

# CHAPTER ONE

## From Moses to AD 1604

### The Battle over the Bible

#### At Home

During seminary, I worked briefly for a Christian bookstore in Raleigh called “Sign of the Fish.” I enjoyed working there immensely, mostly because I could cash my paycheck in to buy all the books I could afford. While there, every worker found their niche and I found mine in the Bible department. I became the store’s unofficial “Bible Expert,” ready to assist customers in picking out Bibles for themselves or their children or a friend. One day, a woman came in looking for a Bible for her son and I showed her a few of the modern versions. After I picked up a New International Version, I looked at her and her entire countenance had changed. She was angry at me and growled, “I would like a *real* Bible, if you don’t mind!”

Later, I spent six years on a church staff in Tennessee and we would usually get a few calls a month from the community inquiring about our church. I don’t remember fielding one of those calls and talking about our theological beliefs. A few asked about our children, youth and music ministry but a vast majority would only be concerned with “What Bible do you use?”

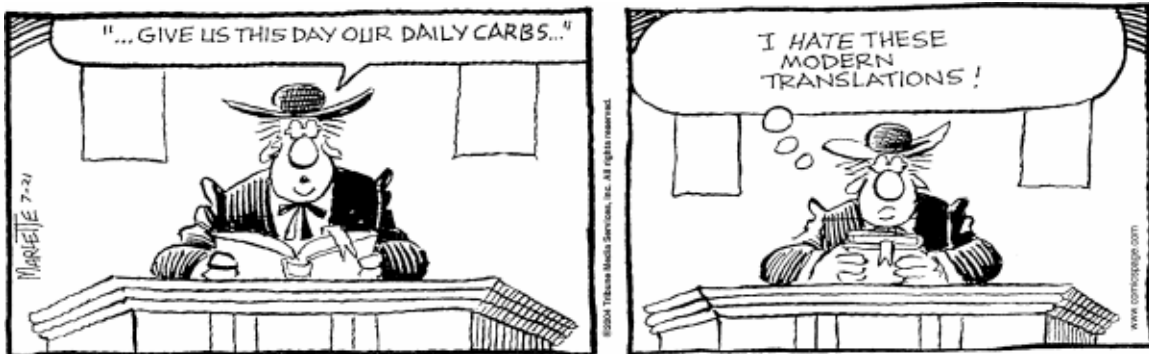
The last several decades have seen a “Battle for the Bible.” For some, the battle is over the inspiration and inerrancy and authority of the Bible. For others, the battle lines are drawn over what particular version one should use in the pulpit and in the home. And the battle lines are clearly drawn.

#### Abroad

Western Avenue Baptist Church has become involved with a project to place Bibles into the hands of Muslims vacationing and living in London, England. While most of the Arabs are very nice and polite, others are quite the opposite (just like Christians in America!). Some ask questions to try to learn and others ask questions to either waste our time or to force us to reveal our ignorance about our faith, our Christ and our “corrupted Bibles.” Many people from Western Avenue had their faith tested during the time overseas when tough questions were asked about theology (the Trinity) and the Bible. This class will be very helpful to those who are planning on returning to London in the future or going there next year for the first time.

For instance, open your Bible to Matthew 18:11. The **King James Version** has the following: For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. The **New American Standard Bible** has the verse but it is in italics: *For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.* The **New International Version** has the following: “<sup>10</sup> . . . always see the face of my Father in heaven. <sup>11</sup> <sup>12</sup>What do you think? . . .”

Other verses that appear to be *missing* in modern versions include Matthew 17:21, 18:11, 23:14; Mark 7:16, 9:44, 9:46, 11:26, 15:28; Luke 17: 36, 23:17; John 5:4; Acts 8:37, 15:34, 24:7, 28:29; Romans 16:24; 1 John 5:7. What are we to think when we encounter such things? It is not hard to understand why this causes great concern in some and outright hysteria in the rest. It’s even reflected in popular media:



There are other places in the Bible where passages differ and extreme controversy follows, such as the last several verses in Mark's Gospel and the account of the woman caught in adultery in John 7:53-8:11 and the account of the "stirring of the waters" at the pool in John 5:5 and the "Trinitarian Formula" of I John 5:7-9.

Perhaps you know why these "discrepancies" exist. Perhaps you have noticed them for the first time. Hopefully, as we go through this class, you will discover the answers and come to a greater knowledge and appreciation of how God worked through history to provide His people with His Word in their language.

The controversy over the Bible is not going to go away. It continues to fester in American between different groups of Christianity. It will continue to grow as Islam spreads to America. Therefore, it is of vital importance to understand the issues. This is even more important when you consider that opinions on this topic are MOSTLY EMOTIONAL in nature and HIGHLY FLAMMABLE.

## ***Why All The Fuss?***

The question is raised: Do we even NEED new translations? After all, not everything has to be new and improved. Some reason that "If the KJV was good enough for grandpa, his grandpa, and his grandpa before him, then it's good enough for me!" Usually, there are two extremes in the church – always changing or never changing

To compound the situation, there is also the issue of the overabundance of Bibles from which you can choose. Listed below is just a sample:

### **VERSIONS**

King James Version (KJV)  
New International Version (NIV)  
New King James Version (NKJV)  
New American Standard (NASB)  
New American Standard Updated (NASB 95)  
English Standard Version (ESV)  
New Century Version (NCV)  
Contemporary English Version (CEV)  
New Revised Standard (NRSV)  
The Message  
The Living Bible  
The New Living Translation Bible  
The New International Reader's Version (NiRV)  
The Holman Christian Standard Version (the new SBC Bible)  
Today's New International Version (TNIV)

Thompson Chain-Reference Bible  
Life Application Bible  
Precept Inductive Study Bible  
Leadership Bible  
The New Reformation Study Bible  
The New Geneva Study Bible  
Baptist Study Bible  
Pastor's Study Bible  
Amplified Bible

### **EDITIONS**

Men's Study Bible  
Women's Study Bible  
Children's Study Bible  
Youth/Teen Study Bible  
Extreme Study Bible  
African-American Study Bible  
Swindoll Study Bible  
Lucado Study Bible  
MacArthur Study Bible  
Ryrie Study Bible  
Stanley Study Bible  
Scofield Study Bible  
Spirit-Filled Study Bible

**The best way to allay the controversy is to be knowledgeable about the situation and the best place to begin is at the beginning. First, let's look at a quick history of the Bible to discover how we got the Bible(s) we use today! When we realize the ENGLISH Bible did not drop from the sky as a completed document but was created through the years by able men, we begin to understand some of these controversial issues.**

## Old Testament Era

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, a strange looking language to most. It is even more unusual and formidable when you learn that the language uses no capital letters, no vowels and has no punctuation. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

Many years ago, it was often thought that the Old Testament could not have been written by individuals like Moses and Samuel because people thought that written language was not “invented” at that time. However, in 1887, a peasant woman in Egypt kicked something hard on the ground and found small clay tablets that were later proved to have come from the ancient *Egyptian Foreign Office*. Written on these clay tablets were the official records of that society. This proved that writing ability was known and used long before the days of Moses.



The accounts of the stories found in our Bible were handed down from Adam to Noah to Abraham to Moses first by ORAL TRADITION, kept very safe and regarded very seriously. The OT writers wrote or inscribed their books on stone, clay or leather. We know these people took great care in writing and recording the Words of God due to groups of men who worked as scribes. One particularly fascinating scribal group was called the Massoretes. They had strict rules governing how they would record the Bible.

Some of the rules are:

- 1) Only use clean animal skins
- 2) Each column of letters no less than 48 lines, no more than 60
- 3) Ink must be black, of special recipe
- 4) Had to Verbalize each word as written
- 5) Had to wipe pen AND ENTIRE BODIES before writing the name of God (YHWH)
- 6) Had to review within 30 days,
- 7) Letters, words, paragraphs counted
- 8) Document invalid if two letters touched each other
- 9) Could not destroy – had to BURY with full ceremony

Around 430 BC, it appears God stopped communicating to His people through the prophets. The prophets had nothing to say and we call this period “the silent years.” The writings of the prophet Malachi were the last words recorded and closed what we call the Old Testament.

Around 330 BC, Alexander the Great conquered the known world and brought the Greek way of life with him. He also brought with him his language – the Greek language.

Around 285 BC, Demetrius was librarian at Alexandria, Egypt and he asked King Ptolemy if he could have Jews living in Egypt make a Greek translation of Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament). Looking for favor, King Ptolemy released 100,000 Jewish slaves and sent them back to Israel along with gifts to Eleazar, the Jewish High Priest in Jerusalem. He requested six scholars from each of twelve tribes, totaling 72 scholars. These intellectuals were taken to island of Pharos and they worked 70+ days until they were in total agreement. Because of number of scholars and the alleged number of days it took to complete the project, this new Greek OT was called the **SEPTUAGINT**. It is normally abbreviated as **LXX**, the Roman numerals for seventy.

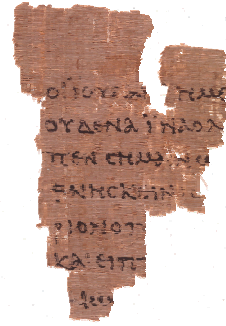
The Septuagint became THE Bible and was the bible the apostles and early church used.

## New Testament Era

The New Testament was written in the Greek language between the 30s and 90s of the first century. It was commonly written on PAPYRUS (dried grass), then tied together as scroll. Later, these dry grass pages were bound together to make CODEX, or a book as we know books today.

Later, copies were written in vellum (the skin of calves, antelopes) and parchment (the skin of sheep, goats). You can refer to 2 Timothy 4:13, where Paul asked Timothy to bring Parchments.

*(The image to the right is P52, the most famous and the oldest of all Greek manuscripts. It was written around AD 125 and was discovered in Egypt in 1920. This small fragment of St. John's Gospel, less than nine centimeters high, contains on the one side part of verses 31-33, on the other of verses 37-38 of chapter 18.)*



## The Post-Apostolic Era

The Bible was written and copied during the reign of the Roman Emperors. These men were used by God to build His kingdom and spread His word throughout the vast Roman Empire (in spite of the Emperor's best intentions). The following emperors deserve our attention:

- **Augustus** - 31 BC to AD 14: The single most important figure in Roman history. He was emperor when Jesus was born.
- **Tiberius** - AD 14 to 37: Emperor during the life of Jesus.
- **Nero** - 54-68: Nero was blamed for a fire that destroyed half of Rome. To cover for himself, he blamed the Christians, having many put to death, including the apostles Peter and Paul.
- **Vespasian** - 69-79: He built the Colosseum in 72, and it stood until 1084.
- **Domitian** - 81-96: John, the apostle and evangelist was exiled to Patmos during this persecution.
- **Trajan** - 98-117: Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch suffered in this persecution.
- **Hadrian** - 117-138: He built the Parthenon.
- **Marcus Aurelius** - 161-180: Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, and the Christian martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, two cities in France, were martyred in this persecution.
- **Decius** - 249-251: In this persecution was Fabian martyred; Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, forced into exile; and Origen imprisoned and tortured.
- **Diocletian** - 284-305: Diocletian began his furious persecution against the Christians in 303. The emperor ordered the doors of the Christian church at Nicomedia, the capital, to be barred, and then burnt the edifice with 600 Christians within. Many edicts were issued by him against Christians. Churches were demolished, Christian books were seized and burnt, Christians were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and killed. The persecution brought a considerable number of martyrs, and it continued until 313, when Emperor Constantine set Christians free and proclaimed religious freedom.
- **Constantine** - 306-337: The first emperor to embrace Christianity, he moved the capital of the empire from Rome to what is today known as Istanbul. In 313, he signed the Edict of Milan putting an end to Christian persecution.



The final wave of persecution was ordered by Diocletian in 303, as he called for the end of all Christian meetings and the destruction of all Christian writings.

This edict, however, had the opposite effect. Christianity did not cease, but only grew stronger as it took root all over the Roman Empire.

- 1) Persecution sharpened people's perceptions of church. They had to ask if those who compromised their convictions (even under torture) could stay in the fellowship. This gave rise to the Novatian controversy.<sup>1</sup>

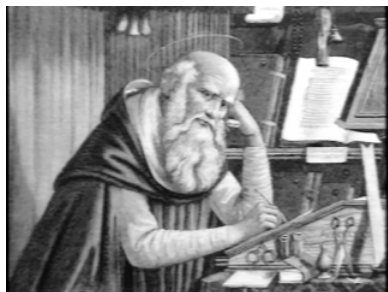
<sup>1</sup> Novatian believed that Christians who had compromised their commitment in order to avoid persecution should not be allowed to return to the church. Cyprian responded with a system of readmission based on the degree of seriousness of the sins. Leniency was extended to those who denied the faith under the most excruciating torture and harshness was reserved for those who willingly denied the faith. Cyprian's argument carried the day and the church created a graded system of penance to deal with the varying degrees of denial. This eventually led to the Roman Catholic tradition of penance, indulgence and priestly absolution of sins.

- 2) Persecution forced attention on the authority of the Bible. If you are going to give up your life for what is written in The Book, you'd better know what's supposed to be IN the Book!

In 312, Constantine became CAESAR AUGUSTUS in a battle near Rome. During this battle, he had a vision and claimed to see a sign of the cross with this insignia: "By This Sign, Conquer"

In January 313, Constantine published EDICT OF TOLERATION, which means that ALL religious cults were to be tolerated (including Christianity). It was during his reign that Christianity grew (although you might say it failed to flourish).

## Jerome



Jerome was born in AD 331, a time when the vast majority of the world spoke Latin. However, there was no true Latin Bible. It existed only in portions.

In AD 380, Pope Damasus I (the 37<sup>th</sup> Pope, according to Catholic tradition) asked Jerome to translate the Greek Bible into Latin and he created what came to be known as the VULGATE (which simply is Latin for "common language"). It contained both the OT (from the Old Latin manuscripts available and the original Hebrew) and the NT (from extant Greek copies).

The Vulgate was written in the common language of the day but became so highly esteemed that it blocked any *NEW VULGATES* (common language Bibles) from appearing. The Vulgate would dominate Christendom for the next 1000 years.

In 400s, the Roman Empire fell and Latin decreased in popularity. In fact, in a short amount of time, only priests knew Latin. This meant that only priests could read Bible. *Amazingly, around AD 500, the Bible had been translated into 500 languages. By AD 600, it was available in only one language – Latin – and no one could read it. The world now plunged into the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages.*

On April 8, 1546, the Council of Trent declared the Vulgate to be the authentic Bible of the Roman Catholic Church.

There are more than ten thousand manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate still in existence today. Some of these copies date the late 400s and early 500s.

## The Origins of the English Language

The history of the English language can be traced back to the arrival of three Germanic tribes to the British Isles during the 5th Century AD: **the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes**. The Angles were named from Engle, their land of origin. Their language was called Englisc from which the word, English derives. An Anglo-Saxon inscription dated between 450 and 480AD is the oldest sample of the English language.

During the next several centuries, four distinct dialects emerged.<sup>2</sup> Over time, only Wessex remained as an independent kingdom. By the 10th Century, this West Saxon dialect became the official language of Britain. Written Old English is mainly known from this period. It was written in an alphabet called Runic, derived from the Scandinavian languages. The Latin alphabet was brought over from Ireland by Christian missionaries and this has remained the writing system of English.

At this time, the vocabulary of Old English consisted of an Anglo Saxon base with borrowed words from the Scandinavian languages (Danish and Norse) and Latin. Latin gave English words like street, kitchen, kettle, cup, cheese, wine, angel, bishop, martyr, candle. The Vikings added many Norse words: sky, egg, cake, skin, leg, window (*wind eye*), husband, fellow, skill, anger, flat, odd, ugly, get, give, take, raise, call, die, they, their, them. Celtic words also survived mainly in place and river names (Devon, Dover, Kent, Trent, Severn, Avon, Thames).

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<sup>2</sup> *Northumbrian* in Northumbria, north of the Humber; *Mercian* in the Kingdom of Mercia; *West Saxon* in the Kingdom of Wessex; and *Kentish* in Kent

Many pairs of English and Norse words coexisted giving us two words with the same or slightly differing meanings. Examples include anger/wrath, nay/no, ill/sick.

In 1066 the Normans conquered Britain. French became the language of the Norman aristocracy and added more vocabulary to English. The new overlords spoke a dialect of Old French known as Anglo-Norman. The Normans were also of Germanic stock ("Norman" comes from "Norseman") and Anglo-Norman was a French dialect that had considerable Germanic influences in addition to the basic Latin roots. More pairs of similar words arose, like odour/smell, annual/yearly.

Because the English underclass cooked for the Norman upper class, the words for most domestic animals are English (ox, cow, calf, sheep, swine, deer) while the words for the meats derived from them are French (beef, veal, mutton, pork, bacon, venison).

The Germanic form of plurals (house, housen; shoe, shoen) was eventually displaced by the French method of making plurals: adding an s (house, houses; shoe, shoes). Only a few words have retained their Germanic plurals: men, oxen, feet, teeth, children. French also affected spelling so that the cw sound came to be written as qu (eg. cween became queen).

In 1204 AD, King John lost the province of Normandy to the King of France. This began a process where the Norman nobles of England became increasingly estranged from their French cousins. England became the chief concern of the nobility, rather than their estates in France, and consequently the nobility adopted a modified English as their native tongue. About 150 years later, the Black Death (1349-50) killed about one third of the English population. And as a result of this the labouring and merchant classes grew in economic and social importance, and along with them English increased in importance compared to Anglo-Norman.

This mixture of the two languages came to be known as Middle English. The most famous example of Middle English is Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Unlike Old English, Middle English can be read, albeit with difficulty, by modern English-speaking people.

By 1362, the linguistic division between the nobility and the commoners was largely over. In that year, the Statute of Pleading was adopted, which made English the language of the courts and it began to be used in Parliament.

It wasn't till the 14th Century that English became dominant in Britain again. In 1399, King Henry IV became the first king of England since the Norman Conquest whose mother tongue was English. By the end of the 14th Century, the dialect of London had emerged as the standard dialect of what we now call Middle English. Chaucer wrote in this language.

Modern English began around the 16th Century and, like all languages, is still changing. One change occurred when the "th" of some verb forms became "s" (loveth, loves: hath, has). Auxiliary verbs also changed (he is risen, he has risen).

The origination of some common words makes for interesting reading:

1. **ORANGE** - The name of the fruit was NARANJ in Sanskrit. This language was spoken in ancient India. Indians traded with Arabs, so the word passed into Arabic as NARANJAH. The Spaniards were ruled by north African Arabs who passed the fruit and word into Spanish as NARANJA (pronounced as NARANHA). This came into English where the fruit was a NARANJ. Words ending in J are not common in English so the spelling quickly changed to "a NARANJE." The initial "N" moved to the "a" because of mis-hearing to give "an ARANGE" (this is called *metanalysis*, seen also in "a nadder" and "a napron" becoming "an adder" and "an apron"). Over time, the initial A became an O to give an ORANGE.
2. **CHECKMATE** - This is a term in chess. It is from the Farsi language spoken in Iran and Afghanistan. The original phrase is SHAH-K-MATE (every syllable pronounced) which means "The King is Dead". The word SHAH means a "king" as in the last monarch (or SHAH) of Iran. MATE has the same root as the English "murder" and the Spanish "matador" (killer). The word came via French (where the SH became a CH) and into English where the MA-TE (two syllables) became MATE (one syllable) to give CHECKMATE.

3. **ALGEBRA** - This is a mathematical term. It comes from Arabic. Mohammad al-Khwarizmi was a mathematician who flourished in Baghdad around the year 800. He wrote a book about the solving of equations. It was called *ilm al-jabr wa'l muqabalah* (the science of transposition and cancellation). The term *al-jabr* from this title gave the English word, ALGEBRA.

The heart of the English language remains the Anglo-Saxon of Old English. Only about 5000 or so words from this period have remained unchanged but they include the basic building blocks of the language: household words, parts of the body, common animals, natural elements, most pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions and auxiliary verbs. Grafted onto this basic stock was a wealth of contributions to produce the richest of the world's languages.

## Early English Bibles

As the Bible fell from the lives of common men, this new English language began to emerge. However, only Latin and French were recognized by royalty and scholars and writers. English was seen as the language of the peasants and not fit for the grandeur of God's words to man. English was seen as utterly incapable of expressing anything but the crudest and basest of meanings. English was fine for describing how to spread dung on the fields as fertilizer but how could such a barbaric language do justice to the lofty ideas of philosophy and religion?

However, this did not stop several men from translating portions of the Bible into English between 690 and 1320. Of course, most of these were not translations from the original languages but were simply translating Jerome's Latin Bible into English words. Some names of these "translators" might be familiar to you:

1. **Caedmon (d. c. 680)** "An unlearned laborer by the name of Caedmon is reported to have arranged in verse form stories of the Bible on subjects ranging from the creation to the work of the apostles. Although these verses were not really translations, they mark the first known attempt to put the Bible accounts in the native Anglo-Saxon" (Lightfoot, p. 125). Caedmon, a simple cowherder, hated to sing and once stole away to a stable to avoid being asked to sing at a party. He fell asleep and dreamed a man came to ask him to sing. He said he could not but the command was repeated. He was told to sing of how all things were first created. He did so and upon awakening, was amazed to discover he remembered all the words to his new song. Others recognized this as a gift and he was asked to join a monastery. At the monastery, he received training in the Bible and soon turned that training into songs. Being easy to remember, they were a good source of teaching doctrine to the common man (Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations*, p. 274).
2. **Aldhelm (640-709)** Aldhelm made the first straightforward translation of portions of the Latin Bible into English. He translated the Psalms into Old English shortly after A. D. 700 (Geisler and Nix, p. 544).
3. **Egbert (c. 705)** Egbert of Northumbria became the first to translate the first three gospels into English.
4. **The Venerable Bede (674-735)** Bede, one of the greatest scholars in Europe and considered the father of English history, translated the Gospel of John into English.
5. **Alfred the Great (849-901)** Alfred, the King of Wessex, translated part of Exodus and Acts into English. Alfred was also one of the few monarchs of his day who thought it advantageous to be literate. He greatly improved the educational world of his kingdom by producing histories and grammars into Olde English.
6. **Aldred (c. 950)** Easfrith, the bishop of Lindisfarne in northern England from 698-721, created a beautiful Latin Bible with incredibly ornate artwork. "A priest named Aldred left his legacy by writing a word-for-word translation (in red ink) of the Latin between the lines of the Latin manuscript, thus producing an interlinear translation" (Jonathan Underwood, *A History of the English Bible*, p. 68). *This is the oldest surviving version of the gospels in any form of English.* A copy of this "Lindisfarne Gospel" is at the British Library.
7. **Aelfric (c. 950-1020)** Aelfric translated the first seven books of the Old Testament from the Latin.
8. **William of Shoreham and Richard Rolle (1300s)** Both these men translated the Psalms into English. Rolle's edition also contained a verse-by-verse commentary.



# The Rise of the English Language

Despite the work of these men, English was still regarded as an inferior language. Slowly but surely, however, English began to displace French. English began to be taught in the schools and the French language was removed from the curriculum. A surge of literary works emerged in English, such as Geoffrey Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" and "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight."

The English defeated the French at Agincourt under Henry V. This military victory also brought a cultural victory. Henry V began using English in his official royal letters. In 1422, the Brewers' Guild of London formally declared they would conduct business only in English. The Hundred Years War (1337-1453) served to embellish in people's minds that French was the language of the enemy. It is no accident that William Shakespeare wrote in Henry VI, Part III: "He can speak French; and therefore he is a traitor."

The growth of English in religious matters is seen in the mystery plays at York. By 1350, the ravages of the Black Death had ended. York entered a new phase of prosperity and soon was second only to London in financial and social importance. The city celebrated its recovery and growth by staging a series of plays around the feast of Corpus Christi. The plays depicted the creation, fall, and redemption of man. The impact of these plays was immense and played a major role in York's revival. Most important of all, the plays *were performed in English*.

This brought the following disconnect to the forefront – the religious plays are understandable in the common language and yet the church services are indiscernible in the foreign Latin tongue. The natural question arose: Why was the Bible not available in English?

The time was now set for the man who would translate the entire Bible into English.

## John Wycliffe (1330 – 1384)



John Wycliffe lived through the *Black Death*, which claimed over 100,000 lives. An average of one of every four people living in England died from this plague. You would wake up with a fever and be dead by evening. This ordeal had a tremendous effect on Wycliffe.

Wycliffe argued extensively for the translation of the Bible into his native tongue. The established church had a vested interest in denying this access by the laity to the Bible. If the laity were to read the Bible for themselves, they might discover the massive discrepancies between the lifestyles of their priests and bishops and the lifestyle commanded by Scripture and practiced by Christ and the apostles. Wycliffe was rightly seen as a threat to destroy the entire world of clergy-led religious domination.

Henry Knighton, a chronicler, saw the danger that could result in upsetting his comfortable lifestyle. Looking back at what Wycliffe finally accomplished, he wrote: "What was previously known only by learned clerics and those of good understanding has become common and available to the laity – in fact, even to women who can read. As a result, the pearls of the gospel have been scattered and spread before swine" (McGrath, *In the Beginning*, p. 20).

What did Wycliffe accomplish? **In 1382, WYCLIFFE WAS FIRST TO COMPLETE AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.**<sup>3</sup> However, it must be remembered that Wycliffe's work was not a translation from the Greek/Hebrew because no manuscripts were available to him. Instead, he translated from Latin, using Jerome's *Vulgate*. Wycliffe produced a word-for-word translation, even to the point that his words were obscure and hard to follow. An example is from the 1382 edition of Matthew 6:9-13:

*Oure fadir that art in hevenes, halowid be thi name. Thi kyngdom come to. Be thi wille don in erthe as in hevene. Geve to us this day oure breed ovir othir substaunce. And forgeve to us oure dettis, as we forgoen to oure dettouris. And lede us not in temptacioun, but delyver us fro yvel. Amen.*

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<sup>3</sup> Chaucer began writing "The Canterbury Tales" in 1388.



This translation became THE Bible in English. Because there were no printing presses, it took 10 months to copy one. A copy costs 30-40 pounds (2 pennies would buy a chicken, 4 pennies would buy a pig; 40 pounds equaled around 9,600 pennies – a HUGE expense (4,800 chickens or 2,400 pigs)). Today, 80 British pounds equals about \$160 in America. Furthermore, you had to make copies by stealth because it was illegal to have a copy. The mere possession of this Bible was presumptive evidence of heresy, a crime punishable by burning. A law was passed in 1408 by the Archbishop of Canterbury that decreed “no one henceforth do by his own authority translate any text of Holy Scripture into the English tongue or into any other, by way of book or treatise; not let any book or treatise now lately composed, be read in whole or in part, in public or private, under pain of the greater excommunication . . . He that shall do contrary to this shall likewise be punished as a favorer of heresy and error.”

The threats had an adverse effect – people’s curiosity was aroused and they wanted to read more and more. Wycliffe’s Bible was immensely popular. Even though it was punishable by death to have one, the cost of borrowing a Wycliffe Bible

for an hour every day for a period of reading was a load of hay. It was so popular that we STILL HAVE nearly 200 COPIES of THIS BIBLE.

Wycliffe’s efforts were so despised by the Roman Catholic Church that they issued five papal bulls ordering his arrest, declared him a heretic, burned his copies of the Bible, and forty-three years after his death, dug up his remains, burning them and throwing them into a river near the church he pastored.

## Johann Gutenberg (1398-1468)



Around forty years after Wycliffe, a young Johannes Gutenberg was carving in the soft wood of his father’s shop. He carved letters and the story goes that he dropped one of the letters into some paint. This “accident” would only later bring to Gutenberg’s mind the idea of printing.

In the Middle Ages, most of Europe was illiterate. The Renaissance of France spread to England and the literacy rate increased dramatically. The demand for books increased exponentially. However, the publishing of books was a long, expensive process and the current methods could not keep pace with the demands for

reading materials. Printers used “block-printing” which meant carving an entire page of text into a block of wood. One can only imagine the stress of trying to avoid errors!

Entrepreneurs began to realize the potentially lucrative business opportunities this new explosion of literacy afforded. The race was on to produce books quickly and inexpensively. By 1450, at least five individuals were trying to invent the best process. If they could do it and keep it secret for a while, unimaginable wealth would be theirs.

The solution was first discovered by Gutenberg. He was in the family business of making fine silver mirrors. These were much sought after by local worshippers – who believed that they could capture the image of a church relic and reflect the relic’s healing power onto themselves and others.

The metal-working background of Gutenberg proved invaluable. His remembrance of the childhood accident led him to mold the metal into letters. This invention of movable type – letters that could be used, removed from the press and reused later – was the genius behind his invention. The type was designed by printer Peter Shoeffler, whose son would later help William Tyndale publish his illegal English Bible.

Gutenberg's process was so perfect that its practice would continue to be used until 1838, when David Bruce pioneered the first typesetting machine in New York (McGrath, *In the Beginning*, 13).

This was incredibly expensive and he needed much financial backing. Gutenberg was able to convince Johann Fust, a local goldsmith, to give him eight hundred gulden in 1450 and again in 1452 (nearly two million dollars each year by today's standards).

Gutenberg first printed about six short works (a Latin grammar and an astronomical calendar) to persuade financial backing by showing his process worked and to gain experience in the process. This did persuade Fust, who loaned even more money on the condition that he be considered a partner in the great project. By 1452, all was ready to begin the work that Gutenberg considered his life's goal.

Gutenberg wanted the Bible to be his first major product for two reasons. First, the Bible was a huge book and a worthy challenge. The edition he printed in 1468 – known as “The Thirty-Six Line Bible,” due to the number of lines of type in each column – runs 1,768 pages. In 1468, that was an incredible accomplishment.

Second, the Bible was an immensely popular and influential book. Even today it remains the best selling printed book in the world. The 1400s were a period of incredible growth in religious activities and literacy. Even though the cost was enormous, many households saw the possession of a Bible as essential for the private matter of devotion and the more sordid matter of drawing attention to their social status. This combination of factors meant that the printer of religious books, and primarily the Bible, would soon become a very rich man.

Gutenberg began cutting type in 1450. Composition began in 1452 and the printing was completed in 1456. Therefore, the first Bible *printed* was in 1456 and it was a copy of Jerome's Latin Vulgate. Each page had two columns of text, consisting of forty-two lines each. Gutenberg was able to print about 185 copies of Bible (about 40 still exist). He also printed 30 copies on Vellum, which required 10,000 calves.

The Bible was immense at 1,282 pages each. Each bible consisted of 340 folio sheets. A single calf hide would yield two folio sheets, so 170 animal hides were required for each two-volume Bible.

The asking price was thirty florins, which was equal to about three year's wages for a learned clerk. He made additional money by printing indulgences – pieces of paper issued through the office of the pope offering written promises of forgiveness from time in purgatory. Thanks to Gutenberg, these evil papers could now be produced by the thousands. It is thought that Gutenberg himself printed over two hundred thousand.

Sadly, Gutenberg did not realize his dream of great wealth. He lacked business sense and ended up losing a serious legal battle with his new “partner” Fust. Fust took over and immediately forged an incredibly lucrative business with Peter Schoeffer, Gutenberg's former employee! Gutenberg's secrets would not stay hidden long and within thirty years, his machine was in nearly every country in Europe. By 1500, there were over 150 printing shops in Venice ALONE.

While others grew rich through his invention, Gutenberg died in poverty in 1468.

## ***Notes on Paper Sizes***

Books and Bibles from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are often described in terms of the size of the paper used in making them. A single large sheet of printing paper would be folded and folded again to give pages of various sizes. The simplest procedure was to fold the paper once, creating two “leaves” of paper. Each could be printed on the front and back, giving four pages of text. This simple single fold produces a “folio.”

If you fold a folio once more and cut off the top edge, you have a “quarto,” giving eight pages of text. An “octavo” involves folding the original large sheet of paper three times to give eight leaves and sixteen pages of text. As the same size of paper was used for all of these folds, the overall result was a radical reduction in size. A folio edition would measure roughly 16 inches by 11 inches. An octavo edition measured about 8 inches by 5½ inches and is thus one quarter the size of the full folio edition.

The following table will help:

NAME	Number of Folds	Leaves Per Sheet	Number of Pages
Folio	1	2	4
Quarto	2	4	8
Octavo	3	8	16
Duodecimo	4	16	32
Sextodecimo	5	32	64

## Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536)



In 1500, Jerome's Latin Vulgate still reigned supreme. However, a brilliant scholar named Erasmus discovered there were big problems with the Vulgate while studying the original languages. The Latin text was shown to include seriously misleading errors in translation. In Matthew 3:1-2, the Vulgate reads: "In those days, John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, 'Do penance, for the kingdom of the heavens is close to hand.'"

Few of the medieval readers could miss the implications of this preaching, given the highly developed theory and practice of penance of that era. John seemed to demand that one find a priest, confess sins and carry out any acts of penance the priest might require of them. Erasmus would not stand for that. The original Greek could not possibly mean "do penance" but instead meant "repent," a demand for inward change of heart and mind.

Another example of mistranslation led to great theological error: In Luke 1:28, Jerome wrote: "And the angel went in, and said to her, 'Hail, *O one that is full of grace*! The Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women!'"

Erasmus declared that the original languages should be translated "one that has found grace" or "O favored one." The implication was that Mary had found favor given to her, not that she could bestow that favor on others. Jerome's words were used to produce the Marian doctrines that she is like a reservoir, full of God's grace and could therefore be a source of God's grace to those who need it.

The need for the original languages to be studied and learned is important. For example, Wycliffe simply translated Jerome's Latin into English. In doing so, he reproduced the translation mistakes of the Vulgate.

Therefore, Wycliffe produced an actual English translation, but it was an inaccurate English translation of the Latin (not the original Greek). To create an English Bible from the Greek text, English translators first had to have a reliable Greek text to use in the translation!

## Complutensian Polyglot

In 1515, a famous Swiss printer named John Froben told Erasmus of a Greek NT being compiled in Spain by Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros. In 1502, Ximenes had the idea of making a POLYGLOT BIBLE (side-by-side versions of the same text in several different languages). The Cardinal/Archbishop spared no expense in gathering as many Greek manuscripts as he could find. He did most of his work in the city of Alcalá, Spain – which is called *Complutum* in Latin, leading to the work's eventual names as the *Complutensian Polyglot*.

This polyglot had parallel columns of text in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin. The entire Bible was finally finished in 1522, long after the death of Ximenes in 1517. Only about 600 were ever published.

## Erasmus' Greek New Testament

Ximenes' work was completed but not published. Erasmus was now joined the race. In July 1515, he began collecting Greek MSS in the town of Basel, Switzerland. He found only six and none were complete, none

matched, and he didn't have the last page of Revelation at all. His copy of Revelation was a manuscript from the 1100s (just 400 years old) and without the final page, Erasmus had to translate the existing Latin Vulgate back into Greek for the final six verses. In other places where the Greek texts were confusing, Erasmus would refer to the Vulgate and consequently added words to his Greek text that do not show up in any other Greek manuscripts.<sup>4</sup>

He compiled and printed His Greek NT on 672 pages, with Greek in one column and his daring new Latin translation in the other (a *DIGLOT*). This was compiled so fast (just ten months) that it was filled with errors. The printer (Scrivener) remarked that Erasmus' first edition was "in that respect the most faulty book I know." Erasmus quickly produced a second edition.

By presenting a new Latin translation, readers soon noticed glaring errors in Jerome's Latin Vulgate. The die was cast. His work produced both acclaim and condemnation. An amazing statement was uttered by theologians from the University of Louvain in Belgium, declaring, "What if it be contended that the same sense, as rendered by the Latin version (Jerome's Vulgate), differs indeed from the Greek text? Then, indeed, adieu [good-bye] to the Greek. I adhere to the Latin because I cannot bring my mind to believe that the Greek are more correct than the Latin codices."<sup>5</sup>

Remarkably, the same sentiment is still expressed by today's most extreme King James Only adherents, who say they will accept the King James Version over the Greek texts!

## **Later Editions**

Erasmus printed out five more editions in 1516, 1519, 1522, 1527 and 1535. Luther used the second edition to translate his German text in 1522 and Tyndale probably used the third edition for his English translation.

However, the fourth edition is the definitive work. It contained THREE columns (*triglot*): the Greek text, the Latin Vulgate and Erasmus' own Latin translation. Erasmus' fifth and final edition was basically the same as the fourth but he removed the Vulgate parallel column.

Erasmus recognized the superiority of Ximenes' Polyglot and used it extensively to "correct" his own work (revising his previous work in Revelation in about 90 places). However, Erasmus' work became the standard Greek text for three reasons:

- 1) it became available to the public first
- 2) it was cheaper
- 3) it came in a convenient size

## **The Textus Receptus**

Is Erasmus' work the famed *Textus Receptus*? Not yet.

A famous printer from Paris named Robert Estienne (1503-1559) later produced four more editions (1546, 1549, 1550, 1551). He is also known as Stephanus, his Latinized name. Estienne utilized both Erasmus' text and the Greek of Ximenes' *Complutensian Polyglot*. Stephanus' third edition contained the first "critical apparatus," which is a series of footnotes that the editor used to show the facts for the basis on why he chose a particular Greek word in each verse.

Stephanus also invented another item that is of great importance to all of us: verse divisions. It was Stephanus who first divided the Bible up into numbered verses in 1551 in his fourth edition (which included two Latin versions (the translations of Jerome and Erasmus) on both sides of his Greek text).

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, in Acts 9:6, Erasmus used the Latin text to add Saul's question, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" There is absolutely no support for this verse in any other Greek manuscripts but Erasmus added it from the Vulgate and therefore, it still appears in the KJV and NKJV today. More on this later.

<sup>5</sup> Remember that by this time, the Latin Vulgate had been THE Bible for over one thousand years. Greek texts had only recently been found. It was a revolutionary idea that the Greek texts may be older and more accurate than the long-existing Latin.

Is the work of Erasmus and Stephanus the famed *Textus Receptus*? Not yet. Theodore Bèza succeeded John Calvin in Geneva as head of Reformed Protestantism. He published NINE editions of the Greek New Testament. Bèza's text of 1565 is quite similar to Stephanus' fourth edition of 1551.

Is the work of Erasmus and Stephanus and Bèza the famed *Textus Receptus*? Yes and No. There was still one more step. Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir were two brothers who had a lucrative printing press in the Netherlands. As a commercial venture, they published a small edition of the Greek text in 1624 primarily based on Bèza's 1565 edition (73 years after Stephanus and 59 years after Beza!) and it gained great popularity because of its small size and remarkably clear printing.

A second printing in 1633 corrected many errors and the preface claims that even the smallest of mistakes had been corrected and thus this edition contained an advertising blurb in Latin that this edition was "the text which is now received by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted."

In Latin, the important words are "textum" which is "text" and "receptum" which is "received." This edition came to be known as the *TEXTUS RECEPTUS* or the *Received Text*. **The T.R. (as it is commonly abbreviated) is the accepted text of the Erasmus/Estienne/ Bèza/Elzevir tradition in 1633.** Ironically, thousands swear allegiance to this T.R. and yet know nothing about it. This Greek text underlies the King James Version of the Bible, even though it was not called the *Textus Receptus* until 22 years after the publication of the first King James Version.



"You really need to upgrade your printer."

We cannot praise enough the T.R. but we should not be blinded to its limitations, either. The question is whether or not we should stop with the Received Text of 1633. To use an illustration, the T.R. is the Gutenberg press of the New Testament texts. Gutenberg's press was a triumph of early engineering and design, but it was only the first step of many. Wouldn't we all suffer if we were still using that type of press for all our printing needs? Aren't you glad we have laser printers and ink jet printers and the big publishing firms have much more advanced presses?

**Today, we have many more Greek manuscripts available to us. Erasmus had only SIX and they were incomplete. The manuscripts we have today are also much older than the ones Erasmus, Bèza and Estienne had. It seems strange to say that an edition of a text produced at the very inception of New Testament**

**textual study is the text to end all texts.**

Many of the King James Only advocates answer that with an assumption. They assume that the manuscripts Erasmus found at Basel must have been the "special" manuscripts God intended him to find *because they were the best* (or even divinely inspired). While not doubting God's providence in the acts, it must be seen that this is a gratuitous and unprovable assumption that can only be accepted by faith. I have no trouble accepting by faith what God has clearly said. However, I have great problems accepting human assumptions by faith alone.

## Opposition to Erasmus' Work

After one thousand years of unopposed loyalty, Jerome's Vulgate would not be allowed to slip away quietly. Martin Dorpius of Louvain University wrote to Erasmus, urging him to stop with his translation:

*"I hear also that you have been correcting the text of the New Testament...If I can show you that the Latin translation has in it no errors or mistakes, then you must confess that the labor of those who try to correct it is altogether null and void ... For it cannot be that the unanimous universal Church now for so many centuries has been mistaken, which has always been used and still both sanctions and uses this version"*

Dorpius later added:

*"There is great harm [in pointing out variances] because, about this matter of the integrity of the Holy Scriptures, many will dispute, many will doubt it . . . all these*

*considerations have induced me to beseech you to either limit your corrections to those passages only of the NT in which you are able, without altering the sense, to substitute more expressive words; or if you should point out that the sense requires any alteration at all, that you will reply to the foregoing arguments in your preface”*

Dorpius admitted to variances but Erasmus was asked to simply keep quiet about it. Dorpius would rather have Erasmus deceive people. Amazingly, this same attitude used to discredit the very Greek text that would lead to the King James Version would later be used by King James Onlyists to discredit modern versions. What irony!

## England in the 1500s

The seeds of the King James Bible were sown in the 1500s as the pressure for a Bible in the English language gradually became irresistible. The 1500s were a remarkable era which included such luminaries as Columbus, Vasco de Gama, Copernicus, Da Vinci, and Michelangelo. In England, one figure dominates the century – King Henry VIII.

### King Henry VIII

Henry VIII came to the English throne in 1509 and set an agenda of making England a significant European power. He knew the only way to ensure the future success of his agenda was a smooth transition of power after his death by producing a son as heir to the English throne. The details of this attempt shed light on the English Reformation and the coming King James translation.

Henry was originally married to Catherine of Aragon (the daughter of Ferdinand & Isabella of Spain). Their marriage was doomed for three reasons:

1. Henry and Catherine had five children but only one survived infancy – Mary. They did not have a son, which brought understandable friction between the two.
2. The marriage also reflected ideals that were antiquated, that being an alliance with Spain was essential to good foreign policy. The weakness of that idea was made clear when Spain’s Charles V declined to marry Henry and Catherine’s daughter.
3. Catherine had been the wife of Henry’s brother Arthur for at least several months. Henry believed that the curse of God fell on such a marriage, quoting Leviticus 20:21 “If a man shall take his brother’s wife, it is an unclean thing . . . they shall be childless.” At their marriage, Henry received a special dispensation from Pope Julius II and now wished for Pope Clement VII to revoke that special dispensation. This would render the eighteen-year marriage null from the outset.



## The Break with Rome

All these factors led Henry to begin the process of divorcing Catherine. Normally, a divorce was only a formality. Popes were generally open to granting divorces to kings because they might one day need a favor, as well. However, the city of Rome was under siege by Emperor Charles V and Pope Clement VII was in no mood to further agitate the Emperor. At the same time, Catherine of Aragon was the aunt of Charles V and Pope Clement could hardly afford to offend Charles. The request for divorce was denied. Clement went one step further and told Henry that he would be excommunicated from the Catholic Church if he ever married again.

Henry VIII was less than happy when he heard the refusal. Henry began to assert a separation from the Roman Catholic Church and autonomy to the English throne. Parliament at first refused but Henry declared that all clergy who supported Rome were guilty of treason and faced the death penalty. The clergy reluctantly agreed to grant Henry’s demands for recognition of his ecclesiastical authority.

Henry’s power was further solidified when the archbishop of Canterbury died and was replaced by Thomas Cranmer, a supporter of Henry’s divorce. Cranmer was consecrated in March 1533. Meanwhile, Henry had been having an affair with Anne Boleyn, who became pregnant in December 1532. Henry had secretly

married the pregnant Anne Boleyn in January 1533. Henry's marriage to Catherine was annulled by an English court in May 1533.

Anne Boleyn was crowned queen on June 1, 1533. Even with the court astrologers predicting the birth of a son, Boleyn gave him another daughter, Elizabeth. Boleyn was later executed for infidelity (a treasonous charge in the king's consort) in May 1536.

Henry then married Jane Seymour by the end of the same month, who died giving birth to Henry's lone male heir, Edward, in October 1536.

Early in 1540, Henry arranged a marriage with Anne of Cleves after viewing Hans Holbein's beautiful portrait of the German princess. However, upon meeting her in person, Henry found her "homely" and the marriage was never consummated. In July 1540, he married the adulterous Catherine Howard, who was later executed for infidelity in March 1542. Catherine Parr became his wife in 1543, providing for the needs of both Henry and his children until his death in 1547.

## Henry's Legacy

With Henry's divorce of Catherine, the Pope was compelled to excommunicate. However, ever the politician, Henry moved first in a series of official royal decrees, or acts. First,

- The "Succession Act" declared that the crown would pass to Henry's children.
- The "Supremacy Act" declared that Henry was the "supreme head" of the English church.
- The "Treasons Act" declared that denial of Henry's supremacy was an act of treason, punishable by death. This final act led to the execution of two prominent Catholic churchmen, Thomas More and John Fisher. Both men refused to recognize Henry as head of the church – a title belonging only to the Pope.

Henry was no enemy of Catholicism. He considered himself a defender of Catholic dogma, writing against Luther's attack on the seven sacraments with his own "Defense of the Seven Sacraments" in 1521. In this work, he referred to Martin Luther as "a poisonous serpent" and a "wolf of hell." In gratitude, the pope gave Henry the title "Defender of the Faith," a title the English monarchy still holds.<sup>6</sup> Apparently, Henry's desire was to be head of the English Catholic Church and let the Pope remain the head of the Roman Catholic Church.

While all of this was occurring, Henry also faced the threat of invasion by neighboring Catholic states. France and Spain both had ample reason to attack. Henry was obliged to ensure the nation's safety and he did so in several ways. In 1536, he ordered the close of many English monasteries and their assets (including the *Lindisfarne Gospels*) seized by the crown. This was designed to eliminate sources of dissension but the main motive was financial to build his army.

The English Reformation was in full swing even though its beginnings were thoroughly pragmatic and political. But Henry was successful in one area – his children would rule the land. Henry had three children survive – Mary, Elizabeth and Edward. These three children played an incredibly important role in the progress of the Bible in the English language.

- **Edward** (of "Prince and Pauper" fame) became the boy king and was Protestant to the core. He helped Christianity flourish but sadly died at 15.
- Then, **Mary Tudor** took over as QUEEN. She was thoroughly Catholic and tried to stamp out Protestantism. She became known as "BLOODY MARY" through the writings of John Foxe and his popular book, "Foxe's Book of Martyrs."
- Finally, Henry's third child, **Elizabeth** became QUEEN. She was sympathetic towards Protestantism and Christianity began to flourish once more. She ruled for nearly fifty years and ushered in England's Golden Age.

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<sup>6</sup> However, Prince Charles indicated in 1994 that when he assumes the throne, the title will be "Defender of Faith," with the definite article removed.



A brief timeline of English history will be helpful as we enter into a time when Bible translations were created fast and furiously.

<b>House of Lancaster</b>		<b>House of Tudor</b>		<b>House of Stuart</b>	
Wycliffe .....	1380	Henry VII	1485-1509	James I	1604-1625
Henry IV	1399-1413	Tyndale .....	1526	Charles I	1625-1649
Henry V	1413-1422	Coverdale .....	1534	<b>Commonwealth</b>	
Henry VI	1422-1461	Matthew .....	1537	Parliament	1649-1653
<b>House of York</b>		Great Bible .....	1540	<b>Protectorate</b>	
Edward IV	1461-1470	Henry VIII	1509-1547	Oliver Cromwell	1653-1658
<b>House of Lancaster</b>		Edward VI	1547-1553	Richard Cromwell	1658-1659
Henry VI	1460-1471	Mary I	1553-1558	<b>House of Stuart</b>	
<b>House of York</b>		Elizabeth I	1558-1603	Charles II	1660-1685
Edward IV	1471-1483	Geneva .....	1560	James II	1685-1688
Edward V	1483	Bishops' .....	1568	Williams III	1689-1702
Richard III	1483-1485	Douay-Rheims ..	1582	& Mary II (co-rule)	1689-1694
				Anne	1702-1714

## The Beginning

It is difficult to discern the beginning of a mighty movement. The Reformation in Germany was instigated by Martin Luther. The Reformation in Switzerland began under the teaching of Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin. The Reformation in Scotland was led by the thundering voice of John Knox. However, in England, there was no singular voice, save the voice of God in the soon-to-come English Bibles. However, some individuals did play tremendous parts. One such person, who perhaps may be called the initiator of the translation of the Bible into English was a man named Thomas Bilney.

Bilney was a Catholic priest but his spiritual life was barren. Fasting and indulgences left him with little money, poor health and an empty heart. Afraid that every generation had its own Judas, he was convinced that he was the one for his generation. He decided that if he was going to hell, it might as well be for a good reason. He went out to purchase a black-market copy of Erasmus' Greek New Testament, which was banned but part of the religious sub-culture at Cambridge University.

He didn't get arrested right away so he read it and was saved. He started talking with others about the Greek text and his new relationship with Christ. He met with other scholars at "The White Horse Inn" who gathered to discuss topics illegal to discuss in the classroom.



The clandestine meetings soon began to gather unwanted attention. Later, when Bilney had graduated from Cambridge and was licensed to preach, we started to preach fiery sermons denouncing the worship of saints and relics. In 1527, Bilney was arrested and taken to the Tower of London. Eventually, Bilney was successfully persuaded to recant his sermons denouncing the Roman Catholic faith. He was forced to listen to a sermon denouncing his "heresy" and then he walked to St. Paul's Cathedral where he was forced to light a fire under some Bibles produced by Tyndale.

The effects of this act almost drove him crazy. He resolved within himself to get arrested again and to make a stand for truth. It worked. He was arrested in 1531 and taken back to prison. On the night before he was to be burned at the stake, his friends tried to comfort him. When he finished eating his meal, he put his Bible back on the table and read from Isaiah 43:2, which says "When you walk through the fire, thou shalt not be burned." He was convinced that the Lord would protect him from the terrible pain of the flames. To show his trust in God, he put his index finger into the flame of the candle and held it there calmly until all the flesh had been burnt off.

The next day, as he approached the stake, he ran to it and hugged it, thanking God for the privilege of dying

for the sake of Christ. Bilney's voice was forever quieted but his life's work would have far-reaching consequences, especially in the life of one man who sat across the table at the White Horse Inn – William Tyndale.

## William Tyndale (1494-1536)



William Tyndale was born in 1494 (the same year as Bilney) and went to Oxford University when he was sixteen years old and earned his Master's Degree soon after that. He taught at Oxford and then at Cambridge, England's two universities. It was at Cambridge that Tyndale gained his expertise in Greek. Tyndale became increasingly convinced that both laity and clergy should know the Bible. One story that has been passed down has Tyndale in discussion with a clergyman. The priest declared that "We are better to be without God's laws than the Pope's." Tyndale replied, "I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spares my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth a plow to know more of the Scripture than you."

Tyndale heard that Martin Luther had produced a German translation in 1522. But Tyndale needed the permission of the Church to translate the Bible into English. He traveled to London to get permission from Bishop Tunstall. Tunstall was not interested. This did not stop Tyndale.

A local merchant housed Tyndale, which allowed him to begin work translating but he soon realized England was not a safe place to do so. Tyndale left the island for Europe, traveling freely and working on his translation all the while. The merchant who was so kind and helpful to Tyndale was arrested in 1528 and imprisoned in the Tower of London.

Once in Europe, Tyndale visited Luther in Wittenberg, Germany. He eventually settled in the German city of Cologne in August 1525. His New Testament was complete and now he set about trying to get it printed.

There are several major differences between Tyndale's work and Wycliffe's. These are:

- 1) Wycliffe's Bible was a translation of Jerome's Latin Vulgate. Tyndale went back to the original Greek (Erasmus) and Hebrew.
- 2) Wycliffe's Bible was hand copied. Tyndale's Bible was to be printed on a press.
- 3) Wycliffe translated into Middle English. Tyndale's version belongs to the Modern English period and can still be understood with some work to this day.

He chose to produce the work in the printing house of Peter Quentell. Quentell was also publishing a book for Johannes Cochlaeus, a noted opponent of Luther. Cochlaeus learned of Tyndale's book when some of Quentell's employees got drunk and started talking. Cochlaeus knew he would rise in the Catholic ranks if he could expose this illegal act and he arranged for a raid on Quentell's presses. However, Tyndale caught wind of the raid and managed to escape just minutes ahead of the raiding party. He had only printed three quarters of Matthew's Gospel and Tyndale managed to save 6,000 of them.

Tyndale then moved to Worms, German, to use the presses of Peter Schoeffer, the son of the man who once worked with Gutenberg. This time they were able to finish the work. The New Testament was completed in February 1526. Six thousand copies of his New Testament were copied in Worms and by April 1526 they were selling in England's black market.

When the Bibles reached England, the King ordered death to any who had one. Now, there was a price on Tyndale's head and bounty hunters were everywhere.

Cuthbert Tunstall, the Bishop of London, bought many of these copies and had them burned. Tunstall hired a man to purchase all of Tyndale's Bibles he could so he could burn more. However, the man was also a friend of Tyndale's and charged Tunstall almost four times the price of the Bible. Ironically, the money paid by Tunstall paid off Tyndale's debts and financed a new and corrected edition.

Tyndale reprinted his New Testament many times and in 1530 he published his translation of the Pentateuch, with a revised edition of Genesis appearing in 1534. Tyndale also translated Jonah and all of the books from Joshua to 2 Chronicles. Tyndale translated directly from the Hebrew and Greek and truly is the "Father of the English Bible."

Finally, in August 1536, his days of running were over. He had eluded religious and state authorities for decades with his extensive knowledge of foreign languages greatly assisting his life as a fugitive. Tyndale spoke eight languages fluently with each one passing as his mother tongue.

Tyndale was living in Antwerp, a free city. However, the surrounding territory was under the control of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. As long as he stayed in Antwerp, he was safe. Therefore, the emperor had him kidnapped in May 1535 and carried out of Antwerp and imprisoned in a town some six miles north of Brussels.

Tyndale was kept in prison over a year and a half. In that time, the jailer was converted, as was his daughter and a multitude of the prison staff.

Finally, the day came for the execution in October 1536. His executioners led him to be killed, where he was chained to a pillar with two holes it in to run wire around the neck. He was strangled and then burned. Showing no fear or regret, he uttered his final words: "LORD OPEN THE KING OF ENGLAND'S EYES." Tyndale's fate reveals that translating the Bible in those days was far more than simple scholarly exercise.



## ***The Effects of Tyndale's Bible***

Tyndale's English New Testament must be regarded as a landmark in the history of not only the English Bible, but also in the history of the English language and literature. It is estimated that approximately ninety percent of the King James Bible is the same as Tyndale's. His English prose is still appreciated today for its clarity and beauty. In many places, Tyndale's translation remains even though it might not be the *best* translation.

For instance, it was Tyndale who translated the Greek phrase "*me genoito*" as "God forbid." However, the phrase has no mention or even hint of the word "God" within it. Literally, the phrase means "May it not be." Yet, the Tyndale translation remains to this day, revealing the staying-power of his influence.

Secondly, Tyndale generally avoided Latin terms, preferring to "English-ize" them. Sometimes, this means using words that had only recently come into use or sometimes even coining new words on the spot. Many of Tyndale's words found their way into the common English language of the day. He invented such words and phrases as:

- "the powers that be" (Romans 13)
- "my brother's keeper" (Genesis 4)
- "apple of His eye" (Deuteronomy 32:10)
- "the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5)
- "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3)
- "daily bread" (Matthew 6)
- "shepherd abiding in the field" (Luke 2)
- "eat, drink and be merry" (Ecclesiastes 8:15)
- "only begotten son" (John 1:14, 18) (However, he used "only son" in 3:16)
- "in the twinkling of an eye" (I Corinthians 15)
- "Passover" (Exodus 12:11)
- "Jehovah" (Exodus 6:3)
- "nurse" (Exodus 2:9)
- "scapegoat" (Leviticus 16:8)
- "atonement"
- "beautiful" (Matthew 23:27)
- "fisherman" (Luke 5:2) (Why not "*huntermen*"?)

*All these words could have been translated differently from the Greek but because Tyndale had such an ear for the English language, these words are still used today.*

Tyndale used vibrant English. For example, the serpent says to Eve, “Tush, Ye shall not die” (Genesis 3:4). Elsewhere, Pharoah’s “jolly captains” died in the Dead Sea (Exodus 15:4).

However, it was Tyndale’s personal notes in the margins that angered the Church of England and Rome. At Exodus 32:35 where the Israelites died because they worshipped the golden calf, Tyndale wrote “The Pope’s bull slayeth more than Aaron’s calf.” In Exodus 36:5-7, Moses told the Hebrews to stop giving when enough had been collected for the temple. A controversial marginal note reads “When will the Pope say ‘Hool!’ and forbid an offering for the building of St. Peter’s Church? Never until they have it all.”

At Matthew 16:17-19, Tyndale penned a note that read: “Peter in the greke sygnieth a stone in englysshe. This confession is the rock.” This directly contradicted the Roman Catholic Church’s belief that Peter was literally “the rock” on which the church stood as the first of the popes.

England’s clerics also did not like that Tyndale used different words in places, such as “congregation” for “church” and “repentance” for “penance” and “love” for “charity.”

*Once Tyndale’s Bible was available, there was no turning back. It was so popular that the church and state realized they had only two options: his work would have to be authorized or made “better” by a new English translation. They opted for the latter. Thus Tyndale was an unparalleled success. He produced an excellent translation and then he forced the hand of England’s “powers that be” to undertake something that would have been unthinkable only a few years earlier – an officially sanctioned English Bible. Ironically, this newly approved Bible would be in production even before the fire began to blaze under Tyndale’s feet. His prayers were answered even as he prayed.*

## Coverdale’s Bible (1535)



In December 1534, almost two years before Tyndale was executed, the Convocation of Canterbury convened and petitioned King Henry VIII to rule that “the Holy Scriptures should be translated into the vulgar English tongue by certain good and learned men, to be nominated by His Majesty, and should be delivered to the people for their instruction.” The English clergy turned their backs on Tyndale but conceded the need for an officially sanctioned English Bible. A vital corner had been turned.

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) was a friend of Tyndale who produced this translation. His contribution was first *complete printed* Bible in the English language.<sup>7</sup>

Coverdale was no great linguist. His translation was really a revised translation of a translation (not the original languages). He used at least five different sources for his new English translation (Tyndale, Jerome, Luther’s German translation, a more recent Latin version by Pagnini, and a Swiss/German translation from Switzerland). It really should not be considered a translation at all but more of a compilation of other translations.

Coverdale’s edition of the English Bible was available in 1535. Sadly, no complete copies exist today. Henry VIII had been persuaded by the evil archbishop Wolsey and the hateful Thomas More to ban Tyndale’s work. However, now that those two mentors were removed from his presence, he began to think differently. Now assisted by Thomas Cromwell, who was in turn advised by Thomas Cranmer (the Archbishop of Canterbury), Henry declared “If there be no heresies, let it go abroad among the people.” Tyndale’s prayers were answered and the English Reformation was now in full swing.

The most innovative thing about this Bible was that it placed the Apocrypha – those books that Roman Catholics accept as Biblical but which Protestants do not – at the end of the Old Testament instead of being interspersed throughout the Old Testament. All previous versions had the Apocrypha distributed amongst

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<sup>7</sup> Wycliffe’s Bible was complete but handwritten; Tyndale’s version was printed but only contained part of the OT.

the Old Testament books. All Protestant Bibles that were to follow, if they included the Apocrypha at all, included them in a special section between the testaments.

Amazingly, within one year of Tyndale's arrest and subsequent execution, complete English Bibles were available to the people. Coverdale's Bible had no royal sanction but because he smartly dedicated the Bible to King Henry VIII for being a better "Defender of the Faith" than even the pope, the Bible was allowed to be published and disbursed with no serious opposition.

Coverdale's efforts were also helped by the fact that Anne Boleyn preferred it and she held great sway over King Henry VIII. However, when Anne Boleyn was beheaded in 1536, Coverdale's Bible began to slip from public view and public use. Thomas Cromwell, the King's chief advisor, knew Henry would never authorize this Coverdale Bible so he had to take another approach. He would work to encourage an entirely new translation and he would not have to wait long.

## Matthew's Bible (1537)

John Rogers, under the pen-name Thomas Matthew, published his own version in 1537 by combining the Old Testament works of Tyndale and Coverdale along with a 1535 revision of Tyndale's New Testament. This Bible is famously known as "The Wife-Beater's Bible" because of a marginal note at I Peter 3:7, which reads, "If [the wife] be not obedient and helpfull unto [her husband], [he] endeavoureth to beate the feare of God into her."

Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury, were kept aware of the progress of this work by Rogers and his associates because they could bend the ear of King Henry VIII. In August 1537, Cranmer received a final proof. He liked it and gave it to Cromwell. Cromwell approved of it as well and "caught Henry on a good day." The king scanned the book, thinking it might be a useful instrument to weaken the grip of Rome on England and declared his permission to print it. The king did not see the large initials "W.T." that Rogers had placed at the end of the Old Testament in recognition of William Tyndale's contributions. He did not realize the Bible had any connection with the hated Tyndale, and so he gave the Bible his approval.

On the title page it read "printed with the king's most gracious license." A milestone in the history of the English Bible had been achieved. No longer forced to be sold on the black market and smuggled into England, a Bible in the English language was now printed with the king's outright royal permission.

Ironically, this means that there were two versions that had Henry's sanction to be printed within a year of Tyndale's execution. However, there was still no officially *authorized* version. Henry knew the best way to counter all the unauthorized versions was to flood the country and its churches with a single authorized version. Henry VIII therefore issued this royal decree:

*That ye shall provide, on this side of the Feast of All Saints next coming, one book of the whole Bible of the **largest** volume in English, and the same set up in some convenient place within the said church that ye have cure of, whereas your parishioners may most commodiously resort to the same and read it. **The charges of which book shall be rateably borne between you, the parson and the parishioners aforesaid, that is to say, the one half by you and the other half by them.***

The king was willing to authorize a final version but he was not willing to pay for it. The reference to the "largest volume" suggested that the Matthew's Bible would be chosen because Coverdale's quarto version was too small. However, the notes in Matthew's Bible were strongly flavored by Protestantism and England was not quite ready for such strong words. The text of the Bible was widely accepted but the notes were disliked by the Anglican priests. Furthermore, the order of the books of the New Testament followed the Lutheran order, placing Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation at the end of the New Testament in a category all their own.

The titles of the fourth and sixth editions (Nov 1540 and Nov 1541) were completely rewritten and then authorized by "Cuthbert," the Bishop of Durham. This is Cuthbert Tunstall, the former Bishop of London who had denied Tyndale permission to translate his bible and later burned the bibles Tyndale had printed.

He undoubtedly knew that this Bible was essentially Tyndale's version but with the King's authority behind it, he could do nothing about it!

## The Great Bible (1539)

Thomas Cromwell realized that neither Matthew's Bible nor Coverdale's Bible would receive the final authorization to be placed in every church in England. However, to begin from scratch would take an enormous amount of time and money. The simpler solution was soon discovered.

Matthew's Bible was popular but had many anti-Catholic footnotes. It became hard for Cromwell to deal with other nations politically so he sent to King Henry VIII for permission to print another new edition. Coverdale helped edit it and eliminated all the footnotes. His explicit instructions to Coverdale were to revise Matthews' Bible with such changes as were required to keep influential English churchmen happy. It also had to be larger than Matthew's Bible to get around the King's earlier decree.

The new Bible appeared in April 1539 and the King ordered 1500 copies. The Bible was huge, with 11" x 16" pages. Because of the size, this version came to be known as the *Great Bible*. Some called it the Chained Bible because it was always chained down in churches, lest someone steal it.

This Bible became the *first* royally AUTHORIZED VERSION. Within two years, 20,000 copies had been sold. All parishes were ordered to have one and it had to be publicly displayed so all could read. Furthermore, the church had to ensure a reader was present if a person was illiterate. Incredibly, the English Bible was now **commanded to be read**. In fact, this command was followed so enthusiastically that a new law had to be passed to keep people from reading it aloud during the sermons!

The title page itself is a remarkably revealing piece of reformation art and history. It represents a powerful visual statement of the Bible in Tudor England and shows the close link between church and state in that time and place. It identifies three main figures in the production of this Bible: King Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Cranmer.

At the top of the page in the center directly above the work's title is King Henry VIII, who is pictured receiving the biblical text from God. At Henry's right hand (the reader's left) is Thomas Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury, along with his fellow bishops. Cranmer is depicted as happily receiving the Bible from the King, thus stressing the mutual commitment of both the church and state to the Gospel. Immediately beneath that, we see Cranmer passing the Bible on to a priest of the Church of England. Cranmer's Coat of Arms is placed in this scene to allow easy identification. Immediately beneath this scene, we see the same clergyman preaching to his congregation. The pulpit is inscribed with the words "*Vivat Rex!*" which means "Long Live the King!"

The other side of the page deals with the secular aspects of the matter. Henry VIII is passing a copy of the Bible to Thomas Cromwell, Henry's vice-regent and chief advisor. The scene immediately below this depicts Cromwell delivering the Bible to the general laity. Cromwell's Coat of Arms is included in this scene. Finally, at the bottom, another group of laity are seen milling around aimlessly. This is in contrast to the other side with its people in rapt attention to a sermon. There is also an image of men in a prison in the lower right hand corner.

Overall, this image projected a nation united under the monarch and the Bible. The church and the state were working harmoniously. However, this was just an icon and it could not mask what was really



happening. Cromwell fell from favor in 1540 when he tried to force Henry into a closer alliance with Germany and its Lutheran populace. He attempted to have Henry marry Anne of Cleves. Cromwell arranged for Hans Holbein to paint an excessively flattering portrait of the bride-to-be, whom Henry never met prior to the marriage. On seeing the real princess in the flesh, Henry's enthusiasm for the alliance disappeared. He divorced Anne of Cleves immediately and had Cromwell executed.

This presented a problem: What could be done with the title page? The solution was to simply erase the Cromwell's coat of arms so that the third and all later editions displayed a blank circle. This allowed the person to whom Henry gave the Bible to remain vague and be filled by whoever filled that position at the time.

Henry died in 1547 and was succeeded by his son, Edward VI. Edward was had very strong Protestant leanings but lived only six years. However, during his brief reign, it is estimated that some forty editions of Tyndale's, Coverdale's, Matthew's, the Great Bible and even Taverner's Bible were published.

Within this time, the Great Bible was ordered put in the churches, then ordered out of the church and then ordered back in. In 1546, orders were given to burn all bibles but the Great Bible.

With Edward's death, one can mark the end of the rise of Protestantism and the beginning of a *bloody* period of persecution in England.

## The Geneva Bible (1557)



Four years after the Great Bible was published, Edward had died and his sister, Mary Tudor, became Queen in 1553. Edward's Reformation policies were reversed. Those responsible for printing Bibles during Edward's reign were executed, most notably John Rogers (famous for his "Matthew's Bible") and Thomas Cramner. Mary was determined to return the country to its Roman Catholic roots. She systematically rooted out Protestants and executed many, exiling more. To escape her bloody persecution, Protestants fled to the European continent. Many settled in the town of Geneva. In AD 1500, the population of Geneva was about 5,000 people. By 1550, it had grown to 13,100. By 1560, it was bulging at the seams with 21,400 residents.

Mary died in 1558 and her sister Elizabeth assumed the throne. Elizabeth, imprisoned by her sister at age 21, reversed Mary's pro-Catholic policies. It was during Elizabeth's reign that the Geneva Bible was published.

This new translation was completed in 1557 by William Whittingham, John Calvin's brother-in-law. Many Protestants settled in Geneva, Switzerland during Mary's bloody reign, which led to this Bible being known as the GENEVA BIBLE. It was aimed for use by everybody everyday. It was filled with study notes and pictorial illustrations, which were very popular. The translation was so good that it was never revised. It was quoted over 500 times by William Shakespeare in his plays. Perhaps the greatest tribute to its popularity is that in the preface to the soon-coming King James Version, the translators chose to use the Geneva translation instead of the very one they were attempting to replace.

The Geneva Bible was the first English Bible to have VERSE DIVISIONS, which remain today. This Bible used ITALICS to indicate English words written in the English Bible that were not in the original Greek texts. This practice was followed by KJV translators 54 years later. This Bible was published in QUARTO size, making it easier to carry and to keep in the home.

The Great Bible was not without controversy, however. For example, a 1595 edition added notes that the beast coming out of the pit in Revelation 11:7 is "the pope which hath his power out of hell and cometh thence."

This Bible was loved by some and hated by others. It had *extensive* study notes which were anti-Catholic, anti-monarchy, and anti-Church of England. It impacted believers greatly as they used the notes in a way like Americans used the SCOFIELD STUDY BIBLE in the 1900s

*The Geneva Bible became the Bible of Puritans, Pilgrims and Shakespeare (NOT the KJV).* The Puritans were Protestants who wanted REFORM in the church. They eventually left England, sailed to America and we know them today as the PILGRIMS

The Geneva Bible continued to be printed for 30+years after KJV came out. It didn't immediately drop out of favor for KJV, but eventually succumbed.

The Geneva Bible was never that popular with the established church and her priests and bishops. The English National Church disagreed with Roman Catholicism but never fully broke with Rome in practice. Priests still wore robes and collars and bishops still held office. But official opposition to the Geneva Bible could not prevent it from becoming the most widely read bible of the Elizabethan era, and even into the King James era. It never secured royal authorization but it never needed it.

## The Bishops' Bible (1568)



When Elizabeth came to England's throne in 1558, she required every parish church to have an English Bible. The instant success of the Geneva Bible made it impossible to go on using the Great Bible for reading in the churches. Its deficiencies became all too obvious in the light of the new and better version. But the Geneva Bible could not be used in church settings as it was not accepted by the English clergy because of its controversial notes.

Another more acceptable version came into being—the Bishop's Bible. Its name came from the fact that most of the translators were bishops. The Bishop's Bible was a pulpit Bible and was basically a revision of the Great Bible. Its quality, though, was not as good as the already very popular Geneva Bible and failed in rivaling the Geneva version in usage. No more copies of the Bishop's Bible were made after 1606 though it continued to be the official version of the churches until the 1611 King James Version.

Within 23 years of being unlawful to own a Bible, it now became the law to own one. In 1580, Elizabeth sent out search teams to inspect homes to see if a Bible was present. Inspectors had to see the Bible and it had to have owner's own name in it to keep people from borrowing their neighbor's copy just for the inspection.

***From the time of Tyndale until 1611, seven major English translations were made—the Coverdale Bible, the Matthew Bible, the Taverner Bible, the Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, the Bishop's Bible and the Rheims-Douai Bible (a Roman Catholic Bible published in France).***

***The first era of the English Bible lasted from 1382 (Wycliffe) to 1610 – nearly 230 years. Elizabeth's death would open the door for yet another version of the Bible. This King James Version would eventually surpass all these versions and become the standard English Bible for the next 350 years.***