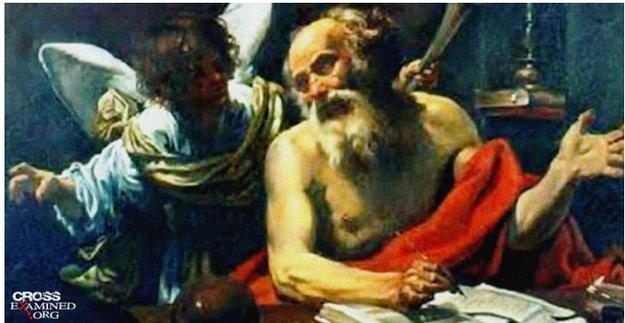


ERRORS IN THE BIBLE?

How could there be errors in the Bible? Isn't it the infallible word of God?

In the original autographs, the actual original copies written down by the prophets and apostles, we believe there were no doctrinal errors. But from that point on, human error was bound to creep in. Still,



in looking at the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, we can easily see how very careful the Jewish people have been over the millennia to preserve the text. One way we see this is that original errors have not been corrected. When we say original errors, we are not talking about potential doctrinal errors. We're talking about simple errors of spelling and grammar.

Those to whom God originally gave His word did not have dictionaries or thesauruses handy to verify spellings or meanings. It's not at all uncommon to find more than one spelling of Hebrew words in the Old Testament, as well as misspellings. The writings of Moses are a good example. Moses was a Hebrew, but had not been raised in a Jewish household. From his infancy, he had been raised as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He knew he was a Jew by birth, but had not been brought up in the knowledge of his people or their language. Undoubtedly, he had received the finest education Egypt could provide, being a member of the royal family. So he would have been fluent in Egyptian, and have known their arts and sciences. But not so with his own history and language.

Moses mentions being slow of speech and slow of tongue. He was particularly concerned about going to his own people and telling

them that God had sent him. Many have taken this to mean that Moses had some kind of speech impediment. While this cannot be ruled out, more than likely what he meant was that he simply didn't know Hebrew well enough to be a good spokesman for God to the Jewish people. And in reading his written Hebrew, we do occasionally find errors of grammar. They don't affect his meaning in the slightest; they're just grammatically incorrect.

God does not generally dictate His word verbatim. If He did, the entire Bible would be in one writing style. But it is not. Rather, He gave the message, in detail, and allowed each writer to phrase it in his own words and style. But the most significant thing about the various errors of spelling and grammar in the Hebrew Old Testament isn't the fact that they occurred, but the fact that they have never been corrected. The Jewish people have such reverence for the word of God that they will not make even the slightest alteration to the text, not even to correct a simple and obvious error. Instead, they have means of pointing out the errors, without correcting them. A Jewish sofer (scribe) has a very difficult and demanding job. It is this man's responsibility to copy over the scrolls of the Tanakh (Old Testament) by hand. Every single letter must be written absolutely perfectly. If there is even the slightest error, whether a misshapen letter, an error in spelling by the sofer, or even a stray dot of ink on the page, the entire page is invalid and may not be used. Corrections, erasures, etc., are not permitted. With that kind of attention and reverence, it's quite easy to believe that the Hebrew Old Testament says today pretty much exactly what it said 2400 years ago when the last book was penned.

While those preserving the Greek New Testament have never shown that much attention to detail, we still have a pretty good situation: While there are different manuscripts, and there are some small differences, they aren't significant enough for the most part to cause doctrinal error. (This is speaking only of the oldest

manuscripts. Beginning in the 16th century, altered Greek manuscripts appeared on the scene, created not by copying over older Greek manuscripts, but by translating a flawed Latin translation back into Greek. This, coupled with the inexplicable choice of the King James translators to reject EVERY ancient Greek New Testament available to them, and to focus mainly on the flawed 16th century manuscript, has indeed led to some error, including a fraudulent verse found in several English (and other vernacular) translations.

While God has indeed preserved His word to a remarkable degree in the original languages, enabling us the potential for an accurate translation, that is, sadly, as far as His protection has gone. It cannot be said to extend to the various vernacular translations, because it is easy to see that those various versions frequently disagree with each other, often significantly. Why are there errors? Why did (and do) translators take liberties?

The answers to these questions vary from century to century. The earliest known deliberate tampering with the word is traced back to late versions of the Latin Vulgate. In those days, it was monks in monasteries who were charged with copying over Christian Bibles. The only permitted language at the time was Latin. And for centuries, the Vulgate had been copied over by hand, prior to the invention of the printing press. But even after the press was invented, the practice of hand lettering manuscripts continued. And for the most part, this practice produced no significant problems... Until the day when some anonymous monk decided to add his own words to one of the manuscripts. We don't know who he was, or exactly what his motives were. What we do know is this: All of a sudden, there was a manuscript of John's first epistle with an extra verse in it. This verse breaks the sense of the passage, as it does not follow the line of thought John was expressing. But there it was. And

in later years, when that manuscript was copied over to produce a new one, that verse was copied right along with it.

There wasn't the kind of Bible scholarship then that we would find today. Were a new Bible to appear today with an added verse, it wouldn't take long at all for people to notice. But back when this new verse was first added, the chances that anyone would notice were remarkably small. Only clergy were allowed to have copies of the Bible, and those copies were only in Latin, which only the educated few could read. People were not allowed to study scripture for themselves. And since there weren't multiple copies to choose from, the chances that any one person would have two manuscripts to compare weren't good. Now, had this error been confined only to the Latin Vulgate, it might not have been a problem for later translations. But it didn't work out that way. In 1516, Desiderius Erasmus published a printed version of the Greek New Testament. Although largely based on the much older Byzantine manuscripts, there was one very significant difference: Erasmus compared the Byzantine to the late flawed versions of the Vulgate, and he incorporated the errors of the Vulgate into his new Greek manuscript. This new, now flawed, Greek manuscript came to be known as the *Textus Receptus*.

It is not uncommon to hear proponents of "KJV-only" use the Textus Receptus as the basis for their claim that only the King James Version is accurate and should be used. If any of the people making this claim bothered to learn what the Textus Receptus was, and the circumstances of its use, they wouldn't be saying what they do. Most of them are unaware that the Textus Receptus is **ONLY** a New Testament manuscript, and that it was less than 100 years old at the time the King James translators used it. They are also unaware that these translators chose to reject the numerous more ancient and authoritative Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, and based their work primarily on the Textus Receptus. That

was not divine guidance or a wise decision. It resulted in KJV containing a fraudulent verse. (1 John 5:7, as found in KJV and several other versions, is a known fraud. Known as the Johannine Comma, This verse cannot be found in ANY ancient Greek manuscript, nor in any of the early Latin translations. It was never cited in any way by the church fathers. Clearly, they never heard of it. It breaks the sense of what John was writing about. That verse is without scriptural authority, and the KJV translators, if they didn't actually know that, SHOULD have known it. Some new versions leave the verse out altogether, while others include it only in a footnote. But what is truly baffling is that the new versions of KJV [NKJV, KJV21] continue to include this verse, despite the facts concerning it and the fact that no legitimate Bible scholar in the world believes John wrote it.)

Another factor involved in errors in vernacular Bibles applies to the earlier versions. The earliest translations were sponsored by churches (Lutheran into German, Anglican into English, Catholic into English and French, etc.) One thing all these churches taught, despite their dislike for each other and doctrinal differences, is that the church was the final arbiter of doctrine, not the Bible. Today, not too many Christians accept that, although it is still in practice, and perhaps even in actual doctrine, for several of the older forms of Christianity. This meant that regardless of what the Bible said on any particular subject, it was the church's view that mattered. They got this idea from Jesus' words to Peter, about whatever he bound on earth being bound in heaven, and what he loosed on earth being loosed in heaven. They construed this to mean that Peter (and therefore, in their minds, his successors) could set whatever doctrines and practices they chose, and that God would have to honor them. They have to ignore much of the rest of the Bible to come to that conclusion, things such as the Bible's statement that God's word is FOREVER SETTLED in heaven, and that not even the smallest part of it would be pass away until all was done. Or the

warning Paul gave, and then immediately repeated, to the Galatian church in regard to those who would attempt to alter the original teaching of the apostles in any way: That if even an angel from heaven or an apostle tried to alter the original teachings, he was to be accursed. (Gal. 1:8-9) But since, up until that time, so few had ever even seen a Bible, let alone read one, pretty much nobody knew that it is the word of God that carries the final word, not the church.

What this meant, however, in terms of translation, was this: When the translators encountered portions of scripture that either cast doubt on, or downright contradicted, church teaching, they were of the mindset that the church teaching overruled scripture, and that they were perfectly justified in altering the translation to bring it into line with church teaching. In fact, had they done otherwise, their work would have been rejected from the start: The King James Version was intended to be read from the pulpits of Anglican churches. If it blatantly contradicted Anglican teaching, it could have created problems, questions, and even rebellion.

Had the translators presented King James with a Bible that contradicted the teachings of his church, he would have told them to go back and do it over... or perhaps would have replaced those translators with others. The goals of the translators themselves aren't above reproach. Older copies of the King James Version contain a letter from the translators, addressed to the king. Upon reading this letter, it becomes clear that accuracy was not their main goal. Their first goal was to flatter King James.

The most obvious form of flattery they used was to put his name into the Bible text itself. Some may know that things pertaining to King James are referred to as Jacobean. What many don't know is why. The reason why is that the translators of the Bible that bears his name took two men in the New Testament who were actually

named Jacob, and renamed them James. But James is not linguistically related to Jacob at all. James is the anglicized version of the Gaelic Seamus, and not at all linguistically connected to Jacob. There is no doubt that James was quite pleased and flattered not only to find his name in the Bible, but even to find an epistle named after him! (Later translators chose not to change the name back to Jacob. Although it would have been more accurate and honest, it would have resulted in extreme confusion in the churches.)

What kind of Bible errors are we talking about? This site deals with a number of them, related to a particular subject. But by no means were those the only errors. One of the first errors is found in Deuteronomy 6:4. This verse, known to Jews around the world as the “sh'ma,” is, in Hebrew, the ultimate declaration of monotheism, of the absolute Oneness of God. (Sh'ma is the first word of the verse in Hebrew, corresponding to the English command “Hear!”)

KJV renders the verse this way: “Hear O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD.” In English language Old Testaments, LORD in all capital letters represents God's Name, יהוה, often rendered as Jehovah or Yahweh in English. (The Hebrew form contains only the four consonants, YHVH [sometimes written YHWH], but the vowels were not written, thus the actual name itself is unknown today.) If we read Deut. 6:4 with that understanding, that LORD represents a proper name, we can see readily that the translation makes no sense whatever. Were we to use the same syntax, replacing LORD with another proper name, and God with another position, we can see how inane a statement this is: Hear O Israel, John our mailman is one John. What is that supposed to mean???

For the translators, the problem with the verse was that, if translated accurately, it made them theologically uncomfortable: “Hear O Israel: YHVH is our God; YHVH is

one.” While perhaps not theologically incompatible with Anglican doctrine, for those not well versed in the doctrine, it seemed to challenge it. So this verse, as well as the New Testament quote thereof, were “fudged.” In fact, any time the text got too close to declaring monotheism, the translators seemed to intervene, with only a few exceptions. (There are actually two components to biblical monotheism, but the majority of Christianity only accepts one of those, i.e. the belief that there is only one God. But the other part, believed by Jews, some Christians, and Muslims, is that the one God exists as one Entity.)

KJV, as well as pretty much every other vernacular Bible commonly available, begins John's Gospel by stating that the “Word was with God.” The Greek text, however, makes no such statement. Literally, the Greek says that the Word was “toward God.” Idiomatically, this means “pertained to God.” (KJV translated the exact same Greek phrase properly in Heb. 2:17 - “pertaining to God.”) Unfortunately, an entire doctrine, known as the Logos doctrine, has grown up around this mistranslation. For centuries, people have dissected John 1:1-2, looking for doctrinal statements, when originally, there was no doctrinal statement in those verses. Rather, the first few verses of the Gospel were intended as explanations and definitions. John was writing in Greek, which means his intended audience was most of the Roman Empire, anyone willing to read it. And the overwhelming majority of those people had no idea who the God of Israel was, that He was the only God, etc. It would have been pointless for John to launch right into a narrative about the life and ministry of Jesus when his readers didn't even know who God was. So John sought to identify the God of Israel to his readers.

He had faced a significant problem in doing so. Can you imagine trying to introduce someone, but not being able to say name of the person you were introducing? And that was John's dilemma: He had to introduce the God of Israel, the God of creation, without saying

His name. Why? The first reason was custom: Jewish belief held that God's name was so holy that, not only was it not to be uttered aloud, but it was not to be written down in any language other than Hebrew, the holy language. But even if custom had allowed John to write YHVH in Greek, the Greek alphabet itself would not: It simply doesn't have the letters needed to represent all of those consonants. Greek has no letter that has a consonantal Y sound. The letter Γ (gamma) can sound like a Y, but only if followed by specific vowels. Greek also lacks a letter to make the H sound. It was only possible for that sound to exist at the beginning of a word that started with a vowel, but never in the middle of a word. (Even at the beginning of a word with a vowel, the H sound was not originally represented in writing. When it was, centuries later, it was still not with a letter, but an inverted apostrophe.) So John needed to find a way to introduce YHVH without using His name.

He took a cue from the Aramaic Targum ("translation"). Following the Jewish people's captivity in Babylon, they no longer used Hebrew in everyday conversation, but used Aramaic instead. Aramaic is closely related to Hebrew, and shares some of the same vocabulary and grammar. The Jewish people wrote Aramaic using the Hebrew alphabet. But when they created an Aramaic translation of the Tanakh (OT) for everyday use, they were reluctant to put God's name in it, even though it was still technically in the Hebrew alphabet. Instead, they replaced it with a "codeword." The word they chose was memra – מִמְרָא which means "word." (That is, something that is spoken, or in the case of God's name, NOT spoken, aloud.) Readers coming across memra would know that it stood for God's name. (Just as LORD in uppercase letters represents the name in English language Bibles.)

John chose the Greek equivalent, which was Logos λόγος. Of course, this word was of no use to him if his readers didn't know

what he meant by it. So in his first few verses, John attempted to explain what he meant by Logos:

In the beginning was Logos, and Logos pertained to (meant) God, and Logos was God. This pertained to (meant) God in the beginning. All things were created by Him, and without Him, nothing was made that was made.

From this, his readers would understand that Logos referred to the God of creation, the one who made everything in existence, right from the very beginning. Any reader who was familiar with either the Targum or the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) would have connected Logos with YHVH. However, none of this was intended to be a doctrinal statement. Not until the 14th verse did John make a doctrinal statement about Logos: “And Logos became flesh and dwelt among us.” But this statement, read in view of Logos being the Creator, was theologically uncomfortable for the translators, so they introduced an artificial division into the Godhead by using the word “with” in verses one and two.

In John 8:58, the KJV translators correctly have Jesus saying “Before Abraham was, I AM.” Inexplicably, however, the next time Jesus made the I AM statement, they hid it. This was at His arrest in the garden. Jesus asked the soldiers who they were looking for. They replied, “Jesus of Nazareth.” According to KJV, Jesus answered “I am he.” But that's not what He said, according to the Greek text. What Jesus actually said to them was this: “I AM.” And what happened next shows us that this was indeed a statement of great power, of His divinity: The moment He said “I AM,” those soldiers fell backwards to the ground! (Either He spoke the I AM in power, or those were the clumsiest soldiers the world has ever known!)

In Col. 1:19, KJV says “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.” Other English translations, about half of them, say

something similar, some replacing “the Father” with “God.” The problem is that the Greek mentions neither. The Greek says “For all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him.” That’s a big difference. Paul wrote that the fullness (of the Godhead) itself was pleased to dwell in Him (Jesus). The translators changed it so that it pleased someone else for the fullness to dwell in Jesus. And yet, again inexplicably, Colossians 2:9, which makes an equivalent, and even more direct, statement, is rendered correctly: For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

In James 2:19, KJV says “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” But the Greek refers to the other component of monotheism: “Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well...”

Some who cannot read the original languages may doubt that these errors exist. But the truth is, most of the deliberate errors are so obvious that even a first year student of Hebrew or Greek could spot them. But here’s a way to know that errors exist, even if it doesn’t resolve them:

Go to Biblegateway.com. Compare a verse in all available English translations. Look at the major discrepancies. That alone tells you that somebody, somewhere, isn’t being honest.

For example, compare Deut. 23:17 in all English versions. If we were to believe that all of these were correct, we would have to believe that a whore, a prostitute, a shrine prostitute, a temple prostitute, a cult prostitute, a consecrated worker, a ritual harlot, a strumpet, a lecher, a whore-monger, a homosexual and a sodomite all meant exactly the same thing, because those are all the ways the Hebrew words *kadesh* and *kadeshah* have been translated.

(*Kadesh* and *kadeshah* mean the same thing, temple prostitute, but one is male, the other female, like actor/actress or waiter/waitress.)

Obviously, while some of those terms are synonymous (shrine prostitute = cult prostitute = temple prostitute), some of the others don't fit at all. Temple prostitution was a form of worship of the goddess of fertility, and bore little in common with ordinary prostitution. (An ordinary prostitute, in Hebrew, is a zonah. That word is found in Deut. 23:18.) And a prostitute, a lecher, a whore-monger and a homosexual aren't even remotely synonymous. And as for sodomite, there will be another leaflet on Sodom to come. But suffice it to say that there is no such word as *sodomite* in the Hebrew or Greek texts of scripture.

In light of the indisputable fact that our Bibles contain numerous errors in translation, many of them deliberate, the advice of Paul to Timothy takes on a whole new meaning:

Study to show yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, correctly dividing the word of truth.

(2 Tim. 2:15)

This HAS to entail more than memorizing verses from a favorite translation and simply "assuming" that they have been correctly translated into English. Today, there are sufficient tools available online for anyone, even with no prior knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, to being to learn to read those languages. And copies of the Hebrew and Greek texts themselves are freely available online. The resources to "study" are there, at our disposal, giving us a tremendous advantage over Christians of prior centuries to whom scripture was either unavailable or available only in an obscure, dead language. Everything we need to know the truth is at our fingertips. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Taken from <http://www.hoperemainsonline.com/>