

'THE B.I.B.L.E.'

(“Yes! That’s The Book for Me!”)

English Bible History

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King Henry VIII did not have a change of conscience regarding publishing the Bible in English. His motives were more sinister... but the Lord sometimes uses the evil intentions of men to bring about His glory. King Henry VIII had in fact, requested that the Pope permit him to divorce his wife and marry his mistress. The Pope refused. King Henry responded by marrying his mistress anyway (later having two of his many wives executed), and thumbing his nose at the Pope by renouncing Roman Catholicism, taking England out from under Rome's religious control, and declaring himself as the reigning head of State to also be the new head of the Church. This new branch of the Christian Church, neither Roman Catholic nor truly Protestant, became known as the Anglican Church or the Church of England. King Henry acted essentially as its "Pope". His first act was to further defy the wishes of Rome by funding the printing of the scriptures in English... the first legal English Bible... just for spite.



The ebb and flow of freedom continued through the 1540's...and into the 1550's. After King Henry VIII, King Edward VI took the throne, and after his death, the reign of **Queen “Bloody” Mary** was the next obstacle to the printing of the Bible in English. She was possessed in her quest to return England to the Roman Church. In **1555**, John "Thomas Matthew" Rogers and Thomas Cranmer were both burned at the stake. Mary went on to burn reformers at the stake by the hundreds for the crime of being a Protestant. Refugees fled from England with little hope of ever seeing their home or friends again.



John Foxe John Calvin John Knox

In the 1550's, the Church at Geneva, Switzerland, was very sympathetic to the reformer refugees and was one of only a few safe havens for a desperate people. Many of them met in Geneva, led by **Myles Coverdale** and **John Foxe** (publisher of the famous **Foxe's Book of Martyrs**, which is to this day the only exhaustive reference work on the persecution and martyrdom of Early Christians and Protestants from the 1st century up to the mid-16th century), as well as Thomas Sampson and William Whittingham. There, with the protection of the great theologian **John Calvin** (author of the most famous theological book ever published, *Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion*) and **John Knox**, the great Reformer of the Scottish Church, the Church of Geneva determined to produce a Bible that would educate their families while they continued in exile. The NT was completed in **1557**, the complete Bible was first published in **1560**. It became known as the **Geneva Bible**.

Due to a passage in **Genesis** describing the clothing that God fashioned for Adam and Eve upon expulsion from the Garden of Eden as "Breeches" (an antiquated form of "Britches"), some people referred to the Geneva Bible as the Breeches Bible.

The **Geneva Bible** was the 1st to add numbered verses to the chapters, to make referencing specific passages easier. Every chapter was also accompanied by extensive marginal notes and references so thorough and complete that the Geneva Bible is also considered the 1st English "Study Bible". William Shakespeare quotes hundreds of times in his plays from the Geneva translation of the Bible. The Geneva Bible became the Bible of choice for over 100 years of English speaking Christians. Between **1560** and **1644** at least 144 editions of this Bible were published. Examination of the **1611** King James Bible shows clearly that its translators were influenced much more by the Geneva Bible, than by any other source. The Geneva Bible itself retains over **90%** of William Tyndale's original English translation. The Geneva in fact, remained more popular than the King James Version until **decades** after its original release in **1611**! The Geneva holds the honor of being the first Bible taken to America, and the Bible of the Puritans and Pilgrims. It is truly the *Bible of the Protestant Reformation*. Strangely, the famous Geneva Bible has been out-of-print since 1644, so the only way to obtain one is to either purchase an original printing of the Geneva Bible, or a reproduction of the original 1560 Geneva Bible.

With the end of Queen Mary's bloody reign, the reformers could safely return to England. The Anglican Church, now under Queen Elizabeth I, reluctantly tolerated the printing and distribution of Geneva version Bibles in England. The marginal notes, which were vehemently against the institutional Church of the day, did not rest well with the rulers of the day. Another version with a less inflammatory tone was desired and the copies of the Great Bible were getting to be decades old. In **1568**, a revision of the Great Bible known as the **Bishop's Bible** was introduced. Despite 19 editions being printed between **1568** and **1606**, this Bible, referred to as *the rough draft of the King James Version*, never gained much of a foothold of popularity among the people. The Geneva may have simply been too much to compete with.

In **1582**, the Roman Catholic Church of Rome surrendered their fight for "Latin only" and decided that if the Bible was to be available in English, they would at least have an official Roman Catholic English translation. Using the corrupt and inaccurate Latin Vulgate as the only source text, they published an English Bible with all the distortions and corruptions that Erasmus had revealed and warned of 75 years earlier. Translated at the Roman Catholic College in the city of Rheims, it was known as the **Rheims NT** (or Rhemes). The **Douay Old Testament** was translated by the Church of Rome in **1609** in the city of Douay (also Doway & Douai). Combined, this is commonly referred to as the "**Doway/Rheims**" Version. In **1589**, Dr. William Fulke of Cambridge published "Fulke's Refutation", in which he printed in parallel columns the Bishops Version alongside the Rheims Version, attempting to show the error and distortion of the Roman Church's corrupt compromise of an English version of the Bible.



With the death of Queen Elizabeth I, Prince James VI of Scotland became **King James I of England**. The Protestant clergy approached the new King in **1604** and announced their desire for a new translation to replace the Bishop's Bible first printed in **1568**. They knew that the Geneva Version had won the hearts of the people because of its excellent scholarship, accuracy, and exhaustive commentary. However, they did not want the controversial marginal notes (proclaiming the Pope an Anti-Christ, etc.) Essentially, the leaders of the church desired a Bible for the people, with scriptural references only for word clarification or cross-references.

This *translation to end all translations* (for a while at least) was the result of the combined effort of about fifty scholars. They took into consideration: **The Tyndale NT**, **The Coverdale Bible**, **The Matthews Bible**, **The Great Bible**, **The Geneva Bible**, and even the **Rheims NT**. The great revision of the **Bishop's Bible** had begun. From **1605** to **1606** the scholars engaged in private research. From **1607** to **1609** the work was assembled. In **1610** the work went to press, and in **1611** the first of the huge (16 inch tall) pulpit folios known today as "**The 1611 King James Bible**" came off the printing press. A typographical discrepancy in *Ruth 3:15* rendered a pronoun "He" instead of "She" in that verse in some printings. This caused some of the **1611 First Editions** to be known by collectors as "**He Bibles**", and others as "**She Bibles**". Starting just one year after the huge 1611 pulpit-size King James Bibles were printed and chained to every church pulpit in England; printing then began on the **earliest normal-size printings of the King James Bible**. These were produced so individuals could have their own personal copy of the Bible.



The Anglican Church's **King James Bible** took decades to overcome the more popular Protestant Church's **Geneva Bible**. One of the greatest ironies of history, is that many Protestant Christian churches today embrace the King James Bible exclusively as the "only" legitimate English language translation... yet it is not even a Protestant translation! It was printed to compete with the Protestant **Geneva Bible**, by authorities who throughout most of history were hostile to Protestants... and killed them. While many Protestants are quick to assign the full blame of persecution to the Roman Catholic Church, it should be noted that even after England broke from Roman Catholicism in the 1500's, the Church of England (The Anglican Church) continued to persecute Protestants throughout the 1600's. One famous example of this is **John Bunyan**, who while in prison for the crime of preaching the Gospel, wrote one of Christian history's greatest books, **Pilgrim's Progress**. Throughout the 1600's, as the Puritans and the Pilgrims fled the religious persecution of England to cross the Atlantic and start a new free nation in America, they took with them their precious **Geneva Bible**, and rejected the King's Bible. America was founded upon the **Geneva Bible**, not the **King James Bible**.

Protestants today are largely unaware of their own history, and unaware of the **Geneva Bible** (which is textually 95% the same as the **King James Version**, but 50 years older than the **King James Version**, and not influenced by the Roman Catholic **Rheims NT** that the King James translators admittedly took into consideration). Nevertheless, the **King James Bible** turned out to be an excellent and accurate translation, and it became the most printed book in the history of the world, and the only book with one billion copies in print. In fact, for over 250 years...until the appearance of the **English Revised Version of 1881-1885**...the **King James Version** reigned without much of a rival. One little-known fact, is that for the past 250 years, all "**King James Version**" Bibles published anywhere by any publisher are Blaney's 1769 Revised Oxford Edition of the **1611 King James Bible**. The original "1611" preface is almost always deceptively included by modern Bible publishing companies, and no mention of the fact that it is really the 1769 version is to be found, because that might hurt sales among those imagining that they are reading the original 1611 version.

The only way to obtain a true, unaltered, 1611 version is to either purchase an **original pre-1769 printing of the King James Bible**, or a less costly **facsimile reproduction of the original 1611 King James Bible**. A first edition **facsimile reproduction of Blaney's 1769 Revised Oxford Edition of the 1611 King James Bible** is also available, which exemplifies the 20,000 spelling and punctuation changes and over 400 wording changes made to the original 1611 to 1768 King James Bible, when compared to King James Bibles published between 1769 and today.



Although the **first Bible printed in America** was done in the native Algonquin Indian Language by **John Eliot** in **1663**; the first English language Bible to be printed in America by **Robert Aitken** in **1782** was a **King James Version**. **Robert Aitken's 1782 Bible** was also the only Bible ever authorized by the United States Congress. He was commended by President George Washington for providing Americans with Bibles during the embargo of imported English goods due to the Revolutionary War. In **1808**, Robert's daughter, Jane Aitken, would become the first woman to ever print a Bible... and to do so in America, of course. In **1791**, Isaac Collins vastly improved upon the quality and size of the typesetting of American Bibles and produced the **first "Family Bible" printed in America**... also a **King James Version**. Also in **1791**, Isaiah Thomas published the first Illustrated Bible printed in America...in the **King James Version**. For more information on the earliest Bibles printed in America from the 1600's through the early 1800's, you may wish to review our more detailed discussion of **The Bibles of Colonial America**.



While **Noah Webster**, just a few years after producing his famous *Dictionary of the English Language*, would produce his own modern translation of the English Bible in **1833**; the public remained too loyal to the King James Version for Webster's version to have much impact. It was not really until the **1880's** that England's own planned replacement for their King James Bible, the **English Revised Version (ERV)** would become the first English language Bible to gain popular acceptance as a post-King James Version modern-English Bible. The widespread popularity of this modern-English translation brought with it another curious characteristic: the absence of the 14 Apocryphal books.

Up until the **1880's** every Protestant Bible (not just Catholic Bibles) had 80 books, not 66! The inter-testamental books written hundreds of years before Christ called "*The Apocrypha*" were part of virtually every printing of the **Tyndale-Matthews Bible**, the **Great Bible**, the **Bishops Bible**, the Protestant **Geneva Bible**, and the **King James Bible** until their removal in the **1880's**! The original **1611 King James** contained the Apocrypha, and King James threatened anyone who dared to print the Bible without the Apocrypha with heavy fines and a year in jail. Only for the last **120** years has the Protestant Church rejected these books, and removed them from their Bibles. This has left most modern-day Christians believing the popular myth that there is something "Roman Catholic" about the Apocrypha. There is, however, no truth in that myth, and no widely-accepted reason for the removal of the Apocrypha in the 1880's has ever been officially issued by a mainline Protestant denomination.

The Americans responded to England's **ERV Bible** by publishing the nearly-identical **American Standard Version (ASV)** in **1901**. It was also widely-accepted and embraced by churches throughout America for many decades as the leading modern-English version of the Bible. In the 1971, it was again revised and called **New American Standard Version Bible** (often referred to as the **NASV** or **NASB** or **NAS**). This **New American Standard Bible** is considered by nearly all evangelical Christian scholars and translators today, to be the most accurate, word-for-word translation of the original Greek and Hebrew scriptures into the modern English language that has ever been produced. It remains the most popular version among theologians, professors, scholars, and seminary students today. Some, however, have taken issue with it because it is so direct and literal a translation (focused on accuracy), that it does not flow as easily in conversational English.

For this reason, in **1973**, the **New International Version (NIV)** was produced, which was offered as a "dynamic equivalent" translation into modern English. The NIV was designed not for "word-for-word" accuracy, but rather, for "phrase-for-phrase" accuracy, and ease of reading even at a Junior High-School reading level. It was meant to appeal to a broader (and in some instances less-educated) cross-section of the general public. Critics of the NIV often jokingly refer to it as the "Nearly Inspired Version", but that has not stopped it from becoming the best-selling modern-English translation of the Bible ever published.

In **1982**, Thomas Nelson Publishers produced the "**New King James Version**". Their original intent was to keep the basic wording of the King James but change the most obscure words and the Elizabethan "thee, thy, thou" pronouns. The preface of the NKJV states, "They have perceived the Holy Bible, New King James Version, as a continuation of the labors of the earlier translators, thus unlocking for today's readers the spiritual treasures found especially in the Authorized Version of the Holy Scriptures."

In **2002**, a major attempt was made to bridge the gap between the simple readability of the NIV, and the extremely precise accuracy of the NASB. This translation is called the **English Standard Version (ESV)** and is rapidly gaining popularity for its readability and accuracy. The 21st Century will certainly continue to bring new translations of God's Word in the modern English language.

As Christians, we must be very careful to make intelligent and informed decisions about what translations of the Bible we choose to read. On the liberal extreme, we have people who would give us heretical new translations that attempt to change God's Word to make it politically correct. One example of this, which has made headlines recently is the Today's New International Version (TNIV) which seeks to remove all gender-specific references in the Bible whenever possible! Not all new translations are good... and some are very bad.

But equally dangerous, is the other extreme... of blindly rejecting ANY English translation that was produced in the four centuries that have come after the 1611 King James. We must remember that the main purpose of the Protestant Reformation was to get the Bible out of the chains of being trapped in an ancient language that few could understand, and into the modern, spoken, conversational language of the present day. William Tyndale fought and died for the right to print the Bible in the common, spoken, modern English tongue of his day... as he boldly told one official who criticized his efforts, "*If God spare my life, I will see to it that the boy who drives the plowshare knows more of the scripture than you, Sir!*"

Will we now go backwards, and seek to imprison God's Word once again exclusively in ancient translations? Clearly it is not God's will that we over-react to SOME of the bad modern translations, by rejecting ALL new translations and "throwing the baby out with the bathwater". The Word of God is unchanging from generation to generation, but language is a dynamic and ever-changing form of communication. We therefore have a responsibility before God as Christians to make sure that each generation has a modern translation that they can easily understand, yet that does not sacrifice accuracy in any way. Let's be ever mindful that we are not called to worship the Bible. That is called idolatry. We are called to worship the God who gave us the Bible, and who preserved it through the centuries of people who sought to destroy it.

The War Within'

(Harnessing Upset Souls with Scripture)

Psalm 119:145-152

19th Hebrew letter ‘Qoph’ (‘q’ sound): Letter symbol ‘monkey’ (a foolish, noisy, wild creature)

Possible comparable time in David’s life: 2 Samuel 9-10/ Following David’s military conquests and expansion of the borders of Israel (2 Samuel 8:1-4), David was blessed with a time of calm and order where he established his administration (2 Samuel 8:15-18) and brought Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth, into his own royal household (2 Samuel 9). Feeling extremely benevolent, David reached out to an old friend’s son, Hanun, the Ammonite, by sending an entourage of servants to begin a friendship he had with Nahash (Hanun’s deceased father). Instead of respecting David’s servants, Hanun shamed them by cutting off half their apparel and half their beards, to mock David (2 Samuel 10:1-4). When David heard about it he was shamed and enraged. He ordered the servants who had been made to appear foolish to stay at Jericho until their beards grew out prior to their return. David probably struggled to restrain his vengeful, angry feelings and sought God’s inner calm so he could be certain of what to do (*if anything*) in response, to the public humiliation he had suffered (Psalm 119:145-152).

Struggle for Self-Control

*“I cry out with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD! I will keep Your statutes.
I cry out to You; (deliver) me and I will keep Your testimonies.” Vs. 145-146*

The psalmist is obviously greatly distressed and calling out to the Lord for His help, in doing the right thing, although he is stressed and might react emotionally instead of spiritually. If this is the incident in David’s life suggested above, his kindness has been met with hostility and humiliation.

- Why is it so important to pray like this when our emotions are running high about some unfair thing someone has done to us?
- Refraining from immediate, spontaneous reaction when something outrageous is done to us and praying to the Lord instead is wise (Proverbs 10:18, 17:27). How does emotional restraint please God and help Christians mature whenever they feel disrespected? (Ephesians 4:26-27, James 1:19-20)

Subduing the Inner Conflict

*“I rise before the dawning of the morning and cry for help; I hope in Your word.
My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word.
Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness; O Lord, revive me according to Your justice.
They draw near who follow after wickedness; they are far from Your law.” Vs. 147-150*

Although the psalmist is restraining his upset heart from reacting, he is restless and sleepless in the night. Since he can’t rest he resorts to prayer and Bible study.

- Do you do this when some situation keeps you up at night?
- How can Philippians 4:6-9 calm the soul at times like this?

V. 150 implies that the source of the psalmist’s aggravation and outrage sees his calm reaction as weakness and is ready to attack again! This new aggression must not be allowed and now calls for confrontation based on self-defense, not emotional anger. In the suggested incident above David has exercised self-control after being shamed, but new additional hostilities call for a powerful response (2 Samuel 10:6-19).

- Discuss how you can know when to not react impulsively and when you have to cease being passive and confront relentless trouble-makers (Ecclesiastes 3:8). (Examples to share?)

Submission to His Commands

*“You are near, O LORD and all Your commandments are truth. Concerning Your testimonies,
I have known of old that You have founded them forever.” Vs. 151-152*

- In this close to his prayer, what do you see that proves the psalmist’s intention to now confront the *wicked* adversary is spiritual and not impulsive, biblical and not personal, and to defend the Lord’s honor not his own reputation?
- Next time an outrageous situation hits you, what verses from this section of Psalm 119 will help you get through it God’s way?