

Statements of Un-Faith: What Do Our Churches and Denominations *Really* Believe about the Preservation of Scripture?

Practically all churches, denominations, Bible colleges, seminaries, and other religious organizations have Statements of Faith that address their doctrinal views on Scripture. The following is a common template:

We believe that the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God, and that it is without error in the original manuscripts, and that it is the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

But while it appears to be a Statement of Faith, it's really nothing more than a "Statement of Un-Faith;" or, a "Statement of Unbelief." Reading it again, notice the bolded and underlined portion.

We believe that the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God, and that it is without error **in the original manuscripts**, and that it is the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

In short, they don't believe that the Bible exists today; they only believe that the Bible was the inspired,¹ inerrant,² and infallible³ Word of God *in the original manuscripts* (autographs). And since these autographs no longer exist, then by default, their logic dictates that the Word of God no longer exists. But if the Word of God no longer exists, then how can it be the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct?

If the Word of God no longer exists, then how can anyone be sure of anything – including the need for salvation?⁴ If the Word of God no longer exists, then how can it be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: [so] That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works"?⁵ How can man live by "every word" that proceeds from the mouth of God if those very *words* don't exist?⁶ And if the Word of God no longer exists, then how can anyone be held accountable for teaching error if the Bible itself is full of errors?⁷ To do so would be unjust!

So while these Statements seem bold and authoritative in their pronouncement, they really only mask the unbelief of the church or organization who published it. It also marks the beginning of the debate between those who believe that God has preserved his Word(s) from those who don't.

¹ Inspiration – literally means "God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21); i.e., all Scripture was written by God as he moved upon men by the power of his Holy Spirit.

² Inerrant – without error.

³ Infallible – incapable of error.

⁴ Jn. 5:39; 2 Tim. 3:15

⁵ 2 Tim. 3:16-17

⁶ Dt. 8:3; Mt. 4:4

⁷ Mt. 5:18-19; Ja. 3:1

The Modernists

Those who don't believe that God has preserved every word of his Word are the modernists; so-named because of their preference for the newer more "modern" versions of the Bible; and this is done in addition to, or in place of, the KJB. Specifically, this refers to the textual critics and translators who produce them, followed by those who don't translate them, but avidly support and defend their use. The names of the former are largely unknown to the average Christian, while the latter are often notable ministries with familiar names. These are followed by those who use or promote them based on little more than personal preference or opinion. But generally speaking, a modernist is anyone using, or advocating the use of, any modern version of the Bible; and this is done in addition to, or in place of, the King James Bible.

Doctrinal Disposition

1. As indicated, modernists don't believe in God's promises to preserve every word of his Word. It's their belief that "scribal errors" have entered into the written text of God's Word thus corrupting it and rendering it unreliable, or not as reliable as found in the autographs. So to them, God is dead. He's not a living Author who can Providentially maintain the written text of his own Book; and this is why they believe that the Bible is only inspired, inerrant, and infallible *in the original manuscripts*. Had they believed in the perfect preservation of Scripture, there'd be no reason to include the conditional statement...*in the original manuscripts*. But they don't and that's why it's there.

2. Modernists also believe that these "scribal errors" entered slowly into the written text of God's Word rather than quickly. Therefore, the older a manuscript is, or the earlier in history it was written, the more reliable it should be. This is why their versions are filled with footnotes and bracketed remarks declaring that the "oldest and most reliable manuscripts" don't contain a certain word, phrase, or passage. It's because they believe that their "earlier" manuscripts are more reliable than the "later" manuscripts used by the translators of the KJB. And since their earlier manuscripts didn't contain these various words, phrases, and passages, then it's their position they should be removed.

Admittedly, their logic is sound, but only if corruption entered slowly. But the Bible teaches that it entered quick and early rather than slow and late (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2); and so while their argument is logical, it isn't biblical.

3. Modernists also prefer their earlier manuscripts because they prefer the doctrines of Rome. Indeed, those most responsible for these modern versions were unsaved men who weren't Roman Catholic in name but were Roman Catholic in doctrine. Most professing Christians seem unaware of the fact that all modern versions of the Bible are translated from the exact same set of manuscripts from which Rome derived its doctrines and produced its Latin Vulgate. Therefore all modern versions of the Bible are nothing more than extensions of Roman Catholicism. So any attempt to supplant the later manuscripts with the earlier can only be seen as an attempt to place God's people back under Roman bondage. It was the KJB that set the world free from Rome and not the other way around. So in purchasing modern versions,

Protestants are actively funding their own demise: the proof of which can be seen in the widespread ecumenicalism that exists in (so-called) Protestant churches today.

4. Modernists don't believe that Satan is actively engaged in perverting God's written Word (through his willing agents), even though Scripture teaches both in principle and by direct reference that he is (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2). They acknowledge the existence of bad doctrine and false teaching; but they do not, nor will they entertain, any notion that the words themselves have been perverted. This is naïve, to say the least. But consult their literature. There's nary a mention of Satan. And when they do speak of corruption, it's limited to the previously aforementioned scribal errors which are always seen as inadvertent and never intentional. And as they see it, the texts with the least errors are their earlier Alexandrian manuscripts while those with the most are the later Byzantine used by the translators of the KJB.

5. And finally, modernists don't believe, nor are they aware, that a method of preservation exists. That, or they choose to ignore it. It isn't plainly stated, but it is plainly taught. Had God made it obvious, then the enemies of the cross would've sought to remove it. But knowing how the debate would ensue, God placed within his Word his method of preserving his written Word in such a manner as to only catch the eye of the willing (Mt. 13:10-17). Any mention of it is noticeably absent from modernist' literature. And when they do, they either deny its existence or teach that no method exists.

Variations of Thought

But as it is with any doctrinal position, there are often several avenues of thought found within the larger context. Some modernists outright deny the inspiration of Scripture, and so their interest in the Bible is one of its historical significance rather than any notion of Divine origin or inspiration. So aside from its impact on society and culture, to them, the Bible is of no greater value than any other religious work – where the legitimacy of a manuscript is measured by its historicity and perceived reliability with no thought given as to who wrote it or what they believed. It's a position that denies the possibility of Satan's influence because to them, Satan doesn't exist – else they'd also believe in the God of the Bible and the inspiration of the Scriptures. So again, their interest in the Bible is one of historical significance rather than Divine inspiration, at best. These are spiritually unregenerate men whose views commonly represent those of the textual critics and the Hebrew and Greek scholars. They're relatively few in number, but often the most prominent and influential.

Others believe in the inspiration of the autographs, but not the copies. In other words, they believe that God wrote his Word, but they also believe that the original wording has been lost, and so they believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures, but not in its perfect preservation. But claiming to believe in inspiration apart from preservation is untenable. Anyone can claim that they believe in the inspiration of the autographs, but there's no way to prove or challenge this belief because they no longer exist – there's nothing left to prove or disprove; and so the real measure and test of one's faith isn't in believing that the Word of God is God's inspired words, but in *also* believing God's promises to preserve his Word. But modernists deny this which is why they're laboring to "correct" it. This group is best represented by most denominations, churches, and other religious organizations.

Others deny the perfect preservation of Scripture, but insist that the basic thought and idea of what God intended has survived. This is known as *dynamic equivalency*, which is nothing more than a textual critic term and justification for *paraphrasing* – where the idea is to capture the basic thought or essence of what was intended instead of producing a more exacting word-for-word literal translation (*formal equivalence*). But the danger here is that in reducing God’s Word to conversational English, meaning is lost – which indeed occurs, as Eve learned.

Others teach that the words *have* survived, but that they’re scattered somewhere amongst the 5300+ extant (existing) Greek manuscripts and as translated somewhere amongst their 200+ (English) versions. So if you want the words of the Lord, then you must purchase all of their versions and then seek to discern for yourself which words are the words of the Lord and which are not. And as they prefer, they’re found amongst their own set of earlier Alexandrian manuscripts.

King James (Bible)-Onlyism

King James (Bible)-Onlyism, or similar, is the name given to those who advocate sole use of the King James Bible. Often portrayed as cultists, or at least cult-like in their beliefs, their zeal is based on God’s promises to preserve every word of his Word as best preserved in the Hebrew Masoretic Texts and the Greek Textus Receptus: the two language texts from which the KJB was translated. They’re amongst the minority of professing Christians and are frequently accused of having brought needless discord into the Body of Christ, including church splits. But of course, these accusations come from the modernists who’d prefer that God’s people adopt their more ecumenical (i.e. Roman Catholic) views.

Doctrinal Disposition

1. KJB-Onlyism believes in God’s promises to preserve every word of his Word. While modernists believe that God’s words have been lost and are seeking to restore them, the defenders of the KJB believe the *opposite*: that God has never lost any of his words and that he’s Providentially watching over and maintaining them: the perfect preservation of Scripture (Jer. 1:12).
2. KJB-Onlyism believes that corruption of the written Word began quick and early rather than slow and late. Scripture teaches this in principle as seen in Eve’s conversation with the serpent and by direct Scriptural reference (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2). Modernists believe the exact opposite.
3. KJB-Onlyism recognizes Rome’s influence on the Scriptures because all modern versions of the Bible are based on the same manuscripts used by Rome in producing its Latin Vulgate. This would be the Septuagint which also contains the non-canonical books of the Apocrypha as part of its canon, which also explains why there are both Protestant and Catholic versions of their “bibles.” The difference is that those sold to Catholics contain the books of the Apocrypha

while those sold to Protestants do not, and so Rome's influence on the Scriptures cannot and should not be underestimated.⁸

4. KJB-Onlyism readily acknowledges Satan's corrupting influence on the Scriptures while modernists make nary a mention (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2). Christians have grown accustomed to the idea that bad doctrine exists, but few are willing to entertain any notion that the wording of the Scriptures themselves has purposely been altered, and this is why this subject is so very important.

5. And whereas those defending the KJB acknowledge that God's Word does contain a plan for its preservation, modernists are almost completely ignorant of its existence much less its application.⁹

The Beginning of KJB-Onlyism

But from whence did KJB-Onlyism arise? For all practical purposes, it began with the penning of the autographs because the lineage and ancestry of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts used by the translators of the KJB can be traced back to them.

What we would call today King James-Onlyism later emerged in defiance to Rome with the printing of Erasmus' *New Testament in Greek* in 1516 (later dubbed the *Textus Receptus*). From that point, several English translations were made based on the Hebrew Masoretic Texts for the Old Testament and Erasmus' *New Testament in Greek for the New* – a process that eventually resulted in the printing of the King James Bible in 1611.

But more popularly, KJB-Onlyism (re-)emerged in 1881 with the introduction of the modern versions of the Bible. Again, the modern versions are based on a different set of manuscripts than those used by the translators of the KJB; and so the debate between the Bible versions isn't one of wording or phraseology based on a translation that's derived from the same set of Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, but from which set of Hebrew and Greek manuscripts we should be using: the early Alexandrian Texts used by the modernists or the later Byzantine used by the translators of the KJB.

But to address the point, modernists want people to believe that KJB-Onlyism is but a recent development: the inference being that they're seeking to squelch the scholarly and scientific pursuit of textual purity when all that's really happening is that some old Catholic manuscripts have been rescued from a garbage can and marketed as the "oldest and most reliable." This is done to distract and deter people from discovering the true lineage of their manuscripts, who wrote them, and what they believed. But in wanting people to believe that KJB-Onlyism is but a recent fad, they hypocritically manage to forget that for some 1500 years the only place that their Alexandrian Texts were in use was *within* Roman Catholicism by way of the Latin Vulgate. While outside of Rome, the Byzantine Texts were being copied, distributed, and translated into

⁸ This can be verified by a visit to almost any "Christian" bookstore.

⁹ It seems that your average KJB-O believer is also unaware of this, but nevertheless more willing to accept its conclusions.

other languages all over the region and world, which explains why we have so few Byzantine manuscripts dating as far back as the Alexandrian.

Similarly, the KJB was published in 1611 and the (English) modern versions didn't start appearing until 1881 – a difference of some 270 years. Again, the true church outside of Rome used the Byzantine Texts and the harlot church of Roman Catholicism used the Alexandrian; and so their desire to supplant the Byzantine Texts with the Alexandrian can only be seen as an attempt to place God's people under Roman bondage. And so KJB-Onlyism isn't the closed-minded cult group that modernists would have people believe that it is; it's a group of God's people who've chosen to believe in God's promises to preserve every word of his Word and to call into account those who don't.

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But back to the point at hand, what do our churches and denominations really believe about the preservation of Scripture? The conditional phrase "... *in the original manuscripts,*" has already been discussed. But in a further attempt to distance themselves from the controversy, the more recent trend is to shorten their Statements to read (or similar):

We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

This too sounds authoritative, but it's only a further attempt to avoid the controversy. All Bibles come from one of two sources, and so they need to name which Bible they believe is the inspired Word of God. If they name a modern version, they're partial to the godless doctrines of Rome. If they name the King James Bible, then they're opposed to Rome and its doctrines. It's that simple. The modern versions and the KJB are derived from two different sources, and so a side *must* be chosen (And this isn't a case of "the truth lying somewhere in the middle."). But since they haven't, then this can only be viewed as an attempt to avoid the controversy or an attempt to hide their true intent – neither of which are godly.

This would be a good Statement if the autographs were still with us, but they're not. Most are willing to believe in the Bible's inspiration, or at least say they do, but there's no way to measure or test their resolve because the autographs have long since passed. And so the real measure and test of faith is in believing God's promises to preserve every word of his Word. Or, it takes more faith to believe that God has *preserved* his Word than it does to believe that he *inspired* it. Most don't which is why they inserted the conditional statement in the first example (... *in the original manuscripts*) and why they've failed to mention a specific version in the second – as also indicated by their lack of any reference to *inerrancy* and/or *infallibility*.

So as before, while this Statement also sounds bold and authoritative in its pronouncement, it's really only written to mask the unbelief of the church, denomination, or religious organization who published it. It's an attempt to avoid the controversy. And if they don't believe that God has perfectly preserved his Word, the question that we then have to ask ourselves is, Why are we listening to them? How can you have "great faith" if you don't believe that God's Word exists today? Selah.