

Word

An Explanation and a Defense

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Introduction

It seems that the time has come to give a word in my defense – or at least offer a word of explanation. Twice in the past six months I and/or my friends and acquaintances have been publically accosted – criticized in ways I feel was inappropriate for the immediate situation and/or underlying circumstances – due solely to my (our) Bible version convictions. The first occasion was an annual meeting of local churches in our denomination, when the speaker all but named me in a sermon almost solely dedicated to berating non-KJV Bible versions and people connected with them. But the greater injustice on that occasion was that, contrary to Paul’s demand to slander no one (Titus 3:2), this preacher maligned not just the actions but the heart and intentions of some very dear friends at our denominational publisher – people whom he obviously did not know and evidently had not even spoken with (or at least had not listened to). He also slammed other publishers he apparently did not know – a very few of whom I am personally acquainted with and know of no malice in their hearts – accusing them of motives which he only speculated to be there.

The second confrontation came in more recent weeks from an out-of-state preacher. As part of a lengthy discussion of Bible versions on an online forum this preacher posted the following public message to me. After stating that my stance proved I was doomed to hell, he wrote,

Enjoy what life you can now, my friend. You are a proven fraud and a Mississippi redneck led by God proved it. I will see that every church in your association sees how well you

handle a sold old [out?] Bible believer. Some already know. God being mu [my] helper, I will send this to every church in your association. You are a tool of Satan and revel in the fact.

My fellow Christians, I write to you today to defend myself, my friends and my acquaintances against these unwarranted accusations.

Of course, I realize that those who stand for truth will at times experience degrees of resistance as the people they deal with “kick against the pricks.” And if taking a few public hits is the price I pay for my desire and efforts to make the inspired Word of God understandable to people reading and hearing it today, then that is a very small price. But those of you hearing these heavy-handed and baseless accusations deserve the opportunity to evaluate them in light of what I truly believe and the reasons behind my choices.

So, my friends and yoke-fellows in the kingdom work, like Paul of old I gladly stand and present to you an explanation and defense of my beliefs in response to the accusations leveled against me.

Don Burke
March, 2012

Word

W-O-R-D – four simple letters. Joined together, they make the basic building block of communication. Combine several of these blocks and you have a communicated message.

I have a keen interest in the Word of God (Bible) and the words that make it up. Did you know that there are over three-quarters of a million words in the English Bible? And some seven hundred of these are the term “word” itself. Consider one of the first occurrences (Genesis 15:1): “...the word of the Lord came unto Abram...” What was that “word” from God? Was it, “The”? Or do you think it was, “Thus”? Of course not; the term obviously doesn’t mean a single word. But what would you say that “word” means here? How would you define it to someone else? Myself, I think “message” well conveys the intended idea. The Bible is simply saying, “And the message of the Lord came to Abram....”

Consider also that Jesus was called “the Word” (John 1:1). Would you agree that here again “word” means “message” – that Jesus was the living, breathing Message of God, both in His speech and in His life?

What about God’s promise that His word (singular, not plural “words”) will not return to Him void (i.e., without filling its purpose)? Is He referring to a small group of letters like “The” or “Thus”? No, once again He is not speaking of a single word, but is referring to His message.

And have you ever noticed that we call the Bible the *Word* of God, and not the *Words* of God. Why? It's because that even though God watched over all the words penned in its sixty-six books, the Bible is first and foremost His *message* to mankind.

All this shows that very often "word" emphasizes a message, and not individual words. In fact, a quick look through the occurrences of "word" in the English Bible shows that "message" is by far the more common meaning of "word."

Of course, that doesn't mean that the individual words are unimportant. Without individual *words* there would be no *word* (message). But the point is that clearly in scripture the term "word" more often emphasizes the message rather than the individual words.

Inspiration of the Word

As we all know and no doubt accept, the Bible proclaims to be given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16). Literally, inspiration means, “God breathed.” This indicates that God breathed His message into the very consciousness of each man who, under His supervision, penned or dictated the various individual books that now compose our Bible.

But if the Bible was given by God this way, some may ask how we account for the differences in style characteristics among the various books. Doesn’t that show these books are the products of men’s thinking? It is true that a book of the Bible by a certain inspired writer tends to have writing styles, vocabulary and other characteristics that are similar to other books by the same writer and these characteristics tend to differ from books by other writers. As one Bible professor put it (with a slight tone of humor, but still with much intended truth): “Paul was an educated man and wrote as an educated man; John was an unlearned man, and wrote as one. And Peter was an unlearned man that wanted to be educated – and his writings show it.” Certainly there are often identifiable characteristics of the various writers in the books they wrote. But even so, the message each one penned was God-breathed into his consciousness, and God watched over each written word to be sure it perfectly conveyed that message. That is inspiration. And these original writings were inerrant, both in message and in words.

Reproducing the Word

As those original documents (sometimes now called “autographs”) were circulated among the saints, different congregations and some of the more affluent individuals would acquire copies as they could afford or could get someone to make them. Soon third-generation copies were made from these copies of the originals, and in turn fourth-generation copies were made of those. And on and on it went. While most of the scribes went to great lengths to make their copies as accurate as humanly possible, some copyists were less careful. Like typographical mistakes in our day, occasionally some human-introduced alterations slipped into copies. And naturally, the subsequent copies made from these altered copies often included the changes as well. I am not a textual expert so I can not authenticate this myself, but reliable sources say no two Greek manuscripts are exactly the same. Even the few manuscripts that the KJV was based upon doubtlessly didn’t agree with each other one hundred percent of the time.

But this brings up what is for some people a troubling question: With all manuscripts having at least slight alterations, is it still proper to say that these copies were inspired and inerrant? This can be a very disturbing consideration, and is well worth taking a while to ponder. Some argue that if there are any words that are changed, then the copy is not inerrant. And since our English translations (including the KJV) are based on manuscripts that have some degree of alteration (changed words), then are our versions no longer inerrant?

I have come to the conclusion that we must answer this question of inspiration and inerrancy in two parts: The *words*, and the *word*. If a scribe happened to change words as he copied one of the Greek (or Hebrew) manuscripts, then the new words were in error – and thus those individual altered *words* were not inerrant, and may not be considered inspired words. *However*, the second – and more crucial – issue is the *word* or message of this new copy. In the immediate passage do the changed words present a materially different message than the inspired originals? If so, then that passage would fail the inspired/inerrant test. If there are sufficient changes throughout the copy that skewed the overall message of God in a given manuscript, then that manuscript as a whole has failed. But if the scribe’s accidental change made no change in the message, then even though there is an error in the *words*, the *word* is still intact, and should be considered as an authoritative copy of God’s Word.

To illustrate this point, consider what happened in a later (1631) infamous edition of the KJV. Because of a typesetter’s error the seventh of the Ten Commandments omitted the “not” and was printed as “Thou shalt commit adultery.” (Unsurprisingly this edition was nicknamed, “The Wicked Bible,” and the printer was fined by the king for his error.) Was there a scribal error in this edition? Unquestionably. Did that error change words and the meaning of the passage, tainting the inspiration and inerrancy of that passage? Certainly. Did that error so change the overall message of the whole edition that it tainted the inspiration of the *word* – making the other passages in that edition (or even all KJV’s) uninspired and not inerrant? Certainly not. And what

is true with this edition of the English KJV equally applies to the Greek manuscripts with various incidental alterations. Thus we see that there is a difference between the inspiration/inerrancy of *words* and the greater issue of the *word/message*.

From this we can conclude that for a Greek manuscript (or for any Bible version):

The true measure of inspiration and inerrancy is determined solely by the degree to which it represents the message of God originally given to the inspired writers.

Rephrased, this means that a scribal or typographical error or any other word change that does not meaningfully alter the intended message of the Word does not taint the inspiration, inerrancy, or authority of that manuscript or version.

The Rise of the Critical Text

In the years leading up to the mid-fifteenth century, the study of Greek and Hebrew was relatively unknown among Bible scholars, and Latin was considered the authoritative language of the Bible. But after that time attention turned back to those all-but-forgotten original languages. And with the invention of the printing press, much effort was soon focused on obtaining manuscripts in order to print a Greek New Testament.

It seems to me that sometime around this period the copyists (now in the form of editors) began to take on a relatively new and increasingly difficult role. In earlier years there were few manuscripts available and a scribe simply copied a book or small section of the Bible with only a single manuscript before him. But after nearly fifteen-hundred years of scribes duplicating the scriptures, there were more manuscripts available. Now an editor often had multiple copies of each book or section of scripture, and that number grew with time as more (and often older) manuscripts were discovered. With multiple copies in hand, and each one at times having slight variations in the words (but remember, not of the message), which wording should be selected for publication? Obviously the answer was to use the words deemed closest to the original words which the inspired writers penned, but deciding between the variant readings wasn't always easy. The editor had to be able to scrutinize the differences in the manuscripts and select the most accurate wording from all the variants. Those who took on this task of analyzing or critiquing the texts to find the most

authoritative wording became known as textual critics, and their finished works are called “eclectic”¹ or “critical”² texts.

One of the first men to grapple with this task was Erasmus (ca. 1466 – 1536). He began to pull together the few Greek manuscripts available to him. He compared these to each other, tried to determine what was most likely the original wording, and used that to print a Greek New Testament. Here are some interesting facts about the printed Greek texts that Erasmus published:

- He worked from some six or seven Greek manuscripts, and none of them were complete New Testaments.
- Erasmus only had one manuscript that contained the book of Revelation, and it was missing the last page. So he translated those verses (and probably other missing, unreadable, or difficult small sections scattered through the NT) from the Vulgate (Latin (Catholic) Bible) back into Greek. And in doing so he mistakenly introduced some Greek words into these passages that are not found in any of the legitimate Greek manuscripts discovered before or after his time.
- From 1516 to 1535 Erasmus published five editions of his critical text. Martin Luther used Erasmus’s second edition (1519) to make his German translation. In 1525 Tyndale translated his English New Testament from Erasmus’s third edition (1522) of the Greek NT. His fourth and definitive edition was published in 1527.

- Although others after Erasmus would continue his efforts, his third edition text in one form or another was the predominate Greek text until 1881. It (along with the manuscripts it was based upon) was essentially the Greek text that the KJV translators used.

Based upon the work of Erasmus and others who followed in his efforts, Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir (uncle and nephew) continued the work of developing the critical Greek text, and published a total of seven editions of their New Testaments. The introduction of their second edition (1633) made the exaggerated marketing claim that even “the most minute mistakes” had been corrected. This edition made another bold and self-inflated claim: “Therefore thou hast the text now received by all, in which we give nothing altered or corrupted [from the original autographs]” – and from this boast was coined the name *Textus Receptus* (Latin for “Received Text”). As you can see from the publication date, the *Textus Receptus* (or TR for short) was actually published a quarter-century after the KJV was being translated. However, it is not unusual to refer to all the Greek editions (which had changed little) in the lineage back to Erasmus as the *Textus Receptus* even though they predate the TR proper. So, it is common to say that the KJV was translated from the TR, even though the actual TR was not yet published at the time.

This work of collecting manuscripts and improving ways to determine the most likely original wording continues from the times of Erasmus and the Elzevirs to our day. Many, many more manuscripts are available to the textual critic today, and the “favored” wording has occasionally changed as more

manuscripts have been discovered and the methods for evaluating them were better honed.

Think of the Greek critical texts as a timeline going from left to right across a sheet of paper. Think of the English translations as a parallel line just underneath it. As the years pass, each new English translation (if done correctly) reaches up to the Greek line and uses the best critical text and original manuscripts that are available at that time. Tyndale used the critical text of Erasmus; the translators of the KJV used the critical texts found in the TR tradition..., and the good translators of our day follow this same pattern of using the best critical texts that are available to them.

One thing that is important to remember is that through this whole process all that is being changed are a relatively few words. In any valid text – whether it is a hand-copied Greek manuscript, a printed critical Greek text, or any translation from these – the overall message will always be the same, even if the wording varies.

Translation of the Word

It is at this point – the point of translation – that the distinction between *words* and *word* becomes even more important.

This distinction may best be illustrated by contrasting our view of the authority of our Bible to the Muslims' view of their Quran. According to what I've read, the Muslims do not consider their holy book to be authoritative in any language but its original (Arabic). Since they apparently consider the authority of their sacred writings to be in the *words* (instead of the *message*), they rightly understand that translating those words into another language undermines the book's authority, since the other language would not use those exact, authoritative words.

In contrast, Christians believe that the Bible may be readily translated into another language without losing any of its authority. Why? Because we understand that the authority is in the *word* (message), not the specific *words*. This is what allows the translators to substitute English words (or other languages) for the Greek or Hebrew words as they translate. As long as the *word* (message) is retained, substituting these different words causes no problem.

If you have ever studied a foreign language, you have probably noticed that sometimes a word in one language does not have a corresponding word (i.e., a word which conveys exactly the same thing) in another language. This also happens in translating the Bible languages into English. For example, in the KJV as well as other translations the Greek words *phileo* and

agape are both translated as “love” even though the two words do not mean the exact same thing. *Phileo* refers to the emotional/relational love that includes close friendship; *agape* speaks of a more decision-based love that God has for mankind and that Christians should have for each other. But since there are no parallel English words for these terms, the translators chose the closest English word – and that is the word “love.” Does the English term “love” really convey all the specific meanings that each Greek word implies? No, it doesn’t. But does this shortcoming – this inability to have and use the exact *words* – mean that the *word* (message) is not inerrant or is less inspired? No, it doesn’t, because the authority is in the *word*, not the *words*.

So, an English (or other language) translation of the Bible is as authoritative as the Greek and Hebrew original texts – even when translated words are unable to convey all the meanings of the original words – because inspiration’s primary focus is on the *word* and not the *words*.

Objections

Detractors have raised a number of objections in an attempt to make a case against all modern-language versions of the Bible. Please allow me a moment to address some of the objections recently raised to me and to remove the unnecessary fears they may have caused.

Objection 1: “God does not copyright His Word.” If there is a list of lame objections to modern-language versions, this has got to be near the top of that list. Copyright is a default in our country (and others) – any creative work (e.g., book, personal letter, even grocery list) is *automatically* copyright-protected. If the KJV were newly published in our country today, it too would be automatically copyrighted just like other versions. In fact, the various KJV study Bibles newly published today are copyrighted. So, there is absolutely no substance to this objection. It is totally a non-issue. And more importantly, there is no scriptural basis for this criticism. If anyone is less than convinced of that, I simply ask them to show where the Bible says that copyrighting Scripture is wrong.

Some objectors cite the copyright issue when their real complaint is that a publisher does not allow unlimited free use of its Bible contents. But I ask you, is it a sin for a publisher to expect reasonable payment for the use of its material, especially in light of the tremendous costs of producing the work in the first place? Doesn't Paul say to not muzzle the ox that is treading out the grain – meaning we should be willing to pay those that minister to us? Is there reason to exclude those

who minister to us through the printed page? Don't they need to be properly compensated as well?

But I ask you to really consider the objectors' arguments, and see whether they consistently live by their own standards or if the evidence suggests that their arguments are just an attempt to grasp for anything that might support a predetermined bias. Do these that condemn modern versions because we have to pay for them use a Bible which they or someone else had to buy? Isn't it at least inconsistent – if not hypocritical – to use a purchased Bible while condemning other versions because they aren't free?

Objection 2: "The other versions change the words." If changing the words is a problem for these objectors, then they also find themselves objecting to nothing less than Moses and the Ten Commandments. As Moses recounted the words that God Himself had earlier written, he changed the words. (Compare Deuteronomy 5:7-21 to the original wording in Exodus 20:3-17.) If the objectors condemn changing the words, then in doing so they also condemn the inspired Moses and his inspired writing because he changed those words.

Also, as already discussed at length, translators (even those for the KJV) changed the words from Greek or Hebrew to English – and some of those changes consist of English words that do not convey exactly the same meaning as the original words. Also, in making the KJV its translators changed the words from the earlier English versions. And then later editions of the KJV changed the words that the 1611 edition used.

Below I have provided selected examples of verses in the KJV of 1611 followed by the changes made to them in later editions of the KJV. Notice that some of these alterations even change the meaning of the word or phrase.

- 1 Corinthians 12:28 — “helpes in gouernmets” changed to “helps, governments”
- Joshua 3:11 — “Arke of the Couenant, euen the Lord” changed to “ark of the covenant of the Lord”
- 2 Kings 11:10 — “in the Temple” changed to “in the temple of the LORD”
- Isaiah 49:13 — “for God” changed to “for the LORD”
- Jeremiah 31:14 — “with goodnesse” changed to “with my goodness”
- Jeremiah 51:30 — “burnt their dwelling places” changed to “burned her dwelling places”
- Ezekiel 6:8 — “that he may” changed to “that ye may”
- Ezekiel 24:5 — “let him seethe” changed to “let them seethe”
- Ezekiel 24:7 — “powred it vpon the ground” changed to “poured it not upon the ground”
- Ezekiel 48:8 — “which they shall” changed to “which ye shall”
- Daniel 3:15 — “a fierie furnace” changed to “a burning fiery furnace”

So, if changing the words is wrong, then the 1769 KJV we use today is wrong, because it changed some of the words from the 1611 version; and the 1611 is also wrong because it changed the words from the previous English versions.

But that’s not all. It may surprise you to know that the KJV editions still in publication do not always use the same words –

that the KJV of today *is still* guilty of “changing the words.” In some contemporary editions of the KJV Jeremiah 34:16 reads, “whom ye had set at liberty,” while others read, “whom he had set at liberty.” Don’t be mistaken, this is not a typographical slip. Rather it is a volitional choice to translate the Hebrew word differently. So, as you see even the current KJV still continues to change the words.

I have to now ask: Why do people that are so critical of modern-language versions “because they change the words” accept the KJV even though it does the same thing? Do they not realize that their argument equally condemns the KJV?

This objection to “changing the words” takes an interesting twist when we consider the version of Scripture some of the people in the Bible used. Quotes from many of the NT writers and leaders – including Jesus Himself – show they used the Septuagint. The Septuagint was the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT, and its translators took significant liberties in altering the words given in the old Hebrew. So, what do you think this example teaches us about which versions we can use? If Jesus opted to use this more contemporary version that didn’t use the same words as the traditional version, then do you think that He has an objection to our doing the same today?

And I must wonder, when someone complains that modern translations change the words, how do they know that these versions are the ones that changed the words? Do they know for sure that it wasn’t the KJV that changed the words from the originals and the more modern ones are changing it back?

I close the discussion of this objection by returning to an earlier point: Changing the *words* does not necessarily change the *word* (message), and the sole basis for evaluating a Bible manuscript or a Bible version is whether its message agrees with the message God gave to and through the original inspired writers of His Word.

Objection 3: “The modern-language Bibles use the Alexandrian (Egypt) Greek texts, and the Bible never speaks well of anything that comes from Egypt.” Recently someone criticized some of the most ancient Greek manuscripts (sometimes called Alexandrian (Egypt) texts) that weren’t discovered until after the KJV was written, but have been used in most of the more modern translations. The criticism centered on the fact that these documents are from Egypt, and (according to him) “nothing God-honoring comes out of Egypt.” My response was to ask him to show me where scripture condemns everything that comes out of Egypt. (He tried, but wasn’t able to.) It quickly became obvious that this guy was just repeating something that he heard from someone else, and he didn’t have a clue whether it was a valid argument or not.

But more importantly, Jesus and the early church leaders didn’t share this objection. They used the Septuagint, and would you care to guess where the Septuagint originated from? That’s right, it came from Egypt – and from *Alexandria*, Egypt to be exact. So, if someone wants to choose Bible versions by a higher standard than the Son of God did – well, I guess that is their business. But as far as I’m concerned, if Jesus personally used Scripture that originated in Egypt, then it is no problem for me or others to do the same.

Why I Use a Modern Language Bible

Having dealt with these objections, I will now share some of the reasons I believe using modern-language Bibles is not only acceptable, but is actually necessary.

1. Versions Put to the Test. The purpose of any Bible version must be to present the message God gave to and through the inspired men of old. And as repeatedly emphasized here, the only thing that determines the accuracy of any version is the degree to which it accurately represents that message. Only those versions that properly present that message may be used authoritatively.

God has blessed me with the opportunity to study the original languages of the Bible (Greek and Hebrew) in some theologically-sound schools under some very reliable instructors. (That is not intended as bragging or a reason to think I have some superior understanding. I am just attempting to defend my stance against the accusations of my critics.) And I use this ability He has provided to evaluate the versions that I use. To the best of my knowledge in handling these versions and comparing them to the original languages, I find the non-KJV versions I use in my study and my teaching and preaching to be every bit as reliable as the KJV in representing the message of those originals.

2. God's Pattern. Using a contemporary-language Bible follows the pattern which God Himself established. When God gave the Old Testament, He gave it in the language of

the people receiving it. Much of the OT was given to the Hebrew people, and He provided that message in the language of those people. Portions of Daniel were focused on the world at large, and God gave that in Aramaic, which at that time was the international language of the known world. Later God had His new message for the first-century world written in the language of the first-century world – Greek. We readily see from this that God’s pattern has been to provide His Word in the language of the people to whom He shared His message. And following His pattern, I choose to use a reliable version that best speaks in the language of the people I share His message with.

3. Jesus’ Example. As previously mentioned, Jesus and other NT church leaders at times used the more modern Septuagint instead of the ancient Hebrew version. They opted for the more modern version, and I am very content to follow their example.
4. Paul’s Example. Paul’s approach to ministry gives an even clearer reason for using a modern-language version of the Bible. When he ministered to the Jews living under the Mosaic Law he related to them as one who lived within their customs of that Law; when he ministered to those not under the Law, to those that were weak, or to people in whatever circumstance, he likewise related to them within their culture and customs. In following that example, we are to minister to people where they are, within the culture in which they live. And in thirty years of ministry I have never ministered to (or even known) people whose everyday custom and culture included using seventeenth-

century English. If ministers are to follow Paul and relate to the culture of those they minister to, that means I must choose a Bible that has the inspired Word written in the customary language of the people I minister to. And the KJV does not do that.

5. Paul's Instructions on Words. Paul dealt at length with the Corinthians about speaking in tongues. ("Tongues" is the supernatural ability to evangelize and exhort others by using a real human language that the minister has never learned.) During this discussion (see 1 Corinthians 14:19) Paul states that five words spoken in a language that those in a church service can understand is better than ten thousand words they can't understand, no matter how morally true or spiritually uplifting those words may be. In our day the language of the KJV with its antiquated vocabulary and structure is often not easily understood by the average person – and at times not understandable at all. The principle in this passage is very clear: It goes against Paul's (and God's) instructions to stand before a group that includes people who do not understand the outdated language of the KJV and try to evangelize or exhort them with words that are a foreign language to them when an understandable version is readily available.

Some Thoughts to Ponder

So you've heard me out and listened to my explanation and defense, and I thank you for that. Before I wrap this up I want to simply present a few questions for you to prayerfully ponder. Those that oppose me and my stand will present all kinds of responses to the thoughts I've shared here – and that is to be expected. But after hearing all that is said from all the various parties that clamor for your loyalty, I ask you to take a little time and ponder the following – just between you and God. Then proceed from that point with the conviction that God gives you.

1. The objectors often attempt to prove the KJV is right and other versions are wrong by quoting verses that say God will preserve His Word. But I ask you to consider:
 - a. Do those verses specifically say that God will preserve His Word in the KJV? If not, then these verses do not prove the KJV to be right, and certainly don't prove that other versions are wrong.
 - b. If God preserved His Word without the KJV prior to 1611, then isn't it possible that He will preserve it in non-KJV forms after 1611? If God's Word was preserved in different wording than the KJV before 1611, can't it be worded differently now and still be true?
2. Some argue that God so watched over the translation process of the KJV that He kept it from all errors – that it is

without error in not just the word (message), but in each and all the individual words. But ask yourself:

- a. If during the translation process God so carefully protected each of the individual words in the KJV from any human error, then why was His careful protection inexplicably absent when there was a need to protect those same words from the many typographical errors we know humans caused through the KJV's history? If God wouldn't protect the KJV from such errors in the printing process, then what reason is there to believe that He specially protected the translation process from all human errors? Doesn't the fact that God allowed printer errors indicate that there is no reason to assume that He holds the KJV in any higher esteem than other English translations that are true to the original message God breathed to the inspired writers?
- b. Does the evidence in fact show that the KJV is and always has been without any error? If it was without error then why was there a need to change the 1611 by subsequent editions – not just typographical or spelling changes, but even changes in word and phrase meanings? If it is without error then why is there the continued translation-inconsistency in Jeremiah 34:16? And why do 2 Kings 24:8 and 2 Chronicles 36:9 disagree on how long King Jehoiachin reigned – with one saying eight years and the other saying eighteen? Doesn't one of these verses have to be an error?

3. You are probably aware of those who forcefully discredit the works of modern textual critics and the modern-language Bible versions that come from them. But have you stopped to ask yourself what these naysayers are basing their criticism on? Do they have the personal background or first-hand knowledge to evaluate which Greek (or Hebrew) manuscripts are valid and which are not? Have they personally worked with translating and evaluating texts to know what the problems are and how to best handle them? I'm not saying that all preachers should be able to do these things..., but if a preacher is going to be critical of something, shouldn't he know what he is talking about? Do you have reason to know that these objectors do in fact know what they are talking about? Or have they blindly believed the baseless and biased propaganda of something they have read or someone they have heard?

Let me turn the question around: Of the people you know and have reason to trust, which of them are truly qualified to speak knowledgably on this issue? And what do these people you trust believe?

Conclusion

In many ways we as God's people are a paradox. One of those paradoxes is that we are responsible for taking an unchangeable God and Message to an ever-changing people and culture. And the only way we can successfully do that is to follow in the footsteps of our spiritual forefathers: Never change the *Word* given by the changeless God, yet regularly update the *words* to best convey that message in a language that the common man can easily understand.

Thank you for hearing me out. For many of you who know me well, a defense was unnecessary – and I find great comfort in that. For those who don't know me well or don't know me at all, I trust this defense will show where I stand and provide an adequate testimony against the unfounded accusations and often ridiculous arguments from those that have attacked me, my friends and acquaintances, and our stance. For all, maybe my explanations will give you greater confidence in your acceptance and use of modern versions that are consistent with the timeless message – or maybe provide you the incentive to reconsider the need for using a modern-language version as you, too, minister to modern people.

Thank you for your kind attention to this explanation and defense. I hope that as you consider the criticism leveled against me in light of my beliefs outlined above, you will agree that the accusations are totally without merit, and that I stand innocent before God and my fellow man.

In His Word do I hope. (Psalm 130:5)

Endnotes

¹ Eclectic means that the finished “hybrid” text is different than any of the individual manuscripts that were used in making it. The *Textus Receptus* that began with the work of Erasmus is an example of an eclectic text.

² Technically a critical text is one that gives the alternate wordings of a passage so that the reader can critique or critically evaluate the various options. However, “critical” is sometimes used as a synonym for “eclectic.”

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