages as inspired by God. This is important because the scriptures themselves claim to be verbally inspired: that is, that every word of the scriptures is the exact word that God has given us through the writers of scripture!

The other method of translating God's word is called ***the dynamic equivalence method***. Dynamic equivalence means translating meaning for meaning instead of word for word. It does not translate word for word but seeks instead to give the meaning of the words. In other words this method involves basically ***paraphrasing*** the words of the text. Using the dynamic equivalence method, the translator becomes an interpreter who gives a paraphrase that often has little or no relation to the original text. New versions like the New International Version (NIV) were produced by men using the dynamic equivalence method. The KJV gives us what the authors of scripture wrote. The new versions give us what a committee of translators think that the authors meant.

To have an accurate translation of the scripture, it is obviously necessary to use the formal equivalence method not the dynamic equivalence method. God's word must be kept free of human invention, opinion, addition, and subtraction. It must be kept pure. Look at Psalm 119:140. Here the Psalmist says to God, "Thy word *is* very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it." The KJV translators were strong believers in the verbal inspiration of the scriptures and in all the central doctrines of God's word. The same cannot be said, however, of the translators of the new versions.

SOME SERIOUS FAULTS TO BE FOUND IN THE NEW VERSIONS

There are some things that are very wrong with the new translations. Here are seven of them that are important for us to consider.

1. The new versions often change the meaning and even the text of the scriptures.

One example is the way the Living Bible translates John 1:17. Let's read it in the KJV first. "***For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ***" Here is how the Living Bible translates this verse: "Moses only gave us the law, with its rigid demands and merciless justice." The Text does not say these things! The Living Bible omits the word *truth* from this verse even though all manuscripts have this word.

Another example is the Living Bible's translation of Acts 13:48. Let's read it first in the KJV. "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: ***and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed***" This is a literal, word for word translation of the Greek text. But the Living Bible denies the doctrine of election when it says that those "***who wanted eternal life believed***" From these and countless other examples, we can rightly say that the Living Bible is nothing but a rewriting of God's word!

2. All new versions question or omit words, verses, and passages from the text.

Most new translations omit or change many verses to make them conform to the Vatican and Sinai manuscripts. New versions based on these manuscripts omit hundreds of words in the New Testament such as Mark 16:9-20, John 7:53-8:11 and part of Acts 8:37.

Look at Acts 8:37 in the KJV. "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, ***I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.***" The following modern versions just omit the last phrase in this book speaking of Christ as the Son of God: the NIV, RSV, NEB and ISV. The Trinitarian Bible Society magazine recently listed 575 words, verses, and passages that are omitted by the new versions.

Revelation 22:18-19 says that no additions to or subtractions from God's word are allowed at risk of severe penalty. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and ***from*** the things which are written in this book."

3. The proliferation of new versions implies we have no sure word from God.

The new versions are not only different from the KJV, they are different from each other. The existence of these many versions implies very strongly that we have no definite word from God. With all these many differences and disagreements in translations, how can we really know what is God's word? Someone else has come up with a good illustration of the problem here when he asked, Are you safer in a country that has one code of highway laws or in a country where there are 20 different versions of the code, all easier to read?

4. The language of the new versions is not majestic and reverent as is befitting the word of the living God!

It is not a language befitting the awesome and fearsome all holy

Creator and Judge of the universe! It is not the language of true worship! Most of the new versions are irreverent in expression. When I was a Southern Baptist, the almost slang wording of the Cotton Patch Bible and the Blue Jeans Bible was popular among them.

The vile, irreverent language of the Living Bible is seen in its translation of I Samuel 20:30. Let's read the KJV first. "Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou **son of the perverse rebellious woman**, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?" Here's how the Living Bible translates this verse: "Saul boiled with rage, You son of a (blank), do you think I don't know that you want this son of a nobody to be king in your place, shaming yourself and your mother?" I'm convinced that the craze for new translations was at the forefront of the movement to make worship less reverent, more casual, more contemporary, and more convenient!

5. The existence of new versions discourages the public reading of God's word in worship services.

I Timothy 4:13 commands us in the churches to "give attendance to reading" meaning we are to read God's word in worship. But how can we read God's word in worship when people in the congregation bring so many different versions with them. Should most congregations today attempt to read God's word aloud in worship, it would be a veritable Babel of sounds! Because of the proliferation of versions in our churches, the public reading of God's word has been effectively eliminated.

6. New versions discourage the memorization of scripture.

Memorization suffers when people adopt new versions. Why memorize a new version when there are so many from which to choose? Why memorize something that is going out of date and is about to be replaced by something new?

7. Finally the profit motive is what drives these new versions in

most cases.

Millions are being made in the Bible publishing business! New versions mean megabucks for the publishers. Publishers try desperately to produce new versions that will be in big demand! The Christian bookstores have cashed in on this craze for new versions. Modern marketing methods commercialize God's word and seek to sell each new version to some niche market.

All the new versions of God's word are copyrighted so that the publishers can protect their profits. If you have a new version, you had better be sure to get the publisher's permission before using it! Can God's word be copyrighted? Certainly not! The KJV is not copyrighted!

Furthermore, sales promotions have created a negative attitude towards the KJV. All the new versions are compared to the KJV, contrasted with the KJV, and tested by the KJV! The promoters of the new versions ***must*** attack the KJV! They must do so in order to sell their versions.

WHAT ABOUT THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION?

This version is popular among many evangelicals and even fundamentalists because of its claim in the preface that its Old Testament is a translation of the Hebrew Masoretic text and its New Testament is a translation of the Greek Textus Receptus--the same texts used by the translators of the old KJV. The NKJV claims "to preserve the integrity of the original in the language of today."

But a careful reading of the NKJV shows this ***not to be true!*** The NKJV changes many words. Here is one of many examples. Turn in your KJVs to Hebrews 2:16. This is speaking of the incarnation. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Here's how the NKJV renders this important verse: "For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham." The NKJV completely changes the meaning here. This translation actually agrees with the false Unitarian doctrine that this refers to what Christ ***does for*** believers

instead of to **what He became for them!** This involves an error concerning the Person of Christ: specifically concerning the manhood of Christ. Many such examples prove that the NKJV is simply not true to the Textus Receptus or that is a more accurate translation.

The subject headings added in the NKJV contain serious doctrinal errors. For example, just before Romans 8:1 the NKJV has the subject heading "free from indwelling sin." This passage does not deal with this subject at all but with freedom from condemnation. God's word in verses like I John 1:8 teaches that no child of God will ever be free from indwelling sin in this present world. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Only when Christ comes back will we be free from indwelling sin. But we are now free from condemnation. Romans 8:1 says, "*There is therefore **now no condemnation** to them which are in Christ Jesus...*"

The footnotes of the NKJV are a huge problem. Footnotes are supposed to aid the reader in understanding the text.

Surprisingly perhaps, the footnotes in the NKJV make reference to the Vatican and Sinai Codexes and speak as if these things are scholarly and must be considered. Look at 1 John 5:7-8. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." Note 17 in the NKJV refers to this passage and it says that the texts based on the Vatican and Sinai manuscripts, the NU text and the M text, "omit the words from 'in heaven' (in verse 7) through 'on earth' (in verse 8). Only four or five very late Greek manuscripts contain these words." In other words, these texts omit the words "...the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth..." This and other footnotes call into question the truth of the KJV scriptures and leave them open to debate! The translators of the NKJV use the traditional text but then effectively question that text by referring to the Alexandrian text as an aid to understanding!

CONCLUSION

The KJV is still the best translation of God's holy word. No book has been more scrutinized and more often attacked by its variety of enemies than the KJV of the scriptures, yet it remains the most used by the people of God today. The great value of the KJV lies in its faithful translation of the original into English!

The KJV is now 409 years old, much older than America herself! The Declaration of Independence, the U. S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights are only middle-aged in comparison with the KJV. The words of the KJV are plastered all over America's public buildings. The confessions of faith of most Christian denominations are based on the KJV of the scriptures. The changing of the text in the new versions destroys the meaning and thus the use of these confessions of faith. Let us continue to use the KJV, not because it is older but because it is better than the new versions offered in its place!