

This is study section 13 from the course, Bibliology

The King James Controversy

There are some believers today that adamantly believe that the King James Version of the Bible is the only reliable text. They even believe that God preserved the very words of the original autographs through the King James Bible. They claim that all other translations or versions have been perverted by Satan and will mislead the readers. The crux of their argument goes back to the family of texts or manuscripts. They claim that God preserved His words through the dark ages and Erasmus found them in writing the Textus Receptus.

These people claim that the KJV Bible is the ONLY Bible that exists today that is faithful to the original texts. These views are certainly not based on knowledge about the family of texts, nor the limitations Erasmus had at the time he was writing his Greek New Testament. They also demonstrate ignorance about translating the Bible into other languages. Today we want to look at how the KJV Bible came on the scene and some true facts about the version these “believers” claim is the only Bible.

In 1603, James was on his way to the London to receive the crown, when Dr. John Reynolds, a puritan clergy, and president of Corpus Christi College, presented him with a list of grievances, and suggested the creation of a new English translation of the Bible. At the Hampton Court Conference on January 14-16, King James ordered a new translation be written. The 54 translators were to come from three colleges, Oxford, Cambridge, and Westminster. The translating committee was to be composed of six groups of nine men, two groups from each of the colleges, one group to work on the OT and one on the NT (nine in each group).

Who was King James?

King James was crowned as King James IV of Scotland when he was 13 months old. He had an excellent education in the humanities and theology but no education in morals and “he became the most learned hard drinker in Europe”. Scotland was ruled by a series of four regents until James became actual King at the age of 17.

In Scotland he ruled over the church with terror, executing any minister who he saw as a threat or who did not submit to his sovereign authority over both church and state. Some of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland pastors believed that James was “the messenger of Satan”.

According to Free Mason records he was inducted as a Free Mason at the Lodge of Scoon, at Perth, Scotland on 15 April 1604. On the wall of the lodge is a mural depicting James kneeling at their altar during his initiation. (The Mason connection is further strengthened by the incorporation of several Mason symbols in the illustrations that were included in the earlier printings of the KJV.)

In 1603 at the age of 37 James became James I, King of England and Scotland. At this point of his life, Durant describes him as: “Profane in his language, coarse in his amusements... fondling handsome young men... He drank to excess and allowed some court festivities to end a general and bisexual intoxication.” (Durant, Will and Ariel. *The Age of Reason Begins. The Story of Civilization. Vol 7.* Simon and Shuster. New York. 1961. p 131.)

His various homosexual relationships are well documented and summed up in the infamous saying of the people that “King Elizabeth had been succeeded by Queen James”. (MacGregor, Geddes. *Scotland: An Intimate Portrait*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1990. p29.) In a statement to the Parliament of 1609, he formulated his claims to divine imperatives stating that “kings... sit upon God’s throne... even by God Himself are called gods... Kings are justly called gods.”



The question obviously is, what this has to do with the translation, since James did not do the translation but only commissioned it. The fact is that not only did this evil man commission the translation, but he set the ground rules for the translators and then personally selected the 47 (originally 54) men who would do the translation.

This is what the King James Only (hereafter KJO) people say about the selection process: “The... translators of the King James Version were providentially chosen by God... the Almighty chose the KJV translators for their sacred task”. Combining James’s claims that he was a god and the KJO claim that God Himself chose the translators are we then to conclude that God is in favor of a drunken homosexual? That is blasphemous but it is the logical conclusion of and their claims. Even if this deduction cannot be made, we CANNOT claim, as the KJO people do, that this man whom pious Christians called the “messenger of Satan” was a prophet of God, divinely appointed to this great work!

Furthermore, it is important to note that this same man was the one who “authorized” the translation as the only valid Bible to be used in churches. Since when does a government have the power to tell the church which translation it is to use? The very people who bestow all but sainthood on James would react violently if a modern government dictated to the church in such a way, yet these same people revel in the word “authorized”!

How King James “organized” the translation team.

The translators were all Anglicans, members of the Church of English, whose scholarship certainly was impressive. The translators were given 15 rules that they had to abide by: among them are:

1. The ordinary Bible read in church, commonly called the Bishop’ Bible, had to be followed and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit.
2. The old ecclesiastical words had to be kept, ex., The word *church* could not be translated as “congregation.”
3. No marginal notes at all to be affixed, but only for explanation of Hebrew or Greek words, which cannot without some circumlocution be so briefly and fitly expressed in the text.
4. Translations to be used when they agree better with the text than the Bishop’s Bible – Tyndale’s, Matthew’s, Coverdale’s, Whitchurch’s, Geneva.

The translators, therefore, relied very heavily upon previous translations by rule. They also used in total Erasmus's Greek translation as their basis for the content of the original Greek. They simply did not have older and more reliable manuscripts at their disposal.

A number of the translators died between 1604 and 1611, during the translation process itself.



The *authorized version* (though no act of parliament ever authorized its creation) was printed by Robert Barker, royal printer, who had the sole rights to print the KJV for 100 years. It was the **ONLY** version *authorized* by King James to be read in the churches.

It was entitled “The Holy Bible, Conteyning the Old Testament and the New: Newly translated out of the original tongues, with the former translations diligently compared and revised, by His majesties special commandment. Appointed to the read in Churches. Imprinted at London by

Robert Barker. Printer to the Kings most excellent Majestie. Anno dom. 1611, cum Privilegio.” It was 16 x 10 ½ inches.

As it turned out, 4% was copied from Wycliffe, 18% from Tyndale, 13% from Cloverdale, 19% from the Geneva Bible, 4% from Bishops’ Bible, and 3% from all other preceding versions.

39% is unique to the KJV. 90% of the N.T. is an exact copy of Tyndale’s version of 1525.

It was reprinted in 1613 to fix 300 misspellings and errors. 30,000 marginal notes were added in versions appearing in the 1760’s. It also must be noted that the 1760 revision made more than 24,000 changes to the 1611 version. Today, the KJV Bible is the 1760 revision of the original 1611 version.

Soon the KJV crowded out all preceding translations except for students interested in specific variations. For the first time, English was reading one Bible at home and hearing the same Bible read in church. God has richly blessed the translation and used to enlighten millions of souls of their need for a savior.

Today, there is a debate about what translation is best. Is the KJV Bible the only Bible God has preserved?

Some believers today claim that the KJV is the only accurate Bible to study and read, and that all other translations are corrupt. They base their position mainly on the fact that the KJV translators relied on the original work of Erasmus who relied on the Byzantine family of manuscripts. This family of manuscripts came from the 11th or 12th centuries. Since the days of Erasmus, we have discovered thousands more whole or partial manuscripts dating back even to the 2nd century. By comparing the earlier manuscripts to the later ones, we can see how the flourishes and additions of scribes can alter or add to the texts, therefore, most modern translators choose to use the “Alexandrian manuscripts” and

other older manuscripts as they believe they are closer to the originals than the Byzantine altered texts. These older manuscripts shed a lot of light on what was originally written in the original manuscripts.

However, the KJV Only advocates site other reasons for their position:

1. The modern translations attack the deity of Christ by removing references to His lordship.

Response: The Byzantine texts have the additional “Lord” and “Christ” added to the name of Jesus in many places where the older, more reliable texts do not. These are most surely the results of ambitious scribes, seeking to show reverence to the Savior or simply making mistakes in copying manuscripts. There are many examples where the deity of Christ is made clearer in modern translations than in the KJV. (Jude 4, Phil. 2-6-7, Acts 16:7, I Peter 3:14-15, John 14:14)

2. Heretics, occultists and homosexuals were on the translation committees of modern versions.

Response: This is an all-out attack on the character of faithful believers who have sought to use their linguistic skills in offering an accurate translation of the Scriptures. The biblical linguist B.F. Westcott is consistently attacked, due to negligence in confusing him with the spiritualist W.W. Westcott. If there is anyone whose salvation should be questioned due to their “fruit,” it would be some of the extremist KJV Only advocates, whose polemic, vicious rhetoric is not becoming of a believer in Christ. There is not one member of the translation committees of most trusted modern translations whose academic and linguistic skills could be challenged or whose lives could be characterized by these extreme labels.

3. The modern translations delete verses from the Bible.

Response: Based on the older and more reliable manuscripts, the modern translations have simply sought to reflect what was contained in the original manuscripts. It is just as serious to add to Scripture, as it is to take away from Scripture. The starting point for KJV Only advocates is that the KJV is the standard to which all other translations must bow, which is also the position they seek to prove. Thus, they employ circular reasoning that will not allow them to see any other position as possibly correct.

4. The 1611 Authorized Version is the preserved Word of God in English.

Response: No one today reads from the 1611 version, which also included the Apocrypha. The 1769 revision is the most common version of the King James translation, and this one includes thousands of insignificant differences compared to the original.

5. The modern translations promote a “works-salvation.”

Response: Virtually all of today’s cults (excepting the Jehovah’s Witnesses) prefer the King James version over the rest, including the Mormons, who also preach a “works-salvation.” Of course, this does not negate the worth of the King James version, but we could use this argument if we were to employ the same tactics of the KJV Only crowd. Compare Revelation 22:14: Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city. (KJV) Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. (ESV) If we were to use the KJV Only logic, we could assume on the basis of this verse that the King James translators were conspiring to take us back to the chains of Catholicism, while the ESV translators are translating faithfully God’s Word. Of course, this would be a ridiculous assumption, but it is the kind of reasoning that KJV Only advocates employ. Even John R. Rice, the founder of the (now KJV-Only) Sword of the Lord admitted in Our God-Breathed Book – The Bible that the KJV renders Revelation 22:14 incorrectly and that the ASV is more accurate here.

6. The newer versions include footnotes which offer different renderings of certain words or verses. These footnotes confuse the reader and undermine the doctrine of inspiration.

Response: The 1611 King James Version also included thousands of footnotes which offered different readings for different verses. We should be grateful for today's translators, who in the spirit of the King James tradition, have been intellectually honest when rendering exceptionally difficult verses about the limits to their knowledge.

Those individuals to hold to the position that the KJV Bible is the only accurate copy of God's Word have a real problem when it comes to Bible translation into other languages. The translators use the best tools possible to translate original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts into the most accurate word or phrases of a foreign language, and that language is not Elizabethan English. Are not any of the thousands of translations into languages other than English accurate? Are they not God's Word to these people?

In 1901 the American Standard Version of the Bible was published which used the Alexandrian texts. The translation never really became popular, even though its scholarship is unparalleled. The chapter and verse layout are somewhat confusing. The New American Standard Bible (NASB) was published in 1960 to reformat the original layout and modernize many of the words. 54 Greek and Hebrew scholars required nearly 11 years to complete the translation. Its translators chose to utilize a formal equivalence approach as much as possible.

The English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible was released in 2001, with minor revisions being released in 2007, 2011, and 2016. As an "essentially literal" translation, the ESV most closely aligns with a formal equivalent translation philosophy in that is "seeks as far as possible to capture the precise wording of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer."

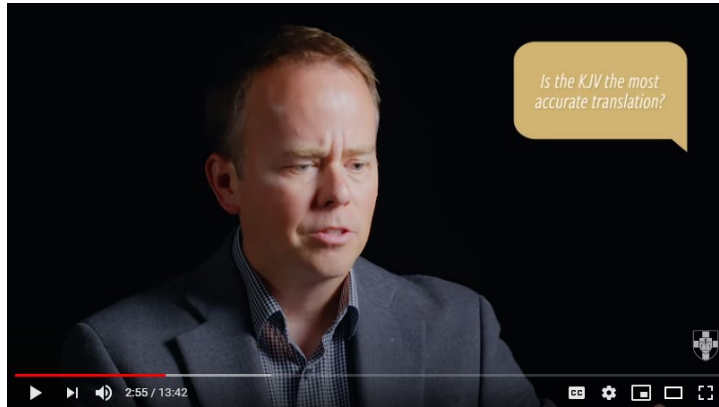
Other recent and popular translations are the New International Version. Again, the translators of this version selected the Alexandrian manuscripts for original sources. The NIV translators utilized more dynamic equivalent phrases in their translation.

There is NO ONE translation that is inerrant (without error). Only the original manuscripts were without error. You have to select the translation that most closely reflects the words of God which were penned in the original manuscripts. When in doubt, consult parallel translations and do word studies to determine which is most accurate to the "original Greek and Hebrew" manuscripts. You have to be like the Bereans who "*received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.*" Acts 17: 11

CHECK THIS OUT!



Is the King James Version of the Bible the most accurate translation?



CHECK THIS OUT!



For further study, check out this book by James R. White

[https://www.amazon.com/King-James-Only-Controversy-](https://www.amazon.com/King-James-Only-Controversy-Translations/dp/0764206052/ref=sr_1_1?crd=12NM467SB5L53&dchild=1&keywords=the+king+james+only+controversy+by+james+white&qid=1599765377&sprefix=The+King+James+%2Caps%2C175&sr=8-1)

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This book by D.A. Carson is also available in Kindle Version:

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