

The Conflict Over Different Bible Versions—Part Nine

By Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. John Weldon

Are Modern Versions Less Readable than the King James Version (KJV)?

G. A. (Gail) Riplinger and other King James Version Only (KJVO) proponents have claimed that scientific tests have been conducted which prove the *readability* of the KJV is equal or superior to that of modern translations, something that anyone who has ever read the KJV might find difficult to believe. The truth is that more tests have been performed showing the *opposite* result. Dr. Arthur Farstad, Executive Editor of *The New King James Version New Testament*, discussed several of these in his *The New King James Version in the Great Tradition* (Nelson, 1988, pages 2-4), which concluded, as would be expected, that the KJV *was* more difficult to understand than modern translations.¹ It simply cannot be denied that there are many, *many* places where the KJV is anything but clear due to its 400 year old language. Indeed the archaic nature of the KJV was the very impetus for the *New King James Version*.

Remember that it was the KJV translators themselves who stated in their original preface that the very purpose of their translation was to provide God's Word in a readable and understandable fashion. They recognized and accepted the translation work that had been done before them. So then how can anyone logically argue that they would object to modern translations being done today for the same purpose?

Now examine this yourself. Here are a few examples of words from the KJV that have passed completely out of use and convey no meaning to readers today: almug, neesing, chode, tabret, habergeon, cieled, purtenance, aceldama, sackbut, blains, wot, trow, churl, ambassage, crookbackt, "collops of fat", "wimples," "hole's mouth," "ouches of gold," "naughty figs," and "fetched a compass" (which does not mean to go **find** a compass but "to turn around").² These were the words chosen by KJV translators in 1611 to signify the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words. Translators now simply find English words in use today that more accurately convey the meaning.

Riplinger's Errors on the NKJV

Riplinger is even critical of the *New King James Version* (NKJV), claiming that it is just as biased and error ridden as modern versions. But those who worked on the NKJV are appalled at her charges. For example, Dr. James R. Price, the Executive Editor of the NKJV Old Testament, stated the following:

As former Executive Editor of *The New King James Version Old Testament*, I have first-hand knowledge of the facts concerning the NKJV, the people who worked on it, the reasons why certain changes were made in the wording of the old King James Version, and the reasons why it was decided to produce the new version in the first place. This information is not secret, as you have stated, but has been made public.... I have read carefully what you have published about the NKJV, and am greatly concerned because everything you wrote about the NKJV is either false or inaccurate. Consequently, you have rendered a gross disservice to the NKJV, its editors and translators, to its publisher, and to your unsuspecting readers. If what you have written about the other new versions is equally invalid, then your disservice is even greater.³

In his letter he cited numerous illustrations of Riplinger's errors of fact regarding the NKJV. In her first edition, Riplinger wrongly claimed that the NKJV followed the Westcott-Hort Greek text and a non-traditional Hebrew text rather than the Greek and Hebrew *Textus Receptus* (p. 105, 475, 494). In fact, the NKJV followed the Greek text of the *Textus Receptus* throughout the New Testament and "anywhere the NKJV appears to differ from the Greek text used by the KJV translators, it is because it has **corrected** the KJV departures from the *Textus Receptus*. Consequently, the NKJV adheres more closely to the ***Textus Receptus than does its predecessor the KJV***".⁴

Unfortunately, Riplinger's treatment of the NKJV is characteristic of her treatment of the NIV and NASB as well. To illustrate, on page 455 of Riplinger's text, *New Age Bible Versions*, she claims that in Isaiah 26:3 the NASB has deleted "the key words, 'on Thee.'" But Riplinger's argument that the NASB has deleted these key words is false. Here is Riplinger's comparison:

- **NASB:** The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace.
- **KJV:** Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.

Riplinger has badly distorted what both the NASB and KJV state. All one has to do is compare the verses. Here is what the NASB and KJV actually state:

- **NASB:** The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in Thee.
- **KJV:** Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace *whose* mind *is* stayed *on Thee*: because he trusteth in Thee.

Clearly, Riplinger has claimed that key words are missing when they are not. Her use of the period after the word "peace" indicates the sentence ends at this word when, in fact, it does not. This kind of mis-citation is evident throughout *New Age Bible Versions*.

Note another point. Riplinger's own translation of the KJV does not place the words "**on thee**" in italics. But every King James Bible has them in italics. The King James translators did this so that the reader would understand that the words "on thee" were **not** in the original Hebrew, as is also true for the words "him," "is," and "whose." Thus she has claimed "key words" were deleted **that never were in the Bible to begin with**. In conclusion, a careful comparison of these verses from the NASB and the KJV indicate that they teach exactly the same thing, and again that Riplinger is wrong.

There is more. James White shows how Riplinger consistently misquotes authoritative sources. For example on page 546 of her text she quotes Westcott and Hort's *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek*. The manner in which she cites them, using ellipses, makes them teach an extremely radical view of the Greek manuscripts *Aleph & B*. Riplinger cites Westcott and Hort's *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* as follows, "[R]eadings of *Aleph & B* should be accepted as the true readings... [They] stand far above all documents... [are] very pure... excellent... and immune from corruption."

By her use of ellipses, Riplinger has distorted what Westcott and Hort actually said which was "...readings of *Aleph/B* should be accepted as the true readings **until strong evidence is found to the contrary**,..."⁵ In fact, Westcott and Hort were actually talking about **errors** in *Aleph/B*. When Riplinger cites them as stating that these manuscripts are "very pure and excellent" she is again misquoting because the words are not referring to *Aleph/B* but the **parent** text of *Aleph/B*. Also, the words "and immune from corruption" cannot be found in any of Riplinger's citations in her footnote. In fact, several of the pages

cited by Riplinger in her footnote have nothing relevant to her excerpt or argument.⁶ Riplinger also misquotes NIV editors, R. Laird Harris and Edwin Palmer, and translators Herbert Wolf and Larry Walker.⁷

Sadly, there is even more, but this should be enough to warn thinking Christians that Gail Riplinger's book, *New Age Bible Versions*, is fatally flawed and misleading. Those who have bought a modern translation to understand the Word of God more clearly should not be discouraged by what she has said. In the future, Christians who have trusted Riplinger's book, *New Age Bible Versions*, will hopefully realize the need for a more critical approach to such sensational claims.

In conclusion, if you are a Christian who uses the King James Version, if you understand what you read and are comfortable with it, then by all means, continue to use it. The KJV, despite the kinds of minor problems which occur in any translation, is still a fine Bible. What if you are a Christian who uses a modern translation? You also should feel free to continue reading a good modern translation. Don't be deterred or intimidated by those who would tell you that you do not have the Word of God in your hands.

Notes:

¹ James D. Price, letter to Gail Riplinger (undated; copy on file), p. 55, James White, *New Age Bible Versions Refuted* (Phoenix, AZ: Alpha and Omega Ministries, 1994), p. 219.

² We have given the meaning of these words in the attached Appendix.

³ Price, p. 1, emphasis added.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3, emphasis added.

⁵ White, p. 82.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83

⁷ G. A. Riplinger, *New Age Bible Versions* (Munroe Falls, OH: A V Publishers, Second Edition, 1993), pp. 2, 89, 90–92, 165, 292, and original material cited by her.

Appendix

These words, found in the King James Version, are no longer in use today.

Almug— (Algum) A large leguminous tree native to India and Ceylon. ¹

Neesing— An old word for sneezing, the plural of which appears once in KJ, in the chapter about Leviathan (Job 41:18): ²

Chode—(past tense of chide) rebuke. In [some] passages, it has the obsolete sense of contend, wrangle, or scold, with loud and angry words.³

Tabret—the diminutive of “taber,” thus a small drum, timbrel, or tambourine. KJ uses “tabret” 8 times and “timbrel” 9 times, as translations of the Hebrew *toph*; RSV uses “tambourine” 5 times and “timbrel” 12 times. (The word “tabret” is probably wrong in Ezekiel 28:13 and is certainly an error in Job 17:6.) ⁴

Habergeon— a short, sleeveless hauberk or coat of mail. ⁵

Cieled— obsolete spelling of CEIL, CEILING. “Cieled” is used four times in the obsolete sense of having walls lined or paneled with wood. ⁶

Purtenance— shortened form of “appurtenance,” and means whatever pertains or belongs to something larger or of more consequence. ⁷

Aceldama— field of blood ⁸

Sackbut—a bass trumpet, an early form of the slide trombone. ⁹

Blains— An old word for a blister or large pustule ¹⁰

Wot— The Old English verb “wit” means to know or to find out. ... present tense, “wot,” ... past tense, “wist...” ¹¹

Trow— an archaic word for think, believe, be of the opinion that.¹²

Churl— the translation of a Hebrew adjective which means hard, severe, stubborn, rough, rude. ¹³

Ambassage— an old form for “embassy” which appears in Luke 14:32. The same Greek word is used in Luke 19:14, where KJ translates it by “message.” ¹⁴

Crookbackt—hunch-backed ¹⁵

“Collops of fat” — collops are slices of meat, rashers of bacon, or thick folds of fat upon the body ¹⁶

Wimples — cloak, shawl¹⁷

“Hole’s mouth” — The sides of the deep gorge.¹⁸

“Ouches of gold” — ornaments fit to display jewels or precious stones. ¹⁹

“Naughty figs” — “Naughtiness” is really bad in KJ; it means downright wickedness.

...The “naughty figs” that Jeremiah saw in his vision (24:2) were simply “bad figs,” so bad that they could not be eaten.²⁰

“Fetched a compass” — to turn, take a roundabout course, make a circuit. ²¹

Notes:

¹Ronald F. Youngblood, general editor; F.F. Bruce and R.K. Harrison, consulting editors, *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* :[computer file], electronic edition of the revised edition of Nelson’s illustrated Bible dictionary, Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995.

²Ronald F. Bridges and Luther A. Weigle, *King James Bible Wordbook* [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1994.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸James Strong, *New Strong’s guide to Bible words* [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.

⁹ *King James Bible wordbook*.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *New Strong’s guide to Bible words*

¹⁶ *King James Bible wordbook*

¹⁷ *New Strong’s guide to Bible words*

¹⁸Jerry Falwell, executive editor; Edward E. Hinson and Michael Kroll Woodrow, general editors, *KJV Bible commentary* [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1994.

¹⁹ *King James Bible wordbook*

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.