

THE SCRIPTURES

A POSITION PAPER ON THE WORD OF GOD

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the Word of our God will stand forever." (Isaiah 40:8)

In God's boundless mercy, He has made Himself known to mankind in an indestructible, written form: the Holy Bible. God's people love the Scriptures, for they reveal the God who loves them. The blood of martyrs stains history's pages, testifying to saints' love for God and for the Scriptures that reveal Him.

This precious book is the most published in history. It has been translated into more languages than any other book. Thousands have died in its defense. No volume has been more influential in the history of western civilization than the Holy Bible. It has been the target of countless assaults, often from professed friends, yet it has withstood them all. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89).

Each year, the teachers, administrators and board members of Harford Christian School affirm their faith by signing the school's doctrinal statement. Unchanged since the school's founding, that statement affirms: "We believe in the Scripture of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired Word of God, as inerrant in the original writings, and as the supreme and final authority in faith and life."

INSPIRATION

Scripture is the "verbally inspired" Word of God (II Timothy 3:16). The term "inspired" means "God-breathed." Scriptures were breathed forth by God through human instruments of His choosing and are the product of neither human imagination nor man's highest religious thought. Rather, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21). "Verbal inspiration" means the words of the Bible are God-breathed. It stands in contrast to the erroneous theory of concept inspiration by which correctness of biblical words is denied while biblical concepts are professedly embraced.

INERRANCY

God-breathed Scripture is inerrant. There are no factual errors in the Holy Bible, a truth often challenged by unbelieving, unregenerate students of Scripture. But inerrancy is an inescapable consequence of inspiration. Christ repeatedly affirmed that everything in Scripture is to be believed. "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18).

INFALLIBILITY

God's Word is also infallible. By diligently following Scripture, a person can know God's perfect will, and he will not be disappointed or misled by Scripture, for it is the product of One who cannot err. True success is knowing and pleasing God. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8).

AUTHORITY

Because the Scriptures were breathed forth by God, they are also authoritative. How often one finds the words "Thus saith the Lord," or similar expressions in the Scriptures! When God speaks, we must take heed, for there is no authority higher than God Himself. Therefore, Scriptures must be accepted as the ultimate authority for all men.

SUFFICIENCY

To his own dishonor man has tried often to add to Scripture that which he thinks will make a fuller religious life. In response to this error, one must recognize and declare the sufficiency of God's written word. The book of Revelation, clearly the capstone of the entire Scripture, concludes with these words: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18). God's revelation to man is complete, needing no addition. Therefore, the pronouncements of a pope, the extra-biblical documents (i.e., Book of Mormon, Koran, etc.) accepted as God-sent by diverse sects, and the special spiritual revelations claimed by modern-day "prophets" are in violation of the Word of God and must be rejected. The Scripture presents itself as sufficient: nothing more is needed.

TRANSLATIONS

In recent decades many English translations of the Bible have been published. Translators often attempt to present the Word of God in a fashion more understandable for the modern reader. But many recent versions have actually added considerable confusion.

God has preserved His Word (Psalm 119:89). Although men have tried to tear down the Scriptures, they will not be destroyed. Neither will the Word of God be preserved

in a form that distorts God's revelation. No translation is perfect, because each is a human product. But it is assuring to know that God has preserved His Word in spite of man's imperfections so that our generation might have a faithful and reliable translation.

In view of the constant assault on God's Word, it is important for the believer to choose the best possible version of Scripture. It should be accurate and reliable. Whereas paraphrasing is inescapable, the more freely a translator paraphrases, the greater risk he runs of distancing his version from the words of the original text. By their very nature, paraphrases tend toward concept inspiration and thus away from verbal inspiration; a paraphrase looks to the thought more than to the words. That weakness underscores the value of a literal translation of Scripture. Thus, the popular paraphrases of our day are less reliable than those versions resulting from efforts to produce an accurate, literal translation.

Another factor is the integrity of the translators. Some modern translations were produced by scholars who deny Scripture, and their work reflects prejudice against important doctrines. Other translation committees have included scholars with serious spiritual flaws. These should be matters of grave concern to someone who loves the Word of God.

For these reasons, the Evangelical Methodist Church in its various ministries – including Harford Christian School – continues to use only the King James Version. For more than three centuries this translation has served English language readers well. Christ's church in the English-speaking world has received a Christian heritage and tradition nurtured by the King James Version of the Bible. In varying degrees, we are all indebted to this faithful translation that has long served the cause of Christ nobly. Its value is beyond the richest assessment.

Although every translation has its limitations, the reliability of the King James Version of the Bible is established. Its dignity of expression is well suited to the loftiness of the Word of God. Today, the God of unapproachable holiness is humanized by popular religion to be little more than an almighty big brother. It is important that the radiant glory, unrivaled holiness and eternal perfection of Almighty God be accurately reflected in the translation of His Word. We believe the language of the King James Version does this more appropriately than any other modern translations.

In a strictly academic analysis, the literary impact of the King James Version on modern civilization and its place in history as the most prominent and influential product of English literature earn it a permanent and significant place in every curriculum within the English-speaking world. In colonial days, it was a foundational and integral part of the American educational system. Its omission from educational

institutions today is academically irresponsible; a moral and spiritual tragedy. Wherever English is spoken, an education is incomplete if it has not included broad reading from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

Moreover, in the classroom setting, it is advisable that all students have the same textbook. If the students' textbooks are merely similar but not exactly the same, confusion is the ultimate result. Therefore, only one version of the Scripture will be used by all students and faculty for the Bible classes and the pulpit ministry of the Evangelical Methodist Church and Harford Christian School: the King James Version. It is reliable, proper in its expression and, for beauty and appropriateness of language, unsurpassed.

"The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever" (Psalm 12:6–7).