

DISCIPLESHIP CHALLENGE
THE BIBLE: ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION FOR LIFE
TRUSTING THE BIBLE
WHY WE USE THE KING JAMES VERSION

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THEOLOGICAL REASONS

Some new Bibles are dangerous because of the **theological bias of their translators**. The Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible was presented to the public as a completed work in 1952. The notoriously liberal National Council of Churches authorized it. The unbelieving bias of the majority of the translators is evident in such readings as *Isaiah 7:14*– “*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*” (RSV)

The difference between this reading and the way the verse reads in the King James Version (KJV) is very important. The KJV says that “*a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.*” The liberal bias against the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ is reflected in the RSV translation of this verse. To make matters worse this liberal version translates *Matthew 1:23*, “*Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son.*” This is a correct rendering of the Greek, but with the incorrect translation *Isaiah 7:14* in the same Bible, the impression is given that Matthew misquoted Isaiah. Not only is the doctrine of the virgin birth undermined in the RSV, but also the doctrine of the infallibility of the Bible! No fundamentalist Christian would accept as his standard a theologically liberal translation of the Bible like the RSV.

The *Good News Bible*, (or, properly, *Today’s English Version*) was translated by neo-orthodox Richard Bratcher, and purposely replaces the word “*blood*” with the word “*death*” in many New Testament Passages that refer to the blood of Christ (such as *Colossians 1:20*, *Hebrews 10:19*, and *Revelation 1:5*). Bratcher also replaces the word “*virgin*” with “*girl*” in *Luke 1:27*. His theological bias ruins his translation.

The New International Version (NIV), which has been one of the most popular versions of our day, calls into question these same doctrinal issues, as well as teaching the false doctrine of *baptismal regeneration*. In *Acts 8:26-40* you will find the account of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, the NIV completely omits the 37th verse, which says, “*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.*”

This leads the reader to believe that salvation is not a prerequisite to baptism. Liberal or neo-orthodox religionists also produced other versions, such as *Phillips Translation* and the *New English Bible*. For this reason we will not use them.

TEXTUAL REASONS

Many in the pew do not know that **most of the more than one hundred new versions of the Bible are not translated from the same Hebrew and Greek texts that the King James translators used!** When somebody says that the translation of a certain verse in the KJV is “*unfortunate*,” usually the problem is text rather than translation.

In the late 1800’s a committee of British and American scholars began work on a revision of the KJV. It was decided by them that the Greek text of the New Testament used in the translation of the old Bible was seriously defective. Although that text represented the New Testament as most Christians had accepted it over the centuries, it was spurned because it disagreed with some of the older manuscripts. **Almost all of the new versions are actually translations of the new Greek text generated by this committee. This new text is significantly different from the traditional text.**

When the reader comes to *John 7:53-8:11* even in conservative translations such as the New American Standard Bible (NASB) or the NIV, he finds the whole story of the woman taken in adultery set apart with lines or brackets. A note is placed in relation to the bracketed section that says something like this: “*The earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not have John 7:53-8:11.*”

Something similar is done to the Great Commission in *Mark 16:9-20*. What the textual critics of a century ago were saying is that a large amount of the New Testament read, believed, preached, and obeyed by most of our spiritual forefathers was actually uninspired material added to the text! If this new text theory were true, it would be revolutionary news to the Church. However, the new theory is still very controversial. Jesus said, “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God!*” (*Matt 4:4*)

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A man's needs will not be met unless he has received "every word" that God has spoken. So said the Lord Jesus. Jesus also said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away. But my words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24:35) With this promise, Christ assured us that the very words we need in order to live as we should would be preserved throughout the ages, through wars and persecutions and disasters, even through the fiery end of creation!

So-called "textual criticism" is more faith than it is science. If one studies the thousands of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament with the belief that God has preserved His Word through the years, he will come to different conclusions than one who studies the same documents with the belief that such preservation is unlikely. Much of the work is guesswork and many of the conclusions are debatable. For this reason, thoughtful conservative believers will decide that it is safer to stay with the traditional text than to adopt the revised one. The only widely used English versions that are translated from the traditional text are the KJV and the NKJV.

PHILOSOPHICAL REASONS

Christians ought to be interested in having the very words of God, since this is what Jesus said we need! The KJV is a translation that seeks what scholars call "formal equivalence" to the original text. Others, however, seek "dynamic equivalence." The "formal equivalence" approach seeks to express in English the meaning of the words in Greek. The "dynamic equivalence" approach seeks to express the meaning of the writer in modern idiom.

Anyone who takes seriously our Lord's admonition in Matthew 4:4 will want "formal equivalence" translation. Most of the new versions do not offer this to us. The so-called "Living Bible" (TLB) does not even pretend to be a translation of the words. Copies of this book clearly identify it as a "paraphrase" of God's Word. Dr. Kenneth Taylor wrote the TLB, and freely admitted that it was his paraphrase of the Scriptures. In other words he was putting the Bible into his own words. When a pastor reads John 3:16 to his congregation Sunday morning, that is one thing. When he rephrases it in his own words in order to explain what the verse means, that is another thing.

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Preachers make it clear when they are reading God's Word and when they are paraphrasing it. It is acceptable to paraphrase the Scripture in explaining it, but it is unacceptable to confuse the paraphrase with the actual Word! TLB is not a Bible; it is Dr. Taylor's paraphrase of the Bible. Please keep in mind the distinction. Sadly, the result of Dr. Taylor's paraphrasing was not always very helpful even though he claims to hold "a rigid evangelical position" in his theology. For example, in 1 Samuel 20:30, he introduced vile profanity without warrant from the original text!

The very popular NIV is a "dynamic equivalency" translation. The looseness of the NIV's translation is admitted by the publishers and well known. The scholars who did the translation believe that it is possible and beneficial to put into English what the writers of Scripture meant rather than what they actually said. One great problem with this approach is the element of interpretation that is introduced into English. To interpret is to explain what it means. Experts will say that all translation involves some interpretation even when this is not the object of the translators. However, much more interpretation will go on when the composers of a new version try to convey the thoughts rather than the words. If we let the translators interpret the Bible for us, we might as well let the priest do it! Our belief in the priesthood of the believer calls on us to reject highly interpretive versions.

CULTURAL REASONS

Proverbs 22:28 says, "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." In the spirit of the fifth commandment, we are to honor the traditions given to us by the previous generations of our people. Of course, if such tradition contradicts Scripture, we are to reject it in favor of what Jesus said in Matthew 15:3, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"

We should never elevate tradition to the same level of authority as Scripture. But we should give our forefathers "the benefit of the doubt." We should also be careful to preserve all we can that is truly Christian about our culture. The KJV has played an important and unique role in the development of American culture.

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It can be said that the foundation of our society is the Holy Scriptures. The theology of the Bible influenced the ideas behind our Constitution. The language of the KJV was scattered throughout our early literature. The revivals that formed and changed our culture resulted from the preaching of Bible texts.

For many years, Americans knew a certain amount of Scripture by heart. Many or most could quote at least *The 23rd Psalm*, and recognize *The Beatitudes*, *The Ten Commandments*, and parts of *The Sermon on the Mount* when quoted. But now the influence of the Bible was waned significantly. One reason for the decline of Biblical influence has been the loss of a standard version of the Bible.

For the first two hundred years as a nation, the KJV was the Bible to most Americans. Even after so-called “modern” versions became popular, the KJV continued to be the version memorized, quoted, and publicly read most often. With the present day abandonment of the KJV by so many, our country has been left without a standard text of Scripture. Who can quote *The 23rd Psalm* anymore? Who knows how to repeat the Christmas story? The question always arises: “Which version?”

Everybody realizes that our nation’s spiritual and moral foundations have been crumbling, but few have understood how the multiplication of Bible versions has contributed to the decay. I will stick with the KJV out of concern for our country’s future, if for no other reason! Why should conservative believers join in the mad movement to throw away the standards that made our country blessed?

Our Constitution is jealously guarded against change by an elaborate and difficult amendment process. If it takes two-thirds of Congress and three-fourths of the states to change one sentence in the Constitution, why should the Churches be so willing to accept great changes in the Bible without serious and extensive “due process”?

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PRACTICAL REASONS

Believe it or not, some of the features that are most criticized in the KJV are among the best reasons to keep it! For example, consider the “*thee*’s” and “*thou*’s.” The KJV was not written in the everyday language of people on the street in 1611. It was written in high English, a very precise form of our language.

In modern English, the second person pronoun is expressed with one word, whether in singular or the plural. The word is “*you*.” Most other European languages have both a singular and a plural pronoun in the second, as well as the first and third person. The first person singular pronoun in the nominative case, for example, is “*I*,” while the plural is “*we*.” The third person singular pronoun (also the nominative case) is “*he*,” while the plural is “*they*.”

Modern English, however, has only “*you*” for its entire second person pronoun uses. High English uses “*thou*” for the second person singular, and “*you*” for the plural! In this way, the King James Version lets us know whether the Scripture means a singular “*you*” or a plural “*you*.” “*Thou*” or “*thee*” mean one persons being addressed, and “*ye*” or “*you*” mean several. This feature often helps us interpret a passage.

“*Thou*” – designates the subject of a verb

“*Thee*” – designates the object of a verb

“*Ye*” – designates the subject of a verb

“*You*” – designates the object of a verb

A personal pronoun beginning with “*t*” is a singular pronoun. (*Thou, thee, thy, thine*)

“*-est*” – indicates the second person singular. (The one spoken to)

“*-eth*” – indicates the third person singular. (The one spoken about)

“*Shall*” – refers to the first person in the future tense

“*Will*” – refers to the second or third person in the future tense.

We also find the italics in the King James Bible to be a great help. The translators italicized words they put into the text that do not appear in the original language. The new translations do not do this.

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We appreciate the integrity of the ancient scholars in letting us know what was added and what was original, and are disappointed that modern translators have let us down in this area.

The matter of quotation marks is also a question of importance. The KJV does not use them, because the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts do not have them. The reader determines where a quotation begins and where it ends by the context, and by other means of interpretation at his disposal. The new versions do not give us the luxury of deciding the extent of quotations ourselves because they have inserted quotation marks according to the translator's interpretations of the various passages. *John 1:15-18* and *John 3:27-36* present examples of places in the Bible where the length of the quotation is a matter of interpretation.

Such features make the KJV the most helpful translation of the Bible in English for the serious reader. Even the NKJV, which is only partially translated from the traditional texts, denies us the practical help of high English, italicized additions, and the absence of quotation marks.

Many publishers claim that the new translations are easier to understand, misleading people into thinking that they will be able to better understand the Word of God. However, the derivative copyright law insists that:
"To be copyrightable, a derivative work must be different enough from the original to be regarded as a 'new work' or must contain a substantial amount of material. Making minor changes or additions of little substance to a pre-existing work will not qualify the work as a new version for copyright purposes."

Therefore, all new Bible versions must change the simple one or two syllable Anglo-Saxon words of the KJV into complex, multi-syllable Latinized words. Consequently, the KJV reads at the 5th grade level and the NKJV reads at the 7th grade level. Because of copyright law, there will never be an easier to read Bible than the KJV.

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Here are a few examples, (there are hundreds) of where the NKJV's preference for more difficult words:

	Text Hard Word NKJV	Easy Word KJV
Amos 5:21	savor	smell
2 Corinthians 5:2	habitation	house
Ecclesiastics 2:3	gratify	give
Isaiah 28:1,4	verdant	fat
Isaiah 34:6	overflowing	fat
Deuteronomy 28:50	elderly	old
Romans 3:25	“sins that were previously committed”	“sins that are past”
Romans 7:7	covetousness	lust

For all of these reasons, it just makes good sense for conservative, Bible-believing Churches to keep the old King James Bible as their standard text. The new versions present too many problems and simply are not fit to replace the English version we have trusted for so long. Let's stick with the King James! The movement to abandon it will move us from clarity to confusion, from authority to anarchy, from faith to doubt. We ought not to make such a move!