LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A STRATEGY FOR CALMING THE TROUBLED WATERS OF THE BIBLE
TRANSLATION CONTROVERSY AMONG INDEPENDENT BAPTISTS

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ABSTRACT

A STRATEGY FOR CALMING THE TROUBLED WATERS OF THE BIBLE TRANSLATION CONTROVERSY AMONG INDEPENDENT BAPTISTS

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A consideration of conservative Christianity reveals that a theological storm rages among Evangelicals in general and independent Baptists in particular over the issue of modern Bible translations. This affects individual believers, local churches, and Christian organizations. The purpose of this project is to propose a strategy to help calm this storm by the teaching of accurate knowledge. The project reviews historical perspectives and biblical teachings on the essential doctrine of Bible inspiration, the essential nature of Bible preservation, the essential need of Bible translation, and misinformation which confuses these essentials. It then proposes practical suggestions to help calm this controversy.

Abstract length: 100 words
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving wife Renae and our lovely daughters: Christina, Esther, Danielle, and Elisabeth. Without their faithful encouragement, patience, and support this work never would have been possible. It is also dedicated to my fellow pastors involved in the Iowa Baptist Bible Fellowship. They are a living example of how dedicated men of God can disagree on the issue of Bible translations and still work together in loving unity and Christian fellowship for the cause of Christ.
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CHAPTER 1
THE TRANSLATION STORM

It was a calm evening on the Sea of Galilee when a great storm suddenly arose to toss the little ship in which the apostles sat with Christ. Fearing the craft would sink, they turned to their Master and cried, “Lord, save us: we perish” (Matt 8:25b). Jesus arose to His feet in the swaying ship, faced the whipping winds and stinging rain, and rebuked the elements with the words, “Peace, be still” (Mark 4:39b). Immediately, the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Through the power of Jesus Christ, the storm upon the Sea of Galilee was calmed that night and the apostles were saved from death.

Many Bible teachers believe that Satan was the source of this terrible trial. One argument in favor of this is that when Jesus “rebuked the wind and the raging of the water” (Luke 8:14b), the Greek word for “rebuked” was also used when He dealt with demons (Luke 4:35, 41; 9:42). If this point of view be true, the devil was attempting not only to kill Jesus but also the men who would become the foundational members of His church. It comes as no surprise that Satan hates the church because he hates the church’s Savior and Lord. Therefore, he has often brought storms of conflict upon God’s people to try to destroy them or make them ineffective in their service for God.

1 All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Through the centuries many storms have arisen to toss the ship of Christianity. Believers have faced storms of religious and political persecution, doctrinal controversy, formalism, and hierarchical control. There were times when the ship seemed upon the point of sinking, but the Master has always arisen and calmed the raging waters. Today a new storm has arisen upon the scene, and the ship of evangelical Christianity among English speaking believers is again being tossed about. This storm involves the issue of Bible translations: which English translation or translations is acceptable for use among God’s people in this day? The opinions are varied, the emotions run deep, and the debate has grown heated. The troubled waters of the Bible translation issue need to be calmed.

The Reality of the Storm

The Storm Raging among Evangelicals in General

This storm over the issue of Bible translations is seen to rage across denominational lines among evangelical Christians in general. It is not limited to one particular group. Among evangelicals, these troubled waters affect the lives of individual believers and the ministries of Bible colleges and seminaries, mission agencies, Christian magazine publishers, para-church ministries, and especially local churches. Indeed, the devastation that can be caused by the Bible translation storm is possibly no where more evident than in the local church and among those called to minister in its context.

The reality of the translation storm in the life of local evangelical churches and those associated with them is quickly seen in four possible case scenarios. The first of these involves a recent graduate from a conservative Bible college. He has done very well in school and has a heart for winning the lost to Christ and ministering to those about him. While in college he took the prescribed courses in Bibliology, hermeneutics,
and homiletics, and thus he feels confident that he has the needed knowledge to do well in the pastorate. After accepting the call to a church of around fifty people, he is excited and anxious to do well in his Master’s service. Since many of the Bible professors in his classes had used the New American Standard Bible (NASB), he begins to preach weekly from it. After a short time in his first pastorate, he is visited by a concerned father in his congregation. This man and his family are faithful in their attendance and hard workers in the church. This gentleman expresses concern over the new pastor’s use of the NASB, explaining that he and his wife had been taught at another church that the only good translation, the only true and pure translation, is the King James Version (KJV). His family is considering leaving the church to attend another where only the KJV is used. What should this young man tell this concerned father? He is confused because this issue was never addressed in college. Hoping to gain insight from more experienced pastors, he decides to attend a state fellowship meeting of pastors the next week. There he hears a seasoned pastor boldly state that unless a preacher uses the KJV he does not even have a Bible. What is he to make of this? His professors and fellow students had used different translations of God’s Word. He has never heard anyone state the position that he has recently discovered. What should he do? Should he change the Bible translation he uses so that he can keep the one family in his church and make some of the older pastors in his state happy? Should he continue using the NASB and risk losing that church family? Perhaps he should stop coming to fellowship meetings so he will not have to hear the criticism of other pastors. He just was not prepared for this issue by the classes he had taken in school.
In the second scenario the pastor is more seasoned. He has been in the ministry for a number of years and preaches and teaches from the KJV. His church runs between seventy to eighty people regularly. One Sunday after the morning service, he is approached by a woman in his congregation who is in deep distress. Recently she has heard another preacher say that unless a person is led to Christ with a King James edition of the Bible that person is really not even saved. Yet this devout Christian woman came to know Christ some years before through the ministry of someone who used another Bible version. Perhaps she had listened to Charles Stanley on the television or Chuck Swindoll on the radio, both of whom preach from the NASB, and she then asked Christ to be her Savior. Or perhaps she was saved when she was witnessed to by the pastor of a Bible church who used the New International Version (NIV). Or perhaps she read a booklet from the Radio Bible Class which used the New King James Version (NKJV). Now this woman begins to worry, “Am I really saved? Do I still need to be saved because it wasn’t the KJV which I heard or read?” How is that pastor to answer her? He knows in his heart that it really does not matter which version of the Bible was used to bring her to Christ because the main issue is her personal faith in Jesus as her Savior. But how should he deal with this doctrinal question in a way that will settle her fears? Later in the week this pastor is visited by a young man in his church who is considering attending college. He loves the Lord and desires to train at an institution which teaches the Bible from a conservative, evangelical point of view. He has done his research and is currently considering such good, fundamental schools as Liberty University, Bob Jones University, and Tennessee Temple University. But now he is troubled. He has been lent a video that presents the propaganda of a particular Bible college which states that if a
school does not use only the KJV and the *Textus Receptus* upon which its New Testament is based, then that school is beginning to water down its stand on the Word of God and has been contaminated by the leaven of liberalism. This young man certainly does not want to go liberal, so now he is very much concerned over whether he can go to any of the colleges he is considering and still be right with God. Thus, he has come to his pastor for advice. What should this man of God say?

The third scenario concerns a missionary trying to raise his financial support. As he calls pastors seeking to line up meetings, and as he visits churches, he begins to be asked if he uses only the KJV or if he uses other translations. Does this missionary need to use just the KJV while in the states and believe that it is the only Bible for the English speaking world so as to raise mission support from local churches? How should he answer the questions he receives?

The final scenario involves an evangelist. He preaches from the KJV but uses other translations in his study of God’s Word. In some of his meetings he is laughed at for being too old fashioned and advised to preach from a more modern version of the Bible. Yet in other churches he is rebuked for his private study of those very translations and warned not to quote from them or refer to them from the pulpit. How should this man respond to these critics from totally different points of view?

The Storm Raging Especially among Independent Baptists

Although this storm is seen among different evangelical groups, it appears that it is especially strong among independent, fundamentalist Baptists. This should come as no surprise to anyone who has studied church history. Independent Baptists have always held the Bible and the truth which it teaches of paramount importance. Indeed,
throughout Baptist history there is a pattern of conservative Baptists separating fellowship from those they consider liberal over issues relating to the Word of God. This is seen in England when many left the Baptist Union in the 1880s over the Downgrade Controversy concerning the reliability and authority of the Bible. It is also very plainly seen in the twentieth century in America.

At the beginning of the twentieth century two of the largest Baptist groups in America were the Northern Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. Both would experience fracture over issues dealing with the authority and infallibility of Scripture. The Northern Baptist Convention witnessed its more militant conservative pastors withdraw to form the short lived Baptist Bible Union in 1923. This did not end the problem for the Northern Baptist Convention. In 1932 a group of Fundamentalists cut their ties with the Convention and organized in 1933 as the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. Then in 1947, after a quarter of a century of effort to produce change within the convention, others pulled out to form the Conservative Baptist Association of America.\(^3\) The Northern Baptist Convention was not alone in its loss of members over the issue of how they treated the Bible. When one considers the Southern Baptist Convention, it is discovered that many Baptist pastors also left the Convention because of matters dealing with biblical authority and reliability to follow J. Frank Norris of Fort Worth, Texas. Norris formed the Premillennial Baptist Missionary Fellowship in the 1930s. This movement was later renamed the World Fundamental Baptist Missionary Fellowship, and then changed its name in 1950 to the World Baptist Fellowship. The Baptist Bible Fellowship International (BBFI) split off from Norris in 1950 over

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personality issues. This latter movement can be considered a grandchild of the Southern Baptist Convention, and its pastors did not desire to return to the Convention because of their views on the authority of the Bible. Then in 1956 Lee Roberson, pastor of the Highland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee, formed the Southern Baptist Fellowship. This movement was composed of independents and those who left the Southern Baptist Convention. It later changed its name to the Southwide Baptist Fellowship. All of these exoduses from both the Northern Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention had as their root cause a lowering of the conventions’ acceptance of the authority of the Bible as the infallible, inerrant Word of God. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the independent Baptist of today would be extremely concerned about the authority of Bible translations.

The Storm Raging Particularly among Baptist Bible Fellowship Pastors

This writer has noted a tendency in particular among the pastors and churches of the Baptist Bible Fellowship International to be caught up in the storm over Bible translations. He is a graduate of the Fellowship’s mother school, Baptist Bible College (BBC), in Springfield, Missouri. As a pastor, he has also served as vice-chairman for the Iowa Baptist Bible Fellowship for three years and is currently serving his third term as secretary of the same state fellowship. During these years as a student and then as a pastor, he has observed the problems this issue can cause.

While a student at BBC in the early 1980s, this writer noted that there were many questions over the Bible translation issue being discussed by the students. Yet these

\[^4\text{Ibid., 762-3.}\]

\[^5\text{Ibid., 767.}\]
questions were never clearly answered or even addressed by the teachers at the institution. The reason appeared to be that the faculty did not want to get involved in a heated debate that could cause some of the pastors of the Fellowship to call for their dismissal. As a result, many young men graduated from BBC at that time and are now serving as pastors, missionaries, and evangelists who never received adequate knowledge on this controversial topic.

Even during these years of student life at BBC, this writer came to be concerned that the storm involving Bible translations would continue to grow and one day cause disunity and disruption among the ranks of the BBFI. Have these misgivings become realities? This writer believes that they have.

In 1999 Mike Randall, then editor of both the Baptist Bible Tribune and The Baptist Preacher, published a feature article entitled “Fightin’ Words in the Translation Controversy.” In this he pointed out that ridicule has been used as a powerful tool in controversy and argument among fundamentalists and independent Baptists and then stated, “At the risk of facing ridicule myself, I want to share some thoughts about the current translation debate and how fighting words of ridicule are helping our Enemy rather than our friends.”6 In this article Randall mentioned his own personal bias in favor of the KJV and then went on to discuss the BBFI’s position on Bible translations, what it meant that God’s Word was preserved, the reasons that the use of ridicule is unnecessary and unwarranted, and the close agreement of all the texts in most cases. Although well written, Randall’s article caused some controversy of its own. In the next issue of the same publication, Randall again devoted the feature article to the issue. He stated that he

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had “expected a lot of response from the article, and I was not disappointed.” The responses came through personal conversations, phone calls, letters, and e-mails. Obviously, the editor had struck a nerve. Most were positive, but some were negative. Randall proceeded by attempting to clarify his statements and defend his position. One might think this would have ended the matter, but it did not. A former teacher at BBC and then BBFI pastor named Billy V. Bartlett called Randall and asked about printing a rebuttal. In the course of writing this, Bartlett decided that it was too long for inclusion in the magazine and determined to send it out through the mail to pastors with the prayer that it would “spark a few in the Fellowship to do some soul-searching concerning our position on what we call our ‘Word of God’, the King James Bible.”

In this response, Bartlett called the original article both amusing and aggravating, proceeded to point out what he considered to be its shortcomings, and concluded by writing, “I wonder, are the Tribune/Baptist Preacher, some of the Fellowship officers, and the ‘Mother School’ now to the left of Liberty [University] on the Bible Translation issue? I am not saying they are, you understand; but it is something to think about, isn’t it?” Randall briefly responded in the first issue of the Baptist Preacher in 2000 and noted, “My contention in past articles and now is that an attitude of mutual respect, despite their differences, helped our founders build this great movement. I believe that attitude is still necessary today.”

This was followed a month later by another article by Randall in which he said he had

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9Ibid.

spoken to Bartlett at a national Fellowship meeting and discovered that he had misinterpreted one of Bartlett’s comments. Randall apologized for this and explained why it was an honest mistake. He also stated that Bartlett and he had been friends for years and that friendship does not require total agreement. Thus, this chapter of the BBFI’s struggles over Bible translations was laid to rest. But at the same time another chapter was beginning to be written.

In October of 1999, Shelton Smith reported in *The Sword of the Lord* that the pastors of the Washington State Baptist Bible Fellowship, meeting on September 14 voted to “rescind our relationship with the Baptist Bible Fellowship International (BBFI), effective immediately.” The resolution adopted in this action expressed four major concerns, two of which dealt with the Bible translation issue. The first concern was that BBC had departed from its stand that the King James Bible is the Word of God in English. The final of the four concerns was that there was “increasing departure from the King James Bible among churches of the BBFI.” Smith went on to report that with these concerns expressed, the Washington State Fellowship changed its name to the Northwest Baptist Fellowship. Mike Randall reported the same events in *The Baptist Preacher*. He clarified the events by declaring that several of those who abstained or disagreed with the resolution elected new officers for the Washington State Baptist Bible Fellowship and that it continued to function. He also noted that the dissenting group of pastors published their resolution with a cover letter and distributed them throughout the United States.

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After saying that the pastors who voted to rescind their relationship with the BBFI had every right to do so since the Fellowship is not a denomination but a voluntary, participatory fellowship, Randall pointed out that the charges in the cover letter were vague, the accusations against BBC were misleading, and that there was no proof that the BBFI was departing from the KJV.\textsuperscript{13} Indeed, he writes, “Use of the beloved King James Version has never been a test of fellowship in the past 50-year history of the BBFI.”\textsuperscript{14}

This withdrawal of the Washington state pastors was only the beginning of further troubles over the KJV issue within the BBFI. Two groups of pastors from Nebraska had requested recognition as the state’s official representatives of the BBFI at a national Fellowship meeting in 1999. Since the Constitution of the BBFI only allows for one representative per state, the Committee of Representatives held a meeting, had both men speak, and voted to seat one of them. In November of the same year, a meeting was held that included the unrecognized group in Nebraska. Pastors from several states and Canada voiced the same complaints as the Washington group and voted to establish a new fellowship called the Missouri Valley Concord of Independent Baptist Churches.\textsuperscript{15} It is thus seen that though not limited only to this issue, the Bible translation debate played a part in this fragmenting of the BBFI.

Next, Pastor Sam Davison, President of Heartland Baptist Bible College (HBBC) founded in 1998 in Oklahoma City, sent out a letter to BBFI pastors. This stated that the administration and directors of HBBC had announced that as of November 14, 2000, they


\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 10.

no longer desired the status of a BBFI approved school and requested to be removed from the list of approved schools.\textsuperscript{16} This came as a result of a “Friends of Heartland” meeting at the Cleveland Baptist Church of Cleveland, Ohio, held November 13-15, 2000. At the same meeting a large majority of the pastors voted to establish a new fellowship, later named Global Independent Baptist Fellowship. Mike Randall saw this as a continuation of the events started by the Washington pastors’ withdrawal. After noting that the complaints of the Washington State Pastor’s Resolution of 1999 had a ring similar to comments in Davison’s letter, he wrote, “To me, this suggests that the Washington pastor’s withdrawal has been enlarged and is part of the Heartland decision.”\textsuperscript{17} Thus, this break would seem to involve the KJV issue. This is supported by the fact that it is well known that HBBC takes a stronger KJV position than does BBC. Also, Pastor Kenneth Gillming, then BBFI President, wrote about those who had decided to break away from the Fellowship. He stated that in the mid-‘90s things began to change in the Fellowship and in Fellowship meetings. There was a loud minority who “dominated every national meeting with their heavy emphasis on ‘The King James Bible’ (not the more correct designation of the King James Version of the Bible), and a near-cultic stance that the English KJV was more than a translation, and able to correct the original manuscripts.”\textsuperscript{18} Gillming next pointed out that it was an issue of control. These pastors desired to control other pastors, the Fellowship colleges, and the Fellowship. When they could not make BBC bend to their will, they started another college [HBBC]. He then closed with the

\textsuperscript{16}Sam Davison to Fellow Pastor, 15 November 2000.

\textsuperscript{17}Randall, “The Heartland Decision,” 6.

\textsuperscript{18}Kenneth Gillming, “A Response to Those Withdrawing from the BBFI,” The Baptist Preacher, November/December 2000, 4.
words, “In conclusion, just remember they left us. We did not leave them. We are right
where we have always been – a fellowship of pastors seeking to carry out the Great
Commission. We had room for them, but they chose not to work with us.” Therefore,
it is plain that the Bible translation issue played an important part in this BBFI problem.

When one considers the history of the BBFI since this writer’s days at BBC, it is
evident that his concerns over the Bible translation storm were well founded. Has the
final chapter in the translation debate been written for the BBFI or will the winds of
controversy continue? It is this author’s opinion based upon personal observation that the
storm will continue. He has personally heard one pastor state that he would never
support a missionary that did not use only the KJV, and he has listened to speakers at
state Fellowship meetings berate those using other translations. Thus, he believes that if
the Bible translation storm is not calmed there will be future problems caused in the
BBFI because of it.

A Proposed Strategy to Help Calm the Storm

As one surveys the landscape of biblical evangelicals today and focuses upon
independent Baptists, there can be no doubt that there is a growing controversy within the
movement over the issue of Bible translations. Brothers who should be working together
for the cause of Christ are arguing over which Bible version to use. The people of God
are confused and troubled because of the controversy among their shepherds and
instructors. A storm has indeed struck the Baptist ranks which threatens to sink many an
individual believer and local congregation just as the storm struck the Apostles upon the
Sea of Galilee. On that day, long ago, the Master arose and calmed the troubled waters.

\[19\] Ibid.
The same is needed today. Independent Baptists need to again hear the voice of their Savior calling out, “Peace, be still.” The troubled waters of the current Bible translation debate can be calmed by the believer’s Savior and Lord. Although the Master is not physically upon the scene to address the issue, this does not mean that He cannot still speak to His people. As one studies the Word of God and history, it becomes evident that Jesus has often used human instruments to fulfill His plan. Indeed, this is His normal means of operation within this world. Therefore, Jesus can still speak to His church and calm the translation storm through the ministries of believers today.

Yet even when it is admitted that Jesus can calm the storm through the means of His servants, the problem is not automatically solved. The question of how to calm the storm still remains. Simply put, the problem before independent Baptists is, “How can the storm of the Bible translation issue be calmed?” This writer proposes that this storm can only be calmed by the teaching and receiving of accurate knowledge. Ignorance has never helped solve a problem but has often enlarged it.

One of the primary reasons that the Bible translation issue has grown to its current level of disruption is that God’s people do not have a basic understanding of how they came to have in their hands the Word of God in their own language. Local congregations are not taught how God gave mankind the Bible, how it was kept intact for them, or how it came to be available in their own native tongue. Often the reason that congregations are in ignorance is because their pastors were not given a complete understanding of this topic in Bible college or seminary. This is not to say that they did not have a course in Bibliology, but, rather, that their course of study did not address in detail how such matters as inspiration, preservation, and translation relate to the English Bible they hold
in their hands. In turn, Bible college professors often did not teach these relationships in detail because they did not have a resource which helped bring all of these together for their Bibliology class.

A second reason the Bible translation issue has grown to its current level of disruption is that those among God’s people who do have such a basic understanding as described above have only considered the issue from one point of view. They have never seriously considered the evidence from the other side. Most local pastors, Bible teachers, and college professors are extremely busy men. Their schedules are full, and they have a stack of books which they desire to read or feel that they should read. As a result of this, when they believe that they have a basic understanding of an issue, they often do not take the time to read what others have to say about it which differs from their position. Although this is a natural reaction, this lack of additional reading can lead to believing that the other position is held by uneducated individuals who are just not spiritual enough to see the truth. It can even lead to name calling and considering the other side to be heretical when they are not. Sadly, most of the books and articles which have been recently written on the Bible translation debate have spent most of their time commenting on what the two sides have in disagreement and do not mention enough about what both sides hold in common.

It seems apparent to this writer that these two problems can be overcome by the teaching and receiving of accurate knowledge. The means of calming the present translation storm will be Jesus’ servants who calmly and intelligently teach the truth of Scripture upon this matter and call for unity among Christians based upon foundational doctrines of the Word of God.
The strategy which this paper proposes to calm the troubled waters of the Bible translation issue among independent Baptists is threefold. First, pastors must be given a resource which will summarize the positions of both sides of the debate so that they can easily see where there is agreement and where there are differences. Second, churches must be given a resource which their pastors can use to teach their people the basics of the translation issue. Third, Bible college professors must be given a resource which they can include in their Bibliology classes to train ministers in these areas. It is this author’s desire in this project to present a resource which can be used to do just that.

The Scope of this Strategy

Statement of Limitation

It should be clearly understood by the reader from the start what this paper does not plan to do. It is not the purpose of this author to try to prove the superiority of one English version above another. Nor is this paper sent forth with the desire to champion one particular Greek text of the New Testament as the preserved Word of God. Although information will be presented which will discuss English Bible versions and the Greek texts from which they were translated, this writer will leave it up to the reader to determine which of each he considers to be the best. Furthermore, this paper is not meant to be a complete history of the English Bible. A detailed summary of all current Bibles in English will not be presented. Nor will their respective strengths and weaknesses be considered. There are already books which sufficiently deal with this side of the issue.

Theoretical Basis

The strategy of this paper is to give pastors, local churches, and Bible college professors sufficient knowledge which can be utilized to calm the translation storm. It is
his contention that independent Baptists must be taught to understand four essential factors if the troubled waters of the Bible translation issue are to be calmed within their ranks. To begin with, he will approach this project by focusing on three major, primary issues. First, independent Baptists must fully understand the essential doctrine of Bible inspiration. Second, they must clearly understand the essential nature of Bible preservation. Third, they must fully understand the essential need of Bible translation. It is this student’s desire in each of these areas to consider each issue in more detail and study what the Bible teaches regarding it. He also desires to bring in what the historical position of Christianity has been in regards to Bible inspiration, preservation, and translation (particularly the position of Baptists concerning each). From this it can be learned where independent Baptists on both sides of the translation controversy agree and what positions and arguments are invalid. This, in turn, should allow the debaters to look upon their opponents as evangelical brothers in Christ and calm some of the heated rhetoric. Then, and only then, can independent Baptists go on to the fourth factor of understanding the fact that peripheral misinformation confuses the essential issues.

The Methodology of this Strategy

In the pages to follow, the three primary issues will be considered in great detail. This student will study what the Bible teaches on each issue. He will also survey the material published by both sides of the debate to gain their insights into each of these areas. Further, he will consider what respected theologians have written through the years in regards to each issue, examine historical confessions of faith, and then move into more modern times by looking at the writings of evangelical Christians, especially Baptists. In particular, he will focus on the writings of independent Baptists and
especially those of the Baptist Bible Fellowship International in which he is involved. He will observe what the BBFI founders had to say by considering past issues of the Baptist Bible Tribune and other material put out by these men. Additionally, he will consider the results of surveys sent out to pastors in the BBFI. Since it was not feasible to send such surveys to every pastor in the Fellowship, he sent these surveys to each pastor in the state fellowship in which he is involved, that of Iowa. Additionally, he sent a similar survey to each of the State Representatives of the BBFI. The results from these surveys will allow the student to gain a better understanding of the positions held among the men of the BBFI and wherein certain problems lie.

After discussing the three primary issues, this student will consider some of the misinformation which has been set forth which confuses the essential issues. While these matters are really only peripheral, they are often given so much time and consideration as to dwarf the true essentials. Because of this, they cannot be totally ignored. They require correction so that the attention of those considering the debate can again be focused upon what is truly important. This will be done by surveying the books on both sides of the debate and setting the record straight on matters which have been blown out of proportion.

This paper will consist of six chapters. In chapter one this writer has shown the need for this paper by observing the reality of the translation storm. If independent Baptists are ever to calm the troubled waters of the Bible translation storm they must first realize that such a storm exists and that it is affecting them in particular. Next, he has proposed a three-fold strategy to help calm the storm. The scope of this strategy has been considered as well as its methodology.
In chapter two this author will deal with the subject of Bible inspiration as it relates to the translation storm. If independent Baptists are to calm the troubled waters stirred up by the Bible translation storm they must fully understand the essential doctrine of Bible inspiration. First, the biblical teaching on the subject of inspiration will be examined. Second, the natural implication that the Bible must be inerrant if it is inspired will be discussed. Third, the subject of the extent of inspiration will be considered. Does biblical inspiration extend only to the original autographs or does it extend to the copies and even to translations into other languages? Fourth, the historical position of Bible believing Christians on the subject of inspiration will be researched with particular attention paid to the historical view of Baptists. The chapter will then end with some concluding thoughts on the subject of Bible inspiration and the translation storm.

In chapter three the subject of Bible preservation will be considered as it relates to the translation storm. If independent Baptists are to calm the troubled waters stirred up by the Bible translation storm they must clearly understand the essential nature of Bible preservation. First, the biblical teaching on preservation will be studied. Second, the method which God has used to preserve the Bible will be discussed. Third, the historical position of Christianity in general and Baptists in particular on the subject of preservation will be considered. Fourth, some conclusions on the topic of preservation and the translation storm will be presented.

In chapter four this writer will address the topic of Bible translation itself as it relates to the current translation storm. If independent Baptists are to calm the troubled waters stirred up by the Bible translation storm they must fully understand the essential need of Bible translation. First, after defining what the essential need of Bible translation
is, the biblical teaching on this need will be presented. Second, this need of translation will be shown to have resulted in an abundance of Bible translations down through the centuries, and to be a need which continues to the present day. Third, the methodology of Bible translation will be considered with its resulting differences of opinion. Should the Bible be translated formally, dynamically, or somewhere in between? Fourth, the historical position of Christians, especially Baptists, on the need for Bible translations will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with some final thoughts on the need of Bible translations as it relates to the current translation storm.

In chapter five the problem of peripheral misinformation will be dealt with as it relates to the translation storm. If independent Baptists are to calm the troubled waters stirred up by the Bible translation storm they must fully understand the fact that peripheral misinformation confuses the essential issues. When the main issues are thus confused, neither side in the debate is willing to consider the other’s point of view. To solve this problem, misinformation must be corrected. To begin with, misinformation concerning the KJV and the Majority Text will be discussed. Then, misinformation concerning modern translations of the Bible and the Critical Text upon which they are based will be examined. Finally, the chapter will implore independent Baptists to lay aside the misinformation they have heard and concentrate on the main issues of the translation debate.

Chapter six will bring the paper to a close with some concluding thoughts on the Bible translation storm. The author plans to finalize this study by reviewing what has been learned and then giving some practical suggestions based upon the four primary points of the paper.
CHAPTER 2
THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE AND THE TRANSLATION STORM

If independent Baptists are to calm the troubled waters stirred up by the Bible translation storm, they must begin by fully understanding the essential doctrine of Bible inspiration. Much of the translation debate circles around the topic of biblical inspiration. What does inspiration mean? What is inspired? What does inspiration imply? How has the Church throughout the centuries and especially Baptists understood inspiration? It is to these topics that this chapter will turn the reader’s attention.

The Biblical Teaching of Inspiration

To accurately understand the doctrine of biblical inspiration, one must begin by asking, “What does the Bible teach concerning inspiration?” One can study theologians from many different schools of thought; one can write down his own personal point of view on the topic; one can debate others on their positions and definitions; but all of this is of no avail if the inquirer does not begin with the Bible’s own teaching on the subject. It is vital that the Bible be the starting point because it is impossible to grasp the meaning of the inspiration of the Bible without understanding the Bible’s own teaching regarding the matter. Yet the student of inspiration can come to a clear biblical conclusion on this essential topic by studying two key Scripture passages, considering multiple theological definitions of inspiration, and grasping a clear conclusion.
Two Key Passages

How did God inspire the Bible? A clear understanding of this matter comes from the study of two key passages. The first of these is 2 Tim 3:16-17, which begins, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” From this passage it can be learned what God did in the matter of inspiration.

First, all Scripture is “given by inspiration of God.” Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, and the Great Bible rendered these words, “inspired of God.”1 In the Greek it is one word, theopneustos, which is a compound word made up of Theos, “God,” and pneustos, “breathed.” Therefore, it literally means “God-breathed.” God is the source of all Scripture; it was breathed out from Him. William Evans notes that, the meaning of the word “breathed,” as used here, is brought out very forcibly by the comparison of two other words translated in the same way. The one is the Greek word psuchein, which means “to breathe gently,” while in 2 Tim 3:16 the term denotes a forcible respiration. The other is the Hebrew word ah-ayrh, which means “to breathe unconsciously,” while 2 Tim 3:16 denotes a conscious breathing.2 Therefore, God breathed the Scriptures consciously and powerfully.

It should also be recognized that theopneustos means that the Scriptures were breathed out by God, not breathed into. Unfortunately, the English term “inspiration” can be misleading in this regards. “Inspire” comes from the Latin word inspiro which means “to breathe in.” Applying this meaning to Scripture would suggest that somehow God

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breathed into the writings of men, filling them with a certain dynamic quality.\textsuperscript{3} This was not the meaning which Paul desired to impart in this passage. \textit{Pneustos} is related to the verb meaning “to breathe or blow,” and the thought is that of breathing out (expiring) rather than breathing in (inspiring). Therefore, \textit{theopneustos} means \textit{out}-breathed by God rather than \textit{in}-breathed by God – divinely \textit{ex}-pired, rather than \textit{in}-spired.\textsuperscript{4} The Scriptures are the product of the breath of God, something breathed out by Him. One might picture all Scripture as the breath of God, having taken form on the pages of the Bible.\textsuperscript{5} The reader can understand this better by realizing that a person can see his breath on a number of occasions. One might exhale on his glasses to clean them. His breath is seen on the fogged lenses. On a winter day, a person’s breath condenses in the air as evidence of the cold temperature. In both of these situations, human breath takes form. What could not be seen has now become visible. This is what the Scripture says concerning itself, that it is God’s breath, having taken form.\textsuperscript{6} Concerning this Dan Hayden writes:

\begin{quote}
The Bible is not representing itself as a collection of writings by prophets and apostles \textit{about} God. Rather, it is saying that the Bible is really the \textit{communication} of \textit{God Himself}, who breathed on holy men so that what they wrote was actually His breath condensing through their pens. This, then, is what the Bible is claiming for itself – that it is literally “the Word of God.”\textsuperscript{7}
\end{quote}

Second, God is very clear in His identification of exactly what was inspired; the “Scripture.” Not just any book was inspired, only the Scripture. The Greek word used

\begin{enumerate}
\item Dan Hayden, \textit{Did God Write the Bible?} (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007), 107.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., 108.
\end{enumerate}
here for “Scripture” is graphê, which means “a writing, thing written,” and is used in the New Testament of the writings of the Old Testament prophets (Matt 26:56) and of the Old Testament Scriptures in general (Matt 26:54). This makes a distinction between the Bible and non-inspired writings. There were many religious books written in the ancient world, but only the Scriptures were the breath of God. It also points out that it was the written Scriptures which were inspired and not the human writers of Scripture. The rabbinical teaching was that the Spirit of God rested on and in the prophets and spoke through them so that their words did not come from themselves, but from the mouth of God and they spoke and wrote in the Holy Spirit. The early church was in entire agreement with this view.8 Thus, inspiration is the process by which Spirit-moved writers (as will be seen in 2 Pet 1:21) recorded God-breathed writings (as has been observed in 2 Tim 3:16). Hence, when inspiration is viewed as a total process, it includes both the writer and the writings; but when it is seen as a product, it relates only to the writings (graphê).9 Although Bible teachers often speak in a general sense of the writers of Scripture as being inspired, in a more specific, theological sense only the writings are inspired. This explains why the same men who wrote passages of inspired Scripture could also write other books which were non-canonical; because they were not inspired. Concerning this, John MacArthur notes:

It is of utmost importance to understand that it is Scripture that is inspired by God, not the man divinely chosen to record it. When speaking or writing apart from God’s revelation, their thoughts, wisdom, and understanding were human and fallible. They were not inspired in the sense that we commonly use that term.


of people with extraordinary artistic, literary, or musical genius. Nor were they inspired in the sense of being personal repositories of divine truth which they could dispense at will. Many human authors of Scripture penned other documents, but none of those writings exist today, and, even if discovered, they would not carry the weight of Scripture. We know, for instance, that Paul wrote at least two other letters to the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 5:9; 2 Cor. 2:4), but no copies of those letters have ever been found. The letters doubtless were godly, spiritually insightful, and blessed of the Lord, but they were not Scripture.

Many men who wrote Scripture, such as Moses and Paul, were highly trained in human knowledge and wisdom, but that learning was not the source of the divine truth they recorded. David was a highly gifted poet, and that gift doubtless is reflected in the beauty of his psalms, but it was not the source of the divine truths revealed in those psalms.

Scripture first of all and above all is from God and about God, His self-revelation to fallen mankind. From Genesis through Revelation, God reveals His truth, His character, His attributes, and His divine plan for the redemption of man, whom He made in His own image. He even foretells the eventual redemption of the rest of His creation, . . . (Rom. 8:21-22).\footnote{John MacArthur, 2 Timothy (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 142-3.}

This is one reason why it can be asserted that the words of the Bible are inspired rather than the thoughts of the writers.

Third, not only does God tell the reader what He did, but the extent of His action. God inspired “all” Scripture. The Greek word rendered “all” in this passage is \textit{pas}. Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest notes that when it is used in a singular substantive with the article, it means “every,” not “all.” That is why he renders this passage, “Every scripture is God-breathed.” The context makes it clear that Paul was referring here to the Old Testament Scripture which Timothy had studied as a child (2 Tim 3:15). Thus, the Greek expression \textit{pasa graphe} (“every scripture”) speaks not of the Old Testament Scriptures as a whole, but of each separate passage considered as a unit.\footnote{Kenneth S. Wuest, The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), 150-1.} Paul is here affirming that every part of the Old Testament is inspired of God. But what of the New Testament
writings, are they also inspired? The Greek word *graphē* was commonly used in the early church not only to refer to the Old Testament but also of God’s newly revealed Word, in what came to be called the New Testament.\textsuperscript{12} Therefore, while the Jews would have only considered the writings of the Old Testament to be inspired, the early Christians would have accepted both the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as being God-breathed.

Inspiration extends to the individual books of both testaments.

The second key passage in regards to biblical inspiration is 2 Pet 1:20-21, which states, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Not only does God explain what He did in the matter of inspiration, He also declares how He did it. The God-breathed Scriptures took form not by man’s innovation but by God’s moving.

The first thing which the Apostle Peter tells his reader about the inspiration of Scripture is that it was not by man’s innovation, that is, it was not humanly motivated. The word “prophecy” (*propēteia*) here is not used in the sense of prediction but in the basic and broader meaning of speaking forth, of proclaiming a message, and it carries the same inclusive idea as “the oracles of God” with which ancient Israel had the privilege of being entrusted (Rom 3:2).\textsuperscript{13} Therefore, the Old Testament in particular and the New Testament by extension, was not of private interpretation. The Greek word used here for interpretation is *epilusis*, and literally means, “loosening, untying” and refers to something being released, sent out, or sent forth. Thus, no part of the Bible was ever sent forth

\textsuperscript{12}MacArthur, 145.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 144.
by man’s private untying. In other words, no message of Scripture was originated and sent forth by men’s own wisdom and will.\textsuperscript{14} This is in perfect agreement with what Peter continues on to state in verse 21, that no message of God was “by the will of man.” No Scripture passage was ever the invention of the prophet who wrote it. Peter is not speaking in this passage about the proper interpretation of Scripture but about the divine origin or source of Scripture.

The second thing which the Apostle Peter tells his reader about the inspiration of Scripture is that it was by the moving of God. He states, “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The Greek word for “moved” here is \textit{pherō}, and means “to bear, carry,” and signifies that the authors were “being borne along” or impelled by the Holy Spirit’s power rather than by their own wills.\textsuperscript{15} The verb is in the passive voice, indicating that the men were the objects of the Holy Spirit’s action. Thus, God was the real speaker and the men were His mouthpieces.\textsuperscript{16} The word is used in reference to ships which were borne along by the wind. A biblical example of this Greek word being used in this manner is found in Acts 27:15, 17 when the ship Paul was on was “driven” (borne along) by the wind. In the days when the Bible was written, there were only two ways that men could propel their boats across the waters. They could either use oars and row the boat under their own power, or they could raise their sails and let the wind move the boat along. Peter tells his readers that the prophets did not write under their own power (like rowing a boat) but were borne along by the Holy Spirit in much the same way that

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{15}Vine, Unger, and White, s.v. “moved.”
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\textsuperscript{16}Hayden, 110.
\end{flushright}
wind moves a sailboat.\textsuperscript{17} Just as the wind provides the power and the sail serves as the tool through which that power works, the biblical writers were the instruments through which the Holy Spirit worked. The prophets raised their sails, (they were obedient and receptive), and the Holy Spirit filled them and carried their craft along in the direction He wished. Men spoke: God spoke.\textsuperscript{18} As Charles Wagner writes, “When the wind catches a sail, its unseen power bears the craft along. If you understand that basic principle of physics – that an unseen power can produce a visible effect – you can begin to understand what the apostle Peter had in mind when he explained how the Word of God was brought into being by the power of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{19} Therefore, men saw the prophets and apostles speak, but the invisible agent who gave them the words was the Holy Spirit.

The view of inspiration which these two key passages of Scripture teach is known as verbal plenary inspiration. Verbal inspiration means that the very words of Scripture are the words of God. Plenary inspiration means that all the parts of Scripture are the Word of God. Together they teach that the Scriptures in their totality, every part and every word, is the Word of God.

It must be recognized that the verbal plenary view of inspiration does not require that the biblical writers were passive secretaries who just took down divine dictation from the mouth of God. Although parts of the Bible were certainly given by dictation, and the prophets repeated them exactly as they heard them from God, the Scriptures nowhere present the authors as being unconscious penmen, robotically recording what God

\textsuperscript{17}Charles U. Wagner, \textit{Set to Sail: Senior Instructor} (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1983), 7.

\textsuperscript{18}Michael Green, \textit{2 Peter and Jude} (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans’s Publishing Company, 1968), 91.

\textsuperscript{19}Wagner, 6.
dictated. The occurrences of biblical writers recording verbatim the words given them by God are not to be taken as the general rule for every occasion. These authors were consciously involved in the process, fully cognizant of what was occurring. God providentially prepared each author for the task of writing each specific book of Scripture. Each writer has his own recognizable distinctive style and vocabulary, and each book grew out of a special set of circumstances.\textsuperscript{20} Verbal plenary inspiration does not require mechanical dictation and, indeed, does not even hint of it.

Multiple Definitions

Based upon the teachings of these two key passages of scripture, theologians have put together a number of definitions of inspiration. Benjamin B. Warfield declares, “Inspiration is, therefore, usually defined as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness.”\textsuperscript{21} René Pache writes that inspiration “is the determining influence exercised by the Holy Spirit on the writers of the Old and New Testaments in order that they might proclaim and set down in an exact and authentic way the message as received from God. This influence guided them even to the extent of their use of words, that they might be kept from all error and omission.”\textsuperscript{22} Charles C. Ryrie notes, “My own definition of inspiration is that it is God’s superintendence of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His

\textsuperscript{20}Wiersbe, New Testament, 2:252.


\textsuperscript{22}René Pache, The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture, translated by Helen I. Needham (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 1969), 45.
revelation to man in the words of the original autographs.” Similarly, Paul Enns writes, “Inspiration may be defined as the Holy Spirit’s superintending over the writers so that while writing according to their own styles and personalities, the result was God’s Word written – authoritative, trustworthy, and free from error in the original autographs.”

Emery H. Bancroft explains, “By the inspiration of the Scriptures we mean that special divine influence upon the minds of the Scripture writers in virtue of which their productions, apart from errors in transcription and when rightly interpreted, together constitute an infallible rule of faith and practice.”

A Clear Conclusion

After a careful consideration of all the above material, a clear conclusion can be reached on the subject of biblical inspiration. It is the words of God recorded in the Bible which are inspired, not the authors. God invisibly but powerfully moved the writers and using their own backgrounds, personalities, and vocabularies, caused His own Words to take form so as to be seen by the eyes of man upon the pages of Scripture. These words are completely trustworthy and without error. As such they constitute the infallible rule of faith and practice to the believer in Jesus Christ.

The Implication of Inspiration

After coming to a clear conclusion in regards to what the Bible teaches concerning its own inspiration, what can be implied from it? The reader may have noted

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the repetition of words and phrases such as “trustworthy,” “infallible,” “kept from error,”
“without error,” and “free from error” in the definitions given by theologians of
inspiration. The reason for this is that the inescapable implication of inspiration is that
the Bible is inerrant. The Holy Spirit so superintended the writings of the prophets and
apostles that they were produced without one single error. Being borne along by the
Spirit, fallible men produced infallible writings. In the words of Irving Jensen, “The
control of the Spirit over the minds of the authors was too complete and powerful to
permit the human qualities of their work to contaminate the purity of the text.”
Inspiration implies inerrancy.

A Logical Demand

The inerrancy of Scripture is demanded by logic. Biblical inspiration and biblical
inerrancy are inseparably linked for two primary reasons. First, if God has a message
which He so desires man to know that He revealed it to mankind and had it written down,
then it is only logical that the record given would be pure. God utilized inspiration to
preserve His revelation. If God has revealed Himself but the record of that revelation is
not accurately recorded, then the revelation of God is subject to question. Hence,
inspiration guarantees the accuracy of the revelation. W. A. Criswell notes that, “if that
divine record is to be a true revelation of God, it must be without error. It must be
infallibly correct.” If one begins to believe that there are errors in God’s revelation,
then he begins to find it difficult to trust any part of Scripture as the revelation of God’s

27Emns, 159.
28W. A. Criswell, Why I Preach That the Bible Is Literally True (Nashville: Broadman Press,
1969), 63.
truth. Once he gives up the inerrancy of Scripture, how can he avoid giving up one by one the other major doctrines of the Christian faith?\textsuperscript{29} Thus, it would have been totally illogical for God to inspire an errant revelation.

Second, if God is the author of Scripture, then it is only logical that the record must be totally true. For God to inspire an errant record would mean one of two things. To begin with, an errant Bible would mean that God can make errors. If the Bible has errors it is the same as suggesting that God can fail, that He can make a mistake. The very nature of God is at stake.\textsuperscript{30} Yet it is quite plain that for God to be God, He cannot be in error. Therefore, the Bible cannot contain errors. The Scriptures are inerrant because their Author, God, is inerrant. He is infallible in everything He says and does, including writing His Word.

It then follows that if God cannot make mistakes and yet the Bible contains errors, then God must be a liar. Thus, to suggest that there are errors in the Bible is to impugn the character of God.\textsuperscript{31} Yet God is preeminently “the God of truth” (Isa 65:16), who cannot lie (Heb 6:18; Tit 1:2), and has given man His Word of truth (John 17:17). Since it is God’s very nature to utter truth without error, He cannot be the author of untruth. It logically follows that since the words of Scripture are God’s words which took form through inspiration, they must be inerrant. Charles Ryrie provides a syllogism for logically concluding the biblical teaching of inerrancy: “God is true (Rom. 3:4); the Scriptures were breathed out by God (2 Tim. 3:16); therefore, the Scriptures are true

\textsuperscript{29}Stewart Custer, \textit{Does Inspiration Demand Inerrancy?} (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1968), 86.

\textsuperscript{30}Enns, 167.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.
(since they came from the breath of God who is true).”32 The very nature of inspiration renders the Bible inerrant. As Harold Lindsell states, “If the Scripture is inspired at all it must be infallible. If any part of it is not infallible, then that part cannot be inspired. If inspiration allows for the possibility of error then inspiration ceases to be inspiration.”33 It must then be concluded that inspiration is demanded by logic.

A Biblical Teaching

The inerrancy of Scripture is not only demanded by logic, it is taught by Scripture. What is the source of the doctrine of inerrancy? The answer is simply that the Bible itself teaches that it is inerrant. Although the pages of Scripture never use the word “inerrant,” the statements which it uses to describe the nature of its contents lead to the conclusion of inerrancy. The writers of the Bible never saw themselves as the originators of Scripture. Continually the Old Testament prophets proclaimed, “Thus saith the LORD,” “Hear the word of the LORD,” and “the word of the LORD came unto me.” Can anyone doubt that they considered their message the very words of God and as such without error? In his book Does Inspiration Demand Inerrancy?, Stewart Custer devotes seventeen pages to surveying Old Testament passages in order to see what it teaches concerning its own inspiration. He then concludes:

The prophets delivered their messages in the supreme confidence that He [God] was actually speaking through them. We are not reading into Scripture the theory of an inerrant inspiration: this is the faith of the prophets themselves. Anyone who reads these passages with an open mind ought to be able to see that the prophets directly taught that their messages were the inerrant Word of God who

32Ibid.

cannot lie or mislead. They never uttered the phrase *Thus saith the Lord* in hypocrisy.\textsuperscript{34}

Additionally, Ps 19:7 claims, “The law of the LORD is perfect.” If it is perfect, how could there be errors in it? Psalm 119:160a proclaims, “Thy word is true from the beginning.” If it is true, how could there be errors in it? Also, Prov 30:5a states, “Every word of God is pure.” If it is pure, how can there be errors in it. Such passages are found in abundance. Clearly the Old Testament claims to be inerrant.

What of the New Testament, does it also teach the inerrancy of the Word of God? Indeed, it certainly does. The Christian finds in the New Testament the heart of the Scriptural teaching about inspiration.\textsuperscript{35} As has been previously noted, Peter claimed the writers were “moved,” or borne along, by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). If this word means anything, it teaches that the Scripture writers were under the controlling power of the Holy Spirit and that they were not the masters of their own pens.\textsuperscript{36} Jesus accepted the writing of the Old Testament as authoritative and declared, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt 5:17, 18). The fact of the inerrancy of the Old Testament was virtually taken for granted by the Jews, and Jesus clearly shared this belief. This is so evident from the pages of the Gospels, that H. J. Cadbury, Harvard professor and one of the most extreme New Testament critics of his generation, once declared that he was far more sure as a mere historical fact that Jesus held to the common Jewish belief of an

\textsuperscript{34}Custer, 30.

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., 31.

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid, 56.
infallible Bible than that Jesus believed in His own messiahship. Jesus’ disciples followed His example and completely accepted the infallibility of the Scriptures. They quoted extensively from the Old Testament in their sermons (as recorded in the Book of Acts) and in their writings (as found in the Gospels and Epistles). Stewart Custer devotes thirty pages in his book to surveying New Testament passages on inerrancy. He begins his chapter on this topic by claiming, “The Old Testament prophets disowned all responsibility for the words which they uttered under the inspiration of God; they were not proclaiming their own words or opinions, but rather the Words of the Living God. . . . The New Testament continues this same teaching that all responsibility for the truth of Scripture rests on God, not the human spokesman.”

The consistent teaching of all these passages has been that the Scriptures are divinely trustworthy, authoritative, and infallible. The personalities of the Scripture writers have not been obliterated, but at the same time the very words of the Living God have been faithfully transmitted by the inerrant inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is not a biased opinion forced upon Scripture; this is the consistent doctrine of Scripture concerning itself.

Clearly the New Testament, as well as the Old, teaches the complete inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures.

A Historical Acceptance

The inerrancy of Scripture is not only demanded by logic and taught by Scripture, it is accepted historically by the Church. It has already been observed that the Jews virtually took for granted the inerrancy of the Old Testament. The early Christians did

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37Lindsell, 

38Custer, 31.

the same and added the writings of the New Testament to their list of inspired, infallible books. This is abundantly clear from the writings of such Church Fathers as Justin, Clement of Rome, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Augustine, and others; and from the writing of Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin.\textsuperscript{40} Most mainline confessions of faith affirm the substance of inerrancy. Among Reformed statements, the Belgic Confession (1561) and the Westminster Confession (1647) both affirm the perfection of Scripture. Similar stands are found in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1563), while more recent confessions, such as the Baptist New Hampshire Confession of 1832, refer to the Bible as containing “truth without any mixture of error for its matter.”\textsuperscript{41} Even the Roman Catholic Church declared at the Vatican Council of 1870 that the Scriptures “contain a revelation without error.”\textsuperscript{42} Perhaps one of the most striking affirmations of inerrancy comes from a united protest addressed to Bishop Colenso by the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England in 1863, which reads, “All our hopes for eternity, the very foundation of our faith, our nearest and dearest consolations, are taken from us, if one line of the Sacred Book be declared unfaithful or untrustworthy.”\textsuperscript{43}

Thus, it is evident that for two thousand years the Church has believed the Bible to be completely trustworthy. It was not until recently that anyone within the borders of


\textsuperscript{41}Comfort, \textit{Origin}, 44.

\textsuperscript{42}Bancroft, 43.

\textsuperscript{43}Urquhart, 15-6.
“Christendom” has dared to question the inerrancy of the Word of God. One simple way to demonstrate this fact is to consider the words of an enemy of traditional Christianity. In 1926, during the height of the Liberal-Fundamentalist controversy, Kirsop Lake, an eminent New Testament scholar and a professor at the University of Chicago, wrote on page 61 of his book *The Religion of Yesterday and Tomorrow*:

> It is a mistake often made by educated persons who happen to have but little knowledge of historical theology, to suppose that fundamentalism is a new and strange form of thought. It is nothing of the kind; it is the partial and uneducated survival of a theology which was once universally held by all Christians. How many were there, for instance, in the Christian churches in the eighteenth century who doubted the infallible inspiration of all Scriptures? A few, perhaps, but very few. No, the fundamentalist may be wrong; I think that he is. But it is we who have departed from the tradition, not he, and I am sorry for the fate of anyone who tries to argue with a fundamentalist on the basis of authority. The Bible and the *corpus theologicum* of the Church is on the fundamentalist side.\(^\text{44}\)

This quotation, from an opposing liberal scholar asserts that the fundamentalist view of biblical inerrancy is indeed the historic view that has been the view of the Christian Church through the ages. Clearly the teaching of inerrancy is not only logical and biblical, it is also the historical view of Christianity.

Therefore, there can be no reasonable doubt that inspiration implies inerrancy. This implication is demanded by logic, taught by Scripture, and has been accepted throughout the centuries by the Church. This truth is a key fact in understanding how inspiration relates to the Bible translation debate.

**The Extent of Inspiration**

What is the extent of inspiration? That is, how far does inspiration go when one studies biblical documents? Are the autographs inspired by God? Are the copies of these

\(^{44}\text{Lindsell, }\text{Battle, }\text{19.}\)
originals inspired? How about translations based upon the copies, are they inspired? The extent of inspiration is a bedrock issue in the translation debate.

The Autographs

The original documents which the biblical writers penned and which now make up the Scriptures are often called the autographs (or autographa). These autographs include those works penned directly by the hands of the earthly authors and those books inscribed by a secretary (or amanuensis) under the direction and dictation of the author, as in some of the writings of Paul and at least some of the passages in Jeremiah.

There can be no doubt in the Christian’s mind that the original manuscripts which the prophets and apostles wrote, the autographs, were inspired by God. After all, it was in reference to these autographs that the Apostle Paul declared they were “breathed-out” by God through men whom the Apostle Peter said were borne along by the Holy Spirit. When the writers of Holy Scripture laid aside their pens, the resulting manuscripts were the very words of God having taken form on paper. They were inspired and without error. That is why many theologians speak of the inerrancy of Scripture “as originally given.”

No one claims that the original autographs have survived to this day. As time passed these original manuscripts would have worn out. Thus over the centuries all of the original manuscripts penned by the biblical authors have been irretrievably lost.

This brings up the question as to why God did not preserve the originals. Certainly God could have performed a miracle and somehow kept the autographs fresh and unworn, but He did not. Although students today cannot say for certain why God choose not to preserve the original manuscripts, one major reason may have been because
of man’s tendency to idolatry. Tragically, man has always had a tendency to want to worship religious relics which they consider holy. An excellent example of this is found in 2 Kgs 18:4, where the Jewish people during the time of King Hezekiah had fallen into worshipping the bronze serpent which Moses had formed in the wilderness at the direction of God (Num 21:5-9). Although this serpent had served its purpose hundreds of years before, the people of Israel had preserved it and eventually came to worship it. Because of this, King Hezekiah was forced to destroy it. Can anyone doubt that if any of the original autographs had survived that some people would be worshipping them?

Some might question the value of inerrant autographs which have perished. But supporters of inerrancy maintain that the confidence of Christian believers in modern translations of the Bible rests firmly in the infallibility of the original writings. How could the reader trust the Bible he holds in his hands today if the original manuscripts which were written were not inerrant? Robert Saucy explains:

The belief in the inerrancy of the original writings has value for us even though they have perished. We would all admit that our desk rulers and tape measures are not absolutely accurate. They are close approximations to one degree or another of the master standards maintained by the National Bureau of Standards in Washington. We may not have been aware that such a standard exists; nevertheless, our rulers and tapes have value because they are based on an absolute standard. Similarly, our present Bibles – even with minor flaws – have value because there is an absolute standard behind them.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the autographs were undoubtedly inspired. This inspiration is not proven by being able to check their inerrancy by having them in hand but by the claims of Jesus and the apostles. This inspiration allows the modern Christian to trust the Bible he holds in his hands.

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45 Comfort, Origin, 42.

46 Saucy, 90.
The Copies

Although all fundamental, evangelical Christians will agree that the autographs are inspired by God, one must next look at the copies which were made down through the years from the originals. Were these copies inspired?

As was observed above, believers no longer have any of the original writings of the Bible with them, but this does not mean that they do not have the Word of God. Because of the unavoidable decay of the originals and for extended distribution, it was necessary that copies be made. Some of these copies would have been made by professional scribes accustomed to such activity, others by laymen desiring a copy of perhaps a gospel or epistle for their church or personal use, or to use in evangelism or discipleship. Indeed, the number of New Testament copies would spread into the thousands.

The question then demands to be asked, “Were the copies inspired by God just as the originals were?” Here is where the implication of inerrancy becomes so crucial to a theological understanding of inspiration. If inspiration demands inerrancy, and if the copies are inspired, then the copies would of necessity have to be inerrant. In other words, the copies which were inspired would have to contain no error. If any error is found then the copies are not inspired in the same sense that the originals were.

For these copies to be inspired would have required God to have borne the copyists along just as He did the original writers. It must be remembered that the original autographs were inerrant not only in their facts but even in their spelling and word order. No word was misspelled, omitted, or duplicated. For the copies to be exact would have required the same supernatural supervision. Yet when the pages of Scripture are
searched, no such promise of empowering the copyists is discovered in the Bible. The Scripture does not teach the infallibility of copies of itself.

Furthermore, it must be admitted that no two existing Greek manuscripts are identical. Even within families of manuscripts there are variations. Any student of biblical manuscripts will admit that there have been copyists’ mistakes made by those who desired to reproduce the Scriptures by hand. Anyone who has ever attempted to copy a passage of any extended length will understand how easy it is to leave out a word, write a word twice, misspell a word, misplace a word, or even skip an entire line or two. When it is considered that documents such as the New Testament books were copied and recopied thousands of times, it is understandable how mistakes slipped in. And then when copies were made of copies which contained such mistakes, they were carried on and even added to.

Thus, one is forced to conclude that copies of the biblical books are not inspired in the same sense that the original autographs were. Since inspiration demands inerrancy, and since the copies contain errors, the copies cannot be inspired. To deny this and teach inerrantly inspired copies is to do damage to the doctrine of inspiration.

This should not cause any distress to the believer because most of the errors which God has allowed to slip in are of the kind that can be detected easily, such as the omission of a word, the doubling of a word, or the omission of a line. Fortunately, the great number of New Testament manuscripts increases the means of correcting the errors. When a great number of copies are compared, it becomes plain where omissions or additions have slipped in. Noted scholar F. F. Bruce points out that the margin of doubt left in the process of recovering the exact wording is not as large as might be feared but is
remarkably small. He then adds, “The variant readings about which any doubt remains among textual critics of the New Testament affect no material question of historical fact or of Christian faith and practice.”[^47] Thus, scholars can virtually ascertain the reading of the original text.

Having realized that the copies are not inspired in the same sense that the autographs were, it should then be understood that this does not rob the Christian of an inspired Bible. In a secondary sense, copies of the originals can be said to be inspired to the extent that they are accurate copies of the original. Since the copies are known to be accurate and sufficient in all matters except minor details, the situation exists that while only the autographs are inspired, it may still be said that all good copies are adequate.[^48]

Therefore, while copies cannot be said to be inspired, they do retain the quality of inspiration to the degree that they are accurate representations of what God gave in the autographs. For this reason, the believer can have confidence that in the existing manuscripts he has the inspired Word of God, but he cannot insist that any particular manuscript or group of manuscripts was produced by the same superintendence of the Holy Spirit as were the autographs.[^49]

The Translations

After considering the inspiration of the autographs and that of the copies, one must consider if translations of the Bible into other languages are inspired. The


[^48]: Geilser and Nix, 32.

Scriptures were originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Over the years they have been translated countless times into a multiplicity of languages. Are all of these, or any of these, translations inspired by God in the same sense as the divine autographs?

It must again be noted that for translations to be considered to be inspired as the autographs were, they would also have to be inerrant. If one single error is found in a translation, it is not inspired as were the originals because inspiration demands inerrancy. In all honesty it must be admitted that all translations have errors because all translators are fallible men. The only way for a translation to be error free would be for God to bear along the translators just as He did the original writers. The Holy Spirit would of necessity have to move again upon the translators so that the very words which they wrote were God-breathed as in the originals. This is nowhere promised or even hinted at in the Bible. Furthermore, even if this were to occur, that would mean that inspiration is possible today as it was in biblical times. But if, as most fundamentalists believe, inspiration ceased with the last words penned by the Apostle John this becomes theologically impossible. To accept an additional inspiration of a Bible translation is to open the door to new inspired writings today.

Most Bible students will admit that there are some minor translation errors even in their favorite version of the Scriptures. Yet some would claim that the King James Version is an error free translation. This is simply not so. A few instances will suffice to prove this point. To begin with, 1 Sam 13 informs the reader that in the days of King Saul the Israelites went to the Philistines for the blacksmiths to sharpen their metal implements. The KJV renders 1 Sam 13:21 as, “Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.” The
problem arises in that the verse contains the Hebrew word *pim*. This word was unknown in 1611 outside of this one reference in the Bible. No one knew what it meant, so they translated the verse as best they could. Yet the word *pim* has now been found marked upon a weight of two-thirds of a shekel found in excavations of this period.\(^{50}\) Thus, the verse is actually telling how much the Philistines were charging to sharpen the Israelites’ iron tools. This is certainly not a major doctrinal matter, but the truth is that the KJV is in error here.

Second, the student of Scripture reads, “Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem” (2 Kgs 2:26a). But he also discovers, “Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem” (2 Chron 22:2). The same man is said to be both twenty-two years old and forty-two years old when he began to reign. Which is correct? It should also be noted that 2 Chron 21:20 informs the reader that Ahaziah’s father died at age forty. Thus, 2 Chronicles appears to make Ahaziah two years older than his father. However one deals with the problem, the KJV rendering of this verse must be in error.

Third, the KJV refers to the Holy Spirit of God twice as a non-person in Rom 8:16, 26 by the use of the word “itself.” Yet the Holy Spirit is a person. He has intellect, emotions, and a will. To render the word referring to Him as “itself” rather than “Himself” is clearly a mistake. Yet it is an understandable mistake. The Greek word “spirit” (*pneuma*), is neuter in gender; the personal pronoun according to the rules of Greek grammar must agree with its antecedent in gender, therefore, the translation “itself.” Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest holds that the translators followed a slavish,

idiomatic method of translation here instead of translating according to sense.\textsuperscript{51} Since the Holy Spirit is a Person, the pronoun should have been rendered “Himself.” Noel Smith writes, “How can you refer to any personality, not to mention the Third Person of the Trinity, as ‘it’? It is unpardonable. It is obscene.”\textsuperscript{52} Thus, the King James is in error.

While none of these would ever be considered serious errors in translation, they are errors just the same. Since inspiration demands inerrancy, even this honored translation of the Scriptures cannot be considered inspired in the same sense as the autographs. The same can be said of any translation of the Bible.

Furthermore, translations need to be updated. William Tyndale revised his translation of the New Testament. The KJV went through revisions. Other translations have been revised. But if the words were inerrantly perfect when originally translated, why would there need to be a revision? The autographs never were revised.

Therefore, it must be concluded that even the most excellent translation of the Scriptures is not inspired in the same way which the original autographs were. Again, it can be said, as it was of the copies, that good translations have virtual inspiration, while actual inspiration is reserved for the autographs.\textsuperscript{53} Any believer using a tested, accurate, reliable translation, can rest in the confidence that he has God’s inspired message. That inspired message is not limited to one translation or one language but is present in any accurate translation.\textsuperscript{54}


\textsuperscript{52}Norma Gillming, The Best of Noel Smith (Springfield, MO: n.p., 1985), 432.

\textsuperscript{53}Geisler and Nix, 33.

\textsuperscript{54}Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 27.
With what has been written concerning the extent of inspiration in mind, can a Christian hold in his hand a good translation of the Bible and honestly state, “I have here the inerrant Word of God”? In this writer’s opinion, yes he can, because he is speaking in the manner of everyday speech used by his hearers, not in theological preciseness. The Bible speaks of the rising and setting of the sun, yet is not in error even though in actuality the sun does not move, the earth does. The statement is still true because it is uttered in the manner of speech in which people normally talk, not in the language of an astronomer. Likewise, to call a translation the inerrant Word of God is not claiming that it is in the original tongues or that it is perfect in its translation; it merely is stating that behind that translation are the original autographs. No one in everyday speech is going to make that distinction. If a professor were to stand in front of his literature class and say that the book he held in his hand was Homer’s Odyssey, no one would ask if he had a book written in Greek or if he had the original pages written by the famous poet. The class would understand what he meant, and so should a congregation when their pastor states the Bible he holds is the inspired Word of God. Therefore, it is perfectly allowable to speak of a translation as being the inspired, inerrant Scripture as long as the speaker is not attempting to place it on level with the autographs.

The Historical Position on Inspiration

How does this understanding of what the Bible teaches on inspiration apply to the translation issue? It applies by observing how the Church has viewed Bible translations over the centuries. Were they seen as inerrantly inspired in the theological sense, or was that distinction reserved for the originals only? What has been the historical position of
Christianity in general and of Baptists in particular on the subject of inspiration in relation to the Bible translation issue? Thus, history must now be examined.

A Consistent Belief

This student has already demonstrated that the early church staunchly held to the inspiration and inerrancy of the original manuscripts. But how did they view translations? A study of church history reveals that the consistent belief of Christendom has been that only the original autographs were inspired and that translations are only trustworthy as they reflect the original. This is seen in confessions of faith and creeds, in the writing of preachers and teachers, and in theological works through the centuries.

As the Church moved out of the Dark Ages, it rediscovered the necessity of translating the Word of God into the mother tongues of its people. The one individual whose name is considered a synonym with the Reformation is Martin Luther (1483-1546). Luther felt a great burden to render the Bible into the native German language directly from the Greek and Hebrew. This passion is evident in a letter he wrote to George Spalatin on March 30, 1522. One excerpt reads:

I have not only translated the Gospel of St. John in my Patmos, but the whole of the New Testament, and Philip and I are now busy correcting it, and with God’s help, it will be a splendid work. Meantime we need your help, to find our proper words, therefore be ready to supply us with the common terms for some things we require, but not those used at Court, for this book is to be written in the simplest language that all may understand it.55

Thus, it is evident Luther did not consider his translation inerrantly inspired.

The same can be said of other translators who labored to bring the Word of God into the language of the English. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw a great

55James B. William and Randolph Shaylor, eds., God’s Word in our Hands (Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International, 2003), 44.
deal of translation activity in Britain, beginning with William Tyndale in 1526 and culminating with the King James Version in 1611. What did these men think of their translations. In the Epilogue to his New Testament, Tyndale states, “Count it as a thing not having [its] full shape, but as it were borne before [its] time, even as a thing begun rather than finished. In time to come . . . we will give it [its] full shape.”56 Tyndale certainly did not consider his Bible error free and desired to revise his work, which he later did (1535). While Tyndale’s work was not allowed to be printed in England, Miles Coverdale has the distinction of having the first Bible printed in that country. In the Prologue to his Bible (1535), he admitted his failings as a translator and the possible need for emendations.57 In 1568 the Bishop’s Bible was published. Again the reader finds the translators’ awareness of their own human fallibility. In their preface they note that they did not, “profess this to be so absolute a translation as that hereafter might follow no other [translator] that might see that which, as [of now], was not understood.”58 Finally, in their preface to the King James Version, “The Translators to the Reader,” the translators tried to answer some criticisms which they knew would be brought against their endeavors. In one place they declare, “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.”59 In another place they write, “Truly, good Christian Reader, we never thought from the beginning that we

56Harold Rawlings, Trial by Fire (Wellington, FL: The Rawlings Foundation, 2004), 169.
57Ibid.
58Ibid., 170.
should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make a bad one a good one; ( . . . ) but to make a good one better, or out of many ones one principle good one . . . "  

60 And again they say, “. . . neither did we disdain to revise that which we had done, and to bring back to the anvil that which we had hammered . . . "  

61 Thus it is evident that these worthy men realized that there were imperfections in their work, saw that good translations could be made better, and revised their own work before it was published. Indeed, the KJV would later go through at least four additional revisions before it would come to its present form. Therefore, it can be concluded that the very men responsible for the great English translations of the Bible never believed that their best efforts were inspired by God.  

As one continues in the study of Christian history, he must also note additional points of interest from the same century in which the Authorized Version was born. In 1647 the Westminster Confession of Faith was published. Concerning the Bible it states:

The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of the old), and the New Testament in Greek (which 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 authentical; so as in all controversies of religion the Church is to finally appeal to them. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God who have 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.  

62 It will be noticed that this historic document claims inspiration for the originals, not for translations. Also in this century, Puritan Congregationalist and vice-chancellor of

60 Beacham and Bauder, 210.

61 Ibid., 212.

Oxford University John Owen (1616-1683) writes, “Translations contain the word of God, and are the word of God, perfectly or imperfectly, according as they express the words, sense, and meaning of those originals.” He then goes on to declare, “To advance any, all translations concurring, into an equality with the originals, . . . – much more to propose and use them, gathering various lections [variations] by them, is to set up an altar of our own by the altar of God, and to make equal the wisdom, care, skill and diligence of men, with the wisdom, care, and providence of God himself.” So saying, he teaches that elevating any translation to equal status with the original, or worse, maintaining loyalty to it over the original, amounts to idolatry.\textsuperscript{63} Then the puritan Richard Baxter (1615-1691) remarks, “Those give too much (in bulk, but too little in virtue) to the Scripture . . . that say that God hath so preserved the Scripture, as that there are no various readings and doubtful texts thereupon, and that no written or printed copies have been corrupted. . . . All these err in over-doing.”\textsuperscript{64} Therefore, the English sentiment of the seventeenth century was not in favor of according translations the status of inspired documents.

As one moves into the eighteenth century, he discovers that the same distinction was made between the originals and translations. Four examples will suffice. One of the greatest evangelists of the time was George Whitefield (1714-1770). It was not uncommon for Whitefield to clarify and to correct a translated word with the meaning of the original during his preaching. His preaching reveals that he did not consider the KJV beyond improvement. While preaching on John 16:8, he corrects the translation by explaining, “The word, which we translate reprove, ought to be rendered convince; and in

\textsuperscript{63}Williams and Shaylor, Word, 49.

\textsuperscript{64}Ibid., 50.
the original it implies a conviction by way of argumentation, and coming with a power upon the mind equal to a demonstration.”" Edwards was most concerned with the accuracy of meaning of a text, and believed that was determined by the text in the original language. No one can consider the 1700s without noting the name of John Wesley (1703-1791). Wesley had a great love for the Scriptures and considered himself “a man of one book.” But this did not mean he was a man of one translation. In his preaching he would correct the Authorized Version to better reflect the Greek or Hebrew text. Then in 1768 he published a revised edition of the KJV with notes. Finally, one cannot overlook John Newton (1725-1807), former slave trader, pastor, and writer of the great hymn “Amazing Grace.” Newton declares:

It would be improper to propose an alteration, though a slight one, in the reading of a text, without bearing my testimony to the great value of our English version, which I believe, in point of simplicity, strength, and fidelity, is not likely to be excelled by a new translation of the whole Scripture. But there are, undoubtedly, particular passages, where a small change in the expression might render the sense clearer, and be equally answerable to the original Hebrew or Greek.

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65Ibid., 51.
66Ibid., 51-2.
67Ibid., 51.
68Ibid., 55.
Traveling into the nineteenth century, one discovers that those holding to the traditional beliefs of Christianity continued to teach the infallible inspiration of Scripture and teach that such inspiration was of the autographs. In 1833 the Congregational Union of England and Wales published a Declaration of their doctrines. Therein they declare:

The Scriptures of the Old Testament, as received by the Jews, and the books of the New Testament, as received by the Primitive Christians from the Evangelists and Apostles, Congregational Churches believe to be divinely inspired, and of supreme authority. These writings, in the languages in which they were originally composed, are to be consulted by the aids of sound criticism, as a final appeal in all controversies; but the common version they consider to be adequate to the ordinary purposes of Christian instruction and edification.\(^{69}\)

In 1850, Pastor William R. Williams noted: “No man will claim for the English Scriptures perfection. A perfect version is a nonentity, and we believe, an impossibility, whilst imperfect and uninspired translators are the only agents to furnish it, and a living language, ever changing from the very fact of its life, remains the only material on which such translators are to work.”\(^{70}\) But as the century began to draw to a close liberalism began to creep into many of the leading denominations of Christianity. Bible believers fought back by proclaiming the fundamental, historical tenants of the Christian faith. Church historians believe that fundamentalism as an American movement grew out of the nineteenth century revivals and Bible conferences. In 1878, the greatest of the Bible conferences, the Niagara Bible Conference, published a twelve-point confession of faith. Concerning inspiration, the Niagara men wrote the following article:

We believe “that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” by which we understand the whole of the book called the Bible; nor do we take the statement

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\(^{69}\)Schaff, 3:730-1.

in the sense in which it is sometimes foolishly said that the works of human genius are inspired, but in the sense that the Holy Ghost gave the very words of the sacred writings to holy men of old; and that His Divine inspiration is not in different degrees, but extends equally and fully to all parts of these writings, historical, poetical, doctrinal, and prophetic, and to the smallest word, and inflection of a word, provided such a word is found in the original manuscripts.  

Ten years later, Wayland Hoyt wrote the following in the book *The Inspired Word*, edited by the well-known conservative A. T. Pierson: “Neither for versions nor for manuscripts is Inspiration to be claimed. Inspiration is to be claimed only for the primal sacred autographs.” Then in 1893, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America gathered at the nation’s capital by a unanimous vote made the following deliverance, “The Bible as we now have it, in its various translations and revisions, when freed from all errors and mistakes of translators, copyists, and printers, (is) the very Word of God, and consequently wholly without error.”

Before leaving this consideration of the nineteenth century, the remarks of some outstanding conservatives should be considered. J. C. Ryle (1816-1900), Anglican preacher and Bishop of Liverpool between 1880 and 1900, states, “I lay no claim to the inspiration of every word in the various versions and translations of God’s Word. So far as those translations and versions are faithfully and correctly done, so far they are of equal authority with the original Hebrew and Greek. We have reason to thank God that many of the translations are, in the main, faithful and accurate.” Presbyterian minister James H. Brookes (1830-1897), one of the founders of the Niagara Bible Conference and

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71 Beacham and Bauder, 187.
72 Ibid., 188.
74 Williams and Shaylor, *Word*, 57.
a mentor of C. I. Scofield, writes, “No one believes that the translation of the Bible into different languages is inspired, but the Bible itself asserts over and over that the original writings of words of the Hebrew and Greek were given by the inspiration of God, men speaking as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”75 Another Presbyterian minister, A. T. Pierson (1873-1911) succeeded C. H. Spurgeon in London and served as consulting editor for the Scofield Reference Bible. He proclaims, “Inspiration is affirmed, of course, only of the original documents, now no longer extant.”76 Also, Methodist evangelist and editor L. W. Munhall (1843-1934) writes in 1896, “No one believes that the transcribers, translators, and revisers were inspired. The doctrine of verbal inspiration is simply this: The original writings, ipsissima verba, came through the penmen direct from God.”77 Pastors and evangelists were not the only ones holding this distinction. Presbyterian theologian Archibald A. Hodge (1823-1886) writes, “We do not assert that the common text (KJV), but only the original autographic text, was inspired,”78 and, “The Church has never held the verbal infallibility of our translations.”79 And in 1893 theologian G. T. Shedd quite clearly drew a difference when he asked, “Why did not God inspire the copyists as well as the original authors? Why did He begin with absolute inerrancy, and end with relative inerrancy? For the same reason that, generally, He begins with the supernatural and ends with the natural.”80

75 Rawlings, 291.

76 Williams and Shaylor, Word, 67.

77 Rawlings, 297.

78 Ibid., 295.

79 Norris, 274.

80 Lindsell, Incomparable Word, 27.
One more observation should be made before moving on to the next century of church history. It was during the late 1800s that the English Revised Version (RV) was published and the Greek text of Westcott and Hort became predominate. One of the outstanding critics of both this Greek text and the RV was John William Burgon (1813-1888). Burgon is often thought to have championed the position that errorless copies exist, but the reader should hear his own words. In his classic *The Revision Revised* he writes:

> That by a perpetual miracle, Sacred Manuscripts would be protected all down the ages against depraving influences of whatever sort, – was not to have been expected; certainly, was never promised. But the Church, in her collective capacity, hath nevertheless – as a matter of fact – been perpetually purging herself of those shamefully depraved copies which once everywhere abounded within her pale: retaining only such an amount of discrepancy in her Text as might serve to remind her children that they carry their ‘treasure in earthen vessels,’ – as well as to stimulate them to perpetual watchfulness and solicitude for the purity and integrity of the Deposit.  

Clearly Burgon did not hold the copies of Scripture to be errorless and thus inspired.

As the student of history moves into the twentieth century he finds conservative Christians at war with liberalism. In 1909 a group of scholars from around the world published a series of twelve booklets entitled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of Truth*. Started under the direction of Amzi Clarence Dixon and later supervised by Reuben A. Torrey, these booklets were written by a group of Fundamentalists from throughout the English-speaking world.  

Most of these articles were later published in a four volume edition in 1917. The first article of the second volume is entitled “The Inspiration of the

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Bible – Definition, Extent, and Proof.” It was by James M. Gray (1851-1935), a
Reformed Episcopal clergyman, President of Moody Bible Institute, and an editor of The
Scofield Reference Bible. He writes:

Let it be stated further in this definitional connection, that the record for whose
inspiration we contend is the original record – the autographs or parchments of
Moses, David, Daniel, Matthew, Paul or Peter, as the case may be, and not any
particular translation or translations of them whatever. There is no translation
absolutely without error, nor could there be, considering the infirmities of human
抄ists, unless God were pleased to perform a perpetual miracle to secure it.83

In another article of the same volume, George S. Bishop plainly states, “We take the
ground that on the original parchment – the membrane – every sentence, word, line,
mark, point, pen-stroke joy, tittle was put there by God.”84 Elsewhere, R. A. Torrey
(1856-1928), who was a Congregational minister, evangelist, Superintendent of Moody
Bible Institute from 1889-1908 and Dean of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles from
1912-1924, explains, “No one, as far as I know, holds that the English translation of the
Bible is absolutely infallible and inerrant. The doctrine held by many is that the
Scriptures as originally given were absolutely infallible and inerrant, and that our English
translation is a substantially accurate rendering of the Scriptures as originally given.”85

During the 1920s the main fundamentalist organization was the World’s Christian
Fundamental Association, led primarily by W. B. Riley. Its confession of faith begins
with these words, “We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as
verbally inspired of God, and inerrant in the original writings, and that they are of

84Ibid., 2:92.
supreme and final authority in faith and practice.” It should be clear that the fundamentalist position was that only the autographs were inspired.

After the battles of the early twentieth century, Fundamentalism survived and formed new colleges and church fellowships. In 1930 the Independent Fundamental Churches of America organized. Their statement reads, “We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbally inspired Word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible and God-breathed.” In the late 1920s evangelist Bob Jones, Sr. founded Bob Jones College, later University, as a bulwark of fundamentalist teaching. One of the cardinal doctrines held by this school was the inspiration of the Scriptures. His son Bob Jones, Jr. (1911-1998) followed him as Chancellor of the school from 1971 to 1998. He states, “There are other good translations in the midst of all the bad ones. Unfortunately, there are no perfect ones, including the Authorized Version, as evidenced by the many corrections and amendments that have been made through the years.” Stewart Custer, former chairman of the Bible department at Bob Jones University, writes:

The final court of appeal in all theological disputes must be to the text of the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. Conservatives are not contending for the infallibility of any translation, but only the infallibility of the original documents. . . . It is the sphere of textual criticism to detect and to remove as many of these copyist’s errors as possible. The diligent labors of many scholars have brought the text of the Bible to an exceptionally high state of accuracy.

It is clear that the fundamentalist position remained the same as the century progressed.

86 Beacham and Bauder, 189.
88 Rawlings, 295.
89 Custer, 88.
Therefore, it is abundantly evident that the consistent belief of Christendom through the centuries has been that only the original autographs were inspired and that translations are only trustworthy as they reflect the original. This position has been held by Christians of various denominations and is the standard belief of conservative Christianity.

A Baptist Belief

As one sharpens his focus of study, it becomes evident that the historical Baptist position on the Bible is that believers have a *trustworthy* translation, not a *perfect* translation. This can be observed as one considers Baptist doctrinal statements, the theological works by Baptist scholars, and the writing by Baptist preachers and teachers throughout Baptist history.

Harold Lindsell has commented that, “Perhaps no group of people produced more confessions of faith than the Baptists.”\(^{90}\) The various groups of Baptists trace their confessions back to the Second London Confession of Faith of 1677 and to the New Hampshire Confession of Faith of 1830. Derived from the Westminster Confession, the London Confession reads:

The Old Testament in Hebrew, (which is the Native language of the people of God of old) and the New Testament in Greek, (which 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 authentical; so as in all controversies of Religion, the Church is finally to appeal to them.\(^{91}\)

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\(^{90}\) Lindsell, *Incomparable Word*, 69.

\(^{91}\) Price, 5.
The New Hampshire Confession does not explicitly declare the primary authority of the Hebrew and Greek autographs, but it may be safely inferred that such a limitation was understood. The confession mentions no translation that was regarded as the final court of appeal.\footnote{Ibid., 6.}

One might point out that although the confession of faith of the Southern Baptist Convention is almost identical with that New Hampshire Confession as it relates to Scripture, it makes no specific declaration of the primary authority of the autographs. Such a limitation was most likely understood, since no mention is made of English translations either. Two Southern Baptist heroes may indicate the position of the Southern Baptist Convention at the dawn of the twentieth century. The first is Southern Baptist pastor B. H. Carroll (1843-1914). He states, “Let me say further that only the original text of the books of the Bible is inspired, not the copy or translation. . . . Versions, or translations, are not inspired; if they were, all of them would be just alike; but the original manuscript was inspired.”\footnote{Williams and Shaylor, Word, 7.} The other is Greek scholar A. T. Robertson, whose widely-used multi-volume \textit{Word Pictures in the New Testament} is a standard in its field. In the heyday of the Fundamentalist Bible Conference movement, Robertson was a frequent speaker though he taught at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky for forty-six years until his death in 1934. Robertson powerfully defended the inerrancy of the autographs, while acknowledging that there are “discrepancies and inconsistencies” in the existing multitudes of copies.\footnote{Ibid., 14.}
In addition to the proof of Baptist confessions of faith, there is the writing of leading Baptist theologians. In his Systematic Theology, Augustus Strong (1836-1921) writes, “We have no right to expect that the inspiration of the original writer will be followed by a miracle in the case of every copyist. Why believe in infallible copyists more than in infallible printers?”\(^{95}\) Also, Emery Bancroft writes in his Christian Theology, “By plenary inspiration we mean that the Scriptures are fully and equally inspired in all there parts.” He then continues, “Those who hold this view claim it not for any version or translation, but for the Scriptures as they first appeared, i.e., the original manuscripts.”\(^{96}\)

Furthermore, the Baptist position on Bible translations is abundantly clear from a survey of Baptist history. In the eighteenth century, the writings of two English pastors stand out. The first is John Gill (1697-1771), who pastored in London for over fifty years. Regarding inspiration he writes:

This 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 divine inspiration also in translating, and were directed by God in the use of words they have rendered the original by; but that is not reasonable to suppose.\(^{97}\)

He also notes, “To the Bible, in the original languages, is every translation to be brought, and judged, and to be corrected and amended; . . .”\(^{98}\) The second is Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) who helped found the Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, which sent

\(^{95}\)Norris, 274.

\(^{96}\)Bancroft, 39.

\(^{97}\)Williams and Shaylor, Word, 54.

\(^{98}\)Rawlings, 294.
William Carey to India. He states, “Allowing all due honour to the English translation of the Bible, it must be granted to be a human performance, and, as such, subject to imperfection. Where any passage appears to be mistranslated, it is doubtless proper for those who are well acquainted with the original languages to point it out, and to offer, according to the best of the judgment, the true meaning of the Holy Spirit.”

The nineteenth century has an abundance of Baptist statements regarding inspiration. The first is by famed missionary to Burma (1814-1850) and Bible translator, Adoniram Judson (1788-1850). He notes, “The Bible in the original tongues, comprise all the revelation now extant which God has given the world.” Additionally, after translating the Bible into the Burmese language in 1834, he penned these words of gratitude to God on that occasion and gives insight into the sacred, but imperfect nature of Bible translating: “Imploring his aid in future efforts to remove the errors and imperfections which necessarily cleave to the work, I have commended it to his mercy and grace; I have dedicated it to his glory.”

The second is by the highly respected theologian J. L. Dagg (1794-1884), who in his 1857 book Manual of Theology writes,

Although the Scriptures were originally penned under the unerring guidance of the Holy Spirit, it does not follow, that a continued miracle has been wrought to preserve them from all error in transcribing. On the contrary, we know that manuscripts differ from each other; and where readings are various, but one of them can be correct. A miracle was needed in the original production of the Scriptures; and, accordingly, a miracle was wrought; but the preservation of the inspired word, in as much perfection as was necessary to answer the purpose for which it was given, did not require a miracle, and accordingly it was committed to the providence of God.

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99 Williams and Shaylor, Word, 56.

100 Rawlings, 295.

101 Williams and Shaylor, Word, 56.

102 Price, 13.
The third is by William Carthcart, who in his 1881 Baptist Encyclopedia, claimed that the historical Baptist view was also the same view of other Bible-believing groups. He writes, “We do not claim that the transcribers and translators of the original Scriptures enjoyed the same divine protection from error which controlled the original writers.”\textsuperscript{103}

The fourth is by historian Thomas Armitage (1819-1896) who writes, “The more accurately a version is brought to the true standard, the more accurately will it express the mind and will of God. And this is the real foundation of the sacredness of the Bible. Any regard for it founded upon the defects or faults of translation is superstition.”\textsuperscript{104} The fifth is by Southern Baptist preacher, theologian, and author J. R. Graves (1820-1893) who declares. “There may be errors in the transcription of the ancient manuscript; there may be errors in translation and in interpretation, but the original Scriptures are the words of the living God (as) He most explicitly declares them to be.”\textsuperscript{105} The sixth is by the great Prince of Preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1934-1892). Possibly no preacher is more admired in Baptist history than this London master of the pulpit. A consideration of his published sermons makes it evident that his consistent practice was to correct the English translation to reflect the reading of the text in the original language.\textsuperscript{106} In his work Commenting & Commentaries he advises:

A man to comment well should be able to read the Bible in the original. Every minister should aim at a tolerable proficiency both in Hebrew and in Greek. . . . A minister ought to attain enough of these tongues to be at least able to make out a passage by the aid of a lexicon, so as to be sure that he is not misrepresenting

\textsuperscript{103} Norris, 274.  
\textsuperscript{105} Rawlings, 294-5.  
\textsuperscript{106} Williams and Shaylor, Word, 58.
the Spirit of God in his discoursings, but is, as nearly as he can judge, giving forth what the Lord intended to reveal by the language employed. Such knowledge would prevent his founding doctrines upon expressions in our version when nothing at all analogous is to be found in the inspired original.

Then, after giving the example of a Roman Catholic theologian’s comment on Gen 1:10 based upon the Latin Vulgate, he goes on, “Such superlative nonsense may be indulged in if we forget that translations cannot be verbally inspired, and that to the original is the last appeal.” In his sermon “The Bible Tried and Proved,” preached on May 5, 1889, he states, “I do not hesitate to say that I believe there is no mistake whatever in the original Holy Scriptures from beginning to end. There may be, and there are, mistakes of translation; for translators are not inspired; but even the historical facts are correct.” It can thus be seen that the Baptists during the 1800s did not consider any Bible translation to be inerrantly inspired.

The twentieth century saw the battle waged between Fundamentalism and Modernism. In this battle, the Baptists did not falter. John Roach Straton (1875-1929) pastored the Calvary Baptist Church from 1918 to 1929 in New York City, the home of the apostate Union Theological Seminary and of liberal Baptist preacher, Harry Emerson Fosdick. In a debate with Unitarian pastor, Dr. Charles Francis Potter, concerning the authority of Scripture, Straton said, “Those of us who hold to the infallibility of the Bible believe that the original manuscripts were absolutely accurate. No man would question the possibility of minor errors through copyists slipping in, however, and as I said in my opening speech, it seems evident that God may even have permitted some such

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107 Estus Pirkle, The 1611 King James Bible (Southaven, MS: The King’s Press, 1994), 221.

108 Williams and Shaylor, Word, 60.
difficulties to enter, . . .”¹⁰⁹ Another Fundamentalist preacher of this time period was the Northern Baptist William Bell Riley (1861-1947). In the message “The Meaning of Modernism” he declares, “To claim, therefore, inerrancy for the King James Version, or even for the Revised Version, is to claim inerrancy for men who never professed it for themselves; is to clothe with the claim of verbal inspiration a company of men who would almost quit their graves to repudiate such equality with Prophet and Apostle.”¹¹⁰

It was during this time that some of the most powerful fellowships and conventions arose in America bringing together local independent Baptist churches to impact the nation. In 1933 the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC) was formed. Where did they stand on the inspiration of Bible translations? Their doctrinal statement reads:

“It is necessary that the Holy Bible as originally written was verbally inspired and the product of Spirit-controlled men, and therefore, has truth without any admixture of error for its matter. We believe the Bible to be the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.”¹¹¹

No claim is made for infallible translations, only the Bible as originally written, that is, the autographs. One book published by Regular Baptist Press (the publishing house of the GARBC) is The Doctrine and Administration of the Church. First printed in 1968, the back cover states, “The subject matter of this book – as it is given here – is needed by every member of our Baptist churches. . . . It has been designed to provide information and assistance for pastors, churches, schools and individuals interested in the

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 13.


¹¹¹Price, 6.
establishment and ministry of Biblical churches.” The publishers held that the author was able to write with authority since he had served as pastor of Regular Baptist churches for seventeen years, as President of the Baptist Bible Seminary for fourteen years, and as the National Representative of the GARBC for nine years. He writes:

> While the doctrine of inspiration applies to the original documents and we do not possess them, this fact provides no uncertainty. Thousands of copies or portions have been found in widely scattered areas, translated into many languages and over a long period of time. These have been diligently compared and provide ample evidence that we possess an accurate text of the original manuscripts. We can therefore read, believe, obey and proclaim our Bible today as the Word of God. I prefer the King James Version for reading, memorizing and preaching, but I find real profit in the comparative study with the American Standard Version of 1901 and other versions.  

Another leading GARBC writer was Dr. Charles U. Wagner, President of Northwest Baptist Seminary, who wrote extensively for Regular Baptist Press. In one teacher’s manual written for the Regular Baptist Press Sunday school curriculum, Dr. Wagner writes “When we say that the Bible is inspired, we are speaking primarily of the original manuscripts as they were written by Moses, David, John, Paul and the others. Many of our English translations give a reliable translation of the Scriptures and can be called the Word of God without any problem. But we must understand that ‘verbal’ inspiration deals specifically with the original Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek texts.”

Another fellowship founded in this century was the Baptist Bible Fellowship International (BBFI) in 1950. What did this group believe regarding inspiration at their birth? The doctrinal statement for the BBFI reads:

\[\text{\textsuperscript{112}}\text{Paul R. Jackson, The Doctrine and Administration of the Church, rev. ed. (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1968, 1980), 135.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{113}}\text{Wagner, 26.}\]
We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men supernaturally inspired; that it has truth without any admixture of error for its matter; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the age, the only complete and final revelation of the will of God to man; the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and opinions should be tried.

1. By “the Holy Bible” we mean that collection of sixty-six books, from Genesis to Revelation, which as originally written does not only contain and convey the Word of God, but IS the very Word of God.
2. By “inspiration” we mean that the books of the Bible were written by holy men of old, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, in such a way that their writings were supernaturally and verbally inspired and free from error, as no other writings have ever been or ever will be inspired.\textsuperscript{114}

Again mention is made of the Bible “as originally written,” whose books were “supernaturally and verbally inspired and free from error” as no other writing would ever be inspired. This appears to place the autographs as inspired rather than later translations.

Furthermore, Dr. Noel Smith, professor of Bible at Baptist Bible College (the Fellowship’s mother school) and the first editor of the Fellowship’s paper, the Baptist Bible Tribune from 1950 to his death in 1974, wrote, “As to the King James Version. Any number of English words in that version should have been corrected long ago. They have either become obsolete and archaic or have lost their meaning.” He also declares, “And there are mistranslations in the King James.”\textsuperscript{115} Finally, Dr. G. B. Vick (President of Baptist Bible College from 1950 to his death in 1975), while giving the first commencement address to BBC on May 27, 1951, proclaimed, “Therefore we believe that the Bible is the very Word of God from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, and that as originally written, it has truth without any admixture of error for its matter, and therefore


\textsuperscript{115}Norma Gillming, 431.
is and shall ever remain until the end of time the only complete and final revelation of God’s will to man.”\textsuperscript{116} At that time he reiterated the belief of an inerrant Bible “as originally written.” These statements would surely imply that the BBFI originally considered only the autographs to be infallibly inspired, not any translation.

Yet a third group founded at this time was the Southwide Baptist Fellowship. Formed by Lee Roberson in 1956 at the Highland Park Baptist Church of Chattanooga, Tennessee, their statement of faith reads, “We believe in the verbal inspiration of the 66 books of the Bible in its original writings and that it is without error and is the sole authority in all matters of faith and practice.”\textsuperscript{117} Yet once more mention is made of the “original writings.” Similarly, in the message “How to Read the Word,” Dr. Roberson states, “We believe the inspiration of the Bible extends to every book, every chapter, every sentence, every word, every ‘jot and tittle’ in the original document. This is verbal inspiration.”\textsuperscript{118} Yet more can be learned of the thoughts of this fellowship on the inspiration of translations. Another individual who helped form the Southwide Baptist Fellowship was Dr. John R. Rice, who started of the \textit{Sword of the Lord} magazine in 1934. In his book \textit{Our God-Breathed Book – The Bible} under the heading “THERE ARE, THEN, NO ERRORS IN THE ORIGINAL WORD OF GOD” he begins by stating, “We are now talking not of translations but of the original autographs.”\textsuperscript{119} Later in the


\textsuperscript{117}Price, 7.

\textsuperscript{118}Lee Roberson, “How to Get the Biggest Bargain in Town” (Orlando: E. J. Daniels Publisher, 1968), 57.

same book while discussing word-for-word inspiration, Rice explains:

We are not discussing the translations. Translators are not inspired, and there can be mistakes in translation although these mistakes are largely overcome by having translations checked and double checked by numerous godly scholars. There may be mistakes in copying, though such mistakes can usually be found by comparing manuscripts with manuscripts since there are hundreds of manuscripts of the New Testament available and many of the Old Testament. But when we speak of inspiration, we speak of the original autographs written down in the Old Testament in Hebrew, except for a small part of the book of Daniel which is Chaldaic, and the New Testament, which is in koine Greek.\(^{120}\)

Furthermore, this fellowship’s premiere school is Tennessee Temple University and its prime church the Highland Park Baptist Church, both in Chattanooga. James D. Price, who was Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Temple Baptist Seminary in Chattanooga from 1972 to 2005, and Academic Dean from 2000 to 2005, writes:

In 1972, I began teaching in the seminary of Tennessee Temple University, Chattanooga, Tennessee. At the time, Aubrey B. Martin, a blind Ph.D. graduate of Bob Jones University, was professor of New Testament. While a student at Bob Jones, Martin had been advised to memorize the ASV because it was regarded as the most accurate translation of the Hebrew and Greek texts. Consequently, he memorized the entire New Testament in the ASV and conducted all his Bible classes in the ASV at Tennessee Temple University. Because Martin was such a popular teacher, the university named a men’s dormitory in his honor.

During my first year at the University, my wife and I attended the Sunday school class held in the main auditorium of Highland Park Baptist Church taught by one of the university administrators. The lesson was taught from the King James Version of the Bible, but the teacher often made reference to other versions, such as that of J. B. Philips, for clarification.\(^{121}\)

Additionally, Dr. Mark G. Cambron, who served for many years as Dean of Tennessee Temple Schools, writes, “Errors in translation may sometimes cause trouble. But do not blame God for the errors in translation. He inspired the Book, not the translation.”\(^{122}\)

\(^{120}\)Ibid., 241.

\(^{121}\)Price, 3.

And when an article on “Bible Translations” by Robert L. Sumner was published by The Sword of the Lord in 1979 which pointed out that the autographs were inspired and inerrant and not translations, Dr. John R. Rice received a letter from E. C. Haskell (from Admissions and Records) on Tennessee Temple Schools stationary which stated, “The position that Dr. Sumner so clearly presented is the position that we take at Tennessee Temple.”\textsuperscript{123} Who could argue that Southwide was not founded with the understanding that only the autographs were inspired while translations were not?

Therefore, it must be irrefutably evident from the abundance of evidence presented that traditionally Baptists have only accepted the autographs as inspired and that the historical Baptist position on the Bible is that believers have a trustworthy translation, not a perfect translation.

\textbf{Concluding Thoughts on Inspiration and the Bible Storm}

Before the troubled waters of the translation storm can be calmed among independent Baptists, they must fully understand the essential doctrine of Bible inspiration. This doctrine is a fundamental of the Christian faith worth fighting for. This chapter has proven that the Bible clearly teaches in the two key passages of 2 Tim 3:16-17 and 2 Pet 1:20-21 that the writings (not the writers) of the Scripture were inspired by God. The logical implication of this was seen to be inerrancy, that is, that inspired writings have to be totally without error. It was then shown that only the original autographs were thus without error because both copies and translations are seen to contain evident errors. Thus, only the original autographs are inspired by God in a

\textsuperscript{123}Sumner, 2.
theological sense. It was finally demonstrated that the overwhelming consensus of Christendom throughout the centuries and the historic Baptist position has been that only the original writings were inspired, not copies or translations.

In conclusion, it should be observed that both sides of the Bible translation debate agree that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. There is absolutely no question that the side which considers the King James Version of the Bible to be the only translation for the English speaking world believes the Bible to be inerrant. That is why they struggle so fiercely for the Authorized Version of the Bible. Yet it must also be recognized that the side which uses other translations of the Bible also just as passionately believes that the Bible is inspired. It was such men who fought so wholeheartedly against Modernism in the early twentieth century. Indeed, although most King James only advocates have little regard for Brooks Westcott, the writers of The Fundamentals recognized that he had proved that the inspiration of Scripture, in all its elements and parts, has always been the doctrine of the Church “by a copious catena of quotations from Ante-Nicene Fathers in Appendix B to his ‘Introduction to the Study of the Gospels.’”¹²⁴ Thus, even Westcott believed in the Bible’s inspiration. Certainly the fundamentalist Baptist preacher today who uses another translation also heartily believes in the Scripture’s inspiration. For example, in the surveys taken by this writer of pastors in the Baptist Bible Fellowship every man surveyed stated that he believed in the plenary-verbal inspiration of the Bible. Their position on the translation issue did not change their acceptance of the fundamental doctrine of biblical inspiration.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Appendix 2.
The difference arises over how far each side believes inspiration extends. One side believes it extends perhaps to the Textus Receptus or even the King James Version. The other side holds that it extends only to the original autographs and that translations are only inspired in a secondary sense, as they faithfully represent the original writings. The issue is not the fact of inspiration but the extent of inspiration.

It should be admitted that sometimes the friends and followers of the Bible make claims for it which it does not make for itself. Although it is difficult to do, in such cases one must recognize this truth and not demand others to believe that for which there is no biblical evidence of support. No chapter or verse ever promises a secondary inspiration of copies or translations of the Scripture.

When dealing with the theological issue of Bible translations, one must speak accurately and theologically. While he may be able to speak in generalities while conversing with friends or from the pulpit, he must restrict himself to the strict theological meaning of terms when discussing the inspiration and inerrancy of Bible translations. Since these terms are plainly reserved for the autographs and Christians have historically recognized this fact, the independent Baptist today has no grounds to claim an inerrant translation.

If one chooses to believe that the translation he holds in his hand is inerrantly inspired, that is his right. But he should have the Christian courtesy to allow his Baptist brother to believe that only the original autographs are so inspired, especially since it is historically clear that this is the consistent belief of Christians in general and of Baptists in particular. If he will simply do so, this will do a great deal in calming the translation storm.
CHAPTER 3
THE PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE AND THE TRANSLATION STORM

If independent Baptists are to calm the troubled waters stirred up by the Bible translation storm, they must fully understand the essential nature of Bible preservation. The topic of preservation is at the heart of much of the current translation debate. What does the Scripture itself teach on the topic of preservation? How has God chosen to preserve His Word? What has been the historical position of Christianity and in particular the Baptists on the subject of preservation? These matters must be considered if the storm is to abate.

The Biblical Teaching of Preservation

What does the Bible teach concerning the preservation of Scripture? It should be understood from the very outset that the Bible presupposes its own preservation. Joshua was commanded to meditate upon the law day and night (Josh 1:8). How could he meditate upon that which was not preserved? The kings of Israel were instructed to make a personal copy of the law (Deut 17:18), and the people of Israel were to teach the words of the law to their children (Deut 6:7) and write them upon their doorposts (Deut 6:9). How could they do so if those words were not preserved? The prophets of the nation of Israel constantly referred the people back to the law of God. How could they do so unless these writings had been preserved? Almost one thousand years after the giving of
the law, Ezra the scribe brought out a copy of “the book of the law of Moses” and read from it in the presence of the people of Israel (Neh 8:1-8). How could he accomplish this feat if that law had not been preserved? When one comes to the pages of the New Testament, he hears Jesus challenge His enemies, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:38). How could Jesus expect them to search the inspired Word of God if it had not been preserved? The student of the New Testament finds the Apostles constantly quoting from the Old Testament and basing their sermons and teachings upon the words found therein. How could they do so unless these inspired words were preserved until that day? Indeed, Paul instructs Timothy to study the Word (2 Tim 2:15), commit the Word to others (2 Tim 2:2), and preach the Word (2 Tim 4:2) because it was inspired by God and profitable (2 Tim 3:16). How could this man do so, and how could the Word of God be profitable, if it had been lost or corrupted? No, the plain implication and presupposition of the entire volume of Scripture is that the inspired, inerrant writings from God will be preserved by God.

God’s Promise

In addition to its presupposition of its own preservation, the Bible gives a number of texts in which God promises to preserve His Word. One such promise falls from the lips of the Savior in Matt 5:17-18, where Jesus states, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Given during the His Sermon on the Mount, these words assure the reader of Scripture that God will preserve His Word until the creation of the new
heavens and the new earth. It must be clearly understood that the primarily teaching of this passage is that every aspect of the Scriptures, even to the minutest detail, will be fulfilled. This is evident from the context in which the Lord is speaking of fulfillment and from His use of the words “jot and tittle.” The “jot” refers to the smallest Hebrew letter, the yodh, which looks like an apostrophe. The “tittle” refers to a very small extension or protrusion made by a stroke of a pen which distinguishes one Hebrew letter from a similar one. For example, the Hebrew “D” differs from the Hebrew “R” only by the use of the tittle.¹ The reader may understand this better by thinking of English letters that are differentiated only by a similar small pen stroke. The English letters “P” and “R” look almost identical. It is only the small angled line that completes the “R” that makes the difference. That slight variation is comparable to the Hebrew tittle. The Jewish rabbis defended the importance of retaining even the slightest stroke and the smallest letter in the Law of Moses.² Indeed, the solemn warning of the old Rabbi to the young scribe shows how jealously the transmission of the sacred text was guarded: “Take heed how thou dost do thy work, for thy work is the work of heaven; lest thou drop or add a letter of a manuscript, and so become a destroyer of the world.”³ Jesus made it clear that He completely agreed with the rabbis’ respect for the law. Not even the smallest dot over an “i” would disappear until the Law was fulfilled.⁴ As Charles Ryrie explains, “The

²Radmacher, 1584.
⁴Radmacher, 1584.
Lord’s point is that every letter of every word of the O.T. is vital and will be fulfilled.”⁵ In truth, Jesus was declaring that all of the prophecies in the Old Testament which pointed to Him would be fulfilled down to the smallest detail.⁶ Yet even though this passage’s primary intent is to teach that all Scripture will be fulfilled, that does not limit the truth contained therein. One of the wonders of Scripture is that a text may proclaim not only one primary lesson but also addition truths. Jesus’ words in this passage also teach the inspiration of Scripture. If even the smallest letter and pen stroke will be fulfilled, then even the smallest letter and pen stroke must have been inerrantly inspired in the autographs. Furthermore, this text also does promise that these inspired Scriptures will continue to be preserved. Otherwise, how would mankind know when God fulfilled them? Thus, by teaching on the certainty of the Scriptures being fulfilled, Jesus also taught that they were inerrant and would be preserved.

Another passage in which Jesus promised the preservation of the Bible is in His Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. At that time, Jesus told His disciples, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt 24:35). Again, it was not the Lord’s primary intent to teach the preservation of Scripture. Rather, He was adamantly declaring that His words, including His predictions of the future, were certain and trustworthy. Jesus was promising that what He had predicted in Matthew 24 would literally come to pass. It would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for Christ’s words to fail.⁷ Yet by saying this, the Lord also promised that His words would

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⁶Beacham and Bauder, 116.

be preserved. The primary teaching does not disallow the secondary teaching, rather it includes it. Christ’s words will be perfectly fulfilled, and this will be evident to those living during these future events by the preserved Word of God.

A third biblical passage in which God promises to preserve His Word is found in Isa 40:6-8. Verse 8 states, “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever.” When one considers the context of the Book of Isaiah, he discovers that chapter 40 begins a new aspect of the prophet’s ministry. Up till this point the prophet had majored on bringing messages of judgment. At this point, Isaiah begins to major upon messages of comfort. Barry Webb, head of the Old Testament department at Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia, writes, “Isaiah’s new message is for people whose whole world has been shattered. And for people like that, cheap comfort is not only a waste of time, it is cruel. Comfort that is not grounded in reality is no comfort at all. But the word that Isaiah is commissioned to bring to them is not like that at all; it is based on truth at every point.”

He then goes on to point out four truths disclosed to the Jews in Isa 40:1-8. First, that they are God’s people (Isa 40:1). Second, they have been forgiven (Isa 40:2). Third, that God will give concrete expression to the fact that He has forgiven them (Isa 40:3-5). This includes bringing them home. Fourth, that God’s word can be relied upon because it does not decay and fade away as man does, but stands forever (Isa 40:6-8). Isaiah was looking forward past the Babylonian captivity. Warren Wiersbe writes, “Assyria was gone, and now Babylon was gone. Like the grass, nations and their leaders fulfill their purposes and then fade away, but the Word of God abides

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9Ibid., 162-3.
forever (. . .). As they began their long journey home, Israel could depend on God’s promises.\textsuperscript{10} God had decreed that His people would return to their land and nothing would change that. People are temporary and change, but God never fails; His Word will be accomplished. The nation can rely upon God’s promise, it will not fail them. Webb notes, “And the truth is that God’s word has the same character of God himself. It is as unchanging and reliable as the God who speaks it.”\textsuperscript{11} Thus, the primary teaching of this passage is the reliability of God’s promise. Yet in a secondary sense, this same passage teaches that God’s Word will be preserved. Otherwise, how would the nation be able to realize that God’s promises had even been kept? The preservation of Scripture guarantees that mankind will recognize the dependability of God’s Word.

A fourth passage that promises the preservation of Scripture is 1 Pet 1:23-25, in which the Apostle quotes from Isaiah 40 to remind his readers that while physical life is temporary, God’s work is permanent. This work includes salvation, which is brought about “by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever” (1 Pet 1:23b). Peter had preached this word to them (1 Pet 1:25) and it would continue to accomplish its work in those who had received it (1 Pet 2:2-3). He was informing his readers that the Word of God, which had been planted in their hearts by the Spirit when they were born again, was alive and incorruptible, and, by means of that implanted Word, they could and should grow to maturity.\textsuperscript{12} Yet it must also be understood that the reason his readers could trust that Word of God was that it was preserved.

\textsuperscript{10}Warren W. Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary / Prophets (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2002), 49.

\textsuperscript{11}Webb, 163.

\textsuperscript{12}Beacham and Bauder, 118.
Therefore, it is obvious that God does promise to preserve His Word. Not only does the Bible presuppose its own preservation, but God promises to preserve His Word in passages in which He describes the Bible’s dependability, fulfillment, and power. The believer today can rest assured that God has preserved His inspired Scripture.

God’s Silence

While the Bible is plain that Scripture will be preserved, it is absolutely silent as to the method God will utilize to preserve it. One can scour the pages of God’s Holy Word over and over again and not discover one verse that discloses how God will accomplish His preservation of His Word. It is certain that He will preserve His inspired writings, but how He will do so is left a mystery.

Obviously God could preserve Scripture by a miracle. He provided the Bible to mankind through the miracle of inspiration, and He could preserve His Word miraculously if He so chose. God could have performed a miracle so that every scribe produced a perfect copy of the original. Yet it is obvious that He did not so choose because there are evident errors found in the copies. W. Edward Glenny, professor of Biblical Studies and New Testament at Northwestern College, St. Paul, Minnesota, notes that the closest manuscripts disagree an average of six to ten times per chapter.\textsuperscript{13} God could have chosen to preserve one particular group of manuscripts perfectly so that there were no errors in these manuscripts. But even among manuscript families there are disagreements between individual manuscripts. God also could have chosen to preserve one single perfect copy of the Bible with absolutely no mistakes in transmission. Yet

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 108.
Glenny also points out that it is easy to demonstrate that every existing manuscript has scribal errors in it.\textsuperscript{14} Therefore, one must logically conclude that God did not decide to miraculously preserve His Word.

If not through a miracle, then how else could God have chosen to preserve Scripture? As one studies the Bible it becomes evident that the God of miracles often chooses to work behind the scenes through divine providence. The same God who delivered Israel from Egypt by the use of miracles during the time of Moses, also worked providentially during the time of Esther, whom God brought “to the kingdom for such a time as this” (Esth 4:14b). A study of the history of preservation leads to the conclusion that God preferred to preserve His Word providentially rather than miraculously.

What can be learned from God’s silence on this topic? This writer believes that the lesson to be taken to heart is not to declare as fact what cannot be supported by Scripture. One must beware being dogmatic where the Scriptures themselves are silent. One must not demand that God miraculously preserved the Bible when the Word of God makes no such claim. It appears best to allow God the right to providentially preserve His Word if that is His chosen preference.

\textbf{The Selected Method of Preservation}

How has God selected to preserve His inspired Word? Even if it is agreed upon that God chose to providentially preserve the Bible, the question must be asked as to the method He utilized to do so. When one considers the sheer volume of copies of God’s Word it is plain that God did preserve His Word, but there is a difference of opinion as to the process by which He did so.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.
An Abundance of Manuscripts

The fact that God has preserved His inspired Word is evident in the abundance of biblical manuscripts which exist. Most books do not survive for very long. Emery Bancroft notes:

Books are like men – dying creatures. A very small percentage of books survives more than twenty years, a yet smaller percentage lasts a hundred years, and only a very insignificant fraction represents those which have lived a thousand years. Amid the wreck and ruin of ancient literature the Holy Scriptures stand out like the last survivor of an otherwise extinct race, and the very fact of the Bible’s continued existence is an indication that like its Author it is indestructible.\(^{15}\)

As will be seen shortly, the manuscript evidence for the Bible is counted in the thousands. This is unheard of when considering manuscripts from the ancient world. In his book *The New Testament Documents*, F. F. Bruce points out that Caesar’s *Gallic War* has several existing manuscripts but only nine or ten are good, only thirty-five of the 142 books of the Roman History of Livy survive in no more than twenty manuscripts, and only four and a half of the fourteen books of the *Histories* of Tacitus survive while of the sixteen books of his *Annals* only ten survive in full and two in part. The text of these existing portions of his two great historical works depends entirely on two manuscripts. Additionally, The History of Thucydides is now known from only eight manuscripts and a few papyrus scraps, the same being true of the History of Herodotus.\(^{16}\) Bruce Metzger adds that the compendious *History of Rome*, written in Latin by Velleius Paterculus (born c. 20 B.C.; died after A.D. 30), survived in only one incomplete manuscript which was discovered in 1515 and later lost without a trace.\(^{17}\) Only the words of Demosthenes

\(^{15}\)Bancroft, 43-4.

\(^{16}\)Bruce, *Documents*, 11.

(two hundred manuscripts) and Homer (643 manuscripts) have numbered into the hundreds.\textsuperscript{18} No wonder Metzger states, “In contrast with these figures, the textual critic of the New Testament is embarrassed by the wealth of material.”\textsuperscript{19} Concerning this comparison of manuscript evidence, Ravi Zacharias concludes, “In real terms, the New Testament is easily the best attested ancient writing in terms of the sheer number of documents, the time span between the events and the document, and the variety of documents available to sustain or contradict it. There is nothing in ancient manuscript evidence to match such textual availability and integrity.”\textsuperscript{20} Similarly, John Warwick Montgomery writes, “To be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament.”\textsuperscript{21}

This abundance of textual evidence is despite the reoccurrence of persecution of those possessing the Bible and the continued attempts made to destroy their sacred Scriptures. While other works of literature only had to survive the ravages of time, the biblical manuscripts had to survive time and determined efforts to eliminate them. Many instances could be noted, but one stands out: the Diocletian persecution of the fourth century. Concerning this time of destruction, W. A. Criswell eloquently writes:

In A.D. 303 Diocletian, Emperor of the Roman Empire, decreed that every Bible in the World should be destroyed and the people who possessed Bibles should be slain. So effective was that horrible, cruel onslaught that in about a


\textsuperscript{19}Metzger and Ehrman, 51.


\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., 36.
year or two the persecutors supposed that they had eradicated the Bible from the face of the earth. Myriads of Christians laid down their lives when they were discovered loving the Word of God. Diocletian was told that Christians were a people of the Book, and that if the Book were destroyed the faith would cease to exist. So he sought to destroy the Book. Diocletian considered his drive of extermination so successful that over a burned and extinguished Bible he built a column and on it wrote these triumphant Latin words: Extincto nomene Christianorum: the name of Christian is extinguished. Christians were drowned in blood, consumed by fire – anguish, martyrdom, death.\textsuperscript{22}

Yet the church historian Eusebius states that twenty-five years after Diocletian’s decree the Roman emperor Constantine issued an edict which commanded that fifty copies of the Scriptures be prepared at the government’s expense.\textsuperscript{23} Enemies of God’s Word have come and gone, but the Scriptures remain. As Norman Geisler states, “History is a testimony to the Bible’s durability. It has been banned, burned, and banished, but in spite of it all, it stands as the world’s all-time bestseller.”\textsuperscript{24}

\textbf{The Old Testament}

As far as the Old Testament is concerned, even before modern discoveries there were a substantial number of Old Testament manuscripts. As early as the late 1700s Benjamin Kennicott published 615 Old Testament manuscripts, and a few years later Giovanni de Rossi published 731 manuscripts. Then, beginning around 1899 some ten thousand Old Testament manuscripts were found in the Cairo Geniza, and since 1947 caves by the Dead Sea at Qumran have produced over six hundred Old Testament manuscripts.

\textsuperscript{22}W. A. Criswell, \textit{The Bible for Today’s World} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), 115.

\textsuperscript{23}McDowell. 10.

\textsuperscript{24}Geisler, 1:247.
manuscripts. According to one source, there are over 3,000 preserved copies of various portions of the Hebrew Old Testament.

The history of the preservation of the Hebrew manuscripts can be broken into three periods of time. First, there is the Talmudic period (c. 300 B.C. – A.D. 500). This period produced a great flood of manuscripts which were used in the synagogues and for private study. According to Paul D. Wegner, there were three groups of copyists during this time who preserved the manuscripts: the Sopherim or “scribes” (c. 500 B.C. – A.D. 100), the Tannaim or “repeaters” (c. A.D. 100-300), and the Amoraim or “expositors” (c. A.D. 200-500). He states that manuscripts copied before the first century A.D. show two tendencies on the part of the scribes: they preserved the accuracy of the text while being willing to revise or update the text in regards to script type, spelling, and corrections. He further points out that evidence from about the mid-third century B.C. on suggests that there were several centuries during which a variety of texts existed simultaneously, but that the traditional view has been that during the first century A.D. a strong movement emerged in Judaism to establish a unified, authoritative text of the Hebrew Bible. From at least the first century A.D. onward the manuscripts were copied by well-trained, professional scribes who were meticulous in their work. Jewish writings mention that the temple employed correctors who scrutinized the scrolls to safeguard

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25Ibid., 1:439.

26Williams and Shaylor, Word, 123.

27Geisler and Nix, 246.


29Ibid., 66, 70.
their precision.\textsuperscript{30} Sometime between 100 B.C. and A.D. 400, which overlaps the periods of all three classes of copyists, meticulous rules were developed to preserve the Old Testament text in synagogue scrolls. Included among these: each written column of the scroll was to have no fewer than forty-eight and no more than sixty lines whose breadth must consist of thirty letters; the page was first to be lined, from which the letters were suspended; the ink was to be black, prepared according to a specific recipe; and no word or letter was to be written from memory.\textsuperscript{31}

Second, there is the Masoretic period (c. A.D. 500-1000). Around the end of the fifth century A.D., a fourth group of scribes arose who inherited the scribal traditions and carried on the work of preserving the text. They were known as the Masoretes, and their diligent labors helped to preserve the Hebrew text that the world has today, the Masoretic Text.\textsuperscript{32} They treated the text with great reverence and were extremely careful in their efforts. According to René Pache, they established the text, choosing the best manuscript from those at their disposal and then copied it with extraordinary care. It has been related that even an error in one single letter could have made the manuscript useless. The Masoretes also annotated the text as a precaution against any omission or addition. The number of letters, the repetitions of certain expressions, the middle letter, and the word and verse in the middle of each book, or collection of books, was indicated in the margin. They also invented vowel points to indicate the pronunciation of the word while at the same time preserving the integrity of the traditional consonantal text.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 73.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 74.
\textsuperscript{33} Pache, 187.
Third, there is the period after A.D. 1000. The Masoretes copied the Old Testament by hand for over one thousand years with extreme accuracy. Not until 1488 was the first complete Hebrew Bible printed. Then in 1516-1517 the first Rabbinic Bible appeared, and in 1524-1525 the Second Rabbinic edition was published.\textsuperscript{34}

Until very recently scholars did not possess any ancient Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament before A.D. 900. In addition to the normal ravages of time, two reasons account for this. First, it is believed that when the Masoretes finished their work of putting in vowel points and of standardizing the Scriptures, they systematically and completely disposed of all the deviating manuscripts. Second, the Jews held their Scriptures in such reverence that when their copies became too old and worn for further ordinary reading, they ceremonially buried them. According to Talmudic tradition, any manuscript that contained a mistake or error, and all those that were aged beyond use, was systematically and religiously destroyed.\textsuperscript{35} Then, beginning in 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. Parts of every book of the Old Testament were found with the exception of Esther and Nehemiah. One of these discoveries was an entire manuscript of Isaiah, dating from the second century B.C. This allowed scholars to check the Masoretic Text with a manuscript a thousand years older. Had the Masoretes altered the text? No, the two texts were practically identical. Gleason Archer states that they “proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. . . . The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and

\textsuperscript{34}Wegner and Ehrman, 78.

\textsuperscript{35}Geisler and Nix, 251.
variation in spelling.”

Thus, the trustworthiness of the Masoretes’ work was made evident. God has preserved His Word in an abundance of Old Testament manuscripts.

The New Testament

As far as the New Testament is concerned, there are now, according to the 2003 official listing, over 5,700 Greek New Testament manuscripts. Obviously not all of these contain the full Greek New Testament. They may range from just a few verses, to full books, to the New Testament in its entirety. Yet compared to the second runner up, Homer’s Iliad with 643 copies, the amount of textual material is overwhelming.

Papyri

The earliest New Testament manuscripts are known as the papyri. These are fragments of papyrus, which was a writing material made from sliced and glued pieces of the papyrus plant that grew in the marshes of the Nile Delta in Egypt and was also available in Syria, Babylon, and other swampy places. To produce a long document, papyrus sheets were joined together into long rolls or scrolls. Later they were put together much like modern books which were called codices (singular is codex). It appears that Christians were the first to popularize the use of the codex as a medium of literature. Remains of Christian manuscripts from the second and third centuries are predominately in codex form, and items of Christian “spiritual” literature are almost exclusively in codex form, while the remains of non-Christian manuscripts from this period are by large majority in traditional scroll form.

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37Williams and Shaylor, Word, 123.
for reading. Bruce M. Metzger states that as of 2003, the official number of New Testament papyri is listed at 116. 38 Papyrus manuscripts are denoted with the letter “P” followed by a serial number. All of the papyrus manuscripts are fragmentary, the most important being the Chester Beatty Biblical papyri, the discovery of which was announced by Sir Fredric Kenyon in 1931. 39 One of these, P\textsuperscript{45}, contains portions of the four gospels and the book of Acts, and dates from the first half of the third century. Another, P\textsuperscript{46}, contains large portions of nine letters of Paul, plus portions of Hebrews, dating to about the year 200. The third, P\textsuperscript{47}, has a sizeable section of the Book of Revelation, dating from the middle or latter part of the third century. 40 Another group of important papyri was purchased by the Swiss bibliophile, M. Martin Bodmer, founder of the Bodmer Library of World Literature at Cologny, a suburb of Geneva. The earliest of these, P\textsuperscript{66}, dates from about 200 and contains two-thirds of the gospel of John. Another, P\textsuperscript{75}, also dates from approximately 200 and contains portions of the gospels of Luke and John. A third, dating from the third century, P\textsuperscript{72}, contains the epistles of Peter and Jude. A fourth, P\textsuperscript{74}, contains portions of the Book of Acts and the General Epistles, and dates from the seventh century. 41 The earliest portion of the New Testament which biblical scholars possess is P\textsuperscript{52}. It is a fragment of the Gospel of John which contains five verses from chapter eighteen, measuring about two and a half by three and a half inches. It was purchased in Egypt as early as 1920, but sat unnoticed among other papyri fragments.

38 Metzger and Ehrman, 50.


41 Bruce, Books, 172; Metzger and Ehrman, 57-8; Strobel, 61.
until 1934, when C. H. Roberts noticed it while sorting through papyri at the John Reynolds Library in Manchester, England. Recognizing it as a portion of John’s gospel, he dated it by its style of script to between A.D. 100 and 150. Other prominent paleographers, such as Sir Fredrick Kenyon, Sir Harold Bell, Adolph Deissmann, W. Schubart, W. H. P. Hatch, and Ulrich Wilcken, have agreed with his assessment. Deissmann was convinced that it goes back at least to the reign of Emperor Hadrian (A.D. 117-138) or even Emperor Trajan (A.D. 98-117).\footnote{Metzger and Ehrman, 55-6; Strobel, 61-2.}

**Uncials**

By the fourth century parchment began to replace papyrus as the primary writing material, and the early New Testament parchment manuscripts are known as uncials. This classification comes from the type of letters used. Written in all-capital Greek letters, the uncial letters were an adaptation of the lapidary capitals used for inscriptions in stone and the like.\footnote{Bruce, Books, 172.} For several centuries these uncial texts were written with no breaks between words. As of 2003 the official number of uncials is listed at 310.\footnote{Metzger and Ehrman, 50.} In the enumeration of New Testament manuscripts, those written in uncials are distinguished in that their serial numbers begin with the digit 0 (01, 02, 03, and so on). Yet the more important uncials retain an older method of denotation which utilized capital letters of the Roman, Greek, and even Hebrew alphabets.\footnote{Bruce, Books, 172-3.} Possibly the most famous uncial manuscript and the one given primary position among many textual critics is Codex Sinaiticus, denoted by the Hebrew letter ’aleph. Discovered by Dr. Constantin von
Tischendorf at the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, it is a copy of the entire Greek Bible (although a good part of the Old Testament has perished). Codex Sinaiticus is noteworthy because it is the only known complete copy of the Greek New Testament in uncial form. Written in the fourth century, this manuscript was presented by the monastery to the czar of Russia in 1859 and later purchased by the British government from the Soviet Union for slightly more than $500,000 on Christmas Day, 1933, and is now housed in the British Museum.\(^{46}\) The British Museum is also the home of Codex A, the Codex Alexandrinus. This manuscript was written in the fifth century and presented to King Charles I, in 1627, by Cyril Lucar, Patriarch of Alexandria, and afterwards, of Constantinople. It contains the Old Testament, except for several mutilations, and most of the New Testament.\(^{47}\) Another valuable uncial is Codex B, the Codex Vaticanus. As its name indicates, it is housed in the Vatican Library in Rome. This manuscript was written in the middle of the fourth century and originally contained both testaments plus the Apocrypha, with the exception of the books of Maccabees. Currently, almost forty-six chapters of Genesis are missing, some of Ps 30 is gone, and the New Testament from Heb 9:14 onward has vanished.\(^{48}\) Other uncials include Codex C, the Codex Ephraemi, written in the fifth century; Codex D, the Codex Bezae, written in the fifth or sixth century; and Codex W, the Washington Codex, written in the fourth or fifth century.\(^{49}\)

\(^{46}\)Bruce, \textit{Books}, 173; Metzger and Ehrman, 62-4.

\(^{47}\)Bruce, \textit{Books}, 173; Metzger and Ehrman, 67.

\(^{48}\)Metzger and Ehrman, 67-8.

\(^{49}\)Bruce, \textit{Books}, 173-4; Metzger, 69-71.
Minuscules

By the tenth century the uncial form of handwriting began to give way to a new style known as minuscule. As the name suggests, these letters were smaller and more akin to modern cursive handwriting. Such manuscripts are called minuscules or cursives and compose the vast majority of Greek manuscripts in existence. Indeed, Metzger states that 2,877 minuscules are now known to exist.\textsuperscript{50} In the enumeration of New Testament manuscripts, those written in minuscules are distinguished by their serial numbers being numbered ordinarily (1, 2, 3, and so on into the thousands).\textsuperscript{51} This form of handwriting predominated until the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century.

Lectionaries

Yet another form of Greek manuscript is the lectionary. Lectionaries are manuscripts of weekly or special Scripture reading lessons with selected portions of Scripture used in church services. The early Christians adopted the custom of the Hebrew synagogue of having prescribed readings from the Scriptures each week. A regular system of lessons from the Gospels and the Epistles was developed, and the custom arose of arranging these according to a fixed order of Sundays and the other holy days of the Christian year.\textsuperscript{52} As of 2003 the official number of lectionaries is listed at 2,432. Therefore, counting the papyri, uncials, minuscules, and lectionary manuscripts, the official listing as of 2003 gave a total of 5,735 manuscripts.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50}Metzger and Ehrman, 50.

\textsuperscript{51}Bruce, \textit{Books}, 172.

\textsuperscript{52}Metzger and Ehrman, 46.

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., 50.
Versions

In addition to the Greek manuscripts, there are manuscripts of New Testament books which were translated into other languages. These various versions also give witness to the original Greek from which they were translated. There are 4,101 Slavic manuscripts, 2,587 Armenian manuscripts, over 350 Syriac Peshitta manuscripts, 100 Bohairic manuscripts, 75 Arabic manuscripts, 50 Old Latin manuscripts, as well as other ancient versions. Indeed, there are more than 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts alone. Thus, Josh McDowell gives the number of ancient versions as being in excess of 19,284.\footnote{McDowell, 34.} When this is added to the Greek Manuscripts, one has an overwhelming total of manuscript evidence for the New Testament of over 25,000 manuscripts.

Church Fathers

inventory of the Church Fathers before the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) reveals some 32,000 citations from the New Testament.\(^{56}\) To all of this could be added the quotations of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers. It should be noticed that Dean Burgon left a considerable amount of unpublished material when he died. Among that is his index of New Testament citations by the Church Fathers. It consists of sixteen thick volumes to be found in the British Museum, and it contains 86,489 quotations.\(^{57}\) Even though some of the quotations by the Church Fathers were often loose, while others were very accurate, they do at least reproduce the substantial content of the original text. Is it any wonder that J. Harold Greenlee has claimed that the quotations are so extensive that the New Testament could be virtually reconstructed from them without the use of the New Testament manuscripts?\(^{58}\)

**Variations**

The very volume of New Testament Greek documents requires the honest student of Scripture to ask, “How do these various manuscripts compare to one another? How much variation has slipped in? Do believers have a trustworthy testimony to the original autographs?” It has been stated that there are over 200,000 known variants which have been discovered among these manuscripts.\(^{59}\) A variant reading is any difference in wording that occurs among manuscripts. It is easy to understand how slight variations slipped in during hand copying. Common unintentional changes would include the confusion of similar letters, the substitution of similar sounding words (known as

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\(^{56}\) Geisler and Nix, 353.

\(^{57}\) McDowell, 45.

\(^{58}\) Geisler and Nix, 356-7.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 361.
homophony), the omission of a letter or word (known as haplography), a letter or word being written twice rather than once (known as dittography), a reversal in the order of two letters or words (known as metathesis), incorrect word division that results in two words being joined as one (known as fusion), one word being incorrectly separated into two (known as fission), omission caused by two words or phrases that end similarly (known as homoioteleuton), omission caused by two words or phrases that begin similarly (known as homoioarkton), and simple misspelling. While most of the variants were unintentional, it must be admitted that some changes may have been intentional as a scribe desired to update spelling or grammar, clear up a difficultly, harmonize a passage to agree with another, or even for a doctrinal reason. Thus, over 200,000 variants came to exist.

Such a figure sounds extremely disconcerting until one stops and considers how variants are counted. In reality these 200,000 variants represent only 10,000 places in the New Testament. If a single word is misspelled in 3,000 manuscripts it is counted as 3,000 variants or readings. The same is true of a word being repeated or left out, of words being placed in opposite order, or any similar mistake. When this is recognized, the sheer volume of Greek manuscripts makes it relatively easy to normally recognize when such a mistake has occurred and to correct it. Hence, once this counting procedure is understood, and the mechanical variants have been eliminated, the remaining significant variants are surprisingly few in number. Indeed, when one studies the

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60 Wegner, 44-9.
61 Ibid., 52-4.
62 Geisler and Nix, 361.
entirety of the wealth of Greek manuscripts, he comes to the conclusion that he can rest confidently in the belief that believers today have a trustworthy witness to the biblical writings as they were originally penned. Not only are there more copies of the New Testament than any other book from the ancient world, but they were more accurately copied than any other book. The famous textual scholars Westcott and Hort estimated that only one-sixtieth of its variants rise above “trivialities,” which would leave the text 98.33 percent pure.\textsuperscript{63} The great scholar John A. T. Robertson said that the real concern is only with a “thousandth part of the entire text,” which would make the New Testament 99.9 percent free of variants.\textsuperscript{64} Bruce Metzger, the great New Testament scholar and Princeton professor, made a comparison of the Iliad of Homer, the Mahabarata of Hinduism, and the New Testament. He found the text of the Mahabarata to represent 90 percent of the original (10 percent textual corruption), the text of the Iliad to be 95 percent pure, and the New Testament text to be only one half of one percent in question, or 99.5 percent intact.\textsuperscript{65} The noted historian Philip Schaff calculated that of the 150,000 variants known in his day, only four hundred affected the meaning of a passage, only fifty were of any significance, and not even one affected “an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching.”\textsuperscript{66} Thus, 100 percent of the message of the New Testament has been preserved in the manuscripts. Sir Fredrick Kenyon, former director and principle librarian of the British museum noted:

\textsuperscript{63}Geisler, 1:548.
\textsuperscript{64}Ibid., 1:549.
\textsuperscript{65}Ibid., 1:463.
\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., 1:549.
The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or the other of these ancient authorities. . . . This can be said of no other ancient book in the world.\(^{67}\)

Therefore, it can be concluded that even though there are recognizable variants between Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, they are relatively few in number and normally make little difference to the meaning of the passage. Additionally, no Bible doctrine, historical fact, or issue of faith and practice is dependant upon a single variant. Indeed, Paul D. Wegner, in his student’s guide to textual criticism, points out that there are more differences between the various English translations of the New Testament than among the Greek manuscripts.\(^{68}\) Christians can indeed trust that God has preserved His inspired Word providentially through the wealth of biblical manuscripts available today.

A Difference of Opinion

There is a difference of opinion as to the exact manner in which God has preserved His Word. Some believe that God has preserved His Word through the oldest existing manuscripts, others through the majority of existing manuscripts, still others through a particular compilation of some manuscripts, and some through all of the Greek manuscripts considered together.

As a basic background for this discussion, one must understand that as scribes inadvertently and sometimes intentionally introduced errors into their copies, a ripple effect resulted as copies of their copies passed on these errors as well as new ones. In principle, manuscripts can be compared and arranged into textual clusters based on

\(^{67}\)Ibid.

\(^{68}\)Wegner, 26.
similarity of mistakes. As textual scholars have studied these groupings of the 5,735 Greek manuscripts that represent the New Testament books, they have come to the conclusion that they can be classified by similarities into what can be termed as textual families. Over the years the number and the names of these textual families have been modified and changed. For the sake of simplicity it can be stated that the two major textual families recognized today are the Byzantine and the Alexandrian. Two less important text types are the Western and Caesarean, and there are disagreements among scholars as to whether these two even constitute separate families. The older manuscripts normally fall into the Alexandrian family while the majority of manuscripts fall into the Byzantine family.

Many believe that God chose to preserve His Word through the existing copies of the earliest known manuscripts. The Alexandrian Text family, which takes its name from the fact that most of its manuscripts come from the area of Alexandria, Egypt, represents the predominance of the earliest extant New Testament manuscripts. One of the wonders of God’s preservation of the New Testament is not only the sheer number of manuscripts available but also the nearness of many of these manuscripts to the originals. Just as it was shown that the New Testament stands out in stark contrast to other works of ancient literature in regards to the number of copies in existence, so it also shines forth in the nearness of these copies to the original compositions from which they were copied. Caesar’s Gallic War oldest manuscript is some nine hundred years later than Caesar’s day. The oldest copy of Homer’s Iliad is some four hundred years removed from the

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69 Ibid., 83.

70 Bruce, Documents, 11.
original. The time gap between the originals of other ancient writers and their closest surviving copy is likewise seen to be large: Herodotus c. 1,350 years, Thucydides c. 1,300 years, Plato c. 1,300 years, Demosthenes c. 1,400 years, Tacitus c. 1,000 years, and Pliny Secundus c. 750 years; while fragments of the New Testament have been found which date to just over 50 years after its composition, books to 100 years, most of the New Testament together to 150 years, and all of the New Testament together to 225 years.\(^7^1\) The early testimony of the manuscript evidence to the New Testament is astounding. Is it any wonder that many hold that these earliest documents present the best source of God’s choice for preserving His Word? While admitting that the Alexandrian Family is in the minority, they contend that manuscripts must be weighed not counted. One major consideration in doing this is the manuscript’s age. They believe that the oldest are the best since there was less time available for corruption to set in.

After the translation of the KJV into English, more and more of the oldest manuscripts were discovered or became available to biblical scholars. Many believed that they should be taken into account in translating the Greek New Testament into English. Over the years some attempted to revise the KJV to include some of these differences, but it was not until the translation of the English Revised Version in England that the oldest manuscripts were given strong consideration. The story begins with two Cambridge University scholars, Brooke F. Westcott (1825-1901) and Fenton J. A. Hort (1828-1892). In 1881, after twenty-eight years of work, they published the text of the Greek New Testament (with an introduction and appendixes) titled The New Testament in the Original Greek. At the same time they made known their theory that Codex

\(^{7^1}\)McDowell, 38.
Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus (along with a few other early manuscripts) represented a text that most closely replicated the original autographs.\textsuperscript{72} It was their Greek New Testament which was the main basis for the New Testament translation of the English Revised Version and the American Standard Version. Several other critical editions of the Greek text appeared after Westcott and Hort. One of these was Eberhard Nestle’s Novum Testamentum Graece, published in 1898. The Nestle text went through twelve editions (1898-1923) and then was taken over by his son, Erwin Nestle (13\textsuperscript{th}-20\textsuperscript{th} editions, 1927-1950), then by Kurt Aland (21\textsuperscript{st}-25\textsuperscript{th} editions, 1979-1993), and finally was coedited by Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland (26\textsuperscript{th}-27\textsuperscript{th} editions, 1979-1993). In 1955 the American Bible Society called together an international group of scholars to prepare a Greek New Testament that could be used by hundreds of Bible translation committees to revise existing Bible translations and make new translations. This was the beginning of the of the United Bible Societies’ Greek text called The Greek New Testament. Kurt Aland was part of the editorial committee of this text, and at the same time was working on a new edition of Nestle’s text that became known as the Nestle-Aland Greek Text. Today two different critical texts are in use, namely The Greek New Testament (4\textsuperscript{th} edition, 1994) and the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece (27\textsuperscript{th} edition, 1993). The text for both of these is now the same. Only the textual apparatuses differ.\textsuperscript{73} Thus, the Greek text used today by many is not identical to that of Westcott and Hort because Greek scholars continued to work with the oldest manuscripts and make changes.

\textsuperscript{72}Comfort, Origin, 197; Wegner, 215.

\textsuperscript{73}Wegner 218-9.
In summary, these older manuscripts which represent the Alexandrian Text have been compared and brought together to form what is commonly known as an Eclectic Text or a Critical Text. This text gives strong preference to the oldest manuscripts and basically ignores the later manuscripts which compose the Byzantine Text. The Nestle-Aland text represents a joining of the various Greek texts into a printed text.

While some look to the oldest manuscripts, others believe that God chose to preserve His Word through the largest number of existing manuscripts which basically agree with one another. As has been noted, the vast majority of existing Greek texts fall into the Byzantine text type which takes its name from the location in which most of these manuscripts originated, that of the old Byzantine Empire. Unlike the western Roman Empire where Latin became the common language, the Byzantine Empire continued to use Greek. As a result there are far more manuscripts existing from the Byzantine tradition than for the other three combined.\textsuperscript{74} Indeed, it is commonly recognized that about 80 percent of all Greek manuscripts (well over 4,000) fall into the classification of the Byzantine family, and Wilber Pickering contends that one can reasonably speak of up to 90 percent of extant manuscripts belonging to this family and Bruce Metzger agrees saying that “about 90% of the extant New Testament manuscripts possess a text of Byzantine character.”\textsuperscript{75} Thus, the Byzantine Text is also commonly referred to as the Majority Text.


Since the majority of Greek texts are in basic agreement, it is the position of many that these represent the manner in which God has providentially preserved His inspired Word through the centuries. It was from the majority family of texts that Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536) published his Greek text in 1516, using approximately seven minuscule manuscripts. It was this Greek text and it revisions which was utilized by so many translators, such as Martin Luther and William Tyndale, to bring the New Testament directly from the Greek into their native tongues. Thus, the Majority Text was looked upon as the authoritative Greek text for centuries by the church and so has also been referred to as the Traditional Text.

The main contention against this position is that the Majority Text is a late text of the fourth century A.D. and thus cannot represent the original. F. F. Bruce notes that the Byzantine Text is not represented in the translations or citations of the first three centuries A.D., and that Chrysostom is the first Greek Father whose biblical citations show a Byzantine character (A.D. 347-407). Yet supporters of the Majority Text disagree because they believe that the very existence of the Majority Text in such large volume necessitates its earlier existence. They hold that the manuscripts which compose the vast majority of Greek texts were copied from earlier manuscripts which were worn out by use or destroyed in religious persecutions. Thus the age of a manuscript must not be confused with the age of the text it exhibits. A late manuscript may more faithfully reflect the common ancestor than its earlier cousin. Zane Hodges contends that their very number argues that they are representatives of the oldest text tradition. He writes:

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76 Bruce, Books, 177.
77 Pickering, 131.
The present writer would like to suggest that the impasse to which we are driven when the arguments of modern criticism are carefully weighed and sifted is due almost wholly to a refusal to acknowledge the obvious. The manuscript tradition of an ancient book will, under any but the most exceptional conditions, multiply in a reasonably regular fashion with the result that the copies nearest the autograph will normally have the largest number of descendants. The further removed in the history of transmission a text becomes from its source the less time it has to leave behind a large family of offspring. Hence, in a large tradition where a pronounced unity is observed between, let us say, eighty per cent of the evidence, a very strong presumption is raised that this numerical preponderance is due to direct derivation from the oldest sources.  

Additionally, proponents of this position argue that there is evidence that the Majority Text did exist before the fourth century. They claim that Byzantine readings can be found in the Church Fathers before the fourth century. Harry A. Sturz, though not a Majority Text advocate, claims that “the papyri supply valid evidence that distinctly Byzantine readings were not created in the fourth century but were already in existence before the end of the second and that, because of this, Byzantine readings should merit serious consideration.” He further claims that quotations from early Fathers have been found in support of Byzantine readings.

Advocates of the Majority Text also note that the manuscripts upon which the Critical Text is based do not agree among themselves and do not give evidence of being the most reliable. Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus disagree over 3,000 times in the four Gospels, disagreeing, on the average, in almost every verse. Pickering notes that even Hort conceded that the scribe of Vaticanus “reached by no means a high

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78 Williams and Shaylor, Word, 204-5.
80 Ibid., 78.
81 Pickering, 126.
standard of accuracy,” and adds that Sinaiticus is acknowledged on every side to be worse than Vaticanus in every way. He then notes concerning Codex Bezae that Hort spoke of “the prodigious amount of error” it contained, while Burgon concluded that it resembled a Targum more than a transcription. Pickering then went on to conclude, “If these are our best MSS we may as well agree with those who insist the recovery of the original wording is impossible, and turn our minds to other pursuits. But the evidence indicates that the earliest MSS are the worst.”

Furthermore, those who support the Majority Text explain that its survival best fits the model of what one would expect to see in the normal transmission of the New Testament text. Wilbur N. Pickering, in his book *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, has done an admirable job of showing how the Majority Text developed historically as the predominate text type which maintained the tradition of the New Testament autographs. He writes:

> Now, then, what sort of a picture may we expect to find in the surviving witnesses on the assumption that the history of the transmission of the New Testament Text was normal? We may expect a broad spectrum of copies, showing minor differences due to copying mistakes but all reflecting one common tradition. The simultaneous existence of abnormal transmission in the earliest centuries would result in a sprinkling of copies, helter-skelter, outside of that main stream. . . .

> And what do we find upon consulting the witnesses? Just such a picture. We have the Majority Text . . . dominating the stream of transmission with a few individual witnesses going their idiosyncratic ways.  

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82 Ibid., 127-8.
83 Pickering, 128.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., 116.
While others such as D. A. Carson\textsuperscript{86} have argued persuasively that Pickering is in error, his logic still demands consideration when considering the worth of the Majority Text.

At this point it should be noted that some have narrowed the Majority Text position to teach that God chose to preserve His Word in the New Testament through a particular edition of the Greek New Testament, the Textus Receptus, or even through a particular translation of the Bible for the English speaking world, the King James Version. Erasmus took the manuscripts which he had available from different parts of the New Testament and edited them to make a new text which he published in 1516. Because he possessed only one manuscript of the Book of Revelation which lacked the last six verses, he translated these verses from the Latin Vulgate into Greek.\textsuperscript{87} In all, Erasmus printed five editions of his Greek text (1516, 1519, 1522, 1527, and 1535). These editions, especially the last two, were the basis of four editions of the Greek text published by Robert Estienne (1503-1559), who is better known by his Latin name Stephanus. His last two editions became the standard text of the Greek New Testament for many people, especially in England. Next, Theodore Beza (1519-1605) published eleven editions of the Greek text, beginning in 1564. In reality, his Greek text hardly differed from Stephanus’ fourth edition (1551), and the translators of the King James Version used Beza’s editions extensively. The name Textus Receptus was first applied to this textual tradition in 1633 when the Elzevir brothers published the second edition of their Greek text which mainly followed Beza’s text but also used Stephanus’ and other sources. The publisher’s blurb in the preface stated that this is the “text . . . now received

\textsuperscript{86}Carson, 105-123.

\textsuperscript{87}Beacham and Bauder, 82.
by all.” In Latin, the words “text” and “received” are textum and receptum, from which is derived the phrase “Textus Receptus,” or “received Text.” This view that the Textus Receptus is God’s method of preserving His Word holds that God providentially led Erasmus in his selection of the Greek manuscripts he used from the Byzantine family and in his and others’ subsequent revisions of his text so that it represents the original autographs. It must be understood that the Textus Receptus is not identical with the Majority Text. Rather it represents an extremely small percentage of the many manuscripts which make up the Byzantine Text family. As such the Textus Receptus differs from the Majority Text in about 1,800 places. Those who support the Textus Receptus as the preferred text hold that God worked in these instances to preserve the true text. It should also be understood that the standard edition of the Textus Receptus used today (published by the Trinitarian Bible Society) is not identical to any of the editions discussed above but has drawn its readings from different sources and, in the case of variants, determines what reading to include by following the KJV.

Furthermore, some have even come to teach that God has preserved His Word in the English speaking world in the KJV. They hold that either miraculously of providentially, God worked in the lives of the King James translators so that what they produced is the perfectly preserved Word of God.

A final view is that God chose to preserve His Word through the totality of existing known manuscripts. This method would give due weight to the majority of

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88 Ibid., 84-6.
89 Ibid., 83.
90 Ibid., 86.
manuscripts in existence while also allowing a comparison with the minority which come from an earlier time period. It would also consider ancient translations of Scripture into various languages and the quotations of the Church Fathers. It holds that God preserved His Word in and through the thousands of extant manuscripts. As a result, these manuscripts must be compared to determine the correct reading when the manuscripts differ. This position has the advantage of holding fast the oldest manuscript evidence which Christians have for the New Testament, while at the same time maintaining the vast number of manuscripts which exist. If one totally rejects the oldest manuscripts, he is left open to the charge that Christians cannot know if the Bible they hold is anything like the original autographs. Yet if one discounts the majority of extant manuscripts, he is left with a substantially reduced number of source documents which do not always agree with each other. When it is remembered that the difference between the Byzantine family (the Majority Text) and the Alexandrian family (the oldest manuscripts) is less than 1 percent and that no doctrine or historical fact is affected, one must beware of arguing too strongly against either family of manuscripts. F. F. Bruce writes:

Something more ought to be said, and said with emphasis. We have been discussing various textual types, and reviewing their comparative claims to be regarded as the best representatives of the original New Testament text. But there are not wide divergencies between these types, of a kind that could make any difference to the Church’s responsibility to be a witness and guardian of Holy Writ.⁹¹

He notes that the KJV is by and large translated from the Byzantine Text, while the RV and the ASV come from the text of Westcott and Hort, and the NIV was produced from an eclectic text, yet no difference in readings requires a revision of Christian doctrine. He then states, “If the variant readings are so numerous, it is because the witnesses are so

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⁹¹Bruce, Books, 179.
numerous. But all the witnesses, and all the types which they represent, agree on every article of Christian belief and practice." Indeed, when the differences between the Textus Receptus, the Majority Text, and the Critical Text are compared, it is found that these texts are in agreement almost 98 percent of the time. When these differences are weighed against one another they are so minor that they neither show up in translation nor affect exegesis. When the Majority Text and the Critical Text are compared it is found that they are very much alike in both doctrinal purity and textual agreement. So why not recognize God’s hand in all of these families and text types? It seems only reasonable to consider that God chose to providentially preserve His inspired Word in all of the manuscripts, both the oldest and the majority.

Therefore, it can be seen that while God has preserved His Word in a great multitude of manuscripts, there is a considerable difference of opinion as to exactly how He did it. Some believe God preserved His inspired Word through the majority of manuscripts; some through only the oldest manuscripts; some through all of the manuscripts; and some through the Textus Receptus or even the King James Version.

The Historical Position on Preservation

What has been the historical position of Christianity in general and of Baptists in particular on the subject of the preservation of the Scriptures? This can be discovered by examining how Christians have understood the Greek texts and translations they have used; if there have been other occasions when a particular Bible translation was considered the perfectly preserved Word of God; and when believers began to consider a particular English translation as the preserved Scripture.

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92Ibid., 180.
A Consistent Understanding

Believers in Jesus Christ have consistently understood that God has preserved His Word in reliable copies which were then translated into dependable translations. Even though the copies contained some scribal errors and the translations were not perfect, these Christians realized that they possessed God’s Word in their native language. This is evident in three ways: how those who compiled the Greek text types considered their results, how Bible translators considered their translations, and how those who have believed and proclaimed God’s Word looked upon Greek texts and versions.

First, the student of biblical preservation needs to examine how the compilers of Greek texts looked at the results of their labors. Did those who labored over the Greek texts believe that what they produced was a copy of the perfectly preserved Word of God? It appears obvious that none of the editors who worked upon the various editions of the Textus Receptus believed that the result of their labors was perfect. Erasmus’ second edition contained more than four hundred changes in the Greek text, chiefly corrections of misprints. His third edition had more than one hundred changes from his second edition. His fourth edition had more than one hundred alterations of the third edition. Stephanus’ editions were not identical with Erasmus’. Furthermore, the second edition printed by Stephanus had more than sixty changes from his first edition, while his third edition included variant readings in the margins. Beza’s eleven editions all vary somewhat from Stephanus’ text and from each other. Additionally, while the Elzevirs’ second edition was the first to be called the Received Text, their third edition differs from the second in 287 places. All told, there are more than twenty-five revisions of the
Textus Receptus. Obviously none of these editors felt that his resulting work was the perfectly preserved Word of God or there never would have been any revisions at all. The same can be said of the Critical or Eclectic Text. The various editors keep revising and seeking to do a better job because they too know that their work is not perfect.

Second, the student of biblical preservation needs to examine how the biblical translators looked upon their works of translation. Did any of these translators believe that the result of their translation effort was the perfectly preserved Word of God? It has already been noted in the last chapter that William Tyndale revised his translation of the New Testament into English. Obviously he did not feel that his work was the perfectly preserved Word of God. The comments of the other English translators given in the last chapter also prove that they did not view their products as God’s perfectly preserved Scripture. The KJV has gone through a number of revisions also. And what did the translators of the Authorized Version have to say about it? In their preface they note that during their efforts, they observed that there are many words in Scripture found there but once and many rare names of certain birds, animals, and precious stones which even the Hebrews were divided about the meaning. They then state, “Now in such a case doth not a margin do well to admonish the Reader to seek further, and not to conclude or dogmatize upon this or that peremptorily? For as it is a fault of incredulity, to doubt of those things that are evident; so to determine of such things as the Spirit of God hath left (even in the judgment of the judicious) questionable, can be no less than presumption.” They then go on to say about their marginal notes, “They that are wise had rather have their judgments at liberty in differences of readings, than to be captivated to one, when it

93Beacham and Bauder, 86.
Thus, they did not see their translation as the perfectly preserved Word which could not be bettered, nor were they always sure of one reading above another. Furthermore, they were quite straightforward on their thoughts concerning translations of the Bible in general. They state:

Now to the latter we answer, that we do not deny, nay, we affirm and avow, that the very meanest translation of the Bible in English set forth by men of our profession (for we have seen none of theirs of the whole Bible as yet) containeth the word of God, nay, is the word of God; as the King’s speech which he uttered in Parliament, being translated into French, Dutch, Italian, and Latin, is still the King’s speech, though it be not interpreted by every translator with the like grace, not peradventure so fitly for phrase, not so expressly for sense, every where. . . . 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.95

Thus, they saw even the poorest of translations as still being God’s Word and held that a translation did not have to be perfect to be considered Scripture. It can then be concluded that the translators of the KJV admitted that they were not certain how some passages should be rendered and that no one translation alone had a special claim of being the Word of God.

Third, the student of biblical preservation needs to examine how those who have believed and proclaimed God’s Word have looked upon Greek texts and English versions. Did these men who believed in the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture consider the manuscripts they possessed or one particular translation they used to be the perfectly preserved Word of God? During the Reformation when the Scriptures were being studied again in their original tongues, John Calvin (1509-1564) believed strongly that the original text was without error. Yet, speaking of what he believed to be an error

94Ibid., 213.
95Ibid., 206.
in a copy, he writes, “How the name of Jeremiah crept in [the manuscript at Matt 27:9], I confess that I do not know, nor do I give myself much trouble to inquire. The passage itself plainly shows that the name of Jeremiah has been put down by mistake, instead of Zechariah.” Geisler, 1:304. Plainly, he felt errors could slip into copies of the text. The same could be said of the other Reformers.

In 1881 the New Testament of the English Revised Version was published, followed by the Old Testament in 1885. Its American cousin, the American Standard Version, was then published in 1901. What were the reactions to having a new translation of the Scriptures? One outspoken critic of the RV was the renowned scholar John William Burgon (1813-1888). Yet Burgon did not oppose the new version on the grounds that the King James did not need revising nor even on the grounds that the Textus Receptus was the perfectly preserved text. In his classic book The Revision Revised, he writes, “Once and 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 this subject. Again and again we shall have occasion to point out (e.g. at page 107) that the Textus Receptus needs correction.” Burgon, 21. Here the great defender of the Received Text states that it contains error. Another critic of Westcott and Hort and the RV was the Presbyterian theologian Robert Dabney (1820-1898). He writes, “No one claims for the Textus Receptus, or common Greek text of the New Testament, any sacred right, as though it represented the ipsisima verba (‘the very words’) written by the

Geisler, 1:304.

Burgon, 21.
inspired men in every case . . . It is therefore not asserted to be above emendation.”

Again, the basis for criticism was not a belief in a perfected preserved Received Text.

What of others at the time, did anyone sound the alarm that God’s perfectly preserved translation had been altered? In reality, although some opposed it on the grounds of its textual basis, most welcomed the new rendering of God’s Word into English. British Congregationalist G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945) in a 1923 letter writes, “You ask me which is the best translation of the New Testament. I do not hesitate to say that it is the American Revision. Of course, the English Revision is very fine, but the American Committee have gone a little further sometimes, and, on the whole, I consider it, as I have said, the best. Then again, I most emphatically say that the best translation into modern English I have known is Weymouth’s.”

American evangelist D. L. Moody (1837-1899) speaking of Bible study writes, “I also find it helpful to mark . . . Variations of the Revised Version: . . .” A well known Bible student of this time period was C. I. Scofield, who is remembered for his reference Bible which became a respected and beloved tool in the Fundamentalist movement for most of the twentieth century. In response to a question of which version should be used in public worship, the King James or the Revised Version, he writes, “The King James, or Authorized Version, remains the Bible of the people, and is, therefore, best for the minister’s public work. He should, of course, be acquainted with the revised renderings of all the passages in which important changes are made, and should not hesitate to call attention to the better and

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98 Rawlings, 293.
100 Ibid., 67.
clearer readings.” In his Scofield Reference Bible, he did not hesitate to point out where the older fourth century Greek manuscripts differed from the Textus Receptus (for example Matt 17:21; Mark 11:26; Acts 8:37; 1 John 5:7). Furthermore, in his book Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth he cited both the English Revised Version in both some of his Scriptural references and in some actual verse quotations. Louis T. Talbot also preferred the Authorized Version for public reading and worship, but notes, “Accordingly, the American Standard Version and the English Revised Version, which are practically the same in most respects, are the most accurate translations in our English language.”

R. A. Torrey, one of the editors of The Fundamentals and a leading Bible teacher and evangelist in his day constantly quoted from the American Standard Version. Another writer in those volumes, W. H. Griffith Thomas states, “for all practical purposes either that Authorized or Revised Version does give us a substantial idea of the original text.” In regards to The Fundamentals, it is of note that they presented the doctrinal underpinnings of the Fundamentalist movement and laid out the biblical teaching on the inspiration and preservation of the Holy Scriptures for God’s people. They quoted from the American Standard Version of 1901 more frequently than any other translation.

Then there was the renowned pastor of the Moody Memorial Church, H. A. Ironside (1876-1951). He writes:

101Sumner, 19.
102Williams and Shaylor, Word, 8-9.
103Sumner, 19-20.
104Ibid., 21.
105Williams and Shaylor, Word, 19.
As to Bible translations, the most generally used is the Authorized Version, sometimes called the King James Version, because it was authorized for use in churches in England by King James I. Nearly three hundred years later the American Standard Version was produced, and it is in some respects to be preferred to the older version, though it has never gained the favor of people generally that was expected. The differences are not very important, but are based upon some older texts which were not in evidence when the Authorized Version was being translated.\textsuperscript{106}

Additionally, Presbyterian minister and educator Wilbur M. Smith (1894-1976) states, “Certainly [the American Standard Version is] the most accurate and most revealing translation of the New Testament that we now have.”\textsuperscript{107} Therefore, it can undisputedly be concluded that those leading conservative, fundamental Bible teachers and scholars did not hold that one particular translation of the Bible into English was the preserved Word of God.

But what of leading Baptists during and after the time of the release of the Revised Version, did they condemn it as an attack upon a previously preserved copy of the Scripture? The answer is that they clearly did not. First of all, this is made abundantly clear by considering the statements of three outstanding Baptists of Great Britain at the time of the Revised Version’s release. Undoubtedly the title of the Prince of Baptist Preachers must be accorded to Charles Haddon Spurgeon. In his sermon “Heart-Disease Curable” from Isa 61:1 preached June 19, 1881, he says, “Concerning the fact of differences between the Revised and the Authorized Versions, I would say that no Baptist should ever fear any honest attempt to produce the correct text, and an accurate interpretation of the Old and New Testaments.”\textsuperscript{108} Then, in his sermon “And We Are: A

\textsuperscript{106}Ibid., 69-70.

\textsuperscript{107}Rawlings, 299.

\textsuperscript{108}Williams and Shaylor, Word, 60.
Jewel from the Revised Version” on 1 John 3:1 preached July 19, 1885, he states, “That the addition [‘and we are’] is correct I have not the slightest doubt. Those authorities upon which we depend – those manuscripts which are best worthy of notice – have these words; and they are to be found in the Vulgate, the Alexandrian, and several other versions. They ought never to have dropped out. In the judgment of the most learned, and those best to be relied on, these are veritable words of inspiration.”  

Additionally, Spurgeon was not afraid to use other translations. Robert L. Sumner notes, “Those familiar with his preaching and writing will attest to the fact that Spurgeon quoted every translation he could get his hands on, if it made the meaning of a text he was expounding clearer – even Roman Catholic translations!” Yet he did not desire to cause people to doubt the King James Version. In his Commenting & Commentaries, he pleads, “Do not needlessly amend our authorized version. It is faulty in many places, but still it is a grand work taking it for all in all, and it is unwise to be making every old lady distrust the only bible [sic] she can get at, or what is more likely, mistrust you for falling out with her cherished treasure. Correct where correction must be for truth’s sake, but never for the vainglorious display of your critical ability.”

Spurgeon was not the only great British preacher of his time; two more need to be mentioned here. Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910), the gifted expositor, in a sermon on Matt 25:8 states, “This is one of the many cases in which the Revised Version, by accuracy of rendering the tense of a verb, gives a much more striking as well as correct

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109 Price, 15.
110 Sumner, 15.
111 Ibid., 16.
reproduction of the original than the Authorized Version does.”\textsuperscript{112} Also, F. B. Meyer (1847-1929) writing about taking notes in one’s Bible advises, “After a while, we shall begin to make references for ourselves; and then we may use a copy of the Revised Bible; that we may not only be able to read God’s Word in the most approved English rendering, which is an immense advantage; but that we may also be able to fill up the empty margins with notes of parallel passages.”\textsuperscript{113} Thus, these three great Baptist preachers of England did not believe in one particular preserved English translation.

This same sentiment is seen in some of the great Southern Baptist preachers and scholars in America of the time. John A. Broadus is well known among Southern Baptists. In his commentary on Matthew he says he was “fully persuaded” that the Revised Version was “almost uniformly superior . . . and often greatly superior” to the King James. And in his widely-used \textit{On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons}, he warns, “The preacher should be very careful not to use any text without first consulting the Revised Version.”\textsuperscript{114} Another famous Southern Baptist, B. H. Carroll writes,

We do not try to make a new standard, but try to get back to the original text as nearly as possible, and in that way instead of the deviations increasing as the years roll by, the variations are diminishing. There are less now than there used to be, and if we were to make another translation, say forty years hence, that translation would be nearer the original than the American Standard translation, which we are now using, and of course very much nearer than the King James translation.\textsuperscript{115}

Then there is the great Southern Baptist Greek scholar A. T. Robertson. In his widely-used \textit{Word Pictures in the New Testament}, he employed the English Revised Version as

\textsuperscript{112}Williams and Shaylor, \textit{Word}, 66.

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., 68.

\textsuperscript{114}Sumner, 23.

\textsuperscript{115}Williams and Shaylor, \textit{Word}, 7.
his basic text believing that it more closely reflected the original Greek and Hebrew than the Authorized Version.\textsuperscript{116} Thus, the Southern Baptists at the time of the Revised Version did not consider any one translation to be the perfectly preserved Word of God. This view has not changed. When the New King James Version was being prepared, the Southern Baptist pastors W. A. Criswell and Adrian Rogers both sat on the North American Overview Committee.

But what of Independent Baptists, did they traditionally hold to a perfectly preserved English translation? One of the leading Fundamentalist Baptists of the twentieth century was Dr. John R. Rice. He fellowshipped with some of the greatest and most respected preachers of his time, and his weekly paper, \textit{The Sword of the LORD}, was a source of strength and encouragement to a multitude of independent Baptists. Rice frequently quoted from the American Standard Version in his paper and in his books. In his 1962 book \textit{Dr. Rice, Here is My Question} he writes:

\begin{quote}
The American Standard Version, translated in 1901, is perhaps the most accurate of all versions. It does not take the place of the King James Version, but in many places it has genuine help. Of course, there are some mistakes, but many of the scholars who prepared it were devout Christians and believers. It takes advantage of the three great manuscripts – the Sinaiticus, the Vatican, and the Alexandrian manuscripts – which were not available when the King James Version was translated. However, they do not make any great changes.\textsuperscript{117}
\end{quote}

Then in 1969, he published his large book \textit{Our God-Breathed Book – The Bible}. In his chapter “God Preserves His Eternal Word,” Rice has a sub-heading “All Translations Together Are the Word of God” in which he writes, “Just so God’s eternal Word is, in small part, hidden under a word miscopied here, a biased translation there. Actually no
translation can perfectly, wholly reveal the Word of God.”\textsuperscript{118} Elsewhere in the same chapter he notes, “You see, then, that God is determined His Word shall be known and He has wonderfully preserved it, though sometimes it be not all in one translation, nor in one copy, not in the preaching of one preacher.”\textsuperscript{119} Later, in the chapter “Bible Translations, Principles and Comments” he writes, “When we speak of a flaw in this translation or that, we should remember that the flaws are so few in any criticized translation as to be a minor and almost insignificant part of the whole.”\textsuperscript{120} He is also clear that, “Whatever their faults, all translations have the very Word of God.”\textsuperscript{121} He then writes, “So the translations are the Word of God, and our serious effort to have good translations and a proper opposition to liberal bias to translations and irresponsible paraphrases should not keep us from rejoicing that in any translation we know we can find Christ and salvation, can know the will of God and be comforted by His promises.”\textsuperscript{122} He declares, “A preacher should refer, when necessary, to other versions, as I do many times.”\textsuperscript{123} Concerning the American Standard Version he writes, “It corrects some mistakes in the King James Version.”\textsuperscript{124} But this was not Dr. Rice’s last word on Bible translations. In 1975 he published a book entitled \textit{I Am a Fundamentalist}, in which he states under the heading “Some Nuts We Have Known”:

\textsuperscript{118}Rice, \textit{God-Breathed}, 70.
\textsuperscript{119}Ibid, 373.
\textsuperscript{120}Ibid., 376
\textsuperscript{121}Ibid., 377.
\textsuperscript{122}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123}Ibid., 380.
\textsuperscript{124}Ibid., 382.
If I say that the American Standard Version of the Bible is a good version (though we prefer the King James Version), I get letters from ardent extremists saying that the King James Version, even the translation, is perfectly done, without error; that in his preference for certain Greek manuscripts, Origen perverted the Scriptures, that Westcott and Hort, perhaps the leading scholars who agreed on the Greek manuscripts from which was translated the American Standard Version, were deliberate deceivers. They strain at gnats and swallow camels.\textsuperscript{125}

Therefore, it is very certain that this leader among independent Baptists held that all translations were God’s Word, that no one particular translation was the perfectly preserved Scripture, and that those who taught otherwise were “nuts.”

Was Dr. Rice alone among independent Baptists in his views on translations? Let others speak. Richard V. Clearwaters was the first president of Pillsbury Baptist Bible College and founder of the Central Baptist Theological Seminary in 1956. He declares, “Honesty compels us to cite the 1901 American Revised as the best English Version of the original languages which places us in a position 290 years ahead of those who are still weighing the King James of 1611 for demerits.” He then goes on to state, “We know of no Fundamentalist . . . that claims the King James as the best English translation. Those in the main stream of Fundamentalism all claim the American Revised of 1901 as the best English translation.”\textsuperscript{126} Indeed, it has been pointed out that before the 1950s no Bible school restricted believers to only one version of the Bible.\textsuperscript{127}

How did the Baptist Bible Fellowship International originally stand on Bible versions? One of the founders of the movement was Noel Smith, professor at Baptist Bible College and the Baptist Bible Tribune’s founding editor from 1950 until his death.

\textsuperscript{125}John R. Rice, \textit{I Am a Fundamentalist} (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1975), 70.

\textsuperscript{126}Williams and Shaylor, \textit{Word}, 20.

\textsuperscript{127}Robert A. Joyner, \textit{King James Only?} (Newport, NC: n.p., 1999), 35.
in 1974. It is well known that Smith felt that the American Standard Version was the best English translation. In a Tribune article entitled “Translations of Our English Bible” published on December 13, 1968, Smith writes, “The truth is, the English Revised and American Standard versions are generally conceded to be, even by some National Council of Churches scholars, the most exact translation of the Hebrew and Greek that has ever been made.”

But you don’t have to go from one extreme to another. You don’t have to follow the fanatics. You have the King James Version, the American Standard Version, and the New Scofield Reference Bible. You don’t have to discard your King James. You have all three (and of course, again, The New Scofield reference Bible is printed in the King James text). You can keep on using your King James Version, as I do. But you should have the American Standard Version, if you are a real student and an authentic and accurate expositor of the Word of God. You should use the American Standard Version as a commentary on the King James Version.

As a professor at Baptist Bible College and as the editor of the Tribune, Smith was in a key position to express the historic position of independent Baptists and to shape the thinking of future generations of Baptist leaders. There is no record that he was ever taken to task by the other founding leaders of the Fellowship about his position on Bible translations or even that they were at variance with him at the time. Indeed, in a 1989 interview, Dr. Wendell Zimmerman (a respected figure within the BBFI since its formation) was asked if in the early days of the Fellowship and even before, if someone referred to a reading in other versions such as the American Standard Version would they have been condemned for doing it. He answered, “No, I don’t think so. I attended Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and had professors who used the RV and the American.

\[128\] Norma Gillming, 434.

\[129\] Ibid.
In the early days of our Fellowship, one of the most respected men we had was Noel Smith, and he used the Revised Version. I never heard any criticism of Noel or any statement that he was a ‘heretic’ for so doing."\(^{130}\) Also, Doug Kutilek does an excellent job in his book *J. Frank Norris and His Heirs* showing that during his student days at BBC in the early 1970s the textbooks used quoted approvingly from other translations with no correcting comments by teachers and that no *Textus Receptus* edition of the Greek New Testament was used in Greek classes.\(^ {131}\) Apparently there was no issue about one particular translation being considered the Word of God. Furthermore, during the presidency of G. B. Vick, the Baptist Bible College bookstore sold the American Standard Version, the New American Standard Version, the Williams New Testament, and the New Scofield Bible. Later, BBFI pastor (and still later BBC president) A. V. Henderson was part of the North American Overview Committee of the NKJV along with fellow BBFI pastors Truman Dollar and Jerry Falwell. Thus, for much of its history the Baptist Bible Fellowship has been composed of pastors who while respecting the KJV did not see it as the only preserved text of the Bible.

What then has been the consistent understanding of Bible believers concerning the preservation of Scripture? The history of those involved in compiling Greek texts and producing English Bible translations points out the fact that they never believed that they had produced a copy of a perfectly preserved Greek text or English translation, and the quotations of Bible believing Christians of various denominations agree with them.


\(^{131}\)Doug Kutilek, *J. Frank Norris and His Heirs: The Bible Translation Controversy* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1999), 46-64.
Finally, the quotations from Baptists in Great Britain, Southern Baptists, and independent Baptists all show that the generally held belief of Baptists has been that God’s preservation of His Word is not limited to one individual translation or even one particular text. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the Church has consistently understood that God has preserved His Word in reliable copies which were then translated into dependable translations rather than in one perfectly preserved text or translation.

A Reoccurring Problem

Despite the Church’s consistent understanding of Bible preservation, it must be admitted that at least twice in Christian history believers became so enamored with their favorite translation that they made the claim that it should be used exclusively. When Jerome produced a fresh translation of the Old Testament in Latin during the fifth century he faced strong opposition. At the time the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint was commonly used by Christians and thought by some to be an inspired translation. But Jerome had not translated his Latin version from the Greek but the original Hebrew, which meant that it varied in content and style from the Septuagint. When his translation reached North Africa, it caused a stir among the churches overseen by Augustine, the bishop of Hippo. Augustine wrote a letter to Jerome in A.D. 405 explaining why he objected to his translation. Basically he objected not because of inaccuracy but because of unfamiliarity. The Christians at Carthage were taking the Septuagint as the standard and comparing Jerome’s translation to that standard rather than the original language.\(^\text{132}\)

Ironically, over a thousand years later Jerome’s text, which became known as the Vulgate, became the established text in Europe. By the early sixteenth century it held in the minds of most Christians the same position the Septuagint had held a millennium before. It was at this time that Erasmus printed his *Novum Instrumentum* ("The New Instrument") in which the Greek text of the New Testament was printed in one column, while his own fresh, new Latin translation was found in another. He had dared to change Jerome! What was once new had become traditional. For this crime Erasmus was accused of altering God’s Word.\textsuperscript{133}

Thus, it is evident that while the Church has consistently understood that one must look beyond one particular translation or even text to see the preserved Scripture, there have been times when a particular translation has become so dear that it has been held up by many as basically being the preserved Bible. Yet, looking back upon these times it is quite evident that those who held this position were wrong. Both the Septuagint and the Vulgate contained numerous mistakes and were not perfectly preserved by God. For a season, tradition had overcome biblical teaching, but happily in both of these instances, the error was overcome and beneficial new translations occurred. Sadly this same reoccurring problem has arisen in the Christian world today.

**A New Teaching**

In the twentieth century a new teaching rose on the scene of the English speaking world. This teaching was a variation of the past problem of tradition and familiarity which had been dealt with before. The new teaching contended that the King James Version of the Bible was God’s perfectly preserved Word for those who spoke English.

\textsuperscript{133}Ibid., 13-7.
Behind this belief was the thought that God had preserved the New Testament perfectly in the Textus Receptus and the Old Testament perfectly in the Masoretic text. Admittedly the seeds of this had been planted earlier when some believers developed such a reverence for the KJV that they began to consider it a perfect work,\textsuperscript{134} but it was not until the development of a number of new translations based upon the Critical Text that the King James Only (KJO) movement began to develop in the twentieth century.

The KJV had reigned supreme until the release of the RV in England in 1885 and the ASV in America in 1901. As has been noted earlier, not everyone was satisfied that the Greek text of Westcott and Hort was the best. Voices were raised in protest by able scholars of the time such as John William Burgon, F. H. A. Scrivener, and H. C. Hoskier. Yet all of these men saw a need to revise the KJV and even the Textus Receptus. They based their arguments upon what they considered the better underlying Greek text, not upon the perfect preservation of the KJV or even the Greek text itself. They recognized that there were errors in the KJV and were not opposed to new translations of God’s Word. Even though these men stood against the RV, they can not be considered part of the KJO movement.

The modern KJO movement, which essentially teaches that the KJV is the perfectly preserved Bible which God inspired, appears to have had its beginning with the release of the book Our Authorized Bible Vindicated by Benjamin G. Wilkinson in 1930. Dr. Wilkinson (1872-1968) was the Dean of Theology at Washington Missionary College in Takoma Park of the District of Columbia. He was a Seventh-Day Adventist who held to a KJO position, insisting that the RV and the ASV were nothing but Roman Catholic

\textsuperscript{134}Beacham and Bauder, 42-3.
translations masquerading as Protestant Bibles. He seems to have begun the practice of demonizing Westcott and Hort, the two Anglicans who introduced the Critical Text used by the revision committee of the RV. In his chapter “Westcott and Hort” he accuses them of higher criticism, Mariolatry, ritualism, anti-Protestantism, anti-Anglicanism, anti-Methodism, anti-Americanism, and of holding the Papal view of the atonement. It should be noted that just because Wilkinson was Seventh-Day Adventist does not disqualify his material from consideration. If what he wrote was accurate it should be given credulity. The problem is not with his background but with his facts. He mistakenly asserts that the Old Latin version, instead of the Vulgate, was the Bible of the medieval Waldensians and that the Old Latin corresponds textually with the Greek Textus Receptus, both of which assertions are demonstrably false. He also mistakenly claims, “The translators of the King James, moreover, had something beyond great scholarship and unusual skill. They had gone through a period of great suffering. They had offered their lives that the truths which they loved might live.” He then gives no proof of this but speaks of the sufferings of Tyndale. While it is certainly true that Tyndale had suffered for his translation efforts and eventually gave his life for them, it is not true that the translators of the KJV suffered for their efforts. On the contrary, all forty-seven of these translators died a natural death. In fact none of them suffered imprisonment or punishment of any kind for their involvement in revising the Scriptures

135 Rawlings, 176.
137 Beacham and Bauder, 44.
since it was a project authorized by the king. Indeed, most of these men received compensation from the government in the form of money or ecclesiastical preferment. Seven were made bishops, and ten more received prebends, benefices, and other emoluments and rewards.\textsuperscript{139} He also states that the Puritans carried the KJV with them when they landed at Plymouth in 1620.\textsuperscript{140} The truth of the matter is that the Pilgrims carried the Geneva Bible with them because of their dislike for the KJV. As Rawlings explains:

\begin{quote}
The first English Bible brought to America by Pilgrims on the Mayflower of 1620, was a Geneva Bible. At the Hampton Court conference in 1604, King James I demanded that all dissenters conform to the Church of England; those who refused to do so, he would “harry out of the land.” The Pilgrims who came to the new world were Puritan separatists who declined to conform to the Church of England. They were willing to brave a treacherous ocean and an uncharted wilderness to find a place of refuge where religious liberty could flourish. Not surprisingly, they did not think too kindly of King James, so the Bible they brought to America was the Geneva Bible, the Bible favored by the Puritans, not the Bible that bore the name of the king that forced them to leave their homeland in the first place.\textsuperscript{141}
\end{quote}

Furthermore, although his being a Seventh-Day Adventist does not necessarily make his thesis wrong, it must be recognized that his background does seem to have influenced his opposition of the RV. Doug Kutilek notes, “Apparently, one of the reasons for his strong dislike of the English Revised Version was that it robbed him of several favorite Adventist proof texts. For example, in Acts 13:42 a change in the Greek text deprived Wilkinson of evidence that Gentiles observed the Sabbath, and in Hebrews 9:27 a translation more literal than the KJV took away a proof text for soul sleep.”\textsuperscript{142} It should

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\textsuperscript{139}Rawlings, 176-7.

\textsuperscript{140}Wilkinson, 256.

\textsuperscript{141}Rawlings, 135.

\textsuperscript{142}Beacham and Bauder, 44.
also be noted that Wilkinson never went as far in his statements as later KJO advocates did. He never claimed that the KJV was inspired or perfectly preserved. He writes, “The original Scriptures were written by direct inspiration of God. This can hardly be said of any translation.”¹⁴³ Nor did he condemn efforts to translate the Bible. He writes, “Since the Reformation, the Received Text, both in Hebrew and in Greek, has spread abroad throughout the world. Wherever it is accurately translated, regardless of whatever the language may be, it is as truly the Word of God, as our own Authorized Bible.”¹⁴⁴ Nor did he forbid the use of modern versions but states that they “can be used as books of reference even if they cannot be put on a level with the Received Text.”¹⁴⁵ What he did do was claim that the KJV had been remarkably honored by God and claim that it was superior to the RV in both its underlying Greek text and its translation.

Wilkinson’s work did not receive much attention and would probably have been forgotten had it not been noticed twenty-five years later by James Jasper Ray, a Baptist teacher in the Pacific Northwest. In the meantime the Revised Standard Version was published in 1952. Authorized by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., this translation is undoubtedly one of the most controversial versions of the Bible ever printed. Because of its liberal slant, it was condemned by conservative Bible scholars and preachers across the nation. Perhaps motivated by this new translation, apparently not recognizing the large amount of misinformation which Wilkinson’s book contained, and believing what he read, Ray published the book God Wrote Only One

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 257.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.
Bible in 1955 depending heavily and copying extensively from Wilkinson’s work. For Ray the acid test was what Greek Text a version was translated from. He writes, “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.” Ray also seems to be the first to suggest that no one can be saved through the use of a Bible based on any other text than the Textus Receptus, yet he did not claim perfection for the KJV but admitted that it does contain errors and needs revision.147

The next person of note to follow the line of Wilkinson’s reasoning was David Otis Fuller (1903-1988), a long-time Regular Baptist pastor in Michigan. He was greatly influenced by both Wilkinson and Ray. In 1970 Fuller published the book Which Bible? in which he repeatedly mentions Ray and his book, and in which he reproduces ten of Wilkinson’s sixteen chapters. It is of note that Fuller seems to have wanted to hide Wilkinson’s Seventh-Day Adventist background. He refers to him only as one who “taught for many years in a small and obscure Eastern college”148 and does not disclose that this was an Adventist school. Further, any footnotes which might reveal the background of the author were deleted. For example, on page 42 of his book Wilkinson quotes from E. G. White’s Great Controversy. Fuller reproduces the quote on page 215 of his work with the quotation marks but leaves out the footnote. Clearly he knew Wilkinson’s background and recognized his source but felt that it might hinder his cause.


147 Beacham and Bauder, 45.

Such dishonesty is regrettable. If a writer’s facts are correct his background does not matter. It is the reliability of the material presented which is important. To hide a source’s identity is unfortunate and hurtful. Fuller did recognize some of Wilkinson’s mistakes and attempted to correct them. Kutilek writes:

Fuller did attempt, via footnotes, to correct some of Wilkinson’s grosser errors, but by no means did he correct all of the errors of the material he printed. Fuller praised Wilkinson as a great scholar and a reliable author in spite of the gross blunders that Fuller himself had discovered in the book. Fuller never informed the reader that the text had been edited, or that some of the footnotes were his own and not Wilkinson’s.¹⁴⁹

While Part 2 of Fuller’s book was a selected reproduction of Wilkinson’s work, Part 1 was made of eleven short chapters by Fuller and others. One of the more excellent chapters is by Robert Dick Wilson which is preceded by a chapter about Wilson. Wilson deals with higher-criticism and the material is excellently done. But the material has nothing to do with the translation question. Another chapter concerns John William Burgon, yet it has already been demonstrated that Burgon was not a KJO advocate. Furthermore, in one of the chapters while considering the RV, Sir Robert Anderson writes, “If the Revisers had kept to the terms of their commission, and been content with the correction of ‘manifest errors,’ a very few sessions would have sufficed to produce a text which might have commanded universal acceptance.”¹⁵⁰ Thus, it is clear that even though Anderson did not have high regards for the RV, he still saw no problem with revising the KJV. In another chapter Alfred Martin admits, “One cannot say that the Textus Receptus, for example, is verbally inspired. It contains many plain and clear

¹⁴⁹Beacham and Bauder, 46.

¹⁵⁰Fuller, 121.
errors, as all schools of textual critics agree.”¹⁵¹ Thus these chapters are strong on
promoting the writers’ preference for the KJV and the Textus Receptus but do not claim
that either is perfectly preserved.

Yet another author who came under the influence of James Ray is Peter S.
Ruckman, a pastor from Pensacola, Florida. Ruckman’s name has become synonymous
with the KJO movement. His first book, The Bible “Babel” (1964), became a
springboard that catapulted him to a KJO leadership role, a position he revels in to this
day.¹⁵² He is known for his caustic and abusive remarks concerning those he disagrees
with, as well as his denouncing conservative Bible scholars. Kutilek notes, “He is also
the most singularly inaccurate writer in the fray, neither presenting the truth nor
apparently caring enough to discover the truth.”¹⁵³ Possibly because of all of the above,
even many KJO advocates attempt to distance themselves from him. The Bible “Babel”
shows unmistakable dependence upon James Ray’s book. In a published review, Zane
Hodges (who had a chapter included in Fuller’s Which Bible?), warned the reader, “So
distorted indeed is so much of the material presented that any reader would be well-
advised to trust nothing which he cannot verify.”¹⁵⁴ Referring to him as “a colorful
personality, known more for sensationalism than accuracy,” Harold Rawlings points out
that he has led his followers astray on a number of different issues.¹⁵⁵ To begin with he
claims that the Septuagint did not exist until one hundred years after the death and

¹⁵¹Ibid., 149.
¹⁵²Rawlings, 181.
¹⁵³Beacham and Bauder, 47.
¹⁵⁴Ibid.
¹⁵⁵Rawlings, 181.
resurrection of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{156} Second, he states that it was “the second edition of the AV 1611 which drops the Apocrypha out altogether, not even including it in the space between the Testaments.”\textsuperscript{157} This is blatantly false. Third, he holds that any Greek text that differs with the KJV is not the original.\textsuperscript{158} In a chapter of his Handbook of Manuscript Evidence entitled “Correcting the Greek with the English,” he writes that the KJV text is superior to the Greek text of Westcott and Hort,\textsuperscript{159} and goes on to make such statements as: “The AV 1611 reading, here [John 4:24], is superior to any Greek text,”\textsuperscript{160} “Again, the AV 1611 is necessary to recover the original text and straighten out the corrupt Greek;”\textsuperscript{161} “The AV 1611 text is to be preferred over any Greek text, as it tells the truth of the matter . . . Notice how the English text corrects the errors in the Greek text;”\textsuperscript{162} and “The AV 1611 text is correct; the Greek texts are wrong.”\textsuperscript{163} Further, in the appendix to this same book he declares, “Where any version or text contradicts the A.V. 1611, THROW IT OUT.”\textsuperscript{164} Fourth, he claims that “all Bibles printed since 1880 (with the possible exception of Young’s) are Roman Catholic Bibles, or even less ‘Christian’ than Roman Catholic Bibles.”\textsuperscript{165} Additionally, Kutilek points out that Ruckman falsely

\textsuperscript{156}Peter S. Ruckman, Manuscript Evidence (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1970), 43.

\textsuperscript{157}Ibid., 142.

\textsuperscript{158}Ibid., 152.

\textsuperscript{159}Ibid., 128.

\textsuperscript{160}Ibid., 131.

\textsuperscript{161}Ibid., 133.

\textsuperscript{162}Ibid., 137.

\textsuperscript{163}Ibid., 138.

\textsuperscript{164}Ibid., 189.

\textsuperscript{165}Ibid., 176.
claims that no Protestant scholar has ever seen the Codex Vaticanus, claims that the KJV has genuine advanced revelations containing information not found in the original Scriptures, mistakenly asserts that Luther’s German Bible contained 1 John 5:7, and was the person who first claimed that the KJV has won more souls than the original manuscripts. Rawlings points out that while Ruckman may be the first ever to claim “inspiration” and inerrancy for the KJV, that it corrects errors in the Greek text, and contains advanced revelation; certain of his over-zealous disciples have gone beyond their mentor and advanced the notion that the KJV was re-inspired in A.D. 1611. Thus, the history of the KJO movement continues to add new beliefs.

One of the most influential current KJO writers is Gail Riplinger. Her first book on the subject, New Age Bible Versions, was published in 1993. The perspective of the book is plainly laid out in the material printed on the back cover, in which it is claimed the book objectively and methodically documents the hidden alliance between new versions and the New Age Movement’s One Word religion and how new versions will prepare the apostate churches of these last days to accept the religion of the Antichrist. James White notes, “The text of the nearly seven-hundred-page book carries the same kind of temperament throughout. No chance is missed to insult and attack men both living and dead, as long as they had something to do with ‘modern versions.’” Even this is enough to show that Riplinger has taken the KJO movement to the next step. She does not just state her reasons for preferring one Greek text type over another or one

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166 Beacham and Bauder, 48.
167 Rawlings, 182.
168 White, 96-7.
169 Ibid., 97.
translation over the rest, nor does she stop at holding the KJV as the preserved Word of God; she declares that every modern version is Satanic and New Age, that false Christianity is a direct result of modern translations, and that these translations are preparing the way for Antichrist. A long distance has been traveled since the reasoned protests of Burgon. Since Miss Riplinger claims lofty academic credentials, one would therefore imagine that she would know how to do effective research and properly present the intentions of the people she quotes. One would also assume that she would understand how to properly footnote material and honestly present comments. Such is not the case. White notes, “New Age Bible Versions contains a plethora of out-of-context citations and edited quotations, frequently misrepresenting the positions of authors it attacks.” The same is true of quotations of biblical verses from modern translations in which Riplinger misrepresents verses. Furthermore, quotations of individuals are taken out of context in such a manner as to misrepresent what is being said. In a 1996 book review of this work in The Baptist Preacher entitled “How NOT to Defend the King James Version,” Ron Minton states that Riplinger’s book is full of inaccurate details, many untrue statements, and misleading claims. He writes, “The book is so full of inaccurate details that no Baptist should trust it. On the first page of Chapter One, she quotes her first Bible verse, Luke 4:8 from the KJV, and makes two


171 White, 97.

172 Ibid., 98.

173 Ibid., 103.

He goes on to show that such inaccuracies are not limited to misquoted Scriptures. He further points out that on page 94 Riplinger implies that she knows Greek and Hebrew, yet later admitted in a debate that she did not know Greek. Concerning misleading claims, he points out that on page 511 of the book’s 4th edition, she says, “even the italics in the KJV are being vindicated by recent discoveries.” Minton writes, “Anyone who knows the history of the KJV knows that the 1611 KJV use of italics was one if its weakest areas. The four revisions (1628, 1939, 1762, 1769) corrected hundreds of these.” No wonder Minton believes that Riplinger “has not only failed to achieve her purpose, she has given a black mark on any one of us who ever tries to honestly defend the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) or the Textus Receptus.” Sadly, though her work is full of misrepresentation, most of her readers have no idea that they are being misled. They accept what they are being told as the truth and become angry at individuals and versions for reasons which are not based in fact. Before moving on, two interesting points should be made. For some reason Riplinger does not capitalize the word “Bible.” Although she capitalizes books of the Bible, and “Old Testament” and “New Testament,” she likes to write “bible” with a small “b.” Also, her explanation as to why she gave her name as G. A. Riplinger on her first book rather than Gail Riplinger is interesting. She claims:

Daily during the six years needed for this investigation, the Lord miraculously brought the needed materials and resources – much like the ravens fed Elijah.

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175 Ibid., 20.
176 Ibid.
177 Ibid., 21.
178 Ibid., 20.
Each discovery was not the result of effort on my part, but of the directed hand of God – so much so that I hesitated to even put my name on the book. Consequently, I used G. A. Riplinger, which signifies to me, God and Riplinger – God as author and Riplinger as secretary.\textsuperscript{179}

With that point of view, how can one question her on comments she has placed in her book?

Another name that must be considered is that of Edward F. Hills (1912-1981). Hills’ words are often quoted by those involved in the modern KJO movement. He taught that the \textit{Textus Receptus}, as followed by the KJV, contained the precise form of the preserved Word of God. Hills’ writings are well thought out and scholarly with his lines of reasoning being neither insulting nor condescending. He recognizes a pre-Christian date for the Septuagint and admits that numerous readings in the \textit{Textus Receptus} were inserted by Erasmus solely on the authority of the Latin Vulgate. Yet it appears that Hills entered his study with his mind already made up that the Greek text of the \textit{Textus Receptus} was the preserved Word of God. That being true, he did not hesitate to utilize that conclusion in his reasoning on the subject and the conclusions which he drew. Indeed, Hills emphasizes what he terms “the logic of faith,” which is that just as God providentially preserved the Old Testament by the Aaronic priesthood, He providentially preserved the New Testament through the priesthood of believers and it eventually became the \textit{Textus Receptus}. Hills writes, “If we believe that the New Testament Scriptures are the infallible inspired Word of God, then it is logical for us to believe that God has preserved this written Word by His special providence in the usage of His Church through the universal priesthood of believers. It is logical also to believe that soon after the invention of printing this written Word was placed in print and became

\textsuperscript{179}White, 179.
the Textus Receptus, being immediately received by believers everywhere and made the basis of faithful translations such as the King James Version.” Thus, Hills goes beyond holding that the New Testament is preserved in the Majority Text and claims that it can be found in Textus Receptus itself. He explains in more detail:

Some believing Bible students are prepared to defend the Traditional text found in the vast majority of the Greek manuscripts but decline to do the same for the printed Textus Receptus, not wishing to be thought unscholarly. But this attitude is altogether illogical. For if we believe that the special providence of God preserved the New Testament before the invention of printing, then we must believe that this same special providence was operative after the invention of printing and is in effect today. Otherwise we would have to conclude that this special providence ceased as soon as Erasmus began to work on his first edition of the Textus Receptus. And if we should suppose this, we would have no reason for maintaining that this special providence was active during the manuscript period either. For why would God watch over the New Testament text at one time and not at another time? We must believe, therefore, that God’s special providential preservation of the New Testament text was operative after the invention of printing as well as before it and that the New Testament text has been providentially preserved in the Textus Receptus.

This is why Doug Kutilek notes, “In reality, Hill’s view is not one of Divine preservation, but rather one of Divine restoration, since he frankly admits that a number of readings in the Textus Receptus are not found in Greek manuscripts but were ostensibly lost in antiquity, only to be restored to the Greek text on the basis of the Latin Vulgate at the time of the Reformation.” Yet Hills cannot prove that God utilized this process, and thus holds that this logic must be accepted by faith. After describing in the above quotation his logic as to how the New Testament was preserved, he then states, “Our approach to the Textus Receptus must ever be one of faith, for faith has always

181 Ibid., 35-6.
182 Beacham and Bauder, 49.
been the decisive factor in its history.” Thus, Hills sees logic combined with faith to become “the logic of faith.” But not only does Hills consider the Textus Receptus as the preserved Word of God, he also considers certain translations as the providentially approved version for their time. Thus, he holds that “the Apostles recognized the Septuagint as the providentially approved translation of the Old Testament into Greek.” Further, he writes, “Hence, in spite of its errors, it is not too much to say that the Latin Vulgate was the providentially appointed Bible version for Christians of Western Europe during the medieval period.” Since this is true, he concludes that “much more is the King James Version the providentially appointed Bible for English-speaking Christians today.” Indeed, recognizing that the translators of the KJV relied not only upon the later editions of Beza’s Greek New Testament but also consulted the editions of Erasmus and Stephanus and the Complutensian Polyglot, he concludes, “Hence the King James Version ought to be regarded not merely as a translation of the Textus Receptus but also as an independent variety of the Textus Receptus.” But this does not mean that Hills felt that the KJV could never be replaced. He just felt that such a time has not arrived. He writes, “Therefore, since the King James Version is the providentially appointed English Bible, we ought to use it until, in the providence of God, a new English Bible clearly becomes necessary. This, as we shall show, is not yet the case and may never be the case, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh (Jas. 5:8).”

183Hills, 36.
184Ibid., 82.
185Ibid.
186Ibid.
187Ibid., 83.
Nor did Hills hold that the KJV was perfectly preserved from errors. He writes,

“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. Its errors are very few and minor.”\(^\text{188}\) Therefore, it can be seen that Hills contended not for an inerrantly preserved KJV but for a providentially preserved Textus Receptus.

The impact of the KJO movement can be seen as one looks at the current situation in fundamental Bible circles. In educational circles conflict broke out between two great Christian universities in the 1990s when Pensacola Christian University sent out a number of videotapes claiming that the New Testament was preserved in the Traditional Text and the KJV. The central thesis of these videos was that textual criticism is the leaven of Liberalism in Fundamentalism. Institutions of education which used other Greek texts than the Textus Receptus and other translations than the KJV were accused of yielding to liberalism. In particular Bob Jones University was represented as the major agent in the spread of this leaven in Fundamentalism. As Rawlings notes:

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\text{Known for years as the bastion of fundamentalism among Christian colleges, BJU was charged with yielding to liberalism by their use of the Westcott & Hort text in Greek classes; accepting the viewpoint of B. B. Warfield that only the original manuscripts are without error; and refusing to alter their long-standing Statement of Faith to reflect a more rigid KJVO perspective. Interestingly, Bob Jones has not modified its belief in the inspiration and preservation of Scripture or restructured any doctrinal stance since I was a student there in the 1950s. Suddenly, however, they have become the left-leaning, compromising, pseudo-fundamentalists. For years Pensacola championed the same views on textual issues and the KJVO controversy as Bob Jones.}\(^\text{189}\)
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Thus, the issue has brought a rift between two great universities and their supporters.

\(^{188}\)Ibid.

\(^{189}\)Rawlings, 195-6.
The impact of the KJO movement can be seen as one looks at the changes which have occurred in fundamentalist magazines. One of the greatest and most well-known fundamentalist publications is The Sword of the LORD founded by Dr. John R. Rice. It has already been noted that although Dr. Rice greatly loved the KJV, he was certainly not an advocate of the KJO movement. Yet since Dr. Rice’s death The Sword has increasingly moved into the KJO camp. Speakers at national Sword Conferences have derided other translations and pointed to the KJV as the only Bible for the English speaking world. It has gotten to the point that some have wondered if Dr. Rice would even be welcome at the organization which he founded. Thus, the issue has brought a rift between those who were readers of the paper when Dr. Rice was alive and those of today.

The impact of the KJO movement can also be seen as one looks at fellowships of pastors and churches such as the Baptist Bible Fellowship International. It has already been observed that when the BBFI was founded in 1950 the matter of Bible versions was not an issue. Noel Smith spoke of the superiority of the American Standard Version in both his classrooms and in The Baptist Bible Tribune, and the Baptist Bible College bookstore sold other translations of the Bible. But a shift began to appear after Smith’s death. In his final commencement address at Baptist Bible College (May 22, 1975), Dr. G. B. Vick said:

It’s become fashionable to use many different versions of the Bible today. In some quarters, it even becomes fashionable to question it and correct that Bible, that English Bible which has been the source of the greatest revivals that the earth has ever known. I refer to that English Bible that has been the basis of the preaching of the gospel and the winning of more souls than even the original manuscripts, because they didn’t last very long. I’m not a crank on this subject, but I still believe that we need to shun such expressions as, “we come across some word that does not appear in the original documents;” “this verse is not found in the oldest manuscripts,” “this could be more properly rendered as such and such.” We need to quit trying to improve the Bible. Listen! This King
James Version, the Bible of our fathers and mothers, is the one that has come floating down to us on the blood of Christian martyrs. It has been the one text of the Baptist Bible College, and it will be as long as I have anything to do with this school! Let’s stick to the old Book.\footnote{\textit{Randall, Vick}, 124.}

This was the first time that Dr. Vick had spoken out in such a way. There had never been any indication that he had disagreed with Noel Smith. If he had previously seen other translations as being a danger why had he not had them removed from the college bookstore? Also, Vick himself was known to explain words in a text he was preaching and give alternate renderings in explanation. Why Vick said what he did or where he might have gone on the issue will never be known because he went to be with his Savior later that same year. It is possible that he had been reading some of the material recently put into print by KJO advocates. Doug Kutilek writes:

What influenced Vick in this change at the very end of his life (he died the following September)? It seems likely that at least in part it was fellow Michigander, Grand Rapids pastor David Otis Fuller who had spoken at the 1971 Baptist Congress in Detroit, and whose book \textit{Which Bible}? has had influence far beyond its merits. As noted, some of Vick’s comments in the graduation address reflect the same point of view as parts of Fuller’s book, and I suspect that the reading of Fuller’s book was the chief influence in this regard.

Perhaps some influence came from Vick’s grandson Billy Vick Bartlett, a teacher at Baptist Bible College from 1966 to 1984, who during my time on the faculty at that college (1981-1983) was the only devoted adherent to the teachings of Peter Ruckman (the King James Version as an infallible English translation, etc) on the entire Bible faculty.

Possibly there was influence from one of Vick’s “preacher boys” from Temple [Temple Baptist of Detroit, Michigan where Vick pastored from 1936-1975] Jewell ( . . . ) Smith . . .

Perhaps it was the influence of Peter Ruckman directly. I have been told that Ruckman was something of a regular speaker at Temple while Vick was pastor, not to mention his speaking at BBC on several occasions in the 1950s and 1960s.\footnote{\textit{Kutilek}, 97-8.}
Whatever the reason, Vick’s final remarks on the topic were greatly at odds with his previous history on the issue. Change would continue within the Fellowship on the issue. Indeed, Doug Kutilek was told during his season as a professor at BBC (1981-1983) that under the then-current circumstances that Dr. Smith in fact could not teach at BBC if he were still living.\textsuperscript{192} After Vick’s death, BBC adopted the policy of recommending only the KJV to students, using it exclusively in classrooms, and employing only the Trinitarian Bible Society edition of the \textit{Textus Receptus}.\textsuperscript{193} Since Vick the BBFI has had times of turmoil regarding the KJO controversy as was seen in the first chapter of this work. Thus, the issue has brought a rift between those working for Christ within the same fellowship and has even caused some to depart from that fellowship. The same could be said of other fellowships.

In summary, the rise of the modern KJO movement had its beginnings before the release of the RV when the seed was planted in the minds of some who loved it so much that they began to think of it as being perfect. It was watered at the time of the RV by the writings of able Bible scholars who saw good reasons to protest the use of the new Critical Text of Westcott and Hort over the traditional Majority Text. Yet it did not truly begin to sprout until Wilkinson wrote his book condemning the RV and the ASV as Catholic frauds and claimed the KJV to be superior in both its underlying Greek text and its translation. It then began to grow with the release of Ray’s book which claimed that any version that does not agree with the Greek \textit{Textus Receptus} was founded upon corrupted manuscripts. It grew stronger with Fuller’s writings which popularized the

\textsuperscript{192}Kutilek, 111.

\textsuperscript{193}Ibid., 112.
teaching of Wilkinson and Ray and promoted the preference for the KJV and the Textus Receptus. It saw some of its greatest beauty with the writings of Hills who proposed a logic of faith for the Textus Receptus. Then the movement began to change as it matured with the appearance of Ruckman who taught that since the King James is the only Bible all others should be thrown out. Going beyond the previous teaching that the Textus Receptus was the best text, he claimed inspiration and inerrancy for the KJV itself and even said that it corrects errors in the Greek text and contains advanced revelation. From this others have advanced the notion that the KJV was re-inspired in A.D. 1611. The movement has since gone on to bear some bitter fruit with the inaccuracies and caustic remarks of Ruckman and the misrepresentations and mean-spirited attacks of Riplinger. The result has often been conflict and disunity among brothers in Christ and the splintering of churches and organizations.

**Concluding Thoughts on Preservation and the Bible Storm**

Before the troubled waters of the translation storm can be calmed among independent Baptists, they must fully understand the essential nature of Bible preservation. This chapter has proven that the Bible presupposes its own preservation and records God’s promise to preserve His Word in passages such as Matt 5:17-18, Matt 24:35, Isa 40:6-8, and 1 Pet 1:23-25. Yet it was also discovered that the Bible is absolutely silent as to the method God will utilize to preserve it. While God could have miraculously preserved His Word in the copying procedure, a study of the history of biblical preservation would lead to the conclusion that God preferred to preserve His Word providentially. It was then observed that while God chose to preserve His Word through an abundance of manuscript evidence, a difference of opinion exists as to
whether He did so in the oldest of the manuscripts, the majority of the manuscripts, the Textus Receptus, or in the totality of existing manuscripts. Next, this chapter noted that the historical position of Christianity in general and of Baptists is particular has been to consistently understand that God has preserved His Word in reliable copies which were then translated into dependable translations. It was also observed that despite this consistent understanding, there were times in Christian history when believers became so enamored with their favorite translation that they made claims that it should be used exclusively. This tendency was seen to have reemerged in the twentieth century in the modern KJO movement which has led to contentions among conservative believers.

In conclusion it should be observed that both sides of the Bible translation debate agree that the inspired Word of God has been preserved for believers today. Indeed, in the surveys taken by this writer of pastors in the Baptist Bible Fellowship every man surveyed stated that he both believed that God had promised to preserve the Bible and had preserved it. The results were the same on the surveys of the Iowa state pastors and the national State Representatives. Their position on the translation issue did not change their acceptance of the fundamental doctrine of biblical preservation. The only difference between them is how God has chosen to preserve His Word. One side believes that God preserved the Scriptures either in the totality of manuscripts, the majority of manuscripts, or perhaps in the oldest manuscripts; while the other side believes that God preserved the Bible in the Textus Receptus and in the King James Version in English. The issue is not the fact of preservation but the means of preservation.

194 Appendix 2.
If one chooses to believe that God decided to preserve His Word in a particular text type or in a particular translation which he holds in his hands, that is his Christian right. But should he not also have the Christian courtesy to allow his Baptist brother to believe that God preserved His Word in another manner, especially since God is silent in His Word on this topic and since it has been generally understood historically by believers that no one single translation or even Greek text perfectly represents God’s preserved Word? If he will simply do so, this will do a great deal in calming the translation storm.
CHAPTER 4

THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE AND THE TRANSLATION STORM

If independent Baptists are to calm the troubled waters stirred up by the Bible translation storm, they must fully understand the essential need of Bible translation. Obviously this entire debate focuses upon the Word of God as it is translated into the English language. The realization of this fact brings up a number of questions. Why was the Bible translated into English? What is the purpose of Bible translations? Why not just leave the Scriptures in their original languages? All of these questions deal with the essential need for Bible translation.

Simply defined, the essential need of Bible translation is the opportunity for the common individual to read the Word of God for himself in his native tongue. To put it another way, the basic necessity of Bible translation is to provide the Word of God in the native language of the reader so that he can comprehend it correctly. The wonderful truth of the matter is that God meant His Word for all people, not just the learned. Most people cannot read Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. If the Scriptures were left in the languages in which they were originally written, most of the world would never be able to read God’s Word for man. Yet God clearly meant for His Word to be read by the common individual. This is seen in two ways. First, it is seen in the languages in which God inspired the Scripture. Most of the Old Testament was written to the Jewish people and was recorded in their native tongue, Hebrew. Since God wanted all the Jews to read
His Word, He had it transcribed in their everyday language. If He had only wanted the learned scribes among them to read Scripture, He could have had it written in another language. Admittedly, some small portions of the Old Testament (the largest being Dan 2:4b-7:28) were written in Aramaic, the international language of the day. But when one considers those sections of the prophet Daniel, he discovers that they dealt with the God of the Bible’s superiority over the gods of the nations, His reigning over the affairs of man, and the destiny of the nations of the world. God had these sections written in the common language used by the Gentile nations of the Near East at the time so that they too could recognize His identity and His plan for humanity. When the student of Scripture comes to the New Testament, he discovers that it is written in Greek, the international language used by all the various nations of the Roman Empire. Not only that, it was also written in Koine (meaning “common”) Greek, which was the language used by everyday people as they went about their daily business, rather than in classical Greek which was the language of the scholars. Thus, the very choice of original languages employed shows that God’s purpose was that the common man should read His Word in his native tongue.

The second way this is evident is in the purposes of the Word of God. God means for His Word to be read (1 Tim 4:13; Rev 1:3), searched (John 5:39; Acts 17:11), studied (2 Tim 2:15), memorized (Ps 119:11), meditated upon (Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2), believed (Rom 10:14-17), and put into practice in daily life (Jas 2:22). How can a person do these unless he has the Scriptures in his own native language which he can read and understand? Obviously God planned for His Word to be translated into the common tongues of the nations of the world so that it could accomplish the purpose for which it was written.
This being true, since the Bible needs to be translated into other languages to give individuals around the world the opportunity to read the Word of God for themselves in their native tongue so that they can comprehend it correctly, a number of other questions arise. What does the Bible teach about this essential need of translation? Has history shown a response to the need for translation and does this need continue till this day? What methodology best meets this need for translation? Have Christians in general and Baptists in particular understood this essential need for Bible translation through the centuries? These are the issues which will be addressed in this present chapter.

**The Biblical Teaching on Translation**

What does the Bible itself say about the essential need for Bible translation? First, it should be recognized that the Bible nowhere commands its own translation into other languages. One cannot quote a single verse that states, “Thou shalt translate God’s Word into other tongues.” Rather, this need for translation is understood as the passing of time required that God’s people have the Scriptures in their currently spoken tongue and as the Word of God was taken to ethnic groups which spoke other languages.

As one turns the pages of Scripture, he discovers at least two instances when it became necessary to translate God’s Word into the currently spoken language of God’s people because they no longer could read the Scriptures in their original state for themselves. The first is found in the Old Testament in the Book of Nehemiah. When the walls of the city of Jerusalem had been rebuilt, the people gathered to hear the Word of God read by Ezra the scribe (Neh 8:1). The purpose was that the common people could “hear with understanding” (Neh 8:1). Interestingly, Neh 8:7 states that as Ezra read from the Scriptures, a group of men “caused the people to understand the law.” Then verse 8
states, “So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.” What exactly does this mean? Referring to the New International Version’s rendering “making it clear,” The Bible Knowledge Commentary notes that the Hebrew word paras means “to make distinct or interpret,” and possibly means here “to translate” from Hebrew to Aramaic.¹ Charles Ryrie agrees, writing, “The reading of the Law was interspersed with explanation; indeed, the Law was also translated from Hebrew into Aramaic, the only language some of the people may have understood (cf. 13:24).”² But why would this be required? Warren W. Wiersbe explains:

The word distinctly in verse 8 means that the Law was explained to the people in a language they could understand. The Word was translated and expounded in such a way that the people were able to apply it to their own lives. The Hebrew language would have undergone some changes since the days when Moses wrote the Pentateuch, and the everyday conversational Hebrew of the people would be different in some ways from ancient Hebrew. We need new translations of the Bible, not because the Bible changes, but because our language changes.³

Therefore, after the Israelites returned from captivity it was necessary to translate the Word of God from the original Hebrew to the slightly different language of Aramaic for some of the people because they no longer could understand the old Hebrew.

The second instance is found in the New Testament when most of the Jewish people read the Scriptures in the common Greek language of the day. In between the Old and New Testaments, Greek became the universal language of the Mediterranean world. What effect did that have upon the Jews? D. A. Carson points out that there is now a

¹Walvoord and Zuck, 1:689.

²Ryrie, Study Bible, 731.

powerful consensus that at least in Galilee, and perhaps elsewhere in first-century Palestine, the populace was at least bilingual, and in some cases trilingual. Aramaic was used for everyday speech, at least in the villages, while Hebrew may have been used for formal and cultic occasions. Just how many people could still speak Hebrew is uncertain. Yet Greek was common enough as an alternative language as is seen by the number of Greek coins and the amount of Greek inscriptions uncovered. Also, a working knowledge of Latin may have been attained by those whose work brought them into close relationship with the army.\textsuperscript{4} Because of this increased dependence upon the Greek language, especially by those Jews of the Dispersion, the time came when a Greek translation of the Old Testament began to be used by many of the people of God. Robert H. Gundry explains its origin:

According to early tradition, under Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.) seventy-two Jewish scholars began to translate the Hebrew Old Testament into a Greek version called the Septuagint. Translation of the Pentateuch came first, remaining sections of the Old Testament later. The work was done in Egypt, apparently for Jews who understood Greek better than Hebrew, and contrary to tradition, probably by Egyptian rather than Palestinian Jews. The Roman numeral LXX (seventy being the nearest round number to seventy-two) is the common symbol for this version of the Old Testament.\textsuperscript{5}

Since the New Testament was written in Greek, it should come as no surprise that the Septuagint forms the textual basis for most of its quotations from the Old Testament.\textsuperscript{6} Thus, the early Christians who could read Greek and not Hebrew adopted the Septuagint for their standard Old Testament text. Indeed, as time went on the Jewish people stopped


\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., 92.
using the Septuagint because of its broad acceptance and use among Christians.\textsuperscript{7} Again, it is evident that the changes brought about by time required the translation of the Word of God.

Not only does one find these historic occurrences of Bible translation based upon believers’ needs, but one also finds the need for translation implied in the outreach of the Gospel to the world. As evangelists and missionaries took the Good News of salvation further and further into the world, it became necessary to translate the Bible into their native tongues. History proves that this took place and the Scriptures imply that this would occur. When the Lord Jesus gave the Great Commission, He stated, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20a). How could individuals from all nations, or ethnic groups, understand the message of salvation unless it was spoken to them in a language they could understand? And then, when they received Christ as Savior, how were they to be taught Christ’s commands and grow in their faith unless the Word of God was given them in their own language? Thus, Christ’s very giving of the Great Commission implied that the Scriptures would need to be translated as time went by.

Therefore, although the Bible never commands that believers translate God’s Word into other languages, it is seen that even during the times when the Bible was being written there was already a need for translations. Also, it is seen that the Bible implies that this need will increase as the Gospel message spreads and non-Jewish and non-Greek

\textsuperscript{7}Comfort, \textit{Origin}, 169.
speaking groups come to a saving knowledge of Christ. Hence, the essential need for the translation of Scripture is biblical.

**The History of Translation**

The history of Bible translation shows the result of the essential need to render the Word of God into the native language of common individuals so that they can read it for themselves and comprehend it. Christians throughout Church history have recognized this need and have responded by translating the Bible into various tongues. This has required that the translator not only know the original languages of the Bible but the language into which the Scriptures were being translated. In some cases this even required the invention of a native alphabet and written language. Yet such difficulties did not stop those believers whom God had chosen to translate His Word so more people could read and understand it. Josh McDowell points out that most books are never translated into another tongue. Among those that are, most are published in just two or three languages. Far fewer books see translation figures rise into the teens. Yet the Bible has been translated into over 2,000 languages.\(^8\) The difference is the result of the essential need to provide God’s inspired Word to the people of the world. This need can be seen throughout history and today.

**A Need Seen throughout History**

As languages changed with time and as the Gospel spread throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, it became necessary to translate the Scriptures into the languages of more and more people. Bible students refer to a translation made directly from the

\(^8\)McDowell. 8.
original language as a primary translation, while a translation made from a translation of
the original is referred to as a secondary translation. Both have been seen throughout
history. It is not within the scope of this current work to present a thorough study of
Bible translations throughout history. Instead, the author wishes to merely perform a
brief survey of such translations in the early years of Christianity, during the Reformation
period, and in modern times to show the result of the essential need for translations.

**Ancient Translations**

Ancient translations of the Bible prove the essential need of allowing individuals
the opportunity to read Scripture for themselves in their own language so they can
comprehend it correctly. A number of examples from the first five centuries of the
Christian era demonstrate this. One early version is the Coptic Version of Egypt. During
the second century A.D. a new type of Egyptian language came into being. Known as
Coptic, it was the primary language of the native population who lived along the Nile
River and was a blending of the old Egyptian demotic alphabet and the Greek uncial
alphabet. Coptic script is composed of twenty-five Greek uncials and seven cursives
taken over from Egyptian writing to express sounds not in the Greek. The Bible was
translated into several dialects of Coptic beginning around A.D. 250. Coptic died out as a
spoken language about the sixteenth century, but it remains the ecclesiastical language of
the Copts, the Egyptian Christian minority.¹⁰

Another ancient translation is the Ethiopic Version. Ethiopia was the land south
of Egypt in Africa. It is thought that the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8:26-39 probably

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⁹Bruce, Books, 203.

¹⁰Miller, 249; Philip W. Comfort, *Essential Guide to Bible Versions* (Wheaton: Tyndale House
introduced Christianity there. Geisler and Nix write, “While there is no authoritative statement on the subject, the Old Testament appears to have been translated from the Greek into Ethiopian beginning in the fourth century A.D., with revisions made in light of the Hebrew text. This translation seems to have been completed by the seventh century, at which time the New Testament was translated.”¹¹ Dr. Harold L. Willmington states that this translation was a good verbal rendering of the Greek and was fluent, readable, and helpful.¹²

A third ancient translation is the Gothic Version of the mid-fourth century. The Goths were an ancient Teutonic race who lived north of the Danube River and west of the Black Sea. The first Goths to be evangelized were the Ostrogoths who lived on the lower Danube. It is believed that this began in the third century, and it is certain that it was before the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 since Theophilus, the bishop of the Goths, was in attendance. The Goths were extremely warlike people and during one of their raids into Asia Minor, they carried away a number of Christian captives. Among these captives a boy was born in A.D. 311 who was named Ulphilas (which means “little wolf”). At the age of twenty he was sent on an embassy to Constantinople, where he remained some ten years. There he doubtless studied Greek and Latin, and probably Hebrew. Already knowing Gothic, he had a strong desire to give the Gospel to the Goths, and he returned as a missionary and was made the second bishop of the Goths around 341 or 343. Known as the “Apostle of the Goths” he labored successfully among them for seven

¹¹Geisler and Nix, 323.

years until persecution became so strong that in about A.D. 349 he secured permission from the Roman Emperor to move a large band of his converts south across the Danube into the land now known as Bulgaria, but then as the Roman province of Moesia. There he labored for thirty-three more years and, around A.D. 350, translated the Bible into their language with the exception of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings which he was afraid might encourage their warlike tendencies.  

A fourth ancient translation is the Latin Vulgate from the end of the fourth century. Damasus, the Bishop of Rome, believed that a standard translation of the Bible was needed in Latin, which was the common language of the Western world. Thus, in A.D. 382 he appointed Jerome to revise the old edition of that Latin translation. For the next twenty-five years Jerome (Eusebius Sofronius Hieronymus) labored at this. He produced his edition of the four Gospels in 384 and later completed the rest of the New Testament. In 384 Damasus died and Jerome’s hopes of succeeding him as Bishop of Rome failed to materialize. He retired to the east, settled in Bethlehem in 386, and spent the rest of his life there as a monk, pursuing the cause of Biblical learning. While there he took the opportunity of perfecting his knowledge of Hebrew under the instruction of a Jewish Rabbi, and concluded that the only adequate translation of the Old Testament must come from the Hebrew. Jerome completed the Old Testament in A.D. 405. Jerome’s translation of the Bible was known as the Vulgate from the Latin word which means “common.” It later became the official Bible of the western church and was the Bible of Christendom for a thousand years.  

\[13\]Miller, 252-3; Bruce, Books, 207; Geisler and Nix, 324; Willmington, 69-70.  

\[14\]Bruce, Books, 194-5; Jensen, 102-3; Willmington, 68.
A fifth ancient version is the Armenian Version of the fifth century. Concerning this translation, Phillip Comfort writes:

Christians from Syria carried their faith to their Armenian neighbors in eastern Asia Minor. As early as the third century, Armenia became a Christian kingdom – the first such in history. Sometime during the fifth century an Armenian alphabet was created so that the Bible could be translated into the language of these new believers. The Armenian translation is considered one of the most beautiful and accurate of the ancient versions. An old tradition says that the New Testament was the work of Mesrop (a bishop in Armenia, 390-439), who is credited with inventing both the Armenian and Georgian alphabets. The first translations of the New Testament into Armenian were probably based on Old Syriac versions. Later translations, which have the reputation for being quite accurate, were based on Greek manuscripts of the Byzantine text type.\(^{15}\)

Before leaving the subject of ancient translations, the Syriac Peshitta should be mentioned. This common translation has been in general use for at least 1500 years and exists in many manuscripts and printed copies. There is a great deal of disagreement about when this translation originated. H. S. Miller explains:

Formerly it was believed to be the oldest Syriac text, and the date assigned was around 150 A.D. It contains all the New Testament books except the 5 antilegomena: 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation; and the omission of these books seems to be an argument for an early date, since they were among the latest to receive general recognition as canonical (273-4). Later discoveries and investigation have, it is thought, changed the situation, so that the favorite view at present is that the Peshitta New Testament, at least in its present form, is a product of the early part of the 5\(^{th}\) century (around 411).\(^{16}\)

Yet the disagreement still continues. Either way, this was an outstanding ancient version of God’s Word.

Therefore as the gospel message spread in the ancient world, translations of God’s Word multiplied. In this way the essential need was met of supplying individuals the opportunity to read Scripture for themselves in their native tongues.

\(^{15}\)Comfort, Versions, 129.

\(^{16}\)Miller, 233-4.
Reformation Translations

Reformation Translations of the Bible also prove the essential need of having the Bible in the language of the people. Indeed, it was the translation of God’s Word into the common tongues of people of various nations that fanned the Reformation flame into a blazing fire. Where true reformation broke out, the Bible was placed into the hands of the populace. This can be demonstrated all over Europe, but this author desires to focus upon the translation of the Bible into English. Therefore, he will turn the reader’s attention to the British Isles. Although Christianity was planted in Britain by the beginning of the fourth century\textsuperscript{17} it was not until the fourteenth century that the people of that land saw all the Word of God in their native tongue. John Wycliffe (c. 1320-1384) and his associates were the first to translate the entire Bible into English. Called the “Morning Star of the Reformation,” Wycliffe stood against Rome and believed that the way to prevail in his struggle was to make the Bible available to the people in their own language. With his associates, he completed the New Testament around 1380 and the Old Testament in 1382. Wycliffe concentrated his efforts on the New Testament, while Nicholas of Hereford did a major part of the Old Testament. Being unfamiliar with the original Hebrew and Greek, these men translated from the Latin into English. John Purvey continued the work by producing a revision in 1388.\textsuperscript{18}

The first nearly complete Bible translated out of the original languages was that of William Tyndale. Concerning Tyndale, Willmington writes, “If Wycliffe was known as the ‘Morning Star of the Reformation,’ then Tyndale could rightly be called ‘The Milky

\textsuperscript{17}Bruce, Books, 211.

\textsuperscript{18}Comfort, Versions, 135-6.
Way of the Modern Bible.’ No other single man in history perhaps did as much in translating the Word of God for the people as did William Tyndale.”

It has been estimated that somewhere around 90 percent of his translation in the New Testament has been retained in the King James translation. Trained at Oxford and Cambridge, Tyndale was convinced that the confusion of people’s minds could only be settled by the use of the New Testament to settle matters of life and doctrine. Thus, they must have the Bible in their own tongue. The story is told of a dispute which occurred between Tyndale and a learned man. When the learned man stated, “We were better be without God’s law than the Pope’s,” Tyndale replied, “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.”

After failing to gain permission to work on a translation of the Bible while living in England, he left for the Continent in 1524. Tyndale’s first edition of the New Testament appeared in 1525 and parts of the Old Testament followed in 1534. He was constantly on the run from authorities. He was finally caught and arrested in Belgium. Tried as a heretic he gave his life for his conviction on October 6, 1536. Before being strangled at the stake and his body burned, he prayed aloud for King Henry VIII, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.”

God was already at work in England doing just that.

Even before the martyrdom of Tyndale the first printed full translation of the Bible appeared in England with the printing of Coverdale’s Bible in 1535. When Henry

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19 Willmington, 72.

20 Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 114.


22 Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 113-4.
VIII broke with Rome in 1534, the religious climate in England changed. Secretary of State Thomas Cromwell urged Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) to publish a complete English translation of the Bible. This was not an official authorization, but it did carry a dedication to Henry VIII and was later printed in England.\textsuperscript{23} Being a friend of Tyndale, Coverdale merely revised his New Testament and finished his Old Testament translation. Lacking the scholarly credentials of Tyndale, he did not use the original languages but relied on the Latin Vulgate, Zwingli’s Zurich Bible, and Luther’s German Bible, in revising Tyndale’s New Testament. Interestingly, in his New Testament he chose to follow readings from Tyndale’s three different editions, rather than sticking to one.\textsuperscript{24}

In 1537, just one year following the death of Tyndale the Matthew’s Bible was sold in England. The title page lists Thomas Matthew as the translator, although the name is considered to be a pseudonym. The actual editor was John Rogers (1500-1555), a former associate of Tyndale’s. Before his death, Tyndale had entrusted all his materials, including his nearly completed translation of the Old Testament to Rogers. He in turn closely followed the part of Tyndale’s work which had been published and also the part he had completed in manuscript form. For the rest of the Old Testament he utilized Coverdale’s translation. The resulting translation he dedicated to King Henry VIII and his third and current wife, Jane Seymour, in the hopes of receiving royal approval.\textsuperscript{25} Harold Rawlings continues the story:

Rogers printed fifteen hundred of these Bibles in Antwerp and sent an advance copy to Cranmer in England. The archbishop immediately told

\textsuperscript{23}Foster, 20.

\textsuperscript{24}Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 114-5.

\textsuperscript{25}Rawlings, 117-9; Foster, 20.
Cromwell, “I like it [the Bible] better than any other translation heretofore made.” Cranmer urged Cromwell to get the King to license it right away. Never suspecting that the “Matthew’s Bible” was a disguised Tyndale Bible, the king, persuaded by Cromwell, permitted the Bible to be sold throughout England. In one of the strange ironies of English history, within twelve months of Tyndale’s martyrdom (a result of his “heretical” Bible), and ten years after the burning and denouncing of his first New Testament at St. Paul’s Cross, that same Bible under an assumed name was now republished and distributed in his native land with royal approval. The first English Bible distributed under a “royal license,” it appeared with the words on the title page, “Set forth with the King’s most gracious lysense.”

The year 1539 saw the release of two more Bibles in England. While the English Bible was now in English homes, it still was not officially placed in her churches. Hence, Cromwell ordered Coverdale to make a new revision on the basis of the Matthew’s Bible to be placed in every church in England. Known as the Great Bible, it took its name from its size, being a folio edition measuring sixteen inches by eleven inches. Chained to a table or podium in the churches for safekeeping, it became known as “The Chained Bible.” The Great Bible immediately received acclaim and achieved widespread acceptance by clergy and laity alike. Indeed, people flocked to the churches to see the Bibles which had been set up for reading, and at times the preachers complained because the people chose to read the Bible rather than listen to their sermons. Thus the Great Bible bears the historical distinction of being the first of the English Bibles authorized to be read in the churches, and Tyndale’s dying prayer was abundantly answered. As Coverdale was preparing his first edition of the Great Bible, an Oxford scholar named Richard Taverner was making his own revision of Matthew’s Bible. Knowing very little

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26Rawlings, 119.

27Bruce, Books, 216; Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 118-9; Foster, 21; Rawlings; 127.

Hebrew, the modifications Taverner made in the Old Testament reflect the influence of the Latin Vulgate, but his knowledge of Greek allowed him to make numerous alterations in the New Testament from previous translations. It is to Taverner that the world owes the term “parable” rather than “similitude” as found in Tyndale’s and Coverdale’s versions. This change and others were later kept in the Authorized Version. Probably appearing shortly before the appearance of the Great Bible, it never did rival the other’s use and was reprinted only once.  

A number of years would pass before the next English Bible would be translated. Two months after the publication of the Great Bible, Thomas Cromwell was thrown into prison. He was beheaded in July of 1540. The remainder of Henry VIII’s reign was a period of turning back to the old ways. Again Tyndale’s translations were ordered destroyed, and Coverdale’s New Testament was likewise condemned. When Henry VIII died in 1547, his son Edward VI came to the throne. Everything again changed and forty editions of the existing translations were issued. Upon his death, after a brief six year reign, a short time of turmoil occurred. Eventually Henry VIII’s daughter Mary Tudor took the throne. A devout Roman Catholic, Mary was determined to reinstate Catholicism in England. Known as “Bloody Mary,” she burned at least three hundred martyrs to the Protestant cause at the stake at Smithfield. The first to die was John Rogers who have translated the Matthew’s Bible. Only when Mary died in 1563 and her half-sister Elizabeth became queen did peace come again to the Protestants in England.  

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29 Rawlings, 121-2; Foster, 21.

30 Rawlings, 129-32; Foster, 21.
The persecution of Protestants during the five year reign of Mary resulted in a flood of exiles escaping to the Continent. Many of these settled in Geneva, not only the home of John Calvin, but also of Theodore Beza, the outstanding biblical scholar of his time. A need was felt among the exiles for a new translation rather than a revision. A group of notable English scholars were led by William Whittingham, John Calvin’s brother-in-law, and produced a Bible in 1560 which became known as the Geneva Bible.\(^{31}\) This version was the first English Bible to be divided into verses and the first to utilize italicized words to indicate words that were not in the original text. It was extremely popular and was the Bible used by John Bunyan and William Shakespeare, brought by the Pilgrims to America on the Mayflower, and even quoted by the King James Translators in their preface. Indeed, it continued to be printed over thirty years after the publication of the KJV, with over sixty editions appearing after 1611.\(^{32}\) After Elizabeth became queen, the Geneva Bible became the most popular translation in the homes, while the Great Bible was used in the churches.

The next English translation to appear was the Bishop’s Bible. After the Great Bible was placed back in the churches under Elizabeth’s reign, deficiencies began to become apparent because of the presence of the carefully prepared Geneva Bible. Yet the Geneva Bible was not popular with the English Church officials because its commentary presented the views of John Calvin and the Reformation. Thus, a revision of the Great Bible was begun by the English clergy, and when completed in 1568 was known as the Bishop’s Bible. A second edition appeared four years later, but this version

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\(^{31}\)Rawlings, 132-3.

\(^{32}\)Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 120-1.
never became as popular as the Geneva Bible and did not measure up to its scholarship. While the Bishop’s Bible became the Bible of the pulpit, the Geneva Bible still remained the Bible of the people.

When the Catholic Church realized that the English translations were there to stay, the decision was made to produce their own version representing the Roman point of view. Based upon the Latin Vulgate, the New Testament was completed in Rheims, France in 1582 and the Old Testament in Douay, France in 1609. Hence, it bore the name the Rheims-Douay Bible.

Beyond a doubt, the queen of the Reformation Bibles for the English speaking world is the King James Version of 1611. When James I became King of England in 1603, he was met en route to London by some of the leading bishops and theologians in the Church of England with Puritan sympathies and presented with the Millenary Petition, a document containing the signatures of some 753 Puritan clergymen complaining about high-church and popish practices in the church. James responded in 1604 by calling together the Hampton Court Conference of bishops and Puritan clergy to attempt to settle the differences among them. The King invited a large group of high-church men (although estimates differ greatly, most likely around nineteen) and only four Puritans. Led by Dr. John Reynolds, the president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, the Puritans were given a hearing on the second day of the Conference, where they were insulted, ridiculed, and scorned. Yet when Reynolds requested a new translation of the

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33 Lightfoot, 130.

34 For a more extensive discussion of the development of these English translations, this writer would highly recommend Harold Rawlings’ book Trial by Fire.
Scriptures, James agreed. This version was to be made from the Greek and Hebrew with marginal notes restricted to matters of language and parallel passages. Fifty-four of the best scholars were chosen to undertake the work. Only forty-seven of these are mentioned by name and thought to have actually participated. These were all Anglican, including some moderate Puritans who had conformed to the guidelines of the Church of England. Fifteen ground rules were set up to be followed by the translators. The first stated that the Bishop’s Bible was to be followed and as little altered as the truth of the original would permit. Yet it was specified that use should be made of the Tyndale, Matthew, Coverdale, Great, and Geneva Bible when any of these agreed more closely with the original text than did the Bishop’s Bible. The translators were divided into six groups. From these groups their work went to a committee of twelve, composed of two from each group, for revision. This was next sent to Bishop Thomas Bilson and Dr. Miles Smith for further revision. Then before reaching the press, the work was sent to chief overseer Archbishop Richard Bancroft (with the help of other bishops) for the finishing touches. At least fourteen changes were made. It was then placed into the hands of Robert Barker, the royal printer, and came off the press in 1611.\footnote{Foster, 22; Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 130-7; Ralph Earle, How We Got Our Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1971), 74; Miller, 362-5; Rawlings, 145-55; Alister McGrath, In The Beginning (New York: Anchor Books, 2001), 155-65, 172-88.}

The first printing of the KJV included a number of printing errors. Indeed, there were two 1611 editions, differing from each other in hundreds of minute matters. This led to several revisions. In the first thirty-three years of its history, the KJV went through at least 182 editions, each different in some way from the others. Some of these
differences were the result of correcting typographical errors. Others were an attempt to make the translation more faithful to the biblical languages.\textsuperscript{36}

At least two minor and four major revisions were made of the KJV. The first minor revision occurred in 1613 with over four hundred variations from the original printing. Then in 1616 another revision occurred. The first two major revisions were made by the Cambridge University printers; Thomas and John Buck in 1629, and Thomas Buck and Roger Daniel in 1638. The 1629 revision, by an unknown editor, dealt with the text, the marginal notes, the punctuation, and the italics. The 1638 revision paid especial attention to the treatment of words in italics. The revisers are recorded as Dr. Goad of Hadley, Dr. Ward, Mr. John Boise, and Mr. Mead. Between these two editions, the editors revised the entire text of the KJV.\textsuperscript{37} This revised text became the standard text for the KJV for the next 124 years. The next major revisions occurred in 1762 and 1769. The revision of 1762 was made by Dr. Thomas Paris of Trinity College, Cambridge, who made a diligent correction of the text, and modernized and regularized the spelling and punctuation. It was printed by Cambridge printer, Joseph Bentham. The revision of 1769 was made by Dr. Benjamin Blayney of Hertford College in Oxford. Blayney incorporated most of the revisions of Paris and made many more of his own. He further revised the punctuation and the use of italics. This revision was printed by the Oxford printers T. Wright and W. Gill. Blayney’s revision came to be known as “the Oxford Standard” and, apart from minor variations, is the standard used in all modern KJVs.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36}Miller, 366; Williams and Shaylor, \textit{Mind}, 147.

\textsuperscript{37}Williams and Shaylor, \textit{Mind}, 158; Price, 94-5.

\textsuperscript{38}Williams and Shaylor, \textit{Mind}, 159; Price, 96-8; Miller, 367.
Modern Translations

Since the essential need of individuals to comprehend the Bible did not end in ancient or reformation times, modern translations of Scripture have been made to allow people to read God’s Word for themselves. Between the publication of the KJV in 1611 and the present time, more than 350 translations have been published in English.\textsuperscript{39} Some of the most notable will be considered.

The age of modern Bible translations began with the publication of the English Revised Version (RV). Although it has been estimated that in the two and a half centuries between the KJV and the RV close to a hundred revisions and translations of parts or of the whole of the Bible were published,\textsuperscript{40} none of these caught the heart of the Christian community. It was not until the release of the RV that a new translation was taken seriously. In 1870 a committee was appointed at the Convocation of Canterbury of the Church of England to revise the KJV. Two companies of linguistic scholars were formed with both the Old and New Testament divisions being composed of twenty-seven men. These individuals were chosen from various denominations and possessed unimpeachable credentials of scholarship. The New Testament of the RV was published in 1881 and the Old Testament in 1885.\textsuperscript{41} The textual basis of the New Testament was basically the Critical Text of Westcott and Hort. When the New Testament was released, the initial reception it was given was tremendous. It is estimated that in the first year more than three million copies were sold in England and America in addition to a large

\textsuperscript{39}Rawlings, 163.

\textsuperscript{40}Foster, 25.

\textsuperscript{41}Foster, 27, Lightfoot, 140.
circulation through newspapers and periodicals. Yet this intense enthusiasm diminished when readers began to miss the familiarity and rhythm of the beloved KJV. The comment of Charles H. Spurgeon was typical of many criticisms of this new work, “strong in Greek, weak in English.”

During the work on the RV, American scholars were invited to form similar translation companies and share in the work. Any suggestions made by the Americans but not preferred by the British would be noted in an appendix, and the Americans could issue their own translation after fourteen years. Thus, in 1901 the American Standard Version (ASV) was published. It only differed from the RV on points of idiom, spelling, word-order, and the like. One of the ASV’s most outstanding features was its use of Jehovah in the Old Testament rather than LORD.

Although other translations appeared in the following years, the next one of note is the Revised Standard Version (RSV), whose New Testament appeared in 1946 and whose Old Testament was published in 1952. Authorized by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., the RSV is a revision of the ASV with the goal of making it more readable. Thirty-two scholars with an advisory board of fifty representatives from a variety of denominations worked on the project, convinced that the older manuscripts provided a more reliable text basis than the ones used for the KJV. The translators of the New Testament used an eclectic text, utilizing the Nestle text and other early sources. Concerning the original translation work, Lewis Foster notes,

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42 Miller, 378.
43 Lightfoot, 142.
44 Foster, 14; Lightfoot, 141.
45 Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 198.
“About nine men were active in the New Testament work and thirteen in the Old. All of then were ‘liberal’ in their theology and would share with Moffatt his denial of verbal inspiration.” 46 This liberal bias of the translation would cause troubles when it was released. While the RSV became the official Bible of many of the liberal denominations, conservative Christians rejected it. One of the outstanding criticisms was the RSV’s changing of “virgin” in Isa 7:14 to “young woman.” Such a change is unacceptable to conservative Christians.

Another liberal translation of the Scripture is the New English Bible (NEB), whose New Testament first appeared in 1961 while the Old Testament and a revised New Testament arrived in 1970. This new translation was the collaborated effort of representatives of the Presbyterian Church of England, the Society of Friends, the Churches of Wales, the Churches of Ireland, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the National Bible Society, and later the Roman Catholic Church in England and Scotland. 47

In 1971 a conservative translation of the Bible was released with the publication of the New American Standard Bible (NASB). The foreword to this translation states that it was “produced with the conviction that the words of Scripture as originally penned in the Hebrew and Greek were inspired by God.” 48 The work of fifty-four translators, it was a revision of the ASV. In regards to the New Testament (which first appeared in 1961), the twenty-third edition of the Nestle Greek text was followed. Thus, the underlying Greek text differs from that on which the ASV was based, although in some

46Foster, 30.

47Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 200.

48Foster, 33.
instances the text is printed in brackets which follows the ASV. The NASB was later revised in 1995.

A different type of Bible translation appeared with the Living Bible (LB). Published in its entirety in 1971, this work was a paraphrase of the Scriptures by Kenneth Taylor. The preface explains that to paraphrase is “to say something in different words than the author used. It is a restatement of an author’s thoughts, using different words than he did.” It goes on to state, “This book is a paraphrase of the Old and New Testaments. Its purpose is to say as exactly as possible what the writers of the Scriptures meant, and to say it simply, expanding where necessary for a clear understanding by the modern reader.” While its initial source was the ASV, Taylor and the Greek and Hebrew specialists he consulted for accuracy also used the most respected texts available.

Another modern translation of note is the New International Version (NIV), whose New Testament appeared in 1973 and Old Testament in 1978. Like the NASB, this version was undertaken by men who held a high regard of biblical inspiration. Sponsored by the New York Bible Society International, translation teams were assigned to individual books. Each team was composed of five men – two translators, two consultants, and one English expert. Work then went to the Intermediate Committee, then to the General Editorial Committee, and finally to the top Committee on Bible Translation. Over a hundred scholars shared in this work, representing a great number of

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50 The Living Bible, “Preface.”

51 Willmington, 79.
church groups from the United States, Great Britain, New Zealand, Canada, and
Australia. 52 The New Testament was translated from an eclectic text.

In 1982 a revision of the KJV was published. The New King James Version
(NKJV) is a literal translation of the Scriptures which follows the Textus Receptus in the
New Testament with footnotes showing any significant differences in the Majority Text
or the Critical Text found in the twenty-seventh edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek New
Testament and in the United Bible Societies’ fourth edition. The work of 119 translators,
the NKJV preserves the thought flow of the original KJV so that a person can follow
along in the NKJV what is being read in the old KJV, or vice versa. 53

Additional revisions of modern translations came to the market in the late
twentieth century and the early twenty-first century which employed inclusive language
in an attempt to be gender neutral. In 1989 the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
was published which revised the RSV and included gender-neutral language. In 1996 the
New Living Translation (NLT) revised the LB into an actual translation rather than a
paraphrase. It too is gender neutral. Then in 2005, the Today’s New International
Version (TNIV) appeared. A revision of the NIV, it is gender neutral.

One final modern translation which will be considered is the Holman Christian
Standard Bible (HCSB). Published in 2004, the HCSB was conceived by Arthur Farstad
and LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention and overseen by
Holman Bible Publishers. The work of one hundred translators, it utilized the latest
editions of the Nestle-Aland and United Bible Societies’ Greek text.

52 Foster, 33.

53 Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 203.
While many other versions could be listed, this brief overview will give the reader an overall understanding of the result of the essential need for translating the Word of God into the common language people use each day. The same need which resulted in ancient and Reformation translations of the Bible has resulted in an abundance of modern translations which continue till this day.

A Continuing Need Today

It has been demonstrated that the need for humanity to have God’s Word in their own native language so they can read and comprehend it has resulted in many versions of the Bible being translated over the centuries. One source states that by A.D. 200, the Bible was translated into 7 languages; by A.D. 500, 13 languages; by A.D. 900, 17 languages; by A.D. 1400, 28 languages; by A.D. 1800, 57 languages; by A.D. 1900, 537 languages; and by A.D. 1980 into 1,100 languages.⁵⁴ This being the case, one might think that the need for Bible translation has been met. But this is not true. There is still a pressing need for Bible translation both worldwide and for the English speaking world.

There is still a global need for Bible translation. This need is twofold. First, not every person in the world has the Word of God in his native language. According to the United Bible Societies, the Bible (or portions of it), has been translated into more than 2,200 languages. Yet this is only about one-third of the world’s 6,500 known languages. While the Bible translations which are currently available are in languages which are the primary vehicle of communication for well over 90 percent of the world’s population, the Scripture is still not rendered in everyone’s native tongue which they speak and

comprehend the best. For this reason, Bible translation efforts continue globally. Wycliffe Bible Translators alone has over six thousand people working with more than 850 different languages in fifty countries to produce new or revised versions of the Bible. Second, the languages of the world keep changing which requires updating Bible translations. Living languages constantly change. Because of this fact, some words change meaning, some words become archaic and cease to be used, and some words are invented. This is the reason that new editions of dictionaries are constantly being produced. This requires that Bible translations around the world be updated and revised. Otherwise, a translation of Scripture which was quite adequate a century ago may give a wrong impression or not be understandable today. Thus, there is still a need for Bible translation globally.

Furthermore, there is still an English need for Bible translation. The need to adequately render the Bible into English so that people can read and comprehend it for themselves did not cease in 1611 or with the last revision of the KJV in 1769. Nor has it ceased today even with the abundance of contemporary versions. As long as the Lord Jesus tarries His coming and as long as the English language continues to change, there will be a continuing need for English Bible translation. Philip Comfort writes, “Bible translators need to stay current with shifts in modern English language if they want to communicate the message of the Bible to modern men and women.” This requires the revision of established versions and the translation of new versions into English just as it does elsewhere in the world.

55McDowell, 8-9.
56Comfort, Versions, 109.
For the majority of English readers today, the KJV of 1769 needs updating to make it more comprehensible. Some terms in the KJV are obsolete and archaic. Because of this some verses no longer make sense to the reader or even give a false impression. It has been stated that over eight hundred words and phrases in the KJV are not used in the same sense today, and of these about two hundred mean something radically different.\textsuperscript{57} This poses a great problem to those unaccustomed to Elizabethan English. After giving twenty-two pages of examples of such words and their explanations, Harold Rawlings writes:

These are only a few of the many archaic and obsolete words and expressions found in the King James Version. It is important to emphasize that most of these words and expressions were appropriate in 1611, but with the passage of almost 400 years, some words have lost their original meaning, while others have dropped out of circulation altogether. The listing of these words and phrases should not be interpreted as implying that the KJV is a poor translation. It is simply an example of how much language changes over four centuries and demonstrates that it is not an unorthodox idea to suggest that a revised edition or a new translation might at times be a noteworthy and necessary undertaking.\textsuperscript{58}

Hence, lovers of God’s Word should understand that the changing of the English language requires renewed efforts in Bible translation. This is so because the stakes are so extremely high. As one writer puts it, “The more words there are that come up blank in the reader’s thinking – or worse, misunderstood – the less he understands the text. And when the text is the Bible, lack of understanding does spiritual harm.”\textsuperscript{59} Men and women must clearly understand the Bible if they are to put its teachings into practice in their lives. For this reason, new revisions and translations are required. As was shown in

\textsuperscript{57}Earle, 111.

\textsuperscript{58}Rawlings, 286.

\textsuperscript{59}Williams and Shaylor, \textit{Mind}, 193.
the previous chapter, this fact is even admitted by those who supported the KJV against the RV. Men such as Burgon did not oppose a new revision, only the textual basis of that revision.

When it is remembered that no translation is perfect or inspired, then it only makes sense to continue efforts to better translate the Word of God into the language used by its readers, including English. Ralph Earle writes, “If we are honestly concerned that people should know the truth of God’s saving Word, we shall seek to give them a translation that says clearly in today’s language what the inspired Greek and Hebrew originals actually said.”60 This is no way reflects upon the original autographs. As Philip Comfort writes, “The point is well worth emphasizing: translations must change as the language changes. There is nothing sacrosanct about a translation – it is changeable and fluid. By contrast the text underlying the translation should not be changed because it is sacred and inviolable.”61 While the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek never change, translations do. Thus, there is still a need for Bible translation in the English language.

**The Methodology of Translation**

The basic need for Bible translation has presented the modern translator with a dilemma; how to best translate the Word of God into the language to be read by the common man. Obviously the Bible translator desires to make a good translation of God’s inspired Message to mankind. The eternal destiny and spiritual development of countless souls rest upon a faithful rendering of the original writings into the common tongue of its readers. But what makes a good translation? Primarily, there must be accuracy. The

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60Earle, 113.

61Comfort, Versions, 115.
translation must faithfully express the meaning of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek
words found in the original. Two languages are being dealt with in any translation
activity. The first is the source language, that is, the language being translated from. The
second is the receptor language, that is, the language being translated into. The
translator’s task is to reproduce the most accurate rendering of the source language in the
receptor language.\textsuperscript{62} But more is needed than just accuracy. There must also be clarity.
The translation must clearly communicate the message that its Author intended. It is
possible to faithfully represent the words and grammar of the source language and yet fail
to be clear in the receptor language. Both accuracy and clarity are necessary. In Bible
translation, it is possible to accurately represent the Hebrew or Greek and fail to be clear
in English. It is also possible to be clear in English and yet fail to accurately represent
the original text. Neither is acceptable.\textsuperscript{63} In addition to accuracy and clarity, there should
also be beauty in style. There ought to be an ease in reading, a beauty of listening, and a
sense of enjoyment in having read a passage. The style of the translation will cause the
reader to desire to come back and read more, rather than leaving with the feeling of
having completed a toilsome exercise. There is no doubt that the KJV excels in the area
of beauty. Lewis Foster observes, “It has been so firmly established in the hearts of
Christian worshippers that this translation has become the standard for beauty of
expression.”\textsuperscript{64} Concerning this point, J. Drew Conley writes, “There were other
translations of near equal accuracy and clarity in the years before the King James Version

\textsuperscript{62}Beacham and Bauder, 137.

\textsuperscript{63}Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 194.

\textsuperscript{64}Foster, 42.
came about, but none matched it for beauty of style. And few if any translations have matched it since, in some measure because of the fact that the King James was done during what may be called the golden age of the English language.\(^{65}\) Therefore, a good translation must have accuracy, clarity, and beauty.

Knowing that he desires to achieve accuracy, clarity, and beauty, the translator is confronted with the need to make a decision concerning his method of translation. If he desires to truly translate the Scriptures rather than merely paraphrase them in his own words, the modern translator must decide between two basic types of translation methodology: formal equivalence or dynamic equivalence.

Formal equivalence focuses upon the words being translated and majors on the accuracy of the translation. Its focus is more concerned with the source language than the receptor language. Also known as literal translation or “word-for-word” translation, this method desires to be faithful to exactly what the original author said. The translator attempts to translate each Hebrew or Greek word by one English word when possible. The strength of this method is that the translation preserves the quality and exactness of the original author’s vocabulary. The weakness is that the translation may be rigid and unclear in places.\(^{66}\) Thus, clarity may be sacrificed for accuracy. Examples of literal translations include the KJV, RV, ASV, RSV, NASB, and the NKJV.

Dynamic equivalence focuses upon the meaning of the passage being translated and majors upon the clarity of the translation. Its focus in more concerned with the receptor language than the source language. Also known as functional equivalence, free

\(^{65}\)Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 195.

\(^{66}\)Jensen, 112.
translation, or “thought-for-thought” translation, this method desires to be faithful to exactly what the original author meant. The translator is not limited by the number or kind of words in expressing the meaning of the original text. He may alter the sentence structure by changing a noun into a verb or an adjective, or a verb into a noun; leave out words; add words without indicating this was done; or seek to use monetary, weight, and time equivalents with which the modern reader is familiar rather than the original terms. The strength of this method is that the translator clarifies the meaning of a passage to the reader by explaining difficult words and phrases. The weakness is that the result may be more of an interpretation than a faithful translation. The translator may inject his own ideas concerning what the text means into the translation. The result may be an easier to understand translation, but may convey the doctrinal slant of the translator. Thus, a dynamic equivalent translation that is meant to clarify the author’s meaning might, in reality, misinterpret the author’s intent. Translations that would be classified as dynamic include the NIV, NLT, TNIV, and the HCSB.

Each method of translation has its supporters who argue that it is best. Obviously there are times when a figure of speech, a custom, or even a word in one language would not make sense in another. For example, in Isa 1:18 it states, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” But what if a person lives in a tropical area and has never seen snow. How should the translator render this word?

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67 Ibid., 113.
68 Hayden, 163.
69 Rawlings, 220.
70 Beacham and Bauder, 141.
Some would say that it is best to render it with an object which the reader knows to be pure white, while others believe that it should be left “snow” and explained to the reader what snow is. The same can be said for figures of speech or for terms of measurement, time, and money. Therefore, the translator is faced with a conflict of methodology.

When considering literal and dynamic translation methodology, it must be realized that no translation is perfectly formal or functional. Every translation is always a mixture of the two. Thus, a literal translation is mainly literal, and a dynamic translation is mainly dynamic. As Conley observes, “All translations fall somewhere between these two poles, depending in part on whether maintaining the literal correspondence to the ancient text or producing a clear meaning in the modern language carried greater weight with the translator.” Even the most literal translation fails to be completely literal because of the differences between the grammar and vocabulary of the source and receptor languages. As James Price notes, “Some degree of paraphrase is necessary for a translation to be understandable and to have good literary style.”

Bible scholars know that the KJV contains some dynamic equivalency. The KJV translators used the phrase “God forbid” about twelve times in the Old Testament and about fourteen times in the New Testament, even though the word “God” is not found in the original. In the Old Testament the Hebrew exclamation meant something to be rejected immediately and decisively, while in New Testament the phrase meant “certainly not” or “may it never be.” Also, in the Old Testament the phrase “God save the king” is used some five times. Again, the word “God” does not appear in the Hebrew text. But the English people in the

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71 Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 194.

72 Price, 296.
1600s continually used this phrase, and the translators put it in rather than render it literally “may the king live.” In Matt 27:44 the KJV reads, “They cast the same in his teeth.” The Greek text does not contain the word “teeth.” While the Greek means “reviled,” the translators used a term current in their day.\textsuperscript{73} Therefore, even the most literal of translations can be dynamic at times.

In reality a good translation needs to combine the best of the literal and the dynamic equivalency methodologies. A translation needs to be both accurate and clear. There should be a balance between its literalness and readability. This desired goal has been referred to as “optimal equivalency.”\textsuperscript{74} Yet for the sake of classification, most translations generally are observed to be more literal or more dynamic.

Which translation method is best? Perhaps it depends upon the purpose for the translation and its audience. If the translation is for a mature believer who desires to study the Bible, then a literal translation is definitely required. On the other hand, if the reader is an unsaved person or a new convert who needs to grasp the main meaning of the Bible’s message, a dynamic translation may be what is needed. There is room for both, and both serve an important purpose.

\textbf{The Historical Position on Translation}

What has been the Church’s position on translation over the centuries? Even a quick look at Church history makes it evident that the essential need for translating the Bible into the native languages of its readers has been understood by believers in all

\textsuperscript{73}Joyner, 60-1.

\textsuperscript{74}Price, 297.
denominations in general and by Baptists in particular. The Church has desired that the Bible be translated and has labored strenuously toward that end.

The need has been understood by the Church in general. The survey of the history of Bible translation earlier in this chapter made it clear that all denominations of Protestant believers have supported translations of the Bible. Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and many others have worked on translation teams and individually to bring God’s Word into their own languages and into the languages of mission fields. Even the Catholic Church, when faced with the reality of the Bible being placed in the hands of people in their own language, finally produced Catholic versions of the Bible. There can be no doubt that the Church in general has approved the translation of Scripture into the native tongues of believers around the world and has labored tirelessly to provide such translations.

But what has been the position of the Baptists in particular concerning Bible translations? It is also evident that the essential need of Bible translation has been understood by Baptists. In the Philadelphia Confession of 1688, Baptists in America explain the need for Bible translation. After stating that the Bible in Hebrew and Greek was inspired by God, kept pure by Him, and in all controversies to be appealed to, they continue by declaring:

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 [Ac 15:15] and search them [Jn 5:39], therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar [i.e. common] languages of every nation, unto which they come [I Co 14:6, 9, 11-12, 24, 28], 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 hope [Col 3:16].  

75Williams and Shaylor, Mind, 191-2.
Obviously the Baptists of the 1600s believed in Bible translation. The same is true of later Baptists. Baptist missionary William Carey is credited with the translation of the whole Bible into nine languages, the New Testament into twenty-seven more, and smaller portions of Scripture into several others.⁷⁶ Also, America’s Baptist missionary to India, Adoniram Judson, translated the New Testament into Burmese in 1835. There was no protest over this action by Baptists back in the states because such action was expected. Rather there was a protest from non-Baptists because he translated the word “baptize” as “immerse.” Judson was supported by the American Bible Society which had been organized to serve all denominations and was supported by all. When the news spread that Judson had used the word “immerse,” there were many protests against using the Society’s money to produce what was termed a “sectarian translation” which only immersionists could use. The Baptist contributors saw nothing wrong in it. Faced with a threat to its very existence and knowing it could not please both sides, the Society decided to use no more money in publishing translations which did not transliterate *baptizo* and its cognates without translating them. As a result, the Baptists organized a rival society called the American and Foreign Bible Society which immediately assisted in publishing “immersion” translations in foreign languages. Baptist opinion was divided regarding making the KJV into an “immersion” Bible. Then, in 1850 the American Bible Union was formed and an “immersion” New Testament later appeared in three small volumes (1862-4), bound in one volume in 1864, and revised in 1865 as the Bible Union New Testament.⁷⁷ It is of special note that one of the organizers of the American Bible

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⁷⁶Earle, 86.

⁷⁷Miller, 405.
Society was the Baptist historian Thomas Armitage. Thus, translations continued to be produced with Baptist support. And it was not just American Baptists who supported translation efforts even into English. In England, the outstanding Baptist preacher of the nineteenth century, Charles Spurgeon, declared, “For many years Baptists have insisted upon it that we ought to have the Word of God translated in the best possible manner, whether it would confirm certain religious opinions and practices, or work against them. All we want is the exact mind of the Spirit.” Baptists believed in translation efforts.

It should also be noticed that Baptists have continued to support Bible translation efforts through the twentieth century until this very day. It has previously been pointed out that Baptist preachers quoted from other versions than the KJV. While pastors in the BBFI took a stand against the liberal renderings of the RSV that did not mean they condemned all other translations. The campus bookstore of BBC in Springfield, Missouri at one time sold other Bible translations, and Noel Smith, founding editor of the Baptist Bible Tribune recommended the ASV. Missionaries from the BBFI and other Baptist organizations supported Bible translation efforts on the mission field. It should also be recognized that other fundamental Baptist colleges sell other translations in their bookstores, use them in classes, quote from them in chapels, and recommend them to their students. Furthermore, both Southern and independent Baptists (including some BBFI pastors) sat on the North American Overview Committee of the NKJV. The evidence is overwhelming; Baptists have historically recognized the essential need for Bible translation, including translations in the English language.

78 Armitage, 906-7.

79 Williams and Shaylor, Word, 60.
Concluding Thoughts on Translation and the Bible Storm

Before the troubled waters of the translation storm can be calmed among independent Baptist, they must fully understand the essential need of Bible translation. This chapter has proven that the essential need of Bible translation is giving the common individual the ability to read the Word of God for himself by providing the Bible in his native language so he can comprehend it correctly. It has shown that the Scriptures provide historical instances in which it was necessary to translate previously written Scripture and anticipates the future need of translation in the Great Commission. Furthermore, the result of this essential need was observed in the history of Bible translation down through the centuries and up until the present day. Indeed, it was shown that the essential need to translate God’s Word still exists today both globally and in English. It was then noted that the essential need for translation has confronted the modern translator with the dilemma of determining which methodology to give preference to. Finally, it was shown that the Church in general and Baptists in particular have always supported Bible translation efforts.

In conclusion, it should be observed that both sides of the Bible translation debate agree that the Word of God must be translated into the common language of the inhabitants of the world. This writer knows of no Baptist group which teaches that the Bible should not be translated for converts on the mission field. Furthermore, both sides of the modern translation debate agree that an English translation of the Bible is vital. There is absolutely no question that the side which considers the KJV to be the only version for the English speaking world believes it was necessary for the KJV to be rendered into the English language. The other side would agree. The point of difference
comes concerning the continuation of translation efforts in the English language. Should the KJV be revised? Should modern translations of the Bible be produced in English? If so, which translation methodology should be given priority? These are the issues regarding Bible translation efforts today, not whether any translation work should be done. There is common agreement that translating the Bible into the languages of the world is good and proper. The controversy occurs over the details. This being true, should not both sides agree that they can hold different opinions?

If one chooses to believe that God ceased His blessings upon English Bible translation efforts with the revision of the KJV in 1769, that is his Christian right. But should not that brother have the Christian courtesy to allow his fellow Baptist brother to believe that God continues to bless translation efforts today in the English tongue as well as in the other languages of the world? If he will simply do so, this will do a great deal in calming the troubled waters of the translation storm.
CHAPTER 5
PERIPHERAL MISINFORMATION AND THE TRANSLATION STORM

If independent Baptists are to calm the troubled waters stirred up by the Bible translation storm, they must fully understand the fact that peripheral misinformation confuses the essential issues. Tragically, many of the writers involved in the translation debate often focus upon these peripherals to such an extent that the main issues get overlooked and confused because of the feelings which are stirred up. Hot heads do not reason well. Now that this author has taken three chapters to discuss in detail the primary issues of Bible inspiration, preservation, and translation, he can examine some of the peripheral issues that so often cloud the reasoning of those involved in the translation debate. When these peripheral issues are cleared up and properly understood, the way will be cleared for independent Baptists to concentrate on the main issues. Misinformation has been propagated on both sides. What are some of these commonly taught misconceptions?

Misinformation about the King James Version and the Majority Text

Although King James only advocates are often accused of spreading false information, it must also be recognized that supporters of modern translations have also made their share of misleading statements.¹ Some will now be touched upon.

¹Comfort, Versions, 91, 159; Geisler and Nix, 423; Lightfoot, 137, 141; Earle, 111; Kubo and Specht, 340.
All King James Supporters Alike

It is mistakenly thought by some that all those who use and support the King James Version are alike. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There is a great diversity among those who advocate the use of the KJV. Some prefer the KJV because they simply like it best. As James Price writes:

Many people were reared in churches where the King James Version was the Bible used in public reading, in preaching from the pulpit, for Scripture memorization, and for personal devotions. They have attributed the blessing of God on His people partly to the Bible version they use. They love the beautiful, majestic, reverent style of the old-fashioned English used in the King James Version. They have no problem understanding King James English, and do not mind having to look up an occasional archaic word in the dictionary. They regard it to be an accurate, reliable translation—one they can trust. Even though they have no serious problem with modern versions, they prefer to continue using the King James Version as they always have, and to use acceptable modern versions only for study and reference.²

Others prefer the KJV because they believe that the underlying Hebrew and Greek texts used by the King James translators are superior to other original language texts. For the New Testament, this would mean the Textus Receptus. Concerning this group, James White writes, “These individuals would not necessarily believe that those texts were inspired, per se, but that they more accurately reflect the original writings of the prophets or the apostles.”³ Similarly, some prefer the KJV because they believe that the Majority Text of the Greek New Testament is superior to the Critical or Eclectic Texts used for most modern versions. They hold that the best reading is that supported by the greatest

²Price, 15.
³White, 2.
number of existing Greek manuscripts. They understand that the Majority Text is not the same as the Textus Receptus, but since there is no translation based on the Majority Text, they use the KJV.

Still others prefer the KJV because they believe that the Textus Receptus and the Hebrew text used by the KJV translators has been either supernaturally preserved over time or even inspired. Some see the providential hand of God in the work of those who created these original language texts, which would include such men as Erasmus, Stephanus, and Theodore Beza.⁴ Some feel that the King James translators always chose the correct reading when faced with differing readings in the Hebrew and Greek texts available.⁵ Those holding this view would not necessarily insist that the KJV is an inerrant translation of these texts, but they believe that it accurately expresses the truth of the original languages. While admitting that a future translation might someday be called for, they normally deny that the KJV needs revising, updating, or altering.⁶

Then there are those who believe that the KJV is itself inspired by God and is therefore inerrant. White notes, “Many of these folks believe the TR is inspired and inerrant as well (it would seem logical that the text from which the KJV was translated would have to be inerrant if the resulting translation is to be considered inerrant), but in practice the importance of the TR begins to fade when the direct claim of inspiration of the KJV is put forward.”⁷ For this group the King James Version alone equals the Word

⁴Ibid.
⁵Price, 16.
⁶White, 2; Price, 16.
⁷White, 3.
of God alone. Thus, they believe that anyone who would use a different translation of the Bible is rejecting the true and real Word of God. Furthermore, every other version is corrupt and dangerous.\textsuperscript{8}

Finally, there are some who even go beyond this last position and hold that God supernaturally inspired the King James translators in such a way that the English text itself is inerrant revelation. Basically this position holds that God “re-inspired” the Bible in 1611, rendering it in the English language. As a result, this position holds that the Greek and Hebrew texts should be changed where necessary to agree with the KJV.\textsuperscript{9} Therefore, it is a great mistake to believe that all those who prefer the KJV are alike in their beliefs.

Uneducated Supporters

It is also a misconception to believe that no well-educated person holds to the superiority of the Majority Text or the King James Version. John William Burgon opposed the English Revised Version on textual grounds. He firmly believed that the new Critical Text of Westcott and Hort was not based upon the best textual evidence. Rather, he held that the Majority Text, which he referred to as the Traditional Text, was more reliable. Was Burgon an uneducated individual? The answer is obvious. Burgon spent most of his adult life at Oxford, as Fellow of Oriel College and then as vicar of St. Mary’s (the University Church) and Gresham Professor of Divinity. He spent the last twelve years of his life as the Dean of Chichester in West Sussex, England.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., 3-4.
\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{10}Hills, 113.
He was renowned for his scholarship and learning in the field of textual criticism. By no means could Burgon be considered uninformed. Then there is Edward F. Hills, the Presbyterian Bible scholar and author. Although Hills went further than the Majority Text position to advocate the preservation of Scripture in the Textus Receptus, he obviously felt that the Majority Text was superior to the Critical Text. He was a distinguished Latin and Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Yale University, earned his Th.B degree from Westminster Theological Seminary, and his Th.M. degree from Columbia Theological Seminary. He did doctoral work at the University of Chicago in New Testament text criticism and completed his program at Harvard, earning his Th.D. in this field. Obviously he was well educated and knowledgeable in the field of textual criticism. There is also Wilbur N. Pickering who did his master’s thesis for Dallas Theological Seminary on the topic of “An Evaluation of the Contribution of John William Burgon to New Testament Textual Criticism.” Pickering’s excellent book The Identity of the New Testament Text offers a scholarly discussion of eclecticism, an evaluation of the Westcott and Hort critical theory, and a study of the history of the New Testament text. His conclusions may be rejected by some fellow scholars, but his scholarship cannot. Then there is Zane Hodges, professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis at Dallas Theological Seminary. Hodges helped edit The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text. Who would doubt Hodges’ credentials? Yet a final individual that will be mentioned is Dr. Henry M. Morris. Founder of the Institute for Creation Research, Morris was one of the foremost Creation Science scholars of the twentieth century. None would dare consider him uneducated or illogical. Yet in addition to his works on biblical creationism, Morris authored a booklet entitled A
Creationist’s Defense of the King James Version, in which he concludes, “The King James Bible is the most beautiful, the most powerful, and (I strongly believe) the most reliable of any that we have or probably ever will have, until Christ returns.”

Therefore, it is plainly evident that the assertion that no well-educated person holds to the superiority of the Majority Text or the King James Version must be rejected.

Best Manuscripts

It is a well accepted practice to make the misleading statement that the best manuscripts support the critical reading of certain biblical texts. By this the writers mean that the oldest manuscripts read a certain way. One often reads and hears, “The best manuscripts read” a certain way. Yet such remarks state the writer or speaker’s opinion rather than established fact. The fact may be that the oldest manuscripts support the critical reading, but that does not necessarily mean they are the best manuscripts. As was pointed out in chapter 3, advocates of the Majority Text have serious questions regarding the reliability of the oldest manuscripts. If Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus disagree over 3,000 times in the four Gospels, if even Hort conceded that the scribe of Vaticanus “reached by no means a high standard of accuracy,” if Hort also spoke of “the prodigious amount of error” Codex Bezae contained, then why should it be conceded by Bible students that these early manuscripts necessarily are the best manuscripts? In this author’s opinion it would be far wiser to state that the “oldest” manuscripts say something than to make a judgment call by proclaiming that the “best” manuscripts say it.

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12Pickering, 126-8.
Obsolete Translation

Some mistakenly believe that the King James Version of the Bible is hopelessly obsolete and should be shelved as a relic of a bygone era. They think that no one today can possibly understand the language of the Authorized Version and so it should be retired. Such a notion is blatantly in error and can be quickly disproved. Despite the fact that the KJV has many archaic words and phrases, multitudes of individuals today read the KJV regularly, if not exclusively, and understand it. Additionally, there are many reference editions of the KJV available which define archaic terms for the reader. The KJV is also being utilized in countless pulpits and classrooms to clearly preach and teach the Word of God to modern hearers. To state that the KJV of the Bible is outdated and no longer being used by God is to claim far more than can be demonstrated.

Misinformation about Modern Translations and the Critical Text

While it is true that advocates of modern translations have made statements that are mistaken, it is just as true that supporters of the King James Version have propagated similarly unsubstantial misinformation. A number of examples will be addressed.

Copyright Fallacy

It is often mistakenly taught that modern translations cannot be the Word of God because they have been copyrighted. The claim is made that no man can copyright the Word of God. It is stated that the KJV has never been copyrighted and has always been public domain. Hence, it is reasoned that since the KJV was not copyrighted, it must be God’s Word and the modern copyrighted versions are not. Barry Burton states, “Is the
King James Bible Copyrighted?????? No!!!!! Why???? You cannot copyright God’s Word!!!!! You can only copyright man’s words!!!”¹³

There are two problems with this line of reasoning. First, the KJV was copyrighted in the manner of its time period. Copyrighting as modern man knows it was not in existence in 1611, but the KJV had the copyright of that day, which existed more for the benefit of the printers than for the authors or translators. It will be remembered that the KJV was printed by Robert Barker, the royal printer. Robert’s father, Christopher Barker, had become Queen Elizabeth’s printer in 1577 and managed in 1589 to persuade her to extend his patent as Queen’s Printer for the remainder of his own life, and that of his son, Robert. When Christopher died in 1599, his son assumed the role of Queen’s Printer, and when James I ascended the throne, Robert became the King’s Printer. Under the 1589 privilege, it was inevitable that the responsibility of printing the new Bible would become his. It has been estimated that Robert Barker set aside 3,500 pounds to cover the production cost of printing the KJV. He also brought in partners to raise capital, but the partnership went into disarray within five years, with the ensuing dispute between the partners threatening to disrupt the later printing of the work.¹⁴

Concerning this, David Daniell, in his massive work *The Bible in English*, writes:

Almost as soon as the KJV was off the press, the printing business of Robert Barker, ‘The Printer of the King’s most excellent Majesty’ as the title page announces, failed. This wealthy man, brought up in a printing family, son of Queen Elizabeth’s printer, now holding the patent which gave him the monopoly of printing the Bible – any Bible, whole or in parts – the Book of Common prayer, all official documents and all Statues, and a great deal of additional work


¹⁴McGrath, 198-9.
which came with all that, went bankrupt. The office of the king’s printer was taken from him.\textsuperscript{15}

Alister McGrath adds:

Barker was obliged to hand over the copyright to Bonham Norton [one of his partners] in 1617 as financial security. . . . It was not until 1629 that Barker managed to regain control of the patent. Norton went on to be imprisoned for bribery, and Barker for debt. Barker spent the last ten years of his life in the King’s Bench Prison in Borough High Street, Southwark. Under the terms of the patent granted to his father, he remained the King’s Printer until his dying day.\textsuperscript{16}

Thus, Barker basically was given by the King a monopoly on the right to print the Authorized Version. His firm held the rights to print the KJV until 1709. Yet it must be noted that along with the King’s printers, Oxford and Cambridge Universities also had certain patents or privileges from the Crown that allowed them to print Bibles.\textsuperscript{17}

Therefore, whether it is called a patent or a copyright, the KJV was copyrighted in the manner of its day. Indeed, it was because the King’s printers in England enjoyed the exclusive right to print the KJV that it was never printed in America until after the Revolutionary War. Only then did American printers feel no need to obey the British form of copyright laws.\textsuperscript{18}

Second, modern copyrighting does not change the authorship of the work translated. A work of Jules Verne is still his whether it is in the original French or translated into English. Likewise, the Bible is still God’s Word whether in the original tongues or rendered into English. A copyright does not change this fact. Rather it

\textsuperscript{15}David Daniell, \textit{The Bible in English} (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 451.

\textsuperscript{16}McGrath, 199.

\textsuperscript{17}Norris, 28.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.
protects the finished translation from being tampered with. Modern copyrighting prevents someone coming along and changing a translation and still calling it by the same name. But what of the profit question? Are not publishers profiting from printing modern translations? Of course they are, but they are also profiting from selling KJV Bibles too. Printers are in the business to make money. Barker was the King’s printer so that he could make a living. When modern publishers and copyright holders put out the money to pay translators for their endeavors, should they not profit from it? After all, Christian authors, singers, and painters make a profit from their work. But, it is claimed, the Bible is not their work. No, but the translation effort is. Furthermore, publishers of copyrighted Bibles do not charge authors for quoting from their works or prevent them from doing so. All that is necessary is that the author state that it was used with permission. What could be considered wrong with that? Therefore, to claim that copyrights prove that modern translations are not the Word of God is unfair and unreasonable.

Catholic Nature

One of the prevalent teachings heard today is that all modern versions of the Bible are Catholic in nature. It was the claim of Benjamin Wilkinson that the RV and the ASV were nothing but Roman Catholic translations masquerading as Protestant Bibles. Peter Ruckman declares, “A man, Christian or otherwise, has to be 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.”

19 What is the basis for this claim? Apparently this claim is based upon the importance given to the Codex Vaticanus by Westcott and Hort. This

19 Ruckman, 171.
manuscript’s very name makes it evident that it is housed in the Vatican Library. Additionally, it contains most of the Apocrypha. Thus, many would suspect any translation which relied upon a “Catholic” manuscript. Furthermore, Westcott and Hort have been accused by some to have been closet Catholics. But do these points make all modern translations Roman Catholic?

If these lines of reasoning make all modern translations Roman Catholic, then it must also be reasoned that the KJV is a Roman Catholic translation. Were Westcott and Hort Roman Catholics? They were not. Rather, they were both Anglicans, but so were all of the translators of the KJV. Did they make statements that indicated that they had some leanings toward Roman Catholic piety? Apparently they did. But it must be remembered that just as they were the developers of the Critical Text, so Erasmus was the composer of the Textus Receptus. While Westcott and Hort may have had Catholic leanings, there can be no possible doubt that Erasmus was clearly Roman Catholic. Even though he criticized the excesses in the Catholic Church, Erasmus remained loyal to the Pope, wrote in defense of the Mass and Transubstantiation, and repeatedly declared himself to be a loyal and devoted Romanist. He refused to side with those involved in the Reformation, and Luther considered him as “a trifler with truth, a scoffer of religion, an unbeliever.” It must be concluded that if Westcott and Hort’s Romanist leanings make their Critical Text and all modern versions translated from it Roman Catholic, then the Textus Receptus and the KJV are also Catholic documents.

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20White, 244.

21Norris, 149; White, 245.

22Norris, 155.
Does the inclusion of the Apocrypha in the Codex Vaticanus make it and any translation which utilizes it Roman Catholic? If so, then the KJV must also be concluded to be a Catholic Bible. It is a fact of history which cannot be honestly argued against that the 1611 KJV included all of the books of the Catholic Apocrypha. This comes as no surprise as all previous English Bibles had also included them. The Apocrypha was such an integral part of the KJV that one of the translators, George Abbot, after his appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury, issued a decree in 1615 stipulating that anyone who published the English Bible (KJV) without the Apocrypha should be imprisoned for one year.\textsuperscript{23} Thus, it was not until 1629 that an edition was printed without the Apocrypha.\textsuperscript{24} Obviously, the inclusion of the books of the Apocrypha does not automatically make a Bible Roman Catholic.

Does the connection of the Codex Vaticanus with the Church of Rome make it a Catholic manuscript and the translations which use it Catholic versions? Not necessarily. Many notable Protestant and anti-Catholic works are also housed in the Vatican Library, as well as numerous Byzantine Greek New Testament manuscripts.\textsuperscript{25} Who would claim these are Catholic because of their location? Furthermore, the Codex Sinaiticus was owned at one time by the government of Russia. But the fact that it was in Russia does not make it Russian. Likewise, just because this other ancient manuscript is housed in the Vatican Library in Rome does not make it by default Catholic. Additionally, the history of the Majority Text and the resulting \textit{Textus Receptus} should also be examined.

\textsuperscript{23}Rawlings, 152.

\textsuperscript{24}Price, 94.

\textsuperscript{25}Rawlings, 202.
The Majority Text, also known as the Byzantine Text, was transmitted by the Greek Orthodox Church. Concerning this group, Norris writes:

The Eastern Church did not officially split from the Roman Church until 1054 A.D., hundreds of years after the Byzantine text became the main New Testament text in use in the Eastern Church. Even after 1054, there were many contacts between the Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox along with several attempts to reunify them.\(^{26}\)

Therefore, if the Codex Vaticanus is Catholic because of its geographic association with the City of Rome, the Majority Text is Catholic because of its geographic association with the area of its preservation and the Greek Orthodox Church. Such logic must go both ways.

Thus, it can be seen that the reasoning behind claims that all modern translations are Catholic in nature is illogical and unreasonable. The same lines of reasoning which make modern versions appear to be Roman Catholic would also make the KJV Catholic. Such arguments would best be left alone.

Liberal Translators

It is also common to hear all modern versions lumped together and referred to as being translated by liberal scholars. This practice is neither accurate nor fair. While it is certainly true that James Moffatt and Edgar J. Goodspeed were liberals, that does not mean all translators are. And while it is certain that the RSV and the NEB had liberals on their translation teams and clearly have a liberal slant, that does not mean every other modern translation is liberal. The foreword to the NASB states that it was “produced with the conviction that the words of Scripture as originally penned in the Hebrew and

\(^{26}\) Norris, 163.
Greek were inspired by God.”27 Likewise, the NIV and NKJV were undertaken by men who held a high regard of biblical inspiration. These translations are not liberal, and to link such versions with the RSV and the NEB is both unscholarly and unjust. A distinction should and must be made between liberal translations and conservative translations, and the liberal translations should not be used to discredit the conservative ones.

Heretical Teaching

Another favorite message promulgated today is that all modern translations of the Bible are heretical in nature. They are often referred to as “perversions” and said to contain false doctrine. But are such statements true? The only way to know for certain is to fairly examine the translations themselves and consider what they state concerning fundamental Bible doctrines. Two of the most commonly used modern translations which are conservative in nature and used by Evangelicals and Fundamentalists are the NASB and the NIV. These will each be considered in regards to some of the more common charges raised against translations in regards to doctrinal purity.

First, what does each teach in regards to the virgin birth of Christ. It is commonly charged that the newer versions deny the virgin birth. Is that true? The major passages dealing with the virgin birth of Jesus are Isa7:14; Matt 1:18, 22-25; and Luke 1:34-35. How does the NASB rate in these passages? This version translates Isaiah’s prophecy, “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she shall call His name Immanuel” (Isa 7:14). It next renders Matthew’s words, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been

27Foster, 33.
betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child by the Holy Spirit” (Matt 1:18). “Now all this took place that what was spoken by the LORD through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us.’ And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus” (Matt 1:22-25). Finally, in Luke 1:34-35 it states, “And Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.’”

Certainly no denial of the virgin birth can be found is these key passages. Indeed, the word “virgin” is found in Luke 1:34 where it is not in the KJV.

But what of the more dynamic NIV; does it deny the virgin birth? Isa 7:14 is rendered, “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” Matthew 1:18 reads, “This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.” Then verses 22-25 are translated, “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ – which means, ‘God with us.’ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.” Lastly, Luke 1:34-35 is rendered, “‘How will this be,’ Mary asked the angel,
‘since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’” Again, there no hint of a denial of Christ’s virgin birth. Indeed, the word “virgin” is again found in Luke 1:34 where it is not found in the KJV. It must be concluded that both of these modern translations clearly and definitely teach the biblical doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. They are not heretical in this matter.

Second, what does each of these modern translations teach regarding the deity of Jesus Christ? It is often claimed that modern versions deny that Jesus is God. If this assertion proves factual then none of these versions should claim any loyalty among those who follow Christ. But is this claim true? The best way to ascertain this is to examine what these versions should do if they truly desired to deny Christ’s deity. For example, there is no shred of doubt that the Jehovah Witnesses are a cult which unmistakably deny the deity of Jesus Christ. Thus, it comes as no surprise that in their New World Translation (NWT), they mistranslate key passages so that Jesus’ deity appears to be lacking. Since they started out with the design to deny Christ’s deity, they were forced to alter verses which teach it. D. A. Carson lists eight such key verses, in all of which the NWT denies the deity of Christ. These are: John 1:1; John 1:18; Acts 20:28; Rom 9:5; 2 Thess 1:12; Tit 2:13; Heb 1:8; and 2 Pet 1:1. How do the NASB and NIV translate these verses? If they are truly trying to deny the deity of Christ, then they should attempt to deny it in these significant passages just as the Jehovah Witnesses do. In regards to John 1:1, both modern versions are very clear that the Word (Jesus) is God. When one looks at John 1:18, both are plain that Jesus is God. In this instance these

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28 Carson, 64.
newer translations can be used to prove the deity of Christ better than the KJV.
Concerning Acts 20:28, both agree with the KJV in proclaiming the deity of Christ.
When one examines Rom 9:5, he discovers that while the NASB is worded like the KJV in teaching the deity of Christ, the NIV is worded even more clearly in teaching this truth.
Concerning 2 Thess 1:12, is must be noted that the KJV does not clearly show forth Christ’s deity. Sadly, these modern versions are worded the same way. Yet it is interesting that while neither clearly show Christ’s deity, the footnote in the NIV gives an alternate reading as “God and Lord, Jesus Christ,” thus attributing deity to Jesus.
Regarding Tit 2:13, the renderings of the modern versions make the deity of Christ clearer than does the KJV wording. Then in Heb 1:8, both join with the KJV in declaring that Jesus is God. Finally, while in 2 Pet 1:1 the KJV is not plain in calling Jesus God, the NASB and NIV are. Therefore, neither of these modern versions joins the NWT in denying that Jesus is God in any of these key passages. Indeed, these modern translations do a better job in some cases of proving His deity than does the KJV. While it is true that sometimes the NASB and NIV do leave out a title of Christ in certain verses, this does not mean that the translation as a whole is attempting to deny His deity. The omission of an individual title, phrase, or verse does not constitute evidence for theological heresy because that would require that the translation or text-type in question consistently tries to suppress or deny that doctrine.29 As the study of the above mentioned verses has proved, this is certainly not the case with these modern translations.

Third, what does each of these modern translations teach regarding salvation? It is often claimed that new translations teach salvation by works rather than by grace. Do

29Ibid., 62-3.
these two major modern versions deny salvation by grace? First, the NASB must be examined. John’s statement on believing is rendered, “He who believes the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” Thus, the NASB states that eternal life is through believing. “Yes,” one might counter, “but it then speaks of obeying. Does that not teach a works salvation?” The answer must be in the negative for two reasons. The first is that a NASB note on the word “obey” states “or believe.” Second because, Jesus Himself explains what it means to obey God in John 6:29, which the NASB translates, “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.’” Therefore, a closer examination of the NASB clearly shows that it is not attempting to teach works salvation in the Gospel of John. But what about elsewhere? In Rom 3:20-24, the NASB renders Paul’s explanation on salvation, “Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” Then in Gal 2:26 it declares, “Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.” And certainly the NASB makes Paul’s declaration to the Ephesians very plain when it reads, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works,
that no one should boast” (Eph 2:8-9). Again, it must be conceded by those with honesty that the NASB is quite plain in its teaching concerning salvation that every lost person must believe in Christ and be saved by faith rather than by any works of his own.

Next, the NIV must be looked at. In John 3:36 it reads, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.” In the NIV, John 6:29 states, “Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”” Then it translates Paul’s words to the Romans as, “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:20-24). Also, the NIV declares that Paul and his fellow Jews “know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified” (Gal 2:26). Finally, Eph 2:8-9 is rendered, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” Clearly, the NIV does not teach salvation by works but by grace through faith. To say otherwise is to misrepresent the overall proclamation of this version. Thus, it must be conceded that these two modern Bible translations do not teach a works salvation any more than the KJV does.
After carefully considering what the NASB and NIV teach on Christ’s virgin birth, His deity, and salvation by grace, it must be concluded that these leading modern versions are not heretical. Rather they are completely orthodox and can be trusted by Christians today. It must also be concluded that if someone were consciously attempting to bring heresy into these versions, they did a terrible job.

100 Percent or Nothing

It was shown in Chapter 3 that it is commonly believed that 98 to 99.9 percent of the New Testament is certain. Yet some have stated that if there is any question of the biblical text at all then Christians do not have the Bible at all. But is such reasoning correct? When Malachi penned the last words of the Old Testament, would anyone dare tell the Jewish people that they did not posses the Scriptures? When Ulfilas translated all of the Bible into Gothic except 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, did he not give these people the Bible? When a modern missionary translates the Gospel of John into a native tongue, has he not given them God’s Word? If a Christian comes to church this Sunday with a New Testament, would he be told he is not carrying the Word of God? Not until recent times has every book of the Scriptures been printed and bound together under one cover. Certainly all of it does not have to be together before God’s Word is present. As was also demonstrated in Chapter 3, all of God’s written Word has been preserved. The only question is exactly how. Because of this there is an extremely small percentage of doubt which affects some passages. Yet this should not cause anyone to claim that God’s Word is not available to modern believers.

Likewise, some claim that every word of God must be known for certain. After all, it is reasoned, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth
out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4b). This is true, but this does not mean that God has recorded every word He ever proclaimed. Does anyone truly believe that every word spoken by Christ while upon earth is recorded in the gospel records? If the Apostle John claimed, “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25), could not the same be said of His spoken words? Now if it must be admitted that modern man does not have every word that Jesus ever said, then it cannot be concluded that he must know every word for certain.

It should also be recognized that the teaching which holds that if believers do not know every word for certain which is preserved then an inspired original is worthless, is the same argument previously used by liberals to attack the inerrancy of Scripture. Kevin Bauder writes:

Ironically, this is one of the arguments that liberals and leftward-leaning evangelicals have employed against the inerrancy of the original documents of Scripture. Inerrancy is worthless, they argue, if it applies only to the originals that we do not have. Similarly, the King James-Only proponents argue that verbal inspiration is worthless unless the exact words are preserved. Whether employed by the far Left or the far Right, the argument is the same: what good are inerrant originals if all we have are flawed copies?30

While no known copy is perfect, that does not mean that God has not preserved His Word. Nor does it mean that any doubt as to the exact wording of the original autographs in a particular instance invalidates biblical inspiration. One hundred percent certainty for every word is not required for man to have the Bible. The truth of the matter is that

30Beacham and Bauder, 23-4.
God’s inspired Word is available to modern mankind if they will just read it. To argue otherwise is to confuse the issue, cause unneeded conflict, and give the enemies of Scripture ammunition to use against the cause of Christ.

**Concluding Thoughts on Peripheral Misinformation and the Bible Storm**

If independent Baptists are to calm the troubled waters stirred up by the Bible translation storm, they must fully understand the fact that peripheral misinformation confuses the essential issues. This chapter has shown that misinformation and misrepresentation are being sown by both sides of the translation debate. Yet both sides of the debate would certainly agree that truth must win out over error. While disagreements occur in the best of families, the mark of love is to act in a courteous fashion and to speak only the truth. Honesty requires that when a line of reasoning has been shown to be built on a faulty foundation, it must be rejected and abandoned. If conservative Baptists will act as Christian gentlemen, rejecting the false information that is constantly being spread about Bible translations and focusing instead upon the core issues, it will go a long way in calming the troubled waters of the translation storm.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON THE TRANSLATION STORM

There is indeed a terrible storm of hurricane proportions blowing today. It threatens to sweep all before it into disarray. The ship of evangelical Christianity among English speaking believers is being tossed about by these horrible winds. This storm has been shown to involve the issue of Bible translations: Which English translation is or translations are acceptable for use among God’s people in this present day? This storm concerns evangelical Christians in general and independent Baptists in particular. Those who should be working together are expending their energies fighting one another. Certainly these troubled waters of the Bible translation issue need to be calmed, but how? It will require the hand of the Master Himself speaking through the means of His servants to bring peace to the wind swept sea.

This study has shown that the Savior can calm the Bible translation storm through the teaching and receiving of accurate knowledge. Working along this line of reasoning, it has presented accurate biblical and historical information which can help Christians overcome preconceived notions and misinformation. It has also shown that both sides of the controversy have more in common than they hold in difference. In the remaining pages the author desires to quickly review what must be clearly understood and then make some practical suggestions on how to calm the troubled waters of the Bible translation storm.
Brief Review of What Must Be Understood

Tragically, many independent Baptist pastors have never been carefully instructed in matters of Bibliology as it relates to the current translation controversy. In the survey taken by this writer of the Baptist Bible Fellowship International’s State Representatives, he discovered that 13 percent of them mistakenly believe that inspiration applied to translations and that over 56.5 percent of them have never had a college or seminary course which directly applied detailed information regarding Bible preservation and translation into the English language to the current Bible translation debate.\(^1\) If good, earnest pastors have never been taught this information, how will their congregations learn it?

The Lord does not place a high premium upon ignorance. Wisdom can utilize knowledge to accomplish great things in the lives of believers in Christ. This is true in many areas of the Christian life, and it is certainly true in regards to quieting the translation storm. This thesis has set forth four essential points which must be understood if Baptists are to find any peace on this issue.

First, it has been demonstrated that if independent Baptists are to calm the troubled waters stirred up by the Bible translation storm, they must fully understand the essential doctrine of Bible inspiration. It was shown that the Word of God clearly teaches in 2 Tim 3:16-17 and 2 Pet 1:20-21 that the writings (not the writers) of the Scriptures were inspired by God, and thus inspiration extended to the very words of the autographs, not just the thoughts. Next, it was observed that inspiration logically implies the inerrancy of Scripture since God cannot make an error. Yet while the originals were

\(^1\)Appendix 2.
error free, it is very evident that both copies and translations do contain errors. Therefore, it was concluded that only the autographs were inspired by God in the strictest theological sense. Finally, it was demonstrated that the overwhelming consensus of Christendom throughout the centuries and the historic Baptist position has been that only the original writings were inspired, not copies or translations.

Second, it has been demonstrated that if independent Baptists are to calm the troubled waters stirred up by the Bible translation storm, they must clearly understand the essential nature of Bible preservation. It was observed that not only did the Bible consistently presuppose its own preservation, it also gave a number of texts in which God promised to preserve His Word (Matt 5:17-18; 24:35; Isa 40:6-8; 1 Pet 1:23-25). Yet it was discovered that the Bible is absolutely silent as to the method God used to preserve it. While God could have miraculously preserved His Word in the copying process, it was seen that a study of the history of biblical preservation leads to the conclusion that God has preserved His Scriptures providentially. Next, it was shown that while God chose to preserve the Bible through an abundance of manuscript evidence, a difference of opinion exists as to whether He did so in the majority of manuscripts, the oldest manuscripts, the Textus Receptus, or in the totality of existing manuscripts. Then, it was historically observed that the consistent position of Christendom in general and of Baptists in particular has been to understand that God preserved His Word in reliable copies which were then translated into dependable translations. Lastly, it was discovered that there were times in Church history when some believers became so enamored with their favorite translation that they made claims that it should be used exclusively, and it was concluded that this tendency had reemerged in the twentieth century.
Third, it has been demonstrated that if independent Baptists are to calm the troubled waters stirred up by the Bible translation storm, they must fully understand the essential need of Bible translation. This essential need was defined as providing the opportunity to the common individual to read the Word of God in his native tongue so that he can comprehend it correctly. The biblical basis for this need was found in the historical instances recorded in Scripture in which translation had been required, and in the anticipation of the future need for translation found in the Great Commission. Next, the result of this need was observed to be the legacy of Bible translations found throughout Church history in ancient, Reformation, and modern times. It was then observed that this need for Bible translation continues until this present day both globally in mission endeavors and among English speaking people because of the constantly changing nature of the English language. It was also noted that this need for translation has presented the modern translator with the dilemma of choosing which translation methodology (literal or dynamic) to give preference to. Finally, it was discovered that historically both the Church in general and Baptists in particular have always supported Bible translation efforts.

Fourth, it has been demonstrated that if independent Baptists are to calm the troubled waters stirred up by the Bible translation storm, they must fully understand the fact that peripheral misinformation confuses the essential issues. The danger of misinformation was seen to be that when the main issues are confused, neither side of the debate is willing to calmly examine the main issues or consider the other person’s point of view. It was observed that both sides of the translation issue had presented misinformation which was both misleading, unfair, and illogical. Such confusing
material needs to be set aside, emotions need to cool, and believers on both sides need to address the primary issues of inspiration, preservation, and translation in a biblical fashion as Christian gentlemen.

Therefore, when the essential doctrine of Bible inspiration, the essential nature of Bible preservation, the essential need of Bible translation, and the danger of peripheral misinformation are clearly understood, the Bible translation storm will be greatly calmed. May independent Baptists lay aside their differences and agree to accurately pursue these essential needs. May pastors and teachers learn these doctrinal and historical facts and teach them to their congregations and student bodies. And may God’s words of “Peace, be still” again be heard over the waters of the troubled sea.

**Practical Suggestions of What Can Be Done**

In addition to teaching congregations and students at Bible colleges and seminaries the biblical and historical facts which shed light on the Bible translation issue, there are other things which individuals and churches can do. This writer would like to set forth just four simple and yet practical suggestions which can help calm the translation storm.

First, individual believers must focus more upon the major doctrinal beliefs they hold in common than upon their secondary points of disagreement. It has been seen throughout this study that both sides of the Bible translation controversy share much in common even in regards to their position on the Bible. Both sides believe that the Scriptures are inspired by God and as such are inerrant. Both sides believe that God has preserved His Word for mankind and that it will endure forever. Both sides believe that God’s Word as originally given in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek must be translated into
the common languages of mankind so that the ordinary man and woman can read it for
themselves and live according to it. Since these are the main issues, why should those on
either side allow the peripheral matters to bring dissention and conflict between them?
Beyond this, independent Baptists agree on the vast majority of doctrinal matters. They
agree on the fundamentals of the Christian faith, on the particular doctrines which make
one a Baptist, and on the need to reach the world for Christ. This being true, should not
independent Baptists who stand side-by-side on the vast majority of topics just agree to
disagree on the particulars of this issue? In some ways this debate over Bible translations
is similar to discussion over Bible prophecy. Some Baptists believe that the two
witnesses of Revelation 11 are Moses and Elijah, while others think they are Enoch and
Elijah, and still others hold they are two Jewish men living during the Tribulation period.
Yet independent Baptists would be silly to break fellowship, write abusive open-letters,
or call each other heretics over this difference. They can talk over their differences in
opinion and argue their lines of logic without becoming enemies. For that matter, while
most independent Baptists are Pre-Tribulational in their viewpoint on the timing of the
return of Christ, if one pastor were to adopt a Mid-Tribulational or Pre-Wrath Rapture
view, other Baptist pastors would not break fellowship with him over this issue alone.
They would attempt to persuade him with biblical logic towards the Pre-Tribulational
point of view, and if unsuccessful believe that he was in error. But they would not refer
to him as a heretic because, although he is mistaken in a particular, he still believes in the
fundamental doctrine of the return of Christ. Likewise, since both sides of this issue
believe in the fundamental doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of Holy Scripture
should they not talk over their differences and then go on with their ministries as brothers
in Christ? May Baptists magnify their similarities in regards to the major doctrines of the Christian faith and minimize their differences on lesser matters. It is time that fundamental Baptists begin to act like Christian gentlemen and disagree as friends. It is time to live again by the ancient maxim, “In essentials unity; in nonessentials liberty; in all things charity.”

Second, each local church should have a policy in regards to the use of Bible translations. There is little doubt that the use of a multitude of Bible versions by the pastoral staff and various Sunday School teachers can cause unneeded confusion among the people of God in a local church. If the Sunday School teacher is utilizing the NIV, the Senior Pastor preaches out of the NKJV on Sunday morning, and the associate pastor uses the NASB in the evening, there probably will be some members in the pews wondering what is going on. It seems best to this writer that each local church decides on which translation will be the primary one used by the entire church for preaching, teaching, public reading, and memorization. Other versions certainly can be referred to, but having one standard version will head off unnecessary conflict. This means that the pastor and church should decide which textual basis they consider to most accurately represent the preserved Word of God. Then, based upon whether they consider the Textus Receptus, the Majority Text, or the Critical Text the most reliable, they can decide upon which Bible translation they should choose. John Ankerberg writes:

Thus, if a given church is convinced that the Textus Receptus, the text behind the KJV, is the correct Greek text, then the KJV can be used. Better yet, preference for the NKJV should be considered since it is easier to understand. If a congregation accepts that the Majority text is the best text for the New Testament then the NKJV should be adopted because it is the closest there is to the MT. Those churches who believe in an eclectic text, in examining all the evidence and making reasoned decisions on that basis, can use a good modern
translation: Those who prefer a more word-for-word literal translation could use the NASB; those who want an easier version to read yet one that is still faithful could use the NIV.²

Yet an extremely large percentage of independent Baptist churches have no such written policy. In the surveys taken by this writer of pastors in the Baptist Bible Fellowship it was discovered that of those surveyed in the state of Iowa only half have a written policy on the use of Bible translations. In the survey of national State Representatives, only 57 percent reported that they have such a written policy.³ By having a written church policy on this issue, a local church can prevent it becoming a divisive problem.

Third, local churches must respect the priesthood of the individual believer and allow members the right to choose for themselves which translation of the Bible they desire to use. Even though a local church has a written policy on Bible translations, that does not mean that it should dictate to its members what they can read for themselves or bring to church services. The written church policy only deals with the public use of Bible versions in church meetings. It must never overrule the individual believer’s right to follow the Lord as he sees best. Independent Baptists believe very strongly in the priesthood of the believer. Each and every believer is a priest (1 Pet 2:9) with access directly to God through Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5). As such, every Christian has the right to pray; read, study, and interpret the Bible; and serve God as he is led by the Holy Spirit. He does not need his pastor’s or his church’s permission to do these things because he is a priest of God himself who can boldly “enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Heb 10:19). Paul R. Jackson writes:


³Appendix 2.
A major part of Christendom today has no concept of this liberty. Men generally feel that the preacher is a priest in a certain sense and has liberties and powers with God that are beyond those of the common man. This is not true. He may use that privilege more faithfully than many, but the way is open for every believer (Heb. 10:19-22).\(^4\)

Therefore, since each Christian is a priest of God, he has the right to decide for himself which Bible translation he desires to use. To deny him this right is to deny the priesthood of the believer. Let each local church respect its members’ soul-liberty.

Finally, every local church should respect the autonomy of other local churches and not demand they utilize any particular translation as the criteria of orthodoxy or fellowship. Just as each individual believer is a priest, each local church is an autonomous, self-governing, body. As such, no outside body has the right to demand any action of a local church. Indeed, such belief is a Baptist distinctive. Mike Randall, President of Baptist Bible College, writes:

The churches in New Testament times were self-governing and as such, they had to be independent. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). This comprehensive injunction implies control of the affairs of the church by the church itself. While maintaining this autonomy, as has already been said, New Testament churches participated in a voluntary cooperation with other churches in common projects (2 Corinthians 8:1-7). It is significant that even in the great council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:5-30), the participants didn’t make laws but merely gave advice. Christ alone is the lawgiver of the New Testament church, but it has judicial and executive power. It is Christianity’s supreme court on earth (1 Corinthians 6:1-8). No other earthly religious body or authority is higher than that of the local, visible, New Testament church. It is a sovereignty.\(^5\)

This being true, no other local church, state or national fellowship, or denomination has the authority to tell a local church which Bible translation they must use. Likewise, to

\(^4\)Jackson, 144.

decide to censure another local church over such a matter is an attack upon its autonomy. Since Baptists loudly declare that they believe in the autonomy of each local church, they should respect such autonomy even if they do not agree with a church’s choices.

If individual believers, local churches, and state and national fellowships will follow these four simple recommendations, much will be accomplished in stilling the troubled waters of the Bible translation storm. Although the storm about independent Baptists rages, although at times the ship seems about to sink beneath the tumultuous waves, may the calming voice of the Master be heard above the roar, “Peace, be still.”
APPENDIX 1

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A considerable amount of literature has been written on the subjects of the Bible’s origin, inspiration, preservation, translation, and on the debate concerning Bible translations. Because of this, the author has chosen to present a representative review of the literature rather than an exhaustive one. He has limited himself to three sources under each heading.

Books Dealing with a General Introduction to the Bible

One of the best conservative books covering the inspiration, canonicity, text, and translation of the Bible is A General Introduction to the Bible by Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, copyrighted in 1968. In this volume the authors break their material into three main parts which deal with the inspiration, canonization, and transmission of the Bible. The first and last of these divisions are of special interest to the current paper. In dealing with the subject of inspiration, the authors point out that the Bible claims to be inspired. The two New Testament passages which set the stage for the discussion of inspiration are 2 Tim 3:16 and 2 Pet 1:21. They note that the New Testament reserves the word “inspiration” only for the writings and that it involves the very words written, and they then go on to contend that while the autographs were actually inspired, good copies or translations are adequate and for all practical purposes the inspired Word of God.
Various theories of inspiration are discussed which cover Liberal, Neo-orthodox, and Conservative views. Geisler and Nix hold the verbal plenary inspiration view. Under the section on transmission, the authors deal with subjects such as preservation, manuscripts, translations, textual criticism, and modern English versions. Of particular help to this student were the pages in which the need for, the principles of, and the history of textual criticism are presented. The writers hold that the Bible of today which is based upon the critical Hebrew and Greek texts is a faithful reproduction of the books produced by its original authors.

A smaller book that is greatly helpful in gaining an overall view of how the Bible has come to modern man is *That Manuscript from Outer Space* by Harold L. Willmington. Copyrighted in 1974, the author presents his material in outline form which makes it easy to follow and find information. Three of Dr. Willmington’s sections were of special help to this student in the current project. The first deals with how the Bible came into being. In this section the author presents the various theories of inspiration and champions the plenary verbal position. He goes on with an excellent division on the implications of inspiration. One of these implications is that such inspiration deals only with the original languages and does not guarantee the inspiration of any modern or ancient translation of the Bible. The second deals with historical translations of the Bible. This has helped the student get a good overview of Bible translations from the time of the Greek Septuagint to the Revised Standard Version of 1952. The third deals with proofs that the Bible is the Word of God. Of special interest in this section is the material on the indestructibility of the Bible. The author points out that political, religious, and philosophical persecution has not been able to destroy the
Word of God. This has greatly helped the student understand the preservation of the Bible throughout the centuries.

An older book, first copyrighted in 1937, which has been of help to this student, is General Biblical Introduction by H. S. Miller. Containing forty-eight chapters, this work in divided into four parts dealing with the inspiration of the Scriptures, the canonicity of the Scriptures, the languages and writing materials of the Scriptures, and the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures. In his first section, the author deals with the various theories of inspiration and holds to plenary verbal inspiration. He points out that inspiration concerns the writing of Scripture only, making the writers infallible only in its composition. Inspiration is seen as guaranteeing the infallibility of the Bible. The author’s final section is very informative and covers material on biblical manuscripts, ancient versions, textual, criticism, English versions, and modern versions through 1937. Not only has the material in this book helped the student in his understanding of the Bible’s origin and transmission, but it is also valuable in understanding what some independent Baptists were taught concerning these matters because it was the textbook used by Noel Smith when he taught the course on Bible Introduction at Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri.

**Books Dealing with the History of the English Bible**

A massive book of almost nine hundred pages on this subject is The Bible in English by David Daniell, copyrighted in 2003. This work deals with the English Bible before printing and after printing and brings the reader up to the turn of the twenty-first century. Because of its size and recent publication date, it gives the student a wonderful resource to refer to for the background on any particular translation. In his introduction,
the author points out that the Greek New Testament is the best-attested document in the world. Concerning manuscript authority, he holds that the general principle is always that the earlier is the better, on the grounds that there are fewer copyists’ errors. Of great help to the student in his current research was the author’s background on the translation of the Authorized Version and that of the English Revised Version. This gives the reader a good background to compare these two versions. Also, of special interest to this student was a discussion of the “KJV Only” debate by the author. He states that this position arose in the United States in the last decades of the twentieth century and gives a short overview of the position and some extreme beliefs held by some.

A shorter work that was copyrighted in 2001 is In the Beginning by Alister McGrath. This book deals in particular with the story of the King James Version of the Bible. It is an engrossing account of its translation and impact on society. This book is helpful in that it gives far more detail than is normally found elsewhere as to the reasons the venture was undertaken and the procedure involved in the translation process itself. This proves valuable in considering some of the arguments of those who hold to a KJV Only position today.

Another recent book, copyrighted in 2004, is by Harold Rawlings and is entitled Trial by Fire. It deals with the history of the struggle to get the Bible into the English language. This excellent volume covers the translations efforts of John Wycliffe, significant events that shaped the English Bible (such as the Renaissance, the printing press, Erasmus’ Greek text, the Reformation, Luther’s Bible, and the reign of the Tudors), the work of William Tyndale, other English translations in the sixteenth century, and the production of the King James translation of the Bible. All of this material gives
the reader a wonderful sense of the rich heritage of the Bible in English. It was of help to
the student in putting the modern translation debate in its historical context. The final
chapter of the book is of special interest for this paper because it deals with the necessity
and difficulty of producing new Bible versions. The author states that opposition to new
translations is to be expected and shows how it has occurred in the past. He points out
that even the Authorized Version had to overcome opposition before establishing itself as
the Bible of choice. Early translators such as Tyndale and Coverdale admitted
imperfections in their work. Even the King James translators implied lack of perfection
for their translation in the Preface to the Authorized Version. Indeed, less than a half-
century after its publication, appeals began to go forth for a revision of the KJV.
Rawlings then points out that the most obdurate opponents of new translations in the
English-speaking world are those in the King James Only movement who insist that the
KJV is the only perfectly preserved, inerrant Word of God for English speaking people.
He goes on to give a good historical background of this movement and its leading
proponents. He further shows that the KJV Only camp has no intention of producing a
modern translation of the Bible even if it is based upon the Textus Receptus. It is also
shown that KJV Only position is a modern view, not the traditional view of conservative
Christians, and that God nowhere promises an inerrant transmission of Scripture.
Rawlings book is especially helpful because he is an independent Baptist who is the son
of John Rawlings, one of the founders of the Baptist Bible Fellowship.

**Books Dealing with the KJV Only Controversy**

One helpful book which deals with the exclusive claims for the King James Bible
is *One Bible Only?*. This work was copyrighted in 2001 and edited by Roy E. Beacham
and Kevin T. Bauder. Both editors are professors at Central Baptist Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and each contributor is associated with the same institution. Therefore, this work is important because it represents the views of many in the Baptist camp. Each of the main chapters is by a different individual and discusses such subjects as the background and origin of the version debate, the Old Testament text, the New Testament text, the preservation of Scripture, and translation theory. Each of these chapters has been helpful to this student in allowing him to better understand the issues being raised in the debate today. In the introduction, Bauder points out that this book disputes the King James Only teaching by insisting that believers can know what God said, even if they do not have every single word with which He said it. In the book’s conclusion the same editor states that the core issue of the controversy is whether one must have the very words of God (all the words and only the words of the autographs) to have the Word of God. If so, there is a problem because no two manuscripts are exactly alike.

Another helpful book is *The Unbound Scriptures* by Rick Norris. This is a large volume of over five hundred pages which was copyrighted in 2003. It is of special importance to this present paper because its author is a fundamentalist and an independent Baptist. In this work, Norris discusses variations in the KJV Only camp, false claims of the movement, arguments used by the movement, the doctrine of preservation, the need for translation, and many other issues. Each of these has been helpful in shaping this researcher’s understanding of the current translation storm. He has also found this work helpful because the writer documents claims from various KJV Only writers and then answers them. He also had access to various pre-King James
versions and shows how they compare to the KJV and modern translations. This is helpful in showing that often the older translations used terminology which agrees with the newer versions.

Possibly one of the most well known books on the translation debate is the 1995 work *The King James Only Controversy* by James R. White. This book is referred to by many when discussing the issue. The author begins by pointing out that not all of those in the King James movement believe alike. He then goes on to show historically that some of the same arguments used by KJV Only advocates have been used in the past by others advocating their own favorite version. Two examples of this are the defenses made for considering the Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate as infallible translations. This has helped this student get a historical perspective on the arguments used in the current debate. Also of interest is the author’s discussion of methods of translation (formal and dynamic equivalency), and his statement that much can be said for both. This has helped the student further understand many of the differences between English translations. Also, White’s comments on text-types and families help the reader understand why differences in English versions go beyond the method used in translation. Furthermore, the author has a helpful section about Erasmus and the Textus Receptus in which he gives historical background and shows that the Textus Receptus is not identical with the Majority Text. White also discusses the translation of the Authorized Version and the different revisions it has gone through. Then, the author considers some of the advocates for the superiority of the KJV and their arguments. He also considers alternate Bible versions whose verses read differently because of both translational differences and
textual differences. This student found all of this to be helpful as a good introduction to the depth of the Bible translation issue.

**Books Dealing with the Superiority of the Majority Text**

Before bringing this review of the literature available on the subject to a close, it would be good to consider some of the books that support the superiority of the Majority or Traditional Text. One of the oldest and still best of these is *The Revision Revised* by John William Burgon, Dean of Chichester. This work was first published in 1883 in response to the English Revised Version, which Burgon believed to be based upon a faulty text. This work is primarily made up of three articles. In the first, the author deals with the new Greek text of Westcott and Hort. He contends that the reconstruction of this text was a fatal mistake and that the oldest copies of the Greek New Testament are among the most erroneous in existence. He notes that various readings can be the result of accident or design and gives some examples of each. In the second article, Burgon deals with the new English Version. Briefly stated, the author holds that the Authorized Version is better that the Revised Version because it was based upon a superior text. He presents examples of what he considers weaknesses and mistakes in this new version throughout this section. In the third article, the writer deals with Westcott and Hort’s new textual theory. He feels that Hort took no notice of gross textual errors that were the result of design rather than accident. He further points out that Hort taught that the Syrian Text (Traditional Text) had undergone a recension. In summary, he holds that the method these two men utilized with the Bible’s text was indefensible. This student found Burgon’s work helpful because it showed that there were legitimate concerns regarding the Greek text of Westcott and Hort at the time it was produced from a man who was a
scholar himself. It also was helpful because Burgon was not opposed to a new translation being produced; he was just opposed to one being published which was not based upon what he considered to be the superior text. Therefore, one can be seen to logically support the Traditional Text without being locked into a King James Only position.

Another book which supports the Majority Text is Believing Bible Study by Edward F. Hills, first published in 1967. In this work the author argues that the entire basis of modern textual criticism is flawed because it treats the Bible like any other old book. He holds that the believer must approach the biblical text with faith that it is the Word of God and that God has preserved it through the outworking of His providence. This was not done in secret but in the majority of texts which survive to this day. Satan attempted to contaminate the text of the Bible, but these damaged texts were recognized by the church and rejected. Hills did not regard the KJV as perfect, but he saw no need for a new translation. This student found Hills helpful because he presents his arguments in a logical and usually fair style. He especially found the writer’s views on the providential preservation of the biblical text enlightening.

A third book which rationally supports the Majority Text is The Identity of the New Testament by Wilbur Pickering. In this book the author attacks what he considers to be the erroneous theories of Westcott and Hort. He points out many of their textual beliefs and assumptions (including the Lucianic recension) that scholars have come to doubt or deny. He also contends that it is recognized that the Majority Text type must date back to at least the second century. These examples have been helpful to this student in seeing that textual critics’ views have changed over the years. But far more helpful was Pickering’s argument of how the original text became the Majority Text and
of how the older texts contain variations. He teaches that the biblical authors clearly intended that their works be copied and circulated. By A.D. 100 there would have been many copies while it was still possible to check the originals. By the early years of the second century the stream of correct copies would have spread to the believing world and thus would have become the majority. Any deliberate change to the text must have occurred early rather than late. He teaches that most of the damage done must have occurred by A.D. 200 and states that from the third century onward not even Origen could effectively alter the text. Some aberrant text forms would have acquired a local following, but they would scarcely affect the momentum of the correct majority of texts in the Christian world. This proposition has been helpful to the student because it presents a reasonable explanation of the origin of both the Majority Text and the older manuscript evidence.
APPENDIX 2

BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP SURVEYS

Desiring to gain a better understanding of the positions held by the pastors who associate themselves with the Baptist Bible Fellowship International, this student sent out surveys. Since it was not feasible to send such surveys to every pastor in the Fellowship, he sent these surveys to each pastor in the state fellowship in which he is involved, that of Iowa. Additionally, he sent a similar survey to each of the State Representatives of the BBFI. The results of these surveys, examples of the cover letters, and examples of the actual surveys follow.

Iowa Baptist Bible Fellowship State Pastors’ Survey

This researcher sent surveys to his fellow pastors of the Iowa Baptist Bible Fellowship. Their names and addresses were gained from the most recent edition of the Baptist Bible Fellowship International Directory. Sixteen pastors (including Iowa’s state representative) responded.

Numerical Results of the State Survey

From the answers sent in by these sixteen pastors, the following information was gleaned. Nine of the sixteen are actively involved in the state fellowship, while seven are not. Three of these pastors have been in the ministry less than five years; two have been in the ministry between five and ten years; and eleven have been in the ministry over ten
years. Seven have an average church attendance of less than 100; five of between 100 and 249; three of between 249 and 500; and one of over 500. All sixteen believe in the plenary-verbal inspiration of the Bible and that inspiration demands inerrancy. Also, all sixteen believe that biblical inspiration applies to the original autographs. Three believe that inspiration also applies to the copies, and two believe it applies to translations. One additional pastor believes that it “somewhat” applies to the last two. All sixteen believe that God has both promised to preserve His Bible and has preserved it. Eight believe that the Bible has been preserved in a particular text type, normally the Textus Receptus or the Majority Text. Five believe it has been preserved in the totality of existing manuscripts, and five in a particular translation. (It should be noted that in the previous reply the pastors could answer in more than one way.) The Bible translation used by fourteen of the pastors for preaching and teaching purposes is the King James Version. Two others use the New King James Version. Only three of the pastors quote from or refer to other Bible translations in their preaching and teaching ministry, while thirteen do not. Six use other Bible translations in their study time and/or personal devotions, while ten do not. In addition to the King James Version, other translations used include the New King James Version, the New American Standard Version, the New International Version, the American Standard Version, the Living Bible, the New Living Translation, the Holman Christian Standard Bible, the English Standard Version, and the Contemporary English Version. Thirteen of the pastors’ churches have a policy on the use of Bible translations, while three do not. Of those who have, five have an understood policy, while eight have a written policy. Thirteen of the represented churches require all Bible teachers to use a particular Bible translation, and eleven require all guest speakers
to use a particular translation. The others do not. When asked if they were hiring an individual for a staff position, how much consideration they would give to his position on English Bible translation, one said none at all, six said some (but not the deciding factor), and nine said a great deal. Similarly, when asked how much consideration they would give this issue when considering a missionary for financial support, one answered none at all, six said some (but not the deciding factor), and eight answered a great deal.

Concerning translations and church membership, five said that they have lost members from their church because of the translation they used, while ten have not, and one was not sure. Also, nine said that people have not become members of their church because of the translation used, while six have not, and one was not sure. In regards to their educational background, eight answered that in their college or seminary training they had a class which in detail explained the Bible’s preservation and translation into English, while five said no, and three did not respond. Of those who said they had such a class, all eight said that it was at the Bachelors level and three said they also had such a class at the Masters level. All eight also said that this information was applied to the current King James Version Bible translation debate. When asked if the current debate over Bible translations has the possibility of hurting or disrupting the future of the Baptist Bible Fellowship international, fifteen of the sixteen answered yes. The one pastor who marked no wrote that the BBFI is not KJV and has no biblical standard when it comes to which Bible to use. Rather, they use other perversions.

Concerning suggestions as to what might be done to settle the debate over the King James only issue, answers included using common sense and having unbiased research, stopping the talking about it and making it an issue, taking the high road and
using the KJV, the bodily return of Christ, having a required course in translations in
college, having someone scrutinize the translations and explain deficient passages, having
a presentation on why the KJV is the translation used by the majority and a renewed look
at Jesus’ teaching on loving one another, that there never will be a solution, and that there
is no debate because the KJV is the only Bible.

Percentage Results of the State Survey

The answers sent in by the Iowa pastors yield the following percentages in
rounded numbers.

56 percent are active
44 percent are not

19 percent have pastored less than five years
12 percent have pastored five to ten years
69 percent have pastored over ten years

44 percent have an average attendance of less than 100
31 percent have an average attendance of 100 to 249
19 percent have an average attendance of 249 to 500
6 percent have an average attendance of over 500

100 percent believe in the plenary-verbal inspiration of the Bible

100 percent believe that inspiration demands inerrancy

100 percent believe that biblical inspiration applies to the original autographs
25 percent believe it applies to copies in some manner
19 percent believe it applies to translations in some manner

100 percent believe that God has promised to preserve His Word

100 percent believe God has preserved His Word

50 percent believe God has preserved His Word in a particular text type
31 percent believe God has preserved it in the totality of existing manuscripts
31 percent believe God has preserved it in a particular translation
87.5 percent of the pastors use the KJV for preaching and teaching
12.5 percent of the pastors use the NKJV for preaching and teaching

19 percent refer to other Bible translations in their preaching or teaching
81 percent do not

37.5 percent of the pastors use other translation in their study or devotions
62.5 percent do not

81 percent have a church policy on Bible translations
19 percent do not

38 percent of those who have a policy have an understood policy
62 percent of those who have a policy have a written policy

81 percent require all Bible teachers at their church to use a particular version
19 percent do not

69 percent require a guest speaker at their church to use a particular version
31 percent do not

When hiring an individual for a staff position:
6 percent give no consideration to his position on English Bible translations
38 percent give some but it is not the deciding factor
56 percent give a great deal of consideration to the issue

When considering a missionary for financial support:
7 percent give no consideration to his position on English Bible translations
40 percent give some but it is not the deciding factor
53 percent give a great deal of consideration to the issue

31 percent have lost members of their churches because of the version they use
63 percent have never lost members for this reason
6 percent are not sure

56 percent have had people not join their church because of the translation used
38 percent have not
6 percent are not sure

62 percent have had college or seminary classes explaining the Bible’s preservation and translation into English in detail
38 percent have not

100 percent of those who had such classes said that the information was applied to the current KJV translation debate
94 percent said that this issue has the possibility of hurting or disrupting the BBFI. 6 percent said it did not because the BBFI was already not KJV.

Conclusions Drawn from the State Survey

From the surveys returned by the pastors in the Iowa Baptist Bible Fellowship, a number of observations can be made and conclusions drawn. First, the Bible translation issue is having an effect upon both local churches, the servants of God in the state of Iowa, and the national Fellowship. It is reported that 31 percent have lost members from their local churches because of the translation issue. Additionally, 56 percent have had individuals not join their church because of the translation issue. Thus, the translation issue is certainly having an impact on the local church. Also, it is having an impact upon God’s servants, because 56 percent of these pastors give a great deal of consideration to the translation issue when considering the hiring of a person to fill a church staff position. The same holds true when considering taking on a missionary for support, since 53 percent give the translation issue a great deal of consideration when doing so. One respondent was quite clear that he supported only KJV missionaries. Thus, over one-half of these pastors say that the translation issue is having an effect upon individual servants of God. It is helping to determine which men are hired in local churches and which missionaries are receiving financial support. Finally, it is having an effect on the closeness and effectiveness of the national fellowship of the BBFI. All of the pastors were in basic agreement on this point, with all but one saying the issue had the possibility of hurting or disrupting the BBFI. The only pastor to disagree did so on the grounds that the BBFI was not KJV and has no standard when it comes to the Bible since it uses other perversions. Thus, his very answer shows that the translation issue is having an effect.
Second, pastors on both sides of the issue have much in common. All of the pastors surveyed believe in the plenary-verbal inspiration of the Bible. Since verbal inspiration means that the very words of Scripture are the words of God and plenary inspiration means that all the parts of Scripture are the Word of God; this means that each pastor believes the Scriptures in their totality, every part and every word, is the Word of God. Next, all of these pastors believe that inspiration demands inerrancy. Since the Bible is the very Word of God and God cannot make mistakes, the Bible contains no errors. Furthermore, every one of these pastors believes that the original autographs were inspired by God. Thus, these autographs were perfectly recorded and were errorless. Additionally, 100 percent of these pastors believe not only that God has promised to preserve His Word but that He has done so. Therefore, regardless of which translation they use or how they stand on the current translation issue, all of these men are in agreement on their basic, foundational beliefs on inspiration and preservation.

Third, the pastors of the Iowa Baptist Bible Fellowship are still very loyal to the King James Version of the Bible. It is of note that pastors on both sides of the issue normally use the KJV in their preaching and teaching ministries. Indeed, 87.5 percent of those surveyed use the KJV. The two exceptions use the NKJV, which has the same textual basis as the KJV (the Masoretic Text for the Old Testament and the Textus Receptus for the New Testament). None are using a translation based upon the Critical Text.

Fourth, many of the churches are seeing the need for having a church policy regarding the public use of Bible translations. The Iowa pastors reported that 81 percent have such a policy. Yet only 62 percent have that policy in writing. This means that one-
half of these churches still do not have a written policy on Bible translations. Furthermore, 81 percent of these pastors require all Bible teachers to use a particular translation, while 69 percent require guest speakers to do so. Thus, it is seen that the use of a policy of one form or another is evident in Iowa regarding the use of Bible translations.

Fifth, it was observed that those pastors who are currently non-active in the state Fellowship were more likely to hold that the Bible had been preserved in a particular text type or in a particular translation rather than in the totality of existing manuscripts. When considering the active pastors, five out of nine believed that the Bible was preserved in the totality of existing manuscripts, three in a particular text type, and one in a particular translation. Therefore, approximately 56 percent believed it was preserved in the totality of manuscripts while 44 percent believed it was in a particular text type or translation. Yet among non-active pastors, none of them believed that it was preserved in the totality of existing manuscripts. Only six of the seven non-active pastors answered this question on the survey. Of those six, five answered that the Bible is preserved in a particular text type and four in a particular translation. Additionally, the one pastor who did not answer this question was elsewhere clear that he is KJV only. Therefore, while only 44 percent of the active Iowa Baptist Bible Fellowship pastors surveyed believe that God’s Word was preserved in a particular text type or version, 100 percent of the non-active pastors surveyed do. This is quite a difference.

It should also be observed that there were a few surprises for this researcher in the results of the survey. To begin with, he expected a larger number of pastors to refer to or quote other Bible translations in their preaching. Only 19 percent did. Also, he expected
a larger number to use other translations in their personal study; less than 40 percent did. Yet, on the other hand, he was surprised that some who hold that the Bible has been preserved in a particular text type or even translation still utilize other translations in their study time and/or personal devotions. Finally, he was surprised that 62 percent of those responding stated that they had received instruction in college or seminary classes explaining the Bible’s preservation and translation into English in detail and that this information was applied to the current translation debate. Over half of these stated that this had occurred at Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri. This researcher also attended there and took the required Bibliology class his first year. Even looking back at his syllabus for this course, he would not state that the preservation of Scripture was covered in detail. There was excellent information given on biblical texts and ancient translations through the KJV, but no details about what preservation means, how the texts were preserved, or about modern translations was recorded. Further, he has no recollection of this material being particularly applied to the current translation debate. This may mean one of a number of things. The material presented could have differed according to when the different pastors attended or who was their teacher. Also, this student’s memory could be in error (although he believes not) or he may consider “in detail” differently than does his pastoral colleagues. Even so, nearly 40 percent of the Iowa pastors surveyed had never taken a college or seminary course which explained the Bible’s preservation and translation into English or applied such information to the translation debate. In this author’s opinion, this is far too large a percentage.
National Baptist Bible Fellowship State Representatives’ Survey

This researcher sent surveys to the pastors who are the State Representatives of the Baptist Bible Fellowship. He received twenty-three responses. These included the states of Alaska, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington.

Numerical Results of the National Survey

From the answers sent in by these twenty-three State Representatives, the following information was gathered. Twenty-two of the men have been in the ministry over ten years. One has been in the ministry between five and ten years. Concerning the average attendance in their churches; five have less than 100, eleven have between 100 and 249, three have between 249 and 500, and four have over 500 in average attendance. All twenty-three believe in the plenary-verbal inspiration of the Bible. Twenty-two believe that inspiration demands inerrancy. All twenty-three believe that biblical inspiration applies to the original autographs, while two believes it also applies to copies and three to translations. All twenty-three believe that God has promised to preserve His Bible and has preserved His Bible. Thirteen believe that God has preserved His Word in a particular text type (usually the Textus Receptus or the Majority Text). Six believe He did so in the totality of existing manuscripts. Three believe it is in a particular translation. (It should be noted that two men did not respond to this question, and one marked two answers.) Nineteen primarily use the King James Version in preaching and teaching, three the New King James Version, and one either the New Living Translation or the English Standard Version. Ten refer to or quote from other translations in their
preaching or teaching, while thirteen do not. Seventeen use other translations in their study or personal devotional times, while six do not. Other translations used include the New King James Version, the New American Standard Version, the New International Version, the Living Bible, the New Living Translation, the English Standard Version, the Amplified Bible, and Young’s Literal Translation. Sixteen of these men’s churches have a policy on the use of Bible translations, while seven do not. Of those churches which have a policy, in five cases it is understood and in eleven it is written. Nineteen of these churches require all Bible teachers to use a particular translation, while four do not. Fifteen of these churches also require a guest preacher to use a particular translation, while eight do not. When asked if their church was considering hiring an individual for a staff position, how much consideration would they give to his position on English Bible translations, three replied none, five replied some but not as the deciding factor, and fifteen replied a great deal. When asked the same question is regards to considering a missionary for financial support, five responded none, eleven responded some but not as the deciding factor, and seven responded a great deal. When asked if they had ever lost members because of the translation they used or did not use, nine said yes, twelve said no, and one was not sure. When asked if some one had not become a member of their church because of the translation used or not used, twelve said yes, nine said no, and one was not sure. Fourteen said that they had received college or seminary courses which explained in detail the Bible’s preservation and translation into English, while nine had not. Of those who had, thirteen said it was at the Bachelors level. Also, three had received it at the Masters level and two at the Doctoral level. Ten of these said that this information was applied to the current KJV translation debate, while four said it was not.
All twenty-three believe that the current debate has the possibility of hurting or disrupting the future of the Baptist Bible Fellowship International. Indeed, fourteen said this debate has already had an impact on their state’s Fellowship, while nine replied it had not.

When asked for suggestions of what might be done to settle the debate over the King James Version only issue, some of the replies included: not a thing, using the KJV as the standard for Bible colleges and preaching while not interfering with autonomous churches, reading more and not just repeating what someone else says, using the KJV in Fellowship meetings, leaving those who hold the KJV position alone and stopping the criticism, understanding the issue and stopping from making it an issue of fellowship, honest study of the Scriptures rather than opinion, having an understanding of the process of translation and God’s providence in the process, more education on the background of Bible translation, teaching on preservation, having an open debate, education and a time for healing, and one who replied, “I wish I knew!”

Percentage Results of the National Survey

The answers sent in by these State Representatives yield the following percentages in rounded numbers.

- 4 percent have pastored five to ten years
- 96 percent have pastored over ten years

- 22 percent have an average attendance of less than 100
- 48 percent have an average attendance of 100 to 249
- 13 percent have an average attendance of 249 to 500
- 17 percent have an average attendance of over 500

- 100 percent believe in the plenary-verbal inspiration of the Bible
- 96 percent believe that inspiration demands inerrancy
- 4 percent do not
100 percent believe that biblical inspiration applies to the original autographs
9 percent believe it applies to copies
13 percent believe it applies to translations

100 percent believe that God has promised to preserve His Word

100 percent believe God has preserved His Word

62 percent believe God has preserved His Word in a particular text type
28.5 percent believe God has preserved it in the totality of existing manuscripts
14 percent believe God has preserved it in a particular translation
   (These percentages add up to more than 100 because two men did not answer
   and one answered in two areas.)

83 percent of the pastors use the KJV for preaching and teaching
13 percent of the pastors use the NKJV for preaching and teaching
4 percent of the pastors use another version for preaching and teaching

43 percent refer to other Bible translations in their preaching or teaching
57 percent do not

74 percent of the pastors use other translation in their study or devotions
26 percent do not

70 percent have a church policy on Bible translations
30 percent do not

31 percent of those who have a policy have an understood policy
69 percent of those who have a policy have a written policy

83 percent require all Bible teachers at their church to use a particular version
17 percent do not

65 percent require a guest speaker at their church to use a particular version
35 percent do not

When hiring an individual for a staff position:
13 percent give no consideration to his position on English Bible translations
22 percent give some but it is not the deciding factor
65 percent give a great deal of consideration to the issue

When considering a missionary for financial support:
22 percent give no consideration to his position on English Bible translations
48 percent give some but it is not the deciding factor
30 percent give a great deal of consideration to the issue
41 percent have lost members of their church because of the version they use
54.5 percent have never lost members for this reason
5.5 percent were not sure

52 percent have had people not join their church because of the translation used
39 percent have not
9 percent were not sure

61 percent have had college or seminary classes explaining the Bible’s
preservation and translation into English in detail
39 percent have not

71 percent of those who had such classes said that the information was applied to
the current KJV translation debate
29 percent said it was not

100 percent said that this issue has the possibility of hurting or disrupting the
BBFI

61 percent said this debate has had impact on their state’s Fellowship
39 percent said it had not

Conclusions Drawn from the National Survey

From the surveys returned by the State Representatives of the Baptist Bible
Fellowship International, a number of observations can be made and conclusions drawn.
First, the Bible translation issue is having an effect upon both local churches, the servants
of God across the nation, and the national Fellowship. Among these pastors represented,
41 percent said they had lost members from their church because of the translation they
used, while 52 percent had people not join their church for the same reason. As at the
local level, the translation issue is affecting national church attendance in independent
Baptist churches. In regards to its impact upon God’s servants, the national survey
indicates that if hiring a staff member 65 percent of these pastors give a great deal of
consideration to his position on the English Bible, and that 30 percent do the same when
considering a missionary for support. Thus, the national percentage of those who are
concerned about this issue is slightly higher than in Iowa when hiring staff but considerably lower when thinking about a missionary. Either way, it still is affecting those servants of God looking for a church to serve in or trying to reach the mission field. In regards to the Baptist Bible Fellowship International, there is complete agreement that the translation issue has the possibility of hurting or disrupting the Fellowship. Indeed, 61 percent replied that it already has had an impact upon their state’s Fellowship.

Second, pastors on both sides of the issue have much in common. All of the pastors surveyed believe in the plenary-verbal inspiration of the Bible. All but one believe that inspiration demands inerrancy. All believe that God has both promised to preserve His Word and has preserved it. This means that on the national level as on the state level, all of these men are in agreement that the Bible was supernaturally given by God in such a way that it is the very Word of God without error and that it has been preserved by Him. Therefore, regardless of which translation they use or how they stand on the current translation issue, all of these men are in agreement on their basic, foundational beliefs on inspiration and preservation.

Third, the State Representatives are still very loyal to the King James Version of the Bible. It is of note that pastors on both sides of the issue still normally use the KJV in their preaching and teaching ministries. While three of these pastors use the NKJV primarily, nineteen use the KJV. Only one pastor uses translations based on an eclectic text. Therefore, despite assertions to the contrary, the overwhelming loyalty of the BBFI appears to still be to the KJV. Also, in response to the question on how the Bible was preserved, over twice as many believe it was through a particular text type (such as the Majority text and the *Textus Receptus*) than in the totality of existing manuscripts. Thus,
it can be concluded that the majority of BBFI pastors surveyed also hold to the textual basis behind the KJV. It would then seem that fears that the BBFI will slip into using modern versions based on the Critical Text are unwarranted.

Fourth, many of the churches at the national level are seeing the need for having a local church policy regarding the public use of Bible translations. Of the pastors surveyed, 70 percent said that their churches had a policy on Bible translations. Of these, 69 percent are written policies while 31 percent are understood. Therefore, almost 57 percent of these churches whose pastors were surveyed have a written policy. Additionally, 83 percent require that all Bible teachers at their church use a particular translation, and 65 percent require guest speakers to do the same. Thus, it is apparent that the use of a policy of one form or another is evident nationally regarding the use of Bible translations in many Fellowship churches.

It should also be observed that there was a slight difference in the results of the national survey as compared to Iowa’s concerning the number who said they were given information that was applied to the current translation debate while in school. While the percentage who stated they had received a detailed explanation during a college or seminary class on the subjects of the Bible’s preservation and translation remained about the same (62 percent at the state level and 61 percent at the national level), less believed that it was applied to the current issue. While all of the state pastors with such classes said it was applied, only 71 percent of the national pastors believed it was. Therefore, in the national survey, over 56.5 percent of the pastors never had a college or seminary class which directly applied detailed information regarding Bible preservation and translation to the current Bible translation debate. Such a large percentage is totally unacceptable.
COVER LETTER
FOR IOWA BBFI PASTORS

April 17, 2007

Dear Pastor,

Greetings in the precious name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. I pray that this letter finds you well and enjoying the blessings of the Lord upon you and your ministry.

I’m writing to request your assistance with a project I am currently working on. As well as pastoring, I am a Doctor of Ministry student at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. As part of my course work, I must write a thesis project. I have chosen as my topic: “A Strategy for Calming the Troubled Waters of the Bible Translation Controversy among Independent Baptists.” I know that this can be a heated topic among our ranks, and I desire to be able to write something that can bring some calming light to the issue. In this task I can use your help. I have enclosed a survey that will help me gain more insight into how our state’s Baptist Bible Fellowship pastors think and act upon the Bible translation issue. This survey will probably take about fifteen minutes to fill out, and I have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope for its return. Would you please take this short amount of time to quickly fill it out right now and return it to me? Your help is greatly appreciated.

Before I close, let me assure you, it is not my purpose to stir up any trouble or to involve you in a dispute. You can sign the survey or not, as you wish. Your name will not appear in my paper in connection with any information or additional comments you make on the survey unless I receive your permission first. It is merely my desire to gather information from pastors associated with the BBFI.

With gratitude for your help,

Pastor Robert L. Pate, Jr.
Bible Community Baptist Church
1085 Sawyer Road
Central City, IA 52214
IOWA BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

STATE PASTORS' SURVEY

(Please Check Your Answers)

Are you actively involved in your state fellowship?

_____ Yes
_____ No

How long have you been in the ministry?

_____ Less than 5 years
_____ 5-10 years
_____ Over 10 years

What is the average attendance in your church?

_____ Less than 100
_____ 100 to 249
_____ 249 to 500
_____ Over 500

Do you believe in the plenary-verbal inspiration of the Bible?

_____ Yes
_____ No

Do you believe that inspiration demands inerrancy?

_____ Yes
_____ No

Do you believe that biblical inspiration applies to: (check as many as applies)

_____ The original autographs
_____ The copies
_____ Translations?
Do you believe that God has promised to preserve His Bible?

_____ Yes
_____ No

Do you believe that God has preserved His Bible?

_____ Yes
_____ No

If you answered yes above, in what way do you believe the Bible has been preserved?

_____ In a particular text type (such as the Majority text, Alexandrian text, Textus Receptus, Critical text, etc.)
   Which one? ____________________________________________
_____ In the totality of existing manuscripts
_____ In a particular translation
_____ Other: ____________________________________________

Which Bible translation do you primarily use to preach and teach from?

_____ KJV
_____ NKJV
_____ NASB
_____ NIV
_____ Other: ____________________________________________

Do you refer to or quote from other Bible translations in your preaching or teaching ministry?

_____ Yes
_____ No

Do you use other Bible translations in your study time and/or personal devotions?

_____ Yes
_____ No
If you answered yes to the question above which ones are you most likely to use? (Please check all that apply)

_____ KJV
_____ NKJV
_____ NASB
_____ NIV
_____ Other: ____________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Does your church have a policy on the use of Bible translations?

_____ Yes
_____ No

If you answered yes to the question above, is it:

_____ understood or
_____ written?

Does your church require all Bible teachers to use a particular Bible translation?

_____ Yes
_____ No

Does your church require guest preachers to use a particular Bible translation?

_____ Yes
_____ No

If you were considering hiring an individual for a staff position, how much consideration would you give to his position on English Bible translations?

_____ None at all
_____ some (but not the deciding factor)
_____ a great deal
If you were considering a missionary for financial support, how much consideration would you give to his position on English Bible translations?

_____ None at all
_____ some (but not the deciding factor)
_____ a great deal

Have you ever lost members from your church because of the translation that you use or do not use?

_____ Yes
_____ No

Have you ever had people not become members of your church because of the translation that you use or do not use?

_____ Yes
_____ No

In your Bible college or seminary training, did you ever have a class which in detail explained the Bible’s preservation and translation into English?

_____ Yes
_____ No

If so, at what academic level was it and at what school?

_____ The Bachelors level

_____ The Masters level

_____ The Doctoral level

If so, was this information applied to the current King James Version Bible translation debate?

_____ Yes
_____ No
Do you believe that the current debate over Bible translations has the possibility of hurting or disrupting the future of the Baptist Bible Fellowship International?

_____ Yes
_____ No

What can you suggest that might be done to settle the debate over the King James Version only issue?

What books have you found helpful in your understanding of Bible translations?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Name: ______________________________________________________________ (optional)

Church: ______________________________________________________________ (optional)

Additional comments:
Dear Pastor,

Greetings in the precious name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. I pray that this letter finds you well and enjoying the blessings of the Lord upon you and your ministry.

Let me take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Robert Pate, and I pastor Bible Community Baptist Church of Central City, Iowa. I am a 1984 graduate of Baptist Bible College in Springfield and am currently the secretary of the Iowa Baptist Bible Fellowship. I am presently working on a Doctor of Ministry degree through Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. And it is because of this last matter that I am sending this to you as a state representative of the BBFI.

I’m writing to request your assistance with an academic project I am researching. As part of my course work, I must write a thesis project. I have chosen as my topic: “A Strategy for Calming the Troubled Waters of the Bible Translation Controversy among Independent Baptists.” I know that this can be a heated topic among our ranks, and I desire to be able to write something that can help bring some calming light to the issue. In this task I can use your help. I have enclosed a survey that will help me gain more insight into how our Fellowship pastors think and act upon the Bible translation issue. This survey will probably take about fifteen to twenty minutes to fill out, and I have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope for its return. Would you please take this short amount of time to quickly fill it out right now and return it to me? Your help is greatly appreciated.

Before I close, let me assure you that it is not my purpose to stir up any trouble or to involve you in a dispute. Your name will not appear in my paper in connection with any information or additional comments you make on the survey unless I receive your permission first. It is merely my desire to gather information on how our Fellowship currently views this issue. Since it is not feasible to write to every pastor listed on our Fellowship’s directory, I have chosen to write to the pastors in my own state and to the national state representatives as a sampling of our men’s views. I trust that you understand. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me.

With gratitude for your help,

Pastor Robert L. Pate, Jr.
1085 Sawyer Road
Central City, IA 52214
(319) 438-6509
BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

STATE REPRESENTATIVES’ SURVEY

(Please Check Your Answers)

Which state Fellowship are you the representative of?

________________________________________

How long have you been in the ministry?

____ Less than 5 years
____ 5-10 years
____ Over 10 years

What is the average attendance in your church?

____ Less than 100
____ 100 to 249
____ 249 to 500
____ Over 500

Do you believe in the plenary-verbal inspiration of the Bible?

____ Yes
____ No

Do you believe that inspiration demands inerrancy?

____ Yes
____ No

Do you believe that biblical inspiration applies to: (check as many as applies)

____ The original autographs
____ The copies
____ Translations?
Do you believe that God has promised to preserve His Bible?

_____ Yes
_____ No

Do you believe that God has preserved His Bible?

_____ Yes
_____ No

If you answered yes above, in what way do you believe the Bible has been preserved?

_____ In a particular text type (such as the Majority text, Alexandrian text, Textus Receptus, Critical text, etc.)
   Which one? ____________________________

_____ In the totality of existing manuscripts

_____ In a particular translation

_____ Other: ____________________________

Which Bible translation do you primarily use to preach and teach from?

_____ KJV
_____ NKJV
_____ NASB
_____ NIV
_____ Other: ____________________________

Do you refer to or quote from other Bible translations in your preaching or teaching ministry?

_____ Yes
_____ No

Do you use other Bible translations in your study time and/or personal devotions?

_____ Yes
_____ No
If you answered yes to the question above which ones are you most likely to use? (Please check all that apply)

_____ KJV
_____ NKJV
_____ NASB
_____ NIV
_____ Other: ________________________________

______________________________

Does your church have a policy on the use of Bible translations?

_____ Yes
_____ No

If you answered yes to the question above, is it:

_____ understood or
_____ written?

Does your church require all Bible teachers to use a particular Bible translation?

_____ Yes
_____ No

Does your church require guest preachers to use a particular Bible translation?

_____ Yes
_____ No

If you were considering hiring an individual for a staff position, how much consideration would you give to his position on English Bible translations?

_____ None at all
_____ some (but not the deciding factor)
_____ a great deal
If you were considering a missionary for financial support, how much consideration would you give to his position on English Bible translations?

_____ None at all
_____ some (but not the deciding factor)
_____ a great deal

Have you ever lost members from your church because of the translation that you use or do not use?

_____ Yes
_____ No

Have you ever had people not become members of your church because of the translation that you use or do not use?

_____ Yes
_____ No

In your Bible college or seminary training, did you ever have a class which in detail explained the Bible’s preservation and translation into English?

_____ Yes
_____ No

If so, at what academic level was it and at what school?

_____ The Bachelors level

_____ The Masters level

_____ The Doctoral level

If so, was this information applied to the current King James Version Bible translation debate?

_____ Yes
_____ No
Do you believe that the current debate over Bible translations has the possibility of hurting or disrupting the future of the Baptist Bible Fellowship International?

_____ Yes
_____ No

Has this debate had any impact on your state’s Fellowship?

_____ Yes
_____ No

If you answered yes to the above question, in what way has it impacted it?

What can you suggest that might be done to settle the debate over the King James Version only issue?

What books have you found helpful in your understanding of Bible translations?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Name: ____________________________________________________________ (optional)

Additional comments:
APPENDIX 3

GLOSSARY

**Alexandrian Text Family:** A term used by textual scholars to identify a particular group of Greek manuscripts whose place of origin is commonly regarded to be the vicinity of Alexandria, Egypt. This text family is usually considered to be the oldest existing Greek manuscripts.

**Amanuensis:** A person who wrote what another dictated, much like a modern stenographer.

**Autograph:** The original manuscript written by the hand of its author or his amanuensis. No autograph of any biblical book has survived.

**Byzantine Text Family:** A term used by textual scholars to identify a particular group of Greek manuscripts whose place of origin is commonly regarded to be the vicinity of Antioch of Syria and later from the region of Byzantium (Constantinople), the seat of the Eastern Church from the fourth century onward. Between 80 to 90 percent of all Greek manuscripts fall into the classification of the Byzantine family. They are generally dated much later than the Alexandrian Text Family with which they are often contrasted.

**Caesarean Text Family:** A term used by textual scholars to identify a particular group of Greek manuscripts whose place of origin is commonly regarded to be the vicinity of Caesarea of Palestine. There are disagreements among scholars as to whether it should even be considered a separate family.

**Codex (pl. Codices):** A manuscript made up of pages of papyrus or parchment sheets folded and stitched together in book form. The codex came into use around A.D. 100 and eventually replaced the scroll. Modern books are of the codex type.

**Critical Text:** A published edition of a biblical text whose words have been determined by some method of textual criticism. It attempts to reconstruct the original text by combining the best readings from all known sources into one text. Nearly all printed editions of the Greek New Testament are critical texts except those that are derived from a single manuscript (a diplomatic text). While most printed editions of the Greek New Testament are critical (including the texts of Erasmus, Stephanus, Beza, Elzevir, and Scrivener), this paper uses the term in reference to texts used for modern translations not based upon the Textus Receptus.
Dead Sea Scrolls: A collection of very early (100 B.C. – A.D. 100) Old Testament and other Jewish manuscripts discovered since 1947 in the caves near Qumran along the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. About 25 percent of them are biblical and contain parts of all of the Old Testament books except Esther.

Dynamic Equivalence: A method of translation which focuses more on the receptor language than the source language. It attempts to match meaning-for-meaning, rather than word-for-word. Also known as functional equivalence, free translation, or “thought-for-thought” translation, this method desires to be faithful to exactly what the author meant. The result is an easier to understand translation, but it may convey the interpretation of the translator rather than the original meaning.

Diplomatic Text: A published edition of a biblical text faithfully representing a single early, known manuscript; in contrast with an eclectic edition, which is a compilation of the best readings from all known texts.

Eclectic Text: A published edition of a biblical text which attempts to reconstruct the original text by combining the best readings from all known sources into one text. While most printed editions of the Greek New Testament are eclectic (including the texts of Erasmus, Stephanus, Beza, Elzevir, and Scrivener), this paper uses the term in reference to texts used for modern translations not based upon the Textus Receptus.

Folio: A large sheet of paper, parchment, or papyrus folded once to form two leaves (four pages) in a codex or book. This term is used to refer to the largest Bibles, with pages measuring approximately twelve inches by fifteen inches. These were typically used as pulpit Bibles.

Formal Equivalence: A method of translation which focuses more on the source language than the receptor language. It attempts to match word-for-word, rather than meaning-for-meaning. Also known as literal translation, this method desires to be faithful to exactly what the original author said. However, no translation fully avoids being a mix between dynamic and formal equivalence.

Inerrancy: The teaching that the Bible is without error or mistake and is therefore trustworthy and authoritative.

Inspiration: The process by which the Holy Spirit of God influenced the biblical writers (without sacrificing their individual styles) so that they recorded God’s words without error. The Greek word (1 Tim 3:16) means “God-breathed” and God inspired the words written, not the writers.

Lectionary: A manuscript of Scripture readings used in Christian liturgies on particular dates in the church’s calendar.
**Majority Text:** The majority (80-90 percent) of extant manuscripts, representing the Byzantine text type. They are generally dated much later than the Alexandrian Family of texts with which they are often contrasted. Because there are many more of them than of any other family of texts they are called the “majority” text.

**Majuscule:** Also known as uncial; a manuscript written in all capital letters, or uncials. It was the form of writing used in manuscripts from the fourth century B.C. up until the ninth century A.D.

**Manuscript:** A handwritten copy of a document in the language in which it was written.

**Masoretic Text:** Sometimes called the “received text,” the distinctive Hebrew text type that came to be identified with a tenth century A.D. manuscript that came from the hands of Rabbi Aaron Ben Asher, a text reflecting an analysis of hundreds of medieval manuscripts.

**Minuscule:** A manuscript written in lower case, connected letters much like modern cursive script. Manuscripts of this type began to appear around the ninth century A.D.

**Papyrus (pl. papyri):** A type of reed from which paper was made in antiquity. It also refers to the writing material made from strips of papyrus reed pounded to make a flat writing surface. Most of the very early manuscripts were written on papyrus paper.

**Paraphrase:** A restatement of a text or passage giving the author’s thoughts in different words than he originally used. As applied to Bible translation, it refers to a loose translation conveying the main meaning of a text; not a literal word-for-word translation.

**Parchment:** Also called vellum; an ancient flat writing material prepared from calf, goat, or sheep skin, the hair of which has been removed and the skin rubbed smooth. The most complete manuscripts of the New Testament were written on vellum.

**Preservation:** The process by which God providentially protected the Word He had given so that it would never be destroyed.

**Primary Translation:** A translation made directly from the original language in which a text was written.

**Receptor language:** The language into which a text is being translated.

**Secondary Translation:** A translation made from a previous translation made from the original language in which a text was written. Thus it is a translation of a translation.

**Target language:** The language into which a text is being translated.

**Targums:** An Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament.
Text-Type: Also known as a textual family, group, or tradition; manuscripts grouped together because of certain important similarities to one another. They generally share a common set of variant readings characteristic of the group. The two major textual families recognized today are the Byzantine and Alexandrian. Two less important text types are the Western and Caesarean, and there are disagreements among scholars as to whether these two even constitute separate families.

Textual Critic: A person who examines the variations between biblical manuscripts and versions in order to determine which reading is most likely the original one.

Textual Criticism: The process of evaluating variations between biblical manuscripts and versions in order to determine the most likely original reading of a text. Various methods of textual criticism have been developed over the years. Because the word “criticism” can mean “finding fault with,” it is important to note that when it is used in the textual sense, it means “evaluation,” the analysis of something with the intent of determining its value.

Textus Receptus: A Latin expression meaning “received text;” an edition of the Greek New Testament which formed the basis of the King James Version. It is used of a number of printed editions of the Greek New Testament, all differing and all derived from manuscripts of the Byzantine Text-tradition.

Traditional Text: The Byzantine or Majority Text. This is the type of Greek text similar to that which underlies the King James Version.

Uncial: Also known as majuscule; a manuscript written in all capital letters. It was the form of writing used in manuscripts from the fourth century B.C. up until the ninth century A.D.

Variant Readings: Any difference between two or more manuscripts of the same text.

Vellum: Also called parchment; a fine grained writing material in ancient times, usually made of calfskin, lambskin or kidskin.

Version: A translation of the Bible or a portion of the Bible into a language other than that in which it was originally written.

Western Text Family: A term used by textual scholars to identify a particular group of Greek manuscripts whose place of origin is commonly regarded to be the vicinity of North Africa, Italy, and Gaul (the Western region of the Church). There are disagreements among scholars as to whether it should even be considered a separate family.
APPENDIX 4

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