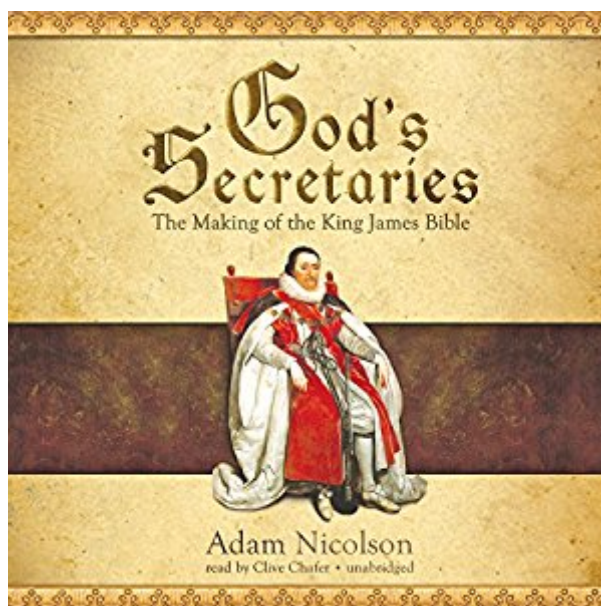


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God's Secretaries: The Making Of The King James Bible



Synopsis

A net of complex currents flowed across Jacobean England. This was the England of Shakespeare, Jonson, and Bacon; the Gunpowder Plot; the worst outbreak of the plague England had ever seen; arcadian landscapes; murderous, toxic slums; and, above all, sometimes overwhelming religious passion. Jacobean England was both more godly and less godly than it had ever been, and the entire culture was drawn taut between the polarities. This was the world that created the King James Bible. It is the greatest work of English prose ever written, and it is no coincidence that the translation was made at the moment "Englishness" and the English language had come into its first passionate maturity. Boisterous, elegant, subtle, majestic, finely nuanced, sonorous, and musical, the English of Jacobean England has a more encompassing idea of its own reach and scope than any before or since. It is a form of the language that drips with potency and sensitivity. The age, with all its conflicts, explains the book. The sponsor and guide of the whole Bible project was the king himself, the brilliant, ugly, and profoundly peace-loving James the Sixth of Scotland and First of England. Trained almost from birth to manage the rivalries of political factions at home, James saw in England the chance for a sort of irenic Eden over which the new translation of the Bible was to preside. It was to be a Bible for everyone, and as God's lieutenant on earth, he would use it to unify his kingdom. The dream of Jacobean peace, guaranteed by an elision of royal power and divine glory, lies behind a Bible of extraordinary grace and everlasting literary power. Adam Nicolson is the author of *Seamanship*, *God's Secretaries*, and *Seize the Fire*. He has won both the Somerset Maugham and William Heinemann awards, and he lives with his family at Sissinghurst Castle in England.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Information on the version I bought and read follows: Version: Kindle ASIN: B000FC11ZG Page Numbers: No English Style: Contemporary with numerous excerpts from 16th century Jacobean English presented in its original form. Table of Contents. Yes and linked for use in Kindle Length: 336 pages in book form X-Ray: No Review begins here: An excellent overview of the remarkable sequence of events in both the church and the state that came together to produce the beloved King James Bible. This is history at its finest – fervently written, efficiently edited, remarkably moving. A finely balanced work. Despite what follows in my review, this book as indicated above is first and foremost history, a point not to be lost. The story is told both through narrative history that introduces the extraordinary (yet quirky and flawed) men and events who brought this work together (not the least of which was King James himself), and Nicolson’s own insightful analysis sprinkled throughout the book which explains why this bible has reigned for over four centuries as the centerpiece of literary achievement in the English speaking world. This second part, the analysis, for me at least was the centerpiece of the book. While not overtly polemic in nature, Nicolson nonetheless makes a convincing case that this bible forever has a place in the English speaking church despite recent trends to more modern (or worse PC) tones because it makes no excuses about the fact that the language of majesty is neither common nor natural. To the contrary, in Nicolson’s own words: “This is about more than mere sonority or the beeswaxed heritage-appeal of antique vocabulary and grammar. The flattening of language is a flattening of meaning. Language which is not taut with a sense of its own significance, which is apologetic in its desire to be acceptable to a modern consciousness, language in other words which submits to its audience, rather than instructing, informing, moving, challenging and even entertaining them, is no longer a language which can carry the freight the Bible requires. It has, in short, lost all authority.” Nicolson, Adam (2009-10-13). *God’s Secretaries (P.S.)* (Kindle Locations 2382-2387). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition. I especially appreciate the author’s insinuation that to those who are willing to acquaint themselves with the rhythms of the King James Bible, a rich poetry awaits that can stir a soul to passionate response in a way that is difficult to imagine in the more recent, “common language” translations. This rang especially true for me as I set aside my NKJV this year and bought an English Standard

Version for my annual reading through the bible. I am now nearly two months into my reading and while feeling adequately informed, something of the magnificence, the deep splendor, has been likewise set aside (apologies to the ESV loyalists). I will finish my reading in the ESV this year, mostly out of curiosity, but judging from what I have seen so far as I close the last pages of Malachi and Revelation at year's end I won't be going back, except for an occasional cross reference. Do I hear the mental gears of the critics whirring? Did I happen to notice the "N" in front of the KJV above? Yes, I did. I don't require (but also don't mind) the "thee" or "thou" or "of forgotten Jacobean English, but even after a short two month absence I very much miss the gracefully expressive rhythm and sense of majesty by which it connects at the deepest levels and which seem to be absent from the other "modern" translations I have tried (NIV, ESV, RSV (better), and worst of all the wooden NASB). I think Nicolson's book has captured why (and I am paraphrasing as I truly believe the authors intent here was to write good history and then provide some insightful analysis into it rather than convert the English speaking world to the KJV): Do you want to read an informative "memo from God" or be ushered into his throne room, where the rich grandeur of his voice fills to overflowing the chambers of a heart, stirring it to single-minded passionate response? If it is the latter, then I highly recommend Nicolson's book for some additional perspective. Needless to say, the book is a 5 star for me as is the King James Bible and its modern follow-up the NKJV.

I grew up in a church that taught me that the KJV was the only version one should reference. I always questioned that line of thought. If the original Scriptures were written in Hebrew and Greek, how is there only one authoritative translation in English? This book sheds light on the many versions that existed pre-KJV and the political climate of England that then birthed the KJV. Interesting read but not the easiest book to get through. The author's writing style is a bit non-linear and I found portions a bit nebulous. I don't know that I'd recommend this book as an intro into Biblical history but it does provide a snapshot of how the KJV came to be.

The service was better than I expected, and the book really good, with details about the times and people involved, at any level, in writing the King James Bible. It gives you a wonderful picture of the

English world of that day and the mindset of the translators and King. They were held to very strict rules to prevent any perversion of original writings, while making it beautiful and understandable, no matter what religious background the reader came from. It also shows why it could never have been done in today's world. It was a unique time and setting and the men involved fascinating--but they had only authentic Godly writings to work from. The author presents all angles of the reasoning and agendas.

The MATERIAL contained therein was VERY WELL done, methinks---but the quality of the paper on which it was written could have been upgraded a notch (or two). The treatment of the various "companies" commissioned by the participating authors was both thorough AND entertaining (and it was quite revealing about how 'rogue-ish' some of those ecclesiastical scholars WERE!) All in all, this book DID meet my expectations, and it served its intended purpose [for background info. on the individual members of the "King's Commission" for the most difficult task of "putting together" this all-time Masterpiece of the English language]. So, THANK YOU for making this available ! Donald R. Denton

This book captured and brought to life the political, social, and religious strife of the time; it gave wonderful insights into the characters involved in its translation as well as a taste of the process of translation itself. Friends who read the book had a little difficulty with the historical figures, but I, having just a little previous knowledge of the characters of the courts of Elizabeth and James, found it utterly fascinating. While scholarly in its approach, it was completely readable. It was the best book I read all year.

The book is excellent and totally true. The story is of the actual translation of the books of the St. James Bible in ancient times. It had to be translated from Greek into English, the first edition of the Holy Bible to be made available to all people. The interest level is very intense as we are told who exactly worked on which books of this incredible book.....different groups of people were assigned different books to work on. If you love history, you will love this book. Since my ancestors came to America in 1630 I am drawn to this kind of reading. LYN WILHELM

Engaged and engaging A lively story out of the translation that resulted in the King James Bible. There are few records of the deliberations of the scholars and of their choices. He has done fascinating work in digging out information about the translators and how they fit into Jacobean

England and its religion. He also includes pertinent quotations, showing the strength of the famous translation. I found it a gripping read

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