



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 8

**Armenian Bible Translation** – Armenia adopted Christianity as her state religion in 301 A.D. The Armenians had no alphabet. Often the Bible was read in Greek or Syriac, and translated orally.

The Armenian monk and theologian, Mesrop Mashtots, invented the Armenian alphabet in 404 A.D., and with the assistance of Sahak the Catholicos translated the Bible into ancient Armenian language (Grabar), around 436 A.D. The oldest Armenian manuscript in existence is from the late 9<sup>th</sup> century.

The first Armenian Bible (Grabar) was printed in 1666. Given the lack of understanding of ancient Armenian, the Bible was translated into Modern Armenian (Ashkharabar) in early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Eastern Armenian Bible in use today (Amirkhanian version) was first published in 1883, and the Western Armenian Bible in use today (Dwight-Riggs version) was first published in 1853.

**Persian Bible Translation** – Henry Martyn, an Anglican priest and missionary, travelled to Iran and translated the New Testament and the Psalms into Persian. He contracted fever and died in 1812. His translation was published in 1815. The complete Bible was translated into Persian in 1838. The Common Language Translation was published in 1976, and the Farsi Contemporary Bible in 1995.

**English Bible Translation** – Latin was the predominant language in the Western world, considered the language of the learned. In Britain the early Bibles were not in English but in Latin. Parts of the Bible were translated into Old English in the 7<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**John Wycliff** – 14<sup>th</sup> century Oxford scholar and theologian, protested against the Roman Catholic Church. A forerunner to the Reformation, he translated the Bible from Latin into English around 1384. The Wycliffe Bible is the first translation of the Bible in the English language. More than 40 years after his death, his bones were exhumed, burned and the ashes thrown into the Swift river.

**William Tyndale** - 16<sup>th</sup> century Oxford scholar and gifted linguist, influenced by the work of Martin Luther. He desired to translate the Bible into English, not from Latin but from Hebrew and Greek.

In 1525 in Germany he completed the New Testament. In 1526 printed copies were smuggled into England. The Roman Catholic Church condemned these and had them burned in public. Tyndale was betrayed in 1535, charged with heresy by the Catholic Church, imprisoned and in 1536 was strangled and burned at the stake, crying out, “Lord, open the king of England’s eyes.”

England was restored to Roman Catholicism in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, under Queen Mary’s rule. She had over 300 religious non-conformists burned at the stake. Many protestant scholars and pastors escaped out of England. Some fled to Geneva, Switzerland, a safe haven for Protestants.

**Geneva Bible** – a number of English scholars translated the Bible into English in 1560 in Geneva. This was the first study Bible, with study notes, introductions and illustrations. It became the people’s favorite Bible, but was not liked by the Church of England officials, as its commentary had the theology of the Reformation, written by leaders such as John Calvin, John Knox and others.

**King James Bible** – in 1604 King James commissioned for a new translation to be produced without any commentaries, to replace the Geneva Bible. In 1611 the King James Version was printed.

Since early 20<sup>th</sup> century many English translations have been produced. William Tyndale is truly the father of the English Bible. His ambition to put the Bible in the hands of the people was fulfilled.