

KING JAMES ONLY? (Part I)

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It's been a few years since the Commission for Theological Integrity sponsored a somewhat similar seminar, which I also led. The issue of whether the King James version is the only one that can be trusted as the inerrant Word of God is still with us; indeed it appears to be somewhat more volatile today than it was then.

In light of that, one may wonder whether it is wise to have this seminar at all. Frankly, I have no desire to stir up things on this subject—or any other subject for that matter. I just plain don't like controversy and will do almost anything to avoid it, except when principles are at stake. If it were not for my concern for truth, and for the importance of hearing the inspired Word of God, I wouldn't even agree to speak on the subject. (I say that, by the way, with the awareness that those who hold the King James only position sincerely insist that they are concerned for those very same two things.)

I won't go at this today in exactly the same fashion as I did last time, partly to keep from boring you with what I've already said and written on the subject, partly because of the way the issue has progressed since I last had anything public to say. At this point I think a little more direct approach is called for. So I will organize what I have to say around this topic: why I don't believe the King James only position will work. I hope that doesn't strike you as being too aggressive. I only mean it as a way of indicating the direction my presentation will take.

So let's get right to the subject, and let me say to start with that I am going to confine my remarks to the New Testament and to its Greek original. This is simply for convenience; essentially the same things could be said about the Old Testament and the Hebrew-Aramaic original.

I begin by observing, as I have before, that those who hold to the King James only view are actually affirming two main things. What they are saying is:

- (1) Only the King James correctly translates the Greek original;
- (2) Only the King James uses the correct Greek original text as a basis for translation.

In other words, as indicated in my booklet, the first is the issue of translation, the second the issue of text. For the first, the question is how one translates the Greek words; for the second, the question is how one determines what the original Greek words were. Every difference between the King James and any other version boils down to one or the other of these two issues, so every argument about which is right is about one or the other of these two issues.

To illustrate. In John 6:53, for example, the King James reads, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." The NASB reads, "Truly, truly, I say to you." And the NKJB reads "Most assuredly I say to you." All three are translating the same Greek text, but they are translating it differently. This is an example of issue number one, the issue of translation. The King James only position is that only the King James provides the completely authoritative translation.

But in John 2:22 we read, in the KJV, that Jesus' disciples "remembered that he had said this unto them." The NASB, however, says they "remembered that he had said this," and does not include the words "unto them." That is because the majority of the Greek manuscripts of John do not include those words. This is an example of issue number two, the issue of text. The King James only position is that only the Greek text which the King James translators translated is the perfectly authoritative and original text.

These are the two issues, then, and these are the two affirmations included in the King James only position.

Now I'm about to disappoint some of you, though I believe for good reason. You will understand when I say that the whole subject involves so much material that we cannot possibly do it all justice in one brief 90-minute seminar. I'm persuaded that we sometimes do our subjects injustice by trying to cover too much in too short a time and therefore not giving them the treatment they deserve. I believe we'll do better to cover only part of the whole subject well than to try to cover it all poorly. Furthermore, I want to allow time for some questions and interchange.

Consequently, I've decided that today I will limit my discussion to the first of the two issues. Then, if there's enough interest and the Commission desires, perhaps we can have another seminar later on the second issue.

As I said, I know this will cause some disappointment, partly because you find it easier to be concerned over whether a given word or section is contained in the Bible than over exactly how it is translated. I admit, the issue I've chosen to cover is the easier of the two issues to understand. The other one is much more complex.

But the truth is, the first issue logically comes first and is equally important. It is an equally important part of what those who hold to the King James only view believe and insist on. And one thing is sure, if we can't come to a clear understanding and sense of agreement on this easier issue, we don't even need to go on to the more complicated one.

Today, then, we are dealing with this part of what the King James only people affirm: namely, that the King James is the only version we should use, the only entirely trustworthy version, the only one that is really the inerrant Word of God, because, for one thing, it is the only version that inerrantly translates from Greek into English.

Now, before proceeding to show why this position won't work, as I see it, let me cite one further example to be sure that the point I am making is clear, up front. Consider a phrase in Matt. 1:18: The Greek text is, *heurethe en gasteri echousa ek pneumatos hagiou*. Literally, in word for word order, this will read: "she was found in womb having out of spirit holy"). Here is what we find in five versions.

KJV: she was found with child of the Holy Ghost;

NKJV: she was found with child of the Holy Spirit;

NASB: she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit;

RSV: she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit;

NIV: she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Interesting that not one of these five agrees with the other exactly, although all five are translating the very same Greek original text. And although all are translating the same Greek and all seem to me to be saying exactly the same thing, the King James only position is that only the first of these is the very Word of God, because only the King James with perfect accuracy translates the Greek into English.

By the way, you will see right away that not any of the five, including the King James, translated the words literally. The Greek expression "having in womb" was their idiomatic way of saying what we express as being with child, or expecting a baby, or being pregnant. And my position is that any one of these five is the infallible, inerrant Word of God. Even if some version were to say "she was found to be pregnant by means of the Holy Spirit" it would still be the infallible, inerrant, inspired word of God in my view.

But what I promised was to tell you why I feel confident that the King James only position will not hold up under close scrutiny. Let's move on directly to that. But before showing specifically why the position will not work, I must do one more thing first. That is, I must clarify the underlying meaning of the King James only view. The logic of this position includes within it this basic belief, this sometimes hidden assumption:

God supernaturally and providentially worked with the translators of the King James version in such a way that their resulting translation was perfect in a way that no other translation can be. In other words, then, He did a work very similar to that which He performed for the original writers like Matthew and Paul.

It seems to me that the assumption of such a miraculous work on God's part, in the production of the King James, is finally the only basis on which the King James only position can logically rest.

Now it doesn't matter what term you use to identify this supernatural work. You could call it "inspiration" of the translators, just as we call the supernatural work of God on the original writers inspiration. But you don't have to. You may simply call it "a supernatural influence," a "divine

superintendence" (which is a phrase that many fundamentalists use to define the original inspiration), or "special providence" or merely "providence." Regardless of the terms, the result is the same. God so worked in the production of the King James that the final result, in English, is equally as inerrant and infallible as the original Greek was. And that is not true of any other version. That may or may not be the way they say it, but that is implicitly contained in the view, as I see it.

Let me put this another way. Given the large number of English translations that have been produced over the years, and that none of them has a special "halo" around it to identify it alone as the Word of God, for a person to say that one particular one represents the only translation that can stand as God's word requires that he make this assumption that God was especially at work in the production of the King James in a way that he has not been at work in any other translation.

Now then, why won't this work? Let me try to show this by pointing out a number of things that are implied in the King James only view. All of them grow out of the view that the King James is the infallible Word of God in a way that no other version is.

1. The KJ only view means, first, that no other translation before or after the King James can be regarded as the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of God. You will immediately see the necessity of this. If only the King James is the inerrant translation, then since no other English version agrees perfectly with the King James (if it did, it would be the King James!) no other English version is in every respect the Word of God. Then not only is the NIV not the inerrant Word of God, neither was Wycliffe's or Tyndale's—who was burned at the stake for his efforts. (I hasten to acknowledge that his martyrdom proves nothing one way or the other.)

You see what this means, if it is true? The English-speaking people before the King James didn't have the full and perfect Word of God.

I think, sometimes, that people aren't really familiar with the history of the translation of the Scriptures into English. Among the early versions were:

- Wycliffe's in the late 1300's.
- Tyndale's in 1525, revised in 1534.
- Coverdale's in 1535, a later edition in 1537.
- Matthew's Bible, also in 1537.
- The Great Bible, in 1539.
- The Geneva Bible, in 1560.
- The Bishops' Bible, in 1568.

And these aren't all, just some of the more important ones. I ask you sincerely, do you really want to say that these English translations were not the Word of God? Before the King James appeared in 1611, there had been 300 years when English-speaking people were reading the Word of God. Were they really tampering with and watering down the Scriptures and deceiving people? Personally, I don't think so; but the King James only position would imply that.

Furthermore, this means that even the early editions of the King James weren't the perfectly inspired Word of God. You realize that the King James was published in 1611, the work of six teams of scholars: three of the teams worked on the OT, two on the NT, and one on the Apocrypha—yes, I said the Apocrypha, which was included in the King James version.

But see, we don't even use the 1611 version; we can't even read much of it, the English is so different. The King James itself underwent a number of revisions: in 1629, 1638, 1762, and 1769, for examples. What we use today is an Americanized version of the 1769 revision (and not even all today's publishers print every single word of the King James in exactly the same way). So the King James only position means, then, that not even the original King James was the perfect Word of God. Only the 1769 version of it was, and so not until 1769 did English-speaking people have the entirely infallible, inerrant Word of God.

Frankly, I don't think that is a view that honors the Lord or His Word.

2. The KJ only view means that nothing that has been learned about the meanings of Greek words since the King James was translated is of any value. Given that God perfectly influenced that translation, so that it is infallible, it is an even surer guide to us than the Greek since there is more than one way to translate a given Greek word and the King James shows us the only perfect translation.

I trust you see the logic of this. If the King James gives us the perfectly infallible translation of any given Greek word into English, in the context, one does not need to look in a Greek lexicon to find the English meaning of a word. God has already given it, and it can't be improved on. Checking the lexicon might therefore even be a manifestation of a sinful attitude, a proud assumption that one can learn enough to outdo divine inspiration in getting at the meaning of a word!

You need to be aware that in the 19th and 20th centuries a great deal has been learned about the meaning of the Greek words during the period when the NT was written. One of the great discoveries lay in the unearthing of thousands of papyrus fragments that date back to NT times. These fragments contain all sorts of communications written in Greek by ordinary people, and so they help us learn many things about the meaning and usage of the Greek of that day. These papyri were not available to the King James translators. Do you really think we should ignore what we've learned that helps us translate ever more precisely? Do you really think the providence of God stopped in 1611, or 1769, and that God was not providentially involved in these later discoveries?

Let's look at an illustration, and in doing so stay with something simple. Take the English preposition "of," for example, which the King James translators were very fond of. I already gave you one example, when I referred to Matt. 1:18 where Mary was found with child "of" the Holy Ghost. It does us little good to know that the Greek preposition thus translated (*ek*) can mean "of, out of, from, by, because of" (or many similar expressions). Since the infallible version (according to the King James only position) has "of" we shouldn't even consider using "by."

Or take John 16:13, where the King James says that when the Holy Spirit has come he will "not speak of himself." As you know, these days, when we use the words "speak of," we mean speak about. I can't tell you how many sermons I've heard where the speaker used this verse to let us know that the Holy Spirit does not talk about himself; instead he talks about Jesus. Now, do I dare tell you that this is that same Greek preposition (*ek*) and that it never means "about"? Am I proudly thinking I know more than the inspiring Holy Spirit when I tell you that it means the Holy Spirit shall not speak from himself but instead will speak what He hears from Jesus? Well, if the KJ is the only correct, infallible, inerrant English translation, then I'm treading on dangerous ground, trying to improve on what God set down as beyond improvement.

I could give you thousands of illustrations, but we must move on. Before I do, however, let me make this point a little clearer. Some of you are probably sitting there thinking that what I've just said is very small, picky, making a mountain out of a molehill. Sure, you say, we don't mind if you read "she was found with child by the Holy Spirit" instead of "she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." But wait a minute. You can appreciate how really significant this is if you will just compare the original, inspired Greek text. You see, it would never occur to me to suggest that the Holy Spirit might have chosen a better Greek word at any place in the Greek text, no matter how relatively small and insignificant the Greek word might seem to be. I cannot improve the Greek original. I would not dare to suggest that any Greek word in the original might be replaced by some other Greek word.

And there's the important difference, you see. The KJ only folks believe the English of the King James has exactly the same authority as the Greek of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul. According to that position, then, just as the Greek can't be improved because every word was chosen under the overriding influence of the Spirit, then neither should one suggest that the English of the King James might be stated with equal accuracy or greater ease by some other English words.

3. The KJ only position means, next, that for any given set of words in Greek (or other language, for that matter), there is only one possible set of words in another language (in this case, English) that will

accurately translate the meaning of that set of words; and the King James, being thus miraculously directed, gives us that perfect set of words (as in the examples above).

I trust the reason for saying this is clear. What the KJ only folks are saying is that only the KJ version gives the divinely-chosen translation of the Greek original. No other translation will be as infallible because no other translation will equally correctly render the Greek into English. That must be maintained because if another translation renders the Greek with equal correctness and accuracy, then that translation too would be the Word of God.

But the point is that the implication is not true: it is always possible to translate from one language into another in different sets of words that express the correct meaning of the original language with equal accuracy.

I've already given you some illustrations of this, with Matt. 1:18, for example, or with the translation of the Greek *amen* as "verily, truly, assuredly, of a truth." Let me give you another one. Let's take Matt. 6:25-34 where we read, to begin with, "Take no thought for your life," and the passage continues by using the words "take thought" several times. We are not to "take thought" about food, clothing, or what tomorrow may bring, Jesus says.

Are you really telling me that precisely the same meaning cannot be conveyed by the words "Do not be anxious for" (NASB) or "Do not worry about" (NKJB)? I submit that either of these sets of words will translate the original accurately and will be just as truly the inerrant Word of God as the KJV. By the way, either of those sets might even be an improvement; at least they reflect what we have come to understand, now, about the meaning of the Greek word translated "take thought." The truth is, if you took "take thought" to be the literal meaning, you couldn't, as a Christian, give any thought in advance to what you are going to wear or eat or do tomorrow. You know as well as I do that understanding this to mean not being anxious or worried or emotionally distraught over those things is, finally, a better understanding simply because it is the correct understanding. But the KJ only position would not leave you the option of suggesting that you can improve a person's understanding in such a way, because the KJ only view means that the English version of 1611, or as revised in 1769, is forever fixed as the only infallible way to translate the Greek. By the way, and this anticipates a point I will make later, it seems clear that when the KJ translators used the words "take thought" in 1611, those words conveyed to them, in their day, the meaning of worry or anxiety. That isn't true today.

4. The KJ only view means, further, that only people who understand English have the Word of God. This conclusion rests inevitably on the other assumptions, since no translation into Spanish, German, French, or any other language was based on the King James or translated by the same people.

Please hear me now; sometimes I think folks just don't realize that every version of the NT except for the original Greek is a translation into another language. Or, if they realize it, they don't consider the implications of that fact. I repeat: no version of the Bible in any language in the world has been based on the King James.

Please realize that there are many translations of the Greek NT into other languages that were made long before the KJ in 1611. Some of these go back way into the early centuries of the church, like the Syriac version or the Coptic versions still used today by some Christians in those parts of the world. Do you really want to say that those folks don't have the Word of God in their language? For them, providentially, the Word has been preserved in their language almost 2,000 years!

Forget the early centuries if you wish: what about the Protestant Reformation? Martin Luther translated the Scriptures into German a hundred years before the KJ, and his version is still widely used by German Christians today. Don't they have the Word of God? And from then until the present day the Bible has been and still is being translated into a thousand languages and more.

Shouldn't it be? Of course it should. And don't they have, won't they have the Word of God? Of course. Surely you don't really want to say that the French or Spanish, or Chinese, or Japanese, or Dutch, or Portuguese versions aren't the Word of God! But if you say that the KJ is the only version that can be safely regarded as the infallible, inerrant Word of God, you must say that.

Of course, there is an alternative to this conclusion: you might assume that just as there is one version in English that was miraculously superintended and is perfect, so there is one in every other language [some of them?] that was likewise supernaturally directed! I shudder to think of the responsibility to pick out which one it is, in each language, or whether the version in a given language was thus supernaturally produced or not! Was Lonnie Sparks' Kulango version the Word of God? Was Bill Jones' Agni version? Or is the more recent revision of the Kulango the Word of God? When and how will we know that the Kulango version has undergone its final revision so that it must not ever be changed again?

Folks, you can't just accept what someone tells you, no matter how pious it sounds, without thinking through all the implications. This one implication alone, about versions in other languages, is enough to tell us that the KJ only position will not stand close scrutiny. At the very least, the KJ only position must be modified to say that only the KJ, in English, is the Word of God. (And then you must set about to determine which of the versions in other languages are—and what distinguishes them from ones that aren't!)

5. Let me take this one more step: the KJ only position also means, therefore, that if an English-speaking person wishes to translate the NT into the language of another people that do not have it, he should use only the King James English version (and not the Greek) as a basis for translation into another language. And, furthermore, he needs to be sure he can do the work with the same kind of miraculous, supernatural control that will guarantee that his translation is the only one that will ever be perfect!

You can easily see that this is true. The reason for this is that the King James English is the only version of the NT that he is absolutely sure of the exact meaning of every word; this results from the fact that he doesn't know Greek as well as he knows English, doesn't have an inspired Greek lexicon, and therefore is dependent on the fact that the King James is the perfect translation into his own language of the Greek original, giving the only perfectly accurate English equivalent, in context, of every Greek word in the original.

By the way, if you think I'm stretching a point here, I'm not. This is exactly what a true advocate of the KJ only position says. I remember just a few years ago when one of our men was speaking with a young preacher who had just graduated from one of our schools and had adopted the KJ only position. He specifically said that if he were a missionary to another people who did not have the Bible in their language he would translate it based on the KJ English!

I really think that view is so obviously wrong that it doesn't need refuting. I will repeat what I've said above: no version that I know of, in any of the thousands of languages the Bible has been translated into, was translated like that. If that's the way to do it, then none of these other folk have the Word of God.

And don't forget the other point tied to this one. Can you be sure that if you translated the Bible into another language, even if you use the KJ English as your base, that your version will be the one supernaturally guided so that it and it alone is the Word of God? That you and not some other believer who also translates into that language are the one God has chosen?

6. The King James only position also means that we cannot have, in our day, what the King James was in its day, or what the Greek NT was in its day. This is an important point, and I want to make sure I make it clear. To repeat: if the KJ only folks are right, you and I can't have what the King James was when it was translated.

Here's the point: when they produced the King James, they did so in the common language of the people of that time—in other words, in the way people really talked and wrote in 1611 (and thus the way they best understand). Sometimes I think that people think the King James English is a special Biblical form of English. It isn't: in 1611, or 1769, people used the English language just the way it appears in the KJ. The strange-sounding "thee" and "thou" and "ye," and "wouldst thou" and "thou didst" (and so on) represent the way the people of the time really talked. It was perfectly normal for a person to say "she hath been a succourer of many," as Paul says about Phebe in the letter to the Romans, or for someone to say

"why dost thou set at nought thy brother?" as he asks in Rom. 14:10. So when the KJ translation was made, their very objective was to give the Word of God to the people in the language of the people as they normally used it.

But it is not perfectly normal for people to talk that way today. So the KJ only position means we can't have what the KJ translators were doing for their day; we can't have the Word of God in the English language as we normally use it. Doesn't that strike you as somewhat strange and contradictory?

Furthermore, when the Lord inspired Matthew and Paul and the others to write their gospels and letters, he inspired them to write Greek in the way real people used the language of the Greek-speaking people of that day, just as the King James English is the way people used the English language in that day.

Now if God inspired Paul to write the kind of Greek people normally used, and the King James translators used (under God's direction, remember) English the way their people normally used English, why must God's word be presented to people in our day with language usage that is different from what they ordinarily use? To keep that from happening is the very reason the King James was produced! Why should it be different today?

7. Now let's take that general principle and develop some specific implications and illustrations. The King James only position implies, indirectly at least, that language doesn't really change in usage and meaning over the generations. But in fact all languages change, sometimes slowly and sometimes more quickly, over time. And English is no exception.

Nor is Greek. Perhaps you didn't know that the Greek of Paul's day is no longer read and used by Greek-speaking people today. The Greek of that day, which we call the "koine" period, is almost as dead a language as Latin is. Modern Greek Christians don't read the original Greek NT but another version in the modern Greek language.

Back to English. If you've ever tried to read Chaucer as he originally wrote *Canterbury Tales*, you understand what I mean. People today can't even read what's called Old English, and the English of Shakespeare's day (Elizabethan English) is very difficult. (Indeed, the English of Shakespeare is merely a literary version of the more typical English of the 1611 King James.)

English changed some from 1611 to 1769; that's one reason there were a dozen revisions of the original King James. And English has continued to change since then. Do you really want to suggest that after the many English revisions leading up to 1769, the process of revision needed to stop at that date even though the language continued (and continues) to change?

Now let's not argue positions just for the sake of convenience. If you aren't willing to admit that in many places the wording of the King James does not communicate, to people today, exactly as it communicated in 1611, then I don't see how we can get very far in our discussions.

I can hear someone saying, "But the KJ isn't all that hard to understand if people will just work at it!" Of course not, but why should we have to work harder in 1995 than the people in 1769 had to work? And would you mind if I suggested to you that one reason the KJ seems so understandable to you is because you've grown up with it all your life, heard it in church, read it personally?

It's interesting that frequently I even hear preachers whose usage of the English language has been shaped by the King James, and they don't even realize how strange their usage sounds to speakers of English today who aren't used to the KJ! I'm not criticizing this, I'm simply saying that it's easy for us not to realize how different even little matters of construction and word order are today as compared to 1769 and the KJ. For example, in Acts 1:8 we read, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." And over and over in the KJ we get that phrase "after that." And as I say I hear preachers who have shaped their syntax just that way and preach away saying "after that" without realizing that people do not talk that way any more.

That's not important, you say? Well certainly there's no harm in it, but pray tell me why we should have to limit ourselves to a version that uses the language in a way that's not current. Why should we use thee and thou and ye and wouldst and didst? And why should we be forced to stay with words that have changed their meaning?

You see, we fundamentalists believe in the importance of the very words God gave. Then I think we ought to be concerned that every one of those words has the very best English translation so that its meaning will be grasped as accurately as possible by the modern reader. That's absolutely the only reason in the world for using a more recent version.

But believe me when I tell you that most American Christians read their King James glibly and somehow don't even seem to realize that they do not know what the "reins" in the Bible are. I kid you not, I have heard sermons preached on texts with the word reins in them, and the reins are then explained to be the kind of reins that one uses on a horse or mule to guide it!

And when Paul says (2 Thess. 2:7) that "he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way," why should we be forced to stay with that usage that is no longer a part of the English language except in the King James? Do you really want to say that "letteth" is God's ordained will for the English translation of the Greek word in the year 1995? Do you really want to say that this is superior to translating the verse to read "He who is now hindering (or restraining) will hinder until he is removed." Do you really want to say that this translation, in the language we now speak, is not the inerrant Word of God?

Or take 1 Thess. 4:15 where Paul says that "We which are alive and remain ... shall not prevent them which are asleep." Will you please accept it that in 1769 "prevent" meant one thing in common usage and in 1995 "prevent" means something else altogether in common usage? In 1769 prevent meant to precede, get ahead of, get an advantage over. (That's why Arminius called pre-regenerating grace "preventing" or "prevenient" grace, by the way—although Arminius didn't call it that at all; he wrote in Latin and someone translated it that way into English.) Now really, wouldn't it be better if 1 Thess. 4:15 read, in English, that we who live until Jesus comes will not precede, or get ahead of, or have any advantage over those believers who have previously died?

In Conclusion

No doubt I could go on along these lines, but this is enough to get us started on the really serious issues involved in this matter. All I have done here is to list some of the conclusions that logically follow from the position that the King James, other than the Greek original, is the only infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of God.

I personally would suggest, because of these implications, that those who choose to adopt the King James only position should seriously consider adopting, instead, a modified King James only position. They could easily modify the position in two important ways.

First, as I suggested above, they could modify it by saying that the King James is the only version in the English language (even though that leaves unsolved the problem of how to determine the inerrant versions in other languages).

Second, they could modify it by saying that they affirm only the second of the two affirmations I laid out to begin with. In other words, they could say that they do not hold that the King James is necessarily the only possible way of translating the original into English that is the Word of God, but they do hold that the King James uses the only correct original text as a basis for translation.

Such a modification would have several advantages. It would be easier to defend from the ridiculous results of the implications I have pointed out today. Mainly, it would have the advantage of focusing on what is the main problem after all, and that is the problem of whether the more modern versions have included all the words in the text that they should have, or have omitted some of what really is the Word of God. As I said, that is after all the thing most people are really concerned about.

And I apologize for the fact that I haven't had time to deal with that second problem today. But, time or not, this first problem is a serious and important one. And I sincerely don't feel we can deal with the second one until we've settled the first one.

Now as a final conclusion let me emphasize a couple of things.

First, just because I am positive that there is more than one way to translate the Greek original into English and still have the inerrant Word of God, that does not mean that I think that every way the

Greek has been translated in every modern version is the inerrant Word of God. There simply isn't time, here, to go into each of the modern versions and analyze them, but some are simply more accurate as translations of the Greek than others.

For a quick example in passing: I am satisfied that Robert Bratcher, in his *Today's English Version*, is flatly wrong in translating passages that refer to the blood of Christ as though they simply meant death. In the context of the Bible, the shedding of Christ's blood refers always to sacrificial, atoning death and not mere death.

Second, while it may very well sound to you like I have been criticizing the King James version, be assured that I have no desire or intention to criticize it or to turn anyone away from using it. I verily believe it is the version for the preacher to use in the pulpit as he moves around from place to place in the denomination.

Keep in mind, then, that the only reason I have pointed out possible ways of translating correctly that are different from the King James is simply to demonstrate that there are alternative translations that would still be the inerrant Word of God, and for good reason. In other words, the only reason for pointing out things that could be different is to show that the King James is not necessarily the only sound, usable English version of the Word of God.

The point is that this presentation is not an attack, it is a response to an attack on the views of us who believe that it is appropriate to make use of some (not all) versions of the Bible other than the King James. If people would not attack that view, I would have no need to point up the implications and possibilities at all.

Then why am I concerned at all? Is it for me? I assure you it isn't: frankly, I read the Greek original when I want to know precisely what the Word of God says, and I am not in the slightest intimidated by those who differ with me regardless how long and loud they speak. And if that sounds proud and independent I don't mean for it to and I hope the next (and final) thing I say will help reassure you. Meanwhile I say this only so you'll know I have no personal axe to grind or need to get involved.

What then? I'm concerned about three things. First, I'm concerned for all the folks who can't be expected to know all that's involved and are preyed upon by extremists who fill their mailboxes with half-baked treatments of the issue and cause them all sorts of fears about this issue. I know that they do not need such fears and need only a reasonable caution to use a version that is produced by a group of sound, Bible believing scholars and not by liberals as a group or by individuals. In other words, I'm concerned because certain persons raise unnecessary alarms, usually as a result of what they've read that others say, and I'd like to turn off the alarms except where they're really needed. There is a need for some concern about versions, and the King James issue causes us to focus on the wrong concerns and be unnecessarily divisive.

Second, I'm concerned about the Bible as the Word of God. God inspired Paul and Moses and the others to give us what is 100% the infallible, inerrant, authoritative Word of God. And those of you who have heard my sermon on that subject know that there isn't anyone among you who expresses this truth more forcefully than I do. And, while I realize that the King James only folks are also concerned (as I said up front) about this, they are putting the issue where it shouldn't be put, and this serves finally to weaken the defense of the truth rather than to strengthen it.

Third, and finally, I'm concerned that people read the Word of God with as clear an understanding of what He is saying to them as possible. I do so believe in the importance of every word that proceeds from the mouth of God that I want every person in the world to hear that word in his or her own language in the most direct and accurately understandable way possible. I think anything less than that dishonors the Word of God. That is clearly His desire too.

THE KING JAMES ONLY POSITION: TWO BASIC BELIEFS

Two main things affirmed

1. **TRANSLATION:** *Only the King James correctly translates the Greek original;*

2. **TEXT:** *Only the King James uses the correct Greek original text as a basis for translation.*

Explanation

All differences between the King James and other English versions boil down to one or the other of these two issues.

(1) As to TRANSLATION, many differences are simply differences in the way the Greek is translated into English. The question involved here is, How does one correctly translate the Greek into English?

(2) As to TEXT, many differences result from the fact that there are differences in what the various Greek manuscripts include. Some have words, phrases, sentences that others don't have, and so some of the differences reflect the fact that the versions aren't all basing their translation on the same underlying Greek text. The question involved here is, How does one determine—given the differences between the various manuscripts—what the original Greek text is?

THE KING JAMES ONLY VIEW: THE BASIC ASSUMPTION

The logic of this position includes within it this basic belief, this (sometimes unstated) assumption:

God supernaturally and providentially worked with the translators and revisers of the King James version so that their resulting translation was perfect in a way that no other translation is.

In other words, then, He did a work very similar to that which He performed for the original writers like Matthew and Paul.

The assumption of such a miraculous work on God's part, in the production of the King James, is finally the only basis on which the King James only position can rest.

THE KING JAMES ONLY VIEW: IMPLICATIONS THAT WON'T WORK

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

1. *This view means that no other translation before or after the King James can be regarded as the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of God. If only the King James is the inerrant translation, then since no other English version agrees perfectly with the King James (if it did, it would be the King James!) no other English version is wholly the Word of God.*

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

2. *This view means that nothing that has been learned about the meanings of Greek words since the King James was translated is of value. Given that God perfectly influenced the King James translation, so that it is infallible, it is an even surer guide to us than the Greek since there is more than one way to translate a given Greek word and the King James shows us the perfect translation of every word in its context. One can't improve on perfection!*

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

3. *This view means that for any given set of words in Greek there is only one possible set of words in another language (in this case, English) that will with complete accuracy translate the meaning of that set of words. The King James, being thus miraculously*

directed, gives us that perfect set of words.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★

4. *This view means that only people who understand English have the entire, infallible Word of God. This conclusion rests inevitably on the other assumptions, since no translation into Spanish, German, French, or any other language was based on the King James or translated by the same people.*

★★★★★★★★★★★★★

5. *This view means that if an English-speaking person wishes to translate the NT into the language of another people that do not have it, he should use only the King James English version (and not the Greek) as a basis for translation into another language.*

Furthermore, he must be sure he can do the work with the same kind of miraculous, supernatural control that will guarantee that his translation is the only one that will ever be perfect!

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

6. *This view means that we cannot have, in our day, what the King James was in its day, or what the Greek NT was in its day.* The original Greek was in the normal language of everyday Greek-speaking people. The English of the King James was in the normal language of everyday English-speaking people at the time. But if we can't revise the King James (and we can't if it is final and perfect as an English translation), we can't bring it into the normal language of everyday English-speaking people of our day. Therefore, in this view, you and I can't have in 1995 what the King James was when it was translated in 1611/1769.

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7. *This view implies, indirectly at least, that language doesn't really change in usage and meaning over the generations.* But in fact all languages change, sometimes slowly and sometimes more quickly, over time. English is no exception. The King James, in many ways of varying importance, isn't in the language as it is used in our day.

A clause in Matt. 1:18:

Greek:

heurethe - she was found

en gastri echousa - in womb having

ek pneumatos hagiou - out of spirit holy

KJV: she was found with child of the Holy Ghost;

NKJV: she was found with child of the Holy Spirit;

NASB: she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit;

RSV: she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit;

NIV: she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.