

ANOTHER WORD ABOUT THE KING JAMES VERSION ON ITS 400 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

N. Sebastian Desent, Ph.D., Th.D., D.D., Pastor, Historic Baptist Church, Wickford, RI
www.HistoricBaptist.org

I am sure there will be hundreds of articles and dozens of books written on this subject this year. By God's grace I shall add to that library.

Recently, I read an article in the *Providence Journal* on this subject, and frankly it was underwhelming and confusing. As a result of that reading, I decided to humbly submit my point of view to the *Projo*, with the hopes that they will give equal time, and that the core truth of this version can be made plain to the masses that lack deep knowledge of the *KJV*.

The Authorized Version of the Holy Bible (also known as *The King James Version*) has been a controversial Book since the beginning of its translation. Of all books, this Version has been attacked a thousand-fold more than any other; and in contrast, it has been loved a million-fold more. There is a reason nobody ever died for a modernist version of the Scriptures, but I have not met a real Bible-believer who would give up his King James Bible, even with the threat of death.

There are historical, textual, and practical reasons why this version of the Bible has been the number one published book in history, and why it is considered the summit of beauty and *the best* example of English literature – even surpassing Shakespeare and Chaucer.

I shall briefly explain the first two reasons (historical and textual) and follow up with a longer explanation of the practical reasons.

Historical Reasons

Europe was largely under the influence of the Pope and just coming out of the Dark Ages when the *Authorized Version* was published. Christians had long been prevented free access to the scriptures during this time. Persecutions were everywhere, but in Geneva the Christians had some liberty to publish and read and possess the scriptures. It was these scriptures that were used as a testimony for the *Authorized Version*. This was God's timing to send the Light of His word to every man. God, foreseeing that English would be the *lingua franca* of the modern world, provided his word for the benefit of all nations.

When the Scottish King James came to power, he, under the power and authority of the English crown, authorized an official Version of the Bible intended to be read by all. James IV of Scotland, now King James I of all England, had been exposed to Bible truths in the mountains of Scotland. This was a place where no foreign army had ever conquered and imposed their government's religion. For fifteen centuries – from the time Pricilla and Aquila brought the Apostle Paul's teachings to the British Isles, the truth of the Gospel of God's Salvation and holiness was allowed to blossom freely.

This new king understood the importance of getting God's word to his people. He chose the best minds at Cambridge, Oxford and Westminster to translate the sacred scriptures – a feat no one

has been able to match in the history of the world. Not only were these men the best in all history (past and future) at what they did, they also checked each other's work, and also had availability to all the scholars in the English realm for their expertise in respect to certain passages. They also based much of the new translation on the proved English versions printed previously. The *KJV* was authorized by a king, something unheard of in history. It reminds me of the verse – *where the word of the king is, there is power.*

“The proof of the pudding is on the eating,” Cervantes said. From 1611 onward, the masses of English-speaking people have overwhelmingly used this Version as their personal Bible. Billions of copies have been printed, and the King of Books still goes strong.

Textual Reasons

Those involved in the study of *Textual Criticism* understand why we have so many Bible versions and translations, and they know how to identify the good from the bad.

There are over 5,000 extant manuscripts of the scriptures, and a multitude of editions of Hebrew, Greek, and other language testaments that have been published over the centuries. Some are good, most are poor, and many are just plain strange. In the English language alone, we have over 100 versions of the New Testament. Are they all good? Are they all profitable? If the Apostle Paul warned in the first century A.D. of those who would corrupt the word of God, why would anyone expect that anything would have changed.

The Roman Catholics use for the most part their own *Codex Vaticanus* with the Old Testament in Greek (also called the *Septuagint*, or LXX in critical apparatus) for the basis of their many translations.

The modernist versions normally use a *Westcott-Hort*, a *UBS*, a *Nestles*, or some similar text for the basis of their versions. These are very similar to, and have the same basis as the Roman Catholic texts. The Jehovah's Witnesses use this same basis for their bible (the New World Translation).

The Protestant *King James Bible* translators, however, rejected what they called the Popish versions (considering them to be corrupted) and instead based their version on the pure Antiochian Greek text for the New Testament and the pure Massoretic Hebrew Text for the Old. It was the church in Antioch that was the authorizing church for the Apostle Paul's missionary journeys.

In contrast to the *Alexandrian Text* of *Vaticanus* (Codex B), the *KJV* is based on the Antiochian Text, otherwise known as the *Majority Text*, or *Textus Receptus*. The history of this pure line of manuscripts is too long for this paper, but a diligent student can find a multitude on information on this subject. New Testament Greek texts in this pure line came through Erasmus, Beza, the Elzivers, and Stephanus. This text is called the *Majority Text*, because the majority of manuscript witnesses agree to the readings. This is what the *KJV* translators used. On the other hand, *Vaticanus* has its beginning at the library in Alexandria, Egypt, where Origen rewrote the New Testament because he was of the opinion it was not inspired by God.

Practical Reasons

It is here that I will spend most of the paper. From the time of my miraculous conversion to Christ from a life of sin and shame (I joined the Marine Corps a week after turning 17, and from that point lived a life of excess – that is, until Jesus saved me); through my layman-ship, my calling to the ministry, seminary training, post graduate studies, and over 25 years of ministry (including 20 years as pastor of Historic Baptist Church); I have believed only ONE BOOK for the inspired word of God – and that is the Authorized Version of the Holy Bible.

I have read this BOOK over and over, memorized hundreds of passages, preached on it thousands of times, taught from it for over 25 years, and studied it intensively for every doctrine and Bible truth I believe and teach; and have brought up my family on its faithful words, building a godly home upon the Rock. I have studied and compared dozens of English versions, foreign translations, Hebrew and Greek; and I come to the same conclusion – the KJV is the Masterpiece of God’s word for the English-speaking world.

As mentioned already, the English language used in this Bible is the apex of its proper usage. Its literary value is beyond reproach. The greatest English and American patriarchs were educated from this Book. Any person intent on improving himself would not neglect a thorough study of the KJV. I recommend starting in Proverbs and then moving to the Gospel of John.

The *King James Version* has proved to be correct in every test. It has never failed. It makes wise the simple, and humbles the proud. It reveals in inerrant beauty the mind of God. Our language and values are formed by this Book, with thousands of quotes from, “In the beginning” and, “Am I my brother’s keeper”; through, “Thou shalt not...”; to “Love thy neighbor as thyself,” and “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

It trains the mind to read from a simple level to the highest level, as proved by university studies.

It changes lives and families, churches and schools, governments and armies.

The power of its words can pierce the soul, stick in the mind, and save to the uttermost.

It is feared, hated, condemned, insulted and blasphemed by those who reject the God and Savior of its pages. But it is loved, and cherished and highly valued by those who truly seek after God, as “the hart panteth after the water brooks” (Psalm 42:1).

It is widely published by thousands of printing houses, distributed to every corner of the world, found at discount stores, online, in hotels, and everywhere man is found.

The character of a man is known by the company he keeps. In my experience, the strongest, most sanctified, zealous, and diligent Christians carry this Book. In contrast, the weakest, most confused, and immature believers use a modernist version. The *KJV* is milk for the babe and strong meat for the warrior. For the man who knows, there is no other.

I could go on for pages, but I will conclude with two things. First, an excerpt from a paper I wrote a year ago on the prose rhythms in this version. Lastly, a song our children like to sing about this “Blessed Old Book.” I hope this has been a blessing to you. More info can be found on www.HistoricBaptist.org.

PROSE RHYTHMS IN THE AUTHORIZED VERSION

The *Authorized Version of 1611* (also known as the *King James Version of the Holy Bible*) was uniformly and diligently translated considering the sound and sense of the passages. The forty-seven translators not only translated the scriptures accurately – being the best-learned men of Oxford, Cambridge, and Westminster – but they also were careful to make sure the flow of the translation was conducive to reading, quoting, and memorizing. They were careful to convey from the original tongues the meanings, tones and styles of the writers. They accomplished this by wording the English in such a way that the choice and sounds of words complimented each other, and the rhythm of words reflected the divine inspiration of the very words of God.

The care taken by the AV translators to arrange the perfectly-translated words show their reverence and love for the word of God – they gave this Bible an accuracy, beauty, and melody unmatched by any other translation of the Bible. Not only is the AV the perfect English Bible, but it is the prime example of beautiful metrically-written English. Not even the writings of Chaucer or Shakespeare come close to the majesty and beauty of the *Authorized Version*.

Understanding and identifying the different rhythms in the Authorized Version will help a student of the Bible, and a preacher of the word, to better emphasize the truth, speak more pleasing to the ear, and improve his homiletic delivery.

An article in *The British Weekly* for December 27, 1956, referring to *Certain Rhythms in the English Bible* by Dr. Lane Cooper (Cornell University Press), it stated: “If preachers, orators and writers would spend a little time noting the rhythms of that version, they would grow discontented with the sentences that please them now.”

The prose in the *Authorized Version* can be defined by these styles and rhythms: dactyls, anapests, spondees, iambus, feet, trochees, etc. The translators were also able to preserve the intent, styles, connotations, etc. of the original inspired words. I will describe the rhythms and other forms below and give some examples for the reader. My hope is that through identifying and studying these things the reader will gain a greater appreciation for the *Authorized Version*.

Continued at www.HistoricBaptist.org

This Blessed Old Book

It's a well of pure water when I'm thirsty and dry,
And bread when I'm hungry and worn.
When the battle is raging it's my faithful sword,
A shelter from life's troubling storms.

It's a light to my pathway and a lamp to my feet,
When the road gets so dark I can't see.
I've not made one change in the words that it says,
But it sure made a change in me.

CHORUS:

This blessed old book that I hold in my hands
Is true from beginning to end.
It's a solid foundation where I firmly stand.
Sin kept me from it, now it keeps me from sin.

When I think what it cost just to hold in my hands,
It reminds me of all those great men,
And all of the martyrs who have gone on before,
Who followed with their dying breath.

Now its critics are many and believers are few,
But one thing I've found to be true;
If you find when you read it that there's something wrong,
There's something wrong with you.

Pastor Desent is senior pastor at Historic Baptist Church in Wickford. He is a father, a grandfather, and one who describes himself as "a beggar who found bread just tellin' others where to get it." He has written many papers, which can be found at www.HistoricBaptist.org.