

HISTORY OF THE BIBLE IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

In 2nd Century A.D. Origen compiled HEXAPLA of Old Testament in parallel columns, comparing Hebrew text with transliteration of Hebrew into Greek alphabet letters, then Greek translations by Aquila, Symmachus, Septuagint, Theodotion. Thereafter for almost 1500 years the BIBLE remained in Official Church Latin where it was jealously guarded by priests who interpreted it for the common people. Not until 16th Century A.D. when Martin Luther began Protestant Reformation by posting 98 theses on Church door of Wittenberg 1517, did the demand for BIBLE translations into the various vernacular languages become widespread. Luther proclaimed "Every man his own priest" capable of interpreting Holy Scripture for himself without need of intervening priest, and Luther was sentenced to Wartberg prison 1521 by Diet of Worms, where he began his own translation of BIBLE into German.

Following is brief history of important English translations of the BIBLE:

1454 - Gutenberg printing press

1. TYNDALE BIBLE (New Testament printed 1525 Cologne, complete BIBLE 1526 at Worms). "The English BIBLE owes more to William Tyndale than to any other man, not only because he was the first to translate the BIBLE from the original Hebrew and Greek, but because the basic structure of his translation has endured through all subsequent changes" (Luther Weigle). Tyndale used Greek text of Erasmus, met Luther at Wittenberg, won approval of Henry VIII but later opposed king's divorce, had dispute with Thomas More, was arrested for heresy in Antwerp, imprisoned in Brussels, was strangled and burned at stake 1536.
2. THE GREAT BIBLE (1535, Miles Coverdale, first complete BIBLE printed in English, based on Latin Vulgate and existing translations of Tyndale in English, Luther in German, Pagninus in Latin,) GREAT BIBLE published London 1539, was first authorized English version, copy ordered placed in every church, 2nd edition 1540 Archbishop Cranmer wrote preface,
3. THE GENEVA BIBLE (1560, first English version to use numbered verses, each set off as separate paragraph). Queen Mary ordered all printing of English BIBLES to cease, forbade their use in Church. English Protestants fled to Geneva, undertook revision of previous English BIBLES. Edited by William Whittingham, GENEVA BIBLE became "peoples' BIBLE", was version used by William Shakespeare and was the BIBLE brought by Puritans who settled New England.
4. THE BISHOPS BIBLE (1572, reprint 1602, became basis of KING JAMES BIBLE. Elizabeth orders copy of "the whole BIBLE of the largest volume in England" placed in every Church, Bishops themselves oversee revision).
5. DOUAY BIBLE (1582, English translation published Rheims from Latin NT Vulgate by Catholic scholars, Gregory Martin; 1609 at Douay, entire BIBLE published). Both Rheims NT and Douay OT close to Latin text.
6. KING JAMES VERSION (1611, 54 scholars translate at Westminster, Oxford, Cambridge). Becomes authorized version although Geneva BIBLE is printed until 1644.
7. THE REVISED VERSION (1881 NT, complete BIBLE 1885). Collaboration between English and American clerics,
8. THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION (1946). "discovery after discovery widening our knowledge of the BIBLE text and its early history" (Fredric Kenyon), history and geography and religions and cultures of Bible lands included, breaks from literalism of earlier translations, returns to cadence and structure of Tyndale and King James.

