

**Journal of Dispensational Theology – Winter 2015**

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***The Making of the King James Bible – New Testament*** by Laurence M. Vance. Orlando: Vance Publications, 2015. 288 pp., paper, \$16.95.

Whether the reader is a fan of the King James translation of the Bible or not, *The Making of the King James Bible – New Testament* is a well-documented history of the translation. At the outset of the book, the author made it clear as to why the King James translation was needed. He quoted John Rainolds from the Hampton Court Conference of January 1604 who said, "Those which were allowed in the reign of King Henry the Eight and Edward the Sixth were corrupt and not answerable to the truth of the original" (p. vii). One should note that the majority of the quotes throughout the book are in Old English which can make it difficult to understand.

When creating the King James translation, Vance stated that the translators had fifteen rules which they followed. The first of which was "that they were to follow the Bishops' Bible" (p. 1). In the introduction, Vance made it clear that the King James translation was not only an update from the Bishops' Bible from 1568, but it is also combined with translations from the original Greek.

The introduction, which spans the first fifty-five pages of the book, covers the history of the English translations beginning with the Tyndale translation of the New Testament published in 1526. The translation was not accepted by King Henry who was, at the time, the head of the Church of England. Vance stated, "In May of 1530, King Henry, in consultation with his bishops, prohibited yet again the translation of Tyndale, but commanded the bishops 'that thei calling to theim the best learned men of the vniuersities should cause a new translacion to be made, so that the people should not be ignoraunte in the law of god'" (p. 2). Vance gave a very thorough and informative history from this translation until the King James translation, focusing quite a bit upon the Bishops' Bible, as this was one of the foundations of the King James translation.

As stated previously, the King James translators used the Bishops' Bible as a foundation. As a consequence of this, Vance took great care in explaining how and why the Bishops' Bible came to be. On page fourteen, the author quoted John Strype (1643-1737) who said, "Among the noble designs of this Archbishop (Matthew Parker), must be reckoned his resolution to have the holy Bible set forth well translated into the vulgar tongue, for private use, as well as for the use of churches." The goal, it seems, was to make the Bible more accessible to everyone. "Because at

least twelve of the translators were bishops, it is no surprise that the new Bible was early on referred to as the Bishops' Bible" (p. 17).

While putting together the Bishops' Bible, Parker set out several observations for the translators, the first of which matches the first rule for the King James translators, that is, they were "to follow the English translation used in the churches, and not to recede from it but where it varieth manifestly from the Hebrew and Greek original" (p. 20). The common translation at the time was the Great Bible. Vance stated, "Thus, like the Authorized Version, the work was not entirely a new translation nor was it entirely a revision of an existing text; it was both" (p. 21). The Authorized Version here is the King James translation; it seems that, according to Vance, the King James Version is a continuation of the Great Bible with revisions where the translators felt it did not hold up against the Greek or Hebrew originals.

The introduction goes on to discuss the editors of the Bishops' Bible and various editions of the Bible. On page twenty-five, Vance stated, "There were eighteen editions of the Bishops' Bible, and they were published from 1568 to 1602." The statement has been a debate amongst scholars over the years, all disagreeing on how many versions were actually produced. Throughout the introduction, Vance goes on to explain the variations of the eighteen versions of the Bishops' Bible. In this section, he provided some very detailed illustrations of the different versions that are discussed.

With so many different versions of the Bishops' Bible to examine, Vance asked the question: "Which edition of the Bishops' Bible was used by the King James Translators?" (p. 49). Since this was the ordinary Bible that the church would use for reading, the translators were to use this Bible as a base for the King James Version. Vance answered, "When historians actually specify an edition, which is not too often, it is either the 1572 or the 1602 edition" (p. 49). At the end of the introduction, Vance made it clear that whether scholars agree or not, the King James Version is based in large part upon the Bishops' Bible.

The majority of the book is dedicated to the collation of the New Testament of the King James Version Bible (pp. 65-246). Vance discussed the differences and the similarities between the 1611 Authorized Version and the 1602 Bishops' Bible. In this, he outlined spelling differences and shows where no verse changes were made at all between the two translations. In this collation, he did not provide the text of the King James Bible, he merely identified what was changed between the two versions.

Vance used the remainder of the book to give a brief analysis of the comparison of the King James Version and the Bishops' Bible. His analysis

is thorough and quite technical. He gave the exact count of verses that were the same between the two and how many were different. He also showed the number of verses that were only different by a single word. Vance closed with the statement that the King James Version "was both a *revision* of the earlier English Bibles and a *translation* from the original languages, all based on the Bishops' Bible" (p. 266). Whether one is a fan of the King James Version or not, Vance has done a thorough job of showing how the King James Version New Testament came to be. His book *The Making of the King James Bible New Testament* is a valuable resource for those who are interested in church history or translation history.

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***How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee*** by Bart D. Ehrman. New York: HarperOne, 2014. 404 pp., cloth, \$27.99.

***How God Became Jesus: The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus' Divine Nature*** by Michael F. Bird, Craig A. Evans, Simon J. Gathercole, Charles E. Hill, and Chris Tilling. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 236 pp., paper, \$16.99.

Bart Ehrman, as the dust jacket of his new book *How Jesus Became God* states, "is one of the most renowned and controversial Bible scholars in the world today." He is the author of over twenty books, some of them *New York Times* bestsellers, and has appeared on numerous television and radio programs, as well as being featured in leading newspapers and magazines. In addition, after teaching for four years at Rutgers, he has taught since 1988 at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where he is currently the James A. Gray Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies.

The title of the book is exactly what the author undertook to explain. As stated on the dust jacket: "How an apocalyptic prophet from the backwaters of rural Galilee crucified for crimes against the state came to be thought of as equal with the one God Almighty Creator of all things." In short, it describes why the followers of the man Jesus considered Him to be God. The answer for believers is because Jesus is and always was God; He is the Almighty; He is the Creator of all things; however, this is not so for Ehrman. The dust jacket also informs readers that the book "took eight