

## Some Thoughts on the King James Version

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by Bill Crews

The “King James Version” of the Bible, also known as the “Authorized Version” (because the translation was “ordered” or “commanded” to be made in 1604 by James I, king of England), was the work of 47 scholars and was finished in 1611 — more than 400 years ago.

Such English translations as Wycliff’s Bible (1382), Coverdale’s Bible (1535), Matthew’s Bible (1537), Taverner’s Bible (1539), The Great Bible (1539), The Geneva Bible (1560), The Bishops’ Bible (1568) (some of these were also “authorized” in the same sense as was the King James Version) had preceded the King James Version. Much of the wording was identical to that used in previous versions. At first the King James Version was as bitterly denounced by some as had been most of the others, but within forty years of its introduction, it had virtually displaced all the others in general acceptance. It went on to become the most popular English translation of all time (it probably still is).

What many people do not know, and some refuse to believe, is that the King James Version in general use today is not the same as that issued in 1611. Not only were there many editions issued; there were also many revisions made, so many, in fact, that no one today would want to use the 1611 edition. Spelling of words, shapes of letters, and the text itself have all been changed considerably. Early editions of the King James Version even included (though separated) the Old Testament apocryphal books!

The following quotations are from an article titled, “The History of the King James Bible,” which appears in the back of my copy of “The New King James Version” (a translation finished in 1979). Mine is a 1982 edition by Thomas Nelson Publishers. “There were three separate printings of the King James Bible in the first year and a total of fifteen editions between 1611 and 1614.” “Over the years from 1611 to 1616, words and phrases in the King James Bible were changed, and various printing errors were corrected.”

“In 1629 the first edition of the Authorized Version, printed by the presses of Cambridge University, underwent a thorough and systematic revision of the text, the italics, and the marginal references. Dr. Samuel Ward and Dean Bois, two of the 1611 translators, participated in that revision.”

“A still further revision, more thorough than the first, was carried out in the Cambridge edition of 1638. This carefully supervised revision covered “from the beginning of the volume to the end.”

“In 1762 Dr. Thomas Paris, a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, issued a major revision of the King James Bible; and seven years later an Oxford revision, the work of Dr. Benjamin Blayney, was released. These two editions have been called ‘the great modernizers’ of the King James Version.”

“King James Bibles in circulation today are the 1611 version as revised chiefly by these two scholars.”

**Pages 1228, 1229, and 1230.**

So the King James Version that nearly everybody has today is not the 1611 edition, but the revisions of 1762 and 1769. If you wish to believe that it is the most accurate English translation ever made, or the one truest to the original languages, that is your prerogative; but please do not entertain: (1) The notion that it is called “Authorized Version” because it is the only one authorized by God. (It is called that because it was “authorized” by King James I of England for use in the churches of England.) (2) The notion that it was the very one used by Christ and

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