

English Bible Translations 4-12-15 PM

Our third lesson on the origin of our Bible concludes with the Bibles that we hold in our hands, the English translations of the Bible. For this lesson we will use the words “version” and “translation” as synonyms of one another (remember from previous lessons we learned that most English translations of the Bible have only been translated ONCE from Greek & Hebrew into English).

We need to have confidence that the translation we hold in our hands is the message that God desires for us to have and know His will. Studying the origin and assembly of the Bible gives us this confidence, and allows us to have an answer to the skeptic as well as the person who has been deceived by the skeptic. In other words, we need to know about the construction of the Bible in order to save souls!

In previous lessons we learned that at the end of the first century the canon of the Old and New Testament was complete. From that time onward the Bible was translated into languages. We know that some of these translations included Aramaic and Latin (which later became the Vulgate translation by Jerome in 382AD, the most common and popular translation in history before the King James Version). Some might question whether the Bible could be translated and maintain its inspiration (for example, the Muslims claim that the Koran cannot be translated out of the original Arabic or it becomes uninspired). However, we can see that while the language that the inspired writers wrote in was Greek, the language spoken in the Gospels and parts of Acts was Aramaic. Thus, inspiration is not lost in translation.

However, while inspiration is not lost in translation, translators themselves are not identified as inspired. Thus it is possible for translation errors to be present in our English Bibles. While we believe that I Peter 1:25 prevents the total inspiration from being lost, it necessitates that we familiarize ourselves with translators and translations.

As translations of the Bible increased, so did the great falling away mentioned in Scriptures (I Timothy 4:1-5, etc.) increase as well. Soon, denominations (primarily the Catholic church) attempted to prevent persons from owning or reading Bibles, and particular effort was made to prevent translations from being created (some translations were always being made, so it would be incorrect to say no one had a Bible in the world, particularly in other parts of the world).

The English Bible’s journey begins with a theologian named John Wycliffe. In the 1370s he began to claim Scripture trumped the Pope. Thus, he began translating the Bible into English. He was excommunicated along with his followers (nicknamed Lollards, meaning “*mumblers*”). It did not prevent the Bible being created in 1382. At that time there was no printing press, so only handwritten copies existed.

In 1523 a man named William Tyndale translated the Bible into a printable English version from the Greek and Hebrew. 18,000 copies were published, but because they were banned by the Catholic Church and burned, only two survive today. Tyndale was executed in 1536 for heresy, but the English translation movement had begun. His last words, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes”, would be fulfilled

The most significant English Bible translation (indeed the most important Bible translation of any kind in history) was the King James Authorized Version published in 1611 (and revised until 1769). Using previous manuscripts (back to Tyndale) the committee of translation reviewed and created a readable (by the language of the day) text. The translation had been commissioned to reject the Calvinist Geneva Bible which had immense popularity at that time. Some myths about the King James Bible include: The word

Baptism was NOT invented for the text; King James did NOT insert his name as the book of James; King James did NOT rush the translation committee (these last two are taught by the Mormon church).

At the end of the 19th century, new Greek manuscripts and changes in the English language caused a need for a revision or new translation. The Revised (1885) / American Standard Version (1901) was the first major attempt to prepare a new English translation. Since that time we have had many translations presented, to the degree that now our problem becomes not one of obtaining the Bible in our language, but finding a reliable translation of the Bible.

Why Translations Matter

Let us consider a chart of several modern translations of important passages and the King James Version:

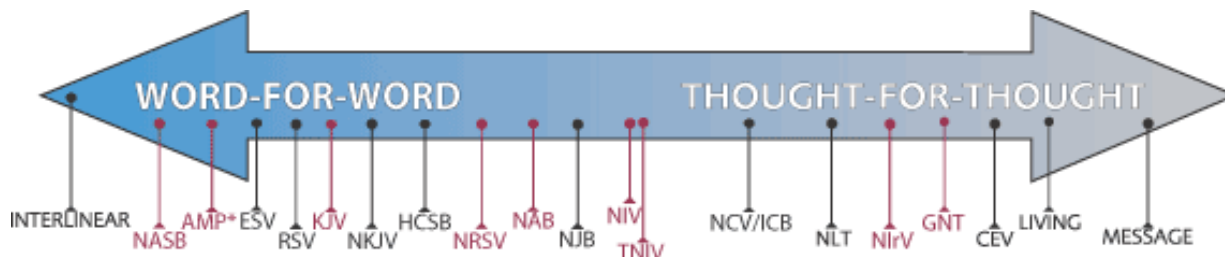
King James Version	Alternative Version	Implication of change
<i>John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.</i>	<i>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god</i>	Jesus is not God (New World Translation, Jehovah's Witness)
<i>Romans 8:5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.</i>	<i>Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what nature desires, but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.</i>	Man has a sinful nature (New International Version)
<i>Titus 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:</i>	<i>For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and shouldest ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee:</i>	Ordination of Priests (Douay-Rheims, Roman Catholic church)
<i>Ac 20:7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread,</i>	<i>Now on the first day of the weeks, when the disciples had assembled to break bread.....</i>	Christians met for communion on Passover annually (Holy Bible in Original Order, church of God)
<i>Romans 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.</i>	<i>"So now we hold, that man is justified without the help of the works of the law, alone through faith"</i>	Man is saved by Faith Only (Martin Luther's translation of the Bible in German)

As we see in some excerpts from Bibles available today, there are some problems with many modern translations that Christians need to know and be careful to handle. Some mistranslations promote false doctrines that can cost someone their soul.

So how can we know what translation to use? Typically, there are indicators that help us to know a faithful translation even before we have seen it. This involves finding the purpose and manner of translation. For example, we can ask: Does it follow a verbatim or a paraphrase mandate? Is it a denominational translation? Does it contain a particularly themed commentary?

Translation Philosophies

First, let us understand what is meant by the translation philosophies of Verbatim and Paraphrase. Verbatim refers to a word for word translation model. Translations that follow this pattern seek accuracy first and foremost. Thought for thought and Paraphrase translators seek to convey the general idea for general idea. They are more concerned with the readability of the message than the accuracy. Here is a chart that puts 12 common Bible versions in their place on this list:



1

You can probably see the problem when you consider the thought for thought or paraphrase presentation: it requires the translator not just to translate the word, but to then synthesize the thought or meaning of the passage. Effectively, these translations cease to be translations of the Bible, and are in fact commentaries of the Bible. We are trusting that the translator (commentator) does not translate their interpretation of the text. Since Scripture is of no private interpretation (II Peter 1:20), we ought to consider thought for thought or paraphrase Bibles not as Scripture.

Of course, such a conclusion would cause us to want to be on the other extreme of translation, but that too can have some problems. The most accurate translations of the Bible (apart from a Interlinear (Greek and English) Bible or an Amplified version) can sometimes be more difficult to read. Consider this chart for example of reading levels and Bibles:

2

Translation	Reading Level
KJV King James Version	12
NASB New American Standard Bible	11
NRSV New Revised Standard Version	10
NKJV New King James Version	9
ESV English Standard Version	8
LIVING Living Bible	8
NIV New International Version	7
TEV Today's English Version	7
TNIV Today's New International Versio	7
NAB New American Bible	6
NLT New Living Translation	6
CEV - Contemporary English Version	5
THE MESSAGE	5
NCV/ICB New Century Version / International Childrens Bible	3
NIRV New International Reader's Version	3

Ultimately, we need to understand that Bible students ought to desire the more accurate translations. The less accurate a translation is the less a Bible can be studied; the Bible is not meant to be read alone, but to be studied and examined carefully (II Timothy 2:15). An example of this is in the NIV translation (one of the two most popular, the other being the KJV). It lacks translation marks to infer words that were added by translators (verbatim translations put words in italics that were inserted by the translators).

¹ <http://www.tateville.com/transchart.gif> (public domain)

² <http://voiceoftruthblog.com/which-bible-version-is-right-for-me> (public domain)

Denominational Translations

It might seem obvious that translations made by particular denominations need to be avoided, but we need to mention it because there are some translations that get attention that they should not. We mentioned passages that have been mistranslated earlier; these mainly came from denominational translations that intentionally commit violence to the language to create a new doctrine. Denominational translations include:

- Catholic Bibles (New American, New Jerusalem, etc)
- Martin Luther's German (Reformation) Bible
- Jehovah's Witness (New World Translation)
- Joseph Smith Inspired Version (a revised KJV)
- 7th Day Adventist (similarly, the Holy Bible in its Original Form Version)

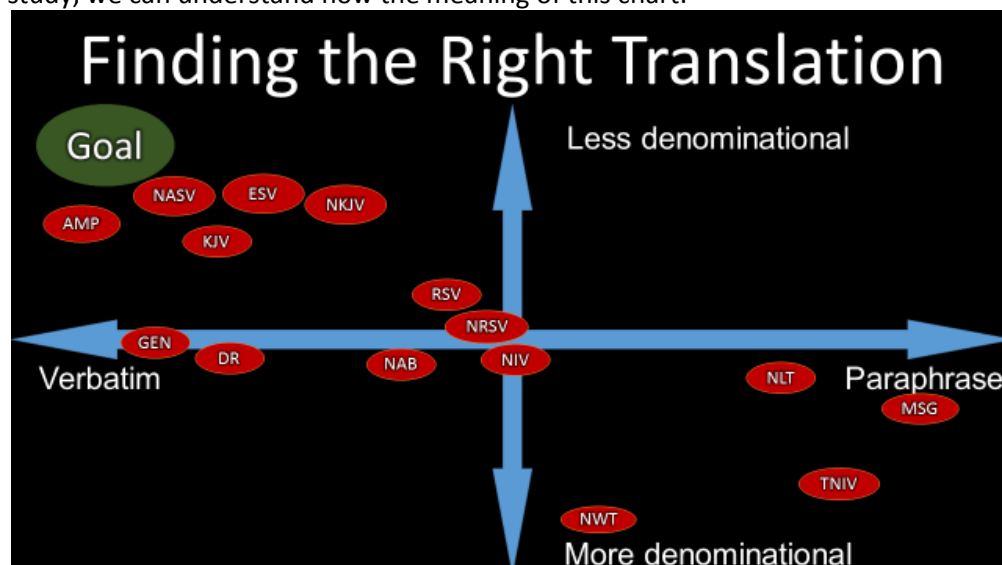
However, many do not realize that sometimes committee translations still have denominational slants. Consider the NIV, which slants towards original sin and salvation by faith only, or the NLT with similar indications. ANY paraphrase bible will, by the nature of the translation philosophy, have the doctrine of the translator interjected. Even our more secure translations sometimes have problems; consider the translation of Acts 12:4 (mistranslating Passover as Easter) in the KJV

Commentaries

Adding commentaries to text is nothing new. One of the primary reasons that the church of England petitioned King James to authorize their version was to escape the Calvinistic commentary of the Geneva Bible. In the last century, the Scofield Reference KJV Bible was introduced. Scofield introduced a commentary in Revelation that discussed a rapture, tribulation, and other ideas of premillennialism that were before unknown. The entire "Rapture" movement today was entirely born from the commentary of the Scofield Bible.

Finding the Right Translation

From this study, we can understand now the meaning of this chart:



The goal of a Christian is to have in their hand a translation of Scripture that is the closest to the original words and with the least denominational slant as possible. It is not the case that a Bible student will escape entirely translation errors in any version, but by applying common sense methods to finding Scripture, we can have confidence in our translations used today.

Conclusion: We can have great confidence in the English translation(s) of Scripture if we have a knowledge of what we are studying. We have many safe translations/ versions of the Bible; but we have many dangerous versions as well. We can accurately determine what is safe & true, and we can even use “unsafe” if we use them cautiously and with understanding.

Attached are two articles to supplement this lesson. These are not my work, but for further reading:

1. Article on the NIV version accuracy lifted from La Vista church of Christ website
2. Article on the KJV only movement lifted from Tri-County church of Christ website

The New International Version

by Jeffrey W. Hamilton

One of the easiest reading Bibles being published today is the New International Version. It's clarity comes not only from its use of modern English, but also from the willingness of the translators to translate idiomatic phrases of the Bible times into similar phrases of today. This could be dangerous to any translation, for a true translation must keep the original meaning intended by the original author. An idiom in one language does not always match an idiom's meaning in another language. I'm not an expert in this field, but I think the translators of the New International Version struck a good balance in this area most of the time.

However, as with most human works, the NIV is not without its problems. The translation was done at a period of time when the best available Greek text for the New Testament, as determined by Biblical scholars turned out to be severely flawed^[1, 2]. One of the false teachings that was wide spread during the early days of the church was a belief that Jesus was not really God in the flesh. Anything earthly was considered sinful and corrupt, "So how could the pure God take on the nature of corruption," these false teachers argued? Followers of this system of belief, now known as Gnosticism, used Bibles edited to support their beliefs^[3].

True Christians refused to use these altered Bibles, but they were loath to destroy the copies since they still contained much of God's Word. Instead they retired the books to sealed crypts. Recently, modern archeologists found these crypts. Finding copies of God's word that was older than most of the material we possessed at that time, they gave higher weight to this older material, reasoning that older was better.

Scholars have eventually pieced together the puzzle, but not before a few new translations were made using the flawed text, including the NIV^[4].

Gary Colley has published a list of problems with the NIV that all Bible students should be aware of. Some of these problems arise from the flawed Greek text that the NIV was based on, but other problems arise from the religious bias of the translators. The wording of the passages were subtly altered in a number of places to make it more acceptable to popular religious beliefs instead of attempting to accurately match the original meaning.

I would like to give you an expanded version of brother Colley's list, showing the alteration by comparing it with other translations.

Total Depravity

"It mistranslated [Psalms 51:5](#) to teach the false theory of Total Depravity."

KJV: *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

NAS: *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.*

NKJ: *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.*

NIV: *Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

It doesn't take a biblical scholar to tell that there is a major difference in meaning between the NIV and the other cited passages. Why did the translators of the NIV change the meaning so much? I believe they were trying to justify their strongly held belief that people are born guilty of the sin of Adam. They attempted to provide proof where none existed.

Original Sin

"It changes 'flesh' in Romans 8 to 'sinful nature' teaching the false theory of original sin."

The word being debated is the Greek word *sarx* which means “flesh (as stripped of the skin), i.e. (strictly) the meat of an animal (as food), or (by extension) the body (as opposed to the soul [or spirit], or as the symbol of what is external, or as the means of kindred), or (by implication) human nature (with its frailties [physical or mortal] and passions), or (specifically) a human being.”

The English word “flesh” carries a similar meaning as it too can refer to the edible parts of an animal or to the physical being of a man. However, “nature” means the inherent character or basic constitution of a person or thing. By changing the wording from “flesh” to “nature” the translators shifted the meaning from an emphasis on the physical make up of man to the character or spiritual make up of man.

In addition, the word “sinful” is adjoined to “nature” even when the original Greek does not mention sinfulness.

The Deity of Christ

“It denies the deity of Christ by removing ‘begotten’ from every text referring to Jesus Christ (cf., [John 3:16](#))”

The NIV refuses to reflect the Greek New Testament statements that Jesus was born of God. Instead they use phrases such as “the One and Only” or “I have made you my son.” Consider the difference in translation shown in [John 1:14](#).

ASV: *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.*

NKJ: *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

NIV: *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The Greek word being translated is *monogenes*. It is a compound word meaning “the only one of a race” or “the only born.” In literature it is used to refer an only child and it can be seen translated as such in [Luke 7:12](#); [8:42](#); [9:38](#); and [Hebrews 11:17](#). In the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament it is used in describing Isaac ([Genesis 22:2](#), [12](#), [16](#)) and Jephthah’s daughter ([Judges 11:34](#)). Isaac was technically not an only child, but he was the unique child of promise to Abraham. Just as an only child is treasured by his parents, the Greek word *monogenes* also carries the connotation of someone beloved.

The NIV emphasizes the uniqueness of Christ while de-emphasizing the kinship of Christ to God the Father. A more clear altering is seen in [Psalms 2:7](#), [Acts 13:33](#), and [Hebrews 1:5](#). Consider the following:

NKJ: *God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'*

NAS: *that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My son; today I have begotten You.'*

NIV: *he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: "'You are my Son; today I have become your Father. '*

The Greek word *gennao* and the Hebrew word *yalad* refers to conceiving and giving birth to a child. The argument for de-emphasizing the birth is that some have argued that these verses mean Jesus had a beginning. The NIV’s wording avoids that conclusion, but at the expense of changing what the text actually says. While there are plenty of verses which demonstrate that Jesus is eternal, these verses carry the idea that Jesus is of the lineage of God – in other words, his deity, which is the point of [Hebrews 1:5](#). That point is softened by the NIV’s translation which leaves the impression that anyone could have become God’s Son, God just happened to select Jesus. The literal reading fits well with the virgin birth of Jesus and that God was literally his father.

The Eunuch’s Baptism

"It deletes both the statement of Philip on the condition of baptism and the eunuch's answer (cf. [Acts 8:37](#))."

This is due to the manipulated Greek text that the translation was based upon. If it is any consolation, most copies of the NIV do include verse 37 in the footnotes.

Salvation at the Point of Hearing

"It falsely teaches that sinners are 'included in Christ' at the point of hearing ([Ephesians 1:13](#))."

NKJ: *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,*

ASV: *in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation,-- in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,*

NIV: *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,*

Nothing in the Greek indicates the idea of being included in Christ, especially at the point of hearing the Gospel.

Salvation at the Point of Faith

"It tampers with the plan of salvation in [Romans 10:10](#), teaching that justification is reached at the point of faith. The same verse teaches that salvation is reached at the point of confession ([Romans 10:10](#))."

NKJ: *For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

ASV: *for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

NIV: *For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

The Greek behind the phrase "unto righteousness" indicates a leading up to the point of the justification of character or leading up to the point of righteousness. However, the NIV leads the reader to believe the justification has already taken place, which contradicts other verses that teach that salvation is based on more than just belief. See [Acts 11:18](#) and [Mark 16:16](#). A similar alteration is made in [John 3:16](#).

NKJ: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

ASV: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

NIV: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Notice the subtle change from the idea that a believer **should** not perish to the idea that a believer **shall** not perish. "Should" indicates that the believer has no excuse in perishing. "Shall" indicates that a believer cannot perish.

Testimony

"It changes [1 Corinthians 1:6](#) from 'the testimony of Christ' (the gospel) to 'our testimony of Christ' (testimonialist)."

The Greek word *marturion* is a neuter word meaning something evidential, in other words in the general sense, evidence given or in the specific sense something like the Decalogue (in the sacred Tabernacle). Changing the "the" or "our" removes the neuter sense of the testimony, making it something that was personally done. While the Apostles did testify of Christ, Paul is not speaking of just his personal testimony in this verse, but of all the evidence that God has delivered concerning Christ.

Salvation Before Baptism

"It makes Peter teach that baptism is 'the pledge of a good conscience toward God' advancing the false theory of faith alone ([1 Peter 3:21](#))."

The Greek word *eperotema*, means "an inquiry." However, the word "pledge" used in the NIV means a promise made to God and not a response to God's request.

CONCLUSION

As you can see, the New International Version is not the best version to use if you are interested in accuracy of translation. I still like it for easy reading, but for serious study I prefer to use more precise translations, such as the New King James Version, the American Standard Version, or the New American Standard Version.

Footnotes

F.H.A. Scrivener, [Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament, Vol. I](#), p. 120. "... while we accord to Cod. B at least as much weight as to any single document in existence, we ought never to forget that it is but one out of many, several of them being nearly (and not quite as old, and in other respects not less worthy of confidence than itself. One marked feature, characteristic of this copy is the great number of its omissions, which has induced Dr. Dobbins to speak of it as presenting 'an abbreviated text of the New Testament:' and certainly the facts he states on this point are startling enough. He calculates that Codex B leaves out words or whole clauses no less than 330 times in Matthew, 365 in Mark, 439 in Luke, 357 in John, 384 in Acts, 681 in the surviving Epistles; or 2,556 times in all. That no small proportion of these are mere oversights of the scribe seems evident from the circumstance that this same scribe has repeatedly written words and clauses *twice over*, a class of mistakes which Mai and the collators have seldom thought fit to notice, inasmuch as the false addition has not been retraced by the second hand, but which by no means enhances our estimate of the care employed in copying this venerable record of primitive Christianity."

Wilbur N. Pickering, ThM PhD, "[AN EVALUATION OF THE W-H THEORY](#)," The Identity of the New Testament Text II, p. 54. "I have quoted men like Zuntz, Clark and Colwell on the "Byzantine" text to show that modern scholars are prepared to reject the notion of a "Byzantine" recension, but the main lesson to be drawn from the variation among "Byzantine" MSS is the one noted by Lake and Burgon—they are orphans, independent witnesses; at least in their generation. The variation between two "Byzantine" MSS will be found to differ both in number and severity from that between two "Western" MSS or two "Alexandrian" MSS—the number and nature of the disagreements between two "Byzantine" MSS throughout the Gospels will seem trivial compared to the number (over 3,000) and nature (many serious) of the disagreements between Aleph and B, the chief "Alexandrian" MSS, in the same space." Brian K. McPherson and Scott McPherson, "[A Brief Examination of Manuscript Variation Issues](#)". "More specifically, we can learn from the early church where the heretics who were altering the text were based geographically and the language they used to spread their false doctrine. When we study early church history we find that although Gnostic heretics did spread to other parts of the Roman (or Byzantine Roman) world, their origination and epicenter was Alexandria, Egypt the very source location of the Alexandrian text type and of the most prominent Alexandrian texts. Early prominent Gnostic heretical leaders like Valentinus and Basilides were first active in Alexandria during the middle of the second century A.D."

In the twenty seventh chapter of his work Against Heresies, Book I, Irenaeus, a second century apologist, recorded the beliefs of the Gnostic heretic Marcion. In the fifth chapter of his third book, Tertullian, a Christian apologist who lived and wrote between approximately 160-230 A.D., records that Marcion tampered with the Biblical texts. As such Tertullian's testimony that Marcion deliberately altered the scriptural texts in a theologically consequential manner is informative of this practice among heretical leaders. Notice from the quote below that Marcion is not an isolated incident, but his followers are said to be "daily retouching" the New Testament texts.

"For if the (Gospels) of the apostles have come down to us in their integrity, whilst Luke's, which is received amongst us, so far accords with their rule as to be on a par with them in permanency of reception in the churches, it clearly follows that Luke's Gospel also has come down to us in like integrity until the sacrilegious treatment of Marcion. In short, **when Marcion laid hands on it, it then became diverse and hostile to the Gospels of the apostles**. I will therefore advise **his followers**, that they **either change these Gospels, however late to do so, into a conformity with their own, whereby they may seem to be in agreement with the apostolic writings (for they are daily retouching their work**, as daily they are convicted by us); or else that they blush for their master, who stands self-condemned either way - when once he hands on the truth of the gospel conscience smitten, **or again subverts it by shameless tampering**." - Tertullian, Book III Ch. V

(NOTE: The above passage from Tertullian is quoted from Tim Warner's article "Demise of the Westcott-Hort Theory.")

Similar accounts are provided by two the fourth century writers, Eusebius and Theodoret, concerning the heretic Tatian. In the twenty eighth chapter of his work Against Heresies, Book I, Irenaeus, relates followed after the Gnostic beliefs of men like Marcion. And like his predecessor Marcion, Eusebius and Theodoret record that Tatian also altered the Biblical texts. Again, this information demonstrates clearly the practice of early heretics to deliberately alter the scriptural texts in a doctrinally significant fashion.

"But their chief and founder, **Tatianus**, having formed a certain body and collection of Gospels, I know not how, has given this the title Diatessaron, that is the gospel by the four, or the gospel formed of the four; which is in the possession of some even now. **It is also said that he dared to alter certain expressions of the Apostles, in order to correct the composition of the phrase**." - Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History. pg. 166

"**Tatian the Syrian**...also composed the gospel which is called 'Diatessaron,' **cutting out the genealogies and whatever other passages show that the Lord was born of the seed of David according to the flesh**." - Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus, Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol. IX, p. 37, 38

(NOTE: The above passages from Eusebius and Theodoret are quoted from Tim Warner's article "Demise of the Westcott-Hort Theory.")

In the quote below, Eusebius records that doctrinally significant text tampering was common practice of the Gnostic heretics. One of the men, Theodotus, was a disciple of the prominent second century Gnostic heretic Valentinus who founded the Gnostic school at Alexandria. Notice again from the quote below that Theodotus is not an isolated incident, but his followers are said to be "daily retouching" the New Testament texts.

"...Theodotus, the leader and father of this God-denying apostasy, as the first one that asserted that Christ was a mere man...**The sacred Scriptures...have been boldly perverted by them**; the rule of the ancient faith they have set aside, Christ they have renounced, not inquiring what the Holy Scriptures declared, but zealously laboring what form of reasoning may be devised to establish their impiety...But as to these men who abuse the acts of the unbelievers, to their own heretical views, and who adulterate the simplicity of that faith contained in the Holy Scriptures,...**For this purpose they fearlessly lay their hands on the Holy Scriptures, saying that they have corrected them. And that I do not say this against them without foundation, whoever wishes may learn; for should any one collect and compare their copies one with another, he would find them greatly at variance among themselves.** For the copies of Asclepiodotus will be found to differ from those of Theodotus. **Copies of many you may find in abundance, altered, by the eagerness of their disciples to insert each one his own corrections, as they call them, i.e. their corruptions.** Again the copies of Hermophilus do not agree with these, for those of Appollonius are not consistent with themselves. **For one may compare those which were prepared before by them, with those which they afterwards perverted for their own objects, and you will find them widely differing....**For either they do not believe that the Holy Scriptures were uttered by the Holy Spirit, and they are thus infidels, or they deem themselves wiser than the Holy Spirit, and what alternative is there but to pronounce them daemioniacs? For neither can they deny that they have been guilty of the daring act, when the copies were written with their own hand, nor did they receive such Scriptures from those by whom they were instructed in the elements of the faith; nor can they show copies from which they were transcribed." - Eusebius: Ecclesiastical History. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Reprinted 1991. pp. 214-216

(NOTE: The above passage from Eusebius is quoted from Tim Warner's article "Demise of the Westcott-Hort Theory.")

From the available historical records we have of the early church period we can see clearly that it was the common practice of the Alexandrian Gnostic heretics to alter the scriptural texts. We must also note from the quote from Eusebius that having no two copies alike is a hallmark of the Gnostic tampering. The fact that this inconsistency is also a hallmark of the Alexandrian text tradition is yet another indication that the variation present in the Alexandrian texts may be the result of Gnostic tampering."

D. Cloud, "[Are the Modern Versions Based on Westcott-Hort?](#)", Way of Life Literature. "Bruce Metzger is probably the most influential textual critic alive. He is one of the editors of the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament and the author of many widely used books on textual criticism. In his 1981 book The Westcott and Hort Greek New Testament--Yesterday and Today, Metzger makes the following plain admission: "The International committee that produced the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament, not only adopted the Westcott and Hort edition as its basic text, but followed their methodology in giving attention to both external and internal consideration" (Metzger, cited by James Brooks, Bible Interpreters of the 20th Century, p. 264)."

The "King James Only" Controversy

by Keith Sharp

There is a popular movement to reject all English translations except the **King James Version**.

Actually, the **King James Version** of today is the latest of several revisions, made in 1762. Very few people could understand the antiquated English of the 1611 version. Even since 1762 the English language has changed immensely. Therefore, most people find the **King James Version** hard to read.

Many knowledgeable scholars defend the **Textus Receptus** upon which the **King James Version** (and **New King James Version**) is based. But it is unreasonable to claim special providence or inspiration for the scholars of the Church of England in 1611 that would not also be claimed for textual critics and translators today. The men who gave the world the **King James Version** of the Bible certainly didn't claim inspiration!

Some people contend the "Thees" and "Thous"" of the **King James Version** are reverential rather than archaic. **Webster's Third New International Dictionary** of the English Language (Unabridged) calls the word "thee" "archaic." (p. 2369) When Jesus commanded, "Get thee hence, Satan" (Matthew 4:10), was he using reverential language? Was he showing reverence to Peter when He said, "Get thee behind me, Satan"? (Matthew 16:23)

Some argue for the beautiful Shakespearean language of the **King James Version**. If that is their personal preference, fine. I don't try to steer anyone away from the **KJV**. But it is sinful to bind our personal preferences

on others (Romans 14:1-3). I grant that scholars tell us that the Hebrew of the Old Testament is classical and that the Hebrew of Isaiah is some of the most elevated of all Hebrew literature. But it is very revealing that, when the New Testament was written, the inspired writers could have used the beautiful, classical Greek that learned authors used even in their day. Instead, with a few exceptions, they used "*koine*," "common," Greek, the language of the common people. If we follow the example of the apostles and prophets of the Lord, we will use a translation that is in the common language of ordinary people of our day.

Some lump all the modern translations together and charge that they deny the deity of Christ. First, it is blatantly unfair to lump the **New American Standard Bible** with **Good News for Modern Man**. Second, it is simply a slander to charge that all the modern translations undermine the deity of Jesus Christ. There are nine New Testament passages that in some or all Greek manuscripts expressly call Jesus "God." (John 1:1,18; Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:12; 1 Timothy 3:16; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1) The **King James Version** translates five of them (John 1:1; Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:8) so that Jesus is denoted as God. Both the **NASB** and the **NIV** render seven of the passages in such a way that they specifically indicate that Jesus is a divine being.

Others, noting the liberalism of B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort and tying all modern versions to the **Westcott and Hort** text, charge all newer translations with liberal bias. The only American translation that closely follows the **Westcott & Hort** text is the **American Standard Version**. The translators of the **New American Standard Bible**, the **New International Version**, and the **New King James Version** believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and the virgin birth of Christ (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-38).

The **King James Version** is by-and-large accurate. But it does have notable weaknesses. Ecclesiastical (church) words of the Church of England were sometimes used (e.g., "baptize" rather than "immerse"; "bishop" rather than "overseer"). There are a few mistranslations (e.g., "Easter" in Acts 12:4). Some of these weaknesses have been carried over into the standard modern English translations (e.g., "baptize").

The chief weakness of the **King James Version** is its age. Most people who did not grow up reading the Bible find the **King James Version** hard if not virtually impossible to read. The argument that, on average, the **KJV** uses shorter words than modern translations completely misses the point. The word "eschew" (1 Peter 3:11, **KJV**) is shorter than the phrase "turn away from" (**NKJV**), but how many modern readers know what "eschew" means? Should we require those we are teaching to learn Elizabethan English so they might know God's will? Many Christians are having opportunities in our day to study with people who grew up Catholic or nothing at all religiously. They are not at all familiar with Elizabethan English. We encounter more and more to whom English is a second language. To demand that they study from the **King James Version** is like asking a country boy to read and understand Shakespeare. The refusal to consider updated English versions of the Bible cripples efforts to reach the lost.

If you prefer to use the **King James Version**, I have no quarrel with you. I preached from it for thirty years. But I switched to the **New King James Version** to make it easier to preach to and teach those who cannot understand old English. I use and recommend the **New American Standard Bible** because of its accuracy. All I ask is that you grant me the liberty of using an accurate translation of the Bible in modern English. Is that asking too much?