

The Fundamental Baptist Fellowship

(1995) *In light of the considerable discussion among fundamentalists about the issue of manuscripts and textual theories, no particular belief about the best textual theory should be elevated to the place of becoming a core fundamentalist belief. Fundamentalists may hold the doctrine of inspiration with equal strength without embracing the same belief about textual criticism. Additionally, proper evaluation of the doctrinal integrity of any particular English translation can only be done by examining its faithfulness to the original languages, not by comparing it to another English translation. While the process of comparing it with other translations may be profitable for matters of clarity and readability, this process cannot pass as the test of doctrinal accuracy since it is illegitimate to check one copy by another; one must compare the copy to the original. In a day when translations abound, fundamentalists must exercise careful discernment in both the selection and rejection of translations. Some professing fundamentalists have wrongfully declared one translation to be the only inspired copy of God's Word in the English language and have sought to make this a test of fundamentalism. Since no translation can genuinely claim what only may be said of the original, inspired writings, any attempt to make a particular English translation the only acceptable translation of fundamentalism must be rejected* (resolution passed at the 75th annual meeting at Faith Baptist Church, Greenville, SC; posted at www.f-b-f.org).



Taking the Word to the World

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Trusted Voices on Translations

Some contemporary Christian leaders are contending that only one Greek New Testament (the *textus*

receptus) or only one English translation of it (the

Authorized or King James)

is the preserved Word of

God. This view is neither

taught nor even implied by

any verse of either the *textus*

receptus or

the King James Version.

Furthermore, neither was it taught by the majority of past conservative Christian spokesmen.

If you are searching for help on the translation issue, a sampling of testimonies from some of these trusted voices is reprinted here for your prayerful consideration.



E. H. Spurgeon



D. L. Moody



John Wesley



G. Campbell Morgan



H. A. Ironside



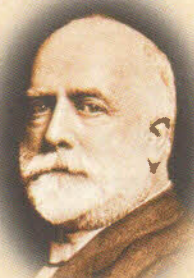
F. B. Meyer



Alexander McClaren



C. I. Scofield



R. A. Torrey

Published and distributed by
Mount Calvary Baptist Church
Greenville, SC

The King James Translators

(Church of England clergy)

(1611) *We do not deny, nay, we affirm and avow, that the very meanest translation of the Bible in English set forth by men of our profession . . . containeth the word of God, nay, is the word of God. . . . 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. . . . Whatever was perfect under the sun, where Apostles or apostolick men, that is, men endued with an extraordinary measure of God's Spirit, and privileged with the privilege of infallibility, had not their hand? (The Translators to the Reader, p. xix).*

John Smyth

(considered to be the first English Baptist)

(before 1612) *The holy Scriptures viz. the Originalls Hebrew & Greek are given by Divine Inspiration & in their first donation were without error most perfect and therefore Canonical. . . . no translation can possibly express all the matter of the holy originalls, nor a thousand things in the Grammar, Rhetoric, & character of the tongue (The Works of John Smyth, fellow of Christ's College, ed. W. T. Whitley, vol. I, pp. 279-280).*

John Owen

(Puritan divine, author of 24 volumes of theology, vice-chancellor of Oxford University)

(1659) *Translations contain the word of God, and are the word of God, perfectly or imperfectly, according as they express the words, sense, and meaning of those originals. To advance any, all translations concurring, into an equality with the originals, . . . —much more to propose and use them as means of castigating, amending, altering any thing in them, gathering various lections* by them, is to set up an altar of our own by the altar of God, and to make equal the wisdom, care, skill and diligence of men, with the wisdom, care, and providence of God himself (Of the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture, in Works, vol. XVI, p. 357).*

*i. e. variations

Benjamin Keach

(one of earliest Baptists, author of *The Baptist Catechism*)

(1682) *Now though some translations may exceed others in Propriety, and significant rendering of the Originals; yet they generally, (even the most imperfect that we know of), express and hold forth*

so much the Mind, Will, and Counsel of God, as is sufficient . . . to acquaint a Man with the Mysteries of Salvation, to work in him a true Faith, and bring him to live godly, righteously, and soberly in this World, and to Salvation in the next (Tropologia: A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors to which are prefixed Arguments to prove the Divine Authority of the Holy Bible, p. xxi).

John Wesley

(founder of Methodism)

(1754) *I design first to set down the text itself, for the most part, in the common English translation, which is, in general (so far as I can judge) abundantly the best that I have seen. Yet I do not say it is incapable of being brought, in several places, nearer to the original. Neither will I affirm that the Greek copies from which this translation was made, are always the most correct. And therefore I shall take the liberty, as occasion may require, to make here and there a small alteration (Notes on the Whole Bible—the New Testament, pp. 3-4).*

Andrew Fuller

(Baptist pastor, first secretary of Baptist Foreign Missionary Society which sent William Carey to India)

(ca. 1800) *Allowing all due honour to the English translation of the Bible, it must be granted to be a human performance, and, as such, subject to imperfection. Where any passage appears to be mistranslated, it is doubtless proper for those who are well acquainted with the original languages to point it out, and to offer, according to the best of their judgment, the true meaning of the Holy Spirit. Criticisms of this kind, made with modesty and judgment, and not in consequence of a preconceived system, are worthy of encouragement (Works, vol. III, p. 810).*

J. C. Ryle

(author of more than 100 pamphlets and books on doctrinal and practical subjects)

(1877) *I lay no claim to the inspiration of every word in the various versions and translations of God's Word. So far as those translations and versions are faithfully and correctly done, so far they are of equal authority with the original Hebrew and Greek. We have reason to thank God that many of the translations are, in the main, faithful and accurate (Old Paths, p. 20).*

(1877) *We have no right to expect infallibility in transcribers and copyists, before the invention of printing. But there is not a single doctrine in Scripture which would be affected or altered if all the various readings were allowed, and all the disputed or doubtful words were omitted (Ibid, p. 29).*

Francis Ridley Havergal

(author of beloved hymns *I Gave My Life for Thee, Take My Life and Let it Be, Who Is On the Lord's Side?* etc.)

It was at her study table that she read her Bible by seven o'clock in the summer and eight o'clock in winter; her Hebrew Bible, Greek Testament, and lexicons being at hand (Memorials of Francis Ridley Havergal, by Marie Havergal, p. 259).

(1877) In a letter to a friend she wrote, *As to I Corinthians ix. 27, why did you not see that the Greek ἀδοκιμος is literally and clearly "not approved," being simply the negative of δοκιμος. You cannot read the Greek word otherwise; and how it came to be translated "castaway" I can't imagine (Ibid, p. 232).*

F. H. A. Scrivener

(member of committee of the English Revised Version, consistently favored Textus Receptus readings over Westcott and Hort's text)

(1880) . . . *Beza's fifth and last text of 1598 was more likely than any other to be in the hands of King James's revisers, and to be accepted by them as the best standard within their reach. It is moreover found on comparison to agree more closely with the Authorised Version than any other Greek text. . . . There are, however many places in which the Authorised Version is at variance with Beza's text; chiefly because it retains language inherited from Tyndale or his successors, which had been founded on the text of other Greek editions. . . . in some places the Authorised Version corresponds but loosely with any form of the Greek original, while it exactly follows the Latin Vulgate (The Parallel New Testament: Greek and English, pp. xxiv-xxv).*

Robert L. Dabney

(Presbyterian theologian, critic of Westcott and Hort and English Revised Version of 1881)

(1881) *No one claims for the Textus Receptus, or common Greek text of the New Testament, any sacred right, as though it represented the ipsissima verba,* written by the inspired men in every case. . . . It is therefore not asserted to be above emendation (Works, vol. I, p. 398).*

*Latin for "the very words"

C. H. Spurgeon

(Baptist pastor, author, founder of the Pastor's College)

(1881) *Concerning the fact of difference between the Revised and the Authorized Versions, I would say that no Baptist should ever fear any honest attempt to produce the correct text, and an*

accurate interpretation of the Old and New Testaments. For many years Baptists have insisted upon it that we ought to have the Word of God translated in the best possible manner; whether it would confirm certain religious opinions and practices, or work against them. All we want is the exact mind of the Spirit, as far as we can get it. . . . By the best and most honest scholarship that can be found we desire that the common version may be purged of every blunder of transcribers, or addition of human ignorance, or human knowledge that so the word of God may come to us as it came from his own hand (Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, vol. XXVII, pp. 342-343).

John William Burgon

(Church of England clergyman, critic of Westcott and Hort and English Revised Version of 1881)

(1883) *Once for all, we request it may be clearly understood that we do not, by any means, claim perfection for the Received Text. We entertain no extravagant notions on this subject. Again and again we shall have occasion to point out (e.g. at pg.107) that the Textus Receptus needs correction (The Revision Revised, p. 21).*

(1896) *I am not defending the 'Textus Receptus'; I am simply stating the fact of its existence. That it is without authority to bind, nay, that it calls for skillful revision in every part, is freely admitted. . . . I do not believe it to be absolutely identical with the true Traditional Text (The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels, pp. 13, 15).*

A. T. Pierson

(consulting editor for *The Scofield Reference Bible*, successor to C. H. Spurgeon)

(1910) *Inspiration is affirmed, of course, only of the original documents, now no longer extant. Many mistakes may have been made by copyists, and some interpolations by officious scribes and translators are fallible. It is the part of reverent criticism to seek, by careful examination and comparison of all existing documents, to detect errors and restore as far as possible the Scriptures in their original purity (Knowing the Scriptures, p. 21).*

One evening he remarked that no one claimed verbal inspiration for the English Bible-although that was remarkably accurate-but only for the text of the original writings. "Then," exclaimed a gentleman rising in the front seat, "if we cannot read the original we might as well have no inspired Bible at all." "Well," replied the lecturer quickly, "my daughter, who is a missionary in Japan, recently sent me a photograph of her child whom I have

never seen. No doubt it is not a perfect likeness. Do you suppose that I said, as I looked upon it, that is not the original and therefore I might as well have no grandchild at all?" (Arthur T. Pierson: *A Biography*, by Delavan Leonard Pierson, p. 284).

D. L. Moody

(evangelist, founder of Moody Bible Institute)

(1895) *I also find it helpful to mark. . . . Variations of the Revised Version: thus Romans 8,26 reads-"the Spirit Himself" in the R.V., not "itself." Note also marginal readings like Mark 6,19, "an inward grudge" instead of "a quarrel" ("How to Mark and What to Mark," *Pleasure and Profit in Bible Study*, p. 104).*

F. B. Meyer

(Baptist pastor, international Bible conference speaker, close friend of D. L. Moody)

(1896) Writing about taking notes in our Bibles he advised, *After a while, we shall begin to make references for ourselves; and then we may use a copy of the Revised Bible; that we may not only be able to read God's Word in the most approved English rendering, which is an immense advantage; but that we may also be able to fill up the empty margins with the notes of parallel passages (Steps into the Blessed Life, p. 294).*

C. H. Mackintosh

(Plymouth Brethren expositor, active in 1859 revival in Ireland, author whose works Spurgeon commended.)

(1898) *We could not say how much we prize the labors of those learned men who have consecrated their energies to the work of clearing the sacred text of the various errors and corruptions, which, from age to age, had crept into it, through the carelessness or infirmity of copyists ("The Bible, Its Sufficiency and Supremacy," *Miscellaneous Writings of CHM*, p. 5).*

Alexander Maclaren

(Baptist minister, lifelong daily reader of Hebrew and Greek text)

(1909) At Matthew 25:8, "Our lamps are gone out," Maclaren wrote, *This is one of the many cases in which the Revised Version, by accuracy of rendering the tense of a verb, gives a much more striking as well as correct reproduction of the original than the Authorized Version does. The former reads, "going out," instead of "gone out," a rendering which the Old Version has, unfortunately, relegated to the margin. It is clearly to be preferred, not only because it more correctly represents the Greek, but because it sets before us a more solemn and impressive picture of the precise time at which*

the terrible discovery was made by the foolish five (Expositions of Holy Scripture, vol. 7, p. 181).

C. I. Scofield

(editor of *The Scofield Reference Bible*)

Answering the question, *Which are the best manuscripts extant?*, he replied, *Of the New Testament, the Sinaitic and Vatican. But it is to be remembered that quotations from the original manuscripts abound in the writings of the so-called "Apostolic Fathers," and these are considered on par with the Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts as text sources (Dr. C. I. Scofield's Question Box, p. 81).*

(1909) *The discovery of the Sinaitic MS. and the labours in the field of textual criticism of such scholars as Griesbach, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Winer, Alford, and Westcott and Hort, have cleared the Greek "textus receptus" of minor inaccuracies, while confirming to a remarkable degree the general accuracy of the Authorized Version of that text (The Scofield Reference Bible, p. iv).*

Arno C. Gaebelin

(consulting editor for *The Scofield Reference Bible*)

(1910) *We use a translation of the New Testament which was made years ago by J. N. Darby, and which for correctness is the very best we have ever seen. We heartily recommend it (The Gospel of Matthew, p. 9).*

James M. Gray

(Dean of Moody Bible Institute:1904-1925, consulting editor for *The Scofield Reference Bible*)

(1917) *Let it be stated further in this definitional connection, that **the record for whose inspiration we contend is the original record-the autographs or parchments of Moses, David, Daniel, Matthew, Paul or Peter, as the case may be, and not any particular translation or translations of them whatever. There is no translation absolutely without error** (emphasis Gray's; "The Inspiration of the Bible-Definition, Extent and Proof," in *The Fundamentals*, vol. II, pp. 12-13).*

Oswald Chambers

(popular devotional writer)

(1911-1917) In his devotional classic, *My Utmost for His Highest*, Chambers included daily devotionals on texts he quoted from the Authorized Version, Moffatt's translation, the Revised Version, the Revised Version marginal readings, and the Prayer Book Version of the Great Bible.

R. A. Torrey

(evangelist, superintendent of Moody Bible Institute: 1889-1908, dean of BIOLA: 1912-1924)

(1922) *No one, as far as I know, holds that the Authorized Version, or any English translation of the Bible, is absolutely infallible and inerrant. The doctrine held by me and many others who have given years to careful and thorough study of the Bible is, that the Scriptures "as originally given" were absolutely infallible and inerrant, and that our English translation is a "substantially" accurate rendering of the scriptures as originally given (Is the Bible the Inerrant Word of God?, p. 76).*

G. Campbell Morgan

(pastor, educator, author of over 60 volumes of commentaries and devotional writings)

(1923) *You ask me which is the best translation of the New Testament. I do not hesitate to say that it is the American Revision. * Of course, the English Revision is very fine, but the American Committee have gone a little further sometimes, and, on the whole, I consider it, as I have said, the best. Then again, I most emphatically say that the best translation into modern English I have known is Weymouth's (This Was His Faith, Jill Morgan, ed., p. 22).*

*American Standard Version, 1901.

(1935) *We must remember that all these translations are from translations, and we have no translation which can be considered absolutely final and authoritative. Personally I think you are wise in your study of the Word in referring to any or all of them, whether those better known (Authorized or Revised), or such as Weymouth's, for instance, to which you refer (Ibid, p. 21).*

W. E. Vine

(author of *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*)

(1923) *The importance of most of the variations in the manuscript readings has been greatly exaggerated. . . . There is no doctrine in Scripture which would be affected if all the various readings were allowed or if all the disputed words, or those about which there is any doubt, were omitted (The Divine Inspiration of the Bible, pp. 27-28).*

(1951) *Among English versions he gave his exclusive preference to the Revised Version, which remains to this day the best translation for the accurate student of the English Bible ("W. E. Vine: The Theologian," by F. F. Bruce, in W. E. Vine: His Life and Ministry, by Percy O. Ruoff, p. 73).*

Amy Carmichael

(missionary to India, devotional writer, founder of the Dohnavur Fellowship)

(1932) *In case any are puzzled by the different translations from which I draw strength and help and delight, it is like this: In studying any object with the microscope we use different lenses and turn the mirror in various ways; such change brings out some new wonder and beauty. So it is for those who are not Greek or Hebrew scholars, and who use the work of scholars to open the meaning of the inexhaustible Word-the Bible is richer than any single version can fully show (quoted in Edges of His Ways, p. vii).*

The editor then listed the different versions and sources quoted by Carmichael. They were the *Authorized Version*, *Revised Version*, *Prayer Book Version of The Great Bible*, *Septuagint*, *American Committee's 1901 Edition of the R.V.*, *Dr W. Kay's Version of the Psalms*, *Weymouth*, *Dr Arthur Way's Letters of St Paul*, and *Rotherham*.

H. A. Ironside

(pastor, author of over 60 volumes)

(1944) *As to Bible translations, the most generally used is the Authorized Version, sometimes called the King James Version, because it was authorized for use in churches in England by King James I. Nearly three hundred years later the American Standard Version was produced, and it is in some respects to be preferred to the older version, though it has never gained the favor of people generally that was expected. The differences are not very important, but are based upon some older texts which were not in evidence when the Authorized Version was being translated (What's The Answer, pp. 12-13).*

(1949) *The Bible text in this publication is from the American Standard Version of the Revised Bible, copyrighted 1929 by the International Council of Religious Education, and used by permission (Publisher's note on p. xiii of H. A. Ironside's Expository Notes on Ezekiel the Prophet).*

Noel Smith

(a founder of the Baptist Bible Fellowship, Bible professor at Baptist Bible College, editor of *The Baptist Bible Tribune* nearly 24 years)

(1968) *The King James, the English Revised, and the American Standard versions remain the great authoritative translations of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament into English (cited by Doug Kutilek in J. Frank Norris and His Heirs: The Bible Translation Controversy, p. 67).*

(1971) *I have no respect for the common attitude that we should accept the Bible "on faith," and that there should never be any discussion about its origin, composition, translation, and preservation. . . . Bring out all the facts. Let everybody ask all the questions he or she wants to ask. . . . Genuine faith must rest upon a foundation of evidence* (Ibid, p. 75).

R. V. Clearwaters

(founder of Central Baptist Theological Seminary, past President of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship)

(c. 1968) *Honesty compels us to cite the 1901 American Revised as the best English Version of the original languages which places us in a position 290 years ahead of those who are still weighing the King James of 1611 for demerits. . . . We know of no Fundamentalists. . . . that claim the King James as the best English translation. Those in the main stream of Fundamentalism all claim the American Revised of 1901 as the best English translation* (*The Great Conservative Baptist Compromise*, pp. 192, 199).

(1974) *At the present time, only two translations are recommendable: "the King James Version" and the "New American Standard Bible." The "King James Version" is unsurpassed in the beauty of its language, even if it may sound somewhat archaic to modern ears. . . . The "New American Standard Bible" is unsurpassed in its accuracy and its fidelity to the Greek text. Its language is also very readable* ("Bible Versions," Central Bible Workshop, p. 6; cited in *The Bible Version Debate*, written and edited by the faculty of Central Baptist Seminary, pp. 16-17).

John R. Rice

(Baptist evangelist, author, editor of *The Sword of the Lord*)

(1969) *The translators of the American Standard Version had the advantage of having access to the three oldest manuscripts with which we are familiar—the Vatican, the Alexandrian, and the Sinaitic manuscripts. It corrects some mistakes in the King James Version. . . . Now there is available the New American Standard Bible New Testament, published by Moody Press. The American Standard Version of 1901, widely acclaimed for its word-for-word fidelity to the Greek, has been painstakingly revised by the Lockman Foundation in the light of the latest textual advances* (*Our God-Breathed Book—The Bible*, pp. 382-383).

(1979) *Where in the Bible does God guarantee that any translator of the Bible, anyone who copies the Bible, . . . will be infallibly correct? There is no such Scripture. The doctrine of the infallibility of the translation in the King James is not a Bible doctrine; it is a manmade scheme* ("Some Questions for King James Fans," *The Sword of the Lord*, March 30, 1979).

Wendell Zimmerman

(a founder of the Baptist Bible Fellowship, pastor, editor of the *Baptist Bible Tribune*: 1974-1982)

(1989) Interview with Gary Hudson, editor of *Baptist Biblical Heritage*: Hudson: *Is the King James Version Controversy among fundamental Baptists a relatively recent phenomenon. . . ?* Zimmerman: *Yes, I think it is a recent matter that has come up. We never heard any such discussion back years ago as we are hearing these days.* Hudson: *Do you mean that you never heard any discussion about whether this or that translation was given by inspiration?* Zimmerman: *I never heard of anyone making the claim that a translation was given by inspiration. There were sometimes discussions as to which translation someone might have thought was the best.* Hudson: *What if someone referred to a reading in the other versions . . . such as the American Standard Version of 1901, would they be condemned for doing that?* Zimmerman: *No, I don't think so. I attended Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and had professors who used the RV and the American. In the early days of our fellowship, one of the most respected men we had was Noel Smith, and he used the Revised Version. I never heard any criticism of Noel or any statement that he was a "heretic" for so doing* (*Baptist Biblical Heritage*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 7-8).

Bob Jones Sr.

(founder of Bob Jones University, evangelist)

The Founder had a great love for the Authorized Version. Although he spoke with approbation of the American Standard Version of 1901, he studied, memorized, and read from the Authorized. He fought against the Revised Standard Version because of its clearly Modernist leanings, as represented by the work's omissions and word changes in clearly doctrinal passages. However, in the 1930s, Bob Jones Sr. did serve on the editorial board for the Amplified Bible, a study aid which provided all the possible meanings of the Greek words in the New Testament text (*Standing Without Apology: The History of Bob Jones University*, by Dan L. Turner, p. 244).

Bob Jones Jr.

(Chancellor of Bob Jones University: 1971-1998)

(1994) *There are other good translations in the midst of all the bad ones. Unfortunately, there are no perfect ones, including the Authorized Version, as evidenced by the many corrections and amendments that have been made through the years* (letter to a friend, quoted by Daniel L. Turner in *Standing Without Apology: The History of Bob Jones University*, p. 245).