

The King James Version, King James I, Witch Persecutions, and the Veneration of Saints

Union of Saints

We still use the word *wicked* in New England, though it is a fun part of our regional language and is usually used to describe something as very good, such as, “wicked awesome.” We also have a strong Catholic heritage. We are known for enjoying beer and for our historical resistance to Prohibition. We have a long-standing cultural fascination with folklore, spirits, and witches, and many people enjoy visiting Salem during Halloween as part of this tradition.

New England has also often been associated with more Democratic political leanings and a reputation for friendliness. However, times are changing rapidly. Many people are concerned with modern challenges, including modern slavery and mass immigration for this reason, political parties have evolved and shifted in ways that Americans describe as a “flipping” or realignment of the parties.

“Better to float than sink, but the devil of man would tell women it was the opposite.” The same is true of lies, manipulations and assumptions, versus truth, balance and logic. The Union of Saint’s wholeheartedly recognizes the “strike” of justice as a reality of truth, and that it should be achieved through the primary mission of *peace*.

~ Cowdrey

Introduction

The **King James Version (KJV)** of the Bible is one of the most influential English translations ever produced. Commissioned by **King James I of England (James VI of Scotland)** and first published in **1611**, it has shaped Christian worship, literature, and culture for more than four centuries. Like many historical works, the King James Version was produced within a particular *political*, *religious*, and *cultural* environment. Understanding that historical context helps explain both its lasting *influence* and the *controversies* surrounding the period in which it was created.

King James I and the King James Version

King James I commissioned a new English translation of the Bible to provide a standardized text for use within the Church of England. The resulting King James Version became widely adopted throughout the English-speaking world and remains in use by many churches today.

The translation reflected the Protestant theological environment of early seventeenth-century England and Scotland following the Protestant Reformation.

King James I and Witch Persecutions

King James I strongly believed in the existence of witchcraft. Before commissioning the King James Version, he authored *Daemonologie* (1597), a work defending the reality of witches and encouraging their prosecution. During his reign, witchcraft laws remained in force, and individuals accused of witchcraft could be investigated, tried, imprisoned, or executed. Witch persecutions were not unique to England or Scotland but occurred throughout much of Europe during this period. Historians generally recognize that many of those accused were innocent people who became victims of fear, superstition, local disputes, or social prejudice. The King James Version itself did not create the witch trials. Rather, it was produced during an era in which belief in witchcraft was happening across Europe.

King James I and the Veneration of Saints

King James I was a Protestant monarch whose religious views reflected the English Reformation. During his reign, England maintained a Protestant national church that rejected many teachings and devotional practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Among the practices rejected by many Protestants of the period was the veneration of canonized saints, including prayers directed to saints, the use of relics, and other devotional practices associated with the Catholic tradition. King James I opposed certain Catholic teachings and practices concerning the veneration of saints. Protestant theology continued to recognize the saints described in Scripture while differing with Catholic teaching regarding their role in Christian devotion.

The King James Version and the Ku Klux Klan

During various periods of American history, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, members of the Ku Klux Klan frequently quoted and used the King James Version in speeches, ceremonies, and publications. The organization presented itself as defending what it described as traditional Protestant Christianity and often appealed to communities where the King James Version was commonly used. The KKK incorporated biblical language, Christian imagery, and passages from the King James Version into its public rhetoric. Its use of the King James Version reflected the Bible's widespread popularity among Protestant churches during that era rather than any unique connection between the translation itself and the organization.

Important Historical Distinction

The fact that members of the Ku Klux Klan used the King James Version does **not** mean that all churches or denominations using the King James Version were affiliated with, endorsed, or supported the KKK. The King James Version has been used for more than four centuries by millions of Christians across many denominations and traditions. The overwhelming majority of churches using the King James Version have had no organizational connection to the Ku Klux Klan, and many have explicitly rejected racism, religious intolerance, and Ku Klux Klan

political ideologies. Likewise, the historical actions and beliefs of King James I should be understood within the political and religious conflicts of the early seventeenth century rather than attributed to the Bible translation itself.

Historical Perspective

The history surrounding King James I and the King James Version reflects the complexity of early modern Europe as well as America. History included religious conflict, political struggles, witch persecutions, and significant theological disagreements between Protestant and Catholic traditions. The King James Version remains one of the most influential works of English literature and Christian history. At the same time, historians continue to study the greater historical context in which it was produced, including the religious controversies, social attitudes, and political events that formed the early seventeenth century. Understanding these events requires distinguishing between the historical actions of political leaders, the beliefs of particular groups, and the enduring influence of a Bible translation that has been used by diverse Christian communities for more than four hundred years.