

The Translation of the Bible

Introduction:

The crowning product of the English scholarship is unquestionably the Authorized King James Version of the Bible - a Bible conceived by the work of William Tyndall, gestated in the womb of the English Reformation, perfected with the words of the great English language, and proved through its powerful witness in succeeding generations.

Nevertheless, the average Christian of today has been led to believe that the Authorized, King James Version is obsolete because of the fact that it is now well over 300 years old and contains many arctic words and phrases.

The "more informed" Christian has been led to believe that the Authorized, King James Version also contains mistakes and faulty translations because of the fact that it was translated from a few late manuscripts.

The "King James' Debate" is a burning issue today.

We accept the Authorized, King James Bible as the pure, preserved, infallible Word of God to the English speaking people. BUT WHY??

I. A Brief History of the Authorized, King James Version

The Authorized, King James' Version came about in the providence of God through a series of events in England.

A. Wycliffe's Bible

John Wycliffe (1302-1384 A.D.) translated the first complete English Bible in 1380-82. This was translated from the Latin Vulgate, but created a hunger in the hearts of Englishmen for the Word of God and sowed the seeds of the Reformation some 130 years later.

B. Tyndale's Bible

Tyndale (1494-1536 A.D.) translated the first English Bible from the original tongues. His New Testament was translated from the Greek text prepared by Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536 A.D.) in 1516-35, which later came to be known as the Received Text, or, "Textus Receptus."

C. The Reign of King Henry VIII

Henry ruled England from 1509-1547 A.D., and in 1534 broke with the Church of Rome, thus beginning the English Reformation.

D. The Reign of Queen Elizabeth I

Protestantism was established in England during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603 A.D.) in no small way through:

1. The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots

Mary Stuart (1542-87 A.D.) was a cousin of Elizabeth, heir to the English throne, and a staunch Catholic who plotted against the Queen.

2. The Defeat of the Spanish Armada

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King Philip II of Spain sent an Armada of 136 ships against England in 1588 with the purpose of restoring Catholicism. The Armada was defeated by a make-shift English fleet, and later decimated by storms.

E. The Reign of King James I

James was the son of Mary, Queen of Scots. He was proclaimed King of Scotland as an infant, and raised by the Scottish nobility as a Protestant. He ruled England from 1603-1625 A.D.

In 1604 two events took place which led to the translation of what was to be called the Authorized, King James' Version:

1. The Millenary Petition

This was a petition signed by 1,000 Puritan (Presbyterian) clergymen calling for changes within the Church of England.

2. The Hampton Court Conference

This was proclaimed by King James in response to the Millenary Petition. It was called to settle some of the differences between the Episcopalian and puritan parties within the Church of England.

A suggestion by Dr. John Reynolds, "That a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek; and this to be set out and printed, without any marginal notes, and only to be used in all churches of England, in time of divine service," caught the attention of the King.

On July 22, 1604, King James announced he had approved 54 selected men to translate a new Bible. The work of translation began in 1607.

II. The Translation of the Authorized, King James Version

The Authorized, King James Version was the fruit of a number of earlier English Bibles which were basically revisions of the work of William Tyndale.

A. The Rules of Translation

Fifteen rules of procedure were drawn up by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

B. The Method of Translation

Of the 54 men chosen for the work, only 47 are positively identified.

1. The men were divided into 6 companies — 2 at Westminster, 2 at Cambridge, 2 at Oxford. Each of the companies was assigned at particular portions of the Bible to translate.
2. Each member of the company then met to make his own translation first.
3. The members of each company then met to compare one another's work, reading the passages out loud whilst comparing written notes.
4. When each group completed a Book, it was sent to the other 5 groups for their independent assessment.
5. When the complete Bible was translated, it came before a select committee of 12 men, 2 from each company. In 1609 this group met daily in London.

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6. Finally, the entire work was assembled and “polished” by a publication committee of 2 meant before being sent to the Royal printer.

By this method, each passage in the translation was scrutinized a minimum of 14 times!

III. The Translators of the Authorized, King James Version

For the most part, the men who translated the King James Version were obscure churchmen or scholars.

Amongst the translators there were differences of opinion in areas of church polity, but the one binding conviction each shared was that they were dealing with God’s sacred Truth, and that the Scriptures were the inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Word of God.

Every translator was a scholar in his own right.

One eminent translator was Sir Lancelot Andrew, the Bishop of Winchester. He was noted for his godliness, gravity, dignity, integrity and ability. He spent 5 hours each day in prayer and devotions. he was fluent in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Chaldea, Syriac, And Arabic, and was fully conversant in 15 modern languages.

He was a strong Protestant and an outstanding preacher. He was a leader of the “High Church” faction within the Church of England.

Another translator and leading spokesman for the Puritan faction was Dr. John Reynolds. He entered Oxford University at the age of 13, graduated at age 17, and began lecturing in Greek there at age 23. He possessed an almost miraculous memory, and was called, “The Living Library.” He too was noted for his holiness of life, gravity, integrity, and skill in languages.

IV. The Textual basis of the Authorized, King James Version

The Authorized Version was much more than just a revision of the Bishop’s Bible. It was “translated out of the original tongues” (Hebrew and Greek), yet cast in the basic language of Tyndale.

The translators were given access to numerous versions and works, and to the best scholarship available.

A. The Old Testament Text

1. The Hebrew Masoretic Text

There were four printed Hebrew Bibles available, dated 1488, 1491, 1494, and 1517.

2. Previous Translations Diligently Compared:

- a) Tyndale’s Old Testament translations
- b) The Matthew’s Bible
- c) The Geneva Bible
- d) The Bishop’s Bible
- e) The Complutensian Polyglot
- f) The Antwerp Polyglot

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- g) The Targums
 - h) The Peshitta
- B. The New Testament Text
1. Received Greek Text
Third edition of Stephan's — 1550 A.D.
 2. Previous Translations Diligently Compared
 - a) Tyndale's New Testament
 - b) The Matthew's Bible
 - c) The Geneva Bible
 - d) The Bishop's Bible
 - e) The Olivetti Bible (French)
 - f) The Diodati Bible (Italian)
 - g) Luther's Bible (German)
 - h) The Waldensian Bible (Old Italic)
 - i) The Peshitta (Syriac)
 - j) The Rheims-Douai New Testament
 - k) Spanish Translations
 - l) Tremellius' Latin Version
 - m) Beta's Latin Version
 - n) A Spanish Translation

V. The Language of the Authorized, King James Version

The Authorized Version is the "purified product" of a number of other English translations that had come into existence in rapid succession during the turbulent early years of the English Reformation.

A. The use of previous English Translations

In deference to the comfort of the people, the translators of the Authorized Version retained as much of the wording and style of popular English Bibles as possible. (The criterion was that such words and style were accurate translations of the "original tongues.")

B. The Language of the Authorized Version is Superior

The Authorized Version was translated (providentially) at a time when the English language was at its zenith.

C. The use of Italics

The translators used an italicized word to indicate it was not found in the Greek or Hebrew text, but that it had been supplied by the translators to facilitate the readability of the English.

This is a demonstration of:

1. The Translators' view of Inspiration
2. The Honesty of the Translators
3. The Ability of the Translators