

The King James Bible 1611

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Abstract:

This brief article is the text of a lecture delivered at the annual Kingdom Lecture series for the Parishes of St Martins and All Saints, Ealing Common, London in November 2011. As such it is not intended as a work of research, rather an attempt to offer some more accessible aspects of the antecedents, creation and afterlife of the King James Version of the Bible. The lecture considers the range of translations of the Bible before 1611, the reasons why a Bible was needed in 1611, the process of constructing the King James Version of the Bible, and the afterlife of the King James Bible and especially its language.

TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE BEFORE 1611

There were a number of versions of the Bible in English well before 1611. In fact as early as the Anglo-Saxon period there were some translations of individual books into Anglo-Saxon, and King Alfred seems to have advocated translation of the Bible into Anglo-Saxon. However the nature of these very early translations was highly specialised:

- Some books, especially the Psalms were translated as linguistic exercises in monasteries to teach translation from Greek and Hebrew; ‘glossing’ which was interlinear translations were ways in which precision in translation was taught.
- Paraphrasing of stories and parables from the Bible was common in Anglo-Saxon literature including homilies and books of stories such as *Ceodmon*, *Beowulf* and *Aelfric*.
- Extract translations of sections of the Bible for a specific purpose, so e.g. King Alfred ordered Exodus 20-23 to be translated as a source for some of his legal code.

However these translations were largely unknown beyond the court and scholarly communities and certainly never reached the people. Nor was there any intention that the Bible would be available to the common man or woman. The Vulgate Bible –the Bible in Latin- was the common Bible of Western Europe from its complete translation in 384 for the next thousand years.

The first complete translation of the Bible in English for use by the laity was John Wycliff's translation of 1380. Wycliff was an Oxford professor and a prolific writer. By the 1370s he had reached an ideological position which denied the power of the papacy and even challenged some of the claims of the priesthood to authority over both doctrine and the people. He also argued that the Church did not have the power to mediate God's word or law. The Church immediately declared Wycliff's views anathema and in 1377 Pope Gregory XI proclaimed him a heretic. But this coincided with the Great Schism (1378-1415) during which the papacy was contested, so Wycliff was not under such threat as he might otherwise have been. Moreover the English found some of Wycliff's views attractive: his opinion that a churchman who was not manifestly righteous could be ejected from his office was one which aided the King in getting rid of troublesome bishops and clergy. It was also popular with people in parishes up and down the country. Wycliff also argued that everyone ought to have access to the Bible in their own language. Between 1377 and 1380 Wycliff and his followers translated the Bible which was produced in manuscript and relied on copying; in total only about 250 copies were made. Two editions were produced in 1380 and 1390 but in 1382 Oxford University declared Wycliff's views heretical and by 1409 Archbishop Thomas Arundel declared ownership of a Wycliff Bible was a crime. The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and the Lollard Movement were regarded as radical consequences of Wycliff's dangerous heretical translations and in 1428 Wycliff's remains were exhumed, burnt and thrown into the river Swift.

The English Bibles extant in 1611 were the product of the Reformation in England (and of course Bibles in German were produced from 1518 as well as many improved translations of the Greek: 8 translations in the 16th century; and Hebrew Bibles: 5 translations in the 16th century). William Tyndale presaged the political Reformation in England. He produced translations of the Bible in Cologne and Worms, and was executed by the Holy Roman Emperor's troops in Brussels in 1536. Tyndale's great advantage was the use of printing. Tyndale's Bible was used by Miles Coverdale as the basis for his translation under royal permission after Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy of 1534. The aim was to produce a theologically neutral Bible, though Coverdale was a reformer and later a Puritan. Cranmer's development of Coverdale's translation into the Great Bible was to add an introduction and to insist that the Bible had to be purchased by all parishes. Coverdale's Bible was the first to separate the apocrypha from the other books of the Bible, with the explanation that they lacked the same authority as the other books and were not found in the Jewish canon. This established a pattern followed by all Protestant Bibles.

The Great Bible was used under Edward VI, whose attention was largely devoted to the Book of Common Prayer. But under Mary I (1553-8) the English Bible was banned and the Vulgate returned. Under Mary I many Protestants fled to the continent and to Protestant safe havens such as Geneva. There a new translation was developed. This Geneva Bible sought to advocate Protestantism more strongly so although it drew on the Tyndale and Coverdale translations it was more polemical and contained textual notes which defended

Protestantism. It was also much smaller and portable –unlike the Great Bibles– and its layout and organisation of the books was much simpler and easier to use. The Geneva Bible took longer than Mary’s reign to emerge –being printed in the first two years of Elizabeth’s reign, but it was very popular because it contained woodcuts of maps and pictures –such as the parting of the Red Sea.

Under Elizabeth I a new translation, known as the Bishops’ Bible, was undertaken because it was widely believed that the scholarly standards of the Great Bible and the Geneva Bible were not high enough and that an ‘authorised’ Bible had to be of the highest scholarship. Moreover the Geneva Bible was becoming seen as a sectarian Puritan Bible and therefore the state wished to distance itself from that translation. Archbishop Parker pointed out that the translation of the Geneva Bible had not been undertaken in England and the textual notes were prejudicial in tone. Parker’s method, with a team of 12-15 bishops, was to test the English translation of the Great Bible against the Hebrew and Greek originals and where there were problems to re-translate those passages. While the Bishops’ Bible was widely adopted –and again all parishes were required to obtain one- it was not very well-received. For example Psalm 23 in the Bishops’ Bible began:

God is my shepherd therefore I can lack nothing: he will cause me to repose myself in pastures full of grass and he will lead me unto calm waters...

Nevertheless despite such shortcomings it became the standard version of the Bible running through 38 editions in Queen Elizabeth’s reign. It was because of

the popularity of the Bishops' Bible that the Catholic Church issued the Douai-Rheims Bible as part of the counter-Reformation.

It should perhaps be mentioned that the translation of the Bible into Welsh had happened in about 1588 by William Morgan, chaplain to Archbishop Whitgift (the defeat of the Spanish Armada was mentioned in the introduction). Modern scholars suggest that the impact of the Welsh Bible was nothing like as great as is often claimed: less than a thousand were printed and they were so expensive as to exclude even many parishes from buying a copy. Nevertheless it was significant that Whitgift, who sponsored the translation, was also the Archbishop when James ordered the new translation of the English Bible.

THE REASONS WHY A BIBLE WAS NEEDED IN 1611

When James I inherited the throne of England from Elizabeth I in 1603 he came to a country in which there were significant religious tensions. Catholics were excluded from society and politics –sufficiently so to plan the Gunpowder assassination plot of 1605- and Puritans felt that they too had been ignored by Elizabeth I and her ministers. James had dropped hints before his accession that he would be keen to tolerate greater religious freedom and it was this that gave both Catholics and Puritans high hopes on his succession in 1603. While Catholic hopes were quickly dashed, the Puritans were convinced that they would be more successful: James was a Presbyterian, a Calvinist and much more likely to sympathise with them. He had, moreover, been head of the Church of Scotland since his accession to the throne of Scotland in 1584. His

first few acts as King of England suggested that he was in sympathy with the Puritans, for example, he banned the popish ceremony of curing the King's Evil by the royal touch (though he later readopted it).

So the Puritans produced a 'Millenary Petition' –signed by 1000 of the Puritan clergy- asking for the Church of England to be reformed and stripped of its more Catholic ceremonies and practices (such as making the sign of the cross and the use of the surplice) and also for episcopal government of the Church to be replaced with Presbyterian control. Appearing to support the Puritans, but in reality increasingly influenced by the bishops, James called a conference at Hampton Court –away from the plague which was raging in London- in January 1604 to discuss these matters. At this point there was no thought of a new translation of the Bible, nor had it been mooted by either the Anglicans or the Puritans. Four moderate Puritans (carefully chosen by the bishops) John Reynolds, Laurence Chaderton, Thomas Sparke, and John Knewstubs were invited. However James had quickly been won over by Archbishop John Whitgift and Bishop Richard Bancroft of London who seem to have planned the Conference as a trap for the Puritans. The first day of the conference saw James in discussions with the bishops –of which there were eight in addition to Whitgift, supported by nine other senior clergy. At the end of the first day the King seemed satisfied and made some mild statements that some matters might need to be tidied up, but he seemed unlikely to concede what the Puritans wanted.

The second day was a joint meeting of the Puritans, the bishops and the King. The King astonished the Puritans at the opening of the meeting with a stern attack on their petition and rejecting out of hand all their requests for liturgical changes and any change in the constitution of the Church. In fact he spoke so severely that the four Puritans seemed entirely cowed and humbled. Only John Reynolds, President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford was prepared to speak up and he raised the matter of a new translation of the Bible because, he said, some editions were not sufficiently faithful to the original.

It is not entirely clear why Reynolds raised the issue of the Bible. It might be that he was overawed by the King and wanted to move away from the issues on which James's mind was clearly closed. It might be that he genuinely had concerns with the recent translations, especially the Bishops' Bible which had diluted the Geneva Puritan content. Some believed that he wanted to encourage the King to return to the Geneva Bible. Bishop Bancroft of London immediately rejected the idea of a new translation of the Bible on the grounds that 'if every man's humour should be followed there would be no end of translating.' Without any warning, however James agreed with the Puritans and said he couldn't abide the Geneva Bible and a new translation was needed. Bancroft was so quick to get back into line that he became the organiser of the new translation.

James's willingness to concede a new translation was probably a consequence of some practical considerations. He had conceded nothing to the Puritans on the key issues of liturgy and ecclesiastical government so a new translation

seemed reasonable. Also James had a strong objection to the Geneva Bible which –in some notes- railed at the power of kings. He cited two passages in the Geneva translation where he found the marginal notes offensive: Exodus 1:19, where the Geneva Bible had commended the example of civil disobedience shown by the Hebrew midwives; and also II Chronicles 15:16, where the Geneva Bible had criticized King Asa for not having executed his idolatrous grandmother, Queen Maachah. This seemed dangerously close to James's own circumstances with his mother Mary Queen of Scots. Moreover because it had been printed in small editions, the Geneva Bible had become a popular edition and was accessible enough for people to have copies of in their homes. It may also be that as a scholar and linguist (James read Latin, French, Italian, Hebrew and Greek) he knew the shortcomings of both the translations of the Geneva and Bishops' Bibles. He had written a commentary on the Book of Revelation and a meditation on the Lord's Prayer so he was conversant with various editions of the Bibles. Consequently while the new translation of the Bible seems to have emerged from the Hampton Court Conference by chance and circumstance rather than any plan or wider objective, it was a politically and religiously welcome move.

THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTING THE KING JAMES VERSION OF THE BIBLE

In July 1604, instructions were given to the translators that were intended to limit the Puritan influence on this new translation. Bishop Bancroft of London

added a qualification that the translators would add no marginal notes (which had been a problem in the Geneva Bible).¹ The King also gave the translators instructions designed to guarantee that the new version would conform to the ecclesiology of the Church of England. Certain Greek and Hebrew words were to be translated in a manner that reflected the traditional usage of the church. For example, old ecclesiastical words such as the word "church" were to be retained and not to be translated as "congregation". The new translation would reflect the episcopal structure of the Church of England and traditional beliefs about ordained clergy. Nevertheless, a feature of the King James Version of the Bible was its relative doctrinal neutrality and its avoidance of controversy. There were only a few slighting comments in the notes about either the Puritans or Papists (a contrast with earlier Bibles). The notes only offered parallel and alternative interpretations and readings without entering into the controversy of which was better. In the OT in the King James Bible there are 6,637 notes which far exceed those for earlier translations and shows how scrupulous the translators were in trying to provide the Hebrew original language.

James's instructions included several requirements that kept the new translation familiar to its listeners and readers. The text of the Bishops' Bible would serve as the primary guide for the translators, and the familiar proper names of the biblical characters would all be retained. If the Bishops' Bible was deemed problematic in any situation, the translators were permitted to consult other

¹ It is important to distinguish between notes which provided a commentary on the contents of the Bible and those which simply provided explanations for the translation and alternative translations of individual words.

translations from a pre-approved list: the Tyndale Bible, the Coverdale Bible, the Great Bible, and the Geneva Bible. In cases where all the earlier editions of the Bible were in agreement their translations were to be adopted. Despite this reliance on earlier Protestant Bibles, scholars have detected an influence on the King James Bible, and especially the New Testament, of the Douay-Rheims Bible. It is for this reason that the flyleaf of most printings of the Authorized Version observes that the text had been "translated out of the original tongues, and with the former translations diligently compared and revised, by His Majesty's special command." About 40% of the King James Bible was original with about 20% each coming from the Geneva, Tyndale and the Great Bible of Henry VIII.

The task of translation was undertaken by 47 scholars, although 54 were originally approved. All were members of the Church of England and all except Sir Henry Savile were clergy. The scholars worked in six committees, two based in each of the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, and Westminster. The committees included scholars with Puritan sympathies, as well as High Churchmen.

The two Westminster teams revised Genesis through to 2 Kings and Romans to Jude

The two Cambridge teams revised 1 Chronicles to Song of Solomon and the Apocrypha

The Oxford teams revised Isaiah to Malachi and Matthew to Acts and Revelation.

The companies seem to have been intentionally composed of men not only with diverse qualifications but also of varying religious convictions, presumably in the hope of thereby obtaining a translation acceptable throughout the English church. It was laid down that every chapter was to be revised simultaneously by each of the members of the relevant committee, who were to confer and agree on their revision of the text. This revision was then to be sent to other groups for review. If the reviewing committee disagreed on any point in the revision, they were to note it and explain their reasons. If the parent committee did not agree to a change suggested by another team, the issue was to be referred to a general meeting, to be attended by two leading members of each of the six groups. In the case of any particularly obscure or difficult word, the translators were permitted write to any learned man of the Church of England qualified to pronounce upon it. Consequently the names of the recorded revisers do not include everyone who contributed in some way to the King James Bible.

Forty unbound copies of the 1602 edition of the Bishops' Bible were specially printed so that the agreed changes of each committee could be recorded in the margins. The committees worked on their sections separately and the drafts produced by each committee were then compared and revised for harmony with each other by a single committee of twelve –as I say- which represented two scholars from each team. The scholars were not paid directly for their translation work, instead a circular letter was sent to bishops encouraging them to consider the translators for appointment to well paid livings as these fell

vacant. Several were supported by the various colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, while others were promoted to bishoprics, deaneries and prebends through royal patronage. In July, the king sent a letter to Bancroft asking him to contact all English churchmen requesting that they make donations to his project.

The committees started work towards the end of 1604. The translation teams had all completed their sections by 1608, the Apocrypha committee finishing first. From January 1609, a General Committee of Review met at Stationers' Hall, London to consider the completed marked texts from each of the six committees. The General Committee was paid for its work by the Stationers' Company. Their deliberations were recorded in Latin—which has partly survived in two later transcripts. The only surviving manuscript of the translation is a bound-together set of marked-up corrections written on one of the forty Bishops' Bibles -covering the Old Testament and Gospels, and also a manuscript translation of the text of the Epistles. The remaining records of the translations are thought to have been destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666.

By the time the project came to conclusion Bancroft had been appointed Archbishop, and he insisted on having a final say, making fourteen changes, of which one was inserting the term "bishopricke" at Acts 1:20. The work of final revision and editing was carried out in south-east England (a circumstance that helped produce homogeneity of language in the finished work), and most of the scholars involved were southerners. Scholars have consequently argued that,

like Shakespeare's work, it contributed to the process of the southern English accent becoming the received pronunciation of the ruling classes.

The original printing of the Authorized Version was published by Robert Barker, the King's Printer, in 1611 as a complete folio Bible. It was sold loose leaf for ten shillings, or bound for twelve –a huge sum in modern values. The sale of the Bible in loose leaves meant that many editions were later bound with pages in the wrong order. Robert Barker's father, Christopher, had, in 1589, been granted by Elizabeth I the title of Royal Printer, with the perpetual Royal Privilege to print Bibles in England. Barker invested very large sums in printing the new edition, and consequently ran into serious debt, so that he was forced to lease the privilege of printing parts of the work to two rival London printers, Bonham Norton and John Bill. It has been estimated that the cost of preparing the manuscript alone was £1000, while printing and production cost a further £2000. It was also such a huge undertaking that at least five different printing presses were used to produce the complete volume. [Scholars of the bible track the detailed 'signatures' on the printed sheets such as the stippling of the sea on some of the maps and the inconsistent capitalisation of the word 'LORD'.] It appears that it was initially intended that each printer would print a portion of the text, share printed sheets with the others, and split the proceeds. However bitter financial disputes broke out, as Barker accused Norton and Bill of concealing their profits, while Norton and Bill accused Barker of selling sheets properly due to them as partial Bibles for ready money. There followed decades of litigation, and imprisonment for debt for members of the Barker and

Norton printing dynasties, while each issued rival editions of the whole Bible. In 1629 the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge successfully managed to assert separate and prior royal licences for Bible printing, for their own university presses –and Cambridge University took the opportunity to print revised editions of the Authorized Version in 1629, and 1638. The editors of these editions included John Bois and John Ward two of the original translators. This did not, however, impede the commercial rivalries of the London printers, especially as the Barker family refused to allow any other printers access to the authoritative manuscript of the King James Version.

While the Authorized Version was meant to replace the Bishops' Bible as the official version for readings in the Church of England, it was (unlike the Great Bible) never specifically "authorized", although it is commonly known as the Authorized Version in Britain. It was instead 'appointed to be read in churches'. However, the King's Printer issued no further editions of the Bishops' Bible, so necessarily the Authorized Version supplanted it as the standard lectern Bible in parish church use in England. In the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, the text of the Authorized Version finally supplanted that of the Great Bible in the Epistle and Gospel readings – though the Prayer Book Psalter continued to use the older version.

The Authorized Version's acceptance by the general public took longer. The Geneva Bible continued to be popular, there was a final printing in England in 1616, but large numbers were also imported from Amsterdam, where printing continued up to 1644 in editions carrying a false London imprint. However,

few if any genuine Geneva editions appear to have been printed in London after 1616, and in 1637 Archbishop Laud prohibited their printing or importation. In the period of the English Civil War, soldiers of the New Model Army were issued a book of Geneva selections called "The Soldiers' Bible" of 1643.

In the first half of the 17th Century the Authorized Version was commonly referred to as "The Bible without notes", thereby distinguishing it from the Geneva "Bible with notes". There were several printings of the Authorized Version in Amsterdam –one as late as 1715— which combined the Authorized Version's translation with the Geneva marginal notes; one such edition was printed in London in 1649. During the Commonwealth a commission was established by Parliament to recommend a revision of the Authorized Version with acceptably Protestant explanatory notes, but the project was abandoned when it became clear that these would be nearly double the size of the Bible text. After the Restoration in 1660, the Geneva Bible was held to be politically suspect and a reminder of the Puritan era. Furthermore, disputes over the lucrative rights to print the Authorized Version dragged on through the 17th Century, so none of the printers involved saw any commercial advantage in marketing a rival translation. The Authorized Version became the only Bible circulating among English speaking people across the world. Although originally intended for Anglicans, the new translation soon spread its influence across the spectrum of emerging denominations and sects, as it gave voice to Presbyterians and Congregationalists, Quakers and Baptists.

In the wake of its first printing in 1611 the King James Version went through 244 reprints in the following two hundred years. Nevertheless the reception of it was not unanimously positive: Hugh Broughton, a leading Hebrew scholar, though one excluded from the translation teams, was outspoken in his criticism; he felt that there were hundreds of mistranslated words and even threatened the translators with damnation on the day of judgement! However John Donne, the poet, immediately took up the King James Bible and used it in his poetry. In Scotland the King James Bible was only available from 1629 and only officially sanctioned in 1634.

Since the King James Bible was only 'replaced' in 1881 by the Revised English Bible, there is an assumption that it remained unaltered between 1611 and 1881. This is not the case. There were minor revisions to correct words and phrases throughout the period. A 1616 revision made some changes to words and in 1629 two of the translators, Samuel Ward and John Bois, revised the text and introduced longer marginal notes. In 1638 further revisions were made and it is the 1638 edition which can claim to have been the longest lasting version of the King James Bible. From 1638 to 1762 the problems that affected the Bible were the errors that printers accidentally introduced (some of which are covered on your handout). It was claimed that cheap Bibles produced during the civil war and especially those imported from abroad were particularly likely to be error-ridden. Nevertheless the 1701 edition introduced two features which are important: it was the first to use the terms BC and AD throughout and it included James Ussher's chronology of the world, dating the creation to

October 23, 4004 BC. In 1762 Dr Paris revised the Bible to eliminate all the errors and to revise the antique punctuation and minor grammatical matters – especially the almost random use of italics throughout the edition. In 1769 Benjamin Blayney took the edition a step further by standardising the spellings of words in the Bible.

In the nineteenth century there were attacks on the copyright of the Bible. In 1833 Thomas Curtis claimed that recent revisions had strayed away from the exact 1611 text and argued that this was because the Copyright Act did not sufficiently protect the printing of the Bible. In the same year an identical reprint of the 1611 edition was published in Oxford and another edition was published in 1873. The American Bible Society issued minor revisions of the King James Bible in 1847 and 1851 but the three year revision of the translation was rejected in America because the Society regarded the wording of the translation as inferior to the original.

The reliance on the King James Bible was partly because scholars and writers came to see the extraordinary beauty of the language of the Bible. It was described by Thomas Babington Macaulay in 1828 as ‘a book which, if everything else in our language should perish, would alone suffice to show the whole extent of its beauty and power.’

The King James Bible adopted pithy and sharpened language which produced phrases that have gained such a purchase that they are part of common English today and at home in Hollywood films, popular journalism as well as novels, poetry and plays. David Crystal has shown that the number of phrases from the

King James Bible which have entered the English language were surprisingly few, only a couple of hundred. Crystal considers such phrases as ‘my brother’s keeper’; ‘how are the mighty fallen’; ‘out of the mouth of babes’; ‘the skin of your teeth’; ‘fly in the ointment’; ‘no peace for the wicked’; ‘physician heal thyself’; ‘see eye to eye’ and ‘the blind leading the blind’ –all of these were in earlier translations of the Bible and were incorporated into the King James Bible. Crystal argues that the power of the King James Bible has enabled it to dominate the language of an astonishing range of people: ‘Shakespeare and Sinatra, Beckham and Byron, Osama and Obama.’ This power is rooted, claims Crystal, in just 257 phrases which have been taken up and used and reused throughout the English language. Of these only 37 were the unique inventions of the King James translators, the remainder were adopted or amended from the earlier translations. Thus while the King James Bible may have begat many phrases in the English language and to have influenced it to a remarkable degree, it did so by drawing together the best of earlier Bibles. The influence the King James Bible exerted on the language can be deduced from the fact that it occupies nearly 42 pages of the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, only narrowly beaten by Shakespeare, with 45. When Samuel Morse sent his first revolutionary telegraph message in 1844, it quoted the Book of Numbers in -- what else? -- King James English: "What hath God wrought!"

What has been called ‘The King James Bible Movement’ has picked up speed in the latter years of the twentieth century. It seems to be made up of a number of strands in both the UK and particularly in the US. There is an ‘I Like the

King James Bible Best' group which prefers the King James Bible over other translations because their church uses it, because they have always used it, or because they like its style. There is a group which bases its support for the King James Bible on a linguistic test. This group argues that the King James Bible's Hebrew and Greek translations are the most accurate. The argument is that the King James Bible is based on better manuscripts. Many in this group accept modern versions based on the same manuscripts as the King James Bible. The Trinitarian Bible Society, for example, does not believe the Authorised Version to be a perfect translation, only that it is the best available translation in the English language, and

the Society believes this text is superior to the texts used by the United Bible Societies and other Bible publishers, which texts have as their basis a relatively few seriously defective manuscripts from the 4th century and which have been compiled using 20th century rationalistic principles of scholarship.

There is a 'Received Text Only' opinion which argues that the traditional Hebrew and Greek texts are supernaturally preserved. The King James Bible is believed to be an exemplary translation, but it is also believed that other translations based on these texts have the potential to be equally good. 'The Inspired King James Bible Group' believes that the King James Bible itself was divinely inspired. They regard the translation as ordained by God and as accurate as the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts found in its underlying texts. Sometimes this group will even exclude other language versions based on

the same manuscripts, claiming that the King James Bible is the only Bible. Related to this is the 'The King James Bible As New Revelation' group which claims that the King James Bible is a "new revelation" or "advanced revelation" from God, and it should be the standard from which all other translations originate. Adherents to this belief hold that the original-language Hebrew and Greek can be corrected by the King James Bible. These latter two views have also been referred to as "double inspiration".

The King James Bible has been claimed as an inspiration for the Trade Union movement: Joseph Arch –who led the National Agricultural Labourer's Union– was a superb orator, who drew on the common culture and language of the King James Bible. It has influenced music, Edward Elgar and Vaughan Williams said that the inspiration behind much of their music and literary sensitivities was the King James Bible.

Some surprising individuals have expressed their support for the King James Bible. Christopher Hitchens, author of God is not Great wrote in the Christian Post:

Though I am sometimes reluctant to admit it, there really is something 'timeless' in the ...King James synthesis. For generations, it provided a common stock of references and allusions, rivalled only by Shakespeare in this respect. It resounded in the minds and memories of literate people, as well as of those who acquired it only by listening... A culture that does not possess this common store of image and allegory will be a perilously thin one. To seek restlessly to update it or make it 'relevant' is to miss the

point, like yearning for a hip-hop Shakespeare, 'Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward,' says the Book of Job. Want to try to improve that for Twitter?²

Hitchens called the contemporary version "pancake-flat" and more suited for "a basement meeting of A.A."

The famous sceptic H. L. Mencken found in the King James "a mine of lordly and incomparable poetry, at once the most stirring and the most touching ever heard of." Another remarkable testimonial to the influence of the King James Bible comes from New Atheist thinker Richard Dawkins, who normally has nothing good to say about any aspect of religion. On the King James Bible, however, he becomes lyrical, so much so that he prays, apologetically, "Forgive me, spirit of science!"³

More predictably, perhaps, Rudyard Kipling in 1911 (on the tercentenary of the Bible) spoke of the King James Bible as hammering England into existence, its words being hammer blows onto the anvil of the language.

I'd like to close with an extract from the *Independent* newspaper, earlier this year. *The Independent* demonstrated the hold the King James Bible exerts on our language when it printed the following paragraph on the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible:⁴

² 2 April 2011, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/atheist-hitchens-praises-king-james-bible-49686/>

³ 2 February 2010, <http://www.kingjamesbibletrust.org/news/2010/02/19/richard-dawkins-lends-his-support-to-the-king-james-bible-trust>

⁴ 31 December 2010, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/battles-of-a-book-the-king-james-bibles-history-of-dissent-and-inspiration-2171902.html>

In a secular age where ignorance of religion goes from strength to strength⁵ among lovers of filthy lucre⁶ who only want to eat, drink and be merry,⁷ we know for a certainty⁸ that these resonant words endure as a fly in the ointment⁹ and a thorn in the flesh¹⁰ of the powers that be.¹¹ They can still set the teeth on edge¹² of those who try to worship God and Mammon.¹³ But does this ancient book, proof that there is no new thing under the sun,¹⁴ now cast its pearls before swine,¹⁵ and act as a voice crying in the wilderness¹⁶ -- a drop in a bucket¹⁷ of unbelief, no longer a sign of the times¹⁸ but a verbal stumbling-block?¹⁹

⁵ Psalms 84:7

⁶ 1 Timothy 3:8

⁷ Luke 12:19

⁸ Joshua 23:13

⁹ Ecclesiastes 10:1

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 12:7

¹¹ Romans 13:1

¹² Jeremiah 31:29

¹³ Matthew 6:24

¹⁴ Ecclesiastes 1:9

¹⁵ Matthew 7:6

¹⁶ Luke 3:4

¹⁷ Isaiah 40:15

¹⁸ Matthew 16:3

¹⁹ Leviticus 19:14

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