

Why All The Fuss Over Bible Versions



Why All The Fuss Over Bible Versions?

by Carl Graham

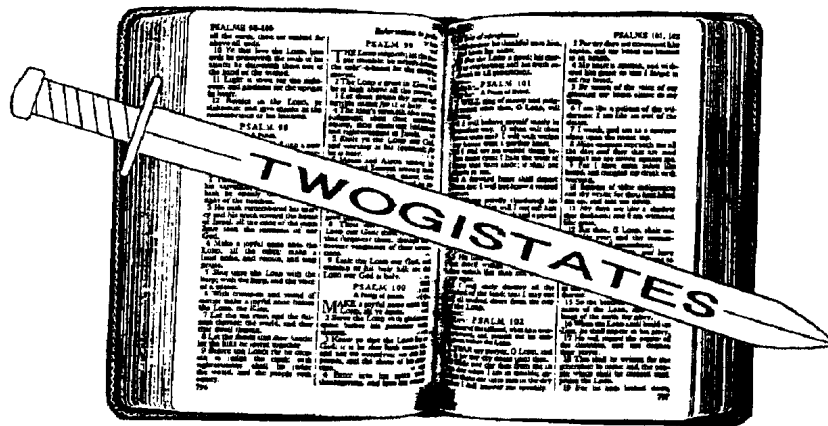
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For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

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Preface

As a matter of clarity in this paper, I use the term "Traditional Bible" to denote all the great English versions that were produced over the centuries by God-called translators using the correct underlying texts. The term "Modern Versions" includes all other English versions that have been produced by translators not called by God using the wrong underlying texts.

Statements are often made throughout the scholarly world about Bible translations not being the exact words of God because of erroneous texts and the impossibility of translating the precise meanings of Hebrew and Greek words into other languages. Knowing the unbelief of many of the scholars, I can agree with this statement, because from a Bible believer's standpoint the unsaved scholar will never be able to translate God's Word, and even the scholar who is saved won't be able to unless God ordains him to do so. It is clear to me that translating the Bible is not about knowing Hebrew and Greek, it is not about science or opinion, but it is all about being in God's will and working according to His purpose.

The Bible version problem for the common Christian is not about translators, translations, or texts. It is much more than that, for it is in reality about being informed and making the right decisions. It has always been a wonder to me why church people will make such a fuss over a pastor being called of God and then ignore the same concern for those who provide them with Bibles, written instructions, doctrines, and worship material. We need to understand the callings of authors, who produce the things we read, are just as important as the callings of pastors who preach the Word. No one has a right to produce one line of Christian literature of any kind without a decree from God, and every Christian has a responsibility to know the standings of those whose writings influence them. If we readily accept uninspired writings as being from God, we fall under the influence of Satan, contribute to the degradation of God's work, and get further and further away from the divine source of power.

This paper is a call for the Christians to wake up and be counted. We can't continue to go through life ignoring the signs of apostasy all around us and then claim ignorance, especially in matters of the Bible version issue. We can't go on using a Bible provided by atheists, homosexuals, and skeptics and still expect God to bless our lives and honor our churches. We must get serious about the impact of God's Holy Word on our Christian lives and realize the information is readily available for us to know the truth. Further, we must seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, accept the fact that we have a God mandated responsibility to know the Bible intimately, and get busy doing the work He has set before us; as Jesus said in John 8:32, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Introduction

I have done much study and research surrounding the Bible version issue, and have come to one conclusion: the Traditional Bible and the Modern Versions cannot both be the Word of God, for their differences are too well defined and documented. While it may not seem so to the uninitiated, it is really a black and white issue, either God preserved His Word or He didn't. There will never be a point of common agreement among advocates of these two extreme positions, because the modernists see God as a weakling and the traditionalists see Him as all powerful. To me it is a simple matter. If God didn't preserve His Word, He lied, and if He lied, He is not God.

As I read about various Bible versions, I often see where they are presented in a parallel Scripture reference format to point out the differences in wording, messages, and doctrines between the Traditional Bible and whatever version is being addressed. While this approach does prove the two are not the same, it does not get to the heart of the problem, which is "what really makes them different?" Actually, the answer to this question is very simple because it can be readily seen they come from two totally different sources; one came through the true Christian church and the other came by way of godless heretics.

I suspect about every professing Christian knows the Traditional Bible's Old Testament comes from the Masoretic Hebrew Text and the New Testament from the Greek Received Text. What many may not know is the modern versions Old and New Testaments come from very different sources identified in this paper as critical texts. Advocates of both the traditional texts and the critical texts claim each is the nearest possible to the original words, but common sense will tell you they are so different that only one of these assertions could possibly be true. The supporters of the Received Text say it is in fact the God preserved words of the original text while the critical text advocates claim the original text was corrupted and has been restored within the range of 99.5 percent of the original wording.

However, before I go into a discussion of the texts underlying the various Bible versions, we need to understand exactly what the original text is and how it fits into the overall picture. We refer to the original text as the actual autographs, which were penned by the various writers of the books of the Bible as they were given direction from God. It is necessary for the Christian to accept these as the inspired, inerrant Words of God. If one doesn't believe this, then any discussion about Bible versions is moot for undeniably this is at the very heart of the Bible version controversy.

Old Testament Texts

As far as the Old Testament is concerned, it was recorded over a period of about 1,000 years (Approximately 1400 BC to 400BC), and its original autographs were never together all in one place at any one time, nor have they ever existed together at any single time in history. The New Testament's history is similar with regard to the collation of the originals. It was written over a period of about 60 years, and the various writings were not brought together until many years later.

This is all stated to help you understand the Bible was not provided instantaneously by God as a bound book with 66 divisions. It was written over a period of approximately 1500 years, and it has always been made up of copies of the original autographs, some being handed down for centuries.

For those who claim to believe the Bible is "God breathed", the copying process of the manuscripts is perhaps the most divisive issue of the Bible version controversy. For the sake of argument, let's assume the two dissenting parties are fully convinced God gave us his inerrant Word in the original manuscripts. However, this is where the parting of the minds takes place. Some believe God gave us His inerrant Word and then left the preservation up to man, while others believe God not only gave us His inerrant Word, but He also preserved it in the subsequent copies. The first mentioned group, those who think God deserted His Word after He gave it, are among those who advocate the critical text approach to God's Word.

However, before we look at the development of the critical Hebrew text it would be well to understand just how seriously the Jews took their responsibility to maintain pure copies of the Scriptures just as God gave them by the way they copied and transcribed them.

According to Paul in Romans 3:1-2, God specifically named the Jews as the guardians of the Old Testament Scriptures, and it was their sworn duty to make sure each and every copy was precise and exact. Here are the rules and methods they used to insure complete and accurate duplications of the original manuscripts of the Old Testament.

1. The parchment must be made from the skin of a clean animal (clean meaning ceremonially clean according to the Old Testament sanitary laws); must be prepared by a Jew only, and the skins must be fastened together by strings taken from clean animals.

2. Each column must have no less than forty-eight, nor more than sixty lines. The entire copy must be first lined.

3. The ink must be of no other color than black, and it must be prepared according to a special recipe.

4. No word or letter could be written from memory; the scribe must have an authentic copy before him, and he must read and pronounce aloud each word before writing it.

5. He must reverently wipe his pen each time before writing the word for "God" (Elohim), and he must wash his whole body before writing the name "Jehovah" (LORD in our King James Bibles), lest the Holy Name be contaminated.

6. Strict rules were given concerning forms of the letters, spaces between letters, words and sections, the use of the pen, the color of the parchment, etc.

7. The revision (to correct any errors) of a roll must be made within thirty days after the work was finished; otherwise it was worthless. One mistake on a sheet condemned the entire sheet. If three mistakes were found on any page, the entire manuscript was condemned.

8. Every word and every letter was counted, and if a letter was omitted, or if an extra letter was inserted, or if two letters touched one another, the manuscript was condemned and destroyed at once.

It is quite clear that the methods used by the Jews to make copies of the Holy Scriptures insured the Old Testament was well preserved, and we can be assured we have today an accurate copy of the original manuscripts. This Hebrew Text is identified as the Masoretic Hebrew Text, and is the underlying document of the Traditional Bible.

It is noted that the developers of the modern versions do not accept the Masoretic Text, and use instead a critical text as its underlying Hebrew source. To help those who don't understand the differences between the two text types, here is a brief look at the history of the critical Hebrew text. The following article written by George Shafter is used with his permission.

Many people do not understand that there is a critical text behind the Old Testament found in modern versions of the Bible. This critical text, based upon the Leningrad Codex of 1005 A.D. and many other corrupt sources, contains between 20,000 and 30,000 changes when compared to the traditional Masoretic text used by the Godly translators of the King James Bible. That is an average of one change per verse. Every popular English language version of the Bible, other than the King James, is based upon this new corrupted text.

One of the primary causes of this corruption is a man named Rudolph Kittel. In 1906 and again in 1912 he published editions of the traditional (uncorrupted) Masoretic text. In these editions, he included a critical apparatus at the bottom of the pages. This apparatus suggested alternative readings based upon other manuscripts (such as the Leningrad Codex), indicating which manuscripts supported these readings. Critics and scholars quickly gobbled up his alternate readings, taking no time to verify whether Kittel, or the manuscripts cited, were accurate.

One scholar named Harry Orlinsky was not quite so gullible. He looked up the changes Kittel listed, comparing them to the manuscripts named in the critical apparatus. His findings were shocking. About Kittel's work he said, "there was scarcely a line in the apparatus of the BH (Kittel's 2nd edition, known as *Biblia Hebraica* or BH) that did not contain an error." He went on to say, "nearly every line ... swarms with errors of commission and omission", and that "no single publication has had such detrimental effect on the lower textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible as Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*."

It turns out that Kittel was not qualified to be a textual critic, as he had little training in the field. In addition, his work was filled with errors that can be called

nothing less than carelessness. For example, he changed the place named in Isaiah 15:9 to "Dibon" based upon the Latin Vulgate, when most manuscripts including the Beatty Papyri, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, Bohairic, Syro-Hexapia, the Targum, and the traditional Masoretic text read "Dimon" (as does the King James). Kittel does not mention these other sources in his critical apparatus.

Another example of Kittel's errors is a change in Isaiah 49:17 that Kittel said was based upon Codex Petropolitanus, the Vulgate, and several other sources. The truth is that Petropolitanus does not read as Kittel said, and that the various versions of the Vulgate disagree with one another.

The best example of Kittel's errors is possibly his change to II Kings 16:5. Kittel changed the plural Hebrew word "Yaklu" into a singular based upon his desire to make it agree with Isaiah 7:1 (there was no manuscript evidence to support the change). He forgot, however, that he had previously changed the singular in Isaiah 7:1 to a plural, once again without evidence, in order to make it agree with II Kings 16:5.

In 1937, the third edition of Kittel's work was published. It is known as Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS). In this edition, all of the changes that had previously been noted at the bottom of the page were swept up into the text. In other words, all of Kittel's inaccurate work suddenly was declared to be God's Word.

Modern versions including the NIV, the NASV, the NKJV, and the NRSV are all translated from it. When you read Isaiah, Chapter nine in the NIV, you will even see a footnote that is almost identical to the critical apparatus from Kittel's 1912 edition.

Modern versions simply assume that Kittel's work was error free, using it without question. Each, in the preface, proudly declares that it is based upon the latest version of the Hebrew Text (Kittel's 1937 or later).

"What about doctrine," you ask? While it is not Kittel's fault, Daniel 3:25 in modern versions says that the fourth person in the fiery furnace appears like "a son of the gods" rather than "the Son of God" (the NKJV is so kind as to read "the Son of God" and place "a son of the gods" in a footnote). Jesus is not "a son of the gods."

I grieve for a man who has been robbed. Few of the people who have bought the NIV, NASV etc. have ever heard of Kittel. They have no idea that the accurate version of the Old Testament has been stolen from them, and replaced with one filled with errors. If you know people like that, let them know. Praise the Lord; He is faithful to preserve His word from men like Rudolph Kittel. (Copied from The Lifeline - May 97 - Anchor Baptist Church, Salt Lake City, UT., Written by George Shafer.)

I think Shafter has said it all. The Old Testament critical text is a fantasy of Kittel's imagination and cannot be relied on. Modern scholars who also subscribe to the critical text methodology has taken this work to a lower level (if that is possible) and put their own opinions into the text. As you can readily see, it is an exercise in futility to attempt to compare the Old Testament of the Traditional Bible to the Old Testament of the Modern Versions, because they simply don't have the same Hebrew texts.

New Testament Texts

The church was given the responsibility for preservation of the New Testament texts, and they simply did not have the same mechanism in place as the Jews to assure there would be no copyist errors. We have evidence among the many Greek manuscripts and fragments that some copy errors did creep into the Scriptures. However, these errors were minor and easily discernible as evidenced by an almost word-for-word agreement among at least 5,000 of the ancient copies. The collation of these copies is where we get the Received Text underlying the Traditional Bible. Just keep in mind there is a big difference between a collated text and a critical text; a collated text represents the majority of the words while the critical text represents the minority.

The modern Bible versions do not use the traditional Greek New Testament text at all. They instead use an underlying critical text, which is based on only a few of the available manuscripts, and it is totally different in words, doctrines, and meaning. Here is a short explanation of how the critical text came about.

The development of the "critical apparatus" was actually conceived by some enlightened German scholars in the late 1700's, and was further developed over the next 150 or so years. In the late 1800's, two English scholars, Westcott and Hort, postulated the modern methodology of dividing the texts into families and setting up rules on evaluation that became the standards for the textual critic. These two men were the dominating force on the English Bible Revision Committee that published the English Standard Version of 1887. This was the first English Bible developed using a critical text.

Because their work had such a profound impact on the scholarly biblical world, it would do well briefly to look at some of their thoughts and methodologies. First, they developed a critical Greek text for the new translation using their own established rules. They proceeded to select the scholars to participate on the committee, and then they totally dominated the thinking of the committee to get the results they wanted. Consequently, a Bible was produced which was so unlike the traditional one that the Christian public wouldn't accept it. However, the modern Bible scholars promptly rallied around this so-called "new science" and overwhelmingly received it. This immediately led them into using the works of Westcott and Hort to develop their own "Canons" of Textual Criticism. Just a couple of these are mentioned to help the reader understand the driving forces behind the critical Greek text, and why it turned out to be as it is today.

1. The oldest manuscript is the best.
2. The shortest reading is preferred.

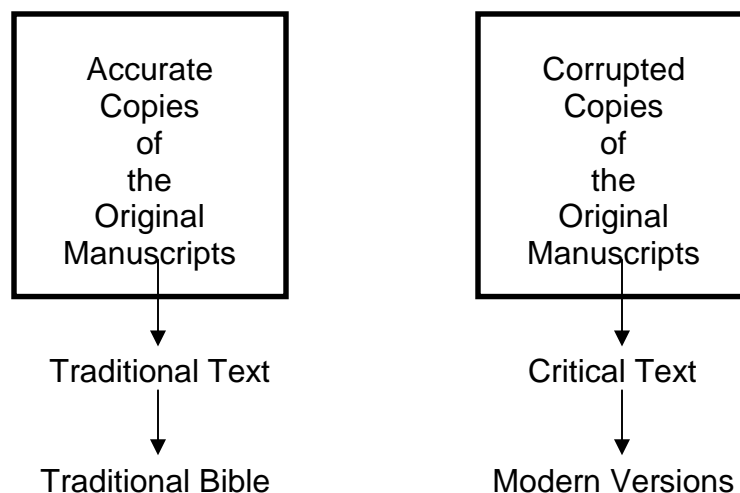
The oldest manuscript is the best is a farce. The modern Greek scholars have decided that the Alexandrian type text represents the oldest manuscripts, and will take nothing else into account. The question comes to mind, "What if sources older than the Alexandrian type text disagree with it?" The answer is simple, "ignore it," and this is exactly what they do in many instances.

Take the case of First John 5:7 for example. The oldest manuscripts, which are dated at approximately 350 AD, do not have it, so the critical scholars didn't include it. However, it is clearly documented in ancient writings, which predate this manuscript by at least two centuries as evidenced in the writings of Theophilus in the 2nd Century, and Tertullian and Cyprian in the 3rd Century.

The shortest reading is preferred does not make sense. The reasoning by the modernists is the copyists tend to add to the Bible and not take away, so if it a reading is longer, it must have been added and away it goes. This "cannon" neglects the process of copying from one document to another. The copyists were not reading the manuscripts to understand the words; they were looking at the letters and reproducing them. When one reproduces anything, the tendency is to leave something out, not add more to it. Can you imagine any copyist saying, "I can improve on the meaning of this, so I'll add my opinion to it." However, I can imagine a copyist forgetting a letter or a word when looking from one page to another. "The longest reading is the best" would make more sense, and the Traditional Bible rightly confirms this point.

Two Different Texts — Two Different Bibles— Two Different Doctrines

Probably by now, you get the idea that it is not the original text the scholars are tying so hard to reconstruct, but a corrupted one. It doesn't take a brain surgeon, or a rocket scientist, to realize there have to be notable variations between the versions produced by the original texts and the corrupted texts because they are totally different. Graphically it looks something like this.



The reader should understand at this point that the issue is not about correct versions or even accurate texts; it is instead about God's involvement in preserving the wordings of the original documents. If the Bible is to be believed this is a non-issue, for it plainly states that God not only gave us His inerrant Word, he kept it pure and undefiled. Here is what Jesus said in Luke 21:33-35:

Heaven and earth shall pass away: but **my words** shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Tied in with the preservation of His Words is the implication they would be ignored and the scoffers, and doubters would be caught unaware. There has never been another time in the history of the world when the Word of God has been so ignored, misused, and tromped on. I'd say this is warning enough.

I already know what the detractors would say to this verse. "Jesus said a lot of words that were not recorded, so that makes this statement invalid. Many of His Words were passed away before He died, and many more since he left this earth. This could not possibly mean the Bible." Yet these same cynics are all praising Jesus at the same time they are accusing Him of lying. They'll find out one of these days if they don't wise up.

Nevertheless, let us not be fooled, as many are who think that translating from the right text assures the finished product will be a correct Bible. Even if this were true there are simply too many other facets such as translators' biases and scholarly pride which come into play to prevent it from being perfect. However you can "bet you bootie" that translating from the wrong text will guarantee a false Bible regardless of any other contributing factor.

Attacking the Modern Versions by comparing them to the Traditional Bible will not prove anything, for it takes a strong imagination to claim there are enough similarities to even assert they are in some way related. It doesn't matter what anyone declares to the contrary, the Traditional Bible and Modern Versions are simply two different Bibles, which come from two different sources, presents two different messages, and in turn presents two totally different doctrines.

I know the general population will not accept the idea that a book that is easier to read than the Traditional Bible is not God's Word, but then I find many are not interested in what is God's Word, but are looking for a shortcut to salvation. Most will take an easy way that causes them less work so they can get readily their religious obligations out of the way and get on with the wiles of the world.

It is kind of like a person who spends all his time trying to get out of work when it would be less work to do the job. Don't ever think you are studying God's Word where a critical text is involved; it simply is another book trying to be a Bible.

What about Those “Good-Godly-Scholars?”

I've been accused of being a professional critic. This is the person who finds fault with everything whether he knows anything about it or not. But the person who accepts anything anyone says about the Bible without checking it out is much worse. I've heard the old cliché about the “Good-Godly-Scholars” who wouldn't deceive us. I've also met many of these “Good-Godly-Scholars,” and I know from personal experience they will deceive you in a minute if it pleases them to do so.

Be aware that most Bible scholars do not accept the Bible as God's inerrant Word, and they are always trying to prove it is not. Where do you think those ridiculous false theories came from such as, “Jesus was married and had children?” I can tell you where they came from, “Good Godly Scholars.” Where do you think such things as, “The first eleven chapters of Genesis are myths and tales came from?” If you guessed “Good-Godly-Scholars,” you got it right. I could go on and on with these kinds of examples, but it wouldn't do any good, for the “Good-Godly-Scholars” will continue to deceive, people will continue to buy their ideas as truth, and the churches will keep right on supporting the degradation of God's Word.

Do you have any idea of the beliefs and convictions of the scholars who developed the texts for your Bible? If they were not strong advocates of the preservation of God's Word, they only developed another false text. How about the translators of your Bible, do you know anything about them? I have yet to meet a modern Bible translator who will admit God had any role in the translation process. In fact, the first rule of Bible translation is the Bible must be treated as any other book of literature. It sure doesn't inspire confidence to know the Bible is thought of as just another book of literature.

Oh yes, I almost forgot about the inspired original manuscripts. Here is the typical statement, “I believe the original manuscripts of the Bible are the inspired Words of God.” Many of our scholars really like to bandy this one about. Can anyone reading this paper tell me what this means? I can tell you what it means to the scholars. They want to believe in the Bible, and still have a place of honor among the unbelieving scholarly community. The unbelievers know there are no original manuscripts around, so who cares about this statement? What a safe way to have it both ways; believe in inerrancy and at the same time doubt the Word and get by with it. They are fooling themselves, they are fooling the people, but they are not fooling God; He'll still have the last word!

Get Rid of Those False Bible

I think I can safely say that most professing Christians who attend Bible believing churches want to please God. Some may attend for some other reason, but not too many, because supporting and helping in a church is time consuming as well as a costly endeavor. A Bible believing church is one that uses only a Bible that has a Godly inspired text, which is translated by Godly inspired Scholars, and is revered by its pastor as the Living Word of God. If any one of these is missing, the power is taken out of the church's services, and it becomes weak and ineffective. Notice I didn't say a thing about great numbers and large amount of money. Any con man can get people to attend a social meeting, golden tongue speakers can wring the last cent out of a

scrooge, but only God can bring the spiritual blessing that comes from honoring His Word.

Get rid of those false Bibles. If your pastor won't get rid of his, get rid of the pastor. If you can't get rid of the pastor, get out of the church, for you are contributing to the weakening of God's Word by being there. There has to be a true Bible believing church somewhere, which would welcome your honesty and support. If you can't bring yourself to do something about the apostasy within the church, which is brought about by the use of Modern Versions, the least you can do is stick with the Word yourself and let others know how you feel. To do nothing is tantamount to denying the Lord and borders on apostasy. The Bible is clear on this point. The Holy Spirit plainly said in Galatians 6:7-8:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

The Modern Versions are nothing more than flesh sowers because they are based solely on the works of man. Those who insist on promoting and using these ungodly versions are defeating their own purposes, will never grow spiritually, and cannot pass along the faith. While they may have enough understanding to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior and make it to heaven based on what their parents taught them from the Traditional Bible, they'll never pass this saving faith along to their children from a Modern Version. In my mind, it is also questionable about their making it themselves, for they are willingly denying the Lord's Words. What a wretched crop to reap.

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