

The King James Only Controversy

by Anton Bosch

The King James Only controversy is a debate amongst some Christians about the legitimacy of the King James Version as the only true English Bible, and the evidence suggests that the translators were not inspired and that the translation has many errors and weaknesses.

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:8, John 1:14, Acts 20:28, Romans 5:2, Galatians 1:6, Ephesians 4:1, 1 Timothy 1:4, Titus 3:9, Hebrews 11:17, 2 Peter 1:21, 1 John 4:9

Topics: "Bible Translation", "King James Version"

Description

Anton Bosch delves into the King James Only controversy, highlighting the debate around the KJV and the misconceptions perpetuated by some King James Only proponents. He discusses the history of the KJV, the translators' agenda, mistakes in translation, and the manuscripts used. Bosch explains why he personally does not use the KJV for teaching, emphasizing the importance of clarity and understanding in conveying God's Word. He concludes by addressing the unnecessary nature of the KJO controversy and the need to focus on the core truths of the Christian faith.

Transcript

To the Reader

If you are convinced that the King James Version (KJV) is the only legitimate English Bible and that all other translations are false then please don't waste your time reading this article because nothing anyone can say will convince you of the truth.

If however, you are genuinely interested in knowing the truth about the King James Only controversy, I pray that this paper will help you to better understand the issues.

The problem

A hot debate amongst some Christians is the debate around the King James (KJV) or Authorized Version (AV). Some people, generally known as King James Only (KJO) people claim that the KJV (1611) is the only "inspired" translation and that all other translations are not true Bibles and that those who use other translation are heretics because other translations are tainted by hidden agendas (conspiracies) designed to destroy the faith. They commonly refer to all other translations as "New Age Versions".

There is no doubt in my mind that some modern translations are damaging to the faith. These include inter alia The Message, The New World Translation and the feminist and homosexual versions. But many of the modern translations are excellent and worthy of consideration.

Here are a few quotes from one of the leading KJO websites¹:

"Only the real Bible will produce Biblical Scholarship--the Authorized (King James) Version of the Holy Scriptures. No other Bible version will work in Biblical Scholarship because the modern versions, written by modern deceived man, are not the word of God."

"I am sad for any congregation whose pastor misleads them concerning the Word of God. To claim that only the originals are inspired is heresy. To claim that the King James Bible is divinely preserved without being inspired is ridiculous and an utter heresy."

"By definition, any Bible version that is not the Authorized Version of the Bible is an unauthorized version; all modern Bible versions are unauthorized versions..."

These are very strong words and reflect the ferocity with which the KJO people hold their views.

Note: On [jesusassaviour](#) they promote the 1611 KJV. At the bottom of their home page they provide links to download the 1611 version but the version you will download and all the quotes on their site come from a version based on the 1769 version! The 1769 version has over 24,000 changes when compared to the 1611 version!² This is not just misleading but dishonest. Sadly much of the KJO opinion is colored by similar dishonesty.

History of the controversy

The KJO controversy is a fairly recent invention. Until about 1930 all churches and scholars accepted that the original manuscripts were inerrant and inspired but that no translation was perfect nor inspired.

The roots of the movement trace back to a book *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated* published by Benjamin G. Wilkinson (1872-1968), a staunch Seventh-day Adventist missionary, theology professor and college president. In *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated* (1930), he attacked the Westcott-Hort Greek text and expressed strong opposition to the English Revised Version New Testament (ERV, 1881), in particular because it didn't support two proof texts favored by Adventists. He was the first to apply Psalms 12:6-7 to the King James Bible, claiming that the reference is a proof text for divine preservation of the Scriptures³.

After Wilkinson came a series of writers, amongst others, Fuller, Ruckman, Waite, Chick, Riplinger, Hyles and Bynum. Each of these "borrowed" more or less from their predecessors but ultimately all rehashed the same theories as proposed by Wilkinson. In addition to a common base (Wilkinson), all KJO authors also share a remarkable similarity in their lack of scholarship and logical reasoning.

It must be borne in mind that there are several variations of KJO supporters who each takes the idea to various levels. James White identifies five different variants within the KJO "movement"⁴.

My purpose and methodology

I had, over the years, written several articles on the topic of the King James Only Controversy. I do not believe that we should be wasting our time on this issue but unfortunately there are many who make it a source of contention and strife and also use it as a means of dividing between "true" and "false" brethren.

Thus recently, I felt the need to combine the various articles and to update the whole in order to produce (for me) a definitive paper on the subject. The problem is that it is almost impossible to fully deal with this question in a paper of a dozen, or so, pages.

The topic really needs an entire book devoted to it. It must be clearly understood that my opposition to the KJO view does not mean that I think that the King James Version is a bad translation. Indeed it is a good translation but the point is that it is not perfect and while the original manuscripts were inspired, we do not believe that any translation is inspired. Is it still the Word of God? Obviously, yes, translations are the Word of God but some convey God's Word and God's words better than others.

In order to keep the paper as short, yet as complete, as possible I have resorted to making brief statements and have refrained from proving each point with numerous examples. At the same time I have been very careful to research every point carefully and to check and cross-check every statement. This subject is a highly emotional one and the internet is flooded with all sorts of statements, lies, half-truths and spin. This is true of both sides but especially of the KJO camp.

Because of the volume of bad research and false statements on the internet I have attempted, as far as possible, to use original and reliable resources and whenever possible, sources that have no axe to grind in the controversy. Obviously when it comes to stating the KJO views we have quoted from their websites. Also in order to keep the study to a reasonable size, I have not set out to refute every argument but have confined myself to the major issues. In addition, certain aspects of the controversy has been reduced to a few lines in order to keep the study as brief and focused as possible.

For the sake of "brevity", I have not entered the discussion on the manuscripts in any length and I have also not discussed the difference between literal translations, dynamic translations and paraphrases. That is an entirely different (though related) topic. For the purpose of this paper when I refer to translations I am primarily meaning literal translations such as the KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, ESV etc. It is not the purpose of this paper to select "the best" English translation or even to defend all modern translations.

The conversation regarding the merits of the various translations is for another paper and another day. Again, let me make clear that there are good, bad and ugly translations. I am not defending the bad and ugly but am simply saying that the claims some make for the King James have no substance and that there are good, or even better, alternatives.

History of the KJV

One of the first tasks King James tackled upon ascending the throne of England at the beginning of the seventeenth century was the reconciliation of the various religious parties within his kingdom. So when Dr Jon Reynolds of Oxford suggested a new translation, King James leapt at the opportunity and "authorized" a new translation. He had disliked the popular Geneva Bible because it had references in the margin which he felt to be politically threatening. He also realized that neither the Geneva, nor the Great, nor the Bishop's Bible could be held up by him as a rallying point for Christians and he saw in a new translation the opportunity to unite all Christians behind a single translation.

He organized the work himself and divided 47 of the best scholars in England into several teams. He also provided strict guidelines such as the new translation was to be based on the Bishops Bible and that certain ecclesiastical words such as church instead of congregation be retained. The work was completed in 1611 and is referred to by many as the "Authorized Version" because it contained a preface which

stated that it had been authorized to be read in churches.

The King James Version was not, however, immediately accepted by the general public. The Roman Catholics claimed it favored Protestantism. Arminians said it leaned toward Calvinism. The Puritans disliked certain words such as "bishop," "ordain," and "Easter." But after some 40 years it overtook the popular Geneva Bible.

After 1611, the KJV was revised many times and also many errors crept in as a result of careless copying. Major revisions began in 1760 resulting in the 1769 version which forms the base of most modern printings. It must be noted that the 1760 revision made more than 24,000 changes to the 1611 version. The copy many read today is very different to the 1611 version. Some in the King James Only camp claim inspiration for the 1611 version while others bestow this credential on most KJV versions.

Who was King James?

King James was crowned as King James IV of Scotland when he was 13 months old. He had an excellent education in the humanities and theology but no education in morals and "he became the most learned hard drinker in Europe"⁵. Scotland was ruled by a series of four regents until James became actual King at the age of 17. In Scotland he ruled over the church with terror, executing any minister who he saw as a threat or who did not submit to his sovereign authority over both church and state⁶.

Some of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland pastors believed that James was "the messenger of Satan". According to Free Mason records he was inducted as a Free Mason at the Lodge of Scoon, at Perth, Scotland on 15 April 1604. On the wall of the lodge is a mural depicting James kneeling at their altar during his initiation⁷. (The Mason connection is further strengthened by the incorporation of several Mason symbols in the illustrations that were included in the earlier printings of the KJV.)

In 1603 at the age of 37 James became James I, King of England and Scotland. At this point of his life, Durant describes him as: "Profane in his language, coarse in his amusements... fondling handsome young men... He drank to excess and allowed some court festivities to end a general and bisexual intoxication."⁸ His various homosexual relationships are well documented⁹ and summed up in the infamous saying of the people that "King Elizabeth had been succeeded by Queen James"¹⁰.

In a statement to the Parliament of 1609 he formulated his claims to divine imperatives stating that "kings... sit upon God's throne... even by God Himself are called gods... Kings are justly called gods."¹¹ The question obviously is, what this has to do with the translation, since James did not do the translation but only commissioned it. The fact is that not only did this evil man commission the translation but he set the ground rules for the translators and then personally selected the 47 (originally 54) men who would do the translation.

This is what the KJO people say about the selection process: "The... translators of the King James Version were providentially chosen by God... the Almighty chose the KJV translators for their sacred task"¹². Combining James's claims that he was a god and the KJO claim that God Himself chose the translators are we then to conclude that God is a drunken homosexual? That is blasphemous but it is the logical conclusion of his, and their, claims. Even if this deduction cannot be made, can we claim, as the KJO people do, that this man whom pious Christians called the "messenger of Satan" was a prophet of God, divinely appointed to this great work?

Surely not. Let me emphasize again, the translation was a good work, but to suggest that James was acting as God's representative is blasphemy. Furthermore it is important to note that this same man was the one who "authorized" the translation as the only valid Bible to be used in churches. Since when does a government have the power to tell the church which translation it is to use? The very people who bestow all but sainthood on James would react violently if a modern government dictated to the church in such a way yet these same people revel in the word "authorized"!

What is the Anglican Church?

One of the means by which KJO proponents seek to discredit other translations is by pointing out that sometimes members of the translation committee are of a different brand of Christianity or are not all Evangelicals or that the company behind the translation has commercial interests. They then create the impression that the KJV was conceived in an immaculate way in the perfect environment. It is vital therefore that we examine the environment in which the translation was born.

All the translators were Anglicans (known in the USA as Episcopalians). A significant number of churches in England were Puritan and in Scotland the churches were mainly Presbyterian - tracing a direct line to the Reformation through John Knox. But James only selected Anglican scholars for the work. So what is the Anglican Church and where does it come from? It is commonly and erroneously said that Anglicanism is Protestant. The KJO people stress the fact that this is a "Protestant" translation.

That is simply not true. The Anglican Church was formed in 1534 when the Pope would not give King Henry VIII permission to divorce. Henry signed the Act of Supremacy which served as a unilateral declaration of independence from Rome and placed the King as the head of the church instead of the Pope. In doctrine and practice the newly formed Church of England was 100% Catholic except for the role of the Pope. For the ensuing 70 year the Church of England oscillated between being Catholic under Rome and Catholic under the King/Queen.

This does not make it a Protestant church. Protestantism generally describes those churches that seceded from Rome for doctrinal reasons as part of the Reformation. Wikipedea's definition of Protestantism is: "any of several church denominations denying the universal authority of the Pope and affirming the Reformation principles of justification by faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, and the primacy of the Bible as the only source of revealed truth"¹³. The Anglican Church does not fit this definition and except for the first quality holds to the exact opposite of this definition.

Anglicans speak of the "English Reformation" as though it is an English version of the European Reformation. But there are no similarities between these two "reformations". The one was a doctrinal reformation while the other was simply a political realignment. In later years the Anglican Church moved away from the Roman doctrines of transubstantiation and of purgatory. They also changed the language of the liturgy to English. But other than that they remain an English version of Roman Catholicism in doctrine, practice and hierarchy to this day.

They have never been Reformed or Evangelical and on the contrary they are the very antithesis of everything we regard as Evangelical. The ease with which Roman priests become Anglican priests and visa versa further testifies to the fact that Anglicanism is simply Romanism with a different label. Add to this the fact that the Apocrypha was an integral part of the original (1611) translation and it becomes clear that the translation was not done by Protestants for Protestants but it was Anglican-Catholic at its core.

The translators

There is little doubt that the translators were all scholars of the highest order. But were they all believers and even saints as some claim? This is a very difficult question since I have not been able to find a single shred of evidence that points to any of them as being born again. I am sure that some of them may have been truly saved but that is an assumption contrary to the evidence:

What is known of spiritual leaders in the Anglican Communion at the time (it is not much different now), points to the fact that the vast majority of Anglican priests and leaders were unregenerate. This in spite of the fact that many of them were very pious and dedicated to the church. One simply has to read the testimony of the Wesleys and others who came to faith while in the Anglican ministry to understand the depth of spiritual darkness of that organization.

KJO proponents have written several books¹⁴ extolling the virtues of the 47 translators. One assumes that they would have dug up anything they could that would speak positively about the 47. The books speak much about their academic credentials, linguistic skills and devotion to duty. But they have not been able to provide a single shred of evidence that these men were born-again believers.

It has to be remembered that The 1604 revision of Canons of the church and the revision of the Common Book of Prayer flowed from the same Hampton Court Conference as the King James Translation and that the King authorized all three. The translators of the KJV were essentially the same men who revised the Book of Prayer and the Canons. Both these documents are very detailed and specific that a baby is saved when it is baptized. At baptism the sins are washed away, the baby is born-again and becomes a full member of the church. The Book of Prayer is very specific that the full and final work of salvation happens at baptism. Neither document makes any reference to salvation by faith etc.¹⁵.

The conclusion is obvious: These men taught that you are saved through baptism. This is beyond any doubt another gospel and Paul pronounced those who taught any other gospel as accursed! (Galatians 1:6-9). So who is right, Paul, who called these men accursed, or the KJO people who call them anointed and saints?

Were they inspired?

The heart of the KJO argument revolves around the notion that the translators were inspired by the Holy Spirit in the same way as the original authors were inspired and that this therefore makes the translation without error and perfect. They say: "If I didn't think I had a perfect Bible I'd close this one, walk out that door, I'd never walk in the pulpit again." --Dr. Jack Hyles¹⁶.

It is vital then that we examine the question as to whether the translators were inspired and whether the translation (as such) is inspired.

God will not anoint and inspire unsaved men to do His work. He requires that those who handle His Word be in a relationship with Him. Since it cannot be proven that the translators were born again believers and that the contrary is probably true, it follows therefore that they were highly unlikely to be inspired, even if it were possible that God would choose to inspire a single translation. Not only did the translators not claim to be inspired, they were specific that their efforts were merely human and that the work could be improved on. (They were thus clear that it was not perfect).

The KJO people say that the fact that the translators did not claim to be inspired did not mean that they were not and that the original writers of the Scriptures also did not claim inspiration. That is plain nonsense. Paul and the other writers were well aware of the fact that they were writing as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2Peter 1:21) and they wrote with the authority of Heaven behind them while the translators were quite apologetic about their efforts. If the translation was indeed inspired it would be without error and perfect, as is claimed.

The fact is that the translation has many very blatant errors in addition to the weaknesses in their methodology, as we shall show. The translators (in their preface) acknowledged that the translation contained errors¹⁷. If they were inspired why did they include the Apocrypha as part of their "inspired" translation? The Apocrypha is clearly not inspired. The translation is not an original work but is based on a number of previous English translations (The Bishops and the Geneva Bibles) as well as several European language versions.

If the translators were inspired so that the very choice of the English equivalent words were determined by the Holy Spirit (as is claimed), why did they need to look at older translations? Note that they freely acknowledged their use of the other translations¹⁸. If the Spirit did guide them in the choice of every English equivalent, why do the translators confess that there were many words that sometimes they floundered for an interpretation since there was no precedent for a particular word: "There be many words in the Scriptures, which be never found there but once, (having neither brother or neighbor, as the Hebrews speak) so that we cannot be holpen by conference of places.

Again, there be many rare names of certain birds, beasts and precious stones, etc. concerning the Hebrews themselves are so divided among themselves for judgment, that they may seem to have defined this or that, rather because they would say something, than because they were sure of that which they said." If the translation was inspired, there would be a single "perfect" version. Yet what is called the King James translation covers at least 11 versions and editions (1611, 1613, 1629, 1638, 1644, 1664, 1701, 1744, 1762, 1769, 1850).

In 1611 alone, there were already two different editions - the so-called "he" and "she" versions! In addition there are thousands of differences between the various editions. One author found as many as 24,000 differences between them¹⁹. Some point to the 1611 (original) translation as the one. Even those who make this claim do not use the 1611 version but a highly redacted version. The fact that the KJV has endured 400 years is often quoted as "proof" that God has His divine hand of protection on the KJV.

If that is true then all of Shakespeare's works are also inspired since they hail from the same time (actually, most were written before 1611). In fact, Shakespeare has to be more inspired since his works are taught in schools across the world while the Bible is banned from most schools. If God had planned that there would only ever be two inspired versions of the Bible - the original writings and the KJV, would the Bible not contain some instruction to that effect? I think it should in the same way as every major event in the history and future of God's dealings with man were foretold. But the Scriptures are totally silent about this "major event when God would re-give His Word in English". Bigotry ?

To claim that God only gave English speaking people an "authorized" Bible and that all other translations are false Bibles designed to mislead is rooted in the heresy of British Israelism and the sin of bigotry. If the KJV is the only inspired Bible then the millions of people who only read one of the 2800 other languages into which the Bible has been translated,²⁰ have been predestined to go to hell unless they learn English.

Also then the Great Commission should have included that we must teach all people to read English.

The KJO people claim that it is not unjust nor strange that God should give the Bible in only one language (English) since the original Scriptures were only written in one of three languages (Hebrew, Greek and some Aramaic). But as you can see, the KJO position equates the Anglo people with the Jews and suggests that God has transferred the covenants from the Jews to the British.

This is neither logical nor consistent with the stated will of God that the gospel should be published amongst all nations.

What was the Translators' Agenda?

Behind many of the conspiracy theories of the KJO people is the idea that all modern translators have a (New Age) agenda while the King James translators were without any agenda except to produce a "perfect" translation. All translations are invariably colored to some degree by the theology and views of the translators. Obviously the New World Translation and other "niche" translations such as the homosexual, feminist, liberation theology, etc. translations have an obvious agenda.

But to suggest that the KJV translators had no agenda is blatantly dishonest. Their agenda was clearly stated and has never been hidden. Some of the agenda was actually of evil intent and other parts of it were quite innocent. But their agenda is clearly recorded and had two sources. The first was in King James' commission, and the second was based on their methodology and is mainly recorded in their preface to the translation. There were 15 rules to be observed in the translation of the Bible. We shall only mention the ones most relevant to this discussion (the numbers in parentheses indicate the number applied by the translators - 1-15):

(1) The Bishops Bible was to be the basis of the new translation. Thus it was not to be a fresh translation based on the manuscripts but a revision of the Bishops Bible. Furthermore it was specified that the text of the Bishops Bible was to be retained as far as possible. This was unfortunate since the Bishops Bible was not the best existing English translation.

(2) The names of Bible characters were to conform as closely as possible to those in common use.²¹ This resulted in several anomalies. Thus "Elijah" appears as "Elias" in the New Testament. Specific problems were introduced when "Joshua" was twice referred to as "Jesus" in the New Testament instead of Joshua.

(3) Old ecclesiastical terms were to be retained. This meant that the translation had to conform to church practice at the time rather than be a true translation. This introduces several doctrinal problems which I will discuss in more detail later. "The implementation of this rule was to be a perpetual source of Puritan objections to the KJV" as they preferred more accurate rendering of several such words²².

(4) When there was more than one possible translation for a word the teachings of the (Anglican) church and the Church Fathers was to determine the translation rather than Scripture interpreting Scripture.

(6) The translation was not to have marginal notes. The Geneva Bible was the best translation of the time but James hated it because some of the notes were seen to be subversive of the monarchy. Marginal notes were permitted but these were simply to clarify the text and on the whole were not sectarian²³. The removal of sectarian marginal notes is a good and commendable thing.

In addition to the written rules, there were a number of unwritten or implied rules that were just as binding as the 15 written rules. The one most relevant here, was that the translation was to be supportive of the monarchy. This after all, was the reason James rejected the Geneva Bible and stipulated that it was to be referred to as the very last resort. This adds a political color to the translation in addition to the ecclesiastical and cultural biases.

It is abundantly clear that the rules the translators worked under did not gender an approach to the work that would produce as clear a translation as possible. Rather, the rules gave a very specific color to the translation. This has, over the years, resulted in many errors in doctrine and practice. Things like the perpetuation of infant baptism, a Romanist hierarchy and structure in the church and the heresy of Heavy Shepherding all find their roots in these built-in mistranslations, based on these rules.

Mistranslations Because of the Rules

Baptize

When confronted with the Greek word baptizo the translators had a problem. The only legitimate English equivalent for this Greek word is either "dip" or "immerse". There are no other options. This however would break rule number 3 and expose the Anglican practice of sprinkling (infants). In order to satisfy rule 3 they used the same device the previous English translators had used called transliteration. This means they simply changed the Greek (and Latin) word into an English word. Thus their disobedience in sprinkling is "hidden".

The problem with not translating the word as "dip" or "immerse" is not only confined to water baptism but also to passages like Romans 6:3-5. This passage is commonly used by evangelicals and Pentecostals to teach water baptism since it uses the word "baptize". Yet this passage does not primarily teach on water baptism but teaches that we are immersed into, and united with, Christ in His death and resurrection. This is a key passage when it comes to understanding the process of the new birth and takes on an entirely different meaning when the word "baptize(d)" is corrected with the word "immerse(d)".

Similar confusion reigns over 1Corinthians 12:13. Because the word "baptized" is used and the assumption is that baptism is water baptism we find the error of baptismal regeneration being taught from a verse that has nothing to do with water baptism. On the basis of the same verse many churches exclude believers from the Lord's Table who have not been baptized.

Easter

When translating Acts 12:4 they chose to use the word "Easter" instead of "Passover". They translated the same Greek word pascha as "Passover" in every one of the other 26 occasions the word is used in the New Testament. Why did they use the word "Easter" here?

By inserting the word "Easter" here, they were creating the impression that the early church celebrated Easter. This was an attempt to sanctify their perpetuation of the Pagan and Romish traditions. The name Easter has its origin with a goddess of the Anglo-Saxons named Eostre (also Estre, Estara, Eastre, Ostara, and similar spellings in various sources). This is the same goddess the Greeks called Aphrodite and the Romans called Venus - she is the goddess of fertility hence the Easter eggs and Easter bunnies. The word "Easter" has the same root as "estrogen" and "estrous" (cycle) when a mammal is most fertile.

It is very obvious that the translation was used to entrench the practice of the church rather than simply translating the Scriptures in a pure and uncontaminated form.

Bishop

The Greek word here is "episkopos" which is a compound word made of "over" and "see" or "look" - literally "overseer". Once again, they used a word which sanctioned their hierarchical structure inherited from Rome. The use of the word "Bishop" is totally gratuitous. In fact they correctly translated the word as "overseer" in Acts 20:28.

Not only does the use of the word give license to introduce an office which did not exist in the New Testament church but the use of overseer in Acts 20:28 creates the impression that this is yet another office (distinct from elders and bishops). Instead of clarifying a very simple matter, the translation has brought much confusion.

Minister

The word "minister" (either the verb or the noun) appears 34 times in the KJV. "Minister" has, since the 14th century, been a religious word meaning a clergyman. Several Greek words have been translated as "minister" but all the Greek words have a common meaning - a servant. The most common Greek word is "diakonos" which means a servant specifically in the context of menial work. A few times they translated the same word (correctly) as "servant" and a few times as "deacon" but the in the vast majority of cases the word is translated "minister".

They obviously chose the word "minister" to entrench the clergy / laity divide which is so typical of the Roman and Anglican churches. The word "minister" is used in the sense of a master, manager or lord when the Greek teaches the exact opposite - that the leaders are to be servants and not masters or lords (1Peter 5:3).

Our understanding of how churches should function would be vastly different if the KJV had correctly translated the word "servant" but the translators' agenda will distort the view "ministers" have of their self-importance until the Lord returns.

Church

The word appears (singular and plural) 113 times in the New Testament and derives from the Greek word "ekklesia". Without going into much detail the word must be translated as "congregation" or "assembly". It refers to any gathering of people whether Christian or not. The word "church" very obviously is a religious word and in the context of Romanism and Anglicanism means either the Roman church or the Anglican church. Only twice did they translate the word correctly (Acts 19) and that because the reference was to a pagan assembly of people.

Not only is this an imposition of their doctrinal view on all readers but it has forever tainted our understanding of what the "church" really is. Had they translated the word without preconceptions we would have understood that the assembly is not a building, a system or organization but a gathering of the Lord's people.

Once again the translators purposely sought to obscure the Word rather than make it plain.

Obeys and rule

In order to entrench the authority of church leaders the word "rule" is often mistranslated. This is a very broad subject and there are many Greek words that apply here. Here is the very brief summary.

Authoritarian and abusive churches like Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves" (KJV 1611 - the translation remains much the same in the modern versions of the KJV). There are two problems here.

The first word "obey", should properly be translated as "have confidence in", "trust", "rely on", "be persuaded", etc. The Greek word is mostly (53 times) correctly translated except in Hebrews 13:17 and Acts 5:37. In fact, they translated the exact same word as "obey" in Hebrews 13:17 but as "trust" in Hebrews 13:18 - the very next verse!

The second problem is that "have the rule over you" should correctly be translated as "those who lead you" or "those who go before you". There is a huge difference between leading and ruling. (Note that there are many Greek words that are translated as "rule" and many of them literally do mean "rule" but this is never used in the context of the assembly)

The same error occurs with another Greek word used in 1 Timothy 3:4 and 5:17. Where it speaks of elders "ruling" their homes and the church. The Greek word is a different one to the one above and means "to stand before" once again speaking of leadership and example as opposed to ruling.

Conclusion

This is only a sample of how the translators have dramatically changed the doctrine of ALL English speaking churches and have imposed their Anglican/Roman errors on us all. Also please note that space limitations (and your patience) have dictated that we not go into any of these points in any depth. The reader is encouraged to further research these words should he be so inclined²⁴.

Many English Words for the Same Greek Word

One of the niceties the translators indulged in was that they used many different English words for the same Greek or Hebrew word. They felt that this brought variety and color to the translation, which it does, but at a cost to accuracy. Here is their statement in this regard:

"Another thing we think good to admonish thee of (gentle Reader) that we have not tied ourselves to an uniformity of phrasing, or to an identity of words, as some peradventure would wish that we had done, because they observe, that some learned men somewhere, have been as exact as they could that way.²⁵"

Here are some examples: the same Greek word is translated in Romans 5:2 as "rejoice", in v3 as "glory" and in v11 as "joy". In Ephesians 4:1 the same Greek word is translated differently as "vocation" and "called". A quick look at a good concordance will show the extent of this problem²⁶. Over the years uneducated preachers loved to build entire messages and even formulate doctrines around these variations as though they contained some divinely inspired message.

You will notice in their introduction that the translators admit that by being consistent in the way each word is translated, the translation would have been more exact and that other translators were more exact.

Obviously they are simply stating that precision was not their priority (but rather a more poetic reading)! They did indeed succeed in producing one of the most beautiful translations of all time but it is by no means the most accurate translation of the original languages.

We accept that all translators must apply some discretion, especially when it comes to phrasing or else the translation would be unreadable. An interlinear Bible where the English words appear above or below the Greek / Hebrew words is potentially the most accurate translation but it is completely unreadable simply because the structure of each language is very different.

Mistakes

In addition to the above problems, the KJV also contains many other mistakes and weaknesses which could be attributed to several causes. It is interesting to note that many of the so-called "contradictions" unbelievers use to "prove" that the Bible is not inspired are a direct result of mistakes in the King James translation. Some of the kinds of mistakes the translators made are²⁷:

Sections paraphrased instead of translating literally.

Inaccurate or badly translated words and phrases.

Archeological mistakes.

Mistranslating sections based on doctrinal preconceptions (there are many more than the few I quoted in this paper).

The Manuscripts

Another part of the debate revolves around the groups (families) of manuscripts that are used as the base for the translation. When the KJV was translated only one set/family of manuscripts was available. This was the so-called Received Text (also called Textus Receptus) which is part of the Byzantine family of manuscripts. Today we have four or five families of manuscripts (depending on who is counting).

The debate over which manuscripts are the best is extremely complex and anyone who suggests that the matter is simple and that there is only one correct set does not know what he is talking about. It is the same as saying in order to put a man on the moon you just need a pipe filled with gasoline and with a garden chair on top.

I freely admit that I do not have sufficient insight into these complexities to even begin to pass a judgment. That does not mean I do not have my preferences but there is just no way anyone can claim the final word in this debate. It is therefore a senseless and futile exercise. In spite of this there are a few things we can learn from the debate:

No one knows which manuscripts are the best because no one has seen the originals. Anyone who claims definitive knowledge on this matter is a fool and must be avoided at all costs.

Referring to many, or all, manuscripts is in its very nature safer than using only one (as in the case of the older English translations).

The accusation that the other manuscripts contain omissions because the Received Text contains verses and parts of verses that are not in the other manuscripts is misleading. If something appears in one and

not the other, it does not necessarily follow that the "missing" bits have been deleted from the shorter version. There is a second alternative which the KJO people are unwilling to consider: The "missing" bit could have been added to the longer version rather than the "missing" bit have been deleted from the shorter version. That is simple logic. What is not so simple is determining which way it is.

Without burdening you with a very complex technical debate, the fact is that it is often more likely that a copyist would add something rather than omit something. This is based on how the copyists would do their work but also because the "additions" are often explanatory and may have been imported from the margin in order to either explain the text better or imported from another part of the Scriptures because it appears to make the text more complete.

Could a part of a "master" which was used as a base for a new copy have a missing piece or a bit have been deleted, either advertently or inadvertently, by a copyist? For sure. But the point is that a "shorter" text does not in, and of, itself prove inferiority and a "longer" text does not prove superiority.

I must emphasize that the differences between the families of manuscripts are extremely small. Of the approximately 20,000 lines that make up the entire New Testament, only 40 lines are in question. These 40 lines represent one quarter of one percent (0.25%) of the entire text of the New Testament²⁸.

Furthermore not a single line that is in question changes our doctrine in any way. (Besides, we should not be formulating doctrine on single verses anyway!)

Lest you think that the Bible is full of errors and that it is not the Word of God let me assure you that it remains God's Word. When you compare how very small the differences between the manuscripts of the Bible are and how comparatively huge the differences in manuscripts of other ancient writings are you will immediately see God's hand in preserving His Word²⁹.

Misinformation

One of the primary tactics of the KJO camp is that they point to differences between the KJV and others as "evidence" that the other translations are wrong and undermine the faith. They normally do so without examining the facts nor the Greek or Hebrew. They sometimes don't examine the evidence because they lack the skills, but mostly they don't because they simply assume that the KJV is perfect. That is just faulty logic. You cannot prove that everybody else is wrong just because they don't agree with you, just maybe you are wrong and they are right!

There are many examples of this but will confine myself to the most publicized one - The only begotten Son of God.

Here is a representative KJO statement: "...there is one doctrine that all the others rest upon. It is the rock bottom, foundation of the Christian faith: Jesus of Nazareth is the only begotten Son of God. Without this core belief, all the others are meaningless. Christianity stands upon the person of Jesus of Nazareth as the only begotten Son from eternity past and into the future forever. He is unique because He is the only begotten Son of God... Today the very foundation of our faith is under direct attack. Most of the modern Bible translations have altered this doctrine and shake the very foundation of Christianity."³⁰

There are actually a number of problems with this statement but I shall confine myself to the issue of the use of the words "only begotten Son" which many modern translations translate as "the only Son"(ESV) or the "one and only Son" (NIV). The phrase appears in John 1:14; 1:18; 3:16; 3:18; 1John 4:9.

The word "Son" is not in dispute so let's look at the Greek word which the KJV (and others) translate as "only begotten". The word is *monogenēs*. In order to understand any Greek word we must look at how the word was understood by Greek speakers of the day, outside of the Bible, and then also at how it is used in the Bible.

Here is what Kittle, arguably the most respected Greek dictionary, says about the secular usage of the term: "In compounds with *genēs*, adverbs describe the nature rather than the source of derivation. Hence *monogenēs* is used for the only child. More generally it means "unique" or "incomparable."³¹

The word *monogenēs* is used nine times in the New Testament - the five from John, listed above, that relate to Jesus and four that do not relate to Jesus. The other four are found in Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38 and Hebrews 11:17. In the case of the three Lucan references the KJV translates them as "only son", "only daughter" and "only child". If the correct translation is "only begotten", why did they translate these differently? Hebrews 11:17 says: "By faith Abraham... offered up his only begotten son". But was Isaac Abraham's only begotten son? No, Ishmael was also his son in every sense of the word. Is it correct to speak of Isaac as "only begotten", or would it be more correct to speak of Abraham's "unique son" or "special son"? I suggest that when *monogenēs* is used of Isaac, the emphasis is on his uniqueness and specialness rather than on his being the only begotten which is clearly not true. Even a superficial reading of the three examples in Luke will confirm that the Author is emphasizing how valued and special the children were to their parents.

In the same way, Jesus is not the only Son of the Father and God has many sons³². But Jesus is the unique son of the Father. While we are sons, no-one else is exactly like Jesus and no-one else has the relationship with the father that Jesus has. *Monogenēs* therefore speaks, as in the case of secular Greek and Isaac, of the uniqueness, distinctiveness and superiority of Jesus.

A study of the history of the term "only begotten" traces it back to one of the earliest errors that beset the church - that of Arianism (3rd & 4th century). The Arians taught that Jesus was created/born and therefore not fully God. Amongst others, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons perpetuate the same heresy today. It is no wonder then, that the notion of the "only begotten son" is still a favorite argument by JW's to show that Jesus is not eternal and therefore not God.

At the same time, I admit that modern scholars are divided on this question and the arguments are much more complex than I have presented here³³. But we must ask how changing *monogenēs* from "only begotten" to "one and only" affects what we believe and "undermines the very foundations of our faith"? The fact is "one and only" does not undermine who Jesus is but rather exalts Him. Removing "begotten" from the translation of John 3:16, etc. does not change the fact that the next word - "son" still retains the doctrine of His Sonship. In addition there are many other verses that speak of Him as "begotten of the Father". (In the other verses, a different Greek word is used). Thus changing the translation of the five verses in question does not change anything about what the New Testament teaches about Jesus and His relationship to the Father.

On the contrary, the use of "one and only" emphasizes that there is no-one like Him and that the Father did not give any son, but His one and only, unique and special Son -the Lord Jesus Christ. It does not matter how you cut it, by removing "begotten" from the verses in John, Jesus is not devalued, but by (correctly) emphasizing His uniqueness to the Father, He is further exalted and glorified as the One and Only, unique and special Son of the Father.

Why I Don't Use the KJV

Before I give you my reasons, let me share a bit of the background with you. I grew up with the KJV and the Afrikaans Bibles and later entered the ministry with a denomination which is KJO. I simply accepted the denomination's policy of KJO and vehemently opposed those who used other translations by using all the classical KJO arguments.

At a particular point in my ministry the Lord began to open doors for me to work increasingly amongst unbelievers and new converts who had no Christian background. It pretty soon became obvious that the KJV was a real stumbling block because of the archaic language and that folk had difficulty reading long sections and fully understanding what they had read. At this point I began to explore the alternatives. I bought copies of three other versions that my research had highlighted as possibly good translations. For about a year I read and studied each of these versions in minute detail. The more I studied the different versions and the issues behind the various translations, I became increasingly convinced that there were other good, possibly even better, translations out there.

I finally settled on the NKJV simply because it was the most compatible with the KJV and it was easy for people to follow in their KJV when I read publically from the NKJV. For several years I used a wide-margin NKJV and noted many of the differences between the KJV and the NKJV. I researched the original languages on each difference and the various factors that influenced the translators to make the choices they did for each instance. The more I dug, the more convinced I became that while the KJV was a good translation, there are better translations. I also became aware that there is not a single perfect translation but that each one has its strengths and weaknesses.

Even though I use the NKJV for public reading and teaching, I still refer to the KJV every day during study and research. I have the KJV open on my computer all the time and when quoting Scripture from memory it is mostly from the KJV.

Here are the reasons I don't use the KJV when teaching and reading in public:

Many words have changed their meaning completely over the past four centuries. Take the word "let" for instance. It used to mean "hinder" or "restrain". Now it means "allow" which is the complete opposite. The word "strife" used to include the concept of "selfish ambition", it no longer does. The word "quick" used to mean "life" it now means "fast". "Prevent" used to mean "to precede" or "to lead" now it means to "stop" or "hold back" (again, the opposite). There are about 800 words in the KJV that are no longer in common use or that have changed their meaning and will therefore present a problem to the modern reader.

Unless the reader is well schooled in Elizabethan English or reads with a dictionary specifically designed to explain KJV words³⁴, the reader will not fully understand what he reads and may even misunderstand. This happens in spite of the power of the Holy Spirit to illumine God's Word. Over the years I have endured far too many sermons that were totally erroneous, in spite of the best intentions of the speakers, because they did not understand the King James English. If the teachers don't understand the language, how will the people understand?

The other problem with the language is that many have come to believe that God only speaks in King James English. So we are more "spiritual" when we pray or preach in King James. This is simply not true. Neither is it true that thee and thou is more respectful than you. Our respect for the Lord is not shown in thee and thou but in a real fear of the Lord which permeates our whole life. And when we use King James

English to impress others with our super-spirituality we have become full-blown Pharisees!

We do not speak King James to one another and therefore it is hypocritical to speak to God in a different language. This too is a carry-over of Catholicism who insisted on a different language for the church and for everyday life. When the New Testament was written there were two forms of Greek in which it could be written. One was classical Greek which dated back about 300 years and would have been similar to King James English. The other form of Greek was Koine, or common Greek, which was the language that everyone spoke and wrote.

That would have been the exact equivalent of modern English. The New Testament was written in common Greek and not classical Greek which simply means that if the New Testament was to be written today (and God chose English as the language), it would be written in ordinary, common, modern English NOT in Elizabethan English. So why should we use a translation which is not in the language that God would have used, had the New Testament been written today? Nehemiah explains the imperative on anyone who teaches the Bible: "So they read distinctly (clearly) from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading." (Nehemiah 8:8).

The problem with the Pharisees was that they obscured the meaning of the Scriptures through their traditions and complicated arguments. The task of anyone who is a teacher of Scripture is to make it easy and simple so that a child can understand. By imposing a Bible on people that is difficult to understand is contrary to our commission as teachers. I want people to read the Bible and to understand it and the best way to do that is to make a good translation in modern English available to them.

I do not, like the Roman church, need to keep people enslaved and dependent on me by denying them access to the Scriptures in a language they do understand. Modern Translations are not the Source of Heresy

KJO people claim that modern translations are the base of heresy and error. In order to "prove" their point they use extreme paraphrases like The Message and the way certain false teachers use such translations to support various errors.

But the truth is that people don't get into heresy because of translations, they get there because of pride, disobedience and rebellion. The big cults in the world today - Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventism, Christian Science etc etc, were all based on the King James Version! Does that make the King James Version bad? No. The problem does not lie with the translations but the problem lies in how the translation is used. Some of the problems that lead to error are a lack of logical consistency, ignorance, pride, and reading the Scriptures in a reactive way. God can use even the worst translation to bring men to truth if they really want to know the truth. In the same way the very best translations and even the actual documents signed by Paul did not stop men from devising false doctrines.

There were false teachers in Jesus' day and a number of heresies plagued the church from the latter part of the first century on. These errors were propagated in spite of the fact that the original manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek being available to them. So, if the actual documents that were written under the inspiration and anointing of the Holy Spirit did not guarantee doctrinal purity, then no translation will either.

In Conclusion

It should also be evident that the claims made regarding the perfection and inspiration of the KJV are false and that better translations are freely available. At the same time we must note that the actual differences between any of the literal translations amounts to a fraction of one percent.

In spite of the problems elucidated above, the KJV is a good translation. Notwithstanding my grave concerns about the translators and the environment in which the work was done, the translators were very skilled linguists and produced a well-crafted translation. The very fact that it has remained popular for 400 years attests to the quality of the workmanship. But its endurance does not prove God's protection on this translation as though it were authorized by the Lord Himself. Even though it is a good translation, it is not perfect and does have real shortcomings. If you use the KJV and are aware of its weaknesses, then it becomes an excellent tool to know and teach God's Word. But if you blindly follow the translators and believe that every English word is inspired and the translators were anointed - you will certainly miss some important truths and could even develop some grave heresy based on these weaknesses.

We must remember that no translation is perfect but today we have access to the most wonderful computer programs that make the original languages accessible to anyone through a whole range of dictionaries, concordances, word studies and other marvelous tools. No student of the Bible has any excuse not to "rightly divide the word of truth" no matter which translation he chooses.

Finally, the KJO controversy is unnecessary and foolish. Let's be mindful of Paul's instructions: "nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm." (1 Timothy 1:4-7). "But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless." (Titus 3:9).

1. <http://www.jesus-is-lord.com/thebible.htm>
2. This is many times more differences than the differences between the 1769 version and the New King James Version (for example).
3. <http://www.kjv-only.com/doug/kjvoroots.html>
4. James White. The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust the Modern Translations? Bethany House, Minneapolis: 1995, pp1-4.
5. Durant, Will and Ariel. The Age of Reason Begins. The Story of Civilization. Vol 7. Simon and Shuster. New York. 1961. p 131.
6. Ibid p133.
7. http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/biography/james_vi/james_vi.html
8. Durant, Will and Ariel. The Age of Reason Begins. The Story of Civilization. Vol 7. Simon and Shuster. New York. 1961. pp136-137.
9. KJO people claim that the accusations of homosexuality were concocted decades after the death of James. This is not true. There is ample first-hand evidence dating to James' reign that corroborate that he

was homosexual in spite of his marriage and that he generally found women unattractive.

10. MacGregor, Geddes. Scotland: An Intimate Portrait. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1990. p29.

11. Durant, Will and Ariel. The Age of Reason Begins. The Story of Civilization. Vol 7. Simon and Shuster. New York. 1961. pp138.

12. <http://www.angelfire.com/la2/prophet1/kjvt1.html>

13. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestantism>

14. Alexander McClure, Translators Revisited; Gustavus S. Paine, The Men Behind the King James Version.

15. "the Infant Baptized is by Virtue of Baptism, before it be signed with the Sign of the Cross, received into the Congregation of Christ's Flock as a perfect Member thereof..." Article 30 of the Constitutions and Canons of 1604: <http://www.anglican.net/doctrines/1604-canon-law/>

16. http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/Bible/inspired_or_preserved.htm

17. "No cause therefore why the word translated should be denied to be the word, or forbidden to be current, notwithstanding that some imperfections and blemishes may be noted in the setting forth of it. For whatever was perfect under the Sun, where Apostles or Apostolic men, that is, men endued with an extraordinary measure of God's spirit, and privileged with the privilege of infallibility, had not their hand? [emphasis mine].

18. They note in their preface to the 1611 version: "Truly (good Christian Reader) we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new Translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, . . . but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that hath been our endeavor, that our mark."

19. Adam Nicholson. God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible. Harper Collins. New York, NY. 2003 p226.

20. <http://wycliffe.org.uk/wycliffe/about/vision-whatwedo.html>

21. Ibid. p98.

22. Campbell, Gordon. Bible: The Story of the King James Version 1611-2011. Oxford University Press. 2010.

23. Bruce, FF. History of the Bible in English. 3rd. Oxford University Press. New York, NY. 1978. p97.

24. The following paper contains many good examples of problems with the translation as such: <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/kjv.html>

25. (Modernized English): <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/1611-Bible/1611-King-James-Bible-Introduction.php>

26. To check this use a computerized Bible program and search for (almost) any Strong's number and then see how many ways that same Greek word has been translated.

27. The previously quoted paper lists many examples of these mistakes and I urge the serious student to at least read through the list at: <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/kjv.html>
28. <http://www.allaboutthejourney.org/bible-manuscripts.htm>
29. Josh MacDowell has unearthed some amazing proofs for the veracity of the Bible in his various "Evidence that Demands a Verdict" books. I urge you to read them.
30. http://www.defendproclaimthefaitth.org/bible_for_today.htm
31. Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1995, c1985). Theological dictionary of the New Testament. Translation of: Theologisches Worterbuch zum Neuen Testament. (607). Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans.
32. We are called sons of God, as are the angels and Adam is also a son of God (by creation).
33. For a more detailed analysis see:
- Köstenberger, Andreas J. John: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Baker Academic. Grand Rapids, MI. 2007. pp40-45. (pay special attention to the footnotes).
- Köstenberger, Andreas J. A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters. Biblical Theology of the New Testament Series. Zondervan, 2009. pp381-382.
- Pendrick, Gerard. Μοϋϋεν■. New Testament Studies, Volume 4 Issue 04. Cambridge University Press, pp 587-600 . (Available from Cambridge Journals Online)
34. Here is one such dictionary: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/king-james-dictionary/>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/anton-bosch/the-king-james-only-controversy/>

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