

DIVERSE MEASURES AND BIBLE VERSIONS

* * * WHEN IT COMES TO STANDARDS, THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE * * *

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Soli Deo Gloria!

<p>"Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike an abomination to the LORD." (Proverbs 20:10)</p>

Introduction. Proverbs 20:10 is a familiar verse, with others similar to it occurring throughout the Book of Proverbs (e.g., Prov11:1; 16:11). Its straightforward interpretation generally views the context of this verse as concerning integrity in business transactions, and rightly so. In the ancient world, dishonest merchants maintained two sets of "weights" and "measures", one set slightly underweight/undersized and another slightly overweight/oversized; they used the former when selling and the latter when buying to effectively rob from their customers. This practice, the use of "divers weights, and divers measures", the LORD considers an "abomination".

Bible Versions. Consider the application of Proverbs 20:10 in the context of our world with its multitude of Bible versions, especially in English. In 2 Corinthians 10:13, Scripture refers to itself as a "rule" and a "measure".

But we will not boast of things without our **measure**, but according to the **measure** of the **rule** which God hath distributed to us, a **measure** to reach even unto you.

In this verse, the Greek word translated "rule" is **κανών**, from which we get the English word *canon*. In English, *canon* means "an accepted principle or rule" (Meriam-Webster Dictionary), and when applied to the Bible the *canon* is that collection of writings accepted as the inspired words of God (2Tim3:16). In other words, in any particular language the *canon* is the authentic version of the Bible.

Like a "weight" or "measure", the Bible is the standard to be used by the Christian to judge every truth claim. "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa8:20). The prayer of the Lord Jesus to His Father in John 17:17 included this petition:

Sanctify them through thy truth; **thy word is truth.**

Note that Scripture, the "word" of God, is referred to by the Lord as "truth". That Scripture is true is certainly included in this assertion (Ps119:160), but to be "truth" means more than merely being true. For Jesus to assert that Scripture is "truth" implies that it is the standard against which all truth claims are to be evaluated; only that which comports with Scripture can be true. In this way, Scripture functions as a truth "measure". For this reason, Scripture repeatedly warns using the strongest of language against adding, removing, or diminishing "ought" from the words of God (Deut4:2; cf. Deut12:32; Prov30:6; Rev22:18-19), since such activities serve to create a "false balance" in the place of what should be a "just weight" (Prov11:1).

After the publication of the King James Bible in 1611, the English-speaking world used one Bible version for more than 250 years¹. But starting with the publication of the Revised Version in 1885, a veritable flood of Bible versions has been introduced into the English-speaking world. These Bible versions are different from one another, both in their choices of underlying Hebrew and Greek texts from which to translate and in translation philosophies. The result is a multitude of English Bible versions that say very different things. Relative to the use of Scripture as a standard against which to evaluate every truth claim, the Christian now has in his possession what is effectively a set of "divers measures".

Conclusion. The many English Bible versions available today are very different. Since it is the Bible against which the Christian must evaluate every truth claim, these many different Bible versions function as "divers measures". In practice, Christians who use/consult many Bible versions tend to choose the readings they like, or the ones to their advantage, much like the dishonest merchant of the ancient world. It is difficult not to conclude that the LORD must consider this an "abomination". Relative to Bible versions, there can be only one true measure, which functions as the universal standard. In English, that universal standard should be the King James Bible.

¹ Even before the King James Bible, the English Bibles produced during the Reformation were very similar to the King James Bible. Furthermore, the King James Bible endures to today as the most-read version of the Bible in English; see Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, "The Most Popular and Fastest Growing Bible Translation Isn't What You Think It Is", *Christianity Today*, March 13, 2014.