

Recommended English Bible Translations

by Reverend Anthony Scalfani

Q: Why do you recommend that we use these two particular English Bible translations {the NASB 1995 and the Authorized Version (KJV 1611)} and why must they be used together?

I will do my best to be brief in the listing of what I have had to profoundly consider in choosing these translations, NASB 1995 and KJV 1611, but this is really not a topic which can be covered briefly. I pray there would be more interest in this topic and a format in which to informally discuss it. If you would like to gain a better understanding of this topic, I suggest we find a time when we could engage in informal dialogue, so I could hear and attempt to answer your questions and better communicate my thoughts in ways that make the technical considerations easier to understand.

Firstly, I discuss this topic not as a foundational belief, but as a recommendation (although most certainly a strong one). We are not part of a movement toward "KJV only-ism," defined as those unwilling to seriously consider other versions, those unwilling to correct the KJV by the Greek text which underlies it (predominantly these are NT considerations, but I would not exclude the possibility of considering corrections for the Hebrew and Aramaic text of the OT and/or NT), those holding to some special understanding of God's providence in preserving the word of God which exclusively sets the KJV or the "Received Text" (the particular collection of source texts used in the translation of the KJV -- NT) in an authoritative and normative class, by itself.

I do not consider this matter an essential of the faith and I always allow participants to read in their preferred version during Bible studies (although we occasionally find ourselves needing to comment on differences in translation). For unity of study and worship, the NASB 1995 is used in our Sunday service.

The seven points below provide my introduction to this topic. It is imperative to work through the first two items *before* any significant effort is spent on the rest of the list. In fact, it is critical that items 1 and 2 are carefully and profoundly considered, regardless of which version of the Bible you use. **This first consideration is foundational to how you will study the Word of God, to what you will believe, and to how you will live your life before God. These are not insignificant matters, temporally or eternally.**

1. What is one's view of the word of God/Holy Scripture? Do you believe it is "inspired in the plenary verbal sense"? Do you consider the writing as inspired ("God breathed"), as opposed to the prophets and the apostles being inspired? Do you believe each word to be inspired? All the words fully inspired? Is it inerrant and is it also infallible? Is the Bible the word of God, as a whole, or does it merely contain the word of God (as a human record of the Divine Revelation which came in the form of the events of redemptive

history)? Does the inspiration extend to every letter of every word? Were the autographs perfect in every respect? How does one resolve the dilemma of our no longer having any of the autographs but rather apographs? What is the nature, age, coherency and reliability of vast body of apographs we do have? What is believed about God's intention in this situation in which we find ourselves? Are the Scriptures the "very voice of God"?

2. What do you want to do with the Bible? Study it very carefully for all your remaining life? Obey it absolutely and completely, even at great and grave personal cost? Learn absolute truth that has significant eternal consequence? Develop principles of belief for which you would die? Teach/train (disciple) those you deeply love? Have God act upon you through it, so that you are deeply transformed; essentially, spiritually, mentally and in the areas of attitudes, values and priorities of the heart? Have the same happen to those who you steward/shepherd and teach?
3. **If one holds a low view of Scripture after considering #1 and/or #2 above, the choice of translation version seems to matter little.** Such a low view or disinterest has very serious implications before God for **ANYONE** who holds to such a position or who remains apathetic about the issue overall. If one has a high view and interest they should read on to what follows below.
4. I believe that of the text-type families (the extant apographs, organized by source) which God has determined/ordained to be preserved, the two most important are the Alexandrian Text-Type and the Byzantine Text-Type (I acknowledge this is a great oversimplification of what actually is, but for the sake of brevity, I will take that liberty here). While there are other families, I am not aware of any mainstream English translation that draws predominately from those other families for the major portion of their translation. While the scholars are divided over the superiority of each of the text families (based in part on: the age of each apograph witness, the number of witnesses, the history of the church's use of the particular witness, the internal quality of the witness, etc.), it seems that most scholars will choose either of these two major families or some combination thereof, depending on the particular book, chapter and verse of the Bible and the collective witness of the body of apographs. **Therefore, I would like the reader to have before him/her representatives of BOTH of these two major families, as the Scriptures are carefully and profoundly considered.**
5. Summarily stated, I find the NASB 1995 and the KJV 1611 to be the best translations OVERALL, representing the Alexandrian Text-Type (NASB 1995) and the Byzantine Text-Type (KJV 1611). They are both very literal, very careful, and theologically orthodox and conservative in the perspectives which underlie their translations. My personal experience with both is that when used together, they afford the most certitude of getting the right understanding of what God actually wrote and together they cause the reader to consider what must be considered.

6. While this entire topic is controversial among even the best of scholars and "good Christian men," my belief is that when taken together, these two translations provide the English reader with the best of what is currently available in translation. In the very many times I have had to go further and carefully examine the Scripture passage in question – utilizing its immediate context, examining it in its greater context, comparing it against many other clear didactic and prescriptive passages, considering it in the light of the confessional positions of the church orthodox/historical, comparing it against the translations of other versions of the Bible, looking to scholarly commentary on the passage from many excellent commentators across time, checking the underlying manuscripts from which the translation was taken, doing lexical research, comparing against other text-type families and/or within families, and finally my own sense of theology (developed during over 30 years of study of the Scriptures, some formally) – **I find most helpful/faithful these two versions together.**
7. For the lay person, the NASB 1995 and the KJV 1611, **used in conjunction with the 4 study Bible notes I recommended**, will most assuredly give one a **"firm foundation."**