

THE KING JAMES CONTROVERSY

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Angry faces, name calling and reams of articles from every corner of the country relative to the KJV proclaim there is a controversy.

This controversy has been caused by overzealous people who are attempting to transfer the inspiration of the original autographs to the KJV version.

This new theory maintains (in varying degrees) that the KJV is inerrant, purified, perfect, infallible, authentic. Therefore it is natural that some contend that the KJV is the only version we are to use.

So far have they gone with this theory they maintain that if you are to translate the Bible into a foreign language, you must translate from the KJV not the originals!

This paper is no attack upon the KJV but it is an attack upon the error that the KJ is perfect, that it contains no errors, and that it takes the place of the originals. These errors we cannot endure, no not for an hour.

I. THE KJV IS NOT A PERFECT VERSION BECAUSE THE LAMP OF INSPIRATION WAS EXTINGUISHED 1500 YEARS BEFORE THE KJ TRANSLATORS BEGAN THEIR WORK

Perfection in any realm for sinful men is impossible apart from miraculous power. Paul could never have written a perfect translation himself without this power! Even the original autographs were perfect only because the men who wrote them were moved by the Holy Spirit! [II P 1:21]. This moving did not come by the will of the prophets or apostles, and certainly not at the will of an Episcopalian king!

Now Baptists have always held that miracles (which includes all the supernatural gifts of the Holy spirit) passed away at the close of the apostolic age. We no longer have the power to heal the sick and raise the dead. All the so called miracle workers do not sway me in the least from this position.

We can no more make an inspired translation of the Bible without the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit than we can raise a dead man from the grave. That power is not available to us today and it was not available to the KJ translators in 1604.

I earnestly contend that the lamp of inspiration was extinguished for a millennium and a half before the KJV was made. Did God restore these miracles in 1611? Did he put Elijah's mantle on those 54 Episcopalians? If not, then it follows that no matter how close, how good, or how accurate the KJV is we must give up this false theory that it is a perfect version.

II. THE KJV IS NOT A PERFECT VERSION DUE TO THE RULES UNDER WHICH THE TRANSLATORS HAD TO WORK

The KJV cannot be a perfect version because the translators were given rules which forbid them from giving the clear meaning of the Word of God. The translators were given rules by King James and # 3 and #4 especially crippled proper translation. They are as follows: #3. "The old ecclesiastical words to be kept: as the word church, not to be translated congregation." #4. When any word hath divers significations, that to be kept which hath been most commonly used by the most eminent fathers, being agreeable to the propriety of place and the analogy of faith." [McClintock & Strong, Vol. I, P. 560].

Translation is difficult enough at best. But when a translator is forbidden to translate a word, or required to use words which do not give the true meaning of the original not only is perfection impossible, but mistranslation is mandated.

These rules of King James forbid them from giving the meaning of *baptizein* as dip or immerse when it referred to the initial act of a believer who wished to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Proof of this is found by comparing their translation of *bapto* in Jn 13:26. They clearly knew what this group of words meant, but no one reading the KJV alone could know what was required of a disciple of the Lord.

It is to this that T. J. Conant referred when he wrote: "The obligation to translate this word rests on something more than grounds of philological correctness. There is, indeed, no reason of sufficient weight to justify, in any case, a departure from the simple rule of giving a faithful and intelligible rendering of the inspired word. No other rule can be recognized as right or safe. On the ground alone, were there no other, that the Greek word means 'to immerse,' is the translator bound so to render it. That general rule no one disputes. It is an axiom, and needs no proof. It is simply the rule, when one professes to communicate the words of another, to tell the truth as to what he has said. Any author, purposely mistranslated or obscured, is falsified by his translator. Just so far as this is done, the translation is a literary forgery; for it conceals while it professes to exhibit what the author has said, or it represents him as saying that which he did not say. When applied to the Word of God, the rule is one of paramount force." —[*Baptizein*, Amer. Bib. Union, 1861, p. 158].

III. THE KJV IS NOT A PERFECT VERSION BECAUSE OF THE NUMEROUS REVISIONS IT HAS GONE THROUGH

One of the amazing things is that most of the men who contend for the 1611 King James Version have never seen one, and couldn't read it with comfort and understanding if they had it.

Because of various reasons the KJV of 1611 *has been revised numerous times*. It was revised in 1613. It was revised in 1629. In 1638 again it was revised. In the year the Baptists put forth their confession in London, 1644, it was revised again. Yet again it was revised in 1769 by Dr. Blayney. As for these previous revisions, no one knows who did the work or who authorized it. Here is a version that many say was the final version, the authorized, the infallible version or the authentic version and it has been altered from its original form not once or twice. Not three or four times but five times! [M&S, *ibid.*, p. 560].

Some of these changes were no doubt minor but others were quite significant. For example: I Jn 5:12 in 1611 is "He that hath not the Son hath not life". In 1769 it is "He that hath not the son of God hath not life". Is this a significant change? Which is inspired? Which KJV is correct? Are both inspired? Another example is I Cor. 12:28. The 1611 has "Helps in govern- ments" while the 1769 has "Helps, governments". Also in Ezk. 24:7 the 1611 reads: "Poured it upon the ground" whereas the 1769 "Poured it not upon the ground."

What do these facts say? The KJV is a usable version or do they say it is a perfect version?

Now either the KJV was a perfect translation in 1611 or it was not. If perfect, then these revisions rendered it imperfect. If it was not perfect, in 1611, then the whole theory goes down. Either way the thing must be given up. There is no such thing as a perfect version!

IV. THE KJ TRANSLATORS CLEARLY RECOGNIZED THEIR WORK WAS NEITHER PERFECT NOT FINAL

If their work had been perfect, then there would have been no need for marginal notes.

There are marginal notes in which the KJ translators give another possible reading, that is a variant in the texts from which they were working. I Cor. 15:31. "I protest by your rejoicing." But the margin has this note: "Some read, *our*." Of course, no such exists in a perfect, inspired work. Eph. 6:9, "That your master also is in heaven" and the margin has: "Some read: *both your and their master*." These might be multiplied but sufficient has been given to make clear the premise.

Many of these marginal notes represent at least two possible ways of translating a given word. This is a frequent problem with the non inspired translator, but is non existent for those who are inspired.

Some examples follow . Job 42:8 where for the pronoun *him* there is this note: "Heb. *his face*, or , *person*." In Mk. 7:3 "Except they wash their hands oft," the KJ translators give a marginal note follows: "Or, *diligently*: in the original, *with the fist*: Theophylact, *up to the elbow*." In Ezk. 27:9 for caulkers the margin gives: "Or *stoppers of chinks*. Heb. *strengtheners*." (Cf. *The 1611 King James Bible*, by Estus Pirkle, The King's Press, 1994, p. 375 377).

There are even marginal notes where the KJ translators appeal to other versions, or to non-biblical sources. In Acts 13:18 for suffered they have "Gr. *etropophoresen*, perhaps for *etrophophoresen*, or *fed them, as a nurse beareth, or, feedeth her child*, Deut. 1:31, acc. to the Sept. and so Chrysostom." (Ibid., Appendix 5, p.372). These things could never be in an inspired or perfect version.

Incidentally, there were also originally in the KJV devices which were used to identify the type of marginal notes. These have through the various revisions disappeared. They were as follows: First, a dagger [] sign meant a "Literal rendering." Now only the language identifies this note, e.g. Heb.. Chald. and Gk. An example is Jer. 32:33.

Secondly, The parallel bars [] meant "an alternate translation of the original. This note is now indicated only by the conjunction "or". See Jn. 16:8.

Finally, there was the asterisk [*] and it was used to indicate a marginal comment or a parallel Scripture reference. These symbols were adapted from the Geneva version and were well understood in the 1600s. [Cf. *Lange's Com.* Vol. 12, Rev. p. vi].

V. THE KING JAMES VERSION WAS NOT A PERFECT VERSION BECAUSE THIS VERSION LEFT OUT WORDS CONTAINED IN THE ORIGINALS

In Ex. 21:32 the 1611 KJV left out the word *silver*, this was corrected by Dr. Blayney in 1769. If the 1611 was perfect, why was this word left out? How could anyone know what kind of money this ransom was to be paid in, if he lived before 1769?

In Rom. 14:10 the 1611 Version left out the word *for*, "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Again this does not destroy the usefulness of a translation, but it destroys the theory that a version must be perfect or it is useless.

VI. BUT EVEN IF THE KJV HAD BEEN FLAWLESS WHEN TRANSLATED, THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE HAS CHANGED SO MUCH THAT EVEN PREACHERS DO NOT KNOW THE MEANING OF MANY OF THE WORDS USED IN THIS VERSION

A few examples will illustrate this point:

- a. Bray, meant *to grind* in a mortar, Prov. 27:22
- b. Savor meant *to understand*, Mt. 16:23
- c. Poll meant *the head*, Nu 1:20
- d. Ancients meant *elders*, Isa. 3:14
- e. Lewd meant ignorant, *unlearned*, Acts 17:5
- f. Sith meant *since*, Ezk. 35:6
- g. Simple meant *guileless*, Ro. 16:19
- h. Road meant *a raid*, a plundering excursion, I Sa 27:10
- i. Munition meant *a fortress*, Isa. 29:7
- j. Lay at meant *to strike at*, Job 41:26
- k. Meat meant *food* (of any kind), Jn. 21:5
- l. Idol (adj.) meant *worthless*, Zech. 11:17
- m. Device meant *design, purpose*, Jer. 51:11; 2 Cor. 2:11
- n. Anon meant *immediately*, at once, Mt. 13:20
- o. Confection meant *a compound* of drugs or spices, Ex.30:35
- p. Affect meant *to desire earnestly*, seek after, Gal. 4:17
- q. Nurture meant *education, discipline*, Eph. 6:4
- r. Peculiar meant *one's very own*, Ex. 19:5

These definitions are from the Glossary in my Cambridge Bible. The introduction is as follows: "The Glossary below explains the meaning of certain words in this Bible that have changed in meaning, or have fallen out of general use, since the King James or Authorized Version was first published in 1611." This is the work of W.W. Skeat.

Let the reader ask the average pastor the meaning of the terms mentioned above and see what response he gets. Now when anyone opposes and fights against a translation which gives the Word of God clearly in the language of the people, he opposes the publication of the Word of God.

Because language changes, versions and translations must also change if they are to communicate the Word of God clearly. Anytime a better translation can be made, it should be done. Anytime we can improve the KJV we should do so. Consider Jay Green's *King James II*; or his *LITV*, (published by sovereign Grace Trust Fund, POB 4998, Lafayette, IN 4703).

VI. THE BAPTIST POSITION HAS ALWAYS BEEN THAT ONLY THE ORIGINAL AUTOGRAPHS ARE INSPIRED

No version is inspired! This has been the position of Baptists as far back as we have record of their beliefs upon this subject. Our heritage on this subject is crystal clear and I would that Baptists would but consider what these great heroes of the faith so ably defended.

The London Confession was adopted by "The Elders and Brethren of many congregations of Christians, baptized upon profession of their faith, in London and the country" in 1677, [Cf. Forward to 1689 Confession by W.L. Mills, 8 Kings Rd., Brighton, Sussex].

"The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old, and the New Testament in Greek (which was at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal to them. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have a right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner. and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope. [Chap. 1, par. 8.].

We note here that these men of God held that *Only the originals were immediately inspired of God!* Furthermore, only the originals were considered *authentic* and this excludes all translations including the KJV.

But the KJ only theory is new, and came up within our time! But the position for which I am contending is clearly documented by the great men of God who have gone before us. John Gill said: "This [the word of scripture] is to be understood of the Scriptures, as in the original languages in which they were written, and not of translations; unless it could be thought, that the translators of the Bible into the several languages of the nations into which it has been translated, were under the divine inspiration also in translating, and were directed of God to the use of words they have rendered the original by: but this is not reasonable to suppose..." "In which languages [Hebrew, Chaldee, & Greek] they can only be reckoned canonical and authentic; for this is like the charters and diplomas of princes; the wills or testaments of men; or any deeds made by them; only the original exemplar is authentic; and not translations, and transcriptions, and copies of them, though ever so perfect: and to the Bible, in its original languages, is every translation to be brought, and by it to be examined, tried, and judged, and to be corrected and amended..." [*Body of Divinity*, Book I, ch. II, p. 13].

I might give many other such quotes from the past but I forebear.

We owe our allegiance to the original autographs and to them alone. We shall never allow a mere version to eclipse the Revelation of God.

VII. THE KJ ONLY THEORY IS BUT THE RESURRECTION OF THE OLD ERROR OF ROME

"Whoever will not receive as sacred and canonical these entire books with all their parts, as they have been usually read in the Catholic church and are contained in the Old Vulgate edition, let him be accursed." [Council of Trent, session 4, decree 1].

Let it be remembered that the Catholics claimed that the authenticity of the Vulgate was of such a nature that it could be made equal to the original and be preferred to all other versions, [Turretin's Institutes, Vol. I, p. 131]. The KJ only theory is just the same old Roman Catholic dogma dressed up in the KJ suit.

We must check every translation with the originals. We must improve them when and where there is need. We cannot allow a false theory to stagnate our study of the Scripture. This theory was wrong as to the Vulgate. It is wrong as to the KJ version. Publish an error a thousand times or a thousand years, it is error still!

VIII. THE TEACHING THAT THE KING VERSION IS PERFECT LEADS TO OTHER ERRORS

Many KJ only advocates are not as honest as the Catholic Mariana was by the Vulgate. He said the Vulgate "is of no less authority than the sources when it agrees with them and must be pardoned when it differs." The KJ only advocates will not admit that originals exist, or if they do they will not admit that the KJ differs with them! Certainly they do not compare the two or they would instantly give up this idea of a perfect translation.

So strongly is this KJ only error embedded that some maintain that if you will translate the Scriptures into any language other than English, the translation must be made from the KJV! Do these brethren forget that this is exactly what the Catholics were doing up until 1970? "Prior to this version, [*The New American Bible*, a Catholic Bible translation, 1970] Catholics had been required to use the Latin Vulgate as the basis for translation," [*Wilmington's Guide to Bible Knowledge*, p.98].

This is but to reject the Scripture as "God breathed" by the Holy Spirit, for some man-made work! [Cf. Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority of The Bible*, p. 132 133; and KJ II on 2 Tim. 3:16, as to the meaning *theopneustia*. I care not whether it be Tyndale, Geneva, Judson, Carey, or a committee appointed by whom ever. Nothing can take the place of the originals. Any time a man sets out to make the Scriptures available to any language group, and he locks himself in the KJ only strait jacket, he is not honest with the word of God! He dotes on a shadow when the sun is over his head!

The KJ only theory leads men to deny the value of the copies of the original manuscripts. One asked this question: "Do you know anyone who ever saw the original autographs?" This boomerangs when we ask "Do you know anyone who ever saw the original KJ autographs?"

The original autographs of the KJV were last reported to be at the King's printers. This was in 1655. They have never been seen since! [*M&S*, Ibid, p.562].

CONCLUSION

The King James Version is a good version. It can be used with confidence. Most of us do use this version. I thank God for it! Yet, when men set up new doctrines teaching that the KJV is the only version which we may use, when they say this version alone is *authentic, inspired, perfect, or infallible*, we must refute and repudiate this error.

The facts prove the designated theory false! There is no ground or support except in the bare assertion of those who hold the theory. The historic Baptist position flies in the face of this theory. The evidence of the Scripture in Hebrew and Greek, compared with the KJV, demands a capitulation of the whole idea.

Let us now restore the KJ Version to its proper position a valuable and useful translation which takes its place with other useful versions. It is not an inspired version and because it is not an inspired version it cannot be a perfect version!