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The Old Testament Scriptures were to accomplish one central purpose—to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ (Lk. 24:25-27). The same is true of the New Testament as well (Jn. 16:14). Those who undermine the authority and accuracy of the Authorized Version only cause God's people to lack a confidence in His Message and the impeccability of Christ and His finished work. This certainly does not advance the purpose of God—to glorify His dear Son and to cause His children to have absolute confidence in His final and complete revelation. Praise God, He has given to us His Word, and we have before us in the English language the Authorized King James Bible, a literal, accurate translation of the very words God breathed in His revelation to man. □

— by M.H. Reynolds, Jr.  
and D.W. Costella

Fundamental Evangelistic Association  
[www.featoday.org](http://www.featoday.org)

# What About Modern Bible Versions?

*"The words of the LORD are pure words:  
as silver tried in a furnace of earth,  
purified seven times.  
Thou shalt keep them, O LORD,  
Thou shalt preserve them  
from this generation for ever."*

— Psalm 12:6-7

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**T**HE BIBLE IS THE MOST WONDERFUL and precious book in the world. In these days of rapid change and crumbling foundations, what a blessing it is to be reminded that our Lord Jesus Christ said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). What a great comfort and encouragement comes as we read and believe Psalm 119:89: "For ever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven." How thankful we are that "the foundation of God standeth sure" (2 Tim. 2:19)—the "foundation of the apostles and prophets," which speaks of the completed canon of Scripture (Eph. 2:19-3:5).

We also must be aware that the Bible is under attack. Satan, who succeeded in selling the first "revised" edition of God's Word to Eve in the garden of Eden, has surely been busy in the past and present centuries along the same lines. We know about the "population explosion" and the "explosion of scientific knowledge," but we are also in the middle of a "Bible translation explosion"—a veritable flood of new Bible translations, versions, revisions and paraphrases, all claiming to be the "most accurate," the "most readable" and the "most up-to-date." The publishing and sale of these new Bibles has become a highly profitable business, and the publishers have employed all the psychological approaches of modern advertising to sell these new versions to the public. Some think this proliferation of Bible versions is wonderful. But serious students of the Word must eventually ask, "Which Bible is the real Bible, the true Word of God?"

In 2 Corinthians 2:17, the Spirit of God warned against the "many, which corrupt the Word of God." Therefore, it is not surprising in studying church history to discover that such attempts to corrupt the Word of God were clearly evident in the altered, polluted and revised manuscripts purporting to be the Word of God that have ex-

isted through the centuries. Unfortunately, many people today fail to see that even greater corruptions of the Word of God are taking place before our very eyes. The purpose of this leaflet is to share with God's people, simply and briefly, some of the important information we have found in studying this vital subject.

It is impossible with limited space to trace the entire history and preservation of the Word of God down through the centuries. However, in the providence of God, two important events occurred in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries for which every Christian should be eternally grateful: the invention of the printing press and the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. It was the combination of these two developments that made possible the translation and publication of the Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible in 1611. From then until now, this wonderful gift of God has changed the course of history, and we enjoy the benefits today.

In the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Satan and his angels of light set out to destroy the church by undermining its foundation, the Bible. Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* was blindly accepted as "new light on an old problem" by the scholarship of that day, which had become largely obsessed with rationalism and humanism. At the same time, theories and methods of "higher criticism" were influencing theologians and textual scholars. This higher criticism was developed and couched in such scholarly language that most people failed to recognize these attacks upon the Word of God because they were carefully disguised as efforts to "supply the English reader with a more correct text of the New Testament" and to "render the New Testament more generally intelligible." The rush toward new versions began, and though the early progress was slow, we are inundated by the results today.

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Three important issues must be understood and addressed when discussing the translation of the Bible from one language to another: first, the reliability of the document being translated; second, the knowledge and skill of the translators; and third, the philosophy of translation (formal vs. dynamic equivalence). On all counts, the King James Bible still stands supreme. In 1881, influenced by and sympathetic to the Darwinian theory of evolution, two men, Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton J. A. Hort, compiled a different version of the Greek New Testament—one which differed from the *Textus Receptus* (the underlying Greek text of the KJV) in numerous places. These two distinct Greek texts were compiled from different strains or families of manuscripts, the former including those from Alexandria, Egypt, and the latter from manuscripts used in the Byzantine, eastern Greek-speaking church beginning in the early centuries.

The Westcott-Hort Greek text was later to become the basis for the English Revised Version and the American Standard Version. It gave great weight to two corrupted manuscripts—the *Vaticanus* (Codex B), which was found in the Vatican library in 1481 and was known to the KJV translators but was not used by them, and the *Sinaiticus* (Codex Aleph), which was found in a monastery wastebasket at the foot of Mt. Sinai in 1844. The *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus* appear to have been copied from the same source in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and held great weight with Westcott and Hort due to their antiquity. Tischendorf, who discovered the *Sinaiticus* manuscript, noted at least 12,000 changes that had been made on this manuscript by people other than the original copyist. It is difficult to understand why such documents as these could lead one to ignore the simple fact that the Greek text underlying the KJV, the *Textus Receptus*, agreed with 90-95% of all known Scripture-related manuscripts that could be evaluated,

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numbering over five thousand.

### **English Revised Version (1885) American Standard Version (1901)**

The first full-scale frontal attack on the Word of God came with the publication of the ERV in 1885 and its counterpart, the ASV, in 1901. Only a few voices of protest were raised. Most staunch defenders of the faith of that day were apparently unaware that the ASV differed from the KJV in over 36,000 places or that the Greek text underlying the translation of the ASV (the Westcott-Hort text) differed from the *Textus Receptus* (underlying the KJV) in over 5,700 instances. Possibly the lack of protest was because the fundamentalists back then were too busy combating the modernists' infiltration of seminaries and churches; or, perhaps it was due to the fact that the ASV never really found great public acceptance. Not until the publication of the Revised Standard Version did many fundamentalists become aware of how effectively a new Bible version or translation could be used to pervert the truth.

### **Revised Standard Version (1946, 1952)**

Some of God's people woke up with a start when the Revised Standard Version was published in 1952. This version, a revision of the ASV of 1901, eliminated the word *virgin* in the prophecy of Christ's birth in Isaiah 7:14. It was also copyrighted by the apostate National Council of Churches. Protests were heard far and wide! Sadly, many failed to recognize that some of the same changes they found so objectionable in the RSV were also true of the ASV. The furor over the RSV gradually died down. But this was the version that paved the way for future perversions of the Scriptures. It had conditioned people to accept changes in the Bible—changes dictated by modern scholar-

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ship. At least the RSV left the word *virgin* in the New Testament references to the birth of Christ. It remained for the Good News Bible to remove it in both the Old and New Testaments.

### **Good News for Modern Man (1966) Good News Bible (1976)**

When the first edition of the Good News for Modern Man (The New Testament in Today's English) was published in 1966, the word *virgin* appeared in all the texts referring to the birth of Christ in Matthew and Luke. But, when the second and third editions were published and then the entire Good News Bible was published in 1976, the word *virgin* had mysteriously disappeared from Luke 1:27 while remaining in Luke 1:34 and Matthew 1:23. Of course, the latter two verses have no supernatural meaning at all if the word *virgin* is removed or replaced. Also, the blood of Christ, a most important and precious word and theme, was lacking in many key New Testament references. It was replaced by "death" or "costly sacrifice," both good terms in their own place but not what the Holy Spirit gave in the original text. The heretical views of the main translator, Dr. Robert Bratcher, help to explain the many places in which the deity of Christ is played down or omitted. The Good News Bible is one of the worst versions, yet it has been distributed by the millions, largely due to endorsements by Billy Graham, Bill Bright and other evangelical leaders.

### **The Living Bible (1967, 1971)**

This is neither a translation nor a version—it is a paraphrase. The Living Bible, praised by Billy Graham and other new evangelical leaders, has reached a publication figure of 37 million copies and has made its author, Ken Taylor, a wealthy man. It is highly readable, but only at the expense

of truth in so many places. Taylor admits that the principle he worked from was not a "word-for-word" translation but rather a "thought-for-thought" paraphrase called "dynamic equivalence." Taylor said he worked for the most part from the ASV of 1901, a corrupt translation to begin with. The Living Bible decimates the Scriptures, nearly eliminating important and precious words and truths such as grace (see John 1:17; Acts 4:33; 15:11; 20:24; Romans 3:24; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Ephesians 2:8-9; Jude 4) and repentance (see Matthew 9:13 and Acts 17:30). *Honor* is substituted for *begotten* in Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5. Significant changes are made regarding such matters as creation in Genesis 1:1-2 and a prophecy of Christ in Zechariah 13:6. The meaning of Romans 8:28 is changed completely. The language of 1 Samuel 20:30 in early editions of TLB shocked many at first but has now been softened. The author has left the door open for further suggestions, corrections and clarifications. Who knows what future editions may contain? New versions invariably leave the door open for more changes and corruption in the days ahead.

### **New American Standard Version (1960, 1971)**

The NASV was to be the Bible for conservatives, evangelicals and fundamentalists. The foreword states that the NASV "has been produced with the conviction that the words of Scripture as originally penned in the Hebrew and Greek were inspired of God. "The basic problem with this translation, however, is revealed in this statement: "This translation follows the principles used in the American Standard Version 1901 known as the Rock of Biblical Honesty." Who gave the ASV such a title? The Principles of Revision states: "In revising the ASV consideration was given to the latest available manuscripts with a view to determining the best Greek text. In most instances the

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23<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Nestle Greek New Testament was followed." This gets right to the heart of the major problem with the modern Bible versions—most are translated from the Westcott-Hort Greek text rather than the *Textus Receptus*. The word *virgin* does appear in Isaiah 7:14, but a footnote adds, "or, young woman." Verses like Matthew 18:11 and Matthew 23:14 appear in brackets with a footnote saying, "most ancient manuscripts omit this verse" or, "this verse is not found in earliest manuscripts." A corrupted Greek text thus becomes the basis for raising questions about the entire verse. In other instances such as in Luke 24:40, the number of the verse appears followed by "see marginal note" which explains that "some ancient Mss. add verse 40." Even worse, some parts of verses are left out with no explanation whatsoever as in Colossians 1:14 and 1 Timothy 6:5. It is sad to see so many conservatives pushing this version and criticizing the KJV.

### **New International Version (1973, 1978)**

Like the NASV, the NIV was produced by those who are said to "hold a high view of Scripture." Sponsored by the New York Bible Society, promotional material highlighted the fact that the NIV translators represent a "broad spectrum in evangelical Christianity," and the list of names confirms the broadness of the spectrum. Rather than being a revision of a previous version, the NIV's preface says, "It is a completely new translation made by many scholars working directly from the Greek." The Greek text used is an "eclectic one," that is, the translators mixed different texts supposedly in "accord with sound principles of textual criticism." However, they did not state what those principles were—and many of the previous unreliable translations of Scripture had been translated and promoted on the basis of "sound principles of textual criticism." Exam-

ining the text, one will find that the NIV leaves out many of the same verses and portions that the ASV and the NASV also omit. An added problem, furthermore, stems from the fact that where an entire verse is omitted, even the verse number is missing and only a small letter refers to a footnote of explanation. A careful study of this version confirms what one Christian leader said several years ago: "For every verse or word clarified in these new translations, two new problems are created." We agree with his statement. In a critique of the NIV, one fundamentalist scholar correctly objected that "words were dropped out; words were added; and key words were sometimes changed." Yet, the same objection must also be raised concerning the NASV, which this same fundamentalist scholar defends and recommends. This objection—the deletion or addition of words—also applies to most of the other modern versions.

### **New King James Version (1979, 1982)**

The NKJV translators claim to have "preserved the authority and accuracy" and "improved the purity and beauty" of the original KJV. We disagree that the "purity and beauty" have been improved. Although the NKJV uses the underlying *Textus Receptus* Greek text, the translators repeatedly use marginal notations to reference the Modern Critical Text upon which all of the modern versions are based. In so doing, the NKJV lends credibility to an unreliable underlying text used by all the other versions. Furthermore, changes in the text are made which simply are not warranted. The NKJV primarily uses the 1967/1977 Stuttgart edition of *Biblia Hebraica* and draws from sources which result in a Hebrew text that is different from the Jacob ben Chayyim text underlying the KJV Old Testament. As a result, the NKJV preface rightly states, "Significant variations are

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recorded in footnotes." The potential for variants between the two translations will no doubt be found primarily in the Old Testament.

### **New Revised Standard Version (1990)**

The NRSV is yet another recent product of ecumenical scholarship and will soon replace the RSV (if it has not done so already), thus helping to fill the financial coffers of the apostate National Council of Churches which holds the copyrights on both the RSV and NRSV. Translated by liberal Protestant, Catholic and Jewish scholars, and eliminating so-called sexist language, the NRSV with the Apocrypha has already received the *imprimatur* of the Roman Catholic Church and may become the ecumenical Bible of the future.

### **More Recent Versions**

In recent years, the proliferation of modern Bible versions has increased tremendously. New versions that are based primarily upon the latest editions of the United Bible Societies revised Greek New Testament include the New Living Translation (NLT), the New Century Version (NCV), the Contemporary English Version (CEV) and Eugene H. Peterson's *The Message*. Most of these versions and translations are not only based on an inferior Greek text but are also thought-for-thought translations based upon dynamic equivalence (which allows for greater interpretive freedom of the text by the translators) rather than formal equivalence, a more literal, word-for-word translation.

The more we have studied and researched this question of Bible versions, the more convinced we are that many of our dear brethren in the ministry and many fundamentalist leaders have not taken time to look at the abundant evidence now available that clearly demonstrates the inaccura-

cies, inconsistencies and confusion that results from new translations. It is clear that many scholars who consider themselves to be evangelical have been influenced by the apostate scholarship of the past and present. We recognize the difference between "higher criticism" (which would be rejected by most fundamentalists) and "textual criticism" or "lower criticism" (which is accepted by most fundamentalists). But many do not see how the whole field of textual criticism has been shaped and molded by the false premises and conclusions of "higher criticism." The central issue revolves around the acceptance of the Westcott-Hort text rather than the *Textus Receptus* as the basis for Bible translations, versions and revisions.

While recognizing the extreme difficulties involved in translations of any kind and especially of a book as important as the Bible, we are convinced that the King James Bible has been blessed by God for hundreds of years and should be used by believers today. It will be far better for us to expand our vocabulary in order to understand its terminology than to continually rewrite the Bible to suit those who will not be able to understand it anyway apart from the new birth or to suit those Christians who are too lazy to study. It is true that the meanings of some English words have changed and others are no longer commonly used. Yet such words are comparatively few and can easily be comprehended with the use of a good dictionary; but if the word is missing altogether, what then?

The promotion and use of so many different Bible versions has resulted in great confusion among God's people. Why do not more pastors and Christian leaders see this? Congregational reading is becoming virtually impossible. Bible memorization is most difficult. Men and women lose confidence in the validity of God's Word when

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some verses are altered, some are bracketed, and some are missing completely.

For all of these reasons and many more, we plead with God's people to be aware of the differences between translations and beware of the many problems with modern Bible translations. Take the time to look into this important question quickly and carefully.

### **ABSOLUTE TRUTH DOES EXIST!**

The written Word of God is the Christian's authority in all matters of which it speaks, for it is God's completed revelation to man. The Bible is God's trustworthy, authoritative book, and no more is to be added thereto. The Holy Spirit supernaturally inspired the writers of the 39 books of the Old Testament to record the very words God desired His people to possess (2 Pet. 1:21). Likewise, the prophetic promise Jesus Christ made to His disciples (soon to be the apostles and writers of the New Testament) restated the same divine operation of inspiration, for the Holy Spirit later also guided these men "into all truth" (Jn. 16:12-15). "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and that inspired Scripture encompasses nothing more, nor anything less, than the 66 books of the Bible, the completed canon of Scripture. Second Peter 3:2 tells us that if we want to know God's Word, then we are to look nowhere other than to the "words which were spoken before by the holy prophets (O.T. Scripture), and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour (N.T. Scripture)." God's Word provides us with all we need to be built up in the faith and to do God's will and work—God gave no additional revelation once the Bible was completed. The inspired writings of the apostles, circulated among the churches and later canonized, were perfect and complete (Lk. 1:1-4; 1 Cor. 14:37; Eph. 3:1-7; 1 Thess. 2:13; Rev. 22:18-19). The

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internal evidence of the Word of God states without equivocation that believers today have God's revealed Truth in the written Word of the living God.

Since the completion of the canon of Scripture, no additional divine revelation has come through any "latter day prophets," charismatic dreamers, cult authorities or the tradition/magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church. With the passing of the original disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ (the apostles who penned the 27 books of the New Testament), the partial revelation ceased, and "that which is perfect"—the written Word of the living God—was complete. "That which is in part" was done away (1 Cor. 13:8-12). With the passing of the apostles and the subsequent completion of the Canon, no more revelation came from God.

It is essential, therefore, that we earnestly contend for the faith "once delivered" (past tense) and against any attempt to claim an authority for faith and practice other than God's Word, the 66 books of the Bible. Remember, Timothy's household did not have the "original autographs," but the copies they had were designated by God as "the holy scriptures" (2 Tim. 3:14-15). Likewise, Paul commended the Ephesian elders to the "word of His grace, which is able to build you up..." (Acts 20:27, 32). We can have confidence today that we have a Bible that is the holy Word of God in the Authorized (King James) Version.

With the 20<sup>th</sup> century's proliferation of new Bible versions, it became necessary to study the history of the English Bible and the Greek text that had been used down through the centuries and to compare that text with the claims of the "higher critics" who championed the minority text upon which the new versions are based. After careful study of the subject, the FEA concluded that the *Textus Receptus*, the underlying text upon which

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the King James Version is based, is the providentially preserved Greek text. The *Textus Receptus* was derived from the majority family of manuscripts used in the Greek-speaking church down through the centuries. We believe this text was the divinely preserved text—an accurate rendition of the very originals (which were miraculously inspired by the Holy Spirit) written by the apostles, and, in the Hebrew tongue, by the Old Testament prophets. The Masoretic text of the Old Testament and the *Textus Receptus* of the New Testament are, in reality, the divinely preserved texts of the divinely inspired original writings.

But now, another problem has arisen within the last few decades. An element of those who were strong defenders of the inerrancy and veracity of the Authorized Version, used and blessed by God in the English-speaking world for almost 400 years, began to advance the idea that the KJV English translation is superior to the underlying Greek and Hebrew texts and that the King James translators themselves were inspired by the Holy Spirit in producing their translation. As a result of this proposal, they claim that the King James translation has been miraculously inspired just as the original autographs themselves were inspired. This false teaching even presumed the authority to correct the underlying Greek and Hebrew texts from which the King James Version was translated. What we have by this proposed phenomenon is what is often known as “double inspiration”—the original writings of the prophets and the apostles consist of the first “inspiration,” and the second work of “inspiration” occurred when the King James translators produced the English Authorized Version in 1611. Certainly the King James translators were the best scholars ever assembled to produce a translation that we can hold up today as our authoritative, trustworthy Bible, but were those esteemed translators “inspired” in the biblical sense? Absolutely not!

We cannot accept this conjecture, for the concept of a superior English text or of “double inspiration” completely denies what the Bible itself teaches about its own initial inspiration by the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit and its promised preservation through each successive generation. No, the English-speaking world is not the sole proprietor of the Word of God. Other nations and languages can also boast an accurate, trustworthy translation of the Word of God from the Greek *Textus Receptus* and the Hebrew Masoretic text.

It is the conviction of the Fundamental Evangelistic Association that the King James Version of the Bible should be the standard of the Holy Scriptures for the English speaking world for two reasons: First, because it is based on the Masoretic Text and the *Textus Receptus*, and second, because it is an accurate, literal (formal, word-for-word) translation of the aforementioned Greek and Hebrew texts (that is, the translation of the text is literal, as much as is possible of any translation from one language to another). We must reject the teaching of those who claim the KJV is full of errors, yet we must also reject the teaching of those “KJV-only” proponents who claim that the King James Version is in itself inspired and superior to the underlying Hebrew and Greek texts. Notice the following timely words by Pastor M. H. Reynolds, Jr., which accurately sum up the biblical position regarding inspiration and preservation:

We are sometimes accused of believing in “double inspiration” or “continuing revelation,” that is, that the King James translators were divinely inspired in the very same way as were the original human writers of the books of the Bible. Not so! The use of these terms amounts to a dishonest misrepresentation of what we believe. The miracle of inspiration applies only to the initial giving of the Word of God to the writers of the autographs (all of which are no longer in existence). But we also be-



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lieve that the Bible itself teaches, and the history of manuscript evidence supports, the contention that the miracle of initial inspiration extends to the divinely superintended preservation of a pure text to this day. We have, therefore, an inspired Bible today in the sense that it is the accurate translation of the text once and finally inspired by God and recorded in the "original autographs," the majority text used down through the centuries in the Greek church. Be wary of any opponent of the KJV who contrives deceptive buzz words to misrepresent what the defenders of the Authorized Version actually believe.

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