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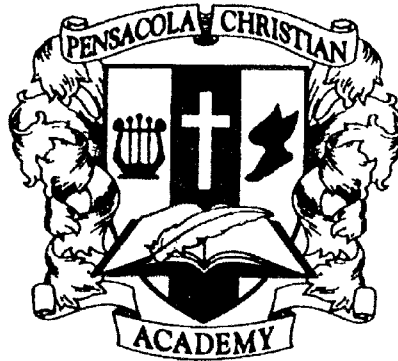
Remarks on the
**NEW
KING
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VERSION**

D. K. Madden

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“And we are in the best frame of duty, when the principal motive in our minds to contend earnestly for retaining the possession of the Scripture against all that would deprive us of it, or discourage us from a daily diligent search into it, is this, — that they would take from us the only glass wherein we may behold the glory of Christ. This is the glory of the Scripture, that it is the great, yea, the only, outward means of representing unto us the glory of Christ.”

—*John Owen, Works, Volume 1, page 316.*



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Remarks on the New King James Version

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First printing—August 1989

Second printing (Revised)—October 1991

Third printing—July 1993

Fourth printing—July 1998

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I NTRODUCTION

Unless otherwise stated the following remarks apply equally to the New King James Version (NKJV) and the Revised Authorised Version (RAV); the latter being the British usage edition of the NKJV published by Thomas Nelson Publishers of Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A., the owners of the copyrights for both of these versions.

It is refreshing to note in the Preface to these versions the statement that their New Testament has been based on the **Greek Textus Receptus, or Received Text**, thus perpetuating the tradition begun by William Tyndale in 1525 and continued by the translators of the 1611 Authorised Version (AV) also known as the King James Version (KJV).

Again, it is noted, with pleasure (see under Preface heading—“*Complete Equivalence in Translation*”) that the translators reject the system of *dynamic equivalence* (employed in such inexact modern versions as the “Good News Bible” and “Living Bible”) in favor of the principle of *complete equivalence*, which was a characteristic of the work of the 1611 KJV men, whose aim was to produce an accurate and complete translation of what was actually written in the Hebrew and Greek text. The modern translators’ insistence upon dynamic equivalence often results in a very free paraphrase of the underlying text.

The Authorised Version Preface entitled “*The Translators to the Reader*,” which was printed in the original edition of the 1611 AV, and was reproduced in subsequent editions over a period of many years, but is, sadly, seldom now to be seen, included, under the heading “The praise of the Holy Scriptures” the following statement:—“*. . . the original thereof being from heaven, not from*

earth; the author being God, not man; the inditer, the Holy Spirit, not the wit of the Apostles or Prophets; the penmen, such as were sanctified from the womb, and endued with a principal portion of God's Spirit; the matter, verity, piety, purity, uprightness; the form, God's Word, God's testimony, God's oracles, the word of truth, the word of Salvation, etc.; the effects, light of understanding, stableness of persuasion, repentance from dead works, newness of life, holiness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost; lastly, the end and reward of the study thereof, fellowship with the saints, participation of the heavenly nature, fruition of an inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that never shall fade away: Happy is the man that delighteth in the Scripture, and thrice happy that meditateth in it day and night."

The vast majority of the modern versions make no mention of these vitally important truths. In view of this it is very welcome to note that the divine authorship of Holy Scripture is acknowledged by the NKJV/RAV in their Preface, where it is also stated that all the participating scholars signed a document of subscription to the plenary and verbal inspiration of the original autographs of the Bible.

Having acknowledged the above commendable features, it is now sadly necessary to draw attention to some serious problems which the NKJV/RAV poses for those who tremble at God's Holy Word (see Isa. 66:2 and 5; Ezra 9:4).

ABSENCE OF CERTAIN DISTINCTIVE PRONOUNS

Continuing with the NKJV/RAV Preface, with reference to “The Style,” it is stated:—“*Readers of the Authorised Version will immediately be struck by the absence of several pronouns: thee, thou, and ye are replaced by the simple you, while your and yours are substituted for thy and thine as applicable.*”

Now in the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible a distinction is made between the singular and plural personal pronouns, and this always conveys some information, and frequently the full meaning of a passage of Scripture is obscured when a translator renders all the second person pronouns by you, your, or yours. For example, in the **Epistle of Paul to Philemon**, we note in the first verse Paul’s address to Philemon, and in the second verse his address to two others and a church; then in verse 3 the Greek plural pronoun “humin”(= you) indicates that Paul’s greeting of grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ is addressed to all of the above persons. This information is correctly conveyed to the reader by the English word “you” in the old KJV. The NKJV also translates “humin” by “you,” but it is now an ambiguous “you” (and could be either singular or plural).

Then in verses 20 and 21 it is clear from the Greek that Paul is addressing Philemon only, and this information is correctly conveyed by the use of the English singular pronouns “thee,” “thy,” and “thou” in the old KJV; but all this is obscured by the substitution of “you” and “your” in the NKJV, though the correct meaning is probably still apparent from the word “brother” in verse 20. But when we come to verse 22 the NKJV conveys the impression that Paul is still addressing Philemon only, whereas the

plural Greek pronouns “homon” and “humin,” correctly translated “your” and “you” in the old KJV, indicate that Paul is here addressing all the brethren to whom he wrote. The NKJV causes further confusion in verses 23 and 25.

From this it is obvious that the translators of the NKJV have withheld from their readers important information which is present in the Greek text, and is quite capable of being expressed in the English language.

Again, the fact of our Lord’s concern for all the apostles, and His particular prayer for Peter, because he was in the greatest danger, is obscured by the NKJV/RAV rendering of the personal pronouns in *Luke 22:31–32*.

I am aware that many people favor the elimination of the distinctive singular personal pronouns on the grounds that they are archaic relics of Elizabethan-Jacobean English. However I wish to draw attention to the fact that this claim is not entirely true. Even during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, such words as “thee,” “thou,” “thine,” were beginning, in common speech, to be replaced by “you” and “your.” This is readily verified by reference to the works of William Shakespeare—see for example “Macbeth,” Act III, Scene IV, near the end of this scene—Lady Macbeth to her husband:—“*Did you send for him sir?*” Again in “King Henry IV,” Act II, Scene I, I have at a glance counted “you” twelve times, and “your” four times. And again in “King Henry VI,” Act II, Scene I, in reading less than half of this scene, I encountered “you” three times and “your” twice.

In **all** of the instances referred to above, the context clearly indicates that a single person was being addressed.

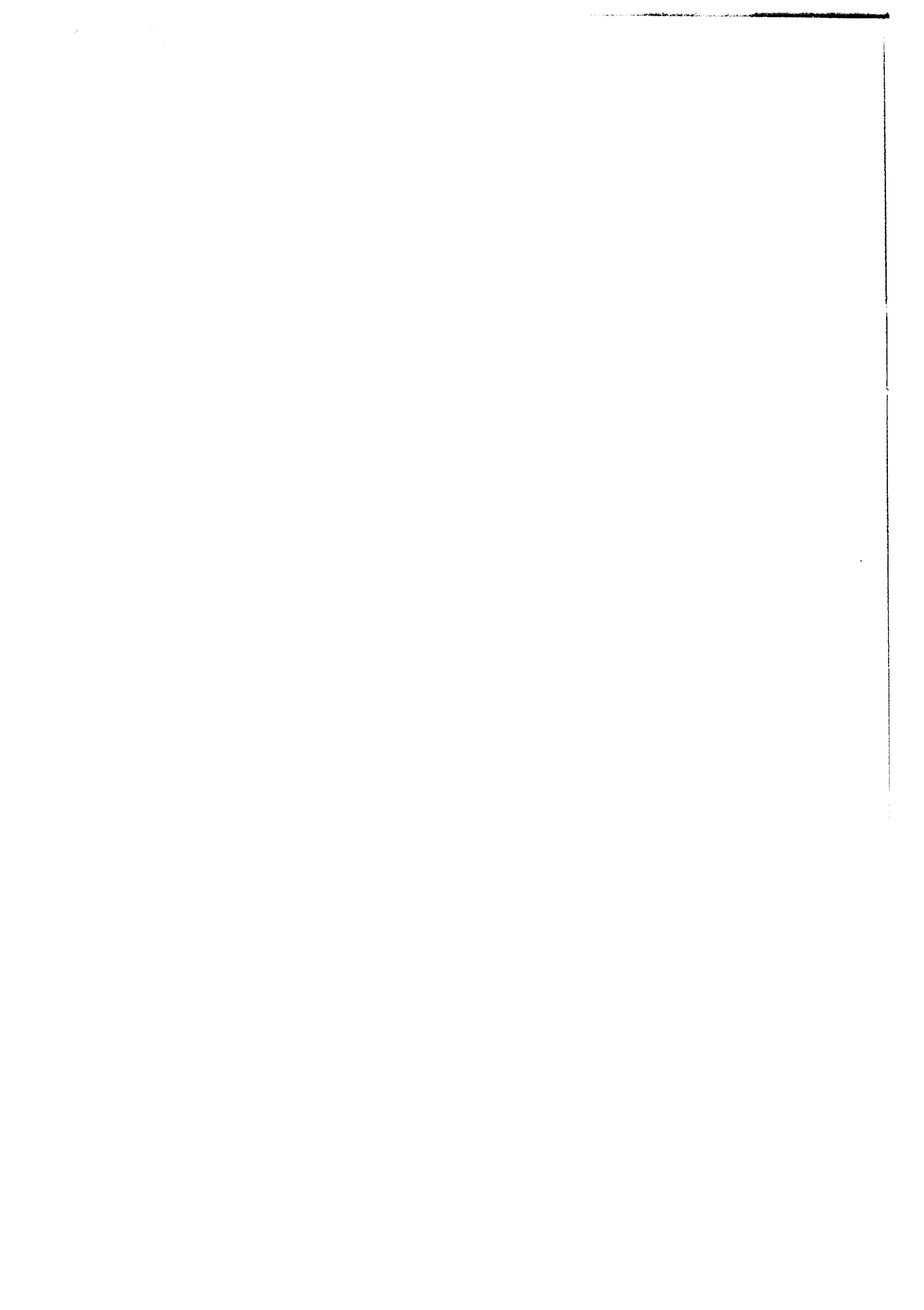
The fact is that the English usage of the old KJV is “Biblical” rather than “Elizabethan”; it is Biblical for the very reason that the Hebrew and Greek texts of Holy Scripture do indeed differentiate between singular and plural personal pronouns in **all** instances. Very sadly the NKJV and RAV have completely eliminated this distinction, with a resultant objective loss of accuracy, and a subjective loss (to many like myself) of a distinctive reverence for God.

The elimination of these particular personal pronouns from almost all of the modern versions has been accompanied by a type of familiarity with God, which ignores the fact that our God is a consuming fire and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (see Heb. 12:29, 14). We would do well to remember and heed the fact that Scripture declares:—*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”*—Psalm 111:10a.

The use of the distinctive personal pronouns “Thee,” “Thou,” “Thy,” “Thine,” in our address to God in prayer, rather than our present common everyday usage—“You,” “Your,” “Yours”—does, or should, help to remind us that we are addressing no earthly monarch, but that we are in the presence of the Almighty Creator and Sustainer of all things, the Sovereign Ruler and Supreme Judge of all, Who could not even be approached by us His sinful creatures, if it were not for the fact that, in His gracious loving mercy, He has, at infinite cost, provided a Mediator in the Person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ; by Him, *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”*—Hebrews 4:16. BUT let it be a holy boldness, not an irreverent familiarity!

Having regard to the solemn warning given in Revelation 22:19, no doubt the translators would not wish to “take away” from the Word of God, but it must be acknowledged that their treatment of the pronouns has the effect of diminishing the accuracy and the clarity of the translation, and to this extent is a subtraction from the full content of divinely given information. The removal of the distinctive second person singular causes a further very serious loss in that it obscures the solemn fact that the Scriptural Truths concerning God’s grace and judgement are directed, not indefinitely to men in general, but specifically to each individual hearer or reader to whom they come.

Further reference will be made in other parts of this booklet to some of the problems caused by the absence of certain distinctive singular personal pronouns.



CAPITALIZATION OF PRONOUNS RELATING TO GOD

The NKJV Preface (still under the heading “The Style”) continues:—*“However, reverence for God in the present work is preserved by capitalizing pronouns, including You, Your, and Yours, which refer to Him.”* (The Revised Authorized Version does not incorporate the selective capitalization of the initial letter of certain pronouns.)

The reader needs to be aware that the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Bible do not provide this distinction, thus the translator who would employ this device must of necessity become an interpreter, and unless he is infallible (which he is not) there is a very real probability that he will be mistaken in at least some passages, and this probability becomes almost a certainty if he holds unorthodox views of Scripture.

Note, a careful distinction must be made between what professes to be a translation of Scripture and that which purports to be a commentary on Scripture. In the case of the latter the thoughtful reader knows that the commentator’s interpretation, as distinct from the Scripture itself, is not inspired and he must himself judge, in the light of the other parts of Scripture, as to whether it is a sound interpretation, or at least hold an open mind on the matter if he is not competent to judge. However, when he reads what professes to be merely a translation of Scripture he can be expected to believe that what he reads is a faithful rendering of the Hebrew and Greek text from which the translation was made.

Doubtless, Uzzah’s intentions were good when he put forth his hand to the ark of God (see 2 Sam. 6:6, 7); but in actual fact he was disobeying a distinct command of God (see Num. 4:15), and he suffered the threatened consequences. I expect that, likewise,

the NKJV translators thought that they were doing good, when they introduced their selective capitalizations of the initial letter of certain personal pronouns with the expressed intention of showing reverence for God. But has God required this at their hand? I think not (see Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18); this being the case, then surely ill and not good will be the consequence!

Continuing with the Preface—*“Additionally, capitalization of these pronouns benefits the reader by clearly distinguishing divine and human persons referred to in a passage.”*

In adopting the use of capital letters for this purpose the translators burden themselves with the necessity of distinguishing in every passage between the divine and human persons to whom reference is made. Admittedly they do confess that on two occasions their wisdom failed them—see text and footnote at 2 Thessalonians 2:7 and Psalm 25:12. But as these are the only places, as far as I can find, in the whole of the NKJV where they have indicated any doubt about their judgement, it would seem to imply that they considered their verdict to be beyond doubt in every other case. In consequence of this, every passage of Scripture, apart from 2 Thessalonians 2:7 and Psalm 25:12, has now been given, in the NKJV, a final and unalterable designation of either divine or human reference.

In view of the terrible mutilation of the majority of the precious Old Testament references to the Lord Jesus Christ in the New American Standard Bible through their use of this very same device (see my booklet “A Critical Examination of the NASB,” pages 20 to 25), it will be instructive to see how the NKJV rates in this respect.

It is noted that capitalized personal pronouns are employed in the following important passages:—Genesis 3:15; 16:7–13; 18:10; 31:11–13; 32:24–29; 49:10; Exodus 23:20–22; Numbers 24:17; Deuteronomy 18:15–19; Joshua 5:13–14; Psalms 2; 22; 45; 72; 110; Isaiah 11:1–5; 42:1–4 and 6; 53; 61:1; Zechariah 6:12–13; 9:9; 12:10.

I expect all soundly orthodox Evangelical Christians would agree that every one of the above passages refer to Him of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write (see Luke 24:25–27, and 44–45). However, there are also passages, recognised by most sound Christians as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, which have been given a purely human designation by the translators of the NKJV. The following are a few examples: Psalm 69; Psalm 89:27; Proverbs 8; Proverbs 23:26; Ezekiel 34:23; Zechariah 9:17; Acts 13:47.

Now in the case of **Psalm 89:27** the old KJV reads:—“*Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.*” I have no doubt that this verse has primary reference to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and I note that this is also the opinion of Matthew Henry, John Gill, David Dickson, and Matthew Poole.

The NKJV renders this verse:—“*Also I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.*” Now note the “My” is written with a capital “M,” thus, according to their system, indicating Deity for the speaker (God the Father): however, the “him” is written with a small “h”—thus, according to their wretched and absolutely un-Scriptural innovation, precluding the possibility (remember the statement in the NKJV Preface:—“*Additionally, capitalization of these pronouns benefits the reader by clearly distinguishing divine and human persons referred to in a passage*”) that this verse has reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. Further, note the NKJV has:—“*. . . the highest of the kings of the earth*”—No, not so, the old KJV is correct:—“*. . . higher than the kings of the earth*”—our blessed Lord is not highest among equals. He is supremely above all, being “*KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS*”—Revelation 19:16.

Proverbs 23:26 in the old KJV reads:—“*My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.*” Now concerning this verse of Scripture, the learned 18th century Baptist commentator, John Gill, writes:—“*These are not the words of Solomon to his son, for a greater than Solomon is here; besides, the claim and possession of the heart do not belong to a creature, but to God; but they are*

the words of Wisdom, or Christ, to every one of his sons, the children the Father has given him in covenant. . . .” Matthew Henry has a somewhat similar comment. It is noted that the NKJV does not make distinctive capitalizations of the initial letter of “me,” “my” in this verse. Thus the translators of this version have arbitrarily excluded God from this verse of Scripture.

In the case of **Zechariah 9:17** the first half of this verse in the old KJV reads:—“*For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty. . . .*” All the following esteemed commentators refer the above passage to God:—John Calvin; Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown; Matthew Poole, John Gill; and Matthew Henry. And Henry, J. F. B., and more particularly Gill apply it specifically to Jesus Christ the Messiah; and in this I have no doubt that they are correct.

I was very surprised and sad to note that the NKJV translators render this passage as follows:—“*For how great is their goodness and how great is their beauty. . . .*” I am aware that there are men called “good” in Scripture, for example Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:50) and Barnabas (Acts 11:24), there are also references to “good men” in general, notably in Psalms and Proverbs; however any mere man’s goodness is only comparatively so, for our Lord Jesus Christ declared: “. . . *there is none good but one, that is, God. . . .*” (Matt. 19:17). In the light of these facts, I believe that this passage in Zechariah, where stress is laid on the greatness of the goodness of the one to whom reference is made, can rightly be applied **only** to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Further, it is interesting to observe that the NKJV has a footnote, concerning the word “their” in Zechariah 9:17, which reads:—“*Literally his.*” Why then did they not put *his* in their text? Apparently they were determined at all cost to exclude God from the verse, because even the word *his* in their footnote was not written with a capital “H.”

Acts 13:47 In this verse the NKJV rendering “you” (twice) suggests, in its context, that Paul and Barnabas were to be a light

to the Gentiles for salvation. In fact, the Greek word “se” is singular, not plural, and is correctly rendered “thee,” “thou” in the old KJV. The quotation is from Isaiah 49:6, where the Hebrew word is also singular and refers to the promised Messiah. Note further that at Acts 13:47 the NKJV does not capitalize the initial letter of “you,” thus, according to “their system,” utterly excluding Jesus Christ the Messiah from this verse. It is noted, by way of contrast, that at Isaiah 49:6 the NKJV employs capitals for the initial letter of the pronoun “You”—what confusion!

Lack of time and space prevent me from discussing all of the examples to which I referred above; however, because of its great significance to the Protestant Reformational and Scriptural doctrine of God’s Providential Preservation of His own infallible Holy Word, I must consider in some detail one further passage of Scripture, viz:—**Isaiah 59:21**. In the old KJV this verse reads:—*“As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.”* Now in this verse who is the speaker? I believe it is God the Father. To whom is He speaking? I believe it is to God the Son, see “Redeemer” in the previous verse; compare also:—*“My spirit that is upon thee”* (in Isa. 59:21) with the following passages of Scripture:—*“the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him”* (Isa. 11:2) *“I have put my spirit upon him”* (Isa. 42:1); *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me”* (Isa. 61:1 and Luke 4:18); *“Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him”* (John 1:33).

Again compare *“my words which I have put in thy mouth”* (in Isa. 59:21) with:—*“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth”* (Deut. 18:18); *“I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him”* (John 8:26); *“For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak”* (John 12:49, see also verse 50); *“And the word*

which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (John 14:24); "*For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me*" (John 17:8).

In view of all these Scripture links, I believe there can be no doubt that in Isaiah 59:21 God the Father is addressing God the Son.

To whom does the word "them" relate?—surely it is to God's redeemed people, the "seed" of the Lord Jesus Christ the Redeemer, His spiritual children (cf. Isa. 53:10—"*he shall see his seed*").

Next what is implied by the expression "**my words**"?—yes, the particular words of God the Father spoken by our blessed Redeemer; but I believe they have also a much wider import—I have no doubt that they include the whole of that precious supernatural revelation of God to man, that "*every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (Matt. 4:4), the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God.

Now note, our gracious God has bound Himself by COVENANT—"*this is my covenant*"—**to perseve for ever** His Holy Word, together with His Holy Spirit to enlighten the hearts and minds of His own redeemed people thus giving us wisdom and understanding therein so making it spiritually profitable to us. Oh, what a precious blessing (see 1 Cor. 2:12) and how indispensable (see 1 Cor. 2:14)! Further, note the change from "them" (plural) to "thee"/"thy" (singular). As already pointed out, I believe, without the slightest doubt, that in Isaiah 59:21 God the Father is addressing God the Son, this being so it is evident that the covenant concerning the preservation of God's Holy Word is not made directly with His people, but rather, for its absolute security, it is made with our blessed Head and Federal Representative, the Son of God our dear Redeemer Jesus Christ; there is therefore no possibility of its ever failing, for Jesus Christ is The Mighty God (Isa. 9:6), the absolutely Unchangeable One (see Heb. 13:8).

Consider now that God has declared that His Word shall not depart out of the **mouth** of His people; from whence we learn that

it is God's determination to preserve His Holy Word in a **public way**, keeping it **always in actual use** amongst His people. As a direct consequence of this it is evident that **the God-preserved Greek Text** of the New Testament **cannot** be the text found in the Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus and their allies, which lay hidden in oblivion for a thousand years. Rather, God has always kept His Word **in use**; and since the time of the Reformation there can be no doubt that it is in the Textus Receptus Greek Text and the Masoretic Hebrew and in the faithful uncorrupted Protestant translations of them that God has continued, in faithfulness to His covenant, to preserve His infallible Holy Word. Oh, may our gracious God turn our hearts again in this present day to His precious pure Holy Word, and so grant us the blessed presence of the Holy Spirit that once again that Word of Truth in the mouths of God's redeemed people might be a Mighty Effectual Sword (see Eph. 6:17 and Heb. 4:12) to the glory of God and the eternal good of His people.

Very sadly the NKJV, in common with most other modern versions, wretchedly mutilates this precious verse (Isa. 59:21) and renders all its especial sweetness null and void:—Firstly it replaces all the distinctive singular personal pronouns “thee” and “thy” with the ambiguous “you” and “your,” thus obscuring the precious fact that the covenant is made, not directly with us, but with a single person (the Redeemer). Secondly, as noted previously, the translators of the NKJV employ, without Scriptural warrant, yea rather in spite of the solemn warnings against adding to the Word of God (see Rev. 22:18; Prov. 30:6), capitalization of personal pronouns referring (in the opinion of these mere fallible translators) to Deity. In pursuance of this policy, they have in Isaiah 59:21 written “Me,” “My,” with capital “M’s” to indicate Deity for the speaker; but “you” and “your” with small “y’s” for the one addressed, indicating (in my opinion very wrongly) non-Deity. Thus by means of these two wretched devices they have taken away the blessed Surety of the Covenant from one of the most precious pas-

sages of Scripture concerning God's express declaration to preserve pure His own Holy Word for ever among His people.

One final remark on Isaiah 59:21; note that the NKJV has "descendants" in place of "seed." I understand that the Hebrew word here translated descendants is identical to the Hebrew word which in Isaiah 53:10, in both the old KJV and the NKJV, is rendered "seed" ("see his seed"); then why did not the NKJV use the same word "seed" at Isaiah 59:21? By replacing it with "descendants" they have obscured a precious link between these two verses. Additionally, it is most unusual, and I believe un-Scriptural, to refer to God's redeemed people as the "descendants" of the Redeemer; rather we are His "spiritual seed," His "adopted children," but we are not His natural descendants.

There are certainly some passages in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, concerning which some Christians strongly hold that they refer to the Messiah the Lord Jesus Christ, while other Christians just as firmly hold that they do not. One such passage is **Daniel 9:27**, which in the old KJV reads:— "*And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate. . . .*" I note that such excellent commentators as John Calvin, Matthew Poole, and Matthew Henry all firmly hold that the Messiah is the person to whom, in this verse, "he" refers. On the other hand, the equally excellent commentator John Gill just as firmly holds that it does not have reference to the Messiah, but rather to the Romans. In the NKJV I note, beside other changes, that the first "he" is written with a small "h," the second with a capital "H" (but this apparently only because they have, for reasons best known to the translators themselves, made this the first word of a line of poetry), the final "he" has been replaced by the word "one" written with a small "o." Thus once again by their worldly wise capitalization/noncapitalization device the translators of the version have given a fixed non-Deity (i.e. non-Messianic) sense to

this verse; whether or not this is the correct interpretation, it is **not** the province of the translators to determine.

I believe it is the grand hope of the publishers of the NKJV that this version should replace the precious old KJV, and very sadly a great number of Christians appear to desire this same end. However, consider now the case of those folk, and no doubt there are already many such, who have only the NKJV, and have known no other version: if they truly believe that what they read in this version is the very Word of God, then, for them our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is forever excluded from Psalm 69; Psalm 89:27; Proverbs 8; Proverbs 23:26; the whole book of Song of Solomon; Isaiah 59:21; Ezekiel 34:23; Daniel 9:27; Zechariah 9:17; Acts 13:47; plus innumerable other passages of Scripture; and, so long as they have faith in the NKJV, no amount of exegesis can allow Him into these portions of Scripture. What a fearful price to pay for the so-called advantages of a more “modern” translation!

Please note that the fundamental objection to this selective capitalization of the first letter of certain pronouns by the translators of the NKJV is **not** that they have failed to capitalize some, but rather that they have, without any Scriptural warrant, yea rather, despite Scriptural warnings (for example see Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18) capitalized any. Our gracious God has left each of His own redeemed children to be free, by diligent study of His Holy Word (see 2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:10, 11) together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 2:10–13), to determine which passages of Scripture refer to our blessed God and Savior Jesus Christ (or other persons of the Holy Trinity) and which do not, or at least to hold an open mind on the matter. Oh, how thankful we should be to God, that by His grace, we are not yet back under popery, where a dogmatic man-made interpretation of all Scripture would be commanded by force upon all. Let us not become complacent and voluntarily allow the NKJV (or any other version) to impose its fallible man-made interpretation upon us or our children.



SUBJECT HEADINGS

The Song of Solomon. With the exception of the small cheaper editions, most other editions of the old KJV have chapter headings or summaries in this precious book, containing such expressions as:—*“The church’s love to Christ”*; *“Mutual love of Christ and his church”*; *“Christ’s care for her”*; *“Christ awakes the church with his calling”*; *“He, the Beloved described”*; *“the church professes her faith in Christ”*; *“Christ’s coming prayed for.”*

Referring again to the NKJV Preface under subheading “The Format,” it is stated:—*“Subject headings assist the reader to identify topics. . . .”* In conformity with this policy, the NKJV has numerous subject headings in The Song of Solomon, but one looks in vain to find a single reference to Jesus Christ the altogether lovely Beloved One. Further, the translators of this version have not capitalized any personal pronouns (to indicate reference to Deity); so by this device they have actually given a fixed solely human designation to the whole of this blessed book. However, in this, their judgement is entirely at variance with that of all the old orthodox Evangelical commentators, who held without doubt that in this book the spiritual union between Christ and His church is set forth in an allegorical manner. Thus, for example, A. R. Fausset (in the Commentary by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)—*“As Ecclesiastes sets forth the vanity of love of the creature, Song of Solomon sets forth the fullness of the love which joins believers and the Savior. . . . The image of a bride, a bridegroom, and a marriage, to represent this spiritual union, has the sanction of Scripture throughout, nay, the spiritual union was the original fact in the mind of God of which marriage is the transcript (see Isa. 54:5; 62:5; Jer. 3:1; Ezek. 16; Matt. 9:15; 22: 2; 25: 1; John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11: 2;*

Eph. 5: 23–32)." See also the commentaries by Matthew Henry, Matthew Poole, John Gill, George Burrowes, and Thomas Scott.

John Owen in his excellent discourse entitled:—"Of Communion With God The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Each Person Distinctly, In Love, Grace, and Consolation," in part 2, "Communion With The Son Jesus Christ," refers the reader again and again to Jesus Christ as He is set forth in the Song of Solomon (e.g. Song of Sol. 5:16)—"*altogether lovely—infinately beyond comparison with the choicest created good . . . he is wholly to be desired, to be beloved, Lovely in his person,—in the glorious all-sufficiency of his Deity, gracious purity and holiness of his humanity. . . .*"

Again it is very interesting to note that the Textual Index to C. H. Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit lists 59 sermons on Song of Solomon; this is an average of over seven sermons per chapter for this eight chapter book, which incidentally is the highest average number of sermons per chapter for any book of the Old Testament. Surly this indicates how highly Spurgeon (whose motto was—"We preach Christ and Him Crucified") valued this book.

I greatly fear that the treatment of Song of Solomon by the translators of the NKJV is likely to prove a stumbling block to many of its readers, who thereby will be discouraged from seeking (see Song of Sol. 3:1) our Beloved Husband our God and Savior Jesus Christ in this precious portion of His own Holy Word.

In order to prevent any misunderstanding, I must add that I realize that the subject headings in Song of Solomon, and elsewhere, in the old KJV are not themselves a part of the Inspired Word of God, and consequently not too much weight is to be placed upon them. However, in view of the fact that all of Scripture, though comprised of many books written over a long period of time, has but one Author (God the Holy Spirit) it is a Unity, and consequently every part must be interpreted in the light of the whole. Consider further our Lord's own declaration:—"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they

which testify of me”—John 5:39, and the statement concerning His exposition of Scripture:—“*And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself*”—Luke 24:27. In the light of these facts, I have no doubt that the old KJV men were correct in seeing our blessed Husband (“*For thy maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called*”—Isa. 54:5) Jesus Christ the Altogether Lovely One (see Song of Sol. 5:16) and His spouse the Church, pre-eminently in The Song of Solomon. By way of contrast the headings in the NKJV are absolutely insipid, and can only prove a hinderance to the reader by obscuring the true purpose and intent of this precious portion of Holy Scripture.

The Old Testament saints had considerable light (for example see John 12:38–41; Acts 2:25–35), much more I am convinced than most present day theologians are willing to grant them. Most certainly they had a blessed hope (see Luke 2:25–32; Heb. 11:24–27) in the promised Messiah, and I cannot doubt that in The Song of Solomon they saw some precious glimpses of that Blessed One. But further, those who maintain that we in our present day must interpret the books of the Old Testament in the light of the people of the time in which each book was written, fall, I believe, into serious error. Since the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the writing of the books of the New Testament, we are privileged with far greater light than the Old Testament saints; to close our eyes to this when we come to the study of the Old Testament is to despise that fullness of Divine revelation with which God has so graciously blessed us.

Further, concerning the matter of Subject Headings, I must draw attention to a very erroneous heading at **Romans 8:1**; here the NKJV has “*Free from Indwelling Sin.*” The chapter in fact deals with freedom from condemnation, which is a very different matter. The Word of God makes it abundantly clear that none of God’s redeemed children will ever be free from sin in this present

world (*“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”*—1 John 1:8), but, praise God, we shall be one day, in that blessed world to come, when our dear Redeemer takes us Home to be with Him for ever (see 1 John 3:2; Rev. 21:27). However we are already free from condemnation (see Rom. 8:1, 33–34; and John 5:24).

MISTRANSLATIONS

1 Corinthians 1:18 Here the old KJV reads:—
“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” In the NKJV the latter half of this verse reads:— *“ . . . but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”* I am well aware that at the present day there are many folk with a knowledge of Greek, who, on purely grammatical grounds, defend the NKJV rendering *“are being saved”* as being the correct translation of the Greek word *“SOZOMENOIS.”* However it is very informative to note that up until the time of the English 1881 Revised Version (RV) this passage of Scripture was never so rendered in English as to imply that salvation is anything other than an accomplished fact from the moment, when, by a gracious and sovereign act of God, on the alone grounds of the satisfaction and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, the sinner, until then dead in trespasses and sins, is *“born again”* (John 3:3). Thus John Wycliffe (14th century) renders this passage *“ . . . but to hem that ben maad saaf. . . .”* or with modern spelling:—*“but to them that been made safe (or saved).”* Although Wycliffe translated from the Latin Vulgate, this in turn was originally from the Greek.

The following is a list, in chronological order, of the chief Protestant English translations covering the period from the Reformation to the 19th century:—

Tyndale (1525) 1535	1 Cor. 1:18	<i>“ . . . us which are saved . . .”</i>
Great Bible (1539) 1540	“	<i>“ . . . us which are saved . . .”</i>
Geneva Bible (1560) 1562	“	<i>“ . . . us whiche are saved . . .”</i>
Bishops’ Bible (1568) 1602	“	<i>“ . . . us which are saved . . .”</i>
Authorised Version 1611	“	<i>“ . . . us which are saved . . .”</i>

Also the Roman Catholic Rheims 1582, translating from the Latin Vulgate renders this passage in a similar way:—“ . . . *them that are saved. . . .*”

As far as I am aware, the 1881 Revised Version (RV) was the first English translation to render this verse “ . . . *us which are being saved. . . .*” Since that time most of the modern versions have adopted this rendering. I believe it is quite significant that it was the RV which first introduced this reading—Professor W. F. Moulton was a member of the translation committee which produced this version; some years later Bishop C. J. Ellicott, who had been chairman of that body, wrote:—“*Their (the Revisers’) knowledge of the New Testament Greek was distinctly influenced by the grammatical views of Professor Winer (of Germany), of whose valuable grammar of the Greek New Testament one of our company (Professor W. F. Moulton). . . had been a well-known and successful translator. Though his name was not very frequently brought up in our discussions, the influence his grammar exerted among us, directly and indirectly, was certainly great.*”—from “Addresses On The Revised Version,” by Bishop C. J. Ellicott, pages 106, 107.

In further vindication of the correctness of the old KJV translation consider also the following facts:—An English translation of the Peshitto (the earliest Syriac translation of the Greek New Testament) renders the passage in question:—“*us who live,*” or as their margin makes clearer “*are saved.*” The Egyptian Coptic reads (in its English equivalent) “*those who will be saved.*” It is here that we begin to see that though literally “SOZOMENOIS” reads “*are being saved*” the Coptic clearly brings out the nuance of the substantivized present participle, that is a “*naming them according to their end*” as Theodoret (c.393–c.458), a Greek father from Antioch, observed on this passage of Scripture in his commentary on the Pauline Epistles. Thus as far back as the 5th century, one who spoke Greek as his native language understood this expression as having reference to the final eschatological sense.

The mid-19th century Princeton theologian, Charles Hodge, in his Commentary on I and II Corinthians, Banner of Truth Reprint, page 19, says on 1 Corinthians 1:18:—“*these are called ‘the saved,’ not only because they are certainly to be saved, but also because they are now in a state of salvation.*” Hodge further adds:—“*compare 2 Corinthians 2:15*”—I note that in this verse also the NKJV has “*are being saved*” instead of “*are saved.*” Finally Hans Conzelmann¹, a present-day New Testament scholar, in his comment on 1 Corinthians 1:18 states:—“*A contrast is drawn between the lost and the saved,*” and in a footnote he adds:—“*The present participles ought not to have mysterious hints read into them to the effect that the present tense expresses the unfinished character of the road to SOTERIA (salvation) and APOLEIA (destruction) respectively—HOI SOZOMENOI means simply ‘the saved.’*”

I have dealt at some length with “*are saved*” (old KJV) versus “*are being saved*” (NKJV and most other modern versions) because of certain important theological implications—“*are saved*” exactly accords with the entire teaching of Scripture on the matter of salvation; by contrast “*are being saved*” lends some support to the un-Scriptural Roman Catholic teaching that salvation is a process controlled by their hierarchy and leading through purgatory.

I must here acknowledge my indebtedness to my dear scholarly friend Theodore P. Letis, M.T.S. for much of the above information regarding 1 Corinthians 1:18.

Hebrews 2:16 Here the old KJV reads:—“*For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.*” While the NKJV reads:—“*For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but he does give aid to the seed of Abraham.*” The difference between these two renderings is not due to any variance in the underlying Greek text; it is a matter of translation. However it is associated with important theological implications

¹While I acknowledge the fact that Conzelmann is an internationally recognised N.T. scholar, I do not accept all of his positions on other matters.

to which attention has long since been drawn. The orthodox have always viewed this verse as giving strong support to the Scriptural doctrine of the Incarnation of God the Son. The Socinians (Unitarians), who deny the eternal pre-existence and Deity of Jesus Christ, have long endeavoured to destroy the force of Hebrews 2:16 by making this verse refer to what Jesus Christ does for believers rather than to what he **became** for them.

The Socinian sect began in 16th century Poland and owed its origin to the heretical teaching of Faustus Socinus and his uncle Laelius Socinus. In the mid-17th century it began to be widely disseminated by John Biddle, the father of English Socinianism. In response to this threat John Owen published in 1655 an extensive refutation entitled "Vindiciae Evangelicae; or the Mystery of The Gospel Vindicated And Socinianism Examined," from which I quote:—

It is evident that in these words the apostle treats not of the help given, but of the way whereby Christ came to help his church, and the means thereof; his actual helping them and relieving of them is mentioned in the next verse. . . . The argument, then, from hence stands still in force, that Christ, subsisting in his divine nature, did assume a human nature of the seed of Abraham into personal union with himself (see page 301 of Volume 12 of Owen's works, Banner of Truth reprint).

Again: That by the 'seed of Abraham' is here intended the human nature of the seed of Abraham, appears,—(1) From the expression going before, of the same import with this, 'He took part of flesh and blood,' verse 14. (2) From the opposition here made to angels or the angelical nature; the Holy Ghost showing that the business of Christ being to save his church by dying for them, he was not therefore to take upon him an angelical, spiritual substance or nature, but the nature of man (Ibid., page 300).

Further concerning this verse the following extract is taken from John Owen's "An Exposition of the Epistle to The Hebrews," Volume 3, page 461: "*The Lord Jesus Christ is truly God and man in one person; and this is fully manifested in these words.*

For there is supposed in them his pre-existence in another nature than that which he is said here to assume. He was before, he subsisted before, or he could not have taken to him what he had not. This was his divine nature. . . . So continuing what he was, he became what he was not. He took this to be his own nature. He so took it as himself to become truly 'the seed of Abraham.' ”

John Gill, in his comment on this verse draws attention to the fact that the Syraic and Arabic versions are very similar to the old KJV rendering at this place, thus indicating that the words were understood in this sense at an early date.

Finally, Theodore P. Letis (previously mentioned) has drawn my attention to the fact that the Greek Orthodox father, Saint John of Damascus, whose native tongue was Greek, in his “On Divine Images,” written in the first half of the 8th century, said of Hebrews 2:16:—“*God did not unite himself with angelic nature, God did not become an angel; he became a man by nature and truth. For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned, but with the seed of Abraham. The person of the Son of God did not assume angelic nature, but human nature.*”

It is sad that the NKJV, in common with the NASB and NIV and most other modern versions, has adopted the theologically inferior reading at Hebrews 2:16, which was first advocated by the Socinians, and continues to be so by their present day representatives, the Jehovah’s Witnesses—see their New World Translation.

Hebrews 3:16 The NKJV renders this verse as follows:—“*For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?*” This of course differs very considerably, in both wording and meaning from the old KJV. It is noted that the following commentators accept without question the old KJV rendering, and draw particular attention to the fact that “*not all provoked*”:—John Calvin, John Owen, Matthew Poole, Matthew Henry, and John Gill. All of these men, with the exception of Calvin and Henry, make special mention of Joshua and Caleb. Calvin says:—“*. . . but it appears that some who truly feared God*

mingled with the wicked. . . .” Henry says:—“ . . . through the majority of hearers provoked God by unbelief, yet some there were who believed the report. . . .”

John Owen, in his great work on Hebrews, devotes eight pages to this verse, and accepts the old KJV rendering without question. He further gives evidence to show that, not only Joshua and Caleb, but also those (or at least some of them) who, at the time of the numbering in the second year after coming up out of Egypt, were under 20 years of age, together with some at least of the tribe of Levi, would be included amongst those who did not provoke God.

I understand that the reason for the difference between the old KJV and the NKJV (and most modern versions including the RV, RSV, GNB, NASB, NIV) is due to a slight change in the accentuation of the first Greek word of this verse. Thus the Greek text followed by the old KJV reads:—“TINÈS. . .” while that followed by the NKJV etc.:—“TÍNES. . .”

Now W. F. Moulton in his commentary on Hebrews in “A Bible Commentary For English Readers,” edited by Charles John Ellicott, states, concerning Heb. 3:16:—“*A slight change in the accentuation of the first Greek word effects a complete change in the sense. . . . It will be remembered that the oldest manuscripts give no evidence on such points as accentuation and therefore leave our judgement free. . . .*” It should be added that W. F. Moulton was no friend of the old KJV; in fact he was a rather radical member of the 1881 Revision Committee; thus his acknowledgment of the lack of authority for accentuation marks is all the more significant. Now, if, as Rev. W. F. Moulton states, the translator’s judgement is free at Hebrews 3:16, then why did practically all the modern versions from the 1881 RV onwards choose that rendering which obviously contradicts other parts of Scripture? Surely this is to act in a very perverse manner! And why has the NKJV (which professes to be based on the same Greek text as the old KJV) followed all the other modern versions in this wretched perversity?

By way of contrast the old KJV men, mindful of the fact that there are no contradictions in the God-given and God-preserved Word of God, chose to understand this Greek passage in conformity with other parts of Scripture, and translated it in English accordingly—*“For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.”*

At **Matthew 2:16** the NKJV has *“male children”* as the English translation of the Greek word *“PAIDAS.”* This is an unjustified adding to the actual declaration of Scripture at this place. J. W. Burgon’s denunciation (see *“The Revision Revised”* page 146) of the 1881 RV is equally applicable to the NKJV:—*“‘All the male children,’ as a translation of PANTAS TOUS PAIDAS is an unauthorized statement. There is no reason for supposing that the female infants of Bethlehem were spared in the general massacre: and the Greek certainly conveys no such information.”*

At **Matthew 4:24** and **17:15** the NKJV renders the Greek word *“SELENIAZO”* by the English *“epileptic”*; but this is not a translation but a private interpretation (a guess) as the Greek word means moon (or luna) struck and is correctly rendered *“lunatic”* in the old KJV.

Revelation 19:8 In the old KJV this verse reads:—*“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”* This verse refers to the righteousness of the Redeemer imputed to believers, and the plural *“righteousnesses”* in the Greek refers to a *“righteousness”* provided for each of the redeemed. However the NKJV renders the last part of this verse as follows:—*“. . . for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”* This translation has serious doctrinal implications, for the Word of God elsewhere declares:—*“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. . . .”*—Isaiah 64:6. And again:—*“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”*

—Titus 3:5 (see also Gal. 2:21). On the other hand the Word of God declares again and again that the **only** righteousness for which we can ever be accepted by God is that righteousness freely provided by Jesus Christ alone—Jehovahtsidkenu—THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (see Jer. 23:6). *“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness. . . .”*—Isaiah 61:10. Again:—*“He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”*—2 Corinthians 5:21 (see also 1 Cor. 1:30).

I would draw attention also to the similarity between the NKJV renderings of Revelation 19:8 and Zechariah 9:17 (referred to earlier). Further note that Revelation 19:8, taken in its context, refers to that blessed Marriage of the Lamb and His wife the Church; and, on what I believe to be sound Scriptural grounds, I cannot believe for one moment that on this blessed occasion the bride would be, or even wish to be, covered with anything but that Perfect Robe of Righteousness provided at such infinite cost by her Beloved Husband; most certainly I would loathe to be clothed with my own filthy rags.

The following is, I believe, a very pertinent comment on Revelation 19:8 by the great Baptist commentator, John Gill:—*“. . . not good works or their own righteousness; for though these are evidences of faith, by which the saints are justified, and are what God has prepared for them that they should walk in them; yet these are not comparable to fine linen, clean and white, but are like filthy rags, and cannot justify in the sight of God. But the righteousness of Christ is meant, and justification by that; for that is the only justifying righteousness of the saints; and though it is but one, yet it may be called righteousnesses or justifications in the plural number . . . and that partly because of the many persons that are justified by it, as also because of the excellency of it, so the Jews use the word in the plural number.”*

I note also that Matthew Poole and Matthew Henry both have very similar comments to the above.

MIRACLES

It is noted that where the old KJV uses the word **miracle** or **miracles**, the NKJV substitutes the word **sign** or **signs** in just over half the cases. Now concerning this very same characteristic of the 1881 RV, J. W. Burgon (“The Revision Revised” pages 202 to 204) complained with sadness:—*“We recognize in the present Revision a resolute elimination of ‘Miracles’ from the N.T., —Not so, (we shall be eagerly reminded,) but only of their Name. True, but the two perforce go together, as every thoughtful man knows. At all events, the getting rid of the Name,—(except in the few instances which are enumerated below,)—will in the account of millions be regarded as getting rid of the thing. And in the esteem of all, learned and unlearned alike, the systematic obliteration of the signifying word from the pages of that Book to which we refer exclusively for our knowledge of the remarkable thing signified,—cannot but be looked upon as a memorable and momentous circumstance.”*

Admittedly the NKJV translators have not progressed quite as far as the 1881 Revisers in this process of elimination of the word **miracle**. Nevertheless it should be a matter of grave concern, and especially so in these days of wide-spread unbelief and ridicule of the Record of God’s miraculous acts of old, that they have substituted “**sign**” for “**miracle**” in so many places, for all “**signs**” are not “**miracles**” though undoubtedly all “**miracles**” are “**signs**.”

CREATION BY JESUS CHRIST

Why is it that in every New Testament passage concerning creation (John 1:3, 10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2) the NKJV translates the Greek preposition “dia” by “**through**,” instead of “**by**” (as in the old KJV)? The English word “through” conveys the impression of a passive agent, whereas the word “by” rightly intimates the fact that Jesus Christ, the Divine Word, was the **active** Agent in creation.

J. W. Burgon (“The Revision Revised” page 174), after affirming:—“*The doctrine that Creation is the work of the Divine Word, all Scripture attests,*” noted with disapproval that the 1881 RV replaced (except at John 1:3, 10) “by” with “through.” The NKJV has now completed this lamentable process **with its entire elimination of “by.”**

John Owen, in his controversy with the Socinians concerning the Deity of our blessed Savior Jesus Christ, writes, in dealing with John 1:1–3:—“*He was God, and he was in the beginning with God, and all things were made by him. The words are an illustration of his divine nature by divine power and works. He was God, and he made all things. He that made all things is God, Heb. 3:4; The Word made all things, John 1:3: therefore he is God*” (see Works of John Owen, Volume 12, page 220).

On page 221, Owen further draws attention to the fact that “dia” is elsewhere used in Scripture to denote the principle efficient cause, and he instances 1 Corinthians 1:9; Galatians 1:1; and Ephesians 1:1. In each of these three cases the old KJV has “**by**.” The NKJV at 1 Corinthians 1:9 and Ephesians 1:1, where the reference is to God (the Father), also has “by”; but at Galatians 1:1, and I might add, at Galatians 1:12 also, it has “**through**”—these

two latter passages have **reference to Jesus Christ**—once again a decided **Socinian bias!**

Finally, it is noted that at Ephesians 3:9, the NKJV has a footnote which reads:—“*NU-Text omits through Jesus Christ.*” The ordinary reader should be informed that these words are present in most Greek manuscripts of Ephesians.

FOOTNOTES

Bearing in mind that God's Word is for ever settled in Heaven (see Ps. 119:89) let us beware of all that tends to unsettle it on earth. Further, if the trumpet of God's Word is made to give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?

Now the NKJV professes to be based on the same New Testament Text as the old KJV, and is so mainly in the body of its text; nevertheless its translators have, in "Trojan Horse" fashion, smuggled parts of another vastly different text into their work. On almost every page in their New Testament are to be observed one or more footnotes directing the reader to alternative readings taken from the "NU-Text." (This text is published in the 26th Edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament (N) and in the United Bible Societies' 3rd Edition (U), hence the acronym "NU-Text"—see pages VII and VIII of the NKJV Preface.) Now quite apart from the fact that these readings are based mainly on the corrupt Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, this maze of alternative readings will surely cast doubts in the minds of many readers concerning the authenticity and supreme authority of God's Holy Word. Concerning this very same procedure of presenting a multitude of alternative readings in the margin of the Revised Version last century, J. W. Burgon in his excellent work "The Revision Revised," issued the following solemn warning:—

"A hazy mistrust of all Scripture has been insinuated into the hearts and minds of countless millions, who in this way have been forced to become doubters—yes doubters in the Truth of Revelation itself. One recalls sorrowfully the terrible woes denounced by the Author of Scripture on those who minister occasions of falling to others:—'It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.'"—see page 237 of Burgon's above mentioned book.

At the back of my Thomas Nelson 406 Edition of the NKJV is a 17-page section entitled “The History of the King James Bible,” on the third page from the last (page 1234) of which I noticed a rather deceptive statement:—“*And, in those few places where the majority of the manuscripts did not support a word or phrase, that fact could best be indicated in a footnote.*” Now this note, taken at face value, certainly conveys the impression that where a footnote indicates the omission of a word or phrase then that word or phrase is **not** to be found in the **majority** of the manuscripts; and this impression is further supported by the fact that in as few rare places the footnote includes words to indicate that the word or phrase in question is contained in a very large number of manuscripts (see example the footnotes at Mark 16:20 and John 7:53), thus leading one to conclude that where no such information is given then the word or phrase is indeed absent from most manuscripts. In actual fact the case is very far different in most instances—see example:—**1 Timothy 3:16** where a footnote indicates that the NU-Text omits “God” and reads “who”; the fact is that at least 300 of the extant manuscripts of this portion of Scripture read “God,” while only eight read something else, and of these only five agree in reading “who.” A further few examples are **Luke 4:4**; **Luke 23:42**; and **1 Peter 4:1**—in each of these three cases the word or words to which attention is drawn in the footnote indicating that it or they are omitted by the NU-Text is or are present in the **majority** of the extant Greek manuscripts.

In refutation of many present day imprecise theologians, who claim that none of the differences between the Textus Receptus and NU type text are of any theological significance, attention must be drawn to a passage to which reference has just been made—viz. **1 Timothy 3:16**. If we follow the “NU-Text” here we lose one of the clearest declarations concerning the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now turn to **John 3:13** where, in the NKJV, a footnote states:—“*NU-Text omits who is in heaven*”; thus removing another unequivocal proof that Jesus Christ is God, for who but God could be on earth yet also in heaven at the very same

instant of time? Further concerning this verse J.W. Burgon writes: *“Why above all, are we not assured that the precious clause in question is found in every manuscript except five of bad character?— is recognized by all the Latin and all the Syriac versions; as well as by the Coptic, Aethiopic, Georgian, and Armenian, is either quoted or insisted upon by Origen, Hippolytus, Athanasius,”* Burgon further adds:—*“Shame,—yes, shame on the learning which comes abroad only to perplex the weak, and to unsettle the doubting, and to mislead the blind . . . branding with suspicion some of the most precious utterances of the Spirit.”* (see “The Revision Revised” pages 132 to 135).

At **Romans 14:10** the old KJV reads:—*“. . . for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”* In the NKJV the text is identical, but a footnote states:—*“NU-Text reads God”*; thus casting doubt on a further wonderful text of Scripture which plainly declares our Saviour’s deity, for verse 12 of the same chapter makes clear that the One to whom we must give account is God. Once again it needs to be remarked that the vast majority of the Greek manuscripts read *“Christ,”* not *“God,”* at verse 10.

A footnote at **Matthew 27:24**, stating:—*“NU-Text omits just,”* greatly weakens the judicial pronouncement of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate as to the innocence of Jesus Christ. But why is the reader not informed that the word in question is found in the great majority of the Greek manuscripts?

Not only is the Person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ impugned by these and similar footnotes, but there are others which call in question important aspects of His mission, as can be seen for example in the following three passages, which in the old KJV read:—

Matthew 18:11 *“For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.”*

Luke 9:56 *“For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. . . .”*

Luke 23:34 *“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. . . .”*

Now footnotes in the NKJV state:—“*NU-Text omits Matthew 18:11*”; “*NU-Text omits the first sentence of Luke 9:56*”; “*NU-Text brackets the first sentence of Luke 23:34.*” The very presence of these footnotes will lead the diligent but uninformed reader to believe that there is strong textual support for these “NU-Text” omissions, otherwise why should they be brought to his attention? The actual facts are far otherwise as J. W. Burgon so ably demonstrated last century in his “The Revision Revised.” Thus:—

Page 92—“*Matthew 18:11 is attested by every known uncial except B, Aleph, L, and every known cursive except three: by the old Latin and the Vulgate: . . .*” He then continues to list a further eight ancient versions, together with ten ‘Church Fathers,’ all in support of this verse.

Page 93—re the first sentence of **Luke 9:56**:—“*Manuscripts, Versions, Fathers from the second century downwards, (as Tischendorf admits) witness eloquently in its favor.*”

Page 83—re **Luke 23:34**—“*And yet these words are found in every known uncial and in every known cursive except four: besides being found in every ancient Version.*”

Finally the NKJV footnotes at **Matthew 27:35** and **Mark 15:28** call in question two New Testament records of the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies; while a footnote at **John 6:47** casts doubt on the necessity for saving faith to have as its only efficacious object the blessed Person of Jesus Christ.

In Eden, our great adversary, Satan, first cast doubt upon God’s Word (see Gen. 3:1, 4), and with what awful consequences! Oh, let us beware of the multitude of footnotes in the NKJV, and other modern versions, which tend to render uncertain that “*every word of God*” (Luke 4:4) on which by daily feeding we are to live.

(Many editions of the NKJV now have their “NU-TEXT” and “M-TEXT” variant readings in a center column rather than at the foot of the page).

GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION OF HIS OWN HOLY WORD

Apparently the translators of the NKJV have no assurance that God has **preserved** His own Holy Word, for although they signed a document of subscription to the plenary and verbal inspiration of the original autographs of the Bible (see page IV of their Preface), **they say nothing about the extant apographs of Scripture, which are, of course, the only authoritative records still available;** the original autographs having, no doubt, long ago turned to dust. A further indication of their hopeless uncertainty concerning the true text of God's Holy Word is evident in the following passage from their "The History of the King James Bible" (page 1235):—*"It was the editors' conviction that the use of footnotes would encourage further enquiry by the readers. They also recognized that it was easier for the average reader to delete something he or she felt was not properly a part of the text, than to insert a word or phrase which had been left out by the revisers."*

How vastly different is this from the forthright statements concerning God's especial care and providence for the Preservation of His own infallible Holy Word found in all the great 17th century Protestant Confessions of Faith—thus the **Westminster Confession of Faith** (1647), chapter 1 section 8:—*"The Old Testament in Hebrew . . . and the New Testament in Greek . . . , being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them. . . ."* The **Savoy Declaration** (the confession of faith of the Congregational-Independents of 1658), and the **Baptist Confession of Faith** of 1689, both also contain this identical

declaration concerning the Divine Inspiration of the Old and New Testaments **and of God's keeping them pure in all ages by His singular care and providence.** Nor did any of these old men of God have any doubts about the fact that they themselves **had at hand the infallible Holy Word of God.** Further elegant testimony is borne to this fact by section 5 of chapter 1 which reads:—*“We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverend esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments where by it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.”*—Now surely only a **present accessible authoritative infallible** Word of God can be employed by the Holy Spirit to give a full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority of that Word! Again in section 9 of that same chapter 1 we read:—*“The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself. . . .”* But how could the 17th century framers of these three noble Confessions of Faith, or ourselves today, have such an infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture unless God, by His singular care and providence had preserved for their, and our, **present use an infallible Scripture?**

Finally, I wish to touch briefly on one further matter to which reference is made in the NKJV Preface at page VII:—*“A newer group of New Testament scholars are persuaded that the best guide to a precise Greek text is the close consensus of the majority of Greek manuscripts. The Greek text obtained by using this rule is called the Majority Text which is similar to the Received Text.”* At important places where the Majority Text differs from the Received Text (the Textus Receptus) the NKJV records this in a footnote designated

“M-Text.” The current representative of this text is “The Majority Greek Text” produced by Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, and published by Thomas Nelson Publishers (who also publish the NKJV); however, in spite of its title, this Text is in fact based on only a selection of the extant Greek manuscripts, and, as Hodges and Farstad themselves admit, much further work needs to be done.

Rather than rely on a Text which is at best tentative, and in fact can never give us an assurance of finality, it is infinitely far better to rely on God’s many precious promises, both direct (see for example Ps. 100:5; 117:2; 119:89, 152, 160; Eccl. 3:14; Isa. 40:8; 59:21; Matt. 5:18; 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:23–25), and indirect (see example Deut. 29:29; Mark 14:9; Luke 4:4), to preserve His Word inviolate; yes and in a public way in actual use in the mouths of His people (see Isa. 59:21), and gratefully to acknowledge that, due only to God’s sovereign providence, we do at this present time have an accessible, authoritative, infallible Word of God, which on historical grounds (remember history is the outworking of God’s providence) can be none other than that preserved in the Masoretic Hebrew and T. R. Greek text. Surely it is not without deep significance that, in the adorable providence of God, the first printed edition of the Textus Receptus Greek New Testament, edited by Erasmus, was printed at Basle, Switzerland in 1516, the very year before Martin Luther nailed his “95 Theses” to the church door at Wittenberg. The Reformation was, above all, a return to the absolute and final authority of the Word of God; what foolishness then to think that our faithful covenant-keeping (see Isa. 59:21) Sovereign Almighty God would provide His Church at this critical time with anything other than the faithful text of His Holy Word—the text on which, in the Providence of God, were to be based all the great Protestant Reformation Bibles—Martin Luther’s German, Olivetan French, Italian Diodati, Dutch Statenvertaling, and our own precious Tyndale/old KJV. What blessed fruit to the glory of God and the eternal good of the souls

of countless millions has followed the reading and preaching from these precious Bibles—surely this is a good tree! (see Matt. 7:20); what madness then to unsettle the faith of God’s people with ever new and various readings. Further we live in desperate times when all things pertaining to the blessed Gospel of the Grace of God (Acts 20:24) are under fearful Satanic attack; we have **ready at hand**, in the Masoretic Hebrew and Textus Receptus Greek and our old KJV Bible, a **tried and proven** trusty Sword (Eph. 6:17), let us be thankful for it, and ask of God wisdom and strength and grace to use it to His glory (see James 1:5; 2 Cor. 12:9; John 15:5).

CONCLUSION

I have been asked on a number of occasions what version I would recommend to someone who has difficulty with the wording of the old KJV. After long and prayerful consideration I have come to a very definite conclusion that there is no English translation of the Bible which I can recommend apart from the precious old KJV. Sadly the spate of modern versions, many of which have been largely inspired by a monetary motive, have, by a variety of means, some of which have been described in this booklet, much undermined the authenticity and authority of God's Holy Word. There are two precious truths for which, by God's enabling grace, we must ever earnestly contend (Jude 3); these are:—(A) **The Divine Inspiration of all Scripture**—see 2 Samuel 23:2; Mark 12:36; Acts 28:25; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21. And (B) **God's especial Providential Preservation of His own infallible Holy Word**—see Psalm 119:152, 160; Ecclesiastes 3:14; Isaiah 40:8; 59:21; Matthew 5:18; 24:35; 1 Peter 1:23–25. If we let go either of these, then what foundation can we have for our Christian faith? But if, as we should, we hold on to these twin truths, then we must accept God's Word as a **definite entity** (Psalm 119:89 *“For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven”*), not a nose of wax to be shaped at will by the whim of every translator.

I believe far too much attention is given to the claim that the old KJV is too difficult and hard to understand; there are thousands of humble Christians in Africa and India and other lands to whom English is only a second language, yet they delight in the old KJV English Bible. But why should we expect God's Holy Word, dealing as it does with matters of the very highest impor-

tance and profundity, to read like a newspaper or cheap novel? God Himself has declared that in the Scriptures are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest unto their own destruction (see 2 Pet. 3:15–18)—let us beware of seeking to make simple that which our all-wise God has seen fit not to make simple! Further, many are willing to devote themselves to long years of diligent study in order to obtain some earthy goal, such as qualifications in medicine or engineering. How much more then should Christians exert themselves to rightly understand the true sense of the necessary technical, theological and other uncommon words and phrases in the Bible, and daily diligently read and study (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:15) that blessed Book with a sincere desire that the Author, God the Holy Spirit, would make it spiritually and eternally profitable to them (Luke 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:15–17.)

“Whoever, in the diligent and immediate study of the Scripture to know the mind of God therein so as to do it, doth abide in fervent supplications, in and by Jesus Christ, for supplies of the Spirit of grace, to lead him into all truth, to reveal and make known unto him the truth as it is in Jesus, to give him an understanding of the Scriptures and the will of God therein, he shall be preserved from pernicious errors, and attain that degree in knowledge as shall be sufficient unto the guidance and preservation of the life of God in the whole of his faith and obedience. And more security of the truth there is herein than in men’s giving themselves up unto any other conduct in this world whatever.”—John Owen, works, volume 4, page 204.

“There lies this broad distinction between Holy Writ and every other book, that the work and the Author must be consulted together. We can study it with profit only when we implore its divine Author to be also its Interpreter.”—James M. McCulloch, DD.

“The holy written word of God doth show the perfect way whereby from death to life arise, from curse to bliss we may.”—John Rainolds the Puritan, one of the translators of the 1611 Authorised Version.

“Thy word is true from the beginning:
and every one of thy
righteous judgments endureth for ever.”
—*Psalm 119:160*