How We Got the Bible

The King James Translation 2

The Translators

Within five months of the Hampton Court Conference, Bishop Bancroft had chosen his teams of translators. (See list below)

The Companies

The translators made up six companies, two each in Westminster, Oxford and Cambridge. The surviving lists of translators are not entirely consistent but we do have information on most of them.

The Translation

Revising the Bishop's Bible

The king's printer, Robert Barker, provided the translators with 40 unbound copies of the 1602 Bishop's Bible. The unbound sheets could then be subdivided between the different companies and translators. There is no clear existing evidence as to how closely rules 8-10 were followed. There is an existing Bible that appears to be a compilation of the sheets with the translators notes and markings. Most, but not all, of the translators revisions were incorporated into the KJV.

According to Rule 14 it would seem the translators were restricted to certain translations for the revising process. However, it is clear from the preface (pp. 19-20) that they made use of several sources available to them.

The Language

Many people today would say that the KJV has several archaic words. Words such as 'thou', 'thee', and 'ye', as well as words ending in '-eth' or '-est'.

In the early 16th century, the personal pronouns were used as follows:

	Singular	**Plural**
Second-person nominative:	Thou	Ye
Second-person accusative:	Thee	You

By the mid-sixteenth century the distinction between 'ye' and 'you' was fading and 'you' was being used for both forms- except in formal idiom (Shakespeare) and the KJV. Example:

Mt. 5:11 Blessed are ye when men shall revile you. Even in 1611 the use of 'thou', 'thee', and 'ye' would have sounded archaic.

The KJ translators always used the formal '-eth' ending for singular verbs. By the 1590's '-es' was the norm except for the plays of Shakespeare and the KJV. The language of the KJV would have sounded a little formal and archaic to most readers and listeners but was probably purposely done give dignity to a sacred text.

The Style

The goal of the translators (Preface pp. 23) was that the translation be understood by the common man. The KJ translators had a clear preference for single syllable words. The Bishop's Bible read, 'God is my shepherd, therefore I can lack nothing'. The KJV reads, 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.'

The text was also often written in poetic rhythm. Genesis 3:12 Adam says, "she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." God said to Eve, "What is this that thou hast done?" You will also notice that all of the words are monosyllable. The rhythm of the KJ Bible makes it easy to read aloud.

Theology

In some cases the theology of the KJV was established in the guidelines (Rule 4). Other decisions still had to be made concerning 'problem' passages. For example, whether the word 'spirit' should be capitalized or not.

The prominent debate at the time of the KJ translation was predestination. It boiled down to a distinction between foreknowledge and predestination. The appearance of Christ or the choice of a believer for salvation could be "foreknown" (the Arminian view) or "foreordained" (the Calvinist view). Most of the translators were Calvinists so the issue of what word to use was always under debate.

1Peter 1:20, Bishop's Bible: 'which was ordained beforehand, even before the world was made, but was declared in the last times for your sakes'.
Douai-Reims: 'foreknown in deed before the constitution of the world, but manifested in the last times for you.'
King James Version: 'who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.'

After much debate the Calvinist reading was decided to be the correct one. There has not been complete agreement among translators and scholars since that time. The Revised

Version and the New American Standard Version, for example, read 'foreknown' (consistent with the Arminian view).

The Printing

The first edition of the KJV was printed in 1611 by Robert Barker, the king's printer, who had the right to print all Bibles published in England in English. Printing the KJV was expensive and seemed to cost Barker £4,000 for the rights to the translation. He financed the printing by mortgaging shares in the office of king's printer to two rival printers. The KJV was not listed in the Stationer's Register of new books. This is because the KJV was classified as a revision- not a fresh translation. Because of this registry omission we do not know when in 1611 the translation was printed. There is no evidence to support any particular date.

There were two editions published in 1611 and they became known as the 'She' Bible and the 'He' Bible. In Ruth 3:15 one 1611 Bible reads 'she went into the city', referring to Boaz; the other reads 'she went into the city', referring to Ruth. The difficulty arose because the Hebrew text has 'he', but the context clearly shows it is Ruth that went into the city.

There were hundreds of spelling, printer's and punctuation errors that some would say have survived until today. Editors did not keep a list of mistakes and updates are always being made. In 1760 Oxford and Cambridge worked together to produce a standard, updated text. This was done again by Oxford in 1769. Most King James Bible's today are printed from the 1769 Oxford text. Scholars are always endeavoring to edit the text of the King James Bible as they strive for perfection. Most recently is *The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible* published in 2005 and edited by David Norton. Norton stated the text needed to be revised to two basic ways: to undo mistaken changes viz. the text should be that of the translators and not that of subsequent revisers. Secondly, the basic elements of spelling and punctuation should be modernized.

First Westminster Company (Old Testament, Genesis to 2Kings)

Lancelot Andrewes: Dean of Westminster, Bishop of Chichester. Fluent in 15 languages including Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac and Arabic.

John Overall: Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. Fluent in Latin

Adrian Saravia: Along with Bishop Bancroft opposed the Presbyterian Church.

Richard Clerke: Expert in Hebrew.

John Layfield: Rector of St. Clement Danes, London. Expert on the tabernacle and temple.

Robert Tyghe: Archdeacon of Middlesex, Vicar of All Hallows Church.

Francis Burley: Rector of St. Benet Paul's Wharf, London.

Geoffrey King: Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge.

Richard Thomas: Expert in philology (study of literary texts).

William Bedwell: Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac.

First Cambridge Company (Old Testament, 1Chronicles to Song of Solomon)

Edward Lively: died 1605 so unable to participate.

John Richardson: Professor at Cambridge. Hebrew scholar.

Laurence Chaderton: One of the four Puritan translators. Hebrew scholar.

Francis Dillingham: Parish priest in Bedfordshire. Well of financially and connected with the aristocracy.

Thomas Harrison: Trinity College, Cambridge. Hebrew and Greek expert.

Roger Andrewes: Master of Jesus College. Appointed because of his brother's (Lancelot) influence.

Robert Spalding: St. John's College, Cambridge. Succedded Edward Lively as professor of Hebrew.

Andrew Byng: Fellow at Peterhouse, Cambridge. Hebrew.

William Eyre: Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Linguistic expert.

First Oxford Company (Old Testament, Isaiah to Malachi)

John Harding: Professor of Hebrew Magdalen College, Oxford.

John Rainolds: President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Died 1607. Leader of the Puritan delegation.

Thomas Holland: Professor of Divinity Oxford, Rector of Exeter College. Moderate Puritan. Expert in biblical languages and law.

Richard Kilbye: Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford. Hebrew expert.

Miles Smith: No university connection. Expert in Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac and Arabic. (Wrote the preface of behalf of the translators)

Richard Brett: Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. Skilled in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic and Ethiopic.

Richard Fairclough: Former Fellow of New College, Oxford. Hebrew and Greek.

William Thorne: Not on the official list of translators but was possibly appointed as an overseer. Professor of Hebrew. Also knew Syriac and studied Arabic.

Second Cambridge Company (Apocrypha)

John Duport: Master of Jesus College, Cambridge. Moderate Puritan.

William Branthwaite: Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Command of Greek.

Jeremiah Radcliffe: Vice-master of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Samuel Ward: Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Puritan. Contributed to the 1638 edition.

Andrew Downes: Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge. Professor of Greek.

John Bois: Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge. Could write Hebrew by the age of 6. Mastered Hebrew and Greek.

Robert Ward: Fellow of King's College, Cambridge.

Second Oxford Company (New Testament, Gospels, Acts, Revelation)

Thomas Ravis: Dean of Christ Church College, Oxford.

George Abbot: Arch-Bishop of Canterbury.

Richard Edes: Dean of Worcester. Died 1604 before he could begin.

John Aglionby: Appointed to replace Richard Edes.

Giles Thomson: Chaplain to Queen Elizabeth and King James.

Sir Henry Savile: Warden of Merton College, Oxford. Mathematician and astronomer.

John Perrinne: Christ Church College, Oxford. Greek professor.

Ralph Ravens: Fellow of St. Johns College, Oxford.

Leonard Hutten: Fellow of Christ Church, Oxford. Sometimes listed in place of Dr. Ravens.

John Harmar: Greek professor, Oxford.

Second Westminster Company (New Testament, Epistles)

William Barlow: Dean of Chester, Bishop of Lincoln. Wrote the official account of the Hampton Court Conference.

Ralph Hutchinson: President of St. Johns College, Oxford. Died 1606

John Spenser: President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

Roger Fenton: Rector of St. Stephen Walbrook, London.

Michael Rabbet: Rector of St. Vedast, Foster Lane, London.

Thomas Sanderson: Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford; Rector of All Hallows-the-Great, London.

William Dakins: Fellow of Winchester College; Bishop of Bath and Wells.

George Ryves: Warden of New College, Oxford. Overseer of this section.

Nicholas Love: Royal Chaplain and headmaster of Winchester College.

Known Committee of Revisers

John Bois
Andrew Downes
John Harmar
William Hutchinson: Fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge.
Miles Smith
Thomas Bilson: Bishop of Winchester
Samuel Ward
Thomas Goade: Provost of King's College. Historian, theologian and poet.
Joseph Mede: Prominent figure at Christ's College. Proficient in Hebrew, Greek and Latin.

Final Reviser

Richard Bancroft – made 14 final revisions although it is not known what they were specifically.