

The Conflict Over Different Bible Versions—Part Eight

By Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. John Weldon

Were There Heretics and Occultists on the Translation Committees of the New Versions?

Proponents of the KJVO, such as G. A. Riplinger, often claim that unbelievers, heretics, occultists and/or homosexuals have been members of the editorial or translation committees of the modern versions. But even if this were true, would this by itself prove any given translation was corrupt?

The only issue is whether or not the members of a given translation committee are competent and qualified scholars who translate the original languages as accurately as possible. The fact that a few individuals on modern translation committees may not have been evangelicals who accepted inerrancy does **not** automatically mean that their scholarly input was wrong, especially when it has been independently checked by other scholars.

What we want among translators is the best skill available. In a life and death situation, would you rather have your child operated on by an **unbelieving** surgeon conceded by everyone as the best available surgeon with no fatalities on his record for this particular procedure or by a Christian surgeon who is only “average” and has a 20 percent failure rate? The same principle applies in translating. We want the best people available. This is because the process of objectively translating a text has no necessary relationship to personal belief.

But, in fact, the situation is nowhere near as bad as some KJVO writers claim. Riplinger, for example, claims that lesbian Virginia Mollencott was involved in the NIV translation.¹ It is true that Mollencott sat on the literary (stylistic) committee of the NIV but only for a few months. However, she had nothing to do with the translation, and once her sexual preferences were known, she was asked to resign.² If Mollencott’s lesbianism somehow tainted the final product, the NIV translation, then did King James’ own homosexuality³ fatally spoil the translation named after him?

Perhaps we can remind ourselves that God let King David write most of the Psalms. Yet David was an adulterer responsible for the murder of Uriah (2 Samuel 12:9). God let the Apostle Paul, a former terrible persecutor of the church who blasphemed the Lord and murdered Christians, write **25 percent** of the New Testament (Acts 8:1–3; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:3). In fact, everything done in this world is done only by sinners, by men that Jesus Himself called evil (Matt. 7:11). So this means that **every** translation and **every** critical Greek text is composed by men with varying degrees of evil in their lives. If the presence of **sin** in one’s life had a necessary connection to **skill** in translating, could an accurate translation ever be produced in the first place?

Consider another example. On pages 404-412, Riplinger cites alleged evidence to imply that Greek New Testament scholars, Westcott and Hort, were heavily involved in spiritism and therefore that their work should not be trusted. (These men produced the 1881 edition of the Greek New Testament which set the pattern for almost all future editions of the Greek text.) But Riplinger’s allegations are either false or, at best, implausible speculation. She confuses the textual critic B. F. Westcott with the mortician-spiritualist W. W. Westcott,

wildly theorizing the latter individual was actually the former. She does this even though B. F. Westcott was born in 1825 while W. W. Westcott wasn't born until 1848.⁴

On page 407 of her book she also cites Arthur Westcott, the son of B. F. Westcott, as supposedly confessing that his father **was** a spiritualist. In fact, Arthur Westcott never stated this.⁵ He merely said that his father had seriously **investigated** spiritualism and concluded just as seriously that "such investigations led to no good."⁶

Concerning Westcott's beliefs, Dr. James Price, the former executive editor of the New King James Version (NKJV) Old Testament, comments as follows in a letter to Ms. Riplinger: "I just finished reading Westcott's commentary on Hebrews 1:1–3. He makes such strong, clear statements about the Word of God, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the incarnation, and redemption that it is hard to doubt his orthodoxy on these doctrines. We may disagree with Westcott and Hort on some of their doctrinal views, but their doctrinal views had little to do with the development of their method of textual criticism, a scientific method for deciding which readings of the Greek New Testament are most likely original. It is wrong to make a connection between their doctrinal views and their scientific methodology. Present day scholars, who accept their method of textual criticism, accept it on the basis of its scientific merit, not because they agree with their theology."⁷

Notes:

¹ Cited in James White, *New Age Bible Versions Refuted* (Phoenix, AZ: Alpha and Omega Ministries, 1994), p. 14.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

³ Proponents of the "King James Version Only" position argue that this is a false charge, put forth by critics of the KJVO position, and no contemporaries of King James ever accused him of homosexual behavior. However, note the following from the online *Wikipedia*:

'Queen James'—One area of James VI/I's life that for many years remained clouded in controversy was allegations that James in fact homosexual. While his close relationships with a number of men were noted, earlier historians questioned their sexual nature. Few modern historians cast any doubt on the King's homosexuality and the fact that his sexuality and choice of male partners both as King of Scotland then later in London as King of England were the subject of gossip from the taverns to the Privy council. His relationship as a teenager with fellow teenager Esmé Stuart, Seigneur d'Aubigny, Earl of Lennox was criticised by Scottish church leaders, who were part of a conspiracy to keep the young King and the young French courtier apart. Lennox, facing threats of death, was forced to leave Scotland. In the 1580s, King James openly kissed Francis Stewart Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell. Contemporary sources clearly hinted their relationship as sexual. When James inherited the English throne from Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, it was openly joked of the new English monarch in London that *Rex fuit Elizabeth: nunc est regina Jacobus* (Elizabeth was King: now James is Queen.) (http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_I_of_England)

⁴ White, *New Age Bible Versions Refuted*, p. 28; Also James D. Price, letter to Gail Riplinger (undated; copy on file), p. 18ff.

⁵ White, *New Age Bible Versions Refuted*, p. 28.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 29; whether this was meant in a parapsychological or biblical context could not be determined by the secondary reference.

⁷ Price, p. 18.

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