

The AV and Inspiration

A Brief Explanation

1. The Basics of the Principle

Among those holding to the Authorized Version there has been a debate concerning the matter of translation and inspiration. It is right that we hold to *every word* in the AV, and to *every* Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic word (in Daniel) upon which it is founded. It is also right that we clearly distinguish as to how these two sets of words were *given*.

The English words of the AV were *given by translation*, and this was **a process**. The process began with Tyndale (in fact before). It was completed in 1611. Further minor refinements continued up to 1769. By contrast, the Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic words were *given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost*, and in each instance this was **an immediate and completed act** (that is in each section or unit in which they were given). Regardless of the source of these Word's (whether the Lord, Job's friends or a heathen king), their inscripturation was an immediate, completed, *forever settled* act (Psa. 119:89). The words thus inspired were inherently, *once delivered* (Jude 3), inerrant (Prov. 30:5), and preserved for all time (Matt. 24:35).

The Scriptures describe the **immediate and completed act of inspiration**: *Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost* (II Pet. 1:21). The AV translators in their Preface, *The Translators to the Reader*, describe the **process of translation**. For the great majority of Bible believers this distinction has been clear. There has been no question. In more recent times claims have been made which *cross the line* between the two, and go beyond what we know Scripture to teach, and what the AV translators clearly state in their Preface.

2. The Testimony of the Translators

A study of the key statements of *The Translators to the Reader*, (found at the front of some AV Bibles), will show that it is not exaggeration to point to this Preface as one of the great documents of history. Here, insight is given that demonstrates *how* the publication of the KJV was such a work of God's Providence that it became the world's 400 Year Standard Bible. The Preface, however, *never* crosses the line between the work of *original inspiration* and the work of *present translation*.

As to the Originals from which They Translated

- *The originals thereof being from heaven not the earth, the Author being God not man. the inditer, the Holy Spirit, not the wit of the apostles or prophets.*
- *The Scriptures being acknowledged to be so full and so perfect.*
- *If you ask what they had before them, truly it was the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the Greek of the New [They knew inspiration was limited to the Hebrew and Greek Words, also the Aramaic in Daniel].*
- *These are the two golden pipes, or rather conduits, where through the olive branches empty themselves into the gold.*
- *Saint Augustine calleth them precedent, or original, tongues; Saint Hierome, fountains.*

As to the Way They Approached Their Task

- *And in what sort did these assemble? In the trust of their own knowledge, or of their sharpness of wit, or deepness of judgement, as it were in an arm of flesh? At no hand. They trusted in him that hath the key of David, opening, and no man shutting.*
- *Neither did we think much to consult the translators or commentators, Chaldee, Hebrew, Syrian, Greek, or Latin, no, nor the Spanish, French, Italian, or Dutch;*
- *Neither did we disdain to revise that which we had done, and to bring back to the anvil that which we had hammered;*
- *But having and using as great helps as were needful, and fearing no reproach for slowness, nor coveting praise for expedition, we have at the length, through the good hand of the Lord upon us, brought the work to that pass that you see.*

As to the Result and Conclusion of Their Work

- *Truly, good Christian reader, we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one [In literary grace] a good one...but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that hath been our endeavour, that our mark.*
- *Many other things we might give thee warning of, gentle reader, if we had not exceeded the measure of a Preface already...Ye are brought unto fountains of living water which ye digged not; do not cast earth into them, with the Philistines, neither prefer broken pits...Others have laboured, and you may enter into their labours. Oh receive not so great things in vain... Be not like swine to tread under foot so precious things...neither yet with Esau sell your birthright for a mess of pottage.*

Never in the history of Bible translation has there been a Preface like this! Nor can it be missed that the AV Men knew they were translating from Greek and Hebrew words given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and that they were translating words in English that were given by prayerful, diligent and scholarly study. Before being finalized, these words were reviewed, revised and brought *back to the anvil that which we had hammered*.

As to the Contrast with the False View

In their great Preface the **immediate/completed act of inspiration** and the **process of translation** could not be more clearly distinguished. It is as its title, *The Translators to the Reader*. They claim inspiration only for the Greek and Hebrew Words from which they translated, not the English words that they were translating. They give no hint of being somehow a channel for on-going or renewed inspiration.

They did not say as Peter Ruckman claimed:

- The truth is God slammed the door of revelation shut in 389 BC and slammed it shut again in 1611. (*The Monarch of Books*, p. 9).
- The King James Bible was given by inspiration of God. (*The Christian's Handbook of Biblical Scholarship*, p. 272).
- We shall deal with the English Text of the Protestant Reformation, and our references to Greek or Hebrew will only be made to enforce the authority of that text or to demonstrate the superiority of that text to Greek and Hebrew. (*Problem Texts*, p. vii).
- A short handbook, such as this, will not permit an exhaustive account of the marvelous undesigned 'coincidences' which have slipped through the A.V. 1611 committees, unawares to them, and which give advanced light, and advanced revelation...(*Manuscript Evidence*, p. 127).

Some have followed this line of thought. It is a serious Scriptural error that sets a precedent for ongoing inspiration and alters the Biblical definition of inspiration. It goes against what the Scripture Writers said. It goes against what the AV Translators said. The Biblical Writers claimed inspiration; The AV men claimed prayerful translation of that which they knew to be inspired. What could be clearer?

3. The Soundness of the Words

The Greek and Hebrew Words were given verbally by Inspiration. These same Words were kept safe verbally by Christ's promise of Preservation (Matt. 24:35). These same Words were brought into the AV verbally (beginning with Tyndale) by true, accurate and prayerful Translation.

Formal translation was the method used. The AV men translated word for word, noun for noun, verb for verb etc. Though the one was given by direct inspiration and the other by true and accurate translation, Translation and Original are at ease with each other. They are good friends. There is harmony. The Translators explain that though the Hebrew and Greek are now translated in a different language, it *is still the Kings Speech* (see *Translators to the Reader XIII.2*).

The foundation structure of a building is strong, and the superstructure built upon that foundation is also strong. But, the former by the nature of the case is *stronger*. It is not *vice versa*. We do not claim with Peter Ruckman and his followers that the English is superior to the Greek and Hebrew. We do not cut ourselves off from, and disparage the foundation. To ignore the Greek and Hebrew is like detaching a currency from the *Gold Standard*. All relates to the foundation .

On the other hand, we stand against becoming *Bible correctors*. We do not chip away at the Words of the AV. We, at every point uphold these time-honored and precious Words. Knowing the nature of this AV Bible, it is an ill-informed arrogance that sets out on the "a better rendering would be" road. We follow the Translators completely when they say: Our Authorized Bible is the "*one principle good one, not justly to be accepted against.*"

The AV always translates *accurately* and is always more than sufficient in itself. You can read it happily and confidently the rest of your life without ever looking at the Hebrew or Greek. But, it is not in the nature of a translation to be able to express in every instance all that is inherent in the underlying Word. There are times when reverent and proper elucidation from the Original is necessary. For example in I John 2:27 the word translated "anointing" is not the same as that translated "anointing" in James 5:14, and the difference should be explained. The same is true for the repetition of "know" in 2:29. In both cases the AV Word is accurate. There would not be a more logical *single* word than "anointing" and "know." But here as elsewhere there can be a need for explanation.

If we let the Words be circular disks, the AV Translators placed (as the case might have it) the slightly smaller English disk in the center of the larger Greek or Hebrew disk. Most of the space has been filled, but there may be room for a little further explanation. That is the nature of translation. The AV Translators themselves acknowledge a small degree of latitude by the insertion of their marginal notes. This explains why we use the terms *inerrant* and *preserved* for the Hebrew and Greek Words given by direct inspiration; and *true, accurate* and *sound* for the English Words given by the process of translation.

4. The Confidence of the Conclusion

To sum up, we know how inspiration came in Bible Times. It came *immediately!* It came because *The Spirit of the LORD spake by me and his word was in my tongue* (II Sam. 23:2). If someone believes inspiration came also in AV Times, let them explain *specifically with historical references* how it happened. They cannot! Let them show at what point in the process it came. They cannot! Let them give a quotation from the Translators where they say that that the English Words they wrote down *over a period of time* were not only a work of the best, prayerful, and spiritually accurate translation, but was also a work of THEOPNEUSTOS. They cannot!

The inspired Words were given once and for all in Bible Times. Against all the attacks of the enemy, these were preserved inerrantly for God's people. The publication of the AV was an act of God's Providence in not only providing **The Standard English Bible**, but also in *confirming and identifying* the inspired, original Words. This was especially the case in those relatively few places where differences existed in copies of the Traditional Text.

With respect to the confirmation and identification of Gods Words, the promises of John 14:23 and 16:13 are to be appealed to: *If a man love me, he will **keep** my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* (14:23); *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will **guide** you into all truth.* (16:13).

Preservation is based on the simple fact that God keeps and preserves His Words through those *who keep his Words!* Many will indeed *corrupt the word of God* (II Cor. 2:17); but in every age there will be sufficient numbers who guard this sacred deposit so as to insure the fulfilment of God's promise of preservation. This has been so through fire, sword, and all the corrupter's malice.

The terms **keep** and **guide** are not terms of inspiration (contrast John 14:26), but of preservation regarding the defence and identification of God's Words. This will by God's promise extend unto *all truth*, a term which can only mean the full revealed Word of God. As it is *forever settled in heaven* (Psalm 119:89), it will be kept and properly identified on earth.

We have therefore One Bible. We do not separate the one from the other. The Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic Words underlying the AV are grounded in the Eternal Counsels of God. The English Words of the AV have been so skilfully and prayerfully translated, that at the close of their Preface, the Translators are able to describe their work: as *great things*, as *precious things*, and as *fountains of living water which ye digged not*.

When we read in Psalm 119:89 that God's Words (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic) are *forever settled in Heaven*, it is likely that the central place of their deposit is that place the Apostle John saw: *And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple **the ark of his testament*** (Revelation 11:19). His Testaments, Old and New, are in the Ark in Heaven!

What is the reason for the completely unique character of Authorized Version? The answer must be: The translating work of the AV men was so in line with *the forever settled Words* deposited *in Heaven* that Heaven could invest the AV with its *Authority* as the *Standard Bible*, and that for 400 years.

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1 December 2012