



The Bible: King James Version

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The King James Version (KJV), also known as the Authorized Version (AV) or King James Bible (KJB), is an English translation of the Christian Bible for the Church of England that began in 1604 and was completed in 1611.

First printed by the King's Printer Robert Barker, this was the third translation into English to be approved by the English Church authorities. The first was the Great Bible commissioned in the reign of King Henry VIII (1535), and the second was the Bishops' Bible of 1568. In January 1604, James I convened the Hampton Court Conference where a new English version was conceived in response to the perceived problems of the earlier translations as detected by the Puritans, a faction within the Church of England. The translation is widely considered a towering achievement in English literature, as both beautiful and scholarly.

James gave the translators instructions intended to guarantee that the new version would conform to the ecclesiology and reflect the episcopal structure of the Church of England and its belief in an ordained clergy. The translation was done by 47 scholars, all of whom were members of the Church of England. In common with most other translations of the period, the New Testament was translated from Greek, the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew and Aramaic text, while the Apocrypha was translated from the Greek and Latin. In the Book of Common Prayer (1662), the text of the Authorized Version replaced the text of the Great Bible – for Epistle and Gospel readings (but not for the Psalter which has retained substantially Coverdale's Great Bible version) and as such was authorized by Act of Parliament.

By the first half of the 18th century, the Authorized Version had become effectively unchallenged as the English translation used in Anglican and English Protestant churches, other than for the Psalms and some short passages in the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England. Over the course of the 18th century, the Authorized Version supplanted the Latin Vulgate as the standard version of scripture for English-speaking scholars. With the development of stereotype printing at the beginning of the 19th century, this version of the Bible became the most widely printed book in history, almost all such printings presenting the standard text of 1769 extensively re-edited by Benjamin Blayney at Oxford; and nearly always omitting the books of the Apocrypha. Today the unqualified title 'King James Version' commonly identifies this Oxford standard text.

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