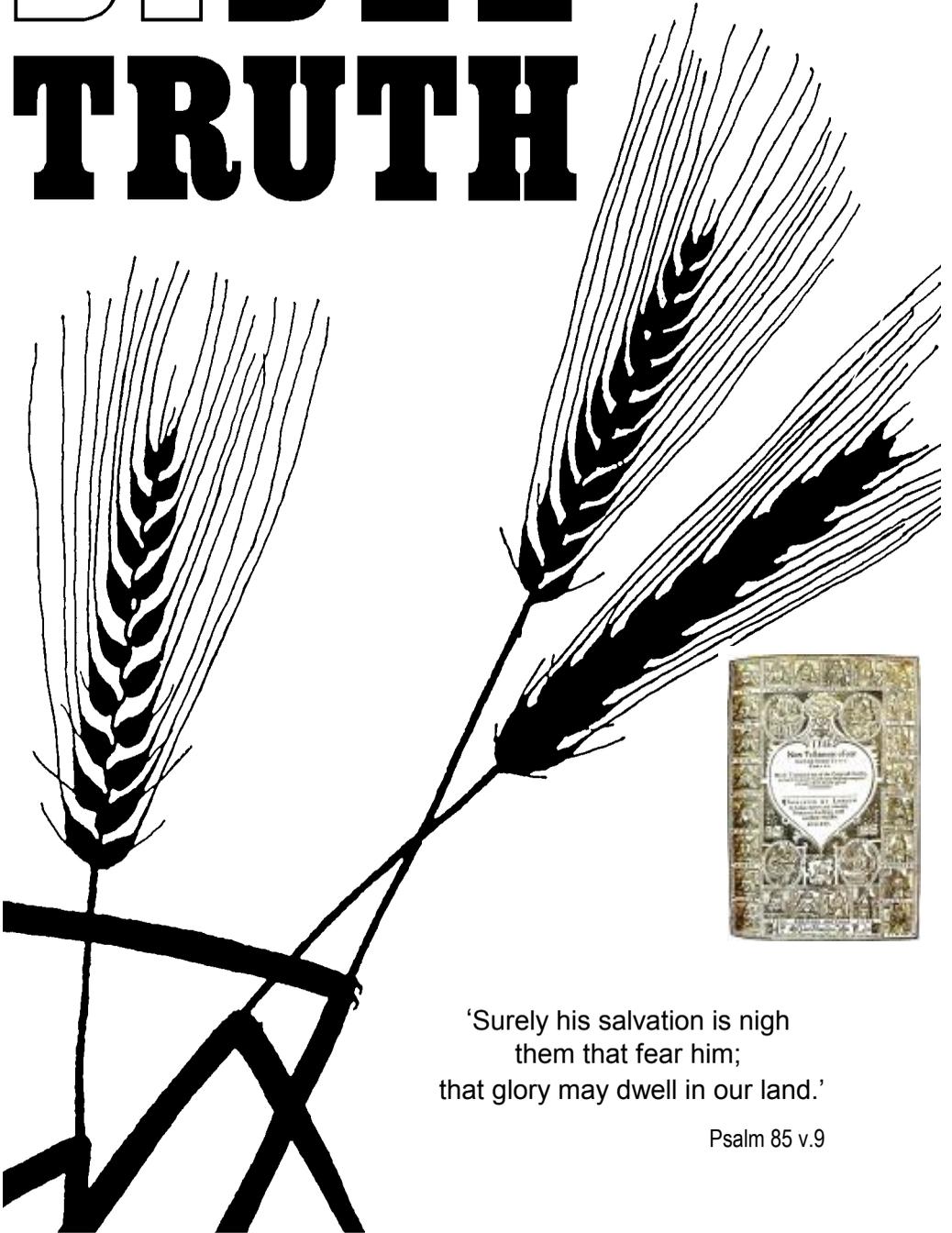


# BIBLE TRUTH

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'Surely his salvation is nigh  
them that fear him;  
that glory may dwell in our land.'

Psalm 85 v.9

# **A short comparison of the *New international Version* with the *Authorised Version* of the Bible**

by Paul Boyd-Lee

There are people who say that the *King James Version* is the best one but what I think they mean is, not that it is perfect in every respect, but if one is not familiar with the Hebrew or Greek then it is a better script to use for Bible study than others that are available.

Our task may have been a lot simpler if a version of the *King James Bible* had been produced which merely updated some of the more archaic word endings like 'blesseth' to 'bless' and likewise. It is a great shame that the word 'Thou' has fallen out of use in common English today because it distinguishes between singular 'you' and plural 'you' and so avoids ambiguity (mistakes over what it means). Many other languages still retain a single and plural version of 'you'. For example French has 'tu' and 'vous', Dutch 'jij' and 'jullie'.

The question is often raised of whether it is better for an enquirer to read a version of the Bible that they are happy with rather than persevere with one of the more formal translations like the *King James*. Usually they will be doing this just to get a rough idea of the contents, the stories and the like. It raises the question of whether it is not better for them to read some version rather than none? A distressing fact is that even though someone may choose the most attractive looking Bible it is exceptionally rare for them to read more than a small amount of it (usually Genesis and Exodus, one or two of the Gospels and a dip into the Psalms). Sadly, this includes church-goers as much as unbelievers. On the other hand if an adult (rather than a child), whether they are a believer or not, is given a *King James Version* as a gift, there is a good chance they will read all of it at least once. They revel over its language, forthrightness, and how it states important matters accurately in so few words. Once a student said to me that the *King James Version* was boring because it was so long and they preferred a modern short version like The Living Bible. I knew they had read little, if any, of the Living Bible because it contains roughly twice as many words as the *King James Version*! It is likewise with many new translations, which take more words to say what the *King James* says in a few.

Language is not static but that fact has to be weighed against, 'The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations' (Psalm 33 v.11). That is to say there is strong argument to support the case that God caused His servants to write that which would be needed for every particular generation. Thus I become very concerned if people feel it necessary to tamper with what the prophets and scribes wrote, in order to change it to what they would like to see written rather than what was originally recorded. This altering of the original text has been the problem with the majority of translations I am aware of in the last 50 years.

Examples from the time of Shakespeare are raised where their meaning has changed today, such as 'reap the whirlwind' etc.). But not many people realise that when the *King James* version was produced it put new expressions into the English language rather than using the language that already existed to translate from the ancient languages. That is, the Bible translators did not borrow from Shakespeare but it was rather that he utilised the Biblical language. That is quite different to what Bible translators are doing these days where they are altering the ancient texts to suit today's dogma which changes with the whims of the age.

This becomes exceedingly important where the Bible is used as a book for teaching, preaching, interpreting prophecy and so on. For example, with the phrase, 'to cast ones bread on the waters'. This expression has served the world well for two and a half thousand years. Even though it may not be a popular expression in some places today, nevertheless anyone familiar with a faithful translation from original languages would know where the words come from and its meaning. What is more, it fits prophetically because in Bible symbolism 'bread' portrays the 'body of Christ' and 'waters' are symbolic of 'peoples'; hence there is a deeper meaning of spreading the gospel amongst all peoples. To translate this 'eclectically' or 'dynamically' (words which modern translators use to mean putting it into modern language) risks losing the greater teaching that the Author of the Word intended to be found by those who study beyond the simple meaning of the mere words. It is for these sorts of reasons that the *King James* Version has had adjectives such as 'inspired', 'inerrant' and 'infallible' Word of God, attached to it.

Some readers may have heard that many modern translators are guided by the 'Text Critical Method' which is largely a product of a German school of thought originating just over a century ago. The

names Westcott and Hort are often associated with this. It selectively uses the oldest manuscript/s available for translating from, rather than the generally accepted texts up to that time. Needless to say, the oldest surviving manuscripts are not necessarily the most accurate; in fact they are likely to be erroneous ones because good texts would have been soiled and worn whereas those in pristine condition might have been doubted and therefore not used.

From the 1980s many evangelical Christians have favoured the *New International Version* without realising that its translation has altered frequently over the years. So, the 1973 version differs from the 1979 say. For example, Matthew ch.16 v.22 'Perish the thought' has become 'never', which in the Authorised reads 'this shall not be'. More serious though, is Luke ch.4 v.23 where 'that you did' appears as 'that you do'. One asks, can it be called a faithful translation when it actually changes the tense of the verb from past to present?

A tragedy of the *New International* and several other recent translations is the way they change the original number units. For example, Genesis ch.6 v.15 gives the measurements of Noah's Ark. The *King James* states this as three hundred by fifty by thirty cubits which is altered in the *New International* to 450 by 75 by 45 feet. Two severe problems arise here. First, one of the glories of God's Word is how the colours, parables, stones, numbers and other concepts fit together. For example, heavenly concepts and matters of salvation always turn up 'light - white', whereas rebellion and sin is 'dark - black'; hence the vivid example, 'no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light', warning us of this great deception. Likewise the number 3 is connected with 'the three-fold godhead - trinity', seven is 'completion', eight 'new beginnings' and six, being one less than seven (completion), heralds confusion and usually something evil.

Thus if a Bible translator changes numbers from the original it runs the risk of losing the full power of the meaning that is inferred particularly where prophecy is involved. A good example of this is found in Daniel ch.3 v.1 telling of Nebuchadnezzar setting up the image of gold. The *King James* gives its measurements as 'threescore cubits high and six cubits broad', that is 60 by 6 which are foreboding numbers! The *New International* version rewords this as ninety feet high and nine broad, that is 90 by 9 which are completely different numbers and hence to someone who closely follows the scriptures, it does not truly indicate the wickedness of Nebuchadnezzar.

Interestingly the *New International* retains the unit in 1 Kings ch.10 v.14 (666 talents) but in Revelation ch.13 v.18 it changes 666 from the *King James Version* 'for it is the number of a man' to 'for it is man's number', thus completely changing the meaning and confusing would be interpreters of prophecy. It changes the meaning from referring to a particular man to all of mankind. However, this change would no doubt suit Roman Catholics whose church was identified by the Reformers as connected with the man whose number is 666 (the gematria of the pope's official title).

Another major problem arising from changing the units in modern translations is that they soon get out of date and so mislead the readers. For example, the *New International* changes many of the Bible units into 'feet'. In Britain today the younger generation have no idea what a 'foot' is, apart from being that which joins their leg to their toes! Britain has now been forced into using the 'metric system' of units. So this translation in trying to be up to date has actually become out of date!

In general, the *New International* has preferred to translate from lesser known and minor original manuscripts (Alexandrian), rather than the '*Textus Receptus*' (the Received Text - Byzantine). Sadly, a good number of these minor manuscripts (largely from Egypt), were the product of heretic sects of the early centuries after Christ and for this reason fell into disuse. However, they appeal to modernists today, those uneasy with the hard doctrines of the original Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew. For instance, Micah ch.5 v.2, the prophecy foretelling the birth of the Saviour, in the *King James* reads 'from everlasting' but in the *New International* it has been altered to 'whose origins are from of old, from ancient times'. To the unobservant this might sound the same thing but in fact it suits those who do not accept Jesus as the Son of God (i.e. eternal) because it gives Jesus' beginning as 'from ancient times'. Similar is John ch.9 v.35 where 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' has become 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'. That is, the deity of Christ has been devalued.

Another problem is where the translation tries to be too clever. For example, Song of Solomon ch.1 v.16 has changed 'green' to 'verdant' in the *New International*. Unfortunately many youngsters in Britain to day are clue-less to know what 'verdant' means so the translation in trying to be more expressive will in fact not convey anything to the young reader.

Lastly, it is inexcusable that the *New International* excludes some verses altogether, or at best moves them to footnotes. For example Luke ch.9 v.56 which in the *King James* reads, 'For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them ...' is omitted in the *New International*. This is hardly surprising because its inclusion causes problems to the Feminist movement. Similar is 1 John ch.5 v.7 which by being removed to the footnotes pacifies Unitarians.

I have confined my comments to just the *New International* Version but most of these criticisms and others beside, also apply to most other modern translations many of which are highly recommended by publishing houses perhaps to boost their sales.

For these sorts of reasons I would recommend that the diligent Bible student uses the *King James* version as their main study book. Even so, I must repeat the question I raised earlier. Is it not better for a new reader to start with some version of scripture rather than none? Hopefully these thoughts will enable you to improve teaching material for those who are using modern interpretation versions.

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