

THE ENGLISH BIBLE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

It is from the text of the Bible printed in 1611, known as the *King James Version*, or the *Authorized Version*, that for the last three and one-half centuries the English people have derived their knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom He sent; of the divine aspect of Israel's history; of the inspired ideals of the Christian life as revealed to the apostles; and any certain concept of the future; of their own souls in a life of glory; and of the earth and of the nations upon it, "So securely has it established its place in the affections of the English-speaking people, and so effectively has it imparted the great spiritual values associated with the Scriptures, that to most of its readers the *Authorized Version* is the Bible."

It is generally agreed that Christianity came to Britain in the second century of our era, possibly soon after the close of the apostolic age. But who brought the Christian faith first to that island, and how extensive its acceptance at that time, we may never know. "Among the many hundreds of religious monuments, civil and military, strewn about Britain from the second to the early fourth century, all are purely pagan." There were some early British martyrs, and Britain was represented at the earlier church councils, but, says the late Professor Charles Oman, "There seems every reason to believe that the main bulk of the population in this remote province of the West remained pagan until a much later date than was the case elsewhere. . . . It is very strange that a religion, which was first publicly tolerated and later encouraged by the government for nearly a hundred years before the fatal year A.D. 410, should have left so few records in stone behind it." What Bibles or parts of Bibles were in Britain in those mysteriously blacked-out decades, we do not know. The oldest book written by a Briton belongs in this period. It was a commentary on the epistles of Paul by the heretic Pelagius. But he left Britain when young, never to return, and wrote the book in Rome.

The Book of Armagh

While for the nearly two hundred years after the departure of the Roman garrison in Britain, A.D. 410, we know almost nothing of the experiences of the Christian church in England, the story is quite different for the church in Ireland, to which mountainous country the Christian faith first came in the fourth century. Within three generations, monasteries sprang up throughout the entire land. By A.D. 600 "the study of sound literature held the foremost place and was pursued

with a thoroughness and intensity unknown elsewhere in Europe at that date." It was during this period that *The Book of Armagh* was written, partly in Irish and partly in Latin, containing a non-Vulgate text of the New Testament, the only complete copy of the New Testament that has come down to us produced by the Irish church.

The Latin Bible

It is with the coming of St. Augustine of Canterbury in 597 that any factual history of Christianity in England must begin. We do not know if St. Augustine actually had a Bible with him, though we are sure that there were hundreds of passages of Scripture, especially the Psalter, stored in his mind. Among the gifts of Pope Gregory to the early church at Canterbury, soon thereafter, were a Gregorian Bible, in two volumes, two copies of the Gospels, two Psalters, an exposition of the Epistles and Gospels for several Sundays, all adorned with silver or jewels. Here is the beginning of the history of the Scriptures in Britain. What kind of Bible would Pope Gregory send to Augustine? It would have to be a *Latin Bible*, not a Hebrew Old Testament or a Greek New Testament, and this deserves brief consideration. By the third century of our era, most people in the Western provinces of the Roman Empire knew very little Greek (even in Rome). If they were to have a Bible, it must be a Latin version, the language that was spoken throughout most of the Mediterranean world. When and how Latin Bibles were replaced by English Bibles, which could be ready by the laity, is what we now want to consider.

The First English Bibles

Undoubtedly, the first translation of parts of the Bible into Anglo-Saxon were not with pen and ink, on vellum or parchment, but in song and recitation. These Christian songs began with Caedmon, whose discovery of a gift of song is so beautifully set forth by Bede. Bede says that Caedmon "sang first of the creation of the world and the beginning of mankind, and all the story of Genesis, that is the first book of Moses, and again of the Exodus of the people of Israel from the land of Egypt and of the entrance into the promised land, and of many other tales of holy writ . . . and of Christ's incarnation, and of His passion, and of His ascent into Heaven, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the teachings of the apostles; and of the day of future judgment and of the terror of punishment full of torment, and of the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom he wrote many a lay; and

also he wrought many others concerning divine benefits and judgments." Caedmon died about A.D. 680. The second great name in this tradition is Cynewulf, who died a century later in A.D. 783. About this time was composed the famous Christian epic known as *The Christ*, showing a remarkable knowledge of the life of the Savior. The most beautiful gem of all literary compositions of this period is the exquisite *The Dream of the Rood*, the most moving interpretation of the Crucifixion of Christ in the first one thousand years of English literature.

The greatest British scholar in the first half of the eighth century was the Venerable Bede. No one equaled him for the next five hundred years in Britain in knowledge of the Scriptures. His own confession is significant. "I gave all my attention to the study of the Scriptures. . . . From the time that I received the degree of Priest's Orders unto the fifty-ninth year of my age [A.D. 731]. . . ." Bede's writings were in Latin, but he did undertake the translation of the Gospels into Anglo-Saxon and on the very day of his death was dictating his translation of John's Gospel. None of these translations have come down to us. St. Aldhelm (d. 709) also translated the Psalms, but these do not exist today.

England's noble King Alfred (849–899), at the beginning of his famous code of laws for his British subjects, used as a preface his own Anglo-Saxon translation of the Ten Commandments. The earliest written translation of the Gospels into Anglo-Saxon that now exists dates from about the tenth century.

The Lindisfarne Gospels

Probably the first extant attempt to bridge this linguistic gap in literary composition is the beautiful *Lindisfarne Gospels* in Latin, originally written about A.D. 700 in an uncial Irish script, containing an interlinear translation written in Anglo-Saxon, added about A.D. 950. About A.D. 1000, appeared the celebrated Aelfric, of whom it has been rightly said, "He is among the first to stand out individually in the records of his contemporaries as one that labored to make the Scriptures available to English scholars in their native tongue." He produced sermons in the West Saxon tongue, wrote commentaries on certain books of the Bible, and composed a condensed version of the first seven books of the Old Testament.

Language changes, however, were rapid then, and by 1300 the Anglo-Saxon language of King Alfred and Aelfric had become almost obsolete. Yet, as a distinguished authority has reminded us, "From the day of Alfred to the time of Chaucer, the language of the English people had a continuous history although it underwent many vicissitudes and suffered great changes. . . . It is this

persistence of an English tone and spirit gradually regaining its ascendancy after having been overlaid for three centuries by the culture of the Normans that gives these Anglo-Saxon manuscripts their chief significance for us. . . . We discern in these ancient versions some permanent core of basic speech that holds over from age to age and constitutes our English idiom, the most English part of our English tongue."

For two hundred years after the Norman conquest (A.D. 1066), French remained the language of ordinary intercourse among the upper class of conquered Britain. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, "its maintenance became increasingly artificial. In the fourteenth century, English won its way back into universal use, and in the fifteenth century French all but disappeared."

The Ormulum Gospels and Acts

At the beginning of the fourteenth century appeared a poetical version of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, accompanied by a commentary known as the *Ormulum*, the work of an Augustinian monk, Orm. Toward the middle of that century, the stories of Genesis and Exodus were translated into rhyming English verse.

The Psalter in Early Middle English

Two prose translations of the Psalter in Early Middle English have survived. One, composed by the famous Richard Rolle, attained great popularity. As an indication of Bible study during the fourteenth century, there are 170 biblical manuscripts of this period still surviving.

The Wycliffe Version

We now come to what may be called the first great effort to place the entire Bible in the hands of the common people in their own language. This is *The Wycliffe Version*, although it is not certain that Wycliffe himself composed any part of it. John Wycliffe did (1330–1384) stir up a desire on the part of many to make available the Holy Scriptures in the language of the people. The first translation was made about 1400 and a second translation, which exercised so much influence, was a revision by John Purvey. Here the idiom is closer to the current language of the day than the earlier version. This is the only Bible in English which existed in Britain until Tyndale more than a century later. *The Wycliffe Bible* is the first complete Bible to appear in England.

The Gutenberg Bible

Between Wycliffe in 1384 and the Tyndale Version 140 years later, some stupendous events changed the whole intellectual and religious atmosphere of Europe. In 1453 Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, fell. Many

Greek scholars migrated to the West with their precious manuscripts. In 1456 there appeared the first book printed with movable type, *The Gutenberg Bible*, which was to usher in a whole new era for Western man. Universal literacy and universal education were now possible, although not yet realities. Before that century ended, America had been discovered by Christopher Columbus. In 1516 Erasmus published the first Greek New Testament ever to appear in print, which exercised an enormous influence on subsequent biblical translations. In 1517 Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the church door at Wittenberg. The Reformation may be said to have begun in Switzerland in 1519, and Calvin began his famous work in Geneva in 1541. This is the period of the reign of Henry VIII (1509–1547).

The Tyndale Bible

Tyndale, born in 1494 and educated at Oxford, became obsessed with a desire to produce a new edition of the Bible, in the English of his day, translated from original Greek and Hebrew. Tyndale was expert in seven languages. Failing to secure any encouragement from the Bishop of London, Tyndale crossed the channel to Hamburg (1524), and then to Wittenberg, where he met Luther. It was in Cologne that the first printed English New Testament was issued in 1525. Tyndale, betrayed by a friend, was deceptively persuaded to come to England, where he was imprisoned and martyred on October 6, 1536, with those famous words upon his lips, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

Regarding the Old Testament, it is believed that Tyndale translated the Pentateuch and the book of Jonah. The translation of Isaiah is to be attributed to George Joye. Tyndale continued to work at revising his New Testament, with new editions appearing in 1533, 1534, and 1535. Eighty percent of the text of the *King James Version* is taken from *The Tyndale Bible*.

So harsh and constant was the denunciation of this version by ecclesiastical authorities, that of the first edition there remains only a fragment now in the British Museum. Of the second edition, only two copies are known today. Of the New Testament, printed at Worms, only two copies have survived to the present time.

The Myles Coverdale Bible

Just before Tyndale died, there appeared *the first complete Bible to be printed in the English tongue*, the work of Myles Coverdale (1485–1568), based on the Latin Vulgate, Tyndale, and the German Bible of Martin Luther. "Next to Tyndale, the man to whom lovers of the English Bible owe the greatest debt is Coverdale." He was the first to separate the Apocrypha from the Old Testament and place it as an appendix. His was

the first Bible to introduce chapter summaries as distinct from brief chapter headings found in the Vulgate. So important was Coverdale's version that his translation of the Psalms, revised by himself for *The Great Bible* of 1539, is the only one that still appears in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

As an illustration of the opposition of the Church to a Bible appearing in the vernacular tongue, one might consider the proclamation of the King condemning Tyndale's book in the following severe language: "And furthermore, for as much as it is come to the hearing of our said sovereign lord the king, that report is made by divers and many of his subjects, that as it were to all men not only expedient, but also necessary, to have in the English tongue both the New Testament and the Old: and that this highness, his noble men and prelates were bounden to suffer them so to have it; His highness hath therefore semblably there upon consulted with the said primates and virtuous, discrete, and well learned personages in divinity foresaid, and by them all it is thought, that it is not necessary, the said scripture to be in the English tongue, and in the hands of the common people; but that the distribution of the said scripture, and their permitting or denying thereof, dependeth only upon the discretion of the superiors, as they shall think it convenient. And that having respect to the malignity of this present time, with the inclination of the people to erroneous opinions, the translation of the New Testament and the Old into the vulgar tongue of English, should rather be the occasion of continuance or increase of errors among the said people, than any benefit or commodity toward the weal of their souls. And that it shall now be more convenient that the same people have the holy scripture expounded to them, by preachers in their sermons, according as it hath been of old time accustomed before this time."

The Cranmer Bible

In 1537 appeared a folio which in the title affirmed that the translation into English was by Thomas Matthew. The translator's name is now recognized as John Rogers, an associate of Tyndale. This translation was "set forth with the King's most gracious license." Later editions (1540 and 1541) contained a preface by Archbishop Cranmer and are known as *The Cranmer Bible*. Rogers did not know Hebrew and was dependent upon earlier translations. It is said that two-thirds of the Rogers Bible was from Tyndale and one-third from Coverdale. On the title page of the later versions appears for the first time, the words "This is the Bible appointed to the use of churches."

The Great Bible

Coverdale had a major part in a new revision of the Matthew Bible which was called *The Great*

Bible. The pages measured 9x15 inches and the text was 8½x13 inches. It was commanded in 1538 that a copy of the English Bible be set up in every parish church, and this Bible was generally secured for carrying out this order. But because another more accurate version soon appeared *The Great Bible* was not reprinted after 1569. Rogers himself suffered martyrdom in 1555. "It is Rogers' Bible which became the foundation of all later English authorized versions, and it is through Rogers' republication that Tyndale's 1535 version of the New Testament had its great influence upon subsequent versions," notes L.A. Weigle.

In 1546 King Henry VIII issued an order that "no man or woman of what estate, condition, or degree [was] to receive, have, take, or keep Tyndale's or Coverdale's New Testament." And yet *The Great Bible*, for the most part made up of the translations of Tyndale and Coverdale, was given royal approval and commanded to be placed in every church.

The Geneva Bible

The most accurate version until the Authorized Version of 1611 was *The Geneva Bible*. During the reign of Queen Mary (1553–1558), no Bible was printed in England, but a group of scholars in Geneva produced an English version called *The Geneva Bible* in 1560, with a second edition in 1652. The New Testament was edited by William Whittingham, who was married to Calvin's sister. Calvin wrote an introductory epistle. For the first time marginal notations called attention to variations in the Greek manuscripts. This was the first English version to use numbered verses as separate paragraphs. This was the Bible used by Shakespeare, John Bunyan, Oliver Cromwell, and so fervently used by the Puritans. Designated as "the people's book," it held a preeminent place among English versions for seventy-five years. This was the Bible brought over on the Mayflower. From 1560 to 1644, one hundred forty editions of *The Geneva Bible* appeared. The first Bible to be printed in Scotland was a Scottish edition of *The Geneva Bible* in 1579. The verse divisions of Robert Estienne, originally employed in his Greek New Testament in 1551, were used. This was the first Bible to be printed in Roman type instead of the old Black Letter.

The Bishops' Bible

The popularity of *The Geneva Bible* persuaded the Anglican authorities, after the accession of Queen Elizabeth to the throne in 1558, to produce a Bible which could bear the authority of the Church of England. This task was proposed by Archbishop Parker, who appointed a committee to begin the work. They were to use *The Great Bible* as their basis and were to compare it with the Greek and Hebrew texts. The scholarship of

these Bishops was not equal to that of the group that had produced *The Geneva Bible*. The finished work was called *The Bishops' Bible*. Nineteen editions were printed from 1568–1606. It was endorsed by Convocation in 1571. In the 1572 edition, Parker published in parallel columns the Psalter of *The Great Bible* and the Psalter of *The Bishop's Bible*. There are fewer difference between *The Bishops' Bible* and the *King James Version* than any other preceding translation.

The Rheims Bible and the Douay Bible

The last two Bibles to be considered, before the *King James Version*, are those known as *The Rheims Bible* and *The Douay Bible*, both Roman Catholic.

The New Testament was published as early as 1582 by the English College, then located at Rheims, and was thus known as *The Rheims New Testament*. The Old Testament, for the most part the work of Gregory Martin, a translation of the Latin Vulgate, was published in 1609, when the English College had returned to Douay and hence the name *The Douay Bible*. The poorest part of this version is acknowledged to be the Psalter, which has been rightly characterized as "a translation of a translation of a translation." There is, of course, a heavy emphasis in this version on ecclesiastical terms. Repentance is here translated *penance*. Here we have such unfamiliar words as *exinanited*, *donances*, and *commersation*. Instead of *shewbread*, this version reads "proposition of loaves." *Deacon* is translated *minister*, and *elder* is translated *priest*. Ephesians 3:9 is made to read, "the dispensation of the sacrament." (See Eph. 3:9: "to make all *people* see what is the fellowship of the mystery.") The New Testament part of this Bible was extensively used by the King James revisers, but the Old Testament was published too late for any such influence.

The King James Version

It is now time to turn to a consideration of the most important English version of the Bible ever to be produced, called sometimes the *Authorized Version* and sometimes the *King James Version* (hereafter we shall refer to it with the initials KJV). In the summer of 1603, when King James was on his way to London to receive the English crown, he was presented with a petition of grievances by the clergy of Puritan convictions, which led the King to call a conference "for hearing and for the determining of things pretended to be amiss in the church." This conference was convened for three days, January 14–16, 1604, and was known as the Hampton Court Conference. During this conference Dr. John Reynolds, the leader of the Puritan party and president of Cor-

pus Christi College, Oxford, made the motion that a new translation of the Bible be undertaken. Although the majority present were against the motion, it appealed to the King, and he ordered that such a translation be undertaken. Fifty-four of the greatest biblical scholars in Great Britain were brought together for this great task and divided into six groups—three to work on a translation of the Old Testament and three on the New Testament. Two groups for the Old and New Testaments were to meet at Oxford, two at Cambridge, and two at Westminster. A recent writer has so well summarized the varied learning of this group that we take the liberty of quoting H. Wheeler Robinson: “The Oxford group was headed by Dr. John Hardinge, Regius Professor of Hebrew, and included Dr. John Reynolds, the originator of the project, whose ‘memory and reading were near to a miracle’; Dr. Miles Smith, who ‘had Hebrew at his fingers’ ends’; Dr. Richard Brett, ‘skilled and versed to a criticism in the Latin, Greek, Chaldee, Arabic, and Ethiopic tongues’; Sir Henry Saville, editor of the works of Chrysostom; and Dr. John Harmer, Professor of Greek, ‘a most noted Latinist, Grecian, and divine.’ The Cambridge committee was at first led by Edward Lively, Regius Professor of Hebrew, who died in 1605 before the work was really begun, and included Dr. Lawrence Chaderton, ‘familiar with the Greek and Hebrew tongues and the numerous writings of the Rabbis’; Thomas Harrison, ‘noted for his exquisite skill in Hebrew and Greek idioms’; Dr. Robert Spalding, successor to Lively as Professor of Hebrew; Andrew Downes, ‘one composed of Greek and industry’; and John Bois, ‘a precious Greek and Hebrew scholar.’ The Westminster group was headed by Lancelot Andrews, Dean of Westminster, afterwards Bishop of Chichester, of Ely, and finally of Winchester, ‘who might have been interpreter general at Babel’ . . . ; and included the Hebraist Hadrian Saravia; and William Bedwell, the greatest living Arabic scholar.” Since there was a lapse of two or three years between the naming of these committees and the beginning of their labors, the work was begun in 1607 and completed in 1610. The Bible appeared the following year.

Fifteen rules were to bind this large number of revisers. The first reads as follows: “The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called *The Bishop’s Bible*, to be followed, and as little altered as the Truth of the original will permit.” The fourteenth rule was more comprehensive, reading as follows: “These translations to be used when they agree better with the Text than the Bishops Rule—Tindoll’s, Matthews, Coverdales, Whitchurch’s, Geneva.” In the Preface to the Reader which appeared in this version, the translators stated that they did not hesitate “to consult the Translators or Commentators, *Chaldee,*

Hebrew, Syrian, Greeke, or Latine, no nor the Spanish, French, Italian, or Dutch.”

The new version bore the following title: “The Holy Bible, Conteyning the Old Testament and the New; Newly Translated out of the Originall tongues, with the former Translations diligently compared and revised, by His Majesties speciall commandement. Appointed to be read in Churches. Imprinted at London by Robert Barker, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Majestie. Anno Dom. 1611.” The New Testament title was slightly different: “The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Newly translated out of the Originall Greeke; and with the former Translations diligently compared and revised, by His Majesties speciall Commandement. Imprinted at London by Robert Barker, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Majestie. Anno Dom. 1611. cum Privilegio.” While this version is called the *Authorized Version*, no act of Parliament was ever passed approving it. King James vigorously promoted such an undertaking, but there was no subsequent official act. The first printing of this Bible was a folio 16x10½ inches. Three editions quickly followed, carrying a considerable number of misprints and variations in spelling. We must ask at this point how much of the KJV was dependent upon earlier versions? It has been said that four percent of the vocabulary goes back to the days of Wycliffe, eighteen percent came from Tyndale, thirteen percent from Coverdale, nineteen percent from the Geneva Bible, four percent from the Bishops’ Bible, and three percent from all other preceding versions. Thirty-nine percent of the vocabulary of the KJV is unique. Almost nine-tenths of the New Testament portion of this version can be found word for word in the Tyndale version of 1525. All controversial notes were excluded, but there were over four thousand marginal notes, giving the literal meaning of Hebrew words, and 765 in the New Testament, indicating variant or alternative renderings. The chapter summaries and page headings were new, and some of these chapter headings are indications of current theology and then prevalent principles of biblical interpretation. The Old Testament rested upon the same Masoretic Hebrew text as all subsequent versions, but since no ancient manuscripts of the Greek New Testament arrived in England until 1628, those responsible for this greatest of all versions did not have the advantage of the best Greek text.

During subsequent decades the spelling of the KJV has been modernized, misprints have been corrected, the larger chapter summaries have been abbreviated, and the references in the margin have been examined. Chronological dates were introduced into the margin of the KJV in 1701, based on the chronology of Archbishop Ussher. As early as 1613, the text showed over 300

differences from the original of 1611. Thirty thousand new marginal references were added in versions appearing in the 1760s.

Soon the KJV crowded out all preceding translations except for students interested in specific variations and the development of the English language. For the first time, England was reading one Bible at home and hearing the same Bible read in church. "It thus became bound up with the life of the nation. Since it stilled all controversy over the best rendering, it gradually came to be accepted as so far absolute that in the minds of myriads there was no distinction between this version and the original texts, and they may almost be said to have believed in the literal inspiration of the very words which composed it," wrote Albert S. Cook. The beauty of the KJV, as well as its enormous influence cannot easily be exaggerated. The translators of the *Revised Version*, nearly three centuries later, declared: "We have had to study this great Version carefully and minutely, line by line; and the longer we have been engaged upon it the more we have learned to admire its simplicity, its dignity, its power, its happy turns of expression, its general accuracy, and, we must not fail to add, the music of its cadences, and the felicities of its rhythm." Even the non-Christian, Thomas Huxley, offered the following glowing tribute to this version of the Scriptures: "Consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is as familiar to noble and simple, from John-o'-Groat's House to Land's End, as Dante and Tasso once were to the Italians; that it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of pure literary form; and, finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest civilizations of the world."

The English Revised Version

It is not necessary to discuss the translations of secondary importance offered during the next three centuries. A number of changes had occurred in the use of the English language, and a great deal of new material was available for ascertaining the Greek text of the New Testament, and much more was known about the Hebrew language. Consequently, on February 10, 1870, Bishop Wilberforce submitted the following resolution to the Upper House of Convocation of the Province of Canterbury: "That a Committee of both Houses to be appointed, with power to confer with any Committee that may be appointed by the Convocation of the Northern Province, to report upon the desirableness of a revision of the

Authorized Version of the New Testament, whether by marginal notes or otherwise, in all those passages where plain and clear errors, whether in the Hebrew or Greek text originally adopted by the translators, or in the translation made from the same, shall, on due investigation, be found to exist." In May of the same year, a committee made five suggestions: "1. That it is desirable that a revision of the Authorized Version of the Holy Scriptures be undertaken. 2. That the revision be so conducted as to comprise both marginal renderings and such emendations as it may be found necessary to insert in the text of the Authorized Version. 3. That in the above resolutions we do not contemplate any new translation of the Bible, or any alteration of the language, except when in the judgment of the most competent scholars such change is necessary. 4. That in such necessary changes, the style of the language employed in the existing version be closely followed. 5. That it is desirable that Convocation should nominate a body of its own members to undertake the work of revision, who shall be at liberty to invite the co-operation of any eminent for scholarship, to whatever nation or religious body they may belong."

Many of the finest biblical scholars in Britain were engaged to translate the Old and New Testaments—fifty-four of them. The first general principle was "to introduce as few alterations as possible into the text of the Authorized Version consistently with faithfulness." The fifth, seventh, and eighth principles were: "5. To make or retain no change in the Text on the second final revision by each Company, except *two-thirds* of those present approve of the same, but on the first revision to decide by simple majorities. 7. To revise the headings of chapters, pages, paragraphs, italics, and punctuation. 8. To refer, on the part of each Company, when considered desirable, to Divines, Scholars, and Literary Men, whether at home or abroad, for their opinions."

The New Testament was issued in May, 1881, and the Old Testament in May, 1885. Two famous Greek scholars, B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, generally influenced the adoption of what they called the "neutral text." A number of passages were taken out of the text and placed in the margin as not appearing in the earlier Greek texts, for example, John 5:3, 4; First John 5:6, 7; and John 8:1–9. Where parallel passages appeared in two or more books with identical wording in the original, the translations also were made identical. There were many criticisms of the *Revised Version*, and yet many agree with the statement of Professor F. F. Bruce that "the *Revised Version* with these marginal references is still the most useful edition of the Bible for the careful student who knows no language but English." The Old Testament is especially recognized as being a

great improvement for accuracy's sake over the KJV.

The American Standard Revised Version

It was hoped that the English and American Committees could be responsible for a single revised version, but so many differences arose that after some years the American Company asked to be released from further cooperation. They would publish their own Revised Version, promising not to do so for fourteen years. In 1897, Thomas Nelson and Sons entered into an agreement with the American Company to meet the necessary expenses for the preparation of an American revision. Once again they went to work, minutely going over the entire text. Twenty-nine years later, on August 26, 1901, the *American Standard Revised Version* of the Bible was placed on sale and was at once recognized as superior in many ways to the English revision.

Other Versions

One of the more important nineteenth-century translations of the Bible was by the famous compiler of *Young's Concordance*, the British biblical scholar, Robert Young. He published at Edinburgh, as early as 1862, his *Literal Translation of the Bible*, permeated with Young's deep conviction that "every word of the original is God-breathed as the Apostle Paul says in his Second Epistle to Timothy, chapter 3:16." A third edition was issued in 1898.

The outstanding scholar among the Plymouth Brethren in their earlier days was J. N. Darby, who had immense linguistic ability and issued a translation of the Bible, first in French, then in Dutch and German, and then in English. Darby wrote in the preface to his New Testament translation, "Being profoundly convinced of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, we have tried in this translation to reproduce as exactly as possible what God has given us in another language. . . ."

Coming into the twentieth century, the first new translation that need be mentioned is *The Twentieth Century New Testament*, the publication of which extended from 1898 to 1901, a careful retranslation based upon the Westcott and Hort text. Great care was taken to weigh every word in the Greek and to translate identical passages verbatim. Dr. E. H. Robertson, in his survey of the more recent versions, says, "There seems to me to be little doubt that this is one of the most careful translations ever undertaken," and reports that the result of a Bible study group which he led for some years was that here appeared "the most faithful rendering of the Greek in nearly every difficult passage we encountered."

The two most widely used translations of the New Testament, until the appearance of the RSV,

were those produced by Dr. Weymouth and Dr. Moffatt. Dr. Weymouth's *New Testament in Modern Speech* first appeared in 1902, with brief introductions prefixed to each book and a considerable number of explanatory footnotes. It was frequently revised during his life and for some years after, the later revisions being increasingly liberal in theological tendency.

The New Testament: A New Translation is by Dr. James Moffatt, one of the most distinguished New Testament scholars of the earlier part of our century. This first appeared in 1913. The Old Testament followed in 1924 and the entire Bible, with a final revision, was published in 1935. His work in the Old Testament is generally recognized as being of much less value than his work in the New Testament. Even here Moffatt justly antagonized many Christians by the liberties he took with some texts. For example, the phrase occurring at the opening of John's Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God," Moffatt translates the last phrase "and the Word was divine." So also in translating the genealogy in the first chapter of Matthew in the Moffatt version, it reads: "Jacob, the father of Joseph, and Joseph (to whom the virgin Mary was betrothed), the father of Jesus who is called Christ," a translation based on a late and unauthoritative Greek manuscript and contradicted by all the most ancient texts. As an illustration, however, of some of the more revealing passages in Moffatt, we might consider four verses from Second Corinthians: "I live for God as the fragrance of Christ breathed alike on those who are being saved and on those who are perishing, to the one a deadly fragrance that makes for death, to the other a vital fragrance that makes for life" (2 Cor. 2:15, 16); "Hence I never lose heart" (4:16); and "he will increase the crop of your charities—you will be enriched on all hands, so that you can be generous on all occasions, and your generosity, of which I am the agent, will make men give thanks to God" (9:11).

The last four translators we have considered were all from Great Britain. It is time now that an American version should appear, and it did, produced by scholars at the University of Chicago. In 1923 Dr. Edgar J. Goodspeed published his *The New Testament: An American Translation*, based on the Westcott and Hort text. In 1935, assisted by colleagues, a new translation of the entire Bible appeared with the simple title *The Bible: An American Translation*. It was widely used for the first twenty years after its first appearance, although it was never quoted with the same frequency as Moffatt's.

The Revised Standard Version

In 1937, the International Council of Religious Education, in which some forty of the larger de-

nominations in North America were associated, authorized the preparation and publication of a complete new revision, which was carried through by some thirty-two different American scholars. *The New Testament Revised Version* was published in 1946 and the entire Bible in 1952. No version produced in our country has ever aroused so much antagonism, some justified and some unjustified. A number of archaisms have been removed, necessary emendations, due to a better knowledge of the meanings of the original text, have been made. Thus, for example, Deuteronomy 32:8, which in the earlier translations stated that God had fixed the bounds of the people "according to the number of the children of Israel," now reads "according to the number of the sons of God," which is supported by the Septuagint and the Samaritan Bible and now by a fragment of the Hebrew manuscript found at Qumran.

One most commendable virtue of this version is that it returns to the familiar words of the King James translation of Second Timothy 3:16, from which the Revised Version had departed, the new version reading "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable."

A second edition of the *Revised Standard Version* was published in 1971, popularly known as RSV II. This edition includes considerable revision of the New Testament.

The Holy Scripture According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation, and The Torah

In 1914, the Jewish Publication Society of America published a volume entitled *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation* (exclusively of the Old Testament), which has not exercised extensive influence outside Jewish circles. In 1962, the same organization published a new translation of the Pentateuch with the simple title, *The Torah*; in 1978 the second section was published, *The Prophets*; and in 1982 the final portion was published, *The Writings*. This work has been very carefully done, the result of the finest Hebrew scholarship available. But there seems to be a deliberate attempt here to make the Messianic predictions of the Pentateuch void of any Messianic meaning, as for example, Genesis 3:15 which here reads: "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; they shall strike at your head and you shall strike at their heel." All other modern translations read "his heel." The modern gentile reader would certainly not get much out of the translation of Exodus 3:14, which here reads: "And God said to Moses, 'Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh.'" There are a number of footnotes indicating that the exact meaning of some Hebrew words is not known today, as for

example, the twelve stones of Exodus 28:17-20, the creatures mentioned in Deuteronomy 14:5, 6, and the diseases of Deuteronomy 28:22.

The Amplified Bible

The Amplified Bible (1954) is a literal translation with multiple expressions using associated words to convey the original thought. The New Testament uses the Greek text of Westcott and Hort plus 27 translations and revisions. The Old Testament is similarly extensive. The version is intended to supplement other translations authentically, concisely, and in convenient form.

Good News for Modern Man

Good News for Modern Man (*Today's English Version*) is a translation of the New Testament by Dr. Robert G. Bratcher (and a distinguished review committee) published in 1966. This work gained enormous popularity in a short period of time. It was intended to communicate the Scriptures to the masses of English-speaking people around the world and has been used as an instrument of evangelism for people outside the church.

The Jerusalem Bible

The Jerusalem Bible (1966) is a translation from the Hebrew Masoretic, Greek Septuagint, Dead Sea Scrolls, and accepted Greek and Aramaic New Testament texts—all compared with the French Version. It was produced by 28 principal collaborators in translation and literary revision under Alexander Jones, general editor.

New American Bible

The New American Bible (1970) is a Roman Catholic translation that is a highlight of Bible publishing in the present century. All basic texts were consulted, and the work was twenty-six years in the making. Over fifty recognized biblical scholars, the majority of them college professors, labored to produce this outstanding version. Scholars were Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish. The purpose was to produce a more accurate translation from the older manuscripts, and this was made possible by the Pope in 1943. Prior to this version, Catholics had been required to use the Latin Vulgate as the basis for translation.

The Living Bible

A very popular paraphrase, *The Living Bible* (Complete Bible, 1971), is the work of a single translator, Kenneth L. Taylor. The initial source was the *American Standard Version* of 1901, but Dr. Taylor and the Greek and Hebrew specialists he consulted also used the most respected texts available.

New American Standard Bible

The New American Standard Bible was translated by an Editorial Board of fifty-four Greek and

Hebrew scholars and required nearly eleven years to complete. The producers of this translation believed that interest in the *American Standard Version* of 1901 should be renewed and increased. Recognizing the values of the ASV, the Lockman Foundation, sponsor of the project, felt an urgency to update that version by incorporating recent discoveries of Hebrew and Greek textual sources and by rendering the ASV into more current English. The editorial board has continued to function since publication of the complete Bible in 1971. Minor revisions and refinements have been inserted in more recent editions.

New International Version

The *New International Version* began with work by committees from the Christian Reformed Church and the National Association of Evangelicals. In 1967 the New York Bible Society undertook the financial sponsorship of the translation. The translation is done from the Masoretic Text in the Old Testament and an eclectic Greek text in the New Testament. This modern English version was published as a complete Bible in 1978.

New King James Version

In 1975 Thomas Nelson Publishers began the fifth revision of the *King James Version*. Over one

hundred scholars worked on the translation of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Old Testament) and the Scrivener Greek Text (New Testament) into modern English using the 1611 and 1769 editions of the *King James Version* as standards. For a more complete discussion of the *New King James Version* see the "Foreword" in this Bible.

Other Major Versions Since 1950

The Holy Bible from Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (1957) was intended to convey ancient biblical customs preserved only in the Aramaic texts and to reveal the deeper biblical meanings often hidden in idioms and parables.

The Berkeley Version in Modern English (1959) translates every word using modern terms.

The New English Bible (Complete Bible, 1970) required twenty-four years to complete and enlisted the labors of fifty recognized biblical scholars. It is based on the original Greek and Hebrew texts.

J. B. Phillips, an English vicar, translated the New Testament into modern speech, beginning with *Letters to Young Churches* in 1947, followed by *The Gospels* in 1952, *The Young Church in Action* in 1955, the *Book of Revelation* in 1957, and in 1958 the one-volume edition of his completed translation of the New Testament, *The New Testament in Modern Speech. Four Prophets* appeared in 1963.