

## STUDY PACK 15

### ENGLAND'S GOLDEN ERA

“God blew His wind and scattered them.”—English medal struck after the defeat of the Spanish Armada

#### I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

##### A. William Tyndale

In 1450, Johan Gutenberg of Germany invented the printing press. In 1454, he invented moveable type. These inventions opened up great new possibilities for the distribution of God's Word.

William Tyndale was born around 1484. Tyndale attended Oxford and Cambridge, where he became skilled in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Italian, Spanish, and Dutch. He then attended Cambridge, where he studied Greek under Erasmus (the great Greek scholar largely responsible for preparing the Textus Receptus).

As Tyndale began to promote the idea of a new Bible translation in English, he began to experience opposition from church leadership. One Roman Catholic priest said to him, “We were better without God's law \_\_\_\_\_.” Tyndale replied, “\_\_\_\_\_”; if God spares my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest.”

Tyndale moved to London and took a pastorate there. Tyndale continued to do translation work, but no printer would dare print it. Tyndale chose to move to the European continent to gain a chance to have his translation printed.

Tyndale traveled to Germany and met with Martin Luther. He settled in Cologne, Germany, and continued his translation work. He used Erasmus' Greek New Testament, the Latin Vulgate, and Luther's German translation as the basis for his English New Testament.

Printing had already started on an order of 3,000 New Testaments when the city council ordered the printers to stop printing. Tyndale and his assistant fled to the German city of Worms. Soon 10,000 New Testaments were in print. Thousands were smuggled into England. They were hidden in bales for cloth, salt-barrels, sacks of flour and corn, and in every way possible. There was a ready market for copies of the Bible in English. The English Church began to buy copies for the purpose of burning them. A new printing was made and soon another 18,000 were on their way to England.

The English Church sought to buy up these New Testaments. A friend of Tyndale's named Packington made arrangements to buy them from Tyndale and sell them to the Bishop of London. He reasoned that the Bishop would get them and burn them anyway. This way, Tyndale would at least have money to print more. Thousands of copies of Tyndale's New Testament were smuggled into England. Strict laws against reading the Tyndale Bible were issued in England and Bible distributors and independent preachers were persecuted. Still,

new copies of the New Testament were produced and appeared all over England.

Tyndale began to roam Germany, trying to avoid agents sent to arrest or kill him. He translated several books of the Old Testament. A secret agent of the Roman Catholic Church, Henry Phillips, pretended to be Tyndale's friend. He made arrangements to go to dinner with Tyndale, but in reality, he led him to several officers who seized him.

Tyndale was put on trial, convicted and sentenced to death. On Friday, October 6, 1536, he was burned alive. His last words were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

The Old Testament translation was finished by others. Forty editions were published and by AD 1566, 50,000 copies of the New Testament were printed.

Tyndale is remembered as "the Father of the English Bible."

## B. Further Developments in the English Bible

Nine new English versions of the Bible were released during the next 85 years. The Coverdale Bible was released in 1535 under a license granted by Henry the VIII. Coverdale was an evangelical Church of England preacher. He had been Tyndale's friend and proofreader. In 1535, he was asked by the Church of England to make an English translation of the Scriptures. He used the Italia Bible (Old Latin), Luther's German translation, the New Swiss Bible, and Tyndale's translation as his basic sources. He was not familiar with either Greek or Hebrew. The Coverdale Bible was largely a reproduction Tyndale's Bible.

The Matthew's Bible was released in 1537. The primary editor was John Rogers. He became acquainted with William Tyndale in Holland. He produced an edition of the Bible under the name Thomas Matthews. He used Tyndale's New Testament. He took some books of the Old Testament from Tyndale's translation and some from Coverdale's. The King authorized the sale of this new English edition of the Scriptures (probably without realizing that much of it was \_\_\_\_\_).

J.H. Merle d' Aubigne described the influence of the Matthew's Bible:

"In many places there were meetings for reading; poor people clubbed their savings together and purchased a Bible, and then in some remote corner of the church, they modestly formed a circle, and read the Holy Book between them. A crowd of men, women and young folks, disgusted with the barren pomp of the altars, and with the worship of dumb images, would gather round them to taste the precious promises of the Gospel. God Himself spoke under the arched roofs of those old chapels or time-worn cathedrals, where for generations nothing had been heard but masses and litanies. The people wished, instead of the noisy chants of the priest, to hear the voice of Jesus Christ, of Paul and of John, of Peter and of James. The Christianity of the apostles reappeared in the Church."

John Rogers was eventually burnt at the stake by "Bloody Mary", during her attempt to restore Roman Catholicism in England.

Eleven years after Tyndale's New Testament was publicly burned, one year after he was burned at the stake, his New Testament and parts of his Old Testament were published \_\_\_\_\_.

The Great Bible was released in 1539. Miles Coverdale was asked by the King of England to prepare another edition of the Bible. He took the Old Testament from the Matthew's Bible and the New Testament from Tyndale's. Both were slightly revised after consulting the work of Erasmus. It was called the Great Bible because of its size. Its pages were 13 ¼ inches by 7 ½ inches. Henry VIII licensed this new Bible, decreed that it be read publicly, ordered every church to have a copy and make it available to be read to the people. The Bibles were chained to the pulpit.

In 1539, the Taverner's Bible was released. Richard Taverner was an Oxford scholar, a lawyer and a Greek scholar. He had been associated with Tyndale's New Testament and had been persecuted as a result. His translation was based upon the Matthew's Bible and the Latin Vulgate. Only two editions were released because of the popularity of the Great Bible.

The Geneva Bible was released in 1560 (the New Testament in 1557). In 1543, Henry VIII had given in to pressure and agreed to limit the English Bible to persons considered "highly-educated" by the Church. Three years later, Coverdale's Bible was outlawed and hundreds of Tyndale's and Coverdale's Bibles were publicly burnt. In 1554, Mary became Queen of England and began to persecute all the non-Catholic elements of English religion. \_\_\_\_\_ and hundreds of people were put to death.

The Geneva Bible was edited by William Whittingham (an Englishman related to John Calvin by marriage). He was aided by many able scholars meeting in Geneva, Switzerland. Many were exiles from England. Members of the translation committee included Miles Coverdale, John Knox, Theodore Beza and John Foxe (author of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*). They studied Greek and Hebrew manuscripts and revised the Great Bible. It was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth (who had succeeded her sister, Mary as Queen). It was the first English translation to omit the Apocrypha. Queen Elizabeth gave consent to its distribution and over 160 editions were released between 1560 and 1644.

The importance of the Geneva Bible has been described this way, "The Scriptures had always been chained to reading stands in churches and libraries. But the Geneva Bible quickly became "\_\_\_\_\_ at home by the English common folk; and it became the backbone of the newly developing \_\_\_\_\_, a movement to simplify or "purify" the liturgy, vestments, and government of the Church of England. Some Puritan shopkeepers even kept \_\_\_\_\_ on their counters for all to see."

The Bishops' Bible was released in 1568. Since the Geneva Bible was being recognized as the Bible of the common man, some of the church leaders felt that the clergy should have its own Bible. A committee of nine bishops was formed to undertake a revision. The Great Bible was compared with some Greek, Hebrew and Latin manuscripts. Many maps, lists and tables were added. This edition was issued in 40 printings from 1568 to 1606. It was the least popular of the English Bibles with the people.

The Rheims Douay Bible was released in 1609 (the New Testament in 1582). It was produced by professors from a college for English Roman Catholics in France. This was primarily a translation of the Latin Vulgate. The Rheims Douay Bible has been retranslated several times but it has never found acceptance outside of Roman Catholic circles.

### C. THE KING JAMES BIBLE

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603), the English church was very divided. The church had three main factions. The Romanists wanted to return to the Roman Catholic Church. The Anglo-Catholics wanted to maintain an independent English church but keep many of the doctrines, ceremonies and traditions of the Catholic Church. The Puritans wanted to \_\_\_\_\_ and maintain \_\_\_\_\_.

King James I (1603-1625) did not identify with any of the three groups. He wanted to see all three groups held in check by the best translation of the English Bible possible. King James felt that the Geneva Bible, and especially its marginal notes, favored the Puritans.

A Puritan leader, John Reynolds, approached King James and asked him to authorize a new translation.

Reynolds was President of Corpus Christi College at Oxford. He persuaded King James to sponsor this new translation. Because of this, Reynolds is often called, “the Father of the King James Bible”.

King James appealed to the English bishops to nominate learned \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ for the translations committee. All of the previous translations had been limited by being the work of an individual or a small number of people. This committee would represent a large number of outstanding scholars. Soon fifty-four scholars had been selected. They would eventually engage the help of at least twenty-one more people.

Tyndale had died to provide the people a translation of the Bible in English. Now King James was authorizing one. Truly the Lord \_\_\_\_\_.

The translators were professional scholars and/or church leaders. Few were married or had families. They were granted leaves by their colleges and churches so that they could \_\_\_\_\_.

The translators were divided into six teams. Two met in Westminster, England, one to work on the Old Testament, one on the New Testament. Two teams met at Oxford, England, one for each Testament. Two teams met at Cambridge. One worked on the Old Testament, one on the Apocrypha.

The teams met regularly for about six years. John Selden described how they checked their translation work,

“The translation in King James’ time took an excellent way. That part of the Bible was given to him who was most excellent in such a tongue (as the Apocrypha to Andrew Downes) and then they met together, and one read that translation, the rest holding in their

hands some Bible, either of the learned tongues, or French, Italian, Spanish &c. If they found any fault, they spoke; if not, he read on.”

An additional team was chosen to review the final work. Two members from each of the three groups were picked. They spent a year carefully checking the entire work.

Dr. Miles Smith reviewed the work for grammar. He placed the commas, colons, and made the final verse and chapter divisions. Finally, Smith declared they were ready “to deliver God’s book unto God’s people in a tongue which they understand”.

Robert Parker, the “Royal Printer,” had exclusive right to print all English editions of the Bible. Miles Smith and Thomas Bilson proofed all the type set by the royal printers. The new translation was so well-received that they immediately issued a second edition — both in 1611. These first two editions were designed for use in the church — they were too large for the home or personal use. People began to beg for copies of the King James Bible. The third edition was printed in a small enough format to be used \_\_\_\_\_.  
Soon, the King James Bible was being \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ The King James Bible soon became \_\_\_\_\_  
in England. As the English colonies developed on the east coast of North America, the King James Bible soon became “the book” there as well.

Russell Kirk describes the influence of the King James Bible in the new world,

“The book that was to exert a stronger influence than any other in America was not published until 1611. A few years after the first Virginian settlement: the “King James” translation of the Bible, the Authorized Version was prepared by English scholars for King James I. Read from American pulpits and in the great majority of American households during colonial times, the Authorized Version shaped the style, informed the intellect, affected the laws, and decreed the morals of the North American colonies.”

There have been many secular testimonies to the importance of the King James Bible. Wendell Bartlett wrote:

“The King James Bible is probably the greatest masterpiece of translation in the world; it has exercised on the thought and the language of English-speaking peoples an influence which cannot be overestimated.”

## II. QUEEN ELIZABETH

Queen Elizabeth, daughter of King Henry VIII, proved to be a strong leader. She issued an Act of Supremacy which required all ministers to recognize \_\_\_\_\_. Independent churches were routinely persecuted.

Elizabeth was vain, self-centered, and controlling; but she was also intelligent, clever, and devoted to England. England’s greatest threat came from Spain, where King Philip coveted control of England. Elizabeth had her representatives negotiate a marriage between herself and King Philip. This would allow Philip to gain the throne of England without a war. Philip quickly agreed to this political marriage. However, Elizabeth managed to keep postponing the wedding until she had used up \_\_\_\_\_. During this time, she worked aggressively \_\_\_\_\_.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth commissioned privateers like Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins to raid Spanish ships bringing gold to Spain from its American colonies.

### III. THE SPANISH ARMADA

The rise of Britain as a world power began in 1588 with the defeat and destruction of the Spanish Armada. The Spanish king, Philip II, controlled the world's most powerful military force and ruled \_\_\_\_\_ . He believed he was chosen to rule by God and was determined to reunite a "Christendom" shattered by the Reformation. Emboldened by success after annexing Portugal, invading the Azores and defeating the Turks at Lepanto, Philip launched his "invincible" Armada of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to bring England back to the Roman Catholic fold (see *Empire, War and Faith*, Parker). Philip believed that since he had "dedicated this enterprise to God... God would send good weather," and that " \_\_\_\_\_ " (*ibid.*, p. 61).

However, when the Armada sailed from Lisbon, it was battered by gales and high seas that damaged and scattered ships, and undermined the morale of commanders and men. Reaching the English Channel, the Armada fought a series of battles with the British navy. Although outnumbered and poorly provisioned, the British ships were faster and carried iron cannons that fired more quickly and had a longer range than the brass cannons of the Spanish. After losing several ships in a battle off the coast of France, the Spanish admiral headed north toward Scotland with a still-powerful fleet of 100 ships, pursued by British ships that were nearly out of powder.

Although some modern historians credit victory to the superior technology of British ships and armaments, *the real story was the weather and the so-called " \_\_\_\_\_ "*. Historian Simon Schama comments that "at every stage *it was geography and the weather that decided the outcome... it was when the Armada rounded the northwest tip of Scotland and ran into merciless Hebridean gales and tempests that it was destroyed*" (*A History of Britain*, p. 386). The Spanish lost 30 to 40 ships on the perilous voyage around Ireland, and the 50 battered boats that limped back to Spain were manned by skeleton crews, decimated by hunger, thirst and disease.

The English people believed that God had preserved them from Roman Catholicism.

### IV. CHALLENGES TO QUEEN ELIZABETH

In Scotland, there had always been a number of independent preachers. In the sixteenth century there were also a number of zealous Protestant Reformers. Both groups united with a group of Scottish nobles to defy both the King of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church. When the Scottish king died, his wife, Mary Stuart, became Queen of Scotland. Mary, a devout Catholic, was in constant conflict with the new "Lords of the Congregation."

French troops (she was related to French nobility) began to pour into Scotland to support her. The people began to rally around the Protestant Reformers like John Knox. Mary was eventually driven from the throne and replaced by her son, James VI. The Roman Catholic Church was replaced by a Calvinist state church.

Mary fled to England, where she sought refuge with her cousin Elizabeth. She was soon connected with plots \_\_\_\_\_ (Mary was a potential heir to the throne). She was arrested and confined to the London Tower. Eventually, she was beheaded.

During Elizabeth's reign, the English began the policy of establishing colonies along the eastern seaboard of the North American continent. Virginia was named in her honor, as she was often called "the Virgin Queen."

Elizabeth died without an heir. King James of Scotland was recognized as the King of England and known as King James I.

## V. KING JAMES

James was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on June 19, 1566. He was the only son of Mary, Queen of Scots. His father, Lord Darnley, was assassinated in an explosion when James was only eight months old. When James was one year old, his mother abdicated the throne of Scotland and James officially became king. She never saw her son again.

In 1589, James was married to Anne, the daughter of Frederick II, King of Denmark. They had eight children together. When Queen Elizabeth (his mother's cousin) died, James was next in line for the throne of England. In 1603, he was crowned King of England. He was officially King James VI of Scotland and King James I of England. He quickly ended the English war with Spain, and England was to live in peace during his reign.

James survived \_\_\_\_\_, the most famous of which was the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. A Roman Catholic agent, Guy Fawkes, had planted several barrels of gunpowder in the basement of Parliament. He planned to blow up the Parliament building while James was addressing the Parliament. His plot was disclosed and defeated. The English still celebrate \_\_\_\_\_ with a national holiday — Guy Fawkes Day.

Even though James had many opponents among the nobility and the clergy, he remained popular among the English people. England experienced \_\_\_\_\_ during his rule.

James was a strong advocate of the doctrine of the Divine Right of kings. Many Protestants felt that he took this concept much farther in his teaching and in his pronouncements than the Scripture warranted. However, he ruled in a generally kind and benevolent manner rather than as a royal despot. His many enemies were never able to generate any grassroots support among the people of England for their criticism of James.

The English program to colonize the Atlantic seaboard, begun under Queen Elizabeth, was strengthened under the influence of King James. Jamestown, the first enduring English settlement in the New World, was named after King James.

King James' most conspicuous claims to fame were the formation of Great Britain (England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland under one throne) and the sponsorship of the King James' translation of the Bible.

## VI. THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

In describing the English Civil War, historian J.H. Merle D' Aubigne wrote:

"There are great crises in the history of man, in which the sovereignty of God over kings and people, however it may be hidden for a time from the eyes of the multitude, is manifested with such

demonstrations of power as to excite the conviction of even the most incredulous.” *The Protector*, p.11.

The English Civil War was fought \_\_\_\_\_ and to defend the historic rights of freedom in England. The English Civil War was in many ways the opposite of the French Revolution.

When King James I died, his son became the king (Charles I). Charles was even more aggressive about asserting the Divine Right of Kings. He went for years without calling for the English Parliament to be in session. His wife was a devout Roman Catholic, and many people believed that he was planning to restore the Catholic Church. When Charles was threatened with an invasion from Scotland, he called Parliament into session to ask for money. When Charles I did not get everything he wanted, he dismissed the Parliament.

Parliament refused to disband and formed an army to defend English liberty. One member of Parliament, Oliver Cromwell, became known as an outstanding military leader. He was also a spiritual leader who \_\_\_\_\_. He and his troops \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ as they marched into battle. They felt that they were defending \_\_\_\_\_.

After suffering several military reverses, the king agreed to recognize the rights of Parliament. Soon he was turning his back on his promises, asserting the Divine Right of Kings and plotting against Parliament. Again, fighting broke out, with Oliver Cromwell as the leader of the opposition. The king was defeated, imprisoned, and put on trial. He was found guilty of violating the rights of the English people \_\_\_\_\_.

Parliament offered to make Cromwell the new king, but he declined.

D’ Aubigne writes:

“Thus he refused to place upon his brows the crown of the Stuarts and the Tudors. There are few men recorded in ancient or modern history who have been able, like him, to resist a similar temptation.” *The Protector*, p. 244.

The Parliament gave in to the temptations of institutional corruption and kept postponing elections. After several years, Cromwell rallied the troops, suspended the Parliament, \_\_\_\_\_. Cromwell assumed the title of Lord Protector and became the virtual dictator of England. Under Cromwell, religious and economic liberties made progress.

Cromwell allowed the Jews to return to England.

England prospered and Cromwell was very popular. After his death, Parliament recognized his son as Lord Protector. He did not have his father’s leadership ability, and the government was soon in chaos. Richard Cromwell resigned his office.

The Parliament was in a quandary about how to continue the government of England. Finally, they agreed to restore the Stuart family to the throne. The son of Charles I was brought from France and recognized as Charles II. He had promised to recognize the rights of Parliament and not to take revenge on those who had executed his father. He kept his promises for a short while, but then he

suspended Parliament and executed several opponents, including Richard Cromwell. Again, the English people chafed under the doctrine of “Divine Right of Kings” and pleaded for relief.

## **VII. THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION**

After the death of Charles II, his brother, James II, became king. He asserted even more strongly the Divine Rights of Kings, and the English people and military revolted. The king had few supporters, and he was forced to flee to France. This is referred to as \_\_\_\_\_

The English Parliament appealed to William of Orange, King of Holland, to accept the throne of England. William was married to the daughter of King James II. William had been a staunch defender of religious liberty and limited government in Holland, and he brought the same principles to England.

## **VIII. THE VICTORIAN ERA**

Queen Victoria ruled over England from 1837-1901. This period is referred to as the Golden Age of England. The English Empire reached its height, the economy flourished, and the English government had a peaceful transition of power from the monarchy to the people.

Victoria followed King George III (who spent his last years completely insane) and the blatantly immoral William IV. Upon assuming the throne she resolved, “I will be good!”

Victoria was a devout Christian who applied her faith to public life. Speaking about the Bible, she said, “That book accounts for the supremacy of England.” In 1849, Victoria sent a Bible to an African chief with this note: “Commerce alone will not make a nation great and happy like England. England has become great and happy by the knowledge of the true God through Jesus Christ. In order to show how much the Queen values God’s Word, she sides with this as a present a copy of the Word.” Victoria believed that it was the role of the Queen to set a moral example and to lead the nation in recognition of moral and spiritual principles.

People often mock the period of Victoria’s rule and have turned the word “Victorian” into an insult. But it is no coincidence that the height of English glory and property came during her reign. Her emphasis on the Bible, limited government, personal responsibility, and morality was reflected in England’s “Golden Age.”

This period is also referred to as the Pax Britannica. Great Britain’s economic and military power led the world to a period of relative peace.