

Andrews University  
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THE ORIGIN OF THE KING JAMES ONLY MOVEMENT

A Paper

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By

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## Background

When one thinks of history, usually one's mind seems to look centuries back. Seldomly does one simply look at the previous year when thinking about history, or even the previous day. History does not just include analysis of the past, or how the past has led to the present day; History also includes looking forward from the present, being aware of how the current of history flows today, and in what direction events are leading too. To put this in simpler terms, we must be aware of not just what has happened, but what is happening. Doing so will not only help us to better understand what happened in the first place, but will also provide future generations with valuable information and viewpoints that will help place whatever happened during our lifetime into a context represented by our experience of the events.

It is for this reason that I devote some of my time to the King James-Only Movement as it is a recent movement – something current. When Christianity first formed in the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. no one at that time would have predicted that such a group would have grown into what it has grown into today. We would also know practically nothing of early Christianity unless people wrote about such a movement such as Eusebius of Caesarea, or unless other remains like relics, pottery, fossils, buildings, tools and other things. The more information we have the more likely we are to understand. Knowing the origin of the King James-Only Movement will help us to better understand and map other developments within Christianity whether in similar groups or other denominations. The more information we have the more likely we are to understand.

**Thesis:** The King James Only Movement Developed from Fundamentalism in response to both Modernism and advancements in textual criticism out of suspicion of a conspiracy to change Christianity by intentionally changing the biblical text.

**Methodology:** We start by analyzing the general context in which the King James-Only Movement finds its roots, then analyzing the development of the King James-Only position by analyzing King James-Only literature and other material, how influential the literature was and why the position was influential.

**Problem:** lack of interest in the King James-Only Movement has resulted in an unawareness of recent developments within the fundamentalist branch of Christianity within the United States.

King James Only has been on radio programs,<sup>1</sup> religious programs,<sup>2</sup> and on the news<sup>3</sup> and have become a fairly numerous group.<sup>4</sup> This is a recent development in Christianity, and is therefore important to analyze this phenomenon as we have the advantage of being close to its origin. It is here we will define what a movement is, and understand the fundamentalist movement in order to understand how the King James Only position developed.

### **The King James-Only Position as a Movement**

The King James Version Only position (hereafter referred to as KJVO) may refer to one of five things:

- 1) Those who prefer the King James Version
- 2) Those who believe the manuscripts underlying the King James Version are superior to other manuscripts
- 3) Those who believe the Textus Receptus (a particular line of Greek Manuscripts) was “supernaturally preserved over time”.
- 4) Those who think the King James Version itself is inerrant
- 5) Those who believe the King James Version is was “supernaturally inspired” making it a divine “revelation”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Debate: Gail Riplinger vs. James white, KRDS Radio, Pheonix AZ, 1993 taken from Youtube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UenzoYbq49M>

<sup>2</sup> Riplinger, Gail. "Action Sixties With Gail Riplinger: Exposing New Age Version Bibles." Interview by Herman Bailey and Sharron Bailey. Action Sixties. Accessed March 28, 2019, Public domain - <https://archive.org/details/ActionSixtiesWithGailRiplingerPart1Of27>

<sup>3</sup> *America's Hate Preachers*. Directed by Hannah Livingston. Performed by Steven L. Anderson, Zsuzsanna Anderson, Ruben Israel, Justin Owen, Donald Trump. UK: British Broadcasting Corporation, 2016. DVD. Accessed March 31, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Going by chick.com alone, a KJVO website, which claims 900 million sold of 156 tracts, of which exist in 100 different languages. If one were to assume that each buyer was to buy all 156 different tracts (thus being one person rather 156 separate persons) and that this occurred with equal distribution in all 100 different language groups, this gives us a mere minimum of 57,692 people.

<sup>5</sup> White, James R. "The King James Only Controversy - Can You Trust the Modern Translations?" Expanded Edition ed. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2009. Pg. 1-5

It is important to understand that a movement is “a series of organized activities working toward an objective also: an organized effort to promote or attain an end”.<sup>6</sup> King James-Only advocates do not simply argue for their position but also attempt to convince and ‘convert’ others to using the King James Version as their only Bible, ultimately appealing their own particular doctrine of preservation. This act of trying to spread their beliefs qualifies it as a movement, the movement being those who belong to the last two groups, the third group being Textus Receptus Only (and thus open to other English translations other than the King James Version).

### **The Rise of Fundamentalism in the United States**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Christianity in America was identified with the freedoms of democracy.<sup>7</sup> For example “American virtues were presented in an overwhelmingly protestant framework”.<sup>8</sup> Christianity began to face intellectual issues with the spread of secularism from Europe to the United States via migration from Europe.<sup>9</sup> Some examples of these challenges include Charles Darwin’s ‘The Origin of Species’ questioned the early chapters of Genesis, and German higher criticism questioned the historicity of the Bible, which in turn criticized American Christianity’s “whole way of thinking”.<sup>10</sup> “Within hardly a generation, vast areas of American thought and academic life had been removed from all reference to protestant or biblical considerations” such as the universities which now were modeled after the standards of the natural sciences as education was the most rapid to change.<sup>11</sup>

In response to these developments certain preachers, emerging after the civil war, attempted to associate these developments with their theology. Henry Ward Beecher claimed that Christianity

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<sup>6</sup> Merriam-Webster, s.v. “Movement,” accessed February 3, 2019. - <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/movement>

<sup>7</sup> Marsden, George M. “*Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*” Paperback Edition ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990. Pg. 9

<sup>8</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 11

<sup>9</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 14

<sup>10</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 13

<sup>11</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 15

progressed with the modern age, and is also a matter of the heart.<sup>12</sup> Other, more conservative preachers, like Dwight L. Moody, increased the missionary and evangelistic efforts.<sup>13</sup> Beecher represents the more liberal or “Modernistic” Christianity that was developing at the time. It should be noted that modernism was an attempt to save Protestantism from the challenges of secularism. The three most typical ways modernists attempted to save Protestantism was the following:

1) Deifying the Historical Process

“God revealed himself in history and was incarnate in the development of humanity.... [a] close relationship between the divine and the historical”

“The kingdom of Christ was the continuing manifestation of the power of God to change human relationships. The bible was a record of the religious experience of an ancient people....an ancient model of religious experience.... its best principles developed as science and modern civilization advance the understanding of God’s reconciling actions. The progress of humanity, then, especially in the moral sphere, is identified with the progress of Christ’s kingdom.”

2) Stressing the Ethical

“The key test of Christianity was life, not doctrine.”

“such ethical emphases appeared in several varieties. Most liberals stressed Christian education, as in Sunday schools, where moral lessons predominated”

3) The Centrality of the Religious Feelings

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<sup>12</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 18

<sup>13</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 21-22

“Appealing to the romantic and idealistic sentiments of the day, liberal Christians could let science reign freely in its own domain, but insist on a realm of religious truth that science could not reach.”<sup>14</sup>

In the 1870s and 1880s “the controversies centered on Darwinism.” Darwin “by implication it questioned the accuracy of the Bible.... [and] totally reversed the perceptions of the relation of science to the Christian faith”. Liberals saw evolution as God’s method. Conservatives saw this as a copout as some “Conservatives rejected all biological evolution as contrary to literal readings of Scripture”.<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that most conservatives made biblical inerrancy a central doctrine.<sup>16</sup> Keep in mind that the central issue is the trustworthiness of the Bible, this focus is crucial for understanding the origin of the KJVO Movement.

As the debate continued, World War I “had accelerated and brought out into the open the secularization that had been growing in American life”.<sup>17</sup> Marsden illustrates this by putting it into perspective for us in that “in 1900 one might have talked about religion in polite company but never would have dared mention sex, by the 1920s the opposite was often the case”.<sup>18</sup> This was mostly the case in cities and in the Eastern part of the United States.<sup>19</sup> In other words, standards for behavior advocated by the Church was no longer enforced.<sup>20</sup> Liberals were optimistic about said developments while conservatives had the opposite reaction. The main thing that changed after the war was that Conservatives and liberals now addressed each other’s differences.<sup>21</sup> Conservatives became the

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<sup>14</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 33-36

<sup>15</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 36

<sup>16</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 38

<sup>17</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 55

<sup>18</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 55

<sup>19</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 55

<sup>20</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 55

<sup>21</sup> Marsden, “*Understanding Fundamentalism*” pg. 56

Fundamentalists while liberals remained liberals (or Modernists as they were called back then).

Fundamentalists, as previously stated, were essentially united against evolution and for defending the Bible as “verbally inspired and inerrant in their original autographs.”<sup>22</sup> Eventually, Fundamentalists realigned its focus back to what it was doing previously – evangelizing and establishing local churches over the nation.<sup>23</sup>

To summarize, Protestantism in the U.S. was unchallenged and deeply rooted in American culture until the introduction of secularism via European migration to the cities. Modernists attempted to adapt Christianity to the secularization of society in order to save it while Conservatives rejected secularism and Darwinism. After World War I, when secularism was dominant, Conservatives simply reaffirmed their position and defending the ‘fundamentals’ of the Christian faith, this time also addressing the liberal or Modernist Christians. Fundamentalists eventually went back to their previous activities, establishing local congregations, mainly Baptist and Methodist churches.

It is here that we turn now to two proto-KJVO proponents who, while not exactly KJVO, invented the bulk of current KJVO arguments: John William Burgon and Benjamin G. Wilkinson.

### **John William Burgon**

William Burgon was not a King James-Only advocate as he falls into the second category of James White’s spectrum, which is not a ‘true’ King James-Only position i.e. the King James Version is not his final authority. William defended the Greek text underlying the King James Version,<sup>24</sup> often times

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<sup>22</sup> Reye, Arnold C. "Protestant Fundamentalism & the Adventist Church in the 1920s" 009640. Center for Adventist Research, AU, Berrien Springs, MI pg. 12

<sup>23</sup> Marsden, George M. "Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925." New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. Pg. 193-194

<sup>24</sup> Burgon, John William "The Revision Revised" (1871 rpr., Dover Publications Inc., NY 1971) pg. 28 – retrieved from Project Gutenberg: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/36722/36722-pdf.pdf>



using Lloyd's Greek New Testament.<sup>25</sup> For example, on John 5:2, Burgon appeals to the textual data (i.e. the manuscripts) to defend the reading "Bethesda" over "Bethsaida".<sup>26</sup> He also seeks to show the manuscripts underlying the Greek Text of Westcott and Hort, Their English Translation (the Revised Version), and their textual theory to be inferior.<sup>27</sup> Burgon also accuses Westcott and Hort to have a heavily biased favor of certain manuscripts which negatively affected their work.<sup>28</sup> Commenting on this bias Burgon states:

"It is clear therefore that Caprice, not Necessity, - an itching impatience to introduce changes into the A.V., not the discovery of 'plain and clear errors' - has determined the great bulk of the alterations which molest us in every part of the present unlearned and tasteless performance".<sup>29</sup>

Burgon published his criticisms in the 1870s, before the fundamentalist movement arose, however his arguments would be reused by Benjamin G. Wilkinson, who was influenced by the fundamentalist movement.

### **Benjamin G. Wilkinson**

Benjamin G. Wilkinson also falls into the second group, and is essentially in agreement with Burgon. Wilkinson, being influenced by the Fundamentalism of the day,<sup>30</sup> also criticized the manuscripts underlying the "modern"<sup>31</sup> Bibles. Wilkinson, while falling into the second category, contributes a different motive than Burgon to the differences in the other Bibles of the day. Burgon argued Westcott

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<sup>25</sup> Burgon *"The Revision Revised"* pg. 15

<sup>26</sup> Burgon *"The Revision Revised"* pg. 31

<sup>27</sup> Burgon *"The Revision Revised"* Pg. 9 Burgon focused more on the Greek texts, commenting on Westcott and Hort's Greek Text he states that if he could demonstrate the "Greek Text be mistaken, what else but incorrect must the English Translation be?"

<sup>28</sup> Burgon *"The Revision Revised"* pg. 7

<sup>29</sup> Burgon *"The Revision Revised"* pg. 152-153

<sup>30</sup> Campbell, Michael W., *"The 1919 Bible Conference and its Significance for Seventh-day Adventist History and Theology"* (2008). Dissertations. 21. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/21>

<sup>31</sup> Wilkinson, Benjamin George. *"Our Authorized Bible Vindicated"*. Brushton, NY: TEACH Services, 2006. originally published June 1930 Washington Missionary College Takoma Park D.C. pg. 1

and Hort to be biased in favoring in certain manuscripts over others, whereas Wilkinson attributes the motive to a Jesuit conspiracy, the Jesuits causing the Modernist movement,<sup>32</sup> the Revised Version and Westcott and Hort being a part of this conspiracy in that they were favorable to evolution<sup>33</sup> – evolution being a key focus of the Fundamentalist Movement. Wilkinson simply introduced conspiracy to the debate probably due to Wilkinson’s work being a product of its time.<sup>34</sup> Wilkinson simply favored the King James Version as other Bibles were tainted by the modernism of the day, rather than believing the King James Version as being inerrant.

As we will see, these two ‘proto-KJVO’ proponents invented the bulk King James Only arguments that would be repeated and sometimes taken further by the founders of the King James Only Movement.

### **The Birth of the King James Only Movement: Ray, Ruckman, Fuller, Gipp, and Riplinger**

As we will see, the King James Movement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century originated in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, each author being, more or less, influenced by the previous author.

### **James Jasper Ray**

Kutilek<sup>35</sup> is correct in his observation that Wilkinson’s book was virtually unused<sup>35</sup> as there seems to be no indication of anyone referencing his material until 1955 with James Jasper Ray who, after reading Wilkinson’s book, produced his own book in 1955 titled “God Wrote Only One Bible.” Ray

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<sup>32</sup> Wilkinson “*Authorized Version Vindicated*” pg. 145-146

<sup>33</sup> Wilkinson “*Authorized Version Vindicated*” pg. 157

<sup>34</sup> Marsden, “*Fundamentalism and American Culture*” Pg. 147 - for example, premillennialists were accused of having German connections during World War I

<sup>35</sup> Kutilek, Douglas “The Background and Origin of the Version Debate” in “One Bible Only?: Examining Exclusive Claims for the King James Bible”, edited by Roy E. Beacham and Kevin t. Bauder, 27-56. Grand rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001

mentions Burgon a number of times in his book, referring to him as a “learned textual critic”.<sup>36</sup> Ray gives no mention of Wilkinson, most likely because of his plagiarism of Wilkinson’s book. Gary Hudson gives us a few examples of this.<sup>37</sup> For example, he points out that on page 98 of Ray’s book he writes “Allix, an outstanding scholar testifies that enemies had corrupted many manuscripts, while the Italic Church handed them down in their apostolic purity”. Comparing this with Wilkinson’s book Ray’s borrowing from Wilkinson is made clear: “That Rome in early days corrupted the manuscripts while the Italic Church handed them down in their apostolic purity, Allix, the renowned scholar, testifies.”

Although heavily influenced from Wilkinson and Burgon, Ray developed the King James Only argument (it was not a movement at this time as Ray did not create any sort of following to his teaching) to not simply be defensive of the traditional text but a specific Greek text itself called the Textus Receptus. We can see Ray’s appreciation of this text, referring to “the virtues of the Textus Receptus”.<sup>38</sup> In other words, Ray laid the ground work for those who belong to the third group of King James Only believers, although, this is not truly King James Only as this argument does not make the King James Version the standard – it makes the Textus Receptus the standard. For instance, Ray writes:

“It is impossible to be saved without ‘FAITH,’ and perfect-saving-faith can only be produced by the ‘ONE’ Bible God wrote, and that we find only in translations which agree with the Greek Textus Receptus refused by Westcott and Hort”.<sup>39</sup>

Ray also claims that the Greek text of Westcott and Hort, and any translation from that Greek text, is a different Bible altogether.<sup>40</sup> Plagiarizing a great deal from Wilkinson, Ray’s book also recycles

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<sup>36</sup> Ray, James Jasper “*God Wrote Only One Bible*” (1955 repr., Junction city, OR: The Eye Opener Publishers, 1976) pg. 28

<sup>37</sup> Hudson, Gary “*The Real Eye Opener: J.J. Ray’s Plagiarism of Benjamin G. Wilkinson,*” Baptist Biblical Heritage 2, no. 1 (spring 1991):1-4

<sup>38</sup> Ray “*God Wrote Only One Bible*” pg. 28

<sup>39</sup> Ray “*God Wrote Only One Bible*” pg. 122

<sup>40</sup> Ray “*God Wrote Only One Bible*” pg. 30

the appeal to conspiracy theory, claiming that Westcott and Hort had “ulterior motives”<sup>41</sup> in which they secretly introduced a new Greek text.<sup>42</sup> Thus, J.J. Ray not only develops the King James Only argument to a standard that is closer to the King James itself, but also continues the claims of conspiracy behind the alternative Greek text.

### **Peter Ruckman**

Ruckman was influenced by Ray’s book, and wrote his own book titled “Bible Babel” in 1964. Peter Ruckman also defended the Greek text underlying the King James Version, comparing a list of the “corrupt” manuscripts with the “Christian” line of manuscripts,<sup>43</sup> the Textus Receptus,<sup>44</sup> anyone using the corrupt manuscripts being an indication that such people are part of the “Alexandrian Cult.”<sup>45</sup> It would seem that Ruckman would also belong to that of the third category of the King James Only group until 1970 when Peter Ruckman writes that the “Mistakes in the AV 1611 are advanced revelation”<sup>46</sup> the King James Version being “superior to the Greek”.<sup>47</sup> For example, he illustrates this by claiming that the King James Version is correct in its rendering on “churches” in Acts 19:37, even though the Greek should be translated as ‘Temple’. In other words, Peter Ruckman believed that the King James Version was inerrant and contained new revelation from God – forming categories 4 and 5 present in today’s King James Onlyism as illustrated by White’s spectrum. Ruckman consistently held this view even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, claiming that “There are more than forty-five advanced revelations”<sup>48</sup> in the King James Version.

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<sup>41</sup> Ray “*God Wrote Only One Bible*” pg. 24

<sup>42</sup> Ray “*God Wrote Only One Bible*” pg. 26 Cf. Introduction

<sup>43</sup> Ruckman, Peter “*Bible Babel*” (Pensacola, FL: Biblical Baptist Bookstore, 1964) kindle edition, 2757

<sup>44</sup> Ruckman, “*Bible Babel*” 2026

<sup>45</sup> Ruckman, “*Bible Babel*” 230

<sup>46</sup> Ruckman, Peter “*Manuscript Evidence*” (Pensacola FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1970) kindle edition, 2737-2748

<sup>47</sup> Ruckman “*Manuscript Evidence*” 2533

<sup>48</sup> Ruckman, Peter “*Bible Believer’s Bulletin*” (Pensacola FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, Dec. 2005) pg. 13

Peter Ruckman, being the first one to make the King James the final authority, seems to be the first 'true' King James Only proponent, gaining a small following in his preaching. All other "King James Only" authors simply defended the Greek text underlying the King James Version, but did not make the King James out to be inerrant itself. This view originated with Ruckman; however, he did not give rise to the movement itself – that would be the work of David Otis Fuller.

### **David Otis Fuller**

In 1970, Fuller published his book "Which Bible?" Fuller did not hold to the view that the King James Version was advanced revelation. What is interesting is, though this book came out the same year as Ruckman's book on early manuscript evidence, Fuller's book garnered far more attention. Infact, it was already on its 5<sup>th</sup> edition by 1975, and on its 12<sup>th</sup> printing by 1987.<sup>49</sup>

Fuller was also influenced by Ray, making a very similar case for the King James Version as Ray did. For example, Fuller, like Ray and Ruckman, claim that the textual data was corrupted early.

"Some very ancient copies have escaped decay and destruction for the simple reason that they were not regarded as accurate enough for copying purposes or for common use"<sup>50</sup>

This argument was also used by Burgon.<sup>51</sup> In the same book, Zane C. Hodges writes

"a large majority of this huge mass of manuscripts – somewhere between 80-90% - contain a Greek text which in most respects closely resembles the kind of text which was the basis of our King James Version."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Kutilek, "One Bible Only?" pg. 55, ref. 56

<sup>50</sup> Fuller, David Otis "Which Bible?" (Grand Rapids MI: Institute for Biblical Textual Studies, 1975, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.) pg.6

<sup>51</sup> Burgon, "The Revision Revised" pg. 16

<sup>52</sup> Hodges, Zane C. "The Greek Text of the King James Version" in "Which Bible?" edited by David Otis Fuller, pg. 26, Grand Rapids MI: Institute for biblical Textual Studies, 1975, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.

Although it seems that Fuller is defending the Textus Receptus and not specifically the King James Version, in 1980 in a letter he wrote he made it clear that it was the King James Version specifically that was his authority,<sup>53</sup> placing him as an advocate for the 4<sup>th</sup> category in the King James-Only Movement. Considering the attention drawn to Fuller, the influence of his work based off of the Rapid reprintings, and his position itself, we may attribute the origin and Impetus of the King James Only Movement itself to David Otis Fuller, while Peter Ruckman simply originated the idea of the King James Version itself being the final authority.

### **Samuel C. Gipp**

Gipp came on the scene in the late 1980s. Gipp places more emphasis on the King James Version as God's preserved words, referring to Psalms 12:7 – an argument originating from Wilkinson.<sup>54</sup> For example, Gipp says "The Bible, God's Word, says that God will preserve His words. Verse six mentions the "words of the LORD" and the 'them' of verse seven is referring to those 'words.' ..... God has perfectly preserved His Word in the King James"<sup>55</sup> Gipp does not seem to side with Ruckman on advanced revelations at this time, denying that the King James translators received any sort of revelation because "They were not 'inspired' to write a new revelation"<sup>56</sup> (although, he changes his position later, claiming that the King James Version is superior to the Greek on the John Ankerberg show in a debate on the King James-Only Movement).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Fuller, David Otis. *The Plains Baptist challenger* 34, no.6 (June 1980):3-4

<sup>54</sup> Wilkinson " *Authorized Version Vindicated*" pg. 154

<sup>55</sup> Gipp, Samuel " *An Understandable History of the Bible*" (Miamitown OH: Daystar Publishing, 1987) Chapter 3, Chapter 9, n.p. accessed March 31, 2019 <http://samgipp.com/category/bible-history/?order=asc>

<sup>56</sup> Gipp, " *An Understandable History of the Bible*" chapter 9, n.p.

<sup>57</sup> *Which English Translation of the Bible Is Best for Christians to Use Today?* Guests Wilkins, Don , Dr. James White, Dr. Joseph Chambers, Dr. Kenneth Barker, Dr. Samuel Gipp, Dr. Thomas Strouse. United States of America: John Ankerberg Show, 2011. DVD.

Gipp also uses Wilkinson's argument regarding Antioch and Alexandria, claiming that Alexandria corrupted god's word while Antioch maintained a "pure copy" of the scriptures.<sup>58</sup> Gipp however did not gain very much attention as Fuller or Riplinger.

## **Gail Riplinger**

The King James Only Movement, still relatively new, found itself receive more attention in the Christian world with Riplinger's book "New Age Bible Versions" in 1993. This book gained such widespread attention that she debated James white, an opponent of the King James Only Movement, on KRDS Radio in 1993<sup>59</sup> and on the *action 60s* television broadcast in 1994.<sup>60</sup> Riplinger repeated the standard arguments of the King James Only Movement, defending the Greek text of the King James Version as a superior Greek text than Westcott and Hort's text, claiming that the manuscripts up to "A.D. 1500" support that particular Greek text<sup>61</sup> Riplinger goes further than Fuller in emphasizing an aspect of conspiracy to her argument. Whereas Wilkinson attributes the conspiracy to the Jesuits, Riplinger includes the Jesuits in a grander conspiracy in which Satan is behind all attempts to create bibles which introduce the New Age into Christianity, the manuscripts underlying the New versions having "unreleased material" containing "an exact blueprint for the antichrist's One world Religion".<sup>62</sup>

One Example Riplinger gives of this is in Isaiah 14:12, where the King James Version translates "הַיְלֵל" as 'Lucifer' (which comes from the Latin vulgate) whereas the NASB translates this as "morning star". She also points out that the NASB in Revelation 22:16 says Jesus is the morning star, making Jesus

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<sup>58</sup> Gipp, "An Understandable History of the Bible" chapter 6, n.p.,

<sup>59</sup> Gail Riplinger vs. James white, KRDS Radio

<sup>60</sup> Riplinger, Gail. "Action Sixties With Gail Riplinger: Exposing New Age Version Bibles." Interview by Herman Bailey and Sharron Bailey. Action Sixties. Accessed March 28, 2019, Public domain - <https://archive.org/details/ActionSixtiesWithGailRiplingerPart1Of27>

<sup>61</sup> Riplinger, Gail "New Age Bible Versions: An Exhaustive Documentation Exposing The Message, Men, and Manuscripts Moving Mankind To The AntiChrist's One World Religion" (Ararat VA: AV Publications Corporation, 1993) pg. 471

<sup>62</sup> Riplinger, "New Age Bible Versions" pg. 3

out to be Lucifer. Thus, the NASB is “the willing marionette, costumed in sheep’s clothing, of ravenous wolves”.<sup>63</sup>

Riplinger then makes out modern translators and the Bibles produced today to be completely different Bibles, insisting that the differences between bible translations are drastic differences. This is a similar argument to Wilkinson, who insists that certain translation allow for heretical interpretations like “evolution, Gnosticism, and the aeon theory”<sup>64</sup> whereas Riplinger claims the same but for New Age thought.

“New Age Bible Versions” had its tenth reprinting in 1999<sup>65</sup> indicating that she was the second most influential King James Only advocate in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, right behind Fuller. What is interesting is the similar roles fuller and Riplinger played when compared to Burgon and Wilkinson. Fuller advocated specifically for a text, while Gail Riplinger added a layer of conspiracy to the matter, similar to how Burgon defended the traditional Greek text, Wilkinson adding a layer of conspiracy to the subject. Perhaps if more attention was given to Burgon and Wilkinson we would see a different King James Only today, defending the traditional Greek text as they did. Thus, Riplinger belongs to the 4<sup>th</sup> category, although a bit more extreme than Fuller. If Fuller and Riplinger were not as influential as they were, the King James Only Movement would probably have only an obscure existence, and would not have become a movement at all. Thus, the widespread distribution of Fuller and Riplinger’s material is the primary reason for the King James Only Movement forming in the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century in the 70s with David Otis Fuller, Riplinger continuing the activity of the movement until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>63</sup> Riplinger, “*New Age Bible Versions*” pg. 43

<sup>64</sup> Wilkinson “*Authorized Version Vindicated*” pg. 151

<sup>65</sup> Riplinger “*New Age Bible Versions*” copyright page



## King James-Only in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

There are a few prominent King James Only advocates in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, namely – Kent Hovind and Steven Anderson. Kent Hovind, in his ministry known as Creation Science Evangelism, filmed his seven part seminar series going over the Creation and Evolution debate. In seminar seven – Questions and Answers – he addresses the question of which Bible Version one should use since there are so many of them. He recommends Fuller, Gail, and Gipp’s books, although instead of attacking the translators of the newer translations, Kent Hovind simply disagrees with the text they used for their translation, even calling them “sincere, dedicated, highly intelligent, Godly Christians”<sup>66</sup> essentially extending an olive branch. This more ‘tone-downed’ defense of the King James Version as an inerrant translation is probably the reason why Kent Hovind’s explanation was so influential as he appears to come across as respectful, well-versed in the topic, and his lack of extreme views on the subject (compared to Ruckman) may have also been a factor in his material being influential. Kent Hovind also held to Riplinger’s view of the New Age, and believed the King James Version and the Textus receptus to be inerrant,<sup>67</sup> placing him in both the third and fourth category of King James Only advocates.

Steven Anderson also is a leading proponent for the King James Only Movement, particularly gaining his fame from the News after preaching his sermon on his hope that President Obama dies.<sup>68</sup> He also gained fame from his lawsuit against border patrol,<sup>69</sup> and also starred on a BBC documentary covering his anti-homosexual rhetoric, including his view that homosexuals should commit suicide.<sup>70</sup> His fiery zeal seems to have attracted his fame in the King James Only Movement along with said news

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<sup>66</sup> Hovind, Kent “*Questions and Answers*” (Pensacola Florida: Creation science Evangelism, 2007) Creation Seminar, part 7

<sup>67</sup> Hovind, “*Questions and Answers*”

<sup>68</sup> Sundby, Alex (September 8, 2009). "Minister in Spotlight After Obama Death Prayers". CBS News. Retrieved March 31, 2019. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/minister-in-spotlight-after-obama-death-prayers/>

<sup>69</sup> J.J. Hensley, Tempe pastor says border agents stopped, beat him, Arizona Republic (April 17, 2009) accessed March 31, 2019 <http://archive.azcentral.com/news/articles/2009/04/17/20090417borderbeating0417-ON.html>

<sup>70</sup> America's Hate Preachers. Directed by Hannah Livingston. Performed by Steven L. Anderson, Zsuzsanna Anderson, Ruben Israel, Justin Owen, Donald Trump. UK: British Broadcasting Corporation, 2016. DVD.

coverage. Anderson believes the King James Bible to be inerrant and inspired, claiming that those who reject the King James Bible to not be saved, although he also believes that people should have the Bible in their own language,<sup>71</sup> translated from the Textus Receptus, taking a bit more of an extreme view than Kent Hovind, but more or less belonging in the same categories as Hovind.

The King James Only view that seems to dominate the movement is the view that the King James View is inerrant, but not containing advanced revelation i.e. those belonging to the 4<sup>th</sup> category. This is primarily due to their use of the internet to spread their material, mainly via Youtube.<sup>72</sup> For example, Steven Anderson and Kent Hovind have a combined subscriber count of almost 250,000 people compared to Gipp and Bryan Denlinger (a lesser known 21<sup>st</sup> century Ruckmanite, founder of King James Video Ministries) who have a total of less than 35,000.<sup>73</sup> Almost 2 decades in, we see a sizeable group who identify as King James Only with a total of almost 300,000 if there is no overlap in the number of subscribers, with a minimum of 116,000 considering the most possible overlap in the number of subscribers to the King James Only proponents.<sup>74</sup> The King James Only Movement seems to be fairly established among American Christians, particularly of the Independent Baptists as most KJVO proponents consider themselves to be Baptists.

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<sup>71</sup> Anderson, Steven *"Bible Translations' (KJV Baptist Preaching)"* Filmed June 24, 2018, YouTube video, 1:06:19, posted June 24, 2018, accessed March 31, 2018) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeK3-XTW1Pc&t=3514s>

<sup>72</sup> Most King James-Only advocates publish their material on YouTube. Others have websites like will Kinney's "Another King James Bible Believer" but the most popular and influential become popular via YouTube

<sup>73</sup> These Statistics may be found on their respective YouTube channels: sanderson1611 (Steven Anderson) Kent Hovind OFFICIAL (Kent Hovind) Sam Gipp (Sam Gipp) KJVM – Bryan Denlinger (Bryan Denlinger)

<sup>74</sup> Considering the likelihood that some may have subscribed to multiple channels, 115,000 is the least amount of people possible to have subscribed after accounting for this.

## Key Observations about the King James Only Movement

### 1) *The King James Only Movement is part of fundamentalism*

Besides for their defense of Fundamental beliefs, King James Only advocates openly associate themselves with fundamentalism earlier on. Ruckman questions whether the scholars of the newer translations are really “fundamental”,<sup>75</sup> Gipp claims that it is the fundamentalists who “do not wish to be confused by the FACTS.”<sup>76</sup> Kent Hovind in his testimony became a King James Onlyist after attending a fundamentalist Baptist church<sup>77</sup> and Faithful Word Baptist Church, where Steven Anderson pastors, openly considers itself to be fundamentalist.

Not all Fundamentalists are part of the King James Only Movement. For example, the Seventh-day Adventist church, a fundamentalist denomination,<sup>78</sup> has taken a stance against the King James-Only position.<sup>79</sup> The King James-Only Movement then represents a split in current Fundamentalism, particularly over the nature of the Bible itself, and the nature of preservation.

### 2) *King James-Only is Conspiracy driven*

Distrust for the Modern Bible translations and the Greek text behind it, and even the translators themselves gave rise to suspicions about any ‘ulterior motives’ of the translators. The plethora of Bible translations that were being produced added to this suspicion, eventually becoming more of a conviction among many King James-Only advocates.

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<sup>75</sup> Ruckman, “*Bible Babel*” 1486

<sup>76</sup> Gipp, “*An Understandable History of the Bible*” preface, n.p.,

<sup>77</sup> Hovind, “Questions and Answers”

<sup>78</sup> The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s fundamental beliefs are very much in line with the fundamentalist movement, such as their view of the Scriptures, creation, trinity, etc.

<sup>79</sup> Biblical research Institute “Modern Versions and the King James Version” (silverspring MD: 1997)  
<https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/bible-canon-and-versions/modern-versions-and-king-james-version>

### *3) The King James Only Movement is a response and concern over the biblical text*

With a new Greek text that had differences, no matter how minor or major, this would certainly be a cause for concern for those who held to the inerrancy of Scripture. The changes themselves caused some to doubt whether the variations were more accurate or less accurate. Add to this Fundamentalism's natural opposition to modernism, with newer Bible translations and the new Greek text resulting from use of modern methods, it is easy to see why Fundamentalists would have opposed these as being deficient, wrong, eventually attributing some sort of conspiracy to the modernists as Wilkinson and Riplinger did.

### **Conclusion: The King James-Only Movement and the search for certainty**

Almost 50 years old, it is too early to see the affect the King James-Only Movement will have on Christianity. One thing is clear - amidst confusion over the differences of the different translations, the desire for certainty may have caused many to recoil from the new findings to stay with what they traditionally had for centuries – the King James Bible. If there is any lesson for Christianity, atleast in the United States, it is the need to help lay members understand the ramifications of the progress being made in areas like cultural studies and textual criticism. Not doing so has given rise to suspicions and distrust – conspiracies of introducing a new form of Christianity via the newer translations.

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