

KING JAMES VERSION: By INSPIRATION or TRANSLATION?

II Timothy 3:15-17

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

All Scripture comes from God. The process was inspiration, which is simply defined in the Scriptures. Five great teachings about the Scriptures are found in the Bible.

1. Pre-existence Psm. 119:89
2. Inspiration II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21

3. Preservation Psm. 12:6,7
4. Corruption II Cor. 2:17
5. Translation Many cases of N.T. quotations of O.T. passages

What God has in heaven, He gave to us through the process of inspiration. He then preserved it to match the heavenly copy. Satan and mankind have corrupted what was given, and thus have created alternative readings. Translation should be the taking of the preserved words of God and transferring them into a receiving language. If this is done properly we have a faithful, trustworthy, flawless, accurate and complete translation. Such is our King James Version.

In II Tim. 3:16, "Scripture" is from the Greek word "graphe" which means "original writing; document, i.e. holy writ".

In II Tim. 3:15, "Scriptures" is from the Greek Word "gramma" which means "writing, epistle, letter, book". Thus Timothy knew the writings which would have been faithful copies of what God had given originally by inspiration.

The word "inspiration" occurs just once in the New Testament. It comes from the Greek word, "theopneustos", which means, "God breathed, divinely breathed in, given by inspiration of God." (The words "inspire" and "inspired" do not occur in our Bible.)

This is a process, not a product. It is GOD'S doing and not that of translators. There is no hint that it is a transferable quality from one language to another. It is God's work (not man's), and totally incapable of being divided or diluted.

Jude 3

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

God would have us contend FOR the faith rather than be contentious about error. Since "the faith" is found in our Bibles, the Scriptures must be our authority. We have a

safe source in the superb and irreplaceable translation, the King James Version.

There are several competing views on this subject. On the left are those who hold to liberal views. For example:

- a) The Scriptures as given originally are lost and replaced with corrupted copies.
- b) God gave men thoughts which they expressed in their own words. Thus there is no verbal plenary inspiration.
- c) "Inspiration" is lowered to include poems, ideas, hymns and preaching.

On the right are reactionary views of re-inspiration due to lost Scriptures.

Near us are those who misunderstand the word "inspiration". These use it to describe a product or quality. They use it as being powerful, pure, accurate etc. I once was

in this group and only left it after careful study and much reading of the Scriptures.

Again I say, "inspiration" is a process, not a quality. It is not a product of man's translation nor a process of translation.

Our King James Version is an accurate, safe, infallible, complete, trustworthy, irreplaceable, enduring, pure, quick and powerful, errorless, matchless translation, but not "inspired" by Bible definition.

Let us consider ten vital issues:

1. The Apocrypha

These books were never inspired of God and are not a part of our Bible. I have reasons to believe the translators believed the same. They included these non-inspired books in the 1611 Edition. Why? They would not have done so if they had been operating under divine inspiration. Neither would they have included the Apocrypha if their translated words were inspired. To think otherwise is to question the men

and their academic and spiritual integrity. The inclusion of the Apocrypha speaks eloquently against the inspiration of the King James Version.

2. Marginal Notes and Readings

The 1611 AV has many notes and readings in its margins. These give alternative words and breadth of meaning. While not changing God's words in English, they obviously show the translators' difficulties in expressing adequately in English what God had said in the original languages. They struggled with faith-fully giving us God's words in English. This is a typical problem in moving from one language to another in translation.

3. Multiple Editions

Psm. 119:89 "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven."

To claim inspiration of the King James Version is to create great questions. Which edition specifically is the accurate "inspired" version? Seven main editions from 1611-1769 had modifications. There were many varying texts among these early printings. Even today there are minor differences between the Cambridge, Oxford and Nelson editions. This certainly shows the work of men, not the inspiration of God. If the "1611" was inspired, why was it revised?

Most alterations were spelling changes. Jesus said, "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matt. 5:18) Certainly these changes do not speak of the KJV being an "inspired" text. This does not meet the Bible standard of forever settled. (The 1769 text, Cambridge edition, is the accurate translation of God's perfect words.)

4. Process of Translation

II Pet. 1:21 “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

I Pet. 1:10 “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:”

The 56 men worked over a seven-year period. They gave us no evidence of any awareness on their part of being used to produce an inspired English Bible. Their silence is eloquent.

The time taken, the steps followed, the six committees, the consultation with others in the Kingdom, checks and balances, use of the power of logic and education etc. all argue for translation and not inspiration. Where in the Scriptures is there any hint of God using such a process for inspiration? This process is in distinct contrast with “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

These 56 men considered various reasons as to why a certain word was chosen

over another. They carefully examined meanings to accurately present what God had said. This also is in stark contrast to inspiration.

5. Translators View of Their Task

These men were chosen for their superior linguistic skills. (What a contrast to many of those God used to write the Bible under inspiration.) They used these skills in careful examination of the Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek texts. They compared the previous English translations. They consulted the translation work of Bibles in other languages. These commendable actions were proper for translation.

They took what was available and revised, revised and revised. This is not the process of inspiration but good translation. Such was recommended from Tyndale to William Carey to this day. They did what they did because of who they were--
TRANSLATORS.

6. Doctrine of Divine Preservation

Psm. 12:6,7 "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever."

I Pet. 1:23,25 "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

God promised to preserve His words! If God failed, what hope is there for our souls? If He promised but didn't follow through, how can we trust Him?

God did keep His promise. He did preserve His words. Their purity made it possible for souls to be saved throughout the ages. God's words were not lost. The translators had those words to translate into English.

The ignorance of this particular Bible teaching has greatly added to the confused thinking of our day. Divine preservation

removes the need for “double inspiration” or “re-inspiration”, common errors.

7. Process of Acceptance

Starting with Wycliffe's translation there had been a number of translations presented to the English-speaking world. The confusion was such that King James was asked to intervene. He provided the backing of the British Crown and adequate financing. The project of translation was undertaken.

In 1611 the first edition was printed and circulated. If this had been an “inspired” version surely the godly saints would have recognized it as such and quickly embraced it. The record shows otherwise. Gradually the improvements in translation were seen and an acceptance occurred. This took a number of years after much comparison.

It was nine years later, in 1620, the Pilgrim fathers came to the New World. They did not bring the KJV 1611 Bible with them. Rather, they brought an older English translation, “The Geneva Bible”. Later they would see the superiority of the KJV

translation. They never did believe in its inspiration.

8. Variable Inspiration

If the KJV is the “inspired” words of God, which edition is 100% inspired? How inspired would that make the Tyndale . . . 70%, 80%, 90%? What about the Geneva, Matthew's, Bishop's etc. Bibles? What about the various deviant versions of today? Are they 20%, 50%, 70% inspired?

What kind of view does that lead us to about inspiration? Can anyone believe in different levels or degrees of inspiration? These are tools in measuring accuracy in translation but not inspiration.

9. Bible Translators

What are the implications to Bible translators today? Must people of other languages wait for “holy men of God” to write when they are “moved by the Holy Ghost”? After 1900+ years must they still wait for the words of God through inspiration? Is God still inspiring today?

Perhaps we should ask these prepared translators to add to their burden for accuracy in translation what labors it would take to make sure they precisely carry over some mystical quality of inspiration! Then they will need to defend their translation against any revision lest some of the “inspiration” be diluted. Can we ask that of the translators? Where is the logic of scriptural teaching for such an idea?

If the missionary teaches his converts that their Bible is inspired, what happens when a more accurate translation is made? (Should we revert to defending the Wycliffe etc?)

10. Linguistic Issues

II Pet. 1:20 “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.”

Most claims for an inspired version of the Bible are among English-speaking people. There seems to be a linguistic prejudice and superiority complex. Pride is resisted by God but grace is given to the humble. Dare we say

to others, "Our language has an inspired Bible but yours does not?"

People of other languages are proud of their languages and feel them superior to English. How do we feel when they claim inspiration for their Bibles? How do we respond if their Bible differs from ours?

Have you ever tried communicating in another language? You should know that not all languages are equal. Each language has strengths of preciseness and clarity that vary from other languages. Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek have strengths not found in English. These are issues the translators have to deal with. To think that the English holds all that God said is to ignore linguistics, word studies, Strong's Concordance etc. Receptor languages always have their limitations. Fortunately no scripture is "of any private interpretation."

The whole of Scripture will balance any real or perceived imperfections, limitations and misunderstandings of a single passage. God has so designed the Bible to be all that we need in our own language. A proper translation will meet our needs.

In summation, inspiration is the process by which God moved the forever settled Word from heaven to earth. Translation and revision are God's process of transferring His words into the language of a certain people. This is the heritage of our King James Version!