

# **King James Onlyism: A New Sect**

By

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## Preface

The King James Only controversy has been raging now for over three decades. I first heard of it in the early 1970s, shortly after I came to Chattanooga, TN, to teach Hebrew and Old Testament at Temple Baptist Seminary. At first, I could not believe that anyone would take the idea seriously, so I treated it as a trivial fad that would quickly die out. But I was wrong. By 1979, when I was invited to work on the New King James Version of the Bible, it was developing into more than a trifle and becoming a matter of theological separation among some constituents. Consequently, I was reluctant to participate in a modern revision of the King James Version because of the controversy it would arouse, and the potential problems it may create for the University with which I was associated. I hesitated to contribute to that revision until I consulted with Dr. Lee Roberson and received his verbal permission.

In my early days, it never entered my mind that the King James Version needed revision into modern English because I cut my teeth on that edition of the Bible, memorizing it from early childhood. Consequently, I understood King James English as well as Modern English and did not know some people had trouble comprehending it. It was not until I began teaching in seminary that I discovered I was investing a worthwhile percentage of my time teaching Elizabethan English in my classes instead of Bible. Many students did not understand (or they misunderstood) what they read in the King James Bible because of its archaic language. That encouraged me to participate in the editing of the New King James Version.

When the King James Only controversy became more serious in the early 1980s, I began to study both sides of the issue to learn the real nature of the problem. From that time until now, I have invested immeasurable time in study and research in order to help people who struggle with this quandary. I have studied

the history of the English Bible from its earliest inception, the origin and sources of the controversy, the arguments favoring the King James Only position and those against it. I have studied the criticisms advocates of the position have of modern versions and carefully checked their validity. This book is an organized presentation of the results of that study.

Several good books have been published in the past few years that address this issue and answer many questions about it. I venture to publish yet another because it addresses issues not covered thoroughly in other books, and it provides extensive details otherwise not available. I have tried to be fair, thorough, honest, and courteous in the way matters are treated. For those who agree with me this books provides abundant evidence to support the conclusions. Those who are skeptical are invited to read it fairly and check all the evidence. Any existing discrepancies or oversights are due to human weakness and not to intentional manipulation. This work is dedicated to the glory of God and a better understanding of His Word.

James D. Price  
Chattanooga, TN  
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## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **The King James Only Doctrine Is a New Idea**

Growing up as I did in the 1930s and 40s, I have witnessed firsthand the development of a new doctrine among some fundamental churches—a doctrine that has come to be known as *King James Onlyism*. This new doctrine declares that the King James Version of the Bible is the providentially preserved Word of God, and is actually (or essentially) the only and final authority in all matters of faith and practice for the English-speaking world today. In my early years, my family was a member of an independent Baptist church associated with a group of churches that had withdrawn from the Northern Baptist Convention<sup>1</sup> because of theological liberalism. The King James Version of the Bible was the version used most often by people in those churches for study and for memorizing, and by preachers in the pulpit.

The idea that the King James Version was the only Bible one should use was unheard of. Everyone in conservative Christian circles understood that the King James Version was one of many translations of the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible and that the final authority for doctrine, faith, and practice always has been the original Hebrew words written by Moses and the prophets and the original Greek words written by the apostles. It was not unusual for the pastor and visiting speakers to make reference to the Greek or Hebrew texts from which they derived better wording or more accurate renderings. They made favorable reference to the wording of the Revised Version of 1881 (RV), to the American Standard Version of 1901 (ASV), and to other modern versions. In those early days, it was popular in fundamental circles to own an American Standard Version of the Bible.

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<sup>1</sup> Now known as the American Baptist Convention.

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During the 1950s, I attended Los Angeles Baptist Theological Seminary<sup>2</sup> (a fundamental school approved by the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches). There, together with Bible, theology, homiletics, church history, and other related subjects, we studied Greek and Hebrew. We studied the principles of textual criticism and how to understand and use the footnotes in the printed editions of the Greek and Hebrew Bibles. These footnotes mark places in the text where the wording differs among the ancient manuscripts, and they identify the various manuscripts that contain the alternate readings. My professors had studied under such great fundamental scholars as G. Gresham Machen and Robert Dick Wilson. My Greek professor always preached directly from the Greek New Testament. No one ever suggested that variant readings in the Greek text were heretical, or that using other versions of the Bible was unacceptable. The only version that was criticized was the newly published Revised Standard Version of 1952 (RSV) because of its theologically liberal bias.<sup>3</sup> However, one must not assume that fundamentalists began to preach King James Onlyism because they rejected the RSV. The rejection was because of a theologically liberal bias in the RSV, not to textual issues or a sudden need to have a final authority in English. Pastors continued to refer to Greek and Hebrew, and to the RV, the ASV, and other acceptable modern versions.

This practice was consistent with the textbooks used in seminary. For example, well-known conservative theologian, Henry C. Thiessen, wrote concerning the divine inspiration of Scripture:

Inspiration is affirmed only of the autographs of the Scriptures, not of any of the versions, whether ancient or modern, nor of any of the Hebrew or Greek manuscripts in existence, nor of any critical text known. All these are either known to be faulty in some particulars, or are not certainly known to be free from error.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The seminary is now located in Tacoma, Washington, and known as Northwest Baptist Seminary, still approved by the GARBC.

<sup>3</sup> This was primarily due to Isaiah 7:14 where the RSV reads *young woman* instead of *virgin*.

<sup>4</sup> Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1949), 107.

Thiessen quoted from the RV or the ASV whenever that version better reflected the Hebrew or Greek text and provided a clearer statement of the doctrine under discussion. Augustus H. Strong,<sup>5</sup> of Emory H. Bancroft,<sup>6</sup> of William Evans,<sup>7</sup> and of other conservative theologians did the same.

During the 1960s, while doing doctoral studies in Philadelphia, we were members of another GARBC church in Haddon Heights, New Jersey. There the pastor and visiting speakers followed the same practice we had observed in earlier decades. No one objected to references to Greek and Hebrew, or to other versions. In fact, the people appreciated the added insight derived from such sources. There was not the slightest hint that anyone thought that the King James Version was the only acceptable Bible to use.

In 1972, I began teaching in the seminary of Tennessee Temple University, Chattanooga, Tennessee. At that 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.

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<sup>5</sup> Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907); of course Strong often made direct reference to the Hebrew and Greek, at times either accepting or rejecting the readings of the Westcott-Hort critical text.

<sup>6</sup> Emory H. Bancroft, *Elemental Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1945).

<sup>7</sup> William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1912, 1939, 1949).

It was not until the early 1970s, after I began to teach, that I first heard of the King James Only idea. I could not believe that anyone would advocate such a teaching. The first mention of this new doctrine came from some students of Peter Ruckman, and then from his own writings.<sup>8</sup> Investigation revealed that this idea could be traced to the works of Edward F. Hills<sup>9</sup> and Jasper James Ray,<sup>10</sup> publications written in the 1950s. However, these authors do not seem to have had much influence until their torch was picked up by Peter Ruckman and David Otis Fuller.<sup>11</sup> By searching back for deeper historical roots, I found the work of Ray<sup>12</sup> and Fuller to be heavily dependent on an earlier book by Seventh Day Adventist Benjamin G. Wilkinson.<sup>13</sup> Fuller praised Wilkinson's scholarship, reproducing ten of his sixteen chapters almost word-for-word.<sup>14</sup> However, he concealed Wilkinson's connection with Seventh Day Adventism by removing all references

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<sup>8</sup> Peter S. Ruckman, *The Christian Handbook of Manuscript Evidence* (Pensacola: Pensacola Bible Press, 1970); plus other similar books, and his newspaper *The Bible Believer's Bulletin*.

<sup>9</sup> Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended!* (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1956).

<sup>10</sup> Jasper James Ray, *God Wrote Only One Bible* (Junction City, OR: Eye Opener Publishers, 1955).

<sup>11</sup> David Otis Fuller, ed., *Which Bible?* (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids International Publishers, 1970); *True or False: The Westcott-Hort Theory Examined* (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1973).

<sup>12</sup> Ray borrowed Wilkinson's idea that the Waldenses preserved the Old Latin form of the *Textus Receptus* in Northern Italy. On pages 79-80, he quoted Frederick Nolan as the authority for this idea. This quotation was lifted, word-for-word, from Wilkinson's book, pages 40-41. Also Wilkinson led Ray to believe that the Latin Vulgate was not the traditional Latin version until after the Council of Trent of 1546 (pp. 80-81). Thus, Ray asserted that Wycliffe's translation of 1382 (which was translated from the Latin version) "is in agreement with the *Textus Receptus*" (p. 34, see also p. 87). However, I checked Wycliffe's translation against the 162 errors Ray listed as being in modern versions (pp. 35-50) and found that Wycliffe agreed with the Rheimes translation (1609) in all but 3 of the 162 passages. Likewise, Wycliffe agreed with the alleged errors in 65 passages. It is clear that Wycliffe translated from the Vulgate, not from the Old Latin.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin G. Wilkinson, *Our Authorized Version Vindicated* (Payson, AZ: Leaves-of-Autumn Books, Inc., 1930).

<sup>14</sup> Fuller, *Which Bible?* 176-318.

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to Ellen G. White and to Adventism.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, Wilkinson's work is unreliable in many details, including the claim that the Waldenses preserved the pure text of the Bible.

However, a study of history reveals that the roots of fundamentalism rest in the authority of the Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible, not in an English translation. This is true of fundamentalism as found in the statements of faith of various denominational groups.

***Original Languages Were Authoritative for Baptists***

The various groups of Baptists trace their confessions of faith back to the Second London Confession of Faith of 1677, and to the New Hampshire Confession of Faith of 1830.

The London Confession is derived from the Westminster Confession of 1649. That portion of the London Confession relating to the Scriptures and to the source of final authority is in paragraph 8 of Chapter 1, which states:

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 authentic; so as in all controversies of Religion, the Church is finally to appeal to them.<sup>16</sup>

The text goes on to indicate the need for translations in all the languages of the world, but no translation is granted authority over the Hebrew and Greek.

With regard to the Scriptures, the New Hampshire Confession reads:

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us, and therefore is, and shall remain to

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<sup>15</sup> Gary Hudson, "The Great 'Which Bible' Fraud," *Baptist Biblical Heritage*, vol. 1, no. 2 (Summer, 1990).

<sup>16</sup> William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 251; italics in the original text.

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the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried.<sup>17</sup>

Although this confession does not explicitly declare the primary authority of the Hebrew and Greek autographs, 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. The following are excerpts from the confessions of faith of the various Baptist groups:

### ***The General Association of Regular Baptist Churches***

We believe 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.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Baptist Bible Fellowship***

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 God to man; the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall 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 definite 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.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> J. Gordon Melton, ed., *The Encyclopedia of American Religions: Religious Creeds*, 1st ed. (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1988), 481.

<sup>18</sup> Melton, 492.

<sup>19</sup> Melton, 484, Melton noted: "The statement of the Baptist Bible Fellowship, one of the largest of the contemporary fundamentalist churches, is the epitome of the fundamentalist position. Notice its affirmation of supernaturalism, biblical authority, creation, and the virgin birth. Otherwise, it follows the mild Calvinism of the New Hampshire Confession" (p. 487).

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The excellent work of Doug Kutilek has demonstrated that the idea of King James Onlyism did not exist in the historical roots of this fellowship of churches.<sup>20</sup>

### ***The Minnesota Baptist Association***

We believe that the Holy Bible was written inerrant in its original languages by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instructions; that i[t] has God for its Author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the age, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried.<sup>21</sup>

The excellent work of Larry D. Petigrew has demonstrated that the idea of King James Onlyism did not exist in the historical roots of this association of churches.<sup>22</sup>

### ***The New Testament Association of Independent Baptist Churches***

We believe that the Bible, sixty-six books in the Old and New Testaments, is without error in its original writing; its author was God using Spirit-guided men, being thereby verbally and plerarily inspired; it is the sole authority for faith and practice.<sup>23</sup>

### ***The Southwide Baptist Fellowship***

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.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Doug Kutilek, *J. Frank Norris and His Heirs: The Bible Translation Controversy* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Melton, 494.

<sup>22</sup> Larry D. Petigrew, "Historical Overview—The King James Only Position," in *The Bible Version Debate: The Perspective of Central Baptist Theological Seminary* (Minneapolis: Central Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997), 5-17. In fact, the entire book demonstrates the point.

<sup>23</sup> Melton, 497.

<sup>24</sup> Melton, 507.

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### ***The Baptist General Conference***

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscript, written under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.<sup>25</sup>

### ***The Southern Baptist Convention***

The confession of faith of the Southern Baptist Convention is almost identical with that of the New Hampshire Confession as it relates to the Scripture.<sup>26</sup> Although it makes no specific declaration of the primary authority of the Greek and Hebrew autographs, it may be safely inferred that such a limitation was understood. No mention is made of an English version that is regarded as the final court of appeal.

### ***Other Baptist Groups***

The confessions of faith of other Baptist groups do not contain a specific statement about the primary authority of the Greek and Hebrew autographs, but it may be inferred that such a limitation was understood. None of these confessions mentions an English version that is regarded as the final court of appeal.

### ***Original Languages Were Authoritative for Presbyterians***

The Westminster Confession of Faith of 1649 has been adopted by the Bible Presbyterian Church, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church of America, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.<sup>27</sup> Concerning the Scripture, Chapter I article VIII states:

The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was 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 authentic; so as in all controversies of religion the Church is finally to appeal to them.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Melton, 515.

<sup>26</sup> Melton, 500.

<sup>27</sup> Melton, 230.

<sup>28</sup> Melton, 218. The confession also asserts the need for translations in all the languages of the nations, but it does not specify any particular versions as preferable.

***Original Languages Were Authoritative for Lutherans***

The Augsburg Confession of 1530 is the document that defines the doctrinal views of the Lutheran Church. However, this confession has no specific article dealing with the authority of Scripture. It seems to have been an assumption that needed no declaration. It was the Formula of Concord of 1580 that provided a declaration regarding the Scriptures, a portion of which follows:

We believe, teach and confess that the only rule and standard according to which at once all dogmas and teachers should be esteemed and judged are nothing else than the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament, as it is written (Ps. 119:105) “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” And St. Paul (Gal. 1:8) “Though an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, let him be accursed.”

Other writings, of ancient or modern teachers, whatever reputation they may have, should not be regarded as of equal authority with the Holy Scriptures, but should altogether be subordinated to them, and should not be received other or further than as witnesses, in what manner and at what places, since the time of the apostles, the [purer] doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved. . .

In this way the distinction between the Holy Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament and all other writings is preserved, and the Holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule, and standard, according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas should and must be discerned and judged, as to whether they be good or evil, right or wrong.<sup>29</sup>

Although this confession does not explicitly refer to the primary authority of the Greek and Hebrew autographs, it may be safely inferred that such a limitation was understood. No mention is made of a translation that would be regarded as the final court of appeal.

***Original Languages Were Authoritative for  
the Evangelical Free Church of America***

The following is an excerpt from the confession of faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America:

The Evangelical Free Church of America believes: 1. The Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Melton, 69-70.

<sup>30</sup> Melton, 257.

***Original Languages Were Authoritative for  
Interdenominational Churches***

Several groups of churches may be classified as interdenominational in nature. The following are typical of those that would be regarded as fundamentalist:

***The American Council of  
Christian Churches***

Among other equally biblical truths, we believe and maintain the following: a. The plenary divine inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and, as the Word of God, the supreme and final authority in faith and life.<sup>31</sup>

***The Independent Fundamental  
Churches of America***

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.<sup>32</sup>

***Original Languages Were Authoritative  
for Historical Leaders***

Fundamentalism believes and defends the historical doctrines of orthodox Christianity. It acquired a distinct identity when, in the early decades of this century, various fundamental groups separated from denominations that were dominated by a theologically liberal leadership. The doctrinal views of Fundamentalism were articulated in a series of books edited by R. A. Torrey, A. C. Dixon, and others entitled *The Fundamentals*.<sup>33</sup> Fundamentalism acquired its name as a result of that publication.

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<sup>31</sup> Melton, 566.

<sup>32</sup> Melton, 574.

<sup>33</sup> R. A. Torrey, A. C. Dixon, *et al.*, eds., *The Fundamentals* (Los Angeles: The Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1917).

**James M. Gray**

James M. Gray, then Dean of Moody Bible Institute, wrote the chapter on the inspiration of the Bible. Part of his definition of inspiration included the following statement:

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 copyists, unless God were pleased to perform a perpetual miracle to secure it.<sup>34</sup>

After Gray completed his definition and defense of the inspiration of Scripture, he concluded by listing some of those who would agree with his definition:

We have spoken of scholars and of the learned, let us come to names. We suppose Dr. Sanday, of Oxford, is a scholar, and the Archbishop of Durham, and Dean Burgon, and Professor Orr, of Glasgow, and Principal Forsyth, of Hackney College, and Sir Robert Anderson, and Dr. Kuiper, of Holland, and President Patton, of Princeton, and Howard Osgood of the Old Testament Revision Committee and Matthew B. Riddle of the New, and G. Frederick Wright and Albert T. Clay, the archaeologists, and Presidents Moorehead and Mullins, and C. I. Scofield, and Luther T. Townsend, for twenty-five years professor in the Theological School of Boston University, and Arthur T. Pierson of the Missionary Review of the World, and a host of other living witnesses—Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, Reformed Dutch.

We had thought John Calvin a scholar, and the distinguished Bengel, and Canon Faussett, and Tregelles, and Auberlen, and Van Oosterzee, and Charles Hodge and Henry B. Smith, and so many more that it were foolishness to recall them. These men may not stand for every statement in these pages, they might not care to be quoted as holding technically the verbal theory of inspiration for reasons already named, but they will affirm the heart of the contention and testify to their belief in an inspiration of the Sacred Oracles which includes the words.<sup>35</sup>

Is this what led J. Hudson Taylor to Inland China, and Dr. Guinness to establish the work upon the Congo, and George Müller and William Quarrier to support the orphans at Bristol and the Bridge of Weirs? Is this—the belief in the plenary inspiration of the Bible—the secret of the evangelistic power of D. L. Moody, and Chapman, and Torrey, and Gipsy Smith, and practically every evangelist in

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<sup>34</sup> James M. Gray, "The Inspiration of the Bible," in *The Fundamentals*, edited by R. A. Torrey, A. C. Dixon, et al. (1917; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 2:12-13; emphasis his.

<sup>35</sup> Gray, 2:40-41.

the field, for to the extent of our acquaintance there is none of these who doubt it? Does this tell us why “the best sellers on the market,” at least among Christian people, have been the devotional and expository books of Andrew Murray, and Miller and Meyer, and writers of that stamp? Is this why the plain people have loved to listen to preachers like Spurgeon, and McLaren, and Campbell Morgan, and Len Broughton and A. C. Dixon and have passed by men of the other kind? It is, in a word, safe to challenge the whole Christian world for the name of a man who stands out as a winner of souls who does not believe in the inspiration of the Bible as it has been sought to be explained in these pages.<sup>36</sup>

After reading Gray’s chapter, it is hard to believe that anyone would claim that the early leaders of Fundamentalism held to a King James Only view. Yet in spite of the evidence from history, some defenders of King James Onlyism erroneously claim that many leaders of past generations held and defended the King James Version as the only authoritative translation. The following are but four examples:

***John William Burgon (1813-1888)***

Edward F. Hills devoted a whole chapter to portraying Burgon as a defender of the Traditional Text, thus of the King James Version.<sup>37</sup> David Cloud also devoted considerable space to a similar portrayal of Burgon.<sup>38</sup> The truth is that Burgon was opposed to the English Revised Version of 1881 not because it was a revision of the King James Version, but because it was based on the Greek text of Westcott and Hort. Further, Burgon was not a defender of the *Textus Receptus* that underlies the KJV, but of the Byzantine Text which he referred to as the Traditional Text. His Traditional Text was the text supported by the majority of Greek manuscripts, otherwise referred to as the Majority Text today. His proposed Greek text differed from the *Textus Receptus* in hundreds of places, and he proposed hundreds of changes that should be made to the KJV based on a differ-

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<sup>36</sup> Gray, 2:42.

<sup>37</sup> Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (Des Moines IA: Christian Research Press, 1973), 139-68; David Otis Fuller reproduced this chapter in his *Which Bible?* (pp. 86-105).

<sup>38</sup> David W. Cloud, *For Love of the Bible* (Oak Harbor, WA: Way of Life Literature, 1995), 138-71. Technically it is true that Cloud listed Burgon among those who opposed the Revised Version, but he never clearly distinguishes Burgon’s Traditional Text from the *Textus Receptus*; and he leaves his readers with the impression that Burgon supports a King James Only view.

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ent underlying Greek text. It is misleading for advocates of the King James Only view to imply that Burgon's Traditional Text is the same as the *Textus Receptus*, and that were he living today he would be a supporter of their new doctrine.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Edward Miller (1825-1901)***

David Cloud also devoted space to portraying Edward Miller, a close associate of Burgon, as a defender of the KJV.<sup>40</sup> This, too, is a misleading portrayal, because Miller, a scholar in his own right, held the same views as Burgon—the Traditional Text.

### ***J. L. Dagg***

The highly respected Baptist theologian of the 19th century, J. L. Dagg, clearly stated where the final authority lies:

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. Yet the providence, which has preserved the divine oracles, has been special and remarkable. They were at first committed to the Jews, who exercised the utmost care in their preservation and correct transmission. After the Christian Scriptures were added, manuscript copies were greatly multiplied; many versions were prepared in other languages; innumerable quotations were made by the early fathers; and sects arose which, in their controversies with each other, appealed to the sacred writings, and guarded their purity with incessant vigilance. The consequence is, that, although the various readings found in the existing manuscripts, are numerous, we are able, in every case, to determine the correct reading, so far as is necessary for the establishment of our faith, or the direction of our practice in every important particular. So little, after all, do the copies differ from each other, that these minute differences, when viewed in contrast with their general agreement, render the fact of that agreement the more impressive, and may be said to serve practically, rather to increase, than impair our confidence in their general correctness. Their utmost

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<sup>39</sup> It is true that Hills eventually declared Burgon's view to be illogical (p. 192), but only when he was defending the *Textus Receptus* in those places where its readings are not supported by the majority of manuscripts—a conclusion that is illogical, in my opinion, after Hills used Burgon's defense of the Traditional (Majority) Text as the basis for defending the *Textus Receptus* to begin with.

<sup>40</sup> Cloud, 172-77. What was said of Cloud's treatment of Burgon is also true of his treatment of Miller.

deviations do not change the direction of the line of truth; and if they seem in some points to widen that line a very little, the path that lies between their widest boundaries, is too narrow to permit us to stray. As copies of the Holy Scriptures, though made by fallible hands, are sufficient for our guidance in the study of divine truth; so translations, though made with uninspired human skill, are sufficient for those who have not access to the inspired original.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)***

Some King James Only advocates have referred to Charles Haddon Spurgeon as one who rejected the English Revised Version and who defended the use of only the King James Version. They support this claim by selectively citing statements of his that could be interpreted in this way. However, it is evident that Spurgeon favorably used the ERV at times. On Sunday evening, July 19, 1885, Spurgeon preached a sermon entitled “And We Are: A Jewel from the Revised Version.”<sup>42</sup> In the introduction to this sermon, Spurgeon stated:

A genuine fragment of inspired Scripture has been dropped by our older translators, and it is too precious to be lost. Did not our Lord say, “Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing may be lost”? The half lost portion of our text is restored to us in the Revised Version. Never did a translation of the New Testament fail more completely than this Revised Version has done as a book for general reading: but as an assistant to the student it deserves honourable mention, despite its faults. It exhibits here and there special beauties, and has, no doubt, in certain places brought into notice words of sacred Scripture which had fallen out: we have a notable instance in my present text.<sup>43</sup>

He then called attention to the text in 1 John 3:1, and cited the verse first from the AV. Then he stated:

So far for our Authorized Version. Now read the Revised Version, and note the words added—

*“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are.”*

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<sup>41</sup> J. L. Dagg, *A Manual of Theology* (1857; reprint; Harrisonburg, VA: Gano Books, 1982), 24-25.

<sup>42</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. xxxii, Sermons Preached and Revised by C. H. Spurgeon During the Year 1886 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1974), 673-84.

<sup>43</sup> Spurgeon, 672.

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The word “*such*” is not in the original. We therefore leave it out, and then we get the words—AND WE ARE. There are only two words in the Greek—“and we are.” That the addition 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 been dropped out. In the judgment of the most learned, and those best to be relied on, these are veritable words of inspiration.<sup>44</sup>

### ***Fundamentalism Is Divided over the King James Only Issue***

As a result of the recent emphasis of vocal defenders of the King James Version, Fundamentalism has been divided into several camps over this issue.

#### ***Some Prefer Modern Versions***

It is quite clear that some Fundamentalists have not been bothered by the recent arrival of numerous modern translations of the Bible. They have not yielded to peer pressure and vocal harassment from King James Only advocates. They have selected one translation, such as the NIV, NASB, NKJV, or some other, as the version to be used in their church or for private study. They use other versions for study and comparison, and are pleased and content that a number of versions are available for their benefit. This view also is widely held among conservatives and Evangelicals.

#### ***Some Prefer the King James Version***

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 problems 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. They do not make the use of the King James Version an

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<sup>44</sup> Spurgeon, 673-74.

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issue for fellowship. Some accept the NKJV as a good modern revision of the KJV. I do not classify this view as being part of King James Onlyism.

### ***Some Prefer the Textus Receptus***

Many Christians use only the King James Version (or the NKJV) for the reasons mentioned above, but also because it is based on the *Textus Receptus*—the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek text of the New Testament that were used by the great reformers and became the traditional texts of the intervening generations. They believe that these texts were providentially preserved as the authoritative texts of Scripture. They are suspicious of the modern critical editions of the Hebrew and Greek texts because they have been led to believe that those texts contain errors and are tainted with liberal theology and rational philosophy. They distrust modern versions of the Bible translated from those texts, considering them to be factually and doctrinally erroneous. They do realize, however, that improvements can be made to the KJV and are not opposed to modern versions, such as the NKJV, that are based on the *Textus Receptus*.

### ***Some Insist on the Textus Receptus Underlying the King James Version***

Some Christians use only the King James Version for the reasons mentioned above, but also because it was translated from a particular form of the *Textus Receptus*—the Hebrew and Greek words behind the English words of the King James Version. This is based on their belief that the translators of the King James Version, when they had to choose between differing readings in the Hebrew and Greek texts available to them, made excellent textual decisions unequaled today—that is, the translators always chose the correct reading. This view holds that these texts are the providentially preserved authoritative texts of Scripture. Further, they believe the King James Version is an accurate translation made by men of great piety and scholarship. To them King James English is superior to Modern English, being able to more accurately express the truth of the original languages. They deny that the King James Version needs to be revised, updated, or in any way altered. Some, but not all who hold this view, assert that the use of the King James Version should be made a test of fellowship.

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I include Hills, Ray, Fuller, Waite, Cloud, and their followers in this category. It is true that these men have claimed that improvements could be made to the present form of the King James Version. However, I have yet to see one improvement that they have recommended or approved.<sup>45</sup> Instead, they vigorously defend every detail of the KJV, and consider any variation from the wording of the KJV as erroneous or faulty. Further, their *Textus Receptus* is defined as the Hebrew and Greek texts that underlie the English words of the KJV. Therefore, it is the English words that determine the words of the Hebrew and Greek texts, not the Hebrew and Greek words that determine the English. Consequently, I see no practical difference between this view and that of Peter Ruckman, who openly declares that the King James English corrects the Hebrew and Greek. In other words, although they claim that the *Textus Receptus* is the autographic text, this claim is really a pseudo-scholarly screen for a hidden King James Only agenda.

### ***Some Insist on the King James Version Only***

Some Christians believe that God has not preserved His Word throughout history by means of manuscript copies of the Hebrew and Greek texts, but by means of translations.<sup>46</sup> Because the original Hebrew and Greek autographs have perished, and only imperfect manuscript copies have survived, they reason that the original Hebrew and Greek words are not available to make up a flawless, infallible, inerrant, authoritative Bible. Thus, because the apostles who wrote the New Testament used a Greek translation of the Old Testament when they quoted Old Testament Scripture, they conclude that God preserves His Word through providentially guided translations.

The reconstructed history follows this logic: During the time of Christ the international language of the known world was Greek; therefore, God providentially guided a translation of the Old Testament into Greek that was His divinely

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<sup>45</sup> Hills did list a few archaic words that have changed meaning, but he does not recommend changing them. Instead, he suggests that the current meaning be placed in the marginal note. He then listed six reasons why the KJV should be retained.

<sup>46</sup> This seems to be the view of Peter Ruckman whose publications have been previously cited. See also, G. A. Riplinger, *New Age Bible Versions* (Ararat VA: A.V. Publications, 1994).

inspired, infallible, inerrant Bible. By the second and third century, that Greek Bible was revised and retranslated as the Septuagint (and others) leading to corrupt, heretical Greek versions that contaminated the Church, and allowed doctrinal error to creep in. When Latin became the international language of the Roman Empire, God providentially guided a translation of the Bible into Old Latin; and that translation became the inspired, infallible, inerrant Bible. In the fourth century Jerome retranslated the Old Latin Bible into the corrupt and heretical Latin Vulgate, thus contaminating the Church and further contributing to doctrinal error. In the meantime, God providentially guided a translation of the Bible into the language of the Waldenses that became the inspired, infallible, inerrant Bible during the Dark Ages.

Finally, in these last days, English has become the international language, consequently God providentially guided a translation of the Bible into English—The King James Version of 1611. Today this Bible is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God preserved for the English-speaking world. Modern versions are corrupt, heretical perversions that contaminate the Church and lead to further doctrinal error. They are the result of the subversive work of Satan. Anyone who uses any version except the King James Version is a heretic and an instrument of the Devil. To the advocates of this view, the use of the King James Version is a necessary issue for separation of fellowship.

### ***This Book Discusses the Problems of the King James Only View***

The last two views above are what I regard as radical King James Onlyism. The historical evidence indicates that this doctrine was unknown to the early leaders of Fundamentalism, but originated and developed in the last few decades of this century. Several good works have been written to counteract this new erroneous doctrine, most of which have been relatively brief.<sup>47</sup> This book is intended

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<sup>47</sup> Richard Andrew Taylor, "The Modern Debate Concerning the Greek *Textus Receptus*: A Critical Examination of the Textual Views of Edward F. Hills," Ph.D. Dissertation, Bob Jones University, 1973; D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979); Stewart Custer, *The Truth About the King James Version Controversy* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1981); Samuel E. Schnaiter, *Textual Criticism and the Modern English Version Controversy* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1981); Eugene H. Glassman, *The Translation Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981);

to provide a more complete and comprehensive treatment of the subject that at the same time is suited for the non-technical pastor and layperson. I hope this work provides helpful information that will enable the reader to reach a balanced Biblical view of the subject, one that will avoid extremes and unnecessary division.

The first four chapters trace the history of English versions of the Bible from the earliest attempts of translation to the completion of the Authorized or King James Version of 1611. After discussing the history of the English Bible up to the time of William Tyndale (1494-1536), subsequent translations are shown to be revisions of Tyndale's translation, each with its own purpose and objectives, including the King James Version.

Chapter 5 describes the subsequent revisions of the King James Version. Chapter 6 describes the current editions of the King James Version, including an in-depth discussion of the many differences between the various current editions.

The important doctrine of Textual Preservation is discussed in Chapter 7, describing the various proposed theories of how the Biblical text has been preserved down through history. I conclude that the text has been preserved in the consensus of the Bibles that have survived from antiquity—Bibles that were used worldwide by Christians and Jews in their homes, churches, and synagogues for worship and study.

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David D. Shields, "Recent Attempts to Defend the Byzantine Text of the Greek New Testament," Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985; Ronald L. Walker, *A Position Paper of the King James Controversy* (Little Rock, AR: Heritage Baptist Temple, 1988); Doug Kutilek, "Ruckman's Phoney 'Advanced Revelation'," *The Biblical Evangelist*, 24:5 (May 1, 1990), 4-6; Estus Pirkle, *The 1611 King James Bible* (Southaven, MS: The King's Press, 1994); James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House Publishers, 1995); Michael A. Grisanti, ed. *The Bible Version Debate: The Perspective of Central Baptist Seminary* (Minneapolis, MN: Central Baptist Seminary, 1997); Robert Picirilli, *Should We Use the King James Only?* (Nashville: Randall House Publications, n.d.); J. B. Williams, ed., *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1999); Roy E. Beacham and Kevin T. Boudier, *One Bible Only?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishers, 2001).

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Chapters 8 through 13 discuss the various theories scholars have proposed for deciding original words in the places where the words of the ancient Bibles differ. Included are the Westcott and Hort type methods, Eclectic methods, Majority Text methods, the Traditional Text (*Textus Receptus*) method, genealogical methods, and statistical methods. Each theory attempts to determine with minimum uncertainty what the original words were.

Chapter 14 describes the most prominent modern versions with respect to their theory of translation, textual base, and targeted audience. Chapter 15 compares eight modern English versions, along with the King James Version of 1769, for their teachings on seven of the cardinal doctrines of Evangelical and Fundamental theology: (1) the deity of Christ, (2) the virgin birth of Christ, (3) atonement by the blood of Christ, (4) justification by faith, (5) the bodily resurrection of Christ, (6) the second coming of Christ, and (7) the doctrine of salvation. Except for the New World Translation of the Jehovah Witnesses, the versions are found to support the seven doctrines and not to deny any of them.

Chapter 16 discusses the problem of uncertainty associated with all methods of textual recovery. The problem is not that the text has not been preserved, but that some uncertainty may exist as to which of the preserved words are original where differences occur. In any case, the alternatives do not affect the overall teaching of Biblical truth and doctrine. The chapter demonstrates that this kind of uncertainty is less of a problem than the uncertainty associated with interpreting the Bible where the Hebrew and Greek words of the text have no variation to cause concern. The presence of a small degree of textual uncertainty should not affect one's confidence in the integrity and authority of the Bible. Ten appendices contain additional data and more technical discussions of significant problems.