

# SCHOLAR'S CORNER

**I have heard about the King James Bible my whole life. Sometimes I have heard it referred to as the Saint James Bible. Is it the bible I should buy?**

Well, the King James Bible was the English bible for Protestants about 300 years ago -- and it is King James, not Saint James, since it was under King James I of England in 1611 that it was first published. The King James Version (KJV) still has the unswerving loyalty of many. You've perhaps heard the joke about the old man who wasn't interested in trying out a newer translation, saying, "If the King James Bible was good enough for St. Paul, it's good enough for me!"

So dominant and beloved was the King James Bible that a number of bibles are revisions of it. Knowing how attached people were to the King James, scholars thought an entirely new, fresh translation that would be very different from the King James wording would have no chance of success.

This practice enables us divide up English bibles into two groups: those that are in the "Tyndale/King James Tradition" and those outside that tradition. You see, not only have there been revisions of the King James Version, but also the King James itself is a revision of earlier English bibles. In the English-speaking world, we have a venerable tradition of bibles, each translation being a revision of the one before it, going back to William Tyndale (c. 1494 - 1536). He translated the entire New Testament and the narrative books of the Old Testament before he was executed for translating the Bible, which was a crime at the time but was soon to be legalized. Tyndale's work was used, with modifications, in the Coverdale Bible (1536), the Great Bible (1539), and the Authorized Version of 1611, known in America as "the King James Version," and "The KJV." After

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until 1881, when the New Testament of the Revised Version was published. The Old Testament of the Revised Version appeared in 1885. Other revisions of the KJV have followed: the American Standard Version (ASV, 1901), the Revised Standard Version (RSV, New Testament 1946, Old Testament 1952), the New American Standard Version (NASB, 1971), the King James II Version (1971), the New King James

about 50 years, the Authorized Version replaced its rival, the Geneva Bible (1560), even with Calvinists, whose theology was shown clearly in the Geneva Bible's footnotes.

The KJV then reigned supreme as the English Bible

Version (NT 1979, OT 1982), and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1989).

All of these revisions of the KJV are inherently conservative in that they seek to retain the earlier language except where they think a change is necessary.

Before 1952, most churches, including the Episcopal Church, used the King James. Between 1952 and 1989, non-fundamentalist churches used the Revised Standard Version. Now we all use the New Revised Standard Version. But most people do not realize the Bible they hear every Sunday in church follows a long and venerable tradition back to William Tyndale.

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The Rev. William G. Gartig, who holds a doctorate in Bible, will answer your questions about the Bible, Episcopal life and other religious subjects. Send questions to 2146 Cameron Ave. Apt. 5, Cincinnati, OH 45212-3631 or at [gartigwg@episcopal-dso.zzn.com](mailto:gartigwg@episcopal-dso.zzn.com).