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ARCHIVES

# From a Child Thou Hast Known the Holy Scriptures

(2 Tim. 3:15)

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“FROM a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,” St. Paul wrote to Timothy, thereby commending the knowledge of Scripture from childhood. In order to know the Holy Scriptures from childhood, children must have the Scriptures presented to them in such a way that they are able to understand them. Knowledge is based on understanding. If from childhood we are to be acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct us for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, to borrow the wording of the revised translation, then it is necessary that the Bible be presented to children in such a form that they will at least be able to understand the words employed, even though they may not always grasp their full spiritual significance. Why is it that one million copies of Elsie Egermeier’s *Bible Story Book* have been printed and sold during the last few decades? Is it not because the text and form of our present English Bible is often too difficult for a child to understand? Is this the fault of the Bible itself, or is the translation to blame in many instances, making it necessary for parents and children to turn from the Bible itself to various Bible story books written in language that a child can grasp?

Working for a year and one half with both the King James Version and the Revised Standard Version side by side in Sunday school teachers’ meetings, the writer of this statement has become thoroughly convinced that not even the Sunday school teachers themselves in ever so many instances understand the real or full meaning of the K. J. V. Bible language, for they have been free to confess their ignorance time and again as they found enlightenment by comparing the K. J. V. with the R. S. V. We, who have grown up with the K. J. V. and have had its words and phrases and constructions explained to us over and over again, oftentimes have had not the faintest notion concerning the real language difficulties encountered not only by children, but also by their elders. Pastors and teachers have taken far, far too much for granted when they thought that meanings drilled into them for decades were equally understandable to children and laymen, for the latter are naturally reluctant to confess their ignorance. The writer’s eyes were first opened when he found to his amazement that of nearly a dozen junior high school students possessing high I.Q.’s and getting good

grades in school not one single one understood the real meaning of the word "suffer" in Jesus' famous word about the little children (Mark 10:14), and these were catechumens being prepared for confirmation. This experience has since been multiplied many times. The following list of parallel passages is compiled to demonstrate the validity of this contention.

Of all the portions of Scripture surely one of the most interesting also for children is the so-called Passion Story read in our churches during Lententide. It should furnish an exceptionally fair sampling, for the story of Jesus' suffering and death is a comparatively simple story, better known to children and elders than many other portions of Scripture. If children cannot readily understand the phraseology of the Passion Story, what hope is there that they can grasp the meaning of other portions?

In the following it is taken for granted that most elders know not only the story, but also the K. J. V. phraseology quite well, since words and expressions have been explained to them over and over again in Bible classes and Lenten services. The purpose of this article is to examine the wording of the K. J. V. in the Passion Story from the standpoint of children who make up a large portion of our congregation of worshipers. Just how would school children, say 6 to 12 years of age, understand the language if they heard the Lenten Story for the first time? On the basis of experience some natural childish misunderstandings are suggested, some of which might seem a little farfetched, yet are actually within the range of possibility. The contrasting K. J. V. and R. S. V. words and phrases are arranged in two columns side by side, in order to let the reader judge which of the two translations children are more likely to understand without much explanation.

K. J. V.	R. S. V.	REFERENCE
"all ye shall be offended" (child: have your feelings hurt?)	"you will all fall away" (see Note 1)	Mark 14:27 Matt. 26:31
"as He was wont" (child: "wont"? unwilling? or wanted to?)	"as was His custom"	Luke 22:39
Jesus "ofttimes resorted thither" (child: "resorted thither"?)	"often met there with" (see Note 2)	John 18:2
Jesus "began to be very heavy" (child: began to take on weight?)	"began to be troubled"	Mark 14:33 Matt. 26:37
Jesus "began to be sore amazed" (child: "sore"? hurt, angry? "amazed"? surprised, astonished?)	"greatly distressed"	Mark 14:33

"exceeding sorrowful" (child: "exceeding"?)	"very sorrowful"	Matt. 26:38 Mark 14:34
"tarry ye here" (child: "tarry"?)	"remain here"	Matt. 26:38 Mark 14:34
"stone's cast" (child: "cast"?)	"stone's throw"	Luke 22:41
"neither wist they" (child: "wist"?)	"they did not know"	Mark 14:40
"Sleep on now, and take your rest! Rise, let us be going!" (child: what does Jesus want them to do, sleep or rise? Or is He perhaps petulant and sarcastic at first? hardly)	"Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Rise, let us be going!" (see Note 3)	Matt. 26:45 Mark 14:41
"he is at hand that doth betray Me" (heavy construction)	"My betrayer is at hand" (one of countless minor improvements, otherwise not listed here)	Matt. 26:46
they came "with staves" (child: what are staves? barrel staves? shepherd staves?)	"clubs"	Matt. 26:47 Mark 14:43
"he that betrayed Him had given them a token" (child: bus token?)	"the betrayer had given them a sign"	Mark 14:44
"smote off his ear" (child: "smote"?)	"cut off his ear"	Matt. 26:51
"then the band" (child: music band?)	"band of soldiers"	John 18:12
"Suffer ye thus far!" (says Jesus when Peter draws sword and others are like-minded) (child: just what does Jesus mean? Maybe: you have to "take it"? up to a certain point?)	"No more of this!" (see Note 4)	Luke 22:51
"Peter followed afar off"	"Peter followed at a distance"	Matt. 26:58 Mark 14:54
<p>Peter "in" the high priest's "palace" presents a number of vexing difficulties in the K. J. V., all of which the R. S. V. remedies by one change. The palace was presumably a rectangular structure, a quadrangle, rooms on all four sides grouped around an open courtyard in the center, entered by an entrance or gateway on one side. The K. J. V. is responsible for all the confusion below, as is shown in Note 5.</p>		
"Peter followed <i>into</i> the palace . . . and sat by the <i>fire</i> " (child: was the fire <i>in</i> the palace?)	"into the courtyard"	Mark 14:54

"Peter sat *without in* the palace" "outside in the courtyard" Matt. 26:69  
 (child: was Peter without or within? how could he be both outside and inside? Or: without what? (!))

"Peter was beneath *in* the palace" "below in the courtyard" Mark 14:66  
 (child: was he?)

"kindled a fire in the midst of the hall" "in the middle of the courtyard" Luke 22:55  
 (child: well, here now we surely have an *inside* fire! No?!)

Are we playing a silly game with the children? a cruel game of deception? in none of these four instances meaning what we say? Are we here dealing with elusive cubes that won't stay put? How needlessly puzzling is all this for pupil and teacher, who (if he or she understands) must annually demonstrate to the former his (or her) superior knowledge of these Biblical conundrums! What waste of precious time!

"Peter stood at the door *without*" "stood outside at the door" John 18:16  
 "made a fire of coals" "made a charcoal fire" John 18:18  
 (see Note 6)

"servants" (at fire) "guards" Matt. 26:58  
 (child: domestic help?) Mark 14:54

"damsel" "maid" Matt. 26:69  
 (see Note 7) John 18:17

"whither the Jews always resort" "where all the Jews come together" John 18:20  
 (child: "resort"?) (see Note 2)

"about the space of an hour after" "after an interval of about an hour" Luke 22:59  
 (typical K. J. V. construction)

"confidently affirmed" "insisted" Luke 22:59

"of a truth thou wast" "certainly you were" Luke 22:59

"thy speech bewrayeth thee" "your accent betrays you" Matt. 26:73  
 (child: ?)

Jesus "held His peace" "Jesus was silent" Matt. 26:63  
 (child — hearing but not seeing spelling: what did Jesus hold? piece of what?) Mark 14:54

"rent his clothes" "tore his mantle" Mark 14:63  
 (child: "rent clothes"? suit rental? Or, if "rent" is explained as "tore": tore his clothes, as boys tear their clothes [by accident]? "Clothes"? modern "tore his robes" Matt. 26:65)

clothes: 3-piece suit?). The R. S. V. eliminates all these possible faulty mental processes, which are so needless!

"guilty of death"	"deserves death"	Matt. 26:66
Here we have an old adult complaint: Was Jesus really guilty of death, <i>i. e.</i> , murder (in opinion of the Council)?	"deserving of death"	Mark 14:64
"they buffeted and smote Him" (child: now what does that mean?)	"slapped and struck Him"	Matt. 26:67
"they carried Him away" (child: did they really carry Him?)	"they led Him away" (see Note 8)	Mark 15:1
Judas "brought again the 30 pieces" (child: had he brought them once before?)	"brought back"	Matt. 27:3
"price of blood"	"blood money"	Matt. 27:6
Jeremiah's prophecy: "the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value"	"the price of Him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel"	Matt. 27:9
"if He were not a malefactor" (child: "malefactor"?)	"evildoer"	John 18:30
"I find no fault in Him"	"I find no crime in Him"	Luke 23:4
"He answered him <i>to</i> never a word" (child: to what?)	"He gave no answer, not even <i>to</i> a single charge"	Matt. 27:13
"he questioned with Him in many words"	"he questioned Him at some length"	Luke 23:9
"Herod was exceeding glad, for he was desirous to see Him of a long season" (child: ?)	"Herod was very glad, for he had long desired to see Him"	Luke 23:8
"Herod with his men of war set Him at naught" (child: ?)	"Herod with his soldiers treated Him with contempt"	Luke 23:11
"for of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast"	"now he was obliged to release one man to them at the festival"	Luke 23:17
"a notable prisoner, Barabbas"	"a notorious prisoner, Barabbas"	Matt. 27:16
"whether of the twain" (child: ?)	"which of the two"	Matt. 27:21

"I have found no cause of death in Him"	"I have found in Him no crime deserving death"	Luke 23:22
"they were instant with loud voices requiring," etc.	"they were urgent, demanding with loud cries," etc.	Luke 23:23
"called together the whole band" (child: instrumental band?)	"called together the whole battalion"	Mark 15:16
"platted a crown of thorns" (child: pressed down hard?)	"plaited a crown of thorns" (braided, twisted)	John 19:2
"Pilate could prevail nothing"	"Pilate was gaining nothing"	Matt. 27:24
"a tumult was made"	"a riot was beginning"	Matt. 27:24
"willing to content the people"	"wishing to satisfy the crowd"	Mark 15:15
"paps which never gave suck"	"breasts"	Luke 23:29
"two others, malefactors"	"two others . . . who were criminals"	Luke 23:32, 39
"two thieves"	"two robbers"	Matt. 27:38, 44 Mark 15:27
"set over His head His accusation written," etc.	"over His head they put the charge against Him, which read," etc.	Matt. 27:37
"the superscription of His accusation was written over"	"the inscription of the charge against Him read," etc.	Mark 15:26
"parted His raiment"	"divided His garments"	Luke 23:34
"for My vesture they did cast" (child: "raiment"? "vesture"?)	"for My clothing they cast"	John 19:24
"people stood beholding" (verb used intransitively; period after beholding)	"people stood by, watching"	Luke 23:35
"done nothing amiss"	"done nothing wrong"	Luke 23:41
"the thieves cast the same in His teeth"	"the robbers also reviled Him in the same way"	Matt. 27:44
"gave up the ghost"	"gave up His spirit"	John 19:30
"yielded up the ghost"	"yielded up His spirit"	Matt. 27:50
"gave up the ghost"	"breathed His last"	Luke 23:46
"gave up the ghost" (child: "ghost"?)	"breathed His last" (see Note 9)	Mark 15:37, 39
"the veil was rent in twain"	"the curtain was torn in two"	Matt. 27:51 Mark 15:38
"the veil was rent in the midst" (child: "veil"?)	"the curtain was torn in two"	Luke 23:45
"an honorable counselor"	"a respected member of the council"	Mark 15:43

"went in boldly and craved the body of Jesus"	"took courage . . . and . . . asked for the body of Jesus"	Mark 15:43
"a clean linen cloth"	"a clean linen shroud"	Matt. 27:59
"wound it in linen clothes"	"bound it in linen cloths"	John 19:40
"as the manner of the Jews is to bury"	"as is the burial custom of the Jews"	John 19:40
"rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher" (child: "door"?)	"rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb"	Matt. 27:60
"command that the sepulcher be made sure"	"order the tomb to be made secure"	Matt. 27:64
"the last error worse than the first"	"the last fraud worse than the first"	Matt. 27:64
"ye have a watch" (child: pocket or wrist watch?)	"you have a guard"	Matt. 27:65
"setting a watch" (child: setting a timepiece?)	"setting a guard"	Matt. 27:66

Here are some 90 references to the Passion Story, mostly in chronological order. Others could be added, particularly such as contain difficult sentence structure. This sampling indicates what may be found in the rest of the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, and the entire Old Testament. By means of the K. J. V. we have tried to keep alive an outmoded, archaic, oftentimes obsolete English, no longer spoken nor readily understood. Dr. John P. Milton, professor of Old Testament at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., concludes his excellent evaluation of the R. S. V. of the O. T. (*God's Word to Men*, 30-page pamphlet, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minn., 20 cents) with the statement: "If anyone reads R. S. V. devotionally . . . he will be blessed in his reading. That is my confident judgment from my own use of R. S. V. I shall continue to use it, and to urge others to use it, because I believe firmly that in spite of criticisms that I myself have voiced God can use it mightily in our day. I have little patience with those who would substitute for ecclesiastical Latin an ecclesiastical English from the 17th century as the permanent religious language of Protestantism. Nor do I have much patience with those spiritual voices who would slander everyone with whom they do not agree. If such a spirit enters the criticism of R. S. V., it does not reflect the spirit of Christ. Whatever imperfections the Revised Standard Version may have, it is on the whole an excellent translation which glorifies God and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Why hinder it by carping criticism? Why not rather learn to appreciate it and thank God for it?"



## NOTES

1. "Offended," "offend," "offense": these now obsolete terms are no longer understood in their Scriptural meaning, as they were 300 years ago, when "ye shall be offended" could well have been understood to mean "you will be thrust upon" or "you will stumble and fall" (cp. large Webster on obsolete meanings). Our people today invariably connect with "offended" the weak meaning "your feelings will be hurt." But even commentators often go no farther than to let the disciples experience a severe jolt to their faith. But the R. S. V. does not go too far when it translates "you shall all fall away." Bauer (*Wörterbuch zum neuen Testament*) gives the meaning: "to permit oneself to be misled to sin, to fall away," and renders this passage: "you will be misled to sin by relinquishing your faith in Me, or turning away from Me." Chemnitz-Leyser-Gerhard (*Evangelienharmonie*) paraphrase Jesus' words thus: "*Dann wird dabinfallen euer Glaube an mich; von Furcht und Unglauben werdet ihr zerruettet werden*"; Johann Brenz, Luther's contemporary and follower, puts it this way: "when they would see what was happening to Jesus (taken captive, crucified, put to death), they would lose their faith, they would assuredly think: He is *not* God's Son, He is *not* the Deliverer; He is *not* our Righteousness and Life." Cp. Emmaus disciples: "we *had* hoped" (R. S. V.); *Pulpit Commentary*: "they would for a time lose their faith," "they would for a time lose confidence and hope in Him" (Matthew and Mark); Schilder: "all would stumble and fall into unbelief;" Phillips: "everyone of you will lose his faith."
2. The words "resorted" and "resort," as here used, are not only no longer in common usage, but fail to bring out the original meaning of "coming together." Besides, the R. S. V. in John 18:20 otherwise follows a better Greek text than the K. J. V.
3. So Moffatt, Goodspeed, and most modern commentators. Bauer (*Woerterbuch zum N. T.*): "*Ihr schlaft weiter!*" or "*Wollt ihr noch immer weiter schlafen?*"
4. Bauer (*Woerterbuch zum N. T.*): "*Lasst ab! Nicht weiter!*"
5. The Greek word which the K. J. V. translates "palace" (*aulē*) really means an "open space," "courtyard"; only by extension can it mean "the house to which a yard belongs." Cp. the English word "quadrangle" (Webster). Bauer defines *aulē* as *Hof, offener, umfriedeter Raum am Hause*," and assigns this meaning (*Hof*) to all the passages above, which the R. S. V. translates "courtyard." Bauer allows "palace" or "praetorium" (by extension) only in Matt. 26:3 and Mark 15:16, where it is so rendered also by the R. S. V. ("palace," or "praetorium").
6. Cp. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, under "coal."
7. The same Greek word is here rendered twice with "damsel," four times with "maid." Bauer: a girl who is a serving maid (or slave).
8. Matthew (27:2), Luke (23:1), and John (18:28) here have "led" and "led away." The term used in Mark can mean "carry away," but can also mean "to forcibly lead away"; Bauer: "*gewaltsam abfuehren.*"
9. Where the Greek has "spirit" (Matthew and John) the R. S. V. has "spirit"; but in Mark (15:37,39) and Luke (23:46) the Greek has, literally "expired," which the R. S. V. properly renders "breathed his last."

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