

**Introduction to Scripture & The English Bible**  
**The Translators of the King James Bible**  
**Lesson 23**

"In all these instances, the Bible means the translation authorized by King James the First ... The translation was extraordinarily well done because to the translators what they were translating was not merely a curious collection of ancient books written by different authors in different stages of culture, but the Word of God divinely revealed through His chosen and expressly inspired scribes. In this conviction, they carried out their work with boundless reverence and care and achieved a beautifully artistic result. It did not seem possible to them that they could better the original texts; for who could improve on God's own style?

And as they could not conceive that divine revelation could conflict with what they believed to be the truths of their religion, they did not hesitate to translate a negative by a positive where such a conflict seemed to arise, as they could hardly trust their own fallible knowledge of ancient Hebrew when it contradicted the very foundations of their faith, nor could they doubt that God would, as they prayed, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

In this state of exaltation, they made a translation so magnificent that to this day the common human Britisher or citizen of the United States of North America accepts and worships it as a single book by a single author, the book being the Book of Books and the author being God."

Bernard Shaw ~~

**I. 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 \_\_\_\_\_ wanted to return to the Roman Catholic Church. The \_\_\_\_\_ wanted to maintain an independent English church but keep many of the doctrines, ceremonies and traditions of the Catholic Church. The \_\_\_\_\_ wanted to "purify" the church of Catholicism and maintain an evangelical state church.

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 Rainolds, approached King James and asked him to authorize a new translation. King James was himself a great linguist and had translated the Psalms and Revelation into English.

Rainolds was President of Corpus Christi College at Oxford. He persuaded King James to sponsor this new translation. Because of this Rainolds is often called, "\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_."

King James appealed to the English bishops to nominate learned Greek and Hebrew scholars for the translation committee. All of the previous translations had been limited by being the work of \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_. 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 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 be full time translators.

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 \_\_\_\_\_. 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, etc. If they found any fault, they spoke; if not, he read on." (Paine, *The Men Behind the King James Version*, p. 76)

An \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. 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 at home. Soon, the King James Bible was being read by firesides all over England. The King James Bible soon became the "book" 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.

## II. THE GOAL OF THE TRANSLATORS OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE

"The central objective of the king's translators was scholarly \_\_\_\_\_ - the finding of proper English words and phrases to render the original Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. Sense and meaning took priority over elegance. The achievement of prosaic and poetic elegance that resulted was, so to speak, a most happy accident of history. Yet this outcome must not divert us from the fact that the idea of 'the Bible as literature' was unknown to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which saw \_\_\_\_\_."

~ Alistair McGrath, *In the Beginning*, pp. 254-255 ~

"Chapter four deals with King James and the production of the KJB. Speaking about the KJV translators Bobrick states on the front flap that the 'collective expertise in Biblical languages and related fields' by the 54 scholars who produced the KJV ' \_\_\_\_\_'."

~ Evangelist Don Jasmin commenting on *Wide as the Waters*, by Benson Bobrick ~

Both of these are recently published secular books.

The secular, historical world understands the nature of the translation of the King James Bible better than the religious, hysterical opponents of the King James Bible.

### III. THE LEARNED MEN

Public domain notes on the translators of the King James Bible by Terrance Broior.

#### "THE TRANSLATORS OF THE AUTHORIZED VERSION OF THE HOLY BIBLE IN ENGLISH A.D 1611

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'We commend thee to God, and to the Spirit of His grace, which is able to build further than we can ask or think. He removeth the scales from our eyes, the veil from our hearts, opening our wits that we may understand His Word, enlarging our hearts, yea, correcting our affections, that we may love it above gold and silver, yea, that we may love it to the end.'

~ The Translators' Preface to the Authorized Version ~

#### THE LEARNED MEN

'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 (Dr. Miles Smith - 'The Translators to the Reader').'

Advocates of the modern versions often assume that they are the product of scholarship far superior to that of the translators of the King James' Version of 1611, but this assumption is not supported by the facts. The learned men who laboured on our English Bible were men of exceptional ability, and although they differed among themselves on

many matters of church order, administration and doctrine, they approached the task with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Scriptures. To them it was 'God's sacred Truth' and demanded the exercise of their utmost care and fidelity in its translation.

The most learned men in the land were chosen for this work and the complete list shows a high proportion of men with a profound knowledge of the languages in which the Bible was written. Of the fifty - four who were chosen, a few died or withdrew before the translation was started and the final list numbered forty - seven men. They were divided into six companies and a portion was assigned to each group. Everyone in each company translated the whole portion before they met to compare their results and agree upon the final form. They then transmitted their draft to each of the other companies for their comment and consent. A select committee then went carefully through the whole work again, and at last two of their number were responsible for the final checking.

The six committees were to meet at Westminster, Oxford and Cambridge. \_\_\_\_\_ attended by:

1. Dr. Lancelot Andrewes, Fellow of Pembroke, Cambridge, where he took his B.A., M.A., and divinity degrees, later became Dean of Westminster, Bishop of Ely and then of Winchester.
2. Dr. John Overall, Fellow of Trinity and Master of St. Catharine's Cambridge, became Dean of St. Paul's and successively Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield and Norwich. He took his D.D. in 1596 and became Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge.
3. Dr. Adrian Saravia, Professor of Divinity at Leyden University in 1582, became Prebendary of Canterbury and Westminster. In the controversies of that period, he is often referred to as "that learned foreigner." His Spanish descent and residence in Holland qualified him to assist the translators with his first - hand knowledge of the work of Spanish and Dutch scholars.
4. Dr. John Layfield, Fellow of Trinity, Cambridge in 1585 and Greek lecturer in 1593, was specially skilled in architecture, and his judgment was relied on regarding passages describing the Tabernacle and Temple.
5. Dr. Richard Clarke, Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, D.D.
6. Dr. William Teigh, Archdeacon of Middlesex, Rector of All Hallows, Barking-by-the-Tower, described by Wood as 'an excellent textuary and profound linguist.'
7. Dr. F. Burleigh, B.D. 1594, D.D. 1607, Fellow, King James' College, Chelsea.

8. Richard Thomson M.A., Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, described by Richard Montagu as 'a most admirable philologer ... better known in Italy, France and Germany than at home.'
9. William Bedwell, M.A., St. John's College, Cambridge, had established his reputation as an Arabic scholar before 1603 and is recognized as 'the Father of Arabic studies in England.' He was the author of the 'Lexicon Heptaglotton' in seven folio volumes, including Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldee and Arabic. He also commenced a Persian dictionary and an Arabic translation of the Epistles of John. (Now among the Laud MSS in the Bodleian Library)
10. Professor Geoffrey King, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and Regius Professor of Hebrew. Lively, Spalding, King and Byng held this professorship in succession.

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included another seven scholars:

1. Dr. William Barlow, St. John's Cambridge, B.A. in 1583, M.A. in 1587, Fellow of Trinity in 1590, B.D. in 1594, D.D. in 1599. He represented the 'Church Party' at the Hampton Court Conference and wrote 'The Summe and Substance of the Conference,' which the Puritans criticized as being biased against their cause. He was made Bishop of Rochester in 1605, 'one of the youngest in age, but one of the ripest in learning' of all those that had occupied that position. He later became Bishop of Lincoln.
2. Dr. Ralph Huchinson, President of St. John's College, Oxford, B.A. in 1574, M.A. in 1578, B.D. in 1596, and D.D. in 1602.
3. Dr. John Spenser, President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.
4. Dr. Roger Fenton, Fellow of Pembroke, Cambridge, D.D., one of the popular preachers of the day.
5. Mr. Michael Rabbet, Rector of St. Vedast, Foster Lane.
6. Mr. Thomas Sanderson, Rector of All Hallows.
7. Professor William Dakins, Fellow of Trinity, Cambridge, M.A. in 1594, B.D. in 1601, Greek Lecturer at Trinity, and Professor of Divinity at Gresham College in 1604.

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enrolled:

1. Dr. John Harding, President of Magdalen College and Regius Professor of Hebrew. He presided over this committee.
2. Dr. John Reynolds, Merton College, Oxford, moved to Corpus Christi and became Fellow in 1566. He took his D.D. in 1585 and became Regius Professor of Divinity. After several years as Dean of Lincoln, he was made President of Corpus Christi College in 1598. He represented the Puritans at the Hampton Court Conference at which he suggested that a new translation of the Bible should be undertaken. His reputation as a Hebrew and Greek scholar was sufficient warrant for his inclusion among the translators, and Hall relates that 'his memory and reading were near to a miracle.' He worked on the translation of the Prophets until his death in 1607. During this period, the Oxford translators met at his residence once a week to compare and discuss what they had done.
3. Dr. Thomas Holland, Balliol and Exeter Colleges, Oxford, B.A. 1570, M.A. 1575, B.D. 1582, D.D. 1584. Master and Regius Professor of Divinity 1589. He achieved so much distinction in many fields of learning that he was not only highly esteemed among English scholars but also had a good reputation in the universities of Europe. Like Apollos, he was mighty in the Scriptures, and like the Apostle, he was faithful in explaining them. His example went hand in hand with his precepts, and he himself lived what he preached to others. Among the translators, he was probably the most strongly opposed to Rome and it is recorded that whenever he went on a journey away from his college he would call the men together and 'commend them to the love of God and to the abhorrence of popery.'

His biographer writes, 'He loved and he longed for God, for the presence of God, and for the full enjoyment of Him. His soul was framed for heaven, and could find no rest till it came there. His dying prayer was - 'Come, O come, Lord Jesus, Thou Morning Star! Come Lord Jesus; I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Thee!'

4. Dr. Richard Kilby, Lincoln College, Oxford, B.A. 1578, M.A. 1582, B.D. and D.D. in 1596 and Regius Professor of Hebrew in 1610. Author of a work on Exodus prepared from Hebrew commentators. An interesting story is found in Walton's biography of Bishop Sanderson illustrating the truth of the old proverb, 'a little learning is a dangerous thing.' Dr. Kilby, an excellent Hebrew scholar and Professor of this language in the university, also expert in Greek and chosen as one of the translators, went on a visit with Sanderson and at Church on Sunday, they heard a young preacher waste a great amount of the time allotted for his sermon in criticizing several words in the then recent translation. He carefully showed how one particular word should have been translated in a different way. Later that evening, the preacher and the learned strangers were invited together to a meal and Dr. Kilby took the opportunity to tell the preacher that he could have used his time more profitably. The Doctor then explained that the translators had very carefully considered the 'three reasons' given by the preacher, but they had

found another thirteen more weighty reasons for giving the rendering complained of by the young critic.

5. Dr. Miles Smith, M.A., D.D., Corpus Christi, and Brasenose and Christ Church, Oxford, Bishop of Gloucester in 1612. He provided more evidence of his contribution than any of the others, as it was left to him to write the long Translators' Preface - 'The Translator to the Reader,' which used to be printed at the beginning of most English Bibles. His knowledge of the oriental languages made him well qualified for a place among the translators of the Authorized Version of the Bible. He had Hebrew at his fingers' ends, and he was so conversant with Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic, that he made them as familiar to him as his native tongue. He persisted in this task from its commencement to its completion and was himself the last man engaged in the translation.

The work of the whole company was revised and improved by a small group selected by Bilson and Miles Smith. The latter then wrote the famous preface, beginning - 'Zeal to promote the common good ...'

6. Dr. Richard Brett, Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, D.D., well versed in classical and eastern languages, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldee, Arabic and Ethiopic.
7. Mr. Fairclowe, Fellow of New College, Oxford.

\_\_\_\_\_ included:

1. Dr. Thomas Ravis, Christ Church, Oxford, B.A. 1578, M.A. 1581, D.D. 1589, D.D. 1595, Vice Chancellor 1597. He was one of the six deans who attended the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 and was made Bishop of Gloucester in that year.
2. Dr. George Abbot - began his university studies at Balliol College, Oxford in 1578 and soon became known for his strong Calvinism and Puritanism. In 1593, he took his B.D., in 1597 his D.D., and in the same year became Master of University College at the age of thirty five, and a few years later he was Vice Chancellor. He very strongly opposed the Romanizing influence of Laud and was very sincere in his denunciation of anything which savoured of 'popery.' Nevertheless he accepted some high offices in the Church of England and in 1609 became Bishop of Lichfield and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1611. He was regarded as the head of the Puritans within the Church of England and he vigorously opposed the King's declaration permitting sports and pastimes on the Lord's Day. He encouraged James to request the States General to dismiss Vorstius from his professorship at Leyden because of his Arminianism.
3. Dr. R. Eedes, Dean of Worcester.

4. Dr. Giles Thompson, Dean of Windsor, Bishop of Gloucester, a man of high repute as scholar and preacher.
5. Sir Henry Saville, Brasenose College, Oxford, Fellow of Merton College in 1565 and Warden in 1585, Provost of Eton in 1596, Tutor to Queen Elizabeth I. He was a pioneer in many branches of scholarship and the founder of the Savillian Professorships of Mathematics and Astronomy at Oxford. His works include an eight volume edition of the writings of Chrysostom.
6. Dr. John Perin, Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, Canon of Christ Church and Professor of Greek.
7. Dr. Ralph Ravens, Fellow of St. John's College.
8. John Harmar, M.A., New College, Oxford, Professor of Greek in 1585. He was well read in patristic and scholastic theology and a noted Latinist and Grecian. His works include translations of Calvin's sermons on the Ten Commandments, several of Beza's sermons, and some of the Homilies of Chrysostom.

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also numbered eight scholars:

1. Edward Liveley, Trinity College, Cambridge, B.A. in 1568, M.A. and Fellow in 1572, Regius Professor of Hebrew in 1575, enjoyed the reputation of an acquaintance with the oriental languages unequaled at that period.
2. Dr. John Richardson, Fellow of Emmanuel College, D.D., Master of Peterhouse and later Master of Trinity.
3. Dr. Laurence Chaderton, Fellow of Christ's College, D.D., Master of Emmanuel. Chaderton entered Christ's College in 1564 and embraced the Reformed doctrines. He had been brought up as a Roman Catholic, and his father offered him an allowance of thirty pounds if he would leave Cambridge and renounce Protestantism 'Otherwise I enclose a shilling to buy a wallet - go and beg.' He acquired a great reputation as a Latin, Greek and Hebrew scholar and was also proficient in French, Spanish and Italian. For fifty years, he was Afternoon Lecturer at St. Clement's Cambridge, and forty of the clergy said they owed their conversion to his preaching.

He was a noted Puritan, but he did not join the cry against 'prelacy,' although he never accepted a bishopric himself. He was one of the three representatives of the 'Millenary Plaintiffs' at the Hampton Court Conference. This faithful preacher and teacher lived to be 94 (one of his biographers says 104), and almost to the time of his death he was able to read his small type Greek New Testament.

4. Francis Dillingham, Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, M.A. in 1590 and B.D. in 1599. According to Fuller, he was 'an excellent linguist and subtle disputant.' His works include 'A dissuasive from Poperie, containing twelve effectual reasons by which every Papist, not wilfully blinded, may be brought to the truth.'
5. Dr. Roger Andrewes, Fellow of Pembroke, Master of Jesus College, D.D., brother of Lancelot Andrewes.
6. Dr. Thomas Harrison, St. John's College, Cambridge, B.A. in 1576. Fellow, Tutor and Vice-Master of Trinity, D.D., noted Hebraist and chief examiner in Hebrew. He was a convinced Puritan.
7. Professor Robert Spalding, Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, succeeded Edward Liveley as Professor of Hebrew.
8. Professor Byng, Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, and Hebrew professor.

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included the following scholars:

1. Dr. John Duport, Jesus College, M.A. and Fellow before 1580. D.D. in 1590, Master of Jesus College, four times Vice-Chancellor of the University.
2. Dr. William Brainthwaite, Fellow of Emmanuel and Master of Gonville and Caius College.
3. Dr. Jeremiah Radcliffe, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.
4. Dr. Samuel Ward, Emmanuel College, Cambridge, D.D., Master of Sidney College, and Margaret Professor. His correspondence with Archbishop Ussher contains treasures of diversified learning, especially concerning Biblical and oriental criticism.
5. Professor Andrew Downes, St. John's, Cambridge, B.A. 1567, Fellow 1571, M.A. 1574, B.D. 1582, Regius Professor of Greek 1585. Downes and Boys revived the study of Greek at St. John's. These two men joined Miles Smith on the sub-committee which subjected the whole translation to a final careful process of checking and correction.
6. John Boys, Fellow of St. John's, Cambridge, and Greek lecturer there. He was born in 1560 and at a very early age showed an unusual interest in languages. He began to read Hebrew at the age of five years and was admitted to St. John's College, Cambridge, when he was fourteen. There he very soon distinguished himself by his knowledge of the Greek language, which he sometimes studied in the library from 4 a.m. until 8 p.m.

When he was elected fellow of his college, he was suffering from smallpox, but he was so anxious not to delay his career that, at some risk to himself and fellow-scholars, he persuaded his friends to wrap him in blankets and carry him in. After studying medicine for some time, he gave up this course and applied himself to the study of Greek. For ten years, he was the chief Greek lecturer in his college. At four in the morning, he voluntarily gave a Greek lecture in his own room which was frequented by many of the Fellows.

After twenty years of university life, he became Rector of Boxworth in Cambridgeshire and while he was there, he made an arrangement with twelve other ministers that they should meet each Friday in each other's homes in turn and share the results of their studies.

When the translation of the Bible was begun, he was chosen to be one of the Cambridge translators and eventually, he not only undertook his portion but also the part allotted to another member of the committee. When the work was completed, John Boys was one of the six translators who met at Stationers' Hall to revise the whole. This took them about nine months and during this period the Company of Stationers made them an allowance of thirty shillings each per week.

After a long life of profitable study, ministry, translating and writing he died at the age of 84, 'his brow without wrinkles, his sight quick, his hearing sharp, his countenance fresh and his body sound'.

7. Dr. Ward, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, D.D., Prebendary of Chichester.

Lancelot Andrewes, a member of the Westminster Committee, had his early education at Coopers Free School and Merchant Taylors School where his rapid progress in the study of the ancient languages was brought to the notice of Dr. Watts, the founder of some scholarships at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. Andrewes was sent to that College, where he took his B.A. degree and soon afterwards was elected Fellow. He then took his Master's degree and began to study "divinity" and achieved great distinction as a lecturer. He was raised to several positions of influence in the Church of England and distinguished himself as a diligent and excellent preacher, and became Chaplain to Queen Elizabeth I. King James I promoted him to be Bishop of Chester in 1605 and also gave him the influential position of Lord Almoner. He later became Bishop of Ely and Privy Councillor. Toward the end of his life, he was made Bishop of Winchester.

It is recorded that Andrewes was a man of deep piety and that King James had such great respect for him that in his presence he refrained from the levity in which he indulged at other times. A sermon preached at Andrewes' funeral in 1626 paid tribute to his great scholarship 'His knowledge in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac and Arabic, besides fifteen modern languages was so advanced that he may be ranked as one of the rarest linguists in Christendom.'

'A great part of five hours every day he spent in prayer, and in his last illness he spent all his time in prayer - and when both voice and eyes and hands failed in their office, his countenance showed that he still prayed and praised God in his heart, until it pleased God to receive his blessed soul to Himself'

No reasonable person imagines that the translators were infallible or that their work was perfect, but no one acquainted with the facts can deny that they were men of outstanding scholarship, well qualified for their important work, or that with God's blessing they completed their great task with scrupulous care and fidelity.

It is remarkable that the literary style of individual members of the company of translators was generally inferior to that of the version which they jointly produced. The explanation of this is that they exercised their wisdom in leaving undisturbed the simple style and vocabulary of the earlier translators. If they had cast the translation in the mould of the more ornate style of their own period, it is doubtful whether their work would have triumphed for so long as it has. They made many thousands of small changes, most of which improved the rhythm, clarified the meaning or increased the accuracy of the translation.

They were indeed "learned men" - and their scholarship was accompanied by a deep conviction of the Divine origin of the records which they were translating. Learning and faith went hand in hand to open the storehouse of God's Word of Truth for the spiritual enrichment of millions from generation to generation, over a period of more than three hundred and fifty years."

Note:

The 1<sup>st</sup> Westminster Committee translated Genesis to I Chronicles  
The 2<sup>nd</sup> Westminster Committee translated the Epistles  
The Oxford O.T. Committee translated Isaiah to Malachi  
The Oxford N.T. Committee translated the Gospels, Acts and Revelation  
The 1<sup>st</sup> Cambridge Committee translated II Chronicles to Song of Solomon  
The 2<sup>nd</sup> Cambridge Committee translated the Apocrypha

#### **IV. TRANSLATORS REVIVED**

A more detailed historical study of the translators can be found in *The Translators Revived*, by Alexander McClure.