

KING JAMES ONLY

INTRODUCTION

There is a wide spectrum of varied views held by those identified in some way with the KJO position. One writer has helpfully attempted to classify them in a spectrum of five groups — ranging from the more moderate to the more radical.¹ This paper will use six groups as follows: 1) The KJV is the best or preferred English translation. 2) The Majority Text (GMT)² is the best Greek text. 3) The TR is the only Greek text that should be used. 4) The TR is inspired and/or inerrant. 5) The KJV is inspired and/or inerrant. 6) The KJV is superior to the original autographs. We should clarify that most conservative scholars in groups one and two probably do *not* wish to be identified with those in groups three through six because of the more extreme views of the latter four groups.³ We will attempt to briefly define and discuss the six groups here in light of some of our major concerns.

GROUP ONE — THE KJV IS THE BEST ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

Group one would include those who prefer the KJV thinking that for various reasons it is the best English translation available today. They are nonmilitant and nonjudgmental toward others that do not share their preference and views. Many of us would no doubt identify ourselves with this group. But many others have had little exposure to the Elizabethan English and find other versions (such as the NKJV, NASB or NIV) much more helpful. Since we are an international organization, others whose mother tongue is not English usually prefer to use a Bible in their own language. Of these, along with our national and tribal co-workers, who either speak English and/or are learning English prefer to use a modern English Bible, rather than either the KJV or the NKJV. Before we comment on the other groups, two through six, we will discuss briefly the two subjects which have been at the heart of the KJO controversy — textual criticism and providential preservation.

- a. Biblical Textual Criticism:⁴ There is a wealth of preserved manuscript evidence for the NT text. This would include 1) 5,800+ Greek NT manuscripts, from fragments to whole books, 2) thousands of NT citations in manuscripts (mss) of the early church fathers who wrote from about 95-430 AD in Greek, Syriac and Latin,⁵ and 3) about 19,000 versional

¹ James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1995). 1-4. The author fully realizes that there are many similarities between each group and many differences within each group.

² GMT refers to the most popular majority text, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, Second Ed., 1985, which was edited by Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad. The GMT is not to be confused with the TR, which traditionally has often been referred to as “the majority text” since it closely represented a majority of extant manuscripts.

³ In fact, some prominent teachers in groups two and three have written strong negative critiques of the writings of those like Peter S. Ruckman and Mrs. G. A. Riplinger, *New Age Bible Versions*, (Ararat, VA: A.V. Publications, 1993).

⁴ Not to be confused with “higher criticism” which has to do not so much with the authentic form and structure of the biblical text, but with its history, date, literary style, sources, authorship and value. The *higher criticism* of liberals, even from the 1600s until now, has largely been a very “destructive criticism” of our *Holy Bible*.

⁵ “Indeed, so extensive are these citations that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament.” Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament, Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 2nd

manuscripts. Since no two manuscripts are identical, the goal of textual criticism has always been the study of their differences to determine the form of the original writings. Eventually textual scholars identified two major text-types out of several and called them Byzantine and Alexandrian (because of their perceived origin) based on the form of certain unique, variant readings. The vast majority of Greek manuscripts represents more consistently the Byzantine variants and tend to be later. A minority of the manuscripts, which represents more consistently unique Alexandrian variants, tend to be much earlier. This problem of making judgments on variant readings was not so great for Erasmus, since he only used a few late manuscripts available to him when he produced his first Greek text in 1516 which eventually became known as the TR, or at least the first edition or version of it. The few manuscripts he used contained mostly Byzantine variants. As more and more manuscripts were discovered or made more readily available, understandably textual scholars became more deeply involved in textual criticism utilizing various criteria for making judgments to determine which of the variant readings most likely represent the original autographs.

- b. **Providential Preservation:** Most believers have traditionally held that the writings of the original biblical authors (autographs/autographa) were divinely inspired and inerrant. And we believers rejoice in the abundant evidence of God’s providential preservation of His Holy Word in the biblical, patristic and versional manuscripts. We praise God, too, for His providential preservation of the biblical texts translated into various languages around the world — especially since the invention of the printing press. Biblical and Church history makes it very evident how God has marvelously used both believers and unbelievers in the providential preservation of His precious Word. But believers sometimes differ in their views as to their understanding of both “textual criticism” and “providential preservation.” The differing views on these two subjects are probably the major cause for the differing views of believers regarding texts and versions.

GROUP TWO — THE MAJORITY TEXT (GMT) IS THE BEST GREEK TEXT.

Group two includes those who believe that the 1985 GMT best represents the original autographs, largely because it follows more closely the variant readings of the Byzantine text type found in the *majority* of the manuscripts. And they believe that God’s Word is providentially preserved more perfectly in the GMT than either the TR⁶ or the Critical text (CT).⁷ But they certainly would not claim inspiration or inerrancy for either the TR or the GMT. They recognize that NT “textual criticism has not produced a ‘final’ Greek text.”⁸ Prior to the publication of the GMT in 1982, most teachers and scholars in this group would have claimed: “The Greek text known as the Textus Receptus is superior to any modern critical text and the King James Version

Edition, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 86.

⁶ This paper only deals with issues related to the New Testament (NT). So, the use of TR has reference only to the Greek NT, not the whole Bible. The TR is also referred to as the established, Received, Byzantine, Majority (prior to 1982), Traditional or Ecclesiastical Text.

⁷ “CT” refers to the Nestle-Aland-UBS Greek text, which follows in the line of increasingly more eclectic CTs since Westcott & Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, 1881.

⁸ Hodges & Farstad, *The NKJV Greek English Interlinear New Testament*, “Introduction,” (Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, 1994): x

is a better Bible than any contemporary translation.”⁹ Those who favor the GMT would also prefer either the KJV, or perhaps the New King James Version (NKJV), as the best of all English versions. But their reason for this is that both the KJV and the NKJV are based more on the Byzantine/majority variant readings than all the other English versions produced over the 20th century. The latter versions are mostly based not on the TR or the GMT but on the CT or its predecessors. Scholars in Group two tend to agree with 1) some of the arguments that scholars of the 1880s¹⁰ used in their criticism of the earlier CTs and 2) their desire to see the TR revised to be more consistent with the true Byzantine majority. Some of our missionaries possibly embrace this view, but probably most of us would not.

GROUP THREE — THE TR IS THE ONLY TEXT THAT SHOULD BE USED.

Group three represents those who, like those in group two, believe that “it is in the Byzantine text that Christ has fulfilled His promise always to preserve in His Church the true New Testament text.”¹¹ But those in Group three insist that only the TR, rather than any other text including the GMT, should be used by “believing Bible students” and translators because the TR is the common or “Traditional text” used by the Christian church from the reformation of the early 16th century until almost the end of the 19th century. This is based on “God’s providential preservation” and the “logic of faith.” The leading spokesman of this view, E. F. Hills, postulated six axioms of “consistently Christian textual criticism,” summarized as follows: [1] “The purpose of the providential preservation of the New Testament is to preserve the infallibility of the inspired original text [2] Providential preservation concentrated itself on the Greek New Testament Text [3] This providential preservation operated within the sphere of the Greek [Catholic] Church [4] Providential preservation operated through the testimony of the Holy Spirit [5] The text of the majority of the manuscripts is the providentially preserved and approved text [6] The text of the majority of the manuscripts is the standard text [the TR].”¹² The author also makes this claim: “To reject this view is to act unreasonably. It is to fly in face of the facts. Those, moreover, who reject this orthodox view of the New Testament text have rejected not merely the facts but also the promise of Christ always to preserve the true New Testament text and the doctrines of the Divine inspiration and

⁹ Zane C. Hodges, “Book Review,” Peter Ruckman, *The Bible “Babel,”* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1964) printed in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Oct. 1967.

¹⁰ The main spokesman for this view was John William Burgon (1813-1888) who was the High Anglican Dean of Chichester in Sussex, England. Others contemporary with Burgon include F. H. A. Scrivener and E. Miller. More recent promoters in this group include conservative evangelicals such as Z. Hodges, A. Farstad, W. Pickering and others. All of these have expounded reasons for their rejection of the textual critical views of Tischendorf, Tregelles and especially Westcott and Hort. Hills particularly and repeatedly identifies their work as “**naturalistic** textual criticism” partly since all have used the same criteria scholars use for making judgments on variants of nonbiblical manuscripts of antiquity.

¹¹ Hills, “The Magnificent Burgon,” Cited in David O. Fuller, Editor, *Which Bible?* 5th Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1975), 104.

¹² James A. Price, “King James Only View of Edward F. Hills,” *Baptist Biblical Heritage*, Volume 1 Number 4, Winter 1990-91. These “axioms” are discussed in Hills, *King James Version Defended*, (Christian Research Press, Des Moines, Iowa, 1956) 30-35. Most of us would agree with S. L. Johnson that such axioms are better called “presuppositions which the average New Testament scholar would be hesitant in accepting” Book Reviews, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 1957, 280. (Price, who formerly taught at Tennessee Temple, wrote his 386 page Th.D. doctoral dissertation on, *The King James Only Controversy in American Fundamentalism Since 1950*.

providential preservation of Scripture implied in this promise.”¹³

Erasmus produced the first edition of the TR which, although based on just a few manuscripts, actually favored the Byzantine text type of the manuscript majority. However, because of the limited number of manuscripts available to him and by his using certain readings from his Latin Vulgate Bible,¹⁴ many of the readings in his TR did not actually represent the majority readings. In fact, a few are not found in any extant Greek manuscript. Hills claimed “that these few Latin Vulgate readings which were incorporated into the Textus Receptus were genuine readings which had been [providentially] preserved in the usage of the Latin-speaking [Roman Catholic] Church. Erasmus . . . was guided providentially by the common faith to include these readings in his printed Greek New Testament text of the majority of the Greek manuscripts. In the Textus Receptus God corrected the few mistakes of any consequence which yet remained in the Traditional New Testament text of the majority of the Greek manuscripts.”¹⁵ This presupposition is a major difference Hills had with Burgon.

Those in group three recognize that the Septuagint (LXX) and the Latin Vulgate were “the providentially appointed” Bible versions for use in the early Church and medieval Europe respectively. And they would agree with Hills’ claim that “much more is the King James Version the providentially appointed Bible for English-speaking Christians today. In it the true text of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament has been restored, and the errors of the Septuagint and of the Latin Vulgate have been corrected.”¹⁶ It is also claimed that the KJV is an independent “variety of the Textus Receptus.”¹⁷ Those in this group have made other claims, such as: “It is only among the readers of the KJV that due love and reverence for God’s Word may be found If you are a mature Christian, you will want to read the King James Version Of all the English Bibles now in print only the King James Version is founded on the logic of faith. Therefore, only the King James Version can be preached authoritatively and studied believably For all these modern versions are founded on the naturalistic New Testament textual criticism which ignores the special, providential preservation of the holy Scriptures If you ignore this providence and choose to adopt one of these modern versions, you will be taking the first step in the logic of unbelief.”¹⁸ Even so, those in this group do at times acknowledge that neither the TR nor the KJV is inspired and inerrant. It has been put like this: “Admittedly the King James Version is not *ideally* perfect. No translation ever can be. But it is the product of such God-guided scholarship that it is *practically* perfect.”¹⁹

Although some among us may accept some/most of these views, they do not represent the official position of this organization. The kind of divisive, judgmental rhetoric demonstrated in the

¹³ Hills, cited in Fuller, *Which Bible?* 104. Such views explain why so many in Group 3 have been so critical of the GMT.

¹⁴ Such as readings in Mt. 10:8; 27:35; John 3:25; Acts 8:37; 9:5-6; 20:28; Rom. 16:25-27; Rev. 22:19.

¹⁵ Edward F. Hills, *Believing Bible Study*, 2nd Edition, (Des Moines, IA: The Christian Research Press, 1967, 1977) 196.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 206. This is partly because the KJV 1769 wording was the basis for the Scrivener’s 1894 TR in use ever since.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 54, 86-87.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

preceding paragraph is certainly not helpful. Many conservative scholars believe that most variant readings of the Alexandrian manuscripts are to be preferred partly because they are generally earlier and naturally closer to the originals. They also generally agree with Daniel Wallace (New Testament Greek scholar) who wrote, “what is today the majority text did not become a majority until the ninth century. In fact ... the majority text did not exist in the first four centuries. Not only this, but for the letters of Paul, not even one majority text manuscript exists from before the ninth century. To embrace the majority text for the Pauline Epistles, then, requires an 800-year leap of faith. When Westcott and Hort developed their theory of textual criticism, only one papyrus manuscript was known to them. Since that time almost 100 have been discovered. More than fifty of these came from before the middle of the fourth century. Yet not one belongs to the majority text. The Westcott-Hort theory, with its many flaws (which all textual critics today acknowledge), was apparently still right on its basic tenet: the Byzantine texttype—or majority text—did not exist in the first three centuries.”²⁰ However there are many other criteria (besides quantity and age) that are also utilized by scholars for judging variants. Based on the weight of all the criteria most scholars now favor a more eclectic approach rather than accepting a variant reading simply because it is identified with one particular text type. It has been clearly shown that just in The Revelation, the GMT differs from the TR in at least 218 places where words and phrases are added, deleted or altered. (In 66 of these, the Critical Text agrees with the Textus Receptus against the Greek Majority Text).²¹ Many have noted “that there is no majority text of the book of Revelation [And] since God did not preserve a majority text for Revelation, it is at least possible that He might also preserve the best text of other NT books in a minority of manuscripts as well.”²²

A very high percentage of the world’s population have the possibility of access to at least portions of God’s marvelously preserved Word translated into 3,384 languages as of October 2019.²³ None of these translations are perfect, and many, if not most, are probably based mostly on the CT or its ancestors, not the TR or the GMT. Most of us do not believe that God has preserved His Word only in the Byzantine and/or the majority manuscripts as represented in either the TR or the GMT. Most of our Bible translators use translation aids that favor the CT rather than the TR/GMT. Since neither text incorporates all the readings of the *majority* of the manuscripts, and, if preservation has to do with the majority of manuscripts, then how can either text alone represent accurately the *providentially preserved* Word of God? The KJV translators (as well as the New Testament authors and Jesus) considered the LXX translation to be “the Word of

²⁰ Daniel B. Wallace, “The majority Text and the Original Text: Are They Identical?” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April-June 1991, 159. Wallace also argues: “None of the versions produced in the first three centuries was based on the Byzantine Text There are about 15,000 versional manuscripts. The vast majority of them (mostly 10,000 Vulgate copies) do not affirm the Byzantine text. If one wishes to speak about the majority, why restrict the discussion only to extant Greek witnesses and not include the versional witnesses? The Coptic, Ethiopic, Latin and Syriac versions came from all over the Mediterranean region. In none of these locales was the Byzantine Text apparently used. This is strong evidence that the Byzantine text did not exist in the first three centuries.” pp. 160-161.

²¹ See the textual footnotes in Hodges/Farstad, *The NKJV Greek English Interlinear New Testament*, (Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994), 839-899.

²² Douglas S. Chinn and Robert C. Newman, *Demystifying the Controversy Over the Textus Receptus and the King James Version of the Bible*, Research Report No. 3 (Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1979), 12-13.

²³ <https://www.wycliffe.net/resources/scripture-access-statistics/>

God” even though it was and is known to be an imperfect translation.²⁴

GROUP FOUR — THE GREEK TEXTUS RECEPTUS (TR) IS INSPIRED AND/OR INERRANT.

Those in group four have confidence only in the TR because they are firmly convinced that the TR alone is inspired and/or inerrant. Obviously, they would not only repudiate the CT, but the GMT as well. After admitting that there “are a few mistranslations in the King James English,” a leading proponent of “an inerrant TR” makes the claim that “every word [in the KJV] is based upon a Greek word in the Textus Receptus which was given by the inspiration of God, and has been providentially preserved for us today.”²⁵ The TR “is known as the Greek Text of Stephens 1550.”²⁶ Another claim is even made that “the Textus Receptus ... was the text used by the Apostles in separate manuscript form. When the Spirit-directed consciousness of the early church gathered these separate God-inspired manuscripts into book form, they had the Received Text, the Textus Receptus.”²⁷ This leads to other claims: “Any version of the Bible, that does not agree with the Greek Textus Receptus, from which the King James Bible was translated in 1611, is certainly to be founded upon corrupted manuscripts.”²⁸ “Because God inspired only one Bible, all other writings which are not in full agreement with it cannot possibly be the true Word of God It is impossible to be saved without ‘Faith,’ and perfect-saving-faith can only be produced by the ‘ONE’ Bible God wrote, and that we find only in translations which agree with the Greek Textus Receptus.”²⁹

The *original autographs* of the biblical authors were Divinely inspired. In our judgment, neither copies of manuscripts nor the various Greek texts produced from them were/are so inspired. This includes the TR however it may be defined. The TR version currently in use is a good Greek text. But it is neither inspired nor inerrant. John W. Burgon was correct when he wrote: “Once for all, we request it may be clearly understood that we do not, by any means, claim perfection for the Received Text. We entertain no extravagant notions on the subject. Again, and again we shall have occasion to point out that the Textus Receptus needs correction ... in not a few

²⁴ See “The Translators to the Reader,” *The Holy Bible*, 1611 Edition (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990). “The translation of the Seventy [LXX] dissenteth from the Original in many places, neither doth it come near it, for perspicuity, gravity, majesty; yet which of the Apostles did condemn it? Condemn it? Nay, they used it, (as is apparent, and as Saint Jerome and most learned men do confess) which they would not have done, nor by their example of using it, so grace and commend it to the Church, if it had been unworthy the appellation and name of the Word of God.” [Spelling modified].

²⁵ James Jasper Ray, *God Wrote Only One Bible*, (Eugene, OR: The Eye-Opener Publishers, 1955, 1980), 102.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 93. The TR was based largely on Stephen’s 1550 edition, which was based mostly on Erasmus’ first edition “which, as Erasmus himself declared later, was ‘precipitated rather than edited’ Owing to the haste in production, the volume contains hundreds of typographical errors; in fact, Scrivener once declared, ‘[It] is in that respect the most faulty book I know.’” B. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 99.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 122. David Otis Fuller was apparently influenced by Ray’s “splendid book.” David O. Fuller, Editor, *Which Bible?* 5th Edition (Grand Rapids MI: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1975), 2. The last half (10 chapters) of his book is a reprint of Benjamin G. Wilkinson, *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated*, 1930. Fuller did not identify Wilkinson as the Seventh Day Adventist teacher-missionary that he was. This book must have had a very deep impression on Fuller.

particulars, the ‘textus receptus’ does call for revision, certainly.”³⁰

The TR currently used by scholars did not even exist in 1611. It is sort of an “eclectic” text, or a “KJV English-back-to-Greek” text based on several different Greek editions used by the KJV translators. It is “purportedly that which underlies the *King James Version*, as reconstructed by F. H. A. Scrivener in 1894. It thus differs to a degree from all previously printed editions of the Received Text (there are over 250 differences, most of them quite minor, between this text and the Stephens 1550 ‘standard’ *Textus Receptus*). The present text was typeset in England for the Trinitarian Bible Society and corresponds to *The New Testament in the Original Greek According to the Text Followed in the Authorized Version*, edited by F. H. A. Scrivener, and originally published by Cambridge University Press in 1894 and 1902. The present Trinitarian Bible Society edition of the Greek New Testament was published in 1976. Careful study, however, will show that this present text does not agree 100% with the text used by the KJV translators, though virtually always it does so. In places it has a different reading than that found in the KJV In other places the present text gives Greek words where the KJV translators indicated by italics that they had none Some of these readings do have minority MSS support.”³¹ The so-called TR was published in at least 19 editions by Cardinal Ximenes, Erasmus, Stephanus and Beza between 1514 and 1604. The KJV translators used variants from several of these editions. In Scrivener’s collation, “the KJV follows Beza against Stephanus in 113 places, Stephanus against Beza in 59 places; the Complutensian [Ximenes], Erasmus, and the [Latin] Vulgate against both Stephanus and Beza in 80 places.”³² Such facts are impossible to reconcile with any perceived doctrine of *verbal* inspiration for the TR. And any such claims should include an answer to the question, “Which TR?” And one needs to realize that *all* of them contain some readings not found in *any* extant Greek manuscript of the New Testament. Most of these came from Jerome’s Latin Vulgate by the hand of Erasmus.

GROUP FIVE — THE KJV IS INSPIRED AND/OR INERRANT.

Probably most KJO adherents are in group five. These believe that the KJV 1611 (or, possibly without realizing it, Benjamin Blayney’s 1769 edition³³ currently in use) is inspired and/or inerrant as well as the TR. In answer to the question, “Do we have the absolutely perfect Word of God today?” they would insist that “God has preserved it [the KJV Bible] perfect for us today. It was not just perfect in the original autographs.”³⁴ In *The Answer Book*, it is stated, “Question #28: Is the King James Bible inspired or preserved? Answer: The original autographs were inspired. The King James Bible is those same autographs preserved up to today

³⁰ John W. Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, (London, 1883). He realized that the TR did not always use majority readings.

³¹ Jay P. Green, Sr. General Editor, “Preface,” *The Pocket Interlinear New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990).

³² F.H.A. Scrivener, *The Authorized Version of the Holy Bible — 1611, Its Subsequent Reprints and Modern Representatives*, Cambridge, 1884, 60. Cited in Gary R. Hudson, “Why Dean Burgon would not join the Dean Burgon Society,” *Baptist Biblical Heritage*.

³³ Concerning his revision, Blayney stated, that “many errors that were found in former editions have been corrected, and the text reformed to such a standard of purity, as it is presumed, is not to be met with in any other edition hitherto extant.” Scrivener, *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible*. 3. Cited in Gary R. Hudson, “Revision Is No Myth.” Author gives a “partial list” of 75 corrections.

³⁴ B. Burton, *Let’s Weigh the Evidence, Which Bible is the Real Word of God?* (Chino, CA: Chick Publications, 1983), 2-3.

.... Question #30: The King James Bible is a mere translation from Greek to English. A translation can't be as good as the originals, can it? Answer: A translation cannot only be 'as good' as the originals, but better."³⁵ Another has written, "I believe that the King James Version does not have any errors."³⁶ In other words, "I believe I have a perfect Bible in my hands ... the KJV... needs no correction."³⁷ And again, "I believe I have [in the KJV] the perfect, inspired Word of God because of God's promise of preservation."³⁸

Biblical texts such as 2 Tim. 3:16-17 and 2 Pet. 1:19-21 give witness to divine inspiration of the canonized writings of biblical authors. Manuscripts, compiled texts and translations are the results of divine preservation of these writings. The doctrine of inerrancy means absolute perfection for the autographs but not for any of the manuscript copies of them, and either texts or translations made from them, including the TR and the KJV. "According to Scrivener (1884), there are 8,422 marginal notes in the 1611 edition of the King James Version, including the Apocrypha. In the Old Testament, Scrivener goes on to say, 4,111 of the marginal notes give the more literal meaning of the Hebrew or Aramaic, 2,156 give alternative translations and 67 give variant readings. In the New Testament 112 of the marginal notes give literal rendering of the Greek, 582 give alternative translations and 37 give variant readings As the marginal notes indicate, the King James translators did not regard their work as perfect or inspired."³⁹ (And these marginal notes also included numerous cross-references to verses in the 14 apocryphal books which were included in all the earlier editions of the KJV). Every version of the KJV ever published has included several words and clauses not found in any Greek NT manuscript ever discovered. Any claim of an inspired and/or inerrant KJV must also answer the question, "Which KJV?"

J.W. Burgon correctly wrote: "We hold that a revised edition of the authorized Version of our English Bible, (if executed with consummate ability and learning), would at any time be a work of inestimable value It is often urged on behalf of the Revisionists [RV 1881] that over not a few dark places of St. Paul's Epistles their labors have thrown important light. Let it not be supposed that we deny this."⁴⁰ John R. Rice wisely noted that: "A perfect translation of the Bible is humanly impossible [T]here are no perfect translations"⁴¹ partly because the "nature of language does not permit a 'perfect' translation — the semantic area of words differ between

³⁵ Samuel Gipp, *The Answer Book*, <http://staggs.pair.com/kjbp/>

³⁶ D. O. Fuller, "Which Bible is Preserved of God," *O Timothy magazine*, Vol. 9, Issue 9, 1992. <http://staggs.pair.com/kjbp>

³⁷ D. W. Cloud, (first appeared in *O Timothy magazine*, Vol. 11, Issue 6, 1994). www.wayof-life.org/fbns/whichtr.htm

³⁸ D. W. Cloud, "Some Thoughts on Inspiration and Preservation," *O Timothy magazine*, Vol. 9, Issue 11, 1992. <http://staggs.pair.com/kjbp/>

³⁹ E.F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, 216. In "The Translators to the Readers," the KJV men defended their inclusion of marginal notes with these words: "Some peradventure would have no variety of senses to be set in the margin, lest the authority of the Scriptures for deciding of controversies by that show of uncertainty should somewhat be shaken. But we hold their judgment not to be so sound in this point They that are wise had rather have their judgments at liberty in differences of readings, than to be captivated to one, when it may be the other."

⁴⁰ J. Burgon, *Revision Revised*, 11.

⁴¹ John R. Rice, *Our God-Breathed Book — The Bible, the Verbally Inspired, Eternal, Inerrant Word of God*, (Murfreeboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1969), 376.

languages so that there is seldom complete overlap.”⁴² For instance, the KJV translators translated the single Hebrew words, *dabar* and *nathan*, each with more than 60 different English words and phrases depending on their context. Even a good unabridged English dictionary would not list most of these words/phrases as even being synonymous. Obviously, none are identical formal equivalents to either *dabar* or *nathan*.

GROUP SIX — THE KJV IS SUPERIOR TO ANY GREEK TEXT.

Group six, like group five, believe that the KJV 1611 is inspired and/or inerrant. But they also believe that the KJV 1611 is “new revelation,” even superior to any Greek text. This group would be the more radical of the militant groups three through six. A leading Ph.D. promoter of this view claims to have given proof in his book “for the superiority of the A.V. 1611 English over the ‘Original Greek.’”⁴³ It is also claimed that “in exceptional cases, where the majority of Greek manuscripts stand against the A.V. 1611, put them in file 13 Where any version or text contradicts the A.V. 1611, THROW IT OUT.”⁴⁴ It is thus no wonder that, consistent with the KJV, the additional words in 1 John 5:7-8 are so vehemently defended even though admittedly “there is little evidence in the Greek manuscripts for the reading.”⁴⁵

There has *never been* an edition of the NT Greek text that was/is in total agreement with *any* edition of the KJV ever printed, including the KJV 1611. Except for a copy of *The Holy Bible*, 1611 Edition in modern font printed by Thomas Nelson Publishers in 1990, probably most of our personnel have never seen a copy of the original KJV 1611.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE KJV

An argument raised by numerous KJV Only scholars is this: “The language of the AV is not simply beautiful Elizabethan prose, it is also a kind of ‘biblical English,’ and therefore timeless and unique. The abandonment of the AV for a modern English version leaves us with an English Bible that is here today, gone tomorrow.”⁴⁶ Another has written, “One of the charges consistently leveled against the King James Version is that its language is archaic and obsolete. The answer is a simple one: it is intended to be. In 1611 the King James Version was as ‘out of date’ as it is today The translators avoided the speech of their day for a basic English which would be simple, timeless and

⁴² Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1977, 1980).

⁴³ Peter S. Ruckman, (Preface, II,” *The Christian’s Handbook of Manuscript Evidence* (Pensacola, FL: Pensacola Bible Press, 1970).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 130, 172.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 128. [Other examples of assorted claims include these: “A man, Christian or otherwise, has to be as blind as a bat backing in backwards to fail to see that every Bible translated since 1880 is a Roman Catholic Bible, or a Communist Bible. Bible translating ceased in 1611 and since then competitors of the A.V. 1611 have been engaged in the book-selling business” (p.156). The LXX “never existed until 100 years after the Death and Resurrection of Christ” (p.38)].

⁴⁶ William O. Einwechter, *English Bible Translations By What Standard?* (Mill Hall, PA: Preston Speed Publications, 1996), 54. *Ibid.*, 72. The author has here in mind the “original texts of Scripture ... the TR and Masoretic text.” Quoting F. Turretin’s, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Einwechter writes, “By the original texts, we do not mean the autographs ... which certainly do not exist. We mean their apographs which are so called because they set forth to us the Word of God in the very words of those who wrote under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit.” *Ibid.*, 34-35.

beautiful, and they succeeded.”⁴⁷ Such statements echo these words: “[T]he English of the King James Version is not the English of the early 17th century. To be exact, it is not a type of English that was ever spoken anywhere. It is biblical English, which was not used on ordinary occasions even by the translators who produced the King James Version Even in their use of thee and thou the translators were not following the 17th-century English usage but biblical usage”⁴⁸ The language of the KJV “is not just old English. It is biblical English which has been developed providentially for the express purpose of praising God.”⁴⁹ If these statements be true, and if there is such a thing as a “biblical English” used ONLY in the KJV that remains “timeless” since 1611, then it certainly contradicts our own Bible translation objectives.

Any good translation of the Bible will meet two major criteria: First, it will accurately convey the meaning of the original text being translated. Second, *it will be in the language actually spoken by those for whom the translation is intended*. A strong emphasis should be placed on *meaning-based* translations. Translators should strive more for *complete equivalence* in meaning rather than *formal equivalence*. This goal is in harmony with that of William Tyndale who had such a burden that “John Ploughman [a symbol of the hard-working, ignorant . . . desperately poor country Englishman] must read the Scriptures for himself, in plain ploughman’s English.” That’s why he responded to a well-educated priest, “I defy the pope and all his laws; if God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost.”⁵⁰ If God has ordained a uniquely sacred “biblical English,” a type of English never spoken by anyone anywhere, then are we to assume that our translators are supposed to come up with some sort of a “biblical Yanomami” or a “biblical Yagaria” unspoken by any Yanomami or Yagaria speakers? We think not. To make an English translation using a form of English “that is not a type of English that was ever spoken anywhere” is contrary to sound translation principles. To insist that such a translation is to be timelessly preserved for everyday use by anyone makes no sense to us.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The godliness or the sincerity of most who embrace the KJV-Only position is not being questioned. However, it appears that most of the KJV-Only views are rooted in some invalid presuppositions that include these three: 1) God has preserved His Word ONLY in the majority of mss and/or the TR; 2) ONLY the TR is inspired and/or inerrant, and 3) ONLY the KJV is inspired and/or inerrant. Such false assumptions explain why so much of KJO writings compare all other Greek texts with the TR and all other English versions with the KJV to show what has been deliberately *deleted, added, or altered* from the “*One Bible God wrote*.”

The KJV translators/*revisers* correctly insisted: “We never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one . . . but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against, that hath been our endeavour, that our mark [W]e do not deny, nay, we affirm and avow, that the

⁴⁷ Rousas J. Rushdoony, “Translation and Subversion,” *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 12 (1989), 12-13. Cited in Einwechter, *English Bible Translations By What Standard?* 55.

⁴⁸ E. F. Hills, *The King James Versions Defended*, 218.

⁴⁹ E. F. Hills, *Believing Bible Study*, 86.

⁵⁰ Brian H. Edwards, *God’s Outlaw, The Story of William Tyndale and the English Bible*, (Welwyn, Hertfordshire, England: Evangelical Press, 1976, 1988) 51, 61.

very meanest translation of the Bible in English, set forth by the men of our profession ... containeth the Word of God, nay, is the Word of God No cause therefore why the Word translated should be denied to be the Word, or forbidden to be current, notwithstanding that some imperfections and blemishes may be noted in the setting forth of it.”⁵¹

A major issue in this KJO “debate” seems to center around one’s interpretation of “variant readings” in the wealth of extant manuscripts now available. Of the thousands of variants, only a minute percentage of them effect the sense of a passage in any way. “Westcott and Hort estimated that only about one-eighth of all variants has any weight, as most of them are merely mechanical matters such as spelling or style. Of the whole, then only about one-sixtieth rise above ‘trivialities,’ or can in any sense be called ‘substantial variations.’ Mathematically that would compute to a text that is 98.33 percent pure whether the critic adopts the Textus Receptus, Majority Text, Nestle-Aland Text, or some eclectic text of the New Testament.”⁵² We are encouraged to realize “(1) that the vast majority of the variant readings are so slight (a mere question of a single letter, or an accent, or a prefix, or a case ending) as not to raise any question at all concerning the true sense of the passage; and (2) that the sum of all the variant readings taken together does not give ground for the slightest doubt as to any of the fundamental points of faith and doctrine. In other words, the very Text that could be constructed from the abundant materials available would not disturb any of the great truths of the Christian faith.”⁵³ The TR is a good Greek text, although neither perfect nor necessarily the best one. The KJV is a good English translation, although neither perfect nor necessarily the best one.⁵⁴ Neither the TR nor the KJV are being opposed by this paper. However, there are serious problems with the “TR-only” and the “KJV-only” positions.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

BOOKS:

- Ronald Bridges & Luther A. Weigle, *The King James Bible Word Book*, (Nashville. TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994).⁵⁵
- D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate, A Plea for Realism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979).

⁵¹ KJV Preface, “Translators to the Reader.”

⁵² Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible, Revised and Expanded* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986). 474. Daniel Wallace (DTS) put it this way: “There are approximately 300,000 textual variants among New Testament manuscripts. The *Majority Text* differs from the *Textus Receptus* in almost 2,000 places. So the agreement is better than 99 percent. But the *Majority Text* differs from the modern critical text in only 6,500 places. In other words the two texts agree almost 98 percent of the time. Not only that, but the vast majority of these differences are so minor that they neither show up in translation nor affect exegesis.” D. Wallace, “The Majority Text and the Original Text: Are they Identical?” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April-June, 1991, 157-158.

⁵³ Philip Mauro, cited in Chinn & Newman, *Demystifying the Controversy ...* 23.

⁵⁴ This paper does *not* take the same anti-KJV attitude as America’s Pilgrim fathers who “would not even allow it [the KJV] on board the Mayflower, preferring instead the Geneva Bible of 1560.” Eugene H. Glassman, *The Translation Debate, What Makes a Bible Translation Good?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 15.

⁵⁵ This 422-page book is “A contemporary dictionary of curious and archaic words” found in the KJV. It includes articles on 827 words and phrases. It does not include articles on proper names or on the names of animals, trees, jewels and the like ... quaint forms of spelling” or archaic grammatical constructions. It could be an encouraging help to KJV users.

- Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible, Revised and Expanded* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986).
- Gustavus Paine, *The Men Behind the King James Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977).
- Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament, Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration, 2nd Edition*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).⁵⁶
- James B. Williams, Gen. Ed., *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man*, (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1999).⁵⁷
- James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust the Modern Translations?* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1995).

PAMPHLETS:

- John Ankerberg & John Weldon, *The facts on The King James Only Debate*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996).
- Stewart Custer, *The Truth About the King James Version Controversy*, (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, Inc., 1981).
- Douglas K. Kutilek, *Erasmus: His Greek Text and His Theology — Research Report No. 32*, (Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute 1986).
- Douglas S. Chinn and Robert C. Newman, *Demystifying the Controversy Over the Textus Receptus and the King James Version of the Bible, Research Report No. 3* (Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1979).
- Robert L. Sumner, *Bible Translations, Biblical Evangelism*, 1979. First published in John R. Rice, *Sword of the Lord*, Feb. 1979.
- G. C. Weiss, *What You Should Know About Bible Translations* (Lincoln, NE: Back to the Bible, 1977).

⁵⁶ Although a strong advocate and joint editor of the GMT, Zane C. Hodges has stated: “By far the best available handbook on textual criticism, Metzger’s *Text of the New Testament* has topped its field ever since its initial appearance in 1964 It goes almost without saying that serious students of textual criticism can hardly be satisfied not to possess the most recent edition of Metzger, whether this or (hopefully) any succeeding ones which may appear.” “Book Reviews,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April 1969, 174. Metzger is one of the main editors of the CT and author of *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, which gives explanations for the editors’ choice of CT variants.

⁵⁷ B. J. Williams is on the Bob Jones University Board of Trustees. Most of the Fundamentalist contributors to this volume are or have been associated with BJU.

ARTICLES:

- “The Translators to the Reader,”⁵⁸ *The Holy Bible*, 1611 Edition (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990).
- Marchant A. King, “Should Conservatives Abandon Textual Criticism?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 130:517 (Jan 73), 35-40.
- James A. Price, “King James Only View of Edward F. Hills,” *Baptist Biblical Heritage*, (Vol.1, No. 4, Winter 1990-91).
- Daniel B. Wallace, “Inspiration, Preservation, and New Testament Textual Criticism,” *Grace Theological Journal*, (Vol. 12:1, Spring 1991), 21-50. A reprint from *New Testament Essays in Honor of Homer A. Kent, Jr.*, edited by Gary T. Meadors (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1991), 69-102.
- D. Wallace, “Some Second Thoughts on the Majority Text,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, (146:583, July-Sept. 1989), 270-290.
- D. Wallace, “The Majority Text and the Original Text: Are They Identical?” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, (148:590, April-June 1991), 151-169.
- D. Wallace, “The Majority-Text Theory: History, Methods And Critique,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, (Vol. 37, June 1994) 185-215.
- James R. White. *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust the Modern Translations?* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1995). A Review by Brian A. Shealy, *Masters Seminary Journal*, (Vol. 8:1 Spring, 1997), 126-27.

⁵⁸ This “defensive” document was written by Myles Smith, one of two final editors of the KJV 1611, as a foreword to that revision. This document is highly recommend as it so clearly portrays the thinking of the KJV revisers and the rationale for translation revisions.