



The History of the Bible
Session 15: Topic 4.0
The Beginning of the English Bible

Study by
Lorin L Cranford

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4.0 The Beginning of the English Bible: 1100 to 1800 AD

How did the English Bible first come about?

The history of the English Bible has two aspects to its beginnings. The very early, pre-reformation efforts have little to do with the modern English Bible. Their influence was small and not lasting. But during the Reformation, the English Bible, as we know it today, had its beginnings. Luther's translation into German and its wide-spread success laid the ground work for a translation of the Bible into English. This became possible in England once King Henry broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England was born.

4.1 Early English Translations: How did English speaking people read the Bible before the King James Version?

When one speaks of the early English translations of the Bible, the division of this topic into two time periods is dictated mostly by the form of English being used at the time of the translation. The very early translations, almost exclusively that of St. Bede in the 700s, makes use of Old English. By the time of the work of John Wycliffe in the 1300s, the form of English is Middle English.

Old English was the major form of English spoken until the 1100s when Middle English began to dominate. As the Wikipedia article describes,

Old English (also called Anglo-Saxon) is an early form of the English language that was spoken in parts of what is now England and southern Scotland between the mid-fifth century and the mid-twelfth century. It is a West Germanic language and therefore is similar to Old Frisian and Old Saxon. It is also related to Old Norse and, by extension, to modern Icelandic....

Old English was not static, and its usage covered a period of approximately 700 years – from the Anglo-Saxon migrations that created England in the fifth century to some time after the Norman invasion of 1066, when the language underwent a major and dramatic transition. During this early period it assimilated some aspects of the languages with which it came in contact, such as the Celtic languages and the two dialects of Old Norse from the invading Vikings, who were occupying and controlling the Danelaw in northern and eastern England.

This sample of text from Matthew 6:9-13 provides some indication of the language:

This text of The Lord's Prayer is presented in the standardized West Saxon literary dialect:	New Revised Standard Version (Mt. 6:9-13)
Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum, Si þin nama gehalgod. To becume þin rice, gewurpe ðin willa, on eorðan swa swa on heofonum. urne gedæghwamlican hlaf syle us todæg, and forgyf us ure gyltas, swa swa we forgyfað urum gyltendum. and ne gelæd þu us on costnunge, ac alys us of yfele. soþlice.	Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

Middle English developed in large part from the Norman invasion of England in 1066 AD. It joined a mixture of different languages current in the British Isles until the mid to late 1400s, when another shift took place linguistically. A very helpful summation is found in the Wikipedia article on Middle English:

Middle English is the name given by historical linguistics to the diverse forms of the English language spoken between the Norman invasion of 1066 and the mid-to-late 15th century, when the Chancery Standard, a form of London-based English, began to become widespread, a process aided by the introduction of the printing press into England by William Caxton in the 1470s, and slightly later by Richard Pynson. By this time the Northumbrian dialect spoken in south east Scotland was developing into the Scots language. The language of England as spoken after this time, up to 1650, is known as Early Modern English.

Unlike Old English, which tended largely to adopt Late West Saxon scribal conventions in the immediate pre-Conquest period, Middle English as a written language displays a wide variety of scribal (and presumably dialectal) forms. It should be noted, though, that the diversity of forms in written Middle English signifies neither greater variety of spoken forms of English than could be found in pre-Conquest England, nor a faithful representation of contemporary spoken English (though perhaps greater fidelity to this than may be found in Old English texts). Rather, this diversity suggests the gradual end of the role of Wessex as a focal point and trend-setter for scribal activity, and the emergence of more distinct local scribal styles and written dialects, and a general pattern of transition of activity over the centuries which follow, as Northumbria, East Anglia and London emerge successively as major centres of literary production, with their own generic interests.

Toward the end of the 1300s, English became increasingly the official governmental language as well in the royal court of the king. As a result, a process of standardization of the language begins. This will lay a basic foundation for the language structure even as English continues to be used today. This sample of an early and a late middle English translation of Luke 8:1-3 provides some sense of the language and the way it evolved:

Early Middle English Translation	Late Middle English Translation	New Revised Standard Version
Syððan wæs geworden þæt he ferde þurh þa ceastre and þæt castel: godes rice prediciende and bodiende. and hi twelfe mid. And sume wif þe wæron gehælede of awyrgdum gastum: and untrumnessum: seo magdalenisce maria ofþære seofan deoflu uteodon: and iohanna chuzan wif herodes gerefan: and susanna and manega oðre þe him of hyra spedum benedon;	And it is don, aftirward Jesus made iourne bi cites & castelis prehende & euangelisende þe rewme of god, & twelue wif hym & summe wymmen þat weren helid of wicke spiritis & sicnesses, marie þat is clepid maudeleyn, of whom seuene deuelis wenten out & Jone þe wif off chusi procuratour of eroude, & susanne & manye opere þat mynystreden to hym of her facultes	Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

John Wycliffe's translation (1395) of Luke 8:1-3 reflects the influence of the late middle English form of the language:

1 And it was don aftirward, and Jhesus made iourney bi citees and castels, prechyng and euangeli- syng the rewme of God, and twelue with hym; 2 and sum wymmen that weren heelid of wickid spiritis and sijknessis, Marie, that is clepid Maudeleyn, of whom seuene deuelis wenten out, 3 and Joone, the wijf of Chuse, the procuratoure of Eroude, and Susanne, and many othir, that mynystriden to hym of her ritchesse.

4.1.1 Pre-Reformation Translations

During this time period, when some isolated translations of the English Bible began appearing, one should remember that these translations are not made from the biblical languages text. Rather, they are translations of the Latin Vulgate into a particular form of the English language. Those who produce these translations are inside the Roman Catholic church and are very loyal to it. Their concern was to help the people on the British Isles to better understand the gospel of Christ. And, in the case of Wycliffe, to also foster an awareness of the teachings of the Bible by the laity. This was intended to create pressure on the Catholic church hierarchy to reform itself and pull the church back toward biblical based teachings.

4.1.1.1 Venerable Bede



Before the Middle Ages, a few isolated efforts at translating the Vulgate into Old English occurred. The better known work was that of St. Bede in the early 700s. But the Latin Vulgate held such sway in the minds of most Christians in England that there was resistance to the idea of the Bible becoming too common for the laity. The Wikipedia article provides a summary:

Although John Wycliff is often credited with the first translation of the Bible into English, there were, in fact, many translations of large parts of the Bible centuries before Wycliff's work. Toward the end of the seventh century, the Venerable Bede began a translation of Scripture into Old English (also called Anglo-Saxon). Aldhelm (AD 640–709), likewise, translated the complete Book of Psalms and large portions of other scriptures into Old English. In the 11th century, Abbot Ælfric translated much of the Old Testament into Old English.

For seven or eight centuries, it was the Latin Vulgate that held sway as the common version nearest to the tongue of the people. Latin had become the accepted tongue of the Catholic Church, and there was little general acquaintance with the Bible except among the educated. During all that time, there was no real room for a further translation. Medieval England was quite unripe for a Bible in the mother tongue; while the illiterate majority were in no condition to feel the want of such a book, the educated minority would be averse to so great and revolutionary a change. When a man cannot read any writing, it really does not matter to him whether books are in current speech or not, and the majority of the people for those seven or eight centuries could read nothing at all.

These centuries added to the conviction of many that the Bible ought not to become too common, that it should not be read by everybody, that it required a certain amount of learning to make it safe reading. They came to feel that it is as important to have an authoritative interpretation of the Bible as to have the Bible itself. When the movement began to make it speak the new English tongue, it provoked the most violent opposition. Latin had been good enough for a millennium; why cheapen the Bible by a translation? There had grown up a feeling that Jerome himself had been inspired. He had been canonised, and half the references to him in that time speak of him as the inspired translator.

Criticism of his version was counted as impious and profane as criticisms of the original text could possibly have been. It is one of the ironies of history that the version for which Jerome had to fight, and which was counted a piece of impiety itself, actually became the ground on which men stood when they fought against another version, counting anything else but this very version an impious intrusion.

How early the movement for an English Bible began, it is impossible now to say. Yet the fact is that until the last quarter of the fourteenth century, there was no complete prose version of the Bible in the English language. However, there were vernacular translations of parts of the Bible in England prior to in both Anglo Saxon and Norman French.

Unfortunately, none of his translation work has survived. Consequently, we have no access to any of this in order to gain a clear sense of how he did this work.

4.1.1.2 John Wycliffe, (c.1320 – December 31, 1384)



The most important pre-reformation Bible translator in the English speaking world was John Wycliffe. Closely connected with the university at Oxford most of his adult life, he was a part of a movement that was critical of the papacy and other practices of the Roman Catholic Church. This has earned him the label “Morning Star of the Reformation.” Wycliffe’s reformation activities are well summarized in the Wikipedia article:

It was not as a teacher or preacher that Wycliffe gained his position in history; this came from his activities in ecclesiastical politics, in which he engaged about the mid-1370s, when his reformatory work also began. In 1374 he was among the English delegates at a peace congress at Bruges. He may have been given this position because of the spirited and patriotic behavior with which in the year 1366 he sought the interests of his country against the demands of the papacy. It seems he had a reputation as a patriot and reformer; this suggests the answer to the question how he came to his reformatory ideas. [Even if older evangelical parties did not exist in England before Wycliffe, he might easily have been influenced by continental “evangelicals.”]

The root of the Wycliffite reformatory movement must be traced to his Bible study and to the ecclesiastical-political lawmaking of his times. He was well acquainted with the tendencies of the ecclesiastical politics to which England owed its position. He had studied the proceedings of King Edward I of England, and had attributed to them the basis of parliamentary opposition to papal usurpations. He found them a model for methods of procedure in matters connected with the questions of worldly possessions and the Church. Many sentences in his book on the Church recall the institution of the commission of 1274, which caused problems for the English clergy. He considered that the example of Edward I should be borne in mind by the government of his time; but that the aim should be a reformation of the entire ecclesiastical establishment. Similar was his position on the enactments induced by the ecclesiastical politics of Edward III, with which he was well acquainted and are fully reflected in his political tracts....

The sharper the strife became [with the papacy], the more Wycliffe had recourse to his translation of Scripture as the basis of all Christian doctrinal opinion, and expressly tried to prove this to be the only norm for Christian faith. In order to refute his opponents, he wrote the book in which he endeavored to show that Holy Scripture contains all truth and, being from God, is the only authority. He referred to the conditions under which the condemnation of his 18 theses was brought about; and the same may be said of his books dealing with the Church, the office of king, and the power of the pope – all completed within the space of two years (1378-79). To Wycliffe, the Church is the totality of those who are predestined to blessedness. It includes the Church triumphant in heaven, those in purgatory, and the Church militant or men on earth. No one who is eternally lost has part in it. There is one universal Church, and outside of it there is no salvation. Its head is Christ. No pope may say that he is the head, for he can not say that he is elect or even a member of the Church.

Needless to say, Wycliffe’s Bible translation work was part of a much larger agenda to reform the Roman Catholic Church. In particular, his desire was to force the RCC priesthood and church back to the perceived days of poverty that he assumed characterized the ministry of Jesus and the apostles. This position became the central motivation for a movement known as the Lollards, which was both a political and religious movement demanding a return to biblical principles for the priests. One of their beliefs, which was severely opposed by the church, was that piety was the sole basis for a priest being able to administer the sacraments, not official ordination by the Church. Given the massive ownership of property and political power that the Church had over most all of Europe, such a position demanding poverty was seen as extremely dangerous. Efforts to stamp out this influence were severe, despite the popularity of Wycliffe’s ideas among many of the English nobility, and people in general.

His translation was produced from 1380 to 1390 and released in segments until completed and released as a whole. Increasingly, it has become clear that others besides Wycliffe himself worked on this translation, although it bears his name. The translation was based on the Latin Vulgate, not the biblical language texts. The form of English was middle English. Revisions of this translation reflect



changes in wording that move it closer to the very late forms of middle English, as the illustration below from Genesis 1:3 demonstrates:

Vulgate:	Dixitque Deus: Fiat lux, et facta est lux
Early Wyclif:	And God said: Be made light, and made is light
Later Wyclif:	And God said: Light be made; and light was made
King James:	And God said: Let there be light; and there was light

His rendering of John 3:16 is of particular interest:

For God louede so the world that he yaf his oon bigetun sone, that ech man that beliueth in him perische not, but haue euerlastynge lijf.

By the completion of this translation project, Wycliffe's translation was the first English translation of the entire Bible. Thus the Wycliffe Bible marks the beginning of the English Bible.

The impact of the Wycliffe translation was initially strong, but the intense opposition of the papacy and its strong-arm tactics succeeded in crushing its influence. Severe censorship laws were passed by the English parliament banning its distribution and reading. Preoccupation with wars with the French and other political eruptions pushed these religious issues to a back burner status for more than century, until Luther's movement on the European continent gained success and opened the door for translation efforts in England to flourish again.

4.1.2 Reformation Era Translations

Again, the emergence of the English Bible as a complete translation with Wycliffe begins then dies. The Protestant Reformation in Europe was necessary before the English Bible could resurface, and with sufficient popularity that it successfully resisted efforts to banish it. Just as Luther had recognized the importance of a vernacular translation of the Bible into the language of the people (i.e., German), the Reformation era English Bible translators understood the same thing. By the 1500s the political atmosphere had changed, negative attitudes by both the people and political leaders against the papacy had grown -- these and other aspects created the necessary environment for the English Bible as a part of the spread of the Protestant Reformation westward across the English channel.

4.1.2.1 William Tyndale, c. 1494 - October 6, 1536



Tyndale's biography is a tale of attempted reform and adherence to biblical principles at the cost of his life. The Wikipedia article provides a concise summation:

William Tyndale was born around 1494, probably in North Nibley near Dursley, Gloucestershire. The Tyndales were also known under the name "Hitchins" or "Hutchins", and it was under this name that he was educated at Magdalen Hall, Oxford (now part of Hertford College), where he was admitted to the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1512 and Master of Arts in 1515. He was a gifted linguist (fluent in French, Greek, Hebrew, German, Italian, Latin, Spanish and of course his native English) and subsequently went to Cambridge (possibly studying under Erasmus, whose 1503 *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* - "Handbook of the Christian Knight" - he translated into English), where he met Thomas Bilney and John Fryth.

He became chaplain in the house of Sir John Walsh at Little Sodbury in about 1521. His opinions involved him in controversy with his fellow clergymen and around 1522 he was summoned before the Chancellor of the Diocese of Worcester on a charge of heresy. By now he had already determined to translate the Bible into English: he was convinced that the way to God was through His word and that scripture should be available even to 'a boy that driveth the plough'. He left for London.

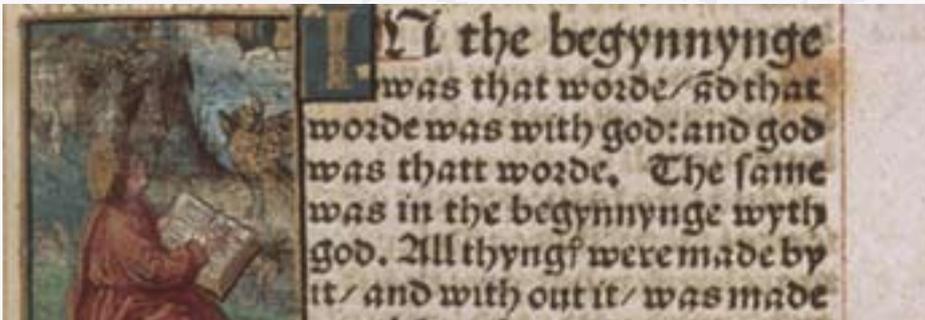
Tyndale was firmly rebuffed in London when he sought the support of Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall. The bishop, like many highly-placed churchmen, was uncomfortable with the idea of the Bible in the vernacular. Tyndale, with the help of a merchant, Humphrey Monmouth, left England under a pseudonym and landed at Hamburg in 1524. He had already begun work on the translation of the New Testament. He visited Luther at Wittenberg and in the following year completed his translation.

Following the publication of the New Testament, Cardinal Wolsey condemned Tyndale as a heretic and demanded his arrest.

Tyndale went into hiding, possibly for a time in Hamburg, and carried on working. He revised his New Testament and began translating the Old Testament and writing various treatises. In 1530 he wrote

The Practyse of Prelates, which seemed to move him briefly to the Catholic side through its opposition to Henry VIII's divorce. This resulted in the king's wrath being directed at him: he asked the emperor Charles V to have Tyndale seized and returned to England.

Eventually, he was betrayed to the authorities. He was arrested in Antwerp in 1535 and held in the castle of Vilvoorde near Brussels. He was tried on a charge of heresy in 1536 and condemned to the stake, despite Thomas Cromwell's attempted intercession on his behalf. He was mercifully strangled, and his dead body was burnt, on 6 October 1536. His final words reportedly were: "Oh Lord, open the King of England's eyes."



His translation of both the Old and New Testaments is a fascinating story intertwined with his tumultuous life:

Tyndale was a priest who graduated at Oxford, was a student in Cambridge when Martin Luther posted his theses at Wittenberg and was troubled by the problems within the Church. In 1523, taking

advantage of the new invention of the printing machine Tyndale began to cast the Scriptures into the current English.

However, Tyndale did not have copies of "original" Hebrew texts. In fact the quality of the Hebrew documents was poor, since no original Hebrew sources earlier than the 10th Century had survived. He set out to London fully expecting to find support and encouragement there, but he found neither. He found, as he once said, that there was no room in the palace of the Bishop of London to translate the New Testament; indeed, that there was no place to do it in all England. A wealthy London merchant subsidized him with the munificent gift of ten pounds, with which he went across the Channel to Hamburg; and there and elsewhere on the Continent, where he could be hid, he brought his translation to completion. Printing facilities were greater on the Continent than in England; but there was such opposition to his work that very few copies of the several editions of which we know can still be found. Tyndale was compelled to flee at one time with a few printed sheets and complete his work on another press. Several times copies of his books were solemnly burned, and his own life was frequently in danger.

The Church had objected to Tyndale's translations because in their belief purposeful mistranslations had been introduced to the works in order to promote anticlericalism and heretical views (the same argument they used against Wycliff's translation). Thomas More accused Tyndale of evil purpose in corrupting and changing the words and sense of Scripture. Specifically, he charged Tyndale with mischief in changing three key words throughout the whole of his Testament, such that "priest", "church", and "charity" of customary Roman Catholic usage became in Tyndale's translation "elder", "congregation" and "love". The Church also objected to Wycliffe and Tyndale's translations because they included notes and commentaries promoting antagonism to the Catholic Church and heretical doctrines, particularly, in Tyndale's case, Lutheranism.

There is one story which tells how money came to free Tyndale from heavy debt and prepare the way for more Bibles. The Bishop of London, Tunstall, was set on destroying copies of the English New Testament. He therefore made a bargain with a merchant of Antwerp, to secure them for him. The merchant was a friend of Tyndale, and went to him to tell him he had a customer for his Bibles, The Bishop of London. Tyndale agreed to give the merchant the Bibles to pay his debt and finance new editions of the Bible.

The original Tyndale Bible was published in Cologne in 1526. The final revision of the Tyndale translation was published in 1534. He was arrested in 1535 at Brussels, and the next year was condemned to death on charges of teaching Lutheranism. He was tied to a stake, strangled, and his body was burned. However, Tyndale may be considered the father of the King James Version (KJV) since much of his work was transferred to the KJV. The revisers of 1881 declared that while the KJV was the work of many hands, the foundation of it was laid by Tyndale, and that the versions that followed it were substantially reproductions of Tyndale's, or revisions of versions which were themselves almost entirely based on it.

What we continue to observe with the English Bible is that it was born in conflict and struggle against official Christianity. It continued such an existence through the work of Tyndale. But one important shift took place. Tyndale, although basically using the Latin Vulgate as his base text, did make efforts to go back to the original biblical languages of the scripture text, as limited as they were to him. Following Luther's example, the printing press was used for quick and mass reproduction of the translation. But, despite efforts to destroy it, the English Bible would survive and begin to thrive as time passed.

The importance of Tyndale's work for the English Bible through the King James Version cannot be emphasized too much. His translation laid a path for phrases, use of certain words, and, in general, a basic tone to English language expression in Bible translation that would last for several centuries. Not until the 1950s will the English Bible begin variations from the classic translation pattern initially laid down by Tyndale. Thus the discussion of the other Reformation era English translations will to some degree be a discussion of how they vary from Tyndale's translation.

4.1.2.2 Coverdale Bible, 1535



When one looks at the life of Miles Coverdale, there emerges a life mostly of suffering and persecution because of his dissent from the Roman Catholic Church of his day. Note the biographical sketch in the Wikipedia Encyclopedia:

Myles Coverdale (also Miles Coverdale) (c. 1488 - January 20, 1568) was a 16th-century Bible translator who produced the first complete printed translation of the Bible into English.

He was born probably in the district known as Coverdale, in that district of the North Riding of Yorkshire called Richmondshire, England, 1488; died in London and buried in St. Bartholomew's Church Feb. 19, 1568.

He studied at Cambridge (bachelor of canon law 1531), became priest at Norwich in 1514 and entered the convent of Austin friars at Cambridge, where Robert Barnes was prior in 1523 and probably influenced him in favor of Protestantism. When Barnes was tried for heresy in 1526, Coverdale assisted in his defence and shortly afterward left the convent and gave himself entirely to preaching.

From 1528 to 1535, he appears to have spent most of his time on the Continent, where his Old Testament was published by Jacobus van Meteren in 1535. In 1537, some of his translations were included in the Matthew Bible, the first English translation of the complete Bible. In 1538, he was in Paris, superintending the printing of the "Great Bible," and the same year were published, both in London and Paris, editions of a Latin and an English New Testament, the latter being by Coverdale. That 1538 Bible was a diglot (dual-language) Bible, in which he compared the Latin Vulgate with his own English translation. He also edited "Cranmer's Bible" (1540).

He returned to England in 1539, but on the execution of Thomas Cromwell (who had been his friend and protector since 1527) in 1540, he was compelled again to go into exile and lived for a time at Tübingen, and, between 1543 and 1547, was a Lutheran pastor and schoolmaster at Bergzabern (now Bad Bergzabern) in the Palatinate, and very poor.

In March, 1548, he went back to England, was well received at court and made king's chaplain and almoner to the queen dowager, Catherine Parr. In 1551, he became bishop of Exeter, but was deprived in 1553 after the succession of Mary. He went to Denmark (where his brother-in-law was chaplain to the king), then to Wesel, and finally back to Bergzabern. In 1559, he was again in England, but was not reinstated in his bishopric, perhaps because of Puritanical scruples about vestments. From 1564 to 1566, he was rector of St. Magnus's, near London Bridge.

The examples below from the Prologue of the Gospel of John (1:1-18) provide illustration of both the similarities and distinctives of Coverdale's work in comparison to that of Tyndale, done less than a decade earlier:



William Tyndale (1526)	Miles Coverdale Bible (1535)	New Revised Standard Version
<p>1 In the beginnyng was the worde and the worde was with God: and the worde was God. 2 The same was in the beginnyng with God. 3 All thinges were made by it and with out it was made nothinge that was made. 4 In it was lyfe and the lyfe was ye lyght of men 5 and the lyght shyneth in the darcknes but the darcknes comprehended it not.</p>	<p>1 In the begynnyng was the worde, and the worde was with God, and God was ye worde. 2 The same was in the begynnyng wt God. 3 All thinges were made by the same, and without the same was made nothinge that was made. 4 In him was the life, and the life was the light of men: 5 and the light shyneth in the darknesse, and the darknesse comprehended it not.</p>	<p>1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.</p>

Coverdale followed the emerging tradition of making an English translation from the Latin Vulgate, rather than from the original Hebrew and Greek texts. You don't have to look very far before the similarities of wording etc. to Tyndale's work become very clear. Fredrick G. Kenyon provides a helpful summation of the significance of Coverdale's work, particularly in relationship to that of Tyndale:

Tyndale never had the satisfaction of completing his gift of an English Bible to his country; but during his imprisonment he may have learnt that a complete translation, based largely upon his own, had actually been produced. The credit for this achievement, the first complete printed English Bible, is due to Miles Coverdale (1488-1569), afterwards bishop of Exeter (1551-1553). The details of its production are obscure. Coverdale met Tyndale abroad in 1529, and is said to have assisted him in the translation of the Pentateuch. His own work was done under the patronage of Cromwell, who was anxious for the publication of an English Bible; and it was no doubt forwarded by the action of Convocation, which, under Cranmer's leading, had petitioned in 1534 for the undertaking of such a work. It was probably printed by Froschover at Zurich; but this has never been absolutely demonstrated. It was published at the end of 1535, with a dedication to Henry VIII. By this time the conditions were more favorable to a Protestant Bible than they had been in 1525. Henry had finally broken with the Pope, and had committed himself to the principle of an English Bible. Coverdale's work was accordingly tolerated by authority, and when the second edition of it appeared in 1537 (printed by an English printer, Nycolson of Southwark), it bore on its title-page the words, "Set forth with the Kinng's most gracious license." In thus licensing Coverdale's translation, Henry probably did not know how far he was sanctioning the work of Tyndale, which he had previously condemned. In the New Testament, in particular, Tyndale's version is the basis of Coverdale's, and to a somewhat less extent this is also the case in the Pentateuch and Jonah; but Coverdale revised the work of his predecessor with the help of the Zurich German Bible of Zwingli and others (1524-1529), a Latin version by Pagninus, the Vulgate, and Luther. In his preface he explicitly disclaims originality as a translator, and there is no sign that he made any noticeable use of the Greek and Hebrew; but he used the available Latin, German, and English versions with judgment. In the parts of the Old Testament which Tyndale had not published he appears to have translated mainly from the Zurich Bible. [Coverdale's Bible of 1535 was reprinted by Bagster, 1838.]

In one respect Coverdale's Bible was epoch-making, namely, in the arrangement of the books of the Old Testament. In the Vulgate, as is well known, the books which are now classed as Apocrypha are intermingled with the other books of the Old Testament. This was also the case with the Septuagint, and in general it may be said that the Christian church had adopted this view of the canon. It is true that many of the greatest Christian Fathers had protested against it, and had preferred the Hebrew canon, which rejects these books. The canon of Athanasius places the Apocrypha in a class apart; the Syrian Bible omitted them; Eusebius and Gregory Nazianzen appear to have held similar views; and Jerome refused to translate them for his Latin Bible. Nevertheless the church at large, both East and West, retained them in their Bibles, and the provincial Council of Carthage (A.D. 397), under the influence of Augustine, expressly included them in the canon. In spite of Jerome, the Vulgate, as it circulated in Western Europe, regularly included the disputed books; and Wyclif's Bible, being a translation from the Vulgate, naturally has them too. On the other hand, Luther, though recognizing these books as profitable and good for reading, placed them in a class apart, as "Apocrypha," and in the same way he segregated He-

brews, James, Jude, and the Apocalypse at the end of the New Testament, as of less value and authority than the rest. This arrangement appears in the table of contents of Tyndale's New Testament in 1525, and was adopted by Coverdale, Matthew, and Taverner. It is to Tyndale's example, no doubt, that the action of Coverdale is due. His Bible is divided into six parts -- (1) Pentateuch; (2) Joshua -- Esther; (3) Job -- "Solomon's Balettes" (i.e. Canticles); (4) Prophets; (5) "Apocrypha, the books and treatises which among the fathers of old are not reckoned to be of like authority with the other books of the Bible, neither are they found in the canon of the Hebrew"; (6) the New Testament. This represents the view generally taken by the Reformers, both in Germany and in England, and so far as concerns the English Bible, Coverdale's example was decisive. On the other hand, the Roman Church, at the Council of Trent (1546), adopted by a majority the opinion that all the books of the larger canon should be received as of equal authority, and for the first time made this a dogma of the Church, enforced by an anathema. In 1538, Coverdale published a New Testament with Latin (Vulgate) and English in parallel columns, revising his English to bring it into conformity with the Latin; but this (which went through three editions with various changes) may be passed over, as it had no influence on the general history of the English Bible.

His contributions as a Bible translator to several different translation beyond his own produces this observation: "It could also be said of Myles Coverdale, that he had a part in the publication of more different editions of English language Bibles in the 1500's, than any other person in history." He lived a simple life as a good, compassionate man, first as a priest in the Catholic church and then later as a preacher of Puritanism.

A couple of revisions of Coverdale's work followed the work of Tyndale:

Matthew's Bible. This translation was made in 1537 by John Rogers, an assistant of Tyndale, under the alias Thomas Matthew. It was based entirely upon the work of Tyndale and Coverdale and it was printed under the King's License, as the third edition of Coverdale's Bible had been. **Taverner's Bible.** This was an unimportant revision of the Matthew's Bible appearing in 1539, the work of Richard Taverner.

4.1.2.3. The Great Bible, 1539



This translation was produced in large part by Miles Coverdale as well. Large portions of it were an update of the work of William Tyndale. It has the distinction of being the first officially authorized English translation. King Henry VIII declared it to be the official English Bible to be used by the Church of England. The Wikipedia article effectively summarizes this work:

The Great Bible was the first authorised edition of the Bible in English, authorised by King Henry VIII of England to be read aloud in the church services of the Church of England.

The Great Bible was prepared by Myles Coverdale, working under commission of Sir Thomas Cromwell, Secretary to Henry VIII and Vicar General. In 1538, Cromwell directed the clergy to provide:

"...one book of the bible of the largest volume in English, and the same set up in some convenient place within the said church that ye have care of, whereas your parishioners may most commodiously resort to the same and read it."

The first edition was a run of 2,500 copies that were begun in Paris in 1539. Much of the printing was done at Paris, and after some misadventures where the printed sheets were seized by the French authorities on grounds of heresy (since relations between England and France were somewhat troubled at this time), the publication was completed in London

in April 1539. It went through six subsequent revisions between 1540 and 1541. The second edition of 1540 included a preface by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, recommending the reading of the scriptures. (Weigle viii; Pollard 16-19.)

Although called the Great Bible because of its large size, it is known by several other names as well.

It was called the Cromwell Bible, since Thomas Cromwell directed its publication. It was also termed the Cranmer Bible, since Thomas Cranmer wrote the preface as well as convinced the King to commission an authorized version. Cranmer's preface was also included in the front of the Bishops' Bible. It was also called the Chained Bible, since it was chained in "some convenient place within the said church."

The Great Bible includes, with very slight revision, the New Testament and the Old Testament portions that had been translated by William Tyndale. The remaining books of the Old Testament were translated by Coverdale, who used mostly the Latin Vulgate and Martin Luther's German translation as sources rather than working from the original Greek and Hebrew texts.

The Great Bible's New Testament revision is chiefly distinguished from Tyndale's source version by the interpolation of numerous phrases and sentences found only in the Vulgate. For example, here is the Great Bible's version of Acts 23:24-25 (as given in The New Testament Octapla):

"...And delyver them beastes, that they maye sett Paul on, and brynge him safe unto Felix the hye debyte (*For he dyd feare lest happlie the Jewes shulde take hym awaye and kyll him, and he hym selfe shulde be afterwarde blamed, as though he wolde take money.*) and he wrote a letter after thys maner."

The non italicized portions are taken over from Tyndale without change, but the italicized words, which are not found in the Greek Textus Receptus used by Tyndale to translate, have been added from the Latin. (The added sentence can also be found, with minor verbal differences, in the Douai-Rheims New Testament.) These inclusions appear to have been done to make the Great Bible more palatable to conservative English churchmen, many of whom considered the Vulgate to be the only legitimate Bible.

The psalms in the Book of Common Prayer are taken from the Great Bible rather than the King James Bible.

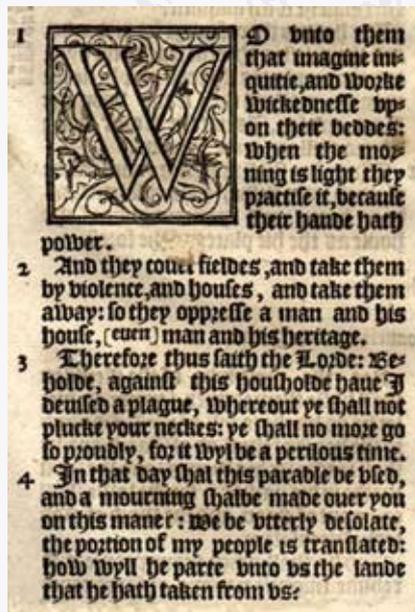
The Great Bible was superseded as the authorised version of the Anglican Church in 1568 by the Bishops' Bible.

As noted so much before, this translation depended almost entirely on the Latin Vulgate. One can't help but notice the powerful influence the Vulgate continued to exert upon Protestantism through this indirect means.

4.1.2.4 The Bishops' Bible, 1568



This version of the English Bible came about largely through the efforts of Matthew Parker (1504-75), the archbishop of Canterbury. It came about after Elizabeth had ascended to the throne following the reign of Queen Mary who attempted to crush the Church of England and return the country to a pure Catholic commitment.



This translation was a reactionary Bible. That is, it attempted to stem the tide of Calvinism being spread throughout England by the very popular Geneva Bible (see below). Parker led a group of bishops in the Anglican Church to produce this translation, and it was officially designated to be read in all the worship services of the Church of England. Although the official Bible, it never became popular among the people. King James' "authorization" did not mandate that it replace the Bishops' Bible; instead, this "authorization" merely permitted it to replace the Bishops' Bible for use in the church. In reality, many bishops continued to use the Bishops' Bible for several decades after 1611. Thus it failed to stem the influence of the Geneva Bible. The Wikipedia article contains a helpful summation:

The thorough Calvinism of the Geneva Bible offended the high-church party of the Church of England, to which almost all of its bishops subscribed. They associated Calvinism with Presbyterianism, which sought to replace government of the church by bishops (Episcopalian) with government by lay elders. In an attempt to replace the objectionable translation, they circulated one of their own, which became known as the Bishops' Bible.

The leading figure in translating was Matthew Parker, Archbishop of

Canterbury. It was at his instigation that the various sections translated by Parker and his fellow bishops were followed by their initials in the early editions. For instance, at the end of the book of Deuteronomy, we find the initials “W.E.” which, according to a letter Parker wrote to Sir William Cecil, stands for William Alley, Bishop of Exeter. Parker tells Cecil that this system was “to make [the translators] more diligent, as answerable for their doings” (Pollard 22-3).

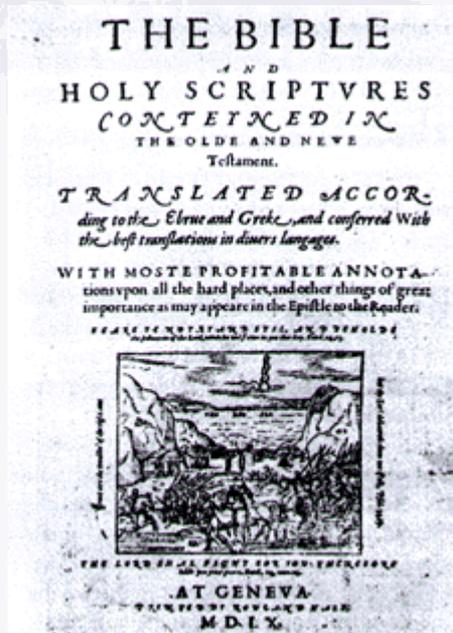
The Bishops’ Bible had the authority of the royal warrant, and was the version specifically authorised to be read aloud in church services. However, it failed to displace the Geneva Bible from its popular esteem. The version was more grandiloquent than the Geneva Bible, but was harder to understand. It lacked most of the footnotes and cross-references in the Geneva Bible, which contained much controversial theology, but which were helpful to people among whom the Bible was just beginning to circulate in the vernacular. As a result, while the Bishops’ Bible went through 20 editions from its introduction to 1606, during the same period the Geneva Bible was reprinted more than 150 times.

In 1611, the King James Version was published, and soon took the Bishops’ Bible’s place as the de facto standard of the Church of England. Later judgments of the Bishops’ Bible have not been favorable; David Daniell, in his important edition of William Tyndale’s New Testament, states that the Bishops’ Bible “was, and is, not loved. Where it reprints Geneva it is acceptable, but most of the original work is incompetent, both in its scholarship and its verbosity” (Daniell xii).

Unlike Tyndale’s translations and the Geneva Bible, the Bishops’ Bible has rarely been reprinted. The most available reprinting of its New Testament portion (minus its marginal notes) can be found in the fourth column of the New Testament Octapla edited by Luther Weigle, chairman of the translation committee that produced the Revised Standard Version.

The Bishops’ Bible is also known as the “Treacle Bible”, due to its translation of Jeremiah 8:22 which reads “Is there not treacle at Gilead?” In the Authorized Version of 1611, “treacle” was changed to “balm”.

4.1.2.5 The Geneva Bible, 1560



This Bible was the “Puritan Bible,” at least in the eyes of many Englishers. During the reign of Queen Mary I (1553-1558), efforts were made to forcibly bring England and Scotland back under Roman Catholicism. Many Puritans fled to Geneva in Switzerland for safety. Miles Coverdale was among them. In Switzerland several of these Puritan scholars, influenced by the Reformed Church movement led there by John Calvin and Theodore Beza, began a translation project to update the Great Bible. The project began in 1557 and the first edition was released in 1560.

“The Geneva Bible was a Protestant translation of the Bible into English. It has also been known as the Breeches Bible, after its rendering of Genesis 3:7, ‘Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knewe that they were naked, and they sewed figge tree leaues together, and made them selues breeches.’ This was the Bible read by William Shakespeare, by John Donne, and by John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*. It was the Bible that was brought to America on the *Mayflower* and used by Oliver Cromwell in the English Civil War. Because the language of the Geneva Bible was more forceful and vigorous, most readers preferred this version strongly over the Bishops’ Bible, the translation authorised by the

Church of England under Elizabeth I.” (“Geneva Bible,” Wikipedia)

Several new items would be included in this new Bible. Most importantly were:

First, it was the first English Bible to use both chapter and verse numbering, which were developed by William Whittingham, one of the translators on this project. The New Testament versification drew largely from the printed Greek text of Robert Estienne who introduced them in 1551. These have become the standard followed by all English translations since then.

Second, the Geneva Bible introduced study notes and cross-referencing systems to the English Bible. This quickly became the most controversial aspect of the translation. This objection was largely due to the very strong Calvinist and Puritan tones and doctrinal viewpoints saturating these notes. The leadership of the Church of England as well as the king vigorously objected to these notes because they contradicted Anglican

theological views in many significant places. This played a major role in King James I authorizing the King James Version, the Anglican translation to counteract this influence. Additionally, the Geneva Bible spurred the Roman Catholic Church to produce its first English translation of the Bible, the Douai Bible. Gary DeMar provides additional details ("Historic Church Documents," *Reformed.Org*):

England's Most Popular Bible

While other English translations failed to capture the hearts of the reading public, the Geneva Bible was instantly popular. Between 1560 and 1644 at least 144 editions appeared. For forty years after the publication of the King James Bible, the Geneva Bible continued to be the Bible of the home. Oliver Cromwell used extracts from the Geneva Bible for his Soldier's Pocket Bible which he issued to the army.

A THREAT TO KING JAMES

In 1620 the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth with their Bibles and a conviction derived from those Bibles of establishing a new nation. The Bible was not the King James Version. When James I became king of England in 1603, there were two translations of the Bible in use; the Geneva Bible was the most popular, and the Bishops' Bible was used for reading in churches.

King James disapproved of the Geneva Bible because of its Calvinistic leanings. He also frowned on what he considered to be seditious marginal notes on key political texts. A marginal note for Exodus 1:9 indicated that the Hebrew midwives were correct in disobeying the Egyptian king's orders, and a note for 2 Chronicles 15:16 said that King Asa should have had his mother executed and not merely deposed for the crime of worshipping an idol. The King James Version of the Bible grew out of the king's distaste for these brief but potent doctrinal commentaries. He considered the marginal notes to be a political threat to his kingdom.

At a conference at Hampton Court in 1604 with bishops and theologians, the king listened to a suggestion by the Puritan scholar John Reynolds that a new translation of the Bible was needed. Because of his distaste for the Geneva Bible, James was eager for a new translation. "I profess," he said, "I could never yet see a Bible well translated in English; but I think that, of all, that of Geneva is the worst."

A THREAT TO ROME

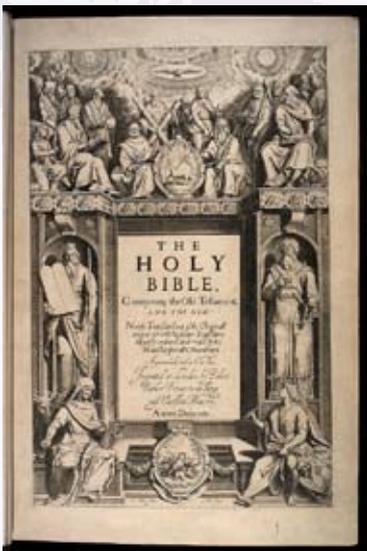
In addition to being a threat to the king of England, the Geneva Bible was outspokenly anti-Roman Catholic, as one might expect. Rome was still persecuting Protestants in the sixteenth century. Keep in mind that the English translators were exiles from a nation that was returning to the Catholic faith under a queen who was burning Protestants at the stake. The anti-Roman Catholic sentiment is most evident in the Book of Revelation: "The beast that cometh out of the bottomless pit (Rev. 11:7) is the Pope, which hath his power out of hell and cometh thence." In the end, the Geneva Bible was replaced by the King James Version, but not before it helped to settle America.

This introduces one of the ironies that continues to exist in many Protestant circles to this very day. The King James Version came about as a Church of England translation expressly to snub out the influence of the Geneva Bible with its Puritan beliefs that were shaped by Calvinism. Yet, many very conservative Protestant groups today with strong Calvinistic leanings will only allow the use of the King James Version of the Bible in their churches.

To help see the similarities and differences of the Geneva Bible from its predecessors and competitors, note the translations of Psalm 51:1-6

Great Bible	Bishops' Bible	Geneva Bible
<p>1 Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy (great) goodness: according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offences. 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine wickedness: and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know mine iniquities: and my sinne is ever before me. 4 Against the onely have I sinned and done this evill in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified in thy saying and clear when thou art judged. 5 Beholde, I was shapen in wickednes, and in syn hath my mother conceyved me. 6 But lo, thou requirest truth in the inward partes: and shalt make mee to understande wisdom secretly.</p>	<p>1 Haue mercie on me O Lorde accordyng to thy louyng kindnesse: accordyng vnto the multitudes of thy mercies wpe out my wickednesse. 2 Washe me thoroughly from myne iniquitie: and clense me from my sinne. 3 For I do acknowledge my wickednesse: and my sinne is euer before me. 4 Agaynst thee, only agaynst thee I haue sinned and done this euill in thy sight: that thou mightest be iustified in thy saying, and founde pure when thou art iudged. 5 Beholde, I was ingendred in iniquitie: and in sinne my mother conceaued me. 6 Neuerthelesse, lo thou requirest trueth in the inward partes [of me]: & [therefore] thou wyllt make me learne wisdom in the secreta [part of myne heart.]</p>	<p>1 To him that excelleth. A Psalm of Daud, when the Prophet Nathan came vnto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba. Haue mercie vpon me, O God, according to thy louing kindnes: according to the multitude of thy compassions put away mine iniquities. 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquitie, and clense me from my sinne. 3 For I know mine iniquities, and my sinne is euer before me. 4 Against thee, against thee onely haue I sinned, and done euill in thy sight, that thou mayest be iust when thou speakest, and pure when thou iudgest. 5 Beholde, I was borne in iniquitie, and in sinne hath my mother conceiued me. 6 Beholde, thou louest truth in the inward affections: therefore hast thou taught mee wisdom in the secret of mine heart.</p>

4.2 The King James Version, 1611: What about the KJV?



The preceding English Bibles in the 1500s laid the foundation for the new Anglican English Bible in the early 1600s that would eventually become to the English speaking Protestant world what the Latin Vulgate has been to Roman Catholicism. From the middle 1600s until the late 1800s, “the Bible” meant the King James Version to virtually all Protestants. And even to this day in small numbers of ultra conservative groups of Protestants the KJV still remains the only legitimate Bible. It has not only shaped Protestant understanding about Christianity, but it has also shaped English speaking western culture and literature profoundly. Consequently, we need to give more detailed attention to it, than we did to the earlier English Bibles.

4.2.1 Its beginnings

At the heart of the beginnings of the KJV is controversy. It is a reactionary translation. Among Puritans and a growing number of other Englanders was the huge popularity of the Geneva Bible. The leadership of the Church of England along with King James I became increasingly alarmed by this popularity.

This wasn’t due to the translation itself. Instead, the marginal notes that made the Geneva a study Bible were the sore spot. These notes advocated a Calvinist doctrinal viewpoint in conflict with the teachings of the Anglican Church. At certain points the note contained either direct or indirect criticism of the monarchy. Thus this translation was born out of the attempt to stamp out the influence of the Geneva Bible. The Geneva Bible had become the basis of severe criticism of the Bishops Bible that was the official English translation during this period. Thus the church leadership sought a means to revive an official English Bible like the Bishops Bible, but under a new name and with its own identity.

The “justifying rationale” was the perceived confusion coming from having many different English translations floating around the countryside. Jack P. Lewis describes the situation (p. 28):

Geneva Bibles were commonly used in homes, Bishops’ Bibles in churches. Some Great Bibles were still around and perhaps even Tyndale and Coverdale Bibles could be found, though none of these three had been reprinted for a generation. Miles Smith in the “Translators to the Reader” of the KJV spoke of making one translation out of many good ones, to which men could not justly take exception. Though



one can hardly envision King James doing a lasting service to Christendom, fate has its odd turns. John Reynolds' proposal of a new translation made at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 caught King James' fancy, and he set in order the machinery to bring about the translation.

The launch pad for all this was the Hampton Court Conference first called in 1604 by King James I. The meeting was focused on reforming the Church of England. Two groups were present. The bishops who represented



the Church of England officially, and a group of moderate Puritans who wanted to reform the British church of its "popish" tendencies. The king moderated over the sessions. One of the side products coming out of this was the organization of a translation committee to produce a new English translation to help bring unity to Protestant Christians in England and Scotland.

Laurence M. Vance provides a helpful summation of this meeting at Hampton Court palace:

The conference at Hampton Court at which the Authorized Version was born was held within a year of James VI of Scotland becoming James I of England. And although a new version of the Bible was not on the agenda, God had his own agenda, and used the king and the conference participants alike to bring about his purposes.

Soon after he acceded to the English throne, the new king was presented with the Millenary Petition, so called because "we, to the number of more than a thousand, of your Majesty's subjects and ministers, all groaning as under a common burden of human rites and ceremonies, do with one joint consent humble ourselves at your Majesty's feet to be eased and relieved in this behalf." This was the first, and most influential, of several petitions presented to the king by clergyman with Puritan leanings. The Puritans desired a more complete reformation in the Church of England. Extreme Puritans rejected Prelacy (church government by bishops) outright, as well as the Book of Common Prayer; moderate Puritans merely objected to certain ceremonies, such as wearing the surplice (a white ministerial vestment), and making the sign of the cross (traced on an infant's forehead during baptism). Although the Act of Supremacy in 1534 had established King Henry VIII as "the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England," the Reformation in England progressed slower, lasted longer, and underwent more changes than any Continental reform movement. The reign of Elizabeth ended the external conflict with the Church of Rome, but this was followed by the internal conflict between Prelacy and Puritanism. It is to be remembered that there was no separation of church and state during this period in history – neither in Catholic nor Protestant countries.

The Millenary Petition begins with a preface reading: "The humble Petition of the Ministers of the Church of England desiring reformation of certain ceremonies and abuses of the Church." The moderate demands of the Puritans were subsumed under four heads: (1) In the Church Service, (2) Concerning Church ministers, (3) For Church livings and maintenance, (4) For Church Discipline. This was followed by the mention of a conference: "These, with such other abuses yet remaining, and practised in the Church of England, we are able to show not to be agreeable to the Scriptures, if it shall please your Highness farther to hear us, or more at large by writing to be informed, or by conference among the learned to be resolved." The petitioners sought "a due and godly reformation," and closed by addressing the king as did Mordecai to Esther: "Who knoweth whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time?"

Ever wanting to be tolerant and a reconciler of religious differences, King James set a date of November 1 for a conference in which the Puritans could state their case. This was scheduled months before he would even meet his first Parliament. There were English precedents, parallels, and sequences to the Hampton Court Conference, but none where the presiding moderator was a king, and not just any king, but a king who was keenly interested in theological and ecclesiastical matters, and quite at home in disputes of this nature. Regarding the Puritans, in a revised preface to the 1603 edition of his *Basilikon*

Doron (The King's Gift), printed in England within days of his accession to the throne, the king stated his unflinching opposition to the more radical Puritans. Thus, the Hampton Court Conference can be seen as primarily an attempt to settle the issue of Puritanism in the Church of England.

The Hampton Court Conference was soon postponed until after Christmas. In a royal proclamation dated October 24, 1603, the king mentioned "a meeting to be had before our Selfe and our Counsell, of divers of the Bishops and other learned men, the first day of the next month, by whose information and advice we might governe our proceeding therein, if we found cause of amendment." This was followed by three reasons for postponing the conference, chief of which was "by reason of the sicknesse reigning in many places of our Kingdome." Thus, because of an outbreak of the plague (which was killing thousands in London), the conference was postponed until January of the next year.

Beginning on a Saturday, the Hampton Court Conference was held on three days in January (14, 16, & 18) of 1604. It was held in a withdrawing room within the Privy Chamber. Here, a delegation of moderate Puritan divines met with the king and his bishops, deans (a church office below that of a bishop), and Privy Council (the king's advisors). Several of the men who attended the Hampton Court Conference were later chosen to be translators of the proposed new Bible. The participants on the first day were limited to the king, the bishops, five deans, and the Privy Council. Day two saw the Puritan representatives, two bishops, and the deans meet with the king and his Council. The third day was a plenary session.

There survives several accounts of the Hampton Court Conference. The official account, which is also by far the longest, was commissioned by Bishop Bancroft of London a few weeks after the conference closed. It was written by William Barlow, who attended the conference in his capacity as the Dean of Chester, and was published in August of 1604 as *The Summe and Substance of the Conference, which, it pleased his Excellent Maiestie to have with the Lords, Bishops, and other of his Clergie, (at which the most of the Lordes of the Councell were present) in his Maiesties Privy-Chamber, at Hampton Court. January 14, 1603.* The other accounts of the conference include letters about the conference written soon after its close by four participants, including the king himself, an anonymous account supposedly favoring the bishops, and four anonymous accounts supposedly favoring the Puritans.

Representing the Puritans at the Hampton Court Conference were Dr. John Rainolds (1549–1607), Laurence Chaderton (1537–1640), Dr. Thomas Sparke (1548–1616), and John Knewstubs (1544–1624). Rainolds was president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. It was he who put forth the suggestion at the conference that a new translation of the Bible be undertaken. He was also one of the translators, serving on the company that translated the Prophets. Rainolds, of whom it was said: "He alone was a well-furnished library, full of all faculties, of all studies, of all learning; the memory, the reading of that man were near to a miracle," acted as the "foreman" for the Puritan group. Chaderton was the master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and a prebendary (a receiver of cathedral revenues [a "prebend"]) of Lincoln Cathedral. He was a noted Latin, Greek, and Hebrew scholar, and also served as one of the translators of the future Bible. Chaderton preached to large crowds at Cambridge for nearly fifty years. Sparke was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he earned four degrees. He had earlier represented the Puritans in a conference held at Lambeth Palace in December 1584. Knewstubs was educated at St. John's College, Cambridge. He was an ardent controversialist. At the Hampton Court Conference, he took special exception to the use of the sign of the cross in baptism and the wearing of the surplice, equating it with garments worn by the priests of Isis, for which he was rebuked by the king.

There were nine bishops in attendance at the Hampton Court Conference: John Whitgift (1530–1604), Richard Bancroft (1544–1610), Thomas Bilson (1547–1616), Thomas Dove (1555–1630), Anthony Watson (d. 1605), Gervase Babington (1550–1610), Henry Robinson (1553–1616), Anthony Rudd (1549–1615), and Tobie Matthew (1546–1628). Whitgift was the aging Archbishop of Canterbury. He had drawn up the Calvinistic Lambeth Articles in 1595, which articles were to be mentioned at the Hampton Court Conference. Bancroft was the bishop of London and successor of Whitgift as the Archbishop of Canterbury. Bilson was the bishop of Winchester, Dove of Peterborough, Watson of Chichester, Babington of Worcester, Robinson of Carlisle, Rudd of St. David's, and Matthew of Durham. Bancroft and Bilson each had a role in the production of the King James Bible – Bancroft as a translator, and Bilson, with Miles Smith (d. 1624), as a final editor. It is Bilson who is thought to have written the dedication to King James that appeared at the front of the new version that came to be called after his name. This "Epistle Dedicatory" is sometimes still printed at the front of some editions of the Authorized Version. The bish-

ops of the Church of England were joined by nine deans. William Barlow (d. 1613), Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626), John Overall (1560–1619), James Montague (1568–1618), George Abbot (1562–1633), Thomas Ravis (1560–1609), Thomas Edes (1555–1604), Giles Thomson (1553–1612), and John Gordon (1544–1619).

Barlow, who wrote the “official” account of the Hampton Court Conference, was the dean of Chester. Andrewes was the dean of Westminster, Overall of St. Paul’s, Montague of the Chapel Royal, Abbot of Winchester, Ravis of Christ Church, Edes of Worcester, Thomson of Windsor, and Gordon of Salisbury (or Sarum). John Bridges (d. 1618) is listed in some accounts as representing Salisbury at the conference, but none of them primary sources. This can be explained by the fact that although Bridges was the actual dean of Salisbury when the conference took place, Gordon was nominated to replace him the previous October but not officially confirmed to the deanery until February 24 – after the conference. Bridges was consecrated Bishop of Oxford on February 12. So, either both Bridges and Gordon attended (highly unlikely) or Bridges was named in some accounts instead of Gordon because of his connection with Salisbury.

Barlow, Andrews, Overall, Montague, Abbot, Ravis, Edes, and Thomson were all chosen to serve as translators of the King James Bible, but Edes died before he could take part.

There are some other participants in the Hampton Court Conference whose role is unsure. Dr. Richard Field (1561–1616), the Oxford-educated chaplain to the king, was in attendance, as was an archdeacon (another church office below that of a bishop), Dr. John King (1559–1621), of Nottingham. Patrick Galloway (1551–1626), the king’s Scottish chaplain, was also there.

On the first day of the conference the king and his Privy Council met with his bishops and five deans – those from the Chapel Royal, Westminster, St. Paul’s, Chester, and Salisbury. In his opening remarks, the king contrasted England and Scotland: “For blessed be God’s gracious goodness, who hath brought me into the promised Land, where religion is purely professed, where I sit amongst grave, learned and reverend men, not as before, elsewhere, a king without state, without honour, without order, where beardless boys would brave us to the face.”

After relating that he did not call the conference “for any innovation, for we acknowledge the government ecclesiastical, as now it is, to have been approved by manifold blessings from God himself,” the king explained that the points upon which he desired to be satisfied could be reduced to three heads: (1) Concerning the Book of Common Prayer, and divine service used in the Church, (2) Excommunication in the ecclesiastical courts, (3) The providing of fit and able ministers for Ireland. In the Prayer Book, the king had questions about confirmation, absolution, and baptism. Regarding excommunication, the king was concerned about the manner in which it was done and the persons who did it. As for ministers for Ireland, the king deferred the matter to the last day of the conference. There was to be no question of a change in the government of the church, as James was later to state: “I approve the calling and use of bishops in the Church, and it is my aphorism, ‘No Bishop, no King.’”

On the second day of the conference, the Puritan delegation, two bishops (Bancroft of London & Bilson of Winchester), and the deans met with the king and his Council. Patrick Galloway and the two doctors of divinity, John King and Richard Field, were also in attendance. Prince Henry (who would die in a few years, leaving Charles as the king’s only heir), then nine years old, sat on a stool beside his father the king.

The Puritan delegates had been instructed to propose some moderate reforms: the improvement of the clergy, the revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles, the abolition of offensive ceremonies, the correction of the liturgy, better regulation of the Sabbath, and the authorization of a new short catechism. There was no mention of any new translation of the Bible.

Dr. Rainolds began the day’s session with four requests: 1. That the doctrine of the church might be preserved in purity according to God’s word. 2. That good pastors might be planted in all churches to preach the same. 3. That the church government might be sincerely ministered according to God’s word. 4. That the Book of Common Prayer might be fitted to more increase of piety.

He went on specifically to request that a new catechism be made, that errors be corrected in the Prayer Book, that the sign of the cross not be used in baptism, that changes be made in the words of the marriage ceremony (for which he was chided by the smiling king for speaking of marriage when he was but a single man), that articles sixteen, twenty-three, twenty-five, and thirty-seven in the Thirty-Nine Articles be amended, that “unlawful and seditious books be suppressed,” that the Apocryphal books

not be read in church, and, almost incidentally, that a new translation of the Bible be made. Twice he requested that the “nine orthodoxal assertions” of the Lambeth Articles be added to the Thirty-Nine Articles.

In discussing the manner in which theological disputes should be settled among the clergy, Rainolds mentioned the desirability of an episcopal synod where the bishop with his presbytery could make a determination of “such points before not decided.” A presbytery was the wrong thing to mention, for James was from Scotland, and, shrewdly using the opportunity presented him by Rainolds to reinforce his idea of episcopacy being a safeguard to the monarchy, he quickly retorted: “If you aim at a Scottish presbytery, it agreeth as well with monarchy as God and the devil. Then Jack, and Tom, and Will, and Dick, shall meet and censure me and my council, and all our proceedings.” The king then quoted for the second time his maxim, “No Bishop, no King,” and concluded his words to Dr. Rainolds with: “If this be all your party hath to say, I will make them conform themselves, or else I will harrie them out of the land, or else do worse.”

The third day of the conference was quite different than the first two. In addition to the Privy Council and the clergy, there were also present some knights, civilians, and ecclesiastical lawyers. The Puritans were called in at the close to hear the king’s decisions. The king made a speech in which he touched on changes to be made – changes in the Book of Common Prayer, in the operation of the ecclesiastical courts, concerning ministers, including the planting of preachers in Ireland, and in controls on the importation of popish books. A list survives containing fifteen things “as shall be reformed in the Church,” one of which concerns a new translation of the Bible. After the bishops and the Privy Council were directed to form themselves into committees to implement the decisions made at the conference, the Puritan delegation was admitted and informed of them.

King James was interested in conformity. He insisted at the end of the conference that he “would have the bishops to govern and the ministers to obey.” Although most of the reforms decided on at the Hampton Court Conference had been mentioned in the Millenary Petition, the principal objections of the Puritans were ignored. The alterations made in the Prayer Book were in many respects considered to be matters of indifference to the Puritans. There was to be no great revision like that of the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI in 1552. The Jacobean Prayer Book of 1604 (the fourth) was therefore basically the same as the Elizabethan Prayer Book of 1559 (the third). A royal proclamation enjoining the use of the revised Book of Common Prayer was issued on March 5, 1604.

The king would use subscription to regulate nonconformity. The Convocation (the clerical Parliament) of the Anglican Church passed a series of 141 canons later in 1604. Canon 36 incorporated Whitgift’s Three Articles of 1583 that required every minister to subscribe to the royal supremacy, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. This was followed by another royal proclamation on July 16, 1604, in which ministers were given until November 30 of that year to conform to the rites and ordinances of the Church of England.

The only thing accomplished after the Hampton Court Conference that was of any lasting significance was the translation of the new Bible. It was on the second day of the conference that Dr. Rainolds proposed that a new translation of the Bible be undertaken. According to Barlow: “After that he [Rainolds] moved his majesty that there might be a new translation of the Bible, because those which were allowed in the reign of king Henry the Eight and Edward the Sixt were corrupt and not answerable to the truth of the original.”

Three examples were then given by Rainolds: “First, Galatians iv. 25. The Greek word *susoichei* is not well translated as now it is, bordereth neither expressing the force of the word, nor the apostles sense, nor the situation of the place. Secondly, psalm cv. 28, ‘They were not obedient;’ the original being, ‘They were not disobedient.’ Thirdly, psalm cvi. 30, ‘Then stood up Phinees and prayed,’ the Hebrew hath, ‘executed judgment.’”

The king replied that “he could never yet see a Bible well translated in English; but I think, that of all, that of Geneva is the worst.” But it was not the text of the Geneva Bible that bothered the king – it was the notes. After the Bishop of London added a caveat that no marginal notes should be added to Rainold’s new Bible, the king mentioned two passages in the Geneva Bible (Exo. 1:19 & 2 Chr. 15:16) where he found the notes to be offensive. The king then concluded: “Let errors, in matters of faith, be amended, and indifferent things be interpreted, and a gloss added unto them.”

And so the King James Authorized Version was born. The greatest achievement of the Hampton

Court Conference may seem rather incidental in man's eyes, but it is "in the sight of God of great price" (1 Pet. 3:4), as history has borne witness. The conference and the king's sponsoring of the new translation were both alluded to in the dedication to the new Bible. And in the preface to the same, there is specific mention of both events: "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 although 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."

At the king's funeral sermon, the Hampton Court Conference and James's sponsoring of the new translation of the Bible were both mentioned; and rightly so, for without these two events – the former giving birth to the latter – we would not be commemorating the Bible that bears the king's name. The Hampton Court Conference is still studied by historians, both secular and sacred, and is certain to continue to be so because of the renewed interest in this historic event generated by its 400th anniversary

The translators were mandated to follow 15 guidelines in the production of the translation:

1. The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the Bishops Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the Truth of the original will permit.
2. The names of the Prophets, and the Holy Writers, with the other Names of the Text, to be retained, as high as may be, accordingly as they were vulgarly used.
3. The Old Ecclesiastical Words to be kept, viz. the Word Church not to be translated Congregation etc.
4. When a Word hath divers Significations, that to be kept which hath been most commonly used by the most of the Ancient Fathers, being agreeable to the Propriety of the Place, and the Analogy of the Faith.
5. The Division of the Chapters to be altered, either not at all, or as little as may be, if Necessity so require.
6. No Marginal Notes at all to be affixed, but only for the explanation of the Hebrew or Greek Words, which cannot without some circumlocution, so briefly and fitly be expressed in the Text.
7. Such Quotations of Places to be marginally set down as shall serve for the fit Reference of one Scripture to another.
8. Every particular Man of each Company, to take the same Chapter or Chapters, and having translated or amended them severally by himself, where he thinketh good, all to meet together, confer what they have done, and agree for their Parts what shall stand.
9. 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.
10. If any Company, upon the Review of the Book so sent, doubt or differ upon any Place, to send them Word thereof; note the Place, and withal send the 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.
11. When any Place of special Obscurity is doubted of, Letters to be directed by Authority, to send to any Learned Man in the Land, for his Judgement of such a Place.
12. Letters to be sent from every Bishop to the rest of his Clergy, admonishing them of this Translation in hand; and to move and charge as many skilful in the Tongues; and having taken pains in that kind, to send his particular Observations to the Company, either at Westminster, Cambridge, or Oxford.
13. The Directors in each Company, to be the Deans of Westminster, and Chester for that Place; and the King's Professors in the Hebrew or Greek in either University.
14. These translations to be used when they agree better with the Text than the Bishops Bible: Tyn-dale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Whitchurch's, Geneva.
15. Besides the said Directors before mentioned, three or four of the most Ancient and Grave Divines, in either of the Universities, not employed in Translating, to be assigned by the vice-Chancellor, upon Conference with the rest of the Heads, to be Overseers of the Translations as well Hebrew as Greek, for the better observation of the 4th Rule above specified.

Prof. Metzger (p. 71) summarizes these rules well:

The rules of the procedure specified that the Bishops' Bible was to be followed and "as little altered as the truth of the original will permit"; that certain other translations should be used where they

agreed better with the text, namely, “Tindoll’s Matthew’s, Coverdale’s, Whitchurch’s [=the Great Bible, so named from the name of the printer], and Geneva”; that “the Old Ecclesiastical Words [were] to be kept, viz. the Word Church not be translated Congregation, etc.” and that no marginal notes were to be used except for necessary explanations of Hebrew or Greek words. Most of the remaining fifteen rules dealt with method of procedure.

The translators worked from 1604 until the first edition was released to the public in 1611. Despite King James’ goal of having a single English Bible used universally, the translators’ preface makes it clear that they viewed their work as not the final work on English Bible translation: “nothing is begun and perfected at the same time” (as quoted in Lewis, p. 36). Also, they clearly did not view either the preceding English translations nor theirs, the KJV, to be a “perfect” translation.

The sources for the translation not only included the available Greek and Hebrew texts but especially the previous translations of the English Bible beginning with Tyndale, and in particular the wording of the Bishop’s Bible (cf. rule #1). The Latin Vulgate was also consulted and used. To be sure, the available Greek and Hebrew texts were of very poor quality, and followed essentially the same original language text families as had the Latin Vulgate. Since the history of the English Bible from Tyndale on had been mostly a translation of the Vulgate, one should not be surprised that the major accomplishment of the KJV was an updated translation with more contemporary and more carefully nuanced English language expression. By being an “Authorized Version,” it had the official backing of both the government and the Anglican Church, which helped its rapid distribution. But some of the earlier translations continued to be reprinted along side the KJV for several decades after 1611.

Many reacted to this new translation with hostility. The label “The Devil’s Bible” was attached by some of the early critics of the KJV in the 1600s. “Among the most vocal of the critics was Hugh Broughton who, after examining the translation, declared that it was so poorly done that it would grieve him as long as he lived” (Lewis, p. 29). Catholic taunting of the KJV took this turn: “Was their Translation good before? Why doe they new mend it? Was it not good? Why then was it obruded to the people?. . . Nay, if it must be translated into English, Catholicks are fittest to doe it” (Lewis, p. 30).

The first edition contained a large number of printing errors, and thus calls for re-printing and new revisions came rather quickly.

Agitation for additional revision may be noted in the following sequence of events. John Lightfoot in 1629 objected to the Apocrypha’s being included between the two Testaments. When preaching before the House of Parliament on August 26, 1645, he urged a “review and survey of the translation of the Bible” so that people “might come to understand the proper and genuine reading of the Scriptures by an exact, vigorous, and lively translation.” John Selden commented on the KJV’s style, noting that “the Bible is rather translated into English Words, than into English Phrase. The Hebraisms are kept and the Phrase of that Language is kept.” Printing errors plagued all of the early editions. A tract written by William Kilburne in 1659 pointed out the errors in certain printings. As a result of the agitation for revision, a bill was introduced into the Long Parliament on January 11, 1653, for “a new English translation of the Bible out of the original tongues,” and a committee was appointed to consider the question. In 1655 John Row in Scotland, pointing out certain deficiencies in the KJV, proposed a revision. In 1657 a further committee of Parliament was appointed to look into the question; however, Parliament was dissolved before the committee could render a report. Had the British church been less tied to the state, the history of the King James Bible would likely have been different.” (Lewis, pp. 30-31)

4.2.2 Which version of the KJV?

From 1611 to the present the KJV has undergone numerous revisions and changes while still being labeled the King James Version. This does not include either the two revisions discussed below, nor the major modern revisions using more up-to-date critical Hebrew and Greek texts, beginning with the English Revised Version in the 1880s.

Few people seem conscious of the fact that a currently circulating King James Bible differs in significant details (though not in general content) from the one issued in 1611; they assume that the King James is a fixed phenomenon like “the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3; ASV). According to modern standards, books produced in the seventeenth century were carelessly printed. The 1611 editions of the KJV had “Then cometh Judas” in Matthew 26:36, which should have been “Then cometh Jesus.” The second edition by dittography repeated twenty words of Exodus 14:10. The

two editions of the KJV issued in 1611 differ from each other in several other respects. Printers' errors in various later printings created oddities like the "Wicked Bible" (which omitted "not" from the seventh of the ten commandments), the "Unrighteous Bible" (in which the unrighteous inherit the Kingdom), the "Vinegar Bible" (with its "Prable of the Vinegar), the "Ears to Ears Bible," and many others. Though quite humorous, these examples show that the printing of the Bible is a process subject to human error. The running together of "headstone" (Zech 4:7) is a printer's error of 1611 which remains uncorrected. Another printing error continued in modern printings and defying explanation is "strain at a gnat" (Matt. 23:24) where the 1611 version correctly had "strain out a gnat." (Lewis, pp. 37-38)

4.2.2.1 Pre-Twentieth Century Revisions

Lewis (pp. 38-40) and Metzger (pp. 77-80) point out a large number of revisions to the original KJV of 1611. A listing of these includes:

#1629 Cambridge edition made substantial corrections

#1638 edition prepared by Goad, Ward, Boyse, and Mead (two of the original translators) contained numerous changes

Most controversial was "ye may appoint" for "we may appoint" in Acts 6:3

#1659 William Kilburne claimed to have identified 20,000 errors that had crept into the six different editions printed in the 1650s.

#1660 New marginal references added

#1683 Dr. Anthony Scattergood added 7,250 references to a new edition

#1727 King's printer at Edinburgh issued an edition in which several thousand marginal references were corrected

#1701 Bishop Lloyd added a biblical chronology taken from Bishop Ussher.

#1762 F.S. Paris and H. Therold extended the use of italics, modernized the language and added 360 marginal references.

#1769 Benjamin Blayney did extensive revision including modernizing of word spellings, 76 new notes, and 30,495 new marginal references. This would become the most commonly printed edition for almost a century.

#1861 American Bible Society did mostly orthographic updating of the then circulating differing editions of the KJV. Over 24,000 variations in the current KJV versions had been uncovered through meticulous comparisons of about six different copies.

#1873 Scrivener's edition updated the Blayney edition which had dominated printing of the KJV from the 1770s on.

#1932 American Bible Society did additional revision in punctuation, spelling, and inserting headers (orthographic changes to American English)

#1962 Reference Bible from ABS containing paragraphing, sections headings, revised punctuation markings

#1982 Thomas Nelson revised edition of the entire KJV Bible released after NT released in 1979. (substantial updating of wording etc.)

#present: at least a dozen different editions of the KJV are in circulation with variations of wording, spellings and headings.

Given such a diversity of "readings" of the KJV over the past four centuries, no one should ever assume that there is "the" King James Version of the Bible. Even in the first publication in 1611 three different versions (folios) of this translation were released to the public with more than 200 variations in wording. In the midst of all this, one must not forget that the KJV gradually acquired dominant, and virtually exclusive, status as the Bible for most English speaking people world over. But the situation would begin changing in the late 1800s with the emergence of modern "critical" Greek texts of the New Testament. The exploding discovery of huge numbers of ancient manuscripts, primarily of the NT, created a growing awareness that the KJV was following biblical language readings that had little possibility of being original to the writing of the books of the NT.

4.2.2.2 Twentieth Century Updates and Revisions

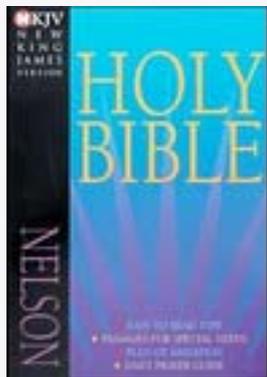
The development of Text Criticism in order to systematically and scientifically analyze the burgeoning number of ancient manuscripts produced a succession of new printed Greek texts of the New Testament in particular. With these new printed Greek texts taking the place of the old Textus Receptus, the call for new translations based on these more accurate Greek texts became louder and louder.

But resistance to this was strong. The KJV had become endeared to most English speaking Christians.

The rhythmic tone of the Elizabethan language was familiar and reassuring. Giving up the KJV was not going to be easy. In fact, most of the modern translations, beginning with the British Revised Version (1881-1885), have sought to follow in the tradition of the KJV with wording, etc. The one major difference has been the underlying biblical language texts upon which the translations are based.

In the twentieth century two major efforts to revise the King James Version, but still use the label King James Version, have taken place. They are the New King James Version and the 21st Century King James.

4.2.2.2.1 New King James Version



This represents a major revision of the King James Version of the Bible. First released in 1982, this translation was the product of a group of very conservative Bible scholars, most of whom were either Baptists or Presbyterians. The attempt was to update the archaic language of the older KJV. No use was made of modern critical Greek texts or Hebrew texts. The exclusive goal was to make the KJV more readable and understandable to modern readers. As is described in the Wikipedia article,

The task of updating the English of the KJV involved significant changes in word order, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. One of the most significant features of the NKJV was its abandonment of the second person pronouns “thou,” “thee,” “ye,” “thy,” and “thine.” Verb forms were also modernized in the NKJV (for example, “speaks” rather than “speaketh”).

New King James Version, 1982 edition	King James Version, 1873 Scrivner’s Edition
<p>1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.</p> <p>6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.</p> <p>15 John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ “ 16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.</p>	<p>1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.</p> <p>6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.</p> <p>15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. 16 And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. 18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he ath declared him.</p>

The above example from John 1:1-18 illustrates the approach of the NKJV translators. Mostly the revisions deal with word changes and re-sequencing of words. Both translations follow the less desirable punc-

tuation of verses three and four: “without Him nothing was made **that was made**. In Him was life,…” (NKJV) and “and without him was not any thing made **that was made**. In him was life;…” (KJV). Compare this to the more accurate NRSV: “without him not one thing came into being. **What has come into being** in him was life…” The shift in placement of the period causes the relative clause ὃ γέγονεν (ho gegonen) -- more literally, “what exists” -- to change meaning from a reference to the creation of everything in the material world. In the NRSV placement of the period, the clause now refers to what lives in creation, and especially to what possesses spiritual existence. In the Johannine writings ἡ ζωή (zoe), used here, means ‘spiritual life’ while τὸ βίος (bios) means physical life, or existence.

As might be expected, the publication of this translation using the words “King James Version” has occasioned considerable backlash and criticism. Most of it, however, comes from strict adherence KJV people who deeply resent its association with the KJV. Interestingly, a large portion of the KJV-only group are from the same two religious groups -- fundamentalist Baptists and Presbyterians.

More objective criticisms can be leveled at the translation: **1)** in the process of “updating” the archaic language of the KJV, it creates a version of English that has never existed. The English language style and tone in the translation represents neither English as it was used in 1611, nor any form of English spoken on either side of the Atlantic today. Translations, to be legitimate, should convey the meaning of the biblical texts in an existing language expression so that people can easily understand what the Bible is saying. **2)** By refusing to profit from over a century of modern biblical studies of the massively greater numbers of ancient Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible, the translators shunned valuable insights into the original wording of the documents of the Bible. The result was to produce a poor translation based on an exceedingly poor original language text.

4.2.2.2.2 21st Century King James



In 1994, a new version of the King James Bible was released to the public. Claiming to not be a new version nor new edition, the editors of Duel Enterprises, Inc., the publishers, assert that all they have done is to update the archaic language of the original 1611 version of the King James Version:

The 21st Century King James Version of the Holy Bible (KJ21®) is an updating of the 1611 King James Version (KJV).

It is not a new translation, but a careful updating to eliminate obsolete words by reference to the most complete and definitive modern American dictionary, the Webster’s New International Dictionary, Second Edition, unabridged. Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization have also been updated.

What has been historically known as Biblical English has been retained in this updating. It is readily distinguished from the colloquial language of commerce and the media used in contemporary Bible translations.

Biblical English is the language which has found its acceptance in Scripture and liturgy for more than 500 years in most of the English-speaking churches throughout the world. Only in the late twentieth century does one find the use of secular English in Bible translations. All language relating to gender and theology in the King James Version remains unchanged from the original.

The 21st Century King James Version contains universally useful study aids. It includes the chapter summaries from the 1611 King James Version, updated for quick reference. Also included are the cross references from the original King James Version plus many more, but without sectarian emphasis. Not since 1611 has there been a Bible that is so - Right for its time, Right for traditionalist, Right for Bible lovers.

The Preface makes some rather bold claims about this translation’s accomplishments, but these should be understood within the framework of the KJV only mindset, e.g., “it is closer in language to the original King James Version than any other Bible copyrighted in the twentieth century.” The English Bible translation world will take issue with most of these claims, and those such as the above one will be answered, in general, with this sort of response:

Of course, we have no concern to preserve the Elizabethian English of a world long since dead. Bible translation is a matter to getting the ideas of the best possible biblical language texts into the most understandable contemporary English possible. The Bible is never to be an object of worship, and this adoration of the KJV comes dangerously close to bibliolatry -- a serious violation of a basic biblical principle of worshipping God alone. As sacred scripture it is the channel through which we encounter God and hear

Him speaking to us. It is a means to an end, not an end within itself.

The circle of influence and use for the 21st Century King James is limited to the KJV only tradition, and yet it comes close to stroking the fires of backlash and opposition that the New King James Version did, simply for “tampering with the Bible.” But this translation takes a more cautious path both in how it has approached the KJV text, as well as in its marketing strategy, in trying to avoid the negative criticism generated by the New King James translators and publishers.

The same critique of this translation that was leveled against the New King James Version is applicable here. The one difference, which is the translation’s greatest weakness, is that it preserves a version of the Elizabethan form of English even more than than the NKJV. Thus, it is guilty of setting forth a form of English that has never existed, and is not spoken nor used anywhere in the English speaking world today. By glorifying the KJV and its language, it becomes an interpretive translation of a translation. Thus the same weakness of the early English Bible in that its versions from Tyndale on were essentially translations (English) of a translation (Latin Vulgate) is even more applicable here. Tyndale through the King James Version at least did “consult” the original language texts. Just the opposite is the case with the 21st Century King James.

New King James Version, 1982 edition	21st Century King James Version, 1994 edition	King James Version, 1873 Scrivner’s Edition
1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He as in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.	1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and that life was the Light of men. 5 And the Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.	1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

A comparison of the three translations above --- NKJV, 21st Cent, KJV --- highlights the claim of only making minor changes in the English language forms. At times the reasoning for making a change, and not making a change, is very puzzling, and therefore, highly subjective. Some of the changes border on the absurd, e.g., why change the KJV “light” to the 21st CKJ “Light”? Superficially, the logic suggests a highlighting of the divine nature of the metaphor of light. But the earlier KJV didn’t feel the need of doing such. Neither does such exist in the underlying Greek text of the Textus Receptus, consulted for the KJV translation. The capitalization de-emphasizes the metaphorical nature of the expression. But without adequate grounds. Popular conservative theological assumptions from our day provide no real basis for the 21st Century KJV’s actions here, but seem to be the reason for the change. The pattern one can trace in this translation is to capitalize every word possessing just a hint at reference to the divine. Ironically, this reflects an opposite pattern developing in contemporary American English. Very likely, this provides the stimulus for the translation’s pattern here: an effort to “counter” the perceived growing paganism in American culture and language usage. Therefore, very conservative theology rather than solid principles of translation govern the methodology. The result is to “make the Bible say what we want it to say,” rather than to sit at its feet seeking to listen to God speak to us through it.

4.2.3 Its lingering influence

Unquestionably, the King James Version of the Bible has had more influence on the English speaking world than any other single publication since the beginning of the printing press.

4.2.3.1 Positive aspects

More, as defined in religious impact. The KJV has impacted Protestant Christianity on both sides of the Atlantic and in Australia / New Zealand in ways that are impossible to measure. Whole theological systems of many religious groups have developed solely from the KJV and the conviction that the KJV most accurately represents the Word of God. Additionally, theological debates and battles have occurred based solely on differing interpretations of the KJV, i.e., Acts 2:38. As a youngster growing up in West Texas in the 1940s and 50s, I vividly remember some of those “formal debates” centered around this verse and conducted by representative ministers of different denominations. No appeal was ever made to “what the Greek says” nor to any other translation. Everything was argued exclusively from the KJV.

More, as defined in literature. The style and flow of the language of the King James helped preserve the impact of Elizabethan English, much more than the writings of Shakespeare and other literary giants from this period. The evolution of English from late Middle English in the rather uniform use of English on three continents, and especially on both sides of the Atlantic, was guided in large measure by the standards of the KJV. This held true until the latter part of the 1800s when English began taking distinctive tones so that a British version, an Aussie version, and an American version developed. But the KJV impacted more than just the language. Literary traditions have been deeply impacted. Most of the English speaking literature -- novels, poems, theater etc. -- reach back to the KJV for imagery and proverbial sayings. Even still today the imagery from the KJV will surface in movies and plays that have no religious content, and may even be hostile to religion. As the Wikipedia article suggests:

The King James Version has proved to have been an influence on writers and poets, whether in their literary style, or matters of content such as the images they depicted, until the advent of modernism. Although influenced by the Bible in general, they likely could not have helped being influenced by the style of writing the King James Version used, prevalent as it was during their time. John Hayes Gardiner of Harvard University once stated 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". Compton's Encyclopedia once said that the King James Version "... has been a model of writing for generations of English-speaking people." [2]

A general effect of the King James Version was to influence writers in their model of writing; beforehand, authors generally wrote as scholars addressing an audience of other scholars, as few ordinary peasants were literate at the time. The King James Version, as it was meant for dissemination among the ordinary man and to be read by preachers to their congregations, could not afford the luxury of using such a technique. The simpler, more direct style used by the translators of the King James Version so influenced authors that their prose began to address the reader as if he or she was an ordinary person instead of a scholar, thus helping create the idea of the general reader.

Without doubt the goal of the original translators, as stated in the original preface, to "take a good translation [i.e., the Bishops' Bible] and make it better" was achieved, and it was these men could never have imagined.

Yet for all that, as nothing is begun and perfected at the same time, and the later thoughts are thought to be the wiser: so, if we building upon their foundation that went before us, and being helped by their labours, do endeavour to make that better which they left so good; no man, we are sure, hath cause to mislike us; they, we persuade our selves, if they were alive, would thanke us.

The label "Authorized Version" created by one of the printers was not legally accurate, since the KJV was never officially the version "authorized by King James" but the label proved to be somewhat accurate through the growth in popularity of this translation over the first two centuries of its existence. It was never officially "authorized" by neither the king of England nor by God. Instead, the common people made it their "authorized" version, even though it took until the 1760s for this to happen fully.

4.2.3.2 Negative aspects

The down side of the KJV is not the fault of the KJV, nor of the original translators themselves. They never envisioned the KJV as being either a perfect translation nor the final English translation. Instead, they saw themselves as a part of an ongoing procession of translators continuing to update and make readable and thus relevant the Word of God to English speaking people.

The tragedy is that for some this ongoing process has become frozen in time. By the 1800s most English speaking people had nominally accepted the KJV as the Bible, much as had Roman Catholics the Latin Vulgate a millennium earlier. Quite fascinatingly during the 1700s and 1800s not everyone adopted this stance. Dr. Metzger has an intriguing chapter entitled "Between the King James Bible and the Revised Version" (chap. 5, pp. 81-104). In it he surveys the mostly private and limited circulation translations of Edward Harwood (NT 1768), Charles Thompson (1808), Noah Webster (1833), and Julia E. Smith (1876), the first woman to translate the Bible into English.

After the publication of the first "critical" Greek New Testament by Prof. Karl Lachmann in 1831, biblical scholars became increasingly convinced that the Textus Receptus did not represent the original wording of the documents of the New Testament. This conviction grew, being fed increasingly by growing discoveries of ancient copies of the New Testament in Greek as well as early ancient languages. The conclusion became that revisions of the King James Bible needed to be made and this time be based upon the best available Greek text of the New Testament. A somewhat similar trend developed largely in parallel fashion regarding

the Hebrew and Septuagintal texts of the Old Testament. The dam burst with the release of the Revised Version (NT-1881; OT-1885; Apocrypha-1895), which not only sought to update the language of the King James Bible, but also to base the translations on the best available original language texts produced by scholars of that day. This was done using the modern British English of the late 1800s. Very quickly a project began to do the same thing, but using American English. The product was the American Standard Version, first released in 1901.

Negative reaction surfaced from a variety of sources, but most gradually died away with the passing of time. The main exception that has hardened its resistance is now known as the King James Only Movement. It is comprised of ultra conservative, fundamentalist Christians and ministers in the English speaking world whose general conviction is that God inspired the translation of the King James pretty much at the same level as of the original writings of the biblical authors. Variations of view points will certainly be found inside the movement ranging from the Majority Text group to the most extreme view that I know of, Chick Publications in California. The typical reasoning follows this path: God inspired the KJV; this means that the Textus Receptus underneath the NT in Greek must be inspired; this means that the Byzantine text family which the TR mostly follows has to be the most accurate representative of the original writings. This backwards reasoning has obvious flaws, not just by considering it logically. At each point in the backward process major problems and misinterpretations of existing facts are found. This movement represents only a small element of fundamentalist Protestant Christianity itself, but it is a very vocal movement. Typically, it is linked to vicious anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic stances, and will tend to label all forms of Christianity apart from Protestant fundamentalism as "tools of the Devil." Since living in North Carolina from 1998, I have observed a powerful influence of this movement in the smaller, rural Baptist churches here. Gardner-Webb students frequently report in classes of their home church having passed a church law that the KJV is the only legal Bible to be used throughout the church and that members are strongly discouraged from even reading other translations. What a tragedy! To worship a translation of the Bible, rather than the God of the Bible is to condemn a congregation to spiritual shallowness and superficiality. What these students additionally report is that the legalism of their home church makes it easy for young people to go off to college or to a job elsewhere and then quickly abandon their Christian faith.

To be sure, this attitude is not as racial as that of the Islamic world in which the original Arabic expression of the Koran cannot be translated into other languages and remain sacred scripture. Translations of it do exist, but are not regarded as sacred scripture. The KJV-only movement, unfortunately, takes a step in this direction when it elevates a single translation to being the only valid scripture for Christianity. It has the ring of the words of a very dear, and devout, German Baptist lady who years ago in a mid-week Bible study group leaned over to me and said in German (essentially in English), "If the Luther Bibel was good enough for Jesus and Paul, why do we need these modern translations?" This, when the pastor began reading from the Züricher Bibel, at that time a 1931 revision of the original translation by Ulrich Zwingli in Zürich Switzerland. Zwingli, ironically, completed his translation of the entire Bible into German some five years before Martin Luther did, and he had heavily depended on the parts of the Luther Bibel that were available to him while doing his translation.

The English Bible has fascinating beginnings. But its history takes even more interesting twists and turns in the modern era of the twentieth century.

Bibliography

For a detailed bibliography see this study online.