

THE KING JAMES BIBLE (1611–2011)

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THE KING JAMES BIBLE (1611–2011)



PREHISTORY AND AFTERLIFE

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“KÁROLI’S (KING) JAMES BIBLE (CONFERENCE)”



A PREFACE TO THE PAPERS

In September 2011, the Institute of English Studies, the Center for Hermeneutical Research at Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, together with the Hungarian Bible Society, hosted the international conference *The King James Bible (1611–2011) – Prehistory and Afterlife*. The four hundredth anniversary of the King James Bible (KJB), a major influence in shaping the literature and culture of the English-speaking world, was indeed an extraordinary public event in 2011. Queen Elizabeth II praised its language in an address to the nation; Prince William chose its text for his wedding liturgy; rare book collections of the largest libraries proudly exhibited their unique and precious copies; and scholarly conferences were organized throughout the United Kingdom, the United States, and several other countries. Linguists have demonstrated how the proverbial nature of the KJB has filtered into the English language. Here are some well-known examples: *east of Eden* (Gen. 4:16); *how the mighty are fallen* (2 Sam. 1:19); *to everything there is a season* (Eccl. 3:1); *Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven* (Matt. 6:20); *turned the world upside down* (Acts 17:56); *A thorn in the flesh* (2 Cor. 12:7). These expressions all first appeared in the KJB. There are also several expressions that had already been used in the five earlier translations,¹ but it was due to the widespread popularity of the KJB that they found their way into the natural speech of everyday English people: *apple of his eye* (Deut. 32:10); *salt of the earth* (Matt. 5:13); *mote...in thine own eye* (Mat. 7:3); *in the twinkling of an eye* (1 Cor. 15:52) and so on.²

While it is obvious that the KJB has been respected both as the inspired word of God in English and as a cultural icon of the English speaking world, why then, we may ask, is an international conference devoted to this topic in Hungary, linguistically and culturally so remote from the English-speaking world?

The answer is twofold. First, our university, founded after the collapse of communism in 1992, was named after the Calvinist pastor Gáspár Károli (ca.

¹ Wycliffe (1382–4); Tyndale (1526, and 1530–1); 1534 Geneva (1560); Bishops (1568); Douai-Rheims (1582 and 1609–10).

² See David Crystal: *Begat. The King James Bible and the English Language*. Oxford: OUP, 2010, 263–300.

1529–1591), whose name is associated with the publication of the first complete Bible in Hungarian (1590). The Károli Bible (KB) was printed in the small village of Vizsoly in the Eastern part of the country and, is therefore sometimes also called the “Vizsolyi Bible.” With some exaggeration, we may say that the KB has played a similarly iconic role for Hungarians as the KJB has for the British. Although the KB was the linguistic medium of a minority culture, it has also played a tremendous role in the making of Hungarian identity through the language and the literature it inspired. Several of the greatest Hungarian poets from the 17th century up to the present day (Dániel Berzsenyi, Sándor Petőfi, János Arany, Imre Madách, Endre Ady) were Protestants (mainly Calvinists, but some of them Lutherans) and thus their poetic language frequently carries the cadences and imagery of the KB, just as the poetry of John Milton, John Bunyan, William Blake, S. T. Coleridge, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oscar Wilde, R. S. Thomas is deeply immersed in the text of the KJB. Another parallel between the two Bibles is the movements of emerging and re-emerging conservative support for “the KJB only” , or “Authorised Version”, a movement ironically called “AVolatry”, just as there are calls for the exclusive use of the KB against any new translations - a phenomenon that may be likewise called “KBolatry”

The other reason for the conference is related to the first. “English Studies” have established themselves in the curriculum of Hungarian universities for over a hundred years, in the early 20th century. The first English Departments began to flourish between the World Wars, but with the advent of communism, English Studies began to be considered as suspicious because of their allegedly implicit imperialistic ideology. Since the 1960s, they were smuggled back into the curriculum to the extent of becoming perhaps the most popular subject within the Faculties of Humanities by the time of the radical political changes in 1989. While Marxist ideology dominated the official academic discourse in the humanities, including English Studies, courageous and cunning professors and lecturers tacitly challenged the foundations of the old system by introducing the insights of text-oriented New Criticism, and structuralism; ideology-free approaches to teaching or writing about English and American. These scholars managed to read and interpret even premodern literature in terms of modernity, or, of the absurd. Shakespeare, among others, was hailed as “our contemporary” after the thought-provoking book of Jan Kott. Within this agenda, one could easily see his or her own mirror in a Shakespeare play, or in a tale of Geoffrey Chaucer.

However, the idea that “Shakespeare might be our contemporary, but we are not *his* contemporaries,” a witty remark of a contemporary scholar, has promoted the new recognition that the alterity, or difference, of premodern

culture – including medieval and Renaissance literature – should be acknowledged. This perception is definitely a recent development that has emerged as a new paradigm only with the advent of the 21st century. True, the movement in Hungary had already begun as early as the mid 1980s when the works of Northrop Frye, Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, and others were discovered and used by scholars of English literature at Hungarian universities. The critical and scholarly contribution of these North American intellectuals had a strong impact upon studying early modern English literature through a rediscovered history-oriented perspective, sometimes called the “religious turn” in early modern studies. John N. King, David Scott Kastan, Brian Cummings, and others have explored the vast material concerning the Bible-centered literary culture of the English Reformation.

In the Hungarian academia, the new interest in religion, or the religious context of literature, is also explained as a counter-effect of the formerly exclusive Marxist attempt to erase religion from even cultural memory. As early as 1995, only three years after their foundation, the English Departments of the two church-related universities, Pázmány Péter Catholic University and Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church, decided to organize an international conference on “Teaching the ‘Bible and Literature’ at Universities.” The proceedings of the conference were published as *The Bible in Literature and Literature in the Bible* (Budapest: Pano Verlag Zürich and Center for Hermeneutics, 1998).

The idea of organizing the conference on the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible was meant to continue this initiative that began in the mid 1990s. It goes without saying that in the years between this above-mentioned publication and the present volume, the Department (now Institute) of English of Károli Gáspár University has continued to organize similar conferences. For example, in 2007, our university hosted the first conference on Jonathan Edwards in Europe (its papers were published in 2009 by Oxford University Press as *Understanding Jonathan Edwards*). The proceedings of the conference on the 400th anniversary of Milton’s birth were published by our university as *Milton Through the Centuries*. The centenary of Northrop Frye’s birth was also celebrated with an international conference, its proceedings published by our university as *Northrop Frye 100 – A Danubian Perspective*.

In 2011, we focused on the King James Bible. Scholars, both young and old, local and visitors, came together to share and discuss their insights or discoveries. We issued a call for papers on both the “prehistory” and the “afterlife” of the King James Bible. In this volume, we are offering a selection of half a dozen of

papers in each section. Due to various difficulties, mostly financial, the editing of the present volume took longer than we expected.

The relevance of these papers, however, remains valid even almost five years after their original delivery. It was an exciting challenge in 2011 to organize a conference on the KJB at Károli, an institution that itself is a living example of the KB's afterlife. In 2016, it is an equally exciting moment to launch this modest volume for a broader audience. The KJB project has, in the meantime, been inculturated into its receptive Hungarian context: over the past few years, KJB has come to mean "Károli's (King) James Bible (Conference)." The KJB, thus contextualized, now found a place in Hungarian English Studies.

31 January, 2016

Tibor Fabiny

PART I
THE KING JAMES BIBLE



THE KING JAMES VERSION, A BIBLE OF UNITY



HENRY WANSBROUGH OSB

A HIGH POINT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

The King James Version of the Bible was one of the greatest achievements of English literature. It was produced at an unrivalled period of English culture and learning. During the years in which this version was being created an astonishing constellation of great writers was at work. Poets like John Donne (1572–1631), dramatists like William Shakespeare (1564–1625), Ben Jonson (1573–1637), essayists like Francis Bacon (1561–1626), homilists like Launcelot Andrewes (1555–1626) were at the height of their powers, writing with vigor, drama and confidence. The contemporary standard of learning may be judged from the remark in the Preface to the KJB, “the Syrian translation of the New Testament (NT) is in most learned men’s libraries [...], and the Psalter in Arabic is with many.” (Qtd. in DANIELL 780.)

The process of preparing the translation of the King James Version would put the translators of many Bibles to shame. The KJB was prepared by six panels¹ of translators, two at Oxford, two at Cambridge, two at Westminster. In all, at least fifty scholars were involved. All of these were under the close control of the King himself, the first four being presided by Regius Professors, who owed their jobs to him, the last two being located in the royal peculiar of Westminster, near London (now of course engulfed in London). The final revision took place over a period of nine months at the Stationers’ Hall in London. A panel of sixteen scholars sat round, each with a different Bible in one of the principal European languages, while the prepared version was read out. If they wished they could intervene. The notes taken by a scholar named John Bois on the discussion of the final part of the NT have recently been discovered and published, and show the care and detail with which the discussions were conducted.

¹ They were called “companies,” after the model of the trading companies, the Muscovy Company founded in 1555 and the East India Company in 1600.

A BIBLE OF UNITY

It would be possible to expand at length on the brilliance and literary importance of the KJB translation. However, such is not the subject of this paper, and I shall merely allude to three of the qualities of the translation achieved:

- The number of phrases which have become proverbial and unnoticed current coin in the English language is countless: “the powers that be,” “the fat of the land,” “not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,” “sour grapes,” “go from strength to strength,” “the salt of the earth,” “a thorn in the flesh.”
- The number of words newly invented: “passover,” “long-suffering,” “scape-goat” and many others.
- The rhythm and directness achieved by such qualities as use of monosyllables (“She gave me of the fruit and I did eat,” “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want”). The former is a perfect iambic pentameter. The version is full of rhythms that please the ear. If the translators took Tyndale’s style as their model, this third quality may be associated with Tyndale’s upbringing: he was born and bred in the sheep-farming country of the Vale of Berkeley, and his family were wool merchants. Much of the pungency and rhythm of his language may come from the speech of the local countrymen.

My principal theme is that the KJB was a Bible of unity. It came at the end of a period of disunity and quarrelling which often issued in bloody persecution, both by Protestants and by Catholics. Born of controversy and protest, the KJB was an important achievement of unity. It was not a compromise in the sense of compromising standards to achieve agreement. It took the best from several opposing worlds, without regard for their place of origin, and knit them together. The preparation of the translation was a determination to unite two strong traditions in British religion, the traditional and the puritan, but it was not ashamed to draw also on the Roman Catholic Rheims version of the NT, which was itself a tool of controversy produced by the tradition rival and bitterly opposed to the royal religion, and whose adherents were currently being cruelly martyred (or executed as traitors) in England.

TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE INTO ENGLISH

As early as the Lindisfarne Gospels scribed in the Northumbrian tradition (c. 715) English language annotations appear in Bible manuscripts. In about 970 Aldred, Provost of Chester-le-Street, inserted glosses in Old English between

the lines of the text. The first real translation of the Bible into English comes, however, from John Wycliffe. Wycliffe's work unfortunately proved disastrous, in that it blocked all further translation. How was it that this occurred? We need to look more carefully at the person and work of Wycliffe.

John Wycliffe was a famous and respected philosopher in Oxford, who also lectured on the Bible. He has been hailed as a precursor of the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century for four doctrines of his:

- He held that the Scriptures should be available to all in the vernacular, not merely filtered to them by a largely corrupt clergy who could read Latin. The laity should have direct access to the Scriptures and be able to judge for themselves. It is not clear whether he was the literary author of the Wycliffite translation, which may stem from his disciple, Nicholas Herford, but he certainly sponsored and promoted it.
- There was no such thing as a "state of perfection" in the monastic life, and monastic orders should be abolished.
- The philosophical explanation of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, stemming from Thomas Aquinas, and couched in the Aristotelian terms of substance and accidents, was unsatisfactory. This cry was taken up by Luther who objected to everything Dominican—and Aquinas was a Dominican!
- A corrupt monarch, bishop or Pope has no authority. This was aimed directly at the current Pope, Gregory IX, who was well-known for his corruption.

This last claim was appropriated by the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. This revolt was primarily sparked by the imposition of a Poll Tax, but the cry that the king had no authority was used as an adjunct and justification for rebellion. The result was that the whole of Wycliffe's "judge for yourself" attitude was rejected, and possession of any translation of the Bible without Episcopal permission was banned by the Constitutions of Oxford in 1407. During the whole of the century there were frequent investigations of libraries to search out "Lollard" literature, and numerous heresy trials in which such literature was condemned.

ERASMUS AND TYNDALE

A hundred years later, in 1516, the diffusion of books had become a completely different ball game. In that year the greatest scholar of the Renaissance, Desiderius Erasmus, produced the first printed Greek edition of the New Testament. It was produced under great pressure, because Erasmus was determined to

score a “first,” and was racing against the Polyglot Bible being prepared at the Spanish university of Alcalá (three columns, Hebrew, Latin, and Greek).² He relied on seven 12th-century MSS, all in one textual tradition, the Byzantine, and did a rushed job. The MSS he used for the Book of Revelation (borrowed from his friend Melancthon) lacked the last page, which Erasmus himself retroverted into Greek from the Vulgate Latin.³ However, Erasmus was the idol of Christendom; he followed in Wycliffe’s footsteps in his desire to make the Bible available for all. In the preface to the 1516 Greek edition he wrote:

I could wish that all women should read the Gospel and St Paul’s Epistles. I wish the farm worker might sing parts of them at the plough and the weaver might hum them at the shuttle, and the traveller might beguile the weariness of the way by reciting them

This is clearly echoed by William Tyndale in a famous story recounted in Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*:

Master Tyndale happened to be in the company of a certain divine, recounted for a learned man, and in communing and disputing with him he drove him to that issue, that the said great doctor burst out into these blasphemous words, and said: “We were better to be without God’s laws than the pope’s.” Master Tyndale, hearing this, full of godly zeal and not bearing that blasphemous saying, replied again and said: “I defy the pope and all his laws,” and further added that, if God spared him life, ere many years he would cause the boy that driveth the plough to know more of scripture than he did (Fox 2009: 301).

It is notable that Tyndale concentrated on the ploughboy, rather than the weaver or the traveller, as Erasmus had done. His ambition was to provide a Bible readable to his fellow countrymen of the Vale of Berkeley, to whom he was also preaching at this time. In any case, Tyndale offered himself as a translator to join the household of Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London. Tunstall rejected him, on the plea that his household was already full. It may have been true. The real reason may have been that (with the efficient Tudor system of informers) he

² It is striking that Latin was so standard and the other languages so unfamiliar and “unscriptural” that this three-column printing, Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, was hailed as “Christ between two thieves.”

³ In his fourth edition (1527) Erasmus started to use the Complutensian Greek text for these verses.

had already heard that Tyndale was tainted with Lutheranism. Or it may simply have been the result of a bias against any translation of the Bible.

The academic language was still Latin. Scholars all over Europe corresponded with each other in Latin. More's *Utopia* was written in Latin, and Tunstall thought it necessary to ask More explicitly to write in English when he was writing against Tyndale. As late as 1605 of the 60 000 volumes listed in the *First Printed Catalogue of the Bodleian Library*⁴ only sixty were in English. Similarly, of the 1830 books listed as sold by the Oxford bookseller John Dorne in 1520, the overwhelming majority was in Latin, with only the occasional intrusion of such works as "Robin Hod" or "balets" (ballads). This is perhaps less surprising for a university city. However, even a popular manual of etiquette for children in the dining room is written in Latin, *Stans Puer ad Mensam*, of which John Dorne sold several copies (see DANIELL 396).

English at this time was not yet considered a literary language. As a prose medium it could still be characterized as "rude" and "barbarous." Sir Thomas Elyot in 1531 in the Preface to *The Boke named the Governour* complains of the difficulty caused by the poverty of the language. He in fact invented in that book such terms as "modesty," "mediocrity," "industrious," "frugality," "beneficence," but the complaint has all the marks of a literary convention. It is possible to quote contemporary figures about illiteracy, but it is important to remember that these testimonies are suspect because their authors have an axe to grind. Thus Thomas More in his *Apology* (1523) is arguing that there is no point in Englishing the Bible when he makes the estimate that "people far more than four parts of all the whole divided into ten could never read English yet, and many now too old to go to school" (13). A quarter of a century later Bishop Stephen Gardiner of Winchester's estimate is still more pessimistic when he writes (*Letter*, May, 1547) that "not the hundredth part of the realme" could read (Fox 1563: 785).

These are not serious estimates, let alone reliable statistics, though More's estimate of a 40% literacy rate is quite promising. In any case evidence to the contrary may be garnered from the numerous heresy trials where possession and use of heretical books form a regular part of the accusation, even among the artisan classes. A work such as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* cannot have sprung out of nothing. There were plenty of good plain works, manuals of instruction on medicine, hawking, cooking, behaviour. There were letters, such as the Paston and Stonor letters, which are often playful and merry. There was the English Chronicle, which Tyndale claims to have read as a child (*The*

⁴ See the *Works Cited* section.

Obedience of a Christian Man, preface), and which may well have had no small influence on his purposeful, episodic style. There were devotional works, such as Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, or Nicholas Love's popular *Mirror of the Life of Christ*. The latter is full of warm and memorable passages which make its popularity in English still easy to appreciate. The field was clearly open and ready for some major works in English. This makes an interesting contrast to some non-European countries, Christian and non-Christian, where the Bible into the vernacular has clearly been a major influence in the development of a literary language and culture.

In any case, Tyndale was compelled to go abroad, to the Low Countries, now Belgium and Holland (in fact to Antwerp, then the printing capital of Europe), in order to put into effect his plan to produce an English translation. Perseveringly he sent the books across to England, and as perseveringly they were impounded and burnt by Tunstall and his agents as they arrived in the docks. He was heavily influenced by Luther, and has been accused of copying from Luther's great translation into German. On a very inadequate sample, I would say that his Hebrew was better than Luther's. On the other hand, he certainly made considerable use of Luther's *Preface to the Romans* in his own. He had published a translation of the New Testament, the Pentateuch, and the book of Jonah before he was kidnapped and imprisoned at the instigation of Bishop Tunstall. It seems likely that the portion of the Old Testament from Joshua to Chronicles used soon afterwards in the Matthew Bible was also from his pen, though his name is carefully omitted from the whole. From his cell he sent a heartrending letter to the prison governor, asking for the means to continue working:

I suffer greatly from cold in the head and am afflicted with perpetual catarrh. I ask to have a lamp in the evening; it is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark. Most of all I beg and beseech Your Clemency to urge the Commissary that he will kindly permit me to have the Hebrew Bible, Hebrew grammar and Hebrew dictionary, that I may pass the time in that study (qtd. in DANIELL 379).

However, in 1536 he was tried as a heretic, garrotted and his body burned at the stake. I have spent perhaps too much space on Tyndale because he set the standards for the KJB. It has been calculated that by the time of his death in 1536 perhaps 16 000 copies of his translation had been brought into England, a country with a population at that time of some two and a half million (qtd. in MACCULLOCH 203). A good deal of the KJB is based on his translation, lightly altered. In a 1998 article it was reckoned that in the NT 84% of the KJB is from Tyndale, and in the OT 76% of his words are retained (NIELSON 49–74).

THE GREAT BIBLE

Much more briefly I need to mention three other important translations of the Bible which fed into the KJB. In 1538 Henry VIII commanded that a Bible in English should be available in every parish church. This translation was known as “the King’s Bible” and the title page shows the King (a realistic portrait, not unlike the well-known portrait by Holbein) distributing the Bible on one side to the Lords spiritual and on the other to the Lords temporal, while the delighted crowds below cheer *Vivat Rex*. Those not so delighted are shown in the bottom right corner safely imprisoned. It was indeed a great success. The crowds who gathered to read the six copies placed in St Paul’s Cathedral were so noisy and enthusiastic that the Bishop of London forbade the reading of them during services.

The king, however, was of course a Catholic at heart, and soon became concerned at the free interpretations and the quarrels which arose from reading the Scriptures. He blamed such disunity on unguided reading of the Bible, and so an Act of 1543 forbade the reading of Bibles by large classes of people, namely women, merchants, artificers, journeymen, and yeomen (cf. DUFFY 422). The king’s chief concern about Bible reading and particularly about the aspect of unity becomes clear in his last address to Parliament in December, 1545. He extensively quotes 1 Corinthians 13 about unity before chiding the “Lords spiritual and temporal” for their lack of charity in religious name-calling, and then going on to bewail the abuse of the Bible “to dispute and make scripture a railing and taunting stock against priests and preachers. I am very sorry to know and hear how irreverently that most precious jewel the word of God is disputed, rimed, sung and jangled in every ale-house and tavern.” (BYRNE 421)

THE GENEVA BIBLE

The Great Bible was, however, soon overtaken by the Geneva Bible, which proved in one way to be the immediate stimulus to the KJB. It was produced by English Protestant exiles in Geneva and published in 1560. In many ways it set new standards of Bible production, which have continued to this day. It was the first Bible printed in normal type, as opposed to the heavy and less legible black letter type. It was illustrated and equipped with an extensive apparatus, and not surprisingly, it was heavily Calvinistic in tone. It was the first English Bible to contain not merely chapter divisions but also verse numbering for ease of reference. The notes did not fit the delicate balance which Elizabeth was

intent on achieving between tradition and reform, but attempts to replace it with the Bishops' Bible, shorn of the "bitter" notes (Archbishop Parker), were unsuccessful, for the Bishops' Bible was never popular. In the twenty years before 1603 there were thirty editions of the Geneva Bible as opposed to seven of the Bishops' Bible (1569). The Geneva Bible remained a runaway success, and was printed in multiple editions of every size from folio to sextodecimo; it remains easy and attractive to use today. It was the Bible principally used by Shakespeare. Its success is perhaps best gauged by its use in the Preface to the King James Version, where it is quoted fourteen times.

THE RHEIMS VERSION

One other translation needs to be considered in the run-up to the KJB, the Rheims-Douai Catholic edition.⁵ This was a strange translation, whose importance for the KJB has sometimes been mentioned, but normally underestimated. For my view of the KJB as a Bible of unity, it is of the highest importance. At the accession of Elizabeth large numbers of Marian supporters emigrated from Oxford, and set up a sort of alternative Oxford at the new university of Leuven. Over a hundred academics went into exile rather than accept the Elizabethan settlement. The Wykehamist influence was particularly strong, for the members from Winchester and New College were particularly numerous. They even hired a large house as a sort of College of their own. Before long their leader, William Allen (Fellow of Oriel in 1550, Proctor of the University in 1557) set up a College at Douai for the training of priests who were to be sent to England to maintain the old faith until the moment—which surely would not be long delayed—when yet another reversal would bring England back to the old beliefs. Among the exiles was Gregory Martin, one of the founder Fellows of St John's in 1557. At Oxford he had taught Greek; at Douai he became Professor of Hebrew. He ruined his health by translating the whole Bible in two years. The NT was published in 1582, in time to be of use for the KJB; because of lack of funds the OT remained unpublished till 1609–10.

What is really remarkable about this Bible from our point of view is that the KJB deigned to take any notice of it. The translation produced by the Catholic exiles in Douai had three clear characteristics:

- Extreme exactness of literal translation for the sake of controversy. There should be an exact version which could be quoted in controversy with

⁵ Known as the Rheims-Douai version because the NT was published while the College was in further exile in Rheims, the OT when they had returned again to Douai.

Protestants. The translation was from the Latin Vulgate and latinisms were frequently retained. This often resulted in absurd literalism to the point of unintelligibility. Three examples must suffice: Ephesians 6:12 “...against the spirituals of wickedness in the celestials,”⁶ Philippians 2:7 “[Jesus] exinanited himself (*semetipsum exinanivit*).” A particularly absurd literalism in the OT is Isaiah 5:1 “A vineyard was made to my beloved in horn, the son of oil.” It is surprising that the KJB did not reject the whole translation as a laughing stock because of this. No, they considered it seriously in the final revision, and adopted a number of its translations. The most famous is at Hebrews 11:1: “the substance of things to be hoped for.”

- A return behind Erasmus’ Greek text. Martin correctly maintained that, translating from the Vulgate, he made indirect use of an older manuscript which was not available to Erasmus, who relied on much later Greek MSS. Since the considerable advances in discovery of manuscripts, especially the Codices Vaticanus, Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus, none of which were available at the time, this criticism has often rightly been levelled at the KJB, whose translators used Erasmus’ third edition of 1522.
- A principle importantly invoked by the final revision of the KJB: where the Greek is ambiguous, it should be left ambiguous in the translation. This most important principle is specifically invoked and followed in the notes of John Bois on the final revision of the KJB (see FULMAN).

THE PRODUCTION OF THE KJB

After this long succession of various English Bibles in the 16th century, we now come, with the turn of the century and the accession of James VI of Scotland to the throne of England, to the KJB. One of the first problems confronting King James VI of Scotland as he became King James I of England in 1603 was to maintain the fragile religious unity of his new realm. The Lutheran position—in so far as it had penetrated into Anglicanism—dictated that nothing should be acceptable if it was *contrary to* the Bible, whereas the Puritans adhered to the Calvinistic doctrine that nothing should be accepted unless it was positively *in* the Bible (cf. SYKES 176). Elizabeth had with difficulty held the balance between Anglicanism and the Calvinistic Puritanism of Geneva, a balance eventually enshrined in the Act of Uniformity of 1559. An example of the compromise position is the instruction that clergy should wear a surplice

⁶ *pros ta pneumatika tes ponerias en tois epouraniois.* (προς τα πνευματικά της πονηρίας εν τοις επουρανίοις)

for the service—halfway between full vestments and ordinary lay dress. Puritans saw the accession of James as their opportunity, for in Scotland he had been king of a fully Protestant nation, and already on his way south in 1603 he was met by the Millenary Petition, signed by (nearly) a thousand Puritan ministers of the Church of England, begging to be free of “a common burden of human rites and ceremonies.”

To this James responded by the Hampton Court Conference in the following year. In almost every respect the Puritans seem to have been rebuffed, but then came the spark: the Puritan John Reynolds suggested a new translation of the Bible as a unifying factor. In the course of discussion John Reynolds also suggested the method by which it should be done: six panels of translators, two at Oxford, Cambridge, and Westminster respectively, each charged with a set section of the Bible. This should be submitted for revision and approval in turn to the Bishops, the royal Privy Council and the King himself. Reynolds’ exact motives are unclear, but the king seized on this opportunity to get rid of the anti-royal tone of the notes of the Geneva Bible. The selection of this high level academic team had, of course, its effect on the tone of the translation. In the extensive parts where Tyndale provides the base the donnish team has worked through the text with a red pencil, improving accuracy in minor details and often marring the magic of Tyndale’s own rough-hewn language in the process (In Table 1 I give briefly some examples where Tyndale’s directness and humour fail in the KJB).

James had long disliked the highly popular Geneva Bible, which had in fact replaced every other Bible translation. He considered it the worst of the translations available. This was no doubt because of its strongly anti-monarchical marginal notes, which he regarded as “very partiell, untrue, seditious and savouring too much of daungerous and trayterous conceits.” Kings are regularly described as “tyrants” (a word which would never be used in the KJB). James considered the note on Exodus 1:19, approving the decision of the Hebrew midwives to disobey Pharaoh, “seditious.” Nor could he approve such notes as that on 2 Kings 9:33–37, where Jezebel’s death is described as “a spectacle and example of God’s judgment on all tyrants,” or on Isaiah 30:33 that “Tophet [the burning rubbish-dump of Jerusalem, the image of hell] is prepared of old ... even for the king.” (qtd. in HEYLYN 213–214) There were also what James regarded as glaring misinterpretations: James regarded kings as the Lord’s anointed, and yet the Geneva Bible glossed Psalm 105:15—“Touch not mine anointed”—as referring not to the king but to the anointed people of God, “those whom I have sanctified to be my people.” The notes at Daniel 6:22 and 11:36 even question the authority of the king.

However, keeping rigorously to the principle of compromise, the king did not demand notes to set things right, but insisted that any new translation should merely be devoid of notes. Rules for translators were firmly laid down. The new Bible should follow the Bishops' Bible as closely as possible, avoiding some recent idiosyncracies like the hebraizing spelling of names. The Bishops' Bible had spelt the son of Abraham as "Izhàc" and the Geneva Bible as "Isahac."

One instance of fidelity to the Bishops' Bible has had immense consequences for all ecclesiastical and biblical language in England, namely the retention of the second person singular, "thou" and "thee," which have been regularly used in hymns and prayers until very recently. There is strong evidence that this usage was already waning at the time (the court records of Durham in 1575 show that the singular was being used only rather aggressively to social inferiors. In Shakespeare Sir Toby Belch recommends it as a way of insulting and annoying conversation partners). The purpose of the retention of this slightly antiquated usage, as well as other such antiquated usages, may have been to give an *allure* of the dignity of antiquity.⁷ Furthermore, to judge from European languages which still make a distinction between second person singular and plural, the retention of "thee" and "thou" gave the text a homeliness and intimacy which would reflect not only the greater simplicity of the biblical situation but also the familial situation, both horizontal and vertical. It is a pity that developments in language have made this quality inaccessible to us today. The translation-decision taken here may well have arrested the development of the language on this point, so that the usage still continues in the North of England.

The new translation was to draw on the best of previous translations (Tyn-dale's, Matthew's Bible, Coverdale, the Geneva Bible) mentioned in the careful instructions to the companies of translators. Not only words but principles were invoked, for example, there was to be no attempt to standardize translation of one Greek word by the same English word. The translators/panel of translators refused to "be in bondage to the use of the same word," such as "purpose" and "intent" or "journeying" and "travelling," or "pain" and "ache." This imparts a certain liveliness but has disadvantages; thus in Romans 5:2–11 *kauchomai* (καυχῶμαι) is translated by three different words within nine verses. Similarly, since the panels worked independently of one another, quotations of the OT in the New often differ from the version in their original position (e.g. Luke 3:4,5).

⁷ See the paper in this volume by Ádám Nádasy.

Table 1

	Tyndale	KJB
Gen. 3:4	Tush, ye shall not die	Ye shall not surely die
Gen. 3:15	crush thy head	bruise thy head
Gen. 31:48	toot-hill	make an heap
2 Kings 4:28	fool's paradise	deceive me
Matt. 19:12	He that can take it, let him take it	He that is able to receive it, let him receive it
Mark 10:19	Break no wedlock, kill not, steal not	Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal
Luke 4:5	In the twinkling of an eye	In a moment of time
2 Thess 3:1	Every one of you swimmeth in love	The charity of every one of you aboundeth
Heb. 12:16	For one breakfast sold his birthright	For one morsel of meat sold his birthright

Too strong a Puritan bias was to be avoided in that the familiar traditional forms of words were to be retained rather than the Puritan equivalents, so “church” not “congregation,” “baptism,” not “washing.” Avoiding the other extreme, they have sharp words to say of “the obscurity of the Papists in their Azimes, Tunike, Rational, Holocausts, Paepuce, Pasche, and a number of such like, whereof their late translation is full, and that of purpose to darken the sense, that since they needs must translate the Bible, yet by the language thereof it may be kept from being understood.” (“Translators’ to the Reader” qtd. in DANIELL 793). This, of course, is a direct criticism of the Rheims New Testament, which uses such Latinate words. Even-handedly, however, the final preface was written jointly by the Puritan sympathizer Miles Smith and the learned High Church bishop Thomas Bilson. Unforgettably they compared translation to tearing the veil of the Temple to enable the viewer to see the mysteries inside, and to lowering the bucket into Jacob’s well. Perhaps more to the point, they praised the king

by comparing his authorization of the translation to that of Pharaoh Ptolemy who authorized the LXX translation into Greek, just in time for the coming of Christ. At the same time, they underlined their own fallibility by noting that the authors of the NT, when quoting the Old, do not always follow the LXX Greek, but feel able to correct it or take an alternative translation.

Less pleasing to the king will have been the surprising decision to include the Apocrypha, the books and portions of books of which no Hebrew original exists, or rather, existed at the time.⁸ Article Six of the 39 Articles of 1562 had reverted to the middle position taken by Origen and Jerome, neither fully accepting nor rejecting the apocryphal books: “and the other books (as Hierome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners, but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine.” (ARTICLES OF RELIGION n. p.) King James himself was sharper; he wrote in *Basilikon Doron*, “as to the Apocriphe bookes, I omit them because I am no Papist.” (JAMES n. p.) Similarly, the Apocrypha are summarily dismissed a few years later by the Puritan Westminster Confession of Faith in 1646: “The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the Canon of Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings.” (WESTMINSTER CONFESSIOIN n. p.) This was, therefore, an important ecumenical decision. It was not always followed in subsequent editions. I believe that the inclusion of the Apocrypha is a vital return to the tradition of the Church. The Greek Bible (the LXX) which included them was the original Bible of the Church. At the Reformation they were excluded by Luther because he disliked some elements of their theology, authorizing the omission by relying on a wrong decision of St Jerome that the Hebrew was the true biblical text, a decision into which he was bullied by Rabbis in Bethlehem. There are, I think, signs that these Greek elements are again becoming acceptable throughout the Christian Church.

⁸ The Book of Ecclesiasticus or Ben Sira is part of the Apocrypha. Some two-thirds of the Hebrew original have by now been discovered.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I would only like to underline the remarkable fact of the co-operation of different Church traditions towards the construction of the King James Version. Translation of the Bible into English had been dogged by controversy and factionalism, ecclesiastical and lay. Wycliffe's translation had been banned and suppressed because of its social implications. Tyndale had been cruelly executed at the instance of the Catholic authorities for his efforts. It was the achievement of the eirenic spirit of James I to bring together the scholarship not only of the Established Church and the Puritan tendency, but also of Roman Catholicism to create this version of the Bible. It would be interesting to know whether the decision to use the Rheims New Testament came from a royal initiative or merely from scholarly freedom from *ira et studium*. Similarly, it would be interesting to discover what the royal reaction was to the inclusion of the Apocrypha, which James himself so disliked. There is still work to be done.

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