

Appendix B: The King James Version

Origins

In 1603, King James VI of Scotland ascended the English throne as King James I. From then until his death in 1625, he would reign simultaneously over both kingdoms, although they would not unite to form a single country for nearly a century. This period of English history is known as Jacobean, after the Latin form of the name James.

In January 1604, King James met with English religious leaders at Hampton Court, ostensibly to address some issues being raised by his Puritan subjects. On the whole, the King did not side with the Puritans, but when one of the Puritan leaders, John Rainolds, suggested a new English translation of the Bible, the King seized on the idea and almost immediately set about bringing it to fruition. The result was first published in 1611 and is known today as the King James Version (KJV) or Authorized Version (AV). The former name derives from its patron, and the latter from the assumption that it was, at some point, officially authorized to be used in Anglican worship services, although no record of that authorization survives.

At the time the KJV was published, there were a number of English Bibles already in general use, with the most popular being the Geneva Bible of 1557–1560 and the Bishops' Bible of 1568. (King James preferred the latter himself, but Biblical quotations in Shakespeare are from the Geneva Bible.) The Geneva Bible continued in popularity long after the King James Version was published, the last edition being printed in 1644. From then until the late nineteenth century, there was only one English Bible in common use, and only one used by Protestants (Catholics continued to use the Rheims-Douai Bible, 1578–1610). It was the mid-twentieth century before a non-KJV English Bible was able to achieve any kind of popular success, and the late twentieth century before the KJV ceased to be dominant in English-speaking Protestantism. Even now, the KJV is probably the single most sold English Bible, although it no longer accounts for the majority of English Bibles sold.

In the main, the translation's continued success is a result of its unsurpassed literary brilliance. Translated in the same era that produced Shakespeare, it deservedly counts among the great highlights of English literature.

Because the King James Bible was the Bible of the American frontier throughout the ministry of Joseph Smith, and because its language had acquired an almost sacred character of its own in the mind of the men and women from whom the bulk of the early Church membership was derived, modern scripture inevitably follows its literary lead. Not only does the Book of Mormon use the idiom of the King James Version, there are countless echoes of this translation throughout modern Scripture, and the King James Version provides modern Scripture and the Church in general with most of its theological and ecclesiastical vocabulary. The Joseph Smith Translation, moreover, is a revision of the King James Version and cannot be understood without reference to the original. For these and other reasons, the King James Version remains the official English-language Bible of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Translation and Publication

Fifty-four "learned men" were selected to form the main body of the translators. It is known that some other men had a hand in the translation process, but a full list of those

involved is not available. The translators were divided into six teams and each assigned a portion of the Bible on which to work. Fifteen rules were used as the basis of the translation work:

1. The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the Bishops Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the Truth of the original will permit.
2. The names of the Prophets, and the Holy Writers, with the other Names of the Text, to be retained, as nigh as may be, accordingly as they were vulgarly used.
3. The Old Ecclesiastical Words to be kept, viz. the Word Church not to be translated Congregation &c.
4. When a Word hath divers Significations, that to be kept which hath been most commonly used by the most of the Ancient Fathers, being agreeable to the Propriety of the Place, and the Analogy of the Faith.
5. The Division of the Chapters to be altered, either not at all, or as little as may be, if Necessity so require.
6. No Marginal Notes at all to be affixed, but only for the explanation of the Hebrew or Greek Words, which cannot without some circumlocution, so briefly and fitly be expressed in the Text.
7. Such Quotations of Places to be marginally set down as shall serve for the fit Reference of one Scripture to another.
8. Every particular Man of each Company, to take the same Chapter or Chapters, and having translated or amended them severally by himself, where he thinketh good, all to meet together, confer what they have done, and agree for their Parts what shall stand.
9. As any one Company hath dispatched any one Book in this Manner they shall send it to the rest, to be considered of seriously and judiciously, for His Majesty is very careful in this Point.
10. If any Company, upon the Review of the Book so sent, doubt or differ upon any Place, to send them Word thereof; note the Place, and withal send the Reasons, to which if they consent not, the Difference to be compounded at the general Meeting, which is to be of the chief Persons of each Company, at the end of the Work.
11. When any Place of special Obscurity is doubted of, Letters to be directed by Authority, to send to any Learned Man in the Land, for his Judgement of such a Place.
12. Letters to be sent from every Bishop to the rest of his Clergy, admonishing them of this Translation in hand; and to move and charge as many skilful in the Tongues; and having taken pains in that kind, to send his particular Observations to the Company, either at Westminster, Cambridge, or Oxford.
13. The Directors in each Company, to be the Deans of Westminster, and Chester for that Place; and the King's Professors in the Hebrew or Greek in either University.
14. These translations to be used when they agree better with the Text than the Bishops Bible: Tyndale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Whitchurch's, Geneva.
15. Besides the said Directors before mentioned, three or four of the most Ancient and Grave Divines, in either of the Universities, not employed in Translating, to be assigned by the vice-Chancellor, upon Conference with the rest of the Heads, to be Overseers of the Translations as well Hebrew as Greek, for the better observation of the 4th Rule above specified.

As the first rule indicates, the King James Version is not a fresh translation, but a revision made of the Bishop's Bible, using the Greek and Hebrew (and other translations) as guides. Note the list of English translations to be consulted in the fourteenth rule. In point of fact, all the translations mentioned (and the Bishop's Bible itself) are derived from William Tyndale's translation (NT 1526). Most of the wording of the King James Bible, and of the New Testament in particular, is due to Tyndale.

The first edition of the King James Version was published in 1611. For the next century and a half, new editions frequently incorporated alterations and corrections. (One typographical error from the 1611 edition has proven so popular that no editor has had the heart to remove it: "strain at a gnat" in Matt. 23:24 should be "strain out a gnat.") The last of these corrected editions was published in 1769 by Benjamin Blayney. The 1769 edition is the model for later printings, including the one issued by the LDS Church in 1979.

Although there are literally thousands of changes in the King James Version from 1611 to 1769, the overwhelming majority of them are matters of spelling and punctuation. The 1769 King James Version is more like the 1611 one than the 1981 Book of Mormon is like the 1830 edition.

Mechanics

The King James Version was originally printed using a blackletter typeface for the main body of text and a Roman typeface used for contrast. Later editions use roman type and italic type respectively instead, as blackletter is rather hard to read.

The purpose for the contrasting type is not emphasis but to indicate that a word is not explicitly present in the original text, but is required by English to round out the sense. Thus, in Luke 1:5, one finds, "and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elisabeth." The Greek original here is καὶ γυναῖκὴ αὐτῷ ἐκ τῶν θυγατέρων Ἀαρῶν καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῆς Ἐλισάβετ *kai gunē autō ek tōn thugaterōn Aarōn kai to onoma autēs Elisabet*, literally, "and a wife to him out of Aaron's daughters and the name hers Elisabeth." Greek does not require explicit use of forms of *to be* as English does, so the two instances of *was* had to be supplied by the translators.

The text is divided into chapters and verses, according to the predominant system still in use. In most editions, verses are printed on their own lines and indented, the way paragraphs are in most running prose. A pilcrow or paragraph sign (¶) is used to mark paragraph breaks. For some unknown reason, the paragraph breaks cease after Acts 20:36.

Small caps are used at the beginning of chapters in many editions. They are also used in the Old Testament when the Name of God appears. The Name of God is written in Hebrew letters יהוה, which is usually transliterated as YHWH or YHVH today. An older transliteration would be JHVH. At some point, the Jews ceased actually pronouncing God's name when reading the Scriptures; they would substitute the word Adonai (my Lord) instead. The Old Testament was originally written without vowel marks, which are not really needed for fluent speakers and readers of Hebrew. As time progressed, however, and the Jews used Hebrew less and less except in worship, they decided to add vowels to help with pronunciation. When they added vowels to the Divine Name, they used, not its proper vowels (since one was never supposed to pronounce it anyway), but those for Adonai, instead, with a slight change in the

initial vowel to allow for spelling conventions. Using an anglicized transliteration, the result is Jehovah. The actual pronunciation of the Name is unknown, but it certainly is not “Jehovah” as pronounced by English speakers. Most scholars feel that the original pronunciation was something like Yahweh, but that is at best conjecture.

Small caps are used in three different ways in the King James Version Old Testament to mark the presence of the Divine Name. “LORD” by itself means that YHWH is found in the Hebrew. “LORD God” means that YHWH *elohim* (YHWH God) is found in the Hebrew, and “Lord GOD” means that *adonai* YHWH (the Lord YHWH) is found. On occasion, the King James Version also uses small caps in the New Testament when an Old Testament verse containing the Name is quoted.

Punctuation in general in the KJV appears to be designed more as a guide to those who read the Bible aloud, providing clues for where to place pauses and how long to make them, than to aide those who study it silently and need grammatical guides.

The 1611 edition contained numerous marginal notes indicating cross-references, alternate translations, and even alternate readings of the original. By F.H.A. Scrivener’s count, there are 6637 marginal notes in the 1611 ot of the KJV, and 767 in the NT. Of the latter, 37 give alternate readings, 112 give a more literal translation of the Greek than was used in the text, 582 are alternate translations, and 35 are explanatory notes.

The notes expanded over time, but more modern marginal notes are generally substituted today. The original chapter and page headers are usually omitted as well.

Various other helps are found in different editions. Some use various diacritic marks to indicate pronunciation of names, some use red type to indicate the actual words of Jesus, and so on. Until recently, most editions of the KJV included Bishop William Lloyd’s dates derived from Archbishop James Ussher’s *Annales V. et N. Testamenti* (1650–1654).

The LDS edition includes cross-references to all the Standard Works of the Church, custom chapter headings, a brief Bible Dictionary, extracts from the Joseph Smith Translation, a gazetteer and maps, and the Topical Guide.

Properly speaking, the King James Version includes both the Old and New Testaments, and the Apocrypha as well. The Apocrypha is a set of just over a dozen books or fragments of books used in early Christian Bibles but missing from the Hebrew Old Testament. D&C 91 is a revelation to Joseph Smith on the subject of how Latter-day Saints should treat the Apocrypha. The King James Version Apocrypha is now rarely if ever printed with Bibles and is rather hard to find, as most Christians who use the Apocrypha or are interested in it read other translations.

The 1611 edition also includes an offensively sycophantic dedicatory epistle to King James and a long, pedantic introduction, The Translators to the Reader. Strangely, the former continues to be printed with most King James Version Bibles although it really adds nothing to the work, and the latter is omitted although it is (despite its obscurity) interesting and valuable. We have included it in Appendix D.

References

Scrivener, F.H.A. (1910). *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611): Its Subsequent Reprints and Modern Alternatives*. Cambridge: University Press. This is an exhaustive examination and enumeration of the changes made to the KJV between 1611 and 1769.

The Holy Bible: 1611 Edition. (n.d.) Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. This is a modern reprint of a 19th century republication of the 1611 KJV. The only difference between this volume and the 1611 publication is the use of Roman type instead of blackletter.