

The *KJV* and Thee and Me

Thomas Robinson, July 10, 2011

2 Timothy 3:14 – 4:5 King James Version, 1611

¹⁴ But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; ¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

4: ¹ I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; ² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴ And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. ⁵ But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

2 Timothy 3:14/15 John Wycliffe, 1384

¹⁴ But dwelle thou in these thingis that thou hast lerud, and that ben bitakun to thee, witinge of whom thou hast lerud; ¹⁵ for thou hast knowun hooli lettris fro thi youthe, whiche moun lerne thee to heelthe, bi feith that is in Crist Jhesu.

2 Timothy 3:14/15 William Tyndale, 1525

¹⁴ But continue thou in the thynges which thou hast learned which also were committed vnto the seynghe thou knowest of whom thou hast learned them ¹⁵ and for as moche also as thou hast knowe holy scripture of a chylde which is able to make the wyse vnto saluacion thorowe the fayth which ys in Christ Iesu.

2 Timothy 3:14/15 Geneva Bible, 1560

¹⁴ But continue thou in the thinges which thou hast learned, and which are committed vnto thee, knowing of who thou hast learned them: ¹⁵ And that thou hast knowen the holy Scriptures of a childe, which are able to make thee wise vnto saluation, through the faith which is in Christ Iesus.

2 Timothy 3:14/15 English Standard Version, 2001

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

The Bible and Revelation – Incarnation, Translation

2011 is the 400th Anniversary of the publication of the King James Bible in 1611. A good time to reflect on the importance of the Bible in our faith and its long history and lost heroes.

God reveals himself in events/actions: creation, promise/call, exodus, law, Jesus, Pentecost.

But the events are handed down to later generations by word of mouth and by writing, which become part of the process of revelation by which God lets us humans know him.

God works through/with his people as they recognize and assemble texts that embody that revelation – “God-breathed” (*theopneustos*), human words but also God’s word. These texts form a “canon”/measuring stick that tests all developments of teaching and practice.

The texts are handed down, copied, and translated, subject to mistakes and corrections.

We usually focus on what the Bible is about. But the Bible itself is an important as God’s work.

The Struggle to Read the Bible:

The OT was written in Hebrew (& Aramaic); the NT in Greek. But God’s work is for the whole world, the languages were never considered holy and were translated into common languages: OT: Aramaic (Neh 8:8); Greek “*Septuagint*” 200 b.c. NT: Latin, Egyptian Coptic, Syriac, Ethiopic, many others. Hundreds of Greek manuscripts with variations. Latin “*Vulgate*” by Jerome c. 400. Standardized Greek text in 5th cent. – Byzantine text. These became dominant texts in the Latin west and Greek east through Middle Ages. Especially in the west, translations into new languages was forbidden; church control.

In 1380’s John Wycliffe translated from Vulgate as means to reform of the church.

Handwritten copies were distributed, but his texts were banned. Jan Hus, burned 1415.

1450’s, Gutenberg developed printing press, Gutenberg Bible (Vulgate) was printed 1454.

In 1516, Erasmus, a Dutch scholar, printed first Greek NT with new Latin translation, based on late Greek manuscripts. Widely distributed. 1517, Martin Luther, Reformation.

1525 William Tyndale, genius of English and other languages, met with Luther; both were translating the NT. First English version printed, banned. Tyndale burned 1536.

1539 under Henry VIII, Thomas Cranmer and Myles Coverdale publish the “Great Bible,” as part of Henry’s “reform.” Large size, chained to pulpits, widely read in public for first time.

Under Queen Mary (catholic, 1550’s) many protestants in Geneva Switzerland with John Calvin. Geneva Bible with notes (anti-pope, anti-hierarchy). Bible of the Putitans/Pilgrims.

The King James Version – 250 Years

James I became king of England, 1603, trained in languages and theology. He desired a new translation to be used by both Church of England and the Puritans. Committees of scholars on both sides worked on the translation, using older versions and the Greek of Erasmus and Hebrew mss. Published in 1611, it took almost 50 years to replace the other versions, but then became practically the only English Bible until nearly 1900.

The KJV became very influential in its language both for English in general and specifically for religious language. It served as a unified religious language for all English protestants.

Early Manuscripts, Changing Language

The modern new translations flow from two causes. On a literary level, the 17th cent. English has become difficult for moderns to understand, especially in mission situations.

Many new manuscripts of the Greek NT have been discovered (19th-20th cent.), and it became clear that the KJV was based on late manuscripts used by Erasmus, different in many ways from the earliest texts of the NT. The first Revised Ed. of 1899/ASV 1901.

Revised Standard Ver. 1946, NewRSV, 1989; ESV, 2001. New translation NIV 1973.

The process goes on. Recovering the Bible’s teaching. Exploring God’s Revelation.