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Why I Use the King James Version

*A Personal Position on Inspiration, Preservation, Translation, and
Christian Liberty*

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A personal record of biblical conviction, prepared for faithful witness and future generations.

Summary of My Position

I believe that God verbally and plenary inspired the original Scriptures and has providentially preserved His Word for every generation. After sustained study, I concluded that the King James Version is the fully reliable and fully trustworthy English translation for my preaching, teaching, and ministry. I do not believe that the KJV translators were inspired as the biblical writers were, that the English text corrects the Hebrew and Greek, or that exclusive use of the KJV is a test of salvation, orthodoxy, or spirituality. I gladly extend Christian charity to believers who reach a different conclusion.

The Origin of My Conviction

I have long believed in both the inspiration and in the providential preservation of the inerrant Word of God. Because those doctrines matter, I believed that I needed to determine which English translation I could use with the greatest confidence. It occurred to me that if two different translations contained some places that contradicted the other, then both could not be correct and true. Therefore, I needed to study the issue and determine if the translation really makes a difference.

With this approach, I invested many hours in that study, and read hundreds of pages, from 1993 through 1996. For the sake of transparency, I must state that my inquiry began as an effort to disprove what I then regarded as the fallacy that the King James Version was the best English translation. At the time, I used several versions in my preaching, teaching and discipleship ministry.

By 1996, however, I had reached a settled personal conviction: the King James Version faithfully preserves and communicates the words of Scripture in English, and it should therefore be the Bible from which I preach and teach. This statement records that conclusion, the reasons for it, and the boundaries I place around it.

What I Mean—and What I Do Not Mean

The King James Version is a translation. It is not inspired in the unique sense in which the original autographs were inspired by the Holy Ghost through holy men of God (2 Pet. 1:21). Inspiration belongs properly to the God-breathed Scriptures; a translation has authority insofar as it faithfully communicates that inspired text. We must also believe that God has accurately preserved those inspired words in some form. If we believe that “every word of God is pure” (Pro. 30:5), and that God will hold us accountable for every word (John 12:47-48), then we must believe that we have the totality of God’s words accurately preserved somewhere.

Nor do I believe that the Word of God was unavailable before 1611. English-speaking Christians possessed earlier translations, and believers in other lands read the Scriptures in their own languages. The KJV translators themselves described their work as a revision that compared earlier English translations and returned to the Hebrew and Greek sources. They did not claim to be producing the first true Bible in English.¹

My position is therefore neither re-inspiration nor English-language supremacy. It is a judgment about the fidelity, textual basis, formal character, literary excellence, and proven usefulness of one English translation.

The Text and the Translation

The New Testament of the KJV rests principally upon the received Greek-text tradition available to the translators, especially editions associated with Erasmus, Stephanus, and Theodore Beza. The translators made extensive use of Beza’s editions, which in turn stood in the lineage of Stephanus and Erasmus.² The Old Testament was translated principally from the Hebrew text then received and printed among the churches, while earlier translations and ancient versions were also consulted.

The KJV isn't simply a translation. I believe it to be the most accurate English translation because it draws from the manuscripts the early church actually used. They are the ones the early church copied, handled, read, wore out, and copied again. Origen's less reliable manuscripts, from Alexandria, had been mostly discarded by the church until they resurfaced again in the mid-19th century. Thus, I give substantial weight to the long use of the traditional or Received Text in the life of the church.

Older manuscripts deserve careful attention, but age alone does not settle every reading. Likewise, numerical predominance alone does not settle every reading. Textual evidence must be weighed, and the providence of God must never become an excuse for careless scholarship. Yet, neither can faithful scholarship ever surpass the providence of God. For me, the traditional text underlying the KJV, joined to the translators' generally formal method, provides the surest foundation for public ministry in English.

Therefore, I believe that, in the English language, the King James accurately preserves the very words of God. I cannot settle for the mere "thoughts" of the Word of God, as the NIV and other dynamic equivalency translations do. I cannot settle for the paraphrasing of those words, as *The Message* and the *Living Bible* do. I must insist on the preservation of the literal and actual words. I believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. Thus, although I do consult the other translations in my study, I use the King James for my preaching and teaching.

An Issue of Faith

It is fully realized that in the translation debate, there are many scholars who have given themselves to researching, and seeking for, the oldest manuscripts. The assumption is that the older ones are historically closer to the dateline of the original autographs. Obviously, that makes

logical sense. Yet, I would suggest that confidence in the Word of God cannot be regulated to merely a scholarly or academic exercise. To do so will make us arrive at the conclusion of James White. In his book *The King James Only Controversy*, he writes the following:

The scribes of old made errors, too. Even the best professional scribes had bad days. They made mistakes in what they were copying, even when they were copying the Scriptures. They worked under much more difficult situations. They often worked in the cold or the heat, and their lighting was always inferior to a good fluorescent lamp. Many of them had to work long hours at what they were doing. Fingers cramped, backs ached. You may think of one of those long essay tests from college to get a slight idea of the rigor of the work. All of these things contributed to the simple fact that there is not a single handwritten manuscript of the Bible, in Greek or Hebrew, that does not contain, somewhere, an error, an oversight, a mistake. To err is human. (emphasis added)³

While I do respect James White and appreciate much of his writing, I greatly disagree with his suggestion that copying of manuscripts is purely a human endeavor. The whole the Christian life is a life of faith. We are saved by faith (Eph. 2:8-9). We also go from saving faith to maturing faith (Rom. 1:17). Therefore, the acceptance of the doctrines of both *inspiration* and *preservation* is a faith issue. We are saved by faith, and we walk by faith. My disagreement with White lies with the logical conclusion that textual variation must leave the church without sufficient certainty concerning the words of Scripture.

The Christian life is a life of faith. We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8–9), and “the just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:17). Faith does not reject evidence; it receives God’s testimony as supreme and then handles the evidence with humility. I therefore approach inspiration, preservation, and translation as doctrines to be studied carefully and trusted confidently. The believer must possess an absolute confidence in the fact that we do have a fully accurate and trustworthy copy of God’s Word that is available to us today.

The Scriptural Witness to Preservation

The Scriptures provide us with two definitive examples where perfect copies were made of God's Word. The first time is found in Deuteronomy 17:18-19. God gives a command concerning when a king assumes the throne of the nation. God commands:

"And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:" (Deuteronomy 17:18-19)

Notice that the Holy Spirit guided the penman to write "all the words." If a single word was either added or left out, then the verse is not accurate and the Holy Spirit erred. Of course, we know that He is always truthful.

The second time is found in Joshua 8:32. It is stated that Joshua made a copy of the Law of Moses (the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible). Then in verses 34-35 we find the following:

"And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them." (Joshua 8:34-35, emphasis added)

The Holy Spirit inspired the biblical writer to state that Joshua read all the words, and there was not a single word left out. In other words, Joshua had made a perfectly preserved copy of the verse words! If this is not factually true, then we have a problem with the Holy Spirit making a mistake. Again, we certainly do not believe that the Holy Spirit has ever made a mistake.

Thus, again, I believe it is a matter of faith. That does not mean we reject scholarly study and academic pursuits, but it means we have the utmost confidence and faith in the inspiration, preservation, and sufficiency of the Scriptures.

Verbal, Plenary Inspiration and Translation

The terms verbal inspiration and plenary inspiration describe complementary aspects of the Divine inspiration of Scripture. *Verbal* means that inspiration extends to the very words of the biblical text. *Plenary* means that inspiration extends to the whole of Scripture—all its parts and all that it affirms.

Verbal inspiration does not require mechanical dictation. The Holy Ghost used the vocabulary, style, experience, and personality of each human writer while ensuring that the words written were precisely those God intended. Plenary inspiration means that no portion of Scripture may be dismissed as spiritually inferior, accidental, or uninspired.

Proverbs 30:5 states, "Every word of God is pure..." Every word is divinely refined and trustworthy. Jesus said that, until He returns, there will not be a single jot or tittle that will pass away. In our modern language that would be like saying "not a crossing of a 'T' or the dotting of an 'I'.

Dynamic or functional equivalence is a method of translation, not a method of inspiration. That distinction is important. Every competent translation must communicate meaning, because languages do not correspond word for word at every point. Formal-equivalence translations usually retain more of the wording and structure of the source text, while functional-equivalence translations are more willing to recast that form to communicate the perceived meaning. Even translators who defend functional equivalence insist that it can be consistent with verbal, plenary inspiration.⁴

I nevertheless prefer the more formal approach of the KJV. In my judgment, it allows the reader to see more readily the wording, repetition, grammatical relationships, and literary form of the biblical text, while leaving fewer interpretive decisions hidden within the translation.

Can Children Understand the KJV?

I believe the idea that children cannot understand the King James is a cultural idea that cannot withstand the scrutiny of history. The King James was translated in the 17th century. It is a misnomer that the King James vernacular was the common language of the day. It wasn't. The language and prose of the King James was the formal language of the day and was used in a more legal setting. Even the legal contracts of our day still use the same formality.

The translators recognized their duty was to translate sacred texts. Therefore, they held those texts to a standard above the mere books and writings of men. They believed they were doing a sacred task.

From the 17th century, until the mid-19th century, millions of young children were taught the wisdom of God's Word from the King James Version. Children were taught the fulness of the English language. Text-speak and emojis had not invaded their precious minds through social media. They knew how to read, grasp concepts, and comprehend the meaning.

Personally, as a child, I had no problem understanding its language. If I encountered a word I did not know, I could look it up in a dictionary, if the context did not provide a definition.

Christian Latitude

If another believer concludes that the ESV, NASB, LSB, or another responsible translation most faithfully communicates the words of Scripture, I recognize that conclusion as a matter of Christian liberty. Good and godly men and women differ on this issue. Bible-version preference must not become a test of salvation, orthodoxy, spirituality, or doctrinal purity.

Neither should anyone be pressed to violate a settled conscience. We should explain our reasons honestly, listen carefully, refuse caricature, and respect the liberty of other believers.

Grace is not weakness; it is strength governed by truth and love. We must display grace and biblical latitude in such areas as these.

A Final Thought

The KJV commonly printed today is not typographically identical to the 1611 printing. Its present form largely reflects the standardizing work associated with the Oxford edition of 1769, together with later editorial differences among publishers.⁵ That history does not trouble me; it confirms that responsible correction of spelling, punctuation, typography, and printing errors is not the same thing as rejecting the translation.

Some KJV words now carry meanings or connotations different from those they bore in earlier English. Terms such as “gay” in James 2:3 and several words now regarded as coarse can distract modern readers. I am not opposed in principle to careful lexical updating. My concern arises when revision obscures or changes the meaning of the underlying text, weakens theological precision, or conceals significant textual decisions. In other words, we can simply update the words, but we must not change the meaning.

For my preaching, teaching, and ministry, I therefore remain committed to the King James Version. I hold this position firmly, but I do not hold it angrily. Conviction and charity are not enemies. Truth needs no assistance from misrepresentation, and Christian fellowship should not be sacrificed upon an altar of labels.

A Call to Grace and Civility

Those who disagree with me should not describe my position as though I believe the KJV translators were inspired as the original writers were. Neither should they conclude that I believe

the English text corrects the original languages, or that every user of another translation has rejected the Bible. Please let me be clear—I believe none of those things.

Likewise, those who hold an absolute King-James-Only position should not suggest that my acknowledgment of translation, textual history, or the usefulness of careful language updating constitutes a rejection of the Bible. Such a charge would be false and unjust.

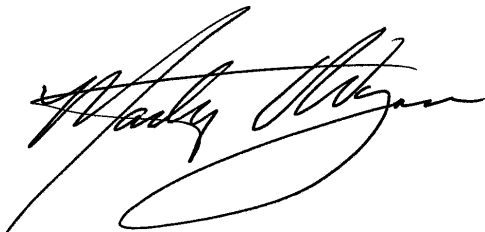
The most basic rule of ethical debate is that one is able, and willing, to state their opponent's position in a way they would agree that you have accurately described their position. Anything else is dishonest and unethical.

If we choose to discuss this issue, let us do so with truth, respect, grace, and courtesy. “Speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) is not optional; it is the manner befitting those who belong to Christ.

Therefore, if you chose to engage in this conversation with me, I would ask that we both show respect, grace, courtesy, and integrity to each other.

Personal Affirmation

With gratitude to God for His inspired and preserved Word, and with charity toward faithful Christians who differ from me, I affirm that the King James Version shall remain the Bible I use for public preaching, teaching, and the ministry entrusted to me.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marty Wynn', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

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Endnotes

1. The Translators, “The Translators to the Reader,” in *The Holy Bible* (London: Robert Barker, 1611), modernized transcription, [Bible Researcher](#).
2. Lincoln H. Blumell, “The Greek New Testament Text of the King James Version,” in *New Testament History, Culture, and Society: A Background to the Texts of the New Testament*, ed. Lincoln H. Blumell (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2019), 691–706, [Religious Studies Center](#).
3. James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1995), 36.
4. William D. Mounce, “Do Formal Equivalent Translations Reflect a Higher View of Plenary, Verbal Inspiration?” *Themelios* 44, no. 3 (2019), [The Gospel Coalition](#).
5. David Norton, *A Textual History of the King James Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chap. 6, “Setting the Standard, 1762 and 1769,” [Cambridge Core](#).

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