SHOULD YOU TICKLE YOUR EARS?

Posted on October 3, 2009 by Eddie

Category: Bible Translation

Is the King James Bible an effective tool for evangelism? is the theme of a blog post I came across yesterday. The post was interesting, if not electrifying, and sparked some more or less routine discussion. But the comments took a fascinating turn when someone stepped in and commented in support of the King James Version.

> *The AV/KJV is translated from the Received Text, which is the text preserved by God through the centuries and approved by the church in all ages...*
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> *... If you want a Bible which teaches all the historic doctrines in their full force, you will choose the Authorized King James Bible.*
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> *If you want a watered down Bible with weakened doctrines to tickle your ears, you will choose a modern version...*
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> *... If you donâ€™t want your conscience to be troubled, you will choose a modern version that is soft on the ears. If you want to know the truth, and the truth will set you free, you will thoose (sic) the King James Bible.*
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> *I would advise you to dig deeper on this issue. Whether you will or not will reveal whether you are an earnest seeker of truth or a merely superficial Christian, if a Christian at all.*

Subtle stuff! The reason I draw your attention to this because the comment in reply to this was the best response that I have ever seen to the KJV only position. Here are a few quotes:

> *You are (sort of) incorrect that the AV (1611) uses the Received Text as its foundational source from which it is translated. Firstly it only relates to the NT. Secondly, it was translated using two texts: Thomas Bezaâ€™s Greek New Testament (1565-1604) and Stephanusâ€™ 3rd edition Greek NT (1564-1551). It wasnâ€™t until 1624 (13 years after the AV) that the Received Text even officially existed. The Elzevir Brothers wrote a Greek NT using Bezaâ€™s text claiming in 1633 that they were providing â€œthe text which is now received by all,in which we give nothing changed or corrupted.â€ However your, and their, assertion that it â€œis the text preserved by God through the centuries and approved by the church in all agesâ€ is completely foundation-less! To start with it was based on the previous texts by Beza, who himself based his text on that of Erasmus (1516). His text was based on around 6, rather late, Greek manuscripts he had, all from the 10th Century onward. There is variation in his text too. The famous Trinitarian text of 1 John 5:7-8 found in the AV was not in the original print, nor in Erasmusâ€™ text as he couldnâ€™t find it in any Greek texts. However in 1520 he was presented with a Greek manuscript with it included so it was added to later editions. Also, Erasmusâ€™ has to translate the last 6 verses of Revelation himself from the Latin Vulgate as they werenâ€™t in his manuscripts. His translation appears in none of the Greek*

> *manuscripts we have...*
>
> *... Also you say, â€œIf you want a watered down Bible with weakened doctrines to tickle your ears, you will choose a modern version.â€ Weakened doctrines? Where? How is using modern language and varied sources weakening doctrine? How is that tickling our ears? Was it tickling our ears when the Bible was translated into Latin, or English, or any other language?...*

> *... You assertion that, â€œIf you want a Bible which teaches all the historic doctrines in their full force, you will choose the Authorized King James Bibleâ€ seems to claim that anyone that didnâ€™t have the AV is lacking. All the Christians before 1611 will be rather annoyed I guess. This also limits the work of the spirit in revealing truth to us.*

Personally, I have two major gripes with those who suggest that the King James is the only valid translation of the Bible. The first is that they tend to ignore the historical and geographical context. Quite simply, the King James Translation (and the manuscript from which it was derived) did not exist for the first three quarters of the Christian era and the majority of the world's Christians don't speak English. To elevate any translation to the sort of sacred levels that these folks do, marginalises the majority of Christians in time and space to the level of second class believers. Secondly, it is my strong conviction that God desires the Scriptures to be read and understood. The English language has changed in the last four hundred years and so it is appropriate that our Bibles reflect those changes.

That being said, I would have similar problems with anyone who that any translation of the Bible was the only legitimate one, whatever the language.

But once again, the saddest thing to my mind in all of this, is that English speakers are getting all hung up about the legitimacy of translations into English, while ignoring the 200 million people worldwide who don't have a single word of Scripture. We need to get our priorities sorted out!

The original blog post that I discovered dates back to February 2009 but has only just shown up in my Google feed reader - very strange.