

Any translation is only an approximation. Four centuries and a half ago William Tyndale determined to make a good translation of the Bible into English. The church leaders, who were accustomed to reading the Bible in the excellent Latin translation that St. Jerome had made a thousand years earlier, did not see any need for a change, but Tyndale persisted, and after a great deal of hard work he was able to publish a very good translation of the Bible. During the next eighty years many different groups prepared and published Bible translations. Some of these were excellent in one way and some in another.

King James was stupid in some ways. In some respects he was really a scoundrel. He put many hindrances in the way of the Bible believers in England, and himself wrote a book on the divine right of kings. Yet he rendered one excellent service by picking a group of qualified scholars and setting them free to select the best phrases and sentences out of the many translations that had been made during the previous eighty years and fitting them together to try to give the sense of the Bible in the English of their time. The result of their work came to be called the King James Version.

The King James Version is a very excellent translation, but, like every translation, it has its faults, and there are a few places where its translation is definitely in error. It was a marvelous gift to its own day but as the language gradually changed many of its sentences came to obscure the truth rather than to express it, not because of faults in it but because the English Language has changed.

Every language is constantly changing. These changes come slowly and often we are not aware of them at all. When I was a boy everyone used the word "terrific" to mean "horrible" or "very bad". When a young man asked me, a few years ago, to give three lectures to a group of Christian students at a university, I named three topics. The young man immediately said, "Oh, that's terrific!" I thought he meant that it was very bad and I should think of other subjects, but I soon saw by his facial expression that he meant the exact opposite. To almost anyone who is now over 50 years of age the word "terrific" means "horrible" or "very bad": to almost anyone under 50 it now means "very good" or "excellent".

There are probably about 60 words in the King James Version