

The Conflict Over Different Bible Versions—Part Six

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Do Modern Versions Corrupt the Purity of God’s Word? (continued)

Last time we examined the KJVO [King James Version Only] claim that the modern translations have corrupted the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone.

The Deity of Christ

Next, KJVO proponents claim that the new translations **deny** the biblical teaching that Jesus Christ is God. Supposedly, these new translations were written by “liberals” or “heretics” who refused to translate the truth about Christ’s deity. G. A. Riplinger makes the following astounding claim, “Working 12 hours a day for nine months, comparing **every single word** in the New Testament, left me shocked and horrified at the blatant and gross omissions and perversions in new versions. I found the deity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ had been deleted **at every turn.**”¹

Likewise, Cecil J. Carter claims, “A characteristic of the new Bible versions is found in the way that virtually **every one** of them alters Scriptures which plainly teach the Deity of our Lord Jesus.”²

Riplinger, Carter and others claim that the New American Standard Bible (NASB), New International Version (NIV), New King James Version (NKJV) and other new versions are guilty of deleting the deity of Christ at many places. On page 369 of her book, *New Age Bible Versions*, Riplinger refers to “over one hundred instances in which the deity of Christ is avoided.” On page 306 Riplinger claims in reference to Philippians 2:5–7 that **every** new version denies the deity of Christ. She writes, “**all** other versions **deny** Christ’s deity in this verse.” She even says, “The NKJV, here as well as in other places, denies Christ’s deity also.”

But, if we compare the KJV with the modern versions, we find that the deity of Christ is not denied; in fact, it is taught more clearly in the NIV than in the KJV. Compare for yourself:

- KJV—Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God....
- NKJV—Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,...
- NIV—Who, **being in very nature God**, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped....

Reading this, do you think the new versions deleted Christ’s deity? No, Riplinger is wrong.

Evidence of how wrong Riplinger is can be found in Dr. D. A. Carson’s book, *The King James Version Debate*, which contains a chart setting forth eight primary verses declaring that Jesus Christ is God. It examines the King James Version, Revised Version, Revised Standard Version, New English Bible, Moffatt, Goodspeed, Today’s English Version, NIV, Modern Language Bible, and even the Jehovah’s Witnesses *New World Translation*. Only the *New World Translation* omits all these references to Christ’s deity. But even the theo-

logically **liberal** translators Moffatt and Goodspeed have one and three references respectively ascribing deity to Christ. Significantly, the KJV is only a little better translating **only four of the eight** verses as references to Jesus' deity. But **the NIV has the highest number by far: seven of eight references clearly teach Christ's deity.**³

Why should Riplinger trust Don Carson's chart? Because it conclusively shows that her claim that the deity of Christ "had been deleted at every turn" is false.

In James White's book, *The King James Only Controversy*, there is a similar chart in which he compares the KJV, NIV and NASB. Of twelve primary references to Christ's deity, the NASB is clear in **10 of 12** Scriptures. The NIV does it one better, clearly teaching Christ's deity in **11 of 12** Scriptures. But, horrors, the KJV is clear at only **6 of 12** Scriptures.⁴

Look for yourself. In Colossians 2:9, the NIV/NASB are very clear or at least as clear as the KJV:

- NIV—For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form...
- NASB—For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form...
- KJV—For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Do you think these new translations look like a satanic conspiracy to **deny** the deity of Christ? Obviously not.

Further examples also show that Riplinger is wrong when she argues that the new translations are part of a plot to deny the deity of Christ.

Examine for yourself verses such as Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1. The KJV inaccurately translates these passages by splitting the terms "God" and "Saviour", thus distinguishing the person of God from the person of Jesus—"the great God **and our** Saviour, Jesus Christ." This rendering wrongly implies two persons are spoken of: (1) the great God and (2) our Saviour Jesus Christ. Jehovah's Witnesses use this ambiguity to argue that Jesus Christ is not "the great God" but only "our savior." Now, the King James translators translated the words this way because they were unaware of a grammatical rule of the Koine Greek. Today it is known as the Granville Sharp Rule, which was not discovered until the early 19th century.⁵

The NIV, NASB, etc., have the proper translation at this point due to their knowledge of this rule and render it: "Our great God **and** Savior, Jesus Christ"—showing that Jesus is both our God and our Savior.

Should we then argue that it is **really** the KJVO supporters who are endorsing a translation that "denies" Christ's deity? Of course not; this would be just as unfair as the KJVO approach to the new translations. The deity of Christ is still clearly taught in the KJV in other places.

But lacking the help of modern scholarship, the followers of the KJV Only are **less** prepared to defend such doctrines as the deity of Christ and salvation by grace at certain points than those who use modern, clearer translations.

Notes:

¹ G. A. Riplinger, "Why I Wrote the Book: *New Age Bible Versions*," *The End Times and Victorious Living*, Jan./Feb., 1994, 7, 2nd emphasis added.

² *Ibid.*, p. 143.

- ³ D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), p. 64.
- ⁴ James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1995), p. 197.
- ⁵ “Basically, Granville Sharp’s rule states that when you have two nouns, which are not proper names (such as Cephas, or Paul, or Timothy), which are describing a person, and the two nouns are connected by the word “and,” and the first noun has the article (“the”) while the second does not, *both nouns are referring to the same person*.” Dr. James White, at <http://www.aomin.org/GRANVILL.html>.