



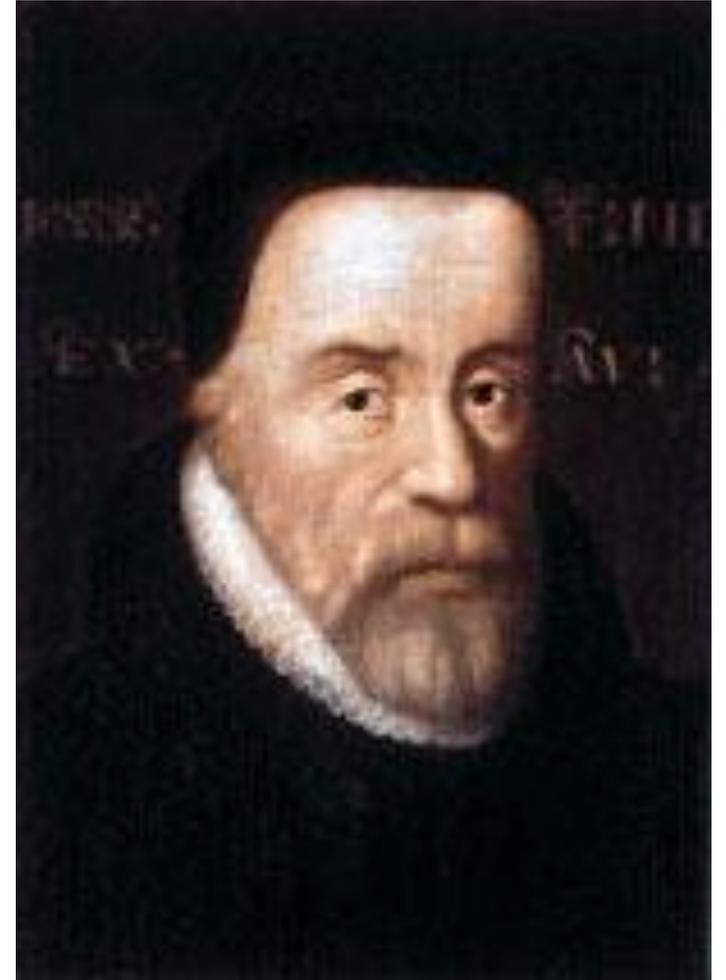
**THE ENGLISH BIBLE FROM TYNDALE
TO KING JAMES**

1525-1611

Although Tyndale was executed in 1536, his work lived on and inspired others in England:

- Myles Coverdale
- John “Thomas Matthew” Rogers

Work on Bible translation was also continuing in Europe under Erasmus, Martin Luther and John Calvin.



WILLIAM TYNDALE

MYLES COVERDALE



Coverdale was born in 1488 in Yorkshire. He was a contemporary of Tyndale, and studied theology and philosophy at Cambridge. He was admitted to the priesthood in 1514.

Also in 1514, Coverdale joined the monastery of the Austin Friars at Cambridge.

- The prior of the Austin Friars was Robert Barnes, who helped to circulate Tyndale's New Testament.
- Barnes also spoke out against the luxurious (and expensive) lifestyle of Cardinal Wolsey.
- Myles Coverdale was surrounded by Reformation ideas, and eventually gave up monastic life in order to devote himself to evangelical preaching. He left England around 1528.



- From 1528 to 1535 Coverdale spent most of his time in continental Europe, mainly in Antwerp, Belgium.
- In Antwerp there was the “English House,” where English reformers were given sanctuary.
- Some historians believe that upon arriving there, Coverdale rendered considerable assistance to William Tyndale in his revisions and partial completion of his English versions of the Bible.

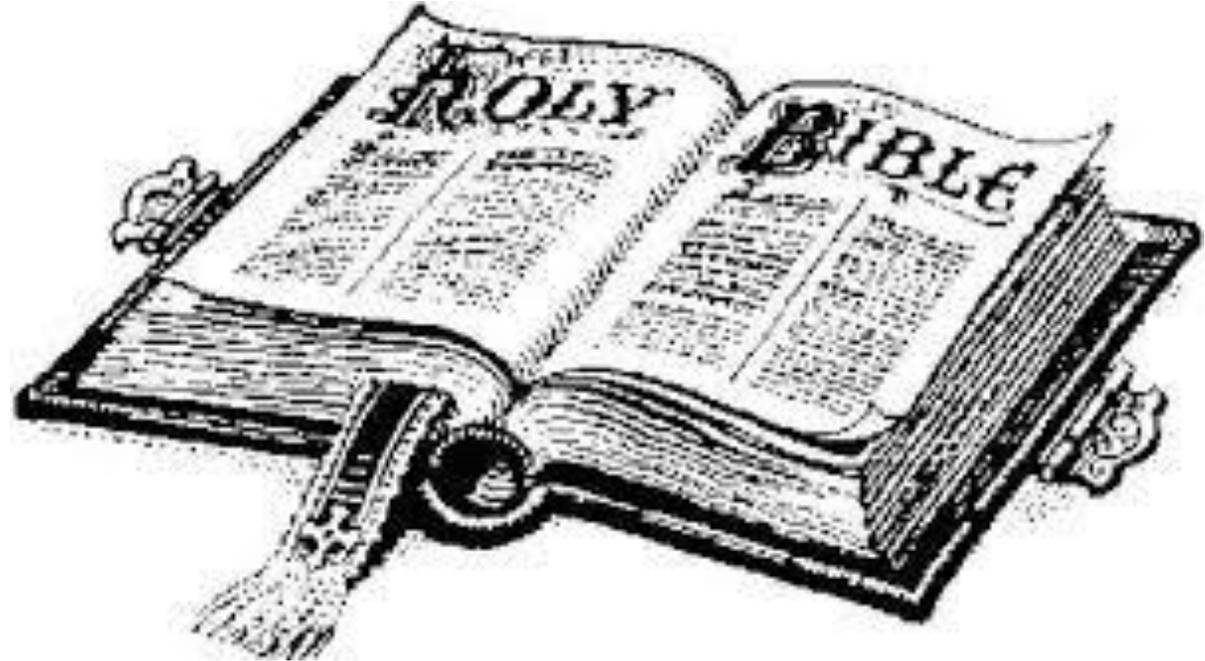
- After Tyndale was arrested by English authorities in 1535, Myles Coverdale continued working alone, and produced the Coverdale Bible that same year.
- The Coverdale Bible draws upon Latin, English and German sources plus the translations of Tyndale himself.
- In 1534 the Canterbury Convocation had petitioned Henry VIII that the whole Bible might be translated into English.
- Coverdale dedicated his translation to the King.

Coverdale based the text of his Bible on:

- Tyndale's translation of the New Testament (following Tyndale's November 1534 Antwerp edition)
- Those Old Testament books which were translated by Tyndale: The Pentateuch and the book of Jonah.
- Other Old Testament books as translated by Luther – Coverdale translated those books from German into English.
- It should be noted that Coverdale did not have the skill in language translation that Tyndale had.

- Coverdale's translation of the Psalms in his 1535 Bible formed the basis for his Psalter.
- A Psalter is a separate book with the Psalms and other devotional material.
- Coverdale's Psalter was made part of the Anglican 1662 Book of Common Prayer.
- Coverdale's Psalter, with various minor corrections, was made part of the 1926 Irish Book of Common Prayer, the 1928 U.S. Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, and the 1962 Canadian Book of Common Prayer.

- Coverdale also produced a parallel translation of the New Testament in 1538.
- In his parallel translation he put the Latin Vulgate and a literal English translation of the Vulgate side-by-side.
- He did this to show how his (and Tyndale's) New Testament did not misrepresent the Latin Vulgate, and did not contain heretical ideas.



The Matthew Bible

In 1537 the Matthew Bible was printed, also in Antwerp, at the expense of Richard Grafton and Edward Whitchurch who also sent it to London. It contained:

- Tyndale's Pentateuch;
- A version of Joshua 2 and Chronicles translated from the Hebrew, probably by Tyndale and not previously published;
- The remainder of the Old Testament from Coverdale;
- Tyndale's New Testament from 1535.

- The *Matthew Bible* was dedicated to Henry VIII who licensed it for general reading.
- "Thomas Matthew" the supposed editor, was an alias for John Rogers.
- John Rogers was an Englishman born in 1505 in Birmingham, and educated at Cambridge.
- He was a clergyman in the English church.
- In 1534, Rogers went to Antwerp, Belgium as chaplain to the English merchants of the Company of the Merchant Adventurers.

- In Antwerp John Rogers met William Tyndale and abandoned the Roman Catholic faith and embraced Reformation ideas.
- He left the priesthood and married a woman from Belgium. He had eleven children.
- He also met Myles Coverdale in Belgium and incorporated much of Coverdale's work in the Matthew Bible.
- Rogers studied at the University of Wittenberg and graduated from that university in 1540.

- Rogers became the pastor of a Lutheran church in Wittenberg.
- Rogers returned to England in 1548. Henry VIII had died in 1547.
- Conditions for church reformers were not too difficult in England from 1547 to 1553 during the reign of Edward VI. Edward died on July 6, 1553.
- Mary Queen of Scots ascended to the English throne after the death of Edward. Mary was a dedicated Catholic, and instituted persecution of Protestants.

Important features of the Matthew Bible include:

- Chapter summaries
- Woodcut pictures
- A concordance
- A dictionary
- Commentary that was antipapal in sentiment

John Rogers dedicated the Matthew Bible to King Henry VIII, and the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer persuaded Henry to license this Bible, a sign of royal approval.

The Great Bible

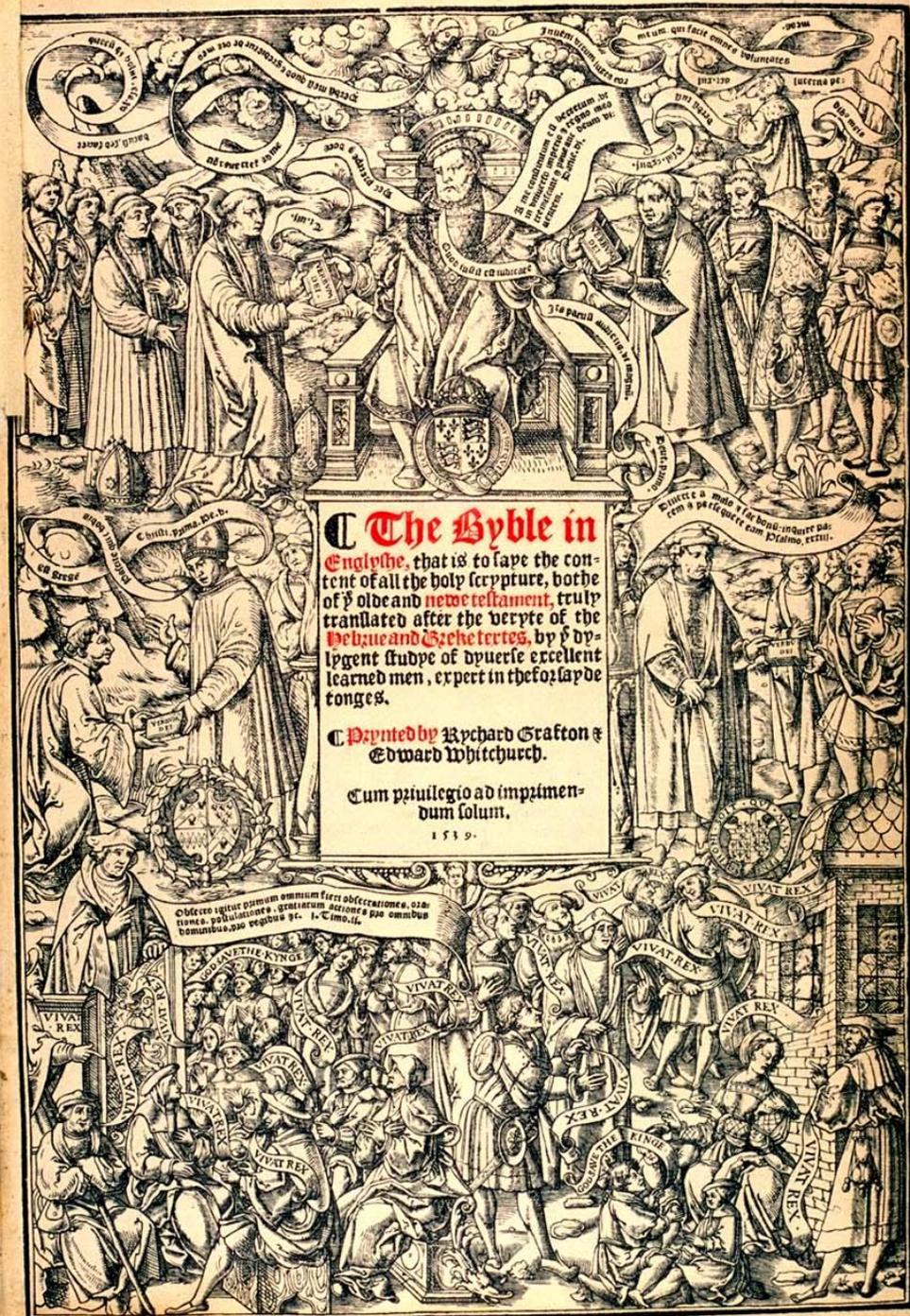
By 1537, both the Matthew's Bible and Coverdale's Bible were in circulation with apparent approval from the political and religious authorities. Thomas Cromwell, Henry's chief minister, asked Coverdale to prepare an updated version of his Bible that would replace both the Matthew's Bible and the original Coverdale Bible. This was so that there would be only one official and authorized Bible in the English language. This version was known as The Great Bible.

THE GREAT BIBLE:

- Printing began in Paris in 1539.
- Due to the Roman Catholic Inquisition, the presses, metal type, paper, workmen, etc. all had to be moved to England.
- The pages of the Great Bible were large: 16.5" X 11"
- The Latin Vulgate and Erasmus's Latin New Testament were used for the English New Testament.
- Coverdale used a Latin translation of the Old Testament as the basis for the English Old Testament.

- The Great Bible became the (single) authorized Bible in use in England at that time.
- King Henry VIII asked the bishops of the Church of England to study it to see if it contained any heresy.
- Church authorities studied The Great Bible and found no heresy.
- The Archbishop of York ordered all church curates to provide a copy of The Great Bible in each church.
- People gathered around Bibles in churches to read it or hear it being read.

The Title Page Woodcut of
The Great Bible
King Henry VIII
Archbishop Cranmer
Thomas Cromwell
Priests and the people



~

This woodcut portrays the hopes of the king that The Great Bible would foster religious and political loyalty.

The Later Life of Miles Coverdale

- By the late 1530s England was in religious turmoil.
- Conservative (Catholic) clerics and leaders were resisting efforts at reform.
- On June 28, 1539 the Act of Six Articles became law, ending official tolerance of religious reform. Thomas Cromwell was executed on July 28, 1540.
- Coverdale's Augustinian mentor Robert Barnes was executed about the same time.
- Cromwell had protected Coverdale since at least 1527.

- Before leaving England, Coverdale married Elizabeth Macheson (d. 1565), a Scotswoman of noble family who had come to England with her sister and brother-in-law as religious exiles from Scotland.
- The family went first to Strasbourg, in eastern France, where they remained for about three years.
- Coverdale translated books from Latin and German and wrote an important defense of the work of Robert Barnes. This is regarded as his most significant reforming statement apart from his Bible prefaces.

- Coverdale went to Germany and received the degree of Doctor of Theology from Tübingen, Germany and visited Denmark, where he wrote reforming tracts.
- In Strasbourg he befriended Conrad Hubert, Martin Bucer's secretary and a preacher at the church of St Thomas. Hubert was a native of Bergzabern in Germany.
- In September 1543, on the recommendation of Hubert, Coverdale became assistant minister in Bergzabern as well as schoolmaster in the town's grammar school.

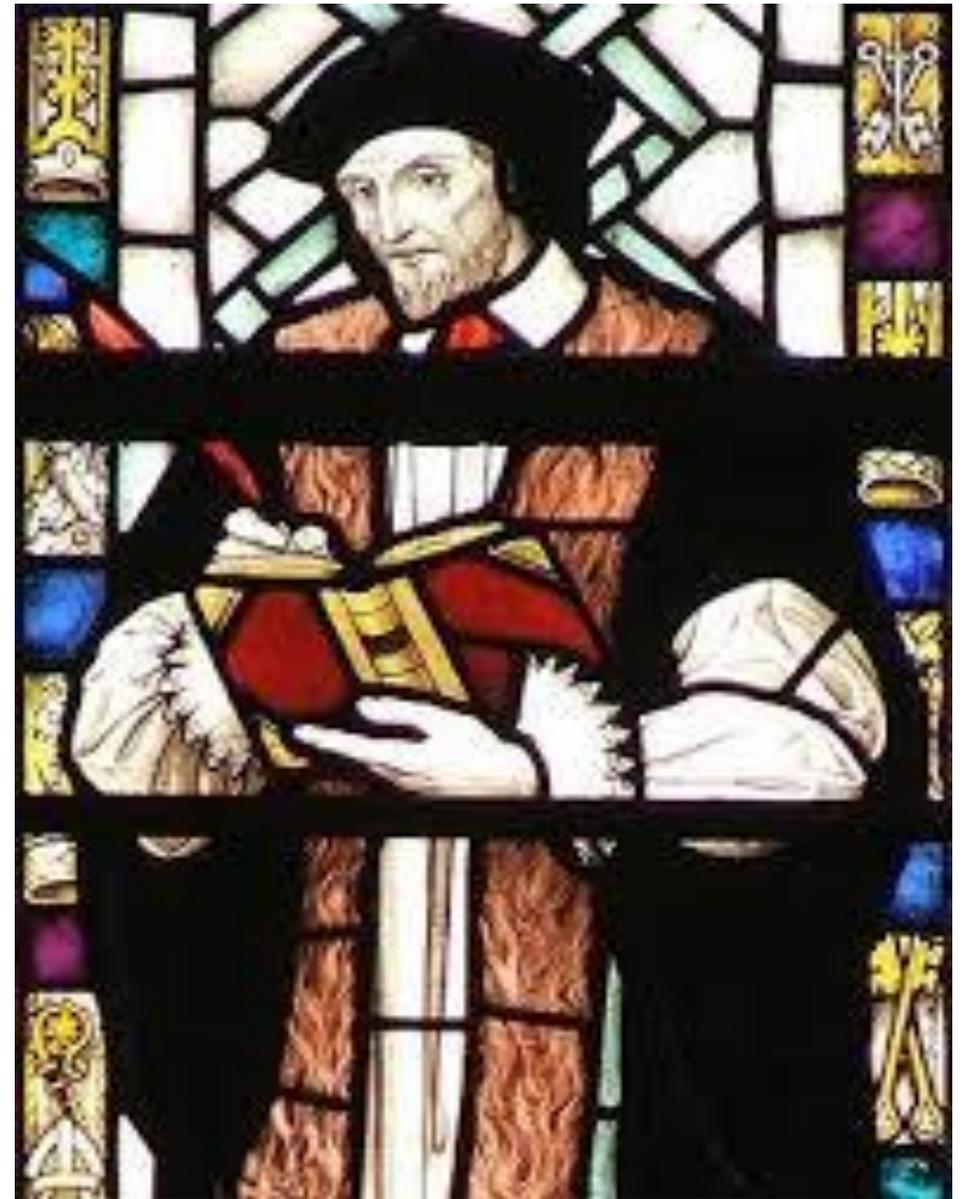
- During this period, Coverdale opposed Luther's attack on the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper.
- Coverdale also began to learn Hebrew, becoming competent in the language, as had been Tyndale.
- King Henry VIII died on January 28, 1547. His son, Edward VI was nine years old when he ascended to the English throne. Edward was clearly on the side of the Reformation.
- Coverdale wrote to John Calvin in March 1548 that he was returning to England, after 8 years of exile.

- Coverdale was well received at the court of the new monarch. He became a royal chaplain in Windsor, and was appointed almoner (chaplain who is in charge of distributing money to the deserving poor) to the dowager queen Catherine Parr (mother of Edward VI).
- Coverdale eventually became the Bishop of Exeter after the previous bishop was dismissed on August 14, 1551.
- After the death of Edward in 1553 and the rise of Queen Mary, Coverdale and his family had to flee to Germany again.

- In August 1559, Coverdale and his family returned to London.
- From 1564 to 1566, he was rector of St. Magnus the Martyr in London near London Bridge.
- Coverdale became popular in early Puritan circles, because of his quiet but firm stance against elaborate ceremonies and clerical dress.
- Due to his opposition to official church practices, the wandering priest died in poverty on May 26, 1569.
- His funeral was attended by a multitude of mourners.

“It shall greatly help ye to understand the Scriptures if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before and what followeth after.”

~~Miles Coverdale



KING JAMES

James VI and I (James Charles Stuart; June, 19 1566 – March 27, 1625) was King of Scotland as **James VI** from 24 July 1567 and King of England and Ireland as **James I** from the union of the Scottish and English crowns on 24 March 1603 until his death in 1625.



Under James, the "Golden Age" of Elizabethan literature and drama continued, with writers such as William Shakespeare, John Donne, Ben Jonson, and Sir Francis Bacon contributing to a flourishing literary culture.

Historians have praised the scholarship, learning and literary abilities of the king. He wrote poetry; works on witchcraft and tobacco; meditations and commentaries on the Scriptures, a manual on kingship; works of political theory; and, of course, speeches to Parliament.

For our focus here, the most important sponsorship that King James provided was as the patron of the translators of the "Authorized version" of the Bible. This was surely the greatest concentration of literary talent ever to enjoy royal sponsorship in England.

When James came from Scotland to England after the death of Queen Elizabeth I, he was approached by Puritans who had grievances with the Church of England. One of the things the Puritans asked for was a new translation of the Bible.

James was ambitious to build on the personal union of the Crowns of Scotland and England to establish a single country under one monarch, one parliament, and one law, a plan that met opposition in both realms. "Hath He not made us all in one island," James told the English Parliament, "compassed with one sea and of itself by nature indivisible?" In April 1604, however, the Commons refused his request to be titled "King of Great Britain" on legal grounds. Later, he went ahead and used that title any way.

Along with his ambitions for his earthly kingdom, James was a proponent of the divine right of kings, and also took his responsibility as the head of the church very seriously. It seemed entirely fitting that he should sponsor and oversee the work of producing a new authorized version of the Bible in English.

The king appointed 54 scholars from Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and from Westminster Abbey. However, the names of only 47 scholars appear in the records.

- Sadly, there was no money in the royal treasury to fund this work.
- As one scholar said, King James provided no money for the task, only “enthusiasm.”
- Oxford and Cambridge Universities picked up the tab for the scholars’ room and board.
- The work was begun in 1607, although some of the scholars had been doing work on their own on some parts of Scripture prior to this.

- The scholars were divided into groups to work on different sections, and then reviewed the works of other groups.
- The Bishops' Bible (1568) was to be followed closely.
- The Tyndale, Matthew, Coverdale, The Great Bible and The Geneva Bible were to be used where they agreed better with the text than the Bishops' Bible.
- For words with different meanings, the one most commonly used by the ancient fathers, was to be used.
- Some key words retained their old meanings.

Some important words that remained “ecclesiastical,” not literally translated:

- “church” instead of “congregation” (GK *ekklesia*)
- “pastor” instead of “shepherd” (GK *poimén*)
- “bishop” instead of “overseer” (GK *episkopon*)

This method of translation reinforced the authority of the Church of England, and the king as head of the church.



The translators and scholars also had access to:

- Luther's German translations
- The Rheims and Douai Version
- Olivetan's French translation
- Latin translations by Erasmus and other scholars
- The Latin Vulgate
- Italian and Spanish translations
- Daniel Plantin's Polyglot Bible, which contained the texts in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Syriac

The translators appear to have otherwise made no first-hand study of ancient manuscript sources, even those that—like the Codex Bezae (a 5th century manuscript of the four Gospels in Greek and Latin) —would have been readily available to them.

But regardless of its shortcomings, the King James Bible remains one of the greatest landmarks in the English tongue. It has decidedly affected our language and thought categories, and although produced in England for English churches, it played a unique role in the historical development of America.

Even today, many consider the King James Bible the ultimate translation in English and will allow none other for use in church or personal devotions.

What did King James think of the translation that was given his title and name?

Apparently he was pleased with the work done by the scholars, and especially pleased that it helped solidify his rule in a land with increasing religious tensions between Catholics, Protestants, the hierarchy of the Church of England, and Puritans who wanted reform.

By giving more people direct access to the Bible, the King James Version also had a democratizing influence within Protestantism itself, especially in the English colonies being settled in the New World. The new Bible didn't help the Puritans and other reformers to make the reforms they wanted in the Church of England. But in the colonies, the Anglicans no longer had supremacy, because the Puritans, Presbyterians, Methodists and others came, all of whom made use of the King James Bible.