NGM.COM DECEMBER 2011

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

The King James BIBLE

Making a Masterpiece

King James Bible
First edition, 1611
Quayle Bible Collection

The Bible of King James

First printed 400 years ago, it molded the English language, buttressed the "powers that be"—one of its famous phrases—and yet enshrined a gospel of individual freedom. No other book has given more to the English-speaking world.

BY ADAM NICOLSON ❡ PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM RICHARDSON

For a thousand years, music and ceremony have celebrated the Christian Gospel in Westminster Abbey in London. As the place where generations of English kings and queens have been married, crowned, and buried, this great medieval building embodied King James's cherished fusion of divine glory and regal authority—a visual and aural richness of which the new Bible was to be an integral part.

The 15th-century church of Rodel on the Isle of Lewis, built for the war-like chiefs of the MacLeods, towers over the sea lochs of Scotland's Outer Hebrides. Nothing in early modern Britain, from its cities to its remotest corners, was more political than religion. The church in every parish—nearly always the most imposing building—was as much a symbol of worldly control as a shrine to God.

ROME WAGER STANDS IN front of the rodeo chutes on a small ranch just outside the Navajo Reservation in Waterflow, New Mexico. He is surrounded by a group of young cowboys here for mid-week practice. With a big silver buckle at his waist and a long mustache that rolls down on each side of his mouth like the curving ends of a pair of banisters, Wager holds up a Bible in his left hand. The young men take their hats off to balance them on their knees. "My stories always begin a little different," Brother Rome says to them as they crouch in the dust of the yard, "but the Lord always provides the punctuation."

Wager, a Baptist preacher now, is a former bull-riding and saddle-bronc pro, "with more bone breaks in my body than you've got bones in yours." He's part Dutch, part Seneca on his father's side, Lakota on his mother's, married to a full-blood Jicarilla Apache.

He tells them about his wild career. He was raised on a ranch in South Dakota; he fought and was beaten up, shot, and stabbed. He wrestled and boxed, he won prizes and started drinking. "I was a saphead drunk."

But this cowboy life was empty. He was looking for meaning, and one day in the drunk tank in a jail in Montana, he found himself reading the pages of the Bible. "I looked at that book in jail, and I saw then that He'd established me a house in heaven… He came into my heart."

The heads around the preacher go down, and the words he whispers, which the rodeo riders listen to in such earnestness, are not from the American West: They are from England, translated 400 years ago by a team of black-gowned clergymen who would have been as much at home in this world of swells and saddles, pearl-button shirts and big-fringed chaps as one of these cowboys on a Milanese catwalk. "Second Corinthians 5. 'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.'"

A life-size statue of King James dominates the most lavish room of this treasure-encrusted palace at Hatfield, north of London. Crowned and holding a sword and a scepter—symbols of his power—James is nevertheless flatteringly relaxed in his pose. Hatfield House was completed by Robert Cecil, the monarch's loyal secretary, in 1611 as the King James Bible came off the presses.

Here is the miracle of the King James Bible in action. Words from a doubly alien culture, not an original text but a translation of ancient Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, made centuries ago and thousands of miles away, arrive in a dusty corner of the New World and sound as they were meant to—majestic but intimate, the voice of the universe somehow heard in the innermost part of the ear.

You don't have to be a Christian to hear the power of those words—simple in vocabulary, cosmic in scale, stately in their rhythms, deeply emotional in their impact. Most of us might think we have forgotten its words, but the King James Bible has sewn itself into the fabric of the language. If a child is ever the apple of her parents' eye or an idea seems as old as the hills, if we are at death's door or at our wits' end, if we have gone through a baptism of fire or are about to bite the dust, if it seems at times that the blind are leading the blind or we are casting pearls before swine, if you are either buttering someone up or casting the first stone, the King James Bible, whether we know it or not, is speaking through us. The haves and have-nots, heads on plates,

Adam Nicolson's book God's Secretaries *is about the makers of the King James Bible. Jim Richardson documented the Hebrides in the January 2010 issue.*

thieves in the night, scum of the earth, best until last, sackcloth and ashes, streets paved in gold, and the skin of one's teeth: All of them have been transmitted to us by the translators who did their magnificent work 400 years ago.

THE EXTRAORDINARY global career of this book, of which more copies have been made than of any other book in the language, began in March 1603. After a long reign as Queen of England, Elizabeth I finally died. This was the moment her cousin and heir, the Scottish King James VI, had been waiting for. Scotland was one of the poorest kingdoms in Europe, with a weak and feeble crown. England by comparison was civilized, fertile, and rich. When James heard that he was at last going to inherit the throne of England, it was said that he was like "a poor man…now arrived at the Land of Promise."

In the course of the 16th century, England had undergone something of a yo-yo Reformation, veering from one reign to the next between Protestant and anti-Protestant regimes, never quite settling into either camp. The result was that England had two competing versions of the Holy Scriptures. The Geneva Bible, published in 1560 by a small team of Scots and English Calvinists in Geneva, drew on the pioneering translation by William Tyndale, martyred for his heresy in 1536. It was loved by Puritans but was anti-royal in its many marginal notes, repeatedly suggesting that whenever a king dared to rule, he was behaving like a tyrant. King James loved the Geneva for its scholarship but hated its anti-royal tone. Set against it, the Elizabethan church had produced the Bishops' Bible, rather quickly translated by a dozen or so bishops in 1568, with a large image of the Queen herself on the title page. There was no doubt that this Bible was pro-royal. The problem was that no one used it. Geneva's grounded form of language ("Cast thy bread upon the waters") was abandoned by the bishops in favor of obscure pomposity: They translated that phrase as "Lay thy bread upon wette faces." Surviving copies of the Geneva Bible are often greasy with use. Pages of the Bishops' Bible are usually as pristine as on the day they were printed.

This was the divided inheritance King James wanted to mend, and a new Bible would do it. Ground rules were established by 1604: no contentious notes in the margins; no language inaccessible to common people; a true and accurate text, driven by an unforgivingly exacting level of scholarship. To bring this about, the King gathered an enormous translation committee: some 54 scholars, divided into all shades of opinion, from Puritan to the highest of High Churchmen. Six subcommittees were then each asked to translate a different section of the Bible.

Although the translators were chosen for their expertise in the ancient languages (none more brilliant than Lancelot Andrewes, dean of Westminster), many of them had already enjoyed a rich and varied experience of life. One, John Layfield, had gone to fight the Spanish in Puerto Rico, an adventure that left him captivated by the untrammeled beauty of the Caribbean; another, George Abbot, was the author of a best-selling guide to the world; one, Hadrian à Saravia, was half Flemish, half Spanish; several had traveled throughout Europe; others were Arab scholars; and two, William Bedwell and Henry Savile, a courtier-scholar known as "a magazine of learning," were expert mathematicians. There was an alcoholic called Richard "Dutch" Thomson, a brilliant Latinist with the reputation of being "a deboshd drunken English-Dutchman." Among the distinguished churchmen was a sad cuckold, John Overall, dean of St. Paul's, whose friends claimed that he spent so much of his life speaking Latin that he had almost forgotten how to speak English. Overall made the mistake of marrying a famously alluring girl, who deserted him for a presumably non-Latin-speaking courtier, Sir John Selby. The street poets of London were soon dancing on the great man's misfortune:

The dean of St. Paul's did search for his wife
And where d'ye think he found her?
Even upon Sir John Selby's bed,
As flat as any flounder.

This was a world in which there was no gap between politics and religion. A translation of the Bible that could be true to the original Scriptures, be accessible to the people, and embody the kingliness of God would be the most effective political tool anyone in 17th-century England could imagine. "We desire that the Scripture may speake like it selfe," the translators wrote in the preface to the 1611 Bible, "that it may bee understood even of the very vulgar." The qualities that allow a Brother Rome Wager to connect with his cowboy listeners—a sense of truth, a penetrating intimacy, and an overarching greatness—were exactly what King James's translators had in mind.

They went about their work in a precise and orderly way. Each member of the six subcommittees, on his own, translated an entire section of the Bible. He then brought that translation to a meeting of his subcommittee, where the different versions produced by each translator were compared and one was settled on. That version was then submitted to a general revising committee for the whole Bible, which met in Stationers' Hall in London. Here the revising scholars had the suggested versions read aloud—no text visible—while holding on their laps copies of previous translations in English and other languages. The ear and the mind were the only editorial tools. They wanted the Bible to sound right. If it didn't at first hearing, a spirited editorial discussion—extraordinarily, mostly in Latin and partly in Greek—followed. A revising committee presented a final version to two bishops, then to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and then, notionally at least, to the King.

The King James Bible was a book created by the world in which it was made. This sense of connection is no more strikingly felt than in a set of rooms right in the heart of London. Inside Westminster Abbey, England's great royal church, the gray-suited, bespectacled Very Reverend Dr. John Hall, dean of Westminster, can be found in the quiet paneled and carpeted offices of the deanery. Here his 17th-century predecessor as dean, Lancelot Andrewes, presided over the subcommittee that translated the first five books of the Old Testament. Here, in these very rooms, the opening sentence "In the beginning God created the heaven, and the earth" was heard for the first time.

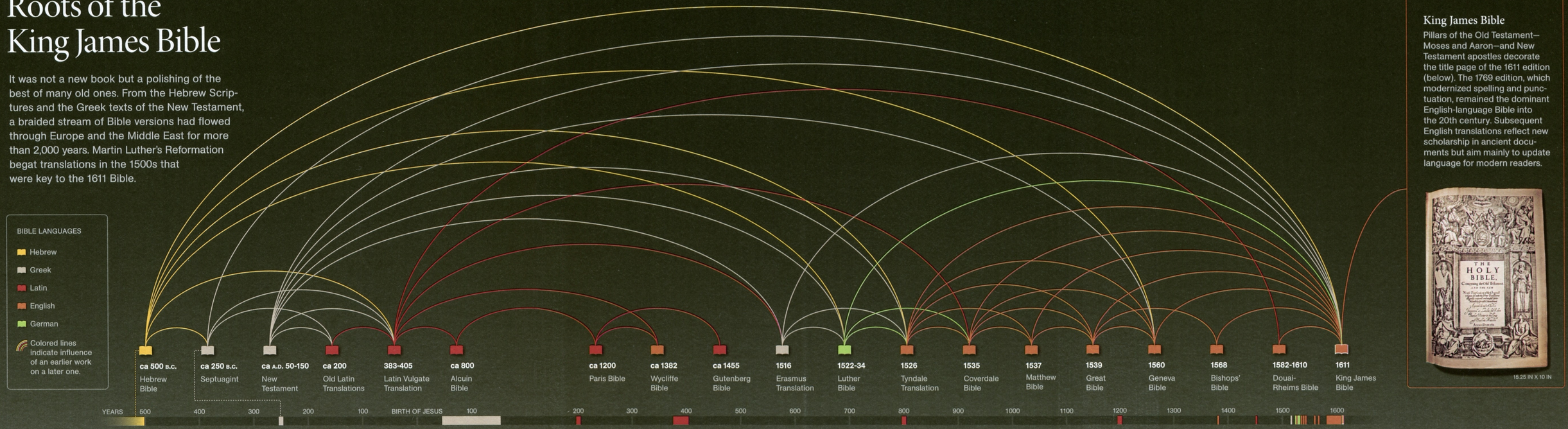
John Hall is the man who conducted the marriage of Prince William and Kate Middleton in the abbey earlier this year, and as we talk, thousands of people are queuing on the pavements outside, wanting to get into the abbey and retrace the route the new duchess took on her big day. It is the other end of the world from Rome Wager's sermon to the cowboys in the New Mexico dust, but for Hall there is something about the King James Bible that effortlessly bridges the gap between them. He read the King James Version as a boy, and after a break of many years he took it up again recently. "There are moments," he says, "which move me almost to tears. I love the story, after Jesus has been crucified and has risen, and he appears to the disciples as they are walking on the road to Emmaus. They don't know who he is, but they talk together, and at the end they say to him, 'Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' That is a phrase—so simple, so direct, and so powerful—which has meant an enormous amount to me over the years. The language is full of mystery and grace, but it is also a version of loving authority, and that is the great message of this book."

THE NEW TRANSLATION of the Bible was no huge success when it was first published. The English preferred to stick with the Geneva Bibles they knew and loved. Besides, edition after edition was littered with errors. The famous Wicked Bible of 1631 printed Deuteronomy 5:24—meant to celebrate God's "greatnesse"—as "And ye said, Behold, the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory, and his great asse." The same edition also left out a crucial word in Exodus 20:14, which as a result read, "Thou shalt commit adultery." The printers were heavily fined.

But by the mid-1600s the King James had effectively replaced all its predecessors and had come to be the Bible of *(Continued on page 54)*

Roots of the King James Bible

It was not a new book but a polishing of the best of many old ones. From the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek texts of the New Testament, a braided stream of Bible versions had flowed through Europe and the Middle East for more than 2,000 years. Martin Luther's Reformation begat translations in the 1500s that were key to the 1611 Bible.



King James Bible

Pillars of the Old Testament—Moses and Aaron—and New Testament apostles decorate the title page of the 1611 edition (below). The 1769 edition, which modernized spelling and punctuation, remained the dominant English-language Bible into the 20th century. Subsequent English translations reflect new scholarship in ancient documents but aim mainly to update language for modern readers.

15.25 IN X 10 IN

The Bible Through Time

ca 500 B.C.
The Scriptures of the **Hebrew Bible**—the law, the prophets, psalms, and other writings—are thought to have been completed by this date.

ca 250 B.C.
A Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, called the **Septuagint,** is compiled by Jewish scholars living in Alexandria, Egypt.

ca A.D. 50-65
Paul's letters to Christian churches around the Mediterranean are the earliest known writings of the **New Testament.**

A.D. First and Second Centuries
The Gospels and other writings that will form the **New Testament** are set down in Greek.

Fourth Century
Scriptures are translated into vernacular languages of the Middle East, such as Coptic and Syriac.

383-405
Commissioned by the pope, a translation of both testaments into Latin later becomes known as the **Vulgate.**

ca 800
Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Emperor, orders a standardized version of the Vulgate translation, the **Alcuin Bible.**

ca 1382
The first major Bible translation in English is begun by followers of dissident theologian John **Wycliffe.**

1408
To preserve church authority, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of England forbids English translations of the Bible.

1516
Dutch scholar **Erasmus** produces Latin and Greek translations; the latter affects reformers such as Martin **Luther.**

1526
William **Tyndale,** "father of the English Bible," translates the New Testament, which leads to his execution.

1534
Henry VIII breaks with the Roman Catholic Church and becomes head of the Church of England.

1560
The English-language **Geneva Bible** is published by Scottish and English Protestants living in Switzerland.

1603
Elizabeth I dies. In 1604 her successor, James I, commissions a new English translation. It is published in 1611.

Origins of the Bible in Hebrew and Greek

For centuries Jewish Scriptures were copied by hand on scrolls of animal skin—leather or parchment. Christian writings that became the New Testament were likely first inscribed on scrolls of papyrus. By the early second century A.D., Christian Scriptures were copied on pieces of papyrus bound together so that the pages could be turned: a new format called a codex, or book.

COMPLETE SCROLL: 10.5 IN X 24 FT (FRAGMENT SHOWN)

The Isaiah Scroll, *one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, was copied in Hebrew on parchment ca 100* B.C.

Latin and Early Vernacular Translations

With Rome as head of the Western church, Latin became the chief language of Christian Bibles. The fifth-century Vulgate translation was the standard for a thousand years. It was used by a monk at England's Lindisfarne monastery around 700 to create illuminated Gospels (right). About 960, one of the earliest English translations of Scripture was inscribed within its pages.

13.5 IN X 9.75 IN

The Lindisfarne Gospels *and other illuminated manuscripts elevated the Latin text to art.*

European Influence

By the mid-1200s, Dominican and Franciscan friars in Paris and Bologna were copying complete Bibles, in Latin, that could fit into a pocket (right). They standardized the order of the Bible's books and divided books into chapters. The practice of numbering each verse dates to a 1553 French-language Protestant edition published in Geneva.

6 IN X 4.25 IN

Paris Bibles *were the first complete Bibles bound as a portable book.*

Revolutions in Bible Publishing

Gutenberg's movable-type press in the mid-1400s and the aims of the 16th-century Protestant Reformation coupled to put Bibles in the hands of ordinary people, in their own language. English-speaking Protestants treasured the 1560 Geneva Bible; English Roman Catholics had the Douai-Rheims Bible. By the mid-1600s, Protestants embraced the King James Bible.

16 IN X 11.5 IN

Johannes Gutenberg *was the first to print the Bible, about 1455. Perhaps 180 were printed; 49 remain.*

AMANDA HOBBS, NGM STAFF; ALEJANDRO TUMAS

SOURCES: GORDON CAMPBELL, *BIBLE: THE STORY OF THE KING JAMES VERSION 1611-2011*; CHRISTOPHER DE HAMEL, *THE BOOK: A HISTORY OF THE BIBLE*

PHOTOS (FROM LEFT): JIM HOLLANDER, EPA/CORBIS; BETTMANN/CORBIS; LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; PIERPONT MORGAN LIBRARY/ART RESOURCE; JIM RICHARDSON (TOP)

A Bible's Gift to Language

The King James translation introduced 18 classic phrases into the English language and made famous some 240 more from earlier English translations. Google searched 2.4 million of its digitized English-language books with its Ngram Viewer for the 18 original phrases and a selection of the others. The larger each phrase appears on these pages, the more popular it has been over the past 200 years. "From time to time" is the leader, coming up nearly 4.6 million times in the survey.

Scripture in red: phrase originated in the King James Bible
Scripture in blue: phrase popularized by the King James Bible
Citations are given, but many phrases occur multiple times.

Higher popularity

Lower popularity

Let us now praise famous men
Ecclesiasticus 44:1 (Apocrypha)

Turned the world upside down
Acts 17:6

To every thing there is a season
Ecclesiastes 3:1

Know for a certainty
Joshua 23:13

Unto the pure all things are pure
Titus 1:15

The skin of my teeth
Job 19:20

As a lamb to the slaughter
Isaiah 53:7

Stand in awe
Full length of phrase: 14 inches

Psalms 4:4

Put words in his mouth
Exodus 4:15

Beat their swords into plowshares
Isaiah 2:4

A man after his own heart
1 Samuel 13:14

How are the mighty fallen
2 Samuel 1:19

The root of the matter
Full length of phrase: 27 inches

Job 19:28

No small stir
Acts 12:18

A thorn in the flesh
2 Corinthians 12:7

Be horribly afraid
Jeremiah 2:12

Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven
Matthew 6:20

Fell flat on his face
Numbers 22:31

Set thine house in order
Isaiah 38:1

Suffer little children
Luke 18:16

A still small voice
1 Kings 19:12

Much study is a weariness of the flesh
Ecclesiastes 12:12

Pour out your heart
Psalms 62:8

East of Eden
Genesis 4:16

Get thee behind me
Luke 4:8

The most popular of the phrases surveyed can't be printed at full scale: The *F* would be 35 feet high, and the phrase would stretch 188 feet. The towers of Westminster Abbey are shown for comparison.

From time to time
Ezekiel 4:10

Ngram Viewer adjusts data to account for the increasing number of books published since 1800.

JOHN BAXTER AND
AMANDA HOBBS, NGM STAFF

SOURCES: GOOGLE BOOKS NGRAMS DATA SET; JEAN-BAPTISTE MICHEL AND EREZ LIEBERMAN AIDEN, HARVARD UNIVERSITY; JON ORWANT, GOOGLE; DAVID CRYSTAL, *BEGAT: THE KING JAMES BIBLE & THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE*

Fueled by the Bible-led ideals of the Reformation, 17th-century Puritans loathed nothing more than the grandeur of "pomp-fed prelates" and other religious trappings for which there was no scriptural basis. But the English church, with the King James Bible at its core, always loved ceremony as much as the word. Here in the giant Gothic cathedral of York Minster, High Church services continue to relish "the beauty of holiness."

(Continued from page 45) the English-speaking world. As English traders and colonists spread across the Atlantic and to Africa and the Indian subcontinent, the King James Bible went with them. It became embedded in the substance of empire, used as wrapping paper for cigars, medicine, sweetmeats, and rifle cartridges and eventually marketed as "the book your Emperor reads." Medicine sent to English children during the Indian Mutiny in 1857 was folded up in paper printed with the words of Isaiah 51 verse 12: "I, even I, am he that comforteth you." Bible societies in Britain and America distributed King James Bibles across the world, the London-based British and Foreign Bible Society alone shipping more than a hundred million copies in the 80 years after it was founded in 1804.

The King James Bible became an emblem of continuity. U.S. Presidents from Washington to Obama have used it to swear their oath of office (Obama using Lincoln's copy, others, Washington's). Its language penetrated deep into English-speaking consciousness so that the Gettysburg Address, *Moby Dick,* and the sermons and speeches of Martin Luther King are all descendants of the language of the English translators.

But there was a dark side to this Bible's all-conquering story. Throughout its history it has been used and manipulated, good and bad alike selecting passages for their different ends. Much of its text is about freedom, grace, and redemption, but those parts are matched by an equally fierce insistence on vengeance and control. As the Bible of empire, it was also the Bible of slavery, and as such it continues to occupy an intricately ambivalent place in the postcolonial world.

AMID THE RUBBLE and broken cars of Trench Town and Tivoli Gardens in West Kingston, Jamaica, every property is shielded from the street and its neighbors by high walls of corrugated iron nailed to rough boards. This is one of the murder capitals of the world, dominated by drug lords intimately connected to politicians and the police. It is a province of raw dominance, inescapable poverty, and fear. Its social structure, with very few privileged rich and very many virtually disenfranchised poor, is not entirely unlike that of early 17th-century England.

The circuit-riding Baptist minister Rome Wager breaks a horse on ranch land he leases at the southern end of the Jicarilla Apache Reservation in northern New Mexico. A multiple prize-winning saddle-bronc, bull-riding, and bareback pro, Wager now bases his life on preaching the King James Bible. Here in the dry lands around the Apache Nugget Casino, he is planning a new church for ranchers, oil field workers, and casino staff.

This is one of the heartlands of reggae—the Rastafarian way of life that gave birth to it—and of the King James Bible. As the Jamaican DJ and reggae poet Mutabaruka says, "The first thing that a Rasta was exposed to in this colonial country was this King James Version." Rastafarians are not Christians. Since the 1930s they have believed that the then emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, is God himself. His name was Ras Tafari before 1930, when he was called "King of Kings, Lion of Judah, Elect of God." Those echo the titles the Bible gives to the Messiah. The island had long been soaked in Baptist Bible culture. In the mid-20th century, as Jamaicans were looking for a new redemptive Gospel, this suddenly made sense. Ras Tafari was the savior himself, the living God, and Ethiopia was the Promised Land. For Rastafarians, intensely conscious of the history of black enslavement, Jamaica was Babylon, their equivalent of the city where the people of Israel had been taken as slaves. Liberty and redemption were not, as the Christians always said, in the next life but in this one. "The experience of slavery helps you," Mutabaruka says, "because there is this human need for salvation, for redemption. The Rastas don't believe in the sky god. Their redemption lies within the human character. When the Europeans came and say, 'Jesus in the sky,' the

Rasta man reject that totally." (Jesus in the sky being Rasta shorthand for the whole story of the Resurrection.) "The man say, 'When you see I, you see God.' There is no God in the sky. Man is God, Africa is the Promised Land."

Michael "Miguel" Lorne is a Rastafarian lawyer who for 30 years has been working for "the poor and the needy" in the toughest parts of Kingston. The walls of his office are filled with images of Africa and the Ethiopian emperor. But the windows are barred, the door onto the street triple locked and reinforced with steel. "The Bible was used extensively to subjugate slaves," Lorne says. It seemed to legitimate the white enslaving of the black. "Your legacy is in heaven," he says, not smiling. "You must accept this as your lot."

The Bible has been an instrument of oppression—or "downpression," as they say in Jamaica, because what is there "up" about oppression?—but it has also been the source of much of what the Rastafarian movement believes. "The man Christ," Lorne says, "that level of humility, that level of conquering without a sword, that level of staying among the poor, always advocating on behalf of the prisoners, the downpressed, setting the captive free, living for these people. What is the use of living if you are not helping your brother? It is a book that gives you hope."

Lorne exudes a wonderful, tough-minded goodness. "We hope for a world where color does not play the dominant role it plays now," he says. "We want the lion and the lamb to lie down together. That is one of the beauties of Rastafari. We who have suffered and been brutalized and beaten, we have been agitating for compensation and reparation for years, but we don't think we will stick you up with a gun to get it."

On Bobo Hill outside Kingston, Jamaica, Rastafarians chant psalms from the King James Bible as they do every morning, facing east into the early sun. They are members of the Bobo Shanti "mansion": The term comes from John 14:2, "In my Father's house are many mansions." Not Christian, but believing in the divinity of Haile Selassie, the last emperor of Ethiopia, they follow a strict regimen modeled on Old Testament laws.

Pious Rastafarians read the King James Bible every day. Lorne has read it "from cover to cover." Evon Youngsam, who is a member of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, a Rastafarian "mansion" in Kingston, its headquarters opposite Bob Marley's old house in the city, learned to read with the King James Bible at her grandmother's knee. She taught her own children to read with it, and they, now living in England, are in turn teaching their children to read with it. "There is something inside of it which reaches me," she says, smiling, the Bible in her hand, its pages marked with blue airmail letters from her children on the other side of the ocean.

The adherents of another, strict Rastafarian mansion, Bobo Shanti, in their remote and otherworldly compound high in the foothills of the Blue Mountains outside Kingston, rhythmically chant the psalms every day. The atmosphere in Bobo Camp is gentle and welcoming, almost monastic, but there are other Rastafarians whose style is the polar opposite of that, taking their cue from some of the more intolerant attitudes to be found in the Bible. Several Jamaican reggae and dance hall stars have been banned from performing in Canada and parts of Europe for their violently antigay lyrics. The justification is there in the Bible ("If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: They shall surely be put to death," Leviticus 20:13), but this is a troubling part of the King James inheritance: a ferocious and singular moral vision that has become unacceptable in most of the liberal, modern world.

Not only at its roots in the heart of Westminster but also in some of the most obscure corners of the English-speaking world, this book remains complicatedly and paradoxically alive. Not that it any longer holds universal sway. From the late 19th century onward, revisions

It's a midweek Prayer Meeting in the Church of Scotland at Leurbost on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. No image, not even a cross, is allowed in the church. The word **rules** *alone.*

The fallow deer in the park at Knole, Kent, have looked down at the world with long-nosed lordliness since the days of King James. The deer park is a rare survival from the roughly 700 in early 17th-century England. The grandeur of this aristocratic style seeped into every corner of King James's England—and into the language used by the translators of his Bible. It was an age in which social hierarchy was considered a reflection of the divine order of the universe.

and new translations began to appear with increasing regularity. Scores of new versions of the Bible or of substantial parts of it have been published in the past 50 years. But the 1611 version remains potent in places where a sense of continuity with the past seems important.

With the cool summer rain of the Hebrides in northwest Scotland spattering the glass of his windows, John Macaulay, elder of his church in Leverburgh on Harris and a boatbuilder at home in Flodabay, muses on the double inheritance of authority and liberty that the King James Bible has given him and people like him. He was brought up in the strict way of Scottish Presbyterianism. "Everything for the Sabbath was prepared on the Saturday," he says, sitting now by the same hearth he sat by 60 years ago. "You had to bring extra water into the house—you didn't have piped water in those days. Buckets of water from the loch across the road. Peats were taken in from the peat stack so that you had all the peats that you needed for the fire. Potatoes were peeled, meals prepared. My father always shaved on the Saturday evening, and I did too when I got older. The Bible said you must not work on the Sabbath, and so we did not."

No one was allowed to drive on a Sunday. "The only person with a car going to church was the minister, and he would drive, but he would never pick anyone up on the road. You had old men tottering along—howling gale, driving snow—but no, even if he stopped and was to offer anyone a lift, they would not step into a car on a Sunday."

In this Gaelic-speaking family, the Bible was the frame of life. Every evening of the week they knelt for prayers in front of the fire and the reading of a psalm. On Sunday the only book they could read was the Bible.

Before he was four years old, Macaulay was taught by his mother to read English from the Bible. "It is literally true that the English I learned was the English of the King James Bible. But we didn't use English at all in the house. Unless we had visitors who had no Gaelic, which was rare. I could read English from the book, but I could not have a conversation in it. I did not really know what it meant."

In some ways his immersion in a sacred book has sustained him through life. "You were taught very early on that there was someone there looking after you, someone you could rely on, someone you could talk to. You knew his words. They were in your mind." But there was another side to it. The authority of the church with this book in its hand also became a source of fear. "It is not just awe and reverence; it is fear. People are fearful of being seen to be doing something wrong. There are lots of people that go through life without ever expressing themselves or their feelings, and it is sad to see that."

The reverence for the minister, the man in the pulpit explicating the supremacy of the Bible, remains potent. "The church is a refuge from the realities of life," Macaulay says, "but there is also something else, which is a wee bit more sinister. Domination is a factor. The power of some of these preachers to really control their congregation. That has always been there."

The King James Bible has always cut both ways. It had its beginnings in royal authority, and it has been used to terrify the weak. It has also brought an undeniable current of beauty, kindness, and goodness into the lives of rich and poor alike. Its origins were ambivalent—for Puritan and bishop, the great and the needy, for clarity and magnificence, to bring the word of God to the people but also to buttress the powers that be—and that ambivalence is its true legacy. □