

Preacher's Pen points

Are Modern Versions Real Bibles?

People believe all kinds of things and proudly display them on bumper stickers. Sometimes they are funny; sometimes they are just flat wrong! Consider for example this one that I saw the other day on the back of a truck: *"If it ain't King James it's not the Bible"*.

The Importance of the King James Bible

Hardly anyone familiar with the last four hundred years of history could deny the impact that the King James Version of the Bible has had on our land. As Don Bassett of the Biblical Resource Center has put so eloquently, *"The Hampton Court Conference, and with it the conception of the King James Version, is a major milestone in the story of the Bible, and in the story of the English speaking people as well. As the first translation of the Bible in English to enjoy both widespread popular acceptance and recognition from ecclesiastical authorities in the Anglican Church, its impact has been immeasurable. The level of cooperation and scholarship employed in its production has left a legacy for modern scholars who continually work to enhance our understanding of the Scriptures. ...The KJV's widespread popularity also served to stabilize and standardize the English language, laying the foundation of the modern form of the language. The road to Hampton Court may be only a single leg in the journey of the Holy Bible, but it leaves a milestone that will remain visible for many years to come."*

"A" Translation But Not "The" Bible

To acknowledge its place in the history of the Bible's passage to us is not to affirm that the King

James Version is the Bible as the bumper sticker seems to suggest. The original Bible existed long before the King James translation of 1611 and was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, the languages of the times in which its human authors lived. Of course, it became necessary for this collection of books (called in Greek "biblia") to be translated into other languages as it spread throughout the world. Thus, "the Bible" has made its way into the numerous languages of the world.

The King James Version was itself one of a long line of attempts to translate the Bible into the language of the day, including English. It was a remarkable and useful translation for its time. However a number of factors have made it desirable to continue to make newer English translations. First numerous older manuscripts have been discovered that help establish the original text. Second there has been increased learning in the ancient languages themselves through discovery of secular documents from the same period. Third the English language has continued to evolve over the centuries with many changes in word meanings and modes of expression. As a result of these discoveries and changes we can have an even better translation of the Bible in our own speech. In the tradition of the King James Version several newer Bible translations have come into being that reflect this continued advance in learning, producing a readable and accurate Bible in our contemporary language. The King James Version was an important milestone in the journey of the Bible to us, but what the bumper sticker says "ain't" right!

—Johnny Felker (www.truthchasers.com)