

Is the KJV (AV) the only true Bible version?

Many conservative Reformed believers claim that only the KJV is the only genuine Bible. Some are more moderate and say that it is the best version to be trusted, but others are extreme and claim that it is inspired and was sovereignly kept by God to be the only true translation. What are we to believe?

Firstly some facts:

- The KJV cannot be the only true version (even in English) since it appeared quite late in history (1611). Before that most English Calvinists used the Geneva Bible (1557-1560) and most Puritans continued to use this Bible after the publication of the KJV (called Authorised Version in England). The Puritans believed the KJV was compromised since the translation was toned down to placate various parties. The Geneva Bible was also the version taken to America by the Pilgrim Fathers. Political promotion by the king and the evil Archbishop Laud was required to wear down the popularity of the Geneva Bible.
- Only the original autographs were inspired by God and these manuscripts are now lost. Nothing written by man since then is inspired, though God supervised the copying and safeguarding of accurate copies. Thus no Bible version is inspired; but some are more accurate than others. Neither is the KJV inerrant. All versions have mistakes; the KJV is no different.
- Much of the beauty in the KJV arises from the Tyndale Bible, which it copied; 90% of Tyndale's translation appears in the KJV word for word.
- The translators of the KJV themselves did not affirm KJV-only teaching but encouraged the use of various translations.
- If the KJV is the only genuine Bible version, what about Bibles that are necessarily translated into foreign languages?

The KJV was an excellent and poetic translation of its time. Its various revisions since then have ensured that it remained a good translation up to modern times. It is also based on the best family of manuscripts (Byzantine). However, much more information has come to light in the last 100 years, including the finding of many good manuscripts. There are also many archaic words remaining in the KJV, and many errors, that justify using a better version which takes these factors into account. In my view, the best version is the NKJV, which is a revision of the KJV using the fruit of modern scholarship but keeping the spirit and manuscript family of the KJV.

Whatever your decision one thing is certain, it is wrong to use this debate as occasion to cause an offence to fellowship.

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Understanding Ministries

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