



The Bible, Origin of the New Testament

The Reproduction of Scriptural Copies

Scriptural copies were created by hand prior to the development of the printing press in 1454 AD. The scribe (copier) counted every word and every letter in a Scriptural portion before and after he copied it. If the number did not agree, the manuscript was destroyed. They used a certain kind of ink and wrote on special animal skins. Each word was pronounced by the scribe aloud while he copied. Every time the term “God” appeared he would clean the quill and dip in fresh ink. Before recording the name of Jehovah, the scribe would wash his entire body with water. The work was then checked upon completion and if one incorrect letter was found, the manuscript was destroyed.

Progression of Major Handwritten Copies

In about 250 BC, more Jews spoke Greek than Hebrew because of the worldwide influence of the late Alexander the Great. So the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into the Greek. It was called the Septuagint. Also in about 250 AD, due to Roman influence an “Old Latin” Bible was in circulation. From this in 401 AD came the “Latin Vulgate” and from the Latin Vulgate came the Roman Catholic Douay Version.

English translations came, for the most part, from the Greek Septuagint and Greek New Testament. Catholic influence, however, translated their versions from the Latin Vulgate. The first English attempt was in 700 AD by Aldhelm, a translation of the Psalms. At the same time, Bede translated a portion of the Gospel of John. The first complete English translation occurred in 1380 AD for the New Testament, 1382 AD for the Old Testament by John Wycliffe. Persecution was severe at this time from many religious authorities because they did not think that the Scriptures should be in the hands of the common people! 170 copies exist today.

Progression of Printing Press Copies

In 1454 AD, Gutenberg printed a Latin Psalter. In 1456 AD, an entire Latin Vulgate Bible was printed called “The Gutenberg Bible” and was among the earliest major books printed using mass-produced movable metal type. Forty-nine copies (or substantial portions of copies) have survived.

William Tyndale in 1525 AD was the first to print and publish a complete New Testament in the English language. In five years, 15,000 copies were in print. Tyndale was banished from England and later strangled to death and then burned at the stake for printing this New Testament. But a year after he died, the whole Bible was printed and authorized by the King of England.

In 1537 AD, an entire Bible was published by John Rogers and copies were chained to stands to keep them from being destroyed, hence the Chained Bible. John Rogers was burned at the stake in 1555 by the Queen of England - Mary Tudor otherwise known as Bloody Mary for her persecution of Protestants. During her brief reign of 4 1/2 years, 300 Christians were burned at the stake, hundreds more banished from the country and much blood was shed. The Bible has also been translated into 1100 other tongues and dialects. For the past 1,000 years the history of our Bible has been connected with much bloodshed.

Chronological Listing of Other English Bibles

The Great Bible in 1539



The Geneva Bible in 1560
The Bishop's Bible in 1568
The Douay Version in 1610
King James Version (1611, KJV) revised in 1769
The English Revised Version in 1885
American Standard Version (1901, ASV)
Twentieth Century New Testament (1901, TCNT) revised in 1904
The New Testament in Modern Speech (1903, NTMS)
The Worrell New Testament (1904)
Thompson Chain Reference Bible (1908)
The Scofield Study Bible (1909) revised 1917
A New Translation of the Bible (1928, MNT)
The Bible: An American Translation (1935, AAT)
The New Testament in the Language of the People (1937, NTLP)
Knox Bible (1949, KNOX)
Revised Standard Version (1952, RSV)
The Daily Study Bible (1954)
The New Testament in Modern English (1958, NTME)
Wuest Expanded Translation of the New Testament (1959, WET)
The Berkeley Version in Modern English (1959, BV)
Dake Annotated Reference Bible (1963)
The Amplified Bible (1965, AMP)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966, JB)
New American Bible (1970, NAB)
New English Bible (1970, NEB)
New American Standard Bible (1971, NASB or NAS)
The Living Bible (1971, TLB)
The Good News Bible (1976, GNB or GNT)
New King James Version (1982, NKJV)
The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible (1984)
Revised English Bible (1989, REB)
New Revised Standard Version (1990, NRSV)



21st Century King James Version (1994, KJ21)
Contemporary English Version (1995, CEV)
New Living Translation (1996, NLT) revised 2004
English Standard Version (2001, ESV)
Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004, HCSB)
Today's New International Version (2005, TNIV)
New English Translation (2005, NET)