

**Thy Law Is Perfect***James Montgomery (1771–1854)*

Thy law is perfect, Lord of light,  
 Thy testimonies sure;  
 The statutes of Thy realm are right,  
 And Thy commandments pure.

Let these, O God, my soul convert,  
 And make Thy servant wise;  
 Let these be gladness to my heart,  
 The dayspring to mine eyes.

So may the words my lips express,  
 The thoughts that throng my mind,  
 O Lord, my strength and righteousness,  
 With Thee acceptance find.

**ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ***In the Nick of Time***The Seventies: Part Five***Kevin T. Bauder*

The 1970s were an important decade for the evangelical doctrine of Scripture in more than one way. As we have seen, these years witnessed the beginning of a “battle for the Bible” during which evangelicals divided over biblical inerrancy. The inerrancy debate was not the only significant development in bibliology, however.

As already mentioned, in 1970 David Otis Fuller published his book, *Which Bible?*. This was the first major evangelical volume to lay out the King James Only position for a popular readership. Some KJO voices had existed previously, but they had not attracted a wide following. For example, Edward Hills’s *The King James Version Defended* (1956) was less KJO than it was a defense of the Textus Receptus as a *restoration* of the original Greek New Testament. Others, such as Peter Ruckman’s *The Bible Babel* (1964) and his subsequent writings were so wildly inaccurate and vituperative as to attract only a scant following. Fuller’s book did what these older volumes had not: it was published by a mainstream, evangelical publisher; it was written for ordinary readers; and it reached a wide audience. Furthermore, it was released shortly before Ken Taylor’s *The Living Bible*, a paraphrase that was wildly popular, but that raised the hackles of many conservative Bible readers. The popularity of *The Living Bible* made Fuller’s book seem more relevant than it deserved.

Once Fuller’s book hit the stands, some evangelicals and fundamentalists were drawn to the King James Only position, while others reacted against it. Figures such as John R. Rice and Robert Sumner explicitly rejected the new position, while D. A. Waite, E. L. Bynum, and M. James Hollowood began to advocate it. Most educational institutions rejected the new philosophy, but it eventually managed to capture Baptist Bible College (Springfield, MO), at least temporarily. Maranatha Baptist Bible College flirted with the KJO position for a few years, but eventually backed away from it.

As the KJO movement was coalescing, publishers released two of the most conservative English translations of the Bible. One was the New American Standard Version (1971), a strict translation that provided an alternative to the more liberal Revised Standard Version (1952). The other was the New International Version (1978), which was translated for readability and



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provided a more responsible alternative to *The Living Bible*. Both the NASB and the NIV were translated by scholars who loved the Word of God, and both versions were welcomed by the vast majority of evangelicals, including fundamentalists.

By this time, however, King James Onlyism had begun to pick up speed. In late 1978 a small group of KJO advocates gathered near Philadelphia to organize the Dean Burgon Society. The new society was named for John William Burgon, who had been Dean of Chichester Cathedral after 1876. Burgon had written extensively against Hort and Westcott and in favor of the Textus Receptus. Nevertheless, his views disagreed markedly with some of the opinions later expressed by the men who organized the society in his name. As Edward Hills put it, “They ought to call the society the Wilkerson Society [*sic*]. Most of them are following Wilkinson’s 7th Day Adventist approach. . . . In short, these Baptist defenders of the KJV are terribly confused.” [See here.]

The principal organizers of the Dean Burgon Society were D. A. Waite and E. L. Bynum, assisted by David Otis Fuller and M. James Hollowood (professor at Maranatha Baptist Bible College). The new organization’s executive committee included E. A. Griffith, who was the current president of the American Council of Christian Churches. Oddly, the original listing for the executive committee also included Marion H. Reynolds, Jr. (who was deeply involved in the ACCC) and Theodore Letis (a young man later known for his advocacy of the “ecclesiastical text”), but within a month both those names had vanished from the list without comment.

Reynolds, however, did contribute an article to the new society’s paper: “Fundamentalists and the Bible Version Issue.” He stated “[t]hat the King James Version is the only accurate, reliable English Version—and that all modern Bible versions are defective and should be rejected.” Of course, “all modern Bible versions” included the NASB and the NIV. In case anyone failed to grasp his point, Reynolds continued, “We consider all of the modern Bible versions to be a part of the most direct and deceitful attack Satan has ever launched upon the verbal inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of God’s Word!”

The new society was not at all shy about identifying its opponents. According to society publications, one such opponent was Edward Panosian of Bob Jones University. Another was the Council on Biblical Inerrancy with its recently published Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

If the new society had opponents, however, it also had friends. In the spring of 1979, Waite and Fuller traveled to Watertown, Wisconsin, to organize the society’s first campus chapter at Maranatha Baptist Bible College. This new chapter had the blessing of college president B. Myron Cedarholm, and it numbered almost 250 members.

A younger colleague of M. James Hollowood at Maranatha was Thomas Strouse, who was an alumnus of the school’s seminary. Strouse held a newly-minted Ph.D. from Bob Jones University, and had joined the Maranatha faculty only that autumn. He would go on to become an advocate, not only of the KJO position, but of a geocentric universe. To be fair, the present personnel of Maranatha Baptist University do not seem to look back on the Hollowood-Strouse period as the best years of their institution.

Not all KJO advocates were fundamentalists, but many of them were. They emerged within already-existing institutions (such as Maranatha or the ACCC) and they sometimes founded new institutions (like the Dean Burgon Society). Because they had previously earned their standing within the existing institutions, their shift in position placed their old colleagues in an embarrassing position. The great majority of fundamentalists did not agree with the new teaching of King James Onlyism, but they were also reluctant to disagree publicly with old friends. Thus, the KJO philosophy was permitted to remain within many fundamentalist circles, and even to capture a few, for another decade and a half. At that time its leading figures declared open war on the rest of the fundamentalist world. But that is another story.



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This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

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