

The Glorious History of the English Bible

By David Cloud

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Introduction

The King James Bible is not merely *another* translation. Its heritage and the manner in which it was created are unique.

The early record of the English Bible is one of the most fascinating chapters of church history and reads almost like a novel.

The following overview traces this glorious heritage, beginning with the Wycliffe Bible of the late 14th century.

Every English-speaking believer should know this history; yet, sadly, even in the staunchest Bible-believing churches it is rare to find someone who is well informed about the great price that was paid to provide him with an excellent Bible in his own language.

I have studied this history for many years, and it has greatly strengthened my faith in God and in the authenticity and preservation of His Word. I trust that it will do the same for each reader of this book.

THE WYCLIFFE BIBLE (1380, 1382)

The history of the English Bible properly begins with John Wycliffe (1324-1384).

The Scriptures most commonly found among English people before Wycliffe were Anglo Saxon and French, and the few English translations were only of portions of Scripture. (For an examination of the history of the Bible in England prior to Wycliffe see *Faith vs. the Modern Bible Versions*, available from Way of Life Literature.)

Some modern scholars have tried to make the case that Wycliffe did not do any of the actual translation himself, but older historians did not question Wycliffe's role in the work and we believe the evidence supports their view. That Wycliffe had helpers and that the original translation went through revisions no one doubts, but I do not accept the position that John Wycliffe was not involved in the actual translation.

Wycliffe's Times

In John Wycliffe's day Rome ruled England and Europe with an iron fist. By the 7th century, Rome had brought England under almost complete dominion, and it was under subjugation to the popes from then until the 16th century, roughly 900 years, a period that is called Britain's Dark Ages.

King John (who ruled from 1199-1216) tried to resist Pope Innocent III's authority in the early 13th century, but he was not successful.

The pope excommunicated John and issued a decree declaring that he was no longer the king and releasing the people of England from their obligation to him. The pope ordered King Philip of France to organize an army and navy to overthrow John, which he began to do with great zeal, eager to conquer England for himself. The pope also called

for a crusade against John, promising the participants remission of sins and a share of the spoils of war. Bowing to this pressure, John submitted to the pope, pledging complete allegiance to him in all things and resigning England and Ireland into the pope's hands. The following is a quote from the oath that John signed on May 15, 1213:

"I John, by the grace of God King of England and Lord of Ireland, in order to expiate my sins, from my own free will and the advice of my barons, give to the Church of Rome, to Pope Innocent and his successors, the kingdom of England and all other prerogatives of my crown. I will hereafter hold them as the pope's vassal. I will be faithful to God, to the Church of Rome, to the Pope my master, and to his successors legitimately elected."

The Roman Catholic authorities severely repressed the people and did not allow any form of religion other than Romanism. There was intense censorship of thought. Those who refused to follow Catholicism were persecuted, banished, and even killed.

The pope's representatives had great authority and held many of the highest secular offices in the land.

"The higher dignitaries in both these classes of the clergy, by virtue of their great temporalities held in feudal tenure from the crown, were barons of the realm, and sat in parliament under the title of 'lords spiritual,' taking precedence in rank for a parliament, archbishops, bishops, and abbots already headed the list. ... By prescriptive right, derived from times when the superior intelligence of the clergy gave them some claim to the distinction, all the high offices of state, all paces of trust and honor about the court, were in the hands of the clergy. In 1371, the offices of Lord Chancellor, Lord Treasurer, Keeper and Clerk of the Privy Seal, Master of the Rolls, Master in Chancery, Chancellor and Chamberlain of the Exchequer, and a multitude of inferior offices, were all held by churchmen" (H.C. Conant, *The Popular History of the Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, revised edition, 1881, p. 11).

The bishops, parish priests, and even the monks in the monasteries lived in great opulence through the accumulation of property, the ingathering of tithes and offerings, the saying of masses for the dead, and the sale of

indulgences.

“To the office of the prelates were attached immense landed estates, princely revenues and high civil, as well as ecclesiastical powers; the lower clergy, residing on livings among the people, were supported chiefly by tithes levied on their respective parishes. ... The wealth of the English monks at this period almost passes belief. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the endowment of monasteries was a mania in Christendom. Lands, buildings, precious stones, gold and silver, were lavished upon them with unsparing prodigality. Rich men, disgusted with the world, or conscience-stricken for their sins, not unfrequently entered the cloister and made over to it their whole property. During the crusading epidemic, many mortgaged their estates to the religious houses for ready money, who never returned, or were too much impoverished to redeem them. In this way vast riches accrued to their establishments. They understood, to perfection, all of the traditional machinery of the Church for extracting money from high and low. The exhibition of relics, the performance of miracles, and above all the sale of indulgences, and of masses for the dead, formed an open sluice through which a steady golden stream poured into the monastic treasury” (Conant, *Popular History of the Translation*, pp. 5, 8).

All orders of Roman Catholic clergy were exempt from civil jurisdiction and could provide a safe haven for criminals.

“A clergyman, of whatever offence against the laws of the land he might be guilty, could not be tried by any civil court of the realm. All such offenders were claimed by the Church whose tribunals, subject only to appeals to Rome, dealt so tenderly with her beloved sons, that the land groaned under the crimes of its religious teachers. It was publicly stated to Henry II by his judges, that during the first ten years of his reign, more than a hundred murders had been committed by clergymen, besides thefts, robberies, and other crimes, for which they could not punish them. ... they maintained in full force the ancient right of sanctuary, that is, of harboring fugitives from justice. Once within the sacred precincts of church or abbey, they could defy the law and all its ministers. **This usage, first intended as a shield to the oppressed, had now become the refuge of the vilest criminals.** Debtors, able but unwilling to pay, thieves, assassins, felons of every sort, looked out securely from under the wing of the Church and laughed at justice. Thus protected through the day, they often issued from the holy portals under cover of night to pursue their trade of burglary, arson, or highway robbery, not always unattended by such as had a more permanent residence in the secure abode” (Conant, pp. 6, 12).

The clergy lived in debauchery. By the early 12th century, celibacy was enforced upon all of the clergy.

“The name of Anselm ... should be forever infamous to the friend of humanity, for the pitiless rigor with which he enforced this measure. In 1102, he held an ecclesiastical council at London, where no fewer than ten canons were made for this single object. All priests, even the very lowest, were commanded to put away their wives immediately, not to suffer them to live on any lands belonging to the Church, never to see or speak to them, except in cases of the greatest necessity and in the presence of two or three witnesses. ‘Those unhallowed wretches who refused, were instantly to be deposed and excommunicated, and all their goods, as well as the goods and persons of their wives, as in the case of adulteresses, were to be forfeited to the bishop of the diocese’ [*Henry’s History of Great Britain*, 4th ed., 1805, vol. v. p. 307]. Succeeding prelates followed the lead of Anselm, and episcopal and legantine councils urged the measure, till the long struggle ended in the final establishment of celibacy, and the secular clergy were sealed to utter and irreclaimable profligacy” (Conant, pp. 6-7).

The monasteries, which were supposed to be places of strict holiness, were more like brothels. “Their profligacy was equal to their luxury. Those hells of vice, uncovered in the monasteries by the commissioners of Henry VIII, in the sixteenth century, were not the growth of that age alone. Such as they were then they were two centuries before, and the cry that went up from them to the ear of heaven was like that of Sodom and Gomorrah” (Conant, p. 10).

The Augustinian begging friars carried this debauchery to every strata of society. They were responsible only to the pope and could travel at will to every parish.

“When the barefoot Friar, clad in his serge gown, and weary with toiling over the rough and miry ways, announced in some neglected hamlet that he had come to offer pardons, indulgences, the redemption of their deceased friends from purgatory, and all the precious wares of the Church, at a price within the reach of the poorest laborer or beggar, it seemed to the deluded people like good tidings of great joy. He could, moreover, by certain old rags, pigs’ bones, rusty nails, bits of rotten wood, and similar rubbish which he carried about with him under the name of relics, ensure them good crops, and fruitful herds, and faithful wives, all for a very reasonable consideration. His animated harangues,

seasoned with marvellous stories, all to the honor and glory of his Order, took their ears captive. Then he was so affable, so condescending! He was not too proud to sit down under the thatched roof and eat with his rustic hosts, washing down the plain fare with draughts from the pewter tankard, while his merry joke and tale were the best sauce of the feast. ... This was the most successful blow which had ever yet been struck for the Papacy. Hitherto, the relation between the clergy and people had been such as to allow of a wholesome dislike of the priesthood. ... But under this new form, it wormed itself into the very heart of the people. It fell in with all their prejudices, flattered their vanity, vulgarized religion to their tastes, cheapened it to their means, and bound them, heart and soul, to their spiritual teachers. Their special commission, held directly from the Pope, rendering them amenable to himself alone, gave the Friars a great advantage. Under this all-powerful sanction they ranged from parish to parish, from diocese to diocese, regardless of all prescriptive rights, literally underselling all competitors, and crowding them out of market. **Crime of every sort, secure of absolution in the most private manner and at the cheapest rate, increased with fearful rapidity. One bishop complained that he had in his diocese some two thousand malefactors, of whom not fourteen had received absolution from parish priests, who yet defied punishment, and claimed their right to the sacraments on the pretence of having been absolved by the Frairs**" (Conant, pp. 14-16).

Under these conditions, the people were steeped in ignorance and immorality and lawlessness was rampant.

"Violence and bribery everywhere overawed or corrupted justice. 'There was not,' we are told, 'so much as one of the king's ministers and judges who did not receive bribes, and very few who did not extort them' [Henry, vol. viii, p. 384]. Perjury was a vice so universal, that the words of scripture might have found an almost literal application to the English people, from the king to the serf -- 'All men are liars.' Life and property were kept in perpetual insecurity, by the numerous and ferocious bands of robbers which roamed over the country, under the protection of powerful barons, who sheltered them in their castles, and shared with them their booty. Englishmen and Englishwomen were still sold like cattle at the great fairs. Grossness of manners characterized all ranks, and exhibited itself in the most revolting forms of licentiousness among the leading classes. **'Like priest, like people,' was never more fully verified than in this portion of English history**" (Conant, pp. 22, 23).

The Roman Catholic Church was not interested in granting the people access to the Bible.

The Council of Toulouse (1229) and the Council of Tarragona (1234) had forbidden the laity to possess or read the vernacular translations of the Bible. The Council of Toulouse used these words: “We prohibit the permission of the books of the Old and New Testament to laymen, except perhaps they might desire to have the Psalter, or some Breviary for the divine service, or the Hours of the blessed Virgin Mary, for devotion; expressly forbidding their having the other parts of the Bible translated into the vulgar tongue” (Allix, *Ecclesiastical History*, II, p. 213).

The declarations of these Councils were in effect during Wycliffe’s day.

What Rome allowed were only small portions of Scripture, usually from the Gospels but never from Paul’s Epistles. The Scripture portions allowed by Rome were published together with apocryphal and legendary stories and Mary was commonly exalted higher than Jesus Christ. Consider, for example, the rightly named *GOLDEN LEGEND*. This was published widely in Europe and England prior to the Reformation, but while it was alleged to be excerpts from the Bible it was actually filled with legends about the “saints.” The Bible scraps were “lost in a sea of fiction” (David Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 108). Consider also the 13th century *MIRROR OF THE BLESSED LIFE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST*. This Latin work was translated into English by Nicholas Love and went through eight editions from 1484 to 1530. Alleged to be an “expanded gospel harmony,” it was actually filled with legend and had little to do with the Bible. “The book is not long, but it is padded out with long meditations by and about the Blessed Virgin Mary, who has the overwhelming presence. Although half the book is on the Crucifixion, the Gospels’ narrative is only just visible, overtaken by the Virgin Mary’s long accounts of her own

suffering at that event” (Daniell, p. 161). It sounds like the original for Mel Gibson’s movie *The Passion of the Christ*!

This was the type of “Bible” that Rome allowed the people to have. It is telling that with the publication of Tyndale’s New Testament in 1526, printing of Love’s *Mirror* suddenly ceased.

Theological studies of that day ignored the Bible and were devoted instead to foolish questions. “The Universities could boast their subtle, sublime, profound, angelic, and seraphic doctors of theology, who could discuss through endless folios the questions: ‘Does the glorified body of Christ stand or sit in Heaven? Is the body of Christ, which is eaten in the sacrament, dressed or undressed? Were the clothes in which Christ appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, real or only apparent? ...’ ... Even a copy of the Latin Vulgate was scarcely to be found at the Universities. In 1353, three or four young Irish priests came over to England to study divinity; but were obliged to return home ‘because not a copy of the Bible was to be found at Oxford’” (Conant, pp. 21, 22).

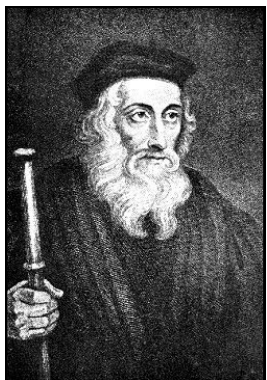
One of the enemies of Wycliffe’s doctrine, Knyghton, a canon of Leicester, complained that by translating the Scriptures into English and thus laying it “open to the laity and to women who could read” Wycliffe was casting the gospel pearl under the feet of swine. This was the attitude that was typical of Roman Catholic leaders in that day.

An Overview of Wycliffe’s Life

Wycliffe was born in Yorkshire in 1324 and educated at Oxford. He was a fellow of Merton College, and from 1361 to about 1366 was Master of Balliol College. In 1372 he received a doctorate in theology.

In the early part of his ministry, when he began preaching against the Friars who swarmed across the land and against

the pope, Wycliffe was popular both with the king and with the authorities at Oxford. The king shared a dislike for the pope's interference in England's affairs, and the leaders at Oxford shared Wycliffe's animosity toward the Friars.



In 1374 Wycliffe became chaplain to King Edward III and was appointed to the rectory of Lutterworth in Leicestershire. Some parts of the ancient church remain from Wycliffe's times. There is a chair still there that he allegedly used and the "Wycliffe Door" on the side of the church away from the river was the door that he used. The existing pulpit is a copy of the one that he preached from. On a visit there in 2003 we found the

famous portrait of Wycliffe hanging in a back storage room.

Beginning in 1377 Wycliffe was fiercely persecuted by the Roman Catholic authorities in England at the instigation of the pope in Rome because of his Bible doctrine.

In 1381 he was put out of Oxford for denying the Roman dogma of transubstantiation and he retired to Lutterworth. The next year a sermon was preached from St. Mary the Virgin Church, the Oxford university church, denouncing Wycliffe's followers as *Lollards*.

Wycliffe produced a voluminous amount of writing between then and his death. "Some 57 Latin works were written between 1380 and December 1384" (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 73).

It was during this time that the first English Bible was completed.

Wycliffe died on the last day of December 1384.

Wycliffe's Doctrine

Wycliffe was a Catholic priest but began to preach against Rome's errors in his mid-30s. He did not reject Rome's dogmas all at once but gradually grew in his understanding of Scripture. There is a lot we do not know about his doctrine, as some of his writings have perished, but we do know that Wycliffe exposed many of Rome's errors.

Wycliffe's foundational doctrine was that the Bible is the sole authority for faith and practice and that men have the right to interpret Scripture for themselves before the Lord (and not be dependent upon Rome). He said, "Believers should ascertain for themselves what are the true matters of their faith, by having the Scriptures in a language which all may understand."

Wycliffe believed the Bible to be the Word of God without error from beginning to end. One of Wycliffe's major works was "On the Truth of Sacred Scripture," which was "a defence of the authority and inerrancy of the Bible." He testified, "It is impossible for any part of the Holy Scriptures to be wrong. In Holy Scripture is all the truth; one part of Scripture explains another" (David Fountain, *John Wycliffe*, p. 48).

Wycliffe believed that the Scripture was "a divine exemplar conceived in the mind of God before creation, and before the material Scriptures were written down" (Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 1998, p. 230). This is the testimony of Psalm 119:89: "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."

He taught that the apostolic churches had only elders and deacons "and declared his conviction that all orders above these had been introduced by Caesarean pride" (Henry Shelton, *History of the Christian Church*, II, 1895, p. 415).

Wycliffe was very bold against the pope, contending that "it

is blasphemy to call any head of the church, save Christ alone” (Thomas Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, I, 1740, p. 7).

Consider some other statements by Wycliffe on the subject of the papacy:

“It is supposed, and with much probability, that the Roman pontiff is the great Antichrist.”

“How then shall any sinful wretch, who knows not whether he be damned or saved, constrain men to believe that he is head of holy Church?” (Shelton, II, p. 415).

“Antichrist puts many thousand lives in danger for his own wretched life. Why, is he not a fiend stained foul with homicide who, though a priest, fights in such a cause?” (John Eadie, *History of the English Bible*, I, pp. 46, 47).

Wycliffe taught that men have the right to have the Bible in their own languages and was willing to endure the wrath of the Catholic authorities by translating the Scriptures into English. When Wycliffe began the translation work, the pope in Rome issued “bulls” against him. Wycliffe’s reply was as follows:

“You say it is heresy to speak of the Holy Scriptures in English. You call me a heretic because I have translated the Bible into the common tongue of the people. Do you know whom you blaspheme? Did not the Holy Ghost give the Word of God at first in the mother-tongue of the nations to whom it was addressed? Why do you speak against the Holy Ghost? You say that the Church of God is in danger from this book. How can that be? Is it not from the Bible only that we learn that God has set up such a society as a Church on the earth? Is it not the Bible that gives all her authority to the Church? Is it not from the Bible that we learn who is the Builder and Sovereign of the Church, what are the laws by which she is to be governed, and the rights and privileges of her members? Without the Bible, what charter has the Church to show for all these? It is you who place the Church in jeopardy by hiding the Divine warrant, the missive royal of her King, for the authority she wields and the faith she enjoins” (Fountain, *John Wycliffe*, pp. 45-47).

Wycliffe eventually rejected Rome’s key dogma of transubstantiation. He wrote: “May the thing made turn

again and make him that made it? Thou then that art an earthly man, by what reason mayst thou say that thou makest thy Maker? Were this doctrine true, it would follow that the thing which is not God today shall be God tomorrow; yea, the thing that is without spirit of life, but groweth in the field by nature, shall another time be God. And yet we ought to believe that God is without beginning or ending” (Wycliffe, *Wyckett*).

There is some evidence that Wycliffe rejected infant baptism, at least toward the end of his life.

There is evidence of this from his own writings. Wycliffe taught that “baptism doth not confer, but only signify grace, which was given before.” This principle undermines the doctrine of infant baptism, as the baptism of a baby cannot signify grace that was previously given as it does in believer’s baptism. The *Martyrs Mirror*, first published in Dutch in 1660, states that in 1370 Wycliffe issued an article “declared to militate against infant baptism” (p. 322).

There is also evidence of this from the Catholic authorities. Thomas Walden and Joseph Vicecomes claimed that Wycliffe rejected infant baptism and they charged him with Anabaptist views. Walden, who wrote against the Wycliffites or Hussites in the early part of the 1400s, called Wycliffe “one of the seven heads that came out of the bottomless pit, for denying infant baptism, that heresie of the Lollards, of whom he was so great a ringleader” (Danver’s *Treatise*; cited by Joseph Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, 1811, I, p. 72).

Even if Wycliffe did not entirely deny infant baptism, it is certain that many of his Lollard followers did. The term “Lollard,” like that of “Waldensian,” was a general term that encompassed a wide variety of doctrine and practice. While many of the Lollards retained infant baptism, it is certain that others did not. (For more about the Lollards, see the *Advanced Bible Studies Series* on Church History, available from Way of Life Literature.)

Other Quotes from Wycliffe's Writings

John Wycliffe's writings are truly amazing, not only in their number and breadth, but in their simplicity. His was a day of affectatious writing, a day when the educated wrote in Latin or French rather than in English, to tickle the ears of the scholarly rather than to edify the humble. Though Wycliffe was one of the greatest scholars of that day, though he was intimate with kings and princes and nobles, he wrote for the common man. The simplicity of his writing is testified by the fact that we can understand him today, more than 600 years later, merely by modernizing his words to a small degree.

Wycliffe typically wrote short tracts. By this means his writings were multiplied widely even in that day before printing. Religious tracts are powerful things, and Wycliffe understood this. They are more read than books.

"I should be worse than an infidel were I not to defend unto the death the law of Christ; and certain I am, that it is not in the power of the heretics, and disciples of antichrist, to impugn this evangelical doctrine. On the contrary, I trust through our Lord's mercy to be superabundantly rewarded, after this short and miserable life, for the lawful contention which I wage. I know from the Gospel, that antichrist, with all his devices, can only kill the body; but Christ, in whose cause I contend, can cast both body and soul into hell-fire. Sure I am, that he will not suffer his servants to want what is needful for them, since he freely exposed himself to a dreadful death for their sakes, and has ordained that all his most beloved disciples should pass through severe suffering with a view to their good" (quoted from Conant, *Popular History of English Bible Translation*, pp. 49, 50).

"To any degree of true love to Jesus, no soul can attain unless he be truly meek. For a proud soul seeks to have his own will, and so he shall never come to any degree of God's love. Even the lower that a soul sitteth in the valley of meekness, so many the more streams of grace and love come thereto. And if the soul be high in the hills of pride, the wind of the fiend bloweth away all manner of goodness therefrom" (Wycliffe, *The Poor Caitiff*). [*Caitiff* was a name for a common person. *The Poor Caitiff* is a collection of Wycliffe's tracts.]

"Singular love is, when all solace and comfort is closed out of the heart but the love of Jesus alone. Other delight or other joy

pleases not; for the sweetness of him is so comforting and lasting, his love is so burning and gladdening, that he who is in this degree may well feel the fire of love burning in his soul. That fire is so pleasant that no man can tell but he that feeleth it, and not fully he. Then the soul is Jesus loving, on Jesus thinking, and Jesus desiring, only burning in coveting of him; singing in him, resting on him. Then the thought turns to song and melody" (Ibid.).

"God playeth with his child when he suffereth him to be tempted; as a mother rises from her much beloved child, and hides herself and leaves him alone, and suffers him to cry, Mother, Mother, so that he looks about, cries and weeps for a time; and at last when the child is ready to be overset with troubles and weeping, she comes again, clasps him in her arms, kisses him and wipes away the tears. So our Lord suffereth his loved child to be tempted and troubled for a time, and withdraweth some of his solace and full protection, to see what his child will do; and when he is about to be overcome by temptations, then he defendeth him and comforteth him by his grace" (Ibid.).

"For, no doubt, as our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles profess plainly, Antichrist and his cursed disciples should come, and deceive many men by hypocrisy and tyranny; and the best armor of Christian men against this cursed chieftain with his host, is the text of holy writ" (Wycliffe, prologue to Luke's Gospel).

"As the faith of the Church is contained in the Scriptures, the more these are known in their true meaning the better; and inasmuch as secular men should assuredly understand the faith they profess, that faith should be taught them in whatever language may be best known to them. Forasmuch, also, as the doctrines of our faith are more clearly and exactly expressed in the Scriptures, than they may probably be by priests--seeing, if I may so speak, that many prelates are but too ignorant of Holy Scripture, while others conceal many parts of it; and as the verbal instructions of priests have many other defects--the conclusion is abundantly manifest, that believers should ascertain for themselves what are the true matters of their faith, by having the Scriptures in a language which they fully understand. For the laws made by prelates are not to be received as matters of faith, nor are we to confide in their public instructions, nor in any of their words, but as they are founded on Holy Writ--since the Scriptures contain the whole truth. And this translation of them into English should therefore do at least this good, viz.: placing bishops and priests above suspicion as to the parts of it which they profess to explain. Other means, such as the friars, prelates, the pope, may all prove defective; and to provide against this,

Christ and his Apostles evangelized to the people in their own language. To this end, indeed, did the Holy Spirit endow them with the knowledge of tongues. Why, then, should not the living disciples of Christ do in this respect as they did?" (Wycliffe, written after his retirement to Lutterworth after being evicted from Oxford, quoted by Conant, pp. 53, 54).

Wycliffe's Battles with the Catholic Church

For his translation efforts and his biblical views, Wycliffe was hounded by the Roman Catholic authorities.

He was required to appear before the Catholic bishops in February 1377 to give an account of his doctrine. This occurred at St. Paul's Cathedral in London, where the Bishop of London, named Courtney, was the chief priest. It was just behind St. Paul's that English Bibles were burned from the days just following those of Wycliffe to those of William Tyndale.

John of Gaunt (Duke of Lancaster, fourth son of King Edward III), Percy, Earl Marshal of England, and other nobles accompanied Wycliffe to defend him, and the trial was broken up by a riot before a decision could be reached. "Forgetting all produce and propriety, he [Courtney, the Bishop of London] started angrily from his seat, and addressed the two noblemen in a tone of insolent rebuke, such as peers and soldiers are not wont to endure patiently. Their reply was in a spirit no less haughty; and the fierce colloquy ended in a tumult which broke up the meeting, and the innocent occasion of the uproar quietly withdrew, without having been asked a question, or having uttered a word" (Conant, *Popular History*, p. 34).

The bishops then appealed to Pope Gregory XI, who issued five papal bulls against Wycliffe in May 1377. At that time the pope's headquarters was in Avignon, France. The bulls were addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and to the University of Oxford. The pope raged against Wycliffe, calling him "Master in Error." The

authorities were ordered to put Wycliffe into prison and keep him there until “judgment be received from the Holy See,” but the death of King Edward III forced a brief delay in the clergy’s attempt to enact the papal bulls, because Wycliffe’s friend John of Gaunt assumed practical control of the throne since Edward’s son Richard II was so young.



In April 1378 Wycliffe was again required to appear before the bishops to be investigated for his alleged heresies. This was held at Lambeth Palace in London, which would later become the home of the infamous Lollard’s Tower where so many dissenters were imprisoned. Before Wycliffe could be charged, Joan of Kent, widow of the Black Prince and mother of King Richard II, intervened, demanding that the trial stop and that no judgment be made against the Reformer.

The Catholic authorities in England continued to hate Wycliffe but they were thwarted in their efforts to imprison and kill him. Their attitude toward him and toward his vernacular translation is evident from what Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote to Pope John XXIII in 1411. “This pestilent and wretched John Wyclif, of cursed memory, that son of the old serpent ... endeavoured by every means to attack the very faith and sacred doctrine of Holy Church,

devising -- to fill up the measure of his malice -- the expedient of a new translation of the Scriptures into the mother tongue" (David Daniel, *The Bible in English*, p. 67).

In 1381 Wycliffe was condemned even by his own Oxford University because of his rejection of transubstantiation. Wycliffe preached against Rome's doctrine of the Mass with the same boldness he had preached against the Friars and against the Papacy itself.

"It is as if the Devil had been scheming to this effect, saying--'If I can, by my vicar Antichrist, so far seduce believers as to bring them to deny that this sacrament is bread, and to believe in it as a contemptible quality without a substance, I may after that, and in the same manner, lead them to believe whatever I may wish; inasmuch as the opposite is plainly taught, both by the language of Scripture, and by the very senses of mankind.' Doubtless, after a while, these simple-hearted believers may be brought to say, that however a prelate may live--be he effeminate, a homicide, a simonist, or stained with any other vice--this must never be believed concerning him by a people who would be regarded as duly obedient. But by the grace of Christ, I will keep clear of the heresy which teaches that if the Pope and Cardinals assert a certain thing to be the sense of Scripture, therefore so it is; for that were to set them above the Apostles" (Wycliffe, *Triologus*).

In the spring of 1381 Wycliffe published 12 theses on this issue. He declared, "... the bread we see on the altar is not Christ, nor any part of him, but simply an effectual sign of him; and that the doctrines of transubstantiation, identification, and impanation, have no basis in Scripture."

He challenged the University to a debate on the subject, but the Chancellor of the Oxford assembled a secret council and condemned Wycliffe's doctrine and issued this decree: "If any person, of whatever degree, state, or condition, shall in future publicly teach such doctrine in the University, or shall listen to one so teaching, he shall be suspended from all scholastic exercises, shall be liable to the greater excommunication, and shall be committed to prison."

Representatives were sent to announce this decree to

Wycliffe while he was teaching a class, and he was forced to retire to Lutterworth.

In the summer of 1382, Wycliffe was condemned in a sermon preached at the Oxford University church, St. Mary the Virgin. It was in this sermon that his followers were denounced as Lollards for the first time.

The Protecting Hand of God upon Wycliffe

Wycliffe would have been cut off by the Roman Catholic authorities had he not, by divine intervention, been protected by certain powerful individuals and unusual events.

One of these was JOHN OF GAUNT, the Duke of Lancaster and the father of King Henry VI. He was the effective ruler of England for some time because King Edward III was very old and his son Richard II was only a child. John was a large man and a bold knight. His armor, which is displayed today in the Tower of London, is 6 foot 9 inches. He protected Wycliffe for many years until Wycliffe rejected Rome's doctrine of transubstantiation.



Another protector was JOAN THE PRINCESS OF WALES (1328-85). She was the wife of Edward (1330-76), also known as the Black Prince (so named because of his black armor). He was the eldest son of King Edward III. In 1378, the enemies of Wycliffe called him to stand before a tribunal of bishops in Lambeth Palace. Wycliffe was accused of spreading heresies, but the bishops were frustrated in carrying out any sentence. "...Sir Richard Clifford entered

with a message from [Joan, the widow of the Black Prince], forbidding them to pass sentence upon Wycliffe” (Fountain, *John Wycliffe*, p. 33). The trial ceased.

QUEEN ANNE, the wife of Richard II (1367-1400), also assisted Wycliffe. She was daughter to the emperor Charles IV and sister of Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia, and thus held the position of Elizabeth of Prague. Anne was only a teenager when she was brought to England to wed Richard. She brought versions of Scriptures in German, Bohemian, and Latin with her into England. She loved Wycliffe’s doctrine and sent copies of his books into Bohemia by her attendants (Joseph Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, 1811, I, p. 69). Many of Wycliffe’s works that were completely destroyed in England survived in copies in Bohemia. Anne died in June 1394, at the age of twenty-seven.

Further, in 1378 Pope Gregory XI died, and THE GREAT PAPAL SCHISM began, during which there were two (Gregory XII and Benedict III) and eventually three popes, and these were too busy hurling curses at one another to worry much about Wycliffe in England!

Wycliffe’s Missionary Endeavors

Wycliffe not only translated the Bible but he also carried out missionary endeavors.

He had a powerful influence through his extensive writings, which were widely distributed in England and even helped create a separatist revival movement in Europe.

Wycliffe had a missionary heart and he trained and sent out preachers to proclaim the gospel of the grace of Jesus Christ. These were called “Bible men” and Lollards and they were hounded and bitterly persecuted by the Catholic authorities. (The term “Lollard” predated Wycliffe. It might have been derived from a Waldensian preacher named Walter



Lollardus, an Englishman who was burnt for heresy in Cologne. See William Canton, *The Bible and the Anglo-Saxon People*, 1914, p. 42, and Joseph Ivimey, *The History of the English Baptists*, 1811, I, p. 64.)

“Like the seventy sent out by our Lord, they were sent on foot, clad in coarse garments, the pilgrim’s staff in their hands--and ... with a Latin Bible hid in the bosom of their gowns. Wherever they found an audience--whether in a church or a church-yard, in the busy market-place, amid the noisy chaffering and boisterous amusements of the fair--there they proclaimed to the people ‘all the words of this life.’ To the venal sale of indulgences and priestly absolution, they opposed the unbought grace of the gospel; to the invocation of saints, the one Mediator between God and man; to the worship of pictures and images, the worship of the one living and true God; to the traditions of men and the authority of priests, the pure revelation of God’s will in the Holy Scriptures. Their own blameless lives enforced their teachings. Asking nothing, they received thankfully what was required for their simple wants; and even from this were ever ready to spare something for the needy. ... Many country baronets of wealth and influence likewise espoused their cause; and sometimes, when danger was apprehended, a body-guard of gentlemen was seen around the pulpit, ready, if necessary, to defend with their good swords the right of Englishmen to speak and to hear, according to the dictates of their own consciences. The intimidated sheriff, having served on the preacher a citation to appear before the bishop, would retire; and before adequate forces could be raised to execute the writ, the evangelist was

proclaiming in some far-off hamlet the glad tidings of salvation to its neglected poor" (Conant, *Popular History*, pp. 42, 43).

Wycliffe also had copies of the hand-written Scriptures made and distributed not only in England but also abroad in Europe. That these multiplied widely is evident from the record that still exists of the many copies that were confiscated by the authorities: "By reference to the Bishop's Registers it will appear that these little books were numerous, as they are often specified as being found upon the persons of those accused. Sometimes the Gospels are spoken of either separately, or together; or it is the book of Acts, or the Epistle of James, or the Apocalypse that is specified. It appears also from these Registers, that many of those who possessed these little volumes were either servants or tradesmen" (Blackford Condit, *The History of the English Bible*, 1886, p. 75).

The End of Wycliffe's Life

John Wycliffe continued to take a stand for the truth and to progress in spiritual strength and wisdom even in his old age. In 1381, just three years before his death, Wycliffe boldly proclaimed that the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation was false. He taught that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper do not change substance and are merely symbolic of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Wycliffe's protector, John Gaunt, refused to accept Wycliffe's denial of Rome's foundational doctrine. He warned Wycliffe to be silent about this, but Wycliffe refused, though he knew by his stand he would probably lose his protection from an earthly perspective. Gaunt did withdraw his guardianship, but Wycliffe put his trust in One who is a more dependable and effective protector than a 6 foot 9 inch knight!

Wycliffe was expelled from his teaching position at Oxford and withdrew to his parish of Lutterworth where he lived until his death.

In May 1382 Wycliffe was called before yet another synod of ecclesiastical authorities. This is called the Blackfriars' Synod, because it was held in the monastery of Blackfriars in London (so named because of the black



robes worn by the Dominican friars). The Dominicans had been at the forefront of the Inquisition since their appointment by Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) in the early 13th century. Charles V, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and a great persecutor, stayed at the monastery on his visit to London in 1522.

When the 47 bishops and monks and religious doctors took their seats, a powerful earthquake shook the city. Huge stones fell out of castle walls and pinnacles toppled. “Wycliffe called it a judgment of God and afterwards described the gathering as the ‘Earthquake Council’” (Fountain, *John Wycliffe*, p. 39).

The synod condemned Wycliffe, charging him specifically with 10 heresies and 16 errors. His writings were forbidden and the king gave authority to imprison anyone who believed the condemned doctrines.

The monastery, which originally stretched from Shoe Lane off Fleet Street right down to the Thames at Puddle Dock, ceased to function as a religious order during the days of King Henry VIII. Later it was used as one of Shakespeare’s playhouses. Though the monastery no longer exists and even the buildings are gone, with only a part of a wall left that can be seen from St. Anne’s churchyard, that area of London is still called Blackfriars and the Blackfriars Bridge over the Thames originates there.



Wycliffe died on December 31, 1384. He was seized with paralysis on December 29 while performing his reinterpreted “mass” at Lutterworth Church and was carried out the small side door that still bears his name. He remained unconscious for two days before his soul was given up to God.

It was not only a year that ended, it was an era. The new year, 1385, marked the first entire year that the English people had their own Bible.

The Wycliffe Bible

Wycliffe’s greatest influence was through the Bible that he translated. W.R. Cooper, in his introduction to The Tyndale’s Society’s modernized edition of the Wycliffe New Testament (London: The British Library, 2002), wisely observes: “John Wycliffe, who gave his name to the English Bible that followed him, is considered by many to have been a morning star of the later Reformation, and in many ways he was. Yet it is the English Bible that bears his name that is the real morning star. We must remember that it was no Oxford theologian whose words people memorised and bore in their hearts through persecution, torture and the stake. Wycliffe was certainly the greatest teacher of his age, but even he was quite unable to convert sinners and transform lives. Only the word of God can do that, and it was the appearance of the English Bible from Wycliffe’s school that truly heralded the dawning of the great English Reformation that was to follow.”

Wycliffe began by translating portions of the New Testament and publishing individual books of the Bible. We know that

he did this with the Gospels (Conant, pp. 52, 53).

The New Testament was completed in 1380 and the Old Testament in 1382, just two years before Wycliffe died.

How much of the entire Bible was translated by Wycliffe himself and how much was accomplished by helpers, we cannot know. It is popular among contemporary historians to deny that Wycliffe had any part in the actual translation, but we do not accept this position. The ancient historians such as William Caxton (1482), John Foxe (1554), and Thomas Fuller (1662) were united in their opinion that Wycliffe did at least part of the translation; and in my estimation contemporary historians have not refuted this historical view.

Wycliffe's friend Nicholas Hereford was probably involved in the translation and possibly the revision. Hereford is named in some manuscripts.

The order of books in the New Testament followed the standard Latin arrangement, as follows: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, Acts (the Deeds of the Apostles), James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, Jude, Revelation.

Many copies of the Wycliffe New Testament included the *Epistle to Laodiceans* (between Colossians and 1 Thessalonians). This epistle, a little longer than 3 John, claims to be a letter written by Paul to the church of Laodicea. Such a letter is mentioned in Col. 4:16, but it does not exist in Greek and was never counted as part of the Canon of Scripture. Cooper observes, "The Lollards commonly regarded the Epistle as genuine, even though fully aware that it was omitted from the canon and certainly from some of the Latin manuscripts of their day."

The Wycliffe Bible had some fascinating renderings. Following are a couple of examples:

Psalm 91:5 said the child of God would not be afraid “of an arrow flying in the day, of a goblin going in darknesses.” There are goblins in the sense of evil spirits and demonic powers that are aligned against the child of God, so this translation of the Hebrew word “pachad” is interesting. In the King James Bible, this word is translated dread, dreadful, fear, fearful, great fear, terror, and great terror.



Matthew 3:4 says of John the Baptist “and his meat was honeysuckers and honey of the wood.” While honey of the wood referred to wild honey, we aren’t sure where honeysuckers comes from!

Luke 2:13 has an interesting description of the Lord’s heavenly hosts: “And suddenly there was made with the angel a multitude of heavenly knighthood, herying [praising] God and saying.” Wycliffe lived in a day when armies were led by bold knights in their impressive armor with their colorful standards flying, and this makes for an effectual translation of “hosts.”

The Wycliffe Bible was not printed until the 19th century. Tyndale’s was the first printed English New Testament.

The Wycliffe Scriptures were often distributed in portions rather than as a complete Bible or even a complete New Testament, because these were easier to copy and transport and conceal.

A copy of an entire handwritten Wycliffe Bible was very expensive. “Nicholas Belward suffered from popish cruelty in 1429, for having in his possession a copy of Wiclif’s New Testament. That copy cost him four marks and forty pence. This sum, so much greater was the value of money then than it is now, was considered as a sufficient annual salary for a curate. The same value at the present time would pay for many hundreds of copies of the Testament, well printed and bound” (Alexander McClure, *The Translators Revived*, 1855).

Surely many believers would be motivated to make their own copies of the Scripture, and doubtless this would have been the case with preachers. I have not seen this important point emphasized in other histories of the Bible, but it is only reasonable. I don’t believe it was only a matter purchasing a copy from a professional scribe. Though time consuming, it is not that difficult to make a copy of the New Testament. In the first few years of my Christian life, which was B.C. or *Before Computers* (I was converted in 1973 at age 23), I wrote out copious portions of Scripture in my zeal for memorization and in the process of my studies. Had I lived in an earlier time when the Scriptures were not available in printed form, I have no doubt that I would have made my own copy from Genesis to Revelation, no matter how long it took, and I would also have made copies of portions to give away to other brethren and even to unbelievers. During the early months after I was saved I tediously made copies of my testimony by typing it repeatedly, using carbon paper to multiply my efforts, because I was too poor then to afford to have it printed. I handed these out in my evangelistic work. I am confident that multitudes of early believers shared this zeal to make copies both of God’s Word and of evangelistic pamphlets. It is only natural, for the believer is born of the

Word (Jam. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23), lives by the Word (Mat. 4:4), continues in the truth by the Word (John 8:31-32), is to be a doer of the Word (Jam. 1:22), grows by the Word (1 Pet. 2:2), operates by the faith that comes from the Word (Rom. 10:17), is cleansed by the Word (Eph. 5:26), and defends himself by the Word (Eph. 6:17).

The original Wycliffe Bible was revised and it is the revision that was widely distributed for more than a century. Today the original is called the Early Version (EV) and the revision the Later Version (LV). The Later Version first appeared in 1388, shortly after Wycliffe's death, but it continued to be modified somewhat throughout the 15th century.

The reviser knew that the fear of God and great care are necessary for an accurate translation. The following is from the introduction to the revision: "A translator hath great need to study well the sense both before and after, and then also he hath need to live a clean life and be full devout in prayers, and have not his wit occupied about worldly things, that the Holy Spirit, Author of all wisdom and cunning and truth, dress him for his work and suffer him not to err. God grant to us all grace to know well and to keep well Holy Writ, and to suffer joyfully some pain for it at the last."

Wycliffe's translation was based on the Latin Vulgate, and it contained most of the errors common to that version. Following are some examples:

MATTHEW 5:44 — "bless them that curse you" is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 6:13 – "for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever" is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 9:13 – "to repentance" is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 15:8 – "draweth nigh unto me with their mouth" is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 16:3 – "O ye hypocrites" is omitted in the Wycliffe

MARK 2:17 – "to repentance" is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 6:11 – "more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha" is

omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 10:21 – “take up the cross” is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 13:14 – “spoken by Daniel the prophet” is omitted in the Wycliffe

LUKE 2:33 – “Joseph” is changed to “father” in the Wycliffe

----- 2:43 – “Joseph and his mother” is changed to “his parents” in the Wycliffe

----- 4:8 – “get thee behind me Satan” is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 11:2-4 – “Our ... which art in heaven ... Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth ... but deliver us from evil” is omitted in the Wycliffe

JOHN 4:42 – “the Christ” is omitted in the Wycliffe

ACTS 2:30 – “according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ” is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 7:30 – “of the Lord” is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 16:7 – “Spirit of Jesus” is added in the Wycliffe

----- 17:26 – “blood” is omitted in the Wycliffe

ROMANS 1:16 – “of Christ” is omitted in the Wycliffe

1 CORINTHIANS 5:7 – “for us” is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 7:5 – “fasting” is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 15:47 – “the Lord” is omitted in the Wycliffe

EPHESIANS 3:9 – “by Jesus Christ” is omitted in the Wycliffe

COLOSSIANS 1:14 – “through his blood” is missing in the Wycliffe

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1 – “from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” is omitted in the Wycliffe

1 TIMOTHY 1:17 – “wise” God is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 3:16 – “God was manifest in the flesh” is changed to “which was manifest in the flesh” in the Wycliffe

----- 6:5 – “from such withdraw thyself” is omitted in the Wycliffe

HEBREWS 1:3 – “by himself” is omitted in the Wycliffe

JAMES 5:16 – “faults” is changed to “sins” in the Wycliffe

1 PETER 1:22 – “through the Spirit” is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 4:1 – “for us” is omitted in the Wycliffe

REVELATION 1:11 – “I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last” is omitted in the Wycliffe

----- 8:13 – “angel” is changed to “eagle” in the Wycliffe

----- 9:11 – “*And by Latin he has the name Exterminans, that is, a destroyer,*” is added in the Wycliffe from the Latin Vulgate.

The language of the Wycliffe version is simple and forceful and laid the foundation for other Bibles in English. In the following examples, only the spelling has been modernized.

Wycliffe Bible, John 11:8-12: “The disciples said to him, Master now the Jews soughten for to stone thee, and goest thou thither? Jesus answered whether there be not twelve hours of the day? If any man wander in the night he stomlish, for light is not in him. He saith these things and after these things he saith to him Lazarus our friend sleepeth but I go to raise him from sleep; therefore his disciples saiden: Lord, if he sleepeth, he shall be safe.”

Wycliffe Bible, Luke 2:8-14: “And shepherds were in the same country, waking and keeping the watches of the night on their flock. And lo, the angel of the Lord stood beside them, and the clearness of God shined about them, and they dreaded with great dread. And the angel said to them, Nil ye dread, for lo, I preach to you a great joy that shall be to all people. For a Saviour is born today to you that is Christ the Lord in the city of David. And this is a token to you, ye shall find a young child lapped in cloths and laid in a creche. And suddenly there was made with the angel a multitude of heavenly knighthood, herying [praising] God and saying, Glory be in the highest things to God, and in earth peace to men of good will.”

Many phrases from our English Bible of 1611 can

be traced back to Wycliffe with only the slightest modification, including the following:

“enter thou into the joy of the Lord”; “for many be called, but few be chosen”; “a prophet is not without honour, but in his own country”; “he that is not against us, is for us”; “suffer ye little children to come to me, and forbid ye them not, for of such is the kingdom of God”; “how hard it is for men that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God”; “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”; “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to each creature”; “and Mary said, Lo! the handmaid of the Lord”; “ask ye, and it shall be given to you; seek ye, and ye shall find; knock ye, and it shall be opened to you”; “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”; “In the beginning was the word”; “he was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not”; “for God loved so the world, that he gave his one begotten Son”; “I am bread of life”; “I am the light of the world”; “ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”; “I and the Father be one”; “and Jesus wept”; “straight is the gate and narrow the way”; “and no man ascendeth [up] into heaven, but he that came down from heaven”; “I have overcome the world”; “my kingdom is not of this world”; “what is truth?”; “born again”; “a living sacrifice”; “the deep things of God”; “upbraideth not”; “whited sepulchres”; “for the wages of sin is death”; “ye be the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you”; “when I was a little child, I spake as a little child, I understood as a little child, I thought as a little child”; “I have kept the faith”; “what fellowship hath light with darkness”; “we make known to you the grace of God”; “the world and all that dwell therein is the Lord’s”; “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only”; “for your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about, seeking whom he shall devour”; “Lo! I stand at the door, and knock”; “and he said to me, It is done; I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end.”

In fact, some entire verses appear to be brought into the KJV from the Wycliffe (via William Tyndale) almost intact. Following are three examples:

MATTHEW 11:29 “Take ye my yoke upon you, and learn ye of me, for I am mild and meek of heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls.”

MATTHEW 18:20 “For where two or three shall be gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.”

MATTHEW 22:21 “... Therefore yield ye to Caesar those things that be Caesar’s, and to God those things that be of God.”

The Wycliffe Bible had a strong impact on the English language itself. “There is an important relation existing between Vernacular versions of the Scriptures and the languages into which they are translated. So marked is this influence where such translation is made, that it constitutes an epoch in the literary and in the religious history of the people. ... It was a bold stroke on the part of Wycliffe to set forth the Scriptures in the language of the people, but the results far exceeded his fondest expectations. In all simplicity he thought to give the word of God to his own age, but in fact *he laid the foundation for the Reformation in England, and for the permanence and excellence of the English language*” (Blackford Condit, *History of the English Bible*, 1896, pp. 79, 80).

It must be remembered that Wycliffe lived in an era when the English language was new and despised even in its own homeland. Wycliffe literally molded the English language to the Bible and forever changed the character of the language thereby.

“The noble Saxon of our forefathers, displaced at the Conquest, by Latin as the language of books, and by Norman-French as that of polite life, became the badge of degradation and servitude. The English into which it gradually changed, by a mixture with Latin and French, had, in process of time, so far regained the ancient

rights of the vernacular, as to be, at this period, the spoken language of the great body of the people. Yet in such contempt was it still held, that scarcely an attempt had been made to use it in composition, till Wicliffe, with his great heart of love for the people, laid hold of it as the vehicle of religious instruction. He took the rude elements [of the emerging English language as it grew from Saxon, French, and Latin] directly from the lips of the despised ploughmen, mechanics, and tradesmen. He gave it back to them in all its unadorned, picturesque simplicity, but fused by the action of his powerful mind into a fitting instrument of thought, and enriched with the noblest literature which the world had produced; the utterances of inspired poets, prophets, and apostles, the inimitable histories, narratives, and portraiture, through which divine wisdom has told the sublime story of providence and redemption" (Conant, *Popular History of the Translation of the Holy Scriptures into the English Tongue*, 1881, p. 56).

The Wycliffe Bible had a profound effect upon the English nation and laid the foundation for the Reformation. "What seeds were those then sown in the virgin soil of the common English mind! What must have been the quickening of intellectual life, in a community where the Book of books furnished almost the only aliment of the hungry soul! Were not the children eager to read for themselves those wondrous stories? Did not the ear of age forget its deafness, to hear the glad tidings of a Saviour and a future rest? Would not a new consciousness of worth steal into the soul of the rude clown, when he learned what God had done to redeem him? The more deeply we enter into the circumstances and spirit of the times, the stronger will grow the conviction that this first English Bible must have been like an awakening breath from heaven, the beginning of days to the common people of England. ... The light which Wycliffe had kindled, often smothered, then hidden from public view, but never for a moment extinguished, at length mingled its beams with the full day of the Reformation" (Conant, pp. 56, 57, 60).

The Strange Tale of Wycliffe's Bones

At the Roman Catholic Council of Constance, which met between 1415 and 1418, John Wycliffe was condemned and his bones were ordered dug up and burned. This is the same Catholic council that burned John Huss and Jerome of Prague, ignoring their promise of safe conduct. "As his Bible aroused the English conscience, the pope felt a chill; he heard unearthly sounds rattle through the empty caverns of his soul, and he mistook Wickliff's bones for his Bible. The moldering skeleton of the sleeping translator polluted the consecrated ground where it slept. The Council of Constance condemned his Bible and his bones to be burnt together" (Thomas Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, 1890, I, p. 315).



For some reason, another 13 years passed before the strange deed was actually performed. It occurred during the reign of Pope Martin V (1417-1431).

In 1428, nearly 44 years after his death, Wycliffe's bones were exhumed and burned and the ashes scattered. The strange ceremony was led by Archbishop Chicheley, head of the Church of England. What sight could be more unscriptural, more pagan, more wicked, than these Catholic leaders disinterring old bones from their resting place under

the chancel* so they can publicly desecrate the long-dead Bible translator and preacher of the Gospel of Grace? What other evidence do we need that the Roman Catholic Church is apostate?

After the remains of Wycliffe were burned, the ashes were cast into the little river Swift, which flows near the Lutterworth church. The interesting old British historian Thomas Fuller saw in this a far grander vision than the one enjoyed that day by the Catholic authorities that carried out the dastardly deed: “To Lutterworth they come, Sumner, Commissarie, Official, Chancellour, Proctors, Doctors, and the Servants ... take, what was left, out of the grave, and burnt them to ashes, and cast them into Swift a Neighbouring Brook running hard by. Thus this Brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon; Avon into Severn; Severn into the narrow Seas; they, into the main Ocean. And thus the Ashes of Wickliff are the Emblem of his Doctrine, which now, is dispersed all the World over.” [* H.C. Conant said Wycliffe was buried under the chancel. *Popular History*, p. 64.]

The Influence of Wycliffe and the Lollards and their Persecutions

The Word of God was preached in England in a dark day and many came to the light and were saved. The record of this is largely unwritten and that which was written was largely destroyed, but it can be found in Heaven’s libraries and God has left enough for our present edification. Some recent histories downplay the influence of the Lollard movement in England, but this is revisionism. In fact, the movement was large and influential. Henry Hargreaves observes: “Reading them [Wycliffe Scriptures] together in small groups, as the evidence at trials shows that they did, they were in danger of prosecution and even death, but read them they did, and the small and secret Bible-readings and meetings that they conducted proved a fertile breeding-ground for that Puritanism or nonconformity that has never since died

out” (Hargreaves, “The Wycliffite Versions,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, edited by G.H. Lampe, vol. II, “The West from the Fathers to the Reformation,” 1969, pp. 414-15).

David Daniell adds: “The heart of Lollardy was its English Bible, only now at the start of the twenty-first century, beginning to be understood in some quarters as the massive, careful, complex, always developing achievement that it was” (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, 2003, p. 90).

After Wycliffe’s death the Lollards and other dissident believers continued to preach the Word of God and congregate together in fellowships to the extent possible under the circumstances of those times.

The term “Lollard,” like the terms “Waldensian” and “Albigensian” and “Paulician,” was a catchall word that encompassed a wide variety of Christians who were opposed to Roman Catholic doctrine.

While there were Lollards who were pedobaptists and still held to some of Rome’s errors, others progressed farther in their spiritual understanding and were immersionists. This fact is commonly overlooked or denied by Protestant (and even some Baptist) historians today, but the evidence is clear. Following are three witnesses to the baptistic Lollards:

Historian John Foxe says one of the articles of faith among the Lollards was “that faith ought to precede baptism.” It is impossible to fit infant baptism into this principle, as an infant is incapable of exercising faith.

In his history of the Puritans, Daniel Neal says, “That the denial of the right of infants to baptism was a principle generally maintained among Lollards, is abundantly confirmed by the historians of those times” (Neal, *The History of the Puritans*, II, 1837, p. 354).

In a letter dated October 10, 1519, Erasmus gave this

description of the Lollards in Bohemia: "... they own no other authority than the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; they believe or own little or nothing of the sacraments of the church; such as come over to their sect, must every one be baptized anew in mere water..." (Thomas Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, 1738, I, pp. 14, 15). Thus Erasmus described the Lollards as Anabaptists.

The authorities in England persecuted the readers of the Wycliffe Scriptures. "This Bible provoked bitter opposition, and it became necessary for the people to meet in secret to read it, as they often did. Persecution did not begin at once, but it finally became widespread and bitter. Many suffered and it has been said that some, for daring to read the Bible, WERE BURNED WITH COPIES OF IT ABOUT THEIR NECKS" (Paris Marion Simms, *The Bible from the Beginning*, p. 161).

Many laws were passed against Bible believers, such as the following:

In 1401 the statue *De Heretico comburendo* was passed. This was the first English statute for burning heretics alive (though Bible-believing Christians had been burned before



this), and it was not repealed until 1677, or 276 years later.

Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury and a great hater of Wycliffe and his English Bible, called a Council at Oxford in 1407 “aiming to control preachers, books and the universities” (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 75)

In 1408 the Council passed a number of laws toward this end. Called ***the Constitutions of Arundel***, they were ratified later at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London.

Article 7 made it illegal to translate or read the Scriptures in the English language without express permission of the Catholic authorities. The *Constitutions of Arundel* made this brash demand:

“WE THEREFORE DECREE AND ORDAIN THAT NO MAN SHALL, HEREAFTER, BY HIS OWN AUTHORITY, TRANSLATE ANY TEXT OF HOLY SCRIPTURE INTO THE ENGLISH OR OTHER LANGUAGE by way of a book, pamphlet or tract, and that no book, pamphlet or tract of this kind be read, either recently composed at the time of the said John Wyclif, or since then, or that in future may be composed, in part or in whole, publicly or privily, under pain of the greater excommunication, until the said translation be allowed by the ordinary of the place, or, if the case so require, by the council provincial” (Alfred Pollard, *Records of the English Bible*, 1911, pp. 80-81)).

In effect this was a complete ban against the translation of the Scripture or the reading thereof on the part of all English citizens, because no approval by a bishop or council was ever known to have been given for this activity.

Articles 6, 9, 10, and 11 further (1) required that the views of theological students be examined on a monthly basis; (2) forbade any preaching without a license (which was granted only after finding that the preacher was orthodox in his Catholic doctrine); (3) forbade preachers or schoolmasters to discuss the sins of the clergy or the sacraments; (4) forbade all arguments over matters of faith outside of the universities.

Arundel’s *Constitutions* remained in force for one hundred

and twenty-one years, until 1529.

Under this law diligent search was made by the authorities for copies of forbidden literature and much of it was destroyed.

At another Convocation of bishops at Oxford in March 1411, a list was presented of 267 heresies and errors extracted from Wycliffe's books (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 76). His books were burned at that time at Oxford in the presence of the University Chancellor and again in January 1413 at St. Paul's in London.



In 1414 the legislature under King Henry V (1413-22) joined in asking for harder measures against the Lollards.

"After a suspected rising of the Lollards, a law was passed, declaring that ALL WHO READ THE SCRIPTURES IN THE MOTHER TONGUE SHOULD 'FORFEIT LAND, CATEL, LIF, AND GOODS, FROM THEYR HEYRES [THEIR HEIRS] FOR EVER'" (John Eadie, *History of the English Bible*, I, p. 89).

The "English sheriffs were forced to take an oath to persecute the Lollards, and the justices must deliver a relapsed heretic

to be burned within ten days of his accusation. ... No mercy was shown under any circumstances” (Thomas Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, 1890, I, pp. 323, 325).

Many of the Lollards were burned alive for their faith in the 1400s. Following are a few examples. In our *Advanced Bible Studies* course on Church History we list about 40 that were burned in the 15th century, but there were probably many more. Much of the record has not survived. Following are some examples:

The first religious dissident burned after Wycliffe’s death was **William Sawtree** (Sautre), who was martyred in 1400. He was condemned as a heretic by Archbishop Thomas Arundel and ordered to be burned by King Henry IV. Two of his “heresies” were these: “That every priest and deacon is more bound to preach the word of GOD, than to say the canonical hours” and “that after the pronouncing of the sacramental words, the bread remaineth of the same nature that it was before.”



In 1409 a tailor named **John Badbe** was burned alive in a barrel (John Eadie, *The English Bible*, 1876, I, p. 87; Cushing Hassell, *History of the Church of God*, pp. 465, 66). Badbe was convicted as a heretic for believing that the sacrament of the mass, consecrated by

the priest upon the altar, “is not the true body of Christ, by virtue of the words of the sacrament; but that after the sacramental words spoken by the priests, the material bread does remain upon the altar.” When questioned about his

faith, Badbe replied, "That if every host, consecrated at the altar, were the Lord's body, then there were 20,000 gods in England; but he believed in one God Omnipotent." Badbe was taken to Smithfield in London and "there, being put into an empty barrel, was bound with iron chains fastened to a stake, having dry wood put about him. As he was standing thus, it happened that the prince, the king's eldest son, was there present; who, to save his life, counseled him, that he should speedily renounce these dangerous opinions. Also Courtney, at that time chancellor of Oxford, informed him of the faith of holy church. In the mean season the prior of St. Bartholomew's, in Smithfield, with all solemnity, brought the sacrament, with twelve torches borne before it, and so showed it to the poor man at the stake. Then demanding of him, how he believed in it? He answered, 'That he knew well it was hallowed bread, and not God's body.' Hereupon the fire was put to him. When he felt the fire, he cried, 'Mercy!' (calling upon the Lord,) and so the prince immediately commanded to quench the fire. The prince (his commandment being done,) asked him, if he would forsake heresy, and turn to the faith of holy church? Which thing if he would do, he should have goods enough; promising him also a yearly stipend out of the king's treasury. But this valiant champion of Christ, neglecting the prince's fair words, refused the offer of worldly promises, being more vehemently inflamed with the Spirit of God, than with any earthly desire. Whereupon the prince commanded him straight to be put again into the fire, and that he should not afterward look for any grace or favor. But as he could be allured by no rewards, so was he affrighted at no torments, but persevered invincible to the end" (Foxe).

Thomas Bagley was burned at Smithfield in 1430. He had stated that if a priest made the consecrated wafer into God, he made a God that can be eaten by rats and mice. For expressing such biblical common sense, he was put to death.

At Christmas time in 1417, **Sir John Oldcastle** was roasted alive for his faith in the Word of God and his

rejection of Rome's authority (under the false charge of treason). Oldcastle was the Lord of Cobham, a famous and fearless knight, and a favorite of King Henry IV. He loved John Wycliffe and the Wycliffe doctrine and often stood by Wycliffe or other Lollard preachers in his armor to protect them. Oldcastle used his position to shield Lollard preachers, and he used his wealth to have copies of the Wycliffe Scriptures made for distribution. In spite of his open rejection of Roman Catholicism, Oldcastle was shielded by King Henry IV until his death in 1413, at which time Oldcastle's Romanist enemies contrived to destroy him. They falsely charged Oldcastle with plotting a rebellion against the new king and had him arrested and condemned to die as a traitor and a heretic. Brought to the place of punishment a few days before Christmas 1417, "having a cheerful countenance," it was evident that the old warrior still carried a burden for the souls of the people. Prior to his brutal execution, he warned the people to obey the Holy Bible and to beware of false teachers, whose lives are contrary to Christ. He refused to allow a Catholic priest to minister to him, boldly declaring, instead, that he would confess his sins "to God only." Falling down on his knees, he prayed that God would forgive his persecutors. This man, who had loved the Word of God and had caused it to be distributed among the people, was hung in chains and suspended over the fire to be roasted alive. As this barbarous execution proceeded, the hateful priests and monks reviled and cursed the poor man and did their best to prevent the people from praying for him. It was to no avail. The people loved the godly knight and they wept and prayed with him and for him. The last words which were heard before his voice was drowned by the roaring flames were "Praise God!" John Oldcastle has been depicted in many church histories as a traitor because that was what he was charged with, but from what we read in the ancient records, including John Foxe, we salute him as a victorious soldier of Jesus Christ and look forward to meeting him in Glory.

John Goose was burned at Tower Hill in 1474. He had been arrested ten years earlier and had abjured, but he repented of his abjuration and continued in the truth, sealing his confession with his life's blood. After Goose's final arrest, a sheriff in London, Robert Billesdon, took the condemned man to his home to plead with him to repent of his "errors." The steadfast believer refused and requested something to eat, saying "I eat now a good and competent dinner, for I shall pass a little sharp shower ere I go to supper." Thus, he was planning to eat his supper in Heaven, but before that, he had to go through the fire, which he described as "a little sharp shower." After he finished his meal, John Goose asked to be taken to the execution.

In 1494, **80-year-old Joan Boughton** was burned to death at Smithfield. She was charged with holding eight heretical opinions derived from Wycliffe. Joan's daughter, **Lady Young**, widow of Sir John Young, a mayor of London, was also burned at the stake. She had accepted Christ and apostolic doctrine, but her husband remained a Catholic.

Many others suffered imprisonment and torture in **the Lollard's Tower** and other places.

The Tower was located in Lambeth Palace, the London headquarters of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It faces the River Thames, across from the Parliament and Westminster Abby.

It was made into a prison in the early 15th century by Archbishop Henry Chichele.

Those imprisoned in the Tower were shackled in chains. The rings for the shackles could still be seen in the early 20th century.

In one three-year period (1428-31) 120 persons were imprisoned for Lollardy.

The Lollard's Tower was bombed on May 10, 1941, during

World War II, and was “completely gutted.” It has been rebuilt and today it houses apartments. When we had a private tour of Lambeth Palace in March 2003, our guide told us that she did not know what, if anything, still remains of the prison room. There is a photo in the official Lambeth Palace guide book that appears possibly to have been taken after World War II and that shows a corner of the prison room with the rings in the walls (*Lambeth Palace*, Warners Midlands PLC: 1998, p. 11).

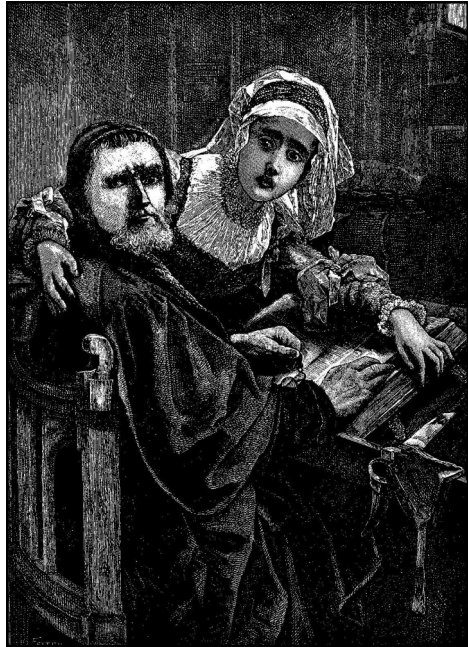
Many Lollards were marked for life as “heretics” by branding on the cheeks. “Their necks were tied fast to a post with towels, and their hands holden, that they might not stir; and so the hot iron was put to their cheeks. It is not certain whether branded with L for Lollard, or H for heretic, or whether it was only a formless print of iron” (Thomas Fuller, *Church History*, I, p. 164).

Others were forced to wear special clothes. Some were forced to wear a depiction of a fiery torch on their clothes during the rest of their lives as a reminder “that they deserved burning” and as a continual warning to others of the potential price of standing upon the Bible and rejecting Roman Catholic authority. To go into the public without this garment or with it covered meant death. “And, indeed, to poor people it was true,—put it off, and be burned; keep it on, and be starved: seeing none generally would set them on work that carried that badge about them” (Benjamin Evans, *Early English Baptists*, 1862, I, p. 23, f1).

The Scriptures were confiscated and burned. In 1410 about 200 copies of Wycliffe’s writings were publicly burned at Oxford, and that was only one occasion.

So many of the Wycliffe Bibles were destroyed that only about 250 Wycliffe manuscripts have survived altogether, in spite of the fact that they were reproduced widely over a period of more than 140 years prior to the printing of the Tyndale New Testament.

The Forbidden Book -- "The Bible was worth more than life itself to many of these ancient Christians, and so it is today to those who understand its true value. The forbidden book was often read by night, and those who had not been themselves educated listened with eagerness to the reading of others; but to read it, and to hear it read, were alike forbidden. Copies of the New Testament were also borrowed from hand to hand through a wide circle, and poor people gathered their pennies and formed copartneries for the purchase of the sacred volume. Those who could afford it gave five marks for the coveted manuscript (a very large amount of money in that day), and others in their penury gave gladly for a few leaves of St. Peter and St. Paul a load of hay. ... Some committed portions to memory, that they might recite them to relatives and friends. Thus Alice Colins was commonly sent for to the meetings, 'to recite unto them the Ten Commandments and the Epistles of Peter and James.' ... In 1429 Margery Backster was indicted because she asked her maid Joan to 'come and hear her husband read the law of Christ out of a book he was wont to read by night.' ... The means employed to discover the readers and possessors of Scripture were truly execrable in character. Friends and relations were put on oath, and bound to say what they knew of their own kindred. The privacy of the household was violated through this espionage; and husband and wife, parent and child, were sworn against one



another. The ties of blood were wronged, and the confidence of friendship was turned into a snare in this secret service. Universal suspicion must have been created; no one could tell who his accuser might be, for the friend to whom he had read of Christ's betrayal might soon be tempted to act the part of Judas towards himself, and for some paltry consideration sell his life to the ecclesiastical powers" (John Eadie, *History of the English Bible*, I, pp. 91, 92, 93).

The story of **the Scots Bible** is an example of how the Wycliffe Bible had to be read in secret and in fear.

Murdoch Nisbet was a farmer of Hardhill in Ayrshire, which was a center of Lollardy. He possessed a Wycliffe Bible and in 1520 determined to make his own translation into Scots. He dug a vault below his farmhouse so that he could accomplish this work in secret away from the prying eyes of the persecuting authorities. His manuscript was carefully preserved by his descendants through vicious persecution by the Scottish government that lasted well into the 17th century. In 1893 this Scots Bible was purchased by the



British Museum and it resides today in the British Library. “Scots, the language of Robert Burns, did not survive ... but the story of Nisbet’s making his New Testament is a demonstration of the passionate dedication of communities to Wycliffite Bible translations” (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 106).

The Lollard believers continued to be imprisoned, persecuted, and burned right up to William Tyndale’s day in the 16th century. In the *Way of Life Advanced Bible Studies* course on Church History we list 99 Christians who were burned for their faith in England between 1500 and 1532, and many others were imprisoned, beaten, and otherwise tormented.

Because of the bitter persecution in England following Wycliffe’s death, multitudes of Christians were forced into exile, fleeing to the wilds of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, to Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, and Bohemia. As they moved from place to place, they carried with them the precious words of eternal life and in this manner the outlawed Scriptures spread even in the face of bitter persecution.

The preaching of the Word of God prepared the way for the Reformation in England and elsewhere. The groups of Christians who established their faith and practice upon the Wycliffe Bible continued to exist until the formation of the Church of England. The doctrine of the Lollards was still being proclaimed in England in 1529. The royal proclamation called upon the authorities to “destroy all heresies and errors commonly called Lollardies.” As late as 1546 another proclamation by the English authorities forbidding the possession of Scriptures also mentioned the writings of Wycliffe.

John Wycliffe has been called the “MORNINGSTAR OF THE REFORMATION,” but it was actually his Bible that fulfilled that role.

THE TYNDALE NEW TESTAMENT

The Tyndale New Testament of 1525 was the first English translation based on Greek and the first to be printed. The Wycliffe Bible was based on Latin and published only in hand-written manuscripts. The King James Bible is basically an edition of Tyndale's masterly translation.

William Tyndale (c. 1494-1536) is therefore the most important name in the history of the English Bible and one of the most important names in the history of the English people. And yet when I have asked people in England who he was, not one has given a correct answer, and the situation is the same in America.

Tyndale's Times

Tyndale was born to **a time of great change and turmoil**. It was a time of international travel and discovery. When Tyndale was a boy Columbus discovered America and Vasco da Gama sailed around the Cape of Good Hope to India, and the great era of world exploration had begun.

Tyndale's day was also a time of great persecution. Shortly before Tyndale was born the Spanish Inquisition was established, and by the time Tyndale was a teenager, 8,800 had been burned to death and 90,000 imprisoned under the pope's Inquisitor General in Spain, Thomas de Torquemada.

As Tyndale grew to manhood, terrible persecutions were being poured out upon the separatist Christians in Bohemia and Moravia and against the Waldensians in Italy and France. For instance, when Tyndale was four, an army of 18,000 Catholics made war against the Waldensian Christians of Piedmont in Northern Italy, destroying entire towns and villages.

Tyndale's day was also a time for printing. In 1453, a mere four decades before Tyndale was born,

Constantinople was overrun by the Muslims and the Greek scholars had fled to Western Europe with their valuable manuscripts, including copies of the Byzantine Greek New Testament, which had been preserved for one thousand years through the Dark Ages.

The first book on movable type, a Latin Bible, had been printed in 1456.

By Tyndale's birth, printing presses had been set up in London and in more than 120 cities of Europe.

Scriptures in the common languages of the people had begun to be printed in 1488 with the publication of the Bohemian Bible, just a few years before Tyndale was born.

Tyndale's day was a time when England was still greatly bowed down by Roman Catholicism.

Catholicism was the state religion and England was heavily taxed by Rome. In 1376 the English Parliament noted that the taxes paid in England to Rome amounted to five times as much as those levied by the king (Cushing Hassell, *History of the Church of God*, 1886, p. 457).

The citizens of England were largely given over to idolatry, honoring the mass wafer as god and worshipping Catholic images that were set up at famous pilgrimage sites such as Our Lady of Walsingham and St. Anne of Buxton. Another image, the Rood of Grace at Boxley in Kent, was cleverly rigged to impress the worshippers by bowing its head, rolling its eyes, smiling and frowning! The people journeyed to these sites, kissed the feet of the idols, burned candles before them, and made offerings of money.

The Catholic priests controlled the people's lives from cradle to grave, claiming the power to save infants through their baptism, to authenticate marriage, to give the Holy Spirit through confirmation, to keep the soul saved by the mass, to prepare souls for death through extreme unction, and to redeem souls from purgatory through their masses.

Salvation was a commodity to be bought and sold. “The people relied ‘on the merit of their own works’ toward their justification, such as pilgrimages to images, kneeling, kissing, and cursing of them, as well as many other hypocritical works in their store of religion; there being marts or markets of merits, full of holy relics, images, shrines, and works of superstition, ready to be sold; and all things they had were called holy: holy cowls, holy girdles, holy pardons, holy beads, holy shoes, holy rules” (Benjamin Evans, *Early English Baptists*, I, 1862, p. 28).

The hypocrisy of the ecclesiastical leaders was great. “Decency was thrown aside, and morality unknown. Brothels were kept in London for the especial use of the priesthood. The confessional was abused, and profligacy was all but universal” (Evans, pp. 28, 29).

The intellectual and moral state of the people under such conditions was almost beyond conception. “Ignorance, vice, and immorality of the worst kind, reigned all but universally” (Evans, p. 33).

In Tyndale’s day, it was still a crime to translate or read the Bible in one’s mother tongue. This dated from Arundel’s *Constitution* which was passed in 1408. A Catholic authority, Knyghton, a canon of Leicester, complained that to translate the Scriptures into English and thus lay it “open to the laity and to women who could read” was “casting the Gospel pearl under the feet of swine.” This was what Rome thought of providing the common man with the Word of God. The priests declared it to be heresy to speak of the Holy Scriptures in English (John Eadie, *History of the English Bible*, I, 1876, p. 81).

Ordinary people could not read Latin and therefore had no access to the Latin Vulgate, which Rome did allow.

Even the priests were largely ignorant. During one test of a group of priests in the early 1500s, nine did not know how many commandments were written on stone at Sinai; 33 did

not know where these commandments were located in the Bible; and 34 did not know the author of the Lord's Prayer!

What Rome did allow to be translated into English was filled with heresy. The "Mirror of the Life of Christ" by Nicholas Love, which was supposed to contain excerpts from the New Testament, actually contained Catholic mythology and exalted Mary above Christ!

The popes of Tyndale's day were very powerful and very wicked.

Sixtus IV (1471-1484) established houses of prostitution in Rome.

Innocent VIII (1484-1492) had seven illegitimate children, whom he enriched from the church treasures.

Alexander VI (1492-1503) lived with a Spanish lady and her daughter, and reveled in the grossest forms of debauchery. "The accounts of some of the indecent orgies that took place in the presence of the pope and [his daughter] Lucrezia are too bestial for repetition" (William Kerr, *A Handbook on the Papacy*, pp. 228, 29). This pope had five children, and his favorite son, Caesar Borgia, murdered his brother and his brother-in-law.

Just a few years before Tyndale's birth, work had begun on the fabulous **St. Peter's Basilica** and parts of the 1,000-room Vatican palace under the reign of Pope Nicholas V. The pope was selling indulgences to pay for the extravagant project. An indulgence was a promise of the "remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins" and it is imparted by the pope from "the treasure of Christ and the saints."

In spite of Rome's dominion over England, there were Bible-believers. There were Waldenses, Lollards, and other dissident believers in England prior to and during the days of John Wycliffe (1324-1384), the man who gave England her first Bible.

This Bible movement in England stemming from before the days of Wycliffe lasted until the time of Tyndale and laid the groundwork for the Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries. “In spite of the opposition, however, Lollardy made the Bible familiar to the people of England in their mother tongue” (Hassell, *History of the Church of God*, p. 466).

(For more about the Lollards and the Waldenses see the *Way of Life Advanced Bible Studies* course on Church History, which is available from Way of Life Literature, <http://www.wayoflife.org>, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org.)

Tyndale’s Early Life

William Tyndale was born sometime between 1484 to 1494, the exact date not being known. Many older histories have c.



1484, while most newer ones have c. 1494.

His family was well to do and was involved in the cloth or wool business. Some of the branches of the Tyndale family had adopted the name Hitchens or Hutchens or Hychyns, and William Tyndale was also known by this name. His Oxford records have William Hychyns.

William had three brothers, two older (Richard and Edward) and one younger (John). Edward was “a considerable figure in the country” and was the Crown Steward for the Berkeley estate (David Daniell, *The Bible in English*, pp. 140, 141).

Many Tyndale women were daughters and heirs of knights.

Another William Tyndale married a niece to the king of Bohemia, and their son, also named William, was invited to become the king of Bohemia, though he declined.

Tyndale was born in the Cotswold area of Gloucestershire in western England toward Wales, “probably in one of the villages near Dursley (possibly Stinchcombe)” (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 140).

This is a lovely area of rolling hills covered with sheep pastures and forests, with bubbling streams and gentle flowing rivers. Even today the area is rural and quaint and many of the houses are ancient, and it is not difficult to imagine what it was like in Tyndale’s day.

This was a place filled with Lollard and Waldensian teaching, and it is probable that the Tyndales were influenced. We know that by the time William Tyndale arrived at college, or soon thereafter, he had biblical faith in Christ.

The Severn River which runs through this area is the depository of the River Avon, which in turn is the depository of the little River Swift. The latter is the river that runs near the Lutterworth church into which the ashes of John Wycliffe’s bones were thrown in 1431 after they were disinterred and burned by the Roman Catholic authorities.

Tyndale’s Education and Life’s Goal

Tyndale had a good education. He attended Magdalen College in 1506. Magdalen was one of the dozen colleges that made up Oxford University at that time.

Tyndale was a brilliant student and obtained a BA in July 1512 and an MA in July 1515. He mastered eight languages - Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English and French, and German (and had partial knowledge of others, including Welsh). He was so skilled in these eight languages “that whichever he might be speaking, you would think it to be his native tongue.” He was later praised by the German scholar

Hermann Buschius for his mastery of these languages (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 142).

Oxford University was then steeped in paganism and Romanism. No theology was studied until after the MA. Tyndale later testified that “in the universities they have ordained that no man shall look in the Scripture until he be nursed in heathen learning eight or nine years and armed with false principles with which he is clean shut out of the understanding of scripture.”

After Oxford, Tyndale went to Cambridge for a short time (according to John Foxe). It is possible that Tyndale studied under Richard Croke, who returned to Cambridge from Germany to lecture on Greek in 1518. Erasmus had been in England from 1509-14 and had taught Greek at Cambridge part of that time.

Tyndale was probably ordained to the priesthood at St. Bartholomew the Great Church which is entered from Smithfield in London. The arched west entrance into the church, called the Smithfield Gate (c. 1300) can be seen in drawings of ancient martyrdoms. The church was built in the 12th century and became Anglican under Queen Elizabeth I.

It is not known when Tyndale was converted to Christ, but it might have been during his student years. Foxe tells us that while there “he read privately to some of the students and fellows of Magdalen college, in divinity; instructing them in the knowledge and truth of the scriptures; and all that knew him reputed him to be a man of most virtuous disposition, and of unspotted life” (Foxe, abridged, 1830, p. 252).

At Cambridge Tyndale enjoyed fellowship with certain student friends who shared his faith in Christ, chiefly Thomas Bilney and John Fryth. At Cambridge “these three young men associated themselves together, and strengthened each other’s hands in the work of reading the New Testament and preaching the Gospel of repentance to their fellow students” (Condit, *History of the English Bible*, 1881, p.

96). Bilney came to Christ through reading the Erasmus Greek New Testament.

The historian John Foxe tells us that Tyndale was “singularly addicted to the study of the Scriptures,” and he was not



Little Sodbury Manor

content to have the Scriptures for himself in Hebrew and Greek; he was burdened to have the Bible translated into English directly from the original biblical languages and printed so that it would be available to the common man. He understood that this was the only spiritual hope for England.

The Greek New Testament had been printed in 1516 soon after Tyndale graduated from Oxford, and it was translated and published in German by Martin Luther in 1522.

Upon leaving Cambridge in about 1521, Tyndale got a job as a tutor to the children of Sir John Walsh and family chaplain at **LITTLE SODBURY MANOR** in the lovely Cotswold's region of western England. He resided there for almost two years.

The wealthy, well-connected Walshes (John and Anne) were friends with Tyndale's influential brothers Edward and John.

John Walsh was twice High Sheriff and had spent time at the king's court. King Henry VIII spent a night at Little Sodbury with his second wife, Anne Boleyn.

Tyndale did some translation work at Little Sodbury and it is probable that he started work on the translation of the English Bible here.

Tyndale's students were very young and he doubtless had much time for study. It is thought that he lived in the attic room, which would have been a quiet retreat. I saw this room on a visit to Little Sodbury Manor in March 2003. Some parts of the ancient manor are still in much the same condition as they were in Tyndale's day a half millennium earlier. The Great Room, for example, has the same ceiling and fireplace and the large wooden table might be the same one that was in the house when Tyndale lived there. The current owner of Little Sodbury Manor graciously allowed us to take photos of the Great Room. It is here that Tyndale had discussions over dinner with visiting Catholic priests and prelates. It is perhaps in this room that the famous discussion was carried on, in which Tyndale said that he defied the pope and all his laws.

While at Little Sodbury Manor Tyndale translated one of the works of Erasmus, the *Christian Soldier's Manual (Enchiridion Militis Christiani)*. ("His writings Tyndale admired, but saw through the defects in his character" --Christopher Anderson, *Annals of the English Bible*, I, p. 38).

While at the Little Sodbury Manor, Tyndale preached the Word of God, and we know of two of the places where he preached.

He preached in a common place "called Saint Austen's Green," which was in front of the Abbey of St. Augustine in Bristol. In 1542 Henry VIII converted the 400-year-old Abbey into the Cathedral Church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, and it remains an Anglican cathedral today. The place where Tyndale preached is called College Green today.

He also preached in the St. Adeline's Church, which was originally located on the ridge above Little Sodbury Manor, with an excellent view of the land for miles around. The church



building was moved a couple of miles away in the 1800s to its current location. On a visit there in 2003 a church member showed us around the building. When I asked him if he was born again, he replied in the negative and said that the church does not preach that message today.

Tyndale also debated Catholic priests who visited Little Sodbury.

One thing that he debated was the translation of the Scriptures into English. Many years later Tyndale described the way the Roman Catholic authorities looked upon this work: "Some of the papists say it is impossible to translate the Scriptures into English, some that it is not lawful for the layfolk to have it in the mother-tongue, some that it would make them all heretics" (William Tyndale, preface to *The Five Books of Moses*, cited from Schaff, *Church History*, VI, p. 726).

One day a priest replied to Tyndale, "We are better without God's laws than the pope's." Hearing that, **Tyndale exclaimed: "I defy the pope and all his laws. If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou doest."**

Because of his preaching and his conflicts with the

Romanists, Tyndale was called before a local tribunal in 1522 and threatened for preaching “heresy.”

Tyndale later described this scene as follows: “All the priests of the country were present the same day. ... When I came before the Chancellor, he threatened me grievously, and reviled me, and rated me as though I had been a dog; and laid to my charge whereof there could be none accuser brought forth, as their manner is not to bring forth the accuser; and yet, all the Priests of the country were there the same day” (Tyndale’s Prologue to Genesis, 1530).

The Chancellor who persecuted Tyndale was Thomas Parker, who later displayed his unreasonable fury against the truth by digging up the bones of William Tracy and burning them to ashes. This was done in 1531. Tracy had been condemned after his decease “because in his last will he had committed his departing Spirit to God, through Jesus Christ alone, and left no part of his property to the priests, to pray for his soul” (Christopher Anderson, *Annals of the English Bible*, 1845, I, pp. 296, 297).

The cardinal who had appointed Parker was Thomas Wolsey, who himself had been appointed cardinal by Pope Leo X, the pope who persecuted Martin Luther. Thomas Wolsey would continue to persecute God’s people in England throughout his life. Later Wolsey lamented to the pope that the printing press had made it possible for “ordinary men to read the Scriptures.”

The Bishop of Worcester, who oversaw the area in which Tyndale was persecuted, was Julio di Medici, who later became Pope Clement VII (1523-1534). As pope he issued a proclamation condemning the writings of Erasmus.

Because of these experiences, Tyndale came to understand that the people would never make progress in the truth unless they had the Bible in their language:

“A thousand books had they rather to be put forth against their

abominable doings and doctrine, than that the Scripture should come to light. For as long as they may keep that down, they will so darken the right way with the mist of their sophistry, and so tangle them that either rebuke or despise their abominations, with arguments of philosophy, and with worldly similitudes, and apparent reasons of natural wisdom; and with wresting the Scriptures unto their own purpose, clean contrary unto the process, order, and meaning of the text; and so delude them in descanting upon it with allegories . . . that though thou feel in thine heart, and art sure, how that all is false that they say, yet couldst thou not solve their subtil riddles. WHICH THING ONLY MOVED ME TO TRANSLATE THE NEW TESTAMENT, BECAUSE I HAD PERCEIVED BY EXPERIENCE, HOW THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH THE LAY PEOPLE IN ANY TRUTH, EXCEPT THE SCRIPTURE WERE PLAINLY LAID BEFORE THEIR EYES IN THEIR MOTHER TONGUE, THAT THEY MIGHT SEE THE PROCESS, ORDER, AND MEANING OF THE TEXT: for else, whatsoever truth is taught them, these enemies of all truth quench it again . . . that is with apparent reasons of sophistry, and traditions of their own making; and partly in juggling with the text, expounding it in such a sense as is impossible to gather of the text itself" (Tyndale, preface to *The Five Books of Moses*). (We see that Tyndale's first rule of Bible interpretation was context.)

Thus as a young man Tyndale dedicated his life to the fulfillment of the noble goal of producing an English Bible based on the Hebrew and Greek. To this end he suffered great privations, surrendered up to God the blessing of marriage and a settled family life, wandered about from place to place in Europe to avoid the persecuting Roman authorities, all for the objective of endowing the English-speaking people with the eternal Word of God.

Tyndale's Doctrine

Though there is no evidence that William Tyndale was a Baptist at any point in his life, he was Protestant in doctrine and went even beyond this in some areas. (Baptist historian John Christian summarizes Tyndale's views in his *History of the Baptists*, 1922.)

Consider, for example, what Tyndale believed about the church and its ordinances

He always translated the word ecclesia by the word congregation and held to a local conception of the church (Tyndale, *Works*, London, 1831, II, p. 13).

He taught that there are only two offices in the church, pastor and deacon.

He taught that elders should be married men (Tyndale, *Works*, 1831, I, p. 265).

He taught that true churches consist of believers.

He taught that there are no popes or priests in the church but a priesthood of believers. “Peter in the Greek signifieth a stone in English. This confession is the rock. Now is Simon ... called Peter, because of his confession. Whosoever then thiswise confesseth of Christ, the same is called Peter. Now is this confession come to all that are true Christians. Then is every Christian man and woman Peter” (Tyndale’s note on Matt. 16:18 in the first printed edition of Matthew).

Tyndale denied that baptism washes away sin. “It is impossible that the waters of the river should wash our hearts” (Tyndale, *Works*, London, 1831, I, p. 30).

He taught that baptism is “a plunging into the water” (Tyndale, *Works*, I, p. 25), and that to avail, baptism must be preceded by repentance, faith and confession (Tyndale, *Works*, III, p. 179). We don’t know if Tyndale ever followed through consistently with this doctrine, but this is a denial of infant baptism, since it is impossible for a baby to repent and exercise faith and confession.

Tyndale taught that baptism is a memorial signifying the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. “The plunging into the water SIGNIFIETH that we die and are buried with Christ as concerning the old life of sin which is dead. And the pulling out again SIGNIFIETH that we rise again with Christ in a new life full of the Holy Ghost which shall teach us, and guide us, and work the will of God in us; as thou seest Rom.

6” (Tyndale, “The Obedience of All Degrees Proved by God’s Worde,” imprinted by Wyllyam Copland at London 1561; cited from Joseph Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, I).

Tyndale further taught that the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper are memorials only.

Tyndale’s Life and Character

We have only one description of Tyndale’s daily habits, and that is what John Foxe wrote about his last years in Antwerp.

“First, he was a man very frugal, and spare of body, a great student, and earnest labourer in the setting forth of the Scriptures of God. He reserved or hallowed to himself two days in the week, which he named his pastime, Monday and Saturday. On Monday he visited all such poor men and women as were fled out of England, by reason of persecution, into Antwerp, and these, once well understanding their good exercises and qualities, he did very liberally comfort and relieve; and in like manner provided for the sick and diseased persons. On the Saturday, he walked round about the town, seeking every corner and hole, where he suspected any poor person to dwell; and where he found any to be well occupied, and yet over-burdened with children, or else were aged and weak, those also he plentifully relieved. And thus he spent his two days of pastime, as he called them. And truly his alms were very large, and so they might well be; for his exhibition that he had yearly, of the English merchants at Antwerp, when living there, was considerable, and that for the most part he bestowed upon the poor. The rest of the days of the week, he gave wholly to his book, wherein he most diligently travailed. When the Sunday came, then went he to some one merchant’s chamber, or other, whither came many other merchants, and unto them would he read some one parcel of Scripture; the which proceeded so fruitfully, sweetly and gently from him, much like to the writing of John the Evangelist, that it was a heavenly comfort and joy to the audience, to hear him read the Scriptures: likewise, after dinner, he spent an hour in the same manner” (Foxe).

As a further testimony to Tyndale’s life and character we will quote from a letter by his friend John Frith, which he wrote in 1534 to Sir Thomas More:

“And Tyndale, I trust, liveth, well content with such a poor Apostle’s life, as God gave His Son Christ, and His faithful ministers in this world, which is not sure of so many mites as ye be

yearly of pounds; although I am sure that, for his learning and judgment in Scripture, he were more worthy to be promoted than all the Bishops in England. ... And as for his behaviour, it is such, that I am sure no man can reprove him of any sin; howbeit, no man is innocent before God, which beholdeth the heart" (Christopher Anderson, *Annals of the English Bible*, I, 1845).

As to his fear of God and zeal for the Scriptures and his fear of corrupting them in translation, Tyndale testified in his communication with Sir Thomas More: **"For I call God to record against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, to give a reckoning of our doings, that I never altered one syllable of God's Word against my conscience; nor would this day, if all that is in the earth, whether it be pleasure, honor, or riches, might be given me."**

Tyndale's Translation Work

Tyndale first attempted to translate the Bible in England. He left Gloucestershire in 1523 and traveled to London to seek the help of Cuthbert Tunstall, bishop of the city. He had a letter of introduction from Sir John Walsh to Sir Henry Guildford, Controller and Master of the Horse for King Henry VIII (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 142).

As we have seen, the *Constitutions* of 1408 forbade translation of the Scriptures into English. Tyndale was hoping to find protection for the work under the wing of the highest authorities.

As Tunstall had helped Erasmus with the first edition of Greek New Testament, having consulted manuscripts for him, it appears that Tyndale was under the impression that the man might be receptive to the translation of the Bible into English.

Tyndale would have met Tunstall in Fulham Palace, the residence of the bishop of London in those days. Today Fulham Palace is a museum located in Bishop's Park by the

River Thames. I took photos of it on a research trip in April 2005.

Tyndale quickly learned that it was not possible to complete the translation work in England.

The authorities were not supportive. Tyndale said, “I understood that not only was there no room in my lord of London’s palace to translate the New Testament, but also there was no place to do it in all England.”

Further, no English printer would dare print a forbidden vernacular Bible.

King Henry VIII, who sat on the throne, had been awarded the title *Fidei Defensor* (“Defender of the Faith”) by Pope Leo X in 1521 for his rigorous defense of the papacy against Luther and others. (This title is still held by British monarchs, with “F.D.” on all British coins.) Though Henry later broke from the pope and founded the Church of England in 1534, he held to Catholic doctrine all his life. “Henry continued to defend the principal teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, required all people in England and Wales to adhere to the Roman creed, and was quite willing to put to death men and women who opposed his will by embracing Protestant doctrine” (Sidney Houghton, *Sketches from Church History*, p. 113).



In London, a wealthy businessman, **HUMPHRIE MUNMOUTH**, a dealer in cloth draperies, befriended Tyndale. He invited Tyndale to live with him, and Tyndale stayed there for about a year preaching and studying and translating, supported by Munmouth.

Munmouth helped pay Tyndale’s way to Europe in about

January 1524 and continued to support Tyndale in Europe as he worked on the translation.

During the few months that Tyndale was in London before going to Europe, he preached at St. Dunstan's in the West on Fleet Street. "St. Dunstan's apparently had connections with the growing reform movement, with the Poyntz family and with merchants in the cloth trade, particularly Humphrey Monmouth..." (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 142). This is where John Milton printed *Paradise Lost* in 1667.

Today St. Dunstan's is radically ecumenical. Their web site has this information: "Here, alone in the whole of the country, the traditions of the seven major churches of Christendom -- that is the Old Catholics, the Assyrian Church of the East, the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church, the Oriental churches, the Lutheran and Reformed Churches and the Holy Roman and Catholic Church -- are honoured in four chapels and three shrines set around the octagonal walls. Designated as a centre of prayer for Christian Unity in 1960, it now plays a major role in fostering good relations with churches outside the Anglican communion."

In early 1524 Tyndale left England, not knowing that he would never see his beloved homeland again. He settled in Hamburg, Germany, to complete the translation.

In May 1525 Tyndale traveled to Cologne to oversee the printing of his New Testament, but a Catholic spy named Cochlaeus learned about the project. Cochlaeus had heard certain whisperings that led him to believe that such a printing in English was ongoing, but he did not know the details until he overheard some printers boast about a revolution that might shortly be coming to England. Cocklaeus invited them to his lodging and loosened their tongues with liquor, learning where the 3,000 copies of Tyndale's first edition were being typeset and printed in preparation for smuggling into England.

He quickly reported this information to the authorities, who forbade the printers to proceed with the work; but Tyndale, having been forewarned of this matter, was able to recover most of the completed sheets of Matthew and escape by boat up the Rhine to the city of Worms, where the printing was completed. "A single set of printed sheets to Matthew 22, bound in the nineteenth century, is in the British Library" (Daniell, p. 143).

The first edition of the Tyndale New Testament was printed in late 1525 or early 1526 and began to be distributed in England in early 1526. It is probable that 6,000 copies of the first edition were printed in Worms. Martin Luther's friend Spalatin says in his diary: "Buschius told me, that, at Worms, six thousand copies of the New Testament had been printed in English. The work was translated by an Englishman."

The Tyndale New Testament was small, fitting easily into the hand of a grown man, so that it could be concealed. I have examined several copies of the Tyndale New Testament at various libraries. All of the small Scriptures that were copied or printed in the centuries when Rome ruled Europe are readily identifiable as missionary Bibles. The Waldensian and Anabaptist Bibles were also small, allowing preachers to transport them more clandestinely in those dark days when Rome sought to destroy all dissident missionary work. I examined a fascinating little 14th century Waldensian New Testament at Cambridge University Library in April 2005. It was deposited there in the 17th century by Samuel Morland, Oliver Cromwell's ambassador to the Waldenses.

From the first, the Tyndale New Testament contained cross-references and was intended for study.

Immediately after coming off the press copies of Tyndale's small treasure began to be smuggled into England from the European continent, hidden in bales of merchandise, and then distributed clandestinely.

The first copies arrived in England in January 1526. It was



the dead of winter but this volume was destined to warm many hearts. Condit tells us that the way having been prepared by the Wycliffe Scriptures, “the people received these newly printed Testaments joyfully, but, from necessity, secretly” (Condit, *The History of the English Bible*, p. 104).

The New Testaments were smuggled inside of

Tyndale New Testament bales of cloth, in barrels or casks of wine or oil, in containers of grain, in flour sacks, in the false sides or bottoms of chests, and in other ingenious ways.

The Catholic authorities were quick to label Tyndale’s translation heretical and ordered all copies confiscated and burned.

Cardinal Wolsey demanded that a diligent search be made for copies in London, Cambridge, and Oxford. Those who were found with copies were arrested.

On February 11, 1526, the first pile of Scriptures was burned in London, under the approving eye of Cardinal Wolsey. A description of this scene reminds us of the seventeenth chapter of Revelation: “The Cardinal had a scaffold made on the top of the stairs for himself, with six and thirty Abbots, mitred Priors, and Bishops, and he, in his whole pomp, mitred, which [Robert] Barnes [in a sermon] had denounced, sat there enthroned! His Chaplains and Spiritual Doctors, in gowns of damask [SCARLET-colored silk or

linen] and satin, and he himself in PURPLE [See Rev. 17:4]! And there was a new pulpit erected on the top of the stairs, for Fisher, the Bishop of Rochester, to preach against Luther and Dr. Barnes; and great baskets full of books, standing before them within the rails, which were commanded, after the great fire was made before the Rood of Northern, (or large crucifix at the north gate of St. Paul's), there to be burned; and these heretics after the



sermon, to go three times round the fire, and cast in their faggots” (Christopher Anderson, *Annals of the English Bible*, 1845, I, p. 106).

The Bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall, was very zealous against Tyndale and his English New Testament. In a proclamation issued on October 24, 1526, he said that this New Testament was created by “many children of iniquity” who were “blinded through extreme wickedness,” and he predicted that if the spread of the New Testament among the people were not stopped it would “contaminate and infect the flock committed unto us, with most deadly poison and heresy.” Tunstall oversaw the burning of Tyndale’s New Testaments on October 27, 1526, at St. Paul’s Cathedral.

Diligent search was made from house to house for copies of the source of this “deadly poison and heresy.” Writing in January 1527, the ambassador of King Henry VIII to the

Netherlands said that copies of the Tyndale New Testament were being burned “daily” in England (Anderson, *Annals of the English Bible*, I, p. 122). Tunstall’s chaplain wrote of “many hundreth burned both here and beyond the sea” (Daniell, p. 144).

In fact, thousands of copies of Tyndale’s work were destroyed. So thorough and fierce were these persecutions, that only two complete copies of the first edition of the Tyndale New Testament exist today of the three to six thousand that were printed. One is at the British Library (lacking only the title page) and one is in the Stuttgart Landesbibliothek (the latter, discovered in 1996, is the only surviving copy containing the title page). Another copy at the St. Paul’s Cathedral Library lacks the title page and 70 leaves.

By 1528 the prisons were filled with citizens whose only “crime” was that of reading the New Testament in English.

One of those who were arrested was Humphrie Munmouth, the man who had assisted Tyndale. He was imprisoned in the London Tower “on suspicion of heresy” and charged with assisting “those who are translating the Scriptures into English,” of “subscribing to the said New Testament,” and of “having said that faith alone is sufficient to save a man” (D’Aubigne, *History of the Reformation*, V, p. 386). From this it appears that Munmouth was still assisting Tyndale financially.

Munmouth was later released, and when he died in November 1537, he left a large gift for three gospel preachers, refused to leave any of his inheritance for the saying of Catholic masses, and commended his soul unto Christ Jesus, “my Maker and Redeemer, in whom, and by the merits of whose blessed passion, is all my whole trust of clean remission and forgiveness of my sins.”

Another of those arrested was Tyndale’s own brother, John. He was charged with distributing Tyndale’s Testaments and

books in London and was fined heavily and forced to ride through the city sitting backwards on a horse, with pages from the New Testament pinned to his clothes.

In February 1529 the first religious dissident was burned in England for importing a copy of Tyndale's New Testament. Thomas Hitton was captured in Kent and charged with preaching contrary to the state religion and with importing a copy of the Tyndale New Testament. He was burned at the stake at Smithfield.

In those days, as the name suggests, Smithfield was a large field that was a popular gathering place for commerce and amusement. Many believers were burned here up unto the days of King James I.

Today a small park marks the place where the English government burned nonconformists. There is a plaque on a wall that mentions this. Smithfield was (and still is) bordered on one side by St. Bartholomew the Great church, where Tyndale was probably ordained. The arched entrance (c. 1300) called the Smithfield Gate, which still exists today, can be seen in ancient martyrologies in the background of some of the old drawings of the Smithfield burnings. In Tyndale's day St. Bartholomew was Catholic but since Queen Elizabeth I's day it has been Anglican.

Not being satisfied with the destruction of Tyndale's New Testaments in England itself, Thomas Wolsey and others resolved to search for his books in Europe.

In February 1526 King Henry VIII and Wolsey addressed letters to various authorities in Antwerp, urging them to pursue and destroy all copies of Tyndale's New Testament.

Princess Margaret of Antwerp "pointedly commanded her officers to search the country for these books, intending to proceed in all rigour against those whom they found culpable" (Anderson, *Annals of the English Bible*, I, p. 124).

John Hackett, an agent of the English crown, was instructed to seek out these Scriptures in various cities, and we are told that in this capacity he visited Antwerp, Barrow, Zealand, Ghent, Bruges, Brussels, Louvaine, and elsewhere, all in obedience to Cardinal Wolsey's instructions.

Printers were threatened, and at least one, Christopher Endhoven, was arrested in Antwerp. He died in a prison in London for his crime of printing and shipping English Bibles.

Richard Harman and his wife were imprisoned on July 12, 1528. One of the charges was that he had "received books from a German merchant (viz., New Testaments in English without a gloss*), and sold them to an English merchant who has had them conveyed to England." They languished in prison for seven months and suffered great harm to their business. (* The term "gloss" refers to explanatory notes appended to words or phrases. The glosses commonly added to the Latin Vulgate by the Catholic Church, which claimed to be the only authentic interpreter of Scripture, were for the purpose of instructing "the faithful" to read Roman doctrine into the text through the process of *isogesis*. The Catholic glosses included myths and quotations from the writings of Augustine, Jerome, and "pope" Gregory "the great.")

About this time an attempt by the Catholic authorities in England to destroy Tyndale New Testaments backfired and resulted in the publication of even more copies. A plan was devised to purchase great quantities of the Tyndale New Testament in Europe and destroy them before they entered circulation in England. Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall, already mentioned, played a key role in this. Knowing how eagerly Tunstall yearned to destroy Tyndale's work, an enterprising merchant named Augustine Packington conceived of a plan that would allow Tyndale to pay off his debts while increasing the publication of more New Testaments. After gaining Tyndale's approval of the plan, Packington approached Bishop Tunstall when he was on a visit to Antwerp and offered to sell him an entire printing of

Tyndale's New Testaments for a large sum of money. Tunstall fell right into the little "trap." Though that batch of unbound New Testament leaves was destroyed, the money paid by Tunstall ended up in Tyndale's hands so that he was able to pay off his debts and have enough left over to print even more copies than those that were burned! It was one step backwards, but two steps forward. When Tunstall later inquired as to where Tyndale got the money to print so many more New Testaments so quickly, he was told that it was from him!

Tyndale settled in Antwerp by 1528 and began work on the Old Testament. He was assisted now by his Cambridge friend John Frith. Frith had been forced to flee England in about 1527 because of the persecution.

In late 1528 Tyndale sailed to Hamburg and suffered shipwreck on the way. Since the only record for this is the second edition of Foxe (1570), it has been doubted by some historians and biographers, but I see no reason to doubt it. Foxe was writing only a short time after the events, and unless there is clear evidence that he was wrong in some point we see no reason to doubt him. Foxe says Tyndale lost all of his books and writings in the shipwreck. Tyndale lived in Hamburg through most of 1529 in the house of a widow and completed the five books of Moses.

After this Tyndale returned to Antwerp, where he lived until his arrest.

Tyndale's other Writings

Tyndale wrote many profitable books, including "The Revelation of Antichrist," "The Supplication of Beggars," "The Obedience of a Christian Man," "and "How Christian Rulers Ought to Govern."

In May 1528 Tyndale published his masterly defense of justification by faith without works entitled A Treatise of

Justification by Faith Only, otherwise called, The Parable of the Wicked Mammon. This was a direct assault upon Rome's false gospel. Tyndale taught that good works, though important, must flow from true faith, as fruit comes from a vine. He showed how that an unscriptural Romanist emphasis upon works leads only to superstition.

In October 1528 Tyndale published The Obedience of a Christian Man. "Enemies were asserting that the reformers throughout Europe were encouraging sedition and teaching treason. Tyndale wrote to declare for the first time the two fundamental principles of the English reformers: the supreme authority of Scripture in the Church, and the supreme authority of the king in the state. ... Tyndale makes many pages of his book out of Scripture, and he is scolding about the corruptions and superstitions in the [Catholic] Church. ... Contrasted with the New Testament Church and faith, he describes the sufferings of the people at the hands, especially, of monks and friars, though the whole hierarchy, as he sees it, from the pope down, is guilty of 'selling for money what God in Christ promiseth freely'" (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 147).

In 1530 Tyndale published The Practice of Prelates: Whether the King's grace may be separated from his queen because she was his brother's wife, in which he boldly described the pope as ivy, which climbs up a tree and gradually saps the strength of the tree and kills it. The tree was the English nation. "Practice" here refers to its older meaning of scheming and trickery. This tract shows Tyndale's excellent understanding of church history. Consider an excerpt:

"Even so the Bishop of Rome, at the beginning, crope along upon the earth, and every man trod upon him in this world. But as soon as there came a Christian Emperor, he joined himself unto his feet, and kissed them, and crope up a little with begging,—now this privilege, now that,—now this city, now that ... St. Peter's patrimony,—St. Peter's rents,—St. Peter's lands,—St. Peter's right; to cast a vain fear and superstitiousness into the hearts of men ... And thus, with flattering and feigning, and vain superstition, under the name of St. Peter, he crept up and fastened

his roots in the heart of the Emperor; and with his sword climbed up above all his fellows; and brought them under his feet. And as he subdued them with the Emperor's sword, even so, by subtilty and help of them, after that they were sworn faithful, he climbed above the Emperor and subdued him also; and made him stoop unto his feet, and kiss them another while. Yea, Celestinus crowned the Emperor Henry the Fifth, holding the crown between his feet. And when he had put the crown on, he smote it off with his feet again, saying—that he had might to make emperors and put them down again. ... And as the pope played with the Emperor, so did his branches and his members, the bishops, play in every kingdom, dukedom, and lordship ... And thus,—the Ivy tree hath under his roots, throughout all christendom, in every village, holes for foxes, and nests for unclean birds, in all his branches,—and promiseth unto his disciples all the promotions of the world" (Tyndale, *The Practice of Prelates*).

In light of the boldness and plainness by which William Tyndale exposed Rome's error, it is no wonder that he was a special target of the same.

In this tract Tyndale argued against Henry VIII's divorce from his first wife, Catherine. It is thus no surprise that Henry hated Tyndale for his writings, which respectfully but plainly reproved his wicked life and rule. When Henry published an English edition of his treatise against Martin Luther in 1526, he mentioned William Tyndale as one of the "lewd persons born in this our realm." They were lewd, in the king's eyes, "for the translating of the New Testament into English" (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 163). Henry said he planned to burn the book and sharply punish its readers. Pope Leo X in Rome was so tickled with Henry's original Latin treatise in 1521 that he named him *Fidei Defensor* ("Defender of the Faith"). Though Pope Paul III revoked Henry's title after he broke with Rome, the English parliament restored the title in 1544 at a time when the newly formed Church of England was staunchly Romanist in everything but submission to the pope. British monarchs still hold this title and FD still appears on British coins, even though the "faith" Henry was defending was Rome's and the enthusiasm that earned him this title was his zeal to burn Bibles and persecute believers. Though Henry's successors

didn't burn Bibles, they did burn believers, and that goes for Edward VI, Elizabeth I, and James I. Those who dissented from the Church of England continued to be persecuted under British monarchs until the 18th century.

Interestingly, even though Tyndale had opposed Henry's marriage to **ANNE BOLEYN**, she loved the Tyndale New Testament and had a keen interest in Tyndale's writings.

Cardinal Wolsey testified that Anne Boleyn was "tainted by the Lutheran heresy" (D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation*, V, p. 317). Blackford Condit, in his *History of the English Bible*, says that Anne headed up "the New Testament party" in the royal house in England (p. 133).

After Tyndale's New Testament began to be smuggled into England in January 1526, Anne obtained a copy. "Anne Boleyn, notwithstanding her smiling face, often withdrew to her closet at Greenwich or at Hampton Court, to study the gospel. Frank, courageous, and proud, she did not conceal the pleasure she found in such reading; her boldness astonished the courtiers, and exasperated the clergy" (D'Aubigne, V, p. 324).

In 1529, before becoming queen, Anne possessed a copy of Tyndale's *Obedience of a Christian Man*, and a very interesting thing happened in this connection.

We must remember that to own such a book in England at that time was illegal and very dangerous. Consider one of the "heretical" statements made in the book: "If thou believe the promises, then God's truth justifieth thee; that is, forgiveth thy sins and sealeth thee with his Holy Spirit." It was illegal to hold this priceless Bible doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone.

Cardinal Wolsey had ordered the members of the royal court to be on the lookout for "heretical" books. Ignoring these instructions, Anne had lent the book to one of her female attendants, who was found reading it by her suitor, George

Zouch, one of the men in the royal household. He playfully snatched the book away and refused to give it back. After he began to read it, he became fascinated by it and soon thereafter was reading it during a sermon at the royal chapel. The dean of the chapel confiscated the book and delivered it to Cardinal Wolsey.

In the meantime, Lady Anne, learning of the loss, approached the king, desiring his help in retrieving the book. A short while after Anne left the royal apartment Wolsey approached the king about the matter, hoping perhaps to bring charges against Anne. Henry, though, had determined that Anne was to get her book back and the matter was closed! Noting the state of the king's mind on the subject, Wolsey quickly excused himself from the royal quarters.

Upon regaining possession of the book, Lady Anne brought it to the king and requested that he read it, and he did so, and even commented to her that it was a good book, saying, "This book is for me, and all kings, to read." Thus, we see the hand of God in providing a witness to the haughty king. He was maneuvered into reading a sermon written by the very man he was persecuting. That the fickle Henry soon changed his mind about Tyndale's "Obedience of a Christian Man" is to his discredit.

Anne helped many of the persecuted Bible believers. Thomas Crosby describes her as "being a special favourer of the gospel" (Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, I, p. 32). The English historian John Foxe, who was seventeen years old when Anne was beheaded and later interviewed many of her acquaintances, testified that Anne "without all controversy was a special comforter and aider of all the professors of Christ's Gospel" (Foxe, unabridged, 1641, II, p. 332).

In 1534, a year after her coronation, Anne Boleyn helped Richard Harman to regain his liberty and the possession of his house and business privileges in Antwerp, which had been taken from him five years earlier for his efforts in

smuggling New Testaments. Anne Boleyn's letter to Thomas Crumwell in behalf of this Christian man is still in existence and is evidence of her love for the Word of God. Signed "Anne the Queen," the letter said:

"Trusty and right well beloved, we greet you well. And whereas we be credibly informed that the bearer hereof, RICHARD HERMAN, merchant and citizen of ANTWERP, in Brabant, was, in the time of the late Lord Cardinal, put and expelled from his freedom and fellowship, of and in the English house there, for nothing else (as he affirmeth,) but only for that he, still like a good Christian man, did both with his goods and policy, to his great hurt and hindrance in this world, HELP TO THE SETTING FORTH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IN ENGLISH: We therefore desire and instantly pray you, that, WITH ALL SPEED AND FAVOUR CONVENIENT, YE WILL CAUSE THIS GOOD AND HONEST MERCHANT, BEING MY LORD'S TRUE, FAITHFUL, AND LOVING SUBJECT, TO BE RESTORED TO HIS PRISTINE FREEDOM, LIBERTY, AND FELLOWSHIP, aforesaid, and the sooner at this our request, and at your good leisure to hear him in such things, as he hath to make further relation unto you in this behalf. Given under our signet, at my Lord's manor of Greenwich, the xiii day of May. To our trust and right well beloved, Thomas Crumwell, Squire, Chief Secretary unto my Lord the King's Highness."

Though we are not attempting to make a "saint" of Anne Boleyn, we do agree with Christopher Anderson's potent observation on this letter:

"Whatever may be said, whether to the praise or disparagement of Anne Boleyn, it should not now pass unnoticed that NO MAN, either of influence or office in all England, EVER SO EXPRESSED HIMSELF WHILE TYNDALE LIVED" (Anderson, *Annals of the English Bible*, I, p. 411).

Anne also helped Thomas Garret, who was one of the first to distribute the smuggled Tyndale New Testaments in England. Garret had been imprisoned in a foul dungeon at Oxford in 1526. In 1535 Queen Anne attempted to help this man obtain a position that was vacant at the time (Anderson, I, p. 120). (Garret was martyred for his love for the Word of God in 1540, four years after Anne Boleyn's death.)

Anne also rescued some Englishmen who had been consigned by the Inquisition in France to slavery on board

the galley ships. This is described by Foxe:

“They were put on board the galleys [oar-powered ships], where they were subjected to the absolute control of the most inhuman and barbarous wretches who ever disgraced the human form. The labor of rowing, as performed in the galleys, is described as being the most excessive that can be imagined; and the sufferings of the poor slaves were increased many fold by the scourgings inflicted on them by their savage taskmasters. The recital of their miseries is too horrible to be dwelt upon: we shall therefore pass to that period when the Lord, of his infinite mercy, gave ear to the cries of his afflicted servants, and GRACIOUSLY RAISED THEM UP A DELIVERER IN ANNE, QUEEN OF ENGLAND, who, filled with compassion for the unhappy fate of so many of her fellow-protestants, ordered her ambassador at the court of France, to make a spirited remonstrance in their favor, which Louis, whose affairs were then in a very critical situation, was under the necessity of complying with; and he accordingly dispatched orders to all the seaports for the immediate release of every galley slave condemned for his religion. ... *A deputation of those who had been released by the interposition of queen Anne, waited upon her majesty in London, to return their most grateful thanks, on behalf of themselves and their brethren, for her Christian interference in their favor.* SHE RECEIVED THEM VERY GRACIOUSLY, AND ASSURED THEM THAT SHE DERIVED MORE PLEASURE FROM THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF HAVING LESSENED THE MISERIES OF HER FELLOW-PROTESTANTS, THAN FROM THE MOST BRILLIANT EVENTS OF HER REIGN” (Foxe, *Book of Martyrs*, one-volume abridged, 1830, pp. 180, 181).

It was “in recognition of her protection to the friends of the New Testament” that William Tyndale, in 1534, had a special copy of his New Testament printed for the Queen (Condit, *History of the English Bible*, p. 133).

It was beautifully printed on vellum (made from the skins of lambs or young calves), with illustrations, and bound in blue morocco. The cover contained, in large red letters, the words *ANNA REGINA ANGLIAE* or ANNE QUEEN OF ENGLAND. The title page is done in bright red, blue, and gold, and says, “The New Testament. Printed at Antwerp by Martin Emperotive, Anno. MDxxxiii.”

It is very telling that this volume contains no dedication to the Queen. Christopher Anderson observes: “Tyndale was no

sycophant. There is no dedication,--no compliment paid, as there never ought to be, to any human being, along with God's most holy Word."

This invaluable New Testament ended up in the private library of Clayton Cracherode and after his death in 1799 it became the property of the British Museum. Today it resides in the British Library and sometimes is on display in the John Ritblat Gallery.

Anne had a direct role in Henry VIII's proclamation in 1535 that the Bible should be printed and deposited in every church. Archbishop Parker, chaplain to the Queen, testified of this: "His royal Majesty was petitioned by the whole Synod, to give commandment that the Holy Scriptures might be translated into the English tongue; for so it could be more easily discerned by all, what was agreeable to the Divine Law. To this, Stephen Gardiner--the King's most secret counsellor--made resistance as covertly as possible. But *through the grace and intercession of our most illustrious and virtuous mistress the Queen, permission was at length obtained from the King*, that the Holy Scriptures should be printed and deposited in every church, in a place where the people might read them; which grant of the King did not go into effect, because this most illustrious Queen soon after suffered death" (emphasis added) (John Strype, *Life and Acts of Parker*, p. 7).

When Anne's son died shortly after childbirth in January 1536, the fickle and cruel monarch connived to have his young wife put to death. He had wooed her and used her and now he would discard her like a piece of trash. She was falsely charged with adultery and beheaded on May 19, 1536, less than five months after miscarrying. At the moment of her execution, just before noon, artillery was fired as a predetermined signal to Henry, who was out in the fields hunting. Those present said he responded thus: "Ah! Ah! It is done; the business is done! Uncouple the dogs, and let us follow the sport!" The very next morning he married Jane

Seymoure, with whom he had become infatuated some months earlier (*Wylie, History of Protestantism*, III, p. 404; Fuller, *Church History of Britain*, II, p. 69).

Having read extensively about the life of Anne Boleyn, I am convinced that Henry disposed of her for two reasons, for his lust toward another woman and for his hatred of the favor she showed toward the “Protestants.”

Anne Boleyn has been much criticized by some historians, and it is certain that she had serious faults; but I believe the old British historian Thomas Fuller was correct when he summarized her life in this way: “In a word, she was a great patroness of the Protestants, protector of the persecuted, preferer of men of merit (among whom Hugh Latimer,) a bountiful reliever of the poor, and the happy mother of queen Elizabeth” (Fuller, *Church History of Britain*, 1837, II, p. 66).

Tyndale’s Imprisonment and Death

Tyndale was hunted the entire time he was in Europe, and these efforts were increased in 1531, because King Henry VIII was fiercely desirous of capturing and destroying the Bible translator. Various individuals were commissioned to seize Tyndale or to attempt to entice him back to England. “His anxiety to seize the man, or allure him into the kingdom, will be found to harmonise with the growing ferocity of his character” (Christopher Anderson, *Annals of the English Bible*, I, p. 267).

In spite of these diligent efforts to capture Tyndale, God continued to hide him from his persecutors. His work on earth was not finished, and nothing can destroy the child of God unless and until God allows it.

An interesting thing occurred in April 1531, four years prior to Tyndale’s arrest. Stephen Vaughan, one of the men hired to spy on “heretics” among the English merchants in Europe,

was in Antwerp; and Tyndale, learning of this, decided to confront his enemy. He contacted Vaughan by a middleman and requested that Vaughan accompany this man to meet “a certain friend, unknown to the messenger, who is very desirous to speak with you.” Vaughan inquired as to the mystery friend’s name, but he was told that the messenger did not have this information. He agreed to accompany the man, anyway, to satisfy his curiosity.

One evening soon thereafter Vaughan was brought outside the gates of Antwerp into a field, where he found himself face to face with William Tyndale, one of the objects of his inquisition. Following is the dialogue as recorded by Vaughan himself in a letter to the English authorities:

Tyndale: “Do you not know me?”

Vaughan: “I do not well remember you.”

Tyndale: “My name is Tyndale.”

Vaughan: “But, Tyndale, fortunate be our meeting!”

Tyndale: ”Sir, I have been exceeding desirous to speak with you.”

Vaughan: “And I with you; what is your mind?”

Tyndale: “Sir, I am informed that the King’s Grace taketh great displeasure with me, for putting forth of certain books, which I lately made in these parts; but specially for the book named ‘The Practice of Prelates,’ whereof I have no little marvel,—considering that in it, I did but warn his Grace, of the subtle demeanour of the Clergy of his realm, towards his person; and of the shameful abusions by them practised, not a little threatening the displeasure of his Grace, and weal of his realm: in which doing, I showed and declared the heart of a true subject, which sought the safe-guard of his royal person, and weal of his Commons: to the intent, that his Grace thereof warned, might in due time, prepare his remedies against their subtle dreams. If, for my pains therein

taken,—if for MY POVERTY,—if for MINE EXILE out of mine natural country, and BITTER ABSENCE FROM MY FRIENDS,—if FOR MY HUNGER, MY THIRST, MY COLD, THE GREAT DANGER WHEREWITH I AM EVERY WHERE COMPASSED;—and finally, if for INNUMERABLE OTHER HARD AND SHARP FIGHTINGS WHICH I ENDURE, not yet feeling of their asperity, by reason (that) I hoped with my labours, to do honour to God, true service to my Prince, and pleasure to his Commons;—how is it that his Grace, this considering, may either by himself think, or by the persuasions of others, be brought to think, that in this doing, I should not show a pure mind, a true and incorrupt zeal, and affection to His Grace? ... AGAIN, MAY HIS GRACE, BEING A CHRISTIAN PRINCE, BE SO UNKIND TO GOD, WHICH HATH COMMANDED HIS WORD TO BE SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, TO GIVE MORE FAITH TO WICKED PERSUASIONS OF MEN, WHICH PRESUMING ABOVE GOD’S WISDOM, AND CONTRARY TO THAT WHICH CHRIST EXPRESSLY COMMANDETH IN HIS TESTAMENT, DARE SAY, THAT IT IS NOT LAWFUL FOR THE PEOPLE TO HAVE THE SAME, IN A TONGUE THAT THEY UNDERSTAND; because the purity thereof should open men’s eyes to see their wickedness? ... As I now am, very death were more pleasant to me than life, considering man’s nature to be such as can bear no truth.”

Vaughan attempted to persuade Tyndale to return to England, promising him safety, but the Lord gave the man wisdom enough to ignore these entreaties that he might remain free for a while longer and continue his work.

At this point Tyndale drew away from Vaughan and departed into the night so as not to be apprehended.

The king of England ignored Tyndale’s plea to allow the Bible in English to be freely distributed without fear of persecution.

The last thing that Tyndale wrote and published prior to his

imprisonment was his second address to the Christian reader that was appended to the new edition of his New Testament that was published in 1534:

Moreover, I take God, which alone seeth the heart, to record to my conscience, beseeching Him that my part be not in the blood of Christ, if I wrote of all that I have written, throughout all my books, aught of an evil purpose, of envy or malice to any man, or to stir up any false doctrine or opinion in the Church of Christ; or to be author of any sect; or to draw disciples after me; or that I would be esteemed, or had in price, above the least child that is born; save only of pity and compassion I had, and yet have, on the blindness of my brethren, and to bring them into the knowledge of Christ; and to make every one of them, if it were possible, as perfect as an angel of heaven; and to weed out all that is not planted of our heavenly Father; and to bring down all that lifteth up itself against the knowledge of the salvation that is in the blood of Christ.

Also, my part be not in Christ, if mine heart be not to follow and live according as I teach; and also, if mine heart weep not night and day for mine own sin, and other men's--beseeching God to convert us all, and to take His wrath from us, and to be merciful as well to all other men, as to mine own soul--caring for the wealth of the realm I was born in, for the King, and all that are thereof, as a tender-hearted mother would do for her only son.

As concerning all I have translated, or otherwise written, I beseech all men to read it for that purpose I wrote it: even to bring them to the knowledge of the Scripture. And as far as the Scripture approveth it, so far to allow it; and if in any place the Word of God disallow it, then to refuse it, as I do before our Saviour Christ and His congregation. And where they find faults, let them shew it me, if they be nigh, or write to me, if they be far off; or write openly against it and improve it; and I promise them, if I shall perceive that their reasons conclude, I will confess mine ignorance openly.

Tyndale was arrested in May 1535 in Antwerp. By that time he had completed a large portion of the Old Testament (Genesis to 2 Chronicles and the book of Jonah).

For about a year prior to May 1535 Tyndale had been staying in the home of an English businessman named Thomas Poyntz, a friend of the Word of God. He was the son of Sir Robert Poyntz of Iron Acton, Gloucestershire, where Tyndale had grown up; and the Lady of Sir John Walsh at Little Sodbury Manor, where Tyndale had been tutor, was from

another side of Poyntz family that resided in Essex.

A young Catholic man named Henry (also called Harry) Phillips was hired, probably by bishops in England, to snare Tyndale. Phillips was a scoundrel. Having been entrusted with money by his father to give to someone in London, Phillips had gambled it away. After this he fled abroad and hired himself out to entrap Tyndale.

He had met and befriended the translator, pretending to be a friend of the Reformation and to have an interest in Bible translation. A Catholic Cistercian monk named Gabriel Donne (or Dunne), of Stratford Abbey near London, was posing as Phillips' servant and was probably the actual leader of the little entrapment party. (Some biographers have claimed that Donne did not assume this position of servant to Phillips, but John Foxe, contemporary with those events, said Donne took this position, and Christopher Anderson's research on this, at least in the mind of this writer, is conclusive. Foxe got his information about Tyndale's betrayal directly from Thomas Poyntz, in whose house Tyndale had been staying prior to his arrest. Poyntz was Tyndale's true friend and got himself into deep trouble for trying to help Tyndale after his imprisonment.)

Tyndale's arrest happened after this fashion.

Just hours before the betrayal, the wicked Phillips borrowed forty shillings from Tyndale, knowing he would not have to repay it. Phillips lied to Tyndale, claiming that he had lost his purse during a journey.

Phillips invited Tyndale to be his guest for a meal, but the gracious and unsuspecting Bible translator protested that he, instead, would provide the meal at his expense and that Phillips should be his guest. Phillips agreed and at the appointed time when he arrived to meet Tyndale, he had officers stationed outside the house awaiting his signal to arrest the man of God. Phillips met Tyndale at the door and pretended that he was ready to go to dinner. When they left

the house, they had to walk down a little pathway to the road. The taller Phillips insisted on walking behind Tyndale, and as they reached the road Phillips pointed down to the Bible translator. This was the prearranged signal for Tyndale to be seized by the officers of Charles V, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and a bitter opponent of the Reformation.

Tyndale was first held at Antwerp and then transported about 24 miles away to Vilvoorde, a few miles from Brussels, and imprisoned in the castle there. He was convicted of heresy and condemned to die under the laws of the inquisition.

The old castle is no longer in existence. It was torn down long ago and some of the stones were used to construct the (now abandoned) prison that stands in its place.

On a visit there in 2003 I saw the site of the old castle. The River Seine, into which Tyndale's ashes were thrown following his execution, is a narrow and polluted body of water that flows in front of the prison. That this is the actual site of the old castle is witnessed by the fact that Castle Street ("Kasteel Straat") dead-ends at the river just across from the prison. The modern bridge over the river is a short distance from this street. There is a small museum in Vilvoorde attached to the oldest Protestant church in the town dedicated to the memory of Tyndale, and it contains a large model of the castle and a near life-size model of a prison room (located one floor beneath the museum and accessed by a small stairway at the back of the main museum room), as well as other treasures such as two old line drawings of the castle and portraits of the two chief persecutors who examined and tried Tyndale.

There is also a memorial to Tyndale in Vilvoorde. It is about 12 feet tall and located in a park named Tyndale Park. Carved into the stone monument are the words "To the memory of the Englishman William Tyndale." The plaque on the monument says in four languages: "William Tyndale who

suffered martyrdom under Spanish rule on Oct. 6th 1536, was strangled and burnt at Vilvorde; among his last words were these: 'Lord, open the eyes of the king of England.' This prayer was answered within a year by the issue under royal authority of the whole Bible in English. This memorial was erected by friends of the Trinitarian Bible Society of London and of the Belgian Bible Society, Oct. 1913."



Tyndale's friend Thomas Poyntz made a diligent effort to help him, even though he knew that by these actions he was endangering himself. He wrote letters and spoke to the authorities on Tyndale's behalf. He neglected his own business for two months, traveling with letters and even crossing over to England to bring the matter before the authorities there. Following is a description of Poyntz's efforts, which led eventually to his own arrest. This is from d'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation*:

When Poyntz saw his friend in prison, he resolved to do everything to save him. Poyntz's elder brother John, who had retired to his estate at North Okendon, in Essex, had accompanied the king in 1520 to the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and although no longer at court, he still enjoyed the favor of Henry VIII. Thomas determined to write to John ... [who] lost no time: he succeeded in interesting Cromwell in the reformer's cause, and on the 10th of September 1535, a messenger arrived in Antwerp with two letters from the vicar-general -- one for the marquis of Bergen-op-zoom, and the other for Carondelet, archbishop of Palermo and president of the

council of Brabant. Alas! the marquis had started two days before for Germany, whither he was conducting the princess of Denmark. Thomas Poyntz mounted his horse, and caught up the escort about fifteen miles from Maestricht. The marquis hurriedly glanced over Cromwell's dispatch. 'I have no leisure to write,' he said; 'the princess is making ready to depart.' 'I will follow you to the next baiting place,' answered Tyndale's indefatigable friend. 'Be it so,' replied Bergen-op-zoom.

On arriving at Maestricht, the marquis wrote to Flegge, to Cromwell, and to his friend the archbishop, president of the council of Brabant, and gave the three letters to Poyntz. The latter presented the letters of Cromwell and of the marquis to the president, but the archbishop and the council of Brabant were opposed to Tyndale. Poyntz immediately started for London, and laid the answer of the council before Cromwell, entreating him to insist that Tyndale should be immediately set at liberty, for the danger was great. The answer was delayed a month. Poyntz handed it to the chancery of Brabant, and every day this true and generous friend went to the office to learn the result. 'Your request will be granted,' said one of the clerks on the fourth day. Poyntz was transported with joy. Tyndale was saved.

The traitor Philips, however, who had delivered him to his enemies, was then at Louvain. He had run away from Antwerp, knowing that the English merchants were angry with him, and had sold his books with the intent of escaping to Paris. But the Louvain priests, who still needed him, reassured him, and remaining in that stronghold of Romanism, he began to translate into Latin such passages in Tyndale's writings as he thought best calculated to offend the catholics. He was thus occupied when the news of Tyndale's approaching deliverance filled him and his friends with alarm. What was to be done? He thought the only means of preventing the liberation of the prisoner was to shut up the liberator himself. Philips went straight to the procurator-general. 'That man, Poyntz,' he said, 'is as much a heretic as Tyndale.' Two sergeants-at-arms were sent to keep watch over Poyntz at his house, and for six days in succession he was examined upon a hundred different articles. At the beginning of February 1536, he learnt that he was about to be sent to prison, and knowing what would follow, he formed a prompt resolution. One night, when the sergeants-at-arms were asleep, he escaped and left the city early, just as the gates were opened. Horsemen were sent in search of him; but as Poyntz knew the country well, he escaped them, got on board a ship, and arrived safe and sound at his brother's house at North Okendon (J.H. Merle d'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation in the Time of Calvin*).

It is probable that Poyntz's suspicions were correct and that

he would have been put to death with Tyndale, because the man responsible for overseeing Poyntz's imprisonment was fined a very large amount of money by the Brussels city council for permitting the escape of "a prisoner accused of Lutheranism."

Poyntz was banished from the Netherlands and lost his goods and his occupation. His wife, a native of Antwerp, refused to join him in England, and for many years he did not see his children. "His business was in ruins; he lived a further twenty-six years, too poor to benefit from the inheritance of the ancestral manor in Essex" (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 154). "In a worldly way his life was ruined by his generous championship of Tyndale: but the lustre of his deed is his perpetual possession" (Mozley, *William Tyndale*, p. 319).

The Latin epitaph on Poyntz's grave describes him as a man who had an "ardent profession of evangelical truth."

What happened to the two men who entrapped Tyndale?

Conspirator Henry Phillips was later charged with treason against the king of England and was pursued from city to city on this account. In the end he was destitute and friendless. "We take our leave of him, disowned by his parents, cast aside by his friends, denounced by his country, shunned by the very party for whose sake he had marred his life, mistrusted by all, valued only as a tool, *friendless, homeless, hopeless, destitute, fated to go down to history as the author of one perfidious deed*" (James Mozley, *William Tyndale*, 1937, p. 323). Christopher Anderson adds this: "Reduced to extremities, Phillips begged for money from all parties to assist him to return to Flanders, but, suspected and avoided by all, none would afford him the least aid, till, driven by necessity, he sold his clothes, and is supposed to have entered the army of some one of the powers that were then at war in the south of Europe. No more is heard of him. Thus sunk into oblivion one of the betrayers of our Translator" (*Annals of the English Bible*).

Conspirator Gabriel Donne had dedicated his life to Mary, and after the business in Europe pertaining to Tyndale, he was well rewarded by the Roman Catholic Church. He returned to England and was appointed Abbot of Buckfastleigh, in Devonshire, by which he received great wealth amounting to a thousand marks a year. He was given a generous retirement. He remained a Catholic and a subject of Mary all his days and there is no evidence that he ever repented of his part in Tyndale's betrayal. He died in 1558, was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral in London, and went out into eternity to face God.

Tyndale was imprisoned in a lonely, inhospitable prison cell for 16 months. The long winter was cold and difficult, and the translator was sick. He wrote the following pitiful letter from the prison (discovered in Belgian archives in the 19th century), beseeching an authority to allow him to have some warm clothes:

"I entreat your lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here during the winter, you will request the Procureur to be kind enough to send me from my goods which he has in his possession, a warmer cap, for I suffer extremely from cold in the head, being afflicted with a perpetual catarrh, which is considerably increased in this cell. A warmer coat also, for that which I have is very thin: also a piece of cloth to patch my leggings. My overcoat is worn out, as also are my shirts. He has a woollen shirt of mine, if he will be kind enough to send it. I have also with him leggings of thicker cloth for putting on above; he also has warmer caps for wearing at night. I wish also his permission to have a lamp in the evening, for it is wearisome to sit alone in the dark.

"But above all, I entreat and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the Procureur that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend my time with that study.

"And in return, may you obtain your dearest wish, provided always that it be consistent with the salvation of your soul. But if, before the end of the winter, a different decision be reached concerning me, I shall be patient, abiding the will of God to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ, whose Spirit, I pray, may ever direct your heart. Amen" (Andrew Edgar, *The Bibles of England*, 1889, pp. 66-69).

During the first months of his imprisonment, Tyndale was challenged by the Catholic authorities and scholars at the University of Louvain, and an extensive discussion was carried on with Tyndale, in person at the castle and also by letter. Foxe says, "There was much writing, and great disputation to and fro, between him and them of the University of Louvain; in such sort, that they all had enough to do, and more than they could well wield, to answer the authorities and testimonies of the Scripture, whereupon he, most pithily, grounded his doctrine."

The procurer-general that headed up Tyndale's examinations was Pierre Dufief. David Daniell says he was "a magistrate of evil reputation, widely known in the Low Countries for his cruelty." "His zeal for hunting down heretics was fuelled by the fact that he was given a proportion of the confiscated property of his victims, and a large fee" (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 154).

Tyndale was tried by 17 commissioners led by three chief accusers, "at their head the greatest heresy-hunter in Europe, Jacobus Latomus, from the new Catholic University of Leuven/Louvain, a long-time opponent of Erasmus as well as Luther" (Daniell, p. 154). That Tyndale would be convicted and condemned by the Inquisition's kangaroo court was never in doubt.

The main things disputed at Tyndale's examination and trial were the sole authority of the Bible and justification by faith without works. In his account of the trial, which was published in 1550, Latomus said that Tyndale emphasized that "faith alone justifies before God." Tyndale wrote a book by that title in his defense during the examination and trial.

Another thing that Tyndale emphasized was that "the key to the understanding of Scripture is salvation." Thus Tyndale testified to his accusers that they did not understand the Bible properly because they were not born again. It will be interesting in eternity to see what fruit that powerful

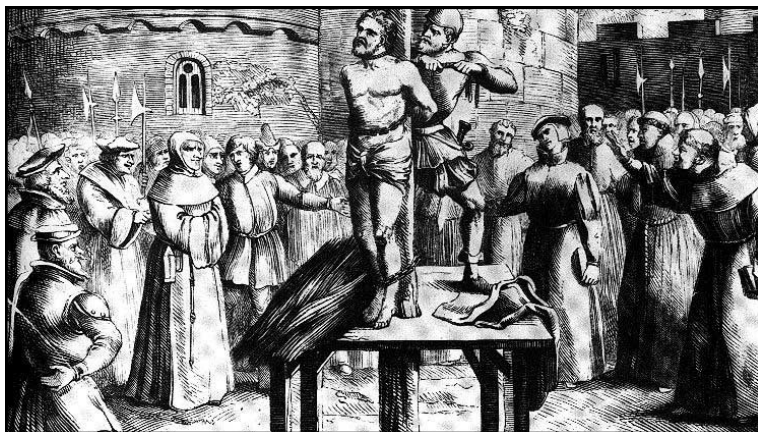
testimony bore among his listeners.

Another subject disputed was the translation of the Scripture into the vernacular languages, to which Rome was bitterly opposed.

During his imprisonment, it is said that Tyndale converted the jail keeper, the keeper's daughter, and other members of his household. The rest that were in the castle, and conversant with Tyndale, reported of him, "that if he were not a good Christian man, they could not tell whom to trust: and the Procurator-General, the Emperor's attorney, being there, left this testimony of him, that he was '*Homo doctus, pius, et bonus*'—a learned, pious, and good man" (Christopher Anderson, *Annals of the English Bible*, I, pp. 517, 18).

Though Tyndale was bound, the Word of God was not. Even during his imprisonment, three editions of his New Testament were printed, as well as editions of some of his books. It is also possible that he continued to work on the English translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, though we have seen that in the winter following his arrest in May he still did not have his Hebrew Bible study tools.

On the morning of October 6, 1536, Tyndale was led forth to the place of execution.



He was taken outside the walls of the castle and across the river. “The gates of the prison rolled back, a procession crossed the foss and the bridge, under which slept the waters of the Senne, passed the outward walls, and halted without the fortifications. ... On arriving at the scene of punishment, the reformer found a numerous crowd assembled. The government had wished to show the people the punishment of a heretic, but they only witnessed the triumph of a martyr” (J.H. Merle d’Aubigne, *History of the Reformation*).

Tyndale was tied to a stake, strangled, and his body was burned. His suffering was over. For more than 460 years, he has been enjoying his reward in Glory in the presence of his Savior in the most complete comfort imaginable! And yet his earthly labors, sacrifice, and suffering continue to bear sweet fruit in this sin-cursed world.

Tyndale was condemned and burned on the authority of the Roman Catholic clergy. Hall’s *Chronicle* of 1548 contained the following information (we have modernized the spelling): “This year in the month of September William Tyndale otherwise called Hitchens was *by the cruelty of the clergy of Louvain* condemned and burned in a town beside Brussels in Braband called Vilvorde” (cited from Westcott, *History of the English Bible*, p. 172). After riding through Vilvorde in 1550, Roger Ascham, tutor to Princess Elizabeth, wrote that Tyndale was put to death “at the town’s end in a notable solemn place of execution...” (cited from David Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 156).

The following statement from Christopher Anderson, a Scottish Baptist who wrote the first extensive biography of Tyndale’s life, is fitting:

“Standing above all his contemporaries, with only one man by his side, his companion Fryth, he had never temporised, never courted human favour, never compromised or sacrificed one iota of Divine truth; but with his face to the foe, and dying on the shield of faith, he was called to quit the well-fought field, for his mansion near the throne; to refresh himself, after the dust and turmoil and heat of the day, in the paradise of God, to exchange contention

with the votaries of darkness and superstition, for the harmony and the light of heaven; the solitude of his dungeon, for the presence of his Redeemer, in the city of the living God" (*Annals of the English Bible*). [Anderson pastored the English Baptist Church in Edinburgh and was cofounder of the Edinburgh Bible Society and the Baptist Itinerant Society. He was also the home secretary of and raised support for William Carey and his Serampore Mission in India. Anderson spent 14 years writing the *Annals of the English Bible*, which was first published in 1845 in two volumes. His objective at first was to write a biography of William Tyndale and his times but the work expanded in perspective as it progressed.]

At his death, Tyndale prayed, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes." Though we have no evidence that Henry VIII was ever converted, we do know that soon after this the Tyndale Bible received official recognition under Henry. Also, Henry's successor, Edward VI, was a friend of the Reformation.

Henry was convinced by his Vicar General, Thomas Cromwell, to authorize the printing of the Matthew's Bible just months after the death of Tyndale. The Matthew's Bible (edited anonymously by John Rogers, who, like Tyndale, was martyred for his faith) was at least two-thirds the work of Tyndale. It even featured a prologue to the book of Romans written by Tyndale and included the initials of Tyndale nearly two and a half inches high at the end of Malachi.

Tyndale's Bible also gained royal approval under the form of the Great Bible. It was ordered by King Henry that a copy of the Great Bible be placed in every parish church in England.

This Bible even appeared at one point with the imprimatur of Cuthbert Tunstall, the same Bishop of London who had condemned Tyndale and consigned his New Testaments to the flame! His imprimatur appeared in editions of the Great Bible in 1541. After the Vicar General Thomas Cromwell was maligned, falsely charged, and then executed in July 1540 (something which happened regularly with friends and wives of Henry VIII), it was necessary from a political standpoint that the names of bishops who had opposed Cromwell appear in the approved Bible rather than the name of

Thomas Cranmer, who had been closely aligned with Cromwell. Thus it happened that Cuthbert Tunstall was one of the two names that newly appeared on the title page of the Great Bible, which was really the Tyndale Bible, in 1541.

Therefore, by God's sovereign hand, the fickle king authorized the publication of the very Bible translated by the man he had persecuted.

It is important to understand that Tyndale did not live to see most of the fruit from his labors. He labored by faith. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). The Scripture that he labored and sacrificed so much to translate was the very source of his faith (Rom. 10:17). "Every one of the thousands of English versions round the world goes back to Tyndale's fundamental work in Worms and Antwerp. His was a dazzling achievement. Of its success he knew nothing. He worked in faith, the existential faith which is the business of getting up and doing it. As he noted in the Prologue to *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, faith in the God of the Bible is huge in its effects" (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 156).

Tyndale's Influence

William Tyndale's translation was the basis for several revisions, chiefly, the Coverdale Bible, the Matthew's Bible, the Great Bible, the Bishop's Bible, and the Geneva Bible, culminating in the King James Bible of 1611.

A large percentage of Tyndale's words remain in the KJV. In the first epistle of John, nine-tenths of the King James Bible is from Tyndale. In the book of Ephesians, the percentage is five-sixths. "These proportions are maintained throughout the entire New Testament" (Ira Maurice Price, *The Ancestry of Our English Bible*, p. 251).

In 1998, a computer study was done on 18 carefully selected portions of the Bible, comparing the King James with the

Tyndale. The authors of the study were Jon Nielson and Royal Skousen. They concluded that 83% of the King James Bible was contributed by Tyndale (Nielson and Skousen, "How Much of the King James Bible Is William Tyndale's," *Reformation*, 3, 1998, pp. 49-74).

"Behind the statistics is that immeasurable feeling that KJV's rhythm, vocabulary and cadence, which can be so exquisite and so direct, has a root in an essence of the English language. The cause of that is Tyndale's genius" (David Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 448).

Thus, every person who has been blessed by a sound English Bible during the past four and a half centuries owes a large debt to the humble translator who was faithful unto death.

Tyndale gave the English people a Bible that is not only accurate but also beautiful. Tyndale was writing for God, first, and for the ploughboy, second, and the result was wonderful. It still has a sweet, clear, powerful feel to it even almost half a millennium later! Much of the short, pithy, powerful language that characterizes the King James Bible can be traced back to William Tyndale. Consider the following example:

"And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Gen. 22:12).

The miracle of what Tyndale accomplished is evident by considering the state of the English language in his day.

"The work of Tyndale ... was done ... when the English language was a poor thing indeed, almost dead at the bottom of the pond. In 1526, a few local documents were beginning to be expressed in English. The language of government, the professions and religion was Latin: the new humanist Latin was a fine vehicle for any thoughts above the mundane. What English prose there was tried for an ornamented and heavily subordinated wandering line in vocabulary that was partly Saxon, heavily Norman-French, and strongly Latinized. ... Tyndale made for the Bible not only a strong direct short prose line, with Saxon vocabulary in a basic Saxon subject-verb-object syntax, but also showed a range of English

styles which, coming out of the 1530s, astonishes the knowledgeable reader. NO ONE ELSE WAS WRITING ENGLISH LIKE THIS IN THE 1530s" (David Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 136).

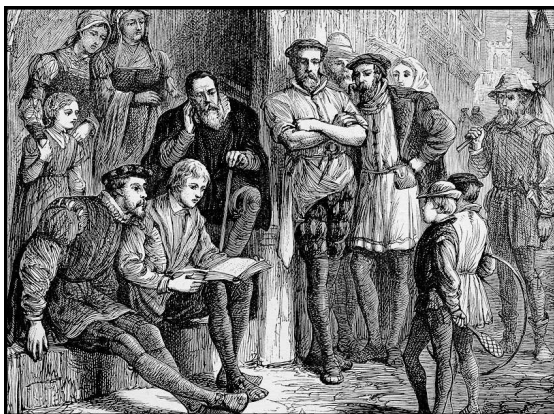
Through his Bible translation, Tyndale standardized the English language and wielded a greater linguistic influence than Shakespeare. "Tyndale gave to English not only a Bible language, but a new prose. England was blessed as a nation in that the language of its principal book, as the Bible in English rapidly became, was the fountain from which flowed the lucidity, suppleness and expressive range of the greatest prose thereafter" (Daniell, *William Tyndale*, p. 116).

Countless of the common English-language expressions were coined by Tyndale, such as "let there be light"; "fight the good fight"; "filthy lucre"; "eat, drink and be merry"; "a prophet has no honor in his own country"; "ye of little faith"; "signs of the times"; "a man after his own heart"; "am I my brother's keeper"; "a law unto themselves"; "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak"; "the powers that be"; "the salt of the earth"; to mention but a few.

The Tyndale Bible literally transformed the nation of England. Describing 17th century England, Christopher Hill wrote: "For most men and women the Bible was their point of reference in all their thinking. ... The Bible was the source of virtually all ideas; it supplied the idiom in which men and

w o m e n
d i s c u s s e d
t h e m " (*The
English Bible
a n d t h e
S e v e n t e e n t h -
C e n t u r y
R e v o l u t i o n*, p.
34).

The Tyndale
Bible was read



widely. In about 1537 Thomas Swynnerton noted in his handbook of rhetoric, which was not a religious tract, “Every man hath a Testament in his hand.”

The excitement and change that was wrought in British society by the distribution of the first printed English Bible is described by John Foxe. “Everybody that could, bought the book or busily read it or got others to read it to them if they could not themselves, and divers more elderly people learned to read on purpose. And even little boys flocked among the rest to hear portions of the holy Scripture read.”

The Tyndale Bible was read aloud to groups large and small, in churches, homes, and even in public places. John Strype speaks of the interest excited by those old Bibles. “It was wonderful to see with what joy this book of God was received, not only among the learned sort, but generally all England, over, among all the vulgar and common people; and with what greediness the Word of God was read, and what resort to places where the reading of it was! Every body that could, bought the book, or busily read it, or got others to read it to them, if they could not themselves. Divers more elderly people learned to read on purpose; and even little boys flocked, among the Rest, to hear portions of the Holy Scripture read” (Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, 1816).

The services of the Church of England called for the New Testament to be read through, aloud and in English, three times a year, the Old Testament once, and the Psalms (read or sung) every month.

The Tyndale Bible in its many incarnations was printed by the multiplied millions.

Between 1525 and 1640, printed English Bibles and parts numbered, “at a modest estimate, over two million. ... England had far more Bibles than Germany” (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, pp. 121, 129). This was for a population of only about six million. In Shakespeare’s lifetime alone, a mere 52 years, there were a whopping 211 editions of the

English Bible and New Testament.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, more than 1,200 editions were printed, largely of the KJV.

These figures don't begin to describe the breath of the Bible's influence in past centuries, for it is impossible to document the Bible's influence through preaching and teaching, through private study and conversations, through quotations in newspapers and magazines and books, and through the publication of Scripture portions. The *Soldier's Pocket Bible*, for example, which was printed in large quantities in England and America up to the end of the American Civil War, contained 150 Bible verses.

Multitudes of commoners were motivated to learn to read and were thus lifted out of illiteracy by their enthusiasm to study the Bible in their own tongue.



Consider the story of William Maldon of Newington. He was a young man during the reign of Henry VIII when some men in his town bought a Tyndale New Testament and would read it on Sundays in the back of the church. Many gathered around to hear “the glad and sweet tidings of the gospel,” and William joined them. His father, a staunch Roman

Catholic, forbade him to do this and forced him to listen to the unintelligible Latin mass. William said, "This grieved me very much, and thus did he fetch me away divers times." William determined to learn to read English so that he could read the Bible for himself, which he did. He obtained an English primer and studied diligently and soon he pooled his money together with that of his father's apprentice Thomas Jeffary and purchased a Tyndale New Testament. They kept it hidden in the bedstraw and read from it as often as possible. When his father found that he was persisting in reading Scripture, he beat him often and finally tried to kill him by strangling him. Left for dead, William was rescued by his mother and sister, though he said that "I think six days after my neck grieved me with the pulling of the halter" (Alfred Pollard, *Records of the English Bible*, 1911, pp. 128-71).

Even people who could not read loved the Tyndale Bible and memorized large portions of it. Consider the following examples given by David Daniell: "There can be found, in John Foxe and elsewhere, accounts of the thoroughness of the Bible knowledge of often the humblest men and women: men and women who often could not read. Rawlins White was a Cardiff fisherman burned in 1555. He was illiterate, but in Edward VI's reign he yearned to study the Bible. He sent one of his children to school to learn to read English (an indication that his native tongue was Welsh). The boy would read a portion of the Bible to his father every night, after supper. White would commit this to memory, so successfully that, as Foxe reports, when someone made a Scripture reference he could cite the book, the leaf and the very sentence. Similarly, John Maundrel, who was burned in Salisbury in Mary's reign, carried a Tyndale New Testament everywhere, though he could not read. When he met anyone that could read, his book was always ready. He could recite by heart most places of the New Testament. Joan Waste was a blind woman in Derby who earned her living making hose and sleeves. She saved her money and though she could not

read, bought a New Testament, and had it read to her a chapter at a time. This she memorized, so that she could recite many chapters of the New Testament without the book. She was burned in 1558. A Mrs. Prest, burned in Exeter, also in 1558, was illiterate, but caused Sir Walter Raleigh's mother to comment that Mrs. Prest's Scripture knowledge was even greater than hers, though she could not read" (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, pp. 269, 270).

Thus was brought to pass that prophetic saying of Tyndale, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou doest."

Daniell observes: "To write about English life between 1525 and 1640 and take no account at all of such enormous popular demand as these totals [of Bibles published] demonstrate is surely to be perverse. Yet it is not only commonly done: it has been the norm. The revolution in religion represented here must not be mistaken. A pre-Reformation mass was conducted at the distant altar by the priest, murmuring in Latin with his back to the people. In a post-Reformation service the minister faced his congregation and addressed them in English. It was the difference between a scarcely heard, mumbled *Petite, et dabitur vobis; querite, et invenietis; pulsate, et aperietur vobis*, and the ringing 'Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you' (Matthew 7)" (*The Bible in English*).

In addition to the Bible, and as companions thereof, there were other influential books in English.

One of these was Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of Matters Most Special and Memorial*. Though large and expensive (two thick folio volumes in the second edition and three volumes in the third), it sold 28,000 copies unabridged and thousands more abridged between 1563 and 1616.

Another example was the English translation of Erasmus's

Paraphrases of the New Testament, which was read alongside the standard Bible as a help. The government required that all 9,000 Anglican parish churches have a copy.

The Tyndale Bible also had a large role in the creation of the United States of America.

The Bible brought to America by its first settlers in the early 1600s, settlers seeking religious liberty, was the Geneva, an edition of the Tyndale. And the Bible that had such a great influence upon America's unique founding political documents in the late 1700s was the King James, another edition of Tyndale.

The first English Bible published in America, by Robert Aiken in 1782, was printed only eleven months after the British surrendered at Yorktown, thus ending the Revolutionary War. (A German Luther Bible was printed in America in 1743.)

The Aiken Bible was even recommended to the American people by Congress on September 10, 1782. “*Resolved*, That the United States in Congress assembled highly approve the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aiken, as subservient to the interest of religion as well as an instance of the progress of the arts in this country ... this recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States.”

Though Aikens, in 1789, petitioned Congress for a 14-year patent “exclusively to print the Holy Scriptures,” it was wisely refused. From its inception America would put no restrictions on the printing of the Bible. The first amendment to the Bill of Rights, ratified in December 1791, began, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...” From the nation's inception any American printer was at liberty to print the Bible without government license.

Americans loved the Tyndale Bible.

“In America, from the first printing of a Bible in 1777 until 1850,

there were over fourteen hundred different editions of English Bible ... almost all of them KJV. For thirty years after 1850, the American Bible, by then an essential item in the furnishing of the American home, was in editions and numbers, a phenomenon beyond calculation. No one knows, or will know, how many Bibles the new presses across America, developed by then for newspapers and cheap books, were turning out" (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, pp. 162, 63).

The American Bible Society, founded in 1816, further flooded the land with inexpensive Bibles. By 1829, the Bible Society's printer, Daniel Fanshaw in New York, "was operating sixteen Treadwell steam-powered presses exclusively for ABS Bibles" (Daniell, p. 736). With the use of the newly invented stereotyping and by printing in great volume, the Bible Society reduced the price of a New Testament to six cents and a whole Bible to 45 cents. By the 1860s the Bible Society was printing a million Bibles a year. (By 2004 the American Bible Society had distributed more than 6 *billion* Bibles.)

The relationship of America to the Bible was illustrated by the frontispiece of the 1792 American "Self-Interpreting Bible." The drawing depicted three women. "The chief figure represents America. Her left elbow touches a column with thirteen names, headed 'Washington'; her left hand holds a scroll labelled 'Constitution'; her right hand is extended to receive from a kneeling woman an open copy of the 'Holy Bible'" (Daniell, p. 602).

In America the Bible permeated society at every level. There was a Soldier's Bible for every soldier and even a Bible for every Pony Express rider. The KJV family Bible was the most respected book in households. It was commonly taken westward by pioneering families. The KJV was used as a textbook and reader in the schools. It even saturated the national dictionary. Noah Webster's *An American Dictionary of the English Language* of 1828 was filled with quotations from the King James Bible. Consider his definition of *faith*:

"Evangelical, justifying, or saving faith, is the assent of the mind to

the truth of divine revelation, on the authority of God's testimony, accompanied with a cordial assent of the will or approbation of the heart; an entire confidence or trust in God's character and declarations, and in the character and doctrines of Christ, with an unreserved surrender of the will to his guidance, and dependence on his merits for salvation. In other words, that firm belief of God's testimony, and of the truth of the gospel, which influences the will, and leads to an entire reliance on Christ for salvation."

Webster concluded his definition of *faith* by quoting Romans 5:1; 10:10; and Hebrews 11:6.

William Tyndale (as far as we know) was not able to complete the entire Old Testament before he was put to death by the Catholic Church in 1536. We do know that he completed at least Genesis through 2 Chronicles plus Jonah -- 15 of the 39 books.

After his death the translation of the Old Testament was completed by other men and the entire Tyndale Bible was published in several revised editions, primarily the Coverdale Bible, the Matthew's Bible, the Bishops Bible, the Geneva Bible, the Great Bible, and the King James Bible of 1611.

THE COVERDALE BIBLE (1535)

Another important English Bible in the lineage of the King James Bible is the Coverdale Bible of 1535.

Coverdale's Life

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) was born in York and ordained a priest in the Augustinian order in 1514. He was educated at Cambridge, and it was there that he was converted through reading the Scriptures. He fell in love with the Bible and later wrote:



"Wherever the Scripture is known it reformeth all things. And why? Because it is given by the inspiration of God." Coverdale also believed that the Holy Spirit has preserved the Scripture in "in Hebrew, Greek, French, Dutch and in English, as in Latin" (Kristen Poole, *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England*, 2000, p. 4; cited by David Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 13).

This is a scriptural and wise view on Bible preservation, as the Lord Jesus commanded that the Bible be preserved in the church age through the fulfillment of His Great Commission (Mat. 28:19-20), which involves the translation of the Scripture into the languages of the people.

Coverdale was influenced by and associated with Robert Barnes, who was later martyred for his faith (on July 28, 1540). When Barnes was arrested the first time, in 1525, Coverdale helped to prepare his defense.

By 1528, Coverdale left the Augustinians and was preaching

against Catholic dogmas such as transubstantiation, the worship of images, and confession to the ear (auricular). These were dangerous views in that day, and Coverdale was exiled thrice from England, the first time from 1528-35, the second from 1540-47, and the third from 1556-1559.

On September 26, 1546, at the end of the reign of Henry VIII, Coverdale's books, including his Bible, were burned at Paul's Cross. (Henry VIII died four months later.)

In early 1548 Coverdale returned to England from his first exile and became chaplain to Katherine Parr, the sixth and final wife of Henry VIII. Parr, a Protestant, financed the English translation of Erasmus's paraphrases of the New Testament. Martyrologist John Foxe tells us that Catherine became "very zealous toward the gospel, and the professors thereof" and that she was "very much given to the reading and study of the holy Scriptures." Parr had re-married after the king's death in January 1547, but she died in childbirth in September 1548. Coverdale preached her funeral sermon.

Coverdale was imprisoned for two and one half years at the beginning of Queen Mary's reign. "He was several times examined before his inquisitors, and was in extreme peril of his life" (McClure, *The Translators Revived*). Upon the intervention of the king of Denmark, Mary allowed Coverdale to depart for Europe for his third exile.

It is a sad and shameful blot on Coverdale's name that he was a member of the commission of 1551 that was appointed to punish "Anabaptist heresy." He was one of the judges at the trial of Anabaptist George van Parris, who was burned alive in April 1551. "He suffered with great constancy of mind, and kissed the stake and faggots that were to burn him" (Burnet, *History of the Reformation*, II). Though the Anabaptist Parris was denounced as holding Arian views, this was a catch-all charge in those days that was not always accurate.

Coverdale was described by John Bale in 1548 as follows:

“Under the mastership of Robert Barnes he drank in good learning with a burning thirst. He was a young man of friendly and upright nature and very gentle spirit, and when the church of England revived, he was one of the first to make a pure profession of Christ. ... he gave himself wholly, to propagating the truth of Jesus Christ’s gospel and manifesting his glory. ... His style is charming and gentle, flowing limpidly along: it moves and instructs and delights” (James Mozely, *Coverdale and His Bibles*, 1953, p. 3).

Coverdale died in 1569 and was buried at St. Bartholomew’s Church. When that was demolished in 1840, his remains were removed to St. Magnus by London Bridge.

Coverdale’s Association with Tyndale

Like Tyndale, Coverdale was forced to flee England for the relative safety of certain cities on the European continent. His first exile was from 1528-35. According to Foxe he spent from Easter to December 1529 working with Tyndale in Hamburg.

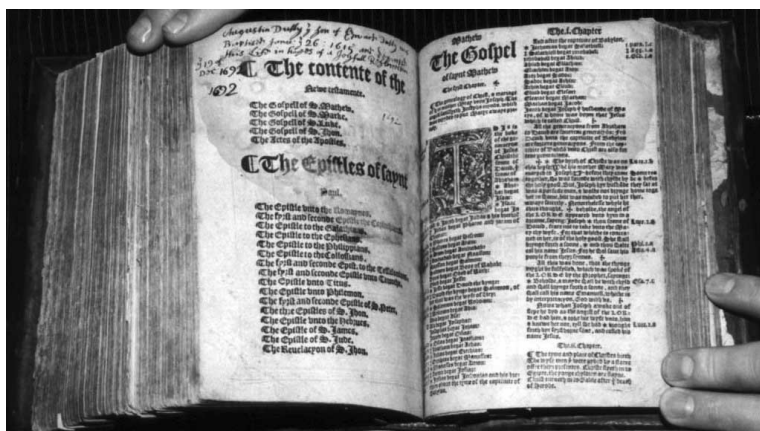
Coverdale also helped proofread manuscripts as they went to press in Antwerp before Tyndale’s arrest.

The Coverdale Bible

The Coverdale Bible first appeared in England in 1536, shortly after Tyndale’s death.

It was the first entire printed English Bible.

It used Tyndale’s New Testament and all of the Old Testament portions that Tyndale had completed. The rest of the Old Testament was translated from German and Latin by Coverdale. The title page said: “BIBLIA. THE BIBLE, that is the holy Scripture of the Olde and New Testament, faithfully and truly translated out of Douche and Latyn into Englishe, 1535.”



It was first printed in Europe in late 1535 and shipped to England for distribution. Beginning in 1537 it was printed in London by James Nicholson. By then it had in the title the words “Set forth with the king’s most gracious licence.”

It was dedicated to King Henry VIII and “his dearest just wife, and most vertuous pryncesse, QUEEN ANNE.”

Thus within one year of Tyndale’s death, his Bible was being distributed in England.

When Anne Boleyn was put to death in May 1536, the dedication in the Coverdale Bible became an obstacle to its distribution. Some copies were therefore modified. Christopher Anderson says that some were changed to “Jane,” referring to Henry’s third wife Jane Seymoure, and in other copies the name of the queen was removed entirely. Some replaced the title page with a new one that changed the year to 1536 and removed the words “translated out of Douche and Latyn.”

The Coverdale Bible was intended to be a study Bible. The page layout was clear, with summaries at the head of each book and chapter. This was in sharp contrast with Bibles before Luther which “could all best be described as solid blocks of heavily printed paper, with no relief, and often no obvious indicators on any page of which chapter of

which book a reader might be on” (Daniell, p. 185). The chapter summary to Acts 27 in the Coverdale Bible said, “Paul’s shipping toward Rome, Julius the captain entreateth Paul courteously, at the last they suffer shipwreck.”

It had Luther’s prologue, Tyndale’s preface to Romans, marginal cross-references, and numerous comments on the text. For example, “proselyte” (Mat. 23:15; Acts 6:5) was defined in the margin as “a novice or convert.”

Coverdale taught his readers some of the important principles of Bible interpretation. He wrote in one section of his Bible:

“But who so ever thou be that redest scripture, let the holy ghost be thy teacher, and let one text expound another unto thee: as for such dreams, visions, and dark sentences as be hid from thy understanding, commit them unto God, and make no articles of them: but let the plain text be thy guide, and the spirit of God (which is the author thereof) shall lead thee in all truth.”

Consider the principles that are contained in this one paragraph:

- (1) The Bible can only rightly be interpreted by submission to the Holy Spirit.
- (2) The Bible must be interpreted by comparing Scripture with Scripture.
- (3) Difficult passages must not be interpreted in isolation but must be interpreted by those that are clear.
- (4) It is dangerous to build doctrine on difficult passages.
- (5) The Bible student must not be discouraged because he cannot understand everything in Scripture. He must trust God with what he doesn’t understand and be patient as he seeks further understanding.
- (6) The Bible must be interpreted literally and its plainest meaning must be allowed to rule.

The Coverdale Bible had more than 150 pictures, such as Gideon laying out his fleece and Absalom caught in a tree by his hair.

The Psalms, which were newly translated by Coverdale (Tyndale did not get that far before his martyrdom), were included in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer and were thus read as part of Anglican services from then until the 1960s.

Much of Coverdale's work in the Psalms was carried over into the King James Bible. Following are two examples:

"The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands" (Psalm 100:1).

Some words in the King James Bible were brought in from the Coverdale, such as "winebibber," "tender mercies," "lovingkindness," and "saving health."

The Coverdale Bible contained the 14 apocryphal books, though they were not viewed as canonical. They were assembled together between the Old and New Testaments instead of being scattered among the canonical books as in the Catholic Bibles. Coverdale introduced the Apocrypha with these words:

"These books (good reader) which are called Apocrypha, are not judged among the doctors to be of like reputation with the other scripture..."

The apocryphal books were printed in all early English Bibles (including the Geneva) and most later ones, including those printed in America, through the 19th century. David Daniell testifies: "The present writer's experience of examining Bibles printed in America throughout the nineteenth century is that in the first half more of them than not included the Apocrypha" (*The Bible in English*, 2003, p. 600).

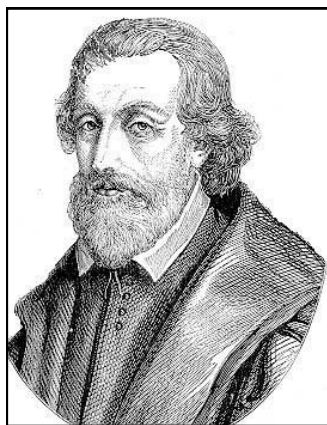
The apocryphal books were also included in the early Protestant Bibles in other languages, including the Luther German and the Olivetan French.

THE MATTHEW'S BIBLE (1537)

The Matthew's Bible was so called because "Thomas Matthew" appears on the title page. This was a pen name for **John Rogers** (1500-1555) and is thought to stand for the apostles Thomas and Matthew (Mat. 10:3).

Christopher Anderson, in *Annals of the English Bible*, tells us that it was Tyndale who influenced Rogers to examine the Scriptures, which led to his conversion to Christ and his rejection of Roman dogma.

Cambridge educated, Rogers moved to Antwerp in 1534, while Tyndale was there, to become chaplain to the English merchantmen. He arrived the year before Tyndale was arrested.



In about 1538 Rogers moved to Germany and became the pastor at Meldorf, in the Dietmarsh region in the northwest part of the country. He was associated with the Lutherans. Melanchthon had recommended him to the pastorate.

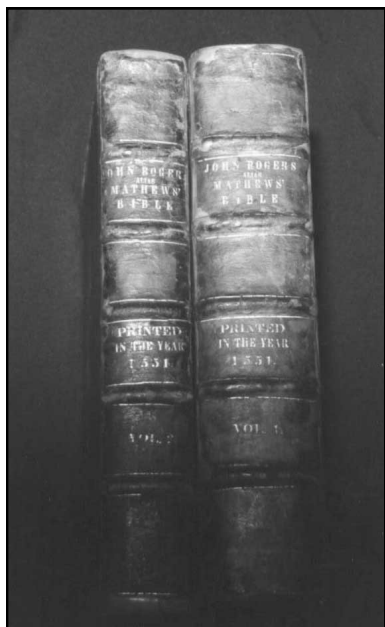
In his recommendation letter, Melanchthon described Rogers as "a learned man ... gifted with great ability, which he sets off with a noble character ... he will be careful to live in concord with his colleagues ... his integrity, trustworthiness and constancy in every duty make him worthy of the love and support of all good men."

In 1547 Rogers returned to England. King Henry VIII had died and his son Edward VI, who was sympathetic to the Reformation, was on the throne.

When Tyndale was imprisoned, John Rogers somehow got

the manuscripts Tyndale had completed on the Old Testament books, and after Tyndale's martyrdom Rogers completed the translation.

For the Matthew's Bible, Rogers used the Tyndale New Testament and those portions of the Old Testament that Tyndale had completed (Genesis to 2 Chronicles, plus Jonah). For the rest of the Old Testament he revised the Coverdale. In some places, such as the opening chapters of Job, he made a fresh translation.



The printing of the Matthew's Bible was done in Europe and when it was about half finished, two London printers joined the project and completed it.

These were Richard Grafton and Edward Whitchurch. They carried on the printing beginning with Isaiah. At that point the page numbering begins anew and the new section begins with a title page containing "The prophetes in Englishe" in black and red letters, surrounded by sixteen woodcuts. On the next page

the letters "R.G." appear at the top and the letters "E.W." at the bottom, with a large woodcut between. These, of course, are the initials of the printers.

Grafton was later incarcerated in Fleet prison and required to post a large bond promising that he would not print or sell any more Bibles until the king and the bishops could agree on a translation, something they never did in Henry's day!

The Matthew's Bible was intended for serious study.

(1) It had a collection of biblical passages constituting "An Exhortation to the Study of the Holy Scripture." The initials "J.R." appear at the end, indicating that this was the work of John Rogers.

(2) It had a summary of Bible doctrine adapted from Jacques Lefevre's French Bible of 1534.

(3) It had an alphabetic concordance to Bible subjects, translated from Robert Olivetan's French Bible of 1535.

(4) It had more than 2,000 marginal explanatory notes and many cross-references.

On February 4, 1555, John Rogers followed his friend Tyndale into the flames and gave his life for his testimony for Christ.

Rogers was imprisoned in Newgate on January 27, 1554, not long after the Roman Catholic Queen Mary ascended to the throne.



Rogers had a large family; at the time of his death he had ten or eleven children, including a nursing infant. His wife, a German, was named Adriance de Weyden. "She is sometimes called Prat, which is the English form of the same name, both meaning *meadow*" (Alexander McClure, *The Translators Revived*).

Rogers' request that his wife be allowed to visit him before his death was cruelly denied by the ecclesiastical authorities.

He did not see her or the children until he was on the way to his execution at Smithfield. Mrs. Rogers brought the children to the execution “to strengthen him against the ordeal.” Not allowed even to stop and bid his family farewell, he walked calmly to the stake, repeating the 51st Psalm. Offered a pardon if he would recant, he refused.

“An immense crowd lined the street, and filled every available spot in Smithfield. Up to that day men could not tell how English Reformers would behave in the face of death, and could hardly believe that Prebendaries and Dignitaries would actually give their bodies to be burned for their religion. But when they saw John Rogers, the first martyr, walking steadily and unflinchingly into a fiery grave, the enthusiasm of the crowd knew no bounds. They rent the air with thunders of applause. Even Noailles, the French Ambassador, wrote home a description of the scene, and said that Rogers went to death ‘as if he was walking to his wedding.’ By God’s great mercy he died with comparative ease” (J.C. Ryle, *Why Were Our Reformers Burned?*).

The Bible translator John Rogers was the first of almost 300 burned to death during the reign of Queen Mary. (Many others died in prison.)

His widow took her fatherless flock back to Germany. “Daniel Rogers, probably the eldest child, lived to be Queen Elizabeth’s ambassador to Belgium, Germany, and Denmark. Richard Rogers, the famous Puritan minister of Weathersfield, was, in all probability, another son of the martyr; and if so, then the numerous families in New England which trace their descent from Richard, are descended from the illustrious Bible Translator” (Alexander McClure, *The Translators Revived*).

THE GREAT BIBLE (1539)

The Great Bible, published in 1539, was an edition of the Matthew's.

Miles Coverdale oversaw the completion and printing of the first Great Bible, but there were several editions that were printed by other parties. Christopher Anderson in *Annals of the English Bible* mentions five or six editions that appeared by 1540 and four more in 1541.

This Bible was persecuted by Roman authorities during its printing in France. The printing began in Paris in 1538. Coverdale wrote that the work was “daily threatened.” The license they obtained for the printing had a provision that warned that the project had to conform to inquisition laws. Before the printing could be finished, the Romanist French ambassador to England learned of it and wrote to French authorities, suggesting that it be destroyed.

Being warned of impending trouble, Coverdale and his workers labored diligently to ship the portions that had already been printed to England. Coverdale wrote, “If these men proceed in their cruelty against us, and confiscate the rest yet this at the least may be safe.”

Four days later the Roman Catholic inquisitor-general for France demanded that the printing cease and called for any completed sheets to be removed. The feared Roman Catholic inquisitors descended upon the printing facility, seized the sheets which had not already been shipped to Britain, amounting to, some say, 2500 Bibles, and ordered them burned.

Bible translator Miles Coverdale and his friend Richard Grafton, who had been overseeing the printing, had to flee from Paris to avoid the inquisition.

Later, through diplomatic negotiations, they were able to

return to Paris and recover the printing presses and type. Some historians also tell us that they were able to recover even many of the condemned sheets. Instead of burning them, the authorities had sold them for waste paper, and the men who had purchased them were willing to sell them back to Coverdale.

The first printing of the Great Bible was completed in April 1539.

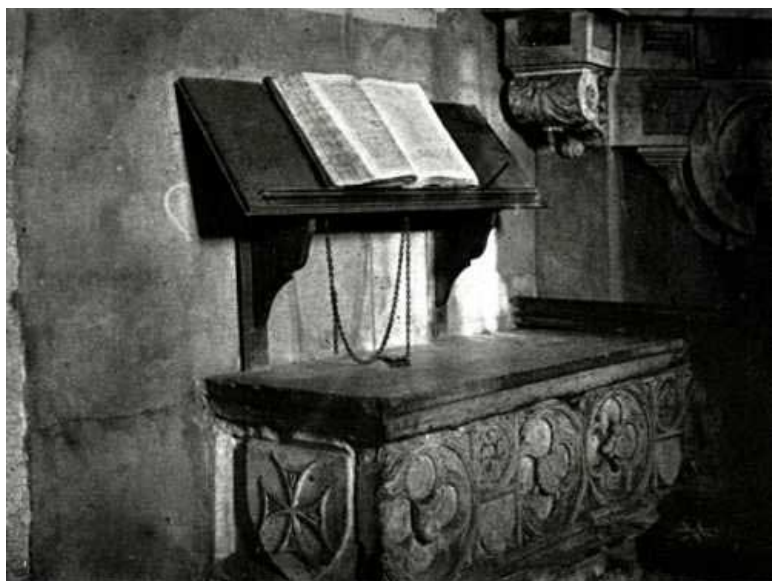
It was called “great” because of its large size. It was published in six volumes, each page measuring 14 X 9 inches. (The Matthew’s Bible was not much smaller, with a page size of 12 X 9 inches.)

The Preface contained an interesting statement on the sufficiency of the Bible for faith and life and its importance for every class of people. The following section was from Chrysostom:

“Take the books into thine hands, read the whole story, and that thou understandest, keep it well in memory; that thou understandest not, read it again and again. Here may all manner of persons: men, women; young, old; learned, unlearned; rich, poor; priests, laymen; lords, ladies; officers, tenants, and mean men; virgins, wives, widows; lawyers, merchants, artificers, husbandmen, and all manner of persons, of what estate or condition soever they be; may in THIS BOOK learn all things, what they ought to believe, what they ought to do, and what they should not do, as well concerning Almighty God, as also concerning themselves, and all others.”

It is this faith that the Bible is divinely inspired and the sufficient and sole rule for faith, life, and practice that was the ground of the Reformation (though the Protestants didn’t carry their principle far enough). This faith motivated men and women to study, practice, translate, and distribute the Scriptures in the vernacular even in the face of death.

Copies were placed in all of the churches of England upon royal authority. Thomas Cromwell ordered that a copy of the Great should be placed in every parish church in England (Paris Simms, *Bible from the Beginning*, 1929, p. 178).



The Great Bible also attained the name **The Chained Bible**, because copies were often chained to reading desks that were attached to a pillar or wall in the church. This was to discourage theft.

THE GENEVA BIBLE (1557, 1560)

The Geneva Bible was produced by English refugees that settled in the Swiss city of Geneva to escape the persecutions of the Roman Catholic Queen Mary, who reigned in England from 1553-58.

Geneva was a bastion of Bible text and translation/printing activity.

Robert Olivetan's French translation was published in Geneva in 1556. Financial support for the printing had come from Waldensian churches in northern Italy (Daniel Lortch, *Histoire de la Bible Francaise [History of the French Bible]*, p. 105; from an English translation appearing in *Documentation on the Olivetan-Ostervald Bible* by Curtis Gibson, p. 2).

Also printed in Geneva was a 1556 reprint of the Spanish New Testament translated by Juan Perez de Pineda and a revised edition of the Diotati Italian Bible in 1562. Between then and 1665, five of the seven Italian Bibles came from Geneva.

Geneva was the home of Theodore Beza, one of the prominent Protestant scholars of the day and an editor of the Greek Received New Testament. Beza, who took John Calvin's place in Geneva in 1564, published editions of the Received Text in 1565, 1582, 1588-9, and 1598. Beza was the first rector of the Academy of Geneva, which was inaugurated on June 5, 1555.

The Geneva Bible in English was chiefly the work of **WILLIAM WHITTINGHAM**, with assistance from others. Whittingham was a graduate of Oxford (Brasenose College, All Souls, and Christ Church) and had traveled widely in Europe. He moved to Geneva in 1555, a little over a year after Queen Mary took the throne, and became the pastor of the English congregation of about 100 members.

He married Catharine Chauvin, the sister of John Calvin.

(*Calvinus* is the Latin form of the French name *Chauvin*.)

Whittingham returned to England after the publication of the Geneva Bible and was the author of several metrical versions of the Psalms that are still sung in Anglican congregations. In 1563 he was appointed dean at Durham.

He was persecuted by “traditionalists” in the Church of England unto the time of his death. He was repeatedly tried in ecclesiastical courts for non-conformity.

He died in 1579 at age 65 and was buried in the cathedral at Durham (Cathedral Church of Christ and St. Mary the Virgin).

“He was an eminently pious and powerful preacher, and an ornament to religion and learning, to which he greatly contributed by his publications, and chiefly by his agency in the revision of the English Bible” (Alexander McClure, *Translators Revived: Biographical Notes of the KJV Translators*, 1855).

Whittingham was aided by other English exiles, including Miles Coverdale, Christopher Goodman, Anthony Gilbey, Thomas Sampson, William Cole, William Kette (or Kethe), John Baron, John Pullain, and John Bodley. It is even possible that John Knox assisted in the project, as he was pastor of the English-speaking congregation in Geneva off and on from September 1556 until January 1559.

Anthony Gilbey, born in Lincolnshire, was educated at Christ’s Church College, Cambridge, and skilled in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He was noted “for a flaming zeal against the errors and abominations of papistry, and all the remnants and patches of it retained in the Church of England” (McClure, *Translators Revived*). Gilbey fled to Europe during Queen Mary’s reign and returned after the accession of Elizabeth.

Thomas Samson (1517-1589), Oxford educated, “was a stout Protestant and puritan, and a very great scholar” (McClure). He was appointed Dean of Winchester in 1552 and after the accession of Queen Mary he escaped England “with great

difficulty.” After he returned to his homeland he turned down an offer to be the bishop of Norwick because of “conscientious scruples.” Instead, in 1560 he became Dean of Christ Church at Oxford University and was considered was of the greatest linguists in the nation. A letter written by men associated with the college to solicit his appointment said: “After well considering all the learned men in the land, they found none to be compared to him for singular learning and great piety, having the praise of all men. And it is very doubtful whether there is a better man, a greater linguist, a more complete scholar, a more profound divine.” In 1564 Samson was arrested under Queen Elizabeth, deprived of his office, and charged with non-conformity. In 1570 he was made Prebendary of Pancras in St. Paul’s Cathedral. He died in 1589 at the age of seventy-two.

Prior to moving to Geneva, Christopher Goodman was Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford.

The Geneva New Testament was published in 1557; the entire Bible in 1560.

It was funded by the English congregation in Geneva. A prominent member who provided substantial money was John Bodley, “whose son Thomas would later found the Bodleian Library at Oxford” (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 294).

The Geneva Bible was often printed in small sizes that were convenient for missionary work. The Geneva New Testament was the same size (octavo) as the little Tyndale New Testament.

The page layout was uncluttered and attractive.

(1) It was printed in clear Roman type instead of the heavy Gothic Black Letter that had been used commonly in Bibles before that.

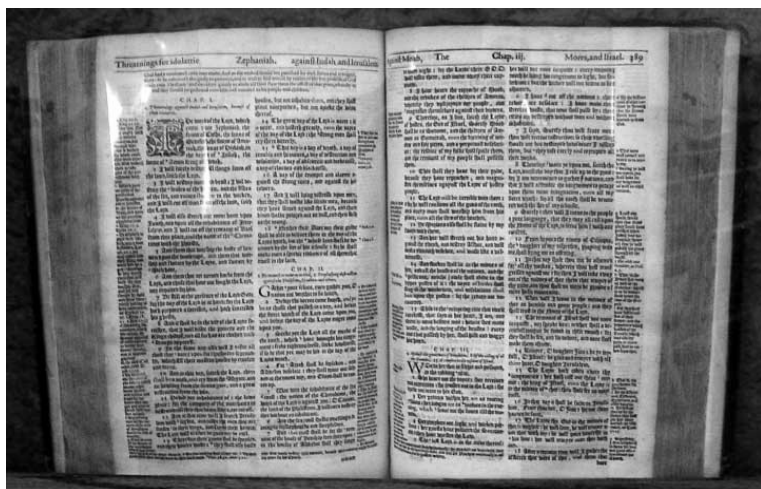
(2) The type was ruled off with red lines and surrounded by

wide margins on the sides and at the bottom.

(3) The headings across the top of each page told the reader at a glance what book he was reading.

(4) Each chapter was preceded by a summary of its content.

The Geneva Bible contained many notes, explaining the text, teaching Protestant doctrine, and, in some cases, condemning Roman Catholicism. There is an average of two notes per page. Consider some examples. The notes on Revelation exhibit the erroneous allegorical method of interpretation.



Jeremiah 44:17: "It seemeth that the Papists gathered of this place their *Salve Regina*, and *Regina caeli laetare*, calling the virgin Mary Queen of Heaven, and so of the blessed virgin and mother of a Saviour Christ made an idol: for here the Prophet condemneth this idolatry."

Revelation 9:3: "Locusts are false teachers, heretics, and worldly subtle Prelates, with Monks, Friars, Cardinals, Patriarchs, Archbishops, Doctors, Bachelors, and Masters which forsake Christ to maintain their false doctrine."

Revelation 16:2: "This was like the sixth plague of Egypt, which was sores and boils or pocks: and this reigneth commonly among Canons, monks, friars, nuns, priests, and such filthy vermin which bear the mark of the beast."

Revelation 16:13: “[The unclean spirits like frogs are] a strong number of the great devil the pope’s ambassadors, which are ever crying and croaking like frogs and come out of Antichrist’s mouth, because they should speak nothing but lies and use all manner of crafty deceit to maintain their rich Euphrates against the true Christians.”

Following are some of the notes from Revelation 17 in the 1560 edition:

“...Christ Jesus who will take vengeance on this Romish harlot.”

“The Beast signifies an ancient Rome; The woman that sits thereon, the New Rome which is the Papistry, whose cruelty and blood shedding is declared by scarlet and full of idolatries, superstitions and contempt for the true God.”

“This woman is the Antichrist, that is, the pope with the whole body of his filthy creatures, as is expounded in verse 18.”

There were many pictures, including interesting drawings of Solomon’s temple, and even maps.

The 1560 Geneva was called the “Breeches Bible” because it said Adam and Eve made themselves “breeches” in Genesis 3:7. In fact, the Geneva translators must have borrowed this from the Wycliffe Bible.

The Geneva Bible was a milestone in many important ways:

The Geneva contains, for the first time in an English Bible, the entire Old Testament translated from Hebrew. William Tyndale had completed Genesis through 2 Chronicles and Jonah (as far as we know) before his arrest and martyrdom. The rest of the Old Testament was translated in the Coverdale, Matthew’s, and Bishops Bibles from Latin and German rather than Hebrew. Speaking of Christopher Goodman, Anthony Gilbey, and the others who produced the Geneva Old Testament, David Daniell says: “They were, it is now clear, exceptional Hebrew scholars. They were the first to use at first hand the Hebrew commentary of David Kimshi, followed in those readings in many places in KJV. They had also a remarkable, almost Tyndalian, grasp of English, the

knowledge to use available helps in at least five languages (Aramaic, Latin, Greek, German and French); and the ability to work fast” (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, pp. 314, 15).

The Geneva was the first entire English Bible to contain verse divisions throughout. Before this, the English Bibles had been divided into chapters and paragraphs. In the verse divisions, the Geneva translators followed the Stephanus’ Greek New Testament of 1551 and the Latin Bible of 1555, which was the first entire Bible in any language to contain verse divisions.

For the first time in English, words not in the Greek but thought necessary to carry the meaning in English are printed in ITALIC.

The Geneva quickly became the most popular English Bible and wielded a powerful influence for almost 100 years, until its popularity waned in favor of the King James Version.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, more than two-thirds of the 138 editions of the Bible printed in England were the Geneva.

The Geneva was the Bible carried to America by the first settlers from England in the early 17th century.

THE BISHOPS BIBLE (1568)

The Bishops Bible was produced in 1568 during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, who followed the Roman Catholic Mary and returned the Church of England to the Protestant footing that was begun during Edward VI's brief reign.

Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury, oversaw the production of the Bishops Bible. It was so called because most of those who worked on it were Anglican bishops.

The bishops wanted a Bible to compete with the popular Geneva Bible and one that could replace the Matthews and Great Bibles.

The Bishops Bible was translated by some men who were persecuted for their faith. Consider two examples:

Thomas Bentham, a Fellow of Magdalen College in Oxford, was ejected from his position during Queen Mary's reign and was forced to flee to Europe, where he became a preacher at Zurich and Basle.

Edmund Grindall was also educated at Magdalen College and was persecuted under the reign of Queen Mary.

The Bishops Bible was never popular with the people. Though it was promoted by the bishops and though Matthew Parker did not allow Geneva Bibles even to be printed in England, the Geneva continued to be the people's Bible until after the publication of the King James. It was simply imported from overseas. Between 1568 and 1611, during which 20 editions of the Bishops' were printed, there were 120 of the Geneva.

THE KING JAMES BIBLE (1611)

This is the most famous and influential of the English Reformation Bibles. It is called the *King James Bible* or the *King James Version* (KJV) because its production was authorized in 1604 by King James I, who ruled England from 1603 to 1625. In the United Kingdom it is more commonly called *The Authorized Version*.

The Proposal and Authorization

James Stuart (1566-1625) was king (James VI) of Scotland before he became **King James I of England**. He ascended the throne of Scotland in July 1567, at age 13 months, when his Roman Catholic mother Mary Queen of Scots (1542-1587) was forced to abdicate.

James' father, Henry Stuart, died in mysterious circumstances shortly after James was born. He was assassinated and it was rumored that Mary had a part in the crime.



“The rift between Mary and her husband became public knowledge. She turned to a Scottish nobleman, a very powerful man, the Earl of Bothwell, for support. He and other Scottish noblemen proposed to do whatever they could to help the queen in her dilemma. This decision led to a failed explosion plot and to the strangulation death of Darnely. A few months later, Mary and the Earl married. This angered the populace who suspected Bothwell's participation in the murder of their King. Mary's subjects were outraged and turned against her” (“Mary Queen of Scots,” <http://home.earthlink.net/~zzz12/>).

When Mary fled to England to seek help from her cousin Queen Elizabeth, she was imprisoned instead. Nineteen years later Mary was found guilty of participating in a plot to kill Elizabeth, and the 44-year-old former queen was beheaded at Fortheringhay Castle in 1587. In 1612 James moved his mother's body to Westminster Abbey, constructing for her a magnificent tomb that rivaled that of Elizabeth.

James became king of England in March 1603 upon the death of Elizabeth. He was the closest living relative of the unmarried childless queen, being the son of Elizabeth's cousin. He united England and Scotland.

James married Anne of Denmark and they had eight children, of whom only three lived beyond infancy: Henry, Prince of Wales (1594-1612), Elizabeth Stuart (1596-1662), and Charles, who became king upon James' death (1600-1649).

James was known as the most educated sovereign in Europe. "Among those justifiably attributed refinements was his reputation as a paragon of learning, crammed with Greek and Latin and other tongues. In spite of his physical disabilities, his mind was first rate. Already at the age of seven he 'was able, extempore ... to read a chapter of the Bible out of Latin into French and next out of French into English as well as few men could have added anything to his translation.' ... Before he was 20 ... he had translated 30 of the Psalms in metrical form and as a parallel venture had paraphrased the Revelation of St. John" (Olga Opfell, *The King James Translators*, pp. 1, 7). In 1604 he published *A Counterblast to Tobacco*, aimed against "this vile custom of tobacco taking."

One of the major events in James' reign was **the Gunpowder Plot**. An attempt was made by Roman Catholic agents to assassinate the king, queen, and parliament by exploding barrels of gunpowder in a room underneath the House of Lords. The plan was "to kill the

king, seize his children, stir up an open revolt with aid from Spaniards in Flanders, put Princess Elizabeth on the throne, and marry her to a papist” (Paine, *The Men Behind the KJV*, p. 89). On November 5, 1605, Guy Fawkes was caught in the act of attempting to carry out the deed. In May, Fawkes had taken a solemn oath with his co-conspirators, which oath “was then sanctified by the performing of mass and the administering of the sacraments by the Jesuit priest John Gerard in an adjoining room” (David Herber, “Guy Fawkes,” <http://www.britannia.com/history/g-fawkes.html>).



Though King James was a scholarly man and had some good qualities, he was not very popular. “He laid much of the groundwork that would eventually lead to the beheading of his heir Charles I during the English Civil War, but because of his political skills, his rule was relatively stable” (“King James I,” <http://www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/king-james.html>).

Soon after James assumed the throne of England in 1603, following the reign of Elizabeth I, he was approached by a group of Puritans led by John Reynolds, president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and presented with **the Millennium Petition**. This called for spiritual reform in the Church of England along Presbyterian lines, and it got its

name from the fact that it was signed by an estimated 1,000 ministers. The Puritans were encouraged to pursue their objective by the fact that James had been a Presbyterian in Scotland. His true colors were not yet fully known.

A three-day conference was held at **HAMPTON COURT** in January 1604 to discuss the petition, and it was here that the decision was made to produce the King James Bible.

Hampton Court is a magnificent royal palace on the River Thames, not far from London. The first part of it was built for the Knights Hospitallers, a religious order founded in the early 12th century to protect the land of Israel from the Muslims. In the early 1500s, Thomas Wolsey, Cardinal and Lord Chancellor of England under King Henry VIII, obtained



a 99-year lease on the property and expanded it into a royal palace. Wolsey built royal lodgings for Henry, and eventually all six of Henry's

wives spent time there. Henry's marriage to Catherine Parr took place in the Chapel Royal at Hampton Court, and his son Edward was baptized there. The royal barge would travel to and from London and would dock near the palace. Henry's Astronomical Clock in the tower near the entrance not only kept time but also kept track of the tide so the river trips could be planned more easily. Amazingly, the clock has survived and still works today. In 1528, Wolsey was forced to relinquish Hampton Court to the king because he had been unable to secure the pope's consent for Henry's divorce.

Within ten years, Henry spent more than 62,000 British pounds, a sum in today's money that would be more than many tens of millions of dollars, on construction at Hampton Court. There were tennis courts, bowling alleys, vast pleasure gardens, an 1,100-acre hunting park, kitchens covering 36,000 feet of space for the feeding of 1,200 people daily, the great dining hall that could seat hundreds, an elaborate chapel, a massive lavatory that could seat 28 people at a time (known as the Great House of Easement), even a plumbing system that brought water by lead pipes from three miles away. Hampton Court is a museum today.

The Hampton Court conference was announced as a sincere attempt to reconcile the differences between the Puritans and the traditionalists, but it was anything but that, causing the Puritans afterwards to call it a "mock conference." Only four Puritans were invited, as opposed to at least 22 traditionalists (with the king at their head).

"It soon became manifest that the only object of the meeting was to give the king an opportunity to declare his bitter hostility to the Puritans, who were brow-beaten, insulted, and trampled upon by the tyrant and his ghostly minions. The Puritans were confuted ... 'with seven solid arguments, thus reckoned up, Authority, Violence, Craft, Fraud, Intimidation, Terror and Tyranny.' The monarch roundly declared that he would 'harry out of the land' all who would not conform their consciences to his dictation" (Alexander McClure, *Translators Revived*).

Indeed, many did flee, including the Pilgrims who helped found America. McClure tells of a certain joke that had the king and his sycophant traditionalist clergymen in hysterics at the expense of the Puritans: "A Puritan is a Protestant frayed out of his wits!" This truly funny saying was told by "one Butler, a Cambridge man."

During the conference Reynolds suggested that a new translation of the English Bible be produced. This scene was described by William Barlow in his *Sum and Substance of the Conference*. Barlow, the Dean of Chester, became one of the KJV translators. He was very prejudiced against the Puritans.

"After that, he [Reynolds] moved his Majesty, that there might be a new translation of the Bible, because those that were allowed in the reigns of Henry the eighth, and Edward the sixth, were corrupt and not answerable to the truth of the Original. ... Whereupon his Highness wished that some special pains should be taken in that behalf for one uniform translation (professing that he could never yet, see a Bible well translated in English; for the worst of all, his Majesty thought the Geneva to be) and this was to be done by the best learned in both the Universities, after them to be reviewed by the Bishops, and the chief learned of the Church: from them to be presented to the Privy-Council; and lastly to be ratified by his Royal authority; and so his whole Church to be bound unto it, and none other. ... Marry, withal, he gave this caveat (upon a word cast out by my Lord of London) that no marginal note should be added, having found in them which are annexed to the Geneva translation (which he saw in a Bible given him by an English Lady) some notes very partial, untrue, seditious, and savouring too much of dangerous, and traitorous conceits." [Note: It is very doubtful that the king knew of the Geneva Bible only what had been shown to him "by an English lady." By this manner of speaking Barlow was putting the Geneva into the least respectable light and pretending that the king had no serious interest in it. Later, as we will see, the Geneva was specifically named as one of the translations that should be consulted by the translators.]

The same scene was described in the original preface to the King James Bible, written by Miles Smith, as follows:

"For the very historical truth is, that upon the importunate petitions of the Puritans at his Majesty's coming to this crown, the conference at Hampton Court having been appointed for hearing their complaints, when by force of reason they were put from all other grounds, they had recourse at the last to this shift, that they could not with good conscience subscribe to the Communion book, since it maintained the Bible as it was there translated, which was, as they said, a most corrupted translation. And though this was judged to be but a very poor and empty shift, yet even hereupon did his Majesty begin to bethink himself of the good that might ensue by a new translation, and presently after gave order for this translation which is now presented unto thee."

It is evident that both accounts are deeply prejudiced against the Puritans. The fact is that they were not defeated by "force of reason" but by brute force. It is to be regretted that none of the Puritans wrote the history of the Hampton Court conference from their perspective. As it stands today, we have the testimony of the conference only from the mouth of

their enemies, something that has occurred all too frequently in church history.

Some of the meetings were held in the king's privy chamber, which was a large room in Henry VIII's state suite on the east side of the clock tower. "As George II altered this part of the palace, no one can now see the spot where Rainolds stood when he proposed the translation" (Gustavus Paine, *The Men Behind the King James Version*, p. 4, f. 1).

We were told by a staff member at Hampton Court in 2003 that it is thought that part of this historic meeting was held in the Cartoon Gallery, which is so called because of the impressive paintings that hang on the walls depicting biblical scenes. (A cartoon was a painting that was used as a model for the creation of tapestries, frescos, or statues.)

The approval of the two-faced king of the translation of the masterly Bible that bears his name is a wonderful example of God's sovereign rule in man's affairs. While the king and the politically-motivated traditionalist bishops he invited to Hampton Court did not have the best interest of the English people in heart, they were overruled by One who did. We must view the history of the Bible through faith in the God of the Bible.

Within months a list of 54 scholars was drawn up for the work. Deaths and withdrawals reduced the number and the surviving lists name 50 men, though we know that others were involved in the work.

The project was divided among six companies of translators, two meeting at Cambridge, two at Oxford, and two at Westminster (London).

It has often been repeated in histories that the work did not begin until about 1607, but this is not true.

In November 1604 Lancelot Andrewes, director of one of the two companies at Westminster, mentioned the work in a

letter to Mr. Hartwell, Secretary of Antiquaries (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 438). He excused himself from attending a meeting of the Antiquaries Society because it would cause him to miss the regularly scheduled translator's meeting. He also said that the work was proceeding slowly, indicating that not all of the scholars were yet fully involved.

The Oxford Company that met at Merton College began its work on February 13, 1605, according to the college register (Adam Nicholson, *God's Secretaries*, p. 154).

The Spiritual Climate for the Translation

The King James Bible came out of a period of intense persecution and spiritual revival.

The Wycliffe Bible was the Bible of the persecuted Lollards. Laws were passed against it and its translator's bones were dug up and burned. Hundreds of the men and women who loved the Wycliffe Bible were imprisoned, tortured, and burned to death.

Thousands of copies of the Tyndale Bible were burned and otherwise destroyed by ecclesiastical authorities; laws were passed against it; its readers were imprisoned and burned at the stake; and its translator was martyred.

Miles Coverdale, translator of the Coverdale Bible, was thrice exiled for his faith and was imprisoned for two and a half years during the reign of Queen Mary. His books were burned at Pauls' Cross in September 1546.

The translator of the Matthew's Bible, John Rogers, was burned to death for his faith.

Some of the translators of the Bishops Bible were persecuted for their faith by Queen Mary.

The Geneva Bible was also a product of persecution and spiritual revival, having been produced by men who were in

exile for their faith, and even when translator William Whittingham returned to England he was persecuted by “traditionalists” in the Church of England, being repeatedly tried in ecclesiastical courts for non-conformity.

These Bibles had created a great spiritual awakening in England and beyond. It was a time when men accepted the Bible as the literal Word of God, when they had passion about their religion and were willing to pay any price for their faith, whether a turn on the rack, a dangerous journey across the seas, or even a fiery death.

In the early 17th century, church attendance was compulsory in England and knowledge of the Bible was pervasive. “The state ordained that every man, woman and child should attend morning service and evening prayer on Sundays and festival days, heads of households being responsible for the attendance of their wives, children, servants, and apprentices. Neglectful parishioners could be fined” (Opfell, *The King James Bible Translators*, p. 35). Though we do not agree with compulsory church attendance by a state church nor do we agree with everything that was taught in the Anglican churches that the people were required to attend in that day, this policy produced a biblically knowledgeable citizenry. It is doubtful that there has ever been a nation more steeped in basic Bible knowledge than 17th century England. The people were required to attend church, and at church they heard the entire Bible read through every year in the liturgy.

There was also a pervasive climate of earnestly contending for the Protestant Christian faith and a bold opposition to Romanism, atheism, and other enemies of the faith. It was not a day of spiritual neutrality and positivism. The sword of the Spirit was not sheathed. As we will see, many of the translators of the King James Bible were warriors for their Christian faith and stood earnestly against the Roman Catholic Church.

The Literary Climate for the Translation

By the early 17th century the English Bible had been developing for more than two centuries. The wording of the King James Bible represents the labors of centuries of brilliant, believing, sacrificial, godly scholarship. Dozens of some of the best biblical linguists who have ever lived applied their minds and their prayers to translating into English precisely what the Hebrew and Greek text mean.

The foundation for the English Bible was the Wycliffe Bible of 1384. Though it was translated from Latin rather than Hebrew and Greek and thus contained some textual errors, it was a masterpiece of translation work. Wycliffe and his editors had a gift of molding the English language to fit the Bible. As we have seen, many words and phrases passed from the Wycliffe into the Tyndale and from there into the King James Bible.

The next important step in the progress of the English Bible was the publication of Tyndale's masterpiece, based directly upon the Hebrew and the Greek.

The Tyndale Bible went through various revisions, particularly the Matthew's, the Geneva, and the Bishops, preparing the way for the King James.

"Thus it came to pass, that the English Bible received its present form, after a fivefold revision of the translation as it was left in 1537 by Tyndale and Rogers. During this interval of seventy-four years, it had been slowly ripening, till this last, most elaborate, and thorough revision under King James matured the work for coming centuries" (Alexander McClure, *The Translators Revived*, 1855, p. 59).

By the early 17th century the English language was at its apex. Alexander McClure observed: "The English language had passed through many and great changes, and had at last reached the very height of its purity and strength. The Bible has ever since been the grand English classic. It is still the noblest monument of the power of the English speech. It is

the pattern and standard of excellence therein” (*The Translators Revived*).

The Scholarly Climate for the Translation

By the early 17th century knowledge of biblical languages was at an apex in some ways. Realizing that this view is contrary to that held by most contemporary scholars, we invite you to consider our reasons for making this statement.

Consider the following descriptions of that time, which has been called “a period which was remarkable both in its wealth of eruditional effort and in the significance of its concentration of deepest learning on the Bible centre.” The following is from *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature, 1907–21*:

“LARGE PORTIONS OF THE SCRIPTURES WERE KNOWN BY HEART, NOT ONLY BY MINISTERS, BUT, ALSO, BY THE LAITY, AND EVEN BY CHILDREN, who were also well drilled in Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* and other histories of persecutions. Whilst French Huguenot children were trained, Spartanlike, to look forward to dying for the faith, English children, from the earliest age, were disciplined in prayer, in reading books of devotion and in the close knowledge of Bible histories and Bible doctrine. ... Hence, we notice psychologically, THERE WERE DEVELOPED ENORMOUS INDUSTRY IN LEARNING, endurance in listening to preachers and teachers, tenacious memory and the power of visualising and concentrating the thoughts on Bible heroes, Bible stories, Bible language and Bible aspirations. Scripture students were indefatigable workers. Bishop Morton was at his studies before four o’clock in the morning, even after he was 80 years of age. Matthew Poole rose at three or four o’clock, ate a raw egg at eight or nine, another at twelve and continued his studies till late in the afternoon. Sir Matthew Hale, for many years, studied sixteen hours a day. For several years John Owen did not allow himself more than four hours’ sleep. FEATS OF MEMORY ARE AS REMARKABLE FOR THEIR FREQUENCY AS FOR THEIR COMPREHENSIVENESS, AND WERE PRACTISED FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD in the repeating of sermons, in the learning of Latin grammar and in almost every academic discipline. Moreover, the number of references to memory testifies to the conscious cultivation of the art. ... In short, the scholarship and learning of this period, by their direct bearing upon the Bible,

permeated and transfigured the national life in a rare degree, giving it, in spite of all its excesses and deficiencies, A STRENUOUSNESS, SOBRIETY, AND, ON THE WHOLE, A SINCERITY, PROBABLY NEVER SO LARGELY SUSTAINED, BY BOOK LEARNING, IN ANY AGE, and rarely in any country" (*The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, Vol. VII, *Cavalier and Puritan*, Part XIII, "Scholars and Scholarship, 1600–60").



Oxford University

"GREEK, ALSO, WAS A PRESSING ACCOMPLISHMENT, for a large constituency besides the professor and scholar. Nor were Greek experts so few as is often supposed. In *The Authorised Version of the Bible* (1607–11), adequate scholarship in Greek was available in Thomas Ravis, George Abbot, James Montague, Thomson, Savile, Perin, Harmar, William Barlow, Hutchinson, Spencer, Fenton, Rabbett, Sanderson, Dakins. Of the other translators employed on the Old Testament Apocrypha, John Duport, Downes and Bois were of still greater renown for their knowledge of Greek. J. Bass Mullinger remarks on the low state of Greek in English universities in the latter part of the sixteenth century. He names Whitaker, Dering, Gabriel Harvey, Aylmer, as almost alone proving that Greek at Cambridge was 'not extinct.' It was otherwise in the period 1600–60. Andrew Downes, professor of Greek in Cambridge from 1585 to 1625, published lectures on *Lysias: De Caede Eratosthenis* (1593) and on Demosthenes: *De*

Pace (1621). Francis Hicks, a gentleman of Worcestershire, made Greek his study and recreation, and published a translation into Latin, with notes, of select dialogues of Lucian, 1634. John Price, one of the greatest scholars of the period, professor of Greek at Pisa, showed great learning in his commentaries on the New Testament, illustrated by references to Greek and Latin Fathers (1646–7). In 1636, Gerard Langbaine published his notes on Longinus. In 1637, John Harmar, regius professor of Greek at Oxford, issued his etymological Greek lexicon. In 1652, Thomas Gataker produced his *Marcus Antoninus*, Greek text, with Latin translation and commentary. Finally, in 1661, Joseph Caryl, Thomas Cockayne, Ralph Venning, William Dell, Matthew Barker, William Adderley, Matthew Mead, Henry Jersey, all nonconformist ministers, jointly published a Greek-English dictionary of all the words in the New Testament. This list is only representative of the types of works in Greek. But we must take into account the undoubtedly deep knowledge of Greek possessed by Gataker (who had been taught by Bois), overshadowed as it is by his Hebrew and other oriental studies; by Ussher with his expert knowledge of Greek geography, astronomy and other Greek material for chronology, his treatise on the origin of the Greek Septuagint and the editing of two ancient Greek versions of the Book of Esther; by Selden, the great dictator of English learning, in his *Marmora Arundeliana*, 1628, in which he was helped by Patrick Young and Richard James; by John Hales and the Cambridge Platonists; by John Milton; by Philemon Holland and the other translators. BESIDES GRAMMAR TEXT-BOOKS AND ANNOTATIONS ON GREEK AUTHORS, THERE IS EVIDENCE OF READY KNOWLEDGE OF GREEK IN ALL KINDS OF WRITERS, AND INDICATIONS OF A NOT UNCOMMON ERUDITION. Jeremiah Whitaker, of Oakham free school, read all the epistles in the Greek Testament twice every fortnight. John Conant, regius professor of divinity in Oxford, often disputed publicly in Greek in the schools. In the period 1648–59, the disputations at Oxford were often in Greek. Henry Stubbe, in 1651, wrote, in *Horae Subsecivae*, translations into Greek from Randolph and Crashaw. But the readiest in this art was James Duport, who wrote Greek hexameters on the death of the vice-master of Trinity college, Cambridge. He rendered into Homeric verse The Book of Job (1637) and Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and The Song of Solomon (1646), and won high recognition by these feats” (*The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, Vol. VII, *Cavalier and Puritan*, Part XIII, *Scholars and Scholarship*, 1600–60, “Latin and Greek scholarship”).

“From the time of the new Elizabethan and Stewart foundations of grammar schools, THE THREE ‘HOLY’ LANGUAGES--LATIN, GREEK AND HEBREW--HAD BEEN THE AIM OF PROTESTANT WORKERS IN EDUCATION, not only for providing antagonists

capable of meeting Catholic opponents in disputation, orally and in books, but, also, for coming 'nearer' to the primitive times of the Christian era. BOYS IN SCHOOL WERE TO LEARN THEIR CATECHISM IN A GREEK TEXT, READ THE NEW TESTAMENT IN GREEK, LEARN, IF MIGHT BE, TO SPEAK IN GREEK. The aim of school and university, in their Greek studies, was, in the long run, theological" (*The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, Vol. VII, Cavalier and Puritan, Part XIII Scholars and Scholarship, 1600–60, "Hebrew scholarship").

"IN THE UNIVERSITIES, THEOLOGY WAS THE CHIEF SUBJECT, and, as J. Bass Mullinger says, with few exceptions, secured the attention of all those 'who contended for intellectual distinction, for popularity and for the prizes of high office and social influence.' ... Accordingly, theology had full sway in the universities, and, AS STUDENTS LEFT THE UNIVERSITY, THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF GREEK AND HEBREW BECAME CONTRIBUTORY TO THE GREAT DIVINITY STREAM. Venn has shown that, in 1630, one out of 3600 of the male population of England and Wales proceeded to Oxford or Cambridge as against one in 9000 today ... Grammar schools (public and private) were particularly numerous in this period, and managed to cast a Scriptural and theological colour around ordinary instruction. NEVER WAS THERE IN THE ANNALS OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH A MORE ELOQUENT, PIOUS AND ERUDITE BAND OF ANGLICAN THEOLOGIANS THAN AT THIS TIME. In fact, Selden tells us of his own time: 'All confess there never was a more learned Clergy'" (*The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, Vol. VII Cavalier and Puritan, Part XIII Scholars and Scholarship, 1600–60, "University studies").

Consider also the testimony of J.W. Whittaker, who wrote two centuries after the completion of the KJV. In 1820 Whittaker, Fellow of St. John's, Cambridge, published *An Historical and Critical Enquiry into the Interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures, with Remarks on Mr. Bellamy's New Translation*. It was a brilliant defense of the Authorized Version against John Bellamy's criticisms thereof. Bellamy had launched a vicious attack on the authenticity of the King James Bible and had made the accusation that the translators of the KJV and its predecessors were not skilled in Hebrew. Whittaker, a Hebrew scholar, carefully described the linguistic excellencies of Tyndale, Miles Coverdale, John Rogers, and the translators of the Great Bible, the Geneva, the Bishops, and the Authorized 1611. Whittaker gave

examples from these translations, demonstrating that the versions conformed to the Hebrew rather than to the Greek Septuagint or the Latin Vulgate. He made the following statement about the early 17th century:

“Had this gentleman [Bellamy] consulted any historical authority, or in the slightest degree investigated the characters of our translators, he would have found that many of them were celebrated Hebrew scholars, and could not have failed to perceive that THE SACRED LANGUAGE WAS AT THAT TIME CULTIVATED TO A FAR GREATER EXTENT IN ENGLAND THAN IT HAS EVER BEEN SINCE. We have already seen that twelve editions of the Hebrew Bible were printed before the year 1527, four of which were published in one year. Ever since the first dawn of literature in Europe, the study of the Scriptures in the original languages had been an object of the warmest enthusiasm. The turn which religious controversy took at the birth of the Reformation compelled all learned men to take their authorities from the inspired text, and not from a Romish version. In the year 1540, King Henry the Eighth appointed regular Hebrew Professors, and the consequences of this measure were instantaneous. In Queen Elizabeth's reign no person who pretended to eminence as a learned man was ignorant of this language, and so very common did it become, that the ladies of noble families frequently made it one of their accomplishments. ... Under Queen Elisabeth and King James, who were not only the patrons of learning by their institutions, but examples of it in their own persons, Hebrew literature prospered to a very great extent, and under the last of these monarchs attained its greatest splendour. The Universities, and all public bodies for the promotion of learning, flourished in an extraordinary degree, and AT THIS HAPPY JUNCTURE OUR TRANSLATION WAS MADE. Every circumstance had been conspiring during the whole of the preceding century to extend the study of Hebrew. The attempts of the Papists to check the circulation of the translations, the zeal of the Protestants to expose the Vulgate errors, the novelty of theological speculations to society at large, and even the disputes of the Reformed Churches, GAVE AN ANIMATED VIGOUR TO THE STUDY OF THE ORIGINAL SCRIPTURES WHICH HAS NEVER SINCE BEEN WITNESSED (Whittaker, pp. 99-104).

Consider the testimony of Alexander McClure, author of *The Translators Revived* (1855):

“As to the capability of those men, we may say again, that, by the good providence of God, their work was undertaken in a fortunate time. Not only had the English language, that singular compound,

then ripened to its full perfection, but THE STUDY OF GREEK, AND OF THE ORIENTAL TONGUES, AND OF RABBINICAL LORE, HAD THEN BEEN CARRIED TO A GREATER EXTENT IN ENGLAND THAN EVER BEFORE OR SINCE" (*The Translators Revived*, pp. 59, 61).

Consider the testimony of James Lister in 1820:

"The time when our translation was completed, though two hundred years ago, was remarkable for classical and biblical learning. The classics from the capture of Constantinople, had been revised, and had been studied with enthusiastic ardour in all the countries of Europe. In the century immediately preceding our version, schools and colleges had been multiplied over all the western world. Manuscripts were explored, compared and edited, and correct copies of the ANCIENT AUTHORS, BOTH PROFANE AND SACRED WERE PUBLISHED WITH A ZEAL AND PATIENCE FAR EXCEEDING ANY THING OBSERVABLE IN OUR TIMES. Oriental literature, Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac and Greek was deeply studied; and dictionaries, concordances, polyglots, such as the world had never seen before for depth and variety of erudition remain to this day as monuments of the talents, learning and research of our ancestors. Exalted on these monuments, some of our puny scholars, in THESE LATTER DAYS OF GREAT PRETENSION, have taken their lofty stand, and affected to despise the very men by whom these monuments were reared" (Lister, *The Excellence of the Authorized Version of the Sacred Scriptures Defended against the Socinian*, 1820, p. 14).

Biblical scholars of that day grew up with Latin, Greek, and Hebrew and were as at home in these languages as in their mother tongue. One of the KJV translators, as we will see, could read the Hebrew Bible at age five. In our day, scholars don't ordinarily even begin to learn the biblical tongues until adulthood, during their college days.

Consider the situation at Oxford and Cambridge in those days:

In the 1500s and early 1600s all of the printed texts at these universities were in Latin. All of the compositions, lectures, and disputations were in Latin.

In 1605, of the 6,000 volumes in the library at Oxford, only 60 were in English (David Daniell, *Tyndale's New Testament*, p. 45)

Though Erasmus made five visits to England between 1499 and 1517 and taught at Cambridge for two years, he “neither wrote (nor it seems, spoke) a word of English” (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 130). He was able to communicate and teach in Latin.

A similar situation existed throughout the educational field:

“Latin-speaking was well preserved. Brinsley, in his *Ludus Literarius*, 1612, expects school lessons in grammar to be conducted by questions and answers in the Latin language. Disputations and orations were in this language, not only in universities but, also, in grammar schools. ... In fact, Latin occupied very much the position that mathematics now assumes on the modern side of a public school, in relation to physical science studies. It provided the necessary equipment for other studies, and the school curriculum was framed with a view to relieving the university from its teaching. The curriculum consisted of *Pueriles Confabulationculae* (children’s Latin talk), colloquies, catechisms in Latin and Greek, systematic grammar, translation and re-translation, and the whole round of vocabularies, the making of Latins, letter-writing (on the model of Cicero’s *Epistulae*, proceeding to those of modern writers—Politian, Erasmus, Ascham, Manutius, Lipsius—and the composition, concurrently, of original epistles), themes, with full equipment of adages, apophthegmata, flores, phrase-books; then making verses, and, finally, the glory of sixth form work, producing and declaiming original orations. Thus, THE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE IN LATIN WAS NEVER MORE COMPLETE THAN IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY” (*The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, 1907–21, Vol. VII, “Cavalier and Puritan,” Part XIII, “Scholars and Scholarship,” 1600–60, “Latin and Greek scholarship”).

There were a severely limited number of Fellow positions in a college and the competition was fierce. It was a much more prestigious and sought after position than it is today. Alexander McClure describes that as “A TIME WHEN THE STUDY OF SACRED LITERATURE WAS PURSUED BY THOUSANDS WITH A ZEAL AMOUNTING TO A PASSION.” It attracted some of the nation’s brightest men. Such an atmosphere in the field of theology exists nowhere in the world today. It could be compared today only to something

like the field of sports, in which thousands of athletes compete earnestly from their youth with the objective of winning a place on a professional team. [* A Fellow was a teacher and usually had a company of five or six students and was also involved in college administration -- Opfell, *The King James Bible Translators*, p. 45.]

The educational climate at Oxford and Cambridge in that day was serious in the extreme. At Emmanuel College, for example, "The recreational schedule consisted only of one hour after dinner at 11 a.m. and one hour after supper at 5 p.m. Undergraduates were expected to be at work 'in the college' at all other times" (Opfell, p. 48).

For those familiar with conditions in colleges and seminaries today, it is obvious that the level of scholarship has deteriorated significantly; recreation and leisure take up a *much* larger portion of the average student's time today.

The fierce religious debates of that time resulted in zeal for biblical scholarship and caution about the details of biblical translation that has no comparison in our day.

"The time when our authorized version was completed was a time of awful contention between catholics and protestants; a contest in which whole nations were embarked to a man, arranged under their respective civil authorities. EVERY NERVE WAS STRAINED ON BOTH SIDES TO OBTAIN THE ASCENDENCY. Learning, talents, piety and zeal rushed forth to the conflict. AND THE MIGHTY FIELD ON WHICH THEY MET WAS, 'THE TRANSLATION OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES INTO THE VULGAR TONGUES.' In this fearful combat England stood at the head of the Protestant union; and both sides were fully aware of the incalculable consequences connected with an authorized version of the sacred scriptures into the English tongue. THE CATHOLICS WATCHED ... PUT EVERY VERSE OF OUR TRANSLATION TO THE SEVEREST SCRUTINY. The Catholics had already sanctioned the Vulgate, and were prepared to impugn every sentence wherein our version should differ from their authorized text. THE MASS OF PROTESTANT LEARNING WAS ENGAGED ON THE ONE SIDE TO MAKE OUR VERSION AS FAIR A COPY AS POSSIBLE OF THE MATCHLESS ORIGINALS; AND THE MASS OF POPISH ERUDITION, ON THE OTHER SIDE, STOOD FULLY PREPARED TO DETECT EVERY

MISTAKE, and to expose without mercy every error of our public version" (James Lister, *The Excellence of the Authorized Version of the Sacred Scriptures Defended against the Socinian*, 1820, pp. 14, 15).

Further, it is crucial to understand that biblical scholarship has taken a dramatically rationalistic turn since the 19th century.

Most of the great names in this field have been affected by the spirit of unbelief, including the authors of many of the important lexicons and study aids, such as Joseph Thayer, Samuel Driver, Eberhard Nestle, Hermann von Soden, Gerhard Kittel, Eugene Nida, Kurt and Barbara Aland, and Bruce Metzger. We have documented this sad story in our book *The Modern Bible Version Hall of Shame*.

In the mid-1800s Charles Philpot, leader of the Gospel Standard Baptists and Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford, took up the question of "Who would undertake a revision of the Authorized Version today?" He said:

"Of course they must be learned men, great critics, scholars, and divines. **BUT THESE ARE NOTORIOUSLY EITHER TAINTED WITH POPERY OR INFIDELITY.** Where are the men, learned, yet sound in Truth, not to say alive unto God, who possess the necessary qualifications for so important work? And can erroneous men, dead in trespasses and sins, carnal, worldly, ungodly persons, spiritually translate a Book written by the blessed Spirit? We have not the slightest ground for hope that they would be godly men, such as we have reason to believe translated the Scriptures into our present version."

In the 20th century, even the "evangelical" scholars became infected with rationalistic views of the Bible, as has been documented in many books, such as Harold Lindsell's *The Battle for the Bible* (1976) and *The Bible in the Balance* (1979), Richard Quebedeaux's *The Worldly Evangelicals* (1978), Francis Schaeffer's *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (1983), David Wells's *No Place for Truth* (1993), and Iain Murray's *Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950 to 2000*. We have also documented this sad business in *Faith vs. the Modern Bible Versions*, Part VII, "We

Hold to the King James Bible Because Evangelical Scholarship Is Unreliable.”

The dramatic change that occurred between the 17th century and the 21st is even recognized by men who are not fundamentalists.

“The churches and biblical scholarship have, by and large, abandoned the frame of mind which created this translation [the KJV]. The social structures which gave rise to it -- rigid hierarchies; a love of majesty; subservience; an association of power with glory -- have all gone. The belief in the historical and authentic truth of the scriptures, particularly the Gospels, has been largely abandoned, even by the religious. The ferocious intolerances of the pre-liberal world have been left behind ... and perhaps as a result of that change, perhaps as a symptom, religion, or at least the conventional religion of ordinary people, has been drained of its passion. There is no modern language that can encompass the realities which the Jacobean accepted as normal. Modern religious rhetoric is dilute and ineffectual, and where it isn't, it seems mad and aberrational. ... These men, and their Bible, exist on the other side of a gulf, which can be labelled liberal, secular, democratic modernity. **WE DO NOT LIVE IN THE SAME WORLD**” (Adam Nicholson, *God's Secretaries*, 2003, p. 239). Indeed.

The Translation Process

The translation began in late 1604 and early 1605 and the final draft from the committees was completed probably in late 1608. In 1609 the delegates from the committees met in Stationers' Hall in London and reviewed the whole work for nine months. In 1610-11 Miles Smith and Thomas Bilson put the finishing touches to the translation, wrote the translators preface, and prepared the Bible for the press.

Though, according to the KJV Translators Rule # 1 the Bishops Bible was to be the basis for the revision, Rule #14 gave the translators liberty to use other versions: “These translations to be used when they agree better with the Text than the Bishops: Tindoll's, Matthews, Coverdale's, Whitchurch's [the Great Bible], Geneva.” “...the Bishops' Bible is thought to have contributed no more than about 8

percent of its phraseology to the King James Version” (Adam Nicholson, *God’s Secretaries*, p. 73).

We know that the translators also consulted two new Latin versions (one by Arius Montanus printed in the Antwerp Polyglot in 1575 and the other by Immanuel Tremellius from 1579), plus foreign language Bibles such as the Geneva edition of the Olivetan French Bible, the Diodati Italian Bible, and the Valera Spanish Bible.

Each part of the Bible went through four major winnowing processes and was examined at least 14 times.

The translators were divided into six companies, and each group was assigned a portion of Scripture to translate.

The portion was first translated individually by each member of the company. “Every particular man of each company to take the same chapter or chapters; and having translated or amended them severally by himself, where he thinks good...” (rule # 8).

That translated portion was then reviewed by the company as a whole. “...all to meet together, to confer what they have done, and agree for their part what shall stand” (rule # 8).

If a special obscurity or difficulty was found, the companies were authorized to “send to any learned in the land for his judgment in such a place” (rule # 11). There is a hint from an extant letter dated Dec. 5, 1608, that this rule was followed. The letter is from William Eyre, Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, to a young James Ussher, who would become the famous Bible scholar. “In my absence from Cambridge, there was an order taken from the Kings Mat by the Arch B. of Canterb. that the translation of the Bible shall be finished and printed as soon as may be. Hereupon I am earnestly requested to get again that copy of our part which I lent you for D. Daniel his use. For albeit there be two fair written copies out of it; yet there will be use of it because I noted in the margin ... the places which were

doubted of. And this marking of places that want consideration is not in the others” (Adam Nicholson, *God’s Secretaries*, p. 150). Here we see three men mentioned in association with the work who were not a part of the official translation committee, and two of them (Ussher and Daniel) were living in Dublin, Ireland, at the time. The volume that Eyre was requesting to be returned was a manuscript book containing the completed translation from one of the companies. We see, then, that copies were made of the manuscript so that it could be distributed to scholars in other places, and they, in turn, wrote their comments in the margin of the manuscript. No doubt this was the custom with each company in accordance with their instructions.

Learned men not on the translation committee were invited to submit their opinions even if not solicited by the translation committee (rule # 12).

When the companies completed a book, it was then sent to the other five companies for review. “As any one company hath dispatched any one book in this manner, they shall send it to the rest, to be considered of seriously and judiciously; for his Majesty is very careful in this point” (rule # 9). Thus, each book of the translation was reviewed by all of the companies.

The finished product from each company was then submitted to a 12-man committee (composed of two chief men from each company) for final review and preparation for the press. As the companies reviewed each book, they noted any questions or differences, and these matters were settled by the final committee. “If any company, upon the review of the books so sent, really doubt, or differ upon any place, to send them word thereof, note the place, and withal send their reasons; to which if they consent not, the difference to be compounded at the general meeting, which is to be of the chief persons of each company, at the end of the work” (rule # 10).

THUS, EVERY PART OF THE TRANSLATION WAS EXAMINED AT LEAST 14 TIMES. “As the number of companies was six, and the numbers in each company varied from seven to ten, it follows that every several part would be examined at the least fourteen times distinctly; many parts fifteen times, and some seventeen” (“Historical Account of the English Versions of the Scriptures,” *The English Hexapla*, 1841, p. 153).

John Selden, the esteemed British jurist and parliamentarian, described the process as follows:

“The company of translators would meet together and as the newly translated book was read verse by verse, each one compared it to a Bible in some language in his hand. If any thing struck any of them as requiring alteration, he spoke, otherwise they read on” (“Historical Account of the English Versions of the Scriptures,” prologue to *The English Hexapla*, 1841, quoting *Table-Talk of John Selden*).

Note that they were testing the translation with their ears. Not only did they aim for accuracy but also for readability. And never has an English Bible sounded lovelier.

They also aimed for majesty. In his notes John Bois describes a scene in which Andrew Downes suggests a different reading, because “if the words are arranged in this way, the statement will be *more majestic*.” Nicholson observes that Downes’ “remark is important in showing that majesty was a quality being consciously sought in the Stationers’ Hall. These men are interested not only in clarity and fidelity but in a grandeur of statement which colours the translation as a whole” (p. 212).

The diligence with which the translation was made can be illustrated from an interesting scene that took place not long after it was published. This was recorded by Izaak Walton (author of *The Compleat Angler*) in *The Life of Dr. Robert Sanderson* (1678). One of the KJV translators, Richard Kilby, happened to visit a church and hear a sermon in which the young preacher showed the congregation three reasons why

a certain translation in the King James was wrong. It also happened that both men were invited afterwards to the same house, and there Dr. Kilby informed the preacher that the translation committee had considered the three reasons that he had given *but they had found 13 more compelling reasons for overruling them!* Here is the account as given by Walton:

"I must here stop my reader, and tell him that this Dr. Kilby was a man of so great learning and wisdom, and so excellent a critic in the Hebrew tongue, that he was made professor of it in this University; and was also so perfect a Grecian, that he was by King James appointed to be one of the translators of the Bible; and that this Doctor and Mr. Sanderson had frequent discourses, and loved as father and son. The Doctor was to ride a journey into Derbyshire, and took Mr. Sanderson to bear him company; and they, resting on a Sunday with the Doctor's friend, and going together to that parish church where they then were, found the young preacher to have no more discretion, than to waste a great part of the hour allotted for his sermon in exceptions against the late translation of several words, (not expecting such a hearer as Dr. Kilby,) and shewed three reasons why a particular word should have been otherwise translated. When evening prayer was ended, the preacher was invited to the Doctor's friend's house, where, after some other conference, the Doctor told him, he might have preached more useful doctrine, and not have filled his auditors' ear with needless exceptions against the late translation; and for that word for which he offered to that poor congregation three reasons why it ought to have been translated as he said, he and others had considered all them and found thirteen more considerable reasons why it was translated as now printed; and told him, 'If his friend,' (then attending him,) 'should prove guilty of such indiscretion, he should forfeit his favor.' To which Mr. Sanderson said, 'He hoped he should not.' And the preacher was so ingenuous as to say, 'He would not justify himself.' And so I return to Oxford." Alexander McClure makes an important observation on this story: "It also furnishes an incidental proof of the considerate and patient care with which our venerable Translators studied the verbal accuracy of their work. WHEN WE HEAR YOUNG LICENTIATES, GREEN FROM THE SEMINARY, DISPLAYING THEIR SMATTERINGS OF HEBREW AND GREEK BY CAVILLING IN THEIR SERMONS AT THE COMMON VERSION, AND POMPOUSLY TELLING HOW IT OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN RENDERED, WE CANNOT BUT WISH THAT THE APPARITION OF DR. KILBY'S FROWNING GHOST MIGHT HAUNT THEM. Doubtless the translation is susceptible of improvement in certain places; but this is not a task for every new-fledged graduate; nor can it be very often attempted without shaking the confidence of

the common people in our unsurpassed version, and without causing 'the trumpet to give an uncertain sound.'"

Lancelot Andrewes' Westminster Company usually met in **the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster Abbey**, where Andrewes was dean.

The Abbey is the church in which the kings of England have been crowned since William I in 1066. Until the Reformation it was a Roman Catholic Benedictine Abbey. Since 1540 it has been associated with the Church of England. Many famous people are buried here, including some of England's kings and queens, such as James I, Elizabeth I, and her half sister "bloody Mary," and even secularists such as Charles Darwin, the father of the theory of evolution.

The Jerusalem Chamber was once part of the Abbot's House and was built in the late 14th century. King Henry IV died there. He had been told that he would die in Jerusalem, and while making preparations to travel there, he visited Westminster to pray. While doing so he became sick. His servants moved him to the Jerusalem Chamber and laid him down in front of the large fireplace. When he awakened and was told that he was in the Jerusalem Chamber, he said, "Laud be to the Father of Heaven! for now I know that I shall die in this chamber, according to the prophecy made of me beforesaid, that I should die in Hierusalem."

The Jerusalem Chamber is not open to the public, but we were able to view it during a research trip in 2003. David L. Brown arranged for us to see it by private appointment. We were allowed to take some video and still shots of the Chamber as well as of the inside of the Abbey itself, including the Darwin grave marker on the floor.

The room features a large white fireplace with an intricately carved cedar wood overmantel and tapestries of Bible scenes that go back, in some cases, to the 16th century. The original ornate ceiling still exists.

Unlike the committee that produced the English Revision of



1881, the translators of the King James Bible obeyed their instructions. Ward Allen, who examined the history of the King James extensively

and broke new ground with material that he found at the Lambeth Palace Library (some of the working sheets apparently from a late stage in the revision), concluded that the translators “worked according to their instructions” (Ward Allen, *Translating for King James*, p. lxxxiii). After examining John Bois’ notes (which were discovered by American scholar E. E. Willoughby in the mid-1950s at the Bodleian Library at Oxford) and all other surviving materials, Allen described the process:

“Each translator completed his revision of a chapter week by week, and each company forged a common revision by comparing these private revisions. This revision being completed, a company circulated its work, book by book, among the other companies. From this circulation there resulted revisions, made in the light of objections raised to the work of a company, and an excursus upon any objection which the original company did not agree to. Then the translators circulated their work among the learned men, who were not official translators, and revised their work in view of suggestions from these men. Now the translators had to circulate these revisions among the other companies. Then, they prepared a final text. This final text they submitted to the general meeting in London, which spent nine months compounding disagreements among companies” (Allen, *Translating the New Testament Epistles 1604-1611: A Manuscript from King James’s Westminster Company*, pp. xli-xlii).

The Translators

The exact number of translators is unknown. The following list, which is grouped by Company, contains 51 names. Gustavus Paine, author of *The Men Behind the King James Version*, said that he found the names of more than 54 translators if replacements are counted. Further, “the final version contains contributions from countless unknown linguists.”

First Westminster Company (translated Genesis to 2 Kings): Lancelot Andrewes, John Overall, Hadrian Saravia, Richard Clarke, John Laifield, Robert Tighe, Francis Burleigh, Geoffry King, Richard Thompson, William Bedwell

First Cambridge Company (1 Chronicles to the Song of Solomon): Edward Lively, John Richardson, Lawrence Chaderton, Francis Dillingham, Roger Andrews, Thomas Harrison, Robert Spaulding, Andrew Bing

First Oxford Company (Isaiah through Malachi): John Harding, John Reynolds, Thomas Holland, Richard Kilby, Miles Smith, Richard Brett, Daniel Fairclough

Second Oxford Company (Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelation): Thomas Ravis, George Abbot, Richard Eedes, Giles Tomson, Henry Savile, John Peryn, Ralph Ravens, John Harmar

Second Westminster Company (the Epistles): William Barlow, John Spencer, Roger Fenton, Ralph Hutchinson, William Dakins, Michael Rabbet, Thomas Sanderson

Second Cambridge Company (the Apocrypha): John Duport, William Braithwaite, Jeremiah Radcliffe, Samuel Ward, Andrew Downes, John Bois, John Ward, John Aglionby, Leonard Hutten, Thomas Bilson, Richard Bancroft. [Note: Bois participated in both companies at Cambridge, the one assigned the Apocryphal books and the one assigned Chronicles to Song of Solomon. He was also one of the

translators who did the final editing at Stationer's Hall in London.]

The translators of the King James Bible were scholars of the highest caliber. Many of them were among the very top scholars of England and Europe.

The translators were masters of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. That was a basic part of what was called a classical education in those days. These men grew up with the biblical languages and Latin. They learned these in their childhood and perfected the use of them throughout their lives. This is not true today. Ordinarily, even those who are scholars in the biblical languages don't begin to learn them until their adult years.

The KJV translators as a whole were masters not only of Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin but also of the cognate or associate languages that are necessary for research into ancient documents relative to the Bible. These include Persian, Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, and Chaldee.

They further had the ability to read ancient unprinted manuscript versions of Greek, Latin, German, Italian, and Spanish. It is one thing to read modern German or modern Latin; it is far more difficult to read ancient versions of these language and much more difficult yet to read these in the handwritten manuscripts. These men were accustomed to such research inasmuch as in their day many scholarly resources had not yet been printed and it was common to have to use handwritten manuscripts in the pursuit of ordinary study. The common scholar of the 17th century had a level of expertise in such things that is found only in the rarest of cases today.

Following are some examples of the quality of the translators' scholarship and a few snippets from some of their lives. They are listed alphabetically rather than by company.

(For the information that we have found on the memorials of

the translators, such as burial places, surviving portraits, and published works, see the more detailed studies in our book *Faith vs. the Modern Versions*.)

Miscellaneous introductory thoughts:

(1) “The choice of revisers seems to have been determined solely by their fitness, and both parties in the Church were represented by some of their best men” (Alfred Pollard, *Records of the English Bible*, p. 53).

(2) Only three of the men assigned to the KJV translation committee in 1604 were bishops.

(3) Most of the translators were Fellows of colleges at Oxford or Cambridge and a dozen were heads of colleges. The translators included the Regius [king’s] professors of Hebrew and Greek in both universities. These appointments went to the most skilled linguists in the land.

(4) Most of the translators had the highest degrees. “The successive degrees of the greater part of the persons belonging to the list of Translators could be given; but are omitted for the sake of brevity. It is enough to record, that they nearly all attained to the highest literary honors of their respective universities” (Alexander McClure, *Translators Revived: Biographical Notes on the KJV Translators*, 1855).

GEORGE ABBOT (1562-1633), doctor of divinity, was Master of University College, Oxford, and thrice elected Vice Chancellor of the University. He grew up in a godly home. His parents embraced the Word of God in the days of Edward VI and were persecuted during the



reign of Mary (Thomas Fuller, *The Church History of Britain*). Abbot was a Puritan who eventually became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1611. One of his brothers was Master of Balliol College. As archbishop of Guildford, Abbot founded a hospital that is still there today. Abbot was one of the excellent writers on the committee. On the fading of earthly life he wrote: “[R]emember how that every winter the glory of the trees and all the woods is decayed; their leaves lie in the dust, their cheerful green is but blackness--the sap and life is held in the root within the ground--all the tree doth seem dead” (Nicholson, *God’s Secretaries*, p. 158). On sin Abbot wrote: “[Sin] is like a smoke, like fire, it mounteth upward, and comes even before God to accuse us; it is like a serpent in our bosom, still ready to sting us; it is the devil’s daughter. A woman hath her pains in travail and delivery but rejoiceth when she seeth a child is born; but the birth of sin is of a contrary fashion; for all the pleasure is in the bringing forth, but when it is finished and brought forth, it tormenteth us continually; they haunt us like tragical furies” (Ibid.). Abbot published *A Brief Description of the Whole World* (1599). He opposed King James’ 1618 “Declaration of Sports,” which permitted Sunday games. (The idea that Sunday is the new Sabbath is unscriptural.)

JOHN AGLIONBY (1566-1611) was Principal of St. Edmund’s Hall, Oxford, and chaplain to Queen Elizabeth as well as to King James. He was “an excellent linguist.” Anthony Wood in *Athanae* wrote that “he had a most considerable hand in the Translation of the New Testament, appointed by King James I., in 1604.”

LANCELOT ANDREWES (1568-1626) was Master of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, chaplain to Queen Elizabeth, Dean of Westminster Abbey, bishop of Chichester (from 1605) and bishop of Ely (from 1609). A “formidable scholar,” he was the master of 15 languages. “Scholars of the greatest eminence, such as Casaubon, Grotius, and Vossius, have eulogised his extensive attainments.” Of Andrewes, it was said that “such was his skill in all languages, especially

the Oriental, that, had he been present at the confusion of tongues at Babel, he might have served as Interpreter-General.”

“Once a year, at Easter, he used to pass a month with his parents. During this vacation, he would find a master from whom he learned some language to which he was before a stranger. In this way after a few years, he acquired most of the modern languages of Europe” (McClure, *Translators Revived*). Further, “Young Andrewes eschewed ‘games or ordinary recreations’ and preferred walking by himself or with a selected companion ‘with whom he might confer and argue and recount their studies’” (Opfell, *The King James Bible Translators*, p. 28).



Is this how the average contemporary Bible scholar spends his teenage years? Is it not, rather, wasted on rock & roll, video games, television, Hollywood movies, dating, and other carnal activities, perhaps glossed over with a veneer of churchianity?

Andrewes’ friends included many famous men of literature, including Francis Bacon, Isaac Casaubon, and John Chamberlain.

On trips to northern England, sponsored by the Earl of Huntingdon, Andrewes saw many converted to the Word of God through his preaching. McClure says Andrewes was called the “star of preachers.” Thomas Fuller says that he was “an inimitable preacher in his way.” There was music in his preaching and doubtless some of Andrewes’ lyrical music passed into the King James Bible. Here is an excerpt from a sermon on Christmas 1609:

“Men may talk what they will, but sure there is no joy in the world to the joy of a man saved: no joy so great, no news so welcome,

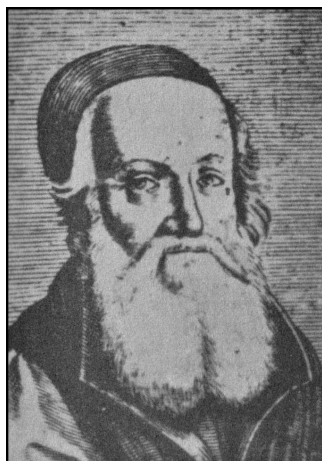
as to one ready to perish, in case of a lost man, to hear of one that will save him. In danger of perishing by sickness, to hear of one will make him well again; by sentence of the law, of one with a pardon to save his life; by enemies, of one that will rescue and set him in safety. Tell any of these, assure them but of a Saviour. It is the best news he ever heard in his life."

Andrewes spent many hours each day in private prayer and devotion and family worship and was "given to hospitality."

In 1610 Andrewes, apparently at the urging of King James, published *Responsio ad Apologiam Cardinalis Bellarmine*, which was a reply to the Roman Catholic Jesuit apologist.

WILLIAM BEDWELL (1562-1632), educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, and Vicar of Tottenham High Cross, London, was an eminent Arabic scholar. "His fame for Arabic learning was so great, that when Erpenius, a most renowned Orientalist, resided in England, in 1606, he was much indebted to Bedwell for direction in his studies. To Bedwell, rather than to Erpenius, who commonly enjoys it, belongs the honor of being the first who considerably promoted and revived the study of the Arabic language and literature in Europe. He was also tutor to another Orientalist of renown, Dr. Pococke" (McClure, *Translators Revived*). "He spent many years in preparing an Arabic lexicon; and the commencement of a Persian dictionary and an Arabic translation of the Catholic Epistles of St. John, by the same scholar, are still preserved among the Laud MSS in the Bodleian Library."

THOMAS BILSON (d. 1616), Fellow of New College, Oxford, was made Bishop of Winchester in 1599. "Anthony Wood proclaims him so 'complete in divinity, so well skilled in languages, so read in the Fathers and Schoolmen, so judicious in making use of his readings that at length he was



found to be no longer a soldier, but a commander in chief in the spiritual warfare, especially became a bishop!” (McClure). Bilson is called “that eminent light in all learning” (*The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*) and was described by Anthony Wood as being “as reverend and learned a prelate as England ever afford.” Bilson wrote *True Difference between Christian Subjects and Unchristian Rebellion*. His work entitled *The Perpetual Government of Christ's Church* (1593) “is still regarded as one of the ablest books ever written in behalf of Episcopacy” (McClure).

ANDREW BING (1574-1652), Fellow of Peterhouse College, Cambridge, succeeded Geoffry King as Regius Professor of Hebrew. Bing probably outlived all of the other KJV translators. He would have witnessed the beheading of James’ son Charles I and the rise of Oliver Cromwell.

JOHN BOIS (Boys) (1561-1643), Fellow of Clare Hall College, Cambridge, had a good spiritual heritage. His father William was converted under the ministry of the Lutheran reformer Martin Bucer when he was exiled from Strasbourg, Germany, and was teaching at Cambridge; and William had subsequently hid out in the countryside during the reign of Mary. During those days he met and married Mirable Poolye, “a pious woman, and a great reader of the Bible in the older translations,” and they had several children, all of which died young except John. When John was at Cambridge he would often walk the 20 miles to his mother’s house for dinner and return again in the evening. The respect that he had for his mother is evident in what he wrote in the flyleaf to her *Book of Common Prayer*: “This is my mother’s book; my good mother’s book. Her name was first Mirable Poolye; and then afterwards Mirable Bois; being so called by the name of her husband, my father, William Bois. ... She had read the Bible over twelve times, and the Book of Martyrs twice; besides other books, not a few.”

Taught by his father, John could read the whole Bible in

Hebrew at age five. Within six months of his admission to St. John's College, Cambridge, the 14-year-old Bois was writing letters in Greek to the Master and Senior Fellows of the school. "It was a common practice with the young enthusiast to go to the University Library at four o'clock in the morning, and stay without intermission till eight in the evening" (McClure, *Translators Revived*). Bois was an exact grammarian who had read sixty grammars (Paine, *The Men Behind the KJV*, p. 67). Bois was a Greek lecturer at St. John's College for 10 years, and "during that time, he voluntarily lectured, in his own chamber, at four o'clock in the morning, most of the Fellows being in attendance! It may be doubted, whether, at the present day, a teacher and class so zealous could be found at old Cambridge, new Cambridge, or any where else,--not excluding laborious Germany."

At one point Bois determined to study medicine, but finding that "whatever disease he read of, he was troubled with the same himself," he gave it up!

When Bois was 35 years old, the Rector of Boxworth, Mr. Holt, left in his will an unusual request. He wanted Bois to succeed him as vicar of Boxworth on the condition that he would marry his daughter. The scholar drove his buggy over to meet the girl and after some visits and "taking liking each of other" he agreed to the arrangement. In 1596 Bois became Rector of Boxworth, and two years later the now thirty-seven - or thirty-eight-year-old bookworm married the late Rector's daughter. "While thus absorbed in studious pursuits he left his domestic affairs to the management of his wife, whose want of skill in a few years reduced him to bankruptcy. He was forced to part with his chief treasure, and to sell his library, which contained one of the most complete and costly collections of Greek literature that had ever been made. This cruel loss so disheartened him, as almost to drive the poor man from his family and his native country. He was, however, sincerely attached to his wife, with whom he lived in great happiness and affection for five and forty years."

Even with the late start, the Bois's were not slack in producing children. They had four sons and two daughters. Bois told them "funny and delightful stories after supper" and prayed with each of them every day. One died in infancy; two in their teens; another at age 30. Only two survived their father. Robert and Mirabel (named for his mother) died in 1623 within a month of each other, of smallpox. The heartbroken father wrote, "Never has there been a more bitter night for me than that in which my Mirabel died." Bois made almost daily trips from Boxworth to Cambridge, and allowing his horse to find his own way he would use the occasion to study!

Bois was charitable to the poor, but wise in his charity. "He 'chode the lazy,' knowing that charity's eyes should be open, as well as her hands."

Even in his old age, Bois spent eight hours in daily study.

Though a great scholar, he aimed for simplicity in his preaching, desiring to make himself easily understood by the humblest of his hearers.

"Up to his death, his brow was unwrinkled, his sight clear, his hearing quick, his countenance fresh, and head not bald." Asked the secret of his longevity, the octogenarian ascribed it to the observance of three rules, given him by one of his college tutors, Dr. Whitaker: First, always to study standing; secondly, never to study in a draft of air; and thirdly, never to go to bed with his feet cold! He also ate only two meals a day, dinner at midday and supper in the evening, and didn't take any food and little drink between meals, except on occasion, "upon trouble of wind a small quantity of *aqua-vitae* [a brandy-like spirit] and sugar." We are not told how often he had wind trouble.

WILLIAM BRAINTHWAITE (b. 1563), one of the first Fellows at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, was Master of

Gonvil and Caius College, Cambridge when appointed to the translation work. In 1619 he was elected Vice Chancellor of the University. He was often praised for his extensive knowledge of Greek and was also skilled in Hebrew (Opfell, p. 68). Brainthwaite's library can be seen today at Conville and Caius College library, filling one entire bay.

RICHARD BRETT (1567-1637), Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, and doctor of divinity. "He was skilled and versed to a criticism in the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldee, Arabic, and Ethiopic tongues" (McClure, *Translators Revived*).

LAWRENCE CHADERTON (1537-1640) grew up in a staunch Catholic home and his wealthy father wanted him to be a lawyer. Upon being converted to Christ in 1564, Lawrence abandoned his law studies to attend Christ's College, Cambridge. When he wrote to his father to request some assistance, the "old papist" wrote, "Son Lawrence, if you will renounce the new sect which you have joined, you may expect all the happiness which the care of an indulgent



father can assure you; otherwise, I enclose a shilling to buy a wallet. Go and beg." When Lawrence replied that he could not give up his faith in the Word of God, his father disinherited him of the large estate; but by God's grace he never had to beg (Ps. 37:25).

He was thoroughly skilled in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Spanish, and Italian, and was thoroughly acquainted with the writings of the Jewish rabbis. He was a Puritan and the first Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, which was founded in 1584 and was established with the intent that students would not only study but

would “go out and spread knowledge in all parts of the country” (Paine, *The Men Behind the KJV*, p. 28). McClure says: “Having reached his three score years and ten, his knowledge was fully digested, and his experience matured, while ‘his natural force was not abated,’ and his faculties burned with unabated fire. Even to the close of his long life, ‘his eye was not dim,’ and his sight required no artificial aid. ... He was greatly venerated. All his habits were such as inspired confidence in his piety. During the fifty-three years of his married life, he never suffered any of his servants to be detained from public worship by the preparation of food, or other household cares. He used to say, ‘I desire as much to have my servants to know the Lord, as myself’” (McClure, *Translators Revived*).

As a young man Chaderton began a series of afternoon sermons at the church of St. Clement’s, Cambridge, that continued for 50 years. “Sermons were timed by an hour glass, which stood beside the pulpit. Chaderton’s biographer tells how once having preached for two hours, he feared he had worn out his listeners’ patience and stopped. But the entire congregation cried, ‘For God’s sake, go on! We beg you, go on!’ Chaderton continued for another hour” (Opfell, *The King James Bible Translators*, p. 47). When he announced that he was retiring from these lectures, forty of the clergy, who said they owed their conversion to his preaching, begged him to reconsider. Two of Chaderton’s brothers-in-law, Samuel and Ezekiel Culverwell, became famous Puritan preachers (Opfell, p. 47). He died in the year 1640 in the one hundred and third year of his age, and it is said that to the end he could read a small-print Greek New Testament without glasses.

RICHARD CLARKE was a Fellow of Christ’s College, Cambridge, vicar on the island of Thanet, and one of the six preachers in Canterbury Cathedral. The following quote from one of his sermons illustrates how dramatically different those times were compared to modern times: “There are two

sorts of atheism, mental and vocal. ... I pardon the *mouth atheist*. For he that shall openly say, There is no God, will *ipso facto* be thought beside himself. Or if he seem to have his wits, yet they that hear him will abhor him; they will stop their ears against his blasphemy, they will hiss at him, they will spit at him; his impious assertion shall not stumble any one. But the *heart atheist* that saith God is, but thinks it not, and lives accordingly, ungodlily, unrighteously, unsoberly ... his sin is greater than his hypocrisy” (Paine, *The Men Behind the KJV*, p. 41).

WILLIAM DAKINS (d. 1607) a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, was appointed Professor of Divinity at Gresham College, London, in 1604. He was considered peculiarly fit to be employed in the translation work, on account of “his skill in the original languages” (McClure, *Translators Revived*).

FRANCIS DILLINGHAM (d. 1625), a Fellow of Christ’s College, Cambridge, was a Puritan. He was a famous Greek disputer and was called “the great Grecian” and “an excellent linguist.” “Francis Dillingham was a diligent writer, both of practical and polemical divinity. He collected out of [Catholic] Cardinal Bellarmine’s writings, all the concessions made by that acute author in favor of Protestantism. He published a Manual of the Christian faith, taken from the Fathers, and a variety of treatises on different points belonging to the Romish controversy” (McClure, *Translators Revived*). One of Dillingham’s books was titled *A Dissuasive against Popery*. In another (*A Quartron of Reasons, Composed by Dr. Hill, Unquartered, and Proved a Quartron of Follies*), Dillingham refuted the Catholic doctrine of celibacy. In *A Golden Key Opening the Lock to Eternal Happiness*, Dillingham gave suggestions for how to choose a wise wife: “That a man may obtain a wife that will be in subjection unto him, he must choose a prudent and wise wife, for prudence and wisdom respecteth persons, place, and manner of doing a thing. ... Prudence teacheth the wife that her husband is her head, and so subjecteth herself unto him. No marvel then

though many men have not their wives in subjection, for they have married fools which know not their place ... A wise woman, saith Solomon ... buildeth the house, but the foolish destroyeth it with her own hands." Dillingham must not have found his woman to fit this description, for he never married.

ANDREW DOWNES (1544-1625) was for 40 years Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge. "He is especially named by the renowned John Selden as eminently qualified to share in the translation of the Bible. Thus it is the happiness of Dr. Downes to be 'praised by a praised man;' for no man was ever more exalted for learning and critical scholarship than Selden, who was styled by Dr. Johnson, 'monarch in letters,' and by Milton, 'chief of learned men in England;' and by foreigners, 'the great dictator of learning of the English nation.' His decisive testimony to Downes's ability was given from personal knowledge" (McClure, *Translators Revived*).

ROGER FENTON (1566-1616) was a Fellow of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. He was Penitentiary of St. Paul's Cathedral in London and was rector of Chigwell, in Essex. His friend Nicholas Felton, bishop of Ely, testified, "Never a more learned hath Pembroke Hall brought forth, with but one exception," and that exception was Lancelot Andrews. Fenton's main printed work was *A Treatise on Usury* (three volumes, 1611).

JOHN HARMER (1555?-1613) was a Warden of St. Mary's College, Oxford, and King's Professor of Greek. He was a canon of Winchester Cathedral. He accompanied the Earl of Leicester to Paris where he debated Roman Catholic doctors of the Sorbonne. Wood says that he was "a most noted Latinist, Grecian, and Divine." "He stood high in the crowd of tall scholars, the literary giants of the time. He published several learned works; among them, Latin translations of several of Chrysostom's writings,--also an excellent translation of Beza's French Sermons into English, by which he shows himself to have been a Calvinist, the master of an excellent English style, and an adept in the difficult art of

translating” (McClure, *Translators Revived*). Harmer traveled to Europe and held disputations with “great doctors of the Romish party” (Paine, *The Men Behind the KJV*, p. 111).

THOMAS HOLLAND (1539-1612), a “deciding non-conforming Puritan,” was appointed King’s Professor of Divinity in 1589 and Regent at Exeter College, Oxford, in 1592. Known as a “prodigy of literature,” his reputation extended to the continent, and he was held in high esteem in the universities of Europe” (McClure, *Translators Revived*). It is said that whenever he went on a journey he would gather together the fellows of the college and exhort them, “I commend you to the love of God, and to the hatred of popery and superstition.” On his deathbed he cried out: “Come, Oh come, Lord Jesus, thou bright and morning star! Come, Lord Jesus; I desire to be dissolved and be with thee.”

RICHARD KILBY (1560-1620) was a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, and became Rector of the college in 1590 and doctor of divinity in 1596. In 1601 he was made a Prebend of Westminster Abbey. “He was considered so accurate in Hebrew studies, that he was appointed the King’s Professor in that branch of literature. Among the fruits of his studies, he left a commentary on Exodus, chiefly drawn from the writings of the rabbinical interpreters” (McClure, *Translators Revived*). In his sermon on “The Burden of a Loaden Conscience,” we see Kilby’s gospel: “Consider well what He hath done for you. He made you at the first like unto Himself, in wisdom and holiness, and when you were by sin made like the devil, and must therefore have been condemned to hell torments, God sent His only son who taking unto him a body and soul, was a man and suffered great wrong and shameful death, to secure your pardon, and to buy you out of the devil’s bondage, that ye might be renewed to the likeness of God ... to the end ye might be fit to keep company with all saints in the joys of heaven” (Paine, *The Men Behind the KJV*, p. 48).

JOHN LAIFIELD (or Layfield) (d. 1617) was Fellow of

Trinity College, Cambridge, and Rector of St. Clement Dane's Church in London (in the Strand). Of him it is said "that being skilled in architecture, his judgment was much relied on for the fabric of the tabernacle and temple" (Collin's *Ecclesiastical History*, 1852, Vol. VII, p. 337; cited from Paine, *The Men Behind the KJV*, p. 39). Laifield had traveled to Puerto Rico in 1598 as chaplain to Earl of Cumberland and had written of the dangerous adventure during which hundreds had died through sickness and combat. In this interesting record it is obvious that Laifield wielded an exceptional pen: "The trees do continually maintain themselves in a green-good liking, partly of many fine rivers, which to requite the shadow and coolness they receive from the trees, give them back again, a continual refreshing of very sweet and tasty water" (taken from *God's Secretaries*, p. 104).

EDWARD LIVELY (or Livlie) (1545?-1605), Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, was Regius Professor of Hebrew from 1575. He was one of the eminent scholars not only of Hebrew but also of other oriental languages. "Ussher, Eyre, Pocock, and Gataker speak in eulogistic terms of Lively's attainments as a Hebrew scholar" (from Lively's funeral sermon by Thomas Playfere). He was one of the three directors of the translation work. "

JOHN OVERALL (1559-1619) was Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, King's Professor of Divinity, and Master of Catharine Hall. When he was made Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London in 1601 and had to preach in English before Queen Elizabeth, he told the father of the historian Thomas Fuller that "he had spoken Latin so long, it was troublesome to him to speak English in a continued oration." It is obvious that he could write well in English, though, as the following excerpt demonstrates: "I was requested to come visit some of my parish that were sick, and coming I found them sicker in mind than body. The thing that troubled their minds, so they said, was this. They could not

be persuaded that Christ died for them. Wherein, having by the comforts of the gospel as I thought best, somewhat eased and persuaded them I took occasion afterward in my sermon, for their sakes, to handle this point” (Opfell, p. 33). Overall was considered by some “the most scholarly divine in England.” “He was styled by Camden ‘a prodigious learned man;’ and is said by Fuller to have been ‘of a strong brain to improve his great reading’” (McClure, *Translators Revived*).

THOMAS RAVIS (1560?-1609), doctor of divinity, was the president of the Oxford company responsible for Isaiah to Malachi. In 1593 he was appointed Dean of Christ’s Church College, Oxford, and twice was elected Vice-Chancellor of the University. In 1604 he was appointed bishop of Gloucester and in 1607 bishop of London. “He very strongly opposed the Romanising influence of Laud and was very severe in his denunciation of anything which savoured of popery.” He opposed the king’s declaration permitting sports and recreational pastimes on Saturday.



JOHN RAINOLDS (or Reynolds) (1549-1607), the leader of the Puritan party at Hampton Court, was president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He had become a Fellow of Corpus Christi at age 17 and a Greek lecturer at age 23. McClure observes: “It is stated that ‘his memory was little less than miraculous.’ He could readily turn to any material



passage, in every leaf, page, column and paragraph of the numerous and voluminous works he had read. He came to be styled ‘the very treasury of erudition;’ and was spoken of as ‘a living library, and a third university.’” “This Dr. Reynolds was party to a most curious episode. He had been an ardent Roman Catholic, and he had a brother who was an equally ardent

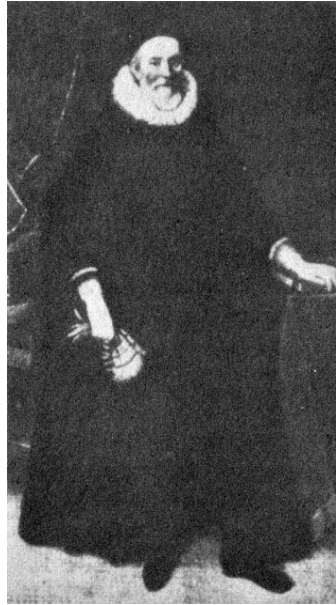
Protestant. They argued with each other so earnestly that each convinced the other; the Roman Catholic became a Protestant, and the Protestant became a Roman Catholic” (Ian Paisley, *My Plea for the Old Sword*). John Rainolds’ Catholic brother, William, taught divinity and Hebrew at the English College at Rheims and probably assisted Gregory Martin in the translation of the Rheims-Douay Catholic Bible that was published in 1610 (Opfell, p. 56). Rainolds not only became a Protestant, he became one of England’s greatest champions for Protestantism. “About the year 1578, John Hart, a popish zealot, challenged all the learned men in the nation to a public debate. At the solicitation of one of Queen Elizabeth’s privy counsellors, Mr. Reynolds encountered him. After several combats, the Romish champion owned himself driven from the field. An account of the conferences, subscribed by both parties, was published, and widely circulated. This added greatly to the reputation of Mr. Reynolds, who soon after took his degrees in divinity, and was appointed by the queen to be Royal Professor of Divinity in the University. At that time, the celebrated Cardinal Bellarmine, the Goliath of the Philistines at Rome, was professor of theology in the English Seminary at that city. As fast as he delivered his popish doctrine, it was taken down in writing, and regularly sent to Dr. Reynolds; who, from time to time, publicly confuted it at Oxford. Thus Bellarmine’s books were answered, even before they were printed” (McClure, *Translators Revived*). In 1586 “Sir Francis Walsingham founded a temporary lectureship to confute ‘popish tenets’ and secured Rainolds’ appointment to those lectures” (Opfell, p. 58). At the height of the popularity of Shakespearean productions, Rainolds wrote a book against stage plays. His warning was plain and very much to the point: “They meditate how they may inflame a tender youth with love, entice him to dalliance, to whoredom, to incest, inure their minds and bodies to uncomely, dissolute, railing, boasting, knavish, foolish, brainsick, drunken conceits, words and gestures” (Rainolds, “The Overthrow of Stage Plays,” cited from Paine, *The Men Behind the KJV*, p. 24). Rainolds

warned that it was unlawful for men to wear women's clothing on the stage and cited Deuteronomy 22:5. Though he died before the translation was complete, he worked at it during his last sickness as long as his strength permitted. "During his decline, the company to which he belonged met regularly every week in his chamber, to compare and perfect what they had done in their private studies. His days were thought to be shortened by too intense application to study." When urged to cease his labors he nobly replied that "for the sake of life, he would not lose the very end of living!" As he was dying, a rumor was spread by some Roman Catholics that he had renounced Protestantism. Replying the day before he expired, he wrote the following: "These are to testify to all the world, that I die in the possession of that faith which I have taught all my life, both in my preachings and in my writings, with an assured hope of my salvation, only by the merits of Christ my Saviour."

HADRIAN SARAVIA (1530 or 1531-1612) was born in France; his father was Spanish and his mother Belgian. While living in Belgium from 1577 to 1587, he was Professor of Divinity at the University of Leyden. He also founded the Walloon church in Brussels and took part in drawing up the Walloon confession of faith and was the pastor of the French Reformed Church in Leyden. He came to England in 1587 and was made Doctor of Divinity at Oxford in 1590. He became Prebend of Canterbury and Canon of Westminster. He was "educated in all kinds of literature in his younger days, especially in several languages" and noted for his knowledge of Hebrew.

HENRY SAVILE (or Saville) (1549-1621), Warden of Merton College, Oxford, and Provost of Eton College, was "a weighty Greek scholar." He was the first to edit the complete works of Chrysostom (with help from others). Toward this end he searched out the best manuscripts of Chrysostom's works throughout Europe and assembled more than 15,000 sheets of them, which he gave to the Bodleian Library at Oxford. "Sir Henry Savile was one of the most profound,

exact, and critical scholars of his age. In 1570, he read his ordinaries on the *Almagest* of Ptolemy, a collection of the geometrical and astronomical observations and problems of the ancients. By this exercise he very early became famous for his Greek and mathematical learning." He was the tutor in Greek and mathematics to Queen Elizabeth. In about 1604 he was knighted by King James. One of his sayings was: "Give me the plodding student. If I would look for wits, I would go to Newgate [prison];--there be the wits!"



Saville founded two professorships at Oxford, one of geometry and one of astronomy. Many of his books remain at the Bodleian Library. I conclude this brief review of Savile's life with an account given by Alexander McClure, which most studious husbands and most wives of studious husbands can doubtless relate to: "He was so much of a book-worm, and so sedulous at his study, that his lady, who was not very deep in such matters, thought herself neglected. She once petulantly said to him, 'Sir Henry, I would that I were a book, and then you would a little more respect me.' A person standing by was so ungallant as to reply, 'Madam, you ought to be an almanac, that he might change at the year's end.' At this retort the lady was not a little offended. A little before the publication of Chrysostom, when Sir Henry lay sick, Lady Savile said, that if Sir Henry died, she would burn Chrysostom for killing her husband. To this, Mr. Bois, who rendered Sir Henry much assistance in that laborious undertaking, meekly replied, that 'so to do were great pity.' To him, the lady said, 'Why, who was Chrysostom?' 'One of the sweetest preachers since the apostles' times,' answered the enthusiastic Bois. Whereupon

the lady was much appeased, and said, ‘she would not burn him for all the world.’”

MILES SMITH (1524-1624), who was on the 12-man final revision committee and also wrote the Preface, was expert in Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, Latin, Greek, and Arabic. These were as familiar to him as his own mother tongue. A fellow bishop called him “a very walking library.” He was a graduate of Brasenose College, Oxford, a doctor of divinity, Prebendary* of Hereford Cathedral, and (from 1612) Bishop of Gloucester. His father had made a fortune as a fletcher or a maker of bows and arrows. [* A Prebendary “was the holder of a cathedral benefice, and his Prebend usually consisted of revenue from one manor of the cathedral states” Opfell, *The King James Bible Translators*, p. 29.]



JOHN SPENCER (1559-1614) was elected Greek lecturer at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, when he was only 19 years old. He was a chaplain to King James and in 1607 was made President of Corpus Christi upon the death of John Reynolds. His wife “was a great-niece of Thomas Cranmer, that Archbishop of Canterbury, whom Queen Mary burnt at the stake for his Protestantism” (McClure, *Translators Revived*). He wrote the foreword to Richard Hooker’s famous work, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.

SAMUEL WARD (1572?-1643) was Master of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge University, from 1609 until his death; he was also Lady Margaret* Professor of Divinity. Among Ward’s pupils at Sidney Sussex were Oliver Cromwell and the historian Thomas Fuller. In 1618 Ward was selected by King James to attend the Synod of Dort, in Holland, as one of “the four divines most able and meet to represent the Church of England, at the famous Council.” Ward’s

puritanical piety is displayed in his diary, which is extant. As a student he bewailed his lack of godliness: "Pride, Desire of vainglory, yea, in little things. Wearisomeness in God's service. Non affection. No delite in God's service. No care of exhorting my brethren. No boldness in the confessing of God's name. No delite in hearing God's word, or in prayer, or in receiving of the Sacraments. Shame in serving God" (Nicholson, *God's Secretaries*, p. 126). Ward was past 50 when he married a widow with a daughter from her previous marriage (Opfell, p. 70). He was imprisoned briefly in 1642 for supporting King Charles I during the Civil War and died six weeks later from an illness contracted during confinement. [* Lady Margaret Beaufort, "mother of Henry VII, was the founder of St. John's and Christ's Colleges," Opfell, p. 70.]

Consider some further testimonies to the capability of the KJV translators:

John Selden, in *Table-talk* (1689), said: "The English translation of the Bible is the best translation in the world, and renders the sense of the original best."

Thomas Hartwell Horne (1818), in *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, said: "We cannot but call to mind with gratitude and admiration, the integrity, wisdom, fidelity, and learning of the venerable translators, of whose pious labors we are now-reaping, the benefit; who, while their reverence for the Holy Scriptures induced them to be as literal as they could, to avoid obscurity have been extremely happy in the simplicity and dignity of their expressions; and who, by their adherence to the Hebrew idiom, have at once enriched and adorned our language."

William T. Brantly, a leader in the Baptist denomination in America, said (1837): "... the forty seven professors and divines, who were appointed by James I., to re-translate, revise and correct preceding versions ... were profound

philologists, men of ripe scholarship, and well skilled in critical acumen. ... it is difficult to imagine, how any individual, professedly acquainted with the literature of the reigns of Elizabeth and James, could be purblind to the fact, that so far from the Hebrew and Oriental languages falling into neglect and disuse during those periods, *au contraire*, they were among the first and prominent studies at Oxford and Cambridge; and that men, profoundly skilled in both, composed the conference who sat in solemn and nature deliberation at Hampton Court. ... we believe it will be difficult for the most incredulous mind to evade the conviction, that the venerable translators were eminently qualified, both by their learning and their piety, to produce an accurate and faithful version of the Bible in the English language..." (*Objections to a Baptist Version of the New Testament*, 1837, pp. 42-45).

Alexander McClure, author of *Translators Revived*, 1855: "As to the capability of those men, we may say again that by the good Providence of God, their work was undertaken in a fortunate time. Not only had the English language, that singular compound, then ripened to its full perfection, but the study of Greek, and of the oriental tongues ... had then been carried to a greater extent in England than ever before or since. ... it is confidently expected that the reader of these pages will yield to the conviction, that all the colleges of Great Britain and America, even in this proud day of boastings, could not bring together the same number of divines equally qualified by learning and piety for the great undertaking. Few indeed are the living names worthy to be enrolled with these mighty men. It would be impossible to convent out of any one Christian denomination, or out of all, a body of translators, on whom the whole Christian community would bestow such confidence as is reposed upon that illustrious company, or who would prove themselves as deserving of such confidence."

Arthur Cleveland Coxe, Episcopalian bishop in western New

York, exalted the skills of the King James translators in his “Apology for the Common English Bible” of 1857. He called them “those giants of Scriptural scholarship” and the “great scholars of the old time, whose reputation and labours have received the homage of men of learning for more than two centuries complete.” After describing some of the individual translators, Coxe concluded: “A biographical history of all who had part in the Translation, is a desideratum, and might be an effectual antidote to the itch for superseding their work, which seems to trouble so many in our days” (Coxe, *An Apology for the Common English Bible*, pp, 21, 22). (A “disideratum” is “that which is not possessed, but which is desirable; any perfection or improvement which is wanted,” Webster 1828).

Dean John Burgon (1883), one of the greatest textual scholars of the 19th century: “... the plain fact being that the men of 1611 produced a work of real genius: seizing with generous warmth the meaning and intention of the sacred Writers. ... Verily, those men understood their craft! ‘There were giants in those days.’ ... the Spirit of their God was mightily upon them” (*The Revision Revised*, 1883, pp. 167, 196).

Edward F. Hills (1956, 1979), who had a doctorate in textual criticism from Harvard: “Judged even by modern standards, their knowledge of the biblical languages was second to none” (*The King James Version Defended*, p. 114).

David Otis Fuller (1986), Princeton-educated Pastor of Wealthy Street Baptist Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan: “God Himself, I believe, was in the choosing of those great scholars of 1611. NEVER in all world history has any such a group of learned and tremendous geniuses ever gathered together. The Chairman of the 1611 committee, Lancelot Andrews, was fluent in 20 languages and spent 5 hours a day in prayer” (D.O. Fuller in a letter to David Cloud, February 7, 1986).

The King James translators had the noble and godly objective of opening the eternal Word of God to English-speaking readers:

“Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most Holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water, even as Jacob rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well, by which means the flocks of Laban were watered. Indeed without translation into the vulgar tongue, the unlearned are but like children at Jacobs well (which was deep) without a bucket or some thing to draw with: or as that person mentioned by Isaiah, to whom when a sealed book was delivered, with the motion: ‘Read this, I pray thee,’ he was fain to answer, ‘I cannot, for it is sealed’” (“Translators to the Reader”).

The translators knew that the great wisdom necessary to produce an accurate Bible translation can only come from God.

“To that purpose there were many chosen, that were greater in other men’s eyes than in their own, and that sought the truth rather than their own praise . . . And in what sort did these assemble? In the trust of their own knowledge, or of their sharpness of wit, or deepness of judgment, as it were an arm of flesh? At no hand. They trusted in him that hath the key of David, opening, and no man shutting; they prayed to the Lord, the Father of our Lord, to the effect that St. Augustine did, O let thy Scriptures be my pure delight; let me not be deceived in them, neither let me deceive by them. In this confidence and with this devotion, did they assemble together; not too many, lest one should trouble another; and yet many, lest many things haply might escape them” (“Translators to the Reader”).

They understood that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. To my knowledge, a loftier testimony of the Bible’s divine inspiration has never been written than that which is contained in the Preface to the 1611 King James Bible.

“It is not only an armour, but also a whole armory of weapons, both offensive, and defensive; whereby we may save our selves and put the enemy to flight. It is not an herb, but a tree, or rather a whole paradise of trees and the leaves for medicine. It is not a pot of Manna, or a cruse of oil, which were for memory only, or for a meal’s meat or two, but as it were a shower of heavenly bread sufficient for a whole host, be it never so great; and as it were a

whole cellar full of oil vessels; whereby all our necessities may be provided for, and our debts discharged. In a word, it is a Panary of wholesome food, against fenowed [moldy] traditions; a Physicians-shop (Saint Basil calleth it) of preservatives against poisoned heresies; a Pandect* of profitable laws, against rebellious spirits; a treasury of most costly jewels, against beggarly rudiments; Finally a fountain of most pure water springing up unto everlasting life. And what marvel? The original thereof being from heaven, not from earth; the author being God, not man; the enditer [composer], the holy spirit, not the wit of the Apostles or Prophets; the Pen-men such as were sanctified from the womb, and endued with a principal portion of God's spirit; the matter, verity, piety, purity, uprightness; the form, God's word, God's testimony, God's oracles, the word of truth, the word of salvation, etc.; the effects, light of understanding, stableness of persuasion, repentance from dead works, newness of life, holiness, peace, joy in the holy Ghost; lastly, the end and reward of the study thereof, fellowship with the Saints, participation of the heavenly nature, fruition of an inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that never shall fade away; Happy is the man that delighteth in the Scripture, and thrice happy that meditateth in it day and night" ("Translators to the Reader"). [* A *pandect* is a treatise which contains the whole of any science.]

Except for John Harmer, who was paid 50 pounds, the translators were not paid for their work. A few of them were awarded, though, with ecclesiastical positions that provided an income.

The 12 men who did the final revision received a weekly stipend of 30 shillings for basic expenses as they met in London for the nine months required to complete that portion of the work. This was paid by the king's printer Robert Barker.

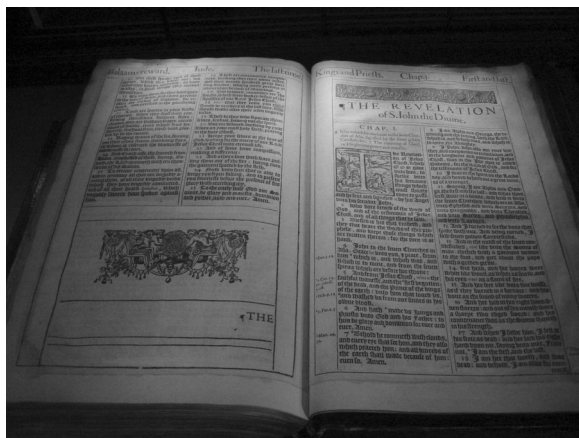
The final revision committee met at Stationers Hall. "The Stationers' charter established a monopoly on book production ensured that once a member had asserted ownership of a text (or 'copy') no other member would publish it. This is the origin of the term 'copyright'. Members asserted such ownership by entering it in the 'entry book of copies' or the Stationers' Company Register. In 1695 this monopoly was diminished and in 1710 Parliament passed the first copyright act. In 1606 the Company bought Abergavenny House in Ave Maria Lane and moved out of

Peters College. The new hall burnt down in the Great Fire of 1666 along with books to the value of about £40,000. It was rebuilt; its present interior is much as it was when it reopened in 1673. The Court Room was added in 1748 and in 1800 the external façade was remodelled to its present form” (*Wikipedia.com*).

King James had nothing to do with the translation itself.

The Printing

The King James Bible was published in 1611. It was printed by Robert Barker in a large volume bearing on its title page the following inscription: “The Holy Bible, containing the Old Testament & the New: Newly Translated out of the Original tongues; & with the former Translations diligently compared and revised by His Majesties special Commandment.”



Robert Barker's father Christopher had obtained an exclusive patent as the Royal Printer in 1577. This was transferred to Robert in 1589. Thus when James I ascended the

throne, Robert Barker held this position. He started printing Geneva Bibles in 1600 and printed the first Bishops Bible that same year.

There were seven printings of the first edition. The Gene Scott collection claims to be the only collection that has all seven -- <http://www.drgenescott.org/stn27.htm>. This

collection is located in The Crystal Cathedral, Garden Grove, California.

There were many mistakes in the first printings. The most infamous is the omission of “not” from the seventh commandment in Exodus 20:14. Copies containing this error were called “the wicked Bible.” (The printer was fined the massive sum of two or three thousand pounds by the King. See Scrivener, *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible*, p. 25.)

The King James Bible master “remained the King’s Printer’s hands at least until 1660 and is believed to have burned in the Great Fire of London in 1666” (<http://www.drgenescott.org/stn27.htm>). It is not possible to reconstruct the master today except by consulting the 1611 editions.

The Nature of the Translation

The King James Bible is a masterpiece of Bible translation. It is a solid translation of the Hebrew and Greek and its English language is peerless. It has been called “The Miracle of English Prose.”

I have about 100 books in my library that extol the excellence of the King James Bible. The following statements could be greatly multiplied.

In his book *The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation* (Wheaton: Crossway Book, 2002), Dr. Leland Ryken, professor of English at Wheaton College, continually applauds the KJV, praising its beauty, dignity, and power. He uses it as an example of what good Bible translation is all about. He calls for modern translation work to be done after “the King James tradition” (p. 282, 284). The book contains many quotations exalting the KJV.

“peerless literary masterpiece” (p. 270)

“unquestionably the most beautiful book in the world” (p.

267)

“the noblest monument of English prose” (p. 258)

“incomparably the best English translation in its rhythm” (p. 259)

“when it comes to stylistic range and flexibility, the King James Bible is peerless” (p. 227)

“the touchstone of affective power” (p. 206)

“matchless in its literary qualities among all English translations” (p. 188)

“the supremely literary English translation” (p. 163)

“immeasurably superior” (p. 163)

“the touchstone of literary excellence” (p. 62)

“stylistically the greatest English Bible translation ever produced” (p. 51)

Even Roman Catholics have given grudging praise to the King James Bible, recognizing that it has been the bulwark of Protestantism in the English-speaking world.

Alexander Geddes, even when calling for a new translation, gave the following praise to the King James Bible in 1786: “The means and the method employed to produce this translation promised something extremely satisfactory; and great expectations were formed from the united abilities of so many learned men ... and indeed, IF ACCURACY, FIDELITY, AND THE STRICTEST ATTENTION TO THE LETTER OF THE TEXT, BE SUPPOSED TO CONSTITUTE THE QUALITIES OF AN EXCELLENT VERSION, THIS OF ALL VERSIONS, MUST, IN GENERAL, BE ACCOUNTED THE MOST EXCELLENT. Every sentence, every word, every syllable, every letter and point, seem to have been weighed with the nicest exactitude; and expressed, either in the text, or margin, with the greatest precision. Pagninus himself is hardly more literal; and it was well remarked by Robertson, above a hundred years ago, that IT MAY SERVE AS A LEXICON OF THE HEBREW LANGUAGE, AS WELL AS FOR A TRANSLATION” (Geddes, *Prospectus of a New Translation of the Holy Bible*; cited from William Brantley, *Objections to a*

Baptist Version of the New Testament, 1837, pp. 47, 48).

Frederick William Faber, who went over to the Catholic Church from the Church of England during the Oxford Movement, used these words:

“Who will say that the uncommon beauty and marvellous English of the Protestant Bible is not one of the great strongholds of heresy in this country? It lives on the ear like a music that can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells, which the convert scarcely knows how he can forego. Its felicities seem often to be almost things rather than words. ... It is his sacred thing, which doubt never dimmed and controversy never soiled; and in the length and breadth of the land there is not a Protestant with one spark of religiousness about him whose spiritual biography is not in his Saxon Bible” (Faber, quoted from John Eadie, *The English Bible*, II, p. 158).

These words were not only true; they were prophetic. Since the pulling down of the King James Bible and its replacement among Protestant churches in general with the multiplicity of conflicting modern versions, the Rome-oriented ecumenical movement has made amazing progress.

Matthew Poole, 1669: “In the English version published in 1611, occur many specimens of AN EDITION TRULY GIGANTIC, of UNCOMMON SKILL IN THE ORIGINAL TONGUES, or extraordinary critical acuteness and discrimination, which have been of great use to me very frequently in the most difficult texts” (Poole, *Synopsis Criticorum*; cited from James Lister, *The Excellence of the Authorized Version of the Sacred Scriptures Defended against the Socinians*, 1820, p. 17).

Edward Pocock, Commentary on Micah, 1685: “That translation from our own which we follow is such and SO SPEAKABLE TO THE ORIGINAL, as that we might well choose among others to follow it, were it not our own, and established by authority among us.”

Jonathan Swift, 1712: “The translators of our Bible were MASTERS OF AN ENGLISH STYLE much fitter for that work

than any which we see in our present writings, which I take to be owing to the simplicity that runs through the whole” (Jonathan Swift, *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue*, London, 1712).

Adam Clarke, 1810: “Those who have compared most of the European translations with the original, have not scrupled to say, that the English translation of the Bible made under the direction of king James I, is the most accurate and faithful of the whole. Nor is this its only praise; THE TRANSLATORS HAVE SEIZED THE VERY SPIRIT AND SOUL OF THE ORIGINAL AND EXPRESSED THIS ALMOST EVERYWHERE WITH PATHOS AND ENERGY. The original, from which it was taken, is alone superior to the Bible which was translated by the authority of king James. ... Besides, our translators have not only made a standard translation, but they have made their translation the standard of our language. ... This is an opinion in which my heart, my judgment, and my conscience coincide” (Adam Clarke, General Introduction to his *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1810-26).

William Orme, 1824: “Like every thing human, it is no doubt imperfect; but as a translation of the Bible, it has few rivals, and AS A WHOLE, NO SUPERIOR. It is in general faithful, simple, and perspicuous. IT HAS SEIZED THE SPIRIT AND COPIED THE MANNER OF THE DIVINE ORIGINALS. It seldom descends to meanness or vulgarity; but often rises to elegance and sublimity. It is level to the understanding of the cottager, and fit to meet the eye of the critic, the poet, and the philosopher. It has been the companion of our princes and our nobility, and prized by many of them as their most invaluable treasure. It is the birthright of our numerous population, and has proved the means of knowledge, holiness and joy to millions; and WE TRUST IT IS DESTINED FOR AGES YET TO COME, to be the glory of the rich, and the inheritance of the poor; the guide to the way-worn pilgrim, and the messenger of peace to many a dying

sinner” (William Orme, *Bibliotheca Biblica: a Select List of Books on Sacred Literature, with Notices Biographical, Critical, and Bibliographical*, 1824).

Thomas Fanshaw Middleton, 1841: “The style of our present version is incomparably superior to any thing which might be expected from the finical and perverted taste of our own age. It is simple, it is harmonious, it is energetic; and, which is of no small importance, use has made it familiar, and time has rendered it sacred” (Middleton, first Anglican bishop of Calcutta, *The Doctrine of the Greek article Applied to the Criticism and Illustration of the New Testament*, 1841).

John Dowling, Baptist leader in America and author of *History of Romanism*, 1850: “The fact is that the common version which it is proposed to amend, is, taken as a whole, a wonderful translation, and although it may be conceded that it is not perfect--for what human performance is so?--yet it is exceedingly doubtful, whether a translation has ever been made from any ancient book, Greek, Latin, or Oriental--which in point of faithfulness to its original can be compared with this, or which has fewer errors in proportion to the entire amount of its contents. ... to attempt to supplant it by a ‘new version,’ or TO INTRODUCE ANY MATERIAL ALTERATIONS, WOULD BE LIKE ‘GILDING REFINED GOLD’...” (*The Old-Fashioned Bible, or Ten Reasons against the Proposed Baptist Version of the New Testament*, 1850, pp. 11, 12, 13).

Arthur Cleveland Coxe, Episcopal bishop in western New York, 1857: “The Holy Scriptures, as translated in the reign of king James the First, are THE NOBLEST HERITAGE OF THE ANGLO-SAXON RACE. ... It was the work, in some degree, of all, who, in the successive stages of England’s growth and development, had contributed to that great principle of the Anglican Reformation ... It was the Bible of Adhelm and Bede and Aelfric and of Alfred; of Stephen Langton and Rolle of Hampole; of Wiclif and Tindal and Coverdale and Cranmer and Parker, and of all the noble

army of Marian Martyrs. Finally, it was the Bible which had been winnowed from whatever was unsubstantial in the fruits of all their labours, and which combined the merits of all; IT WAS THE FINEST OF THE WHEAT. ... The English language was in its prime and purity; its wells were undefiled. ... By the acclamation of the universe, it is the most faultless version of the Scriptures that ever existed in any tongue. To complain of its trifling blemishes, is to complain of the sun for its spots. ... ” (Coxe, *An Apology for the Common English Bible*, 1857, pp. 5, 6, 8).

Joseph Philpot, 1861: “They [the KJV translators] were deeply penetrated with a reverence for the word of God, and, therefore, they felt themselves bound by a holy constraint to discharge their trust in the most faithful way. UNDER THIS DIVINE CONSTRAINT THEY WERE LED TO GIVE US A TRANSLATION UNEQUALLED FOR FAITHFULNESS TO THE ORIGINAL, AND YET AT THE SAME TIME CLOTHED IN THE PUREST AND SIMPLEST ENGLISH. ... No one can read, with an enlightened eye, the discourses of our Lord without seeing what a divine simplicity ran through all His words; and our translators were favoured with heavenly wisdom to translate these words of the Lord into language as simple as that in which they first fell from His lips. What can exceed the simplicity and yet beauty and blessedness of such declarations as these?--‘I am the bread of life;’ ‘I am the door;’ ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life;’ ‘I lay down My life for the sheep;’ ‘I am the vine;’ ‘God is love;’ ‘By grace ye are saved.’ Even where the words are not strictly monosyllabic they are of the simplest kind, and as such are adapted to the capacity of every child of God, in whatever rank of life he may be. The blessedness of having not only such a Bible, but possessing such a translation of it can never be sufficiently valued. ... it is because the language of our Bible is such pure, simple, unaffected, idiomatic, intelligible English that it has become so thoroughly English a book, and has interwoven itself with our very laws and language” (Joseph Philpot, *Gospel Standard*, February 1861).

[COMMENT: As we have seen, the purity and simplicity of the language of the KJV regularly goes back to William Tyndale, and some times even to Wycliffe.]

Frederick Scrivener, 1884: “Nor can the attentive student of the Authorized version fail to marvel at the perfect and easy command over the English language exhibited by its authors on every page. The fulness and variety of their diction, the raciness of their idiomatic resources, SEEM ALMOST TO DEFY IMITATION, while they claim our just and cheerful admiration” (*The Authorized Edition of the English Bible*, p. 141).

William Muir, *Our Grand Old Bible*, 1911: “The influence of the Authorised Version, alike on our religion and our literature, can never be exaggerated. ... The Authorized Version has often been called A WELL OF ENGLISH UNDEFILED, and much of its purity is due to the fact that its water was drawn from the ancient springs. It has the universal note which gives it a place among the immortals. IT HAS THE DIVINE TOUCH, EVEN IN ITS DICTION, WHICH LIFTS IT ABOVE THE LIMITATIONS OF LOCALITY AND TIME, AND MAKES IT VALID AND LIVING FOR ALL THE AGES. Like A RARE JEWEL FITLY SET, the sacred truths of Scripture have found such suitable expression in it, that we can hardly doubt that they filled those who made it with reverence and awe, so that they walked softly in the Holy Presence. ... THE ENGLISH BIBLE IS STILL FRESH AND MIGHTY, EVEN IF IT HAS ARCHAIC OR OBSOLETE WORDS. IT HAS WAXED OLD, BUT IT HAS NOT DECAYED. ITS YOUTH ABIDES, AND THE SUN NEVER SETS ON ITS SPHERE OF INFLUENCE. Many volumes have perished since it first saw the light; but its message is as modern as ever. It has not only kept up-to-date, it has anticipated every need of men, and still responds to every new demand” (Muir, *Our Grand Old Bible*, 1911, pp. 131, 192, 238).

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, critic, scholar, and educational reformer, 1913: “I grant you, to be sure, that the path to the

Authorised Version was made straight by previous translators, notably by William Tyndale. I grant you that Tyndale was a man of genius, and Wyclif before him a man of genius. I grant you that the forty-seven men who produced the Authorised Version worked in the main upon Tyndale's version, taking that for their basis. Nay, if you choose to say that Tyndale was a miracle in himself, I cheerfully grant you that as well. ... and when Tyndale has been granted you have yet to face the miracle that forty-seven men--not one of them known, outside of this performance, for any superlative talent--sat in committee and almost consistently, over a vast extent of work--improved upon what Genius had done. I give you the word of an old committee-man that this is not the way of committees--that only by miracle is it the way of any committee. ... Individual genius such as Tyndale's or even Shakespeare's, though we cannot explain it, we may admit as occurring somehow, and not incredibly, in the course of nature. But THAT A LARGE COMMITTEE OF FORTY-SEVEN SHOULD HAVE GONE STEADILY THROUGH THE GREAT MASS OF HOLY WRIT, SELDOM INTERFERING WITH GENIUS, YET, WHEN INTERFERING, SELDOM MISSING TO IMPROVE: THAT A COMMITTEE OF FORTY-SEVEN SHOULD HAVE CAPTURED (OR EVEN, LET US SAY, SHOULD HAVE RETAINED AND IMPROVED) A RHYTHM SO PERSONAL, SO CONSTANT, THAT OUR BIBLE HAS THE VOICE OF ONE AUTHOR SPEAKING THROUGH ITS MANY MOUTHS: THAT, GENTLEMEN, IS A WONDER BEFORE WHICH I CAN ONLY STAND HUMBLE AND AGHAST. Does it or does it not strike you as queer that the people who set you 'courses of study' in English Literature never include the Authorised Version, which not only intrinsically but historically is out and away the greatest book of English Prose. ... the Authorised Version astounds me, as I believe it will astound you when you compare it with earlier translations. Aristotle (it has been said) invented Chance to cover the astonishing fact that there were certain phenomena for which he found himself wholly unable to account. Just so, if one may compare very small things with very great, I

spoke of the Authorised Version as a ‘miracle.’ It was, it remains, marvellous to me. ... were this University to limit me to three texts on which to preach English Literature to you, I should choose the Bible in our Authorised Version, Shakespeare, and Homer (though it were but in a prose translation)” (*On the Art of Writing, Lectures delivered before the University of Cambridge, 1913-14*).

John Livingston Lowes (1867-1945), American scholar of English literature, 1936, called the King James Bible “THE NOBLEST MONUMENT OF ENGLISH PROSE.” This was the title of the chapter that he contributed to *Essays in Appreciation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936).

Arthur Clutton-Brock, essayist, critic, and journalist, 1938, said: “The Authorized Version of the Bible is a piece of literature WITHOUT ANY PARALLEL IN MODERN TIMES. Other countries of course, have their translations of the Bible, but they are not great works of art” (Vernon Storr, editor, *The English Bible: Essays by Various Writers*, Clutton-Brock, “The English Bible,” 1938).

H. Wheeler Robinson, *Ancient and English Versions of the Bible*, 1940: “The Authorized Version is A MIRACLE AND A LANDMARK. Its felicities are manifold, its music has entered into the very blood and marrow of English thought and speech, it has given countless proverbs and proverbial phrases even to the unlearned and the irreligious. There is no corner of English life, no conversation ribald or reverent it has not adorned. Embedded in its tercentenary wording is the language of a century earlier. IT HAS BOTH BROADENED AND RETARDED THE STREAM OF ENGLISH SPEECH” (Robinson, *Ancient and English Versions of the Bible*, p. 205).

Henry Louis Mencken (1880-1956), “the most prominent newspaperman, book reviewer, and political commentator of his day,” said this about the King James Bible: “It is the most beautiful of all the translations of the Bible; indeed, IT IS

PROBABLY THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PIECE OF WRITING IN ALL THE LITERATURE OF THE WORLD. ... Its English is extraordinarily simple, pure, eloquent, lovely. It is a mine of lordly and incomparable poetry, at once the most stirring and the most touching ever heard of" (Gustavas Paine, Preface, *The Learned Men*).

Winston Churchill, 1956: "The scholars who produced this masterpiece are mostly unknown and unremembered. But they forged an enduring link, literary and religious, between the English-speaking people of the world" (*History of the English-Speaking People*, "The New World").

Gustavus Paine, author of *The Men Behind the KJV*, 1977, wrote: "... not only was theirs the best of the English Bibles; THERE IS, IN NO MODERN LANGUAGE, A BIBLE WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH IT AS LITERATURE. ... indeed the 1611 rhythms have been potent to affect writing, speaking, and thinking ever since the learned men produced them. ... They knew how to make the Bible scare the wits out of you and then calm you, all in English as superb as the Hebrew and the Greek" (pp. 169, 171, 172).

When Harvard University Press published *The Literary Guide to the Bible* in 1987, they selected the KJV for the literary analysis of each of the Bible books. "... our reasons for doing so must be obvious: it is the version most English readers associate with the literary qualities of the Bible, and IT IS STILL ARGUABLY THE VERSION THAT BEST PRESERVES THE LITERARY EFFECTS OF THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES" (*The Literary Guide to the Bible*, p. 7).

Jonathan Yardley, Washington Post: "King James Bible is THE GREATEST WORK EVER WRITTEN IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, PERIOD" (quoted in Adam Nicholson, *God's Secretaries*, in the section "Praise for God's Secretaries" which follows the table of contents).

David Daniell, 2003: "On a historical scale, the sheer longevity of this version is a phenomenon, without parallel.

... IN THE STORY OF THE EARTH WE LIVE ON, ITS INFLUENCE CANNOT BE CALCULATED. ITS WORDS HAVE BEEN FOUND TO HAVE A UNIQUE QUALITY, of being able both to lift up a dedicated soul higher than had been thought, and to reach even below the lowest depths of human experience” (David Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 427).

Adam Nicholson, 2003: “The marvels of this passage [Psalm 8:3-5] consist above all in one quality, or at least in one combination of qualities: AN ABSOLUTE SIMPLICITY OF VOCABULARY SET IN A RHYTHM OF THE UTMOST STATELINESS AND MAJESTY. The words are necessarily slowed to a muffled drumbeat of a pace. There is no hurrying this, no running away with it, as a Shakespeare speech can sometimes hurry, a rushed cataract of words tripping over itself even as it emerges. The characteristic sound of the King James Bible is not like that but, like the ideal of majesty itself, is indescribably vast and yet perfectly accessible, reaching up to the sublime and down to the immediate and the concrete, without any apparent effort. The rhetoric of this translation has, in fact, precisely the qualities which this psalm attributes to God: a majesty that is mindful of man” (Adam Nicholson, *God’s Secretaries*, pp. 230, 231).

The style of the King James Bible is not that of the 17th century but is an English style molded by the Hebrew and Greek.

“... the English of the King James Version is not the English of the early 17th century. To be exact, it is not a type of English that was ever spoken anywhere. IT IS BIBLICAL ENGLISH, which was not used on ordinary occasions even by the translators who produced the King James Version. As H. Wheeler Robinson (1940) pointed out, one need only compare the preface written by the translators with the text of their translation to feel the difference in style. And the observations of W.A. Irwin (1952) are to the same purport. The King James Version, he reminds us, owes its merit, not to 17th-century English--which was very different--but to its faithful translation of the original. ITS STYLE IS THAT OF THE HEBREW AND OF THE NEW TESTAMENT GREEK. Even in their use of *thee* and *thou* the translators were not following 17th-century

English usage but biblical usage, for at the time these translators were doing their work these singular forms had already been replaced by the plural *you* in polite conversation” (Edward Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, p. 218).

“Hallam ... [declares] that the English of the Jacobean version [the King James Bible] ‘is not the English of Daniel, or Raleigh, or Bacon’--in fact, that ‘it is not the language of the reign of James I.’ ... this is strictly true, and for the reason that he assigns, namely, ‘in consequence of the principle of adherence to the original versions which had been kept up since the time of Henry VIII” (Albert Cook, *The Authorized Version of the Bible and Its Influence*, 1910).

“This English is there to serve the original not to replace it. It speaks in its master’s voice, and is not the English you would have heard on the street, then or ever. It took up its life in a new and distinct dimension of linguistic space, SOMEWHERE BETWEEN ENGLISH AND GREEK (OR, FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT, BETWEEN ENGLISH AND HEBREW). These scholars were not pulling the language of the scriptures into the English they knew and used at home. The words of the King James Bible are just as much English pushed towards the condition of a foreign language as a foreign language translated into English. It was, in other words, more important to make English godly than to make the words of God into the sort of prose that any Englishmen would have written, and that secretarial relationship to the original languages of the scriptures shaped the translation” (Adam Nicholson, *God’s Secretaries*, pp. 210, 211).

Professor Gerald Hammond of the University of Manchester, England, said THE KJV TRANSLATORS “HAVE TAKEN CARE TO REPRODUCE THE SYNTACTIC DETAILS OF THE ORIGINALS,” and, “At its best, which means often, THE AUTHORIZED VERSION HAS THE KIND OF TRANSPARENCY WHICH MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR THE READER TO SEE THE ORIGINAL CLEARLY. It lacks the narrow interpretative bias of modern versions, and is the stronger for it” (Gerald Hammond, “English Translations of the Bible,” *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, Harvard University Press, 1987, pp. 664, 656).

The reason for this was the translators’ conviction that the Hebrew and Greek words of the Scripture are the eternal

words of God. In “The Translators to the Reader,” Miles Smith spoke for them all when he said of the Bible: “It is ... a fountain of most pure water springing up unto everlasting life. And what marvel? The original thereof being from heaven, not from earth; the author being God, not man; the enditer [composer], the holy spirit, not the wit of the Apostles or Prophets; the Pen-men such as were sanctified from the womb, and endued with a principal portion of God’s spirit...”

The King James Bible has a proper “biblical” style that is understandable but exalted and reverent, having the proper “rhythm” and “tone.” We have already seen that “majesty” was one of the objectives of the KJV translators.

“The Bible is not a modern, human book. It is not as new as the morning newspaper, and no translation should suggest this. If the Bible were this new, it would not be the Bible. On the contrary, the Bible is an ancient, divine Book, which nevertheless is always new because in it God reveals Himself. Hence THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE SHOULD BE VENERABLE AS WELL AS INTELLIGIBLE, and the King James Version fulfills these two requirements better than any other Bible in English” (Edward F. Hills, p. 219).

“I believe that it is correct for an English translation to preserve AN APPROPRIATE ARCHAIC FLAVOR as a way of preserving the distance between us and the biblical world. Joseph Wood Krutch used an evocative formula in connection with the King James Bible when he spoke of ‘an appropriate flavor of a past time’” (Leland Ryken, *The Word of God in English*, p. 182).

“GOOD RHYTHM FOR A BIBLE IS LIKE A QUALIFYING EXAM: If a translation cannot measure up on this matter, it is not in the running to be a superior Bible for public use and oral reading in more private situations. ... The best test of rhythm is simply to read passages aloud. ... If in oral reading a passage ebbs and flows smoothly, avoids abrupt stops between words and phrases where possible, and provides a sense of continuity, it is rhythmically excellent. If a translation clutters the flow of language and is consistently staccato in effect, it is rhythmically inferior. ... All of these considerations make rhythm an essential translation issue, not a peripheral one. For a book that is read aloud as often as the Bible is, and for a book whose utterances are so frequently charged with strong feeling and sublime ideas, excellent rhythm should be regarded as a given” (Ryken, pp. 257, 259).

"Tone is the literary term that refers to such things as the writer's attitude toward his or her subject matter, the suitability of style for the content, and the correctness of effect on a reader. ... From time to time I encounter the sentiment from dynamic equivalency advocates that the Bible 'should not sound like the Bible.' Billy Graham endorsed *The Living Letters* by saying that 'it is thrilling to read the Word ... [in] a style that reads much like today's newspaper.' I disagree with these verdicts. A SACRED BOOK SHOULD SOUND LIKE A SACRED BOOK, NOT LIKE THE DAILY NEWSPAPER. It should command attention and respect, and to do so it cannot be expressed in the idiom of the truck stop. The failure of modern colloquial translations is frequently a failure of tone." (Ryken, *The Word of God in English*, pp. 278, 279, 280)

"To make the Bible readable in the modern sense means to flatten out, tone down and convert into tepid expository prose what in K.J.V. is wild, full of awe, poetic, and passionate. It means stepping down the voltage of K.J.V. so it won't blow any fuses" (Dwight Macdonald, "The Bible in Modern Undress," in *Literary Style of the Old Bible and the New*, ed. D.G. Kehl, 1970, p. 40).

"WE ARE IN REAL DANGER OF LOSING, IN AN AGE OF FLAT PROSE, AN ESSENTIAL AND INVALUABLE CAPACITY OF THE LANGUAGE, FULLY REALIZED ONCE IN THE ENGLISH BIBLE ... the capacity to express by tone and overtone, by rhythm, and by beauty and force of vocabulary, the religious, the spiritual, the ethical cravings of man" (Henry Canby, "A Sermon on Style," in *Literary Style of the Old Bible and the New*, ed. D.G. Kehl, 1970, p. 427).

The King James Version was intended from the beginning to be a study Bible.

It contained 8,422 marginal notes. Of these, 4,111 give a more literal meaning of the Hebrew and Greek, 2,156 give alternative translations, and 67 give variant readings. In the New Testament there are 37 variant readings in the marginal notes. "As the marginal notes indicate, the King James translators did not regard their work as perfect or inspired, but they did consider it to be a trustworthy reproduction of God's holy Word, and as such they commended it to their Christian readers" (Edward Hills, p. 216).

The King James Bible gained general ascendancy over the popular Geneva Bible within a couple of decades.

It was natural that the Geneva Bible would retain its popularity for some time. It had been THE English Bible for half a century and had become an intimate part of the private lives, ministry, and public thinking of the English people.

By the 1630s, though, the Geneva Bible ceased to be imported from Holland.

During the transitional period many quoted both from the Geneva and the King James. This was true of the poet John Milton, author of *Paradise Lost*; John Bunyan, Baptist preacher and author of *Pilgrim's Progress*; and Oliver Cromwell who led the government from the beheading of Charles I to the coronation of Charles II.

Some have taken the position that the King James Bible won over its successors strictly because of commercial monopolies or because it was promoted by the ecclesiastical authorities in England, and some look upon its triumph as a mere accident of history. But these theories do not explain the following:

They do not explain why the Geneva Bible stopped being printed not only in England, but everywhere else as well. Regardless of how exclusive was their right to print Bibles in England, Robert Barker and Cambridge University could not stop the importation of Geneva Bibles from Europe; and had there been a market we can be certain that the European presses would have taken advantage of it and would have supplied as many copies of the Geneva Bible as Englishmen wanted to purchase. The printing of the Tyndale Bible was entirely forbidden in England until after Tyndale's death, but this did not stop the people from purchasing copies that were smuggled in from Europe, even at the threat of severe persecution.

These theories also do not explain why the ecclesiastical authorities of England were never able to succeed in foisting their will upon the people before the time of the King James Bible. Henry VIII's attempt to keep the people from loving the Tyndale Bible had failed. The bishops' attempt to replace the Geneva Bible with the Bishops Bible had failed. The Archbishop of Canterbury even refused to allow the Geneva Bible to be printed in England during his reign in an attempt to discourage its sale, but nothing changed. The people continued to purchase the imported Geneva, because it is the one they wanted. We can be sure that had the British people continued to prefer the Geneva Bible over the King James indefinitely, no amount of badgering from ecclesiastical authorities and no commercial monopoly would have changed their minds.

These theories also do not explain why the King James Bible remained unchallenged for so long and why it retains a strong hold upon people's affection even to this day. David Daniell, who holds the commercial monopoly theory, admits, "...the sheer longevity of this version is a phenomenon, without parallel. English translations come and go, some with strong effect: but 'King James' is still the bestselling book in the world."

If the King James Bible won over its predecessors only on the weight of commercial interests and not because of its inherent superiority, why did it dominate the field for such an extraordinary length of time, not only in Great Britain, but also in America and Canada and throughout the English-speaking world?

We believe that the real explanation for the triumph of the King James Bible is divine blessing. It triumphed because the people loved it. It triumphed because no competitor in the past 394 years has taken its measure. And unlike modern versions such as the New International and the New Living and the Good News, sales of the King James Bible have not

been sustained by massive advertising campaigns or by the promotion of the world's most popular evangelist.

The King James Version is still revered by millions of English-speaking people. In spite of the vast advertising campaign that has been waged for 100 years in favor of the modern versions, by the mid-1990s the KJV was still outselling all opponents.

In 1994 the following appeared in the preface to *The King James Bible Word Book*: “Despite the availability of many new translations and paraphrases of God’s Word, THE VENERABLE KING JAMES VERSION STILL POSTS MORE SALES EACH YEAR THAN ANY OTHER” (*The King James Bible Word Book*, Publisher’s Preface, p. iii).

In 1995, I wrote to Thomas Nelson Publishers to ask what English version had the greatest sales, and they replied that the King James still had the greatest sales in the United States. “In your fax dated March 27th, you mentioned a statistic that the ‘NIV version leads the King James Version in sales since 1986.’ This perspective is usually based on data reported by Spring Arbor Distributors which footnotes in their report that these figures are based on their distribution only. ALL GENERAL DISTRIBUTORS SELL MORE KJV than NIV. Unfortunately there is no industry-wide report available” (Philip Stoner, Vice President, Biblical and Religious Reference Publishing, Thomas Nelson, April 4, 1995).

A 1995 poll showed that nearly all Americans own at least one version of the Bible and that approximately two-thirds of those surveyed claim the Authorized Version as their main translation (Thomas Holland, *Crowned with Glory*, chapter 5, “The English Jewel,” citing information from Jennifer Lowe, “Buy the Book,” *Dayton Daily News*, Dayton Ohio, Sept. 16, 1995, p. 7C).

Tyndale's Influence upon the KJV

The King James Version is a revision of the Tyndale Bible. Comparisons have been made, showing, for example, that nine-tenths of the Authorized Version in the First Epistle of John and five-sixths of the Epistle of Ephesians are directly from Tyndale. "These proportions are maintained throughout the entire New Testament" (Price, *The Ancestry of Our English Bible*, p. 251).

Tyndale Bible, Philippians 2:5-13 –

"Let the same mind be in you the which was in Christ Jesus: which, being in the shape of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Nevertheless he made himself of no reputation, and took on him the shape of a servant, and became like unto men, and was found in his apparel as a man. He humbled himself and became obedient unto the death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath exalted him, and given him a name above all names: that in the name of Jesus should every knee bow, both of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under earth, and that all tongues should confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, unto the praise of God the Father. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not when I was present only, but now much more in mine absence, even so perform your own health with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both the will and also the deed, even of good will."

Much of the powerful, direct, energetic style of the King James Bible is Tyndale's. British historian James Froude observed: "Of the translation itself (the 1611), though since that time it has been many times revised and altered, we may say that it is substantially the Bible with which we are all familiar. The peculiar genius—if such a word may be permitted—which breathes through it—the mingled tenderness and majesty—the Saxon simplicity—the preternatural grandeur—unequalled, unapproached in the attempted improvements of modern scholars—all are here, and bear the impress of the mind of one man—William Tyndale. Lying, while engaged in that great office, under the shadow of death, the sword above his head and ready at any moment to fall, he worked, under circumstances alone

perhaps truly worthy of the task which was laid upon him—his spirit, as it were divorced from the world, moved in a purer element than common air” (Froude, *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, III, 1893, p. 84).

The King James Bible is also a significant improvement over the Tyndale as well as over the Geneva.

“In a cumulative way, all the virtues of the various translations which preceded it were gathered up. **Tyndale** had coined words and phrases like ‘peace maker,’ ‘passover,’ ‘long-suffering,’ ‘scapegoat,’ ‘the Lord’s Anointed,’ ‘flowing with milk and honey,’ ‘filthy lucre,’ ‘the salt of the earth,’ and ‘the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ **Coverdale**, ‘tender mercies,’ ‘respect of persons,’ ‘lovingkindness,’ ‘pride of life,’ ‘enter thou into the joy of the Lord,’ ‘the valley of the shadow of death’; the **Geneva Bible**, ‘Vanity of vanities,’ ‘except a man be born again,’ ‘smite them hip and thigh,’ ‘remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,’ ‘Solomon in all his glory,’ ‘a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,’ and other unforgettable turn of phrase. ... From the **Bishops’ Bible** came: ‘the voice of one crying in the wilderness,’ ‘less than the least of all the saints,’ ‘Sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof,’ and ‘Rend your hearts and not your garments.’ And from the **Second Wycliffe** version came ‘gave up the ghost,’ ‘well stricken in age,’ ‘held his peace,’ ‘three score and ten,’ ‘strait is the gate and narrow the way,’ and ‘a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’” (Benson Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution It Inspired*, 2002, p. 258)

Consider Genesis 1:1-2

Tyndale: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth. The earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the deep, and the spirit of God moved upon the water.

Geneva: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the waters.”

KJV: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

Here the Geneva is an improvement over the Tyndale, and

with only a few slight modifications the KJV translators, in turn, improve the Geneva. “These are slight and marvellous changes. Some are almost purely rhythmic. ... The commas after ‘heaven’ and in the second verse are signs to pause in the reading of it, and the colon after ‘deep’ marks a slightly longer rest. In these slightest of ways, Andrewes [the head of the KJV committee that translated the Pentateuch] introduces two new qualities to add to Tyndale’s: an aural fluency and the sense of ease which comes from that; and, allied to that ease, a pace of deliberate and magisterial slowness, no hurry here, pausing in its hugeness, those bass colours in the vocabulary matched by a heavy, soft drumming of the rhythm. It is as solemn and orderly as the beginning of a steady and majestic march” (Adam Nicholson, *God’s Secretaries*, pp. 193, 194).

Consider Psalm 23:6

Geneva: “Doubtless kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, And I shall remain a long season in the house of the Lord.”

KJV: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

The King James translators dramatically heightened the poetry and readability of this verse with a few simple changes.

Consider Psalm 121:1

Geneva: “I will lift mine eyes unto the mountains, from whence my help shall come.”

KJV: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.”

Again, there is a dramatic improvement in this verse with the slightest of modifications.

Consider the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13

Tyndale: “O our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Let thy kingdom come. Thy will be fulfilled, as well in earth, as it is

in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, even as we forgive our trespassers. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and power, and the glory for ever. Amen.”

KJV: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

Consider Matthew 11:28-30

Tyndale: “Come unto me all ye that labour and are laden and I will ease you. Take my yoke on you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

KJV: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Consider Mark 14:4

Tyndale: “When he was in Bethania, in the house of Simon the leper, even as he sat at meat, there came a woman with an alabaster box of ointment, called narde, that was pure and costly, and she brake the box and poured it on his head. There were some that disdained in themselves, and said: what needed this waste of ointment? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and been given unto the poor. And they grudged against her.”

KJV: “And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.”

“Tyndale is flat and only half accurate. ‘What needed this waste of ointment?’ is a lumpen sentence compared with ‘Why was this waste of the ointment made?’ Tyndale’s version does not embrace the strange ambiguity of making

something by wasting it which the Jacobean sentence conveys with economy, accuracy and its own form of resonant elegance. The King James Version steps beyond the question of liberalism verses gracefulness. It has plumbed and searched for the essence of the meaning and in that way is an exercise in passionate exactness. It doesn't choose between the clear and the rich but makes its elucidation into a kind of richness. IT IS A SLEIGHT OF HAND, BUT THIS IS THE CENTRAL PARADOX OF THE TRANSLATION: THE RICHNESS OF THE WORDS SOMEHOW REPRESENTS A SUBSTANCE THAT GOES BEYOND MERE WORDS AND THAT IS ITS TRIUMPH" (Nicholson, p. 197).

Consider Luke 22:20

Tyndale: "... This is the cup, the new testament, in my blood, which shall for you be shed."

KJV: "... This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

By a simple rearrangement of the words, the KJV improves the sound dramatically.

Consider John 3:16

Tyndale: "For God so loveth the world, that he hath given his only son, that none that believe in him, should perish: but should have everlasting life."

Geneva: "For God so loveth the world, that he hath given his only begotten Son: that none that believe in him, should perish, but have everlasting life."

KJV: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son: that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here the KJV not only follows the Greek more precisely than its predecessors, it also improves the English in small but perceptible ways.

The King James Bible's Worldwide Influence

It had a powerful influence upon England, producing spiritual reformation and making it into a great missionary-sending nation. We looked at this under the section on the Tyndale Bible.

The King James Bible also had a strong role in the creation of the United States of America, a nation that in former days, particularly, was a spiritual light to the entire world. America was created as a bastion of religious liberty by those who believed the Bible and were fleeing persecution in England and Europe. The King James Bible had a powerful influence upon America's founding political documents, and it built the hundreds of thousands of churches that once made her great, morally and spiritually.

The King James Bible has also had a very powerful influence upon the English language itself. The language is filled with sayings that come directly from this Bible. These have become so much a part of the language that most English speakers are not aware that they come from the Bible.

A few examples are "lick the dust," "land of the living," "from strength to strength," "pride goeth before a fall," "the skin of his teeth," "a thorn in the flesh," "the scales fall from your eyes," "salt of the earth," "fight the good fight," "turn the other cheek," "the pride of life," "labour of love," "root of all evil," "a soft answer," "the fat of the land," and "a land of milk and honey."

Consider the following testimony to the literary affect of the King James Bible from Cleland Boyd McAfee's *The Greatest English Classic: A Study of the King James Version of the Bible and Its Influence on Life and Literature* (1912), chapter IV, "The Influence of the King James Version on English Literature" --

The first and most notable fact regarding the influence of the Bible

on English literature is the remarkable extent of that influence. It is literally everywhere. If every Bible in any considerable city were destroyed, the Book could be restored in all its essential parts from the quotations on the shelves of the city public library. There are works, covering almost all the great literary writers, devoted especially to showing how much the Bible has influenced them.

The literary effect of the King James version at first was less than its social effect; but in that very fact lies a striking literary influence. For a long time it formed virtually the whole literature which was readily accessible to ordinary Englishmen. We get our phrases from a thousand books. The common talk of an intelligent man shows the effect of many authors upon his thinking. Our fathers got their phrases from one great book. Their writing and their speaking show the effect of that book. ...

First, the style of the King James version has influenced English literature markedly. Professor Gardiner opens one of his essays with the dictum that 'in all study of English literature, if there be any one axiom which may be accepted without question, it is that the ultimate standard of English prose style is set by the King James version of the Bible' (*Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1900, p. 684). You almost measure the strength of writing by its agreement with the predominant traits of this version. ...

The second element which English literature finds in the Bible is its language. The words of the Bible are the familiar ones of the English tongue, and have been kept familiar by the use of the Bible. The result is that 'the path of literature lies parallel to that of religion. They are old and dear companions, brethren indeed of one blood; not always agreeing, to be sure; squabbling rather in true brotherly fashion now and then; occasionally falling out very seriously and bitterly; but still interdependent and necessary to each other' (Chapman, *English Literature in Account with Religion*). Years ago a writer remarked that every student of English literature, or of English speech, finds three works or subjects referred to, or quoted from, more frequently than others. These are the Bible, tales of Greek and Roman mythology, and Aesop's Fables. Of these three, certainly the Bible furnishes the largest number of references. There is reason for that. A writer wants an audience. Very few men can claim to be independent of the public for which they write. There is nothing the public will be more apt to understand and appreciate quickly than a passing reference to the English Bible. So it comes about that when Dickens is describing the injustice of the Murdstones to little David Copperfield, he can put the whole matter before us in a parenthesis: "Though there was One once who set a child in the midst of the disciples." Dickens knew that his readers would at once catch the meaning of that reference, and would feel the

contrast between the scene he was describing and that simple scene. Take any of the great books of literature and black out the phrases which manifestly come directly from the English Bible, and you would mark them beyond recovery (McAfee, *The Greatest English Classic*).

The King James Bible also had a powerful influence upon the great missionary movement of the 17th to the 20th centuries. It was almost the exclusive Bible of English-speaking missionaries for three and a half centuries, during which the gospel of Jesus Christ went to the ends of the earth. In many cases, the King James Bible was also the basis for translations into other languages.

Even in the 21st century, the King James Bible continues to be the Bible of tens of thousands of congregations throughout the world and of thousands of missionaries. And it continues to be used as the basis for foreign-language translations. In recent decades fresh translations have been made from the King James Bible into Korean, Nepali, Thai, and other languages.

Summary of Why We Believe the King James Bible Is Still the Best English Version

The following is from “The King James Version of the Bible” by Steven Houck, minister in the Protestant Reformed Church (http://www.prcan.org/pamphlets/pamphlet_9.html)

Even though the King James Version has its weaknesses, it is an excellent translation and by far the best version available today. We must not be taken in by the modern versions and their claims. Our 400-year-old Bible is to be preferred above all others because it is better than them all.

1. It was translated by men who are unsurpassed in their knowledge of Biblical studies.

2. The translators were pious men of God who believed in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.
3. It is the mature fruit of generations of English translations as well as the careful work of its translators.
4. The King James Version is based upon the Greek Received Text rather than the critical Greek text of modern versions.
5. It is a word-for-word translation which faithfully and accurately reflects the originals.
6. The language is one of reverence and respect which gives honor to the majesty of its Author.
7. Of all the English versions of today, it alone is the Bible of the Reformation.
8. Our spiritual forefathers thought so highly of it that they were willing to suffer and even die for it.
9. It is the version which has been recognized for generations and generations as the Bible God has given to His English-speaking Church.

The Admonition of the King James Translators

In the Preface to the 1611 King James Bible, the translators give their readers the following important challenge:

“Ye are brought unto fountains of living water which ye digged not. Do not cast earth into them with the Philistines, neither prefer broken pits before them with the wicked Jews. Others have labored, and you may enter into their labors; O receive not so great things in vain, O despise not so great salvation! Be not like swine to tread under foot so precious things, neither yet like dogs to tear and abuse holy things. ... If light be come into the world, love not darkness more than light; if food, if clothing be offered, go not naked, starve not yourselves. ... It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, but a blessed thing it is, and will bring us to everlasting blessedness in the end, when God

speakeeth unto us, to hearken; when he setteth his word before us, to read it; when he stretcheth out his hand and calleth, to answer, Here am I, Here we are to do they will, O God.”

To this we say amen and amen.

Some Final Questions about the King James Bible

QUESTION # 1. Was the King James Bible Authorized?

This point has been debated aggressively, because no record of authorization has survived. (All of the documents from the Privy Council from 1600-1613 were destroyed in the Whitehall fire of 1619.) Whether or not it was actually authorized by a king is not really important, of course, as there can be no doubt that God put His stamp of approval upon it, and that is what matters. But since this is a point that is debated, I will give four reasons why I am confident that it is proper to refer to the King James Bible as authorized.

ANSWER:

First, at the Hampton Court conference in 1604 King James I made a formal decision to approve the new translation for use in all the churches. It was produced by royal order and under royal watchcare. It has never been explained to my satisfaction why this in itself does not constitute “authorization.” William Barlow’s report of the Hampton Court conference (Barlow was one of the KJV translators and was present at Hampton Court in 1604), stated that the decision was made by the king not only that a new translation would be made but also that it be “ratified by his Royal authority; and so his whole Church to be bound unto it, and none other” (Barlow, *The Sum and Substance of the Conference*, reprinted in Alfred Pollard, *Records of the English Bible*, pp. 46, 47). Barlow’s report was published with the king’s approval.

Second, the crown of England has held the copyright to the King James Bible from the beginning.

Third, the title page to the first edition of the King James Bible stated, “Appointed to be read in Churches.”

Fourth, in 1616 the king issued a command that only the King James Bible was to be printed in England.

Conclusion: The King James Bible was created by royal order, was printed by authority of the Crown of England, and was appointed to be read in all the churches. I see no reason why this does not constitute formal “authorization.”

QUESTION # 2. Was the King James Bible ever copyrighted?

ANSWER:

The King James Bible was produced under the direct authority of the British Crown and is owned and “copyrighted” by the crown of England.

The British government still licenses all printings of the text in Great Britain, typically by designating one printer as the authorized publisher and requiring other printers to obtain a sublicense from that one.

The universities of Oxford and Cambridge also possess the right to print editions of the crown copyrighted Bibles.

“Annotated study Bibles escape the monopoly by being labeled as ‘Bible commentaries,’ and can also use the text” (Freedictionary.com).

Effectively, there is no copyright outside of the United Kingdom. The KJV has been published without restriction in America, for example, since the revolution in the late 18th century.

QUESTION # 3. Was King James a homosexual?

ANSWER:

The accusation that King James I was a homosexual has often been made, but we need to be cautious about accepting it.

Actually, since he fathered eight children, he couldn't have been much of one! He wrote love letters to his wife and obviously enjoyed her most intimate company. He referred to her as "our dearest bedfellow" (Gustavus Paine, *The Men Behind the King James Version*, p. 4). When John Rainolds questioned the phrase in the Anglican marriage service, "with my body I thee worship," King James replied: "... if you had a good wife yourself, you would think that all the honor and worship you could do to her would be well bestowed" (Ibid.).

In a book that the king wrote for his son Henry (entitled *Basilikon Doron*, or *A King's Gift*), he made the following statements about the importance of sexual purity:

"But the principal blessing [is] in your marrying of a godly and virtuous wife ... being flesh of your flesh and bone of your bone. ... Marriage is the greatest earthly felicity" (p. 43).

"Keep your body clean and unpolluted while you give it to your wife whom to only it belongs for how can you justly crave to be joined with a Virgin if your body be polluted?" (p. 44).

"When you are married, keep inviolably your promise made to God in your marriage" (p. 45).

"Abstain from the filthy vice of adultery; remember only what solemn promise ye made to God at your marriage" (p. 54).

In fact, the king wrote plainly against the sin of homosexuality.

"Especially eschew to be effeminate" (*Basilikon Doron*, p. 46).

"There are some horrible crimes that ye are bound in conscience never to forgive: such as witchcraft, willful murder, incest, and sodomy" (p. 48).

The charge of homosexuality was made by the king's enemies and only after his death. The book *King James I Unjustly Accused* by Stephen A. Coston, Sr., makes the case that the charge was slanderous and untrue (KONIGSWORT Inc., St. Petersburg, FL, 1996). The charge was first made by Anthony Weldon, who had been expelled from his office by James for political reasons and had sworn that he would have his revenge. Weldon not only hated James, he hated the entire Scottish race. Historian Maurice Lee, Jr., warned, "Historians can and should ignore the venomous caricature of the king's person and behavior drawn by Anthony Weldon" (*Great Britain's Solomon: James VI & I in His Three Kingdoms*, 1990, pp. 309-310). See also David Wilson, *King James VI & I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956) and Christopher Durston, *James I* (London: Routledge, 1993).

That was an age in which intimate but non-sexual relationships between males was common. While at Cambridge, William Sancroft, the future Archbishop of Canterbury, had such a relationship with his roommate Arthur Bonnest. "They lived together, read together and slept together." When Bonnest contracted TB and had to leave the school, the two continued to correspond. Bonnest wrote: "Thou art oftener in my thoughts than ever; thou art nearer me than when I embraced them. Thou sayest thou lovest me; good, well repeat it again and again."

Adam Nicholson, who records this from Sancroft's personal correspondence, observes: "The age was at ease with unbridled but apparently quite unsexual love between men" (*God's Secretaries*, p. 132).

While we do not believe that King James was a homosexual, we do not defend his character very far. He was a profligate, conniving man, and he was a persecutor of Baptists and other separatists who refused to submit to the state church. In fact, the last two men burned alive in England for their faith were burned during the reign of James, and many others died in their cruel prison cells for no crime other than

following the Bible according to the dictates of their own conscience. It was because of the persecution poured out during James' reign that the Puritans fled England and sailed for America in 1607 and the Pilgrims followed in 1620.

The bottom line is that the character of King James I has no relevance to the King James Bible itself. Though he set the project in motion and there is evidence that he maintained an interest in it, he had no role in the translation. He did not even finance the project.

QUESTION # 6. Hasn't the KJV been revised and updated in thousands of places?

ANSWER:

There were thousand of changes but the vast majority was simple corrections of printing errors, typographical changes, and spelling updates. These were done by the British publishers of the KJV and can be grouped into two time periods.

There were updates made between 1613 and 1639 for the purpose of correcting printing errors. The revisers included Samuel Ward and John Bois, two of the original translators. "Some errors of the press having crept into the first edition, and others into later reprints, King Charles the First, in 1638, had another edition printed at Cambridge, which was revised by Dr. Ward and Mr. Bois, two of the original Translators who still survived, assisted by Dr. Thomas Goad, Mr. Mede, and other learned men" (Alexander McClure, *The Translators Revived*, 1855). Cambridge University Press published updated editions in 1629 and 1638.

Another modification was made between 1762-69 to correct any lingering printing errors and to update the spelling, enlarge and standardize the italics, and increase the number of cross references and marginal notes. This revision was begun in 1762 by Dr. F.S. Paris of Cambridge University and completed in 1769 by Dr. Benjamin Blayney of Hertford

College, Oxford University. “The edition in folio and quarto, revised and corrected with very great care by Benjamin Blayney, D.D., under the direction of the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, and the Delegates of The Clarendon Press, in 1769” (Alexander McClure, *The Revision Revised*, 1855). This revision was made by collating the then current editions of Oxford and Cambridge with those of 1611 and 1701.

All of the changes were of a minor nature, such as the following:

Printing errors were corrected. This was almost exclusively the nature of the corrections made in the 28 years following the first printing. Consider some examples:

Psalm 69:32 -- “seek good” was a printing error in the 1611 that was corrected to “seek God” in 1617

Ecclesiastes 1:5 -- “the place” was a printing error in the 1611 that was corrected to “his place” in 1638.

Matthew 6:3 -- “thy right doeth” was a printing error in the 1611 that was corrected to “thy right hand doeth” in 1613.

The use of italics was more standardized and expanded. The italic type indicates words that are not explicitly in the Hebrew and Greek but are implied and “being so necessary to the sense that the English reader would be perplexed or go wrong without it” (Scrivener, *The Authorized Edition*, p. 62).

Spelling and punctuation were updated.

For example, old English had an “e” after the verb (i.e., feare, blinde, sinne, borne), used an “f” for the “s” except at the end of words (alfo instead of also) and “u” for the “v” (euil instead of evil). Consider how 1 Corinthians 14:9 was written in 1611: “So likewise you, except ye vtter by the tongue words easie to be vnderstood, how shall it be knownen what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the aire.” Or Genesis 1:1-2: “In the beginning God created the Heauen, and the

Earth. And the earth was without forme, and voyd, and darknesse was vpon the face of the deepe: and the Spirit of God mooued vpon the face of the waters.”

Capitalization was more freely used in 1611, and some words that were capitalized then are printed in lower case in later editions. Examples are Altar, Ark, Court, Hanging, Mercy-seat, Noble, Priest, Sabbath, Statutes, Tabernacle, and Cedar-wood.

A large number of new marginal notes and cross-references were added. Chronological dates were also added. “The chronological dates placed in the margin of our modern Bibles are derived from that of Bishop Lloyd in 1701 ... They are in substance taken from Archbishop Ussher’s *Annales V. et N. Testamenti* (1650-4), and are beyond doubt sufficiently exact to be a real help to the reader, the data on which they are constructed being always assumed as true” (Scrivener, *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible*, pp. 133-34).

Donald Waite of Bible for Today compared every word of the 1611 KJV with a standard KJV in publication today (the 1917 Scofield which uses an Oxford text). He counted all of the changes that could be heard. The largest number of changes were spelling (e.g., “blinde” to “blind”), but as these have no real significance he did not count them. He found only 1,095 changes* that affect the sound throughout the entire 791,328 words in the King James Bible. Of these, the vast majority are minor changes of form, such as “towards” changed to “toward,” “burnt” changed to “burned,” “amongst” changed to “among,” “lift up” changed to “lifted up,” and “you” changed to “ye.” Obviously these are not real changes of any translational significance. [* Waite’s original report stated that he found 421 changes that affect the sound, but he later revised that to 1,095 changes.]

DR. WAITE FOUND ONLY 136 SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES (out of 791,328 words) between the original KJV of 1611

and the contemporary Oxford edition. Most of these changes were made within 28 years after the original publication of the KJV and were the simple correction of printer's errors. Dr. Waite's study is entitled "KJB of 1611 Compared to the KJB of the 1917 Old Scofield" (BFT1294) and can be obtained from Bible for Today, 900 Park Ave., Collingswood, NJ 08108, <http://www.biblefortoday.org/>.

Following are some of the 136 substantial changes that were made in the 1769 revision, the vast majority of which are the correction of printing errors:

1 Samuel 16:12 -- "requite good" changed to "requite me good"

Esther 1:8 -- "for the king" changed to "for so the king"

Isaiah 47:6 -- "the" changed to "thy"

Isaiah 49:13 -- "God" changed to "Lord"

Isaiah 57:8 "made a" changed to "made thee a"

Ezekiel 3:11 -- "the people" changed to "the children of thy people"

Nahum 3:17 -- "the crowned" changed to "thy crowned"

Acts 8:32 -- "shearer" changed to "his shearer"

Acts 16:1 -- "which was a Jew" changed to "which was a Jewess"

1 Peter 2:5 -- "sacrifice" changed to "sacrifices"

Jude 25 -- "now and ever" changed to "both now and ever"

Further, there are a few differences between the Oxford and the Cambridge corrected editions that can still be found in current editions of the KJV.

Following is one example:

Jeremiah 34:16 -- Cambridge has "whom YE had set at liberty" while Oxford has "whom HE had set at liberty"

The most thorough study on the various editions of the King James Bible was done by Frederick Scrivener in the late 19th

century. He was the author of the *Cambridge Paragraph Bible*, which was an “elaborate attempt to publish a trustworthy text of King James’ version.” It first appeared in 1873 and was republished in 1884 accompanied by Scrivener’s valuable Introduction and Appendices as *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611): Its Subsequent Reprints and Modern Representatives* (Cambridge: University Press, 1884). One of the Appendices is a “List of original readings of the Bible of 1611 examined and arranged” and another is a “List of wrong readings of the Bible of 1611 amended in later editions.” Scrivener also analyzed the KJV’s underlying Greek text and tabulated the number of times that it varied from the Stephens and the Beza editions of the Received Text. A reprint of Scrivener’s important book is available from Bible for Today. It is also available on CD from Sola Scriptura Publishing, 1118 SW Orleans St., Topeka, KS 66604. <http://www.solascripturapublishing.com>, mlangley1@cox.net.

What is the significance of the changes which have been made to the KJV between 1611 and today?

First, we see that the KJV has gone through a strenuous purification process that can give the reader confidence in its accuracy.

Second, we also see that any idea that the KJV was “given by inspiration” is disproved. If it was “given by inspiration” in 1611 it would not have needed any sort of correction. Those who teach that the KJV is more than an accurate translation, that it is given by inspiration and perfect and inerrant in itself and advanced revelation and other such things must show us exactly which edition they are referring to.

QUESTION # 7. Isn’t it significant that the translators retained ecclesiastical terminology from the Bishops Bible? (e.g., “baptize” instead of “immerse”; “church” instead of “congregation”; “charity” instead of “love”)

ANSWER:

It is true that the KJV translators were instructed not to change these terms from the Bishops Bible, but I do not think that this did any harm to the Word of God. None of these are wrong translations. Further, Bible words must always be interpreted first and foremost by their context, and when “church” or “baptize” or “charity” are so interpreted, there is no confusion.

The term “church,” for example, was an ancient English word by the time that the KJV translators used it, and beyond that it was an ancient word in Anglo-Saxon (*circ*), Scottish (*kirk*), German (*kirche*), and other languages. Many linguists believe it was derived from the Latin “curia,” which in turn was from the Greek “kuriakon,” meaning “the Lord’s house” (*McClintok and Strong Cyclopedia*). Wycliffe used “church,” as did the Geneva translators. Tyndale, on the other hand, used “congregation.” This might be deemed better, but even this is not a complete translation of the Greek word “ecclesia,” meaning “a called out assembly.” The term “church” in the KJV is easily interpreted by the Bible itself. I have never been tempted to become an Anglican because the KJV has the word “church” instead of “congregation.”

As for “charity,” that was an excellent translation and still carries more of the meaning of the Greek than our modern concept of “love.”

The term “baptism” is another word that some have criticized in the King James Bible. All of the English versions predating the KJV, including the Geneva, used the word “baptize,” which is simply a transliteration of the Greek word “baptizo.” Some American Baptists formed a Bible society in the 19th century with the goal of translating “baptizo” as “immerse” instead of transliterating it. They wanted to revise the English Bible in this manner, but even the word “immerse” does not carry the full meaning of “baptizo,” which has the

meaning not only of putting something under but also of bringing it up again. Some of the German versions have translated “baptizo” as “dip,” which is a good translation, as it has the complete meaning of immersing something in water and then lifting it out, which is what scriptural baptism is, being symbolic of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. The word “immersion” carries only half of the meaning of the Greek “baptizo.” (The same is true of replacing the word “fetch,” which is used 31 times in the KJV, with “bring” or “get,” as modern English versions such as the NIV do. *Fetch* has the meaning of going and obtaining something and then bringing it back. Thus “bring” or “get” has only half of the meaning.)

I do not say that the KJV could never be changed or that its words are always the very best that possibly could be (though I do not believe it will ever be replaced in this apostate hour). I do believe, though, that in all cases the translators chose a word or phrase that is a proper translation. I also know that I am not scholar enough to correct them. For 32 blessed years since I was saved, the KJV translators have been my teachers and I have been their humble student. I don’t see that changing in this life, because I have only begun to learn what the KJV translators can teach me.

QUESTION # 8. Is the King James Bible inspired?

ANSWER:

The King James Bible was not *given by inspiration*. The term “inspiration” is used only one time in Scripture and that is in 2 Timothy 3:16. “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*” This describes the original process of the giving of Scripture. The same process is described in 2 Peter 1:19-21. “*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the*

day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Inspiration was the supernatural process by which the Holy Spirit gave chosen words to holy men of old so that what they wrote was the inerrant Word of God. No translation can lay claim to this process. No translation is "given by inspiration."

Translation is the process whereby men render the Spirit-inspired words of Scripture into other languages. If it is done prayerfully and carefully and properly by godly, capable believers, under submission to the Holy Spirit, the words of Scripture can be rendered accurately into another language and such a translation can be called the Word of God in that language. It can even be called the inspired Word of God in that language. But no translation is given by inspiration.

QUESTION # 9. Could the King James Bible be revised again?

ANSWER:

I do not believe that a better English language translation of the Masoretic Hebrew and the Greek Received Text could be made in our day. A clear turning point in church history was made in the 19th century with the blossoming of theological liberalism and in the 20th century with the rapid growth of the ecumenical movement.

As for a new revision of the King James Bible, we are not opposed to it in theory if it were done after the fashion of the previous revisions in the 18th century. Language changes and it is not wrong to update the language, for example, to change "wot" to "know" and "noised" to "reported" and "quick" to "living." This type of revision has been made before, and we see no reason in theory why it could not be done again.

The best-known attempt to revise the King James Bible in recent times is the *New King James Bible*, but it was not a minor revision after the fashion of the former ones. It was a wholesale revision that allowed Thomas Nelson to obtain a new copyright. It even dropped the distinction between the second person singular and plural (replacing the singular thee, thy, and thine with the modern and non-precise “you” in all places). Another revision is the *Modern King James Bible* or *King James Bible II* by Jay Green. This, too, in my estimation, takes far too many liberties. Dr. Green even proposes to make hundreds of textual changes based on the so-called Majority Greek text. I, for one, do not accept these revisions and I do not believe that such revision is needed.

It is doubtful that a new revision will be made in these days that is both minor after the fashion of the former revisions and that will also be acceptable to the majority of users so that it could replace the existing KJV.

Finally, I do not believe that a revision is necessary. Admittedly, the antiquated language in the KJV is difficult for new readers and especially for those who read English as a second or third language, but this difficulty can be overcome by the use of tools such as the *Concise King James Bible Dictionary* published by Way of Life Literature. See the next question.

QUESTION # 10. Isn't the King James Bible too antiquated and difficult to understand today?

ANSWER:

First, the KJV does have some antiquated words and forms of speech, but there are not too many of these. The Trinitarian Bible Society publishes a list of 618 antiquated words. It is called *Bible Word List*. Most of these can be understood by the context. There are only about two hundred words in the KJV that have become so antiquated that they have changed meanings or have dropped entirely out of common usage, so that you really need a dictionary to

understand them. Following are some examples:

carriages (Acts 21:15) = baggage

charger (Mk. 6:25) = platter

conversation (Gal. 1:13) = conduct

devotions (Acts 17:23) = objects of worship

do you to wit (2 Cor. 8:1) = make known to you

fetches a compass (Acts 28:13) = circled

leasing (Ps. 4:2) = lying

let (2 Thess. 2:7) = restrain

meat (Mat. 3:4) = food

noised (Acts 2:6) = reported

prevent (1 Thess. 4:15) = precede

quick (Heb. 4:12) = living

room (Lk. 14:7) = seat

scrip (Mat. 10:10) = bag

take no thought (Mat. 6:25) = be not anxious

wot (Gen. 21:26) = know

Second, the overall reading level of the KJV is not very high.

The KJV is written on an 8th to 10th grade level. This was proven in the 1980s by a computer analysis made by Dr. Donald Waite. He ran several books of the KJV through the *Right Writer* program and found that Genesis 1, Exodus 1, and Romans 8 are on the 8th grade level; Romans 1 and Jude are on the 10th grade level; and Romans 3:1-23 is on the 6th grade level. I would guess that many parts of the four Gospels are on that same level if not lower.

The KJV was rated as “very easy prose” by Dr. Rudolf Flesch. In the book *The Art of Plain Talk* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), Dr. Flesch analyzed the reading level of various documents and rated them on a scale from Very Easy to Very Difficult. He testified, “The best example of very easy prose (about 20 affixes per 200 words) is the King James

Version of the Bible...” Dr. Flesch became famous with the publication of his book *Why Johnny Can’t Read*.

Third, the KJV has a small vocabulary. While Shakespeare used a vocabulary of roughly 21,000 English words, the vocabulary of the King James Bible is composed of only 6,000 (Albert Cook, *The Authorized Version of the Bible and Its Influence*, 1910). This compares favorably to the vocabulary of the Hebrew Old Testament, which is 5,642 words, and that of the Greek New Testament, which is about 4,800 words.

Fourth, the KJV uses simple words; most are only one or two syllables. “The entire KJV averages 1.31 syllables and 3.968 letters per word. This word length puts the KJV in the same readability category as the children’s books” (D.A. Waite, Jr., *The Comparative Readability of the Authorized Version*, Bible for Today, Collingswood, NJ, 1996).

Consider Psalm 23, for example:

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

Of the 119 words in this Psalm, only 24 are more than two syllables.

Consider the Parable of the Rich Man in Luke 12:15-21.

“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will

pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Of the 157 English words in this passage, only 22 are more than two syllables.

Fifth, the most important thing in a Bible translation is not simple language but faithfulness to the original. Dr. Donald Waite has made the following excellent comments on this subject:

“The Bible is not a first grade primer. It is God’s book. It is a book that must be diligently read. It is only by ‘searching the Scriptures’ that we find what pertains to life and death. It tells of creation, of the mighty universe, of the future or the past, of the Mighty God and His wonders, of the Holy Spirit’s ministry among Christians, of the Son of God’s great sacrifice for sin, of home in Heaven for the believer, and of a fiery hell for the unsaved. How dare we assume that His Word can be capsulated in a comic book [or a version that reads ‘like the morning newspaper’]. Some people say they like a particular version because ‘it’s more readable.’ Now, readability is one thing, but does the readability conform to what’s in the original Greek and Hebrew language? You can have a lot of readability, but if it doesn’t match up with what God has said, it’s of no profit. In the King James Bible, the words match what God has said. You may say it’s difficult to read, but study it out. [At times it’s] hard in the Hebrew and Greek and, perhaps, even in the English in the King James Bible. But to change it around just to make it simple, or interpreting it instead of translating it, is wrong. You’ve got lots of interpretation, but we don’t want that in a translation. We want exactly what God said in the Hebrew or Greek brought over into English” (Waite, *Defending the King James Bible*, p. 242).

Consider, too, this statement by Leland Ryken, a professor of English at Wheaton College:

“An English Bible translation should strive for maximum readability ONLY WITHIN THE PARAMETERS OF ACCURATELY EXPRESSING WHAT THE ORIGINAL ACTUALLY SAYS, including the difficulty inherent in the original text. The crucial question that should govern translation is what the original authors actually wrote, not our speculations over how they would express

themselves today or how we would express the content of the Bible. The fact that the New Testament was written in *koine* Greek should not lead translators to translate the Bible in a uniformly colloquial style. Finally, a good translation does not attempt to make the Bible simpler than it was for the original audience" (Leland Ryken, *The Word of God in English*, pp. 100, 101).

Sixth a large part of the antiquated feel of the King James Bible is its usage of the second person singular pronominal forms, "thee," "thou," and "thine."

These should be retained because their use allows the distinction in English between singular and plural pronouns. In other words, "you" and "ye" are plural, while "thou" and "thine" are singular. The singular forms have disappeared from contemporary English, so that there is no difference today between "you" plural and "you" singular. The Hebrew and Greek languages, though, have both a singular and plural form of the pronoun.

The use of *thee*, *thou*, *thine* was already antiquated when the King James Bible was translated. The translators did not adopt *thee*, *thou*, *thine* because those forms were common to their day, but because they wanted to faithfully translate the original Scripture text into English.

The distinction between the singular and plural in English began in the late 13th century and continued commonly until the 1500s. Thus, these expressions had already dropped out of common English by 1611 when the King James Bible was published. We can see this by reading the translator's Preface and their other writings.

The British biblical scholar J.B. Lightfoot wrote,

"Indeed, we may take courage from the fact that the language of our English Bible is not the language of the age in which the translators lived, but in its grand simplicity stands out in contrast to the ornate and often affected diction of the literature of the time" (*The Divine Original*, Trinitarian Bible Society, London, England).

Oswald T. Allis adds:

“It is often asserted or assumed that the usage of the AV represents the speech of 300 years ago, and that now, three centuries later, it should be changed to accord with contemporary usage. But this is not at all a correct statement of the problem. The important fact is this. THE USAGE OF THE AV IS NOT THE ORDINARY USAGE OF THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY: IT IS THE BIBLICAL USAGE BASED ON THE STYLE OF THE HEBREW AND THE GREEK SCRIPTURES. The second part of this statement needs no proof and will be challenged by no one. It is undeniable that where the Hebrew and Greek use the singular of the pronoun the AV regularly uses the singular, and where they use the plural it uses the plural. Even in Deuteronomy where in his addresses, and apparently for rhetorical and pedagogical effect, Moses often changes suddenly, and seemingly arbitrarily, from singular to plural or from plural to singular, the AV reproduces the style of the text with fidelity. THAT IS TO SAY, THE USAGE OF THE AV IS STRICTLY BIBLICAL” (Oswald T. Allis, “Is a Pronominal Revision of the Authorized Version Desirable?” See the Bible Version section of the *End Times Apostasy Database* at the Way of Life Literature web site -- <http://www.wayoflife.org>).

Linguistic scholar A.T. Robertson made the following important observation about the King James Bible:

“No one today speaks the English of the Authorised Version, or ever did for that matter, for though, like Shakespeare, it is the pure Anglo-Saxon, yet unlike Shakespeare IT REPRODUCES TO A REMARKABLE EXTENT THE SPIRIT AND LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE” (*A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 56).

The style of the King James Bible goes back to the masterly work of William Tyndale in the early 16th century. British historian James Froude observes:

“Of the translation itself (the 1611), though since that time it has been many times revised and altered, we may say that it is substantially the Bible with which we are all familiar. The peculiar genius—if such a word may be permitted—which breathes through it—the mingled tenderness and majesty—the Saxon simplicity—the preternatural grandeur—unequalled, unapproached in the attempted improvements of modern scholars—all are here, and bear the impress of the mind of one man—William Tyndale. Lying, while engaged in that great office, under the shadow of death, the sword above his head and ready at any moment to fall, he worked, under circumstances alone perhaps truly worthy of the task which

was laid upon him—his spirit, as it were divorced from the world, moved in a purer element than common air” (Froude, *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, III, p. 84).

Following are some examples of how important it is to retain the distinction between second person singular and plural. These examples (excepting Isaiah 7:14) are adapted from the book *Archaic or Accurate: Modern Translations of the Bible and You versus Thee in the Language of Worship*, edited by J.P. Thackway, and published by The Bible League of England:

Exodus 4:15. “THOU shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth; and I will be with THY mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach YOU what YE shall do.” THOU and THY refer to Moses, but YOU and YE refer to the nation Israel.

Exodus 29:42. “This shalt be a continual burnt offering throughout YOUR generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD where I will meet YOU, to speak there unto THEE.” YOU, referring to the children of Israel, is explained in the following verse, but THEE refers to Moses, who had the holy privilege of hearing the words of God directly (Lev. 1:1).

2 Samuel 7:23. “And what one nation in the earth is like THY people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for YOU great things and terrible, for THY land, before THY people, which THOU redeemedst to THEE from Egypt.” Here David is in prayer to God, thus accounting for the singular words THY and THOU, referring to God. David turns his attention to the people Israel when he uses the plural YOU. If “you” were used throughout, the reader would not be able to understand who David was addressing.

Isaiah 7:14. “Therefore the Lord himself shall give YOU a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” There is a long-running

debate by liberal and even New Evangelical scholars that Isaiah 7:14 is only secondarily a Messianic prophecy and that its primary fulfillment was in Isaiah's day. For example, the note in the *NIV Study Bible* says of the word virgin: "May refer to a young woman betrothed to Isaiah (8:3), who was to become his second wife (his first wife presumably having died after Shear-jashub was born)." In fact, the prophecy is not directed to Isaiah personally but to the nation Israel as a whole, and this is clear in the KJV, because it indicates properly that "YOU" is plural, not singular. This important information is lost in the modern English versions, including the New King James.

Matthew 26:64. "Jesus saith unto him, THOU hast said: nevertheless I say unto YOU, Hereafter shall YE see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." The singular THOU refers to the high priest, but the plural YOU refers to all who will see Christ in the day of His glory (Rev. 1:7).

Luke 22:31-32. "The Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have YOU, that he may sift YOU as wheat: but I have prayed for THEE, that THY faith fail not: and when THOU art converted, strengthen THY brethren." Satan's desire was directed to all the apostles (YOU), but the Lord prays for each individually and for Peter specifically (THEE, THY).

John 3:7. "Marvel not that I said unto THEE, YE must be born again." The message was spoken to an individual (THEE), Nicodemus, but the message encompassed all men (YE). The same thing occurs in verse 11, where we read, "I say unto THEE ... that YE receive not our witness."

1 Corinthians 8:9-12. "Take heed lest ... this liberty of YOURS ... if any man see THEE which hast knowledge ... through THY knowledge ... But when YE sin." The plural YOURS refers to the church members in general, but the Holy Spirit personalizes the exhortation by changing to the

singular THEE and THY.

2 Timothy 4:22. “The Lord Jesus Christ be with THY spirit. Grace be with YOU.” The singular THY refers to Timothy, to whom the epistle was written (2 Tim. 1:1), but the plural YOU refers to others who were also included in Paul’s final greetings, “Priscilla and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus” (2 Tim. 4:19).

Titus 3:15. “All that are with me salute THEE. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with YOU all.” Here, the singular THEE refers to Titus, but the plural YOU refers to the church in Crete (Tit. 1:5), and to all who loved Paul in the faith.

Philemon 21-25. “Having confidence in THY obedience I wrote unto THEE, knowing that THOU wilt also do more than I say ... I trust that through YOUR prayers I shall be given unto YOU ... There salute THEE ... the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with YOUR spirit.” The singular THEE refers to Philemon, but as this short letter was also addressed to “Apphia ... Archippus ... and to the church in thy house” (v. 2), the plural form YOU, YOUR is used in verses 3, 22, and 25.

Seventh, previous generations educated the people UP TO the Bible, and that is what we should do today. It is my conviction that we don’t need a new translation today; we need to renew our study of the excellent one that we already have.

“Instead of lowering the Bible to a lowest common denominator, why should we not educate people to rise to the level required to experience the Bible in its full richness and exaltation? Instead of expecting the least from Bible readers, we should expect the most from them. The greatness of the Bible requires the best, not the least. ... The most difficult of modern English translations -- the King James -- is used most by segments of our society that are relatively uneducated as defined by formal education. ... research has shown repeatedly that people are capable of rising to surprising and even amazing abilities to read and master a subject that is important to them. ... Previous generations did not find the

King James Bible, with its theological heaviness, beyond their comprehension. Nor do readers and congregations who continue to use the King James translation find it incomprehensible. Neither of my parents finished grade school, and they learned to understand the King James Bible from their reading of it and the preaching they heard based on it. We do not need to assume a theologically inept readership for the Bible. Furthermore, if modern readers are less adept at theology than they can and should be, it is the task of the church to educate them, not to give them Bible translations that will permanently deprive them of the theological content that is really present in the Bible” (Leland Ryken, *The Word of God in English*, pp. 107, 109).

Eighth, though the terms “thou” and “thine” have been out of common usage of the English language for more than 400 years, it was only a few decades ago that people started complaining about it. Even then it was done largely at the prompting of Bible publishers greedy to make ever larger profits by introducing an ever more bewildering smorgasbord of “up-to-date Bibles.” Believers in the 1600s, 1700s, 1800s, and even most of the 1900s, loved the “quaint” old English of the King James Bible. They did not think it strange that their Bible did not sound like the morning newspaper. It is the Bible! It was written thousands of years ago! It is the Word of the eternal God! Why, pray tell, should it sound like the morning newspaper?

“I believe that it is correct for an English translation to preserve an appropriate archaic flavor as a way of preserving the distance between us and the biblical world. Joseph Wood Krutch used an evocative formula in connection with the King James Bible when he spoke of ‘an appropriate flavor of a past time’” (Ryken, *The Word of God in English*, p. 182).

Finally, there are many tools available to help people understand the King James Bible.

Following are a few of these:

The Bible Word List from the Trinitarian Bible Society of London, England. This is a pamphlet that defines 618 antiquated words in the King James Bible. See <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/>.

The Concise King James Bible Dictionary, available from Way of Life Literature. Designed to fit in a Bible case, its convenient size makes it easy to use, because it can be kept right with one's Bible. It includes an extensive list of King James Bible words that have changed meaning since 1611, plus all of the doctrinal terms and much more. Not only does it define individual Bible words but also many of the phrases and descriptive statements that are no longer a part of contemporary English usage, such as "superfluity of naughtiness," "at your hand," "taken with the manner," and "in the gate." It is an excellent small Bible dictionary for both new and older Christians. Way of Life Literature, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061-0368. 866-295-4143, <http://www.wayoflife.org>.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. In my estimation, *Strong's* is the most important Bible study tool ever published. Not only is it exhaustive in its treatment of the words of the English Bible, but it also links the English words to an exceptional dictionary of the Hebrew and Greek terms underlying the English. One does not have to know the Greek and Hebrew alphabets to use Strong's dictionary; he developed a masterly apparatus whereby each Greek and Hebrew word is assigned a number, and the student can thus search for Greek and Hebrew terms by numbers. The dictionary gives a concise definition of the Greek or Hebrew word as well as a list of how word is translated at various places in the English Bible.

The Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity. Another tool for studying the King James Bible is the *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity*. (The above-mentioned *Concise King James Bible* was based on the *Way of Life Encyclopedia*.) This lovely hard cover Bible encyclopedia contains 560 pages (8.5X11) of information, over 5,500 entries, and over 6,000 cross-references. Twenty-five years of research has gone into this one-of-a-kind reference tool. It is the only Bible dictionary/ encyclopedia written by a fundamental Baptist and based strictly upon the King James

Bible. It is a complete dictionary of biblical terminology, plus it features many other areas of research not often covered in a single volume Bible reference tool. Subjects include Bible versions, Denominations, Cults, Christian Movements, Typology, the Church, Social Issues and Practical Christian Living, Bible Prophecy, and Old English Terminology. The Christian will be helped and fortified in his faith through this Encyclopedia. It does not correct the Authorized nor does it undermine the fundamental Baptist's doctrines and practices as many study tools do. Many preachers have told us that apart from *Strong's Concordance*, the *Way of Life Bible Encyclopedia* is their favorite study tool. A missionary told us that if he could save only one study book out of his library, it would be our encyclopedia. An evangelist in South Dakota wrote: "If I were going to the mission field and could carry only three books, they would be the Strong's concordance, a hymnal, and the *Way of Life Bible Encyclopedia*." Missionary author Jack Moorman says: "The encyclopedia is excellent and will meet a real need. The entries show a 'distilled spirituality.'" Way of Life Literature, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061. 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org (e-mail), <http://www.wayoflife.org> (web site).

For more questions and answers on this subject see the *The Bible Version Question Answer Database*, available from Way of Life Literature. This book gives accurate and in-depth answers to more than 80 of the most common and important questions on this important topic.

Conclusion

The King James Bible is not merely another translation. It has a glorious and unmatched heritage. It came out of the fires of persecution, out of an age of revival and faith, by a peerless process of translation. Its Hebrew and Greek texts represent the traditional text that has come down to us through the age. All of this is in contrast to the modern versions.

A WEALTH OF INFORMATION ON THE BIBLE TEXT VERSION ISSUE

Way of Life Literature's three new volumes on the Bible Text-Version issue contain a wealth of information, an entire library on this subject. The author has researched this issue for 25 years, having built a large personal library, having read more than 600 books and pamphlets and 2,000 articles on this topic, and having done on-site investigation in many parts of the world, including North America, Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Slovakia, Italy, Australia, and India.



FAITH VS. THE MODERN BIBLE VERSIONS: A COURSE ON BIBLE TEXTS AND VERSIONS AND A 10-FOLD DEFENSE OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE. To our knowledge, this is the most comprehensive course on this topic in print. It contains information that has not appeared in any other book defending the King James Bible and breaks new ground in several areas. The course features 783 sectional review questions to reinforce the teaching. A separate teacher's test book is available with sectional and final tests and answer sheets. 775 page.

THE BIBLE VERSION QUESTION ANSWER DATABASE gives diligently-researched, in-depth answers to 82 of the most important questions on this topic. A vast number of myths are exposed, such as the myth that Erasmus promised to add 1 John 5:7 to his Greek N.T. if even one manuscript could be

produced, the myth that the differences between the texts are slight and insignificant, and the myth that there are no doctrines affected by the changes in the modern versions. The author has carried on extensive correspondence with men on all sides of this issue for the past 25 years, and this book answers the challenges that are made by the opponents of “King James Onlyism,” including James White, D.A. Carson, Doug Kutilek, the editors of *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man* and *One Bible Only*, etc. It also includes studies on several of the popular modern versions, including the New Living Bible, Today’s English Version, New International Version, New American Standard Version, The Message, and the Holman Christian Standard Bible. 423 pages.

THE MODERN BIBLE VERSION HALL OF SHAME documents the apostasy of some of the most influential names in the field of modern textual criticism and modern Bible versions from the past 250 years. There are articles on 110 influential modern textual critics and 40 modern version translators, including Bengel, Griesbach, Lachmann, Tregelles, Tischendorf, Westcott, Hort, Schaff, Thayer, Briggs, Driver, Brown, Nestle, Liddle, Scott, von Soden, Kittel, Kilpatrick, Epp, Nida, Wikgren, Aland, Martini, Metzger, and Karavidopoulos. Included are reports on some of the key evangelical popularizers of modern textual criticism, such as Tregelles, Hodge, Warfield, Robertson, and Carson. 292 pages

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