The History of the King James Bible

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Preached on: Sunday, August 30, 2015

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Don't be intimidated by the stack of books, though I will be making reference to them. They're all Bibles. I am to give a talk this morning on how we got our English Bible. The whole story cannot be told. The version of the Scriptures which we have in our pews here at First Presbyterian Church is the English Standard Version. It's about 13 years old, something like that, and a very good edition it is indeed, though I cannot help but say in significant respects, inferior to the one in which I hope to herald this morning.

The story of the English Bible is a fascinating one. You know, there was a time when people had no access to the Scriptures, when even parish priests had no access to the Scriptures. Many were illiterate or semi-literate. They heard some of the stories told by their betters from the New Testament and tried to memorize them and repeat them as best they could, but the Bible was not available.

The standard version of the medieval church, it remains the standard version to this very day, is that by Jerome, finished in about 430 or so in the Christian era. Jerome was a great scholar. He knew Hebrew and Greek unusually for his own time, and produced the Vulgate version of the Scriptures, that's the common version: Vulgate, vulgar, ordinary, common version of the Scriptures. And it was to that version that those who could read and had access to the Bible would turn when they wanted to consult it.

You know what happened in 1454 and 1455, do you remember? It was then, of course, that Gutenberg printed the first book using movable metal type, lead type. It was the Bible and a number of those Bibles are still in existence today. It was a revolution. It was an advance in technology which made all the difference in the world so far as literacy is concerned; so far as the knowledge of the world in which we live in and literature; so far as the Scriptures were concerned.

But we have to go back a little farther than Mister Gutenberg himself because the story of the English Bible begins with a man named John Wycliffe, 1328 to about 1384. He was a learned man, one of the most learned men of his time; an Oxford don who was greatly respected for his expertise in philosophy and other branches of human learning. But John Wycliffe had a vision of sorts, not a literal vision of course, but the Lord opened his mind and heart and he began to see all of the terrible flaws in the medieval church, the wickedness of the church in many respects, and he understood that the church under the Pope had lost sight of the true Gospel and he began to preach. He got himself into

considerable difficulty. Was spared death by burning at the stake because he had prominent political sponsors who protected him, but in the end he had to retreat from Oxford to his parish in Lutterworth. I've been to Lutterworth. The only fragment that I remember seeing there of Wycliffe himself was a bit of cloth that had made up one of his comments. But there he inspired the translation of the Bible for the first time into the English language. It was not a translation from the Hebrew and the Greek. How much of it Wycliffe himself did we do not know. It was done by a group of men.

It all had to be done by hand so you had to have a scholar to translate from the Latin to the English, that was the version they used, the Latin Vulgate; then to do this all painstakingly by hand. It's amazing that they could do this. Very few survive, though fragments certainly do because in those days, it could be a capital offense to possess and to read a copy of the Scriptures. One early printer who was guilty of nothing more than printing the Bible was burned at the stake. As I said, Wycliffe was spared that by his political protectors, sponsored a movement which we call the Lollard Movement. The preachers were Lollards and they went about their business of disseminating the word of God and the blessed Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as best they could, keeping as much as possible out of sight.

So fierce and so intense was the recoil of the officials political and ecclesiastical to what Wycliffe had done, that very little remains of anything he wrote in England itself and that's one of the curiosities of church history. One has to go to Prague to learn what Wycliffe had to say because his lectures and other writings were communicated by Bohemian students in England to Bohemian students and preachers in Prague and one of them's eyes were opened by Wycliffe, beautiful and important and so solemn work was Jan Hus. Jan Hus was a preacher to the university; he was a professor of theology and he became the Bohemian national hero. Jan Hus got into serious difficulty and was the target of much criticism and on that account was summoned to appear before the Council of Constance in 1414. It met at Constance on the shores of Lake Constance, perhaps some of you have been there. He was granted a safe passage by the Emperor Sigismund but the Council set that aside, one need not keep one's word to heretics, and this brave and holy man, the light of whose life had been kindled under God by reading John Wycliffe's works, was burned at the stake. And by order of the same Council, we can't call it a godly Council, by order of the same Council, John Wycliffe's bones had to be dug up and burned and then the ashes thrown into the local river, the River Swift.

There is something more to the story than that, though, because you take it another step further. Jan Hus was a great influence in the Lutheran Reformation in Germany. Some of you will have read Roland Bainton's wonderful biography of Martin Luther. There is a description in it of the Colloquy at Leipzig, a theological conversation between Johann Eck and Martin Luther. It lasted 18 days and Eck was successful in drawing out of Luther some things that Luther himself had not realized he had come to. Not long afterward, that took place in 1519, in 1520 he said that we are all Hussites without our knowing it.

So there is that chain from Wycliffe to Hus to Luther and then there is another link as well. Most of us have little knowledge of Cardinal Cisneros. He was a great figure in the

early period of the Spanish Golden Age. He was the founder of the Complutense University which is now the University of Madrid. He was repeatedly a royal counselor, a regent indeed, tremendous power and he was in charge of the Inquisition. That is certainly, of course, not to his credit, but he also was responsible for what is called the Complutensian Polyglot. What is the Complutensian Polyglot? Well, it is an astonishing and magnificent work in six huge volumes in which side-by-side various versions of the Scriptures are included: the Hebrew, the Old Testament Septuagint, the New Testament in Greek, the New Testament in Latin and so on, with references also to the Aramaic. It was a staggering work. He did not do much of it himself but he was the sponsor; he was the patron. He saw to it that it came to pass.

The New Testament was finished in 1514 but the book could not appear until...I say the work had been finished, the New Testament had not yet been finished but basically the work was finished by 1514. But something else happened. You know, the profit motive reigns supreme in every age and there was a printer in Basel named Froben who heard about the project underway in Spain and summoned to his side in order to discuss the matter, none other than Desiderius Erasmuc of Rotterdam. Erasmus was the great humanist. Now, humanist then did not mean what humanist means now. It has a bad connotation for many of us, "Oh, you're a humanist," meaning you're not really a believer. But in Erasmus' time, in the time of the Renaissance, for example, humanist meant an interest in and commitment to the humane letters; ancient learning of the Greeks and of the Romans, for example.

Erasmus was a fascinating character. He was the illegitimate son of a priest brought up in Rotterdam. That's why Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, there is a well-known statue in his honor there, studied for a time with the brothers of the common life in Deventer in the Netherlands. Was briefly a monk, though all his life while he was no longer a monk, he was a priest. Nobody knows whether he really ever acted as a priest. He was a scholar. He was a writer. He lived a peripatetic life. For a time he taught in England and he wrote a great deal. He wrote encouragingly from the perspective of those who were beginning to see the Gospel as it is presented in the New Testament Scriptures.

But Froben had heard of the work being done in Spain and so he called Erasmus in and he said, "I want your help in producing a Greek New Testament." There was nothing like that at the time except in Spain and that was still in the incipient stage. Remember that in 1453, Constantinople finally fell to the Turks. A crucial date in the history of the world. Sometimes modern history and medieval history have their dividing point at just that year, 1453. Well, scholars had to leave Constantinople as quickly as they could possibly do but they brought many books along with them and manuscripts. They were Greek, they read Greek, they spoke Greek, and it was so that the lamp of Greek learning was lightened in western Europe. These men came and shortly by 1500 or so, there were chairs of Greek in the various universities in western Europe.

Well, Erasmus set about to do this work; he did it in a year. Absolutely amazing. Incredible that he could have done it so quickly. He did it probably, almost certainly, too quickly and the manuscripts that he had at his disposal were not particularly ancient

manuscripts but, nevertheless, he produced a New Testament which was published in 1516. Now you know what happened the very next year, it was in 1517 that Martin Luther nailed to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg his 95 theses against the sale of indulgences. There is a link there and not very long afterward, Martin Luther said about himself, "To translate the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament into the German language." It was a work, the Luther Bible, which had tremendous influence on the development of the German language.

But somebody else made use of Erasmus' Greek Testament. I have here a treasure loaned me just for this morning. This is an actual page from the 1536 William Tyndale New Testament translated from the Greek. It's amazing. I have a facsimile here, but this is an actual page. Can you imagine? You can look at it afterwards if you like. An actual page from the New Testament which Tyndale published in 1536. Now, we don't know a great deal about Tyndale. We don't hear much about him commonly because his work was superseded by that of others, but Tyndale's great passion at the very center of his life was the desire to make the Bible available to people in England so that every plow boy could read and could understand. He was for a time tutor with the Welches and had their young children in hand. At dinner one evening, a contemporary, a learned man remarked in his hearing, "We were better without God's law than the Pope." Master Tyndale upon hearing that answered him, "I defy the Pope and all his laws," and said, "If God spare my life ere many years, I will cause the boy that driveth the plow shall know more of Scripture than thou dost." Amazing.

Well, he set about to do that, first tentatively in England but opposition was fierce. People would not tolerate the idea that the Bible should be made available to everybody. Tyndale's dates, by the way, are 1494 to 1536, the date of this leaf that I have just shown you. He died as a young man and I'll have more to say about that in a moment. But he had to leave England because his life was at risk. It's so amazing for us to think now that in the Christian world, so-called, the Christian world, one might have to forfeit one's life because one possessed a copy of the Bible in one's own language. How many Bibles do you have in your home? Certainly more than one. The Bible has been printed in the vernacular, many languages of the world, in the billions upon billions of copies. That's really and truly so, but in Tyndale's time, there was a tremendous risk in that regard. You know, religious hatred is a fearful thing. We see it abroad today, of course, in the Middle East, where it's enough to be a Christian to be persecuted or even to be beheaded and churches have been destroyed, Christians have been martyred, on the ground of religious hatred. It's a terrible thing and utterly in conflict with the Gospel of Christ, yet people in power seem to think that they are threatened, essentially threatened, when somebody does something a little unusual, however commendably it may be in itself.

So Tyndale had to repair to the continent and he spent time in Cologne. There he was betrayed and had to flee. Only a fragment remains of the work he did there. It's called the Cologne Fragment. He went to Worms. He went to the Wittenberg, we think, in Luther's time, met, conversed with Luther. He learned German in Wittenberg and then finally went to Antwerp. Antwerp then as now is a great port city. It was a center for the printing industry and so on and there was a considerable English colony there. It was in Antwerp

that Tyndale was able to complete his work, but it was also in Antwerp that he was betrayed by a man he had befriended who was perhaps in the employ of Thomas More and he was imprisoned at Vilvoorde near Antwerp. For 16 months he sat in a cold unheated cell without a glimmer of light. He pleaded for books so that he could continue his work but that, of course, was denied him. And then finally he was taken out of his cell, he was marched to the place of execution, bound to the pole around which the wood had been gathered for the fire, strangled and then his body was burned. It's a very moving story of a young man whose passion was to see to it that people could have and read the Bible.

I mentioned Thomas More, he lost his head at the behest of Henry VIII, you may remember, because he opposed Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. He has been made a saint in the Roman Catholic Church. Some saint. He was a furious persecutor of Christian people, of folk who differed from him, Lutherans for example, and other evangelical Christians. He did not hesitate to have them put to death. Of course, he himself was eventually on the ground of a principle he held dear himself, executed by Henry VIII.

Well, following that there is a whole long series of Bible translations, all of them more or less dependent on what Tyndale had done. Tyndale did the whole New Testament and a fairly substantial part of the Old Testament as well. You have the Coverdale Bible. That's interesting because the version of the Psalter produced by Coverdale who did not know Hebrew or Greek but had to use the Latin, is the version of this Psalter that until fairly recently has been included in the Anglican or the Episcopalian Book of Common Prayer. That's the case with some other parts of the Scriptures as well. You remember that sometimes at services where considerable blending takes place of Presbyterians, Episcopalians and others, some say "debts" and some say "trespasses." I don't think the Lord minds particularly but it is an amusing sound to hear. Well, Tyndale used "trespasses" and that crept into the Anglican liturgy. John Wycliffe used "debts" and, of course, so did the King James version.

There is a Matthews Bible by John Rogers. He was burned at the stake under bloody Mary, Queen Mary, the successor to her father Henry VIII, in 1555. Then you have the Great Bible and finally this Bible. This is a copy of the Genevan Bible. I've had it for many years. It's not worth very much, I think I paid 30 some dollars for it more than 50 years ago. I've been carrying it about ever since and sometimes reading it on high occasions. I have usually read it on Thanksgiving day for our services because the Genevan version of the Bible is the one that was used by the pilgrim fathers, all the early settlers in this country in the area of New England.

It was done in 1560 in Geneva, that's why it's called the Geneva Bible. A considerable group of scholars, real scholars, felt they had to leave England, their lives were at risk if they stayed and go to Geneva. Now, you remember that when Calvin died, you all knew this, in 1564, 1509-1564, so when the work on the Geneva Bible was underway, Calvin was there to look over the shoulder of the translators and so was his colleague and successor ,Theodore Beza. Amazing. It was chiefly done by William Whittingham but

there were others as well amongst them, perhaps John Knox. And it became the favorite Bible for English speaking people for a very long time until really the middle of the 1600s, the 17th century. It's a Bible also that where this could be done was dependent on the work of our friend Tyndale.

I'm tempted to read just a little of it to you. Let me find the 23rd Psalm and you'll see what striking similarities there are. This is all, of course, in black letter so it's a type we're not used to reading.

> 1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. 2 He maketh me to rest in green pasture, and leadeth me by the still waters. 3 He restoreth my soul, and leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake. 4 Yea, though I should walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. 5 Thou dost prepare a table before me in the sight of mine adversaries: thou dost anoint mine head with oil, and my cup runneth over. 6 Doubtless kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall remain a long season in the house of the Lord.

There are striking similarities to the Common version, are there not? And yet some some differences too. I'll say more about those differences in a moment but the Geneva Bible is a very, very important version of the Bible. It's been reprinted, in my house, a copy of a recent reprint of the Geneva Bible, it's scholarship is unimpeachable and it had a very great influence in its time.

Well, you remember that Queen Elizabeth succeeded her sister Mary, her half-sister Mary, as Queen of England. With the accession of the present Queen, she came to be known as Elizabeth I. There is now also an Elizabeth II. Her reign was long and influential. She was a great and wise ruler; a kind of 16th and very early 17th century version of Margaret Thatcher, I suppose you could say, though she dressed much more elaborately and very clever at manipulating people to get her way. It was under her reign, of course, that the Spanish Armada was overthrown and England delivered from that terrible danger.

Well, Elizabeth never married. She was the Virgin Queen and the question then became who should be her successor? As she grew older, she grew more acerbic and difficult and willful, but finally her statesmen gathered the courage to ask about succession and she said, "Why, my cousin of Scotland, of course." That was James VI of Scotland; we know him as James I of England. Then when she was very near death, a day before her death, she could no longer speak and she was asked the question again and all she could do was to gesture around her head like this as if describing a crown. She wanted no ordinary person to succeed her. She wanted a king to succeed her and that is, of course, what happened. It's amusing to read the stories of that and the subsequent period.

When Elizabeth died, two or three people made great haste to travel from London to Edinburgh hoping for royal favor by communicating the good news. Well, James was, of

course, elated. He had had a difficult life. He had already been King for 37 years from infancy really, and he had had a difficult upbringing. His mother, Mary Queen of Scots, was Roman Catholic but she, it was widely thought, was complicit in the murder of his father, Lord Darnley. Eventually Mary, as you know, became a prisoner of Elizabeth and at one point Elizabeth had her executed. And James spoke not a word against the execution of his mother but he was thrilled at the prospect of becoming King of England and as soon as could be managed, very quickly indeed, he began his journey southward. He was joined by a great company. He scattered gold and knighthoods here and there in gratitude, finally coming to London but before he reached London, there was a petition placed in his hand called the Millenary Petition. Millenary, thousand, because it was supposedly signed by 1,000 Puritan ministers in which they requested that some relief should be given in terms of one of true reformation in the Church of England.

Well, James ignored that but not long after, he came to London and he responded in this way, that there should be a conference held at Hampton Court Palace, a palace built for himself by Cardinal Woolsey and then given to Henry VIII when Woolsey's own life was in peril. A grand palace. Some of you may have been there but 1,000 rooms. A vast place. The conference, the Hampton Court Conference, met in January 1604. Only four Puritans were invited, Lawrence Chatterton and John Reynolds being the chief of them. The King, and he was learned, he could read Greek and Latin and so on and he was widely read, considered himself something of a theologian, indeed. The King made it clear as time went along that he could not resist giving some of the bishops a good deal of grief but he made it clear as they went along that he was on their side. They had feared that James, being a Presbyterian and having been instructed by all these sober, solemn Presbyterian divines in Scotland in the truth of God, that he would conform to that and try to make the Church of England in the image of the Church of Scotland. Well that, of course, was not to be. He said in the course of this conference, "Presbytery existeth with Monarchy as God with the devil. No bishop, no King." So his point there was perfectly clear.

Four Puritans came to the conference. There is so much to be said, I hardly know what to say and what to leave out. But the Puritan movement had become very strong in England, especially represented in the House of Commons and Parliament. Who where the Puritans? Well, some of them were very great men. The term could be used derisively, "Ha, Puritans," but it also came to be a noble term. These were people who wanted the church of England to be further reformed, to become more like the continental reformed churches; less like the Roman Catholic Church of which there were certainly strong lingering elements in the Church of England.

Well, it's with a certain distaste that you read of this. Here is old John Wycliffe, about to die, he was the Archbishop of Canterbury, a furious anti-Puritan, who when the King spoke as he did in favor of the established church, fell down on his knees and exclaimed that it must be the Holy Ghost that had given King James these words and so on. Richard Bancroft, a miserable creature if ever there were one, a persecutor of the godly, an arrogant man but at the same time a sycophant as so many of these were dependent and eager for royal favor, also fell down on his knees in front of the King to make a point or two. What the Puritans asked for was denied them. They wanted certain things to be

removed: making the sign of the cross, rings in weddings and some other changes in the Book of Common Prayer and so on. But the King would have none of it.

I should say, I was preaching in Scotland a long time ago at the great church in Dingwall which was made famous by John Kennedy in the 19th century. He was a close friend of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Spurgeon preached at the dedication of the church building in Dingwall and my host, a dear, good man and a friend, a friend highly prized, asked me first if I would take off my tie and put on one that he gave me because I had a black tie with a little red in it and his was musty and sort of green with age but nevertheless it was black. I agreed to that. Then he asked me if I would take off my wedding ring because he said some people will be offended if they see that wedding ring. It is an ancient aversion in certain parts of Scotland. That I drew the line at. I said, "No, I'm married to Jane. She's my wife. I'm not ashamed of her. I'm proud of her. I will not take off my ring." He let it go at that, but the Puritans already in 1604 wanted us to do away with the sign of the cross and the use of wedding rings and some other things.

This happened and it was almost coincidental, certainly it was not a part of the any big plan of protest, Reynolds asked if a new translation of the Bible could be done which might satisfy all parties and become the English Bible. Bancroft immediately recoiled from that thinking that he had a certain discernment of the King's mind but James found that very attractive and he immediately latched onto it. He knew the Geneva Bible but he detested it. Why did he detest it? Because the Geneva Bible is accompanied with marginal notes. Some of you have the NIV Study Bible, the Reformation Study Bible and those Bibles, of course, are replete with notes but the Geneva Bible went a little bit beyond that. For example, in relation to obedience to Pharaoh in the book of Exodus, some things are said about the rightness of resisting evil rulers and, of course, King James was convinced that he was King of England, Scotland, Ireland and France by the will of God and that nobody could contest that and so he detested the Geneva Bible. Now, it's of course, ironic, wonderfully so, that the Bible produced by order of King James included so much of what's already to be found in the Genevan Bible.

But work began immediately. It was done by officials in the Church of England. What sort of people were they? That were six committees. Two met at Westminster, the Abbey, the Jerusalem Chamber of the Westminster Abbey which I've seen. It's an important room to this day. The Westminster divines who gave us the Westminster Confession and the larger and shorter catechisms met in the Jerusalem Chamber. Two met at Cambridge and two met at Oxford.

It was done under the leadership of people like Lancelot Andrewes. Now, this Lancelot Andrewes, I've always had difficulty with him. He was a learned man. He spoke and wrote and read 15 languages. He was a prodigy of learning. He was also a holder of many benefices, for example, you could be vicar of a church and prebendary of a cathedral and Dean of Westminster Abbey and something else and something else all at the same time and benefit from the revenues which accrued to those who held such offices, and he held many. He gave himself, it is said, five hours a day to prayer and devotion. Five hours. Anybody who called on him before 11 o'clock was unwelcome. There was no right or

wrong about that. It was just obvious that he was at prayers. And his prayers are in print to this day, the private devotions of Lancelot Andrewes. He did not write them for publication. He did not write them in English. He wrote them in other languages but, nevertheless, they are a classic and I know, for example, Alexander White, one of my favorite characters, a great preacher in Scotland in the late 19th and early 20th century, thought a great deal of Andrewes.

He was vicar of Saint Martin's Cripple Gate, that is a parish in the city of London, a magnificent building and occasionally he preached there. He was a pastor of the congregation when in 1603, the plague broke out in London. 4,000 people lived in his parish in 1603, by the time that the plague had passed, more than 2,700 of them had died and where was their pastor? He had fled to the country because the safest way of avoiding the plague was to keep out of its way, not to be in the city. When I read such things as that I think immediately of our own Doctor Palmer who was here for almost 13 years and then went to New Orleands for another 46, and when the yellow fever struck in New Orleans and was so deadly, Palmer on one occasion away from the city for a holiday, returned immediately. He made 30 to 50 calls a day in the houses of death and suffering. Well, Lancelot Andrewes was of a different sort. He was a kind of prince of the church and so he avoided the plague in a beautiful place named Chiswick. Well, maybe I shouldn't have told you all that because it might sour you on the work that he did and that would be a shame.

The whole company of translators, we know of 50 names of them. The whole company represent tremendous learning, the finest, most accomplished learning available in that time. One was a man named Saravia. He was Belgian and Spanish. He had taught at the University of Leiden for several years, 1882 to 1888. Then came over to teach in Britain and he was the oldest of the translators. He was in his 70s when he undertook the work. But there were many, many like him. They were expert in Greek and Hebrew and in Latin, of course, and in some cases German and Aramaic and French and so on. They set about to give us what came to be called the Authorized or the King James Version of the Bible.

What time is it? I've got to stop quickly. I'm just going to read a couple of things here. I've got one marked, John 3:16 right here. The Tyndale Bible is divided into chapters but not into verses. The introduction of verses occurred later in the same century so it's a little difficult to find your way around in this translation. Let me read from John 3, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son for the intent that none that believe in him should perish but should have everlasting life, for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved."

My friend, Doctor Swaim over here, has written a fine, fine article on the King James Version in connection with the 400th anniversary four years ago and it's easily accessible on the Internet. All you have to do is type in his name, Martin Swaim and, there you'll find it, and it's eminently worth reading. He points out something which Adam Nicholson has also pointed out in his excellent book "God's Servants," that what the King James translators did as they set about their work was not so much to break new ground, though

they did some of that, as to refine and to make better. Well, if you listen to John 3:16 there, it's very similar to what we have. The meaning is precisely the same but how much easier, how much more, I suppose you could say beautiful, is the translation of the King James Version? "For God so loved that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life." If you make a study of it, that happens again and again. It's not so much that they changed the content but that they replace a word or revise the word order in such a way that it comes out as we know it to be. I wish there were more time to give illustrations of this sort but it's important that we know that.

A great deal of hard work was done from 1604 until 1611 when triumphantly the King James Bible entered the world. It was not an immediate success, however. The first printer lost a great deal of money on it. The Geneva Bible continued to be the preferred version, even among some of the translators of the King James Bible, not least Lancelot Andrewes himself, the preferred version continued to be the Genevan Version. But by the middle of the 1600s, that had begun to change and until my lifetime, I know I'm old now so that doesn't mean a great deal as far as you're concerned, but until my lifetime, it was the version of the Bible that people read and from which ministers preached and from which public orators quoted. Many, many of them: Churchill, Abraham Lincoln and so on.

It has lost its preeminence because of a plethora of modern translations. The first of them was the Revised Version, the English Revised Version in 1885 and then the American Revised Version in 1901. Those are excellent versions, especially the American Standard Version of 1901. Not so good to read but excellent if you want the exact and precise translation of the Greek and the Hebrew that lies behind it. Then, of course, the Revised Standard Version in 1952 which we used in our church until a few years back when we no longer could get the Revised Standard Version as it had been. It had become politically correct by that time and so we made the decision to introduce the English Standard Version. I think the right decision, but it grieves me to think that whole generations are now growing up, coming to adulthood and some of you are in that category, who have no knowledge of the King James Version at all. And it is so much a part of our spiritual heritage, of who we are, where we came from, how we got to where we are at the present time. So much a part of the warp and woof of the lives of English-speaking people that anybody who does not have a King James Version and read it at least occasionally should be ashamed of himself or herself.

Now, there I've said it. Some of you perhaps have been a little irritated by my constant use of the Authorized Version. I recognize it has its deficiencies. For example, if you go to 1 Corinthians 13, you find the word "charity for love, and have not charity," and so on. Well, the reason for that, of course, is that charity comes from caritas, selfless love in Latin, the translation of a agape love. We use one word which the Greek has three alternatives and they wanted it to be understood that it is selfless love, charity, but that passes us entirely by and I think that almost everyone who uses the King James Version at the present time substitutes "love" as he does so as he reads it. I certainly have done that. But, you know, I do not believe that the King James Version was inspired by God,

that it's the only translation. Some people think that in their ignorance, but I do believe that it is a glorious translation and that everybody ought to read from it at least now and again. The reason for my using it in the pulpit and in this class is because nobody will probably ever do it again and that's sad, but it's nevertheless, I'm afraid, a looming fact.

Let me read something to you by way of conclusion. This is from Will Durant, of all people. Now, Will Durant was not a believer. He and his wife wrote a whole long series of books on the "History of Civilization." This is what he has to say about King James and the Bible. "Despite his vanity and coarseness, he was a better King than some who excelled him in vigor, courage and enterprise. His absolutism was mainly a theory tempered with a timidity that often yielded to a powerful Parliament. His pretensions to theology did not impede a will to tolerance far more generous than that of his predecessors. His brave love of peace gave England prosperity and checked the venal bellicosity of his Parliament and the vicarious ardor of his people. His flatterers had called him the British Solomon because of his worldly wisdom and, Sully, failing to embroil him in continental strife, termed him the wisest fool in Christendom but he was neither philosopher nor fool. He was only a scholar miscast as a ruler, a man of peace in an age mad with mythology and war." And then this, "Better the King James Bible than a conqueror's crown."

Let's give thanks.

Our Father in heaven, we thank thee for the opportunity to be together this morning. We thank thee for thy word. We hang our heads in shame as we think of the degree to which we have failed to appreciate it and value it when others have given their lives for it, given their lives to translate it and place it in our hands. Receive our praise, O Lord, and inspire us to be regular and careful readers of thy holy word. Be with thy people everywhere, especially those who are now being persecuted for the sake of the Gospel. We pray in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

Let me say, if you read the King James version, you'll find it a whole lot better if you read it aloud. It was appointed to be read in the churches. The oral effect of the language in the King James Version is very, very important indeed.