

Why I Quote the NIV Bible

By Graham Pockett

In most of my writings I quote from the NIV (New International Version) Bible. Why do I do this when there is a 'tried and true' version available in the KJV (King James Version)? The basis of the text below was a response to a Christian who considered my use of the NIV to be heretical, if not satanic. I hope it answers your questions.

A few Christians have questioned my use of the NIV Bible. One person said to me that "we have the true and infallible word of God in the Authorized or KJV and the use of any other version is heretical".

Let me set the record straight – the KJV is like every other version of the Bible, simply a translation. It has errors as do all versions, both ancient and modern. Translations are just that, translations – none are the original.

Unfortunately, we do not have original manuscripts of the various books of the New Testament but we do have fragments of very early manuscripts (back to about 110AD) plus many complete texts from after 200AD. In most cases, the earlier the manuscript the more accurate it should be, though there are some early manuscripts, from specific regions, which were clearly flawed. We don't know if this was deliberate (to make them fit an existing heresy) or just poor copying. Prior to the Nicean Council of 325AD there were numerous heresies within the church.

We also have quotes from New Testament writings found in many letters sent between Christians from about 50AD. I understand that you can read the entire New Testament from the quotes collected up to 200AD! Not only were there quotes directly from the New Testament writings but there were many references to events in the New Testament – for example the solar "eclipse" which occurred when Jesus died on the cross.

According to Dr Dale Robbins ([Why So Many Bible Translations?](#)):

"The KJV New Testament (and all editions since Tyndale) was compiled primarily from the Byzantine family of manuscripts (AD 500 – 1000) frequently referred to as the Textus Receptus. But many of the newer translations were produced using a composite of later discoveries of other manuscripts and fragments dating from an earlier period. Among such are The 'Alexandrian Family' manuscripts (AD 200 – 400) which include the three oldest The Codex Alexandrius, the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus, all which were major contributors to most Bible versions after the King James Version."

Which manuscripts (usually abbreviated to MSS) are the 'right' ones? Probably none of them because none are original. However, the Textus Receptus MSS does have some problems from a translator's point of view according to Bible linguist Charles V Taylor (who wrote "Bibles With Holes?", "The Oldest Science Book In The World", "Did God Really?", "The Creator Is Coming", "Churches Aglow Down The Ages", et al). Dr Taylor points out that when dealing with Holy works (of any faith), copyists tend to **add** explanation rather than **remove** words. This is because the words are considered Holy and therefore must never be removed (Rev 22:19), though adding words of explanation was often considered acceptable.

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If you check most of the verses 'missing' from the NIV and other modern Bibles you will find, in nearly every case, they were an explanation of the previous verse – which makes those verses more likely to have been added by a copyist rather than deleted by a translator. This makes the 'Alexandrian Family' of manuscripts more likely to be closer to the original than the Textus Receptus (Byzantine Family) manuscripts, which is why they have been chosen by the later translators. So when someone tells me that the KJV has 790,704 words and the NIV has "only" 726,606 words then I feel even **more** confident in my choice of Bible translation.

But simply looking at the total number of words is meaningless because the language between the KJV and the NIV are so different – one is 17th Century English and the other is 20th Century English. Words, phrases and concepts which meant one thing to a 17th Century reader often mean something totally different to a 20th Century reader. What does "suffer little children to come unto me" mean to you? Do you want the children to only come to Jesus if they are in pain or suffering? Or maybe they come to Jesus so they will suffer? I don't think so.

The KJV says in Luke 18:16... *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of God.*

While the NIV says: *Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.*

Which renders the verse 'best'? At least the NIV makes sense to a modern reader!

But modern Bibles can be just as 'wrong' as older versions. In John 2:1 the NIV says: *On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there...and the KJV says: And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there...*

But what does this mean? Did it take Jesus three days to walk to Cana? If so, from where? The translation is 'wrong' in a modern English sense because, in many cultures (especially Greek), days of the week are numbered so "the third day" simply means "Tuesday" (the first day of the week is Sunday). A sensible modern translation would be "On Tuesday a wedding took place..."

"This is the dilemma of all translators – especially if they are translating Holy books."

So the act of translation itself can cause problems. When the original says "on the third day" should we accept that and translate it literally, or should we render it so that it makes the same sense to us as it did to the 1st and 2nd Century audience it was written for? This is the dilemma of all translators – especially if they are translating Holy books.

In French the adjective follows the noun rather than precedes it so that the phrase "the green door" becomes "the door green" in French. If you were translating either from or to French which would you use? Would you say that the phrase must be rendered exactly (word-for-word) or would you agree with most translators and say that it must be rendered into its equivalent phraseology for the target audience? And if you did translate word-for-word, would the resultant translation be 'more accurate'? Alas, no. In fact, in many cases there are no direct translations so equivalent English phrases must be substituted so that the correct tense and concept is portrayed.

The translation from ancient Greek (especially when the New Testament ancient Greek had an Aramaic accent!) to modern English is therefore not just a matter of taking one word and translating that single word into English – you must try and render a phrase into a correct rendition of what the original writer meant when he or she wrote it **as if they were writing in modern English**. Not so easy...

But there are even more potential problems when an English translation of ancient Greek text has to be also rendered into a rhyming style, as was the KJV. This adds another barrier to accurate translation because the translator must translate into prose. What liberties must be taken with the original for this to be accomplished?

“I wonder if the Christians who used the Geneva Bible of 1560 complained loudly about the “heretical new KJV Bible” when it was first introduced?”

The problems with translations are compounded because, if the publisher of a modern translation wants his version to be accepted by people who have been reading an older version, he has to make it compatible with that version. What translation errors have there been since Tyndale’s Bible, faithfully reproduced so that existing readers are not alienated by an apparent change in doctrine. While the NIV had the KJV to work from, so the KJV had previous versions which it had to be compatible with. Going back to Dr Robbins:

“After Tyndale, several other famous Bibles were produced in the 16th century. The Cloverdale Bible in 1535, Matthew’s Bible in 1537, The Great Bible in 1539, The Geneva Bible in 1560 (the first to use chapters, verses, and the italicization of added words), and the Bishops Bible in 1568.”

In fact, some 80% of the KJV was copied from the Geneva Bible. It is clear, then, that the KJV really was ‘just another English translation’, excellent when it was written (especially considering the limited number of manuscripts available at that time) but still ‘just a translation’ – just like the NIV and other modern Bibles... I wonder if the Christians who used the Geneva Bible of 1560 complained loudly about the “heretical new KJV Bible” when it was first introduced?

How about the foreign language versions of the Bible? Are they too somehow inferior because they aren’t the KJV? Should a Chinese-speaking Christian be forced to read the KJV because it is “the only true and infallible word of God”?

So which version is right? As Christians, let us not get into dispute over this because I really don’t believe it is important. What is important are the core teachings in the Word, and these do not change between any of the major versions of the Bible (not counting the New World Translation, a Jehovah Witness version which is deliberately flawed to follow the teachings of that cult).

“With the recent publication of several different books vilifying modern translations, asserting that they were borne out of conspiratorial motives, a word should be mentioned about this concocted theory.” (Daniel B. Wallace)

Finally, if you think that the NIV and other modern versions are somehow the work of Satan (or non-Christian humanists) then I urge you to read the Addendum to the excellent article [Why I Do Not Think the King James Bible Is the Best Translation Available Today](#) by Daniel B. Wallace, PhD (Professor of New Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary).

This says (paragraph breaks added and emphasis mine):

“One further point is necessary. With the recent publication of several different books vilifying modern translations, asserting that they were borne out of conspiratorial motives, a word should be mentioned about this concocted theory.

First, many of these books are written by people who have little or no knowledge of Greek or Hebrew, and are, further, a great distortion of the facts. I have read books on textual criticism for more than a quarter of a century, but never have I seen such illogic, out-of-context quotations, and downright deceptions about the situation as in these recent books.

Second, although it is often asserted that heretics produced some of the New Testament MSS we now have in our possession, **there is only one group of MSS known to be produced by heretics: certain Byzantine MSS of the book of Revelation. This is significant because the Byzantine text stands behind the KJV!** These MSS formed part of a mystery cult textbook used by various early cults. But KJV advocates constantly make the charge that the earliest MSS (the Alexandrian MSS) were produced by heretics. The sole basis they have for this charge is that certain readings in these MSS are disagreeable to them!

Third, when one examines the variations between the Greek text behind the KJV (the Textus Receptus) and the Greek text behind modern translations, it is discovered that **the vast majority of variations are so trivial as to not even be translatable** (the most common is the moveable nu, which is akin to the difference between ‘who’ and ‘whom’!).

Fourth, when one compares the number of variations that are found in the various MSS with the actual variations between the Textus Receptus and the best Greek witnesses, it is found that these two are remarkably similar. There are over 400,000 textual variants among NT MSS. But the differences between the Textus Receptus and texts based on the best Greek witnesses number about 5000 – and most of

these are untranslatable differences! In other words, over 98% of the time, the Textus Receptus and the standard critical editions agree.

Those who vilify the modern translations and the Greek texts behind them have evidently never really investigated the data.

Their appeals are based largely on emotion, not evidence. As such, they do an injustice to historic Christianity as well as to the men who stood behind the King James Bible. These scholars, who admitted that their work was provisional and not final (as can be seen by their preface and by their more than 8000 marginal notes indicating alternate renderings), would wholeheartedly welcome the great finds in MSS that have occurred in the past one hundred and fifty years."

The KJV, like other translations, is a superb document. However, it is not the only version and it is not necessarily the 'best' version. If it suits you, great, but it might not suit other people. If the doctrine stated in the more modern translations, including the NIV, is virtually identical to the doctrine in the KJV then what is the problem?

As Christians we should not get involved in petty disputes which do not honor the Father and do, in fact, honor Satan. Let us remember who the Enemy is, and it isn't fellow Christians who might, or might not, have identical doctrine to you. God honors our hearts, not our doctrines!

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, dwell in you and in your house forever.



If you are interested in following up the verses "missing" from the NIV Bible you can check out my article ["Omissions" from the NIV Bible](#). In this article I have taken each of the 17 verses reported to be missing from the NIV New Testament and have analyzed them in the light of their context, adding my own observations in the process. Please note that this is quite a long page.

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