

“The Value of Making A Bible Translation From The King James Holy Bible”

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It is assumed from the outset that the readers of this article would desire that every language group have the exact preserved words of God, as God wants them, available in those languages to those language groups. However, it is beyond the scope of this short polemic to deal with the presuppositional issue of whether or not one even could possibly have the 100% correct preserved words of God in his hand in *any* particular language, including Greek and Hebrew, or whatever receptor language comes to mind (though some would say it is possible or actual in these original languages, but not in others). The purpose of this work is *not* to provide any sort of detailed treatment of the questions regarding these issues nor regarding the Greek and Hebrew texts, nor regarding the issue of the King James Bible itself. Neither is this short work an attempt to answer all the questions that might be raised about translational theory and practice. Those are issues which are beyond the scope of this polemic. Further treatment of the details of the foregoing and related subjects can be found in the numerous books and articles covering the text and version debate. This short declaration is not an attempt to refute those who would say that one should *not* make a translation directly from the KJB, nor is the author attempting to fully explain the particular position which he sets forth herein.

Bible translation has moved so far afield today from correct Biblical translational philosophy, principles, and procedures that many people, even among those whose domain is the theological or linguistical realm, have little or no knowledge of the actual historical practice of such things. Though not much considered today, the procedure of translating from the King James Bible into a foreign language is not an unusual one historically, nor an unjustified one practically and theologically. Even secular historians have recognized and recorded sound historic Bible translation principles and techniques. Some examples are found in “An American Bible”, by Paul Gutjahr (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1999). The British and Foreign Bible Society was begun in 1804 with the specific purpose of translating the Bible into the major languages of the world.

For instance, for many years translations were done by the Bible societies directly from the King James Bible. Another example is that in the past, even the American Bible Society encouraged (if not required) its translators to use the English translation of the scriptures as the basis for their receptor language translations and to set aside the *primacy* of the so-called “original language” texts. The specific reason for this is that each word must be translated in its biblical context. However most lexicons, many times authored by unsaved individuals, get their definitions from non-biblical, i.e., secular, documents. Past generations knew that the question of word meanings could not be solved by translating even good Greek and Hebrew texts using secular, non-exhaustive and non-contextual lexicons. This would apply particularly to those lexicons which are authored by unsaved individuals who have

not the Spirit of God (I Corinthians 2:14). Even lexicons produced by saved individuals are not exhaustive regarding all possible meanings or all possible meanings even in just the biblical context. For this reason, good Bible publishers and translators had for scores of years, if not hundreds of years, translated directly from the King James Bible.

A second problem which hinders translation from existing editions of even good Greek and Hebrew texts is the fact that these editions, though pure in the main, have variances, greater or lesser, from “the Originall” [KJB Preface] Greek readings underlying the King James Bible and which were used by the KJB translators. This problem occurs in all the published editions, in any form, of the correct family of Masoretic Hebrew and Receptus Greek texts. For example, Scrivener’s N.T. Greek text, which in the main is the Greek readings underlying the KJB translation, but not in every case, and which is probably the closest Greek text to the one underlying the King James Bible, definitely deviates more than 50 times from the Greek readings used by the KJB translators. That is what the author of this article has found to date in random checks of Scrivener’s Greek text. In other words, Scrivener’s text deviates in more than 50 instances from the readings or wordings which the KJB translators considered the best attested and the best representatives of “the Originall”. This variation occurs because Scrivener used only **printed Greek** editions in seeking the supposed readings underlying the KJB, rather than **ALL** the evidence available to and used by the KJB translators. Scrivener himself admits that at times “versions make known to us the contents [readings - POH] of manuscripts of the original which are older than any at present existing” (Scrivener, *Six Lectures*, p. 106).

Dean John W. Burgon, with all of his knowledge of and experience with Greek manuscripts, has concluded that old versions, quotes in the church fathers, lectionaries, etc., (as distinct from only extant Greek manuscripts and/or only printed or published Greek editions) hold the original reading in some cases (*Revision Revised*, p. 392). Thus even if Scrivener were strictly followed for translation into a receptor language, there could be minimally as many as 50 places or more where the translation could be in error and not match what the King James Bible (the text of the AV1611) says, preaches, and teaches. Consequently, such a translation would not be the exact preserved words of God in that receptor language. This would be the case even given the fact that Scrivener is the *closest* text to the correct Greek readings, i.e., the closest to the exact readings underlying the King James Bible.

Dr. Jack Moorman of Great Britain says, “Our extant manuscripts reflect, but do not determine, the text of scripture. The text was determined by God in the beginning (Psa. 119:89, Jude 3). When a version has been the standard as long as the Authorized Version has, and when that version has demonstrated its power in the conversion of sinners, building up of believers, sending forth of preachers and missionaries on a scale not achieved by all other versions and foreign languages combined, the hand of God is at work. And in those comparatively few places where it seems to depart from the majority reading [i.e., the *extant* majority or even a printed Receptus edition – Scrivener, for example – POH], it would be far more honoring towards God’s promises of preservation to believe that the *currently*

available Greek, and **NOT** the English, had strayed from the original!" [emphasis added] (Jack Moorman, *When the KJV Departs From the Majority*, Ararat, VA: AV Publications, pp. 27).

Furthermore, fundamental Christians in English speaking countries have long used the KJB as their standard Bible. Thus it would be logical and consistent for these same fundamental Christians, as well as other non-English speaking fundamental Christians, to use the non-English language translation which is closest to the text of the King James Bible. The author of this work consequently contends that every translation ought to at least be checked word for word, phrase by phrase, verse by verse, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, against the KJB. This is the only way to be sure that a translation does not say, preach, or teach anything different from or contrary to the KJB.

Those who claim any sort of allegiance to the KJB, or who use the KJB as their Bible for preaching in English, should check every translation against it to find the mistakes in those translations and militate for their repair. This author further contends that such missionaries should consequently use the translation that is the closest to the KJB in the language group in which they work. Where any improvement (or even new translation) needs to be made in a given language, missionaries who claim any sort of allegiance to the KJB and/or its exact underlying text should get involved in making the preserved words of God (100% correct, exact, and errorless translation) available for their people (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4; I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18; Hebrews 4:12).

One additional thought regarding the legitimacy, acceptability, and value of making a translation directly from the King James Bible is: "Because the King James Bible is, or should be, **THE** Authority for English speaking peoples." Strange as that may sound in the context of foreign language translation, the actual consequence of this is that a good, pure, faithful, correct, precise, inerrant, and accurate translation done from the KJB into the receptor language will be the preserved words of God in that receptor language. Such a translation will keep all the word(s) of God intact in the receptor language. Such a translation will say (as much as possible), preach, and teach the same things as the KJB. If it says, preaches, or teaches something different from or contrary to the KJB, it is not the preserved words of God, i.e., it is not all the word/words of God kept in the receptor language. Appropriate consideration can be given to the exact Greek readings underlying the King James Bible where that consideration could be helpful in more precisely translating into the receptor language, but it is not absolutely necessary. It is not necessary to learn Hebrew and Greek fluently in order to do proper Bible translation work. The correct position on the matter of texts and versions (and particularly with regard to the final authority of the KJB) is, however, a necessity. Thoroughly adequate fluency in the receptor language is also a must. And it is the contention and recommendation of this author that not only is it legitimate and acceptable to make a Bible translation directly from the text of the Authorized King James Bible, it is also the best procedure.