

Bible – The History of its English Origin

The History of the Bible – How We Got It

This article will answer questions about the bible. How did we get it, who wrote it, who translated it and how did it get printed? We will begin this by telling about some of the main people involved who literally gave their very lives so that we were able to come out of the dark ages by the reformation that had hidden the truth from us for 1000 years.

John Wycliff: The Oxford theologian produced the first handwritten English language manuscripts of the Bible (in the 1380's). Curiously, he was also the inventor of bifocal eyeglasses. Wycliff spent many of his years arguing against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, which he believed to be contrary to the Bible. Though he died a nonviolent death, the Pope was so infuriated by his teachings that 44 years after Wycliff had died, he ordered the bones to be dug up, burned and scattered in the river!

Gutenberg: Invented the printing press in the 1450's and the first book to ever be printed was the Bible. It was, however, in Latin rather than English. With the onset of the Reformation in the early 1500's, the first printings of the Bible in the English language were produced illegally and at great personal risk to those involved.

William Tyndale: Was the Captain of the army of reformers and was their spiritual leader. He worked most of his translating years alone, but had help from time to time as God discerned, he needed it. Indirectly, he had the help of Erasmus in the publication of his Greek/Latin New Testament (printed in 1516). Erasmus and the great printer, scholar and reformer John Froben published the first non-Latin Vulgate text of the Bible in a millennium.

Latin was the language for centuries of scholarship and it was understood by virtually every European who could read or write. Erasmus' Latin was not the Vulgate translation of Jerome, but his own fresh rendering of the Greek New Testament text that he had collated from 6 or 7 partial New Testament manuscripts into a complete Greek New Testament.

The Latin that Erasmus translated from the Greek revealed enormous corruptions in the Vulgate's integrity amongst the rank and file scholars, many of whom were already convinced that the established church was doomed by virtue of its evil hierarchy. Pope Leo X's declaration that "the fable of Christ was very profitable to him" infuriated the people of God. With Erasmus' work (in 1516), the die was cast.

Martin Luther: Declared his intolerance with the Roman Churches corruption on Halloween (in 1517), by nailing 95 Theses of Contention to the Wittenberg Door. Luther, who would be exiled in the months following the Diet of Worms Council (in 1521), that was designed to martyr him, would translate the New Testament into German from Erasmus' Greek/Latin New Testament and publish it (in September of 1522). Simultaneously, William Tyndale would become burdened to translate the same Erasmus text into English. It could not, however, be done in England.

Tyndale showed up on Luther's doorstep (in 1525), and by year's end had translated the New Testament into English. Tyndale was fluent in eight languages and is considered by many to be the primary architect of today's English language. Already hunted because of the rumor spread abroad that such a project was underway, inquisitors and bounty hunters were on Tyndale's trail to abort the effort. God foiled their plans (and in 1525/26), Tyndale printed the first English New Testament.

They were burned as soon as the Bishop could confiscate them, but copies trickled through and actually ended up in the bedroom of King Henry VIII. The more the King and Bishop resisted its distribution, the more fascinated the public at large became. The church declared it contained thousands of errors as they torched hundreds of New Testaments confiscated by the clergy, while in fact, they burned them because they could find no errors at all. One risked death by burning if caught in mere possession of Tyndale's forbidden books.

Had it not been for Wycliff, Tyndale, and other valiant pre-Protestant heroes of the faith, Christianity would have been destroyed, and Satan's Babylonian mysticism would have prevailed, effectively destroying true Christianity.

The 16th century spawned the Protestant Reformation because of the courageous efforts of a few Christian scholars, some within the Catholic church itself which included many priests and bishops who disapproved of the infusion of pagan doctrine and practice. There were also many splinter groups like the Moravians and Waldensians, who carefully adhered to the teachings of Scripture.

Under intellectual and spiritual giants such as Luther, Calvin, and many others, the Reformers called Christianity back to the Bible and at the same time condemned many of Rome's pagan practices, including selling indulgences, teaching the doctrine of purgatory, and praying to Mary.

Having God's word available to the public in the language of the common man, English, would have meant disaster to the Church. No longer would they control access to the scriptures. If people were able to read the Bible in their own tongue, the church's income and power would crumble. They could not possibly continue to get away with selling indulgences (the forgiveness of sins) or selling the release of loved ones from a church manufactured "Purgatory". People would begin to challenge the church's authority if the church were exposed as frauds and thieves.

The contradictions between what God's Word said, and what the priests taught, would open the public's eyes and the truth would set them free from the group of fear that the institutional church held. Salvation through faith, not works or donations, would be understood. The need for priests would vanish through the priesthood of all believers. The veneration of church canonized Saints and Mary would be called into question. The availability of the scriptures in English was the biggest threat imaginable to the wicked church. Neither side would give up without a fight.

Wycliff abilities influenced the preparation of the way for the Reform in England. (In 1384), he died of a stroke. John Huss, influenced by Wycliff's teachings, was taken as a heretic and burned at the stake (on 1415), by the Council of Constance. As it could not be otherwise, the same

council also condemned Wycliff after his death as a heretic, and 45 of his teachings were considered as heresies.

Because of this, the Roman Catholic Church gave orders to exhume his body, to burn his bones and throw his ashes in the Swift River (in 1428). John Wycliff was the principal exponent of the Reform's measures, and for this reason he is called "The Reform Morning Star".

William Tyndale, who translated from the Textus Receptus line, was strangled and burned at the stake by the Catholic religion because of translating the Bible. Time fails me here to speak of John Rogers, Myles Coverdale and others who labored and died that we might have the word of God in our hands. The Authorized Version is a Book forged in blood, sweat and tears. Treasure it.

The King James translators said this of the cumulative nature of their work "Truly we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new Translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one."

Go to <http://www.greatsite.com> for more about the above bible information as well as comparisons of other Bibles including the "Fulke's Refutation" which is printed in parallel columns, the Bishop's Version alongside the Rheims Version, attempting to show the error and distortion of the Roman Church's corrupt compromise of an English version of the Bible.

It is good and profitable to remember our fathers in the faith and the contributions they made for our good. It is good to look into the "old things".

Jeremiah 6:16 "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

Will you ask for the old paths? When you find profitable things there, will you take heed to them? Unlike folks of today, the men of King James' time were true divines and scholars. I perceive that those who held bachelor's degrees could out think most of the doctors of today. We'd think their doctors were geniuses.

The King James Bible translators were men who regularly debated in Latin and Greek, one had read the entire Bible in Hebrew by the time he was six, and on and on. But even more importantly, they were godly men devoted to spiritual pursuits. They believed that they were translating the very words of God, and they took their sacred duties seriously.

As it states in the Translators to the Reader, they came or were thought to come to the work, not exercendi causa (as one saith), but exercitati, that is, learned, not to learn. Nowadays you've got "I barely know Greek translators".

Who Were the King James Translators?

One of the first things the new King James did was the calling of the Hampton Court Conference (in January of 1604), “for the hearing, and for the determining, things pretended to be amiss in the church.” Here were assembled bishops, clergymen, and professors, along with four Puritan divines, to consider the complaints of the Puritans. Although Bible revision was not on the agenda, the Puritan president of Corpus Christi College, John Reynolds, “moved his Majesty, that there might be a new translation of the Bible, because those which were allowed in the reigns of Henry the eighth and Edward the sixth, were corrupt and not answerable to the truth of the Original.”

The next step was the actual selection of the men who were to perform the work. In July of 1604, James wrote to Bishop Bancroft that he had “appointed certain learned men, to the number of four and fifty, for the translating of the Bible.” These men were the best biblical scholars and linguists of their day.

In the preface to their completed work it is further stated, “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. Again, they came or were thought to come to the work, learned, not to learn.” Other men were sought out, according to James, “so that our said intended translation may have the help and furtherance of all our principal learned men within this our kingdom.

Although 54 men were nominated, only forty-seven were known to have taken part in the work of translation. The translators were organized into 6 groups, and met respectively at Westminster, Cambridge and Oxford. Ten at Westminster were assigned Genesis through 2 Kings; seven had Romans through Jude. At Cambridge, eight worked on 1 Chronicles through Ecclesiastes, while seven others handled the Apocrypha. Oxford employed 7 to translate Isaiah through Malachi; eight occupied themselves with the Gospels, Acts, and Revelation.

The King James Version translators took the baton passed on to them by devout men and martyrs who translated before them. Men like John Wycliff, aka “The Morning Star of the Reformation”, who was the first to translate the entire Bible into English. Although he only had the Latin Vulgate to work with, you can see his influence on Tyndale’s translation and ultimately our Authorized Version. Like Martin Luther, Dr. Wycliff was a member of the Romish religion when he was awakened to the truth through the reading of the scriptures. He spoke out vehemently against the Romish rites and practices that at that time had a stranglehold on the land.

His followers were called Lollards and they went out like circuit preachers spreading the doctrine of Christ. Dr. Wycliff wrote tracts and spoke out against error. He was severely persecuted by the Romish religion while alive and was banished from Oxford and his professorship by order of the king. Nevertheless, the Lord delivered him out of Romish hands many times and allowed him to continue his translation work. In 1428, about 44 years after his death, Pope Martin V commanded Dr. Wycliff’s bones to be dug up and burned as a heretic.

Please do not be deceived into thinking that the King James Bible is only an amalgamation of previous translations. These scholars consulted the original languages and related languages.

“Neither did we think much to consult the Translators or commentators, Chaldee, Hebrew, Syrian, Greek or Latin. No nor the Spanish, French, Italian, or Dutch; neither did we disdain to revise that which we had done, and to bring back to the anvil that which we had hammered. But having and using as great helps as were needful, and fearing no reproach for slowness, nor coveting praise for expedition, we have at length, through the good hand of the Lord upon us, brought the work to that pass that you see.”

Should the Lord will, I would like to publish information on the faithful saints who were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, and killed by the Romish religion that we might have the word of God in our own tongue. They did not accept deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection.

The King James Bible translators were a collection of some of the world’s best scholars. They approached this translation with the mindset that they were translating the very word of God, not just some book. The King James Bible has been called “the monument of English prose” as well as “the only great work of art ever created by a committee”.

The following are those who performed the translation of our modern English Version of the King James Bible:

1. **The First Westminster Company:** Translated the historical books, beginning with Genesis and ending with the Second Book of Kings.

Dr. Lancelot Andrews;

Dr. John Overall;

Dr. Hadrian Saravia;

Dr. Richard Clarke,

Dr. John Laifield,

Dr. Robert Tighe,

Francis Burleigh,

Geoffry King,

Richard Thompson;

Dr. William Bedwell.

2. **The Cambridge Company:** Translated Chronicles to the end of the Song of Songs.

Edward Lively,

Dr. John Richardson,
Dr. Lawrence Chaderton;
Francis Dillingham,
Dr. Roger Andrews,
Thomas Harrison,
Dr. Robert Spaulding,
Dr. Andrew Bing.

3. **The Oxford Company:** Translated beginning of Isaiah to the end of the Old Testament.

Dr. John Harding,
Dr. John Reynolds;
Dr. Thomas Holland,
Dr. Richard Kilby;
Dr. Miles Smith,
Dr. Richard Brett,
Daniel Fairclough.

4. **The Second Oxford Company:** Translated the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Revelation of St. John the Divine.

Dr. Thomas Ravis,
Dr. George Abbot;
Dr. Richard Eedes,
Dr. Giles Tomson,
Sir Henry Savile;
Dr. John Peryn,
Dr. Ralph Ravens,

Dr. John Harmar.

5. **The Fifth Company of Translators at Westminster:** Translated all of the Epistles of the New Testament.

Dr. William Barlow,

Dr. John Spencer,

Dr. Roger Fenton,

Dr. Ralph Hutchinson,

William Dakins,

Michael Rabbet,

[Thomas (?)] Sanderson.

6. **The Sixth Company of Translators at Cambridge:** Translated the apocryphal books.

Dr. John Duport,

Dr. William Brainthwaite,

Dr. Jeremiah Radcliffe;

Dr. Samuel Ward;

Dr. Andrew Downes,

John Bois;

Dr. John Ward,

Dr. John Aglionby,

Dr. Leonard Hutten,

Dr. Thomas Bilson,

Dr. Richard Bancroft.

The King James translators did not consider Apocrypha scripture. You will find the above 6 companies of translators which you then can click on any of the individual translators to see their biographies. You can also find translations from various English Bibles to see how the language

changed from Wycliff (in 1380), to the King James version (in 1611). Also, an introduction to the Translators, the Rules for Translating and other pertinent information.