


# MODERN VERSIONS AND THE KING JAMES VERSION



And I sawe when the  
Lambe opened one of the  
scals, and I heard as it  
were the noise of thunder,  
one of the foure beastes,  
saying, Come and see.

2 And I saw, and behold, a white  
horse, and hee that sat on him had a  
bowe, and a crowne was given unto  
him, and hee went forth conquering,  
and to conquer.

3 And when hee had opened the se-  
cond scale, I heard the second beast say,  
Come and see.

4 And there went out another  
horse that was red: and power was  
given to him that sat thereon to take  
peace from the earth, and that they  
should kill one another: and there was  
given unto him a great sword.

5 And when hee had opened the  
third scale, I heard the third beast say,  
Come and see. And I beheld, and loe,  
a blacke horse: and hee that sat on him  
had a paire of balances in his hand.

Revelation 6:1-5 from  
the original King James Version, 1611

# Modern Versions and the KJV

## Biblical Research Institute

### Introduction

Many Seventh-day Adventist are aware of the ongoing debate in our church over which Bible should be read, the Kind James Version (KJV) or one of the modern versions. Much of the discussion has originated with those who believe the KJV is the only Bible that should be used by God's remnant people. But most Adventists are not aware that the "KJV Only" controversy has been going on for over a century within various Protestant churches and is still a point of heated debate.

In some quarters the debate has degenerated into mean-spirited, abusive, and insulting rhetoric which does not reflect the spirit of Christ. James R. White suggests that Dr. Peter Ruckman of the Pensacola Bible Institute is the most vocal and abusive defender of the KJV. White quotes Ruckman as calling a gentleman who does not agree with him a "deceived fool," stupid, and "a miserable little liar" whose ideas are nothing but his own "conceited opinions."<sup>1</sup> In his *Bible Believer's Commentary* on Acts 19:2, Ruckman says, "If you can't handle verse 6 as it is written, *what is the point in changing verse 2*, unless you are trying to play 'god' for a bunch of idol-worshipping suckers ('Christians') who are too stupid to check their speedometers?"<sup>2</sup> Although other defenders of the KJV are not as abusive as Ruckman, his insulting rhetoric does little to commend his cause to a serious thinker.

Seventh-day Adventists who prefer the KJV must not allow themselves to be dragged down to Ruckman's level. In our discussion of Bible versions, a petty, mean spirit will not win the day for anyone and it will certainly misrepresent Christ. The strong feeling and clear statements on the part of KJV Only defenders that modern versions minimize and gloss over distinctive Adventist teachings and that the use of modern versions will lead to a falling away from the three angels' messages, must not turn us from a calm, cool-headed approach to the issues that raise this controversy in our church.

Most defenders of the KJV, both within and outside the Adventist faith, see some kind of conspiracy behind the readings in modern versions that differ from the KJV. Among Adventists the Jesuits and the Roman Catholic Church seem

to be the conspirators.<sup>3</sup> Outside our church the New Age (a union of Eastern mysticism and the occult) conspiracy is a popular candidate.<sup>4</sup> When the Greek text of the *Textus Receptus* is compared with the "New Greek" found in the Nestle's and the United Bible Society's editions of the Greek NT, the defenders of the KJV propose a conspiracy on the part of apostate church fathers in early Christianity.<sup>5</sup>

A meeting of the minds between those who stand for "The KJV Only" and those who see no harm in reading a modern version may be beyond ready possibility, especially if KJV defenders continue to insist there is conspiracy behind every other version. This study is a modest attempt to accomplish four things: (1) a brief review of the issues involved in the controversy, (2) a brief look at some variant readings that KJV Only defenders cite as evidence of an existing conspiracy (for a more detailed treatment see James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy*), (3) a short history of the development of the *Textus Receptus* and the KJV, and (4) Ellen White's appraisal of the revised versions that appeared in her day.

### Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout this study:

TR = *Textus Receptus*, the edition of the Greek New Testament that reflects the largest number of the NT Greek manuscripts (Byzantine texts) lying behind the KJV. In this study, references to the TR are based upon Stephanus's third edition of the Greek NT published in 1550 and Beza's fourth edition published in 1598.

MS = a single Greek manuscript.

MSS = two or more Greek manuscripts.

Byzantine text = the type of text found in the majority of NT manuscripts.

1 James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1995), 110-11.

2 Ibid., 240 (n.12).

3 Russell R. Standish and Colin D. Standish, *Modern Bible Translations*, (Rapidan, Virginia: Hartland Publications, 1993).

4 G.A. Riplinger, *New Age Bible Versions* (Munroe Falls, Ohio: AV Publications, 1993).

5 Ibid., 338-39.

Alexandrian text = the type of text that is found in many of the oldest NT manuscripts, best represented by Codex Vaticanus (B, 4th century), Codex Sinaiticus (Aleph 4th century), and the papyrus MS P75 (3rd century). This text-type has now become the accepted text among textual scholars and the basis for new Bible versions.

### Issues in the Controversy

The proverbial glass of water best illustrates the core of the controversy between the defenders of the TR and the Alexandrian text. Is the glass half full or half empty? Whatever the answer, it is a matter of perspective. This, in turn, becomes the core of the argument between those who defend the KJV, which is based on the Byzantine text-type that underlies the TR, and the majority of new versions based on the Alexandrian text-type.

Those who defend the TR say that it contains the complete and accurate text of the Greek NT and is closest to what the authors originally wrote.<sup>6</sup> God has preserved this text through the centuries, they say, while the various “corrupt” types of text ceased to be copied by scribes in the early centuries of church history. The “corruption” of the Alexandrian text-type can be seen in its omission of words, phrases, and whole verses, as well as its substitution of words and transposition of words and phrases.

The “corrupt” text of MSS Aleph and B originated with such church fathers as Origen and Eusebius and grew out of the Arian controversy of the third and fourth centuries—a debate that raged over the nature of Christ.<sup>7</sup> Thus, some TR defenders say that Aleph and B reflect a conspiracy to deprive Jesus of His divinity. This, in turn, has laid the foundation for the New Age concept that Jesus was only one of many christs that have appeared throughout history and the belief that all humans have divinity within. This teaching of Eastern mysticism has its roots in the original deception, “And ye shall be as God” (Gen. 3:5, KJV, margin).

Defenders of the Alexandrian text, on the other hand, say that the TR is “corrupt” because it is a conflated text. That is to say, copyist scribes over the centuries have added words, phrases, and even whole verses from notes written in the margin of manuscripts and other sources out of fear of omitting something that the authors might have originally written. Because the MSS representing the Alexandrian text are the oldest, they best represent what the authors originally wrote.<sup>8</sup> Defenders of the Alexandrian text argue that the more often a

text is copied, the more likely it will be corrupted. Because the Byzantine text lying behind the TR and the KJV has the longest history of being copied, it is more likely to have been corrupted by additions. Bruce Metzger notes the fact that textual critics studying ancient non-Christian religious literature are convinced that these texts tended to grow over the centuries and that scribes did not deliberately omit portions of what they copied. What happened among copyists in the history of the transmission of these ancient religious writings no doubt happened as Christian copyists reproduced the NT text.<sup>9</sup>

Those who defend the KJV argue that it reflects the majority of Greek MSS, therefore it is the most accurate translation of the “autographs” (original documents) into English. Those who defend modern versions note that the KJV follows readings in places where the TR itself does not carry the majority Byzantine Greek text which the KJV Only advocates defend so passionately. Therefore modern versions are closer to what the original authors wrote. This brings us full circle to the proverbial question, Is the glass half empty or half full? The vexing problem is, we do not know. Not one of the original documents produced by Bible writers has ever been found.

The fact that we do not have the autographs has created a problem that White identifies as “the desire for *absolute certainty*.” White goes on to say, “It is argued that unless we embrace the KJV as our ‘final authority,’ we have no final authority at all, and hence all is subjectivity and uncertainty. People do not want subjectivity, but desire certainty and clarity, and so we must hold to the ‘traditional’ text.”<sup>10</sup> But how do we know that Erasmus, or Stephanus, or Beza, whose works lie behind the TR, chose the correct reading when the MSS of the majority text *disagree with each other*? The answer is, we don’t.

But this does not mean that all is lost and we are swimming in a sea of uncertainty when we read our Bibles and try to discern the Word of the Lord. Some have estimated that there are approximately 200,000 variant readings in the 5,300 plus MSS and fragments of the Greek NT. It has also been noted that only about one-eighth of the variants have any significance. This means that over 98 percent of the text of the NT is pure whether a person reads the TR or another edition of the Greek NT.<sup>11</sup>

At those places where significant variants occur, the rules of textual analysis can be applied and tentative conclusions reached; tentative, because only the autographs could resolve the question as to which variant reading is the correct reading.

6 Standish and Standish, 23.

7 Riplinger, 334-50.

8 Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 133-34.

9 *Ibid.*, 163.

10 White, 93.

11 *Ibid.*, 93.

Until they are found, if ever, an honest decision guided by the Holy Spirit and based upon the experience of working with ancient MSS is the best we have.

In the discussion over which Bible should be read, it is important to remember that usually the differences between modern English versions and the KJV simply reflect differences between the Byzantine and Alexandrian text-types. Many KJV Only defenders, however, present these differences as proof of conspiracy on the part of the editors of the English versions when these editors are merely reflecting the differences that already exist in the different types of Greek texts.

In fact, some KJV Only advocates see a conspiracy even when a modern version gives a literal, word-for-word translation of the TR, but that translation differs from the KJV. For example, where the KJV reads “deliver us from evil” in the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:13), the NEB and NIV read “deliver [save] us from the evil one.” The readings found in the NEB and NIV are condemned as corrupt when, in fact, they are actually literal translations of the TR. In addition, the KJV edition with chain references has the following note on Matt 6:13, “*Or the evil (one).*” Examples such as the above make it clear that for many KJV defenders the KJV has become the standard of how the Bible should read even if it disagrees with the TR that lies behind it.

Such inconsistencies on the part of KJV Only defenders has led White to conclude:

King James Onlyism is a human tradition. It has no basis in history. It has no foundation in fact. It is internally inconsistent, utilizing circular reasoning at its core, and involves the use of more double standards than almost any system of thought I have ever encountered.<sup>12</sup>

When a person has a fixation on conspiracies, he sees evidence of them at every turn. If there is no evidence, it is created. Riplinger’s work, *New Age Bible Versions*, is a good example. Anyone who has read this book will notice the repeated use of ellipses in her quotations, especially those from the work of B. F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort. Because she believes there is a New Age conspiracy behind the Greek text produced by these men, she sets out to prove it. White owns the books written by Westcott and Hort that Riplinger quotes, and when he checked her quotations, he wrote, “I was simply shocked by the blatant editing of the words of these two men by Gail Riplinger.”<sup>13</sup>

On some pages, White could not find the words that Riplinger is supposed to be quoting, and on others there is nothing “remotely relevant to the quotation.”<sup>14</sup> White says,

The fact that a number of pages cited by Riplinger in her note, in fact, contain nothing relevant to her excerpt, and the complete “cut and paste” nature of her citation, makes it difficult to identify the specific pages from which she is allegedly drawing her information.<sup>15</sup>

In bewilderment, White asks:

Is it possible, to be fair, that Riplinger is simply not familiar enough with the subject to follow such a complex work as this by Westcott and Hort? And how would we know? If a pattern of this kind of “cut and paste” citation is found, we can safely conclude that *New Age Bible Versions* presents an unfair and unreliable view of modern scholarship. Does such a pattern exist? An impartial review of the work proves that such a pattern does indeed exist.<sup>16</sup>

### Controversial Passages

Space limitation makes it impossible for us to examine in depth all readings in modern versions that are criticized by KJV Only advocates. Only a sample from those that they give the greatest attention will be examined. For a more detailed presentation, *The King James Only Controversy* is a good source. We must emphasize once more that most of the differences between the KJV and modern versions reflect different readings in the two Greek text-types behind them.

One of the most frequent criticisms of modern versions is the supposed omission of terms connected with the divinity of Jesus. Many times charts like the following attempt to illustrate the point.<sup>17</sup> By examining the two columns, “omissions” found in modern versions can clearly be seen as well as alternate readings.

Reference	KJV	Modern Versions
Matthew 4:18	Jesus	He
Matthew 12:25	Jesus	He
Mark 2:15	Jesus	He
Mark 10:52	Jesus	He
Luke 24:36	Jesus	He

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 249. White repeatedly points out examples of this double standard as he examines the position of KJV Only advocates.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>17</sup> Chart adapted from *The King James Only Controversy*, 45-46, 194-95.

Acts 19:10	Lord Jesus	Lord
1 Corinthians 16:22	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord
Acts 19:4	Christ Jesus	Jesus
1 Corinthians 9:1	Jesus Christ	Jesus
2 Corinthians 4:10	Lord Jesus	Jesus
Hebrews 3:1	Christ Jesus	Jesus
1 John 1:7	Jesus Christ	Jesus
Revelation 1:9	Jesus Christ	Jesus
Revelation 12:17	Jesus Christ	Jesus
1 Thessalonians 3:11	our Lord Jesus Christ	Jesus our Lord
2 Corinthians 5:18	Jesus Christ	Christ
Acts 15:11	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Jesus
Acts 16:31	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Jesus
1 Corinthians 5:4	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Jesus
2 Corinthians 11:31	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Jesus
2 Thessalonians 1:8	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Jesus
2 Thessalonians 1:12	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Jesus
2 John 1:3	the Lord Jesus Christ	Jesus Christ

Two observations are important regarding the differences appearing in the above chart. First, in the first five passages the KJV reads *Jesus* while modern versions read *He*. The “substitution” of *He* for the name *Jesus* is supposed to be an example of attempts to minimize the deity of Jesus. But if you read the Gospels as they appear in the KJV, you will discover that *He* was considered to be a perfectly good word, used repeatedly in reference to Jesus. The personal pronoun *He* is “substituted” for *Jesus* to minimize repetition. Pronouns were invented for this purpose. Where it is used, the context always will let you know who the *He* is.

Mark 2:15 from the above chart is one of several verses that Riplinger lists in her chart that supposedly proves modern versions are “preparing mankind to receive the Antichrist and ‘worship the dragon.’”<sup>18</sup> But when you look at the verses surrounding Mark 2:15 in the KJV, you will see *He* is used everywhere to refer to Jesus. If the use of *He* instead of *Jesus* in Mark 2:15 minimizes the deity of Jesus and prepares the world to receive the antichrist, then what is to be made of all the other uses of *He* in reference to *Jesus* in the KJV? Is there a conspiracy here as Riplinger wants all of her readers to believe?

Among the first five passages in the chart above, Mark 2:15 provides a good illustration, because the TR actually reads *He* and not *Jesus*. Modern versions have been severely criticized for downgrading Jesus by replacing His name with *He* when the truth is modern versions give a literal translation of the TR where the KJV does not. This leads us to the second observation based on what is found in the above chart.

The rest of the chart illustrates a common characteristic of the Byzantine text-type: names and titles for Jesus have been expanded. For example, pious scribes expanded Jesus into Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus into the Lord Jesus Christ, etc. The older Alexandrian MSS do not show this “expansion

of piety,” as White calls it.<sup>19</sup> Again, is the glass half empty or half full, and how does one know the Byzantine text was expanded by pious scribes and the text was not shortened by Alexandrian scribes? Mark 2:15 helps us again by showing that “expansion of piety” exists. Where the TR reads *He*, the KJV committee piously expanded the reading to *Jesus*. A careful comparison between the TR and the KJV would, no doubt, show other differences in other passages that are criticized by KJV Only defenders. We have already examined two in this paper, Matthew 6:13 and Mark 2:15.

John 6:47 is another verse held up by KJV Only advocates as an example of minimizing the divinity of Jesus in modern versions,<sup>20</sup> but it is really another example of expansion of piety. The KJV reads, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” Almost all modern versions leave out “on me,” thus simply saying that all who believe have everlasting life.

Gar Baybrook’s comment on this verse is restrained compared with those of D. A. Waite. Baybrook says, “‘On Me’ has been left out. Belief alone is not sufficient. The devil believes. We must believe on Jesus implicitly.”<sup>21</sup> Waite, on the other hand, labels the apparent omission of “on me” “one of the **CLEAREST** theological errors.” It presents “**ANOTHER GOSPEL**” because a person is free to believe in anything he chooses and have everlasting life—“in Santa Claus, in the Easter Bunny, in the Tooth Fairy, in Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer. . . . This is **SERIOUS THEOLOGICAL PER-VERSION! This is certainly a matter of doctrine and theology**”<sup>22</sup>

In fact, is the “omission” of “on me” in John 6:47 part of a conspiracy on the part of the editors of modern versions to minimize the divinity of Jesus? If you consult a modern version, you will find something very similar to the following quotes from the NASB:

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst (John 6:35).

For this is the will of My Father, that every one who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day (John 6:40).

If a conspiracy exists to minimize the divinity of Jesus by omitting believing “on me” in John 6:47, why did the modern editors not remove belief in Jesus from verses 35 and 40 of the same chapter? And why were the following verses in the NASB not edited by this conspiracy?

18 Riplinger, 17.

19 White, 196.

20 See White, 170-73.

21 Gar Baybrook, *The S.D.A. Bible* (Payson, Arizona: Leaves of Autumn Books, 1990), 78.

22 D.A. Waite, *Defending the King James Bible* (Collingswood, New Jersey: The Bible For Today, 1992), 158.

He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, “From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38).

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection, and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25, 26).

And Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me” (John 12:44).

I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness (John 12:46).

We noted earlier that White sees the KJV Only defenders as using a double standard. Believing on Jesus is an excellent illustration of this. While Baybrook and Waite criticize modern versions for leaving “on me” out of John 6:47, leaving people to wonder what they are to believe or who they are to believe in, they make no mention of the following verses in the KJV that do exactly what they accuse modern versions of doing. Can you see a conspiracy in the following verses from the KJV?

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth (Mark 9:23).

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Romans 1:16).

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Romans 10:4).

But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him let him not put her away (1 Corinthians 7:12).

Believe what, or in whom? The KJV does not say. Is this a conspiracy? Of course not. How, then, can the “omission” of “on me” in John 6:47 be a part of a conspiracy when statements all around this verse say that those who believe in Jesus will have life?

How can the “omission” in John 6:47 be explained? It is another example of copyists’ expansion of piety. Since in two verses (6:35, 40) just prior to John 6:47 read, “he who believes in Me” and “believes in Him,” it would be very easy for a pious scribe to bring verse 47 into harmony with verses 35 and 40. And if the scribe was well acquainted with the Gospel of John, he would probably remember that there are other verses that read “believes in Me.” What we see here is harmonization based on expansion of piety.

Riplinger sees a conspiracy on the part of modern versions to lead Christians into the errors of the New Age movement and finally the acceptance of antichrist. Among the many evidences cited for such a conspiracy is the use of the word “age(s)” by modern versions instead of “world.” She says:

The real religion of America is astrology, if the study of Northern Illinois University is correct, indicating that 70% of Americans read their horoscope. The children are following, as Gallop’s [*sic.*] pole [*sic.*] showed 60% of them also believed in astrology. If ‘ages’ are standard in the religion of today’s internationals and Americans, be assured that the *New International Version*, *New American Standard* and the *New King James* are attuned to the religion of the age. So dozens of times they substitute “ages” for “world”, reinforcing the ideas of the “New” age movement.<sup>23</sup>

The KJV is fairly consistent in translating the Greek word *aion* (age) as “world” except where it is used for vast expanses of time, i.e., “for ever,” or “for ever and ever.” A leading authority in Greek, Joseph Henry Thayer, gives “age” as the primary meaning of *aion*. *Aion* was thought of by ancient Greeks as defining a container in which things are contained, “i.e., the aggregate of things contained in time.”<sup>24</sup> Therefore “world” is a permissible translation of *aion* because it is contained within time.

Modern versions are not wrong in translating *aion* as “age” nor is there a conspiracy behind such a translation. They simply make a distinction between *aion* and two other Greek words for world—*kosmos*, something that is orderly, i.e., “world” or “universe,” and *oikoumene*, “inhabited earth.”

Space does not permit further investigation of various passages that come under criticism by KJV Only defenders. The reader is directed to White’s book, *The King James Only Controversy*, for further examples.

The charge that modern versions minimize the deity of Jesus re-echoes throughout the writings of KJV Only defenders. However, there are a number of places where modern versions are stronger and clearer on the deity of Jesus than

<sup>23</sup> Riplinger, 282-83.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and s Authors, Inc., n.d.).

the KJV. One example is John 1:18. The KJV reads, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Modern versions like the NASB read, “only begotten God,” and the NIV, “but God the One and Only” instead of “only begotten Son.”

The phrase, “only begotten Son,” appears in John 3:16, 18 where the theological context is the gift of God’s Son to the fallen human race. The theological context of the opening to John’s gospel, of which 1:18 is the summary, is the deity of Jesus, and “only begotten God” fits this context better than “only begotten Son.” Without a doubt, the modern versions make a stronger statement about Jesus’ deity than the KJV, especially the NIV where Jesus is called God.

It appears that some KJV advocates criticize “only begotten God” because they do not understand what the phrase “only begotten” conveys. For example, one critic of modern versions says, “How can anyone claim that one that is begotten is at the same time essential God, equal in every respect to God the Father, and to God the Holy Spirit? This makes Christ to be a created Being”<sup>25</sup> This writer is thinking of “only begotten” in terms of origin. What is not understood is that “only begotten” conveys the idea of uniqueness or priority. This concept is clearly illustrated in Hebrews 11:17 where Isaac is called Abraham’s “only begotten son.” Actually Isaac was not Abraham’s only begotten son for he had several sons, one of whom was Ishmael. But Isaac had priority. He had the birthright, and the covenant promises passed from Abraham through him to Jacob, thus he was the “only begotten son.”

Because “only begotten Son” is used to describe Jesus’ relationship with the human race in John 3:16, 18, it is easy to see how a scribe could have harmonized John 1:18 with His unique position as Son. In the introduction to John’s gospel, Jesus is proclaimed as God, as the Creator, and in summarizing his introductory comments in 1:18, John proclaims Jesus’ priority, His uniqueness, His divinity— “the only begotten God.”

In some passages, modern versions make a clearer statement about the divinity of Jesus than the KJV. This is especially true in Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 where they adhere to Granville Sharp’s rule. Sharp’s rule, simply stated is, When two common, singular nouns in the same case are connected by “*kai*” (and) and there is an article in front of the first noun only, both nouns refer to the same person or thing.

Compare Titus 2:13 in the KJV and the RSV:

Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (KJV).

Awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (RSV).

The wording of the KJV presents two Gods: (1) “the great God” and (2) “our Saviour Jesus Christ.” The RSV presents only one, “our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” The RSV is following Sharp’s rule of Greek grammar and thus renders a clearer statement on the deity of Jesus.

This difference can be seen again in 2 Peter 1:1:

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (KJV).

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ (RSV).

The RSV is clear that Jesus is both God and Saviour, while this important truth is obscured in the KJV. Is there then a conspiracy on the part of the men who produced the KJV to minimize the divinity of Jesus? No. We have looked at only three examples where modern versions are clearer on Jesus’ deity than the KJV. There are others as well.

## Two Problem Passages

Two lengthy passages present textual problems that are identified in various ways in modern versions. One is the closing verses of Mark (16:9-20) and the other is the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53-8:11).

There is a division of opinion among NT scholars as to how Mark ended his gospel. Five different endings are suggested by various MSS sources. The uncertainty over the ending is reflected in modern versions. The NIV has a bold black line after Mark 16:8 with a note, “The two most reliable early manuscripts do not have Mark 16:9-20.” The RSV separates verse 8 from verse 9 by a double space and has the following note at the bottom of the page:

Some of the most ancient authorities bring the book to a close at the end of verse 8. One authority concludes the book by adding after verse 8 the following: *But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this,*

25 Jay P. Green, Sr. in *The King James Only Controversy*, 258.

*Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.* Other authorities include the preceding passage and continue with verses 9-20. In most authorities verse 9-20 follow immediately after verse 8; a few authorities insert additional material after verse 14.

Because the supposedly “corrupt” MSS Aleph (Sinaiticus) and B (Vaticanus) are the primary “ancient authorities” that omit verses 9-20, KJV Only defenders are critical of modern versions that either follow the Alexandrian text-type or indicate in a note that textual problems exist. Riplinger sees the omission in Aleph and B as part of a conspiracy to remove the teaching of Jesus’ ascension.<sup>26</sup> The Standish brothers say the omission resulted from carelessness in copying and is further evidence that these two MSS are faulty.<sup>27</sup> It is obvious that when there are so many possible readings for a given passage that something is wrong. But because we do not have the autograph of Mark’s Gospel, we do not know which ending is correct, or if any of them are correct.

Metzger suggests three possibilities for the confusion:

(a) the evangelist intended to close his Gospel at this place; or (b) the Gospel was never finished; or, as seems most probable, (c) the Gospel accidentally lost its last leaf before it was multiplied by transcription.

He concludes, “Thus, on the basis of good external evidence and strong internal considerations it appears that the earliest ascertainable form of the Gospel of Mark ended with 16:8.”<sup>28</sup>

John 7:53-8:11 presents a problem similar to the ending of Mark. Again modern versions indicate in one way or another that there is a textual problem following John 7:52. Besides being located after John 7:52 in some MSS, the story of the woman taken in adultery is also found after 7:36 in one MS, after 7:44 in others, and after John 21:25 in still others. In one family of MSS it is found after Luke 21:38. In addition to this, John 7:52 and 8:12 fit together naturally. The story of the adulteress breaks the natural flow of what John wrote. It is recognized that this experience in the life of Jesus is historical, but it originally existed as an oral report, as all of the Gospel Story did before it was written down, and it was inserted into both the Gospels of John and Luke after they were written.

## Origin of the TR

The first printed Greek NT did not come off the press until 1514. It was part of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible which also had Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin texts. Although it was printed in January, 1514, it was not released until 1522. Learning that the Polyglot Bible had already been printed but was not to be published until later, Johann Froben determined to publish a Greek NT before the Polyglot was made available. Enlisting the help of Desiderius Erasmus, Erasmus went to Basle in July 1515 hoping to find quality Greek MSS to be used for the proposed Greek NT. His hopes were disappointed, however. He could find only about a half dozen MSS, and they needed correcting before being used by the printer.

Erasmus relied mainly on two twelfth century MSS, one for the Gospels and one for Acts and the Epistles. As he worked, he compared them with two or three others. He had only one twelfth-century MS for Revelation with the last page missing the last six verses. So he translated the Latin Vulgate back into Greek to supply the missing verses. The result was some readings that have not been found in any other Greek MS, but are now a part of the TR.

At other places Erasmus introduced material from the Latin Vulgate into his Greek text, and this material has become a part of the TR which lies behind the KJV. An example is Acts 9:6: “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” This question asked by Paul at the time of his conversion appears at Acts 22:10, but no known Greek MS has it at 9:6. This addition from the Vulgate was retained in the TR and now appears in the KJV.<sup>29</sup>

The most famous addition made by Erasmus is known as the *Comma Johanneum* and can be found in the KJV at 1 John 5:7, 8 (added material is in italic type):

For there are three that bear record *in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

Stunica, one of the editors of the Polyglot Bible, challenged Erasmus because these words were missing in his 1516 Greek NT. Although Erasmus had examined other MSS since his NT had been published, he could not find one that supported the above addition. Therefore he told Stunica that the addition would be made in his next edition if he could see even one MS with the words in it. Finally one was presented

26 Riplinger, 364-65.

27 Standish and Standish, 136.

28 Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 126.

29 Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 99, 100.

to Erasmus. Metzger says that there is a real possibility that the MS shown to Erasmus was written in Oxford around 1520 by a Franciscan monk named Froy who took the words from the Latin Vulgate. Good to his word, Erasmus included them in his third edition of 1522. But he also included a long note expressing his suspicions that the MS had been specially prepared for his benefit. Since Erasmus' time, three MSS have been found to carry the disputed reading, a twelfth-century MS with it written in the margin in a sixteenth-century hand, a sixteenth-century MS copy of the Polyglot Greek text, and a fourteenth- (or as some argue a sixteenth-) century MS. The oldest known use of these words is found in a fourth-century Latin treatise by a Spanish bishop entitled *Liber apologeticus*.<sup>30</sup> This then would be a truly variant reading that originated with Rome.

The next step in the development of the TR was the work of Stephanus. Using Erasmus's fourth (1527) and fifth (1535) editions and combining them with the Polyglot Greek text, he published two editions in 1546 and 1549. His third edition (1550), which followed Erasmus's fourth and fifth editions more closely, became the standard Greek NT in England.

Stephanus's fourth edition (1551) became the basis of Beza's 1565 Greek NT, which in turn became the text followed by the Elzevir brothers. In the preface of the Elzevir second edition (1633), the following comment was made, "[the reader has] the text which is now received by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted." Metzger observes:

Thus from what was a more or less casual phrase advertising the edition (what modern publishers might call a "blurb"), there arose the designation "Textus Receptus", or commonly received, standard text.<sup>31</sup>

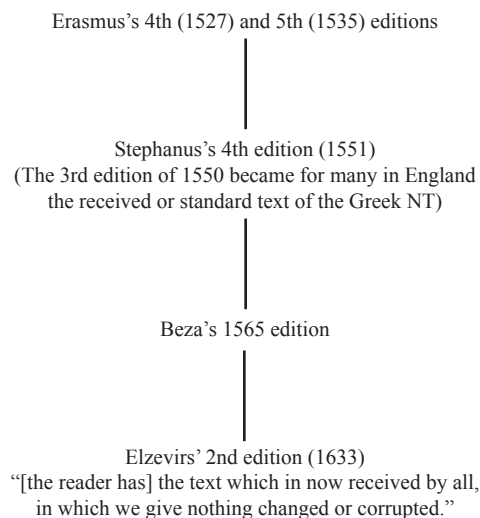
This second edition was published in 1633, 22 years after the KJV had been published in 1611. Obviously the Elzevirs' NT which claims to contain "the text which is now received by all" could not be the basis for the KJV. If the Elzevirs' text of the NT was not used by the KJV committees, what was? The answer is the Greek editions that preceded the Elzevirs' second edition—mainly Stephanus's 1550 and Beza's 1598 editions. These two Greek NTs represented the TR before the editor's 'blurb' in the Elzevirs' second edition.

Metzger's closing comment on the TR is:

So superstitious has been the reverence accorded the Textus Receptus that in some cases attempts to criticize or emend it have been regarded as akin to sacrilege. Yet its textual basis is essen-

tially a handful of late and haphazardly collected minuscule manuscripts, and in a dozen passages its reading is supported by no known Greek witness.<sup>32</sup>

The following diagram of the development of the TR may be helpful:



### Origin of the KJV<sup>33</sup>

The earliest English Bibles were handwritten translations of Latin MSS, mainly the Vulgate. The first complete English Bible is identified with John Wycliffe, and was a stiff, literal translation from inferior Latin Vulgate texts. The first printed English NT was produced by William Tyndale (1494-1536, martyred) and published in 1526. Tyndale's NT was based on Erasmus's second and third editions. Tyndale also published a translation of the Pentateuch (1530) and of Jonah (1531).

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) published the first complete English Bible (1535). The NT was Tyndale's first edition, revised by his second edition plus Luther's German NT.

Matthew's Bible (1537) is historically important because the Bishop's Bible, the Great Bible, the KJV, and all of its almost dozen revisions are essentially a revision of this 1537 text. Matthew's Bible was produced by John Rogers (1500-1550). The name Matthew was probably used by Rogers to veil his association with Tyndale, who was executed for producing the Bible in English. The veil did not help, for at his trial he is referred to as "John Rogers, alias Matthew" and he too was martyred in 1550 by Bloody Mary. In this Bible, the OT was made up of Tyndale's Pentateuch, Joshua to 2 Chronicles was Tyndale's unpublished work, and Ezra

30 Ibid., 101-02.

31 Ibid., 106.

32 Ibid., 106.

33 The following information on the development of the KJV is taken from *A Concise History of the English Bible* (New York: American Bible Society, 1986).

to Malachi, plus the Apocrypha was Coverdale's work. The NT section was Tyndale's latest revision. In other words, 65 percent of Matthew's Bible was the work of Tyndale.

The Great Bible (1540) was the first revision of Matthew's Bible. Because Coverdale's and Matthew's Bibles had lengthy notes and prologues that offended some people, Henry VIII commissioned Cromwell to provide a new Bible free of interpretations. Cromwell, in turn, asked Coverdale to prepare a new text of the Bible by using the work of other men. Coverdale was told he was not to use his own work. Coverdale set to work using a new and excellent Latin version of the OT to revise Matthew's OT. Then he used the Vulgate and Erasmus's Latin version to revise Matthew's NT. The resulting Great Bible got its name from its size. The title page of 1540 says, "This is the Bible appointed to be read in churches," so the Great Bible became the first "authorized version."

When Henry VIII died, his Roman Catholic daughter, "Bloody" Mary, ascended the throne of England and began persecuting Protestants. Many Bible scholars fled to Geneva, and there they produced the Geneva Bible (1560). The OT was that of the Great Bible, and the NT was a careful correction of Tyndale based on Beza's Latin NT. The work on the NT was done by William Whittingham, brother-in-law of John Calvin. This Bible quickly became the most widely read English Bible by the common people.

The Great Bible, the first "authorized version," was being read and preached from the pulpit, but the people in the pews had the Geneva Bible. The Great Bible was just too cumbersome to take to church. This presented a problem that we are familiar with today. In addition to that, the Geneva Bible was not sponsored by the Church of England. So the Great Bible was revised by the bishops of the church. Known as the Bishop's Bible, there was to be one in every cathedral and one in each church, if possible. But the Geneva Bible was still the version of choice used in the homes.

When Elizabeth I died in 1603, her successor, James I, wanted to bring order out of the chaos over which Bible should be read. From an appointed group of 54 men from Westminster, Cambridge, and Oxford, six companies were set up to prepare a new Bible, two from each location. Genesis to 2 Kings went to Westminster, 1 Chronicles to Ecclesiastes went to Cambridge, Isaiah to Malachi went to Oxford, the Apocrypha went to Cambridge, the Four Gospels, Acts, and Revelation went to Oxford, and Romans to Jude went to Westminster.

The instructions were to revise the Bishop's Bible. The NT was to be modified by a comparison with the Greek text, which, as we have seen, was primarily Stephanus's 1550 edition and Beza's 1598 edition. They were also to use

Beza's Latin text and the Geneva and Rheims NTs. The OT was compared with the Geneva OT. When poor wording or a disagreement was found, the committees were to use Tyndale, Matthew, Coverdale, Whetchurch, or the Geneva Bible to make corrections. On the basis of these instructions, it is clear the KJV is not a fresh translation of the original languages, and in this sense it is not a version, it is a revision. Where corrections were made, they were not made on the basis of a fresh translation. The wording of existing versions, most of them already revisions, were to be used.

No human being is perfect, including the men who have worked on Bible versions. Of this group, none have come under more severe criticism than Westcott and Hort.

White says, "KJV Only advocates love to hate B. F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort. Westcott and Hort's work on the Greek New Testament is seen as a focal point of the attempt to 'dethrone' the KJV and its underlying Greek text."<sup>34</sup>

Westcott and Hort revised the TR by using MSS that were much older than those used by previous editors of the Greek NT. Some of these ancient MSS had not yet been discovered when Erasmus and Stephanus did their work. The Greek NT published by these men became the foundation for the *English Revised Version* (1885) and the *American Standard Version* (1901) which KJV Only advocates see as competition for the KJV.

Riplinger's book, *New Age Bible Versions*, is a continuous attack on these two men and their work. Her aim is to tie them to spiritualism. They figure prominently in a chapter entitled "Necromancers," and are included in a subsection of this chapter called "Satan's Apostles."<sup>35</sup> Because they helped establish a club called the "Ghostlie Guild," they are seen as Satan's agents who have helped prepare the Christian world to receive the antichrist and last-day deceptions.

Standish and Standish say Westcott and Hort were Roman Catholics at heart, and that Hort was a devoted evolutionist and came as close to being a Jesuit as a person can without being one. In fact a Jesuit could not have done a better job than Hort in destroying confidence in the KJV.<sup>36</sup>

Westcott and Hort were indeed members of the club known as the "Ghostlie Guild," Westcott, it seems, more active than Hort. After researching their involvement, White concludes that they were not occultists (spiritualists). He says, "Westcott's involvement in a club called the "Ghostlie Guild" has led to all sorts of such charges, but the club was formed to *investigate* strange occurrences, not engage in devilish activity."<sup>37</sup>

As Anglicans they believed in the immortality of the soul (as did the members of the KJV committee in 1611). In fact, the committee's belief in the immortal soul is reflected in that well-known verse of the KJV, "And Jesus said unto

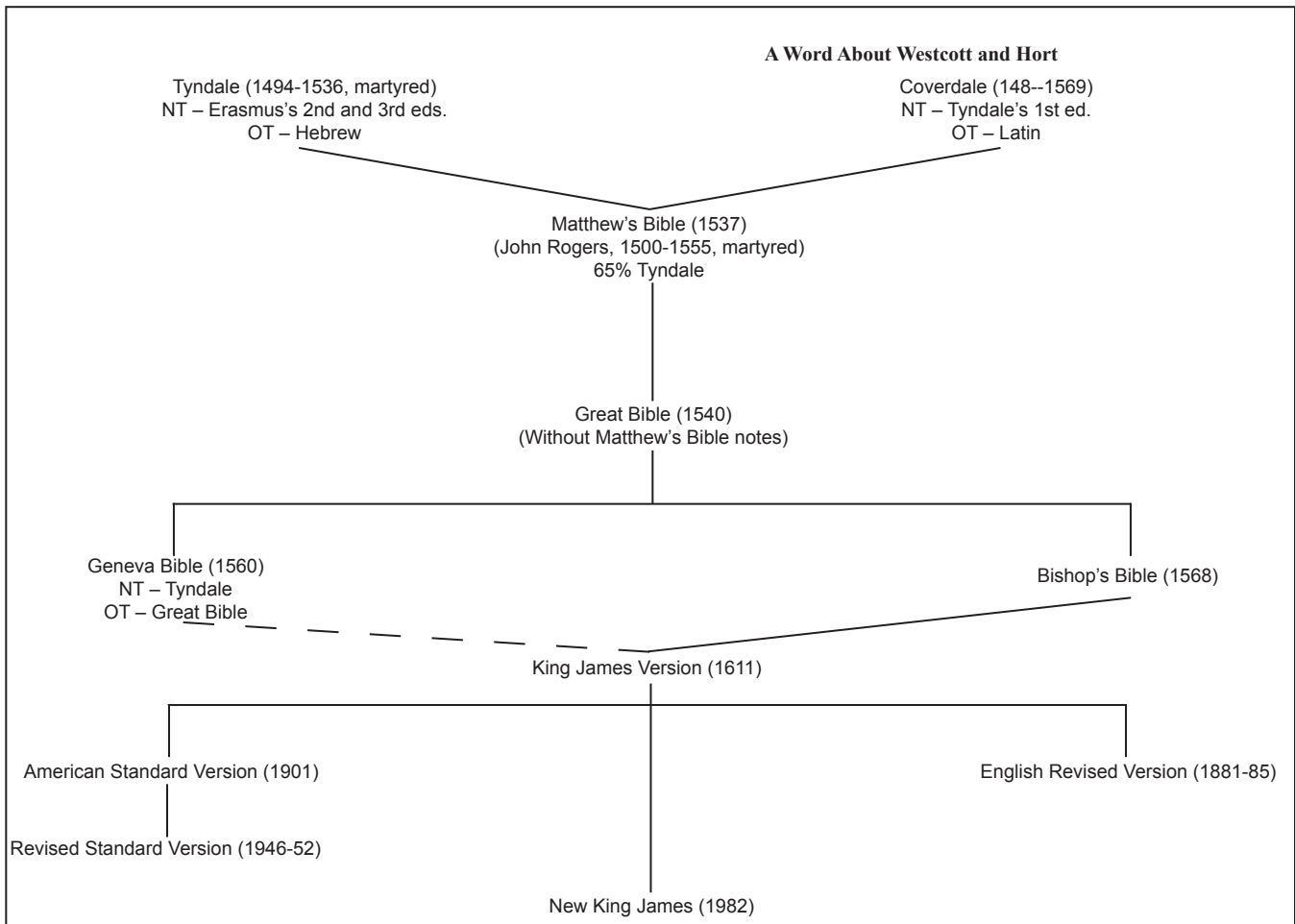
34 White, 99.

35 Riplinger, 397-428.

36 Standish and Standish, 29-31.

37 White, 245.

The following diagram tracing the origin of the KJV may be helpful:



him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).

As Anglicans, Westcott and Hort felt sympathy toward Rome, but the tie between the Church of England and Rome is much stronger today than in Westcott and Hort’s day. Erasmus, held in high esteem by KJV Only advocates because his Greek NT laid the foundation for the TR, defended the Catholic Mass and Transubstantiation.<sup>38</sup> The fact that God used sinful, erring men to write the Bible, and then used sinful, erring men to transmit its content through the centuries, and used sinful, erring men to put it into the language of common, erring human beings is a miracle beyond description. In 1888, when Ellen White already had begun to read and use the *English Revised Version* in her writings, she said, “But the Lord has preserved this Holy Book by His own miraculous power in its present shape—a chart or guidebook to the human family to show them the way to heaven.”<sup>39</sup> When she refers to this Holy Book, she makes no distinction between the KJV, or the *English Revised Version*.

### Some Thoughts From Ellen G. White

At the end of 1953, Arthur L. White put together a document entitled, *The E. G. White Counsel on Versions of the Bible*. This document was revised in 1991 and can be obtained from the E. G. White Estate. All who are interested in the KJV Only discussion are encouraged to examine this document carefully. Here is a summary.

Ellen White used the various versions of the Bible available to her, but she does not comment directly on their merits. Her practice shows, however, that she recognized the desirability of making use of the best of all versions. Her son, W. C. White, reports Ellen White’s attitude toward the *English Revised Version* which was greatly influenced by the work of Westcott and Hort:

Before the revised version was published, there leaked out from the committee, statements regarding changes which they intended to make.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 244-45.

<sup>39</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 15.

Some of these I brought to Mother's attention, and she gave me very surprising information regarding these Scriptures. This led me to believe that the revision, when it came to hand, would be a matter of great service to us.<sup>40</sup>

Immediately after the appearance of the *English Revised Version* and the *American Standard Version* (1901), Ellen White quoted from them in her books.

Between 1880 and 1887, a series of articles appeared in the *Review* written by various church leaders, and all made favorable comments on the revised Bible. During the decade of the 1880s, Ellen White wrote most of her instruction about inspiration and the authority of the Bible, much of which can now be found in the "Introduction" to *The Great Controversy* and in the first chapter of *Selected Messages*, Book 1. If there is the danger that reading modern versions would cause Adventists to forsake the three angels' messages, certainly God would have alerted His messenger sometime during this decade when the first revisions began to appear. But Ellen White shows no concern about apparent or hidden dangers.

Concerning the errors that have come into the biblical text through the course of transmission, she said:

Some look to us gravely and say, "Don't you think there might have been some mistake in the copyist or in the translators?" This is all probable, and the mind that is so narrow that it will hesitate and stumble over this possibility or probability would be just as ready to stumble over the mysteries of the Inspired Word, because their feeble minds cannot see through the purposes of God. . . . All the mistakes will not cause trouble to one soul, or cause any feet to stumble, that would not manufacture difficulties from the plainest revealed truth.<sup>41</sup>

Ellen White used the revised versions in the Conflict series:

In the five volumes of the Conflict of the Ages Series, we find the revised versions quoted. As might be expected, those volumes that enter into an exposition of Bible truth dealing with points of doctrine or the teachings of Christ, contain more texts quoted from the revised versions than do volumes of counsel to the church and those presenting largely historical description.<sup>42</sup>

W. C. White searched his memory to recall any statement made by his mother that would indicate it is wrong to read the new versions:

I do not know of anything in the E.G. White writings, nor can I remember of anything in Sister White's conversations, that would intimate that she felt that there was any evil in the use of the Revised Version. . . .

We cannot find in any of Sister White's writings, nor do I find in my memory, any condemnation of the American Revised Version of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>43</sup>

Arthur White concludes this interesting document with the following:

The extracts quoted above reveal the position of Ellen White on such questions as the transmission of the Sacred Text, the union of the divine and the human in the written record of God's revelation to man, and also as to her relation to the various translations of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>44</sup>

It interests us that Ellen White used the new revised versions more often when dealing with doctrine and the teachings of Christ than she did when dealing with pastoral material. Some have observed that compared with the hundreds of quotations from the KJV in any given volume, the revised versions were used very little. This is true, but the fact must be recognized that she *did* use them. If these versions based on the work of Westcott and Hort will lead people away from truth, why did she use them more frequently in dealing with doctrine and Jesus' teachings than in any other context? Indeed, why did she use them at all?

Ellen White used the KJV in the pulpit, and W. C. White explains why:

There are many persons in the congregation who remember the words of the texts we might use as they are presented in the Authorized Version, and to read from the Revised Version would introduce perplexing questions in their minds as to why the wording of the text had been changed by the revisers and as to why it was being used by the speaker.<sup>45</sup>

40 Arthur L. White, "The E. G. White Counsel on Versions of the Bible" (Takoma Park, Maryland: The E. G. White Estate, 1991), 1, 2.

41 See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, 16.

42 White, "The E. G. White Counsel on Versions of the Bible," 7.

43 Ibid., 8.

44 Ibid., 9.

45 Ibid., 8.

She used the KJV in public to keep the minds of her hearers focused upon what she was saying. She did not want their minds distracted from her message and problem solving while she was speaking. It was not because she considered the new revisions dangerous for the people or that their use would introduce error.

### Conclusion

Ellen White saw the *English Revised Version* and the *American Standard Version* as useful to Seventh-day Adventists. Versions have multiplied since her day, but the interesting point is that she saw no danger lurking in the Greek text that lies behind the first two revisions, i.e., the

Greek text developed by the work and influence of Westcott and Hort and based on the Alexandrian text-type. Westcott and Hort's Greek text, though modified today, essentially lies behind the more recent versions. Neither was she shown by God that the new revisions of the KJV posed a danger for the people.

Although the KJV is an expanded text, as has been shown above, there is nothing in the extra material that contains doctrinal error. Those who prefer the KJV should understand that they are reading a conflated text and they should not take a hostile attitude toward those who prefer to read one of the modern versions. Those who read modern versions should choose carefully, however, for the editors of some paraphrases take too much liberty in rendering the biblical text.

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## Additional Notes on Ellen White’s Use of Contemporary Versions of the Bible

### An Addendum of Modern Versions and the King James Version

Mention has already been made, in the fourth and final division of the preceding document, concerning Ellen White’s appraisal of the revised versions of the Scriptures that were extant in her day. But since Seventh-day Adventists hold, as an article of faith, that Mrs. White was an authentic, genuinely-inspired prophet of the Lord,<sup>1</sup> the fact of her frequent and generous use of such versions has the potential for creating a crisis in faith for some of the “KJV-Only” persuasion.

It may, therefore, be appropriate here to consider in greater detail indisputable facts concerning:

1. *Why* Ellen White made such a generous, liberal use of non-KJV translations available in her day.
2. *How* she employed such in her writings.
3. The widespread *extent* of such usage.

1. **Why she used modern translations.** Although Ellen White did not complete more than three or four years of elementary schooling, in the broadest sense of the word she yet cannot be thus viewed as uneducated. The four sources of her *real* education are generally held to be: (a) wide reading; (b) extensive travel on three continents; (c) close association with highly-educated ministers and educators, with whom she frequently consulted; and (d) some 2,000 prophetic visions and divine dreams during the 70-year course of her unique ministry, in which she regularly held direct converse with either Jesus or the angel Gabriel.<sup>2</sup>

Though not seminary-trained, Ellen White was, nonetheless, a very well informed and astute theologian. And from her theological study she understood fully (as do well-informed theologians today) that a Hebrew or Aramaic word in the original Old Testament text—as, also, a Greek word in the original New Testament text—may frequently have more than one legitimate translation into the English language.

An excellent example may be cited in Philippians 2:7 where the apostle Paul employs the Greek verb *kenoun*—the doctrine of “the emptying of the preexistent Christ,” in which Christ set aside His divine attributes at the incarnation, in order to become fully human.<sup>3</sup>

In A.D. 1611 the translators of the King James Version chose to emphasize only one particular aspect of this “emptying,” by translating this verse, “But made himself of no reputation.” They thus focused solely upon the fact that Jesus willingly took upon Himself the stigma of illegitimate birth as a consequence of the manner in which the incarnation was consummated.

Other translations from Mrs. White’s time through ours, however, have tended to treat the subject in a more generalized manner: *The Amplified Bible* offers, “but stripped himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity]”—a verb also employed by W. J. Coneybear, Richmond Lattimore, J. B. Phillips, and Richard Francis Weymouth.

Three others versions—the *New International Version*, the *New English Bible*, and the *Revised New English Bible*—translate the passage, “He made Himself nothing.”

But a survey of 30 different modern versions reveal an overwhelmingly strong preference by translators for the simple declaration found in 12 of the 30—a full 40 percent of them: “He emptied Himself.”<sup>4</sup>

Only the *New King James Version*, among all of 30 translations examined, stands with the old KJV in declaring that Christ “made Himself of no reputation.”

The more important fact that should be noted, however, is that *all of these versions are correct*, despite their different phraseology! The KJV/NKJV focus upon only one aspect of this emptying of the preexistent Christ, while the others present a much broader picture of the *kenosis*. And all are true!

And Ellen White, inspired by the Holy Spirit, used different translations, in different places, to serve her own various purposes as an author, as we shall now note!

1 “Seventh-day Adventist Doctrinal Statements,” NO. 17. *The Gift of Prophecy*, *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1 (1996): 469.

2 See Roger W. Coon. “Ellen G. White’s Use of Literary Assistants: The Prophet As Writer,” Lecture Outline, GSEM 534, SDA Theological Seminary, p. 4 (rev. April 13, 1995).

3 *Random House Unabridged Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed.

4 (1) *The American Standard Version*, (2) William Barclay’s *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, (3) *The Berkeley Version in Modern English*, (4) *The Confraternity Revision of the New Testament*, (5) The “Douay” Version, (6) *The Jerusalem Bible*, (7) the *King James Version-II*, (8) *The New American Bible*, (9) *The New American Standard Bible*, (10) the *Revised Standard Version*, (11) the *New Revised Standard Version*, and (12) Richard Francis Weymouth’s *The New Testament in Modern Speech*.

**2. How she used modern translations.** The theme of the emptying of the preexistent Christ was a favorite one upon which Ellen White loved to dwell. And a survey of her writings reveals that she treated this doctrine at length, applying it in at least nine different categories.<sup>5</sup>

In *The Desire of Ages*, her most extensive writing upon the life and experience of Jesus, Mrs. White quotes *both* the rendering of the KJV and also that of the Revised Version, in different sections of the book, the better to serve her particular purpose in each instance! She thus uses two different translations of the same text in the same book!

First, in dealing with the “bastardy” issue—Christ’s alleged illegitimate birth (Jesus’ possessing a human mother, but not a human father)—she dwells upon His humiliating sacrifice in “[making] himself of no reputation.” And she points out that Jesus had to meet the insinuations of doubtful parentage at least on five different occasions in His life: (1) as a child in Nazareth, (2) during His early ministry in Galilee, (3) during His ministry at Jerusalem, (4) at His trial, and (5) while hanging upon the cross. He, truly, “made himself of no reputation!”

But, second, in treating the emptying of the preexistent Christ, in the very first chapter of *The Desire of Ages* she ignores the KJV rendering, pointedly preferring instead the reading of the RV, “but emptied Himself.”<sup>6</sup>

Both the renderings of the KJV and of the RV are true and correct—and Mrs. White used both, in different portions of the same book, to serve her different purposes as an author.

**3. The extent of her usage of modern translations.** Examination of Ellen White’s use of then-available new translations shows widespread reference to them. During the last three decades of her life (1885-1915), when the first of these—the RV, and a dozen of its successors, began to find their way into general circulation, she began a series of citations from them.

According to a White Estate tabulation, Mrs. White quoted from at least *ten different versions* in her various writings during this period, in addition to citing updated marginal references in both the RV and the KJV—the vast majority of all of the modern translations that were available in her day!

She reportedly cited scriptures from the following translations in her writings:

- Leeser
- Noyes
- Rotherham
- Basic
- Boothroyd
- Bernard
- Westminster
- Lamsa
- ARV
- RV<sup>7</sup>

In summary, during the last three decades of Ellen White’s life a number of new translations and versions of the Scriptures began to appear. The evidence is clear that she welcomed their advent, and instructed her helpers to purchase copies for her perusal as soon as such became available in bookstores. And she quoted their variant readings repeatedly, when and where it served her purposes as a writer.

Seventh-day Adventists today who allege that the King James Version is the only safe and acceptable version for a Christian to use, and at the same time who also accept Ellen G. White as an authentic, divinely-inspired prophet, find themselves in a position as conflict-ridden as it is illogical.

For surely, if there were dangerous theological error and eternal disaster in the use of non-KJV versions, God would not only have quickly warned her from the ground when she was about to quote from the first one, but would He not have also instructed her to sound the warning to her readers, as well?

Yet this He clearly did not do.

The indisputable facts are that the “KJV-Only” position is not only unsupported by the teaching of Ellen White (who was herself instructed directly by both Jesus and the angel Gabriel for a period of some 70 years), but in literary practice she frequently employed the expressions of other more recent translations.

And these are facts with which proponents of the “KJV-Only” school of thought must not only contend, but also explain.

5 He gave up His (1) “reputation,” (2) heavenly home, (3) union and fellowship with the Father, (4) eternal glory, (5) eternal wealth, (6) omnipotence—His eternal power and will, (7) omniscience—His eternal knowledge, (8) omnipresence—the “form” of God, in which He is everywhere present at all times, and (9) royal prerogatives: (a) His robe, scepter, crown, throne, and mansion; (b) His position as Commander (“high command”) of the heavenly angels; and (c) His honor and homage of heavenly beings, in contradistinction with His subsequent “humiliation.”

6 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1940), 22

7 From a White Estate tabulation, cited in Roger W. Coon, “Ellen G. White and Modern Versions of the Bible,” Lecture Outline, GSEM 534, SDA’s Theological Seminary, Appendix A., p. 10 (rev. March 5, 1992).

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