



# Bible Student's Notebook™

*The Herald of His Grace*

Issue 126

## *I Will Have One Doctrine and One Discipline*

An Essay on the Influence of Religion and Politics on the  
Formation of the King James Bible

Part V

by – Ross Purdy

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### **WHO IS THE SINNER?**

Let me digress here to make sure we understand the dissimilarity between doctrinal differences and morality. The Word of God is straight forward on sin and immorality, and there should not be a lot of debate on the subject. That is entirely different than whether we should be Covenantal or Dispensational theologians or subscribers to some other tradition! Being of a different tradition does not make one a sinner, nor does being at a different level of understanding, despite what King James and his translators would have you believe. What I am trying to do is to get you to see the difference. Christ alone is our only authority, and even then He has exclusively presented and behaved Himself as a model of servant-hood. This is the model we are to imitate and the one by which we are judged.

### **Dynamic Diversity versus Static Statements**

Doctrinal statements are integral parts of religious tradition which stunt our growth. We would normally outgrow its limits except for the set boundaries which arrest any further growth.

It is like putting a baby in a small box and never letting it out even when it has outgrown the box. Requiring all to conform to one Bible version is part of enforcing tradition. That is precisely what King James and his bishops intended to do with their new Bible. They believed that it would promote their agenda of uniformity to the religion of the Church of England. They were hostile to the Puritans and any other nonconformists or separatists who were seen as an ecclesiastical threat! They saw diversity as a threat and demanded an absolute unity in which everyone was intended to be but a clone!

Had they realized that a stronger and more powerful unity could be achieved that allowed for liberty and diversity in doctrinal positions and practice, they would have avoided devastating civil war. Likewise, if the saints would also allow for diversity in which iron would be allowed to sharpen iron, we could avoid the rampant schism in the various communities today! Doctrinal statements do more to cause division than they ever will to cause unity because they can only promote tradition. Doctrinal Statements and traditions do not love the saints; such only

*(continued on page 1331)*



# Letters to the Editor

My question is on the Doctrine of hell which is a very serious subject. I've come to see the grace message; the distinction between Peter and Paul. Now I am confronted with this doctrine of hell. From what I see in Scripture it appears that it is what scripture teaches; that hell is eternal suffering of the lost. Humanly speaking I would love to think there is no such place; that lost loved ones are not burning in the fires of hell! But it comes down to what God's word says that is truth! I've been wrong before. I was once blind to the truth of right division and I could be blind to the truth about hell. Deep in my heart I believe there is a literal burning hell in which lost souls will suffer eternally. There are many Scriptures that lead me to believe this. I may have a total misunderstanding of scripture. I've been wrong before and could be wrong on this. May God help me to accept the truth if I'm wrong and show me if I'm wrong and let go of tradition if it's tradition. – **ME**

I've often thought about my Father in light of eternal damnation and often thought "How could this be? Not my Father! It just doesn't fit His character in totality." Things like that. Thoughts that would come and go ... A God who could create 5 billion men predestined to eternal burning, well, this is a god that only man's dark heart could create. – **KS**

This *Daily Email Goodie* was great. I really needed it right now ... This reminds me of a principle I learned a few years back – to rejoice in prison. Paul sang from prison and sometimes life has you in a prison of financial stress, or a prison of a stressful job, or a prison of loneliness, or a prison of pain. Whatever it is, God can enable you to sing from that prison. Even though I can sing from prison, sometimes I still dwell on wanting that prison sentence to end. This e-mail showed me that I need not dwell on the length of the prison term, but to dwell on He who holds the key to release me. Then it won't matter when that door opens, for the Joy of the Lord is my strength. – **NC**

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
  - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization" or "mission."

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Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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is used to exert authority. Only saints can love saints and have relationships which bond us together and care for each other. The exercise of love is sacrificed in direct proportion to how much unauthorised church authority enforces uniform religion and tradition.

If King James were alive today, how he would mock those who call themselves fundamentalists and then also promote the King James Bible as the only English Bible we ought to use. He would point out that such dishonors their heritage of independence and rather exalts the heritage of those who oppressed their spiritual forbearers and denied them their independence. It is as if they have confused the two opposing heritages into one and don't realize that the two were at odds with each other (even if both were on the Protestant side of things).

While our predecessors were right in seeing that God's Word was to be our standard and that Christ was to be our Head, they failed to fully live up to it. They only got outside the city walls and immediately settled a new colony with notions of authority not much different than where they had left. They made the mistake of calling their new tradition something it was not. They confused it with the very Word of God which was the natural result of their arrogance and conceit. We will continue in the right direction only if we continue to use Scripture as the map rather than tradition (its like comparing a computer enhanced satellite photo to a Dark Ages map). That deference for Scripture is the part of our heritage we need to continue because it seeks to conform us fully to God. This is done by not restricting our brothers and sisters to any one particular Bible version or doctrinal statement or tradition. Some will, like King James, say the flood gates of heresy will burst open in the absence of church authority; but like the independents of England (even if with some variety), we will likely see true piety and Godliness break out all around us instead.

### **Bible Versions Are Fallible Teachers**

Today, there is a proliferation of study materials

and commentaries which can now be used alongside any Bible version, and of course, we always ought to compare any such helps to the Bible text. Variety in helps, as well as variety in Bible versions is a blessing. The different perspectives challenge us so we must think critically. One must start somewhere and that is what a teacher (sometimes in the form of printed and electronic materials) helps us to do. Yet, we can not accept what the teacher says uncritically once we have moved beyond an elementary stage. There we must be challenged with other views and positions which drive us back to the Word of God in a Berean effort to see if those things are true. Authority would rather we be driven back to them for answers.

Now, a Bible version is really an extension of a teacher of the Word of God. A fallible man or men have done the translation, and the nature of translation requires interpretation, thus such a translation is also fallible. Some versions do a lot of interpretation for the reader, and again, their interpretation is fallible. The less a version interprets, the more literal it is; but literal versions are like transliterated words which don't really communicate any meaning (at least at first). Now I must give a little lesson here to explain so bear with me.

Take the word *baptize* as an example. It is a word that has been transliterated straight from the Greek into English. That means the Greek letters of a Greek word were replaced with English letters. Now it looks like an English word but it really is not, (it is now an English word after long use, but not when this word was first transliterated). It is a foreign word written with native letters and it really has not been translated. Many folks think they know what the word means, but what they think is the definition is most often merely the description of a religious ritual according to their particular tradition. They then presume it refers to a particular mode and medium for a religious ceremony. Unfortunately, we may not be aware of all the words that have taken on a meaning which it does not have in the original. Rather, tradition has been allowed to define them for

us with religious jargon not imagined by the original scribes.

The Anglo-Catholic King James Bible reader got the image of a baby at the baptismal font having some water sprinkled on its head by an ordained priest in a religious ritual. To them, anything else was not a baptism. The Anabaptists had a different notion. For them any fellow saint could pour a mug of water on an adult and they were baptized. Baptists saw only a full immersion in water. Each used the medium of water but used a different mode. Many have argued long and hard over the correct mode, but the word in itself does not specify what mode is to be used. That must be supplied by the context. Some have argued that the word does specify the mode but they only convince their own choirs. The facts show otherwise.

The word can be translated a number of different ways and it depends on the context to supply explicitly what the mode and medium is. Now I realize some folks who read this will have been lost at this point so let me explain. A simple gloss for *baptize* is *whelm*. Some people hear the word and think that it means to be immersed in water. It can mean that given that the context explicitly says that whatever is *baptized* is “immersed in water.” If the context does not specifically mention “immersion” or “water,” it can not be assumed that immersion is the mode, or that water is the medium. The word *baptize* is much broader than that and applies to a number of different possible actions or conditions. For example, the mode could be any of the following: pour, sprinkle, shower, dip, immerse, sop, bath and so on. Each has its peculiarity and are not all the same, but *baptize* covers them all (no pun intended). Then the medium could also be different things: water, dye, liquor, wine, spirits, demons, calamity, death, sorrow, stench, love, or lust. The context must specify exactly what the mode and the medium is. So an actual translation of the word *baptize* might be immerse, or sprinkle, or pour, or death, but in each case, more information from the context is needed to specify which, as well as, into or with

what.<sup>1</sup>

The point (whether or not you agree with me on the mode of Biblical baptism) is that a literal translation needs further explanation to understand just like a transliterated word does. The literal translation can fail to communicate while a more dynamic one can communicate the wrong information. Both require caution and scrutiny. A variety of versions can reveal issues like this and they will alert us to the possible problems that may exist in the translation of a passage.

A very literal version does not conform to standards of native grammar and syntax and requires one to reconfigure it so that it is understandable. It will typically reflect the syntax of the original language which can be convoluted enough to confuse the reader. Thus a literal version may require quite a bit of explanation. An extremely literal translation may also mask figures of speech in the original that will need to be explained as well. Failure to see such a figure of speech may result in doctrinal error and its resulting wrong practice. For instance, consider the Roman Catholics’ literal understanding of

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1. Even in the Bible, it never means with water by immersion unless it explicitly says such. I can’t find any place where immersion is specified for the ritual but I have found plenty for sprinkling and pouring. Sprinkle and pour were modes specified in the Old Testament and this is how John the Baptist performed the religious ritual. The washings of the hands by the Pharisees before a meal was by pouring.

Jesus spoke of the baptism with which He was to be baptized and He was referring to His death. Paul also refers to the Lord’s death as a baptism in Romans 6. There, death is mentioned explicitly as the baptism. Water is not found in the context nor can it be inferred when death is explicitly mentioned. It must be one or the other.

See Henry T. Hudson’s *Baptism In The Bible*, <http://www.pilkingtonandsons.com/baptism.htm> #3025. I will produce a free eSword compatible module of this book at some future point. eSword is a free and easy Bible software program with an incredibly extensive list of available materials: <http://www.e-sword.net/> The materials are most all free and public domain. Some few Bibles and works can be purchased to honor copyright status. There are a number of Yahoo! discussion groups which provide support and modules for this program from a wide variety of positions. It is also easy to create your own materials which can be shared and distributed provided you do not sell it. Multiple Bible versions are available and they can be arranged in parallel or in interlinear fashion using eSword for fast and easy comparison.

John 6 and their practice of the “Eucharist.”

No matter how superior, all Bible versions are the work of fallible men and are never, never beyond question. Only religion, superstition, and false authorities, or those deceived by the like, will make such assertions. Keeping this simple principle in mind will keep one from being misled by a translation driven by tradition or a sect.

People have become used to having a choice from the multiple Bible versions available. They can then compare versions and research the reasons for their differences. Again, the variety is a wonderful blessing, it is so very healthy, and stimulating as well. Yet those who are used to the authority of a single version may despair at not being able to trust any version, but once they get busy and start comparing versions and take the time to do the necessary work, their confidence will come back.

Don't be bullied into thinking that we have no mooring or safe harbor just because we don't have a perfect Bible. That is a tactic reserved for use by false authority. It robs us of confidence to stand like mature adults even as God has commanded us to do. Like the words of a certain serpent, it will tell us that we can't really know the words of God without its help and advice (in direct contradiction to God's Words). It is a lie! It is a terrible lie! We can have full confidence in God that He has indeed provided what we need to equip us to discern the truth. We belong to God and we are tuned in to hear His voice.

## CRITICAL THINKING

King James took the notes out of his version of the Bible. The notes taught something other than what his religion taught. King James wanted his bishops and priests to interpret the meaning of the Bible if one had a question. He wanted folks to look to his church as the authority to explain Scripture to them. The people were to study the *Book of Common Prayer* and refer to it when away from church authority. It served as

catechism and teacher and doctrinal statement for the lay person when away from church. Of course, it was used in church more than the Bible was, practically speaking. Attention is drawn away from Scripture to authority or an authoritative church publication both of which in turn glorifies the church more than God. Tradition is mindlessly exalted at the expense of Scripture's rightful place.

Today, there are Sunday School curriculums and study series and catechisms and doctrinal statements all authorized by the denomination or church authority. Much material and most presentations are carefully filtered to denominational standards and lack a true critical approach. Some honestly do try to produce unbiased material, but all needs to be examined with the critical eye to be safe.

A true critical thinking approach does not have to be dishonoring to Scripture, nor does it have to presume liberalism. It considers other positions and interpretations honestly and analyzes their pros and cons. It will definitely lead to a closer conformity to God's Word than any church authority or tradition will allow, because it interacts with an individual's heart and mind in a way that the person owns it for themselves. They can only really do this effectively in an environment and arena free from restrictions. An uncritical presentation, as is typically given by authorities, demands acceptance without seeing how it truly interacts with other positions and even restricts you from doing so. If other positions are given, they are typically distorted and presented in such a way as to make them look stupid or incredible. Facts and key points may be skipped, distorted or marginalized. Minor points are often made to look like key points etc. This kind of dishonesty is avoided in a true critical thinking approach.

Critical thinking musters the best possible arguments and the strongest case for the opposition. The point of not undermining the opposition case and even improving it is to test its true worth against the true worth of one's

own position. In other words, our intent is not to protect our own conviction at all costs, but to determine if it is indeed worthy! It is the process of sharpening iron with iron. The only loyalty owed to it is in direct proportion to its worth. Tradition engenders an attitude that is not necessarily so generous. Tradition presupposes its worth and then most any tactic is acceptable in undermining the opposition, since it is not presumed worthy of any respect in the first place. In fact, because tradition must be preserved at all costs, any tactics that will achieve that goal *must* be employed. In a worst case scenario, that will include invalid logic arguments and even denial of the facts.

A variety of good Bible texts and helps coupled with clear critical thinking can counter the bias of a single version. A balance against the authoritative bias of the King James Bible can be found by consulting other translations and commentaries from various backgrounds. The goal is not to use materials that are free from bias (because such is virtually impossible to find), but to rather use different materials with biases of which one is fully aware. If you are well aware of the bias, you are then prepared to counter it. Different biases will counter and balance out each other and can show where a version over-interprets or takes liberties with translation (like some have by always translating *baptize* as *immerse*).

*Loyalty to none (i.e., any single theological system) is far better than loyalty to one.* (Remember that the context here is not of the elementary level but rather at the mature level.) This limits the damage that can be done so easily by submission to any one authority. It is possible to appreciate what is good in various theologies and translations only without being shackled to the foibles of any single one. Variety and diversity is necessary and it can be had without being a limp liberal or confused pluralist. The point is to own your convictions and put them on the line to test their mettle instead of borrowing them from some man-made authority and hiding them under a bushel basket of tradition. The truth of the matter

is that most folks do not own their convictions and have borrowed them instead. Some have progressed and managed to take ownership of those they have studied out for themselves. Even then, they might be fooling themselves and one must be careful to discern whether they own it or whether they have merely followed a bread crumb trail designed by an unauthorised authority to “reel them in.” Many have created (with a pretext) chains of proof texts taken out of context designed to make a tradition look valid. Such gets used and reused and it is easy to tell that one has borrowed the chain and has merely fallen in line with the *status quo*. Rank alignment with a doctrinal statement or confession is a strong indicator of rank borrowing.

A part of edifying one another is challenging one another with one’s understanding of Scripture in the context of a caring community (which, of course, is not likely under the control of man-made authorities forcing uniform religion upon whomever they can). Such a challenge drives us back to the Word of God to study and to try to understand it better in order to conform to it.

Even so, some are content to let someone “spoon-feed” them pre-canned doctrine. Furthermore, others demand that one accept it uncritically as the ultimate truth when it is but the interpretation of another man or woman. The unfortunate context for this kind of behavior is one in which love is exchanged for unauthorised lordship. We hate to think that the clergy man or pastor we love and admire would or could let us down or fall short, and we also like the idea of church authority. We like tradition as well, and are used to being under its guidance. Then we like to have teachers we can look up to because it is convenient; but it is lazy. We abdicate our responsibility to interact with Scripture directly and rather do it vicariously through authorised teachers and preachers. We go to church and listen to them with an open Bible and deceive ourselves into thinking we have fulfilled our responsibility. Yet this is a dangerous thing after the elementary level.

*“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:12-14).*

The way the typical church is set up with its authority structure does not allow us to live according to what the writer of Hebrews exhorts us to do: grow up, stop being the student, and become the teacher! It seems more like we are a bunch of school children who never graduate and are being forever kept in school under a teacher. While the learning process never ends, there comes a time when we ought to have progressed from being elementary students unto competent adults who can also teach. Adults can continue to learn things, but they ought to be beyond the grade school level! They ought to have progressed beyond the stage when they have to accept many things uncritically at the elementary level! There comes a time where they have to become competent enough to explore a variety of views critically and synthesize conclusions responsibly for themselves in the light of Scripture.

Yet church authority often sees critical thinking as a threat. It does what it can to stamp out any thoughts that diverge from their doctrinal statement or tradition since it may result in an unauthorised interpretation of Scripture. Nevertheless, critical thinking is necessary to function competently as a mature person; yet when critical thinking is arrested, so is the ability to remain competent. Thus authority and tradition can very well prevent believers from maturing to meat and rather keeps them suckling on milk.

Again, it must be pointed out that diversity in a caring community and critical thinking is key to maintaining a direct and personal relationship

with God through Jesus Christ our Head. It is a relationship with God in the context of other mature relationships with God and it includes relationships with those relating to God. This alone allows Scripture to guide us rather than unauthorised authorities and traditions spawned by men. Even the King James Version translators advised variety. When we get stuck on one teacher, tradition, doctrinal statement, particular theology, or Bible version, our focus turns from Christ and His authority to this other unauthorised authority. We give over our responsibilities to professionals and we then forget how to be mature. We then confuse God’s Word with tradition, and God’s authority with some intermediary. Insofar as this has been done, folks have strayed from the path upon which Scripture sheds its light. In fact, they have stopped altogether and made a camp which has turned into a colony. We need to get back on the road again, then keep moving with God’s blessing and not make the mistake of setting up another unauthorised colony.

So if another King James comes along and threatens to drive you out of the land or do worse, grit your teeth and bear with it if you can’t leave, but don’t ever conform. Perhaps most will find themselves caught in a rut out of which it is hard to depart. There is no easy way out whether you go for a fast exit or slow withdrawal. What ever you do, don’t just sit on your heels and always try to speak the truth and practice it in lots of love. If you can leave, don’t perpetrate the error by creating a colony with an authority structure contrary to Christ. Just like Roger Williams who fled the Puritans and founded Rhode Island. Rather create a place where people are free to grow in God’s grace and conform themselves unto Jesus Christ. Morality can be legislated and cultural mandates carried out, they may even be quite effective in imposing a form of godliness, but such can never change one’s heart and soul, nor will it cause one to own God for themselves.



# Bibliography

The following is suggested for further reading. The ISBN numbers are listed with the titles and either will be adequate to do a search on any book finding service. If you do not have internet service, go to your local library which will typically have access. Paperbacks are cheaper and also check out used books for the lowest prices.

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### **William Tyndale: A Biography**

Hardcover ISBN-10: 0300061323  
Paperback ISBN-10: 0300068808

## by David Norton

### **A Textual History of the King James Bible**

Hardcover ISBN-10: 0521771005

### **KJV New Cambridge Paragraph Bible with the Apocrypha**

Hardcover ISBN-10: 0521843863  
Paperback # ISBN-10: 0141441518 (Penguin Classics)

(This Penguin paperback supposedly corrects errors in the first and more expensive hardcover.)

## by Brian Moynahan

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Hardcover ASIN: B000O2V4H2  
(Published by Thomas Y. Crowell, 1959)

Also titled as:

### **The Men Behind the King James Version**

(Published by Baker Publishing Group)  
Paperback ISBN-10: 0801070082

## by Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont

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For Byzantine Textform errata see

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