

# The Revision of the 1602 Bishop's Bible *(AKA, the Production of the KJV)*

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## The KJV NT as a Revision

There is of course a sense in which the KJV is a new translation into English produced from 1604-1611. But there is an even stronger sense in which the KJV isn't really a translation at all. However accurate it might be to say that the KJV is a new translation, it is far more accurate to say that the KJV is actually a revision of the 1602 edition of the Bishop's Bible, and in some ways, a composite revision of several previous English translations.<sup>1</sup> As we noted previously, they titled their work, "newly translated" but also noted in the same title that their work was the product of "the former translations diligently compared and revised." In their preface, they occasionally refer (even in one of the headings) to King James' determination for the work, not of translation, but of, "the perusal of [previous] English translations." At one point in their preface, they mention their work as "the Translation so long in hand," but then immediately qualify, "or rather, perusals of Translations made before." They freely admit that their work is simply, "building upon their foundation that went before us." They refer to the King's commission as being, "to have the translations of the Bible maturely considered of and examined." They note that ultimately their task was to take previous work and make it, "rubbed and polished." In their report to the Synod of Dort in 1618, several of the translators (primarily Samuel Ward) explained that the first rule had constrained them to produce only a revision of the Bishop's Bible rather than a new translation. They noted that, "in the first place [the first rule] caution was given that an entirely new version was not to be furnished, but an old version [the Bishop's], long received by the Church, to be purged from all blemishes and faults; to this end there was to be no departure from the ancient translation [the Bishop's Bible], unless the truth of the original text or emphasis demanded."<sup>2</sup> As Norton notes, "they were not pioneers, but revisers."<sup>3</sup> As they note in the preface under the section heading on "Purpose,"

*"Truly (good Christian Reader) we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new Translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, (for then the imputation of Sixtus had been true in some sort, that our people had been fed with gall of Dragons instead of wine, with whey in stead of milk:) but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that hath been our endeavor, that our mark.*

In other words, the work of the "translators" was, far more accurately, that of revisers.<sup>4</sup> As Scrivener noted, rather than a new translation, it is, "to speak more correctly, a revision of former versions." The question before us at this point is; how was this revision accomplished?

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<sup>1</sup> See Daniell, *"The Bible in English"* pg. 440-442; and Vance, *"The Making of the King James Bible"* pg. ix, (who is a KJVO advocate) for explanation that the KJV is more of a revision than a translation.

<sup>2</sup> Pollard, "Records" pg. 339.

<sup>3</sup> Norton, "History of the English Bible as Literature," pg. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Note the title of Daniell's section, "revisers not translators," or the statement of Scrivener, that rather than a new translation it is, "to speak more correctly, a revision of former versions."

## The Sources Used

We have available today a good number of primary sources that allow us to create a representative picture of the creation of the KJV more accurately than many previous generations. First, we have the title page, the three-page dedication to the King, and the prefatory “*The Translators to the Reader*,”<sup>5</sup> penned by Miles Smith, representing the views of the translators as a whole.<sup>6</sup> Second, we have the notes that were taken by John Bois, one of the KJV translators, during one of the latest stages of the revision, published recently by Allen Ward,<sup>7</sup> in which Bois records some of the discussion and argument that the translators engaged in as they worked at that stage. His good friend Anthony Walker explained that these were the only notes taken during the final “review” stage. Third, we have the copy of the 1602 Bishop’s Bible<sup>8</sup> that the translators did their original work on, crossing things out that they wanted to change, writing things into the margins that they wanted to add, and leaving things as they were that they chose not to change from the Bishop’s Bible. This work is known as “Bod. 1602” for short.<sup>9</sup> Fourth, we have Manuscript 98, which is a further revised copy of the Bishop’s text of the Epistles from a later stage of the revision, which has been published recently, also by Allen Ward, which has the Bishop’s readings, many of the KJV translators alterations to it, and the blank column on the right, presumably for the additional comments of the other company

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix I for a full exposition of this most important primary source.

<sup>6</sup> Available in any of the good facsimile editions or reprints of the first edition 1611. Pollard’s is the academic standard reprint, with his own introduction, available here <https://archive.org/stream/holybiblefacsimi00polluoft#page/n21/mode/2up> A reprint with original spelling but modern font is available in Daniell, “The Bible In English” as an appendix (Daniell, pg. 775-793). Perhaps the best resource is Rhodes and Lupas, “*Original Preface to the King James Version*” which provides the “Translators to the Reader” in original form but with modernized spelling, then also offers a new rendition of the work into modern English, with annotations to help contextualize some of the obscure language and references.

<sup>7</sup> Allen Ward, ed. “*Translating for King James: Being a True Copy of the Only Notes Made by a Translator of King James Bible*” Vanderbilt press, 1969. Ward provides an excellent intro, a photographic presentation of the notes, and then his own translation of the notes (including the mostly Latin notes, and the Greek and Hebrew elements).

<sup>8</sup> More accurately, the manuscript combines pages from several different copies of the Bishop’s Bible upon which the work was done. As we will see, these were originally unbound sheets, spread among the translators, and later compiled into a single Bible.

<sup>9</sup> A large section of the work is reprinted with an introduction as, “*The Coming of the King James Gospels: A Collation of the Translator’s Work-in-Progress*” edited by Ward Allen and Edward Jacobs. Fayetteville, University of Arkansas Press, 1995. One downside is that only parts of the reprint are photographs, much of it is the editor’s transcription of the work. A full photographic facsimile would be much more valuable to scholars and students. Nonetheless, the entire manuscript can be viewed in the Cambridge library.

who would make additional suggestions.<sup>10</sup> We also have the account of the Hampton Conference by William Barlowe, a divine who was present at the conference, published in 1613.<sup>11</sup> We have the report of the translation work to the Synod of Dort in 1618, made by several of the translators.<sup>12</sup> We have the biography of translator John Bois, written by Anthony Walker, a personal friend of his, which spells out some of the details of the translation work that Bois had shared with him.<sup>13</sup> We also have a variety of other secondary sources that contribute to the picture.<sup>14</sup>

An additional note should be made about a source that has only recently come to light.<sup>15</sup> Just recently, a document written in the hand of Samuel Ward, KJV translator in the Apocrypha company has come to light. The document is known as Ms. Ward B, and is a section of the Apocrypha, (I Esdras and chapters 3-4 of Wisdom). It was mis-catalogued for years as a commentary by Samuel Ward on the text of the Bishop's Bible. It contains the text of the Bishop's Bible, with notes following all throughout about the translation, suggesting alternate translations and revision. It has just recently been recognized to actually be from Ward's translation work on the Apocrypha, and confirms several things which Norton had suggested about the translation process several years ago. However, the academic world has not yet seen a publication of the document to be analyzed like the other sources, and many questions await to be answered from this fascinating document.

While none of these sources gives us individually a full picture of how the KJV was created, they do combine to allow us to piece together a much more complete picture of the process than is often imagined. Popular level works about the origins of the King James Bible are to be found in abundance, often written by authors whose scholarship in the area is somewhat dubious at best.<sup>16</sup> The vast majority of

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<sup>10</sup> As the publisher prints this work only upon academic request, I have not been able to obtain a full copy, though sections are reprinted in Norton's, "Textual History."

<sup>11</sup> Barlow, William, Clerkenwall, England, 1613, "The Sum and Substance of the Conference..." available here <https://archive.org/details/summesubstanceof00barl> The publication date is listed as 1603, which I believe is an original typo for 1604.

<sup>12</sup> Reprinted in Pollard's excellent resource linked above.

<sup>13</sup> Reprinted in Wards, "Translating for King James" above.

<sup>14</sup> The primary and other secondary sources are discussed at length in "*The Textual History of the King James Bible*" by David Norton. Notable among the secondary sources is the letter from Bancroft, who chose the translators and headed much of the work, and his "exhortation to the Bishops."

<sup>15</sup> Miller, Jeffery Alan, "Fruit of Good Labours" in *The Times Literary Supplement (TLS)*, 14 Oct. 2015. <http://www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/public/article1619318.ece>

<sup>16</sup> There are literally scores of such works that describe the KJV, or attempt to tell the story its origins, in a variety of fanciful ways, but largely ignore almost all of the primary sources. One thinks for example of the multiple works by Teems, those by Nicolson, Brake, Davies, Ryken (who is slightly better), to name a few, (though naming only a few is a partiality to many others!), and note that I have not mentioned any of the KJVO or TRO works, which almost without exception, and to

such popular level works completely ignore the primary sources, and often share somewhat fanciful tales with little or no grounding in the actual literature. Early scholarly accounts were rendered in works by Pollard,<sup>17</sup> Westcott<sup>18</sup> and Scrivener.<sup>19</sup> But they each lamented a lack of certain sources. For example, they each knew that a private collector somewhere had Bois' notes, which they would love to have consulted, but they didn't know who had them or where. Today, these sources and many others have been collected and studied more carefully and comprehensively than ever before.<sup>20</sup> We will simply review here some of the high points of this all too seldom told story.

### The Preparation for the Work

As he was on his way to succeed Elizabeth on the throne, King James the VI of Scotland (soon to become James the I of England) was met by a delegation of Puritans who were hopeful that his new regime would be more amenable to their pleas for reform that had been ignored repeatedly in previous reigns. They presented him with a document signed by some 1000 ministers of the Church of England (thus known as, "The Millenary Petition") asking for such reforms. The King did not immediately agree to anything, but on October 24, 1603, he issued a proclamation that he would convene a conference to hear the complaints. In January of 1604,<sup>21</sup> the Hampton Conference was called by King James. Three basic issues had

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even greater degrees, fall into this category of ignorance. Such scholarship should be given only the merit it earns.

<sup>17</sup> <https://archive.org/details/holybiblefacsimi00polluoft>

<sup>18</sup> "A General View of the History of the English Bible" available here

<https://archive.org/details/generalviewofhis00westrich>

<sup>19</sup> His earlier, "A Supplement" gave a brief account; his later, "The Authorized Edition" available here <https://archive.org/details/cu31924029268708> is even more full.

<sup>20</sup> Thus, a brief scholarly account is now available in the introduction to Allen's, *"Translating for King James"* (pg. 3-34). A brief (and perhaps slightly less academic) account is given in Laurence M. Vance's, *"The Making of the King James Bible"* (pg. 1-55), who is a King James Only advocate, though he focuses mostly on the history of the Bishop's Bible. A longer account is available in Daniell, *"The Bible in English"* (pg. 427-461). A similar lengthy account is available in Norton's, *"History of the English Bible as Literature"* (pg. 56-107). The best summary account was printed as *"The King James Bible: A Short History"* by Norton. Also notable is McGrath's, *"In the Beginning,"* a book length treatment of the origins and effects of the AV. The fullest, most academic, and indisputably most accurate account is now the one in Norton's recent, *"The Textual History of the King James Bible"* (pg. 3-127). He corrects a few minor statements he had made in previous works, and provides a level of painstaking detail and awareness of the sources that is simply unmatched in any previous work, and is approached only by Westcott and Scrivener for scope.

<sup>21</sup> Barlow mentions more specifically that it was 9:00 AM on Thursday, Jan. 12<sup>th</sup> (Barlow, "Summe" pg. 1).

been raised,<sup>22</sup> which the newly appointed King sought to address. The first was problems with the prayer book, “the Book of Common Prayer.” John Reynolds, (or Rainolds), speaking for the petitioners, claimed that it contained several statements that needed clarifying in relation to Baptism, others in relation to Confirmation, and still others in relation to absolution by a priest, and the garments worn by the priest. He also felt the catechism in the prayer book was too short and should be extended. The second issue was excommunication in the Ecclesiastical courts, and the third, appointing ministers for Ireland. These were complaints long voiced and never heard. One of the ultimate goals was a revision of the Book of Common prayer that would be more Protestant (and ultimately, they hoped, more Puritan) than it was at the time. But they were asking for more than the King could grant, since his own Anglican theology had problems only with the Papal authority of Catholicism, but mostly accepted the other elements of its theology which they disputed. Towards the end of the conference, on the second day, Reynolds, rather without warning, made the request that there be a new translation of the Bible. The complaint of the conference in its context would have had less to do with the translation in general use, and more specifically with the translation employed in the liturgical Book of Common Prayer. The Puritans wanted the Prayer book revised in a variety of ways, but the King was having none of it. Suggesting that it needed revision at least in its translation was a hail-Mary tactic of sorts. The KJV translators recounted the burden of the request in their preface, noting, “they had recourse at the last, to this shift [strategy], that they could not with good conscience subscribe to the Communion book, since it maintained the Bible as it was there translated, which was as they said, a most corrupted translation.”

The Bishop’s Bible was at the time the official church Bible, but the Geneva translation was vastly more popular among the populace. Both were revisions of Tyndale’s work, though revision in two different directions. However, the Communion Book still employed the universally disliked Great Bible for its quotations. Reynolds suggested three examples of places where the current translation in the prayer book was defective,<sup>23</sup> and thus the need for a new translation. But the readings he presented were readings from the Great Bible, two of which had already been corrected in the Bishop’s Bible, which he seems to ignore in his request. More importantly, the revisions that he suggested are essentially the readings already contained in the Geneva Bible, which contains none of the problems he raised in his examples. Thus, scholars today often deduce that he actually intended to subtly press the king to accept the Geneva Bible as an official Bible of the Church, or at the least to reprint the Book of Common Prayer in an

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<sup>22</sup> McGrath, “In the Beginning,” pg. 158. See also Barlow’s summary of the issues.

<sup>23</sup> Gal. 4:25 where he thought the word “Boardereth” a mistranslation; Psalm 105:28 where he noted that a misprint caused the text to say, “They were not obedient, the original being, they were not disobedient” (Barlow, “Summe” pg. 34); and Ps. 106:30, the common book said Phineas “prayed” while the Hebrew was more accurately, “Executed Judgement.”

edition that used the Geneva Bible in its quotations.<sup>24</sup> At present, ministers using the beloved Geneva were technically breaking the royal law. This request should have been an easily agreeable step, and thus, revision of the Prayer book would already be a given, which would give the Puritans a foothold in their other requests for revision. Norton notes, "Looked at more closely, the argument is subtle: he has not attacked the Bishop's Bible, nor therefore the Church establishment, but these three readings remain in the Bishop's Bible and are corrected in the Geneva Bible. Any investigation would show the inadequacy of the former and the correctness of the latter. Reynolds probably hoped that his suggestion for a new translation would be dismissed and the much simpler solution followed, adoption of Geneva as the official Bible of the Church."<sup>25</sup>

This would have resulted not only in the favorable replacement of the "bad" translations in the prayer book, but also would have a side effect of finally authorizing the beloved translation of the people, the Geneva, which is something they had wanted for some time. If that was his plan, it backfired. In fact, even the preface to the KJV notes that his request was, "judged to be but a very poore and emptie shift." King James instead expressed great disapproval of the Geneva Bible, not due to its translation character, but due to some of its controversial notes, specifically the ones which he felt might inspire disloyalty to the monarchy. Thus, the first thing the King decreed after agreeing that a new translation was a good idea was that the new Bible should not have marginal notes, "having found in them that were affixed to the Geneva, (which he saw in a Bible given to him by an English lady), some notes very partial, untrue, seditious, and favoring too much of dangerous, and traitorous conceits."<sup>26</sup> The King gave two examples, the notes on Ex. 1:19,<sup>27</sup> and on II Chron. 15:16.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the King assented to what was probably an impromptu and rather insincere request for a new translation. This would accomplish several things at once. First, it would throw the Puritans a bone, since he would then be granting something they had technically asked for, even though it was not something they really wanted. He found himself in a precarious position, as practically every request made by the Puritans was being staunchly opposed by the Bishops, and the king had yet to take the Puritan side against the Bishops, and the conference would soon appear entirely one sided.<sup>29</sup> Second, removing the notes of the Geneva would (he

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<sup>24</sup> Norton, *Textual History*, pg. 6; The King James Bible, pg. 84; Weigle, *The English Bible 1525-1611* in CHB3, pg. 164; McGrath, "In the Beginning," pg. 158-160; et. al. This is now the commonly accepted view.

<sup>25</sup> Norton, *The King James Bible* pg. 84.

<sup>26</sup> Barlow, *Summe* pg. 35, who was present at the conference.

<sup>27</sup> The note had suggested that when the midwives lied to Pharaoh, this was judged ok in God's sight, and thus the king thought it might encourage disobedience to the Monarchy.

<sup>28</sup> The note offered a commendation of Asa for deposing his Mother, but the King felt that this again is to endorse the idea that a monarch can be deposed, which notion should be rejected.

<sup>29</sup> See McGrath, *In the Beginning* pg. 155-165.



hoped) cool some of the heated controversy from the Puritan non-conformists. Ultimately then, it was a political move to achieve unity, because it would create a translation (as noted in the preface), “not justly to be excepted against.” But finally, the King had only recently acquired this throne, and likely felt that a new translation was the perfect way to seal his stature as a young scholar-king and to establish his fame, especially in opposition to the Catholics. The Rheims translation of the OT had just been completed, and the NT would soon follow. As Catholicism entered the English translation market, the King could make an even greater splash with his own contribution. As the translators note in their dedication to the King, rendering him precisely the fame he hoped the work would bring,

*“There are infinite arguments of this right Christian and religious affection in Your Majesty; but none is more forcible to declare it to others than the vehement and perpetuated desire of accomplishing and publishing of this work, which now, with all humility, we present unto Your Majesty. For when Your Highness had once, out of deep judgement, apprehended how convenient it was, that, out of the Original sacred Tongues, together with comparing of the labours, both in our own and other foreign languages, of many worthy men who went before us, there should be one more exact translation of the Holy Scriptures into the English tongue; Your Majesty did never desist to urge and to excite those to whom it was commended, that the Work might be hastened, and that the business might be expedited in so decent a manner, as a matter of such importance might justly require.”*

And as they also noted finally in their preface, “*And what can the King command to be done, that will bring him more true honor then this?*” The King wanted to increase his fame by leaving his mark on the world. And what better way to do this than with a new translation for the Church of England, which both Bishop’s and Puritans could agree to? In one fell swoop, he could support the Church of English in opposition to Catholicism and Puritanism, but Puritans could not complain, because they had, technically, asked for it.<sup>30</sup> It was a masterful political move, sure to increase his fame. He could have no idea of the lasting legacy he would end up leaving.

### **The Process Followed**

Thus, the King commissioned a revision of the official Bishop’s Bible to be made. There was basically a three-stage process that was to be followed; six companies would do the work, one “general meeting” of a dozen scholars would polish it, and a final revision by two individuals would provide finishing touches. He

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<sup>30</sup> See the exposition of the Preface in the appendix for the translators making precisely this point. The Puritans had called for the work to which the King had agreed, so they could not legitimately complain about it (even though they didn’t really want it, disliked the results, and still preferred the Geneva Bible).

divided the work into six companies<sup>31</sup> of translators, two at Westminster, two at Cambridge, and two at Oxford. The first Westminster Company tackled Genesis-II Kings. The first Cambridge Company took I Chronicles-Song of Solomon. The first Oxford Company handled the prophets, while the second handled the Gospels, Acts, and Revelation. The second Westminster Company took the Epistles. The second Cambridge Company took the Apocrypha. It has long been suspected that in the actual completing of the work, the companies had subdivided their work even further. That is, each company of 8-10 men didn't work over the entire portion allotted to them, but rather the company divided their portion into smaller units among themselves. Anthony Walker's Biography of John Bois had mentioned this subdivision, and Norton had suggested that Walker's account was accurate. The MS Ward B (mentioned above) now confirms this fact. The manuscript occurs only in Ward's hand, but contains only a small subsection of the Apocrypha. In fact, only two chapters of one of the two books. Further, there are plenty of blank pages after the work in the same document, showing that Ward had no intentions of working on a further portion of the text. Thus, it is evident that at least some of the companies subdivided their work further among themselves.<sup>32</sup>

Archbishop Bancroft, with approval of the King, appointed a list of rules to be followed in the translation work. He initially gave them 14 rules, and shortly before the work began included a fifteenth. The rules to be followed were laid out as follows;<sup>33</sup>

1. The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the Bishop's Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit.
2. The names of the prophets, and the holy writers, with the other names in the text, to be retained, as near as may be, accordingly as they are vulgarly used.
3. The old ecclesiastic words to be kept, viz.: as the word 'Church' not to be translated congregation etc.
4. When a word hath diverse significations, that to be kept which hath been most commonly used by the most ancient Fathers, being agreeable to the propriety of the place, and the Analogy of the Faith.
5. The division of chapters to be altered not at all, or as little as may be, if necessity so require.

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<sup>31</sup> Some older scholars saw the division as three companies, each with two parts. According to this division, there would be six scholars in the second stage, rather than twelve. A beautiful collection of photographs of the general locations and even the exact rooms in which each company did their work is available at <http://kingjamesbibletranslators.org>, with a decent description of the translator's lives and history as well.

<sup>32</sup> See Norton's, "The King James Bible" pg. 54-62.

<sup>33</sup> See Norton, "Textual History" pg. 8-11. We have three copies of the rules that were given to the translators extant today (MS Add. 28721, MS Harley 750, and MS Egerton 2884), as well as a recounting of them in Walker's biography of Bois (in Allen's reprint, pg. 140), and a summary of them in the report to the Synod of Dort (printed in Pollard, pg 141-143). Some of them were clearly not followed very closely, and others may not have been followed at all.

6. No marginal notes at all to be affixed, but only for the explanation of the Hebrew or Greek words, which cannot without some circumlocution so briefly and fitly be expressed in the text.
7. Such quotations of places to be marginally set down as shall serve for fit reference of one Scripture to another.
8. Every particular man of each company to take the same chapter or chapters, and having translated or amended them severally by himself where he think good, all to meet together, confer what they have done, and agree for their part what shall stand.
9. As one company hath dispatched any one book in this manner, they shall send it to the rest to be considered of seriously and judiciously, for His Majesty is very careful for this point.
10. If any company, upon review of the book so sent, shall doubt or differ upon any place, to send them word thereof, note the place and withal send their reasons, to which if they consent not, the difference to be compounded at the general meeting, which is to be of the chief persons of each company, at the end of the work.
11. When any place of especial obscurity is doubted of, letters to be directed by authority to send to any learned man in the land for his judgment of such a place.
12. Letters to be sent from every Bishop to the rest of his clergy, admonishing them of this translation in hand, and to move and charge as many as being skillful in the tongues have taken pains in that kind, to send his particular observations to the company, either at Westminster, Cambridge, or Oxford.
13. The directors in each company to be the Deans of Westminster and Chester for that place, and the King's Professors in the Hebrew and Greek in each university.
14. These translations to be used where they agree better with the text than the Bishop's Bible, viz.: Tyndale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Withchurch's [the Great Bible], Geneva.
15. Besides the said directors before mentioned, three or four of the most ancient and grave divines, in either of the universities not employed in the translating, to be assigned by the Vice-Chancellors, upon conference with the rest of the heads, to be overseers of the translations as well Hebrew as Greek, for the better observation of the fourth rule above specified.

There is a brilliance to this suggested procedure which Norton summarizes well, "This is grandiose. As many as ten translators are individually to translate a single part, then to agree together on the translation. This work is then to be circulated among the other groups of translators, commented on and further considered by the original company. Then a general meeting is to deal with all remaining points of difference."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Norton, "Textual History" pg 11. Though he notes that this grandiose vision was not actually followed in any grandiose way.

Forty-seven men were chosen to be translators,<sup>35</sup> probably by Bancroft, and divided into the six chosen companies. Within six months of the Hampton Conference, they were hard at work. Contrary to popular notions, they did not do their work with a Greek testament in one hand and blank paper and pen in the other. (They certainly didn't work with any Greek manuscripts directly). As McGrath notes, "It is impossible to overlook the fact that the King James translators did not begin to translate with blank sheets of paper in front of them."<sup>36</sup> Their work simply was not the work of new translation that such an image would suggest. Rather, their work was expressly to be a revision of the Bishop's Bible, and so they did their work directly upon copies of the Bishop's Bible made especially for the occasion. The king commissioned Robert Barker (who held the office of "the King's printer") to print forty copies of the Bishop's Bible, to be given in unbound sheets to the translators.<sup>37</sup> Forty might seem too small a number for forty-seven translators, but it actually is somewhat excessive. Remember that each company is revising only a select portion of the Bible. Since the Bibles were unbound sheets, the appropriate sections could easily be divided among the companies. The translators then did their revising work directly on these unbound sheets.<sup>38</sup> A collection of these unbound sheets (probably from three different companies, and certainly from at least two different stages of the revision) were bound together as a whole Bible and now make up the manuscript known as "*Bodleian Library Bibl. Eng. 1602b*" or simply, "Bod. 1602."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The number 54 is first mentioned in the letter from Bancroft (Pollard, "Records" pg. 331). There are four different recorded lists of the translators and the division of the work, (as well as notes in Walker, et al.) and they have the list in two slightly different forms, so there are occasionally minor questions at this point. A total of fifty-four men could be mentioned as appointed, with forty-seven of them ultimately engaging in the work. See Norton, "Textual History" pg. 6-7, his "The King James Bible" pg. 54-88. Also see Vance, "King James His Bible and its Translators" (pg. 23-35), and CHB3 pg. 164.

<sup>36</sup> McGrath, "*In the Beginning*" pg. 176.

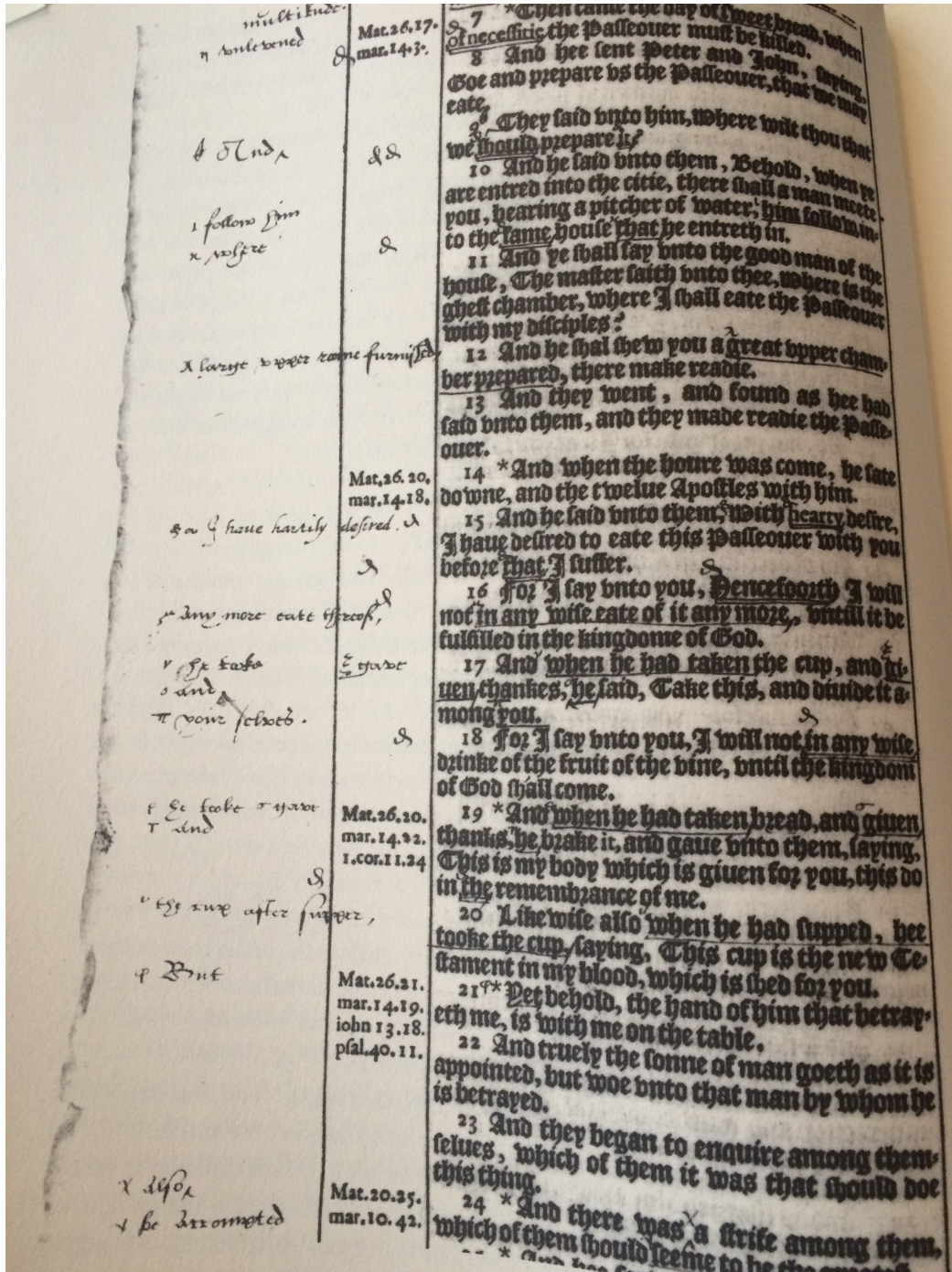
<sup>37</sup> We have his command to Barker, and even still have a copy of the bill Barker wrote, which reads, "40. Large churchbibles for the translators" dated 10 May 1604. (Norton, "Textual History" pg. 12.)

<sup>38</sup> An exception seems to be Samuel Ward. MS Ward B contains the text of the Bishop's Bible, but written out in hand, with alterations suggested to the side, which is why it was mistakenly classified as a commentary by him upon the Bishop's Bible. This is odd, and this author cannot understand its purpose. Did his company run out of sheets? Did his personal proclivities prefer working from a handwritten text? These and other questions about the document remain to be answered by scholars.

<sup>39</sup> See Norton, "Textual History" pg. 20-24 for discussion. The gospels portion of the manuscript is available in, "*The Coming of the King James Gospels*" by Allen and Jacobs, and their intro (pg. 3-57) has further details.

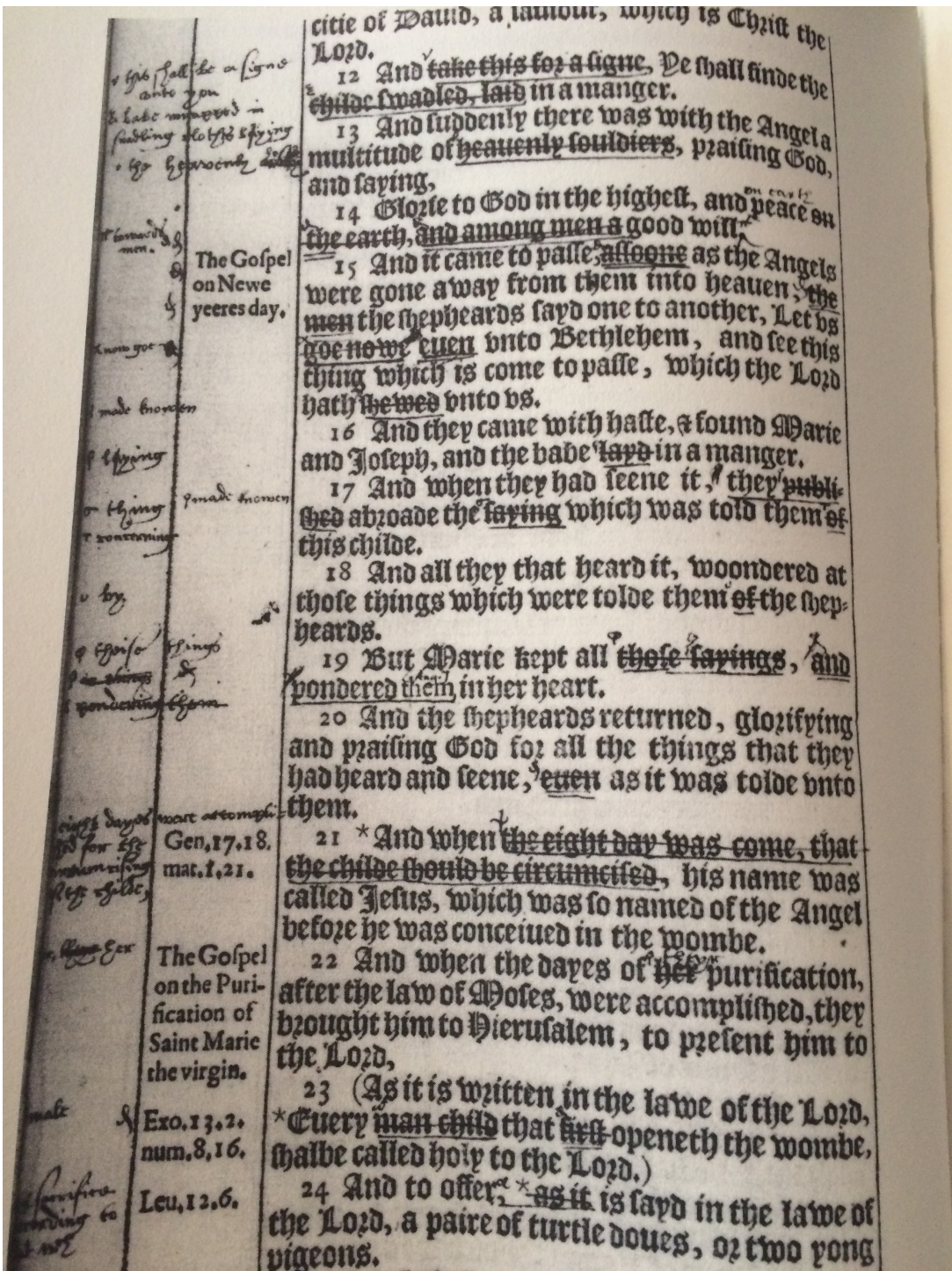


Below are a few photographs<sup>40</sup> of the work-in-progress, as examples. These are images of some of the actual pages upon which the translators did their work.



<sup>40</sup> Images taken from Allen and Jacobs, "The Coming of the King James Gospels" pg. 8, 16. Note that the quality is not great, as this is a picture of a reprinted image of the work.





As one can easily see, the translators underlined wording that would warrant further review, added words into the margins that they wanted to incorporate, and directly crossed words out in the Bishop's text that they wanted to remove or substantially revise (with the revised wording then added in the margins). One can imagine a particular company at work. Ten men gathered around a table, each holding a copy of the Bishop's Bible, and a copy of either an ancient version, a Greek

text, or a previous English version, and one man reading the Bishop's text aloud. If someone saw something they thought needed amended, they spoke up, or not, he continued to read.<sup>41</sup> This stage of the revision had basically three steps. First, the revision work done by each company. Second, once their part of the revision was complete, the work was (presumably) looked over by the other companies (though we have no idea how fully this was carried out), who made additional suggestions, and sent their suggestions back to the original company. Third, the original company then looked again over the work and had a more final say about the readings. This stage of the work was likely completed by the end of 1608. At this stage, the translators are repeatedly choosing among the readings of previous translations, essentially to decide whose wording to borrow. They again and again incorporate readings from Tyndale, Matthew, Coverdale, Geneva, and the Rhiems-Douai.

In 1609-1610, the second stage, the "general meeting" which King James (via Bancroft) had demanded was held at Stationer's Hall in London. Two representatives from each of the six companies were sent, with the annotated copy of their part of the revised Bishop's Bible with them.<sup>42</sup> At this general meeting, these twelve men<sup>43</sup> took the details and hammered them out. During the course of this General meeting, John Bois took occasional notes of the debates and questions that took place, while also noting in many occasions the reading that was adopted. If he had taken more substantial notes, we might find every question answered about the KJV text. As it stands, we have a good representative sampling. We know for sure a few of the men who comprised this second stage. John Bois obviously, and he seems to record comments from Andrew Downes, Dr. Harmer. He lists comments from several others (C., H., D.H., D:Hutch., Hutch., B. and D.) but identifying these from the larger body of translators is only a matter of conjecture. Bois' notes reveal many interesting elements of this stage of the work.

For example, Bois notes that the translators settled on the translation, "answer" in the controversial passage in I Pet. 3:21 because they accepted the interpretation of Tertullian in his treatise on Baptism, echoed by Erasmus, that while there is nothing magical in the water of the laver that saves, the vow of baptism is what brings regeneration. Tertullian had written,<sup>44</sup> "Happy is our sacrament of water, in that, by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free *and admitted* into eternal life!" and "There is absolutely nothing which makes men's minds more obdurate than the simplicity of the divine works which are visible in the *act*, when compared with the grandeur which is promised thereto in the *effect*; so that from the very fact, that with so great simplicity, without pomp, without any considerable novelty of preparation, finally, without expense, a man is

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<sup>41</sup> See Norton "*Textual History*" pg. 12 for Seldon's suggestive picture in a similar vein.

<sup>42</sup> Bod 1602 contains portions both from this stage of the work, and portions from the later final stage of the work.

<sup>43</sup> Or six, if the older division of three companies is accepted.

<sup>44</sup> See ANF volume III <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.vi.iii.i.html> (especially chapters V-VII, and XII "On the Necessity of Baptism to Salvation").

dipped in water, and amid the utterance of some few words, is sprinkled, and then rises again, not much (or not at all) the cleaner, the consequent attainment of eternity is esteemed the more incredible." And finally, "Thus, too, in *our* case, the unction runs carnally, (*i.e.* on the body,) but profits spiritually; in the same way as the *act* of baptism itself too is carnal, in that we are plunged in water, *but* the *effect* spiritual, in that we are freed from sins." Bois explained that rather than the previous renderings, like "request," "promise," "agreement," or Tyndale's, "consenteth," the translators choose to render the word, "answer" in order to propagate the interpretation which says that it is the baptismal vow that saves, and "answer" would naturally call this to mind.<sup>45</sup>

Or as another example, consider Bois' note at I Cor. 7: 29. He explains that there had been discussion of what way to render the Greek. He had pointed the others to the marginal notes of the Greek texts (*scholia* probably a reference to the notes of Beza). But the others had chosen not to heed his advice, and so he notes, "cui non assentior, Lege Gr. Scholia" (or "to which I do not assent. Read the Greek Scholia").<sup>46</sup> Clearly there was discussion, debate, and occasional disagreement among the translators. At this stage, a final annotated copy of the Bishop's Bible was prepared.

In the third<sup>47</sup> and final stage of the revision,<sup>48</sup> Miles Smith and Thomas Bilson placed the finishing touches on an annotated copy of the Bishop's Bible. It is generally agreed that there were few changes to the actual text made at this point. Rather, they mostly added the headings, and compiled the *Translators to the Reader* that would accompany the work.<sup>49</sup> Allen summarizes the three-stage work when he writes, "Work on the translation progressed in three stages. Each company prepared its preliminary translation. From these preliminary translations, the committee of review prepared a final version at Stationer's Hall in London. Thomas Bilson, Bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Miles Smith, a learned Orientalist, prebendary of Hereford and Exeter Cathedrals and later Bishop of Gloucester, supplied the finishing

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<sup>45</sup> See discussion of Bois' note in Allen, pg. 27-28, the note is on page 93.

<sup>46</sup> See his note in Allen pg. 47, and brief discussion of it in Norton, "The King James Bible" pg. 103.

<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that a "fourth stage" could be suggested, because it is clear that Archbishop Bancroft looked over the entire work during the third stage, and Smith complained (repeatedly) that Bancroft made fourteen changes to the text which the translators had not actually agreed to. However, we have today no way of knowing precisely what those changes were, or if they were ultimately printed in the text. See McGrath, "*In The Beginning*" pg. 188.

<sup>48</sup> Norton notes that there is in a sense a further stage of revision, that of the printer. He and his (probably 2) helpers made several hundred minor changes to the text intended by the KJV translator's final copy. Most of these were likely accidental, but it is possible that some were intentional as well. Norton has sought to remove these errors in his "Cambridge Paragraph Bible" so that the reader has the text as they intended, rather than as corrupted by Barker and successive printers and editors.

<sup>49</sup> Norton, "Textual History" pg. 25.



touches.”<sup>50</sup> Norton compiles the evidence with his deductions and summarizes the work as a whole noting, “Six companies produced draft translations between 1604 and 1608. They sometimes subdivided their work and they went over it twice. MS 98 represents first draft work; at this stage about half of the eventual readings had been settled. Bod 1602’s NT annotations represent work as it left the hands of the companies, with in place five-sixths of the readings settled. The work was called in 1608, and the companies forwarded it to the general meeting in the form of annotations to the Bishop’s Bible text. The general meeting had working copies made of some of the submitted work (Bod 1602’s OT work is one of these). It worked over these in small groups in 1609 and 1610, producing as a final copy a heavily annotated and interleaved copy of the Bishop’s Bible. John Bois’ notes give a glimpse of the work done in 1610. In 1610 and 1611, two men worked over the whole text in co-operation with the printer, establishing the KJB as first printed in 1611. Whatever manuscript there might have been, this, with the second printing, effectively became the master copy of the KJB.”<sup>51</sup> Norton goes on to detail at great length the printing of the different editions and revisions of the KJV, noting the hundreds of textual differences between each successive edition of the KJV,<sup>52</sup> and the hundreds of verbal differences between any modern KJV bought off the shelf, and each of these editions, especially noting how the text has successively gotten farther and farther away from the textual form originally intended by the translators.

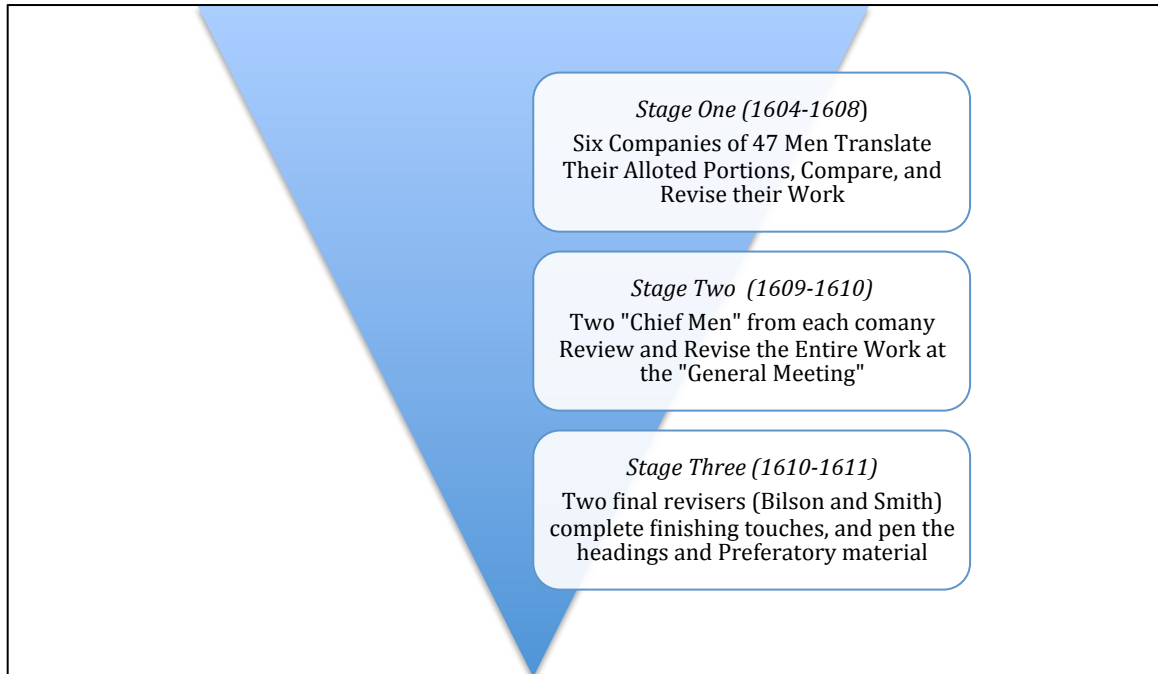
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<sup>50</sup> Allen, Ward, “John Bois, his notes” in *“Translating for King James”* pg. 7.

<sup>51</sup> Norton, *“Textual History”* pg. 27-28.

<sup>52</sup> Norton, *“Textual History”* pg. 46-114.

## The Three-Fold Process of the Revision Work



### The Resulting Revision

For our purposes, the point to note is that the KJV was born as a revision that was essentially an eclectic compilation of disparate elements of a host of previous English translations. As we have noted before, there is a sense in which it is a new translation, since the translators repeatedly went back to their Greek (primarily Beza's editions, but also those of Stephanus, and Erasmus), Hebrew (Bomberg), and Versional texts (primarily the Latin Vulgate and LXX) to wrestle with textual variants and accuracy of translation. But it must be kept in mind that its NT is in this sense a translation of an eclectic compilation of original language texts (Stephanus, Beza, etc.), those texts themselves various revisions of Erasmus' text, itself an eclectic text based on a combination of readings from a handful of manuscripts (primarily miniscules 1 and 2) and the occasional intrusion from the Latin Vulgate, mixed with his own conjectural emendations or "guesses" about what the text should read. In that sense it is a new translation. But in its truest sense, it is just one more in a long succession of revisions of Tyndale's English work. The work of the translators was not primarily translation, but compilation. It is the result of the messy (and irreverent?) work of crossing things out in their Bishop's Bibles, debating about who had previously said it best, occasionally arguing about interpretation, and sometimes never finding total agreement. At the end of the day, it is essentially a work of great composite plagiarism.

In fact, very little of the KJV is work original to the translators. In one of the most careful studies done to date to determine how much of the KJV is simply the

result of borrowing from others,<sup>53</sup> the authors take a wide swath of “sample passages” and do a detailed computer-driven verbal comparison of the pre-KJV Bibles with the KJV to determine how often the KJV goes back to the language of Tyndale, follows each of his successors, or innovates with new readings original to them. The study determines that while comparison to an independent translation that was consistently literal would find much similarity (since they are after all translations of the same book) that number would hover only around 50%. The exact correspondence between the KJV and the works they compared shows what the translators intentionally retained, in numerical and statistical format. In the NT, it was found that 83.7% of the KJV is actually Tyndale’s work. In large measure, this is simply because the KJV translators retained so much of the Bishop’s Bible, which of course is essentially a later revision of his work, rather than being due to a direct intention to replicate Tyndale. In fact, as Vance notes, “Of the 7,957 of the verses in the New Testament the Authorized Version reads exactly with the Bishop’s Bible in 2,102 of them (26.4%).”<sup>54</sup> In over ¼ of the verses of the NT, they let the text stand, and introduced no changes whatsoever to the Bishop’s text. In an additional 3,827 of the 5,855 remaining verses, they make only simple (minor) changes involving 1-2 words.<sup>55</sup> Not only is it true that the KJV is a revision of the 1602 Bishop’s Bible, it is a revision that ultimately changed little of the text. When the KJV alters the text of the Bishops Bible, it is occasionally simply to return to the previous wording of Tyndale. Interestingly, the KJV follows the wording of the Rheims-Douay translation of the Vulgate against all the other previous English versions in 1.9% of the NT.<sup>56</sup> Add to this the amount of Erasmus’ text which is itself a direct translation into Greek from the Vulgate (opposed to all Greek Manuscripts of both his day and ours) and one can feel the strong influence of the Latin Vulgate upon the KJV, at two separate stages of its creation.

How original was their work? The KJV translators only provide original readings in 2.8% of the KJV NT. In the portions of the OT on which Tyndale worked, they either retain or return to his wording 75.7% of the time. In the portions of the OT on which Tyndale didn’t work, they seem to follow Coverdale 57% of the time, the Geneva 25.6% of the time, and provide their own unique readings 17.4% of the

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<sup>53</sup> Nielson, Jon, and Skousen, Royal. “How Much of the King James Bible is William Tyndale’s?” *Reformation Journal*, Volume 3, Issue 1, 1998, pg. 49-74.

<sup>54</sup> Vance, “The Making of the King James Bible” pg. 247. This final analysis is the statistical result of his complete collation of the Bishop’s 1602 with the KJV 1611. It is unfortunate that his analysis used the verse as the unit to present the statistics in, rather than the individual word, which might have proved far more helpful, but of course, one can readily consult his printed comparison, and note the nature and extent of each change.

<sup>55</sup> Vance, “The Making of the King James Bible” pg. 247. Vance provides further statistics about verses involving 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7+ simple changes, as well as those involving more “complex changes.”

<sup>56</sup> This shows that while rule 14 had not mentioned the Vulgate translation, and may even have been formulated in such a way as to exclude it, the KJV translators ultimately would be party to no such shunning.

time. While the study is only of a sample group rather than a full collation of each Bible, it accords with the general estimates that careful scholars have always given of Tyndale's influence on the KJV (Westcott, Scrivener, Daniell, Norton, etc.). In other words, while the KJV translators produced in a sense a "new" translation, it is far more accurate to generally speak of their work as just one more revision of the numerous successive revisions of Tyndale. The KJV is the grand work that it is because the translators were re-tweeting the work of others, and primarily that of William Tyndale. Scrivener noted, "It is no mean evidence of Tyndale's general worth, that his New Testament is the virtual groundwork of every subsequent revision. Page after page of his translation of the gospels, in language and phraseology; in the arrangement of the words, and turn of the construction, bear so strong a resemblance to our common version [the KJV] as to be scarcely distinguishable from it. The variations that do occur are often so minute as easily to escape observation; and the changes that have been introduced [where the KJV departs from Tyndale] are not always for the better."<sup>57</sup> Daniell notes, "Though in the New Testament, and particularly in the Epistles, King James's revisers made many changes, and though their base was Bishop's, the truth is that the ultimate base was Tyndale."<sup>58</sup> In his introduction to the reprint of Tyndale's 1536 NT, he further reminds us that, "In the clangour of the market-place of modern translations, Tyndale's ravishing solo should be heard across the world. Astonishment is still voiced that the dignitaries who prepared the 1611 Authorized Version for King James spoke so often with one voice – apparently miraculously. Of course they did: the voice (never acknowledged by them) was Tyndale's."<sup>59</sup> While we often speak of the KJV as a translation in it's own right, it is in fact more accurate to speak of it as a work of rank composite plagiarism. Enough of the Bishop's Bible was changed to be able to market it as a new revision, but most changes were simply re-tweeting Tyndale without giving credit.<sup>60</sup>

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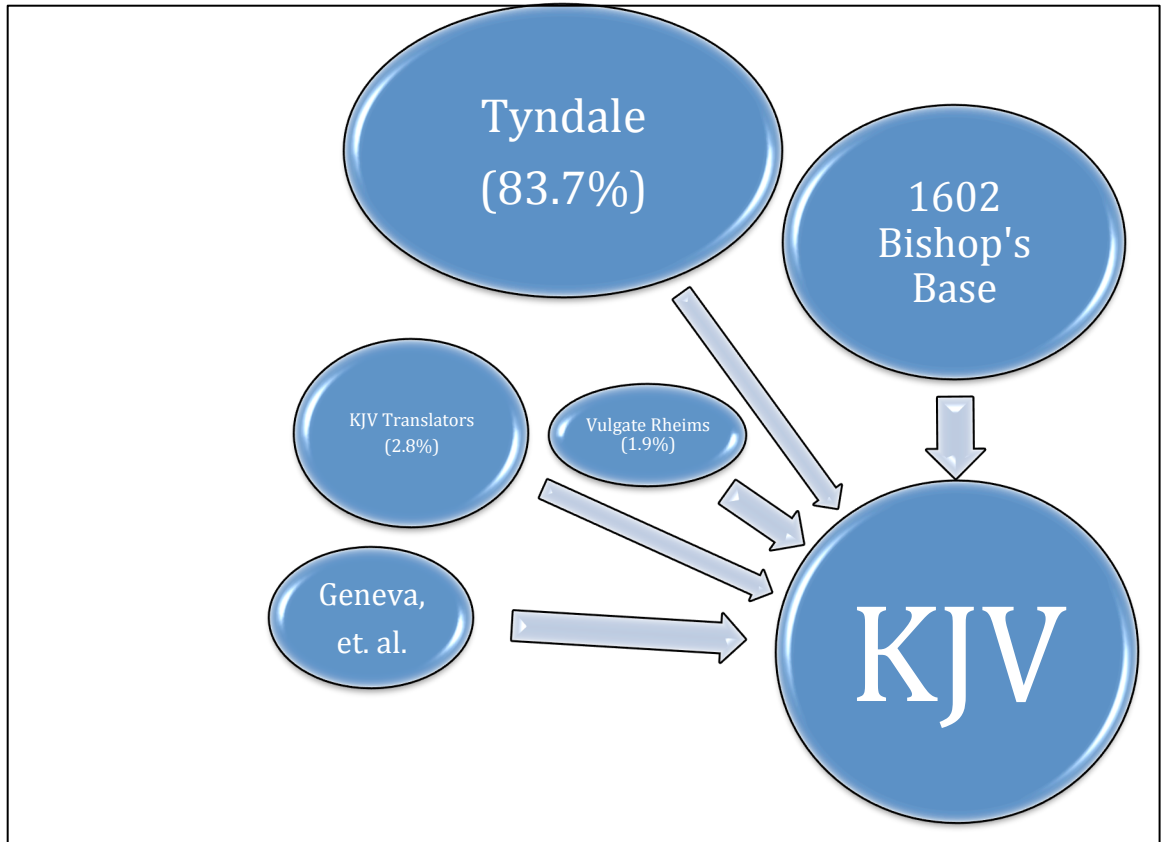
<sup>57</sup> Scrivener, "A Supplement" pg. 80. He further noted, "It would not be difficult also to point out instances in which a change has been introduced into the later edition [i.e., a place where the KJV didn't follow Tyndale] decidedly for the worse. I have noticed no less than fifty-four such cases...in the Gospel of Matthew alone." (pg. 83).

<sup>58</sup> Daniell, "The Bible in English" pg. 448.

<sup>59</sup> Daniell, "Tyndale's New Testament" (introduction) pg. vii.

<sup>60</sup> See the Tyndale Society's explanation and investigation of his translation's contribution to the Reformation. As they note, history rarely credits him as it should. <http://www.tyndale.org>

## The Sources of the Revision of the Bishop's Bible (The KJV)



The point of this section has been a simple question, which hopefully has already arisen in the readers mind. The KJV is quite plainly just one more of a long series of revisions of Tyndale, each changing the form of the text, and itself going through numerous textual changes along the way. Tyndale himself is a translation of just one more revision of an eclectic Greek text, created as a mixture of readings from a handful of Greek manuscripts, with various readings from the Latin Vulgate mixed in, and conjectural emendation (and occasional simple errors) by Erasmus sprinkled throughout. The question is then, upon what possible grounds can one call it, (as a matter of doctrine!), “the very words God inspired” in any sense exclusive of all other versions? How can it be called in any sense, “preserved” when, rather than perfectly preserving any previous form of the text, it creates an entirely new one, and mostly as a composite at that? Upon what grounds can one demand its exclusive use? Or, in Scrivener’s words,<sup>61</sup> “Now it were unreasonable to suppose, that if our Authorized Version is so great an improvement on all who went before it, during the space of eighty years, the current of improvement is here to stop, and that no

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<sup>61</sup> Who also noted in this context that he felt we didn’t so much need a whole new translation as we did a serious revision of the text and translation of the KJV. He concludes his introduction with marvelous words of praise for the KJV. But it must be noted that there is a categorical distinction between praising the KJV and believing it perfect, rather than in need of much improvement.

blemishes remain for future students to detect and remove. More than two centuries have passed since that version (or, to speak more correctly, revision of former versions) was executed, and they have been centuries of great and rapid improvement in every branch of knowledge and science.”<sup>62</sup> The ESV, for example, has consciously sought to stand in the lineage of Tyndale, as perhaps the most recent revision of Tyndale’s work. The NKJV stands in that same lineage, making updates only to the translation, while retaining the same Greek text of the KJV. Why is the KJV perfect and the ESV evil; the KJV demanded and the NKJV rejected? They are simply different points on the same spectrum of revision. There is only one possible ground upon which the verbal perfection of the KJV can be asserted. There is only one possible way to take what is demonstrably a product of revision and demand that all revision subsequent to that revision must have supernaturally halted. In other words, there is only one possible way that doctrinal statements asserting the verbal perfection of the KJV are not asserting serious falsehood in their position. One must believe that God inspired the KJV translators to create a final form of the text that can never be touched again or improved in any way. Apart from belief in the inspiration of the KJV translators, it simply is not possible to assert the position that the KJV is verbally perfect. Either the KJV is demonstrably in error at points, and further revision is possible and needed, or the revisers were inspired by God with a new form of revelation. There are no other options. And this is the final and insurmountable dilemma.

### Category Confusions

Many doctrinal statements treating the issue of the KJV make a variety of conflicting assertions. Perhaps, at the end of the day, most of the logical problems in such statements and in the vast majority of works seeking to defend the KJV, the TR, or the MT as perfect are the results of a strangely unnoticed (or intentionally ignored) confusion of categories. There is and always will be a categorical divide between perfection and all varying degrees of imperfection; between flawless, and any measured amount of error; between an inerrant text, and a text with a single admitted error; between verbal faultlessness, and the presence of even a single verbal fault. The regularly made arguments that seek to defend the KJV on the basis of the Byzantine text or Masoretic text make a variety of errors, and they are all category confusions. They fail to understand that the KJV OT is not a direct translation of the MT, and that the MT is not a verbally monolithic entity. They fail to realize that the “Byzantine text” is likewise not a monolithic entity. There is diversity between every single Byzantine manuscript and any other Byzantine manuscript. But further, the KJV is not a direct translation of the Byzantine text. Erasmus used a few manuscripts that were generally Byzantine in character, but he incorporated a variety of readings from the Western Latin Vulgate, making his resultant text an eclectic combination of Byzantine and Western readings. This combination had never existed before 1516. But even if one ignored this fact, the KJV does not translate the text of Erasmus directly, and Erasmus’ own work was no verbally static entity. The twenty some different editions and revisions that the

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<sup>62</sup> Scrivener, “*A Supplement*” pg. 2.

basic form of his text would go through prior to the KJV are all verbally different from one another in hundreds of places, and different from the eclectic combination of their readings that the KJV translators would produce and that would become the Scrivener TR. But even if one ignored this, even the Scrivener TR in all of its editions is different at minor points from the KJV of which it seeks to present the underpinnings. Similar problems plague any attempt to defend the KJV on the basis of the MT. There are verbal differences between every Hebrew manuscript of the “Masoretic” family, and there are verbal differences between every form of the MT and the KJV OT. Further, if this obstacle were somehow mounted, it must be noted that each edition of the KJV is at points verbally different from one another, and as Norton has shown, due to printing and editorial errors, each edition of the KJV is verbally different from what the KJV translators intended to produce.

These distinctions are routinely ignored (or deceitfully hidden) by those advocating for a perfect KJV. All of these diverse forms of the text are lumped together as “supporting the KJV.” Occasionally one will use more accurate language as say things like, “the TR *generally* speaking is like the KJV” or “the Byzantine manuscripts are *largely* the basis of the KJV” or, “the MT is *generally* reliable.” But one cannot have a foundation that is “generally” not without error, but still containing error, and then demand that the structure built on that foundation suddenly attains a perfection that its foundation admittedly didn’t have. Water cannot rise above its source. A structure is not firmer than its foundations. A chain cannot hold a weight greater than its weakest link, and foundations of admitted error cannot support a claim of inerrancy. It is simply not possible. If one wants to place the KJV in the category of “without error” then its foundations must be viewed from the same perspective of precision, and from that perspective, every single source for the KJV, and every argument used to defend it is in demonstrable error. Every Greek manuscript is in error. Every printed Greek text is in error. Every Hebrew manuscript is in error. Every printed Hebrew text is in error. Every previous English translation is in error. Only the KJV is perfect. Thus, if the KJV is perfect, then the categories invariably set by such a claim demand that it is the only text in any language at any time that has ever been so. And if this be accepted, then only one edition of it can be so, and all the other editions must be categorically rejected.

If one denies these assertions, and intones that, “the differences between the editions of the KJV are not that big of a deal” or, “the differences between the editions of the TR are not that big of a deal” or, “the differences between the different Byzantine manuscripts, or between the Byzantine text and the KJV, or between the MT and the KJV are not that big of a deal” then understand what has happened. One has moved the foundations of the KJV out of the realm of perfect and into the category of imperfect. It is not a matter of how great their errors are. A single word is enough to cause a category change. If the foundations of the KJV are moved to the category of *errant*, then the KJV itself must follow. It now can no longer be assumed correct in every passage; in fact, it must be freely acknowledged to be wrong in some. When placed alongside any other English translation, every passage must then be inductively defended, because its presence in the category of imperfection demands that it is at times in error, and the discovery and exposure of

such errors cannot be condemned *a priori*, and should rather be welcomed. We have pointed out a number of such errors that can only be defended by an *a priori* assumption that the KJV is verbally incapable of error. Many more could be pointed out if such a line of argument were allowed.<sup>63</sup>

If one were to choose instead to argue for one of the “sources” of the KJV (e.g., a particular edition of the TR or of the MT) as being in the category of perfection (such as the so-called “TR Only position does), then the differences between that source and the KJV now demand that the KJV cannot occupy the same category. The KJV is thus no longer in the category of errorless but has moved into the realm of error. All that remains to be debated is the magnitude of the errors, and many of the texts of the KJV cannot sustain such scrutiny apart from the *a priori* claim of perfection. And then we must repeat the same procedure in respect to that “source,” for it demonstrably has foundations which are now inescapably in error, this error being demanded by the categories set by the assertion itself.

If on the other hand one denies the presence of identifiable and correctable error in the KJV, then one is asserting verbal perfection for the KJV, and the categories have been irrevocably set by the assertion being made – an object is now judged either verbally perfect, or verbally in error. The presence of a single errant word causes the object under consideration to switch categories. The presence of multiple such errors simply enforces the already forgone conclusion. And the presence of such errors is demanded, because placing the KJV in the category of verbal perfection demands that every text that is verbally different is by definition then verbally in error. Claiming verbal perfection for the KJV imposes the standard that inherently condemns the KJV’s own foundations. One cannot claim any manuscript or text prior to the KJV to be the “preserved” word of God, using a definition of “preserved” that assumes the presence of verbal error, and then apply the word, “preserved” to the KJV, and demand the absence of such errors. If one means only generally preserved, but admittedly containing error, then the resultant KJV can only be considered generally preserved, but undeniably containing error. It is simply dishonest to use the word in a category demanding of error when speaking of the arguments used to support the KJV, and then use the word of the KJV in a category demanding the absence of error. The KJV cannot be considered, “preserved” in a sense that is categorically different from that in which its foundations are “preserved.”

Only one possible circumstance can move the KJV, the MT, or TR from the category of “containing error” which all of its foundations must then lie in, into the categories of “altogether perfect” containing “the very words God inspired” created by such doctrinal statements. One must assert that God supernaturally inspired the translators with a new form of revelation. It has only been by the regular propagation of a kind of “fuzziness” about such distinctions that the idea of a verbally perfect KJV *apart* from the divine inspiration of the translators has been thought a possibility. But claims of perfection do not admit of imprecise definitions. If the conclusion one wishes to prove is in the category of “perfection” then the arguments adduced for it must work in the same category, and there is only one

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<sup>63</sup> See for example the helpful list of KJV errors in Scriveners, “*A Supplement.*”



argument that can sustain a presence in that category, and that is the belief that God supernaturally moved the KJV translators with an infallibility which allowed them to create a new and final form of the text that had never existed before, God’s new and final revelation to His people.

It must be noted further that there is a serious lack of logical integrity involved in trying to use categorically different elements to argue for a perfect KJV. Appeals to Burgon, Scrivener, Byzantine priority, a majority of manuscripts, sustained history of use, reception by God’s people of a “Received Text,” the legacy of Tyndale or the reformers, etc. all are categorically “imperfect” and cannot be appealed to with any integrity for a perfect KJV. Their irrelevance to the claims they are being promoted to substantiate is patently obvious at every point where they contradict the KJV, and yet the KJV remains uncorrected. One cannot appeal to the scholarship of the KJV translators, because human scholarship is a human endeavor, demanding human errors, which demands a presence in the imperfect category. To err is human. One cannot appeal to Burgon and Majority text supporters, and then ignore them the moment they correct the KJV. This makes them not support for, but *against* a perfect KJV. One cannot appeal to the various editions of the TR as why one believes in a perfect KJV, and then refuse to allow corrections to the KJV that any particular edition would require. One cannot appeal to Byzantine priority, and then reject the Byzantine tradition in every place that it differs unanimously from the KJV. One cannot appeal to the majority of manuscripts as why one believes the KJV perfect, and then assert that when every single manuscript in existence contradicts the KJV, the KJV is correct and the manuscripts are in error. It is a hopeless confusion of categories, and integrity demands that arguments used to support a perfect KJV be made only in the category of perfection that they are being adduced to support. The only argument sustainable in this category is the inspiration of the KJV translators with new revelation from God about the precise verbal form of the text.

Perfection / Inerrant	Imperfections / Errant
<p style="text-align: center;">The KJV</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Inspiration of the Translators</p>	<p>Burgon</p> <p>Scrivener</p> <p>The Masoretic Text</p> <p>The Scholarship of the Translators</p> <p>The Majority of Manuscripts</p> <p>The Byzantine text</p> <p>The Antiochian text</p> <p>The Reformation text</p> <p>The Received Text</p> <p>The verbally different editions of the TR</p> <p>The verbally different editions of the KJV</p> <p>Etc.</p>

One simply cannot ignore the infinite divide that exists between these two categories. The point is not the magnitude of the differences between these

elements and the KJV, or their differences from one another. A difference of *a single word* from the KJV causes an inexorable shift of category, and that is the ultimate point. Categorically speaking, every argument that has been used to support the idea of a perfect KJV (apart from belief in new revelation given in 1611) actually unifies together categorically to argue directly against such perfection.

### Concluding Appeal

What we have seen then is that there is a serious logical flaw in the many statements on Scripture that concern the KJV, because they affirm simultaneously propositions that are in fact mutually exclusive, and categorically opposed. Such statements typically assert,

1. That the English text of the KJV is "*the Word of God kept intact for English-speaking peoples*" and as the only right translation of the pure texts is thus the only place in English where God has fully "*preserved the very words that He inspired.*" This statement is further heightened by referring to the translators as, "*God's instruments used to preserve His words for English-speaking peoples.*" The multiple use of "word/words" in such statements strengthens this verbal focus. This sentiment is so strongly set forth, that it can be demanded that the KJV be, "*the only English version used and or endorsed.*" Such statements are undeniably asserting the verbal perfection of the KJV. Any belief that the KJV contains errors in either text or translation is precluded by this wording. The entire goal of such statements seems to be to present an attitude of absolute certainty about the text of the KJV. Anyone entertaining doubts about the text of the KJV, or believing in specific places that the text of the KJV is in error, would be directly precluded from signing such a statement.
2. That Scripture promises the perfect verbal preservation of the Bible in Hebrew, Greek, and even English. Defining preservation as ending in, "*altogether the complete, preserved, inerrant Word of God,*" claiming that "*By providentially preserved we mean that God through the ages has, in His divine providence, preserved the very words that He inspired*" and repeatedly referring to the KJV as "preserved" demands that this promise applies to each. The list of Scripture references usually included below the statement bolsters this claim. The exegetical fallacies of this assertion are numerous and have been taken up elsewhere.
3. That the MT and TR are verbally perfect, identical to the autographs. This is more strongly asserted than #1 or #2, and is usually the express purpose of statements like, "*By providentially preserved we mean that God through the ages has, in His divine providence, preserved the very words that He inspired; that the Hebrew Old Testament text, as found in the Traditional Masoretic Text, and the Greek New Testament text, as found in the Textus Receptus, are indeed the products of God's providential preservation and are altogether the complete, preserved, inerrant Word of God.*" The statement focuses on the verbal nature of 'preservation.' God did not just preserve his Word, but his 'words.' And as if that wasn't strong enough, they typically adjectivally clarify, 'the very words.' Such statements claim that the one and only place

that the exact words inspired by God can be found is the Traditional Masoretic text, and the Textus Receptus.

4. That the translators of the KJV were not inspired. This is usually stated negatively, as a denial, "*that the Authorized Version translators were not 'inspired.'*"
5. As a logical result of assertions 1-4, the KJV is asserted as the only English translation that can be used or endorsed.

Or, to summarize into the most important points into more manageable abridgments, such statements commonly affirm;

1. That the KJV is verbally perfect
2. That Scripture promises verbal preservation in Hebrew, Greek, and English
3. That the MT and TR are verbally perfect
4. That the translators of the KJV were not inspired

I would agree only with point #4. But as we have seen from the evidence, no two of the above points can be held at the same time with integrity. They are categorically opposed. To believe them all involves one in inescapable contradiction. If #1 is true, then #2, #3, and #4, cannot be. #2 cannot be true in any way, as it is self-contradictory. If #2 is true, then God is a liar, because such a promise simply has not been kept. If there is a perfect English text, then there simply is no Hebrew and Greek text that has been preserved as perfectly as that text. And, entirely apart from the internal contradiction in #2, this again demands that number #4 is false. If #3 is true, then #1 and #4 cannot be. If #4 is true, then #1 and #3 are impossible, as they are inescapably dependent on the inspiration of the KJV translators. These assertions by such statements on Scripture are inherently and inescapably contradictory. They are in fact categorically opposed. That which is inherently contradictory cannot and should not be maintained as true. And if we are to honor Jesus, then it must not be professed as doctrine. There are several different options available to those who promotes such statements make them free of their current logical contradictions;

1. They could be changed to affirm only the *general reliability* of the KJV, the MT, and the TR, and remove all of the language about "words" and "perfectly" and "preserved" and "inerrant" from the statement, (except in relation to the "originally written" autographs). This places each in the category of "errant." Of course, such an affirmation of admitted error could not then be used as a foundation for a demand for the exclusive use and endorsement of the KJV, but they could legitimately affirm the general reliability of both, while still maintaining the assertion that the KJV translators were not inspired. Further, it would demand continual review and revision of the KJV. I would sign such a statement. They could then legitimately require the exclusive use of the KJV, without making it a doctrinal issue, on grounds other than its perfection, and without an appeal to its "preservation." For instance, they could say that "in the interest of unity" they require only the use of the KJV. They could say,

- “out of respect for tradition” they require the exclusive use of the KJV. Those are both legitimate grounds. What is not legitimate is affirming the perfection of the KJV, and the TR, and the MT, and then asserting that the translators were not inspired. Those cannot all logically be maintained simultaneously.
2. They could be changed to affirm only the perfection of the TR and the MT, and remove all such language about the English KJV, and remove any denial of the inspiration of the KJV translators. Since the KJV is at points not based on any Greek or Hebrew text, and thus different from every printed TR and every printed Hebrew text, as we have seen, it is impossible to affirm simultaneously the verbal preservation of each. Since the TR is the result of the translator’s decisions, the perfection of the TR cannot be affirmed while the inspiration of the translators is simultaneously denied. However, since the inspiration of the translators must be maintained to affirm the perfection of the TR they created, once they have affirmed that perfection, there is little reason not to instead choose to affirm the inspiration of the KJV. Besides which, if the statement asserted the verbal perfection of the MT, that would more accurately result in a “NKJV Only” position than a position demanding use of the KJV, as the NKJV OT follows the MT more closely than the KJV (see note above). Thus, I suspect that this option would not be likely to be approved.
  3. They could change it to affirm the perfection of the English KJV, and remove any language about the perfection of the TR and MT. They would also have to remove the language of verbal “preservation” since they would then be asserting that perfect Greek and Hebrew texts are not preserved anywhere, and only the English of the KJV is perfect. They will have to then remove the denial of the inspiration of the KJV translators, since this view is absolutely dependent upon such a claim. I suspect such a formulation would most accurately reflect with integrity what most “Friends of Heartland” actually believe. This belief is in fact the unspoken core of the position held by most who promote the idea that the KJV is perfect. I view such a formulation as in serious bibliological error, but it is at least logically coherent at that point, and could thus be maintained and promoted with more integrity. Such promoters could then articulate the view that God moved the KJV translators supernaturally to recreate a perfect Hebrew and Greek text (which would only be temporarily available in their minds), but only in order to facilitate the creation of the perfect English KJV, after which point, the perfect Hebrew and Greek texts ceased to exist. They can also then legitimately demand the exclusive use of the KJV. They will also have to demand that no one use any Hebrew or Greek texts, since they all differ from the KJV. Only English can be allowed, as the English text of the KJV is then the only verbally perfect text of the Bible in any language.

Hopefully, at this point, one sees the insurmountable difficulties contained in most doctrinal statements asserting the perfection of the KJV. It is hoped that a desire for basic honesty among God’s people will lead to the cessation of the use of words like “preserved” in a mistaken fashion, when what is meant is not,

“preserved” but rather, “divinely recreated by inspired translators in 1611.” It is hoped that the framers of such statements (and adherents to them) will come to realize that it is impossible to affirm the perfection of the MT, the TR, and the KJV, as each are verbally different from one another. It could be hoped that those framing such statements would say what they actually believed, (that the KJV is advanced revelation from God which corrects every single Greek and Hebrew manuscript in existence), rather than what they would like others to think they believed. But alas, this is a hope not likely to be realized.