

**Review: Derek Wilson, *The People's Bible: The Remarkable History of the King James Version*, Lion Hudson plc, Oxford, UK, 2010, (2011 edn.)**

Pages: 222

**Still a Worthwhile Read**

This is an average history of a miraculous book. Given the voluminous material on the translation and events of the time, it could stretch for hundreds of pages.

Where the author fails is in Biblical theology, trusting the pseudoscience of textual criticism, and superficial historical knowledge. Examples include I John 5.7 (which he writes as I John 5.7-8), the 'missing' Mark 16.9-20,  $\aleph$  as a 4<sup>th</sup>C manuscript, and various printing errors in the AV.

He also charges King James with being bisexual based accusations twenty years after his death.

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**Foreword (pp. 6-7)**

The author claims King James was bisexual.

**I) In the Beginning There Was no Word (pp. 8-21)**

*Sentences* were collections of theological or doctrinal statements made by revered masters, e.g., Peter Lombard.

**II) The English Heresy (pp. 22-47)**

In 1401, the bishops had Parliament create a law *De Heretico Comburendo*, in order to burn 'heretics' to death

John Wycliffe, 1381: "All Christians, and lay lords in particular, ought to

know holy writ and to defend it”. [p26]

The 1381 Peasant’s Revolt was contemporaneous with Wycliffe but not associative.

John Purvey was Wycliffe’s amanuensis (secretary). He completed Wycliffe’s translation in 1388.

Scripture and reason were the twin pillars of Lollardism, and they were “people of the book”.

Wilson : “[I John 5.7-8] Erasmus regarded this, correctly, as an interpolation, not found in the best early manuscripts.” [p34]

Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall was a humanist scholar in favour of cautious church reform

Tyndale left for Wittenberg, Germany, in 1524 where he worked with ex-friar William Roy for a year. In 1525, he sent a manuscript to Cologne on the Rhine and printer Peter Quentel’s shop. There, Romanist John Cochlaeus visited and overheard about an English Bible. Tyndale and Roy fled to the jetty and by boat to Worms and a printer Peter Schoeffer.

Tyndale’s 1534 edition had 4,000 changes. In May 1535, he was betrayed by a friend and imprisoned in Vilvorde castle near Antwerp. He was kept 500 days, and made a very sad appeal to the Marquis de Berge in winter.

### **III) “Let it Go Out Among Our People” (pp. 48-72)**

Miles Coverdale (1488-1568) was an ex-friar, but his translation was based on the Vulgate, Tyndale, the Zurich Bible, Luther’s German and Santi Pagnini’s 1528 Latin.

After his arrest, Tyndale entrusted all his work to John Rogers.

Antwerp craftsmen were more skilled than the English.

Secretary Cromwell under King Henry VIII ordered the Matthew’s Bible printed in Paris for its quality, however, in 1539 the print shop was invaded

and work stopped. The papers were smuggled out to England and printers were installed in London.

Edward VI was raised by Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset (1547-9), and John Dudley, duke of Northumberland (1550-3). Seymour had all Bible restrictions removed.

In 1555, Puritan William Whittingham fled to Geneva.

Archbishop Matthew Parker spent Mary's reign in hiding rather than going into exile.

The Bishop's Bible was finished 10/5/1568, rendered in stiff, cold English.

#### **IV) No End of Translating (pp. 73-90)**

Bishop Bancroft: "If every man's humour should be followed there would be no end of translating."

Elizabeth I's church was said to be Calvinist in theology with a Catholic liturgy.

The Canons of 1604 excommunicated everyone against governmental and liturgical church forms.

Presbyterians were extremist Puritans who believed the episcopacy incompatible with the Bible.

Edward Wightman was the last 'radical' martyr, executed 1611.

The 1572 *Royal Antwerp Polyglot* contained Hebrew, Chaldaic, Greek, and Latin. Philip I of Spain had brought together the finest Catholic scholars to work on it.

#### **V) The Good Hand of the Lord Upon Us (pp. 91-109)**

Lancelot Andrewes was leader of Westminster I committee (Genesis – II Kings). He was against Catholics and Puritans, and was on the tribunal of 1611 which executed Edward Wightman.

Westminster II (NT epistles) was led by William Barlow.

Cambridge II (Apocrypha) was led by Dr John Duport, a Calvinist. Samuel Ward and John Bois were members.

Oxford I (Isaiah – Malachi) was led by John Reynolds, who was often ill due to tuberculosis.

After the November 1605 Gunpowder Plot, the Commons wanted laws against Catholics rigidly enforced.

James' first parliament lasted till 1610 when he dissolved it for not supplying enough taxation.

Early in 1610, two members of each AV translation team met at Stationer's Hall, London to work checking the manuscript for nine months.

Thomas Bilson, bishop of Winchester is said to be the author of the Epistle Dedicatory.

Miles Smith of Oxford I committee wrote *The Translators to the Reader*.

In 1698, a disastrous fire destroyed Whitehall and any official records of the work.

Robert Barker was son of Christopher Barker (1529-99), whom Queen Elizabeth appointed royal printer with monopoly rights.

Robert had to fund the AV's printing himself, and battle pirates. In 1635 he ended up in prison where he died nine years later.

## **VI) The Lively Oracles of God (pp. 110-124)**

## **VII) A Mass of Strange Delights (pp. 125-142)**

In 1653, Parliament referred to the King James Bible as "to be the best of any translation in the world". [p137]

In , Lord Protector Cromwell granted AV monopoly printing rights to John Field and Henry Hills.

In 1662, the Act of Uniformity outlawed Puritanism.

### **VIII) Travels and Travails (pp. 143-158)**

In 1775, Congress banned British imports, including Bibles.

In 1777, Robert Aitken published a King James NT in Philadelphia costing £3,000 which bankrupted him.

In 1816, the American Bible Society was formed.

During the Civil War (1861-65), 1.5M Bibles were given to Unionists and 300K to Confederates.

The British and Foreign Bible Society was created 1804.

The 19<sup>th</sup>C was the Apogee of the Anglo-Saxon world.

### **IX) Progress or Profanity (pp. 159-179)**

In 1889-90, the Vatican released a facsimile of B.

### **X) Inspiration and Idolatry (pp. 180-202)**

“The words of the Authorized Bible become progressively less familiar with each succeeding year. Churches are partly responsible for this ... Older Christians can remember the time when their infant faith was nurtured by the King James Bible.” [p193]