



The Story of King James

For the last three centuries Protestants have fancied themselves the heirs of the Reformation, the Puritans, the Calvinists, and the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth Rock. This assumption is one of history's greatest ironies. Today, Protestants laboring under that assumption use the King James Bible. Most of the new Bibles such as the Revised Standard Version are simply updates of the King James.

The irony is that none of the groups named in the preceding paragraph used a King James Bible nor would they have used it if it had been given to them free. The Bible in use by those groups, until it went out of print in 1644, was the Geneva Bible. The first Geneva Bible, both Old and New Testaments, was first published in English in 1560 in what is now Geneva, Switzerland. William Shakespeare, John Bunyan, John Milton, the Pilgrims who landed on Plymouth Rock in 1620, and other luminaries of that era used the Geneva Bible exclusively.

Until he had his own version named after him, so did King James I of England. James I later tried to disclaim any knowledge of the Geneva Bible, though he quoted the Geneva Bible in his own writings. As a Professor Eadie reported it:

"...his virtual disclaimer of all knowledge up to a late period of the Genevan notes and version was simply a bold, unblushing falsehood, a clumsy attempt to

sever himself and his earlier Scottish beliefs and usages that he might win favor with his English churchmen."

The irony goes further. King James did not encourage a translation of the Bible in order to enlighten the common people: his sole intent was to deny them the marginal notes of the Geneva Bible. The marginal notes of the Geneva version were what made it so popular with the common people.

The King James Bible was, and is for all practical purposes, a government publication. There were several reasons for the King James Bible being a government publication. First, King James I of England was a devout believer in the "divine right of kings," a philosophy ingrained in him by his mother, Mary Stuart. Mary Stuart may have been having an affair with her Italian secretary, David Rizzio, at the time she conceived James. There is a better than even chance that James was the product of adultery. Apparently, enough evidence of such conduct on the part of Mary Stuart and David Rizzio existed to cause various Scot nobles, including Mary's own husband, King Henry, to drag David Rizzio from Mary's supper table and execute him. The Scot nobles hacked and slashed at the screaming Rizzio with knives and swords, and then threw him off a balcony to the courtyard below where he landed with a sickening smack. In the phrase of that day, he had been scotched.

Mary did have affairs with other men, such as the Earl of Bothwell. She later tried to execute her husband in a gunpowder explosion that shook all of Edinburgh. King Henry survived the explosion only to be suffocated later that same night. The murderers were never discovered. Mary was eventually

beheaded at the order of her cousin, Elizabeth I of England.

To such individuals as James and his mother, Mary, the "divine right of kings" meant that since a king's power came from God, the king then had to answer to no one but God. This lack of responsibility extended to evil kings. The reasoning was that if a king was evil, that was a punishment sent from God. The citizens should then suffer in silence. If a king was good, that was a blessing sent from God.

This is why the Geneva Bible annoyed King James I. The Geneva Bible had marginal notes that simply didn't conform to that point of view. Those marginal notes had been, to a great extent, placed in the Geneva Bible by the leaders of the Reformation, including John Knox and John Calvin. Knox and Calvin could not and cannot be dismissed lightly or their opinions passed off to the public as the mere ditherings of dissidents.

First, notes such as, "When tyrants cannot prevail by craft they burst forth into open rage" (Note i, Exodus 1:22) really bothered King James.

Second, religion in James' time was not what it is today. In that era religion was controlled by the government. If someone lived in Spain at the time, he had three religious "choices:"

1. Roman Catholicism
2. Silence
3. The Inquisition

The third "option" was reserved for "heretics," or

people who didn't think the way the government wanted them to. To governments of that era heresy and treason were synonymous.

England wasn't much different. From the time of Henry VIII on, an Englishman had three choices:

1. The Anglican Church
2. Silence
3. The rack, burning at the stake, being drawn and quartered, or some other form of persuasion.

The hapless individuals who fell into the hands of the government for holding religious opinions of their own were simply punished according to the royal whim.

Henry VIII, once he had appointed himself head of all the English churches, kept the Roman Catholic system of bishops, deacons and the like for a very good reason. That system allowed him a "chain of command" necessary for any bureaucracy to function. This system passed intact to his heirs.

This system became a little confusing for English citizens when Bloody Mary ascended to the throne. Mary wanted everyone to switch back to Roman Catholicism. Those who proved intransigent and wanted to remain Protestant she burned at the stake - about 300 people in all. She intended to burn a lot more, but the rest of her intended victims escaped by leaving the country. A tremendous number of those intended victims settled in Geneva. Religious refugees from other countries in Western Europe, including the French theologian Jean Chauvin, better known as John Calvin, also settled there.

Mary died and was succeeded in the throne by her Protestant cousin, Elizabeth. The Anglican bureaucracy returned, less a few notables such as Archbishop Cranmer and Hugh Latimer (both having been burned at the stake by Bloody Mary). In Scotland, John Knox led the Reformation. The Reformation prospered in Geneva. Many of those who had fled Bloody Mary started a congregation there. Their greatest effort and contribution to the Reformation was the first Geneva Bible.

More marginal notes were added to later editions. By the end of the 16th century, the Geneva Bible had about all the marginal notes there was space available to put them in.

Geneva was an anomaly in 16th century Europe. In the days of absolute despotism and constant warfare, Geneva achieved her independence primarily by constant negotiation, playing off one stronger power against another. While other governments allowed lawyers to drag out cases and took months and years to get rid of corrupt officials, the City of Geneva dispatched most civil and criminal cases within a month and threw corrupt officials into jail the day after they were found out. The academy that John Calvin founded there in 1559 later became the University of Geneva. Religious wars wracked Europe. The Spanish fought to restore Roman Catholicism to Western Europe. The Dutch fought for the Reformation and religious freedom. England, a small country with only 4-1/2 million people, managed to stay aloof because of the natural advantage of the English Channel.

The Dutch declared religious freedom for everybody. Amsterdam became an open city. English Puritans

arrived by the boatload. The 1599 Edition of the Geneva Bible was printed in Amsterdam and London in large quantities until well into the 17th century.

King James, before he became James I of England, made it plain that he had no use for the "Dutch rebels" who had rebelled against their Spanish King. Another irony left to us from the 16th century is that the freedom of religion and freedom of the press did not originate in England, as many people commonly assume today. Those freedoms were first given to Protestants by the Dutch, as the records of that era plainly show. England today does not have freedom of the press the way we understand it. (There are things in England such as the Official Secrets Act that often land journalists in jail.)

England was relatively peaceful in the time of Elizabeth I. There was the problem of the Spanish Armada, but that was brief. Elizabeth later became known as "Good Queen Bess," not because she was so good, but because her successor was so bad. Elizabeth died in 1603 and her cousin, James Stuart, son of Mary Stuart, who up until that time had been King James VI of Scotland ascended the throne and became known as King James I of England. James ascended the throne of England with the "divine right of kings" firmly embedded in his mind. Unfortunately, that wasn't his only mental problem.

King James I, among his many other faults, preferred young boys to adult women. He was a flaming homosexual. His activities in that regard have been recorded in numerous books and public records; so much so, that there is no room for debate on the subject. The King was queer.

The very people who use the King James Bible today

would be the first ones to throw such a deviant out of the congregations.

The depravity of King James I didn't end with sodomy. James enjoyed killing animals. He called it "hunting." Once he killed an animal, he would literally roll about in its blood. Some believe that he practiced bestiality while the animal lay dying.

James was a sadist as well as a sodomite: he enjoyed torturing people. While King of Scotland in 1591, he personally supervised the torture of poor wretches caught up in the witchcraft trials of Scotland. James would even suggest new tortures to the examiners. One "witch," Barbara Napier, was acquitted. That event so angered James that he wrote personally to the court on May 10, 1551, ordering a sentence of death, and had the jury called into custody. To make sure they understood their particular offense, the King himself presided at a new hearing - and was gracious enough to release them without punishment when they reversed their verdict.

History has it that James was also a great coward. On January 7, 1591, the king was in Edinburgh and emerged from the toll booth. A retinue followed that included the Duke of Lennox and Lord Hume. They fell into an argument with the laird of Logie and pulled their swords. James looked behind, saw the steel flashing, and fled into the nearest refuge which turned out to be a skinner's booth. There to his shame, he "fouled his breeches in fear."

In short, King James I was the kind of despicable creature honorable men loathed, Christians would not associate with, and the Bible itself orders to be put to death (Leviticus 20:13). Knowing what King James was we can easily discern his motives.

James ascended the English throne in 1603. He wasted no time in ordering a new edition of the Bible in order to deny the common people the marginal notes they so valued in the Geneva Bible. That James I wasn't going to have any marginal notes to annoy him and lead English citizens away from what he wanted them to think is a matter of public record. In an account corrected with his own hand dated February 10, 1604, he ordained:

That a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek, and this to be set out and printed without any marginal notes, and only to be used in all churches of England in time of divine service. James then set up rules that made it impossible for anyone involved in the project to make an honest translation, some of which follow:

1. The ordinary Bible read in the church, commonly called the Bishop's Bible to be followed and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit.
2. Or, since the common people preferred the Geneva Bible to the existing government publication, let's see if we can slip a superseding government publication onto their bookshelves, altered as little as possible.
3. The old Ecclesiastical words to be kept, viz. the word "church" not to be translated "congregation," etc.
4. That is, if a word should be translated a certain way, let's deliberately mistranslate it to make the people think God still belongs to the Anglican Church - exclusively.

5. No marginal notes at all to be affixed, but only for the explanation of the Hebrew or Greek words, which cannot without some circumlocution, so briefly and fitly be expressed in the text.

*** You can find more info at Otto Scott's "James I: The Fool As King" (Ross House: 1976), pp. 108, 111, 120, 194, 200, 224, 311, 353, 382; King James-VI of Scotland/I of England by Antonia Fraser (Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1975)pp. 36, 37, 38; King James VI and I by David Harris Willson, pp.36, 99; James I by his Contemporaries by Robert Ashton, p114; and A History of England by Samuel Rawson Gardiner, Vol. 4, p.112. Check also A LITERARY HISTORY OF THE BIBLE by Geddes MacGregor who has devoted a whole chapter entitled "QUEEN" JAMES.

The Mammoth Book of Private Lives by Jon E. Lewis, pp. 62,65,66

James White also makes mention of it in his book, THE KING JAMES ONLY CONTROVERSY.

See also King James and the History of Homosexuality by Michael B. Young

and King James and Letters of Homoerotic Desire by David Moore Bergeron.

For those people who feel that the above is a result of the attack on King James by the 17th century tobacco industry are ignorant of the fact that his behavior and personal life were quite well known to his contemporaries. "He disdained women and fawned unconscionably on his favorite men." ENCYCLOPEDIA AMERICANA-pp. 674,675

"And shall I then like bird or beast forget

For any storms that threatening heaven can send
The object sweet, where on my heart is set
Whom for to serve my senses all I bend?..."

A poem written by King James to his homosexual
love interest (pictured above, Esme Stuart).
King James-VI of Scotland/I of England, by Antonia
Fraser, New York 1975