

Book of Books: Into Our Hands – Week 5

INTRO – Where did the Bible come from?

The Bible has two purposes:

1) To glorify God; 2) For us to know Him and have salvation.

CANON: (Greek) – The list of books which orthodox Christianity recognizes as scripture; the very words of God.

- **1 Peter 1:21** - ... *no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

How did the books we have come to be recognized as scripture?

The process of canonization was slow, organic, and handled with great scrutiny. The Church didn't give/assign authority to certain books. **It recognized the authority which was already on them by God as His word.**

The Last Two Weeks: God came in flesh as Jesus. Jesus is God's self-revelation to us. The apostles wrote the teachings of Jesus. The Sub-Apostolic fathers attested to which writings the apostles wrote. The Early Church Fathers defended orthodox Christianity against heresy.

Tonight: The Church Fathers canonized the 27 books of the New Testament. The church used the heresy of works-based salvation to rise in power, and to protect itself, suppressed scripture. The Reformation called for a return to scripture and made it accessible to everyone.

HOOK

Bottled water became a big deal in the 1980's which must initially have seemed ridiculous when water was cheaply and readily accessible at any faucet. But this water was different. It was mineral water and boasted to have been taken directly from the source - protected water springs – and full of natural healthy minerals. Then with a French name and fancy label, H₂O in a bottle was sold at high prices.

- Most of us would prefer not to drink water after its traveled a long way down stream and treated with chemicals, but when it's pure and refreshing water from the source.

- “ad fontes” = Latin for “back to the source.”
- This was a banner during the Protestant Reformation. Scripture had been diluted by agendas, heresies, and traditions and even poor translations of the Bible, so the reformers (Luther and others we’ll meet soon) wanted to get the Church back to its source – **the life and teachings of Jesus.**

BOOK

Psalm 1:1-3 - *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.*

- Scripture must be what we breathe and what we live. It separates those prone to sin to those prone to health.
- Jesus, in **Matt. 7**, says it separates those who endure and those who collapse.

Colossians 3:16 - *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

- God preserved His word throughout the millennia through the diligence and passion of people who loved His word.

LOOK

Origen of Alexandria (lived: AD185-254)

Was an early church scholar and theologian who founded two Christian schools, a major library, and wrote roughly 2,000 theological works in commentaries, treatises, sermons, and textual criticisms. Two-thirds of the entire N.T. can be found quoted in his writings. He was, both, one of the most influential and controversial figures in early Christianity. Almost all of what we know about Origen’s personal life comes from the biography of him by Eusebius (a Christian historian and theologian).

Origen was taught literature, philosophy, and Christian doctrine by his Christian father. When he was 16, Roman Emperor Septimius Severus ordered that any Christian Roman citizens were to be executed. Origen’s father was arrested and imprisoned. Origen intended to turn himself in and die as a martyr alongside his father, but his mother, to stop her son, hid all his clothes knowing he wouldn’t go into public naked. His father was beheaded, and the authorities confiscated all their belongings leaving them destitute.

At 18, Origen attended the Catechetical School of Alexandria and was eventually given a paid position as a teacher there. He would teach all day, then stay up all night writing commentaries and other treatises.

Origen met a wealthy man named Ambrose who was a Gnostic. After teaching him orthodox Christianity, Ambrose converted. He was so impressed with young Origen that Ambrose bought him a house, hired him a secretary, seven stenographers, a crew of copyists, and paid for all his writings to be published!

Origen continued to study in many of the elite schools of Alexandria.

In his 20's he wrote "On the First Principals." Here, he made Christian theology accessible by laying it out systematically. It would be influential to Christians for centuries to come.

Most significant of his works was his Hexapla ("Sixfold") which took him 20 years and probably consisted of 7,000 pages. It was a massive compilation of the Old Testament where 6 translations (including the original Hebrew and the Septuagint) were laid out in columns side by side for readers to compare.

In 249, a plague called the Plague of Cyprian broke out and the emperor at that time, Decius, believed the plague was a result of Christians not recognizing him as a god. He made a decree persecuting Christians. Origen was imprisoned and tortured harshly for several years! His captors were given clear orders not to kill him until he denied his faith publicly. Emperor Decius was killed in battle, and Origen was finally released. His tortures were so severe that despite his freedom, he died less than a year later.

Origen based his theology on Christian scriptures and believed them to be divinely inspired. On one hand, he was a hero of orthodoxy and anchor for the early church defining doctrine and explaining scriptures. But on the other, he had a bad habit of running with his theology beyond what is explicitly spoken by the bible and ending up promoting some strange theologies. This tendency has made him controversial, and some of his teachings were strongly criticized. Many see him as a hero, and many see him as a heretic.

Note: Origen had many conflicts with his bishop, Demetrius of Alexandria, and it seems to be clear that Demetrius intentionally exaggerated and even invented slanderous rumors. At least some of the defaming information about Origen, his self-castration, and his theology is likely from rumors Demetrius started.

What did Origen do for the developing canon? Origen was one of the first to acknowledge all 27 books of our N.T. though he expressed doubts about the authorship of Hebrews and notes that James, 2 Pet., 2&3 John and Jude are disputed.

Disputed Books

These "general epistles" struggled to be fully accepted. 1 John was recognized as far back as Irenaeus, but 2nd & 3rd are rarely quoted. First Peter also seems to be accepted while the 2nd Peter, James, and Jude continue to have varying levels of prominence in different churches. Hebrews remained in dispute for several centuries. It was accepted in the Eastern churches overall and by Irenaeus and

Tertullian in the west, but continuing doubts about its authorship (notably by Clement of Alexandria) prevented it from being accepted in Rome. Origen offered the best resolution to the problem by proposing an anonymous author and follower of Paul carefully transmitted Paul's teaching. This logical argument brought general acceptance, but it would still be another century before it was universally recognized.

The book of Revelation was initially recognized everywhere. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and the Muratorian Fragment in the West and Origen and Clement of Alexandria in the East accepted it without argument. However, because it was exploited by the heretical group, the Montanists, its scriptural authority came under attack. However, the advocacy of the western leaders eventually brought it fully into acceptance.

PERSECUTION AND FREEDOM

Emperor Diocletian

Before the Christian churches would finally receive their religious freedom, they would endure the worst series of persecutions since Nero.

Emperor Diocletian had spent the first 20 years of his reign seeking internal security and peace by fortifying his army and using old Roman religion to unite his people. He declared himself a god, the son of Jupiter, who was to be worshipped which didn't sit well with Christians. Meanwhile, Roman intellectuals began a tirade of anti-Christian propaganda, and Emperor Galerius along with an influential pagan priestess encouraged Diocletian to begin a policy of extermination against them.

Pressure first fell on Christians in the army. During a ceremony celebrating the emperor's deity, Marcellus, a Christian centurion refused to take an oath to him. He threw down his sword in the sight of everyone and declared that he could acknowledge only one "sacramentum" (religious oath); The one binding him to Christ. This and several other instances led Diocletian to purge the army of Christians compelling them to recant their faith or leave the army.

In AD303, Diocletian ordered edicts bearing the signatures of two emperors and two Caesars ordering the demolition of Christian churches, confiscating and destroying Christian literature, banning Christian gatherings, and stripping Christian citizens of their civil rights. It was most likely during this time that any surviving original manuscripts ("autographs") by the apostles were destroyed. The persecution even began at home for Diocletian with his Christian wife and daughter. The mandates were carried out with severity. Christian leaders were tortured and

executed. Any Christian was put to death who would not offer sacrifices to the gods. At one point, an entire Christian village was burned to the ground. Executions were as widespread as Egypt, Spain, Africa, and Numidia. Ten to twenty, even 60-100, Christians were dying every day. Those who weren't executed were condemned to work in the mines after having an eye plucked out or a foot hacked off. Diocletian imagined that the flame of Christianity was about to wink out. Church leadership was broken, churches had been destroyed, scriptures had been burned, and many "Christians" were denouncing their faith. Diocletian's health failed and he stopped going in public. There was even a rumor that he had died. When he finally made a public speech in AD305, he announced that he was abdicating his crown. It was probably forced by Galerius who succeeded him and continued the persecution.

Edict of Toleration

In 311, emperor Galerius, who was one of the leading figures in persecuting Christians, when he fell mortally ill, passed the Edict of Toleration which acknowledged the right of Christians to exist. On his death bed, he asked that Christians pray for him and for the nation. Tormented by a painful illness, he suffered six miserable days before dying. In Rome, this ended their executions, set Christians free from the prisons and the mines, and allowed them to return to gathering. Constantine succeeded him. However, in Syria and Egypt, Maximinus, in civil war against Galerius, executed a persecution against Christians. Eusebius (the Christian theologian and historian who wrote about Origen) records how brutally Christians were tortured, and yet even the women showed incredible fortitude in their faith and dedication.

"Women were not less manly than the men in behalf of the teaching of the Divine Word, as they endured conflicts alongside the men, and bore away equal prizes of virtue. And when they were dragged away for corrupt purposes, they surrendered their lives to death rather than their bodies to impurity." - Eusebius

Maximinus was defeated by Constantine and Licinius in 312 and they began an effort to aid Christians. Constantine favored Christians and wanted to slowly make Christianity the state religion. When civil war broke out between Constantine and Licinius, knowing Christians would support Constantine, Licinius enacted a final persecution. When Licinius was defeated, in 313, Constantine gave Christians full religious freedom. This was the first time in church history, that Christianity was openly legalized, and the threat of persecution put to rest. In fact, Constantine

declared himself a Christian, called the highly significant council of Nicea in 325, and built Christian cathedrals.

It was in this setting the church could finally have the freedoms necessary to begin serious efforts towards a canon of the N.T.

SEALING THE N.T. CANON

Eusebius (writing: AD325-340) – during this time...

Eusebius was the pastor in Caesarea who became one of the early church's most important historians. His extensive and detailed records are used by Christian and secular historians alike. He was imprisoned during Diocletian's persecution and watched as N.T. scriptures were hunted and burned in public marketplaces for over 10 years.

Note: During this time, the N.T. books were still circulating as separate writings. A majority of the N.T. is recognized and being taught, but they haven't been compiled together into a single book yet.

After Constantine's conversion, he hired Eusebius to be his chief religious adviser. In 331, Constantine commissioned FIFTY BIBLES to be created and sent to the churches in Constantinople. He assigned the job of compiling, transcribing, and delivering them to Eusebius. The emperor provided him with skilled copyists, the finest parchment, and two royal carriages for transportation.

This was a huge task because it required him to gather and discern which books were scripture. For this, he relied heavily on Origen. He used Origen's Hexapla as the master copy for the O.T., and adopted Origen's lists of N.T. books for his starting point.

Eusebius conducted extensive research to learn which books were generally recognized by the churches. There was a core of books which were universally recognized and a collection of marginally accepted ones. He categorized books into four different classes:

1. Acknowledged books – The 4 gospels, Acts, Paul's corpus, & Revelation
2. Disputed books – James, 2 Pet., Jude, 2&3 John
3. Spurious books – Acts of Paul, The Shepherd of Hermas, Apocalypse of Peter, Epistle of Barnabas, Didache, Gospel According to the Hebrews
4. Forgeries of heretics – Gospels of Thomas, Peter, and Matthias, The Acts of Andrew, and Acts of John
 - a. These "ought to be reckoned not even among the spurious books but shunned as altogether wicked and impious."

When Eusebius finally published the 50 Bibles to be distributed in Constantinople, he included in them the first two categories making up the same 27 books we use today.

Note: There's a chance that Codex Vaticanus is one of Constantine's 50 Bibles.

Athanasius of Alexandria (writing: AD367)

Athanasius also lived and ministered during the reign of Constantine. He was the pastor of Alexandria and was one of the church's chief theologians in defining the Trinity and battling heresy in the 4th century.

At great cost to himself, he spent his life battling a pervasive heresy called Arianism. It taught that Jesus was a created being. Because the Son of God was created, He was less than God and not co-equal and co-eternal. The problem: If Jesus is not God, just an exalted man, His death could not suffice to remove sin.

In AD325, this heresy compelled the Church leaders to hold the Council of Nicaea to define the Trinity. Athanasius was a deacon at the Council attending to the Bishop of Alexandria and would spend the rest of his life using the Nicene Creed to defend orthodoxy. Three years after the Council, when the bishop died, Athanasius succeeded him in leading the church at Alexandria. Those church leaders who followed Arius attacked him from every angle accusing him of various things to have him removed. He was exiled from his beloved congregation 5 times, sometimes for years at a time, and often threatened with martyrdom.

Having lived to see the heresy of Arianism put to rest and its followers discredited, the words on his gravestone define his dedication to stand alone for orthodoxy: "*Athanasius contra mundum*" – "Athanasius against the world." After his death, the church leaders established a creed to explain the Trinity and put to rest common heresies. They attributed it to Athanasius' lifelong work to define and defend the Trinity and called it the Athanasius Creed.

Each Easter, Athanasius wrote a **(Paschal) letter** to the churches he oversaw. In **AD367**, the 39th year of his tradition, he included a list of scriptural books he described as the sole sources for Christian instruction. Building on Eusebius' work (influenced by Origen), Athanasius lists the 27 books we recognize as the N.T. He then delineates a category for non-scriptural, permitted readings citing the Shepherd of Hermas and the Didache. For the churches in the East, this letter was definitive.

The Council of Carthage (AD397)

The churches of the West also came to recognize the same books. Therefore, in AD397 the **Council (Synod) of Carthage** was called, representing the Christian Church as a whole, and in universal agreement, they formally recognized the 27 books as the very words of God, the New Testament Canon.

- Also attested to by The Council of Hippo (AD393) and Augustine (AD400)

Jerome of Stridon and the Vulgate (writing: AD382-404)

After 300 years of repeated persecutions, the church enjoyed its religious freedom by closing the Biblical canon and continuing to expand around the world. The “bible” was, however, written in Hebrew and Greek or translated into Old Latin which only the very studied could read. In AD382, Pope Damasus hired Jerome, a leading bible scholar, to translate the four Gospels into the common Latin of their day. He completed the gospels by AD383 but continued working on the rest of the Bible. The Old Latin version of the O.T. was translated from the Greek Septuagint instead of the original Hebrew. Using Origen’s Hexapla as a reference, Jerome went back to **the original Hebrew** manuscripts to provide the most accurate translation possible. Twenty-three years later (AD404), he had translated the entire Bible except for the Psalms (which simply he revised from the Septuagint). (Note: It also included the Apocrypha but with Jerome’s notes that it was set apart from the canonical books.) **Jerome’s Vulgate** fully established the Christian canon by making it the standard for the Roman Catholic Church for over 1,000 years.

HOW DID THE BIBLE GET INTO OUR HANDS? – A messed up story.

THE ENGLISH BIBLE & THE REFORMATION

2 Timothy 4:3-4 - *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*

- Being told you can earn salvation is a comfortable lie. It gives you control and self-assurance.

Romans 1:18 - *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.*

- Look who God’s wrath is being poured out against.
- **Matt. 9** - Dinner at Matthew’s house. “Go and learn.”

- **Hosea 6** – God will break the people to heal them. God will judge the spiritual leaders for being thieves and murders.

Over the next 1,000 years, the church began pulling away from its roots of gospel proclamation and defense of orthodoxy to become tyrannical. When Emperor Constantine made it the state religion, it allowed for the Roman Catholic Church to grow in political power. It began to teach a **subtle heresy** of works-theology. “You must take consecrated communion to be saved which can only be served by the church. You must pay these indulgences to the church or have these sacraments done by the church to be saved. And if we don’t like you, you’ll be excommunicated by the church.” Therefore, it even claimed authority over people’s salvation.

The focus shifted from emphasizing scripture to emphasizing the authority of the priesthood and its Pope. When the Roman Catholic Church decided that the Pope’s decrees were on par with written scripture, the Pope’s power eclipsed scripture. It sought to keep the Bible away from the common public declaring itself the sole interpreter of the Bible. Further, it’s dogmas, indulgences, superstitions, and Pope’s decrees became the emphasis of the “religion,” and the Bible **actually fell into general disuse**. The church authorities assumed the role of being the voice of God instead of teaching the Word of God. God’s word and the authority of His Church were being misinterpreted and abused. There was a drastic need for a course correction, a reformation.

When, in the 2nd- 4th centuries, orthodox Christians faced martyrdom from external persecution, in the 14th- 16th centuries, orthodox Christians, faced persecution and even martyrdom from the Church itself. Yikes.

John Wycliffe (writing: 1380-1382)

One of the first to stand against the juggernaut that was the Roman Catholic Church was John Wycliffe. He was a highly educated, rigidly ethical, hot-headed, and controversial theologian and Oxford scholar. He denounced the wealth and power of the Catholic church, advocated the idea of an invisible church based on election, and criticized the church’s stance on transubstantiation. In short, he stood against the church’s belief that it granted or withheld salvation.

Since Latin had fallen out of use, only the Catholic clergy could read the Bible. And, Wycliffe found several translation errors in the Vulgate which the Catholic church was using to promote their control and faulty stances on salvation. The most

powerful thing he could do to disarm the Catholic church's power was to allow people to see for themselves what the Bible says. (This will be the key strategy of the Reformers.) By 1382, he and his associates had translated the entire Bible into English from the Latin Vulgate and began circulating it along with his criticisms against the Catholic church listed in the preface.

The Pope stood against him and passed laws for his Bible to be banned, collected, and burned. He was excommunicated from the church. In 1408, it was made illegal to translate or read the Bible in common English without the consent of the bishop... who was not giving consent.

Though it wasn't widely circulated, it reached the right people. His desire to get back to Biblical orthodoxy and for common people to have the Bible started the spark. He inspired men like Luther and Tyndale and planted the seeds for the Reformation.

Forty-four years after his death he was declared a heretic, so his bones were dug up and burned.

The Gutenberg Bible (1455)

Wycliffe's Bible was slowly gaining traction in underground Christian circles but copying it by hand took months to produce and it cost 6+ months of wages. However, a new invention took the Christian world by storm. In Germany, Johann Gutenberg invented the first printing press with movable type. The first complete book he ever printed with it was the Latin Vulgate in 1455. This was the most significant event since the sealing of the canon in 397.

1. It made possible for the Bible to be made inexpensively.
2. It could be multiplied exponentially.
 - a. It seems about 180 copies were made initially.
3. It would copy it exactly.

But it was still in Latin which was inaccessible to the common person.

Two parallel things were happening. One, there's a movement to translate the Bible as accurately as possible to get it into the hands of the people and reform the church to Biblical orthodoxy. Two, the means of mass production has entered on to the world's stage.

Erasmus (wrote: 1516)

Schooled as a young boy in a monastery, he was soured by whole monastic system. He studied at multiple schools and was influenced by Origen and Jerome. Erasmus became a professor at Cambridge and the foremost authority in Greek, especially N.T. Greek, for his day. He wrote extensively to expose the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church and their misteachings and abuse of scripture. "[T]he Catholics, instead of repenting of their sins, pile superstition on superstition..."

Christians desired a return to orthodox Christianity, and Erasmus was one of those Christians. **He translated and published his "textus receptus" which placed a new Greek edition alongside a corrected Latin edition.** His passion was for churches to have accurately translated scripture and for everyone of every language to have the opportunity to read it for themselves.

"I would have [the Gospels and Epistles of St. Paul] translated into all languages, so that not only Scots and Irishmen, but Turks and Saracens might read them. I long for the plowboy to sing them to himself as he follows the plow, the weaver to hum them to the tune of his shuttle, the traveler to beguile with them the dullness of his journey... Other studies we may regret having undertaken, but happy is the man upon whom death comes when he is engaged in these. These sacred words give you the very image of Christ speaking, healing, dying, rising again, and make him so present, that were he before your very eyes you would not more truly see him."

His work will be used in soon coming translations by some of the most important people in church history.

Martin Luther (writing: 1517-1522)

Pushback against the Catholic Church had been brewing for some time, but the flame of Reformation officially erupted in 1517 when Martin Luther called for a discussion with the clergy by nailing his 95 Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. On the basis of scripture, he challenged the church's role of being the mediator between God and man, the purchasing of salvation through indulgences, and many other heretical doctrines.

The cry of the Reformation was "ad fontes" – "back to the fountain" or "back to the source." Their push was a return to scripture believing scripture alone was the voice of God, not the Papacy, and there was a renewed interest in the Bible among Christians. Luther went into hiding from the Catholic church. During that time, he followed in the footsteps of Wycliffe and leaned on Erasmus' translations

to translate the Bible into common German for everyone to read. It was on the platform of “ad fontes” that Luther removed the apocrypha the Catholic church had added and published the bible with the 66 books we have today.

Note: He was suspect of James and Hebrews, so he moved them to the back of the Bible alongside Jude and Revelation which he also thought were questionable.

William Tyndale (writing: 1525)

Moved by the Reformation and Luther’s courage, William Tyndale, a priest and Oxford scholar, set out to fulfill Wycliffe’s dream to translate the Bible into English so the common person could read it.

Tyndale was a highly intelligent and disciplined scholar who fluently spoke 7 languages and was proficient in Hebrew and Greek. Erasmus was his hero and in reading his Greek New Testament, found the undebatable doctrine of justification by faith which stood against the Catholic Church’s stance of salvation through indulgences and the authority of the church. Tyndale made Erasmus’ words his life’s purpose and would die because of it.

"Christ desires his mysteries to be published abroad as widely as possible. I would that [the Gospels and the epistles of Paul] were translated into all languages, of all Christian people, and that they might be read and known." - Erasmus

Martin Luther was doing this for those who spoke German. Tyndale wanted to translate the Bible into common English and have it printed widely for English speakers. He couldn’t get approval to translate and publish his Bible in England. It was illegal there. **Where should he retreat to for his work? What invention had been gaining traction for the last 70 years? And where was it?** So he escaped to Germany where there were now hundreds of printing presses. He spent twelve years translating the New Testament from the original Greek (making it even more accurate than Wycliffe’s version), and in 1525, he finished. There he mass printed 2,000 copies of his English translation and had it smuggled back into England in sacks of corn and flour and in crates buried under cotton. In 1535 he also began translating and publishing parts of the O.T. from the original Hebrew.

He had many enemies, greatest of all was the Anglican and Catholic churches. Even in Germany he was hunted and survived by moving from city to city. But, he had many supporters who protected him and provided for him.

So the bishop found a man, Phillips, who was once wealthy but had wasted his inheritance and was living in poverty. The bishop told Phillips, “I’ll return every

penny you've squandered of your dad's inheritance if give me William Tyndale." So he went to Germany, found Tyndale's underground movement, and befriended him. Over the course of several years, they became close friends. One night, Phillips contacted Tyndale saying he needed financial help, and could they meet for lunch? Since he was a fugitive, Tyndale almost never went into public but agreed to meet his friend. Phillips walked him down a narrow alley where guards were waiting at one end. Tyndale turned to run, but several guards had already blocked off his retreat.

He was imprisoned in a dungeon as a heretic by the Anglican and Catholic churches. In **1536**, after 18 months, he was led out of prison wearing his priestly garbs to be publicly defrocked. In front of the gathering masses at the town square, he had his hands scraped (removal of anointing), was stripped of his priestly vestments, and led to a cross to recant his heresy. When he refused, the priesthood ordered his execution for **the crime of translating the Bible into English**. They tied his feet to a stake, piled up the logs and brush, and wrapped a rope around his neck to strangle him. Before the executioner strangled him and the fires were lit, his last words were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." (**Note:** God answered Tyndale's prayer. One year later, King Henry VIII authorized a translation of the Bible into English called The Matthew's Bible who relied heavily on Tyndale's work. There's even a tribute written to him on the last page of the O.T.) It's written about him that the onlookers were shocked by how calm and patient Tyndale was at his execution.

He is called the "Father of the English Bible" because of his importance in giving us God's word in English. Before his capture, Tyndale translated the New Testament from the original Greek and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew.

Note: Miles Coverdale completed Tyndale's work on the O.T. in **1537**.

The King James Bible (1611)

After the Reformation, several influential denominations became strongly opposed to each other. In fact, some of them (Puritans and Calvinists) were calling for a second reformation. Other faulty translations had occurred since Tyndale's with some dangerous errors and biases towards different theological stances. In 1604, King James commissioned an updated translation in an attempt to create peace between the factions. He decreed a new translation should be made using contemporary language which scholars from every theological camp agreed was

accurate to the source material. He commissioned 54 scholars who worked for 6 years to create the Authorized Versions (AKA, the King James Version).

Those scholars used Erasmus' work, the earliest possible manuscripts, Hebrew commentaries, and an elaborate set of rules to prevent anyone from impressing their own biases on their work. They also leaned heavily on Tyndale's translation. In fact, when the scholars were stumped on how to word something, 8 out of 10 times, they went with Tyndale's translation.

Because of the extensive resources of having a king's sponsorship, *"the wealth of scholarly tools available to the translators made their final choice of rendering an exercise in originality and independent judgment. For this reason, the new version was more faithful to the original languages of the Bible and more scholarly than any of its predecessors."* – Encyclopedia Britannica

The KJV was revised in 1769 and has been unaltered and for over 250 years becoming the most embraced version of the Bible. Because of its antiquated language, it was revised in 1901 as the American Standard Version, then 1952 as the Revised Standard Version, and 2001 as the English Standard Version (translated by a collaboration of more than 100 scholars & took into account the Dead Sea Scrolls).

FURTHER INQUIRY

What word was mis-translated in the Latin Vulgate that the Catholic church used to teach salvation by works instead of by faith? Romans 1:17 = **"righteous/justified"**

RECAP – set up students to fill the 7 eras of Church history

1. Spoke scripture: Jesus
2. Wrote scripture: John
3. Attested to scripture: Polycarp
4. Defended scripture: Irenaeus
5. Canonized scripture: Eusebius
6. Suppressed scripture: Corrupt Church Leaders (Roman Catholic Church)
7. Returned to scripture and made it accessible: Tyndale

- The church must constantly return to the purity of scripture.
- Origen's extensive work was foundational in recognizing the canon and translating scripture.
- The Easter letter by Athanasius and the Council of Carthage permanently set the 27 books of the N.T. as the Christian canon.

- Religious freedom under Constantine made way for the church to seal the canon but to eventually become corrupt.
- In defiance to the Roman Catholic Church, reformers sought to translate the Bible into common languages so everyone could read it.
- Their translations + the Gutenberg Printing Press worked in harmony to make the Bible accessible.
- Many people gave their lives so we could read God's self-revelation to us.

TOOK

A canoe needs a keel & power. Without a keel it drifts; without power it drifts.

1) Have a keel.

Ephesians 4:14 – *"...no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."*

- Cultural Christians are always rudderless boats being blown around by whatever is popular next.

2) Keep paddling.

Jude 3-4 - *Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

- We must constantly fight to stay biblically centered. If not, we drift into unhealthy places.
 - "The boat keeps hitting the bank." – P. Matt

Psalms 1:1-3 - *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but His delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.*

Challenge 1: If you don't have a Bible in a translation you can understand, see an Elevate leader.

Challenge 2: Have a bible study tomorrow and select the key verse to memorize.

Challenge 3: Listen to Pastor Ben’s sermon from Sunday on subtle heresies in Christian churches called “Destructive Heresies.”

It’s time we reform our outlook on the value of the Bible.

Paraphrased from Old English: *“Don’t despair or let it discourage you, reader, that it is forbidden to you with the punishment of losing your life and belongings... or that it is counted as treason to read the Word which is health to your soul. For if God is on our side, it doesn’t matter who is against us.”* – William Tyndale

May you be a tree planted by the water. Amen.

Soli DEO Gloria