

THE OUTLINE OF THE REFORMATION

PREFACE.

Presented here in a few pages is an outline of the history of the Reformation. It has been sought to give in this outline a smooth narrative, unbroken by topic-heads, so that it may be read continuously as an interesting story. The aim has been to supply a short work accurate in all its statements, calling attention to great events and great leaders, and at the same time in a style that may be interesting and attractive.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I

The Fall of Constantinople in 1453 -- THE BEGINNINGS OF RELIGIOUS REFORM

Chapter II

THE REFORMED CHURCH 1453-1648 -- PART One, ANTECEDENT FORCES
THE REFORMATION IN GERMANY

Chapter III

THE REFORMED CHURCH 1453-1648 -- PART Two, THE REFORMATION IN
OTHER LANDS
PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMATION

Chapter IV

THE REFORMED CHURCH 1453-1648 -- PART Three, THE COUNTER-
REFORMATION

Chapter V

THE REFORMED CHURCH 1603-1648 -- THE END OF THE REFORMATION
AND THE TRANSLATION OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE

Chapter I

THE BEGINNINGS OF RELIGIOUS REFORM -- The Fall of Constantinople in 1453

During the end period of the dark ages and the medieval Roman Catholic church rays of light bringing biblical truth foretelling the coming Reformation church age began to shine. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 has been deemed by historians as the dividing point between the end of the medieval age and the start of modern times. The Greek Empire never recovered from the conquest of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204; but the strong defenses, which were natural as well as man-made, long protected the city against the Turks, who succeeded the Arabians as the leading Mohammedan power. Province after province of the great empire was cut away, until only the solitary city of Constantinople was left. In 1453, Constantinople finally fell to the Turks under Mohammed the Second. In only one day the church of St. Sophia was transformed into a mosque, and Constantinople, for eleven hundred years the capital of the Roman Empire, became as it has remained until today, the city of the Sultans, and the capital of the Turkish Empire. The Greek Church continues with its patriarch residing in Constantinople, but in complete submission to Moslem authority. The fall of Constantinople dates the ending period of the Medieval Church.

Five great movements for reform in the church arose from the darkness into the light; but the world ruling powers were not ready for this light of truth, and these great movements for reform and biblical truth were repressed with bloody persecution by the Roman Catholic church.

The Albigenses or Cathari, also known as "puritans," grew up to prominence in southern France in about 1170. They repudiated the authority of man-made, non-biblical traditions and opposed the Romish doctrines of purgatory, image-worship, and priestly claims by copying the New Testament and placing the Word of God into local circulation. Pope Innocent III, in 1208, called for a "crusade" against them, and the sect, which were labeled as heretics, were attacked in force resulting in the slaughter of almost the entire population of the region.

The "Vaudois" or "Waldensians" had their own Bible translations that stretched from about 157 to the 1400s AD and also distributed the scriptures abroad. The Waldensian people were a regular topic in the Catholic Councils held at the Lateran Church in Rome; it was here that

papal bulls were hurled against them and crusades organised to "wipe them from the face of the earth." These early people of the true faith upheld the torch of Biblical Truth for centuries. Their emblem was, and still is today, a lighted candlestick with this motto, "Lux Lucet in Tenebris" (The light shines in darkness").

While the Catholic church forced converts to follow the unscriptural teachings of the popes of the day, the faithful of God were forced by persecution to withdraw themselves to these mountain retreats. Waldensian believers were dispersed throughout Italy, France, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Hungary, Poland and Bohemia, they were also in contact with similar groups in England and Holland. Their principal centre was at Milan. Later, after persecution increased, their centre was in the Alpine valleys.

In 1544 the treacherous and heartless Catholic leader, d'Oppede, caused the terrible butchery of thousands of Waldenses. At Cabrieres he wrote a note to the people, saying that if they would open the gates of their city he would do them no harm. They, in good faith, opened the gates and d'Oppede cried out: "Kill them all" Men, women and children were massacred or burned alive. In 1655 there was another massacre of Waldenses. After the Catholic leaders had made several vain attempts to break into the fastnesses of the mountains where the Waldenses lived, and were defeated, the Marquis of Pianesse wrote the various Waldensian towns to entertain certain regiments of soldiers to show their good faith. These Christian people, who always had such sacred regard for their own word, never seemed to learn that it is a fundamental Catholic doctrine that Catholics need not, and should not, keep faith with heretics when the interest of the church is at stake. After they had sheltered the soldiers, and fed them of their scanty store, a signal was given at 4 a.m., April 24, 1655, and the butchery began. "Little children, Leger says, were torn from their mothers, dashed against the rocks, and cast carelessly away. The sick or the aged, both men and women, were either burned in their houses, or hacked in pieces; or mutilated, half murdered, and flayed alive.

The massacre of 1655 aroused most of Europe in sympathy with the Waldenses after in the dead of Alpine winter the massacre of "Bloody Easter" began. The Duke of Savoy on January 25, 1655, published an edict commanding all Waldenses to become Catholics. On April 17th 15,000 troops marched on the Waldenses hiding in their strongholds.

A wave of protest swept over Europe. Switzerland, Sweden, Germany, England and Holland sent offerings to help the survivors. The British

Government sent Sir Samuel Morland to interpose. Morland addressed the Duke of Savoy in a powerful plea which included these words: "The Angels are surprised with horror! men are amazed! Heaven itself seems to be astonished with the cries of dying men, and the very earth to blush, being discoloured with the gore - blood of so many innocent persons! Do not, O thou most high God, do not thou take that revenge which is due to so great wickedness and horrible villanies! Let thy blood, O Christ, wash away this blood!" At Turin in June, and Geneva in July, Morland continued his appeals until the edict was withdrawn in August, 1655.

In 1686 another terrible edict was issued against them from the Lateran Church in Rome. It was the same story of treachery. Gabriel of Savoy himself wrote them: "Do not hesitate to lay down your arms; and be assured that if you cast yourselves upon the clemency of his royal highness, he will pardon you, and that neither your persons nor those of your wives or children shall be touched. The Waldenses accepted the official document in good faith and opened their fortifications. Priests and soldiers rushed in and butchered men, women and children in cold blood and left the towns of the valleys smouldering ruins. The historian Wylie says: "The school of the prophets in the Pra del Tor is razed. No smoke is seen rising from cottage, and no psalm is heard ascending from dwelling or sanctuary, . . . and no troop of worshipers, obedient to the summons of the Sabbath bell, climbs the mountain paths.

According to Theodore Beza, the Waldenses received the Scriptures from missionaries of Antioch of Syria in the 120s AD and finished translating it into their Latin language by 157 AD which is known as the "old Latin". This "Old Latin Vulgate" was used by the Christians in the churches of the Waldenses, the Gauls, the Celts, the Albigenses, and other fundamental religious groups throughout Europe. This Latin version was so used and cherished by early reformed Christians that it was championed by the common people and assumed the term "Vulgate" as a name. Vulgate comes from "vulgar" which is the Latin word for "common". This Bible was passed down from generation to generation, until the Reformation of the 1500s when the Protestants translated the Vaudois Bible into French and Italian. John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards believed, as most of the Reformers, that the Vaudois were the descendants of the first early Christians, and that they preserved the Word of God along with the true Christian faith for us today.

John Wesley has this to say about the Vaudois or Waldenses: "It is a vulgar mistake, that the Waldenses were so called from Peter Waldo of Lyons. They were much more ancient than him; and their true name was Vallenses or Vaudois from their inhabiting the valleys of Lucerne and

Agrogne. The name of Vaudois was changed by the Papists about the year 1160 into Waldenses on purpose to falsely represent this group of ancient christians as a modern group led by a man named Peter Waldo." An important fact cited by Jonathan Edwards reads: "Some of the popish writers themselves own, that this people never submitted to the church of Rome. One of the popish writers, speaking of the Waldenses, says, The heresy of the Waldenses is the oldest heresy in the world. It is supposed that they first betook themselves to this place among the mountains, to hide themselves from the severity of the heathen persecutions which existed before Constantine the Great. The Reformation itself owes a lot to these Christians in the French Alps."

Peter Waldo in 1169, a merchant of Lyons, read, explained, preached and circulated the Scriptures, to which he appealed against the usages and doctrines of the Roman Catholics. He established an order of evangelists, "The Poor Men of Lyons", who went through central and southern France, gaining followers. They were bitterly persecuted; and driven out of France while finding hiding places in the valleys of northern Italy. In the face of centuries of persecution the Vaudois have endured, and now constitute one of the leading Protestant churches of Italy.

The Old Latin Vulgate of the Vaudois must not be confused with Jerome's Catholic Vulgate, which was produced over 220 years later in AD 380 and rejected by the early Christians as being a corrupt translation that changed the Word of God to match their own false beliefs.

Damasus who was the Bishop of Rome at around AD 380 persuaded Jerome, who was a well known textual scholar of the time, to revise the New Testament. The corrupt translation was completed in AD 402. This Catholic translation was also called the Vulgate.

This "New" Vulgate became the Bible of the Western or Roman Church. It was not officially ratified until AD 1546 at the Council of Trent but it had long been the standard version of the Scriptures used in the Roman Catholic Church. Jerome wanted to exclude the Apocrypha but Pope Damasus insisted that it be included while even the Jewish scholars considered these extra books as being non-canonical. Jerome relented and placed the Apocrypha between the Old and New Testaments. Jerome also made some crucial errors in translating key New Testament words, especially the word to justify. In its New Testament usage, this word always means "to declare righteous" (a change of legal status). However, Jerome translated it as a word that means "to make righteous" (a change of moral fitness). This change attempted to validate the official teaching

or doctrine of justification by the Roman Catholic Church which is that God justifies a person by making them righteous. This change in the Word of God had tremendous implications as to how one becomes a saved child of God.

To put things in perspective; living in fourteenth century England, imagine that you would most likely exist as a peasant who earns a meager living, possibly a farmer who toils to bring in an adequate harvest for the landowner. Like everyone else, you consider yourself a Christian, yet you struggle to understand God without the benefit of reading the Word of God in your own tongue and had to rely on the ramblings of your local priest. In the middle of this century, in 1348, the Bubonic Plague known as the "Black Death" hits England, and at least one out of four of your family and village were dead within a few months. Your grief for the death and suffering and the stress of the situation is compounded by uncertainty over the eternal destiny of your deceased loved ones while you also doubt your own destiny. Your fear of purgatory taught by the local priest drives your devotion. You find little comfort in the church; instead, your already thin pocketbook is relieved of its meager possessions by the sale of indulgences. The church only seems to be interested in your money and your confession. You long for a better life. Meanwhile, the Papacy is in major crisis: the Popes for nearly three-fourths of the century were exiled to Avignon, France in what was known as the "Babylonian Captivity" of the church in that time. How could the English respect and obey a Pope who lived in France which was England's mortal enemy? To make matters worse, the Church in England was also in disarray. The finest government appointments were often given to the clergy and completely bypassed the nobles. This caused resentment in the nobles who wanted these posts for themselves. So much seemed wrong and contrary to the teachings of Christ! And yet, if you even dared to speak to the local priest about finding God's truth in the Bible, you would be rebuffed for asking such a question! Besides that, he simply would not know the answer as he only read the Bible in Latin, and only those portions that were important for the liturgy. Life in 14th century England, physically, socially, financially, and spiritually looked pretty bleak.

Into this climate entered John Wycliffe (c1330–1384) 14th-century England's outstanding biblical scholar. An Oxford professor and theologian by profession, he was called in to advise parliament in its negotiations with Rome. Remember, this was a world in which the church was all-powerful, and the more contact Wycliffe had with Rome, the more indignant he became. The papacy, he believed, reeked of corruption and self-interest and was determined to do something about it.

Wycliffe had come to regard the Word of God as recorded in the scriptures as the only reliable guide one must follow rather than the traditions of mere men. Wycliffe maintained that all Christians should rely only on the Bible rather than on the teachings of popes and clerics. He also said that there was no scriptural justification for the papacy.

Wycliffe began publishing pamphlets arguing that, rather than pursuing wealth and power, the Catholic church should have the poor at heart. In one tract he described the Pope as “the anti-Christ, the proud, worldly priest of Rome, and the most cursed of clippers and cut-purses”. He attacked the mendicant friars, and the system of monasticism; rejected and opposed the authority of the pope in England; wrote against the false doctrine of transubstantiation which taught that in the Catholic mass the bread and wine are magically transformed into the physical body and blood of Christ. He said the Bible taught that the bread and wine was a spiritual remembrance and symbol of Christ's sacrifice. He urged that the church service be made more simple, according to the New Testament writings. In other lands he would have suffered martyrdom, but in England he was protected by the most powerful among the nobles.

In 1377 the Bishop of London demanded that Wycliffe appear before his court to explain the “wonderful things which had streamed forth from his mouth”. The hearing was a farce. It began with a heated disagreement from the “powers that be” over whether or not Wycliffe should sit down. John of Gaunt, the king’s son and an ally of Wycliffe, insisted that the accused remain seated; the bishop demanded that he stand. When the Pope heard of the fiasco he issued a papal bull [an official papal letter or document] in which he accused Wycliffe of “vomiting out of the filthy dungeon of his heart most wicked and damnable heresies”. Wycliffe was accused of heresy and put under house arrest and was later forced to retire from his position as Master of Balliol College, Oxford. Wycliffe firmly believed that the Word of God should be available to everybody. He saw literacy as the key to the emancipation of the poor. Although parts of the Bible had previously been translated into English there was still no complete work. Ordinary people, who neither spoke Latin nor were able to read, could only learn from the Catholic clergy. Much of what the people were taught – man-made ideas like the granting of indulgences for profit and purgatory – were not even part of Holy Scripture.

Over a period of 13 years from about 1382 to 1395 AD, in various stages, the first hand-written English language Bible manuscripts were written by John Wycliffe and his followers. His followers, known as Lollards, were poor Oxford scholars who preached the Word. They had a

great impact on the common people, largely because they counted their own lives as nothing for the cause of Christ. In the two decades after Wycliffe's death, many Lollards were burned at the stake by the Catholic authorities, some even with their Bibles hanging from their necks as recorded in Foxe's Book of Martyrs. On December 28 1384, Wycliffe suffered a stroke and died, he was 64 years old. Wycliffe's preaching and his Bible translation in english prepared the way for the Reformation. After his death, the Catholic monks left no stone unturned in their search for the original copies of Wycliffe's English translation. Any copies found were promptly burned.

In 1391, before the Bible was completed, a bill was placed before parliament to outlaw the Wycliffe English Bible or parts thereof and to imprison anyone in possession of this contiband. The bill failed to pass in parliament thanks to the admonishments of this bill by John of Gaunt. The Wycliffe Bible was the first Bible in English and the first complete Bible in any modern European language. It indirectly began to break down the power structures of the political-religious machinery of the Roman Catholic church. Lay folks did not need to rely on the priests to access the Word of God. And they could know His will and even challenge the spiritual leaders of the day. People who owned a copy were risking their liberty and life. Meanwhile, there were encouraging signs in the rest of Europe. Italian, French, Spanish, and Dutch Bibles appeared in the 1400s, most likely inspired by Wycliffe's pioneering efforts.

John Huss, in Bohemia (born 1369, martyred 1415) was a reader of Wycliffe's writings, and preached his doctrines, especially proclaiming freedom from papal authority. He was made rector of the University of Prague, and for a time held a commanding influence throughout Bohemia. The pope excommunicated him, and laid the city of Prague under an interdict while he remained there. Huss retired, but from a secret location sent forth letters reaffirming his views. After two years he consented to go before the Council of the Roman Catholic Church at Constance, in Baden on the border of Switzerland, having received a safe conduct from the Emperor Sigismund. But the promise of "safe conduct" was violated by the Catholic Church, upon their often used principle that "faith was not to be kept with heretics".

John Huss's trial, which took place in the city of Constance, has gone down as one of the most spectacular farces in history. It was more like a carnival than a trial – nearly every dignitary in Europe was there. One archbishop arrived with 600 horses while 700 prostitutes offered their services and 500 people drowned in the lake with the Pope falling off his carriage into a snowdrift. Huss's eventual conviction and barbaric

execution must have seemed an anti-climax to this sordid event. Huss was burnt at the stake in 1416. His death galvanised his supporters into revolt. Priests and churches were attacked, the governing authorities retaliated. A few years later Bohemia had erupted into civil war.

On 4 May 1415 during The Council of Constance the dead and buried Wycliffe was declared a heretic, and all his writings banned. The Catholic Council decreed that Wycliffe's works should be burned and his bodily remains removed from consecrated ground. This order, confirmed by Pope Martin V, was carried out in 1428. Wycliffe's corpse was exhumed then burned and the ashes cast into the River Swift, which flows through Lutterworth.

For nearly forty years between 1378-1417 the "Great Western Schism" was tearing apart the very fabric of religious authority in Europe: during this time there were two rival popes and then later three rival popes, each with his own following, his own Sacred College of Cardinals, and his own administrative offices! No one knew who the so-called "vicar of Christ" on earth according to the Catholic church actually was!

In 1453 the Turks invaded Byzantium; this is where Emperor Constantine had 1100 years earlier relocated his capital. In those 1100 years, Greek learning had disappeared from western Europe. But with the invasion of Byzantium, Greek scholars took their manuscripts and fled into Europe. Five years later, Greek is offered for the first time at the European universities. The Reformation and Renaissance would be born as a result of the rediscovery of classical Greek and of the Greek New Testament.

The near-simultaneous events of the Turkish invasion of Byzantium and the invention of the printing press in 1454 were the catalyst for the production of the first published Greek-Latin Parallel New Testament on March 1, 1516. This New Testament was called the *Novum Instrumentum*, and was issued from the printing press of Johannes Froben of Basel. This Greek-Latin New Testament had been translated by Erasmus of Rotterdam who was moved to correct the corrupt Catholic Latin Vulgate translated by Jerome in AD 380 which he said was inaccurate. He opposed Jerome's translation in two vital areas. He detected that the Greek text had been corrupted as early as the fourth century. He knew that Jerome's translation had been based solely on the Alexandrian manuscript the Vaticanus, written itself early in the fourth century. The Latin part Erasmus used for his translation was not from the corrupt Catholic Vulgate, but his own fresh rendering of the text from the more accurate and reliable Greek, which he had managed to collate from

a half-dozen partial old Greek New Testament manuscripts he had acquired. These manuscripts had originally come from Constantinople. Manuscripts from that area formed what is called a text type. This text type from Constantinople came to be known as the Byzantine Text. Erasmus was driven to make the Word of God available to the common man. While Jerome's Latin had been translated at the bidding of the Roman hierarchy, Erasmus translated his Latin with the express purpose of putting it into the hands of the common people of his day. A practice that the Roman Catholic Church knew could be dangerous to its plan to control the masses. Erasmus is quoted as saying, "Do you think that the Scriptures are fit only for the perfumed?" "I venture to think that anyone who reads my translation at home will profit thereby." He boldly stated that he longed to see the Bible in the hands of "the farmer, the tailor, the traveler and the Turk." Later, to the astonishment of his upper classed colleagues, he added "the masons, the prostitutes and the pimps" to that declaration.

Many consider the 1516 Greek-Latin New Testament of Erasmus to be the most important book ever printed because it sparked the Reformation of the 16th century. Erasmus, who was also a Roman Catholic, was a constant and verbal opponent of the many excesses of his church. He was offered a bishopric in hopes that it would silence his work and criticism which he promptly rejected considering it nothing but a bribe to purchase his silence. Erasmus translated the Greek New Testament on his own. He was not doing that work in any official capacity in the Catholic Church nor did he have Rome's backing but rather was criticized for it and his work was condemned in the strongest terms. His work became the basis for Martin Luther's German translation of the New Testament and William Tyndale's English translation. In Germany, Luther studied the first edition of the Erasmus Greek New Testament as he formulated his "95 Theses," the document widely credited with launching the Protestant Reformation in 1517 by articulating a series of grievances against the Roman Catholic Church.

Over the years the Greek text of the New Testament was collated by a number of different editors. The most famous of these being Desiderius Erasmus, Theodore Beza, Robert Stephanus and the Elzevir brothers, Abraham and Bonaventure.

Erasmus published five editions of the New Testament. The first in 1516 was followed by another in 1519 which was used by Martin Luther for his historic and earth shaking German translation. His third, fourth, and fifth followed in 1522, 1527 and 1535. Erasmus' work set the standard for centuries. Robert Stephanus published four editions, dating from

1546 through 1549, 1550 and lastly 1551. Theodore Beza published several editions of the Greek New Testament. Four were published in 1565, 1582, 1588 and 1598. These were printed in folio, meaning a sheet of paper was folded over once, thus producing four separate pages of the book. He also published five octavo editions, these dates being; 1565, 1567, 1580, 1590 and 1604. "Octavo" means that one printed sheet folded in such a way as to produce eight separate pages of the text. Books printed in this manner tended to have a smaller page size than folio works, but sometimes led to the need of a work being printed in two or more volumes. It is Beza's edition of 1598 and Stephanus edition of 1550 and 1551 which were used as the primary sources by the King James translators.

Some years later, the Elzevir brothers published three editions of the Greek New Testament. The dates being; 1624, 1633 and 1641. They followed closely the work of Beza, who in turn had followed the standard set by Erasmus.

All Reformation Bibles of the 16th century, including German, English, French, and others, were translated from the Byzantine text also known as the majority text or "textus receptus" . This text type continued to be printed by the successors of Erasmus and reached its pinicle in AD 1633 in a Greek New Testament published by the Elzevirs of the Netherlands. In the introduction, we find the following words: "The reader now has the text received by all in which we give nothing changed or corrupted". This became known as the Textus Receptus or the Received Text due to this introduction.

The Majority Text or Textus Receptus remains the standard Greek text even in the 21st century, especially to those who favor the King James Version over the various Modern Bibles today that soley use the corrupt Alexandrian text known as the Minority Text in their translations.

In 1559, twenty-three years after his death Pope Paul IV put Erasmus's writings on the "Index" of books, forbidden to be read by Roman Catholics.

Chapter II

THE REFORMED CHURCH 1453-1648 -- The Reformation in Germany

In this period of two hundred years, the great Reformation which began in Germany and spread over all northern Europe, resulted in the establishment of national churches owning no allegiance to Rome. Below are some antecedent forces leading to the Reformation, and greatly furthering its progress.

1. One of these forces was that remarkable movement known as the Renaissance, or the awakening of Europe to a new interest in literature, art and science; the change from medieval to modern aims and methods of thought. During the Middle Ages the interest of scholars had been in religious truth, with philosophy as related to religion; and the chief thinkers and writers, as we have seen, were churchmen. But in this awakening a new interest arose in classic literature with Greek, Latin, and art soon drawing apart from religion along with the first glimmer of modern science. The leaders of the movement were generally not priests and monks, but laymen. Italy is where the Renaissance first began, not as a religious but a literary movement, yet not openly anti-religious, so much as skeptical or enquiring. Most of the Italian students of the period were men devoid of religious life; even the popes of that time were marked by culture, rather than faith. North of the Alps, in Germany, England and France, the movement was more religious, awakening a new interest in the Scriptures, Greek and Hebrew, and a search for the true foundations of faith, apart from the dogmas of Rome. Everywhere, South and North alike, the Renaissance undermined the Roman Catholic Church.

2. The invention of the printing press was made by Gutenberg, in 1455, at Mayence on the Rhine. Books could be printed from movable type, and with ease disseminated by the thousand. Before this invention, from the beginning of time, books had been circulated only as rapidly as they could be copied out by hand. A Bible in the Middle Ages cost a year's wages of a typical working man. It is significant as showing the desire of that time, that the first book printed by Gutenberg was the Bible. The press brought the Scriptures into common use, and led to their translation and circulation in all the languages of Europe. The people who read the New Testament soon realized that the papal church doctrine was far from the New Testament writings. And the new teachings of the Reformers, as fast as they appeared, were set forth in books and pamphlets, which were circulated by the million throughout Europe.

3. The Spirit of Nationality. This differed from the medieval strifes between emperors and popes, in that it was more a popular than a kingly movement. The patriotism of the people was beginning to manifest itself in an unwillingness to submit to a foreign rule over their own national

churches; to resist the appointment by a pope in a distant land, of bishops, abbots, and church dignitaries; a disposition to withhold the contribution of “Peter’s pence” for the support of the pope and the building of stately churches in Rome; and a determination to abridge the power of the church councils, bringing the clergy under the same laws and courts with the laity. This national spirit was a strong support to the reforming movement.

While the spirit of reform and of independence was awakening through all Europe, the flame burst forth first in Germany, in the electorate of Saxony, under the leadership of Martin Luther, a monk and professor in the University of Wittenberg. Let us notice some of its earlier stages.

The reigning pope, Leo X, needing large sums of money for the completion of St. Peter’s Church at Rome, permitted an agent named John Tetzel to go through Germany selling indulgences. Indulgences were certificates signed by the pope himself, purporting to bestow the pardon of all sins, not only upon the holders of the certificates, but upon friends living or dead in whose behalf they were purchased, without confession, repentance, penance, or absolution by a priest. Tetzel told the people “As soon as your coin clinks in the chest, the souls of your friends will rise out of purgatory to heaven”. Luther preached against Tetzel and his selling of pardons, denouncing his teaching as having no scriptural basis.

2. Luther’s ninety-five theses. The exact date fixed upon by historians as the beginning of the Great Reformation, is October 31, 1517. On the morning of that day Martin Luther nailed to the oaken door of Wittenberg Cathedral a parchment containing ninety-five theses or statements, nearly all relating to the sale of indulgences, but in their application striking at the authority of the pope and the priesthood. The rulers of the church vainly endeavored to coerce and to cajole Luther, but he stood firm, and the storm only made him more resolute in his opposition to doctrines and practices not contained in Holy Scripture.

3. Burning the bull of Pope Leo X. After many controversies, and the publication of the Papal Bull in 1520, the pamphlets and teachings made Luther’s opinions known throughout Germany which were formally condemned. Being excommunicated by this bull of Pope Leo X in June of 1520, the Elector Frederick of Saxony was commanded to deliver up Luther for trial and punishment, but, instead, he gave him ample protection, as he sympathized with Luther’s views. Luther met the excommunication with defiance, called it “the execrable bull of Antichrist,” and on December 10, 1520, publicly burned it at the gates of

Wittenberg, before an assemblage of the University professors, the students, and the people. With the papal bull he burned also copies of the canons or laws enacted by the Roman authorities. This act constituted Luther's final renunciation of the Roman Catholic Church.

4. The Diet of Worms. In 1521, Luther was summoned before the Diet, or Supreme Council of the German rulers, at Worms on the Rhine. The new emperor, Charles the Fifth, gave him the promise of a safe conduct, and Luther went to the assembly, though warned by his friends that he might meet the fate of John Huss in similar circumstances at the Council of Constance, in 1415. Luther said "I will go to Worms, though as many devils were aiming at me as tiles on the roof". On April 17, 1521, Luther stood before the Diet, over which the emperor was presiding, and in answer to the question whether he would retract the statements in his books, replied, after consideration, that he could retract nothing except what was disproved by Scripture or reason, ending with the words: "Here I stand; I can do naught else. God help me. Amen". The Emperor Charles was urged to seize Luther, on the ground that no faith was to be kept with heretics, but he permitted him to leave Worms in peace.

5. The Wartburg Castle. While Luther was traveling homeward, he was suddenly arrested by soldiers of the Elector Frederic, and taken, for his safety, to the castle of the Wartburg in Thuringia. He remained there nearly a year, in disguise, while storms of war and revolt were raging in the empire. But he was not idle, for Luther; during this retirement, made his translation of the New Testament into the German tongue, a work which alone would have placed his name in history, for his version is regarded as the Foundation of the German written language. This was in 1521; the Old Testament was not completed until several years later. Coming back to Wittenberg after his absence, he resumed his leadership in the movement for a Reformed Church, just in time to save it from more extravagant excesses.

6. The division of the German states into the Protestant Name. The reformed and Roman branches was between the Diet of Spires, North and South. The Southern princes, led by Austria, adhered to Rome, while those of the North were mainly followers of Luther. A Diet was held at Spires in 1529, in the vain hope of reconciling the two parties. At this Diet, the Catholic rulers were in the majority, and condemned the Lutheran doctrines. The princes forbade any teaching of Lutheranism in states where it had not become dominant; and in the states already Lutheran required that the Catholics should be allowed the free exercise of their religion. To this unequal ruling the Lutheran princes made a formal protest, and from that time they were known as Protestants, and

their doctrines as the Protestant religion.

Chapter III

THE REFORMED CHURCH 1453-1648 -- The Reformation in Other Lands

While the Reformation was in its earliest stages in Germany, the same spirit broke out in many other lands of Europe. In the South, as Italy and Spain, it was put down with a relentless hand; in France and the Netherlands the cause of reform hung in the balance of uncertainty; but among all the northern nations the new religion was victorious over all opposition and ruled the lands.

1. In Switzerland the Reformation began under the leadership of Ulric Zwingli, who, in 1517, attacked the “remission of sins” through pilgrimages to a shrine of the Virgin at Einsiedeln; and in 1522 definitely broke from Rome. The Reformation was formally organized at Zurich, and soon became more radical than in Germany; but its progress was hindered by a civil war between the Roman Catholic and Protestant cantons, in which Zwingli was slain in 1531. The reform went onward, however, and found its later leader in John Calvin, whose “Institutes of Theology,” published in 1536, when Calvin was only twenty-seven years old, became the standards of Protestant doctrine.

2. Denmark, Sweden, and Norway under one government, early received Luther’s teachings which were favored by King Christian II. Political strife and civil war for a time interfered with the progress of the Reformation, but in the end all the three lands accepted the Lutheran views.

3. In France, the Roman Catholic Church possessed greater liberty than in the rest of Europe, and hence there was less demand for ecclesiastical independence from Rome. But a religious movement arose among the French people, even earlier than in Germany. In 1512, Jacques Lefevre wrote and preached the doctrine of “Justification by faith”. Two parties appeared in the court and among the people, and successive kings, all nominally Roman Catholic, sided at one time or another with each party. But Protestantism received almost a death blow in the terrible massacre of St. Bartholomew’s Day, August 24, 1572, when nearly all its leaders

and countless thousands of their followers were murdered. In the face of persecution the reformed faith lived, and a minority of the French people have been Protestant. Though small in numbers, French Protestantism has been great in its influence.

4. The Netherlands, comprising of the two kingdoms of Holland and Belgium, were at the beginning of the Reformation period under the dominion of Spain. They received the reformed teachings early, but were bitterly persecuted by the Spanish regents. In the Low Countries the reform was a demand for political as well as religious liberty, and the tyranny of Spain drove the people to revolt. After a long war and incredible suffering, the Netherlands, under the leadership of William the Silent, at last obtained independence from Spain, although it was not recognized until 1609, twenty-five years after his death. Holland on the north became Protestant, but Belgium remained mainly Roman Catholic.

5. The movement for the Reformation in England. England passed through various stages of advance and retrogression, from its political relations, from the differing attitude of the successive sovereigns, and from the conservatism of the English nature. It began in the reign of Henry VIII with a band of young students in classical literature and the Bible; some of whom, like Sir Thomas More, paused in their progress and remained Catholic, while others pressed on boldly to the Protestant faith.

One of the leaders of the English Reformation was William Tyndale who was trained in the Greek and Hebrew languages. He earned his bachelor's degree from Oxford in 1512 at the age 16 and his master's degree in 1515. In 1525 the Tyndale New Testament by William Tyndale became the first printed edition of the scriptures in the English language to use the printing press. This enabled the distribution of several thousand copies. Tyndale was a gifted linguist and was fluent in French, Greek, Hebrew, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish, in addition to English. Martin Luther had already translated the Bible into German; the Protestant Reformation was gathering pace. Martin Luther had a small head-start on Tyndale, as Luther declared his intolerance for the Roman Church's corruption on Halloween in 1517, by nailing his 95 Theses of Contention to the Wittenberg Church door. Luther, who would be exiled in the months following the Diet of Worms Council in 1521 that was designed to martyr him, would translate the New Testament into German for the first time from the 1516 Greek-Latin New Testament of Erasmus, and publish it in September of 1522. Luther also published a German Pentateuch in 1523, and another edition of the German New Testament in 1529. In the 1530's he would go on to publish the entire Bible in

German.

In pursuit of accuracy, Tyndale traveled to Germany to consult with rabbis over the precise meaning of the Hebrew of the Bible. There were no Jews in England to consult with, since they had all been expelled from the country by King Edward I in 1290. This, it transpired, was a mistake. Cologne was still under the control of an archbishop loyal to Rome. He was halfway through printing the book of Matthew when he heard that the print shop was about to be raided. He bundled up his papers and fled. It was a story that would be repeated several times over the next few years. Tyndale spent the next few years dodging English spies and Roman agents. William Tyndale translated the New Testament into English from Greek, using Erasmus' 1516 Greek version and managed between 1525-1526 to complete his New Testament translation and smuggle a flood of copies into England. Tyndale's work was completed but he was a marked man. Tyndale was a true scholar and a genius, so fluent in eight languages that it was said one would think any one of them to be his native tongue. He is frequently referred to as the "Architect of the English Language" as so many of the phrases Tyndale coined are still in our language today.

The influence of Tyndale's translation on all subsequent English translations of the Bible and on the English language itself cannot be overstated. It is in Tyndale's Bible that we first find the name "Passover" for the holiday Jews call Pesach; it was he who coined the word "scapegoat"; and many biblical verses that are now idiomatic in English are his own translation – notably, "my brother's keeper," "the powers that be," "the salt of the earth," among many others. One of Tyndale's famous quotes spoken to the Catholic Bishop was, "I defy the Pope, and all his laws; and if God spares my life, ere many years, I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost!" Tyndale's works were burned as soon as the Bishop could confiscate them, but the printing press continued to print Tyndale's New Testament with one copy even ending up in the bedroom of King Henry VIII.

The Catholic church declared the Tyndale New Testament contained thousands of errors as they torched hundreds of these New Testaments which were confiscated by the clergy, when in fact, they actually contained no errors at all. Anyone caught with a copy of Tyndale's Bible was put to death by burning at the stake.

No one with a connection to Tyndale or his translation was safe. Thomas Hitton, a priest who had met Tyndale in Europe, confessed to smuggling two copies of the Bible into the country. He was charged with heresy and

burnt alive.

Thomas Bilney, a lawyer, was also thrown into the flames. First prosecuted by the bishop of London, Bilney recanted and was eventually released in 1529. But when he withdrew his recantation in 1531 he was re-arrested and prosecuted by Thomas Pelles, chancellor of Norwich diocese, and burnt by the secular authorities just outside the city of Norwich.

Richard Bayfield, a monk who had been one of Tyndale's early supporters, was tortured incessantly before being tied to the stake. And a group of students in Oxford were left to rot in a dungeon that was used for storing salt fish.

Tyndale was betrayed in 1535 by Henry Phillips for the bounty on Tyndale's head. Phillips was a dissolute young aristocrat who had stolen his father's money and gambled it away. Tyndale was hiding out in Antwerp, under the quasi-diplomatic protection of the English merchant community. Phillips, who was as charming as he was disreputable, befriended Tyndale and invited him out for dinner. As they left the English merchants house together, Phillips beckoned to a couple of thugs loitering in a doorway. They seized Tyndale. It was the last free moment of his life. Tyndale was incarcerated for 500 days before Tyndale was charged with heresy in August 1536 and condemned to be burned to death at the stake. Tyndale was strangled to death while tied at the stake, and then his dead body was burned. Tyndale's last words were, "Oh Lord, open the King of England's eyes". This prayer would be answered just three years later in 1539, when King Henry VIII finally allowed, and even funded, the printing of an English Bible known as the "Great Bible".

Another leader was Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, who, after aiding to make England Protestant, recanted under the Romanist Queen Mary, in the hope of saving his life, but when condemned to die by fire, recalled his recantation. The reformation in England was both helped and hindered by King Henry VIII, who broke from Rome because the pope would not sanction his divorce from Queen Katharine, the sister of the emperor, Charles V; and established an English Catholic Church with himself as its head. Henry VIII put to death Romanists and Protestants alike who differed from his views. Edward VI, a mere youth, reigned a short time from 1547-1553. Under his leadership the cause of the English Reformation made great progress. Led by Cranmer and others, the Church of England was established.

Queen Mary from 1553-1558 followed Edward VI. She was a bigoted Romanist, and undertook to bring her subjects back to the old church by lighting the fires of persecution. She reigned only five years but "Bloody Mary" was possessed in her quest to return England to the Roman Church. Mary went on to systematically burn both Bibles and Protestants, more than three hundred Protestants suffered martyrdom during that time. This era was known as the Marian Exile, and the refugees fled from England with little hope of ever seeing their home or friends again.

Many Protestant scholars fled from England to Geneva. The Church at Geneva, Switzerland, which was undergoing its own reformation under the leadership of John Calvin, was very sympathetic to the reformer refugees and was one of only a few safe havens for a desperate people. Many of them were led by Myles Coverdale and John Foxe, who published the famous Foxe's Book of Martyrs, to the location where the famous Reformed theologian, John Calvin, was living. One of these expatriate Englishmen, William Whittingham, Calvin's brother-in-law, working with other English scholars, completed the first version of the Bible to be translated in its entirety using Theodore Beza's Latin translation, Hebrew texts, Greek texts, and Tyndale's work. Their publication is known as the Geneva Bible, and was the most commonly used English Bible in the next century. The Geneva Bible had several significant features, which eventually led to the reputation that it was the very first study bible:

- It was the first translation done by a committee.
- It was the first English Bible with verse divisions, which became the basis for all "versification" in later English Bibles.
- It was the first Bible to use italics extensively for words that were not in the original text.
- It contained copious notes in the margins, some doctrinal, and others simply explanatory.
- It was the Bible of Shakespeare, John Bunyan and the Bible the Pilgrims took to America.
- It influenced the King James Version (KJV) enormously. The KJV translators employed the Geneva Bible as much as Tyndale's version to translate the KJV.
- It had a long and stellar history. Fifty years after the KJV was published, the Geneva Bible was still the most popular Bible in England.

In 1558, Mary Tudor died and was succeeded by Queen Elizabeth I, who

reversed her predecessor's reform and firmly established the English Protestant Church, which would become the Church of England. Ten years later, in 1568, the Bishop's Bible was published by the Church of England. This was a revision of the Great Bible which itself was a revision of Tyndale's translation and was the second English version authorized by the Church of England as their official Bible translation. The Geneva Bible could not be used in ecclesiastical settings because it was too "Calvinistic" for the English clergy and was so popular among the lower classes that it was deemed politically incorrect to use from the pulpit. However, the Bishop's Bible never gained popularity and its last printing occurred in 1606. With the accession of Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth reigned from 1558-1603 and opened the prisons freeing the protestants and recalled the exiles abroad. The Bible again stood in honor in the pulpit and in the home. During her long reign, that was given the name, "Elizabethan," to the most glorious age in English history, the Church of England was re-established and took the form in which it has continued to present day.

In 1582 the Rheims-Douai Bible was introduced. Since all of the previous English Bible translations were "protestant" Bibles, the Catholics wanted their own English Bible. This was not because they agreed that lay people should have a Bible in their own language. Rather, since they could not stop lay people from reading the Bible, they at least wanted them to read a "Catholic" version of it. As with the Geneva Bible, the Rheims-Douai translators inserted many notes and annotations into the margins and chapter ends, with the difference, that they promoted Roman Catholic doctrine.

6. The Reformation at first made slow advance in Scotland. Scotland, where the church and state were ruled with an iron hand by Cardinal Beaton and the Queen regent, Mary of Guise, the mother of Mary Queen of Scots. The cardinal was murdered, the Queen regent died, and soon afterward John Knox, in 1559, assumed the leadership of the reforming movement. By his radical and uncompromising views, his unbending determination, and his resistless energy, even against the opposition of the abilities and fascinations of his Romanist sovereign Mary Queen of Scots, he was able to sweep away every vestige of the old religion, and to carry the reform far beyond that in England. The Presbyterian Church as planned by Knox became the established church of Scotland.

At the opening of the sixteenth century, the only church in western Europe was the Roman Catholic, apparently secure in the loyalty of every kingdom. Before the end of that century every land of northern Europe west of Russia, had broken away from Rome and had established

its own national church. While in the lands of northern Europe there were differences in doctrine and in organizations yet it is not difficult to find the common platform of all the Protestant churches. The principles of the Reformation may be named as five in number.

1. Scriptural. The first great principle is that true religion is completely scriptural and founded upon the Word of God. The Roman Catholics had substituted the authority of the church for that of the Bible. They taught that the church was infallible, and the authority of the Bible proceeded from its authorization by the church. They withheld the Scriptures from the laity, and strongly opposed, on pain of death, every translation of them into the language spoken by the common people. The reformers declared that the Bible contained the standards of faith and practice; and that no doctrine was to be accepted unless it was taught in the Bible. The Reformation brought the Word of God back to the people, and placed its teachings upon Biblical authority. It is through the Reformers and mainly in Protestant lands, that the Bible is now circulated by many million copies annually across the globe.

2. Rational. Another principle established by the Reformation was that religion should be rational, intelligent and non-oppressive. Romanism had introduced irrational doctrines like transubstantiation into the church's creed, preposterous pretensions like papal indulgence into her discipline, superstitious usages like image-worship into her rituals. The reformers, while duly subordinating reason to revelation, recognized the former as a divine gift, and demanded a creed, a discipline, and a worship, which should not confuse man's rational nature.

3. Personal. A third great truth made emphatic in the Reformation was that of personal religion. Under the Roman system a closed gate stood between the worshiper and God, and to that gate the priest held the only key. The repentant sinner did not confess his sins to God, but to the priest; he did not obtain forgiveness from God, but from the priest, who alone could pronounce absolution. The worshiper did not pray to God the Father through Christ the Son, but through a patron saint, who was supposed to intercede for him with a God too high for man in this earthly life to approach. In fact, God was looked upon as an unfriendly Being, who must be appeased and placated by the ascetic lives of saintly men and women whose prayers alone could avail to save men from God's wrath. The godly minded could not go for guidance to the Bible, but must take its teachings at second-hand, as interpreted by the councils and canons of the church. All these barriers the reformers swept aside. They pointed the worshiper to God as the direct object of prayer, the immediate giver of pardon and of grace. They brought each soul into the

presence of God and the fellowship of Christ.

4. Spiritual. The Reformers also insisted upon a spiritual religion against a formal man-made religion. The Roman Catholics had overloaded the simplicity of the gospel with a mass of unbiblical forms and ceremonies which completely obscured its life and spirit. Their religion consisted in external services rendered under priestly direction, and not the attitude of the heart toward God. Throughout the Catholic church in general, religion was of the letter and not of the Spirit. The Reformers emphasized the inward rather than just the outward traits of religion. They brought forth the ancient doctrine as a vital experience, “salvation by faith in Christ and by faith only”. They proclaimed that men are righteous, not only by outward forms and observances, but also by the inward spiritual life, “the life of God in the souls of men”.

5. National. The last of these principles in the practical working of the Reformation was that of a national church as distinct from one universal. The aim of the papacy and the priesthood had been to subordinate the state to the church, and to make the pope supreme over all nations. Wherever Protestantism triumphed a national church arose, self-governed, and independent of Rome. These national churches assumed different forms, Episcopal in England, Presbyterian in Scotland and in Switzerland, somewhat mixed in northern lands. The worship in every Roman Catholic Church was in Latin, but every Protestant Church maintains its services in the language spoken by the worshipers.

Chapter IV

THE REFORMED CHURCH 1453-1648 -- The Counter-Reformation

Not long after the Reformation began, a mighty counter effort was made by the Roman Catholic Church to regain its lost ground in Europe, to subvert the Protestant faith, and to promote Roman Catholic missions in foreign lands. This movement is called the Counter-Reformation.

1. Church Reform. The Council of Trent, called in 1545 by Pope Paul Council of III, mainly to investigate and put an end to abuses which had called forth the Reformation. The council met at different times, and in more than one place, though mainly at Trent in Austria, seventy-six miles northwest of Venice. It was composed of all the bishops and abbots

of the church, and lasted nearly twenty years, through the reigns of four popes, from 1545 to 1563. The hope had been that the chasm between Catholics and Protestants might be bridged over, and Christianity reunited; but this could not be accomplished. Yet many reforms were made, the doctrines of the church were definitely stated. They also condemned every other translation of the Bible except for the Latin Vulgate.

2. Order of the Jesuits. A more powerful influence in the Counter Reformation was the Order of Jesuits, established in 1534, by a Spaniard, Ignatius Loyola. This was a monastic order characterized by the union of the strictest discipline, the most intense loyalty to the church and the order, the deepest religious devotion, and a strong proselyting endeavor. Its principal aim was to fight the Protestant movement with methods both open and secret; and it became so powerful as to incur the bitterest opposition, even in Roman Catholic countries; was suppressed in nearly every state of Europe, and by decree of Pope Clement XIV in 1773 forbidden throughout the church. It was continued for a time in secret, afterward openly, then was again recognized by the popes, and is now one of the most potent forces for the spreading and strengthening of the Roman Catholic Church throughout the world.

3. Active Persecution. Active persecution was another weapon employed to quell the growing spirit of reform. It is true that Protestants also persecuted, even to death; but generally their motive was political, rather than religious. In England, those put to death were mainly Catholics who conspired against Queen Elizabeth. But on the continent every Roman Catholic government sought by fire and sword to extirpate the Protestant faith. In Spain, the Inquisition was established and untold multitudes were tortured and burned. In the Low Countries, the Spanish rulers undertook to kill every one suspected of heresy. In France, the persecuting spirit reached its height in the massacre on St. Bartholomew's Day, and for weeks afterward, in 1572, when by different estimates from twenty thousand to one hundred thousand people perished. These persecutions in every land where Protestantism was not in control of the government, not only stayed the reforming tide, but in some countries, notably Bohemia and Spain, crushed it out.

4. Catholic Missions. The missionary efforts of the Catholic church must be recognized as one of the forces in the Counter-Reformation. This was largely, though not entirely, under the direction of the Jesuits. It resulted in the conversion of all the native races of South America and Mexico, and in a large part of Canada; and in the establishment of great missions in India and the lands adjoining Francis Xavier, one of the original

founders of the Jesuit society. Roman Catholic missions in heathen lands began centuries earlier than Protestant missions, and have greatly increased the numbers and power of the Roman church.

Chapter V

THE REFORMED CHURCH 1603-1648 -- The End of the Reformation and the Translation of the King James Bible

In 1603, Queen Elizabeth I died, and James VI King of Scotland became James I King of England. For much of England, there were two competing Bible translations: the Bishops' Bible that was used in the churches, and the Geneva Bible that was read by the people. By far, the Geneva Bible was the more popular one. The clergy desired to have a translation in the churches that would be revered by the masses.

Soon after King James assumed the throne of England in 1603, he was approached by a group of Puritans led by John Reynolds, president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and presented with the Millennium Petition. This called for spiritual reform in the Church of England along Presbyterian lines, this petition got its name from the fact that it was signed by an estimated 1,000 ministers.

In January 1604 a conference was held at Hampton Court Palace to discuss the petition. Reynolds suggested that a new translation of the English Bible be produced.

The king approved the proposition for the new Bible, and within six months 54 scholars were chosen for the work. Eventually around 50 men were actually involved in the translation.

Work began in 1607 and incorporated a strict method of translation:

1. Each part of the Bible was translated and examined at least 14 times, by the following process.
2. The translators were divided into six companies, and each group was assigned a portion of Scripture to translate.
3. The portion was first translated individually by each member of the

company.

4. That translated portion was then considered by the company as a whole. The company of translators would meet together and as the newly translated book was read verse by verse, each one compared it to a Bible in some language in his hand. If anything was noticed as requiring alteration, he spoke, otherwise they read on. If a special obscurity or difficulty was found, the companies were authorized to send it to appointed learned scholars in the land for their review.

5. When the companies completed a book, it was then sent to the other five companies for review. As any one company dispatched any one book in this manner, they sent to the rest, to be considered seriously and judiciously as each book of the translation was reviewed by all of the companies.

6. The finished product from each company was then submitted to a 12-man committee (composed of two chief men from each company) for final review and preparation for the press. As the companies reviewed each book, they noted any questions or differences, and these matters were settled by the final committee.

Thus, every part of the translation was examined at least 14 times! “As the number of companies was six, and the numbers in each company varied from seven to ten, it follows that every several part would be examined at the least fourteen times distinctly; many parts fifteen times, and some seventeen” (“Historical Account of the English Versions of the Scriptures,” prologue to *The English Hexapla*, 1841, p. 153).

The basic translation by the companies took two years; while nine months were required for the final revision.

THE TRANSLATORS

The translators of the King James Bible were scholars of the highest caliber. Alexander McClure, who published *Translators Revived: Biographical Notes of the KJV Bible Translators* in 1855, observed: “It is confidently expected that the reader of these pages will yield to the conviction that all the colleges of Great Britain and America, even in this proud day of boastings, could not bring together the same number of divines equally qualified by learning and piety for the great undertaking.”

Almost all of the translators were masters of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. That was merely a basic part of what was called a classical education in those days. Unlike today, these men grew up with these biblical languages and Latin. They learned these in their childhood and perfected the use of them throughout their lives. The KJB translators did not use the Greek text of Erasmus as their primary source. They used the Greek texts of Stephanus and Beza and they compared several foreign language Bibles as well. In 99% of the cases, further manuscript discoveries have only served to confirm the readings found in the King James Bible.

The translators of the King James Bible were also humble men who knew that only God could give them the wisdom necessary to produce an accurate Bible translation. The following is from the original 1611 Translator's Preface:

“To that purpose there were many chosen, that were greater in other men's eyes than in their own, and that sought the truth rather than their own praise . . . And in what sort did these assemble? In the trust of their own knowledge, or of their sharpness of wit, or deepness of judgment, as it were an arm of flesh? At no hand. They trusted in him that hath the key of David, opening, and no man shutting; they prayed to the Lord, the Father of our Lord, to the effect that St. Augustine did, O let thy Scriptures be my pure delight; let me not be deceived in them, neither let me deceive by them. In this confidence and with this devotion, did they assemble together; not too many, lest one should trouble another; and yet many, lest many things haply might escape them.”

The translators of the King James Bible were not paid for their work. Only the 12 who did the final revision received anything, and their wage was a small weekly stipend for basic expenses as they met in London for the nine months required to complete that portion of the work.

King James I had very little to do with the translation beyond authorizing the work to proceed and agreeing on the translation standards.

He did not choose the translators. He did not do any of the translation. He did not fund the work.

There is no evidence that he even issued an official authorization when the translation was completed.

The King James Bible was first published in 1611. It was printed by Robert Barker in a large volume bearing on its title page the following inscription: “The Holy Bible, containing the Old Testament & the New:

Newly Translated out of the Original tongues; & with the former Translations diligently compared and revised by His Majesties special Commandment.”

From 1577 down to 1709 the Robert Barker family and their consigns had the sole right to print the King James Bible in England.

It would take fifty years after 1611 for the KJV to overtake the Geneva Bible in popularity, it eventually became the preferred version for both public and private use, superseding both the Bishops’ Bible and the Geneva Bible. There are several reasons why the KJV was so popular and went unchallenged for so long:

- Unlike the Geneva Bible, it was produced in England.
- Unlike the Bishops’ Bible, it appeared in both folio size (large) and quarto size (small). It could therefore compete with the Geneva in the home as well as in the church.
- It was adopted and promoted by the Church and without the stigma of the poor literary quality of the Bishops’ Bible.
- Unlike the Geneva Bible, it did not have numerous marginal notes from a particular theological perspective.
- It involved approximately 50 biblical scholars, whereas the Bishops’ Bible had been translated by nine men and the Geneva Bible by a small committee.
- It had excellent English, unlike the Bishops’ Bible, and was more lyrical and rhythmic than the Geneva Bible.
- It was a compromise between various factions within England – including High Churchmen and Puritans.
- Finally, it had the financial and political backing of the English throne.

In 1618 the Thirty Years’ War began between the Reformed and Catholic states a century after the opening of the Reformation, and finally involved nearly all the European nations. Political rivalries as well as religious became involved, and states of the same faith were at times on opposing sides. For nearly a generation the strife went on, and all Germany suffered inconceivably. Finally, in 1648, the great war was ended by the Peace of Westphalia, which fixed the boundaries of Roman Catholic and Protestant states mainly as they have continued unto the present time. At that point, therefore, the Period of the Reformation may be considered as ended.

Essentially, the KJV went unchallenged due to a mixture of political

influence, religious compromise, and literary power. It is worth noting that the first English Bible to be printed in America was a King James Version, by Robert Aitken in 1782. Robert Aitken's 1782 KJV Bible was also the only Bible ever authorized by the United States Congress.

In 1833 Noah Webster, a couple years after producing his famous Dictionary of the English Language, produced his own modern translation of the KJV Bible. Noah Webster, a devout Christian who knew 28 languages, used the King James Version strictly as a guide while consulting the Hebrew and Greek texts in this Textus Receptus based Bible translation. Today The Webster Bible continues to be useful, for those who wish to use a Bible version that maintains the familiar and traditional words of the King James Bible, with only a few of the most difficult expressions modernized and corrected for easy reading.

The Textus Receptus was NOT the basis for the Catholic Bibles, but rather for the Reformation Bibles like Luther's German Bible, the French Olivetan, the Italian Diodati, the Spanish Reina Valera, the English Geneva Bible and of course the King James Holy Bible.

Unfortunately, our modern Bibles used in the churches of today are strangely not based on the Textus Receptus but rather are based on the corrupt Alexandrian text from Egypt which the reformers rejected.

Why did the early churches of the 2nd and 3rd centuries and all the Protestant Reformers of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries choose the Textus Receptus in preference to the Alexandrian Text also called the "Minority Text"? The Textus Receptus is based on the vast majority (90%) of the 5000+ Greek manuscripts in existence. That is why it is also referred to as the "Majority Text". The Textus Receptus is not mutilated with deletions, additions and amendments, as is the Minority Text and agrees with the earliest versions of the Bible such as the Peshitta (AD150), Old Latin Vulgate (AD157), the Italic Bible (AD157) etc. These Bibles were produced some 200 years before the minority Egyptian codices favoured by the Roman Church. The Alexandrian Text-Type are referred to as the 'Minority Texts' simply because they represent only about 5% of existing manuscripts. They were rejected by the early Christians and also by all the Protestant Reformers who were well aware of their existence but considered them unfit for translation purposes.

You can find a complete list of the differences between the modern Alexandrian Text Bible translations and the King James Bible by going to our Modern Bible Section ... [Here](#)

