

WHY WE USE THE KING JAMES BIBLE

There are many different translations of the Bible circulating in the English-speaking world today. Why do we continue to use a Bible that was translated in 1611? Is it because we are trying to make the Bible a mystical book understood only by the initiated?

Is it because we are in love with words like giveth, doeth, hast, begat, thee, thou, and thine? Is it because we are too bullheadedly traditional to change? The answer to these questions is an emphatic "NO!" There are several specific reasons we have chosen the King James Bible and continue to use it.

WE USE THE KING JAMES BIBLE BECAUSE OF ITS TRANSLATIONAL ACCURACY.

The King James Bible was translated when the English-speaking preachers and theological community had reached its academic zenith. Unlike the present day, virtually every pastor in England was acquainted with the Bible languages. That generations of preachers recommended the King James Bible because they recognized its accuracy.

There had been several attempts by the crown and Church of England to produce a universally acceptable English Bible before the King James Bible was published but they had all failed. There have been several attempts since it was published. They have all failed. The King James Bible found universal acceptance because of an informed national consensus.

WE USE THE KING JAMES BIBLE BECAUSE OF ITS TRANSLATIONAL THESIS.

The King James Bible is a direct translation of the Hebrew and Greek text.

Some of the difficult to read passages of the King James Bible are the direct result of this attempt to be literal and accurate. Most modern translations use "dynamic equivalence" as their guiding principle. Rather than a literal translation, they try to find an English idiom that approximates the Hebrew or Greek reading's force and intent. Their work is a paraphrase rather than a translation. Dynamic equivalence exchanges the words of men for the Word of God.

WE USE THE KING JAMES BIBLE BECAUSE OF ITS TEXTUAL INTEGRITY.

By textual integrity we mean the English text is clearly defined. It is not cluttered with footnotes offering alternate readings. Translation can be considered either a science or an art form.

When viewed as a science, the translator attempts to reproduce the original text in a second language with objective technical accuracy. The scientific translator must be convinced that the text he is using is correct. He must also be convinced that his translation is literally and technically correct. He has no place for alternate readings in either the original text or the translation. He makes decisions. The artistic translator does not place these restraints on his work. He exercises the luxury of second guessing his own conclusions. He is more interested in reproducing the meaning of the text as he understands it than in reproducing the verbal equivalent of the text. When a person translates meanings rather than words, he is paraphrasing rather than translating. The translators of the King James Bible were scientific in their approach. They had the academic background, courage, and conviction

to decide between variant readings and potential translations. They worked from a settled Greek text. They chose not to include original language variants. Translational alternatives are very rare. These men were convinced that they had the Word of God and they were confident that they had accurately rendered it into English. No English translation since the King James Bible has exhibited this confidence.

WE USE THE KING JAMES BIBLE BECAUSE OF ITS SOURCE TEXTS.

The King James Bible was the result of the traditional Greek and Hebrew texts.

The manuscript evidence for the Bible text is superior to the manuscript evidence for any other ancient book. There is very little question about the Old Testament text. The printed Hebrew text used by the King James translators was based on manuscripts no older than the 11th century AD. Recent, more ancient finds, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls (100 AD.), have confirmed its accuracy. Jewish scribes had perfected a series of traditions and procedures that guaranteed the accurate transmission of the text.

The New Testament tradition is different. The original books were not kept in a single place. They were sent to various scribes of Europe and Asia. They were circulated separately for several years. They were the immediate objects of persecution and perversion. During the first 100 years after the writing of the New Testament it was subjected to more corrupting influences than in the 1900 years since.

We have scraps of papyrus manuscripts that were written within 50 years of the writing of the original autographs of the New Testament.

We have a few relatively complete parchment manuscripts, which date from the 4th century AD. forward to the 10th century AD.

We have thousands of manuscripts that were written between 1000 AD. and the first printed versions of the Greek New Testament in the early 16th century.

We have very old copies of the writings of the church fathers and also of the lectionaries used in the early churches.

We have early translations into the various languages of the ancient world. Because these various sources were handwritten, scribal errors crept into each text. There are no two that are 100% in agreement, but considered together they present a clear text.

By comparing manuscript to manuscript it is possible to weed out the scribal errors and to construct the New Testament as it was given by God and used by the churches.

This universally used text was first printed in 1516 by a man named Erasmus. He printed several editions of the New Testament.

His third edition won acceptance by scholars. In 1550 Robert Stephens printed Erasmus's New Testament with a few changes. He included some marginal notes showing where some of the manuscripts disagreed with the traditional text. This text of Stephens became the standard,

accepted, printed text of the scholars and translators. In a subsequent edition Stephens introduced chapter and verse divisions. In 1598 Beza reprinted Stephens Greek New Testament with a few changes. Beza's text became the basis of the King James Bible. In the years after the translation of the King James Bible, scholars produced a synthetic Greek New Testament. This text differs from the traditional text in thousands of places. The changes are based on the subjective conjectures at the editors. The King James Bible is the last major English Bible translated from the traditional text. It was the last English Bible done by men who believed they were handling the very Words of God.

WE USE THE KING JAMES BIBLE BECAUSE IT CAN BE UNDERSTOOD.

Although it is not the colloquial language of the day, the language of the King James Bible is still contemporary and understandable. It is still the language of the courts of America. Once a reader is acquainted with the meanings of thee, thy, and thou: once the reader adjusts to the Elizabethan endings: the King James Bible is no more difficult to understand than a 9th grade literature book.

The King James Bible is no more difficult to read and understand than Shakespeare's works. Shakespeare is still enjoyed and appreciated as our greatest non-biblical English literature. When it becomes necessary to retranslate Shakespeare, it will be necessary to retranslate the King James Bible. But then, we will no longer be speaking English.

The King James Bible was produced at the high point of development of the English language. In this brief band of history true modern English came into existence. Soon after its translation English ships carried colonists to the four corners of the earth. Although they continued to speak English, the unity of the language was broken. Thus the Elizabethan Age was the first, last, and only time that all English-speaking peoples spoke the same language with the same grammar and vocabulary.

WE USE THE KING JAMES BIBLE BECAUSE IT IS SUPERIOR TO ALL OTHER ENGLISH LANGUAGE BIBLES.

In the end we feel that we dare not trade an accurate, possibly difficult translation of the Word of God for an easier to read, less accurate, paraphrase of the Word of God. Jesus said, "For I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:28). David had said, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven: (Psalms 119:89). Peter told us, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (I Peter 1:25). John warned us, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." (Revelation 22:18-19). Until another literally accurate translation of the traditional texts of the Old and New Testament gains the affection and confidence of God's people, we will continue to use the King James Bible as our text. We have the confidence that it is the plenary, verbally inspired Bible in the English language. It is the text by which all other English versions are judged.

WE USE THE KING JAMES BIBLE BECAUSE IT HAS STOOD THE TEST OF TIME.

Despite hundreds of newer "easier to read," "easier to understand," "more accurate" English translations of the Bible it stands. In my lifetime I have seen the RSV, NRSV, TEV, NTEV, NEB, RNEB, NAS, LB, WT, Reader's Digest, NIV, and a few dozen more Bibles come and go. In the same period the churches that have adopted the "Bible of the Month" decline in their doctrine, holiness, and zeal for Christ. The strength of a church is a direct function of its confidence that it has the Word of God. All too often the churches that have left the King James Bible have lost that absolute confidence.

WE USE THE KING JAMES BIBLE BECAUSE OF ITS LITERARY QUALITY.

The King James Bible was translated when English had reached its highest development as a language. Elizabethan English is the standard against which the various ethnic English dialects are measured. No English Bible has captured the magnificence of the English language like the King James Bible. No other English Bible has gained and sustained the affection and confidence of the entire English-speaking world. It combined technical accuracy with smooth English prose so uniquely that it is still studied in secular institutions as classic English literature. No other Bible version is as easily memorized. Shortly after the King James Bible was translated, the Pilgrims landed in North America. With the advent of British colonialism English was no longer a unified language. By the time of the English Revised Version (1881) it became necessary to publish an Americanized Version (ASV 1901) of the translation because of the divergence of the American dialect.

WHY DO WE USE THE KING JAMES BIBLE?

While we understand that wherever the proper Greek and Hebrew texts of Scripture are accurately translated into English we have the words of God in English we know of no other English translation, which has been so carefully and accurately translated.

We know of no other English translation, which has demonstrated its power generation after generation. We use the King James Bible because when we do we have the confidence that we have the very Word and Words of God, accurate and complete. We use the King James Bible because it has worked for centuries and continues to work. It creates faith in God and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We see no reason to change.

Some notes from the book: In The Beginning By Allister Mcraff

INTRODUCTION:

The two greatest influences on the shaping of the English language are the works of William Shakespeare and the English translation of the Bible that appeared in 1611....

Literary scholars have heaped praise upon it. Nineteenth-century writers and literary critics acclaimed it as the "noblest monument of English prose." In a series of lectures at Cambridge University during the First World War, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch declared that the King James Bible was "the very greatest" literary achievement in the English language.

The only possible challenger for this title came from the complete works of Shakespeare. (P.1)

The King James Bible was a landmark in the history of the English language, and an inspiration to poets, dramatists, artists, and politicians. The influence of this work has been incalculable. (P.1)

The King James translators seem to have taken the view—which corresponds with the consensus of the day—that an accurate translation is, by and large, a literal and formal translation. “No other book has so penetrated and permeated the hearts and speech of the English race as has the Bible. What Homer was to the Greeks, and the Koran to the Arabs, that—or something not unlike it—the Bible has become to the English.”

The King James Bible, along with the works of William Shakespeare, is regularly singled out as one of the most foundational influences on the development of the modern English language. It is no accident that both date from the late English Renaissance, when English was coming into its own as a language. (P.253)

There was virtually universal agreement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that the King James Bible had made a massive contribution to the development of the English language in general, and English prose in particular. The “noblest monument of English prose” was recognized as being of decisive importance in the molding of English. (P.254)

FACTORS IN THE SHAPING OF MODERN ENGLISH

1. The King James Bible established norms in written and spoken English.

The northern and other colloquial dialects did not significantly impact the King James Bible is written in a standard literary language, free from the confusing variations of local dialects. (P.258)

2. The King James Bible was published within a window, which allowed it to exercise a substantial and decisive influence over the shaping of the English language. (P.258)

3. One of the most fundamental contributing factors to this willingness to accept and use verbal immigrants at this formative period was the influence of the King James Bible . . .

4. The many Hebraic phrases and idioms have become so common in normal English use that most modern English speakers are unaware of their biblical origins.

5. They have become assimilated into English, and made the way for other words and idioms to migrate into English making most welcoming to words whose origins lie elsewhere. (P.259)

About 93 percent of the words used in the King James Bible (including repetitions of the same word) are native English, rather than Latinisms or other linguistic imports.

English was no longer dependent on ‘classical language’ for future development. (P.262)

William Rosenau concluded that: “The [King James Bible] has been—it can be said without any fear of being charged with exaggeration—the most powerful factor in the history of English literature. Though the constructions encountered in the [King James Bible] are oftentimes so harsh that they seem almost barbarous, we should certainly have been the poorer without it.”

Rosenau argued that the King James Bible possessed a penetrative force that could best be demonstrated by observing how its turns of phrase came to be absorbed, often unconsciously, within everyday English. (P.263)