

Websites

As I've said, this writing is an introduction to a big subject, written by an amateur. It will have little relevance to people who do not use the KJV or the NKJV, but hopefully will provide some interest value and help them understand their elders! For those who use either of these Bibles I recommend further study. Almost every part of this article could be greatly expanded.

The following are just a few out of many available websites expanding on the various aspects of this subject:

<http://www.kjv-only.com/> an in-depth refutation of the KJV-only position.

<http://bible-truth.org/KjvDefensePage.html>: strong support for the KJV-only position.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_James_Version: a neutral, factual account of the translation of the KJV.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_King_James_Version: information about the NKJV.

<http://www.britannica.com/biography/James-I-king-of-England-and-Scotland>: a simple historical account of King James.

End Note - Luke 18:12

Some KJV-only believers claim that the KJV was verbally inspired just as much as the original Greek and Hebrew Scriptures. Even translation errors were inspired by the Holy Spirit. One gross mistranslation destroys this idea. The KJV translates Luke 18:12 (“*ἀποδεκατὼ πάντα ὅσα κτῶμαι*”) as “*I give tithes of all that I possess*”. All modern translations (except the NKJV) say, “*I give tithes of all that I get*”. What's the difference? *Possess* implies *property*; *get* implies *income*. The KJV here has 2 serious problems:

1. To part with property was contrary to Old Testament law! All inheritance in Israel was permanent. Naboth was stoned to death for refusing to sell his inheritance to Ahab.

2. Tithing property would be financially disastrous! After 10 years only one third of it would remain, and after 20 years just an eighth!

Added to this the verb κτῶμαι means *to get* rather than *to possess*.

The Holy Spirit would never inspire a mistranslation that leads to scripture contradicting scripture and personal financial chaos! This one verse, more than any other destroys the idea that the KJV was verbally inspired.

The King James Version of the Bible

One further argument against the teaching of *KJV-only* people is the utter dishonesty of their propaganda. They say that modern translations deliberately omit key verses from the Bible. The truth, as we have seen, is that modern versions are based on different Greek manuscripts. They say that the KJV is the only *Authorised* Version; all other Bibles are *Unauthorised*! Authorised by whom? Answer: not by God, but by King James I and the C of E! (For sheer deception see [Which Bible verses did the NIV delete? - Jesus-is-Lord.com.](#))

Modern relatively literal translations of the Bible such as the NASB are probably 95% the same as the KJV. None of them is radically different from the KJV in any major Bible teaching. Yet the KJV-only movement believes that all other Bible translations are satanic attacks on the truth.

The simple truth is that the KJV-only movement is a cult based on lies. At its centre is idolatrous worship of the KJV. Like other cults it believes that its members have a monopoly of the truth.

Other KJV readers

Normal KJV readers are very different from the KJV-only cult. They don't discount all other translations. They simply prefer reading the KJV.

I would suggest to them that good modern translations are both easier to understand and more accurate for the reasons I have given above. They are also much better for communication with the outside world. They (especially if you use more than one of them) are also safer if you want to find the Bible's position on controversial subjects: eg the charismatic movement, divine healing, predestination, the ultimate destiny of unbelievers, the end of the world (as the KJV translates it!) and many more.

If you have studied the subject and firmly believe that the Eastern text is the closest to the original NT, but agree that the KJV is out-of-date and contains errors and biases, then the NKJV is the obvious Bible choice.

If however you accept, as most scholars do, that the Western text is at least as valid if not more so than the Eastern text, then the arguments in favour of the NKJV disappear. The NASV is its natural replacement. The NASV is widely regarded as the most literal of the 20th-century English Bible translations and in this respect it is similar to the NKJV. Of course there are many other options.

huge choices in how they translate from Greek or Hebrew into English. It seems (to misquote Judges) that every translator "does that which is right in his own eyes"! Their scholarship, deliberate or unconscious biases, integrity and above all spiritual understanding all make far greater differences than the differences between the Western and the Eastern texts.

Jesus said: **"when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth"** (John 16: 13). It's a good thing he didn't say: "When you get the right English version of the Bible, it will guide you into all the truth"! Seriously, if we want to know the truth in any matter, we need the leading of the Holy Spirit; we can't depend on any one translation of the Bible.

The New King James Version

The NKJV was completed in 1982. "The aim of its translators was to update the vocabulary and grammar of the King James Version, while preserving the classic style and literary beauty of the original 1611 KJV" (from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_King_James_Version). *You* and *your* replace *thee*, *thou*, *ye* and *thine* and old English tense endings have all disappeared. 2 Corinthians 6: 11, 12 quoted above becomes: **"O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections."**

The NKJV corrects many errors in the KJV, but appears still to retain some bias.

Like the KJV it is based on the Eastern text, but it also has marginal notes giving readings from the Western text.

Conclusions

KJV-only movement

I believe the following points utterly destroy the view that the KJV is the one true inspired translation of the Bible:

- The KJV deliberately mistranslated words to support one particular denomination.
- The KJV is 400 years out of date.
- The gross mistranslation of Luke 18:12: **"I give tithes of all that I possess"** (see End Note for explanation).
- If English has a single inspired Bible translation, what about all the other modern languages?

Prologue

38% of Bible readers in the USA use the King James Version (KJV) and 14% use the NKJV (New King James Version) together making up more than half of Bible readers, compared with 11% who use the NIV.

Some of these people believe the KJV is the only valid English Bible; they believe its translators were verbally inspired in their translation even when through ignorance or error they mistranslated the original Hebrew and Greek. All other English translations are satanic attacks on the truth. These people are known as the King James Only or KJV-Only movement.

Could these people be right?

Others simply prefer the KJV to other translations for a wide variety of reasons. Typically they have grown up with it from childhood. They are not too troubled with old English which they feel they understand. For some people the KJV sounds more holy, more authoritative and more reverent than versions in modern English. They don't believe all other translations are wrong.

Would these people be better to move to the NKJV or to another translation?

These are hugely important questions affecting the daily lives of millions of people! I have no academic qualifications in this subject, but throughout my school days I read or heard no other Bible than the KJV, apart from a Greek New Testament which my Greek teacher gave me when I was about 10! I've continued to read the Greek ever since. However, I am able to introduce the main points in the debate, all of which can be studied in much greater depth on the Internet in articles written by more qualified writers.

In this article I have taken information from a book entitled "Power and Glory" by Adam Nicholson. This book is an account of the political and religious climate in which the KJV was translated and gives much detail about the character and motives of King James and the bishops who did the translation. The author is not approaching the KJV from a religious viewpoint, but rather sees it as a magnificent literary work. I will refer to this book as *op cit*. Other information in this writing is from the Internet.

I will treat this subject under 3 main headings:

1. The age of the KJV.
2. The translation of the KJV.
3. The manuscripts from which the KJV was translated.

The Age of the KJV

The KJV had its 400th anniversary in 2011. Does its age matter? Is it out of date? After all the book of Genesis is about 9 times as old!

The KJV's age has several major negative consequences. We will look at each of these in turn.

The Language of the KJV

The first and most obvious negative consequence is the huge difference in the KJV's language from modern English. Read the following 2 verses: "[O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels](#)" (2 Cor 6: 11, 12). Paul appears to have been suffering from an enlarged heart and the Corinthians clearly had bowel problems!

Every language continually changes and especially now in these days of worldwide communications. New words enter the language, old words become obsolete and, more dangerously, words change their meaning. The pronouns *thou, thee* and *ye* and the verb endings that go with them have become obsolete.

Understanding the language of the KJV may not be a problem to people who have grown up with it; but it is a massive problem to younger people who may have been brought up with no Bible knowledge of any kind. Additionally there are millions of second language English speakers throughout the world who either read the Bible in English or read articles with Bible quotations on paper or on the internet. All these people have a problem with KJV English.

If we wish to communicate with and quote the scriptures to people who do not share our faith and background, we need to do it in a language they understand. The KJV may be ok for personal use, but good modern Bible translations are much better for communicating with the outside world.

A further negative effect of a Bible in out-of-date English is the suggestion that what it is saying is also out-of-date. Faith in Jesus is not something that belongs to the past and is irrelevant to now. It is forward-looking and progressive. It is not a turning back to some previous imaginary golden age!

New Manuscripts

Another less obvious consequence of the KJV's age is that its translators lacked all sorts of information that has since become available. Most importantly, ancient Greek manuscripts dating back to the 4th century have been discovered and most scholars believe that these are more accurate than those used for translating the KJV; but more on that later.

like the doctrine of the Trinity! They believe that the Western text and all the Bibles translated from them are a satanic attack on the truth of the scriptures.

Others reject this view and say that these "Trinity" verses were deliberately added to the text by people who wanted to strengthen the doctrine of the Trinity!

Which of these views is more probable? Normal logic would suggest that manuscripts that are 800 years earlier are more likely to represent the original NT than later ones. Also it seems more likely that people who felt free to change the Scriptures would add verses to strengthen the doctrine of the Trinity rather than remove verses to weaken it. Most scholars believe the Western text is closer to the original NT than the Eastern text.

Manuscripts or Translators?

Which makes the bigger difference, the manuscripts translated or the translators who translate them? We will look at some controversial verses (click on any verse reference to see the verse in about 50 different English translations!):

[John 1:1](#): "In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was **a god**" (New World Translation). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was **God**" (KJV). The Greek word θεος (theos) can be translated *God* or *a god* according to its context. The translators of the NWT preferred *a god*!

[Exodus 20:13](#): "Thou shalt not **kill**" (KJV); "You shall not **murder**" (NKJV). No difference in the Hebrew - (לֹא תִרְצָח) - a vast difference in the English! The KJV supports pacifism and abolishing the death penalty; the NKJV thinks otherwise!

[Rev 14:11](#): "the smoke of their torment goes up **forever and ever**" (most translations); "the smoke of their torment goes up **to ages of ages**" (Darby and other literal translations). "...aux **siècles des siècles**" (several French translations). Greek: εις αιωνας αιωνων. Very serious! An infinite difference in the duration of future punishment for unbelievers!

[Mat 3:11](#): "I baptise you **with water ...**" (most translations); "I indeed baptize you **in water**" (ASV). Greek: εν υδατι; εν can mean *in* or *with* according to context. *In* favours baptism by immersion; *with* sounds more like baptism by sprinkling or pouring!

(I give my opinion of the best translations of these 4 passages in the following 4 writings: [Jehovah's Witnesses and Jesus' Witnesses](#), [Thou Shalt Not Kill](#), [Universal Reconciliation](#), [Baptism - Shadows and Substance](#).)

These translations of the same Greek or Hebrew words are shockingly different from each other. Many more verses could be quoted to show that translators make

The Manuscripts Underlying the KJV

Thirdly, and unknown to most people, but for some the most important factor in Bible translation, is the Greek manuscripts from which our New Testaments have been translated. Obviously, none of the original Bible scrolls are available today. We only have copies of copies of copies ... of the originals. And, unfortunately, these copies do not all agree with each other. Scribes made copying errors and sometimes omissions and sometimes, it seems, additions. The Old Testament has less variation in its manuscripts because, generally speaking, Jewish scribes had a greater reverence for their scriptures and were perfectionists in their work.

These Greek manuscripts fall into two main groups which have come to be known as the Eastern text and the Western text. The KJV and other European translations of its time were translated from the Eastern text. Nearly all modern translations (apart from the NKJV) have been translated from the Western Text.

The Eastern text – also known as the Textus Receptus - was put together by a Catholic scholar and monk named Desiderius Erasmus. He worked from 6 Greek manuscripts which were available to him at the time. All these manuscripts dated from the 12th century or later. He also added parts missing from them by translating from the Latin Vulgate Bible back into Greek! His final edition of this text was produced in the year 1535.

The Western text was put together in the 19th century by the scholars Westcott and Hort. They based their work on newly discovered manuscripts which were much older than those available to Erasmus. Most important of these were the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus both dating back to the 4th century. The Western text is more or less the basis of most modern translations of the Bible, including the NEB, the NASB and the NIV.

What are the main differences between the Western text and the Eastern text, and how much do they matter? The most significant difference between the Eastern text and the Western Text regards the doctrine of the Trinity. Various “Trinity” verses are present in the Eastern Text and therefore in the KJV; but absent from the Western text and hence from most modern translations. The most important passage is 1 John 5: 7, 8: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.” The words in blue here are in the Eastern text, but not in the Western text and therefore in the KJV (and NKJV) but not in most modern translations.

For the KJV-only people this difference is critical. They say that the verses supporting the Trinity were deliberately removed from the text by people who did not

New Greek Materials

As well as new NT manuscripts, many other Greek writings from the time of the New Testament have been discovered. These writings throw new light on the meanings of words and grammatical structures used in the NT.

New Language Studies

The Hebrew language was dead for about 2000 years until Eliezer Ben Yehuda revived it as a spoken language in the early 20th century and it became the national language of Israel. It now has millions of native speakers. Academics among them, born in the land of the Bible, have thrown much light on the meaning of ancient Hebrew. Studies of NT Greek have also greatly increased since 1611, and continue to increase. The Internet has spread knowledge round the world as never before. Modern translations of the Bible can take advantage of all this extra knowledge.

Translation Experience

In addition to new manuscripts and other ancient writings, every modern translation now has the benefit of 400 years more translation experience, especially with the globalisation of the last 50 years. Translation is a science, and like every other science it has progressed, and will progress further.

Spiritual Understanding

More importantly still, men of God have studied the scriptures for 400 years since the KJV was translated and God has given them new understanding of their meaning. People who are filled with the Holy Spirit will have the mind of the Author of the Scriptures and be better placed to understand them. Their insights have made a big contribution.

Summary

The KJV made a huge contribution to Bible translation, and every translation since then has been able to benefit from it. Sir Isaac Newton famously said: “If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants”. Einstein stood on Newton’s shoulders and saw much further than Newton. The KJV stood on the shoulders of Tyndale and others and saw further; modern translations are now standing on the shoulders of the KJV and they in turn have seen further again.

For all these reasons the age of the KJV makes it less suitable for reading and study than a good translation in modern English that can take advantage of all the progress that has been made since 1611.

The Translation of the KJV

Secondly we must consider the translation of the KJV. Who initiated and controlled the whole project? And who did the translation?

King James

Surprisingly the man in charge of the translation of the King James Version was King James himself! The whole project was his idea and he knew what he wanted! He even laid down 16 rules as to how the translation was to be done (op cit pp 73 – 83).

From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_James_Version we read the following: “James gave the translators instructions intended to guarantee that the new version would conform to the ecclesiology and reflect the episcopal structure of the Church of England and its belief in an ordained clergy.”

Can you believe what you have just read? King James himself controlled the translation and ordered a deliberate bias in favour of the Church of England! When Roman Catholics or Jehovah’s Witnesses produce Bibles biased in their favour, the rest of the world immediately cries foul play! There’s obviously another rule for the KJV and the C of E!

Let’s take 4 examples that illustrate this:

1. James decreed that the word ἐκκλησία (ekklesia) must be translated *church* rather than *congregation* as in Tyndale’s translation. This bias has now passed into the English language and nearly all subsequent translations have been forced to adopt it.
2. James insisted the word ἐπίσκοπος (episkopes) be translated *bishop* rather than *overseer*. This creates the completely false impression that the early church had bishops like those in Roman Catholic, Anglican and other denominations. (NKJV translates it *bishop* – most others *overseer*).
3. The words το Πάσχα (to Pascha) (in Acts 12: 4) were translated Easter – a church festival with a heathen origin – rather than the Passover which is their true meaning. (NKJV *the Passover*).
4. The word ἱεροσυλοῦς (in Acts 19:37) was translated *robbers of churches* – implying that church buildings existed in New Testament times – rather than *defilers of temples* which is its real meaning. (NKJV *robbers of temples*).

King James himself was highly educated and understood Greek, Latin and French. He wrote books and poetry and even did translation himself. He was well able to debate theology with ecclesiastics. In many ways he was a good king. He had been brought up as a Presbyterian in Scotland where the king was subject to the church. When he became king of England he became head of the church, which position he

preferred and wanted to keep! Most historians say he was homosexual, though he did have 6 children. He spent a lot of time hunting (op cit p3), was given to drink and could be very vulgar in his conversation. He was ready to tell lies for political purposes (op cit p6). He persecuted puritans and others who wanted to separate from the C of E. Can anyone believe that a Bible that still bears his name is the one and only true Bible in the English language? Can anyone even think that a deliberately biased translation of the Bible is the best Bible for personal use?

The Translators

The translation team consisted of 47 scholars, all but one of whom were C of E clergy. Most of them were bishops. Needless to say, there were no women among them. Some were High Church men who wanted to reverse the Reformation and return to the Roman Catholic Church. Others were Puritans who felt the Reformation had not gone far enough. The C of E is a half-reformed church!

Were these good gentlemen fit for the task?

Obviously they needed to be academically competent, and certainly many of them were. Some of them were extremely able scholars with an in depth knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. Some knew several other European and ancient languages as well, which would have given them further insights into Greek and Hebrew. They were able to discuss the Greek text in great detail and without doubt their labours made an enormous contribution to all subsequent translations.

Were they spiritually competent? When God told Moses to build the tabernacle, he said to him, “See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri and I have filled him with the Spirit of God in skill, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship” (Exod 31: 2, 3). Exactly the requirements for Bible translators! The Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit and people who are full of the Holy Spirit will be much better placed to understand and translate it. People who have had similar spiritual experiences to Peter, Paul and John will find it easier to understand and translate their writings.

Some of the translators were highly moral and godly men; others were drunkards, adulterers and even murderers! (op cit passim) Some oversaw the torture and murder of Separatists (people who did not agree with the C of E) and Roman Catholics. The Pilgrim Fathers who sailed from Plymouth for America in 1620 to find religious liberty in the New World were fleeing from some of these very translators! Ironically some of their descendants are now the strongest supporters of the KJV! One of the poet John Milton’s most famous lines is in a passage denouncing the C of E clergy of this time: “The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed” (from Lycidas written in 1637).

Were these men full of the Holy Spirit? Were they really God’s chosen instruments for the only true Bible in the English language?