

The Bible Debate

Revised 2024

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*Within the introduction to this series, entitled "**One Accord or Discord...Time For the Church to Choose**", I gave a few simple illustrations as to how discord between churches and individual Christians on Biblical issues can work against Christianity as a whole. The issue of Bible translation is indeed an important issue however; it is also one exaggerated beyond reason in many cases. Let us now explore **"The Bible Debate."***

I would first like to mention that in my personal study of the Bible, I use many different translations including the King James, the New King James, the NIV, and about twelve or more others; I also explore the Greek and Hebrew at times in order to gain deeper understanding. That said, there is one interesting point that a lot of "King James Only" advocates seem to overlook. While most refer to the "Original King James Bible", the question is, "what version of the Original King James version?" Many people use the King James Version, completed in 1769; however, there were three other versions of "The Original King James Version" published prior to this one! (See the Note below) So for those insisting on the "Original," to which one are they referring? I am not mocking anyone, but just pointing out that if people really want to "nit-pick," a lot of time could be wasted in debating this question alone; time that could be put to better use by simply preaching the gospel! It is also important to mention that the King James Bible was not "the first" translation of the Bible into the English language! John Wycliffe oversaw the first English translation in 1380 for the NT 1382 for the OT.

Note: The King James Version went through four revisions (1629, 1638, 1762, and 1769). It is this last revision that most people use. The reason for the revisions is that the English language did not have a standard for spelling and punctuation when the first three King James Versions were written.

From: <http://lavistachurchofchrist.org/LVanswers/2005/11-28.htm> (A Great Web Site BTY)

As you can see, the reasons for the revisions of the King James Bible are very practical ones, and they did not have an impact on the overall message of the Bible at all. It is the overall message that is of the greatest importance concerning any translation or revision. Additionally, take into consideration the fact that the Bible is translated into hundreds of languages besides English! My wife was born in Germany; therefore, German was her first language. Although she rarely uses German any more, she can still understand the gist of the conversation when she hears German spoken. Over the years, I have asked my wife, "How do you say this or that in German?" Many times, she has told me that many

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words or phrases cannot be directly translated word for word. While the concept or thought of a passage may remain intact, some phrases simply cannot be translated word for word. Some words she explained did not even exist when she was a child! This is true concerning many languages and is compounded when translating from one to another, using ancient dialects. Therefore, why would the Bible be any different? If translating from any language to English, or visa-versa, there will invariably be many instances of rephrasing, or paraphrasing, in order to get the job done. It is a simple fact, people of different cultures and backgrounds often say things in different ways. Case in point... we do not speak using "Old English" in modern society, even in England! The point of what people speaking different languages are saying may be the same but if you were to translate in either direction word for word, you would end up with a confusing and in some cases as my wife pointed out to me, some rather humorous renditions.

When I became a Christian, my first real exposure to the Bible was in the form of a "Paraphrased Version" entitled "**The Way.**" For those of you who do not understand what a paraphrased version is, it is when the writer takes liberty to in some cases, re-phrase a sentence, or add a word or two in order to make something more understandable. As one might imagine, it is possible, for a Paraphrase to be "manipulated" into a biased interpretation, thereby possibly making it untrustworthy. Therefore, a "Paraphrase Translation" is not recommended for serious study of the Scriptures. I no longer have a copy of The Way but I do remember comparing it to other translations and I don't recall any major discrepancies when I did so. Keep in mind this was a long time ago and I was a new Christian at the time so do not take this as an official endorsement of that translation. The point is this; by reading that translation I was brought closer to my Lord and Savior Jesus which is proof that many, if not most translations, including and besides the King James Version, can and do have a positive roll in spreading the Gospel. The question I have is, "why do we Christians spend so much time debating each other on this issue?" Perhaps a better question for us to consider is whether the on-going debate is having a positive or negative effect on the spreading the Gospel of Christ! If you recall the introduction to this series, this "Bible Debate" had an extremely negative effect on my friend Julio; it may have forever turned him away from Christianity. Throughout the years, I have helped lead many to Christ using many translations other than the King James. Actually, I used other translations more often than not! Once again, this proves the value of the different translations that are out there. When I talk to people and quote scripture, I think it is important to converse with them, especially those unfamiliar with the Bible, using common words and terminology. Another thing to consider is your credibility if you are asked about

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the meaning of a word that is no longer commonly used and you yourself do not know the answer.

As far as the "Bible Debate" goes, it is time for the Church to decide how important that debate really is. Is it important enough to take the chance of turning someone away from Jesus because they don't want to join a fight between people of different ideologies or traditions? Is it important enough to make a mockery of the Holy Spirit that we Christians claim to have within us, the Spirit we claim to unite us as one in Christ? I am willing to bet many of you never thought of it in that context before. The Holy Spirit is supposed to unite us not divide us; so if Christians are showing the world we are divided through our endless debates, just whose spirit do you suppose that might be; is it the Spirit of Christ, or Anti Christ? I think the answer is simple... one draws people to Christ, the other away from Christ. In closing, I want to say that I have nothing against the King James Version of the Bible. I do use it but I do find it distracting at times when I have to stop and look up an Old English word that is not even used in England anymore! If we as Christians want to draw more people to Jesus we have to put our differences aside concerning this issue, and begin to demonstrate the Spirit of Unity in Christ we claim to have. Are we of *One Accord* or are we promoting *Discord*? It is *Time for the Church to Choose* what is **important** as the eternal destiny of someone may depend on not only what people observe in us, but also to what we devote our attention. The world is watching us. Remember, no one will be attracted to a church at war with itself.