

Why We Use the King James Version

As more and more English-speaking churches today are abandoning the KJV for one or more newer English versions, it is important for us to understand the reasons why we should continue to treasure and use it.

1. It is based on superior manuscripts.

The Masoretic text was used for the Old Testament and the Majority Text, for the New Testament (also called the Byzantine Text). An edition by the Elzevir brothers gave it the name Textus Receptus (TR). The TR was used for translation not only by the King James translators but also by other Protestant scholars in Europe to produce Bibles in various languages. Martin Luther used it for his German translation. Theodore Beza (John Calvin's successor) used it for his Latin translation. It continued to be widely accepted without question as the Word of God, the most accurate copies of the original autographs, for many centuries, until the mid-nineteenth century.

According to tract entitled, The Divine Original from the Trinitarian Bible Society, the Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus became available to Biblical scholars in the 1860s, and in 1881 two scholars, Westcott and Hort, advanced the theory that the New Testament text was preserved in an almost perfect state in these two 4th century manuscripts, and that the TR should not be used anymore. The implication of accepting the Westcott-Hort theory is that for 15 centuries (AD 330 - 1881) the true church of God has not had the Word of God, but has been using a very deficient text all along.

These two manuscripts and a few others containing a similar text present in a weakened form many of the passages of Holy Scripture which speak most plainly of the deity of Christ (e.g. 1 Tim 3:16). They also omit many passages that are familiar to us, e.g. the long ending of Mark (Mk 16:9-21) The Pericope de Adultera (John 7:53-8:11) and the Johannine Comma (1 John 5:7) which gives clear teaching on the Trinity.

The thorough research of John Burgon has revealed that the Westcott-Hort text represents only a small family of documents containing various readings which the Church as a whole rejected before the end of the 4th century and were not used for making copies. The more reliable Majority text was multiplied and copied from generation to generation, and the great majority of existing manuscripts (about 99.44 % of the 5,000 or so manuscripts) exhibit a faithful reproduction of the true text.

2. It was translated by faithful men.

The KJV translators were men of integrity, with no hidden agenda of injecting some personal or sectarian views into their scripts. Since they lived early in the 17th century, they were not tainted at all by German rationalism, textual criticism, evolutionism and ecumenism.

In contrast to this, some of the people who were involved in modern English versions were definitely of questionable background. Many of the translators, scholars, experts, consultants, and editors do not have a high view of the Bible, deny the inerrancy of scripture, believe in evolution, and doubt the authenticity of many miracles performed by Christ. The Revised Version (the first modern English translation of the Bible) had a Unitarian scholar named Dr. G. Vance Smith on its committee. Smith denied the deity of Christ, and this infuriated the church so much that they demanded his removal from the committee. However, the influential Bishop Thirwall threatened to leave the revision project if Smith was removed, and so the Unitarian scholar remained.

We thank God that the English Bible we are using has not been defiled by men like Smith. The KJV is therefore the safer translation for us to use.

3. It is a more literal translation.

The KJV may sometimes be hard to understand, but this is mainly because its translators have given a more literal translation of the wording of the Greek and Hebrew texts (Any words which are added by them to smoothen the reading or meaning are printed in italics.) The wording of the original text of a particular verse may be difficult to understand and can be interpreted in several ways, as commentaries on that verse will show. Modern translators overcome this difficulty by interpreting the verses for the reader. But this unfortunately totally obscures all other possible ways of interpreting them (e.g. Psalm 76:10 in NIV). What we read then in modern translations may be what some people think God's Word means, rather than God's Word itself.

The KJV translators followed the original language texts very closely and did not modify or change the meaning. They took no liberties with God's Word, and only rephrased certain expressions, when changes were really necessary. Faithfulness to the original languages can be seen even in the translation of the word "you." In modern English the word "you" can be ambiguous – singular or plural. But in King James English, there are two different words: **Thou** and **thee** for Singular, and **Ye** and **you** for plural. Some new versions boast about removing these archaic pronouns to make the English easier to understand, but they have sometimes obscured the precise meaning by doing this.

While the above reasons make the KJV the best English version for us to use, they do not imply that the KJV is a perfect version. In fact since 1611, it has gone through several revisions, the last of which was done in 1720. There are also obvious instances in the present text where improvements are needed. For example, it would have been better to translate the name 'Jesus' in Hebrews 4:8 as 'Joshua' to avoid needless confusion.

For the past 55 years, Life B-P Church has been upholding the use of the KJV because we believe that it is the best English translation of the Scriptures, made by godly translators from the best Greek and Hebrew texts. The KJV will continue to be used for all ministries of Life B-P Church and for our members' use.

Our doctrinal position with regard to the Word of God and the KJV Bible is as follows: "We do believe that the Hebrew and Greek texts that were used for the King James Version of the English Bible (KJV) were providentially preserved by God and are therefore closest to the original autographs of the Bible." (In the Golden Jubilee magazine, October 2000, 50 Years Building His Kingdom, p.64, emphasis added).