

THE STORY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE¹

Ashby L. Camp

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I. Introduction

A. I think it is fair to say that we take the English Bible for granted. All of our lives we have had the Bible available in English at a cheap price and in multiple versions. I own many English translations of the Bible in both printed and electronic form and have access through the internet to additional English translations. You probably have multiple English translations of the Bible in your home. But such a thing was not always possible.

B. The story of how the Bible came to be translated into English is one of faith, courage, dedication, and brutality, and I think English-speaking Christians should know something about it. So in this class, I am going to sketch that story for you.

C. The books of the Old Testament were written in Hebrew, with some Aramaic sprinkled in (Ezra 4:8-6:18, 7:12-26; Dan. 2:4-7:28; Jer. 10:11; two words in Gen. 31:48). The books of the New Testament were written in Greek.

D. By the time of his death in 323 B.C., Alexander the Great had established a vast Grecian empire around the Mediterranean Sea and eastward. This led to Greek becoming the *lingua franca*, the "umbrella language" through which people of different languages could communicate. During that time, most Jews, as today, lived outside of Israel, and they no longer spoke Hebrew. They therefore needed a translation of their Scriptures, and Greek was the obvious choice because it was the language that most people, including most Jews, spoke.

E. The Pentateuch, the first five books, was translated into Greek in the middle of the 3rd century B.C. The other books were translated into Greek in the next century or two thereafter. These early Greek translations of the Hebrew Scriptures are known collectively as the Septuagint, which is sometimes represented as LXX.

F. In the first few centuries A.D., the Greek translations of the Old Testament (LXX) and the Greek New Testament were translated into various languages, including Latin, which became the dominant language of western Christianity. These early translations into Latin are known as "Old Latin" (Vetus Latina) versions.

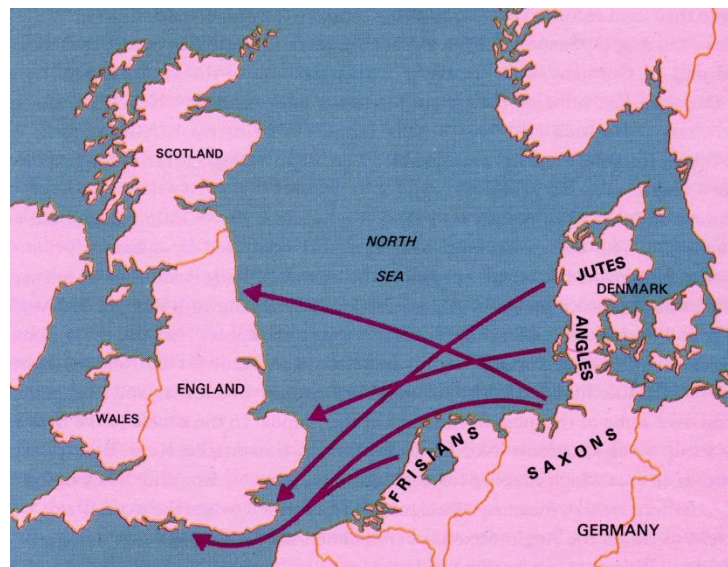
G. In the late fourth century, a great scholar named Eusebius Hieronymus, better known as Jerome, translated the entire Bible into Latin directly from Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek. Over the next couple of centuries, Jerome's translation became the Latin Bible. His translation, known as the Vulgate (common), became the official Latin version

¹ I relied heavily on Donald L. Brake, *A Visual History of the English Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008). I also consulted David Daniell, *The Bible in English* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), earlier research notes, and occasional online sources.

of the Roman Catholic Church. It included the Apocrypha,² but Jerome thought those books were different from authoritative Scripture because they were not part of the Hebrew canon.

II. Old English Translations

A. With the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes invaded the island of Britain from Germany and Denmark. The language of these invaders formed the basis of what is known today as Old English or Anglo-Saxon. Over the course of two centuries, beginning at the end of the sixth century, England converted to Christianity, and there was a demand for Scripture in this emerging language of Old English.

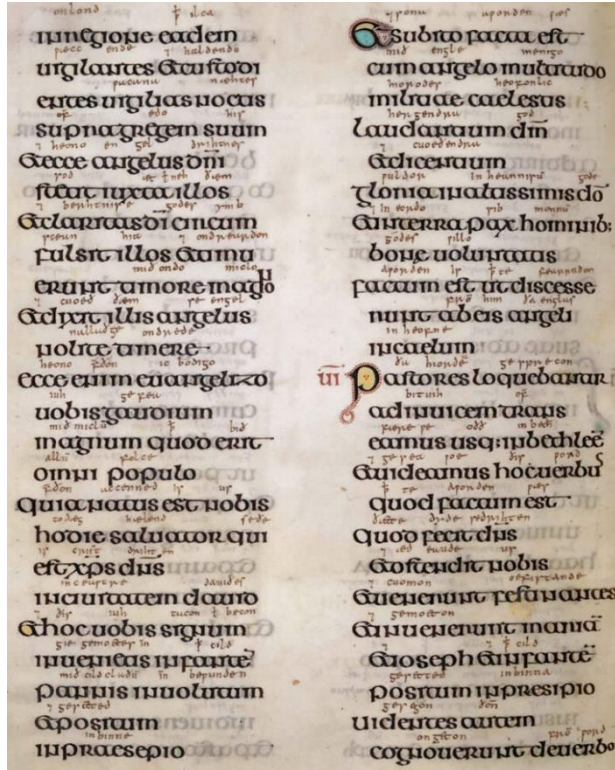


B. The first reputed translation of a biblical text into Old English was Aldhelm's translation of the Psalms, which he began around A.D. 700. That work has not survived. The Venerable Bede, a great scholar of his day, translated the Gospel of John several decades later, but that work also has not survived.

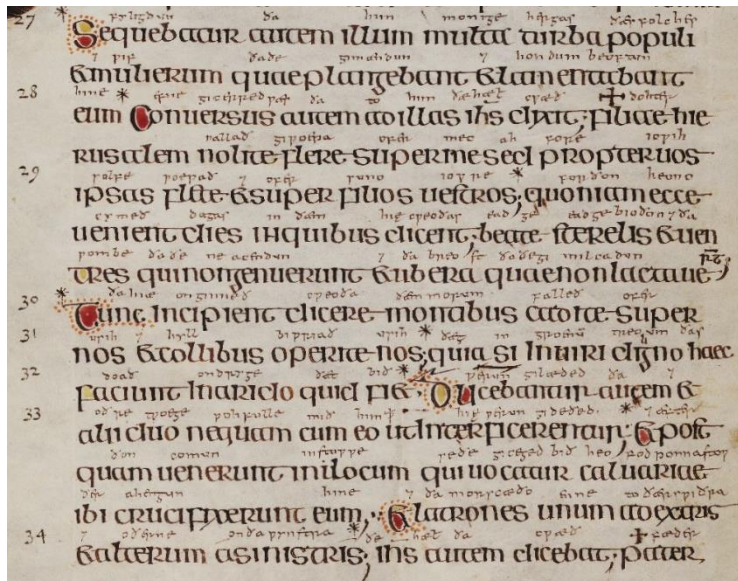
C. In the ninth century King Alfred the Great had the Decalogue, portions of Exodus 21-23, and Acts 15:23-29 put into Old English at the head of the code of laws.

² The books of the traditional Apocrypha are First Book of Esdras, Second Book of Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Additions to the Book of Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (a.k.a. Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach), Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasseh, First Book of the Maccabees, and Second Book of the Maccabees. Some collections combine Baruch and Letter of Jeremiah as one book. Additions to Esther may be scattered through the canonical book of Esther. Prayer of Azariah and the Song of Three Young Men, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon are additions to canonical Daniel. The latest edition of the Oxford Annotated Apocrypha also includes 3 and 4 Maccabees and Psalm 151, which are found in some manuscripts of the Greek Bible.

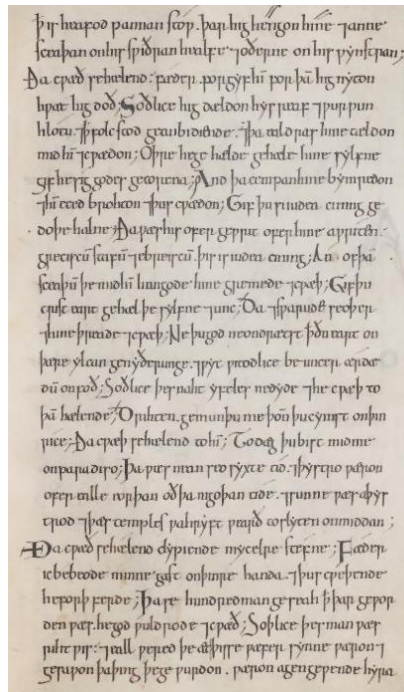
D. In the mid-tenth century Aldred added an Anglo-Saxon interlinear rendering to an eighth-century Latin text of the Gospels. This is known as the Lindisfarne Gospels (image from Luke).



E. In the late-tenth century Farman and Owun did the same in what is known as the Rushworth Gospels (image from Luke 23).

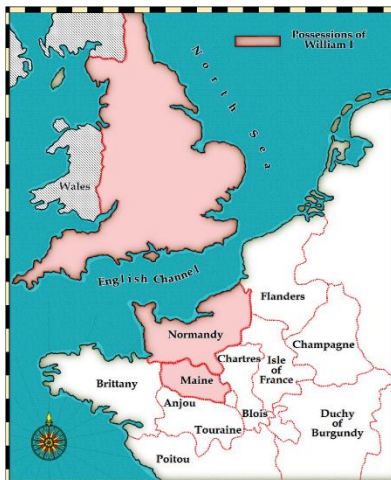


F. In the late-tenth century the gospels were translated from Latin into Old English (West Saxon dialect), as opposed to being an interlinear gloss. This work is known as the Wessex Gospels (image from Luke 23).



III. Middle English Translations

A. In 1066 A.D. the Normans, Vikings who had settled around Normandy, France, along with the native French conquered England at the Battle of Hastings. This is known as the Norman Conquest. It marked the end of the Anglo-Saxon or Old English period, as the French aristocracy that ruled England repressed Anglo-Saxon and declared Norman French the official language of England. This radically transformed Old English into what is known as Middle English, so the earlier work on Anglo-Saxon versions became obsolete.



B. In the late-twelfth century, a monk named Orm provided a poetic rendering of texts in the Gospels and Acts that were used in the mass throughout the year.



Over the next century or so loose poetical versions of several Old Testament books appeared.

C. In the fourteenth century both William of Shoreham and Richard Rolle produced very literal translations of the Psalms from Latin (image is of Rolle's work).



D. The work of John Wycliffe (variously spelled Wyclif, Wycliff, Wiclif, Wicliffe) in the latter part of the fourteenth century was a major turning point in the history of the English Bible.

1. Wycliffe lived from 1324 to 1384. He is called the "Morning Star" of the Protestant Reformation for good reason. He was an Oxford trained theologian who took issue with the Catholic Church's teaching on a number of points, including its civil authority, pilgrimages, praying to the saints, the sale of indulgencies, and the doctrine of transubstantiation. After his teaching was declared heretical by a council in London in 1382, he retired to Lutterworth where he continued to write.

2. Wycliffe believed each person was responsible directly to God, which meant they were responsible for obeying what God revealed in the Scriptures rather than the manmade rules that had been built upon those Scriptures. For that reason, he believed that God's word needed to be in the language of the common man. At that time, Scripture was essentially unavailable to laymen because the complete Bible was available only in Latin, which they could not read, and copies were too expensive to afford. Wycliffe wrote (*A Visual History of the English Bible*, 47-48):

Those heretics who pretend that the laity need not know God's law but that the knowledge which priests have had imparted to them by word of mouth is sufficient, do not deserve to be listened to. For Holy Scriptures is the faith of the Church, and the more widely its true meaning becomes known the better it will be. Therefore since the laity should know the faith, it should be taught in whatever language is most easily comprehended. . . . Christ and His apostles taught the people in the language best known to them.

3. Wycliffe oversaw and probably participated in the first translation of the complete Bible into English. The first edition of the Wycliffe Bible, called "The Wycliffe Version" (or Early Version or EV), came out around 1382. This edition was a stilted, extremely literal translation from the Vulgate. It was, of course, handwritten.



4. The second edition of the Wycliffe Bible, called "Purvey's revision" (or Later Version or LV) was a revision, perhaps done by Wycliffe's friend and associate scholar John Purvey, completed between 1388 and 1395. The reviser employed a much smoother style of translation. It was popular and very influential in the history of English translations, even if indirectly so. A copy of this later version dating from the early 15th century sold on December 5, 2016, for \$1,692,500.

5. The Catholic Church did not take kindly to a translation that was used to popularize the reading of the Bible by the people. Its leaders believed the Bible was too difficult for laymen to understand and that making it available to them would likely lead to heresy. A more cynical view of their opposition is that the church's hold on the laity was to a significant degree based on its monopoly on the word of God. If the people had a Bible they could read they could then judge the teaching and conduct of their religious leaders by that standard.

a. Wycliffe's followers, given the derogatory name Lollards ("mutterers"), were persecuted and copies of his translation were systematically seized and burned. The fact over 250 manuscripts survive is testimony to its popularity. That is more manuscripts than for any other medieval English text. For example, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* survives in only sixty-four copies.

b. In 1401 the English statute *De heretico comburendo* ("Regarding the burning of heretics") prescribed death by burning for heretics. In 1408 the Oxford Council, called together by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel, formulated the infamous *Constitutions* that mentioned Wycliffe by name and forbid translating the Bible into a common tongue without express supervision by the church. Thereafter, translating the Bible into English or even reading the Bible in English became heretical acts (*A Visual History of the English Bible*, 47).

c. In 1411 Arundel wrote to Pope John XXIII: "This pestilent and wretched John Wycliffe, of cursed memory, that son of the old serpent . . . endeavored by doctrine of Holy Church, devising – to fill up the measure of his malice – the expedient of a new translation of the Scriptures into the mother tongue."

d. The Catholic priest William Sawtre was burned at the stake in March 1401 for his Lollard beliefs. The Lollard John Badby, a lay craftsman, was burned at the stake in March 1410 for refusing to recant his denial of transubstantiation. In 1413 Sir John Oldcastle, a former friend of King Henry V, was convicted of heresy because of his Lollard beliefs. He escaped but was captured after a period of hiding and hanged on December 14, 1417. His body and the gallows were burned together, it being unclear whether he was burnt alive.

e. In 1415 the Council of Constance condemned Wycliffe thirty-one years after his death. It also ordered that the Bohemian (modern Czech Republic) theologian Jan Hus (John Huss), who had been influenced by Wycliffe, be burned at the

stake. (In 1999 Pope John Paul II apologized for Hus's "cruel death" and praised his moral courage.) Numerous other Lollards were executed, but more than a few, including John Purvey, avoided that fate by recanting their beliefs.

f. In 1428, on the order of Pope Martin V, Wycliffe's bones were dug up, burned, and the ashes thrown in the river Swift.

IV. Modern English Translations

A. The Modern English period began around 1500 A.D. It followed the invention of the printing press in the early 1450s by Johann Gutenberg in Mainz, Germany. This invention changed the world and made possible an inexpensive Bible that could be mass produced.

B. The first major book that was printed was the Latin Bible around 1455. It is, not surprisingly, known as the Gutenberg Bible. There are forty-seven copies known to be in existence, none of which are for sale.



1. The period of printing from 1455 to 1500 is known as the incunabula period (infant stage). Books printed during this period are known collectively as incunabula and individually as an incunabulum. During this time, the print type was designed in the style of handwriting.

2. Despite the vast number of Wycliffe Bibles available for printing, no Bible was printed in English during the incunabula period. The controversy surrounding

Wycliffe and the threat of heresy no doubt kept printers away from this text. In 1483 English translations of portions of Scripture were printed as part of the English translation of an earlier work in Latin titled *Golden Legend*, a book about the lives of great men of faith. Translating Scripture in that context apparently avoided the ire of the church.

C. When the Christian center of Constantinople fell to Muslim Turks in 1453, scholars with expertise in Greek fled to the West. This led to a rebirth of Greek language studies in the West. Around this time there also was a revival of Hebrew knowledge in the West.

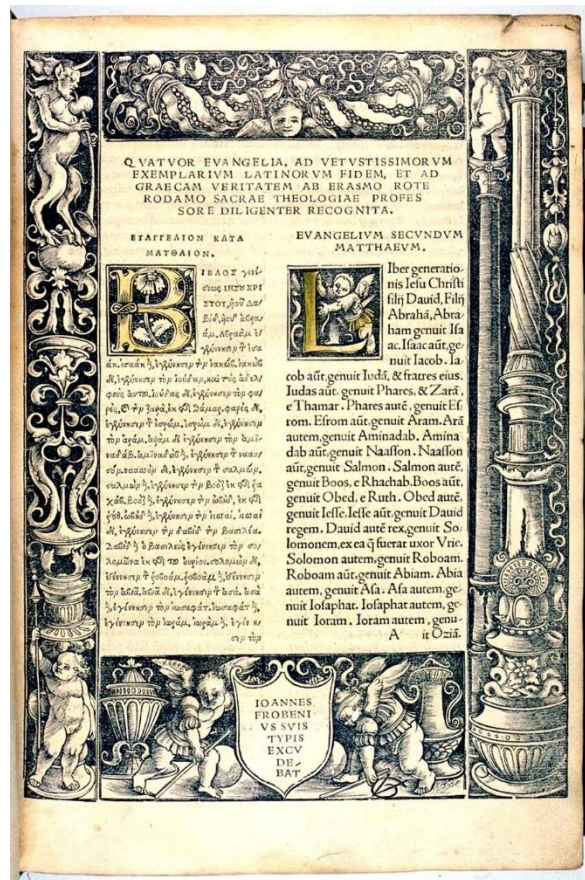
D. The Hebrew Bible was first printed in Soncino, Italy in 1488.



E. In 1516 A.D. an edition of the Greek New Testament (paralleled with Latin) that had been compiled and edited by Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam was printed. It was based on only eight Greek manuscripts, all of which were late and incomplete. This is the list provided by Martin Heide in [Erasmus and the Search for the Original Text of the New Testament](#) (2/7/23):

Contents	Date
Acts, epistles, four gospels	12th c.
Four Gospels	12th
Acts, epistles	12th
Acts, epistles	15th
Pauline Epistles	10–11th
Four Gospels with Theophylact's commentary	15th
Apocalypse with Andrew's commentary	12th
Pauline Epistles with Theophylact's commentary	12th

Here is the 1516 edition of his Greek New Testament (*Novum Instrumentum Omne*):



F. In 1520 the Greek New Testament edited by Catholic scholar and priest Ximenes of Alcala, Spain was printed, but the inferior edition of Erasmus was dominant because it had been published first.

G. William Tyndale is a towering figure in the history of the English Bible.

1. Tyndale was born around 1494 in Gloucestershire, England. He received his Master of Arts degree from Oxford in 1515 and continued his studies there for another six or seven years. He was fluent in eight languages: English, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, German, Spanish, and Italian. Donald Brake comments (p. 95), "He became a scholar of the original Bible languages, an effective speaker, and a man determined to advocate the rights of common people to explore Scripture in their own language."

2. In 1517 the German theologian Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany, a significant event in the Protestant Reformation. In 1522 Luther published his German translation of the New Testament made from Erasmus's Greek text (the second edition of 1519). This set the stage for someone to do the same for English-speaking people. The entire Bible was printed in German in 1534, the Old Testament being translated by Luther and a number of others.

3. Given the hostility toward translating the Bible into English that continued in England, Tyndale went to Germany in 1524 and translated the New Testament from Greek into English; he was the first to do so. When he tried to have it printed in Cologne, Germany in 1525, the city senate banned the project after being tipped off about it by an enemy of the Reformation. Tyndale succeeded in having a handheld-size edition (octavo) of the English New Testament printed in Worms, Germany in 1526.



4. In 1526 Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall of London began seizing and burning copies of Tyndale's New Testament as they were smuggled into England and punishing all offenders. Despite the persecution, the New Testaments continued to pour into England and were so popular that pirated copies were being sold.

5. In 1528 Tyndale published two books that were contrary to Catholic teaching. The first criticized an overemphasis on works, and the second criticized the corruptions and superstitions of the Church. Both were widely read and immediately banned as heretical.

6. In 1529 Sir Thomas More, a powerful counselor of Henry VIII, published *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, in the third book of which he attacked Tyndale's New Testament as heretical. Daniell writes (p. 149), "At bottom, More asserts that Tyndale's offense has been to give the people Paul in English, and to translate key words in their Greek meanings as 'senior', 'congregation', 'love', and 'repent', instead of the Church's 'priest', 'church', 'charity', and 'do penance'." Tyndale published a response in 1531, and More published a massive and intemperate reply to Tyndale's response in 1532.

7. Tyndale revised his New Testament translation in 1534 and again in 1535. In 1535 he was living in exile, essentially hiding in Antwerp, Belgium, a city under the jurisdiction of Charles V, a powerful and staunch Roman Catholic. Charles V was the

nephew of Catherine of Aragon, who was the first wife of England's king Henry VIII. After having unsuccessfully pushed Pope Clement VII for years to issue an annulment of his marriage to Catherine, in January 1533 he defied the Catholic Church and secretly married Anne Bolyne. Five months later, he had his own archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, annul the marriage to Catherine.

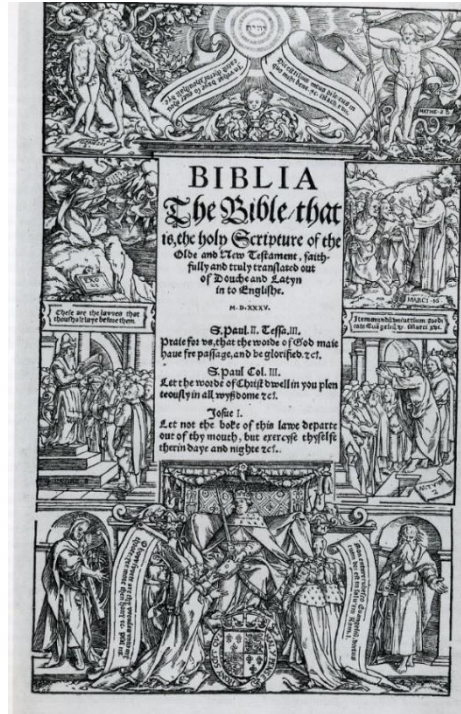
8. In May 1535 Tyndale was betrayed by a supposed friend named Henry Phillips, arrested by the authorities, and thrown in a dungeon in a castle in Vilvorde outside of Brussels. From that prison, and no doubt realizing the fate in store for him, he wrote the following letter in 1535 to the governor of the castle:

I believe, most excellent Sir, that you are not unacquainted with the decision reached concerning me. On which account, I beseech your lordship, even by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to pass the winter here, to urge upon the lord commissary, if he will deign, to send me from my goods in his keeping a warmer cap, for I suffer greatly from cold in the head, being troubled with a continual catarrh, which is aggravated in this prison vault. A warmer coat also, for that which I have is very thin. Also cloth for repairing my leggings. My overcoat is worn out; the shirts also are worn out. He has a woolen shirt of mine, if he will please send it. I have also with him leggings of heavier cloth for overwear. He likewise has warmer nightcaps: I also ask for leave to use a lamp in the evening, for it is tiresome to sit alone in the dark.

But above all, I beg and entreat your clemency earnestly to intercede with the lord commissary, that he would deign to allow me the use of my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Lexicon, and that I might employ my time with that study. Thus likewise may you obtain what you most desire, saving that it further the salvation of your soul. But if, before the end of winter, a different decision be reached concerning me, I shall be patient, and submit to the will of God to the glory of the grace of Jesus Christ my Lord, whose spirit may ever direct your heart. Amen.

9. In August 1536 Tyndale was found guilty of heresy, and on October 6, 1536, he was, at around forty-two years of age, tied to a stake, strangled from behind, and then burned. His final words were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

H. Miles (or Myles) Coverdale, a friend and follower of Tyndale, was the first person to translate the entire Bible into *modern* English. The pages were printed in Antwerp in 1535 but bound by an English bindery pursuant to an English law.



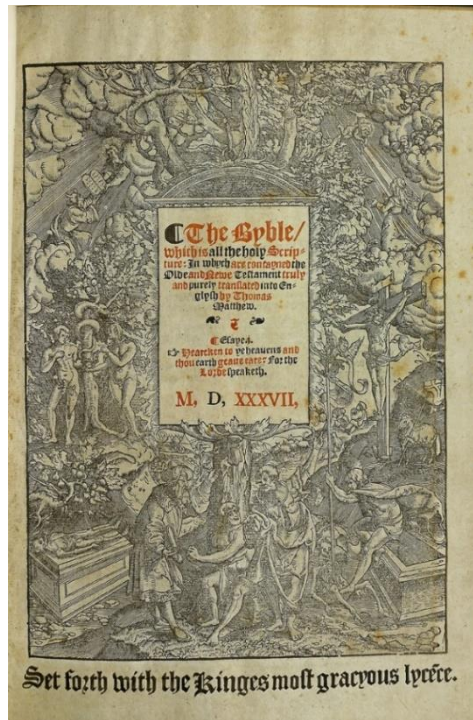
1. Since Coverdale did not know Hebrew or Greek, he translated from Luther's German translation and from the Vulgate, making extensive use of Tyndale's translation of the New Testament, the Pentateuch, Jonah, and the historical books. He emphasized readability in English rather than close correspondence to the original languages.

2. Coverdale put the Apocryphal books in a separate grouping between the Testaments, declaring that they were not considered as authoritative as the other books of the Bible and that they were not found in the Canon of the Hebrews. That is how they were printed in Protestant Bibles until they eventually were dropped.

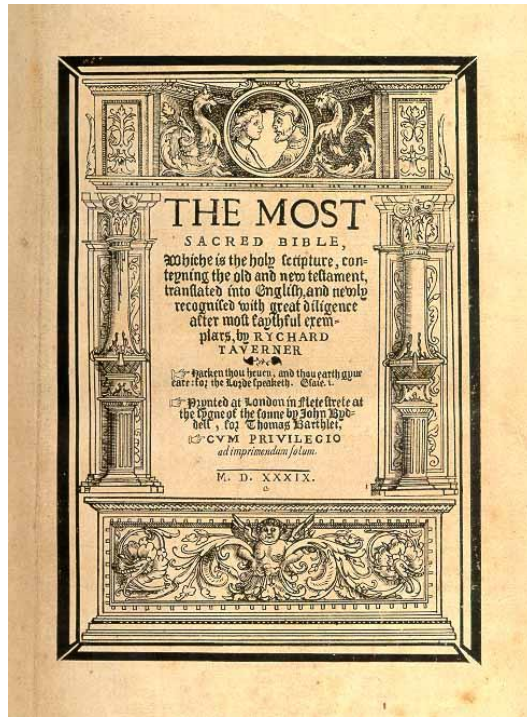
3. Unlike Tyndale, Coverdale had cultivated powerful friends, like Thomas Cromwell and Thomas More, which allowed him to survive as a translator. Henry VIII's second wife, Anne Boleyn, supported Coverdale's work, and he mentioned her in the dedication no doubt as a way to gain Henry's attention and favor in the hope he would officially authorize his version. Unfortunately for Coverdale (and more so for Anne), Henry had Anne executed in May 1536 and took Jane Seymour as his third wife and new queen. Henry was not going to authorize a translation that had been so connected with Anne.

4. In 1537, however, a slightly revised version of Coverdale's translation was printed in England by James Nicholson with the declaration "Set forth with the King's most gracious license." At long last, there was an English translation that met the requirements of the *Constitutions* of 1408, one that could be read without fear of government reprisal.

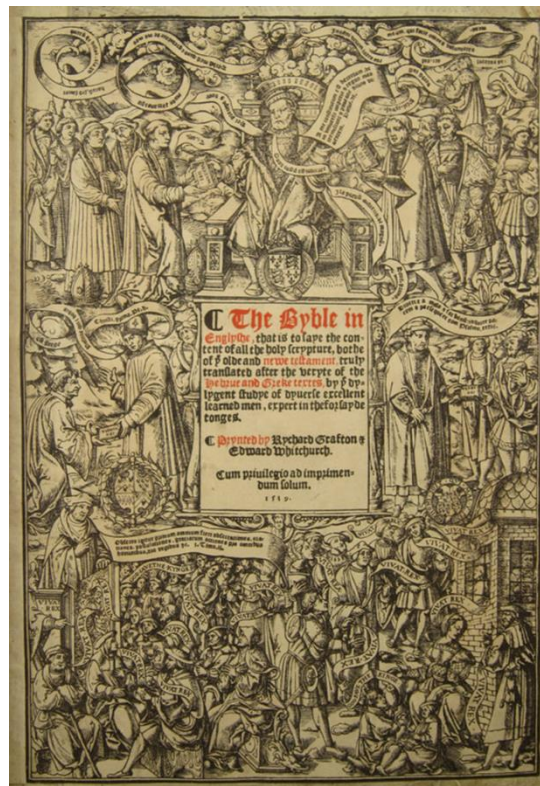
I. John Rogers was educated at Cambridge and a friend of William Tyndale. He took the pseudonym Thomas Matthew to conceal his identity and thus his relationship with Tyndale. In 1537 he had an English translation of the Bible printed under that name, which is known as the Matthew's (or Matthew) Bible. It was basically an edited compilation of Tyndale's and Coverdale's work. Henry VIII, on request from his Vicar-General Thomas Cromwell, gave the translation his formal and official blessing, which is ironic given how fiercely the church and Henry had opposed Tyndale and his work. So now England had two authorized English Bibles.



J. Richard Taverner, a scholar in Hebrew and Greek, prepared a revision of the Matthew's Bible that was printed in 1539, shortly before publication of the Great Bible. It is known as the Taverner Bible. For whatever reason, it did not gain traction and had almost no influence on subsequent translations.

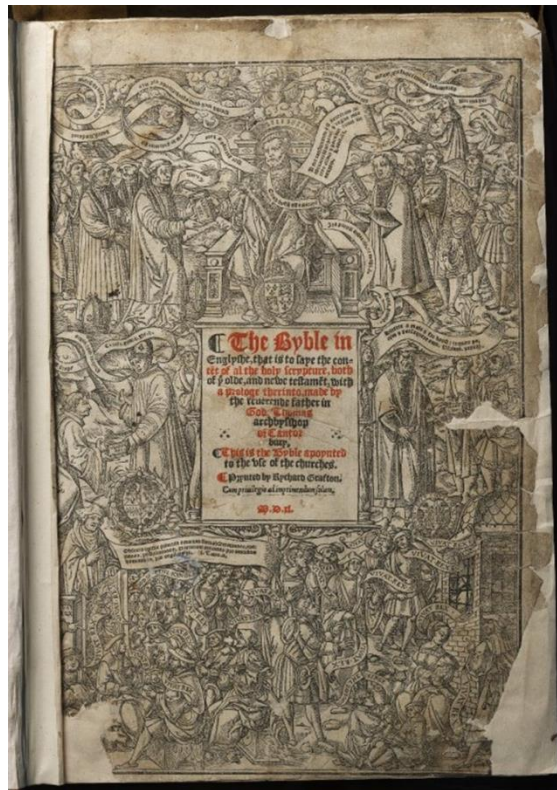


K. Some of the bishops and priests were not satisfied with either the Coverdale or Matthew's Bible, the latter being opposed mainly for its notes, so through Thomas Cromwell they got Henry to agree to authorize another translation. Cromwell chose his friend Coverdale to do it, and in 1539 the "Great Bible" was published.



1. This was not a translation from the original languages. Coverdale relied heavily on the Latin texts, on Tyndale's translation, and on the Matthew's Bible in making it. It was called the "Great Bible" because of its size (16¹/₂ x 11 inches).

2. This was an extremely influential translation. Since Coverdale prepared it at the request of Thomas Cromwell, it is sometimes referred to as Cromwell's Bible. Beginning with the 1540 edition, it had a preface by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, so it is also known as Cranmer's Bible. This Bible was authorized for distribution among the people and for the use of every church.



3. Despite the spurt of English translations during this five-year period, the forces opposed to the Reformation and to English Bibles were still present. Others would pay with their lives for their commitment to these causes.

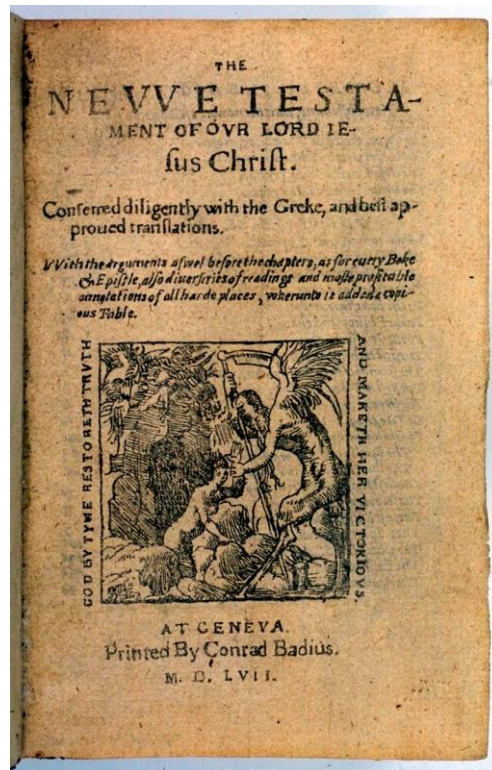
L. King Henry VIII died on January 28, 1547, and was succeeded by King Edward VI, his nine-year-old son from his third wife, Jane Seymour. Though Henry had severed the link between the Church of England and Rome, he never permitted the renunciation of Catholic doctrine or ceremony. It was during Edward's reign that Protestantism was established for the first time in England with reforms that included the abolition of clerical celibacy and the Mass and the imposition of compulsory services in English. The architect of these reforms was Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. No new English translations were made during Edward's short reign.

M. Upon Edward's death in July 1553, Mary, the daughter of Henry and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, became Queen of England. She fervently embraced the Catholicism of her mother and instituted anti-Protestant reforms. She revived the 1401 English law *De heretico comburendo*, which prescribed death by burning for heretics, and intensely persecuted the Protestants. This earned her the nickname "Bloody Mary."

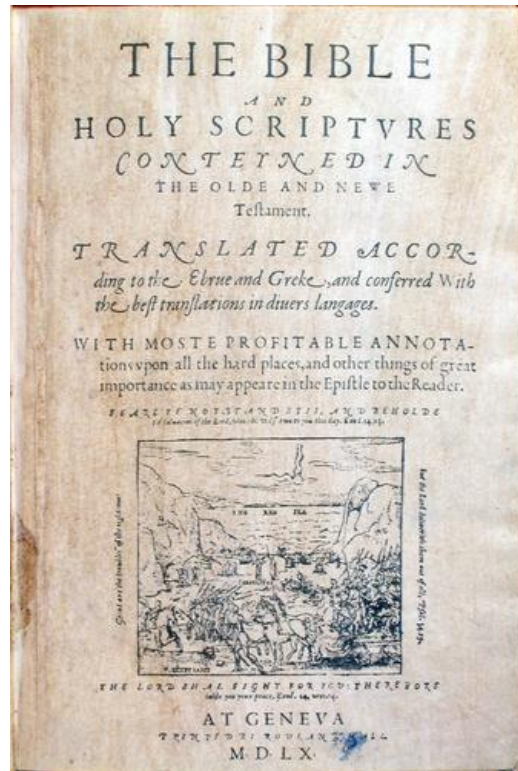
1. John Rogers, the man behind the Matthew's Bible, was the first to suffer martyrdom under Mary. He was burned at the stake in 1555. She had nearly three hundred people burned or beheaded, including such notable men as the Anglican bishops Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley and the deposed Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer.

2. As you might imagine, many of England's greatest scholars and theologians fled to Europe, especially Switzerland and Germany, where the Reformation was more deeply and broadly established. These exiles recognized the need for a new English translation that would be printed with verse divisions and with the more modern Latin or Roman type instead of the heavy Gothic or Old English type.

N. In Geneva, William Whittingham, a Greek scholar, prepared a revision of a recent edition of Tyndale's New Testament using the verse divisions that Robert Stephanus (also known as Robert Estienne) had introduced into the fourth edition of his Greek text in 1551. This work, called the "Geneva New Testament," was printed in 1557. This was the first new translation since the Great Bible of 1539.



O. Queen Mary I died on November 17, 1558, and was succeeded by Queen Elizabeth I, the daughter of Henry and his second wife, Anne Boleyn. Elizabeth was a supporter of the Reformation, so at her ascension many of the exiles began returning to England. Some of the exiles remained in Geneva to complete the translation that was underway there. The complete "Geneva Bible" was printed on April 10, 1560.



1. It was one of the finest translations ever made. Many editions were printed in the following decades, and it achieved dominant popularity in the period 1570-1620. It greatly influenced the later KJV (Authorized Version). The title page reads:

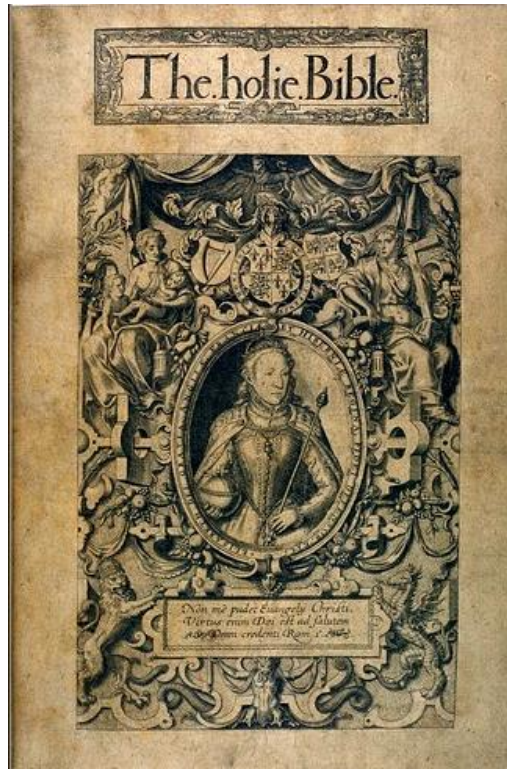
The Bible and Holy Scriptures conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament. Translated According to the Ebrue and Greke, and conferred With the best translations in diuers languages. With moste profitable annotations vpon all the hard places, and other things of great importance as may appeare in the Epistle to the Reader. At Geneva Printed by Rouland Hall M.D.L.X.

2. The notes of the Geneva Bible were influenced by Calvinistic teaching, but that influence appears in relatively few of them. The popular name for the Geneva Bible was the "Breeches Bible" because in Gen. 3:7 it says that Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together and made themselves "breeches."

P. The clergy of the Church of England were not satisfied with the Geneva Bible, primarily because of the Calvinistic doctrine in some of its notes, and considered

Coverdale's translation and the Great Bible to be inferior because they were not translated from the original languages.

1. So in 1563 a massive translation project was launched under the direction of Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury. The result was the publication in 1568 of what is known as the "Bishops' Bible," a revision and improvement of the Great Bible.

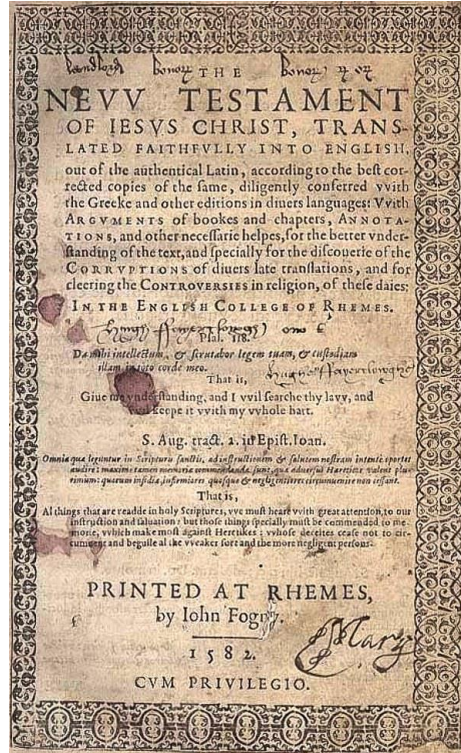


2. Though superior to the Great Bible, this translation lacked the quality and simplicity of the Geneva Bible. Church endorsement attempted to force the use of the translation, and though many editions of it were published from 1568-1602, it never gained the popular support its proponents had hoped for. The primary influence of this translation is that it served as the standard or default version for the translators of the King James Version.

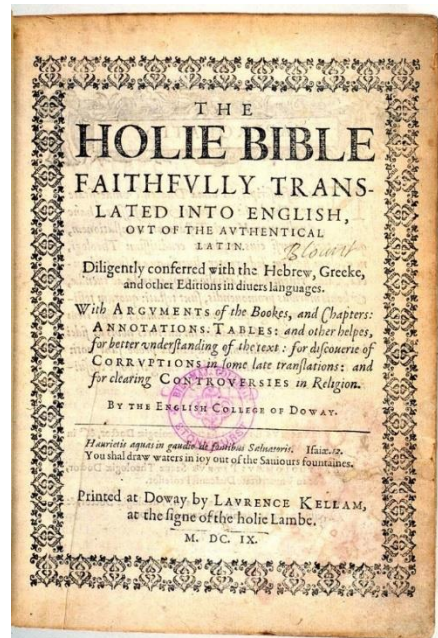
Q. Following Elizabeth's ascension to the throne in 1558, many English Catholics fled to the European continent to avoid persecution. With so many Protestant-oriented English Bibles being published, Catholics felt the need for an English translation that was friendlier to Catholic interpretations and that included notes explaining Catholic doctrines.

1. Such a translation was prepared by the Roman Catholic scholar Gregory Martin and several others from 1578-1582. They based their translation on the Vulgate but were well aware of the Greek and Hebrew and also drew from the Geneva Bible and an edition of the Coverdale Bible.

2. The first English translation of the Roman Catholic New Testament was printed in 1582 in Rheims, France. It was opposed by English Protestants and had to be smuggled into the country.



3. The Old Testament was not published until 1609-1610 at Douay, France. This Catholic translation is known as the "Douay-Rheims Bible."

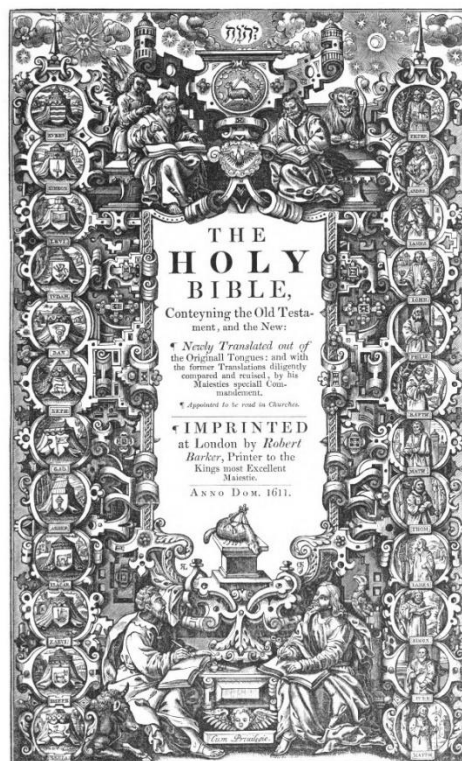


4. The Rheims New Testament had some influence on the King James Version. It was reprinted a number of times. The Old and New Testaments were completely revised in the middle of the eighteenth century by Richard Challoner.

R. Queen Elizabeth I died March 24, 1603, having ruled England for forty-four years. She was succeeded by James VI king of Scotland, who ascended to the throne as King James I of England.

1. In 1604 King James agreed to a request by John Rainolds (or Reynolds), a distinguished Puritan, for the making of a new English translation of the Bible. Rainolds may have been hoping that James simply would authorize the Puritan-friendly (Calvinistic) Geneva Bible rather than tackle a translation project, but James seized on the request to create an alternative to both the Geneva Bible and the Bishops' Bible, neither of which he thought was satisfactory (though he had special dislike for the Geneva Bible).

2. James chose to use fifty-four of England's finest scholars from Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge to prepare the translation. The work began in 1607 and was completed and published in 1611. The translators used the Bishops' Bible as a guideline and, working from the Hebrew and Greek, took into account Tyndale's translation, the Matthew's Bible, Coverdale's Bible, the Great Bible, and the Geneva Bible. Marginal notes were omitted except for notes relating to explanations of Hebrew or Greek words.



3. The first edition was published in 1611 with the words "appointed to be read in churches" on the title page, but despite becoming known as the "Authorized Version," there is no record of official church or royal authorization. However, official sanction was probably assumed from the fact the translation had been initiated by the king and was printed by his own printer, Robert Barker.

4. This version immediately displaced the Bishops' Bible and within a decade or two became more popular than the Geneva Bible. It was the Bible of the English-speaking world for about 350 years! Though it was heavily indebted to the earlier English translations, it has justifiably been called "the noblest monument of English prose."

5. There were various corrections, changes, and revisions of the King James Version in the ensuing decades and centuries. Hundreds of changes were made in a 1613 edition (Lewis, *The English Bible from KJV to NIV*, 38), and a 1616 edition corrected many printing errors. However, these corrections were ignored in some future printings. In 1629 a revision done by two of the original translators, Samuel Ward and John Bois, was printed. In 1638 a further revision by Ward and Bois, joined by Thomas Goad and Joseph Mead, was printed. This 1638 edition became the standard edition until 1762, but printing errors continued to crop up. Some of the more infamous printing errors were:

a. A 1631 printing became known as the "Wicked Bible" because Ex. 20:14 read: "Thou shalt commit adultery."

b. A 1638 printing became known as the "Forgotten Sins Bible" because Lk. 7:47 read: "her sins which are many are *forgotten*" rather than forgiven.

c. A 1641 printing became known as the "More Sea Bible" because Rev. 21:1 read: "and there was more sea" rather than there was no more sea.

d. A 1653 printing became known as the "Unrighteous Bible" because 1 Cor. 6:9 read: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall inherit the kingdom of God?"

6. The King James Version was revised in 1762 by Dr. F. S. Paris. He attempted to update and correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation, to correct printers' errors, and to correct errors in the use of italics. He also made a few changes to the text. Benjamin Blayney expanded on Paris's work, and in 1769 published an edition of the King James Bible that became the standard version for the next one hundred years.

7. Printing errors continued to crop up in editions. In 1801, 1806, and 1810 errors resulted in what are known as the "Murderers Bible" (misprints "murderers" for "murmurers" in Jude 16), the "Standing Fishes Bible" (misprints "fishes" for "fishers" in Ezek. 47:10), and the "Wife-hater's Bible" (misprints "wife" for "life" in Lk. 14:26).

8. The 1873 revision of the King James Version by F. H. A. Scrivener is known as the *Cambridge Paragraph Bible*. This was the first time modern paragraphs were introduced into the Bible. Scrivener's edition is considered the most accurate of all the Authorized Bibles. A revision of the *Cambridge Paragraph Bible* was published in 1994.

S. It became clear in the latter part of the nineteenth century that changes in language, spelling, and scholarship, including greater insight into the original Greek text, required a new Bible translation. A committee of scholars was appointed in England to undertake the task. What was originally designed to be a revision of the King James Version became in fact a new translation. It was published in 1885 as the Revised Version (English Revised Version) which was the first English Bible to exclude the Apocrypha. The preferred wording of American scholars that was not accepted in the Revised Version was represented in a translation published in 1901 called the American Standard Version.

T. There has been a flood of English translations since the ASV, especially in the last sixty or so years. Let me just mention some of the generally respected translations that were done by various committees of scholars. There are differences among them in translation philosophy and sometimes in the underlying text they translate, but these all are serious academic efforts. Of course, no translation of Scripture is above criticism because it is a work done by limited human beings.

1. Revised Standard Version was a revision of the 1901 ASV that was done by a committee of American scholars (originally 13 and then increased to 32). The New Testament appeared in 1946; the Old Testament followed in 1952. The New Testament was revised in 1971. The New Revised Standard Version is a committee revision of the RSV that was published in 1989. The New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition appeared in print in 2022.

2. The Jerusalem Bible is a translation by Roman Catholic scholars that appeared in 1966 (the first part came out in 1956). Its name is derived from its relationship to the French version *La Bible de Jerusalem*, which version heavily influenced the translation. The New Jerusalem Bible, which is a revision of the 1966 Jerusalem Bible, was published in 1985. The Revised New Jerusalem Bible was published in 2019.

3. The New American Bible is a translation by Roman Catholic scholars that was published in 1970. The most recent edition, called New American Bible Revised Edition, appeared in 2011.

4. The New English Bible is a translation by British scholars which claimed no restriction by prior translations. The New Testament appeared in 1961; the Old Testament appeared in 1970. It is a rather free rendering of the original languages. The Revised English Bible, which is a revision of the 1970 NEB, was published in 1989.

5. The New American Standard Bible is a revision of the ASV done by Evangelical scholars. The New Testament was published in 1963; the Old Testament appeared in 1971. It is an accurate translation that is clear and readable, but it is not as smooth as some others. It was revised in 1995, called the New American Standard Updated Edition, and that revision was updated in 2020 in what is called the New American Standard 2020.

6. The New International Version is a translation by an interdenominational team of scholars. The New Testament appeared in 1973; the Old Testament appeared in 1978. It was instrumental to my conversion in 1978, so I have a soft spot in my heart for this version. It is a freer translation than the NASB, one that more accurately reflects contemporary English, which is partly why it became the most popular selling Bible in the English language. It was first revised in 1984. The revision in 2005 was called Today's New International Version, and both it and the 1984 revision were discontinued after the revision published in 2011.

7. The New King James Version was an attempt to bring some of the archaic language in the KJV up to date. It is a scholarly translation that is imposed on the KJV base. The New Testament came out in 1979; the Old Testament came out in 1982. The 21st Century King James Version published in 1994 is a minor updating of some of the archaic language and the spelling, punctuation, and capitalization of the KJV of 1611. It changes much less than does the NKJV.

8. The English Standard Version is the work of a large team of Evangelical scholars that was published in 2001. It is an "essentially literal" translation, meaning that the translators sought as far as possible to capture the precise wording of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer. It is not as smooth as some other translations, but it is the main translation I use. It was revised in 2007, 2011, and 2016.

9. The New English Translation is a translation by more than twenty-five scholars that was made available for free on the Internet in 2001. There were revisions in 2003 and 2005 and a major update in 2019. It includes almost 61,000 translators' notes, which often are quite helpful.

10. The Holman Christian Standard Bible is the work of a large international and interdenominational team that was published in 2004 (NT appeared in 1999). It was revised in 2010 and revised again in 2016 under the name Christian Standard Bible.

U. Popular paraphrases – A paraphrase is where someone expresses in his own words what he thinks is being said in a text. It can be helpful, but it is more commentary or interpretation than translation, and for that reason, it should not be confused with Scripture.

1. Living Bible was done by Kenneth Taylor from 1962-71.

2. The complete Good News Translation, formerly called the Good News Bible or Today's English Version, appeared in 1976. The New Testament portion, called Good News for Modern Man, appeared in 1966.

3. The Contemporary English Version is a very loose translation, if not a paraphrase, that is aimed at about a fourth-grade level. The New Testament appeared in 1991 and the full Bible in 1995.

4. The Message is Eugene Peterson's popular paraphrase. It is based on the original languages. The New Testament came out in 1993; the complete Bible came out in 2002.

5. The New Living Translation is a paraphrase based on the original languages. The New Testament was published in 1996; the complete Bible was published in 2004.