

## IMPORTANT BULLETIN FOR ALL CHRISTIAN BOOKSTORE OWNERS

Coming Soon...

### *The NIV-Only Controversy* by Jeff Blanco

We at Glass House Christian Publishing announce with pleasure that we have signed promising new author Jeff Blanco, who is even now busily putting finishing touches on *The NIV-Only Controversy*. This book, projected for release this coming fall, is sure to be a bestseller, and you won't want to miss out on making this title available at your local establishment!

Full details of our sales campaign will be released in due course, but we wanted to alert you to some key points of the projected strategy. For maximum impact, our marketing team at Glass House recommends that dealers position the product strategically between the floor display for our children's video "Wolgamott Weasel Goes to Church" and our popular *Saturday Bird Watcher's Study Bible*. Additionally, no pains have been spared to produce an attractive, attention-getting cover for *The NIV-Only Controversy* (or *NIVOC*, as we refer to it in-house): the artwork features a tasteful Salvador Dali-like landscape in which the melting clocks have been replaced by NIV logos. (Special note: This cover has not yet been finalized and is, of course, subject to change if our legal team continues to insist that our cutting-edge use of these trademarks may cause us to run afoul of Zondervan and/or the International Bible Society.)

Jeff Blanco is currently Youth Pastor of First Baptist Church of Nouveau Riche, Maryland, and we have asked him to provide a few words of introduction to a sample chapter of this exciting new title. We think you will agree that an author of this magnitude appears only about once every decade! Bro. Jeff's powerful writing style and raw emotional appeal should prove a winning combination, especially among the young people who will carry the ideas of this book forward into today's church.

We will be glad to answer any questions you as a Christian bookseller may have about integrating this title into your sales strategy. All inquiries about *NIVOC* should be directed to our Director of Marketing, Mr. Luke Warmly.

In "the Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7),



*Glass House Christian  
Publishing.*

*"While We Lighten Your Pockets, We're Enlightening The World."™*

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## A Word from the Author

I am proud and pleased to provide a needed service to the church with my new book, *The NIV-Only Controversy*. In writing it, I tried to recapture some of the excitement that I personally felt as a teenager when I first opened a book that would have a crucial impact on my own thinking and approach.

It hardly seems a full ten years that James R. White's *The King James Only Controversy* has been with us doing its excellent work. I vividly remember the thrill I experienced in 1995— when I was only 14 and in the Youth Department at Bible Baptist Church in Deadman's Drop, Oklahoma— when I read this book for the first time. Our Pastor back then was the late Rev. Rock Eternal, who I must say in all candor offered a rather backward-looking kind of leadership to our church, especially given his continued use of the KJV in the pulpit. Dr. White's pioneering book inspired me to action, and I immediately initiated an effort to replace the KJV Pew Bibles we then had in our sanctuary with the more modern and relevant NIV. However, this effort was cruelly squashed by Pastor Eternal, which given his reactionary thinking is perhaps not surprising. But our initiative proved to be effective in an unexpected way: the Pastor resigned shortly after this happened, largely due to the inadequacies in his ministry that I and others (quite rightly) had brought to light during the controversy over the pew Bibles. His successor, Pastor Artie Fishal, turned out to be an ardent supporter of the NIV, and his first action as Pastor was to donate our sanctuary KJVs to the local Faith Farm and initiate the purchase of 300 NIV Pew Bibles to replace them.

Pastor Fishal's backing and his visionary thinking, which along with *The King James Only Controversy* would formatively influence my own spiritual journey, became crucial a few years later, when at the age of 18 I filled an unexpected teaching vacancy in our Sunday School Department. Called to lead the Young Adults class, I started a series of lessons drawn from Dr. White's remarkable book. Unfortunately, given the divisive nature that is well known to be possessed by all "KJV-Onlies," my teaching was not well received by everyone in the class, and some were even offended enough to leave the church entirely. Deeply stressed out by this unfriendly reception, I might have become completely discouraged had it not been for Pastor Fishal taking me aside and putting the situation into perspective for me. He reminded me of the obstinacy that characterizes all "KJVOs" in receiving clear truths, and I then noticed a common thread between ex-Pastor Eternal's hostile actions and the ill will of the families that had left us. Pastor Fishal also pointed out how much better our church was without the disruption and contention brought right into the pews by such individuals, and I saw proof of this when our congregation soon afterwards approved— almost unanimously— our pastor's proposal to change our church's name from "Bible Baptist Church" to "Lifewalk Community Church: The Family-Friendly Place to Worship!"

Although those battles ended triumphantly, progress never stops, as everyone in ministry knows. Recently Zondervan published the complete *Today's New International Version* (TNIV), and on looking through this Bible, I must confess that I was among the first to perceive that the days of the old NIV were over. Therefore I again advocated an immediate removal of the Bibles in our pews in favor of the TNIV. Unfortunately, not everyone shared the same vision for the future, and I regret to admit that even Pastor Fishal did not back my efforts, worried perhaps about the backward thinking of some among our congregation who held obstinately to the older translation. (After all, as they probably tell themselves, "If the NIV was good enough for Paul and Moses, it's good enough for me.")

Greatly disappointed by this void of leadership in my home church, I embraced an opportunity that suddenly arose to become part of the pastoral team at First Baptist in Nouveau Riche, headed by the famed Korean preacher Lao D. Cea. At the same time, I continued seeking guidance on the TNIV issue. Naturally, I looked to Alpha and Omega Ministries, the Christian Apologetics Ministry of Dr. White, but unfortunately a search

of the organization's website (<http://www.aomin.org>) turned up nothing significant, suggesting that the good doctor has so far maintained complete silence on the new translation.

Of course one cannot expect even a brilliant and scholarly individual like James White to take on *every* issue that faces today's church. It therefore seemed to me that, since I saw a need regarding TNIV, I should fill the gap myself. And that's how *The NIV-Only Controversy* was born, which I have here excerpted for your reading pleasure and ready reference against the conformity-bound, retrograde thinking that continues to infest the Christian community in our day.

One final note: it was perhaps inevitable that, given the high regard that I have for *The King James Only Controversy* (which of course inspired the title of my own book), and the number of times I have read and enjoyed it, some notable words and phrases from that work started to seep unawares into my own writing. I would like to thank my longsuffering and diligent wife Bethany, and the legal team at Glass House Christian Publishing, for patiently poring over my manuscript and alerting me to several instances of unintended plagiarism of Dr. White that had made it into my rough draft, which I have only with great regret (and the threat of losing my advance) removed from the book. But I have made every effort to retain the flavor of my predecessor's work in the following pages, since the powerful arguments he made attacking "KJV-Onlies" inspired me so greatly in what I have written about "NIV-Onlies" and their "movement."

Yours in Service,


*Rev. Jeff Blanco*

## Chapter 1 (excerpt): Isn't the *New International Version* Good Enough?

"You can never have a new thing without breaking an old."

--D.H. Lawrence.<sup>1</sup>

### A Distressing Encounter



The salesclerk never saw it coming. He had just finished unpacking a colorful shipment of "Wolgammott Weasel" stuffed toys and setting them up in the children's section of the Christian bookstore. He felt a general sense of satisfaction about working in the bookstore, except that he could never keep up with the constantly changing inventory of study Bibles that came and went like models on a Paris fashion show runway. No matter how many the store kept in stock, it seemed someone was always coming in and asking for one the clerk had never heard of, or one that had been discontinued last summer and of which there remained only a single tattered, sun-faded copy marked "75% Off!" on the clearance table in the front. The clerk also wondered if his manager would ever give him the raise he kept promising— and if maybe the manager would find someone else to do the "Storytime" readings on Saturday afternoons for the wildest bunch of Christian kids known to humankind— and if possibly the cute blonde girl clerk who stocked the worship music CDs would ever go out with him....

But anyway, as I had started to say, the salesclerk never saw it coming. All seemed well once the stuffed toys were unpacked. And then it happened. The elderly woman seemed like any other lady looking for a Bible for her husband's second cousin's grandson's babysitter's father's best friend's psychiatrist. More than glad to help, the clerk pulled a nice new TNIV Bible down from the shelf and opened the box. Her visage changed instantly. She put the Bible back into the box, withdrawing her hands like someone had been trying to pass along to her a container of radioactive waste.

"I would like a *real* Bible," she said.

"A real Bible?" the dumbfounded clerk echoed.

"Yes," she replied, "a *real* Bible, the *New International Version*, the bestselling Bible in the world."

His fingers moving quickly along the row of other Bibles, he glanced along the profusion of packaging and boxes, his eyes starting to glaze over. Which of these products would be likely to satisfy such a difficult customer? Half in desperation, he grabbed another Bible box and thrust it toward the elderly woman.

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<sup>1</sup> From his essay "Benjamin Franklin," as given in J.A. Leo Lemay & P.M. Zall, eds., *Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography: A Norton Critical Edition* (New York: Norton, 1986), p. 298.

“The *King James Version*?” she said with a laugh. “You have got to be kidding. Do you think I want my pastor to shun me as a ‘KJV Only’?”

“Terribly sorry, ma’am,” he apologized, stuffing the box under his arm. “This one really should be on the clearance table.”

He fumbled through some additional shelved volumes, but the woman reached across him and pulled out one with the words *NIV Study Bible* emblazoned on the box. “*This* is what I mean by a ‘real Bible,’ young man,” she said, shaking her head before walking toward the front of the store with the desired item.

It didn’t really bother the clerk so much to have the lady speak harshly to him. But he did feel a pang of regret when the cute blonde girl, who was restocking Amy Grant’s Christmas album on the next aisle, started giggling almost as soon as the customer walked away... .

### “If It Ain’t Broke” (But Should Be)

Scenes like this are repeated almost daily across the English-speaking world— clerks in Christian bookstores who develop hopeless crushes on cute blonde coworkers. Oh, and also encounters with “**NIV-Only**” advocates like this customer who tell clerks, in no uncertain terms, that the only Bible that they *should* be carrying is the *New International Version*. A noted authority in a recent book (which can surely be trusted given that it also has the good sense to quote James R. White a few pages later) tells us that the NIV’s “devoted sectarian use across the world, even to the point, distressingly, of bigotry, must be because true believers are restrained from looking at other versions. To be ‘washed in the blood of the Lamb’ in some communities one must, if not holding a large floppy-backed KJV, be seen to use NIV.”<sup>2</sup> Another author speaks of the NIV as having been seen to have “the potential to become the new ‘authorized’ version, bringing Christians (at least Protestant ones) together around one common text.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, the clear menace of “**NIV-Onlyism**” is *upon us and growing*.

Of course none of this is meant to disparage the NIV, which has been the bestselling version of the Bible for some time now. In its day, it was a fine translation, and I myself grew up using it. Richard Kevin Barnard, writing the history of the NIV, very truly compared the efforts of its translators with those made for the KJV: “A modern translator, working with the treasury of ancient literature now available, is like a sculptor. By looking at his model from many different angles, the sculptor is able to produce an accurate, well-rounded, three-dimensional figure. The *King James* translators were more like painters... [who] were never able to provide the extra dimension of depth.”<sup>4</sup>

However, as refreshing and different as the NIV once was, its English is not the English that we speak in the 21st century. The NIV was translated in another time, a day in which disco was king— when Fonzie was one of the most popular characters on television— a time when Jimmy Carter was president. Gold chains and platform shoes were everywhere. Leonid Brezhnev led the Soviet Union with an iron fist. Music lovers

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<sup>2</sup> David Daniell, *The Bible in English* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 757. The same author quotes a particularly fine flourish of Dr. White’s rhetoric against the “‘KJV Only’ camp” on p. 768.

<sup>3</sup> Dewey, *A User’s Guide to Bible Translations* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), p. 187.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Kevin Barnard, *God’s Word in Our Language: The Story of the New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Lamplighter/Zondervan, 1989), p. 27

listened to the Bee Gees on vinyl discs and 8-track tapes. The NIV, in short, is an analog-age Bible still being used in our digital world.

Given these circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that *Today's New International Version*, the latest revision of the NIV, would be as much of a quantum leap over its predecessor as its predecessor was over the KJV. Indeed, Paul Caminiti, vice president and Bible publisher for Zondervan, was recently quoted making a comparison between the NIV and TNIV that is as telling as the one the Barnard made above. Caminiti says, speaking of the new version, that "It's as if something was in black and white, and now it's in color."<sup>5</sup>

### **My Inspiration in Writing This Book**

I quoted the words of D.H. Lawrence at the head of this chapter, which are self-evidently true for anyone who believes in progress. In the last quarter of the 20th century, the "old thing" that had to be broken was the KJV, in order to allow the "new thing," modern translations, to emerge. Many generations of writers over a period of decades had striven to overthrow the version of 1611, but it was only in fairly recent times that this was finally achieved, allowing the NIV to become the bestselling English Bible of our day. One of those who worked hardest to remove the KJV from the superstitious reverence of the masses was Dr. James R. White, author of *The King James Only Controversy* and one of my personal heroes. He pioneered the use of the nickname "KJV Only" to appropriately stigmatize groups and individuals who use the KJV, and this term and its abbreviation "KJVO"<sup>6</sup> have been picked up and echoed around the world through the Internet. Dr. White rightly condemned the position of "KJVOs" as "by its nature, anti-intellectual, anti-scholarship, and anti-freedom,"<sup>7</sup> while letting us know that "Blustery words and insulting invective" (only from the other side, of course) "are for those who have little substance to back up their position."<sup>8</sup> Dr. White's book is so excellent that I myself took the time to give it five stars (several times over, under various different names) on the Amazon.com website. And I have frankly used his work as an inspiring guide for my own advocacy of the next step in the progress of the church: the supplanting of the outmoded NIV in favor of *Today's New International Version*.

At the same time, while I am loath to admit any flaws whatsoever in *The King James Only Controversy*, some were unkindly called to my attention by a "KJVO" recently in a chat room on modern translations, where I was lurking to research material for my own book. For example, White's statements that "Robert Barker, the royal printer . . . and his heirs maintained the right to print the KJV for a hundred years" and that "for a hundred years no one else could print it"<sup>9</sup> were cited by my antagonist as clear errors. "Says who?" I typed

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<sup>5</sup> As quoted by Robin Galiano Russell, "Bible translation stirs gender debate," *The Dallas Morning News*, 2/22/05, as given at Seacoast Online (<http://www.seacoastonline.com/articles/20050219-NEWS-302199975>).

<sup>6</sup> For those of you who may think that this term is, for instance, "**insulting and inaccurate**," I would refer you to p. 248 of Dr. White's book (James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy* [Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1995]), where he lets us know that "**It is neither. The phrase accurately represents those who seek to tell others that the King James is the only God-honoring English translation.**" On the strength of such an authority, I was easily able to deal with the departing church families who left my Sunday School class at Bible Baptist Church because they told me that they felt "**hurt**" by what they wrongly termed my "name-calling." One should *never* be concerned about hurting the feelings of people whose backward ideas can only be held in contempt.

<sup>7</sup> White, p. 151.

<sup>8</sup> White, p. 247.

<sup>9</sup> White, pp. 77, 244.

back, only to receive the following day an attachment full of inconvenient evidence.<sup>10</sup> At that point, I naturally took the necessary steps to change the subject.

Still, for Christians like me who find facts a secondary consideration, Dr. White's book remains a guiding light. And at this point in church history, there is a need for a new book like this to emerge, especially since the NIV has now become what the KJV was a few decades ago. As a writer for the *Dallas Morning News* recently reported, "For evangelicals, [the NIV]'s the pew Bible of choice. And many don't want it changed."<sup>11</sup> This creation of a "movement" behind the NIV spurred me into action. Another "old thing" blocking progress had to be removed, to allow the "new thing" (TNIV) to be accepted. And the example of what Dr. White had done with the KJV provided the perfect template for doing it again on behalf of the new translation.

But my chat room experience also provided me with a useful lesson: appealing to things that people might actually go out and check— particularly unfriendly people like "KJVOs"— clearly constituted a dangerous strategy, especially if they could demonstrate your "facts" to be less than factual. I have therefore gone to great lengths to avoid facts at all cost. Sometimes I have been unable to avoid providing hard data, but in doing so, I have hewed close to the guiding lights of modern scholarship. That way, if someone proves me wrong about certain things, I will be wrong in good company!

### NIV Only

One often hears mean and derogatory things said (a lot of it, of course, from backward types who use non-progressive Bibles) about people who talk to themselves, but I personally find talking to one's self a

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<sup>10</sup> For example:

1. "Almost as soon as KJV was off the press, the printing business of Robert Barker, 'The Printer to the King's most excellent Majesty' as the title-page announces, failed. This wealthy man, brought up in a printing family, son of Queen Elizabeth's printer, now holding the patent which gave him the monopoly of printing the Bible--any Bible, whole or in parts--the Book of Common Prayer, all official documents and all Statutes, and a great deal of additional work which came with all that, went bankrupt. The office of King's Printer was taken from him" (Daniell, op. cit., p. 451);
2. "Perhaps by the time [Barker] began printing the KJB he was in partnership with two men whose names also appear on the title pages of KJBs, Bonham Norton and John Bill. In 1615 Barker's son Christopher married Norton's daughter Sarah, but three years later Barker was suing Norton and Bill 'for the recovery of a moiety of the office and stock of the King's Printing House' . . . . Litigation and imprisonment dogged them all for the rest of their lives, and titular and effective tenure of the office of King's Printer passed between them as their fortunes varied" (David Norton, *The Textual History of the King James Bible* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], p. 62);
3. "...The privilege was interrupted, but not abolished, during the Commonwealth, 1649-60, when the English monarchy was forced into abeyance by Parliament . . . . At certain times the Barkers raised money by selling leases in their monopoly to other London booksellers, including John Bill (d. 1630) and his son, John; Thomas Newcombe (d. 1682) and his son, Thomas; and Henry Hills (d. 1689) and his son, Henry. These names appear in the imprints of seventeenth-century English Bibles with epithets such as 'assigns' or 'deputies' of each other, as the balance of the partnership was constantly adjusted between them. . . . In the meantime, the right to print Bibles had been extended in the seventeenth century to the university printers of Oxford and Cambridge (both by invoking earlier rights) and to the royal printer in Edinburgh..." (Christopher De Hamel, *The Book: A History of the Bible* [London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2001], p. 248).

There was more in this document, as well as a link to an unfavorable review (<http://av1611.com/kjbp/articles/whitney-kjoc.html>), but I frankly did not read everything he sent me, as something coming from a "KJVO," no matter how thoroughly documented, could not possibly change my mind (and my Amazon reviews) regarding the merits of Dr. White's book!

<sup>11</sup> Robin Galiano Russell, "Bible translation stirs gender debate," op. cit..

useful method of clarifying one's beliefs, as well as offering the certainty of hearing an intelligent person speaking. I asked myself the other day while shaving whether or not "NIV-Only" might possibly be a demeaning or offensive term to lovers of the *New International Version*. Almost immediately (and not without risking a serious cut from my razor), I gave myself a clear and resounding answer: "NIV-Only" is *not* an insulting term, but instead is highly accurate. If anyone feels offended about it, that just shows they are... well, "NIV-Only"!

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**You'll be able to read more of Jeff Blanco's  
blockbuster later this year, when Glass House  
Christian Publishing releases advance copies of  
*The NIV-Only Controversy*  
to the Christian book trade!**

