

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

The King James-only Movement: A Rejection of the Unique Authority of the Original Autographs of the Bible Authors

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The movement that enshrined the *King James Bible*, also known as the *Authorized Version*, as not only the best possible Bible version available but actually given by inspiration of God began with the writings of a Florida pastor named Peter S. Ruckman in or around 1964.¹ The movement grew to encompass a significant minority of Baptist congregations in the United States and a small number abroad.² The movement undermines traditional fundamentalism by injecting the God of the Bible into the history of Bible translation rather than just having an influence on the original autographs of the Bible writers. It is a rejection of the unique authority and inspiration of the original autographs of the books of the Bible.

Latourette defined nonconforming Protestants as those who were not members of a state church.³ The first historical church that called itself Baptist, in the tradition of Puritan Separatists, left the Anglican Church, the state church of England, in 1609.⁴ Three hundred and a half years later, at the end of the 1960's, in America, virtually all fundamentalists were Baptists.⁵ Although the United States has no established national church at this time due to the constrictions of the Federal Constitution the evangelical, Protestant churches have represented a de facto national church since early in the 1800's and the era of the so-called Second Great Awakening.⁶ Traditional fundamentalism, labeled as such in 1920, was a reactionary, social movement couched in religious terms that focused its spiritual efforts on affirming traditional values and on the after-life, and

¹ Ruckman, Peter S. *Bible Babel*. Pensacola, FL: Bible Believer's Press, 1964. The *King James Bible* does not use the wording in 2 Timothy 3:16; "inspired by God (*New American Standard Bible (NASB)*)," or, "God-breathed (ie. *New International Version* or *NIV*)," but uses, "given by inspiration," in which inspiration is defined as understanding (Job 32:8) and wisdom (2 Pet. 3:15) given by God rather than necessarily word-for-word dictation. This allows for opinions of Bible writers to be included along with mandates from God. The original autographs are not given preeminence and can even be altered (Jer. 36:32).

² "Bible Believers' Church Directory," Bible Believers. www.biblebelievers.com, (accessed 6.1.2015).

³ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age: Volume II, The 19th Century in Europe* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1959), 314.

⁴ H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville TN: Broadman Press, 1987), Kindle edition, chapter 1.

⁵ George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing, 1991), 4.

⁶ Ronald E. Osborn, *The Spirit of American Christianity* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1958), 43.

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had a great influence on politics in America. It separated itself from conservative Christian churches of the early twentieth century and the nineteenth which were postmillennial in doctrine and who sought to make the world a better place by establishing the kingdom of God on earth through political action.⁷ The minority *King James*-only movement is in keeping with that Baptist tradition of separation from the established church by separating from fundamentalism in regards to the Bible while holding to its tenets in other areas of social consideration.⁸ Nonconformity (and even the fundamentalism inclination) is a constant in Protestant faith traditions in every generation, a condition initiated by Luther's stance on the relationship of the individual Christian to the Holy Spirit with regard to Bible interpretation.⁹

The beginnings of modern fundamentalism have been outlined in previous work of which the reader is encouraged to review.¹⁰ There was a growing split in evangelical Protestantism in the late nineteenth century. Many Christians who had been postmillennial minded and active in the reform movements of that century became more conservative and less willing to try to make society more just, fair, and equal. The liberal attitudes that developed in mainstream Christianity were rejected. Idealism and postmillennial enthusiasm, while heightened by successes with regard to child labor, woman's suffrage, and conservation also brought along a liberalism toward morality that many conservative Christians would not accept.¹¹ A hardening of theological stance, a movement away from the social gospel, the rejection of postmillennialism, socialism, and

⁷ McBeth, "The Fundamentalist Movement," in *The Baptist Heritage*, Kindle edition, chapter 14. James H. Moorhead, "The Erosion of Postmillennialism in American Religious Thought, 1865-1925." *Church History* 53, no. 1 (March 1984): 61-77.

⁸ *King James*-only churches are at least as conservative socially and politically as traditional fundamentalist churches. Nothing is changed in regard to doctrinal stance, only in regard to which Bible is authoritative.

⁹ Robert Glenn Howard, "The Double Bind of the Protestant Reformation: The Birth of Fundamentalism and the Necessity of Pluralism," *Journal Of Church & State* 47, no. 1 (Winter2005): 104.

¹⁰ Frederick Widdowson, "The Beginning of the Independent Baptist King James-only Movement," Academia.edu, [https://www.academia.edu/7592621/The Beginning of the Independent Baptist King James-only Movement revised](https://www.academia.edu/7592621/The_Beginning_of_the_Independent_Baptist_King_James-only_Movement_revised).

¹¹ Robert T. Hardy, "Protestant Theological Tensions and Political Styles in the Progressive Period," *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, ch. 10, eds. Mark A. Noll & Luke E. Harlow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 241. "Evangelicals who emphasized revivalism and those who emphasized social reform were coming more and more to comprise two parties..." as famed evangelist, Billy Sunday, was criticized in 1912, before the term 'fundamentalism' was even coined by social reformers for his 'sensationalist techniques and his gospel of soul-saving.'" George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 31.

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the embrace of the premillennial belief of the first three hundred years of Christianity became the way of life for many conservative Christians.¹²

The inerrancy of the Scriptures was a focal issue of fundamentalism, as they believed they were defending the Bible from the godless assaults of modernism in social movements, currents of scientific thought, and the political direction the country was taking. The most famous event in the history of fundamentalism in the 1920's, the trial formally called *The State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes* and popularly called *The Scopes Monkey Trial* was a devastating public relations blow for fundamentalism. The Bible appeared to be on trial in this real-life courtroom drama and certainly in subsequent plays, films, and books it was. However, the famed cross examination (which was not heard by the jury nor considered as part of the verdict) of William Jennings Bryan showed that the fundamentalist champion neither believed the Bible literally as he claimed to do, even knew what it said specifically, nor understood the evolutionary theory he spoke against as he admitted that he had never really been interested enough to study anything that he supposed might speak against the Bible account which he apparently knew only vaguely. The complete testimony Bryan gave is not the subject of this paper but is available in many forms for the interested to review.¹³ Bryan's ignorance of the Bible belied his belief in inerrancy and, as it was so for other fundamentalists, was perhaps partly due to the proliferation of the newer, critical versions of the Bible which eliminated traditional cross-references and the *King James Version's* self-defining qualities, making the Bible less readable.¹⁴

¹² The Social Gospel or Social Christianity was influenced by evolution, in the idea of the progress of society, Marxism, in the desire to reach the "oppressed" working class, and the faith in the purpose of government as a rectifier of social ills. See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age: Volume III, The 19th Century outside Europe* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1959) 223, 234. A prime inspiration in the Social Gospel and the government as an agent of God to rectify social ills movements was Johns Hopkins University's Richard Ely who believed in, "the divine right of the state." Gary M. Pequet and Clifford M. Thies, "The Shaping of a Future President's Economic Thought: Richard T. Ely and Woodrow Wilson at "The Hopkins," *The Independent Review: A Journal of Political Economy* 15, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 262.

¹³ Lloyd Chiasson, Jr., ed., *The Press on Trial: Crimes and Trials as Media Events* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 96. Edward L. Larsen, *Summer of the Gods: The Scopes Trial* (New York: Basic Books, 1997). H.L. Mencken, "Appendix: The Examination of William Jennings Bryan by Clarence Darrow," *Religious Orgy in Tennessee: A Reporter's Account of the Scopes Monkey Trial*, Art Winslow, ed., (New York: Melville House Publishing, 2010).

¹⁴ Bryan was unable or unwilling to discuss the cross-references between Jonah 1:17 and Matthew 12:40 and Genesis 1:21. A whale, in the Bible, predates modern taxonomic classifications and simply refers to large sea creatures which include this specially prepared one-of-a-kind fish. Modern taxonomy need not be read back into the *King James Bible* as it represents a later social construct, a text that separates reality into different categories than previously described. As, for instance, fowls are winged creatures so a bat is

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It is incorrect to say that fundamentalism retreated into the fringe of American political and religious thought until Reagan's presidential campaign resurrected their aspirations to national prominence. Evangelical Christian and fundamentalist leaders such as J. Frank Norris did have a limited but growing impact on the nation's political scene. With the movement of a great many Southerners to different parts of the country such as California and the Midwest this influence expanded until Reagan's presidential team masterfully brought it into his camp to conquer the conservative religious element in the electorate as his own.¹⁵

However, the Scopes trial did result in a sort of *intellectual* retreat where fundamentalists set up their own universities and disengaged somewhat from mainstream intellectual involvement.¹⁶ Over the next few decades after Scopes fundamentalist universities such as Bob Jones, Tennessee Temple, Pensacola Christian College, and others became the training ground for fundamentalist pastors, ministers, and laymen. These schools, in the main, expressed a view about the Bible that originated in the nineteenth century in the Princeton Theological Seminary, that only the original autographs of the Bible's books were perfect, inerrant, and infallible, inspired by God.¹⁷ This reduced the transmission of the Scriptures to an act of God at one point in history in writings not extant today, thereby saving the Bible's only inerrant and perfect writings from inspection by any critic, a much larger retreat than the mere act of forming schools that supported fundamentalist doctrine.

This fallback stance allowed for fundamentalists to generally accept the results of the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation, German Protestant Theology, and German Higher Criticism of the Bible, which united in a powerful movement to undermine the Protestant view of the authority of the Scriptures, the foundation of Protestant belief.¹⁸ The influence and consequence of this movement resulted in a revision of the *Authorized Version*, aka the *King James Bible*, that many English speaking Protestant Christians

a fowl in Leviticus 11:19. The word, "mammal," will not be coined for two hundred years after the *King James Bible* was translated. See Mencken's *Religious Orgy in Tennessee* for Bryan's testimony.

¹⁵ Darren Dochuk, "Evangelicalism Becomes Southern, Politics Becomes Evangelical," *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, ch. 13, eds. Mark A. Noll & Luke E. Harlow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 297-325.

¹⁶ G. Elijah Dann, *Leaving Fundamentalism: Personal Stories* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 7.

¹⁷ Ernest Sandeen, "Toward an Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism," *Church History*, Vol. 36, no. 1 (March, 1967), 74.

¹⁸ Chillingworth's famous declaration was, "The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants!" is the classic example of that belief. William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants: A Safe Way to Salvation* (1638, repr. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1846), 463.

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believed was itself the very word of God.¹⁹ This critical Greek text, the result of the labors of Anglican churchmen, Westcott and Hort, and others was, in truth, a product, not just of a search for the original text but the confirmation of German theology of the Enlightenment and skepticism toward established Christian doctrine and belief.²⁰

The objections to the work of the revision committee that dispatched the *King James Bible* to the status of a quaint relic for many are well noted and not the subject here.²¹ The *Revised Version (RV)*, while not enduringly popular among the laity, did have a strong influence on those who would become prominent fundamentalists.²² As a result of its lack of lasting success new versions of it were spawned, each depending in some part on its background text created by Westcott and Hort's efforts, and their methodology.²³

¹⁹ Philip Schaff, *A Companion to the Greek New Testament and the English Version* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1883), 413.

²⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge was one of those who introduced English thinkers to German philosophy and had a great deal of influence on the English church that revised the *Authorized Version*. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age: Volume II, the Nineteenth Century in Europe* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1959), 263, 300. Arthur Westcott, *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1903), 54,56,111, 150. Hort referred to the influence of German theology and philosophy. "...the infidelity of even educated Englishmen will be often German in its character..." Arthur Fenton Hort, *Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1896), 187.

²¹ H.C. Hoskier, *Concerning the Genesis of the Versions of the N.T.* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1910). *Codex B and It's Allies: A Study and An Indictment*, 1914. John William, *The Revision Revised: A Refutation of Westcott and Hort's False Greek Text and Theory* (1883 reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1971). Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to St. Mark: Vindicated Against Recent Critical Objectors and Established* (London: James Parker & Co., 1871).

²² R.A. Torrey, one of the prominent authors of *The Fundamentals*, a series of essays for whom fundamentalists were named, wrote glowingly of the accuracy of the *Revised Version* over the *Authorized Version* and had studied in Germany. R.A. Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches* (New York: Fleming H. Revell & Co., 1898). A.C. Dixon & R.A. Torrey, eds., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* (1900-1915, repr. Amazon Digital Services, 2014) Kindle edition. Paul Gutjahr says, "Although its initial popularity made the *Revised Version* the publishing event of the century, the book's popularity seemed to wane quickly." Paul Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 110. The *Revised Version* was the first Bible to cause the authority of the *King James Bible* also known as the *Authorized Version* to be questioned. See Peter J. Thuesen, "Some Scripture is Inspired by God: Late-Nineteenth Century Protestants and the Demise of a Common Bible," *Church History* Vol. 65, No. 4 (Dec., 1996), 609.

²³ Histories of modern English Bible translations are plentiful, many of them written by translators and translating committees themselves. Examples are; Arthur Farstad, *The New King James Version: In the Great Tradition* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1989) & Kenneth Barker, ed., *The NIV: The Making of a Contemporary Translation* (Nashville, TN: Academie books, 1986). A solid and understandable scholarly work regarding the conflict over Bible versions in America is Peter Thuesen's *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles over Translating the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). The influence of Westcott and Hort's Greek New Testament is manifested clearly by; Eldon Jay Epp, foreword to *The Greek New Testament with Dictionary*, by B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort (1881 repr.

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While embraced by the authors of *The Fundamentals*, the essays from which fundamentalists received their name, initially the work that produced the modern versions after the *Revised Version* did not go unquestioned by those who were originally avid enthusiasts. Philip Mauro, a lawyer and one of the essay authors of *The Fundamentals*, began to believe that the *Revised Version*, its background manuscripts, and its methodology were hopelessly flawed.²⁴ But, like others who would reject the modern versions and embrace the background texts of the *King James Bible*, called the Textus Receptus, with the *King James Version (KJV)* being their best representative, he still just acknowledged the fundamentalists' belief in only the inspiration of the original autographs which the Textus Receptus represented.²⁵

Peter S. Ruckman, a Baptist pastor in Pensacola, Florida, began the *KJV-only* movement in 1964 with a book called *The Bible Babel*. There are no examples of authors prior to this who express the perfection of the *KJV* in quite the manner that Ruckman did. A key concept which can be pulled from Ruckman's writings is that modern Bibles and their translating methodologies are an outgrowth of the Counter-Reformation's success, the spirit of the Enlightenment, and the influence of eighteenth century German theology which resulted in the science of textual criticism and the weakening of the narrative power of the Biblical text.²⁶ This resulted in the loss of influence of the Bible over the average Protestant's spiritual life, and Bible reading in general, as it became virtually indecipherable without a trained expert to interpret it.²⁷ Even those scholars involved in textual criticism of modern texts will acknowledge their indebtedness to those who first applied these principles of textual criticism to the Classics and the Bible.²⁸ Ruckman's critical statements about the pioneers of textual criticism including Astruc and Lachmann

Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007) and F.F. Bruce, foreward to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W.E. Vine (Nashville, TN: Royal Publishers, 1952). "In general aim and method, the Revised Version pointed the way for future translators." S.L. Greenslade, ed. *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 372.

²⁴ Philip Mauro, *Which Version? Authorized or Revised* (1924, repr., Orlando, FL: Vance Publications, 2001).

²⁵ Other authors who are cited by the *KJV-only* movement but who themselves in their writings only acknowledged the authority of the Textus Receptus with the *KJV* simply being its best representative were Benjamin Wilkinson, *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated* (Payson, AZ: Leaves of Autumn Books, 1930); Jasper James Ray, *God Only Wrote One Bible* (Eugene, OR: The Eye Opener Publishers, 1955); Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (1956, repr. Ankeny, IA: Christian Research Press, 1984) & David Otis Fuller, cited in Thuesen.

²⁶Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 322.

²⁷ Greenslade, *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, 301. "The Bible all at once became a difficult book, a specialist's book, not a book for working men and women..."

²⁸ Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1983), 16.

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are essential to his arguments against their viewpoint and for the authority of the *KJV* in *Bible Babel* and other published works.²⁹

Opposition to the fundamentalist belief in the inerrancy and infallibility of only the original autographs is foundational to Ruckman's argument. As noted Southern Baptist preacher, W.A. Criswell, declared, "On the original parchment every sentence, word, line, mark, point, pen stroke, jot, and tittle were put there by inspiration of God."³⁰ Along with protecting it by removing the "real" Bible from the possibility of scrutiny this reduces the act of God in inspiration to one moment in history.³¹ The concept of verbal, plenary inspiration is in direct opposition to what the *KJV*, beloved by Ruckman and his followers, says about inspiration.³² The divide then, Biblically, between the *KJV*-only movement and the mainstream of traditional fundamentalism with regard to what the Bible actually is becomes, "a great gulf fixed."

Important criticisms of the *King James Bible*, the *Authorized Version*, by scholarship after the Enlightenment, include the translators not relying upon Alexandrian manuscripts such as the Codex Vaticanus or having access to the yet undiscovered Codex Sinaiticus, as scholars said, "their text was poor," in not including them.³³ Scholars include additional manuscript finds at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt and the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran discovered since the *KJV* was translated as important factors to consider.³⁴ Additionally, disagreements over the translation of Greek and Hebrew idioms and translating methodology, in general, along with archaic words and sentence structure are

²⁹ Peter S. Ruckman, *Bible Babel* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Believers Press, 1964), 8. Ruckman, *Biblical Scholarship*, (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1988), 183, 185.

³⁰ W.A. Criswell, *Why I Preach that the Bible is Literally True* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1969), 26.

³¹ Kern Robert Trembath, *Evangelical Theories of Divine Inspiration: A Review and Proposal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 15.

³² To repeat footnote 1's comment; 2Timothy 3:16 says that, "all scripture is given by inspiration of God..." while Job 32:8 says that inspiration is understanding, not word for word dictation necessarily. In 2Peter 3:15 Paul is said to have written by the wisdom given to him, not word for word dictation. Jeremiah 36:32 reveals the relative unimportance of the originals to God's final plan for the Bible.

³³ Greenslade, ed. *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, 167. It is understood by traditional fundamentalist scholars that the reason the text between the *KJV* and modern versions is different is because it and they are based on different background Greek and Hebrew texts. James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust the Modern Translations?* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1995), 28.

³⁴ Greenslade, 293. See also; Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), and Harold Scanlin, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Modern Translations of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993).

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brought up in criticism of the *KJV*.³⁵ Background manuscript issues, newer archeological discoveries, and translation issues are typical criticisms by the adherents of modern Bible versions when defending those versions and criticizing the *KJV*.

However, these issues are not the core of the controversy, nor the real reason behind the dismissal of the *KJV* as each of the points mentioned in the last paragraph were and are hotly disputed by scholars within and without and prior to the *KJV*-only movement. Many arguments were made against the Anglican revision of the Bible, against specific manuscripts and manuscript lines, and are still made.³⁶ The meaning and value of the newly found papyri at Oxyrhynchus and the Dead Sea Scrolls are lacking in finality.³⁷ Translating controversies are not resolved and probably never will be resolved, as they are often matters of opinion and preference rather than plain fact.³⁸ So, these issues really cannot be given as the underlying reason for one fundamentalist's rejection of the *KJV* as

³⁵ Glen G. Scorgie, Mark L. Strauss, & Steven M. Voth, eds., *The Challenge of Bible Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2003) & E. Ray Clendenen & David K. Stabnow, *HCSB: Navigating the Horizons in Bible Translation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2012).

³⁶ Early examples include, as previously listed; Hoskier, *Concerning the Genesis of the Versions of the N.T.* and *Codex B and Its Allies: A Study and An Indictment*, 1914 as well as Burgon, *The Revision Revised* and *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark*. One more modern example is Peter S. Ruckman, *Biblical Scholarship*, 1988.

³⁷ The Dead Sea Scrolls do not provide any new information that seriously undercuts the older translations. "...there are relatively few passages in modern English translations of the Old Testament that have been affected by this manuscript evidence...It must be kept in mind that many of the Dead Sea manuscripts preserve a text quite close to that of the Hebrew text underlying the Masoretic Text," attests to this in Harold Scanlin, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Modern Translations of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993), 107. The Christian finds at Oxyrhynchus suggest a significant question as to why these sacred texts were deposited in a garbage dump with one possible explanation that at least some of them were not canonical or considered sacred, although that explanation is likely to be dismissed on other counts. Some may have been school exercises, as well, although the significance of that has not been adequately explored. Whatever the case it still raises questions. For a discussion on why these documents were discarded see; AnneMarie Luijendijk, "Sacred Scriptures as Trash: Biblical Papyri from Oxyrhynchus", *Vigiliae Christianae* 64 (2010) 241, 246.

³⁸ "The fact is that opinions will very often differ over the precise wording of lexical definitions even – or perhaps, especially – after careful consideration of a proposed definition," is just one example of the lexicographer's uncertainty found in the literature. Terry Roberts, "A Review of BDAG," *Biblical Greek Language and Lexicography: Essays in Honor of Frederick W. Danker*, eds. Bernard A. Taylor, John A.L. Lee, Peter R. Burton, & Richard E. Whitaker (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), Kindle edition. See also, "...no translation is perfect...No translation has ever been perfect..." D.A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1979), Google edition, chapter 8.

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outdated and poorly translated or another fundamentalist's acknowledgement of it as merely the best translation of the Textus Receptus, albeit with errors.³⁹

The underlying reason for the marginalization of the *King James* text is the change in the way the Bible was viewed that began with the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation, the Enlightenment, and German Higher Criticism.⁴⁰ The Reformation view of the Bible was that inspiration extended to the individual written words thus elevating the text as the whole Bible was true as God's revelation of Himself.⁴¹ The post-Reformation views included the idea that only the writers themselves, not their words, were inspired.⁴² While that sounds similar to what the Bible says about itself this modern view led to the belief that it was not true that the Bible's written text necessarily represented God's revelation of Himself, at all.⁴³ This change in view about what the Bible represented, a consequence of seventeenth and eighteenth century scholarship, resulted in the theories that made modern Bibles, translating methodologies, and even the traditional fundamentalist regard for a non-existent original Bible possible.⁴⁴ The rejection of the doctrine insisting that the text of the Bible was divinely preserved is a key difference between modern views of the Bible and the *KJV-only* Movement.⁴⁵

The scientific pursuit of the original text of the Bible that was translated into modern languages is the somewhat dubious goal of the modern translator. The original

³⁹ Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (1956 repr., Ankeny IA: Christian Research Press, 1984), 184.

⁴⁰ Richard Simon's landmark work translated from the French called into doubt, among other things, the Mosaic authorship of the entire Pentateuch. Richard Simon, *A Critical History of the Old Testament in Three Books*, transl. H.D. (London: Jacob Tonson, 1682). Frei credits Richard Simon as being one of the precursors to historical criticism. Frei, *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative*, 156.

⁴¹ Frei, *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative*, 37. Greenslade, ed. *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, 299. Psalm 138:2, among other verses, shows the value the Biblical God placed on His words.

⁴² See W. Sanday, *Inspiration: Eight Lectures on the Early History and Origin of the Doctrine of Biblical Inspiration*, (London: Longman's Green and Co., 1894) referred to in Greenslade, ed. *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, 313.

⁴³ Greenslade, ed. *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, 299.

⁴⁴ In defense of the Bible's authority then, noteworthy evangelical scholars at the Princeton Seminary like Charles Hodge created the doctrine that only the original autographs, which are not extant, were inspired by God. See Ernest Sandeen, "Toward an Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism," *Church History*, Vol. 36, no. 1 (March, 1967), 72. Hodge studied extensively in Germany and was an intimate of and influenced by important German theologians and historians. Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age: Volume III, The 19th Century outside Europe*, 167.

⁴⁵ The seventeenth century Westminster Confession of Faith announced the divine preservation of the Biblical text in the first line of Section VIII in Chapter 1.

http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/

(accessed 7.19.2015).

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autographs are not extant and their potential re-creation by way of a critical text is, at best, an educated guess. Some scholars even question whether or not pursuing the original text of the Bible is even necessary.⁴⁶ Other scholars question whether it is even possible to find the original text with the manuscripts available to us.⁴⁷

One can have no epistemic certainty that one has the original wording of the Bible when he looks at a manuscript simply because he does not have nor ever will have an original copy of any book of the Bible. Even if a scholar thought that he might have an original autograph of a Bible book the uncertainties of dating methods would lend themselves to arguments and dissensions against his conclusions. Any time someone makes a determination or draws a conclusion about some thing from the distant past that he does not possess or an event which he or another person did not witness he is making a guess, no matter how educated or informed that guess may be. It is still a guess, nonetheless, which can never be falsified nor proven in the positive, but merely accepted or not by his peers.⁴⁸

Absolute certainty regarding any object or idea that we do not directly observe and cannot directly investigate is not possible. As said previously, we do not now nor likely ever will have an original autograph of a Bible book whose authenticity would not be questioned. For that matter, absolute certainty with regard to the original text of the Bible is not even necessarily desirable as in the *King James Bible* it is shown that in at least one case, in Jeremiah chapter 36, the original manuscript was destroyed and the one made to replace it had additional words added. Possession of the original manuscript would be misleading in that case, at best. Modern textual critics face this issue with situations where an author wrote a manuscript and submitted it to an editor who returned it with corrections which the author employed. What then, they ask for these modern manuscripts, was the author's final intention, the original or the revision made for publication?⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Bart D. Ehrman, "The Text as Window: New Testament Manuscripts and the Social History of Early Christianity," Bart D. Ehrman & Michael W. Holmes, eds. *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research* (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans Publishing, 1995), 361.

⁴⁷ Helmut Koester, "The Text of the Synoptic Gospels in the Second Century," W.L. Peterson, ed. *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1989), 19-37.

⁴⁸ Those engaged in scientific endeavors of any kind do not just try to order the facts, they determine what the facts are, what is to be considered and what contrary evidence is to be ignored. Paul Feyerabend, *The Tyranny of Science* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011), 68. Although this is evident in sciences such as astronomy it can be asserted that it holds true with the "science" of textual criticism where one manuscript of questionable authority can justify ignoring quotes of the early church fathers, Bible versions, and lectionaries. An example would be the arguments over Matthew 17:21.

⁴⁹ McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, 19.

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The underlying philosophy of the KJV-only subset of Protestant fundamentalism's devotion to the *King James Bible* was often more directly about being grossly offended at the seeming apostasy of the modern line of thinking that characterized the previous century and a half. Typically, very subjective and arguable reasons were given. For instance, Ruckman lists chapter headings as reasons for the superiority of the *King James Bible* in *Bible Babel* such as, "The Publication Date of the Authorized Version," "The Honesty of the Authorized Version," "The Preeminence of Christ in the Authorized Version," "Pride and Inconsistency of the AV's Critics," and, "The Psychology of the 'Babel' Builders," with a great deal of opinion and many personal attacks.⁵⁰ However, even in those polemical chapters, as well as in the one entitled, "The 'Older Manuscript' Hoax," there are sounder arguments mixed in with invective, which was Ruckman's manner.⁵¹ He did not write for scholars but for the average churchgoer, to acquaint them with his views and rally them emotionally to the supposed affront done to the word of God.

Ruckman's importance as an individual preacher and his forceful personality trained in a military background and from a military heritage shaping the controversy cannot be exaggerated.⁵² It was not just the substance of his arguments or his rage at the scholars and preachers who had attacked the Protestant Bible that energized the faithful. Ruckman as a pastor personalized the issue as the champion of the, "true Bible." It was Ruckman versus fundamentalist universities, Ruckman versus fundamentalist celebrity preachers, Ruckman versus the Roman Catholic Church, the Enlightenment, and the scholars and modern methodology of textual criticism. Not only did Ruckman himself view these clashes over the Bible in a military warfare sense but his books went over the heads of scholars and preachers to go after popular support in the pews. This characterized his communications to conservative Christians. He took the study of the Bible version issue out of the realm of ivory tower academics and placed it right in the open hands of the common Joe and Josephine in the church on the corner.

Ruckman and other later KJV-only proponents like William Grady and Gail Riplinger mixed questioning of the personal motives of modernist scholars along with a critique of the methodology. William Grady, who assaulted the modern translators and scholars nearly as roughly as Ruckman did, also underscored the importance of divine

⁵⁰Ruckman, *Bible Babel*.

⁵¹ Ibid., 68. Ruckman gave a very thorough critique of the early church father, Origen's, work in how it related to the Bible version issue, for instance, in his assault on modern scholarship and scholars.

⁵² Peter S. Ruckman, *The Full Cup, A Chronicle of Grace: Autobiography* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1998), 1.

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preservation of the Bible.⁵³ Bible verses, taken literally by them, emphasize this immensely important doctrine to the *KJV*-only adherent.⁵⁴ Gail Riplinger, another champion of the *KJV*-only Movement, stressed the unique structural and linguistic attributes she claimed resided only in that Bible version.⁵⁵

Finally, the *KJV*-only Movement is not simply a return to a more traditional way of thinking about the Bible. It is a rejection of the doctrine that came out of the nineteenth century, manifested by Presbyterian theologians of the Princeton Theological Seminary and adopted by the Baptist dominated fundamentalist movement, that only the original autographs of the Bible writers were inspired by God.⁵⁶ In addition, the *KJV*-only Movement is a rejection of the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation as manifested in Simon and Astruc, German theology and rationalism of the eighteenth century, and the influence of the Enlightenment itself all boiling down to a criticism of the science of textual criticism as applied to the Bible. It is not a return to any particular view of the early church, but a response to modernism, a type of postmodern response in that conclusions are drawn that the scholar cannot know what he is claiming against the *KJV* with any certainty. The criticisms, the attacks, the denials of the last major version of the Protestant Bible printed before the Enlightenment become then mere opinion and no reason for the common man to surrender his confidence in the triumphant Bible of the Reformation.

The *KJV*-only Movement removed the Bible from the hands of the scholar, much like the Reformation removed the Bible from the hands of the priest, and returned it to the common man and woman to which it was written. The movement asserts that Protestant Christians, at least English speaking ones, have the Bible that God wants them to have in the *KJV*.⁵⁷ Some would even assert that it is the Bible for all languages, to be used as the

⁵³ William P. Grady, *Final Authority: A Christian's Guide to the King James Bible* (Swartz Creek, MI: Grady Publications, 1993), 17.

⁵⁴ Psalms 12:6 "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. 7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." Psalms 12:6-7. "LAMED. For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." Psalm 119:89.

⁵⁵ The book that explains in the most detail her view of the structural superiority of the *KJV* is her book entitled *In Awe of Thy Word*, published in 2004.

⁵⁶ One of the chapters in Ruckman's *Biblical Scholarship* is mockingly entitled, "The Plenary, Verbally Inspired Thingamajigs." In it he states that Paul sometimes wrote by an amanuensis, a secretary, so if only what was originally written by Paul was inspired then Romans was not inspired as per Romans 16:22, an example of his sarcasm. Ruckman, *Biblical Scholarship*, 337, 338.

⁵⁷ An evangelist interviewed by the author said, regarding the *KJV*, "I believe that is God's word for the end-time English speaking people and it is the preserved word of God." John Kotchenreuter. Interview by Frederick Widdowson. MP3 Recording. Stewartstown, PA. 3.3.2013.

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basis of translation.⁵⁸ The movement denies that only in the unseen original autographs is God's hand of inspiration present.

https://www.academia.edu/14327962/The_King_James_only_Movement_A_Rejection_of_the_Unique_Authority_of_the_Original_Autographs_of_the_Bible_Authors. Retrieved January 30, 2022.

⁵⁸ Heisey, Peter. "The Value of Making a Bible Translation from the King James Holy Bible." Worcester, UK: Time for Truth Christian Literature, 2013.

<http://www.timefortruth.co.uk/content/pages/documents/1332198960.pdf> (accessed 7.18.2015)