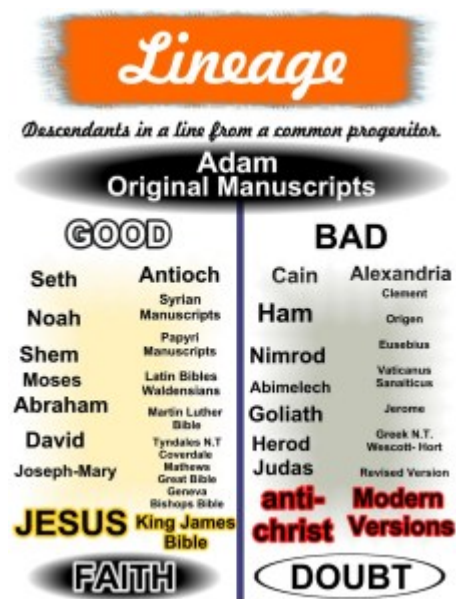


The Proliferation of Modern “Bibles”



This is the next chapter of the book, [The Foundations Under Attack: The Roots of Apostasy – By Michael de Semlyen](#)

PART II **THE KING JAMES BIBLE** **AND MODERN VERSIONS**

Chapter 7 **The Proliferation of Modern “Bibles”**

During the last century the Church has preached a watered-down Gospel from a seemingly unending range of “bibles”, each of which differs from the other, sometimes radically. Until the closing years of the nineteenth century, “the people of the Book” were convinced that in the King James or Authorised Version they had the Word of God. They saw it as infallible; they had no doubt of its inerrancy. Preachers and their congregations approached the Scriptures with great reverence, “Thus saith the Lord.” This was the authorised Bible; it was rare for anyone to question that which was universally accepted as the Word of God. There was no serious alternative to the King James for most of three hundred years. Rival editions, and there was no shortage of these, fell flat on their face before the majesty of the King James. Although custom and language changed, the King James Bible did not. Indeed there was no real case for change, and for most people the idea of change was unthinkable. It was widely regarded then as the Word of God in English.

If today, because of the prevalence of all the other translations, it is no longer seen as this, then which particular version has taken its place? If there is not to be any one version but a combination or synthesis of all versions, and there are more than one hundred and fifty of them, the number

rising fast; then who is to choose the true Scriptures and discard the false? If there were to be no one trustworthy version with a just claim to be the Word of God, then we would have to conclude that we worship a God who is either careless or powerless to keep His Word pure through the ages. The very question posed repeatedly in today's pulpits by the words "depending on what version you are using" reminds us of man's first questioning of God's Word, "... has God said?" (Genesis 3:1) The existence of so many differing versions is a major problem for evangelism, **especially to Muslims** and others of different religions or cults who have their own scriptures.

The footnotes that are to be found in new versions, including the NIV, the RSV, the NASB, the NEB, and the Good News, question the choice of manuscript and cast doubt on the authenticity of the Scriptures. Verses or parts of verses and whole passages are omitted with an explanatory footnote, or often without one. The inevitable consequence of this is the undermining of Scripture's claim to be absolute Truth. *"Thy word is truth."* (John 17:17)

How can we claim that God's Word is inerrant and infallible and at the same time admit that there are errors in every translation and that we don't possess a Bible that we can trust? We are not just being inconsistent and illogical; much more serious—we are in direct conflict with Scripture. Scripture declares emphatically that God will preserve His Holy Word pure in all ages. He has done so in the Authorised King James Version, the complete Word of God and the Final Authority in all matters of faith and practice.

"The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." – Psalm 12:6

"Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it." – Psalm 119:140

That purity is patently missing in popular new versions such as the NIV and the Good News, as we shall show in our section comparing selected key verses of Scripture. The Bible clearly supports the doctrine of verbal inspiration. Dr. Napier Malcolm asks, "How can we say that each word of the Bible (that is, the Hebrew and Greek originals) is inspired of God and true when different Bibles say different things? The modern versions are based on the belief that not every word of our present Bibles is necessarily true.

The translators believe that God may have inspired the original, but He has not preserved the original." (British Church Newspaper, December 24, 2004.)

Preservation of God's Word

Again and again God's providential preservation of His Word is promised in the Bible:

"... Thou shalt keep them (the words of the Lord), O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." -Psalm 12:7

"For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. " -Psalm 119:89

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. " - Matthew 24:35

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." -1 Peter 1:23

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the Word of our God shall stand for ever." -Isaiah 40:8

Men of great faith of the past have admitted their difficulty in explaining those things regarding inspiration and inerrancy, which are hard to be understood. But, as Bishop Ryle pointed out, "We may rest assured that the difficulties which beset any other theory of inspiration are tenfold greater than any which beset our own." Ryle's high view of Scripture reflected his belief that the Authorised Version that he used was preserved inspired, infallible and inerrant, and entirely trustworthy.

The Bible as God's Word

"This Bible is God's Bible," insisted C. H. Spurgeon, "and when I see it, I seem to hear a voice springing up from it, saying, "I am the book of God; man, read me. I am God's writing; open my leaf, for I was penned by God;'..... Oh, book of books! And wast thou written by my God? Then will I bow before thee. Thou book of vast authority!..... for he has written this book himself,.....let us love it; let us count it more precious than much fine gold..... I plead with you, I beg of you respect your Bibles, and search them out,.....go home and read your Bibles,. " (A Sermon (No. 15) delivered on Sabbath Evening, March 18, 1855, by the Reverend C.H.)

As internationally recognised New Testament textual critic Edward F. Hills argued, "In regard to Bible versions, then, we follow the example of the Apostles and the other inspired New Testament writers. Just as they recognized the Septuagint as the providentially appointed translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, so we recognize the King James Version and the other great historic translations of the holy Scriptures as providentially approved. Hence we receive the King James Version as the providentially appointed English Bible. Admittedly this venerable version is not absolutely perfect, but it is trustworthy. No Bible-believing Christian who relies upon it will ever be led astray. But it is just the opposite with modern versions. They are untrustworthy, and they do lead Bible-believing Christians astray." (Edward F. Hills: The King James Version Defended, Christian Research Press)

Dr. B. B. Warfield and countless others have tried to devise a theory of the special providential preservation of the Scriptures which leaves room for naturalistic New Testament textual criticism. But this is impossible, for the two concepts are mutually exclusive. Naturalistic New Testament criticism requires us to treat the text of the New Testament like the text of any other book, in other words, to ignore or deny the special providential preservation of the Scriptures. Hence if we really believe in the Scriptures' special providential preservation then we cannot follow the naturalistic method of New Testament textual criticism.

Dr. Hills, in his book, The King James Version Defended, pointed to six principles in support of this view:

1. The Old Testament text was preserved by the Old Testament priesthood and the scribes and scholars that grouped themselves around that priesthood.
2. When Christ died upon the cross, the Old Testament priesthood was abolished. In the New Testament dispensation, every believer is a priest under Christ the great High Priest. Hence, the New Testament text has been preserved by the universal priest-hood of believers, by faithful Christians in every walk of life.
3. The Traditional Text, found in the vast majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts, is the true text because it represents the God-guided usage of this universal priesthood of believers.
4. The first printed text of the Greek New Testament represents a forward step in the providential preservation of the New Testament. In it the few errors of any consequence occurring in the Traditional Greek Text were corrected by the providence of God, operating through the usage of the Latin-speaking Church of Western Europe. In other words, the editors and printers who produced this first printed Greek New Testament text were providentially guided by the usage of the Latin-speaking Church to follow the Latin Vulgate in those few places in which the Latin Church usage rather than the Greek Church usage had preserved the genuine reading.
5. Through the usage of Bible-believing Protestants God placed the stamp of His approval on this first printed text, and it became the Textus Receptus. It is the printed form of the Traditional Text found in the vast majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts.
6. The King James Version is an accurate translation of the Textus Receptus. On it God has placed His stamp of approval through the long continued usage of English-speaking believers. Hence it should be used and defended today by Bible-believing Christians.

“Not only do English speaking Christians own in the King James version the greatest translation of the Bible ever produced in any language, called ‘The miracle of English prose’, but also the greatest literary masterpiece ever authored. ‘It’s language,’ one said, ‘we reserve for God.’ Its power, sweep and breathtaking authority transcends all other works, while its Elizabethan eloquence, antiquated yet timeless, speaks more profoundly and intimately to our heart than our modern day tongue.” (Rev. Charles Salliby: *If the Foundations Be Destroyed*. Pine Hill Press Inc.)

Difficult to Read

An answer to those who protest that the Authorised Bible is too difficult for the modern reader to read, with all its archaic terms and turn of phrase, was provided by the much-respected expository preacher, the late Dr. D.M. Lloyd-Jones who was quoted in *‘The Majority Text: Essays and Reviews in the Continuing Debate*.

“Yet we are told – it [the Bible] must be in such simple terms and language that anybody taking it up and reading it is going to understand all about it. My friends this is sheer nonsense. What we must do is educate the masses of the people up to the Bible, not bring the Bible down to their level. One of the greatest troubles today is that everything is being brought down to the same level; everything is cheapened. The common man is the standard of

authority; he decides everything, and everything has to be brought down to him.....What we need is therefore, not to replace the Authorized Version... We need rather to reach and train people up to the standard and language, the dignity and the glory of the old Authorized Version." (Theodore P. Letis: *The Majority Text: Essays and Reviews in the Continuing Debate*, Institute For Biblical Textual Studies)

Prince Charles, who does not seem to have understood the main message of the Bible, and much needs the prayers of God's people at this time, sought to express in simple fashion something of the lofty inaccessibility and majesty of so much of Scripture, in contrast with the banalities of the Alternative Service Book: "The Word of God is supposed to be a bit over our heads. Elevated is what God is." (Excerpt from a chapter contributed to by the Prince of Wales to *The Real Common Worship*, published to protest against the new Anglican Prayer Book.) If he becomes King, providing his Coronation Service remains the same, he will be required to assent to a higher view of Scripture than this. His mother, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, at her accession, swore her Coronation Oath affirming that the Bible is "the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is wisdom. This is the Royal Law. These are the lively oracles of God."

To those who continue to argue that the Authorised Version is hard to understand, and that we therefore need modern versions, author Alan O'Reilly asks in his book, *O Biblios*, how it is that its text caused the English people to become a Bible loving people— "the people of the book"—in the words of the historian Green.

The marvellous fact is that the King James Bible is comprehensible to the untrained mind. In many parts of the "Bible belt" in the United States today the great majority of ordinary grass roots Christians would use no other version. The same applies in African countries where both the King James and another version have been used. There is simply the widespread recognition that the KJV has clarity and authority that is not found in other versions. Apart from its magnificent use of language the Authorised Bible flows rhythmically and **has actually proved far easier to learn than other translations.**

The As American Creation Scientist, Henry M. Morris, author of *The Genesis Project*, has written, "The English of the King James is not nearly so archaic or difficult to follow as its critics allege. In fact, it is in general written in a much simpler vocabulary, with a higher percentage of one and two syllable words, than almost any of the new translations. The honest reader will find it at least as easy to understand as any other." Dr. Hills maintains that "the English of the King James Version ... is not a type of English that was ever spoken anywhere. It is biblical English." (*King James Version Defended*, p. 218.)

However, the ultimate criterion is not the ease with which we can read it, rather it is the purity of the text. The King James translators were of a calibre and breadth of scholarship surely unmatched in the world today, and they were entirely submitted to the Scriptures, which they regarded as sacred and inerrant. They approached the work of translation with great reverence

attested to by their handling of the Greek and Hebrew texts, placing each word and phrase precisely as they perceived was intended by the Holy Spirit. There is a consistent faithfulness in their approach to the original text, which is testified to by the use of Italics when words are added in the English translation.

The question that we need to ask of our Bible is “is it inspired by the spirit of God who leads us into all truth or is it just the product of scholarship, reason and research?” We shall be trying to show the importance of an awareness of the crucial and often startling and shocking differences between the King James and the modern versions; and we do urge the reader to take a little time to study the section which follows which compares translations.

In arguing the case for the King James Version, we do not suggest that those Christians who use it are necessarily more spiritual, better informed, more faithful in prayer, more competent in expounding the Word or more zealous in reaching out to sinners than those who use another version. Nor is this an excursion into what some call “bibliolatry” but is a serious attempt to encourage discernment in the use of Bible versions. We walk in a minefield of deception as the version comparisons in the section at the end of this chapter and elsewhere in this book are intended to demonstrate.

Different Greek Manuscripts

One misconception among Christians today needs to be cleared up. The belief that all modern versions are simply revisions of the Authorised Version in more up-to-date language is incorrect. Such revisions do exist, but the great majority of modern versions use translations **from entirely different Greek manuscripts**. The underlying Greek text of the King James Version of the New Testament is called the *Textus Receptus* or Received Text. It derives from what is known as the “Majority Text”, so named because approaching 95% of all existing manuscript evidence supports this text. It was first printed in Basel, in 1516, under the editorship of Erasmus and was the text most relied on by the Protestant Reformation in England and in Europe. It was reproduced in many editions in the sixteenth century, and the 1611 King James translation was largely based on Theodore Beza’s Fourth Edition of 1588.

The modern translations are mainly based on the “Minority Texts”, which were presented to the world as alternatives to the *Textus Receptus* (TR) at the end of the nineteenth century. We recognise the sincerity, the weight of argument and the thoroughness of scholarship of textual critics who support these “rediscovered manuscripts.” We respect, too, the carefully reasoned arguments that seek to invalidate the TR, although we do not accept their conclusions. The simple fact is that the originals or “autographs” are not to be found, and therefore the evidence relating to the integrity of codices or manuscripts is highly complex. This author is in no way qualified to enter into it. He simply looks to set out the facts, and without concealing his confidence in God’s providential role in preserving His Word and providing it in English, invites the reader to look more closely into these things.

Continued in [The Modern Versions – Origins and Influences](#)

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