DISCOVER

The History of the English Language Bible
Presbyterian Heritage Center
Learning Initiatives Series

The Presbyterian Heritage Center (PHC) creates new exhibits each year from its archives and artifact collections, as well as from loans of materials from individuals and institutions. Onsite, we utilize many different techniques to educate, including the displays, videos, touch screen kiosks and more. To reach young people, we conduct Confirmation Classes (history), Collegiate Studies & Visitations, Supplemental Club Programs, Youth Conference Related Exhibits, Online & Hands On Activities and Youth Sunday School Lessons for all Presbyterian denominations.

In addition to these limited-time exhibits, the PHC seeks to provide accompanying educational materials, such as learning booklets, online downloadable materials and DVD resource disks for adults and young people.

The Presbyterian Heritage Center (PHC) believes that learning can be exciting, inspiring and transformational.

The PHC has a responsibility to future generations to promote strong learning skills and an awareness of their role as participants and guardians of the Presbyterian and Reformed heritage.

The PHC seeks to serve youth and adults through this ever expanding educational series. For more information, go online to www.phcmontreat.org or call 828.669.6556.

Front cover photo shows title pages of a 1611 first-edition King James Version of the Bible, with insets left-to-right of a Wycliffe manuscript Bible (c. 1388), Queen Elizabeth’s Bishops Bible (1568) and a Geneva Bible (1560).
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Source: Presbyterian Heritage Center
Preface

Remaining true to our goal to be independent, innovative and interactive, we are using many different techniques to engage our onsite and online visitors. These techniques include films playing on a large screen television, touch screen kiosks and this educational discussion guide.

And sometimes, we use the low-tech approach, such as displaying these rare Bibles to trace the history of English-language translations and influences over the centuries.

This guide is intended to provide additional materials for the exhibit, while teaching comprehension skills for young people. Among the skills are analytical, explanatory, research, writing, generalization, reasoning, summarization and more.

I’d like to thank Michael Morgan, Lisa Harrold, Lucy Dusthimer, Betsy Neville, Ann Vinson and Diana Sanderson for their invaluable contributions to this exhibit, as well as the Montreat Conference Center for arranging the Saint John’s Bible.

We also are grateful to the exhibit advisory committee of John Akers, Nancy McGuirk, Michael Morgan, Richard Ray, Kay Stockdale, and others.

Artifacts, archival documents, photos and more were donated or lent for the History of the English language Bible exhibit by many, including:

- Michael Morgan
- The British Library
- Saint John’s University

The collection of the Presbyterian Heritage Center provided numerous Bibles from the 18th through 20th centuries, as well as images, woodcuts and other graphics.

A special thank you is offered to our financial contributors in the past, in the present and the hopefully in the future.

Ronald W. Vinson
PHC Executive Director

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Source: Presbyterian Heritage Center
The Pre-Reformation

How to save souls?

There was a long debate during the latter portion of the Middle Ages among clerics about reforms needed to convert more people to Christianity.

Early reformers (i.e., challengers to the western Roman Catholic Church) often focused on one goal — translating the Latin Bible or portions of the Bible into the common spoken tongue of the country so the populace could more easily read it.

Originally the Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, with a Latin translation attributed to St. Jerome (c. 347 - 420 A.D., also known as Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus before sainthood was conferred) made in the late 4th century. This Vulgate (“commonly used”) Latin Bible became the standard used by the Roman Catholic Church for a 1,000 years.

Efforts to translate the Bible into Old English (i.e., Anglo-Saxon) began in the 8th century when Bishop Aldhelm (639 - 709 A.D.) translated the Psalms. A monk named Bede (673 - 735 A.D., also known as Venerable Bede) translated the Gospel of John, which was lost.

In the 9th century, King Alfred (849 - 899 A.D.) translated “The Ten Commandments,” probably the Psalms and some other Biblical segments.

Later, English Abbot Ælfric of Eynsham (c. 955 - c. 1010) and others translated the beginning books of the Bible during the late 10th and early 11th century.

But the Norman Invasion of England in 1066 brought a temporary end to Anglo-Saxon translation efforts.

Toward the end of the 1300s, Oxford teacher and priest John Wycliffe and his followers began translation work on the first complete Bible in Middle English. These manuscript Bibles were suppressed. And the next major translation effort would wait until the 1520s and 1530s.

Medieval England

One of the earliest vernacular translations —
the language spoken by the ordinary people in a particular country or region — of the first six books of the Old Testament into the English language was probably compiled in the second quarter of the 11th century at St Augustine’s Abbey, Canterbury, circa 1035 A.D.

This text of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua was richly illuminated in a manuscript called The Old English Hexateuch or Old English Illustrated Hexateuch. The Tower of Babel Illustration from the manuscript accompanies this article on the preceding page.

The Old English Hexateuch manuscript consists of translations and a preface by Ælfric of Eynsham, while the remaining parts were carried out by anonymous authors. Another copy of the text, without lavish illustrations but including a translation of the Book of Judges instead of Joshua (hence also called the Old English Hexateuch), is found in the Bodleian Library in Oxford University.

It is notable that in his translations, Ælfric did not translate it word for word from the Latin, often paraphrasing to better convey the meaning.

Wycliffe & Lollards

John Wycliffe (c. 1324 - December 1384), also spelled Wyclif, Wycliff, Wiclef, Wickliffe, or Wickliffe, was a reformer. A priest and an educator at Oxford, he was a critic of some of the church’s practices. In his latter years, Wycliffe increasingly promoted the need to have the Scriptures in the vernacular. He challenged the church’s hierarchy and luxurious living of bishops.

He also preached that the Eucharist was symbolic.

Wycliffe’s followers were derisively called Lollards, or “mutterers,” by the Catholic Church.

Wycliffe declared that every Christian had the right to read the Bible, and that the Bible enabled every Christian to learn the importance of Christ as salvation, without the trappings of pilgrimages, performed good works and the Latin Mass.

Among Wycliffe’s followers, Nicholas of Hereford apparently finished the Wycliffe Bible manuscript in Middle English about 1384. An improved second edition was translated by Wycliffe’s secretary, John Purvey, about 1395. These Bibles collectively are known as Wycliffe Bibles, even though Wycliffe did not do the
final translations. Nearly 200 copies of these two manuscript versions have survived. When John Purvey made his 1395 revision, there were three dialects existing in Middle English. Purvey chose Midland English, the dialect of London, which was also used by Chaucer, a contemporary of Wycliffe.

The Wycliffe or Lollard movement was effectively suppressed in England. But his writings migrated to Bohemia through students who had studied under Wycliffe at Oxford. His cause and teachings were taken up by John Hus.

Forty-four years after Wycliffe’s death (in 1428), the Catholic Church showed its lingering displeasure with Wycliffe and his followers by disinterring Wycliffe’s bones, burning them and dumping the ashes into a river. The act is depicted in the accompanying illustration from Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, PHC Collection.

Forty-four years after Wycliffe’s death, the church condemned him for heresy in promoting translation of the Bible and exhumed his body, burned it and scattered his ashes in a river.

The followers of Hus religious teachings (known as Hussites) rebelled against their Roman Catholic rulers and the church, defeating five consecutive papal crusades between 1420 and 1431 — the Hussite Wars.

**John Hus and Western Continental Pre-Reformers**

Czech cleric John (or Jan) Jan Hus (c. 1369 – 6 July 1415), often referred to as John Hus or John Huss, was a Czech priest, philosopher, early Christian reformer and Prague professor. Exposed to teachings of John Wycliffe, Hus was a key forerunner of Protestantism. He exerted a strong influence in Western Europe, most pronounced in the approval of a reformist Bohemian religion, and, then more than a century later, on Martin Luther through his writings.

He was burned at the stake in 1415.

**THINK ABOUT IT!**

1. **Analyze Cause & Effect**
   Why did the Norman Invasion of England in 1066 result in a temporary end (some 300 years) of Bible translation efforts in the country?

2. **Pose & Answer Question**
   Think of a question the church leaders would have asked to John Wycliffe about why he translated the Bible into Middle English.

3. **Make Inferences**
   Why do you think the church only wanted to use the Latin language Vulgate Bible?
When Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church doors in Wittenburg in 1517, the internal debates and conflicts within the Catholic Church became highly public — leading to the period called the Protestant Reformation.

Reformers throughout Europe had been busy translating the Bible into the vernacular — French, Spanish, Czech, Hungarian, English, and others. Printed portions of the Bibles in common languages began appearing by 1522.

William Tyndale & the first printed English-language New Testament

William Tyndale (1494 - 1536) also spelled Tindale, Tindall or Tyndall, was an English chaplain, tutor and scholar with a gift for languages.

In 1524, working with his assistant William Roye, Tyndale left England after failing to get permission to work on the English translation of the New Testament.

At upper right is the opening page of the Gospel of John from Tyndale’s 1526 New Testament — the first printed NT English Bible.

Tyndale’s NT translation formed the base for most future translations. His wording featured such well-known phrases as “fight the good fight” and “the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.”

Tyndale had 3,000 copies printed, but active suppression by the Catholic Church in England by burning and destroying the book was nearly complete. Two copies survive.

Around 1529, Tyndale started translating the Old Testament while in Europe. By 1535, he had finished the Pentateuch and nine other books of the Old Testament before he was captured outside Antwerp.

Below is an illustration from Foxe’s Book of Martyrs depicting the strangulation and burning of Tyndale in October 6, 1536. Tyndale’s last words were reportedly: “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes,” not realizing that Henry VIII had licensed the Coverdale Bible to use in 1535.
Myles Coverdale & the first printed complete Bible in English

Myles Coverdale, also spelled Miles, completed the printing of the first complete English Bible in 1535. Because of restrictions on importing bound books into England, Coverdale had the pages printed on the Continent and shipped to an English binder.

In the preface to the Bible, Coverdale praised King Henry VIII and his new Queen, Anne Boleyn. This was the marriage that had led Henry to split with the Catholic Church in Rome and set up a Church of England.

Formerly a priest, Coverdale was primarily an editor and translator using other Bibles already published in Latin and German because he was not yet proficient in Hebrew or Greek. Coverdale also used Tyndale’s published and unpublished English translations, including Tyndale’s partial Old Testament.

After its publication, the Coverdale Bible was the first Bible licensed by King Henry VIII for use in England.

The most innovative thing in this Bible was that it placed the Apocrypha — those books that Roman Catholics accept as canonical, but which Protestants would reject — at the end of the Old Testament rather than interspersed throughout the Old Testament. All Protestant Bibles that were to follow, if they included the Apocrypha at all, included them as an appendix — just like Coverdale had done.

Coverdale lived overseas for many years, carefully timing his trips to England when the threat to Protestant Bible translators was minimal. He fled to the Continent again when Queen Mary assumed the throne and tried to re-institute Catholicism in England.

Coverdale was born in 1488 and died on January 20, 1569. In his formative years, he trained and became an Augustinian friar. He was appointed a priest in Norwich in 1514. During the 1520s, he became more of a radical reformer, having to flee England in 1528. It was while at in Antwerp that Coverdale worked on a complete English Bible.

Coverdale would later be authorized to translate and print The Great Bible of Henry VIII in 1539.

Myles Coverdale (right) and the title page of his 1535 complete English language Bible.
John Rogers and the Matthews Bible

Coverdale’s work was incorporated into the Matthews (or Mathews) Bible printed in 1537. Another friend of Tyndale, John Rogers (c. 1505 – February 4, 1555) edited Tyndale’s work to issue this Bible originally in 1537.

King Henry VIII’s advisors, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and Chancellor Thomas Cromwell strongly pushed the king for his approval of the work, for which they claimed: “There will not be a better English Bible until the day after Doomsday.”

The king was not ready to authorize the Bible to be read in churches, but did give it his official license as the approved version. It became the second licensed Bible in English. When Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer and Chancellor Thomas Cromwell finally convinced King Henry VIII to authorize a Bible for use in the Church of England pulpits, Myles Coverdale was selected to prepare “The Great Bible,” which was released in 1539.

Rogers matriculated at the University of Wittenberg in 1540. He became a close friend of Philipp Melanchthon and other early Protestant Reformation. On leaving Wittenberg, he spent four and a half years at a Lutheran church in Meldorf, Germany. Rogers returned to England in 1548.

John Rogers would be martyred in 1555 during Queen Mary’s reign when she sought to return England to Catholicism.
Henry VIII’s The Great Bible

Printed in 1539 by Myles Coverdale, The Great Bible is the first authorized version of the English Bible. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer commissioned Myles Coverdale to revise the existing Bibles, removing all of the polemical annotations. Coverdale completed the revision in less than two years.

The printing began in Paris because at this time there was no press in England capable of producing volume of this size, i.e. “Great.” The French authorities discovered what was being done and raided the printing press, but Coverdale succeeded in smuggling the presses, type, labor and completed sheets across the English Channel, and the Bible was published in 1539.

The title woodcut is attributed to Hans Holbein. A benevolent Henry VIII is depicted, slightly beneath God, giving the Bible to Archbishop Cranmer and Chancellor Thomas Cromwell — with their official coat of arms depicted — and thence to the people.

When Thomas Cromwell fell out of favor with the king and was executed in 1540, his coat of arms was carved out of the woodblock leaving a blank circle on the title page of the second printing.

The king authorized it for use in churches, and copies were chained in all cathedrals so that anyone could come and read — but not remove it.

THINK ABOUT IT!

1. **Analyze Cause & Effect**
   What was the effect on the population of translating the Bible into common speech?

2. **Explain**
   With death threats by the church and monarchy, why do you think Bible translators went ahead anyway? How do you think you would have reacted?

3. **Discussion Subjects & Additional Research**
   - William Tyndale
   - Henry VIII’s split with the Catholic Church in the 1530s.
Teams of Translators — Geneva, Bishops & Douai-Rheims

After a series of English-language Bibles translated by individuals from imperfect sources, the next stage of Biblical translation was led by teams of scholars from original texts. The first of these team English-language Bibles was the Geneva Bible, the most popular version during the century from 1560 to 1660.

The Geneva Bible

When Catholic Queen Mary assumed the English throne, she started a purge, burning scores of Protestants. It earned her the nickname of “Bloody Mary.” Hundreds of English and Scottish Protestants fled to the continent to Protestant controlled areas in Germany and Switzerland, especially Geneva.

As one exile to Geneva explained, Geneva was “the store of heavenly learning and discipline, the place where God hath appointed us to dwell.” One goal was to produce an English language Bible more contemporary than the Great Bible, (1539) and more reflective of the things they were learning under Reformed theologian John Calvin.

The Geneva Bible of 1560 accomplished many firsts — the first English language Bible in Roman (modern) typeface; the first team of translators to work on a Bible; the first English Bible to number verses — an innovation adopted by all following Bibles — and the first Bible to have so many explanations or commentaries in the side margins.

Title page of 1560 Geneva Bible (far left) and a Genesis page (left) with a map locating the Garden of Eden in Mesopotamia as well as sample of explanatory comments.

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<td>William Tyndale publishes New Testament in English</td>
<td>Matthews Bible printed &amp; translated by John Rogers</td>
<td>Geneva Bible published; translators were William Whittingham, Thomas Sampson, Anthony Gilby</td>
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1500

1535
Miles Coverdale published the first printed complete Bible in English

1539
The Great Bible is printed, edited by Coverdale, authorized by King Henry VIII and sponsored by Thomas Cromwell
In addition, the Geneva Bible contained maps and illustrations.

The main translators were William Whittingham and Anthony Gilby; other contributors included Christopher Goodman, Thomas Cole, John Pullain, Thomas Sampson. The Geneva Bible became the primary Bible of 16th century Protestantism and was the Bible used by William Shakespeare, Oliver Cromwell, John Knox, John Donne, Pilgrims, and John Bunyan, author of Pilgrim’s Progress (1678).

The Bishops’ Bible

When Elizabeth I succeeded her sister Mary to the throne, she strove a middle ground in the Protestant Anglican Church she headed.

The “Bishops’ Bible” of 1568 was a revision of the Great Bible done by several bishops of the Church of England under the direction of Queen Elizabeth’s Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker (1504 - 1575) (image below).

The project was undertaken as an attempt to create an official version that could compete with the Geneva Bible. The Geneva Bible was generally acknowledged to be the most accurate version at the time, and it had become far more popular than the officially sanctioned Great Bible.

But the Geneva Bible was unacceptable to the bishops on account of its anti-episcopal explanatory notes.

Archbishop Parker launched the new translation to create a more “sober” Bible that would replace the Geneva Bible and update the Great Bible of 1539. Prepared by a panel of bishops, the translation would prioritize “polite” language and excised all polemical marginal notes. It was substantially revised in the 1572 (sec-
ond) edition. The Bishops’ Bible failed to achieve its purpose, however, as the Geneva Bible continued to be the most popular version in England.

But everyone was at least familiar with the Bishops’ Bible because it was the official text used in all Church of England (Anglican) church services.

Rheims-Douai Bible

Some 70 years after the appearance of Protestant English-language Bibles, the Catholic Church finally produced its own complete English translation from the Latin Vulgate Bible.

Since the church had fought for centuries to maintain Latin as the only language for the Bible other than original sources in Hebrew and Greek, it was difficult to agree to translate it into the vernacular.

The English New Testament translation was led by Gregory Martin, formerly Fellow of St. John’s College, Oxford. He was assisted by William Allen who was the founder of the English College at Douai, Richard Bristow, Thomas Worthington and others.

Part of the Counter Reformation efforts by the Catholic Church, the New Testament was printed in 1582 in Rheims, France (also spelled as Rhemes or Reims). These Bibles were part of an attempt to re-establish Catholicism in England where it had been ban under the Protestant rule of Queen Elizabeth I.

Known as the Rheims Bible, this New Testament volume had extensive commentary and notes along with a Latinate style of English, rendering it sometimes difficult to read. It was printed in quarto size, approximately 9 x 11.5.

Twenty-seven years later during 1609-1610, the Old Testament in English was produced at the Catholic seminary at the University of Douai (also spelled as Douay) in the Spanish Low Country (now in France).

These translations were significantly revised by Catholic Bishop Richard Challoner during 1749 - 1752.

THINK ABOUT IT!

1 Evaluate
What was the effect of the long gap between the first Protestant English language Bibles and the publication of a Catholic English language Bible?

2 Draw Conclusions
Henry VIII’s Great Bible and Elizabeth I’s Bishops’ Bible have few margin notes and explanations, as compared to the Geneva Bible. Why do you think that was?

3 Discussion Subjects & Additional Research
- Geneva Bible
- John Knox
- Protestant Reformation
- Counter Reformation
King James Version of the Bible, 1611

When King James VI of Scotland assumed the throne of England in 1603 as King James I of England *(at right)*, there were serious problems among Protestants — between the Anglican bishops in the Church of England and the Separatists and Dissenters (such as Puritans and Presbyterians).

At an ecclesiastical conference at Hampton Court in January 1604 with King James, it was suggested that a new Bible translation needed to be made to replace Elizabeth I’s Bishops’ Bible.

James readily agreed and developed 15 rules to guide the translators, including the edict against Geneva Bible type commentaries in the volume. The translators were to base their work on the *Bishops’ Bible*, but the other major English versions also were considered including the *Geneva Bible*, and the whole corrected from original Hebrew, Greek and Early Latin texts.

There were forty-seven known translators, divided into six companies (two at Oxford, two at Cambridge, and two at Westminster). Each company was assigned specific books of the Bible. Each company had to agree on a translation, then the books were sent to the other companies for review. Then, the Bible was reviewed by a representative committee sitting in London, where Bishop Lancelot Andrewes served as a general editor.

The plans for the King James Version of the Bible were the most elaborate that had ever been devised for any such project. The panel of translators was the largest; the rules imposed upon them were the most detailed and the most restrictive.

The aim was a scholarly and literary version that would both satisfy the leaders of all ecclesiastical parties and evoke universal affection. In
15 Guidelines for King James Version Translators

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 nigh 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 &c.

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: Tyndale'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.
for English Protestants during Oliver Cromwell’s 11 years leading the Commonwealth.

But the restoration of the English monarchy under King Charles II in 1660 reignited a public fondness for things related to kings and queens. So the King James Version of the Bible came back into use and gained widespread popularity in England and in the Anglican Church in the American colonies.

Puritans, Presbyterians and other dissenters from the Anglican Church continued to use the Geneva Bible.

THINK ABOUT IT!

1 Analyze Cause & Effect

Explain why you think the King James Version of the Bible became so popular, even today?

2 Explain

What do you think of the process and organization used to create the KJV Bible translation?

3 Discussion Subjects & Additional Research

☐ Puritans & Presbyterians coming to the American colonies.

1604-1609

The translation took from 1604 to 1609, with printing taking over a year.

The King James Version (KJV) of the Bible was published in 1611.

While the KJV Bible was the official Church of England Bible, it was not immediately popular. Even Bishop Lancelot Andrewes continue to use the Geneva Bible translation in some sermons.

When the monarchy was overthrown in 1649, the Geneva Bible was the preferred text for English Protestants during Oliver Cromwell’s 11 years leading the Commonwealth.

But the restoration of the English monarchy under King Charles II in 1660 reignited a public fondness for things related to kings and queens. So the King James Version of the Bible came back into use and gained widespread popularity in England and in the Anglican Church in the American colonies.

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1611

King James Bible is published. A group of 47 - 54 translators and editors working in six companies prepared the edition.

1600 1750

1768

Edward Harwood, A Liberal Translation of the New Testament; being An Attempt to translate the Sacred Writings with Freedom, Spirit, and Elegance

1755

John Wesley, Explanatory notes upon the New Testament. Also called The New Testament with Notes, for Plain Unlettered Men who know only their Mother Tongue.
Comparisons of Selected Translations

Spelling was not a settled issue in the 14th to early 17th centuries. In addition, printers sometimes used u for v characters, as well as the reverse. Ye was used to denote a plural pronoun thee (thou was singular) as well as the sound for “the.” Here are some comparison of various texts. Sometimes it is easier to read aloud to understand the original words.

Genesis 1

John Wyclif (or Wycliffe) Bible (Wyclif and his followers produced the first complete manuscript English Bible). Nicholas of Hereford 1384 (translator; completed first Wyclif Bible translation)

In the firste made God of nouȝt heuene and erthe. The erthe forsothe was veyn with ynne and void, and derknessis weren vpon the face of the sea; and the Spiryt of God was born vpon the wa-tryes. And God seide, Be maad liȝt; and maad is liȝt.

(Note: nouȝt = nought and liȝt = light)

William Tyndale Bible (OT translation) c. 1529 (first printed English Bible portions)

In the beginnyng God created heauen and erth. The erth was voyde and emptye, and darknesse was vpon the depe, & the spirite of God moued upon the water. Than God sayd: let there be lighte and there was lighte.

The Great Bible 1539 (first authorized English Bible by Henry VIII, edited by Myles Coverdale)

In ye begynning God created heauen & erth. The erth was voyde & emptie and darckennes was vpon the face of the depe ad ye Sprete of god moued upon the face of the waters. And God sayde: Let there be made lyght, and there was lyght made.

Geneva Bible 1560 (first English language Bible in Roman (modern) typeface; first team of translators; first English Bible to number verses, second such Bible to use verse numbers)

In the beginning God created ye heauen and the earth. And the earth was without forme & voyde, and darkenes was vpon the depe, & the Spirit of God moued vpon the waters. Then God saide, Let there be made lyght: and there was lyght made.

Bishops Bible 1568 (authorized English Bible during Queen Elizabeth I’s reign)

In the beginnyng GOD created the heauen & the earth. And the earth was without fourme, & was voyde: & darknesses was vpon the face of the deepe, and the Spirite of God moued vpon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be lyght: and there was lyght.

King James Bible 1611 (authorized English Bible by King James I (England) & VI (Scotland); six companies of 47 translators and 7 editors worked on this version)

In the beginning God created the Heauen, and the Earth. And the earth was without forme, and voyd, and darknes was vpon the face of the deepe: and the Spirit of God moued vpon the face of the waters. And God said Let there be light and there was light.
Psalm 23
Geneva Bible, 1560
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to rest in grene pasture, & leadeth me by the stil waters. He restoreth my soule, & leadeth me in the paths of righteousnesse for his Names sake. Yea, thoghe I shulde walke through the valley of the shadow of death, I wil feare no euil: for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staffe, they comfort me.

Bishops’ Bible, 1568
God is my sheepeheard, therfore I can lacke nothyng: he wyll cause me to repose my selfe in pasture full of grasse, and he wyll leade me unto calme waters. He wyll convert my soule: he wyll bring me foorth into the pathes of righteousnesse for his name sake. Yea though I walke through the valley of the shadowe of death, I wyll feare no evyll: for thou art with me, thy rodde and thy staffe be the thyn-ges that do comfort me.

King James Version of the Bible, 1611
The Lord is my shepheard, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in greene pastures: he leadeth mee beside the still waters. He restoreth my soule: he leadeth me in the pathes of righteousnes, for his names sake. Yea though I walke through the valley of the shadowe of death, I will feare no euill: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staffe, they comfort me.

Familiar English Language Bible Phrases
Bible translator William Tyndale coined many phrases in the early 16th century which entered the culture and became familiar to generations, such as:

☐ knock and it shall be opened unto you  ☐ my brother's keeper
☐ twinkling of an eye  ☐ the salt of the earth
☐ a moment in time  ☐ a law unto themselves
☐ seek and you shall find  ☐ it came to pass
☐ eat, drink and be merry  ☐ gave up the ghost
☐ ask and it shall be given you  ☐ the signs of the times
☐ judge not that you not be judged  ☐ the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak
☐ the powers that be  ☐ fight the good fight

THINK ABOUT IT!

1 Evaluate
Which version of Genesis I do you like the best?
Why?

2 Evaluate
Which version of Psalm 23 do you like the best?
Why?

3 Evaluate
How many of the Tyndale phrases had you heard before?
18th — 20th Century Translations

Bible translations accelerated in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries with scores of such efforts each and every century. Discoveries of new source texts, cultural paraphrasing (Wesley’s 1755 *New Testament* to *Good News Bible*, 1976) and various first-times all were causes for recognition. Here are some interesting translations over the centuries.

18th Century
1745, William Whiston, The Primitive New Testament. This revision of the KJV uses three earliest (i.e., primitive) manuscripts then known to scholars — Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis, Codex Claromontanus, and Codex Alexandrinus.

1755, John Wesley, Explanatory notes upon the New Testament. One printing was titled, The New Testament with Notes, for Plain Unlettered Men who know only their Mother Tongue.

1764, Anthony Purver, A new and literal translation of all the books of the Old and New Testament. This volume is often called “The Quaker Bible” because Purver was a Quaker.

1768, Edward Harwood, A Liberal Translation of the New Testament. This ornate paraphrase represents a style of writing common in the eighteenth century, but heavily criticized by Harwood’s contemporaries.

19th Century
1808, Charles Thomson, The Holy Bible. It was the first Bible printed by a woman, Jane Aitken.

1833, Noah Webster, The Holy Bible, a conservative revision of the KJV, in which obsolete words and constructions are replaced with modern equivalents.

1876, Julia E. Smith, The Holy Bible, the first Bible translation by a woman.

20th Century
The 20th Century saw a new wave of Biblical translations into English for many different reasons: accuracy, current idiom and dialect, inclusion and more.

1901, American Standard Version.


1952, Revised Standard Version.


1966, The Jerusalem Bible (Catholic).

1976, Good News Bible.


THINK ABOUT IT!

1 **Summarize**
Write a short summary of up to 300 words on the translation of Bibles into English and the lessons you have learned.

2 **Pose & Answer Question**
If someone proposes a new Bible translation to you tomorrow, what questions would you ask?

3 **Discussion Subjects & Additional Research**
- Reasons for so many Bible translations over the past 300 years.
A New Illuminated Manuscript Bible in the 21st Century

The Saint John’s Bible is the first completely handwritten and hand-illuminated Bible to have been commissioned by a Benedictine Abbey since the invention of the moveable type printing press in the West printed the Gutenberg Bible in 1455. A 15-year project, the St. John’s Bible was finished in 2011.

Using the New Revision Standard Version Catholic Edition of the Bible, The Saint John’s Bible is divided into seven volumes and is two feet tall by three feet wide when open. The manuscript Bible was made on vellum with 160 hand illuminations.


THINK ABOUT IT!

1 Conceptualize
Take one of your favorite Bible verses or select one at random and think about how you would make an illustration to depict it.

2 Draw Conclusions
Why do you think Saint John’s University decide to produce the first illuminated complete Bible in more than 450 years?

3 Discussion Subjects
- Illuminated Manuscripts
- Gutenberg Printing Press & Its Impact
Glossary

**Apocrypha** - (a-pakre-fa), *noun*, biblical or related writings not forming part of the accepted canon of Scripture;

**Counter Reformation** - *noun*, the Catholic Church’s resurgence against Protestants during the 16th - 17th centuries beginning with the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and ending at the close of the Thirty Years’ War (1648).

**Eucharist** - (yook-a-rest), *noun*, the Christian ceremony commemorating the Last Supper, in which bread and wine are consecrated and consumed.

**evangelize** - (e-van-ge-liz) *verb*, to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, so that others may believe.

**Hexateuch** - (heksa-toook) *noun*, first six (6) books of the Old Testament Bible collectively.

**Hussites** - *noun*, followers of reformer John (or Jan) Hus.

**illuminate** - (e-looma-nat), *verb*, decorate (a page or initial letter in a manuscript) with gold, silver, or colored designs.

**Lollards or Lollardy** - *noun*, referring to followers of Bible teacher and translator John Wycliffe. The Middle English word *lollen*, meaning to mutter.

**martyr(s)** - (mahr-ter) *noun*, a person who willingly suffers death, rather than renounce his or her religion.

**manuscript** - *noun*, a book, document or piece of music written by hand rather than typed or printed.

**Pentateuch** - (heksa-toook) *noun*, first five (5) books of the Old Testament Bible collectively.

**Protestant Reformation** - *noun*, also known as the Reformation, this is religious movement of the 16th century that began as an attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church and resulted in the creation of Protestant churches. Those who protested the Catholic Church became known as Protestants.

**quarto** - (kwor-doo), *noun*, a size of book page resulting from folding each printed sheet into four leaves (eight pages). While the size varies, it is about 9½ × 12 inches.

**Reformation** - see Protestant Reformation.

**vernacular** - (ver-nak-ku-lar), *noun*, the language or dialect spoken by the ordinary people in a particular country or region. *Adjective*, (of language) spoken as one’s mother tongue; not learned or imposed as a second language.

**Vulgate** - *noun*, the principal Latin version of the Bible, prepared mainly by St. Jerome in the late 4th century, and (as revised in 1592) adopted as the official text for the Roman Catholic Church. Another meaning is common or colloquial speech.

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