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The King James-only Movement in Print, 1964-2000: A Divisive Issue in Independent Baptist Churches

FREDERICK WIDDOWSON

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In 1964 a movement began in print that was defined by a stated belief that the *King James Version* of the Bible, also known as the *Authorized Version*, was superior to all other Bible translations and was even given by inspiration of God. This movement, confined primarily to a handful of Independent Fundamental Baptist (IFB) Churches, was relatively ignored by mainstream scholars for over a quarter century and yet was and is a significant factor in the worship life of many Fundamentalist Baptists. This paper will define the movement from its beginning, state that it had no historical precedent, explain its manifestation in print, reveal the handful of books devoted to arguing against it, and underscore its significance.

DEFINITION OF TERMS – EVANGELICALISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM

Christian Evangelicalism is a movement that emphasizes redemption through Jesus Christ, who is considered to be God in the flesh. The movement traditionally focused on the salvation experience in that an individual must believe that Jesus Christ died for their sins but, being God, also rose from the dead so that by trusting in His resurrection and in His righteousness, not their own, the individual may have eternal life with their Creator. Although when Evangelicalism is mentioned a number of Protestant faith traditions come to mind there is an Evangelical strain in Roman Catholicism as well with significant differences regarding ritual observances that are not in the scope of this paper. Jay P. Dolan, writing for Eerdman's *Handbook To Christianity in America*, writing about Catholic Revivalism, offered a very concise definition of the underpinnings of the general movement. He said, "...personal conversion experiences are the trademark of evangelical religion."¹

Fundamentalism is a subset of Protestant Evangelicalism. George Marsden, in his work, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* remarked that "a Fundamentalist is an Evangelical who is angry about something."² This statement might be meant to be tongue-in-cheek but it is true nonetheless. Historically, from 1868 to 1900, a group of

¹ Jay P. Dolan, "Catholic Revivalism," in *Eerdman's Handbook to Christianity in America*, ed. Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, George M. Marsden, David F. Wells, & John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1983), 255-256.

² George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing, 1991), 1.

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pastors and laymen held conferences (from 1883 to 1897 at Niagara Falls) where the issues of the basics of the Christian faith were discussed and clarified. This was completely unrelated to the Anglican Revision of the *Authorized Version* of the Bible also known as the *AV* or the *King James Bible* taking place in the same general time frame, and its American counterpart. However, these two unrelated events would converge in the next century in arguments over Bible versions. The participants at these conferences were essentially, “the founding fathers of fundamentalism.”³

Fundamentalists received the name from a series of published volumes in the early twentieth century entitled *The Fundamentals* consisting of sixty four authors who furnished a total of ninety articles, published free for the Protestant public.⁴ The term, “Fundamentalist,” was first coined in 1920 by a Baptist journalist to describe conservative Protestants who were involved in reactionary movements both in and outside of North America defending what they saw as an attack on the fundamentals of the faith such as the virgin birth of Jesus, His resurrection, and His deity, but most importantly the inerrancy of the Bible by modern views of science and religion.⁵

Fundamentalists engaged in their most noteworthy debate with modernistic views of science and religion during the famous, “Scopes Monkey Trial,” an argument over the teaching of evolution. It was in truth a battle not against science but a, “culture war,” between, “religious and social conservatives against religious and social liberals, along with atheists and skeptics,” which moved Fundamentalism even further from the mainstream, further retreating from active engagement with the world, and was a boon to the development of Fundamentalist universities such as Bob Jones, which would embrace views on the inspiration of the Bible that are significant to why the *King James-only* Movement exists.⁶

Fundamentalism retreated after the Scopes trial into a politically insignificant movement until the 1980s. George Marsden pointed out that “by the 1960’s ‘fundamentalist’ usually meant separatists and no longer included the many conservatives in mainline denominations...By this time almost all fundamentalists were Baptists.”⁷ In the 1980s the campaign and presidency of Ronald Reagan reached out to and was affected by a

³ Ernest Sandeen, “Toward an Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism,” *Church History*, Vol. 36, no. 1 (March, 1967), 72.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 77, 78.

⁵ James M. Ault, Jr., *Spirit and Flesh: Life in a Fundamental Baptist Church* (New York: Random House, 2004), 372.

⁶ G. Elijah Dann, *Leaving Fundamentalism: Personal Stories* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 7.

⁷ George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 3.

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growing Independent Fundamentalist Baptist movement led by Jerry Falwell until his death, which influenced and continues to influence American politics.⁸

FUNDAMENTALIST VIEWS OF THE BIBLE BEFORE 1964

Twentieth century Fundamentalism was made a likely event by the doctrines set forward in the Reformation several centuries previous. Robert Glenn Howard wrote that Martin Luther, by taking the authority for Biblical interpretation away from the Roman Catholic Church, moved that authority from the Church into the individual believer's own mind.⁹ Luther's argument was that the Bible was the sole source of divine authority.¹⁰ This diversion from the authority vested in a church to interpret the Bible and dispense religious truth changed the religious landscape of Christianity. One end result was the Fundamentalist belief in an inerrant and infallible Bible.

Not only was the individual believer capable now, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, capable of interpreting the Bible but a perfect Bible without error naturally followed. Hans Frei, writing in his *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*, explained that until the advent of Biblical criticism in the latter half of the eighteenth century the Bible was taken literally as a truthful telling of actual historical events meant to be read literally, the truth of its historical facts going hand in hand with the literal sense.¹¹ Even in the nineteenth century, Philip Schaff, noted church historian and Bible translator, said of the vernacular versions of the Bible made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that to the laity they were, "practically considered to be the inspired Word of God, and every departure from them was looked upon with distrust."¹²

THE ANGLICAN REVISION OF 1881

Although not the only Bible version available for English-speaking Protestants the *King James Bible* was the primary version used by Protestants of all denominations and faith traditions for the better part of two centuries. Established as the dominant Bible version by the 1640s it never reigned without being challenged, although unsuccessfully, by other

⁸ Ault, *Spirit and Flesh*, 12.

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 2005): 91.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹¹ Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 2.

¹² Philip Schaff, *A Companion to the Greek New Testament and the English Version* (New York: Harper Bros., 1883), 229.

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translations.¹³ However, new manuscript discoveries and changes in the way the underlying Bible documents were viewed in the nineteenth century created a sense of the need to revise this authoritative Protestant Bible to bring it into line with those newer developments.

This impulse led to the Anglican Church's 1881 revision of the *King James Bible*. The revision was the first effort in two hundred and fifty years with any Anglican Church authority behind it to revise the *King James Version* of the Bible.¹⁴ Plans were in the works since at least 1820 when Anglican Bishop Herbert Marsh in a lecture on the interpretation of the Bible at Cambridge, published in 1828, called for it as necessary.¹⁵ This struggle to have the idea of a revision seen through happened in fact even though many, such as philologist and America's first true environmental conservationist, George Perkins Marsh, foresaw in lectures given in the autumn of 1858 that a multitude of Bibles would result from such a revision, dividing Protestantism and causing more harm than good.¹⁶ The revision committee published its work in 1881. The revision efforts consisted of an English committee headed by Anglican bishops Westcott and Hort and an American committee headed by Bible scholar and historian, Philip Schaff. His first note referring to the revision was dated August 19, 1870 when he, "suggested suitable names for the committee," resulting in the publication of the *American Standard Version* of the Bible, the American counterpart to the British *Revised Version*, the immediate result of the revision.¹⁷

Anglican divines thought the revision necessary because a change presented itself to the efforts of Bible translators in the nineteenth century. Earlier Protestant Bible translators viewed New Testament Greek as a special language, a version of Greek prepared by the Holy Spirit for its own use as a "unique language with a unity and character of its own."¹⁸ Nineteenth century scholars who translated into lexicons and studied the Bible began to view New Testament Greek as simply common Greek called, "koine'," due to recent finds in Egypt of papyrus documents of a non-Biblical nature with similar words to the Bible's

¹³ Paul C. Gutjahr, "From Monarchy to Democracy: The Dethroning of the King James Bible in the United States", in *The King James Bible after 400 Years: Literary, Linguistic, and Cultural Influences* ed. Hannibal Hamlin & Norman Jones (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 164.

¹⁴ David S. Schaff, *The Life of Schaff: In Part Autobiographical* (New York: Charles Scribner & Son, 1897), 354.

¹⁵ Herbert S. Marsh, *Lectures on the Criticism and Interpretation of the Bible* (London: J. Smith, 1828), 279.

¹⁶ George P. Marsh, *Lectures on the English Language* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1885), 549. The last names of these two lecturers on separate continents are purely a matter of coincidence to my knowledge.

¹⁷ Schaff, *The Life of Schaff*, 357.

¹⁸ P.R. Ackroyd & C.F. Evans, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Beginnings to Jerome* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 8.

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Greek.¹⁹ Lexicographers also began translating Greek words into English not from their Biblical usage but from secular Greek writings, plays, and works on philosophy. It became a standard practice with the Bible to go to other sources than the Bible to see word usage and definitions.²⁰

In Bishop Westcott's personal letters to Bishop Hort and other members of the revision committee it was clear that at least he felt contempt for the *King James Version*. Westcott said in a letter written on October 12, 1853, "I feel most keenly the disgrace of circulating what I feel to be falsified copies of Holy Scriptures [referring to the AV], and am most anxious to provide something to replace them."²¹ They also did not hold to the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture in general (not only the *KJV*) but believed in the Bible's particular human, not divine, origin, based on the nineteenth century changes in the way the manuscript evidence was viewed and Bible translating was done. As Hort said to a respected colleague, the Reverend J.B. Lightfoot, in a letter dated May 1st of 1860, "If you make a decided conviction of the absolute infallibility of the N.T. practically a sine qua non for co-operation, I fear I could not join you..."²² Hort acknowledged that the views of himself and Westcott, as well as the other Anglican scholars who took on the work of revision the *King James Bible* might well meet with opposition. In a letter dated April 12th 1861 he confessed,

I have a sort of craving that our text should be cast upon the world before we deal with matters likely to brand us with suspicion. I mean, a text, issued by men already known for what will undoubtedly be treated as dangerous heresy, will have great difficulties in finding its way to regions which it might otherwise hope to reach, and whence it would not be easily banished by subsequent alarms.²³

The revision finally did come out and was subsequently critiqued by Bible scholars of the time. Dean John Burgon of Chichester, noted conservative Bible scholar, attacked the revision vigorously in 1883. "I pointed out that 'the New Greek Text,' – which, in defiance of their instructions, the Revisionists of the 'Authorized English Version' had been so ill-

¹⁹ F.F. Bruce. Foreword to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers* (Nashville, TN: Royal Publishers, 1952), xii.

²⁰ Bruce, *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, x.

²¹ Arthur Westcott, *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott, Volume 1* (New York: MacMillan & Co., 1903), 229.

²² Arthur Fenton Hort, *Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort, Volume 1* (New York: MacMillan & Co.), 1896), 420.

²³ *Ibid.*, 445.

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advised as to spend ten years in elaborating, - was a wholly untrustworthy performance: was full of the gravest errors from beginning to end...."²⁴

THE PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

How did conservative, Protestant Christians deal with the attacks on the Bible's veracity by German scholarship and criticism of the text of the commonly accepted Bible and scientific theories such as Evolution? The Westcott and Hort Greek Text has been the basis for all of the other Greek Texts in use for Bible translating for the last one hundred and thirty years.²⁵ Most Fundamentalists accepted the Westcott and Hort Greek text, largely due to a new doctrine formulated at the Princeton Theological Seminary in 1879 that said that the original autographs only were inerrant and infallible.²⁶ This allowed a fallback position from the assault on the inerrancy of the Bible by such things as modern scholarship and the acceptance of Darwin's version of the theory of Evolution to a Bible that didn't actually exist in reality as the original manuscripts were never in one Bible and were themselves not extant so they could not be questioned. The mark of Fundamentalism in America was a conservative, literal approach to Scriptural interpretation and a belief in the divine inspiration of the original autographs with translations being trustworthy but not perfect. It reduced divine inspiration to mere transmission from God to writing on a single occasion.²⁷

This position permitted the continuation in conservative Protestant circles of the authority of the Bible which was the basis of Protestantism in its beginnings. As the early Anglican churchman, William Chillingworth, said in 1638, "The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants!"²⁸ Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge, in his three volume work, *Systematic Theology*, stated in 1873, quoting Martin Luther's 1537 Smallcald Articles, that; " All Protestants agree in teaching that 'the word of God, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only infallible rule of faith and practice.'"²⁹ In the next century Baptist theologian Henry Clarence Thiessen went even further in his *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*, "It [what he called the true

²⁴ John William Burgon, preface to *The Revision Revised* (1883 reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1971), xi.

²⁵ Eldon Jay Epp, foreward to *The Greek New Testament* by B.F. Westcott & F.J.A Hort (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), xii.

²⁶ Sandeen, "Toward an Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism," 74.

²⁷ Kern Robert Trembath, *Evangelical Theories of Divine Inspiration: A Review and Proposal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 15.

²⁸ William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants: A Safe Way to Salvation* (1638, repr. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1846), 463.

²⁹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (1873, repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1940), Vol. 1, ch. 6, Kindle edition.

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Church] bases its view on the belief that the Bible is the embodiment of a divine revelation, and that the records which contain that revelation are genuine, credible, canonical, and supernaturally inspired."³⁰

DISSENT OVER BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

There was dissent over every Bible translation when they first were published, even the *King James Bible*. A few examples will suffice as arguments over individual translations' accuracy are not the subject of this paper. Scholar Hugh Broughton, who was not included among the *KJV* translators, declared his objection to that translation. He said, "Tell his Majesty that I had rather be rent in pieces with wild horses than any such translation by my consent should be urged upon poor Churches."³¹ Notable objections to more modern revisions include the aforementioned Dean John Burgon's objections to the *Revised Version*. Another example is the objection to Edgar Goodspeed's *American Translation* in the 1920s which was based on the revulsion for putting the beauty of the Bible's language into modern idioms.³² Peter Thuesen chronicled the objections to Bible versions in the American context, particularly the *Revised Standard Version*, in his *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Battles over Translating the Bible*.³³

The main focus of the *King James*-only Movement was not a series of arguments against individual Bible translations, although many books were written by the defenders of the movement against individual translations. The main thesis of the *KJV*-only Movement was that any translation other than the *Authorized Version (AV)* also called the *King James Bible (KJB)* or *King James Version (KJV)* was a bad translation and a harm to the faith of Bible Believing Christians, those Christians who took the Bible literally as their final authority in all matters of faith, practice, and doctrine.

INDEPENDENT BAPTISTS

The Independent Baptist church movement was started by the pastor of the nation's first Protestant 'megachurch,' J. Frank Norris, in the early part of the twentieth century. Within this movement a controversy surrounding the very Bible which Fundamentalist Baptists held as infallible and inerrant arose in the latter part of the twentieth century.

³⁰ Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1949), 79.

³¹ David Norton, *A History of the English Bible as Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 74.

³² R.B. Bademan, "'Monkeying with the Bible': Edgar J. Goodspeed's American Translation," *Religion and American Culture* : R & AC 16, no. 1 (2006): 57.

³³ Peter J. Thuesen, *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles over Translating the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

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The accepted Fundamentalist belief in the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible did not fall in a specific translation of it but in a divinely inspired set of original autographs by the Bible writers whose names were long associated with the books they were purported to have written with translations such as the *King James* displaying various degrees of reliability. A new doctrine was formulated and expressed first in print in 1964 that elevated the *King James Bible* above all other translations. This point bears repeating. This movement is not simply about an argument over good translations of the Bible versus bad or contrasting interpretations of the Bible. This paper's point is the identification and explanation of a new movement begun in writing in 1964 unlike any before it whose stated belief was that the *King James Bible* is God's preserved and inspired words in English, at least, allowing no competitors or rival versions. This doctrine is a rejection of the singular and unique divine inspiration of the original autographs. It was peculiar as represented by a subset of Independent Baptist Churches and is not found in other Protestant faith traditions. It was also relatively ignored by students of American religion. That is a vital point that must be understood. The conflict existed and it was ignored by the mainstream, as in those scholars who are not Baptist and not part of the movement, with few exceptions, in the latter part of the twentieth century . This paper is not about the history of Fundamentalism, Biblical interpretation, doctrine, or other theological assertions outside of the identification of this ignored movement and its influence on IFB churches.

The foundation for the conflict was laid when individual teachers, missionaries, and pastors began to write polemics against the more modern versions of the Bible produced by the efforts of the 1881 Anglican Revision of the *King James Bible* and those who followed after in the revision committee's footsteps. The conflict developed into a cultural subset of Fundamentalism. As a controversy it split churches apart. Within the IFB church (an individual IFB church might be named a "Bible Church") movement in America in the years between 1964 and the end of the century the controversy was an issue that had to be addressed in many congregations. Ultimately what developed in the minds and teaching of its partisans was a new doctrine that insisted the *King James Bible* contained the only inspired words of God in the English language, at least, and all other translations were counterfeits. This was a position never before established in either Evangelical American Protestantism or in Fundamentalism. Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism are almost synonyms except that Fundamentalism is more militant in its submission to the authority of Scripture.³⁴

This paper will clarify the conflict between IFB churches with regard to their own definition of the words, "the Bible," and under whose influence they came in that regard.

³⁴ Harriet A. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4.

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There were two major stances on the Bible issue within IFB churches; the first being that only the original autographs of the presumed Bible writers were inspired by God and were perfect, infallible, and inerrant while different translations displayed varying degrees of trustworthiness. The second stance was that the *King James Bible*, the *Authorized Version*, was itself a perfect Bible without proven error, the inspired words of God. The first stance represented historical Fundamentalism and was divided into two groups. One group accepted the Anglican Revision of 1881 and its *Critical Text* or *Minority Text* based on a small number of authoritative Bible manuscripts. The second group argued against the Revision and for what was called the *Traditional Text*, the *Textus Receptus* or *Received Text* for the Greek and the *Masoretic Text* for the Hebrew, as being authoritative with the *Authorized Version* as being the most reliable translation. The Greek of the "New Testament" was the focus of the debate more so than the Hebrew of the "Old Testament." It followed that if the original autographs only were inspired by God then the presumed original languages of Greek and Hebrew were part of that inspiration.³⁵

The stance that is the basis of the *King James*-only movement is that the *King James Bible* did not just represent the inspired words of God found in a Greek text but was itself the inspired words of God in English, at least. The most extreme form of what eventually was known as *King James*-onlyism required foreign language translations to be made from that Bible rather than the background texts from which it was translated. The political power and popularity of the IFB movement, although much trumpeted by the mainstream media, was limited by the division over the Bible; not over its inerrancy, its inspiration, its supernatural revelation, or its importance and influence, but by the very definition of "the Bible". The influence of IFB churches in America in the realm of national and local politics over the last quarter of the century made this issue significant. The published writings of the *King James*-only Movement are discussed immediately after the literature on the subject from those Fundamentalists and scholars outside of the movement is reviewed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

During the period of 1964 to 2000 there were no scholarly books written about the *King James*-only Movement. I mean by scholarly that no disinterested scholars without emotional investment in the movement or against the movement or as Fundamentalists themselves felt that the movement was important. The authors listed in the following represented the two sides of traditional Fundamentalism in America. One side stood for the *Critical Text* and the credibility of the work of the Anglican Revision of 1881. This led to an acceptance of most modern versions of the Bible to varying degrees based on

³⁵ Robert M. Price, *Inerrant the Wind: The Evangelical Crisis in Biblical Authority* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2009), 79

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preference. The second side stood for the authority of the *Textus Receptus* with the *King James Bible* being its best representative.

One exception was Princeton scholar, Dr. Peter J. Thuesen, who published *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles over Translating the Bible* in 1999. Thuesen revealed the plethora of disagreements over Bible translations throughout American history and the controversy over the *Revised Standard Version* and its challenge to the *King James Bible* with comments on David Otis Fuller's stance in his book, *Which Bible?*, and his rejection of the *Revised Standard Version*. Thuesen's work helped in establishing the existence of disagreements over specific translations but only briefly mentioned an emerging focus on the authority of the *King James Bible* but did not mention the belief in its divine inspiration. It is logical to assume that modernity demanded truth and accuracy and this led to the methodologies and techniques of the modern Bible translators but that is a statement which every *KJV*-only proponent would argue was preposterous. The *KJV*-only advocates would likely argue that if modernity demanded accuracy in methodologies and techniques of the modern Bible translators then it was certainly frustrated by the failings of the modern lexicography of ancient Greek. First, as James White, a Fundamentalist opposed to the *King James*-only Movement, said, the texts used for modern Bible versions other than the *King James* are different than those used for the *King James*.³⁶ Differences in manuscripts mean that there are some different words to translate. To imply that the *King James* is not accurate because it did not accurately translate a word from the *Critical* or *Minority Text* into English is incorrect when the *Traditional Text* or *Textus Receptus* had a different word to translate. The *King James* is an accurate rendering of the words in Greek and Hebrew that were before them. As Ward Allen said, referring to the *King James* translators' skill, "The translators were masters of Greek words, and they had an astonishing command of the full range of meaning for English words. Even more surprising is their sense for the current status of English words."³⁷ With regard to modernity and the accuracy of modern lexicons from which Greek words' English equivalents are found, lexicographer John Lee confessed, "It is simply a fact that what has been done so far cannot be relied on....we cannot know for certain that what we find in front of us when we look up a word is sound..." going on to insist that all of the currently existing lexicographical entries are obsolete.³⁸ If one justification for modern Bible versions' rejection of *King James* reading is based on a demand for accuracy there appears to be a lacuna, not only in the scholarship regarding

³⁶ James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust Modern Translations?* Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1995), 28.

³⁷ Ward Allen, *The Coming of the King James Gospels*, (Little Rock, AK: University of Arkansas Press, 1995), 48.

³⁸ Bernard A. Taylor, John A. L. Lee, Peter R. Burton, & Richard Whitaker, eds. *Biblical Greek Language Lexicography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans Publishing Co., 2004), xi.

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the *King James*-only Movement itself, but in other facets of the Bible translating process, as well.

Objections to the Anglican Revision and the text it produced began within a generation of its publications of its conclusions. Philip Mauro, a lawyer rather than a trained Bible scholar, wrote *Which Version? Authorized or Revised* in which he questioned the value of the 1881 Revision and the Greek text upon which it was based. His stated reasons given throughout his book were not in any way related to social events or the recent world war or any events external to his study of the Bible. He simply objected to the accuracy of the revision that was at that time only forty years old.³⁹

Thuesen noted that Mauro had contributed to the work that defined the Fundamentalist movement entitled *The Fundamentals* in the early part of the twentieth century after being converted to a belief in the inerrancy of the Bible in the original autographs and using the *Revised Version*. He later changed his mind about that Bible version and began to uphold the *Authorized Version* and attacked the *Revised Version* as being based on inferior manuscripts. Mauro based a great deal of his contempt for the Anglican Revision of 1881 on the works of John William Burgon, an early critic of the revision.⁴⁰

John William Burgon was a noted Greek textual expert of the late 1800's. He penned three major objections to the Anglican Revision of 1881 entitled *The Revision Revised*, *The Traditional Text*, and *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark*. However, he was a proponent, not of the perfection of the *King James*, but of the trustworthiness of the traditional Byzantine text over the text established by Anglican Bishops Westcott and Hort of the Anglican Revision Committee based on the Alexandrian text type.

Another scholar that Thuesen pointed to was Dr. Benjamin Wilkinson of the Seventh Day Adventist College in Tacoma Park, Maryland, known then as the Washington Missionary College. He was the Dean of Theology there and penned his attack on the Anglican Revision entitled *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated* in 1930. He also quoted John Burgon. However, he was not an advocate of the inspiration of the *King James Bible* above all possible translations. He said very clearly that the, "original Scriptures were written by direct inspiration of God," and that any Bible translated faithfully from the *Textus Receptus* was the, "Word of God."⁴¹

The Anglican revision of the *King James Bible* of 1881 resulted in a Greek text that was radically different from any used previously in the Protestant faith tradition.

³⁹ Philip Mauro, *Which Version? Authorized or Revised* (1924, repr., Orlando, FL: Vance Publications, 2001).

⁴⁰ Thuesen, *Discordance with the Scriptures*, 60.

⁴¹ Benjamin G. Wilkinson, *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated* (Payson, AZ: Leaves of Autumn Books, 1930), 256.

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Hendrickson Publishers reproduced that text by Westcott and Hort, the leaders of the revision committee. The foreword by Eldon Jay Epp provided the history of and the reasoning behind the creation of the text which began in 1853, published originally in 1881.⁴² In addition, Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* contained a foreword by respected Bible scholar, F.F. Bruce, which was valuable in understanding the principles by which Bible translating changed in the nineteenth century.⁴³

Often quoted by the extreme partisans of the *KJV*-only was missionary Jasper James (J.J.) Ray who published *God Wrote Only One Bible* in 1955, plagiarizing much of Wilkinson's work, as others would later do, but he was still of the camp that promoted the *Textus Receptus* above the work of the Anglican Revision of 1881 and insisted that the Bible was preserved in that Greek text from which the *AV* was translated.⁴⁴ Ray's main objections seemed sparked by the release of the very *Revised Standard Version*. A year after Ray, Presbyterian Dr. Edward F. Hills, expert in textual criticism, graduate summa cum laude from Yale and graduate of Westminster and Columbia Theological Seminaries as well as Harvard University, published his tome, *The King James Version Defended*, which although often quoted by *King James*-only advocates only went so far as saying that, "it is not absolutely perfect, but it is trustworthy," while upholding the *Textus Receptus* over the text produced by the Anglican Revision.⁴⁵

Baptist Pastor and *King James Bible* proponent, David Otis Fuller, became well known in Fundamental Baptist circles with three books, the most notable being *Which Bible?*, followed by *True or False? The Westcott-Hort Textual Theory Examined*, and *Counterfeit or Genuine?* Like J.J. Ray's book in the 1950's Fuller borrowed heavily from Wilkinson without citation.⁴⁶ Thuesen mentioned Fuller's books in his bibliography but his main mention of Fuller, the one that stood out the most significantly, was Fuller's trumpeting of the *Textus Receptus* as, "virtually infallible," while defending the *King James Bible* as its best English representative.⁴⁷

In 1979, D.A. Carson, who received his PhD from the University of Cambridge and was a research professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, published

⁴² Eldon Jay Epp, foreword to *The Greek New Testament with Dictionary*, by B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort (1881 repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), xi.

⁴³ F.F. Bruce, foreword to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W.E. Vine (Nashville, TN: Royal Publishers, 1952), x.

⁴⁴ Jasper James Ray, *God Only Wrote One Bible* (Eugene, OR: The Eye Opener Publishers, 1955), 106.

⁴⁵ Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (1956 repr., Ankeny IA: Christian Research Press, 1984), 184.

⁴⁶ David Otis Fuller, *Which Bible?* (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1970). *True or False? The Westcott-Hort Textual Theory Examined*, 1973. *Counterfeit or Genuine?* 1978.

⁴⁷ Thuesen, 118.

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*The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism.*⁴⁸ Carson followed the pattern of the Fundamentalist camp that held the original autographs to be sacred, inerrant, and inspired by God but translations to be just feeble attempts at reproducing God's words in print. One of Carson's themes that it was petty to point to a few errors and dismiss a translation on the basis of them and that by the standards the *King James*-only crowd set even the *King James Bible* could not stand up.⁴⁹ His point that, "no translation is perfect...No translation has ever been perfect," underscores the distance between scholars like Carson and the most extreme point of view of the *King James*-only Movement.⁵⁰

Dr. James R. White made his entry into the fray with the 1995 book *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust Modern Translations?* White's work was the most conclusive and in-depth study of the controversy ever written by someone who was not a *King James*-only partisan. He identified the creator of the movement, Peter Ruckman, and all of the key players and their written works. He noted Fuller's and Ray's work and covered much of the same textual criticism ground of Hills, Wilkinson, and Mauro from the perspective of someone who believed the original autographs were inspired by God.⁵¹ He also alluded to Carson's work. Interestingly, he did not mention Wilkinson or Mauro by name. He did give a reasoned explanation of the science of textual criticism. White's book was also important in that it was recommended by pastors who tried to keep the *King James*-only Movement from disrupting their own IFB churches.

Acknowledging the firestorm in Fundamentalism the neo-evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* published its contribution to the study of the controversy in October, 1995. "King James-only Advocates Experience Renaissance," written by Joe Maxwell, gave a fair assessment of the movement that reached its peak at that time. The title betrayed an inconsistency with the article as the word "renaissance" implied a connection to a historical position as if the movement had a precursor in history and this was a revival, so to speak. Although implied by the title, no such historical link was provided.⁵²

Kenneth Hagen's 1998 book entitled *The Bible in the Churches: How Various Christians Interpret the Scriptures* offered a passing glance at the *King James*-only Movement and wrote that the proponents of that movement preferred the Greek text supported by the majority of ancient manuscripts but that most Evangelicals and, one might add, most

⁴⁸ D.A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1979). Google edition.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. 8.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ White, *The King James Only Controversy*, 22.

⁵² Joe Maxwell, "King James-only Advocates Experience Renaissance," *Christianity Today*, October 23, 1995, Vol. 39, Issue 12, 86.

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Fundamentalists, accepted Westcott and Hort's work.⁵³ Hagen did not identify the more radical elements in the movement. Doug Kutilek brought out his book entitled *J. Frank Norris and His Heirs: The Bible Translation Controversy* in 1999 to unravel any links to one of the founders of the IFB movement and the *King James*-only controversy.

The scholars and authors who wrote about the *King James*-only Movement on or before the year 2000 or who presented ideas which that movement used as fuel for its side of the debate were divided into two groups. One represented by Burgon, Mauro, Wilkinson, Ray, Hills, and Fuller regarded the *Traditional Text* as being authoritative. The other viewed the work of the Anglican Revision and the text they produced as more credible. This included Carson, White, and Beacham. Neither side regarded the *King James Bible* itself as inspired by God. It was merely one of many translations to one group and promoted as the best translation by others but nonetheless just a translation with errors and problems. For both sides, perfection was only found in the original autographs. Burgon, Mauro, Wilkinson, Ray, Hills, and Fuller are claimed by the *King James*-only Movement but they were not proponents of *King James*-onlyism.

THE KING JAMES-ONLY MOVEMENT IN PRINT

In 1964, a Baptist pastor from Pensacola, Florida published a book entitled *Bible Babel*. As stated previously, up until this point in the history of Fundamentalism with regard to the Bible translation issue there were two distinct camps. One group of Fundamentalists believed in the perceived solid scholarship behind the Westcott and Hort Greek Text and the Bible translations that flowed from it. The other believed in the virtue of the *Traditional Text* or *Textus Receptus*, the *Received Text*, with the *King James Bible* being the best translation. Now, things would take an interesting turn. Dr. Peter Ruckman, graduate of conservative but traditionally Fundamentalist Bob Jones University, firmly in the Westcott and Hort camp, began insisting on some things completely contrary to what his alma mater taught. In the book Ruckman threw a monkey wrench into the gears of Fundamentalist thought. In his opening remarks he made the shocking recommendation, "...you would do well to stick to the *King James Bible* (1611) whether you are a Protestant, Catholic, or Jew."⁵⁴ He never explained why a Roman Catholic or a Jew should acknowledge the authority of the *King James Bible*. On the same page he called the *King James Bible*, "the greatest book ever written, published, taught, memorized, studied, preached, or read."⁵⁵ With this opening salvo he continued later insisting that, unlike

⁵³ Kenneth Hagen, *The Bible in the Churches; How Various Christians Interpret the Scriptures* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1998), 142.

⁵⁴ Peter S. Ruckman, *Bible Babel* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Believer's Press, 1964), v.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

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other Bibles, the *King James Bible*, "is true to the exaltation of Jesus Christ."⁵⁶ Dr. Ruckman attacked the very foundation of Fundamentalist belief in the inspired original autographs pointing out that no one had seen the originals, the originals never existed together in any book, and pointedly, "there are no scholars, saved or lost, living or dead, who ever made the mistake of thinking that *Paul wrote his originals, and then put them into a BOOK that contained Moses' and Isaiah's originals.*"⁵⁷ Ruckman finished up with a definitive statement about the *King James*. He said it was, "preserved by the grace of God, without error, in spite of the work of the faculty members of..." and then he named several prominent Fundamentalist universities, calling it a, "perfect BOOK for the end time."⁵⁸

Suddenly, believing the *King James Bible* was a good but flawed or even superior but with some errors in translation was not good enough. It was the only translation approved by God Himself without error, an infallible Bible translation. *Bible Babel* was very popular among the rank and file IFB and was reprinted again in 1981, 1987, and 1994 to meet the demand after the movement took hold in local churches. Needless to say this would not please the bastions of "orthodox" Fundamentalism such as Bob Jones University, Tennessee Temple, Pensacola Christian College, and later, Liberty University, although there is no record of their immediate response to the book's publication. This disapproval was evident later as teachers in those schools would argue in letters with the *KJV* only faithful, arguments preserved in Ruckman's books.

Ruckman's view on the authority and perfection of the *King James Bible* was established while a student at Bob Jones University. Interestingly, before he so clearly explained his position in the *Bible Babel* he commented on it in a 1960 work on the Bible book, *The Revelation of St. John*, commonly called *Revelation*. In the book, *The Mark of the Beast*, Ruckman noted his views on the superiority of the *King James Bible* and the inferiority of every other modern Bible version. But this book did not emphasize the Bible version issue for which he became noted as did the *Bible Babel*.

Ruckman preached his message in churches from coast to coast and was recorded on tape quite extensively by his supporters beginning in 1964. Eventually, the bookstore associated with his church would sell popular cassette tapes and then CD's which included commentary on books of the Bible and his polemics against modern Bible versions uplifting the authority, credibility, and perfection of the *Authorized Version* of the Bible. In 1965, Dr. Ruckman founded the Pensacola Bible Institute and trained pastors, missionaries, teachers, and laymen in his viewpoints on the Bible.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 43

⁵⁷ Ibid., 113.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 135

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The next significant work produced by Ruckman that addressed his view on the Bible version debate was his commentary in 1969 on the book of Genesis. Again, he directed a challenge to traditional Fundamentalist scholarship, but this time he expanded his arguments to the Old Testament. "After carefully checking the 1500 (plus) 'supposed errors' in the Old Testament text, the author has come to the conclusion that 80 per cent of the critics of the AV 1611 do not know about what they are talking, and the remaining 20 per cent did what they did for scholastic standing."⁵⁹

Ruckman was the great grandson of a Civil War hero, the grandson of a World War One general, and the son of an Army colonel who worked on the Manhattan Project during World War Two.⁶⁰ He was a hand-to-hand combat instructor in the U.S. Army toward the close of World War Two. These facts of his life influenced his combative nature. In 1970 Ruckman threw the gauntlet down with *The Christian Handbook of Manuscript Evidence*. This was no rehash of Wilkinson from forty years before but a thorough, almost Edward Hills like, appraisal of the Biblical scholarship that overthrew the *King James Bible* and generated new, updated Bible versions every decade. Unlike Hills, Ruckman did not write in a scholarly fashion. His writing style was of the preacher exhorting his congregation. One could almost hear him shouting at certain points where capital letters dominated the pages. He covered everything in this book from the early church fathers and Westcott and Hort's work to the damage he perceived inflicted on the average Christian confused by a multitude of Bible versions that all had slightly different readings being published at regular intervals.⁶¹

Ruckman also laid out his claim to the *King James Bible's* superiority even over the, "original Greek." Rather than comparing the Greek of the *Textus Receptus* as superior to the Greek text formulated by Westcott and Hort's revision committee as other Fundamentalists did, he said, "...the AV 1611 English text is superior to the Westcott and Hort GREEK text...the English readings are superior to the Greek readings, which is borne out by the comparison of one verse to another."⁶² In that same year Ruckman published his commentary on the book of Matthew. Now, in the New Testament, he emphatically declared, "What the modern scribe hates about the AV is the 'A,' for it means AUTHORIZED (from 'authority')."⁶³ These types of jabs at Fundamentalist scholarship were common throughout his works.

⁵⁹ Peter S. Ruckman, *The Book of Genesis* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1969), vii.

⁶⁰ Peter S. Ruckman, *The Full Cup, A Chronicle of Grace: Autobiography* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1998), 1.

⁶¹ Peter S. Ruckman, *The Christian's Handbook of Manuscript Evidence* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Press, 1970).

⁶² *Ibid.*, 128.

⁶³ Peter S. Ruckman, *The Book of Matthew* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1970), 627.

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In 1972 Ruckman attacked the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) with the booklet, *Satan's Masterpiece: The New ASV*.⁶⁴ The year 1973 featured Ruckman's booklet, a smaller version of *Manuscript Evidence* entitled *The Monarch of Books: An Illustrated Account in Layman's Language of the English Bible*, again, written for the average person.⁶⁵ The year 1978 brought his *Survey of the Authorized Version*, clearly intended to keep the controversy charged up.⁶⁶

The year 1983 featured Ruckman's attack on the *New King James Bible*, a more conservative attempt at translating than those versions previous to it in the years since 1900. It was entitled *About the New King James Version*.⁶⁷ That year also saw Ruckman's effort to answer critics of the *King James Bible's* multiple historical editions in *Differences in the King James Version Editions*.⁶⁸ In 1988 Ruckman published a more detailed book on the history of Biblical scholarship with a blistering attack on modern versions such as the *Revised Version*, the *American Standard Version*, the *Revised Standard Version*, the *New American Standard Version*, *The Living Bible*, and the *New International Version*. This book was entitled *The Christian's Handbook of Biblical Scholarship*, again not written in a scholarly manner but written in language that the average person could understand which is what made his books so popular in many IFB churches.⁶⁹

Ruckman's folksy humor and writing style, designed to appeal to the average IFB churchgoer, was very popular and made the Bible Baptist Bookstore or Bible Baptist Press, a ministry of his church, the Bible Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida a small but quite successful publishing house. The bookstore even sold books by people who opposed Ruckman's ideas and people he criticized in his own works.

During the early 1980s Jack Chick, a purveyor of cartoon gospel tracts, got in on the *King James-only* movement. His Chick Publications, the producer of the tracts, published books such as Barry Burton's *Let's Weigh the Evidence: Which Bible is the REAL Word of God?* in

⁶⁴ Peter S. Ruckman, *Satan's Masterpiece: The New ASV* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1972). NASB for New American Standard Bible and NASV for New American Standard Version refer to the same Bible version.

⁶⁵ Peter S. Ruckman, *The Monarch of Books: An Illustrated Account in Layman's Language of the English Bible* (1973 rep., Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 2002).

⁶⁶ Peter S. Ruckman, *A Survey of the Authorized Version* (1978, repr. Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 2003).

⁶⁷ Peter S. Ruckman, *About the New King James Version* (1983 repr., Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 2007).

⁶⁸ Peter S. Ruckman, *Differences in the King James Version Editions* (1983 repr., Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1999).

⁶⁹ Peter S. Ruckman, *The Christian's Handbook of Biblical Scholarship* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1988).

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1983.⁷⁰ The books produced by the *King James*-only Movement were no longer rehashing Benjamin Wilkinson's work or J.J. Ray's copying of it but drawing on the resources of a new generation of students of manuscript evidence who were encouraged by Ruckman's outspoken success and popularity. Dr. Samuel Gipp, a graduate of Ruckman's Bible Institute, introduced his *An Understandable History of the Bible* in 1987, defending the authority of the *King James*. In 1989 he released *The Answer Book*, both now published free of charge on www.chick.com by the Chick tract company.⁷¹ Ruckman, who dominated the 1970s and 80s with his popular preaching style and constant flow of books published by his Bible Baptist Bookstore, began 1990 with an assault on the *New International Version* entitled *The NIV: An "In-Depth" Documentation of Apostasy*, and in 1992 he had published *King James Onlyism versus Scholarship Onlyism*.⁷²

The 1990s, as the century came to a close, saw the largest number of broadsides with new combatants entering the fray. First, in 1993, Gail Riplinger exploded onto the scene with her attack on all modern Bible versions, only with much more in depth and original scholarship, entitled *New Age Bible Versions: An Exhaustive Documentation of the Message, Men, and Manuscripts Moving Mankind to the Antichrist's One World Religion*.⁷³ Gail Riplinger was the most prominent and outspoken of the new leaders in the *King James*-only Movement. Her book, she reported, was the result of a six year study of, "new Bible versions, Greek editions and manuscripts, commencing with over 3,000 hours of word-for-word collation of the entire New Testament."⁷⁴ Riplinger's book was very thorough and detailed in its 650 pages but she was just getting warmed up. More significant work would follow. The book was brought out in churches and argued over by congregants who never considered the issue before and who had never heard of Ruckman. Her most significant difference from Ruckman was her associating of modern Bible translators from Westcott and Hort onward with Satanism and occult beliefs.

Perhaps believing that the *New American Standard Bible's* owners, the Lockman Foundation, updated and revised their version in 1996 based on the damning evidence found in Riplinger's explosive book, Dr. Laurence Vance went after them with, *Double Jeopardy: The NASB Update*, in 1998. He published in the same year as Riplinger's

⁷⁰ Barry Burton, *Let's Weigh the Evidence: Which Bible is the REAL Word of God?* (Ontario, CA: Chick Publications, 1983).

⁷¹ Samuel Gipp, *An Understandable History of the Bible* (Miamitown, OH: Daystar Publishing, 1987). *The Answer Book*, 1989.

⁷² Peter S. Ruckman, *The NIV: An "In-Depth" Documentation of Apostasy* (1990, repr., Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1998). *King James Onlyism versus Scholarship Onlyism*, 1992.

⁷³ Gail Riplinger, *New Age Bible Versions: An Exhaustive Documentation of the Message, Men, and Manuscripts Moving Mankind to the Antichrist's One World Religion* (Ararat, VA: AV Publications, 1993).

⁷⁴ Riplinger, *New Age Bible Versions*, 4.

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bestseller his own, *A Brief History of English Bible Translations*.⁷⁵ Riplinger's thoroughness but sensationalistic accusations were matched by Vance's scholarly and dignified prose. Lesser known authors also joined the exhortation to use only the *King James Bible* such as Chick Salliby, who published one of the more notable attacks on *The New International Version (NIV)* entitled *If the Foundations Be Destroyed* in 1994.⁷⁶

Dr. William Grady published the most scholarly work on this side of Hill's *The King James Version Defended* with his 1993 historical work entitled *Final Authority* which he made available at no charge later on the internet as an audio book. *Final Authority* placed the translation into an historical context from the earliest Bible manuscripts and versions until the Reformation. It is one book rarely attacked, perhaps due to his thoroughness, extensive citations, and helpful bibliography.⁷⁷ Grady implored the Independent Baptist reader with, "Until we hear His trumpet sound (1 Thessalonians 4:16), we must...believe the King James Bible is the preserved Word of God..."⁷⁸

Ruckman, who had a vicious exchange of letters with James R. White, responded to White's *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust Modern Bible Translations?* in 1996 with *The Scholarship Only Controversy: Can You Trust the Professional Liars?* and *The Mythological Septuagint: A Fairy Tale for Grownups*. In the *Scholarship Only Controversy* Dr. Ruckman referred to Bible scholar J.I. Packer's commendation of White's book as, "spaced-out hysteria."⁷⁹ He also published *The Mythological Septuagint: A Fairy Tale for Grownups* which attacked the Greek translation of the Old Testament that the *King James* translators rejected but modern scholars preferred. Then the very next year he released a treasure trove of personal correspondence and statements from prominent Fundamentalists in the originals only camp entitled *The Christian Liars Library*. Ruckman already released a similar group of correspondence in 1990's *The Last Grenade: A Military Record of the Biblical Apostasy of Modern Christianity*. Both of these books contained the arguments against his movement by the professors of the schools that represented traditional Fundamentalism, in part born out of the controversy around the Scopes Monkey Trial. He finished the century in the year 2000 with *The Alexandrian Cult Series*,

⁷⁵ Laurence Vance, *Double Jeopardy; The NASB Update* (Orlando, FL: Vance Publications, 1998), *A Brief History of English Bible Translations*, 1993.

⁷⁶ Chick Salliby, *If the Foundations Be Destroyed* (Taylors, SC: Faith Printing Co, 1994).

⁷⁷ William P. Grady, *Final Authority: A Christian's Guide to the King James Bible* (Knoxville, TN: Grady Publications, 1993).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁷⁹ Peter S. Ruckman, *The Scholarship Only Controversy: Can You Trust the Professional Liars?* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1996), xiii.

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the Alexandrian Cult being his derogatory name for those who followed Westcott and Hort's Greek Text.⁸⁰

Gail Riplinger, in 1998, published praise of the *King James Bible* entitled *The Language of the King James Bible* which, among other things, chronicled her decade long obsession with studying everything from Sanskrit to the history of Bible translating and copying. She stated that the *KJV* was flawless.⁸¹ Riplinger made several statements in her book which she set out to prove about the unique authority of the *Authorized Version*. One was that the *King James Bible* had its own built-in dictionary and another that by using literary devices such as parallel phrasing words and concepts were defined in it in her effort to manifest the supernatural design of that version.⁸²

Riplinger added the science of linguistics to her review of scholarship to support her view of the perfection of the King James Bible. Riplinger stated that the language of the *King James* explained the grammar and syntax of the Greek and Hebrew in an implication, similar to Ruckman's shown earlier, that the English Bible was superior to the Greek and Hebrew.⁸³

Riplinger also quoted extensively from Harvard's *Literary Guide to the Bible* to help her point out the literary devices that this particular Bible used to help with meaning and for the understanding of the reader to buttress her view of its superiority. Taking from among the several quotes from the *Literary Guide to the Bible* she listed on pages 133 and 134 of her book the Harvard compilers of various essays on the Bible said that the *King James Bible*, "is the version that best preserves the literary effects of the original languages," although their reasons for uplifting it had nothing to do with divine inspiration.⁸⁴ In the same contribution the author pointed out that even the translators of the modern versions believed it was a great work of art, although no citation of any modern translator's approval was given.⁸⁵ It was also explained how the syntax of that Bible reflected that of the original languages better than other Bibles.⁸⁶

The *King James Bible* known also as the *King James Version (KJV)* and the *Authorized Version (AV)* was the dominant Protestant Bible for several centuries. Bible translators and

⁸⁰ *The Mythological Septuagint: A Fairy Tale for Grownups*, (Pensacola Fl: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1996.) *The Christian Liars Library*, 1997. *The Alexandrian Cult Series*, 2000, *The Last Grenade*, 1990.

⁸¹ Gail Riplinger, *The Language of the King James Bible*, (1998, repr., Ararat, VA: AV Publications, 2003), 128.

⁸² *Ibid.*, xvii.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Robert Alter & Frank Kermode, "General Introduction." *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, Edited by Robert Alter & Frank Kermode (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 7.

⁸⁵ Hammond, Gerald. "English Translations of the Bible." *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. 650.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 656.

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scholars in the nineteenth century, based on new manuscript discoveries and new ways of viewing the nature of the Bible manuscripts, came to change methodology and reasoning behind translating the Bible. Fundamentalism was divided into two views on the Bible, one that the Anglican Revision of the *King James Bible* and the Bibles that flowed from it were superior and the other that the *Traditional Text* or *Textus Receptus*, Latin for *Received Text*, was superior with the *King James Bible* being the best translation. Both sides agreed that divine inspiration lay only in the original autographs of the presumed Bible writers. Beginning in 1964, a movement started that defined the *King James Bible* alone, as the supposed original autographs no longer existed, as being the object of inspiration. This movement was propelled forward by a number of self-published books by its proponents.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE KING JAMES ONLY MOVEMENT

The controversy that began in print and preaching in 1964 heated up in the 1970's in the Fundamentalist literature and press but didn't come to a boil in the churches until the 1980's and in many parts of the country it was just being recognized at that time by the rank and file Christian. In the March 30, 1979 edition of *The Sword of the Lord* John R. Rice, traditional Fundamentalist, and along with J. Frank Norris considered one of the founders of the Independent Baptist movement, wrote the following understanding that it is not uncommon for preachers to use "we" in reference to themselves and their ministry;

We love the King James Bible. We use it in all our sermons, our books and pamphlets published in millions of copies, in the weekly SWORD OF THE LORD. We recommend it as best for daily use. We have memorized some thirty chapters and thousands of other verses in it. We have large commentaries on Genesis, Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, Corinthians, and Revelations: all based on the King James text. We have written comments on every chapter in the Bible and almost every principle verse in five years of work, all in the King James Version. I have probably done more to promote the King James Bible than anyone else in America in many years.

But there are people who fanatically insist that the King James Version was perfectly translated with no errors; if there is a single error in the translation we have no trustworthy Bible. ...They are wrong, foolishly and perhaps ignorantly wrong, and they are often guilty of railing and unchristian talk and foolish,

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slandrous statements...Why cannot fans and extremists about the King James Version be good Christians also.⁸⁷

So, how did this unchristian like behavior which Dr. Rice claimed was so characteristic of the *King James* only crowd play itself out in the local churches in the last quarter of the twentieth century? The war of words today is often conducted on internet forums and on the websites of partisans and as a result, although their points of fact aren't reliable, they do attest to the existence of the conflict and to the anger of the opponents. One such website entitled *All About Baptists* that didn't respond to email requests for clarification shared this personal testimony in an undated post where the author found himself;

...attending a church where the ushers were instructed to ask visitors to the church what version of the Bible they were carrying. If they had brought any version other than the King James, they were asked to not take it into the 'sanctuary.' If unable to comply, they were asked to leave. I might also mention that the church dropped from over 500 in attendance to under 150 upon adopting this practice. Interestingly enough, the leadership of the church stated that the loss of membership was justified in that they were taking a stand for God.⁸⁸

Traditional Fundamentalist churches linked to the Jerry Falwell "brand" of Fundamentalism with its headquarters at Liberty University had no such concerns about the Bible version issue but followed more or less the John R. Rice view noted earlier. As James Ault discovered in the individual church he studied, "It was always the King James Version, though I later learned that Pastor Valenti, as a Liberty Baptist graduate, did not insist on that translation."⁸⁹ Ault pointed out that the church he studied in the 1980's had no problem altering the content of a verse in the *King James* which a *King James* only church would never condone.⁹⁰ In a reference to trying to understand why the Fundamentalists preferred using the *King James* he revealed that he was at the beginning of the height of the controversy discussed in this paper although by his comment in the footnote for a comment on page 194 he knew little about it. He said, "As this book nears completion, a vigorous movement is underway among fundamentalist Baptists to insist upon the King James Version as the only authoritative one for true Christians, even if fundamentalist seminaries, like Falwell's, teach that it is not the best available translation."⁹¹ The wording, "is underway," reveals his ignorance of a well entrenched

⁸⁷ John R. Rice, "Some Questions for King James Fans," *The Sword of the Lord*, Vol. XLV. No. 6, March 30, 1979, 3.

⁸⁸ "The 'King James Only' Debate Has Divided Bible Believing Baptists, Why?" *All About Baptists*, [http://allaboutbaptists.com/issues Bible Versions.html](http://allaboutbaptists.com/issues/Bible_Versions.html).

⁸⁹ Ault, *Spirit and Flesh*, 166.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 387.

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movement. What is underway is the firestorm, the height of the fury that burns brightest in the next decade. So, the traditional Fundamentalist viewpoint was use the *King James* but don't believe it is the only Bible worthy of being called as such, a notion Ruckman railed against repeatedly.

James White gave his personal testimony of volunteers in his ministry receiving calls from Christians in the 1990s concerned that their pastor preached a sermon on a verse that wasn't even in their Bible. He admitted that the profusion of Bible versions did create the ground for the controversy but blamed the *King James*-only Movement for, "by its very nature, bringing disruption and contention right into the pews of the local Christian church. KJV Only advocates, due to the nature of their beliefs, are often disruptive of the fellowship in churches," and how they felt that, "anyone who does not 'know what they know' needs to be told quickly, and most often, forcefully."⁹² He said that the *KJV*-only, "material alleges grand and complex conspiracies on the part of modern translations, distrust of others who use (or would even defend) those translations," and that this, "results in schisms within the fellowship and a debilitation of the local body."⁹³ White went on to say what was to him the most important issue that, "men of God, pastors and elders entrusted with the care of the flock of God, are inevitably, and often unwittingly, drawn into this controversy."⁹⁴ Furthermore, White accused the *KJV*-only people as being "used by skeptics as evidence of how 'backwards' conservatives *as a whole* truly are."⁹⁵ The *King James*-only controversy was significant because it divided local churches theologically and to a lesser extent politically, even though it was not an issue acknowledged by the popular media.

CONCLUSION

Christianity Today, in its 1995 article entitled "King James-only Advocates Experience Renaissance," accurately explained some of the differences within the *King James*-only Movement, the crux of the Bible version controversy that came to a boil in the last decade of the twentieth century. It identified some of the major players in the controversy such as Gail Riplinger, Sam Gipp, and James White and accurately portrayed their viewpoints. Granted, it was a brief article, but it was typical of the lack of importance that the majority of Fundamentalists and those outside of Protestant Christian fundamentalism granted to the movement.⁹⁶ The issue for many was an issue of the final authority to which an

⁹² White, introduction to *The King James Only Controversy*, iv.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., vii.

⁹⁶ Maxwell, "King James-only Advocates Experience Renaissance," *Christianity Today*.

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Independent Fundamental Baptist appealed on spiritual matters and this issue was not trivial to them.

There was a division within the IFB movement in the latter half of the twentieth century that split the IFB churches on what constituted the Bible, whether it was the original autographs of the presumed Bible writers only that were inspired by God followed by various trustworthy but imperfect translations or whether there existed a perfect, inerrant Bible on which to depend. The latter was identified as the *King James*-only Movement and was started almost singlehandedly by a Baptist pastor from Florida in 1964. This paper revealed the foundation and origins of the conflicts by way of a number of noteworthy books on the subject of dissatisfaction with modern Bible translations and methods. Also revealed were the leaders on both sides of the Bible version debate from the *King James*-only to the originals-only and the gray areas in between.

It is difficult to obtain information on churches that have no affiliation outside of an informal association with other like-minded churches, churches that do not appreciate surveys and statistics. Using the University of Chicago's, "General Social Survey," an article published in the March 1990 *Review of Religious Research* entitled, "Classifying Protestant Denominations," may have given a clue as to an additional complicating factor. It stated that, "the complex nature of America's denominational profile," makes research difficult with over eleven hundred different denominations identified by the late 1970s.⁹⁷ One weakness of all of the research sources studied was the reliance on a view of the individual church in its relationship to a denomination or even an informal association, leaving many IFB churches flying just under the proverbial radar. If they didn't belong to the Baptist Bible Fellowship International, J. Frank Norris' World Baptist Fellowship, or a similar organization they were practically invisible. Bill Leonard, writing an article entitled "Independent Baptists: From Sectarian Minority to 'Moral Majority'" for the journal *Church History* in 1987 reported that there were approximately 1.4 million members in Jerry Falwell's loose-knit network, Baptist Bible Fellowship, started by Beauchamp Vick, alone. Leonard admitted that Independent Baptists had "been overlooked by students of American religion."⁹⁸ A website, www.biblebelievers.com, that lists churches that volunteer their information lists only those that regard the *King James Bible* as inspired by God. There are currently over fourteen hundred congregations listed nationally from Maine to Washington State and over one hundred and fifty congregations internationally listed from Canada to the Philippines on that site's church directory although individual congregation numbers are not available. It is easy to estimate them as in the low hundreds of thousands. The states with the largest reported

⁹⁷ Tom W. Smith, "Classifying Protestant Denominations," *Review Of Religious Research* 31, no. 3 (March 1990): 225.

⁹⁸ Bill J. Leonard, "Independent Baptists: From Sectarian Minority to 'Moral Majority'", 504.

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number of IFB congregations that hold the *King James Bible* as inspired by God are Ohio with over one hundred and twenty congregations, Florida with eighty seven, North Carolina with eighty, California with seventy, and Tennessee with sixty seven. This does not represent the total number of the churches that hold this view as many churches, being fiercely independent, reject being listed in any directory.⁹⁹ These numbers, although clearly a minority of IFB churches with the Baptist Bible Fellowship alone having more than a million members, clearly a, “vociferous minority amongst evangelicals,” as Gordon Campbell phrased it, in all likelihood are not vastly different than they were in the late twentieth century.¹⁰⁰

Fundamentalism, to quote Joel Carpenter, was a literate movement of readers and publishers. “Without a doubt, fundamentalism was a readers’ and publishers’ movement.¹⁰¹ The popularity of written material in the form of books, newspapers, and periodicals had a long tradition in Fundamentalism. This paved the way for the acceptance and the publishing popularity among Fundamentalists of different stripes of the *King James* only partisans such as Ruckman, Gipp, Riplinger, and Grady and the self-publishing enterprises from which they operated but also created the platform from which its opponents such as Rice, White, and Carson could asserted their opinions.

The *King James*-only Movement began in 1964 with the publication of the *Bible Babel* by Dr. Peter S. Ruckman. It was relatively ignored by scholars outside of the Fundamentalist faith tradition through the years leading up to the close of the century. The movement represented a significant number of Independent Baptists in over a thousand churches in America and around the world. It was a divisive issue and was played out most thoroughly in print between the *King James*-only partisans and traditional Fundamentalists who believed in the inspiration of the original autographs of the Bible only. The movement was not based merely on the superiority of the *King James Bible* over other translations but in its divine inspiration with God’s hand directly on the translators’ efforts. The movement regards the *King James Bible* as the very words of God in English, insisting in some cases that Bible translations in other languages be made from it.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ “Bible Believers’ Church Directory,” Bible Believers. www.biblebelievers.com,

¹⁰⁰ Gordon Campbell, *Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611-2011* (New York: Oxford University Press. 2010). Google edition. Chap. 13.

¹⁰¹ Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 24,

¹⁰²https://www.academia.edu/6788973/The_King_James_only_Movement_in_Print_1964_2000_A_Divisive_Issue_in_Independent_Baptist_Churches. Retrieved January 30, 2022.