THE GREATEST ENGLISH BIBLE

A CELEBRATION OF THE KING JAMES VERSION

A Guide to the Exhibition held in Chester Cathedral Library February 2011

By

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For the word of God is quicke and powerfull, and sharper than any two edged sword, pearcing euen to the dividing asunder of soule and spirit, and of the ioynts and marrowe, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
Hebrewes IIII, 12

FOREWORD

My thanks go to the Dean and Chapter of Chester Cathedral, and especially to the Canon Chancellor and Canon Librarian, Jane Brooke, for encouraging me to put on this exhibition, and for giving me the run of their fine library; to Canon Loveday Alexander, the Custos Librorum, for her constant advice and support; to Derek Nuttall for the display on printing; but above all to Peter Bamford, the Librarian, and his band of volunteers, for all the hard work they put in to making the event happen.

This exhibition is not an exercise in nostalgia or antiquarianism, still less an uncritical glorification of the greatest English translation. It is designed to encourage thought on the role of the Bible in the life of the Church and the Nation.

Throughout this Guide I have referred to the King James Version or KJV. When I was a boy most people in the British Isles called this Bible the Authorized Version or AV, while the Americans called it the King James Version or KJV. The latter name has now become almost universal on both sides of the Atlantic, and it is arguably more exact because there is no record that the KJV was ever formally authorized.

In the layout of the exhibition, Case One, Meet the King James Version Itself, is the flat case by the windows; Case Two, Forerunners, Formats and Successors, is the two-decker case nearest the door; Case Three, Scholarship and the KJV, is the two-decker case farthest from the door; and Case Four, Printing before Computers, is the small, flat case beside Case Two.

Six Information Sheets accompany the Exhibition: Information Sheet One contains extracts from William Barlow's Summe and Substance of the Conference*; Information Sheet Two contains extracts from Miles Smith's* Translators to the Reader *– the preface to the KJV. Information Sheet Three contains different versions in English of Psalm 23; Information Sheet Four contains different versions in English of the Lord's Prayer; Information Sheet Five contains extracts from John Owen's* Considerations on the Prolegomena & Appendix to the Late Biblia Polyglotta*; Information Sheet Six contains extracts from Brian Walton's reply to Owen,* The Considerator Considered. *The significance of these documents will become clear from the Guide.*

PSA 24th January 2011

THE MAKING OF THE KING JAMES VERSION

The death of Queen Elizabeth I on 24th March 1603 was a moment of great crisis for the English monarchy. The Virgin Queen had died without an heir, and had dithered right to the end over naming a successor. Lord Cecil and the Privy Council offered the crown to James VI of Scotland (a descendant of Henry VII through his daughter Margaret Tudor), who was more than willing to accept. James crossed into England: the nation held its breath and prayed for a peaceful transition of power.

Various parties hoped to gain the ear of the new monarch. Religious tensions had been growing throughout Elizabeth's reign. On the one side was the Puritan party which demanded further reformation of the English Church. It had been energized by the return from exile under Mary of many able churchmen radicalized by study at the great continental centres of Reform, such as Geneva. On the other side were the Catholics, whom Elizabeth felt increasingly obliged to suppress in the latter part of her reign, after the defeat of the Armada. It was all she could do to steer a middle course. With the arrival of the new king, the Puritans saw a chance to advance their cause. After all, he was untried in the ways of the English, and he was used to Presbyterianism, a much more Reformed, more Geneva-orientated style of Church government, in Scotland. No sooner had the King entered the country to progress south to London than they presented him with a petition, signed, so it was said, by 1,000 churchmen, and so known as the Millenary Petition, demanding further reform of the Church of England.

James dealt with this by saying that he would consider the Puritans' demands at a conference, which he duly held, on his own turf, at Hampton Court in January 1604. The conference was a practical measure to tackle a practical problem, but it is also clear from the King's letters that he rather enjoyed it. He fancied himself

as a bit of a scholar and theologian and relished the cut and thrust of debate with the churchmen. The main parties were the King and his privy counsellors, the Bishops and their supporters, led, in effect, by the Bishop of London, Richard Bancroft (John Whitgift, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was present, but he was not a well man, and it is obvious from accounts of the proceedings that Bancroft was the more forceful personality), and, finally, the Puritans, whose acknowledged spokesman was Dr. John Rainolds (or Reynolds), President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

The agenda was carefully set in advance, and covered the main points of the Millenary Petition. A new translation of the Bible was not on the table. It emerged out of the blue from the discussion of reform of the Prayer Book. Rainolds suddenly introduced the idea that a new translation of the Bible should be authorized for reading in Church, citing inadequacies in the earlier versions. Why he suddenly raised this new topic is far from clear. He had just scored a rare success in gaining the King's support for a modest reform of the Prayerbook, and for the strict enforcement of laws against the profanation of the Sabbath. Perhaps he wanted to build on this success: the Puritans had come with the idea of a new translation of the Bible very much on their minds, and were simply waiting for an opportunity to drop it into the conversation. There can be no question that Rainolds and the other Puritans would have been happier if the Geneva Bible, or something like it, rather than the Bishops' Bible, had been authorized for use in Church. And there were surely grounds for hoping that the King would be open to the idea, given that he had accepted the dedication of a Geneva Bible while still in Scotland.

Bancroft testily rejected the idea of a new translation, but the King latched onto it. He claimed that he had never yet seen a satisfactory one, and the worst of them all, said he, thus dashing Rainolds' unspoken hopes, was the Geneva Version. The King called for a new translation of the Bible. It was a master-stroke. He would gain huge authority by having his name associated with

such a prestigious project; he would quash once and for all the hated Geneva Version; and he would appear to be offering the Puritans something out of the conference, while at the same time making it very clear that he would not countenance Reform. He left the Puritans in no doubt that he intended to uphold the Elizabethan *via media*: there would be no move towards Presbyterianism: "A Scotch Presbytery agreeth as well with monarchy as God with the devil. Then Jack and Tom and Will and Dick shall meet, and at their pleasure censure me and my council ... Until you find that I grow lazy, let that alone ...". "No bishop, no king", as he pithily put it twice during the conference. His one stipulation – picking up a suggestion thrown out by Bancroft, who was quick, having been rebuffed, to try and recover some ground – was that the translation should be without explanatory notes. (See Information Sheet One, which contains extracts from William Barlow's account of the Hampton Court Conference.)

The King ensured that his wishes would prevail by putting Bancroft in charge of the translation. It was Bancroft who drew up the detailed rules of engagement. These incorporated the King's ban on explanatory notes, but also instructed that the translation should be a revision of the Bishops' Bible, and that it should retain the traditional ecclesiastical terms such as "priest" and "bishop". Some 54 scholars, including Rainolds and several other Puritans, were recruited and divided into six teams, or "companies", as they were called – two meeting in Oxford, two meeting in Cambridge, and two in Westminster. The Old Testament, New Testament and Apocrypha were parcelled out among the teams. The work of the six companies, when completed, was to be reviewed by a seventh company, made up of members of the six (plus, in the event, some others), meeting at Stationers Hall in Westminster. This company was to produce the final text, though Bancroft reserved the right of final approval, and is said to have made fourteen last-minute changes, though no-one now knows what they were. The work was completed in 1611 and printed by Robert Barker the King's Printer in London in a large and very handsome folio.

Thus was born the greatest translation of the Bible into English. The work took some six years, involved more people and was more thoroughly and carefully done than any previous English Bible. It has always been a matter of astonishment that a translation produced by such a "motley crew" should have achieved such stylistic unity. You really can't tell on stylistic grounds were the work of one company ends and another begins. Some have suggested that final styling must have been done by one of the literary giants of the age – possibly even Shakespeare, but there is not a shred of evidence to support this. The unity should probably be put down to the shared rhetorical education of the translators (and, remember, Lancelot Andrewes, one of the supreme stylists of the age, was one of their number), and to thorough final editing. For once a committee, in fact several committees, created a literary masterpiece.

CASE ONE: MEET THE KING JAMES VERSION ITSELF

In Case One of the exhibition we meet the King James Version (the KJV) itself. The display is dominated by a magnificent 1611 folio. The KJV was printed three times in all in its year of publication, and all three editions differ slightly from each other. Two of them were "She" Bibles and one a "He" Bible, so called because of a crucial difference in Ruth 3:15, where the former read "and she went into the city" and the latter "and he went into the city". "He" is correct and is found in the first print of 1611; "she" is a mistake, and is found in the other two prints. The folio exhibited is a "He" Bible. These first prints are in folio, because they were meant to be put on lecterns in churches for public reading. They were expensive. On display is a copy of a page from the Cathedral accounts for 1613, which records a payment of 69 shillings to cover the purchase of a KJV and its carriage from London. This was a very substantial sum in those days, and well beyond the pocket of ordinary people. Smaller, cheaper, and more portable formats of

the translation were issued later. It is not clear which, if any, of the folio KJVs in the Cathedral Library represents this purchase, but it is intriguing that the Cathedral seems to have waited two years before buying the new Bible. Presumably it continued to use its Bishops' Bible, the authorization of which was never withdrawn.

In addition to its large size, several features of this Bible are worth noting. First the type. The main text is black letter, or, as it is sometimes called, Gothic type. In the middle of the black letter text, words occur, from time to time, in smaller Roman type. These indicate additions by the translators needed to complete the sense in English. The translators attempted scrupulously (though not always successfully) to show what could actually be found in the original Hebrew and Greek, and what had to be supplied for the benefit of the English reader. The short summaries of the contents of each chapter are also printed in Roman letter, as are the book titles and the running heads at the top of each page. Later prints of the KJV went over exclusively to Roman letter, which is much more legible, but this resulted in the added words now having to be represented by a different type-face, viz., italic.

The text is presented two columns to a page, and is divided into chapters and verses. Each verse stands on its own, but the text is sectioned into paragraphs marked by the paragraph sign ¶. In the outer margins are notes, which provide: (1) References to other verses in the Bible containing significant parallels to the verse in hand. These are marked by an asterisk (*). (2) Alternative, usually more strictly literal, translations of certain words and phrases. These are marked by a dagger (†). (3) Etymologies of Biblical names, marked by two vertical lines (‖). (4) In the New Testament, variant readings from other manuscripts, also marked by two vertical lines (e.g., Luke 17:36; Acts 25:6). The pages are not numbered, but at the bottom right of each is a catchword, which repeats the first word at the top left of the next page. These catchwords (together with the signatures) enabled the binder to make up the volume correctly. Many of these features are so

familiar to us today, so typical of a Bible, particularly if we belong to the older generation, that it is hard to remember that they were only made standard by the KJV. For example, verse-numbering, so crucial to cross-referencing and close study, was not introduced into English Bibles till the Geneva version of 1560.

At the beginning of the Bible, in addition to the fulsome Dedication to King James and the Preface of the Translators to the Reader (for selections from the latter see Information Sheet Two), fifty-eight pages of useful matter were inserted. This included various liturgical calendars and tables of Scriptural lections, a map of Canaan, and numerous Biblical genealogies. The displayed Bible is open at the last of the genealogies and the beginning of Genesis 1. This prefatory material has long gone from our copies of the KJV – a pity, because it could profitably while away the time during a boring sermon! There were two different title pages, a general one at the very beginning, and another for the New Testament section. A photocopy of the general title-page is on display, partly because the actual page is missing from the folio shown, doubtless due to the heavy use to which it was put over many years. In the central panel is the title, the name of the printer, Robert Barker, the place of publication, London, and the date of publication, 1611, just as in any modern book, but this is surrounded by an incredibly detailed set of images. The title pages of the great Bibles were thought out very carefully, and used to set the tone for the whole volume. They were the first thing the reader looked at, so it was important they conveyed the right message. The central axis of the design starts at the top with the most sacred name of God in Hebrew letters (יהוה = YHWH, or Jehovah, as the name would have been pronounced in the 16th and 17th centuries by Christians). Beneath is a dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, descending on a lamb in a roundel carrying a cross, symbolizing, of course, Christ. Thus we have a representation of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. On the same vertical axis, but beneath the central panel, is a roundel containing the image of a pelican, plucking its breast to draw blood to feed its young. This was a

well-known symbol of Christ shedding his blood for the Church (cf., Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act IV, scene vi, 144-146: "To his good friend thus wide I'll ope my arms And, like the kind, life-rendering pelican, Repast them with my blood"). The overall design, however, is dominated by two large figures standing in niches in a wall. On the left is Moses holding the Tablets of the Law, and on the right Aaron. This represents the marriage of legal and sacerdotal power. The prominence given to Aaron is particularly noteworthy: it is a reminder of the Biblical basis for a separate, ordained priesthood. But Moses rules over Aaron, because it is in his law that Aaron's role and powers are defined – No king, no bishop!

Two other items complete the display. The first is a copy of *The Summe and Substance of the Conference*, an account of the Hampton Court Conference written by William Barlow (*d.* 1613). Barlow, who was from a North West family that haled from Barlow Moor near Manchester, was Dean of Chester when the conference took place. He was a staunch royalist, and was rapidly promoted in the Church, ending his days as Bishop of Lincoln. But he was also a considerable Greek scholar. He chaired the Second Westminster Company to which the New Testament Epistles were entrusted.

Alongside Barlow's *Summe* is a copy of a curious work, the *Declaration du Serenissime Iaques I le Roy … pour le Droit des Rois*. It is a defence of the rights of kings written by King James himself, published first in French in 1615 and then in English in the following year. The occasion of this essay was a "harangue" delivered on 15th January 1615 in the Chamber of the French Third Estate by Cardinal de Perron, and then printed, in which he asserted the right of the Pope to depose Princes. De Perron addressed the printed version to James, as if supposing, as James drily remarks, "the reading thereof would forsooth driue me to say, *Lord Cardinall, in this high subject your Honour hath satisfied me to the full*", and it was this effrontery that called forth the King's response. James was carrying on a tradition of royal authorship

going back to Henry VIII's attack on Lutheranism, the *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, a treatise which earned him the title of *Fidei Defensor* (Defender of the Faith) from a grateful pope. The *Declaration* shows James as something of a frustrated scholar, an aspect of his personality which came out at the Hampton Court Conference where he quite clearly enjoyed the theological debate, but it also argues an uncompromising view of the autonomy of kings under God – a view which his son, Charles I, was to espouse with great fervour and less diplomacy, and which cost him his crown and his head.

CASE TWO: FORERUNNERS, FORMATS AND SUCCESSORS

Top Shelf: Forerunners

The KJV was by no means the first translation of the Bible into English. As its title-page declares, it was "with the former translations diligently compared and revised by His Majesty's special commandment." In the preface to the reader, Miles Smith explains, "Truly (good Christian Reader) wee never thought from the beginning, that we should neede to make a new Translation, nor yet to make a bad one a good one, … but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principall good one, not justly to be excepted against." As the rules for the translators, drawn up after the Hampton Court Conference by Richard Bancroft, Bishop of London, make clear, the base text was to be the Bishops' Bible, but other translations should be consulted. These were listed as: "Tindale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Whitchurch's [i.e., the Great Bible], Geneva".

The fountain-head of these earlier translations was Tyndale. William Tyndale (*c.*1494-1536) was a Gloucestershireman who made it his life's work to give the English people a Bible in their own tongue, one that every ploughboy, as he memorably put it (according to Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, chap. XII), would be able to

understand. He was a translator of supreme genius, who had an uncanny ear for strong, vivid, timeless English, and much of his translation has passed over into the KJV. There is deep irony in this because in his own time his translation work was not approved, and he was forced to go to the continent to continue it. He was a combative soul, and compounded his faults by getting embroiled in English politics, attacking in his *Practyse of Prelates* (1530) King Henry's divorce as unscriptural. The king was not amused, nor were Wolsey or Thomas More. Tyndale had made very powerful enemies, and he was tracked by English agents, one of whom betrayed his hiding-place in Antwerp to the local authorities. Arrested in 1535 and held in the castle of Vilvorde near Brussels, he was condemned for heresy, and strangled and burned at the stake there in 1536. Before his death he had managed to see into print his translation of the New Testament from the Greek (1526), and the Pentateuch (1530) and Jonah (1531) from the Hebrew. He began printing his New Testament in Cologne in 1525, but was forced to flee before he had got very far with it. Printing was resumed in Worms, and the complete New Testament finally appeared in 1526. Only three copies of it survive – one now in the British Library, which purchased it from the Baptist College, Bristol, for £1,000,000; a second in the library of St Paul's Cathedral; and the third, discovered only in 1997 and the most complete of the three, in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart. Shortly before his death Tyndale brought out a second, revised edition of his New Testament (Antwerp, 1534), and it is a copy of this, printed at Antwerp in 1536, that is on display. It is open at the beginning of the letters of Paul, who is depicted in the woodcut with his left foot resting on a stone. The three different editions of this text issued in 1536 are distinguished by whether the stone is blank (as here), or has an engraver's monogram inscribed on it (A.K.B. = Adrian Kempe de Bouchout), or the figure of a mole or hedgehog. The copy on display is sadly battered and incomplete, and someone has used the blank sheet for pen-exercises (*exercitus calami*) to test if his pen was working. It is odd to use a Bible for this purpose. It suggests

whoever did this had no idea what a precious and historic volume he was defacing.

Tyndale's was the first printed English Bible, and the first to be done directly from the original languages, but even he was not the first to put the Bible into English. Before him were the Wycliffite versions. These were associated with the name of the great Oxford scholar, John Wycliffe (*c.*1328-1384), who is often seen as one of the heralds of the Reformation. Wycliffe himself was probably not directly involved in the translation, but it was done by men who were inspired by his teachings and ideals. The Wycliffite translations of 1380 and 1388 are in places very fine, and some of their renderings were adopted in later versions, but they were taken from the Latin Vulgate, the standard Bible text in the West in their day, and because they follow the Latin word-order slavishly they can sometimes be hard to follow. Even the Wycliffite versions were not the first. If we go back to the 10th century we can find parts of the Bible in Anglo-Saxon, and still further back in the 4th in Gothic, one of the remote ancestor languages of English, which can only be read today by scholars.

Tyndale did not manage to complete his translation before he was martyred, but he had let the genie out of the bottle and it could not be put back in again. Others set about finishing the task he had begun. In 1535 Miles Coverdale produced the first complete English Bible, but Coverdale, unlike Tyndale, was not a Greek or Hebrew scholar, and so he based himself on the German translation of Luther, and on the Latin Vulgate. His translation was workmanlike, and it was soon challenged by another complete English Bible, which appeared in 1537 under the name of Thomas Matthew, and hence became known as Matthew's Bible. Thomas Matthew was the pen-name of John Rogers, a friend of William Tyndale, and his literary executor, who was later burned at the stake in 1555 under Queen Mary. He was not the translator in any meaningful sense of the term but rather the editor. He reprinted Tyndale's Pentateuch of 1530 and his New Testament of

1535. For Joshua to 2 Chronicles he used a manuscript translation which Tyndale had left unpublished at the time of his death. The remaining books of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha were Coverdale, except for the Prayer of Manasses, which Rogers seems to have translated himself. We thus have a composite text, part of which is taken from the Hebrew and Greek, and part from the Latin and German. Under Cranmer's influence Matthew's Bible was granted the royal licence, a privilege extended also retrospectively to Coverdale. How the times had changed! Within a few years of his martyrdom Tyndale's translation in the form of Matthew's Bible was authorized for circulation in England.

The situation had certainly improved, but it was still not entirely satisfactory: large tracts of the Old Testament had not been done directly from the original. Coverdale returned to the fray to better his first efforts. With official blessing he set about producing a complete Bible "truly translated after the veryte of the Hebrue and Greke textes". His knowledge of the Biblical languages had not improved, so he relied, so he claimed, on "dyuerse excellent learned men, expert in the forsayde tonges", though who they were he does not say. He acted as editor. The new Bible, known as the Great Bible, duly appeared in 1539, and over the next three years was reprinted seven times, from the second edition onwards with an eloquent preface by Cranmer. In each case there were significant revisions.

But things now went into reverse. The latter years of Henry VIII's reign saw a strong reaction against Reform, with which the dissemination of the Bible in English had become so bound up. An act of Parliament of 1543 condemned "the crafty, false and untrue translation of Tyndale". A royal proclamation of 1546 ordained that "no man or woman, of what estate, or degree, was … to receive, have, take, or keep, Tyndale's or Coverdale's New Testament", copies of which were burned at St. Paul's Cross. Even the Great Bible was attacked, the Upper House of Convocation of Canterbury declaring that it could not continue as the authorized

Bible for use in churches "without scandal and error and open offence to Christ's faithful people", and demanding that it should be revised into conformity with the Vulgate. Moves were made to that end but little was done by the time Henry died on January 28, 1547.

Under Edward VI the Reform party once more gained the upper hand and the injunction of 1538, requiring that "one book of the whole Bible of the largest volume in English" should be placed in every parish church, was renewed. The Great Bible was reprinted twice (1549 and 1553) to meet this need. Still more significant was the publication, under Cranmer's direction, of the first *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549. This stipulated that the Biblical readings in Church should be in English, and that the whole of the Psalms should be recited every month. To facilitate this a Book of Psalms was included in the prayerbook. The version printed was taken from the Great Bible, which differed little at this point from the original Coverdale. This translation of the Psalms passed over unchanged into the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* (in other words, the KJV did not replace it), and it has continued in liturgical use in the Church of England right down to the present day.

Edward died in 1553 and was succeeded by Mary. The pendulum swung back again violently against Reform. Numbers of Reformers fled abroad, and it was a group of these, based in Calvin's Geneva, who took the next momentous step in the story of the English Bible. Their leader was William Whittingham, John Knox's successor as pastor of the English church in Geneva. They issued in 1560 a complete Bible in English, "translated according to the Ebrue and Greke, and conferred with the best translations in diverse languages". The Geneva Bible was a fine effort, which reflected the best in continental Biblical scholarship. The "most profitable annotations upon all the hard places" of Scripture which it offered had a distinctly Reformed ring, and attacked the papacy from time to time. The translation was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, who had meanwhile succeeded to the English throne.

This was, of course, a speculative, political move, designed to influence the young queen in the direction of Reform. The Geneva Bible proved popular in England during her reign, and was often reprinted. As the copy on display shows (a London 1598 print), it offered a compact and attractive package. It was apparently the translation used by Shakespeare. The Queen, however, as noted earlier, in the end came out against radical Reform, and this necessitated a new version of the Bible which reflected a more moderate stance. The Great Bible simply could not compete with the Geneva version, which had become a most effective "recruiting sergeant" for Reform.

Moves towards a new official translation were begun in 1561 by Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, who parcelled out portions of the Old Testament, New Testament and Apocrypha for revision to a number of scholarly Bishops and churchmen. The starting-point was to be the Great Bible, which was to be changed only where it did not accurately represent the Hebrew and the Greek. Parker himself acted as editor-in-chief. The work, which came to be known as the Bishops' Bible, was published in 1568. In 1571 the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury ordained that this Bible should be placed in every cathedral, and, as far as possible, in every parish church, and that church dignitaries should prominently display it in their houses in a way that allowed their servants and guests to consult it. The Bishops' Bible was reprinted a number of times (a 1572 print is on display), but it never displaced the Geneva version in popular affection. Geneva remained by a considerable margin the best English translation of the time.

The Geneva Version had provoked the Bishops' Bible. It and the Bishops' Bible combined in turn to provoke the Catholic Church into providing English Catholics with their own English translation of the Scriptures. This was produced by exiled English Catholic scholars associated with the English College at Douai in the Low Countries (now in northern France). This college had been

opened in 1568 by William Allen, a Lancashireman, educated at Oxford and a former Canon of York. The college was forced to decamp to Rheims in 1578 following the advances of the Protestants under Prince William I of Orange, and it was at Rheims in 1582 that a Catholic translation of the New Testament into English, based on the Vulgate, was published. The principal translator was Gregory Martin, but he was assisted by other fellows of the college. The Elizabethan authorities in England reacted with fury to the circulation of this version in England, and possession of a copy could lead to imprisonment and even torture. Archbishop Whitgift appointed Dr Fulke, Master of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, to refute the Rheims translation. He did this in a massive folio volume, published in 1589, in which he printed the Catholic version in full, in parallel with the Bishops' Bible, thus giving it even wider circulation!

The English College returned to Douai in 1593 and continued its work of translation, issuing an Old Testament and Apocrypha in 1609-1610. A copy of this is on display. The Rheims-Douai version became the KJV of English-speaking Catholics, and, in the thorough revision by Bishop Richard Challoner in 1749, remained standard down to modern times. It is perhaps most remembered for its obscure Latinisms, but it is actually a fine, scholarly rendering of the Vulgate, which can be racy at times (Acts 12:13, "And when he [Peter] knocked at the doore of the gate, there came forth a wenche to see, named Rhodè": Protestant versions, "a damosell/damsel" or "maide"), and there is evidence that it was consulted by the KJV translators.

While the Bible was being done into English, it was also being rendered into other European vernaculars, and the English translators were well aware of, and consulted, some of these foreign-language translations. Bible-translation in the 16th and 17th centuries was a truly international affair, and in fact the English were quite tardy, compared to other nations, in putting the Scriptures into their own tongue. Of these non-English versions by

far the most influential was Martin Luther's German. This had a profound influence on Tyndale and Coverdale. But there were also significant translations into French, Italian, and Spanish. John Selden (1584-1654) reports that at the meeting of the final revision committee of the KJV at Stationers Hall in London, "that part of the Bible was given to him who was most excellent in such a tongue (as the Apocrypha to Andrew Downes), and then they met together; and one read the translation, the rest holding in their hands some Bible of the learned tongues, or French, Spanish, Italian etc.; if they found any fault they spoke, if not he read on."

Two volumes on display represent this European tradition of Bible translation contemporary with the KJV. The first is a rather rare copy of the Italian (or, as the title-page says, Tuscan) translation of Antonio Brucioli (1495-1566). Brucioli was an Italian humanist, an associate of Machiavelli, who fell foul of the Inquisition for holding Lutheran views. His translation was first published in 1530. The copy on display was printed in Venice in 1539, where Brucioli passed the latter part of his life. It is unlikely the KJV translators would have known Brucioli's version. More likely they would have consulted the famous translation of the Italian Reformer Giovanni Diodati (1576-1649), which was first published in 1603. The second foreign-language Bible on display is a handsome French volume printed in London in 1688 for the Huguenot community in the city. It contains a form of the famous French translation produced by Pierre Robert Olivétan (*c.*1506-1538), the cousin of John Calvin, and first published at Neuchâtel in 1535. The volume also contains the Psalms in metre by Clement Marot and Théodore de Bèze. If the KJV translators did consult a French version, then it would almost certainly have been this one.

Bottom Shelf: Formats and Succesors

The bottom shelf of this case illustrates two themes: first, the changing formats of the KJV over the centuries following its first publication; and second, the attempts to revise it. The editions of

the KJV printed in 1611 were in large folio because they were intended as lectern Bibles, to be placed in churches for public reading. They were consequently expensive, and not easy to use for personal study and devotion. The contrast here with the Tyndale Bibles which were in octavo or quarto is striking. From 1612 onwards, however, the KJV began to appear in smaller, cheaper formats, more suitable for private use. The smaller prints were in Roman letter, because it was easier to read, as opposed to the black letter formats of the folios. Printing was strictly controlled: only royal printers (Robert Barker and his successors) were allowed to print, plus the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Printing Bibles made a fortune for the University presses, and was the foundation of their commercial success. The privilege to print Bibles could be circumvented by introducing some notes, or illustrations: one could then argue that the edition was a commentary and not a straightforward print of the Bible. This ploy was increasingly used in the 18th and 19th centuries, and some printers sailed very close to the wind. Also American printers felt less constrained by British copyright laws. Three volumes in the display exemplify some of these points. One is a large quarto print of the KJV issued in Oxford in 1675 at the Sheldonian Theatre. This is the first KJV printed at Oxford. Cambridge was earlier in the field, but Oxford overtook it, and the Oxford Bible press was the most successful printer of the KJV by a long way of all the privileged presses.

The second exhibit dominates the case: it is a volume of the enormous six volume Bible edited by Thomas Macklin and published in London in 1800. The Macklin Bible got round the problem of privilege by including illustrative engravings by some of the leading artists of the day, as well a few perfunctory notes which usually got cut off during binding. It became something of a collectors' item, and the custom arose of disbinding it and inserting at the relevant point in the Biblical narrative additional illustrations (a process known as "grangerizing"). With some owners collecting and adding Bible illustrations became an

obsession, and one copy of a grangerized Macklin (the Bowyer Bible), donated by the Heywood family to the town of Bolton in 1948 and now in the Bolton Central Library, finally reached forty-five volumes. Grangerizing was also practised on John Kitto's *Pictorial Bible*, first published in book form in 1836-1838. One copy of this, now in the Huntington Library, California, was expanded from the original three volumes to sixty.

In the starkest possible contrast to the Macklin Bible we have on display a little GI New Testament. This is a pocket copy of a KJV New Testament, printed in Washington in 1942 for mass distribution to the American forces. It has a personal message at the front from General Eisenhower. One wonders how this got into the Cathedral Library. There were plenty of GIs in Cheshire during World War II – General George ("Blood and Guts") Patton's headquarters for a time were at Peover Hall. It is possible some Cheshire clergy had a chaplaincy role with the GIs, or some GIs attended parish churches, and this is how a GI New Testament ended up in the Cathedral library. The Canadian branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society printed a very similar New Testament for distribution to the Canadian Armed forces, with a message from King George VI. It is curious that it is the US version that has ended up in the library.

As the 19th century progressed pressure grew to revise the KJV. Several individuals produced revisions or totally new translations, but finally an attempt was made to produce an official revision, that would match the old KJV in prestige and authority. The New Testament of this Revised Version appeared in 1881, the Old Testament in 1885 (a volume of this is on display), and the Apocrypha in 1895. The result was a fine, scholarly translation, which adhered closely to the originals as they were understood by the best of late 19th century Biblical scholarship, but although initially the new translation was a publishing success, it failed in the longer term to claim the affections of English readers, most of whom remained staunchly loyal to the KJV.

The Revisers, conscious of the existence of large numbers of English-speakers devoted to the KJV in North America, invited a group of American Biblical scholars to participate in the revision. The American committee disagreed in the end in a small but significant number of cases with their British counterparts. Initially printed as an Appendix to the Revised Version, the American preferences were finally, in 1901, incorporated into the text of an American version of the Revised Version which came to be known as the American Standard Version. It was the first "official" American translation of the Bible ever produced. It did not, any more than its British counterpart, displace the KJV in the affections of American Bible readers, but it provided the starting-point for the next major "official" revision of the English Bible – the Revised Standard Version.

This revision was solely the work of North American Bible scholars, who included, for the Old Testament, one Jew, the eminent Hebraist Harry Orlinsky. The intention had been to involve the British, but the War made this impossible, so the Americans went ahead on their own. In retrospect the absence of the British proved symbolic: it marked the end of British dominance in the study of the Bible in the English-speaking world. The New Testament was published in 1946, the Old Testament in 1952, and the Apocrypha in 1957. A copy of this version is on display. The result was probably the finest revision of the KJV ever attempted: while still retaining the rhythms of the KJV the RSV incorporated the best of contemporary knowledge. Its impact in the longer term, however, was limited by two factors: firstly, its reverential retention of the old-fashioned "thee" and "thou" in address to God (the vast majority of Christians gave this up, and came to regard it as an affectation); and secondly, its lack of inclusive language. The impact of feminism on Christian consciousness in the post-war era has been profound, and particularly in churches which had ordained women as priests or ministers, the use of masculine pronouns, or "man" where the

context or the original language clearly included women, was seen by many as no longer acceptable. These issues were addressed in the New Revised Standard Version (1989-90), but the reception of this translation has been very mixed.

After World War II there was a growing feeling that attempts to revise the KJV had run their course, and it was time for a radical new approach. New translations of the Bible into modern English by individuals or small groups were by now increasingly common (pioneering in this regard were the racy English renderings by J.B. Philipps: e.g., *Letters to Young Churches*, 1947). The next "official" translation of the Bible into English, supported by the major Churches in Britain, was a genuinely new translation, which broke decisively with the KJV tradition. An entirely British affair, and, in a way, a sort of answer to the American RSV, it was called the New English Bible (New Testament 1961; Old Testament and Apocrypha 1970). It was, perhaps, most noteworthy for some of its very bold not to say bizarre translations (see Judges 1:14) in the Old Testament, which were influenced by the speculative theories of the leading English Hebraist of the time, a prominent member of the Old Testament revision committee, Professor Godfrey Driver of Oxford. Despite being initially a publishing sensation, the New English Bible has failed to hold its own against more recent translations. The situation at present is one of plurality, with new translations into English of the Bible or parts of the Bible coming out almost every year. The KJV continues to be printed and is still widely used, but it no longer enjoys the dominance it once held.

For different English renderings of Psalm 23 and the Lord's Prayer from the 16th century to the present day see Information Sheets Three and Four.

CASE THREE: SCHOLARSHIP AND THE KJV

Top Shelf: Which text to translate?

One of the major decisions which anyone translating the Bible into English in the 17th century had to make was which text to translate. The choice involved theology, even politics. The Bible in the West throughout the Middle Ages had been the Latin Vulgate in its various forms, a venerable version produced by the great Biblical scholar Jerome (*c.*347-420) in the late fourth/early fifth century, which was embedded in the Latin liturgy of the Catholic Church. This was the text behind the Wycliffe Bibles (14th century), and the Douai-Rheims translation (New Testament 1582; Old Testament and Apocrypha 1609-1610). It has remained the most authoritative Bible-text in the Catholic Church right down to modern times (Ronald Knox's translation of 1944 [New Testament] and 1949 [Old Testament and Apocrypha] was still based on it). A fine copy of this Latin Bible, printed in Cologne in 1477 (which makes it an incunabulum – a rare volume from the cradle days of printing) is on display. The Protestant Reformers, however, attacked the Vulgate, which validated certain Catholic doctrines of which they disapproved, and argued that the Church had to return to the original texts of the Bible (which Jerome himself had translated) – Greek for the New Testament and Hebrew for the Old. The KJV, as a Protestant version, is based directly on the Hebrew and the Greek.

Knowledge of Greek, at least in any depth, was rare in the Latin West in the Middle Ages, but interest in it exploded in the Italian Humanist movement of the 15th century, and spread from there to the rest of Europe, till, by the 16th century, any scholar worth his salt had to be proficient in the language. The Humanist movement drew inspiration from the writings of the ancient Greeks on philosophy, cosmology, and medicine, manuscripts of which were being brought to the West, to attack the scholasticism of the Middle Ages. Humanism was to be found in both the Protestant and the Catholic camps, but it was used in each in different ways. It was this burgeoning knowledge of Greek that now made it

possible to create an edition of the Greek Testament, and to translate directly from it into modern languages.

The first published Greek New Testament was created by the "prince" of Humanist scholars, Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536). It appeared in Basle in March 1516. A Greek Testament had, in fact, already been printed in 1514 in Alcalá de Henares (otherwise known as Complutum) in Spain, thirty-five miles north-east of Madrid, under the auspices of Cardinal Ximenes, but it did not get published till 1522 when it appeared as part of the first of the great polyglot Bibles, the Complutensian. Erasmus's text, which he revised several times, was Luther's and Tyndale's Greek text of choice for their New Testament versions. Other editions followed, one in particular, produced by Robert Estienne (Robertus Stephanus) in Paris in 1550, being particularly prized, and becoming, in effect, the received or standard text (the *Textus Receptus*). It was probably the text used by the KJV translators. On display is a fine reprint of this Stephanus text published in Frankfurt in 1601. An interesting feature of this copy is that it has been interleaved with blank pages to allow the owner to add his own annotations. The notes that have been added are learned, written by an accomplished scholar. We don't know who he was but the handwriting looks late 18th/early 19th century, which shows how the Stephanus text was still being used over 250 years after it was first printed.

A good knowledge of Hebrew was needed to translate the Old Testament from the original. This was a tougher proposition, because, while Greek has many similarities to Latin, and, indeed, to other European languages, Hebrew belongs to a totally different linguistic family, the Semitic. The task was greatly helped, however, by the presence of small communities of Jews scattered throughout Europe, among whom lived formidable scholars totally at home in the Hebrew Bible. Already in the Middle Ages there had been some contact between Jewish and Christian scholars, and a few of the latter (e.g., Herbert of Bosham [12th

century], secretary to Thomas à Becket, and Nicholas of Lyra [c.1270-1349]) had, with Jewish help, made themselves competent in Hebrew; but once again it was the influence of Italian Humanism that led to an explosion of Christian Hebraism. Italian Humanists such as Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), saw Jewish tradition, in particular (oddly) the medieval Jewish mystical tradition known as the Cabala, as an alternative source of wisdom to that offered by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and the other great medieval doctors of the Church. Hebrew became the third language (after Latin and Greek) of the Christian scholar, and it penetrated deeply into the educational curriculum: boys in the grammar schools of Tudor England had to struggle with Hebrew as well as Latin and Greek.

Printed editions of the Hebrew Bible were needed. These began to appear first in Italy. Early in the field was the Soncino family of Jewish printers, who took their name from the small Italian town of Soncino, but the greatest printer of Hebrew books in the early period (the first quarter of the 16th century) was Daniel Bomberg of Venice. Bomberg was actually a Christian, but he employed major Jewish scholars, such as the great Elias Levita (1469-1549), to oversee his Hebrew books. The KJV translators would almost certainly at some point in their work have consulted a Bomberg Rabbinic Bible, to make use of the comments of the medieval Jewish scholars printed there. Hebrew printing spread throughout Europe, and Christian scholars began to produce their own handy editions of the Old Testament in Hebrew, which offered a very literal word-for-word interlinear Latin translation of the original. Putting the Latin underneath the Hebrew was awkward because Hebrew runs from right to left, whereas Latin goes from left to right, so you have to read the Latin backwards! But these editions were a huge help, and it is very likely that an interlinear would have been on the desk of every scholar who worked on the KJV Old Testament. On display is a fine interlinear Hebrew Old Testament printed in Geneva in 1609. The usefulness of this edition is enhanced by the fact that the roots of the verbs in the

Hebrew text are identified in the margin, allowing the scholar to look them up in a Hebrew dictionary.

The Reformers believed they had trumped the authority of the Roman Church by going behind the Latin Vulgate direct to the fountain-head of the Hebrew and the Greek. But problems soon began to arise. If one makes the original texts of the Bible, in Hebrew and Greek, the sole rule of faith, then which text of these does one choose? The problem first became acute with the Greek New Testament. It was noticed that manuscripts of the Greek New Testament differed from one another. Erasmus, in his rush to beat the Complutensian Polyglot to press, used whatever Greek manuscripts he had to hand. We now know that these represented late Byzantine forms of the New Testament text. He even found that for his first edition he lacked a Greek manuscript for the last few verses of Revelation, so he translated the Vulgate back into Greek! Many of the textual variants in the Greek New Testament known in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were trivial, but some were more substantial. The great Reformer, Theodore Beza, friend and successor of Calvin at Geneva, had a 5th century manuscript of the Gospels and Acts which differed, in sometimes startling ways, from the *Textus Receptus*. Beza presented this manuscript to Cambridge University in 1581, where it is still to be found. And in 1624 Cyril Lucar, the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, made a gift of a magnificent 5th century copy of the Greek Bible to James I. Before the copy could be delivered to London, James died, and it was finally received, in 1627, by his son, Charles I. Now known as the Codex Alexandrinus, it resides in the British Library. It too differs from the *Textus Receptus* in significant ways.

The Hebrew Old Testament was seen as less of a problem. Here the Christian scholars were happy to accept the text preserved by the Synagogue. This was highly stable, and the variants between manuscripts piffling, but even here doubts began to arise. Interest in Hebrew led to an enthusiasm for other oriental languages –

Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic – and it became clear that there were early versions of the Bible in these languages. When these were compared with the Hebrew – a comparison facilitated by the great Polyglot Bibles which printed them side by side – it became clear that sometimes they seemed to have been done from a Hebrew text which differed from that used in the Synagogue. This was particularly obvious in the case of the oldest of the versions of the Old Testament, the one most readily accessible to scholars, the Greek Septuagint, parts of which went back to the third century BC. Still more disturbing was the discovery, pointed out by the Jewish scholar Elias Levita, among others, that the vowels and accents marked in the Hebrew Bibles were added to the consonantal text by Jewish scholars, known as Masoretes, in the early middle ages. These vowel points and accents are totally missing from the Hebrew Torah scrolls read in synagogues right down to the present day, and when you remove them, the text becomes much less clear, and can, in places, be read in different ways. If you do rely on the vowel points and accents, then you are accepting a reading of Scripture that depends heavily on tradition, albeit Jewish rather than Christian tradition.

Now all this was much more than antiquarianism. It had profound *theological* implications. If a decision had to be made as to the true text of the Hebrew and Greek originals of Scripture, who was competent to make it? Should it be entrusted to scholars using the rational principles of textual criticism, which they well knew from their study of the Greek and Latin Classics? This was surely a recipe for never reaching a definitive text, since scholars will always disagree, and the received wisdom may always be overturned by new discoveries. Or should the text be decided by bishops or popes, declaring on the basis of their apostolic authority, what Bible text should prevail within the Church? In either case, if Scripture has to be first defined by external authority, where does this leave the Reformed doctrine of Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*) as a self-authenticating rule of faith?

The debate on these issues raged throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was summed up in the English world by a heated exchange between two of the heavyweights of English Biblical scholarship of the period – John Owen (1616-1683) and Brian Walton (1600-1661). Owen, a leading Puritan and Vice-chancellor of Oxford from 1651-1660, was incensed when Brian Walton, later to become Bishop of Chester (1660-61), published between 1654 and 1657 a six-volume Polyglot Bible, the last of the great Polyglots and the only one issued under Protestant auspices. Not only did Walton print all the ancient versions side by side with the original Hebrew and Greek, but, in an appendix, filling a whole folio volume (volume VI), he quoted variant readings to the original texts. Owen vehemently attacked him for this in a work with the title, *Of the divine original, authority, self-evidencing light, and power of the Scriptures. With an answer to that enquiry, how we know the Scriptures to be the Word of God. Also a vindication of the purity and integrity of the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Old and New Testament; in some considerations on the prolegomena, & appendix to the late Biblia polyglotta* (Oxford, 1659).

The grounds of Owen's attack were that Walton gave the impression that the original Hebrew and Greek texts of Scripture had become corrupt. If this was the case, then where did that leave the doctrine of God's providential care of Scripture? The impression that the originals were uncertain would utterly shake the faith of ordinary Christians and give support to the Catholic claim that the Church ultimately had to be the arbiter of Scripture. In particular Owen vehemently rejected the idea that the Hebrew vowel points and accents were not ancient, arguing that if, as Walton accepted (following Elias Levita), they were inserted into the Hebrew five or six hundred years after Christ, then the Protestant doctrine of Scripture would fall. (See Information Sheet Five for extracts from Owen's *Considerations.*)

Walton replied almost immediately in kind in a short book, a copy of which is on display: *The considerator considered: or, A brief view of*

certain considerations upon the Biblia polyglotta, the prolegomena and appendix thereof. Wherein, amongst other things, the certainty, integrity, and divine authority of the original texts, is defended, against the consequences of atheists, papists, antiscripturists, &c. inferred from the various readings, and novelty of the Hebrew points, by the author of the said Considerations (London, 1659). Walton dismissed as mere calumny the charge that he regarded the Scriptures as corrupt, or was insinuating as much by quoting variant readings. He totally agreed with Owen that everything needful for salvation was to be found in even the worst Biblical manuscripts, but facts are facts: there was no point in hiding from ordinary Christians the existence of variant readings, or the evidence that indicated the lateness of the Hebrew vowel-points and accents. Significantly he chose as the motto for his defence Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 13:8, "For we can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth." (See Information Sheet Six for extracts from Walton's *Considerator Considered*.) This debate is interesting because it took place so long ago that we can now form a view as to who was right. The answer is unequivocal: on all material points of fact Walton has been proved to be correct, and one can only marvel now at the folly of Owen in dogmatically placing so high a premium on accepting as fact claims that in his own day were open to reasonable doubt and have subsequently turned out to be false.

We can now say this with the gift of hindsight, but the debate rumbled on, breaking out with renewed vigour in the late 19th century when the Revised Version was published. The storm-centre was once again the Greek New Testament. The Old Testament was not so much affected, because, although a critical approach to the Old Testament text was remerging strongly, especially in Germany, it did not impact so much on the popular imagination. That the standard synagogue text, the Masoretic text, was only one of a number of forms of the Hebrew Bible circulating in antiquity was not proved beyond conclusively till the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls between 1947 and 1956. The New Testament was very different. Since Stephanus had established the

Textus Receptus in the mid-sixteenth century New Testament textual criticism had made huge strides, driven on by the discovery of new manuscripts. The most famous of these, one which made front-page news in the national press in the 1860s, was the Codex Sinaiticus, the oldest more or less complete copy of the Greek Bible, dating from the fourth century. This manuscript, a substantial portion of which was first published by the German scholar Constantin von Tischendorf in 1862, belonged to the library of St. Catherine's monastery, Mount Sinai, but it was given by the monastery to one of its major patrons, Tsar Alexander II of Russia. Ownership passed to the Soviet Govern-ment, which, strapped for foreign currency, sold it in 1933 to Britain. It now resides in the British Library.

What Greek text, then, were the Revisers to follow? Among the New Testament revisers were two eminent New Testament text-critics who were working on a radical new edition of the New Testament in Greek – B.F. Westcott (later to become Bishop of Durham) and F.J.A. Hort. Their views strongly influenced the other revisers. The issues were now substantial. What is the correct wording of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)? Were the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53-8:11), or the last twelve verses of the Gospel of Mark (Mark 16:9-20), or 1 John 5:7-8 (the famous Johannine Comma) truly part of Scripture? The Greek text which the Revisers followed was substantially different from that behind the KJV, as was made clear when it was published by E. Palmer (Oxford, 1881) and F.H.A. Scrivener (Cambridge, 1881). Palmer's and Scrivener's modest, nondescript little volumes, one of which is on display, were dynamite. Traditionalists reacted to them like a bull to a red rag. The traditionalists' champion was J.W. Burgon, Dean of Chichester, who launched a ferocious attack on the text-critical principles of the Revised Version under the title, *The Revision Revised* (London 1883), a copy of which is on display. Burgon, who was no slouch himself when it came to textual criticism, argued that the earliest Greek manuscripts were misleading. The antiquity of the *Textus Receptus* was proved by

quotations of Scripture in the writings of the early Church Fathers. This controversy has raged on to the present day. Ultra-conservative New Testament scholars continue to defend the accuracy of the *Textus Receptus*: Burgon remains for them a hero, and his *Revision Revised* is kept in print in the United States.

Defending the *Textus Receptus* often, though not invariably, goes hand in hand with defending the KJV as superior to all subsequent versions. There are hundreds of Churches, mainly in the States, which have pledged themselves to use only the King James Version in worship. This KJV Only movement embraces a number of positions. For some of its advocates the KJV translators were actually inspired. The idea of an inspired translation is very old: the Jews of ancient Alexandria believed their Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, had been produced under miraculous circumstances (the story is told in the ancient *Letter of Aristeas* and in the Talmud). Some KJV-Onlyists do not go so far as this, but argue that the KJV has received the stamp of divine approval, seen in the countless numbers it has brought to a saving knowledge of God, so woe betide anyone who sets lightly aside a Bible so signally blessed by God. Some KJV-Onlyists will argue, more moderately still, that the KJV is to be preferred because it is actually based on a more satisfactory Greek text than subsequent, modernist versions, which generally follow the Westcott and Hort line. The KJV retains the power to arouse strong passions for and against – passions that will doubtless be stirred again in this anniversary year.

Bottom Shelf: Aids for the Translator

Imagine you have made the decision to translate the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek, and have acquired your nicely printed editions of both Testaments. How do you proceed? You are going to need a lot of help. The bottom shelf of this case is devoted to the kinds of aids (apart from existing translations) to which in the 17th century you could have turned. Some of the items are dated later

than 1611, but they illustrate the sort of resources on which the KJV translators relied. The aids are of three kinds. First, grammars of Hebrew and Greek: you needed these to learn the basic languages. There were numerous grammars of Hebrew, many of them based on the the *Mikhlol*, or *Compendium*, of the great medieval Jewish grammarian and Bible commentator, David Kimḥi (1160-1235). The grammar on display is the Basle 1629 printing of the widely used *Epitome Grammaticae Hebraeae* of Johannes Buxtorf the Elder, first issued in 1605 under the title *Praeceptiones Grammaticae de Lingua Hebraea*. Johannes Buxtorf the Elder (1564-1629) was arguably the greatest Christian Hebraist of the 17th century, and his son, Johannes Buxtorf the Younger (1599-1664), followed in his footsteps. Together they made Basle in Switzerland the most important centre for the Christian study of Hebrew in the period. There were also numerous Greek grammars. The one on display is the *Hellenismos* of Angelo Canini (1521-1557). Canini, an able Italian scholar of Greek, spent much of his working life teaching Greek in Paris. It was there in 1555 that his Greek grammar was first published. The copy on display is a reprint of 1578, issued after his death. From their size both these grammars were clearly intended for learning the rudiments of the languages, rather than for reference.

Having mastered the basics of Greek and Hebrew grammar, you then needed dictionaries. There were ancient Greek dictionaries in Greek. The most valuable of these was a lexicon of around 51,000 unusual Greek words compiled in the 5th century AD by Hesychius of Alexandria. This was first printed by Marcus Musurus at the press of Aldus Manutius in Venice in 1514. The copy of the Aldine edition on display belonged to John Pearson (1612-1686), one of the greatest Anglican divines of the 17th century, who served as Bishop of Chester from 1672-1686. Pearson was the author of the celebrated *Exposition of the Creed* which remained the most important manual of theology for Anglican ordinands down to the end of the 19th century. A magnificent monument to his memory stands in the north transept of the

Cathedral. Hesychius's material was incorporated into the great Greek-Latin dictionary, the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, completed in Paris in 1572 by Henri Estienne (Henricus Stephanus), son of Robert Estienne (Robertus Stephanus). Amounting in the end to four massive folio volumes, this work of stunning erudition remained the basis of classical Greek lexicography down to modern times.

Hebrew lexicography drew heavily on Jewish scholarship. The greatest of the medieval Hebrew dictionaries in Hebrew was the *ᶜArukh* of Nathan ben Yeḥiel of Rome (*c.*1035-1106). An edition of this, printed by Bomberg in Venice in 1531, was quarried for the Hebrew-Latin *Lexicon Chaldaicum, Talmudicum et Rabbinicum*, begun in 1609 by the Elder Buxtorf and completed by the Younger thirty years later. This, like the *ᶜArukh*, was primarily a dictionary to Rabbinic literature. More directly useful to a Biblical scholar was the Elder Buxtorf's *Lexicon Hebraicum et Chadaicum*, first printed in Basle in 1607 under the title *Epitome Radicum Hebraicarum et Chaldaicarum*, which more or less confined itself to the Hebrew Bible. A copy of this is on display.

Finally the would-be Bible translator needed commentaries. Bible comment-ary flourished in the 16th and 17th centuries. It came, basically, in two forms – homiletical and critical. Homiletical commentary aimed at the spiritual edification of its readers, and often began its life in expository sermons. Critical commentary consisted of technical notes and glosses aimed at elucidating the linguistic and textual problems of the original Hebrew and Greek. It was the latter to which the translators turned. Critical study of the Bible was only in its infancy when the KJV translators set to work, but it had nevertheless made enormous advances. That on the Old Testament drew heavily on the medieval Jewish Bible commentators Rashi (1040-1105), Kimḥi (1160-1235), and Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1184), whom Christian scholars could read in the original Hebrew in the great Rabbinic Bibles printed by Daniel Bomberg in Venice in the 16th, or by the Buxtorfs in Basle in the 17th

century. It is striking how often these Jewish commentators are quoted in Christian works of critical scholarship. They had a significant influence on the KJV translators.

I have chosen two impressive representatives of this tradition of critical scholarship. The first is a volume from the massive nine-volume collection of Biblical criticism which went under the name of *Critici Sacri*, first published in London in 1660, by Bishop John Pearson and others. The *Critici Sacri* simply collected and printed studies by the leading critics (Erasmus, Sebastian Münster, Arias Montano, Isaac Casaubon, Hugo Grotius, Joseph Scaliger, James Ussher, and many others) more or less in their entirety, arranged under the relevant Biblical books. It forced the reader to jump about and was, consequently, somewhat awkward to use. The non-conformist scholar Matthew Poole (1624-1679), in his *Synopsis Criticorum* (5 volumes folio, 1669-1676), made life much easier by arranging the critics' notes verse by verse.

The second representative of the tradition of critical scholarship on display is the *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae* of John Lightfoot (1602-1675), Master of Catharine Hall and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, possibly the greatest English Hebraist of the second half of the 17th century. This remarkable work, publication of which began in 1658 but was not completed till after his death, presents a running commentary on the New Testament based on Rabbinic literature, which Lightfoot knew extraordinarily well. Behind this work was the astonishingly prescient idea, fully vindicated by modern scholarship, that it is not enough to set the New Testament simply against the background of the Old; it also has to be set against the background of the Jewish world of its own day, and a valuable window into that world is opened up by Rabbinic literature.

The erudition on display in these volumes is breath-taking even by the standards of our own times. It is impossible not to be amazed

and humbled by what Biblical scholars achieved in the time of the KJV. They deserve our utmost respect.

CASE FOUR: PRINTING BEFORE COMPUTERS

The final small case in the exhibition (a case arranged by Derek Nuttall) is devoted to printing, which is integral to the story of the English Bible. Printing from moveable type was introduced into Europe from China. It allowed texts to be reproduced *en masse*, in exact copies, in a way that was impossible with handwriting. The first true modern printer in Europe was Johannes Gutenberg (*c.*1398-1468), who was operating a press in Mainz by 1450. His most spectacular achievement was his 1455 42-line Bible, known as the Gutenberg Bible, probably now the most famous and precious printed text in the world. Printing was introduced into England by William Caxton, who learned the craft in the Low Countries. He set up his press in 1476 at West-minster, and the first printed book he produced on it was Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

In the first century or so of printing many English Bibles were printed on the continent. This was partly due to the political situation in England where the authorities sometimes opposed the printing of Bibles, but official opposition was not the whole story. The fact is that for a time England lagged behind mainland Europe in print technology, and if you wanted a high-class product you had to go abroad. When in 1538 the Great Bible was ready to go to press, the work was entrusted to François Regnault in Paris, then one of the finest printers in Europe. After printing had begun, and, indeed, was well under way, the Inquisition intervened and put a stop to it, confiscating the printed sheets and even completed, bound copies. The work had to be transferred to England, and the Bible was, in the end, published in London in 1539.

The process of printing began with the small pieces of moveable type, basically the individual letters. These were created by

pouring hot metal into a matrix formed by hammering into a soft copper bar a hard metal punch, on the head of which the letter had been sharply carved in relief. This process allowed thousands of identical pieces of type, known as sorts, to be quickly made. The uniformity of the type that resulted made it possible to develop a range of type-faces and types that could be easily distinguished in print. The individual sorts were put into letter-cases, one letter to each compartment of the case – capitals in the upper case, and non-capitals in the lower. The compositor then got to work making up the lines of type. This had to be done back-to-front. He used a compositing stick to create a few lines of type, and when these were complete he transferred them in the correct sequence into a metal plate or forme, which corresponded to the page to be printed, but in mirror image. The forme was then inked and put into a press, which applied it under pressure (there was great skill in getting the pressure right) to a sheet of paper or proof. The proof was hung up to dry, proof-read and any mistakes corrected on the forme. When the page had been sufficiently proofed final copy was run off.

This process is much faster than hand-copying but it is still laborious and painstaking – from the casting of the tiny pieces of type to the compositing, printing and proofing. Bear this in mind when you look at the pages of the marvellous books on display. It is astonishing how pages of such complexity and beauty, often involving a multiplicity of alphabets, types and type-faces, not to mention illustrations, could have been achieved by such simple, mechanical means. Printers were the leading craftsmen of the 16th and 17th century – at the cutting edge of a major revolution in communication, much as computer experts are today. Probably millions of Bibles were produced by this means in the first hundred years of printing: the Bible was by far the most printed book. Technology made possible the democratization of the Word of God. Nowadays books are composited on computers and printed on laser-printers employing a system basically the same as many of us use at home. But printing with old-fashioned moveable

type is called upon when results of the very highest quality are desired, because at its very best it can still produce a more aesthetically pleasing result than the very best of digital printing.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Anniversaries are a time for reflection and for taking stock, and the four-hundredth anniversary of the KJV should be no exception. I have devised this exhibition as an aid to reflection, not as an exercise in antiquarianism or nostalgia. It is intended to raise questions that are alive in the Church today. Each of you will, I'm sure, have your own thoughts after seeing it. I would like to conclude this brief *Guide* with a few of mine.

My first thought is a very personal one: it has to do with the role of scholar-ship in the Church. On display in this exhibition, and indeed on the shelves of the room in which it is housed, are the fruits of scholarly endeavour spread over five hundred years. The dedication, the intellectual gifts on show are simply awesome. I know to within an inch what it takes to achieve this level of competence. Scholarship at its best is a vocation. I think of Rainolds on his deathbed trying to fulfil his translation duties for the KJV. Without that scholarship there would have been no KJV, no Bible in English at all. The Church owes an immense debt of gratitude to scholarship. But the KJV is not only a monument to scholarship: it is also a shining example of scholarship in the service of the community. The KJV translators were not just ivory-tower academics but men deeply committed to using their learning in the service of others. It would be good if this anniversary were to promote some serious thinking by all parties on the role of scholarship in the Church, and on the Church's relationship to academia.

My second thought is theological. It is about how cunning Providence can be. The process by which the KJV came into being

was very flawed, very messy. It was marred by politics, personal rivalries and power-struggles; the protagonists were by no means all saints, but could show all too human failings. And yet, under God, it produced a result that shaped for good the spiritual life of countless individuals, and the Church as a whole. I think of the pocket GI Bible on display. How many men and women caught up in the violence of war, in fear of their lives, separated from their families, surrounded by scenes of unimaginable horror, drew comfort from words crafted over three hundred years before by the KJV translators? It seems, then, that God does not need perfect instruments to achieve his purposes in the world. He can work with what he has got. An instructive example of the cunning of Providence was King James's insistence that the new Bible should have no interpretative notes. He was motivated by politics: he did not want the translation to carry the sort of snide and seditious remarks that he objected to in the Geneva Bible. But in retrospect how providentially wise this turned out to be. It prevented the KJV from becoming sectarian. It allowed the Scriptures to speak for themselves, without human glossing – something which even the most ardent Reformers, with all their stress on the primacy of the Word, were reluctant to do.

Finally some thoughts on the question of then and now. How have things changed since the KJV translators finished their work? I see immense changes in three areas. First, biblical scholarship has moved on. Scholarship is incremental, and much has been achieved in the past four hundred years. In basic linguistic competence and knowledge of the primary texts the best of the 16th century divines (the Pearsons, the Lightfoots, the Walton's) would give the best of us today a run for our money, but we can inevitably see further than they did because we stand on their shoulders. New manuscripts have been discovered (e.g., the Dead Sea Scrolls), new languages of vital importance for Bible study – ancient Egyptian, Akkadian, Ugaritic – have been deciphered. Archaeology has thrown a flood of light on the material culture of the Biblical world. We can now solve problems which baffled the

KJV translators. Just as they integrated the best in scholarship in their day into their Bible translation so we must integrate the best modern scholarship into ours. Any Christian today who uses only the KJV will be missing a lot.

A second immense change has happened within my lifetime. It has been the waning of the KJV's dominance as the Bible of first choice in the English-speaking world. The KJV rapidly gained pre-eminence among Protestants of all persuasions (English-speaking Catholics, and, indeed English-speaking Jews, have used their own versions down to the present day). This dominance was, in part, brought about by a royal decree forbidding the printing of other translations, and by the political failure of the Commonwealth, when one might have expected the Geneva Version to rise to prominence again (though it did not). Certainly from the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 onwards the KJV reigned supreme. What is surprising is the way it was embraced by non-Anglicans. I was brought up in a very low-church tradition which had no time for Anglicanism, indeed which regarded the Church of England as being seriously in error. Yet we cherished the KJV. It didn't trouble us that it spoke about "bishops" when we did not have bishops, but overseers. We coped easily with that. The KJV reigned supreme in America, even after the American colonies broke with the Crown. The fundamental reason for its widespread acceptance must surely lie in its superlative qualities as a translation. This universality was an important factor for unity among English-speaking Christians. Attempts were made to prolong the life of the KJV through revisions (the RV, the RSV, the NRSV, the New KJV) and totally new translations were published (the NEB, the Jerusalem Bible, the Good News Bible, etc., etc.), but none of the revisions or new translations has gained anything like the acceptance of the old KJV. We now live with a plurality, even, dare I say it, a cacophony, of Bible versions for both private study and public worship. Something precious has been lost, but perhaps there is nothing we can do about it. The genie is out of the bottle, and can't be put back in again. In some ways we have

reverted to something like the situation that prevailed when the KJV was produced – when there was a plurality of English versions in use, only we have so many more now. I sometimes wish that individuals and committees would pause and think hard before they launch yet another English Bible on the world. Mammon, I'm sorry to say, rears its ugly head: Bible-translations are still an almost sure-fire publishing success. But 'twas ever thus: the Oxford and Cambridge presses grew rich on their privilege to print Bibles.

The final change that strikes me is a technological one, but one with immense ramifications. I am impressed with how much the story of the KJV is bound up with printing and with the book. The KJV was set in old-fashioned moveable type, and the first folio is a masterpiece of the printer's art. The technology remained basically the same till the late twentieth century, when computer-assisted compositing took over. This inaugurated a profound change as the Bible moved into the computer age. Computers not only allow Bibles to be printed in a new way. They also allow the Bible to be consulted in a new way – online. Increasingly this is how my students consult it. There are superb, open-access Bible-sites online which will give a range of Bible translations of any verse in the Bible you care to read. While one rejoices at the access to Scripture, free of charge, which this technology affords, it has its drawbacks. My students are beginning to lose the sense of the Bible as a book, as a defined canon of writings in a certain order, which comes with constant handling of it in physical form. When they do have a Bible in their hands they find it difficult to navigate their way through it and locate a reference (online their search-engine does this for them). They do not read the Bible as a continuous text: the presentation online is often "bitty" – verse by verse. They have only an atomized sense of the Bible, and have little idea where a given verse or passage lies within a given Biblical book, let alone within the Bible as a whole. This marks a reversal of over seventeen hundred years of Christian history. It was the Christians who first wrote the Scriptures in a Book, thus creating the Bible as

a defined, physical object within a single set of covers. Jews had used scrolls, and had needed twenty-two of these to accommodate the whole of the Old Testament. One should not underestimate the importance of the symbolism of the Bible as a book. We must not lose sight of it. Literate Christians need to have a strong sense of the limits of the canon of Scripture and of the grand narrative that runs from Genesis (the creation) to Revelation (the consummation of history). I find it deeply regrettable that some people no longer bring Bibles with them to Church, or find Bibles in front of them in the pew. Most now seem to follow the lections from the print-out on the service sheet. And it is surely the last straw when a reader goes up to the lectern, and, pointedly ignoring the handsome volume resting there, reads the lesson from the service sheet instead. Let us hope that the four hundredth anniversary of the KJV will lead us to rediscover the Bible as a book.

FOR FURTHER READING

Important Editions of the KJV

The Holy Bible: Quatercentenary Edition, ed. Gordon Campbell (Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York, 2010). An exact reprint of the first folio edition of 1611 in Roman type.

The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible with the Apocrypha: King James Version (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2005). Text reprinted as *The Bible* in Penguin Classics (2006), and by the Folio Society (2011).

The Cambridge Paragraph Bible of the Authorized English Version, with the Text Revised by a Collation of its Early and Other Principal Editions, the Use of Italic Type Made Uniform, the Marginal References Remodelled, ed. F.H.A. Scrivener (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1873).

Studies of the KJV and the English Bible

Two good general accounts are:

Gordon Campbell, *Bible: The Story of the King James Version 1611-2011* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2010).

Alistair McGrath, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and how it Changed a Nation, a Language and a Culture* (Doubleday: New York, 2001).

Further:

Ward S. Allen, *Translating for King James* (Penguin Press: London, 1969).

David Crystal, *Begat: The King James Bible and the English Language* (Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York, 2010).

David Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2003).

Francis Fry, *A Description of the Great Bible … [and] of Editions in Large Folio of the Authorised Version* (Wills and Sotheran: London, 1865).

Gerald Hammond, *The Making of the English Bible* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1982).

A.S. Herbert, *Historical Catalogue of Printed Editions of the English Bible, 1525-1961* (British and Foreign Bible Society: London, 1968).

Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1991).

Adam Nicolson, *Power and Glory: Jacobean England and the Making of the King James Bible* (Harper Collins: London, 2003).

David Norton, *A Textual History of the King James Bible* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2005).

A.W. Pollard, *Records of the English Bible* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1911).

Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2005).
F.H.A. Scrivener, *The Authorised Edition of the English Bible (1611): Its Subsequent Reprints and Modern Representatives* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1884).

ITEMS ON DISPLAY

Case One: Meet the King James Version Itself

A first printing of the KJV, Robert Barker, London 1611
A copy of the General Title Page of the 1611 KJV
A copy of the Cathedral accounts for 1613 recording payment of 69 shillings for the purchase of a KJV and its carriage from London
William Barlow, *Summe and Substance of the Conference*: an account of the Hampton Court Conference of 1604
James I, *Declaration … pour les Droits des Rois*: James I's defence of the divine right of kings.

Case Two: Forerunners, Formats and Successors

Top shelf: Forerunners

Tyndale's New Testament, Antwerp 1536 (Blank Stone edition)
Bishops' Bible, London 1572
Geneva Bible, London 1598
Douai Old Testament and Apocrypha, 1609-1610
Antonio Brucioli's Italin translation of the Bible, Venice 1539
Olivétan's French translation of the Bible, London 1688

Bottom Shelf: Formats and Successors

The First KJV printed at Oxford, Sheldonian Theatre 1675
The Macklin illustrated Bible, London 1800
A GI Bible: copy of a KJV New Testament mass produced for US armed forces, Washington 1942

The Revised Version Old Testament, 1885
The Revised Standard Version
The New English Bible

Case Three: Scholarship and the KJV

Top Shelf: Which Text to Translate

Latin Bible, Cologne 1477
Greek New Testament, Frankfort 1601, a reprint of the Stephanus 1550 *Textus Receptus*, with interleaving
Interlinear Hebrew Bible, Geneva 1609
William Walton *Considerator Considered*, London 1659
The Greek New Testament of the Revised Version, 1881
Dean Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, London 1883

Bottom Shelf: Aids for the Translator

Angelo Canini's *Greek Grammar* (*Hellenismos*), Paris 1578
Johannes Buxtorf the Elder's *Hebrew Grammar*, first published in Basle in 1605
Hesychius's *Greek Dictionary*, Venice 1514 (Bishop Pearson's copy)
Johannes Buxtorf the Elder's *Hebrew Dictionary*, first published in Basle in 1607
A volume of *Critici Sacri*, published by Pearson in 1660 – a collection of critical commentaries on the Bible
John Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae*, published between 1658 and 1680 – a collection of notes on the New Testament based on Rabbinic Literature

Case Four: Printing Before Computers

Moveable type, a compositing stick, a forme, and a proof