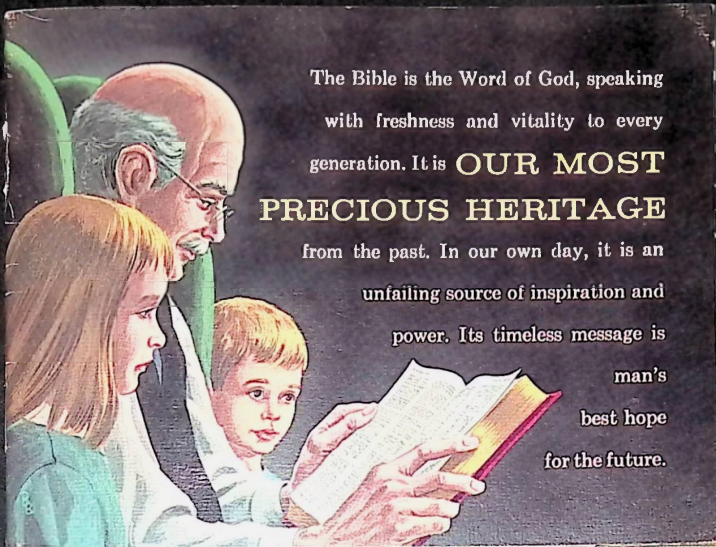




The Bible is the Word of God, speaking
with freshness and vitality to every
generation. It is **OUR MOST
PRECIOUS HERITAGE**

from the past. In our own day, it is an
unfailing source of inspiration and
power. Its timeless message is

man's
best hope
for the future.

The Bible Jesus Knew

IN Jesus' time, every Jewish community had the part of our Bible we call the Old Testament. It was handwritten on scrolls, in Hebrew or Greek, and kept in the synagogue where people met for religious instruction and worship. Jesus read from a scroll like this in the synagogue at Nazareth.

The scrolls were made from goatskins or sheepskins, sewed together to make rolls from ten to thirty feet long. Usually each scroll contained one whole book. The books of the Old Testament were first written in Hebrew, but by the time of Christ they had been translated into Greek, which was then an international language.

The earliest Old Testament manuscript now known is a Hebrew scroll of Isaiah which was probably written about the second century B.C. It was found in 1947 in a cave near the Dead Sea.

There are 39 books and 929 chapters in the Old Testament.

#2



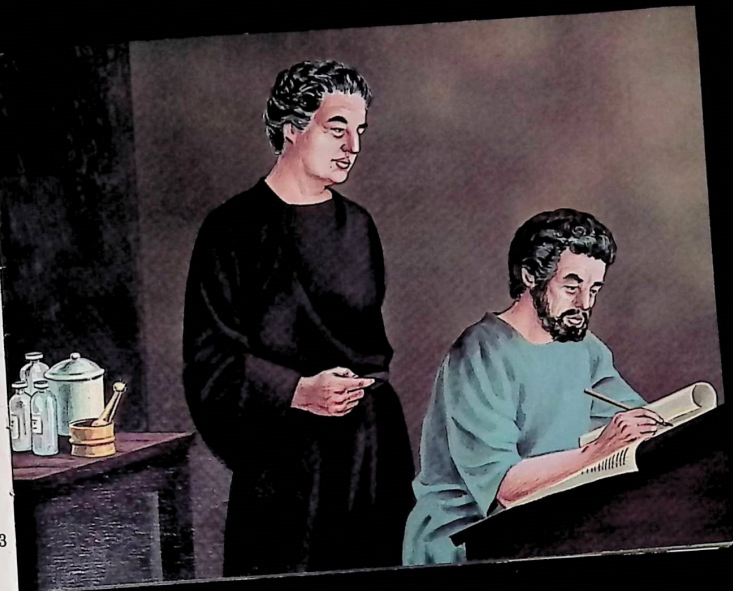
The Good News

THE New Testament tells the gospel, or good news, of Jesus Christ, and describes experiences of the early Christians. Luke dictated his gospel to a scribe, who wrote it down in Greek. The other books of the New Testament were also written in Greek. The sayings of Jesus may first have been written down in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke.

Much of the New Testament consists of letters written by Paul and other apostles to early Christian churches throughout the Mediterranean world. Copies were made for neighboring churches, and these, with copies of the gospel writings, were widely circulated.

The oldest known fragment of a New Testament manuscript is a tiny piece of papyrus written early in the second century. It contains a few words from the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel of John.

There are 27 books and 260 chapters in the New Testament.



A Translation Into Latin

410 A. D.

JEROME, a scholar appointed by the Bishop of Rome, worked twenty-five years to translate the entire Bible from Hebrew and Greek into everyday Latin. Latin was then the common language of the people in many parts of the western world. Known as the Vulgate, Jerome's translation is still the official text of the Roman Catholic Church.

In order to be as thorough as possible, Jerome did most of his work in Palestine, spending much of his time in Bethlehem. He first translated the whole Bible from Greek into Latin. Then he made a fresh translation of the Old Testament, this time from the Hebrew.

The term "Vulgate" comes from the Latin word "vulgas," meaning "common" or "ordinary." It was first applied to Jerome's Bible in the thirteenth century and refers to the frequent and common use made of this translation by the church, as well as to the fact that, in Jerome's time, Latin was the language spoken by the common people.

#4



An Early English Translation

735 A. D.

By the eighth century, only scholars could understand Latin. A monk known as the Venerable Bede began a translation of the Latin Vulgate Bible into Anglo-Saxon, the language then spoken in England. According to legend, he died while dictating his translation of the Gospel of John.

When and how the Bible first reached the British Isles is not known. The first copies may have been carried there in the second or third centuries by Christians serving in the Roman armies. The Bible had certainly arrived in England by the early part of the fourth century, when London and York already had bishops.

In the seventh century, Caedmon, a Saxon cowherd, put some of the Bible's stories into song. The stories were told to him by monks, who had read them in the Latin Bible. Caedmon's poetic paraphrases are thought to have been the earliest Anglo-Saxon form of any part of the Bible.

#5



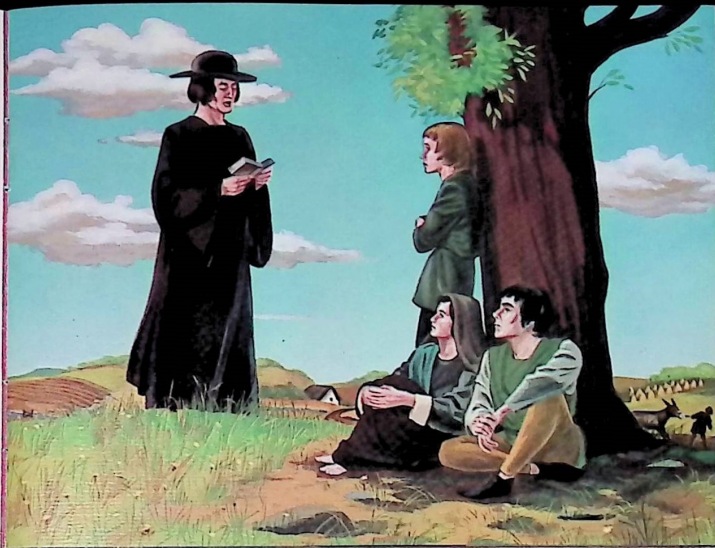
The First Complete English Bible

1383 A. D.

WHEN John Wyclif and others completed the first English translation of the entire Bible, from the Latin Vulgate, the church authorities did all they could to destroy it. Copies had to be written by hand and in secret. Wyclif distributed parts of them to his followers, called Lollards, who travelled all over England reading them to the people. Many who read and listened were punished, and some were burned at the stake.

Wyclif himself died in 1384, before he could be punished, but in 1428, at the direction of church authorities, his body was dug up and burned. The ashes were thrown into a nearby stream.

The Wyclif Bible, despite persecutions, was widely used throughout the fifteenth century. Some people paid the equivalent of more than two hundred dollars for a complete Bible, and others gave a load of hay for a few chapters from a single book.



Martin Luther

1483-1546 A. D.

MARTIN Luther asserted the Bible's supremacy. Defying church and state, he declared his conscience was governed only by the Word of God. To bring the Bible to all the people, he prepared a German translation of the New Testament in 1522, and of the whole Bible in 1534. He used vivid, everyday expressions to make the meaning clear and alive, and his translation was based, not on the Latin Vulgate, but on the original Hebrew and Greek. His conviction and work had considerable influence on English translations that followed.

Protestants in Germany still use the Luther Bible.

Luther and other translators were greatly aided by the work of Erasmus, who produced in 1516 an edition of the Greek New Testament, with a parallel Latin translation. Until then most scholars in western Europe had no access to the New Testament in its original language, but had to depend solely on the Latin.



William Tyndale

1494-1536 A. D.

WILLIAM Tyndale was the first and most influential of the great sixteenth century English translators. Many of his expressions survive in the Bibles we read today. Tyndale felt that the people had a right to know what was promised to them in the Scriptures, and that they could not be expected to read Latin. To one of the many Church leaders who opposed him, he declared: "If God spare my life, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest."

The Latin Bible was the only one then available to most Englishmen. Few were able to obtain one of the scarce, hand-written copies of the old Wyclif Bible. Even fewer could read its antiquated text, for the language had changed a great deal in a hundred and fifty years. Tyndale was aware that only a new translation, written in the English of his own day, could satisfy the people's hunger for the Scriptures.

#8



The First Printed English New Testament

1525 A. D.

JOHANN Gutenberg, the inventor of printing, produced the first printed Bible, in Latin, about 1456. Tyndale's New Testament was the first to be printed in English. It was done in Germany, because the translation and its use by the people of England were prohibited by both King and Church. Copies were smuggled into England in shipments of grain and cloth. Tyndale was working on a translation of the Old Testament when he was betrayed and condemned to be strangled and burned. His last words were a prayer: "Lord, open Thou the King of England's eyes."

Tyndale's translations were written in a simple, living form of English that represented the best speech of the people. His New Testament was based on the Greek and Latin texts of Erasmus, the Latin Vulgate and Luther's German New Testament. His work on the Old Testament was based primarily on the original Hebrew.

#9



The First Printed English Bible

1535 A. D.

MILES Coverdale finished the Old Testament translation Tyndale had begun, and revised Tyndale's New Testament. The resulting Bible was printed abroad. Copies of it circulated in England without much difficulty. The Bible was dedicated to Henry VIII, but the King did not authorize it until 1537, when a new edition was printed in England.

Coverdale's was a secondary translation; that is, it was based on previous translations into Latin, German and English, rather than on the original Hebrew and Greek. Nevertheless, we are indebted to him for carrying on the work that Tyndale had begun, and enriching it with tenderness and resourcefulness.

Although Coverdale's style lacked the vigor and originality of Tyndale, his contributions to our English Bible reveal great beauty and aptness of thought. Many of his expressions are still found in the King James and later versions, especially in the Old Testament.

#10



The Great Bible

1539 A.D.

THE notes and prefaces of Tyndale's and Coverdale's translations aroused so much argument that Henry VIII authorized production of a Bible that included no controversial material. The new Bible, also prepared by Miles Coverdale, was known as the Great Bible, because of its large size. Copies were chained in the churches for safekeeping, and people gathered to listen to the reading of the Scriptures.

Two years before, in 1537, Matthew's Bible had been published—so called because it carried a dedication signed by a Thomas Matthew. John Rogers, a friend of Tyndale, was responsible for its publication. It contained Tyndale's translation of Genesis through II Chronicles, Coverdale's translation of the rest of the Old Testament, and Tyndale's New Testament. Its greatest significance is that it set up the basic text of our present English Bible. The Great Bible, the Bishops' Bible, the King James Bible and most subsequent versions are essentially revisions of this text.

#11



The Geneva Bible

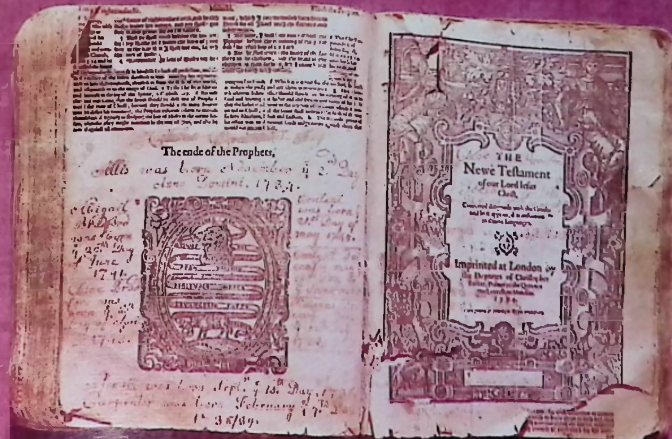
1560 A. D.

WHEN Catholic Mary Tudor came to the throne, public use of the Bible was again prohibited. Scholars fled to Geneva, Switzerland, and there undertook a new version of the Bible, after a study of many Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. The Geneva Bible was published as a small book for use by the people, and it quickly became the most popular version. For the first time, the text was divided into verses. The copy shown here was brought to America on the Mayflower, in 1620, by Governor Bradford of the Plymouth Colony.

The Bishops' Bible, published in 1568, was a revision of the Great Bible by a committee of scholars supervised by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Most of the committee were bishops, hence the Bible's name. It was used in the churches, but never replaced the Geneva Bible in the home.

The Rheims-Douai Bible, first issued by the Roman Catholic Church in 1582 and 1609, is an English version based on the Latin Vulgate.

#12



The King James Version

1611 A. D.

At a conference called by King James in 1604 to consider, among other things, serious differences of opinion over versions of the Bible then in existence, Dr. John Reynolds proposed a new translation that would have the approval of the whole church. A commission of fifty-four scholars was appointed to undertake such a revision. They based their work on a study of early Hebrew and Greek manuscripts as well as many of the later translations, and much thought was given to beauty of style. The new Bible immediately replaced the versions then being used in the churches. Within the next fifty years, it became the most popular version for use in the home.

The King James Version was the result of almost three years of concentrated effort by the scholars, and nine more months of final editing. It was freer of controversy than most previous versions; no marginal notes were inserted except to explain some Greek and Hebrew words.

#13



The First English Bible Printed in America

1782 A.D.

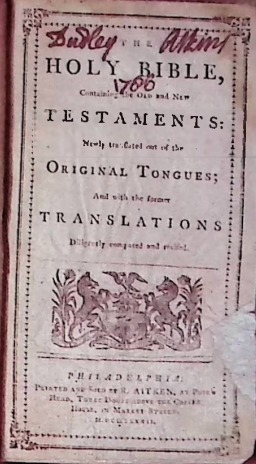
WHEN the United States became a nation in 1776, Bibles still had to be imported from England or Holland and were difficult to obtain. Robert Aitken, a Philadelphia printer, produced the first English Bible ever printed in America. An edition of the King James Version, it was commended to the public by a special Congressional resolution.

Thirty-nine years earlier, in 1743, the first Bible in a European language had been produced in this country. It was a German Bible, printed by Christopher Saur in Germantown, Pennsylvania.

In 1663, a Bible had been printed here in the language of the Massachusetts Indians. John Eliot, a missionary, was the translator.

Our forefathers valued the Holy Scriptures so highly that in 1816 they founded the American Bible Society to translate and publish them and encourage their circulation. Its first president was Elias Boudinot, a friend of George Washington and president of the Continental Congress.

#14



The English Revised Version

1881-1885 A.D.

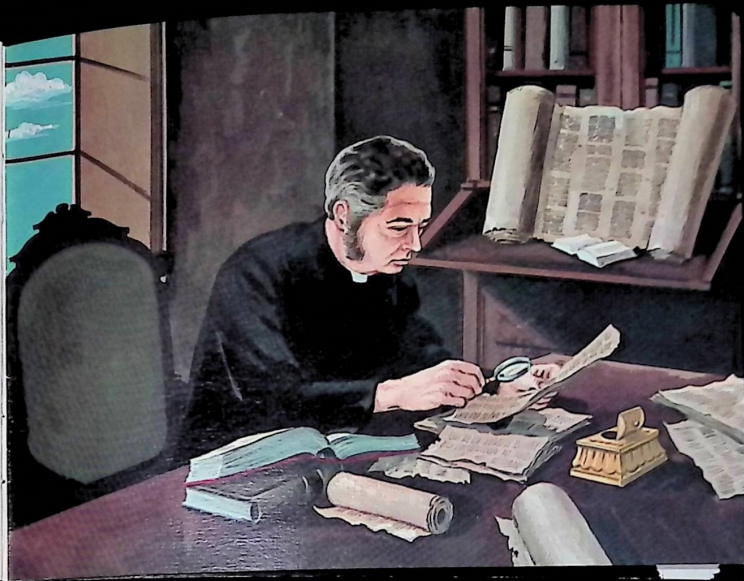
The American Standard Version

1901 A.D.

BY THE nineteenth century, scholarship had advanced considerably. New manuscripts had been discovered, and old ones were better understood. Archeological findings had illuminated certain passages. In 1870, the Church of England appointed scholars to study all available texts in the light of these developments and make a new revision. American scholars were invited to participate; later, they published their own revision, differing from the British version in some words and phrases.

Popular interest in the British version of the New Testament was so great that orders for a million copies had been placed by the time of its publication. When the first copies arrived in America, the entire New Testament was printed in two Chicago newspapers.

#15



The Revised Standard Version

1946-1952 A.D.

OUR knowledge of ancient manuscripts and languages still is growing. Conscious of this, and of changes in the English language itself, America's International Council of Religious Education authorized, in 1937, a new revision of the Bible "to embody the best results of modern scholarship." The work was undertaken by a committee of thirty-two American scholars, and the result was the Revised Standard Version.

As time goes on, more revisions will be made, perfecting and clarifying the language, but not changing the great history and the great truth which the Bible brings to us — our most precious heritage.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but
my words shall not pass away."

—MATTHEW 24:35



BIBLE HISTORY COMES TO LIFE

through these interrelated teaching materials

- Additional copies of this booklet, *Our Most Precious Heritage*, are available at 20¢ ea.; 15¢ ea. for 10 or more.
- Sixteen 9" x 12" *Picture Posters of the History of the English Bible* — the same full-color pictures in larger size, with brief explanatory text and teachers' guide — are available at \$1.25 per set.
- The pictures used in this booklet and in the posters are taken from the four-part filmstrip, *How Our Bible Came To Us*. With 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm record, script and teachers' guide, the price is \$15.00. Without the record, the price is \$12.00. Not available for rent.
- Booklets, posters and filmstrips are based on a feature length motion picture, *Our Bible — How It Came To Us* (84 min., b&w, sound, rental: \$22.50). Featuring more than 250 actors, the film is the most authentic ever made on this subject. It is also available in three parts for separate showings: *Formation of the Bible* (25 min., rental: \$8), *The Bible Spreads Across Europe* (24 min., rental: \$8) and *Making of the English Bible* (35 min., rental: \$9).

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