

Keep the King James, the Gold Standard of the Scriptures

Back at MS in Rufus Bellamy's "17th Century Lit." class, I got into a friendly debate with Fr. Tom Matchie. It was whether the *King James Bible* we were studying should be replaced by some of the "simpler" revisions coming out. Fr. Tom liked the simplified versions, but I having grown up with the KJV, which helped me make it through Doc Satin's grueling Shakespeare class., where we had to read all 37 plays. I believed with Rufus, that simplifying the KJV was akin to desecrating the sanctuary- like replacing a Mona Lisa with an Andy Warhol can of soup.

I had to agree with Fr. Tom on one point. For the sake of getting the gospel out to everyone, the easier versions work, especially for "baby Christians," needing the "sincere milk" of the word until they can handle the "strong meat" of the (KJV).

Last week I heard Andrew Wommack advocate my thesis exactly: that the "King James" should be the ideal against which all other translations should be judged. Still, I'd agree with Fr. Tom in this: start them out on modern, street-simplified English," but teach them to aspire to, some day, "seize the fire" and thrill to the sheer stylistic and poetic brilliance of the KJV, which truly comes closest to catching both the *letter* and the *spirit* of the Hebrew and Greek originals.

My brother Charles, a self-made techie, installed in my new computer a Bible program called *Sword* which has both new and old testaments in about ten different versions. The differences among the translations was astonishing. And it convinced me that many miss God's original intent.

Here is the KJV's rendering of James 1: 21: "therefore, lay aside all filthy language and receive with meekness the *engrafted* word, which is able to save

your souls.” Among the choices other versions offered to replace *engrafted* were *rooted*, and *planted*, which with *engrafted* sustain the imagery of sowing God’s word like seed into the *ground* of the human heart. But the street-easy versions missed that metaphor completely, using words like *placed* and *put* which carry no planting pictures at all. They are simply empty filler, falling short of the much deeper message of the originals.

So what’s so wrong with simplification? Nothing if the reader is content with surface understanding. But here is Solomon: “It is the Glory of God to conceal a matter, but it is the honor of kings to seek it out.” The focus should be on what is gained by “*engrafted* over “placed.” Proper grafting of one tree branch to another demands the perfect alignment of cambium layers, or the sap cannot flow through. The phrase, “placed in a heart” transmits little, but “*engrafted* carries the flow of life itself, like blood. And orchardry images abound in the Bible from Eden to Calvary to Revelation. Treasures of wisdom await those who “diligently seek” a deeper understanding of the knowledge of God.

Why shun “the dark sayings” of the wise? (Pr. 1:6) Get into the hunt. Every scripture you graft into your language strengthens your ability hear and speak the truth.

Gene Pinkney 24-04-17- for The Daily News