

# 400 YEARS

By Richard N. W. Lambert and Kenneth R. Mays\*



*In England when the King James Bible was translated, there was a flowering of great scholars and linguists that has not been duplicated since. Among the translators were several who were associated with Trinity College, Cambridge, as students or professors.*

## TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

382



SAINT JEROME, ISTOCK

### ST. JEROME

translated the ancient texts into a Latin Bible, known as the Vulgate. This was the official Bible of the Catholic Church for more than 1,000 years; however, the common people could not read or understand Latin.



JOHN WYCLIFFE, GETTY IMAGES

### JOHN WYCLIFFE

translated the Vulgate into English. His was the first handwritten copy of the complete Bible in English.

1382

1455



JOHANNES GUTENBERG, GETTY IMAGES

### JOHANNES GUTENBERG

published a version of the Vulgate on his printing press, making it available to more people. It was known as the Gutenberg Bible.

1526



WILLIAM TYNDALE, GETTY IMAGES

# OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE

BACKGROUND: PHOTO BY KENNETH MAYS, ART TREATMENT BY MARGARET DIANE HAYDEN; RIGHT: KING JAMES, GETTY IMAGES; FAR RIGHT: PHOTO BY KENNETH MAYS



King James



Hampton Court Palace



It is not by chance or coincidence that we have the Bible today," said Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "Men like John Wycliffe, the courageous William Tyndale, and Johannes Gutenberg were prompted against much opposition to translate the Bible into language people could understand and to publish it in books people could read. I believe even the scholars of King James had spiritual promptings in their translation work."<sup>1</sup>

**WILLIAM TYNDALE** (originally spelled "Tindale") translated the New Testament, rendering an English version (published 1526 and revised 1534) from Greek. He translated part of the Old Testament from Hebrew before he was imprisoned for heresy in 1535 and executed a year and a half later. Much of the wording we read today in the King James Bible comes from Tyndale's translation.

1535-68

**SCHOLARS** relied on Tyndale's work to produce these new English versions of the Bible: the Coverdale Bible (published 1535), the Matthew Bible (1537), and the Great Bible (1539). Translators of the Geneva Bible (1560) and the Bishops' Bible (1568) used other sources as well as Tyndale's work.

1604



JOHN RAINOLDS, GETTY IMAGES

**KING JAMES** held a conference at Hampton Court Palace. John Rainolds, a prominent Puritan at the conference, moved that the king commission a new translation of the Bible. King James set forth a resolution to do so.



FIRST EDITION

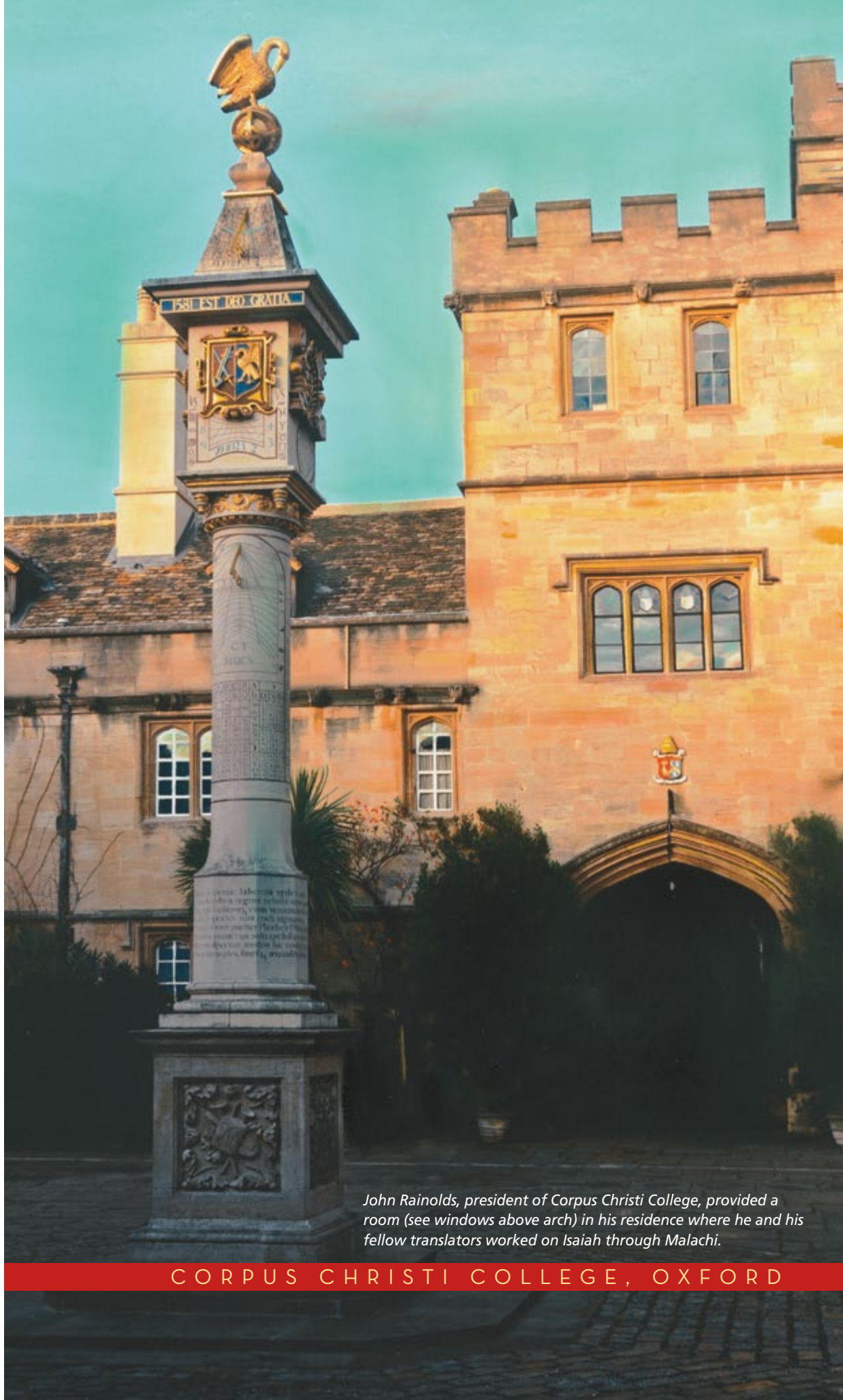
1611

<sup>1</sup>*The authors did field research in England supported by the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation. Lambert's biographical sketches of the translators and Mays's photographs will soon appear on [KingJamesBibleTrust.org](http://KingJamesBibleTrust.org).*

The unique skills possessed by those who translated the King James Bible were at their apex during this time. The translators were all learned biblical scholars and linguists. It would be difficult today to gather 50 scholars with the knowledge of ancient languages possessed by these men.

Lancelot Andrewes was typical of those selected. He had command of 15 languages. Considered one of the most learned men in England, he was also a spiritual leader. He was royal chaplain to Queen Elizabeth and to King James. His sermons left listeners wanting more. In fact, King James slept with Andrewes's sermons under his pillow.

A few translators were atypical because they were not associated with a university. Richard Brett was one such translator. Though he attended Oxford and mastered such languages as Syriac, Coptic, and Ethiopic, he spent most of his life as a rector, husband, and father in the small English village of Quainton—except for the few years he worked on the King James translation.












*John Rainolds, president of Corpus Christi College, provided a room (see windows above arch) in his residence where he and his fellow translators worked on Isaiah through Malachi.*

CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD



King James asked Bishop Richard Bancroft (above) to oversee six companies of translators at three locations. They worked on unbound pages from the 1602 revision of the Bishops' Bible. Bancroft wrote 15 general rules to guide them. After translators of each company completed their assignment, they passed it on to the next company, so that all companies reviewed the entire Bible. This process took four years.

			
<b>Location</b>	WESTMINSTER	CAMBRIDGE	OXFORD
<b>Director</b>	 	 	 
<b>Section</b>	Lancelot Andrewes Genesis–2 Kings	William Barlow Romans–Jude	Edward Lively John Duport 1 Chronicles–Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
			John Harding Thomas Ravis Isaiah–Malachi The Gospels, Acts, Revelation

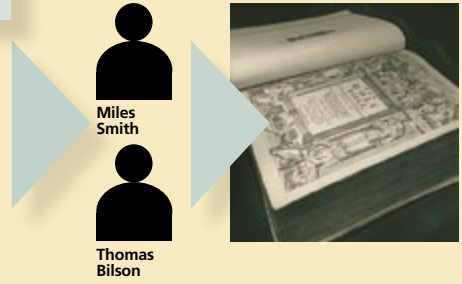
# TRANSLATORS OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE

Miles Smith and Thomas Bilson oversaw the final revision of the King James Bible. Richard Bancroft reviewed the final revision and made only 14 changes.

The original copies of the King James Bible were 16" x 11" (40.6 cm x 28 cm) and weighed 30 pounds (13.6 kg).



Following this initial translation work, two translators from each of the six companies spent nine months at Stationers' Hall in London reviewing the work. Only three of these twelve translators have been identified.



Above: Map showing the locations of the three translation sites.

Right: Ely, England, where Lancelot Andrewes served as bishop. Far right, top and bottom: The parish church in Quinton, England, where Richard Brett served for over 40 years as the rector.



## THE POETIC LANGUAGE OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE

The King James Bible is regarded by many to be the most beautiful English language version because of its lyrical quality, which seems to speak to the heart and spirit.

### THE KING JAMES BIBLE

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light” (Genesis 1:1–3).

### THE KING JAMES BIBLE

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death . . .” (Psalm 23:4).

### THE KING JAMES BIBLE

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1–3).

### THE NEW INTERNATIONAL READER'S VERSION OF THE BIBLE

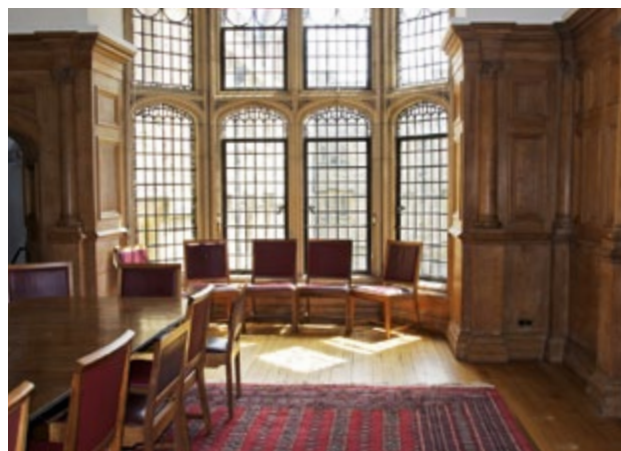
“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth didn't have any shape. And it was empty. Darkness was over the surface of the ocean. At that time, the ocean covered the earth. The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. God said, 'Let there be light.' And there was light” (Genesis 1:1–3).

### THE NEW LIVING TRANSLATION BIBLE

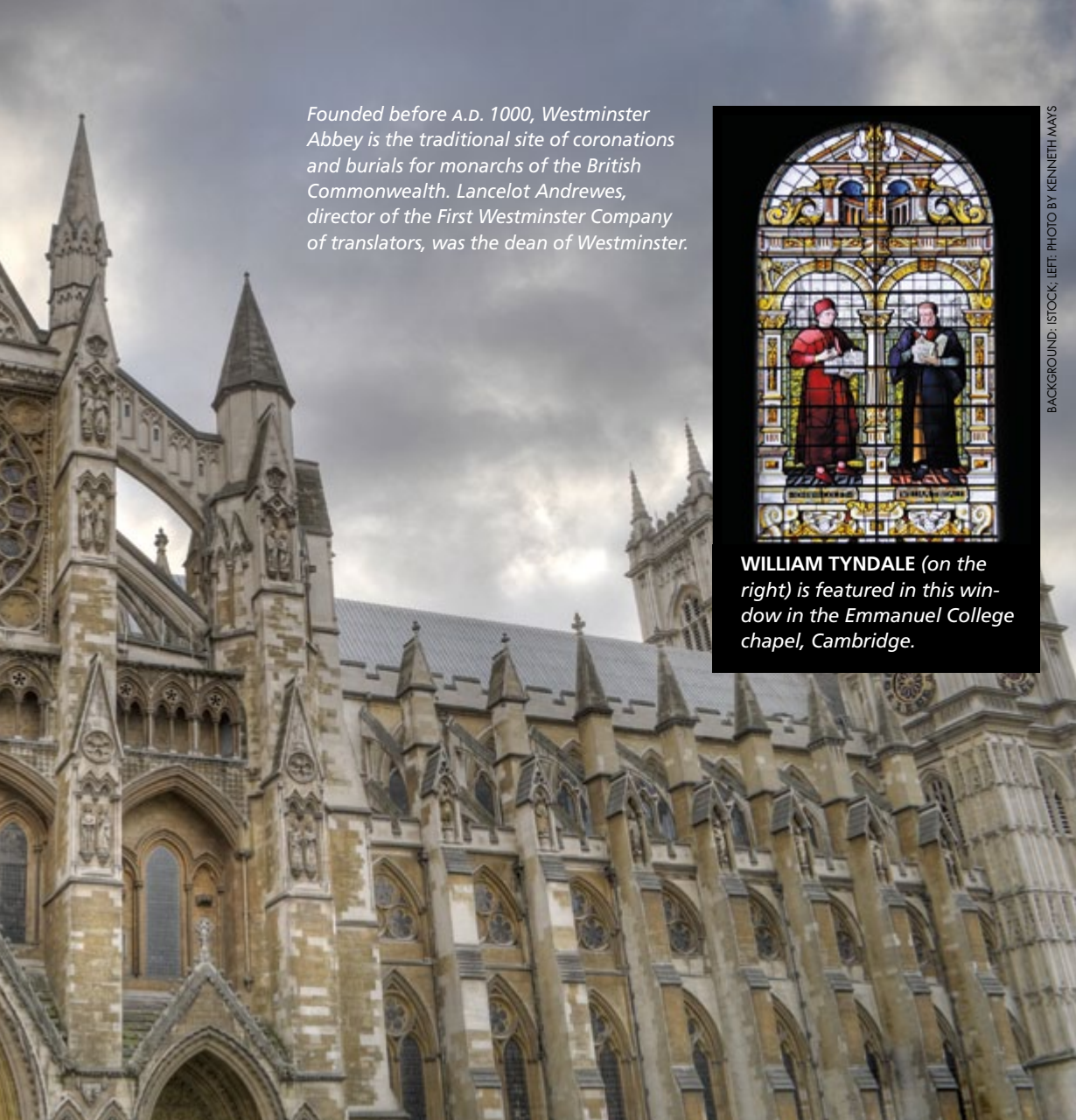
“Even when I walk through the darkest valley . . .” (Psalm 23:4).

### THE NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION OF THE BIBLE

“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1–3).



Above: In this room at Merton College, Oxford, translators led by Thomas Ravis worked on the Gospels, Acts, and Revelation.



Founded before A.D. 1000, Westminster Abbey is the traditional site of coronations and burials for monarchs of the British Commonwealth. Lancelot Andrewes, director of the First Westminster Company of translators, was the dean of Westminster.



WILLIAM TYNDALE (on the right) is featured in this window in the Emmanuel College chapel, Cambridge.

BACKGROUND: ISTOCK; LEFT: PHOTO BY KENNETH MAYS

William Tyndale desired to put the Bible in the hands of the common people. Speaking to the clergy of his day, he said, “If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough, shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost!”<sup>2</sup> Tyndale achieved his goal, but in 1536 he was strangled, then burned at the stake as a heretic.

Nevertheless, much of Tyndale’s translation survived in the King James Bible, and his hope that the common people could study the Bible in English came to pass, as seen in the life of Joseph Smith, a young farm boy. ■

**NOTES**

1. M. Russell Ballard, “The Miracle of the Holy Bible,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 80.
2. William Tyndale, quoted in D. Todd Christofferson, “The Blessing of Scripture,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2010, 32.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY, LONDON

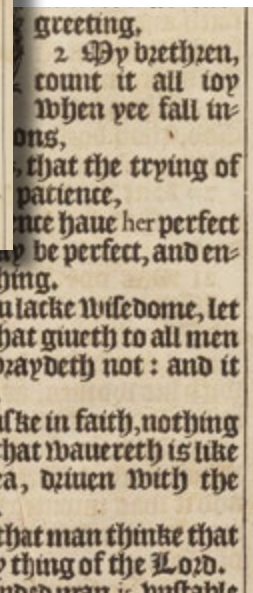
**JOSEPH SMITH AND THE KING JAMES BIBLE**



Young Joseph Smith sought guidance in his King James Bible and found it in James 1:5, which says, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, . . . and it shall be given him.” He believed. As he prayed in a grove of trees, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to him. (See JS—H 1:1–20.)

Today, English-speaking Church members use the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Version of the Bible. Based on the doctrinal clarity of latter-day revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Church has held to the King James Version as being doctrinally more accurate than recent versions.

In 2010 the Church published 364,000 copies of the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Bible.



LEFT: PHOTO BY KENNETH MAYS; RIGHT: JOSEPH SMITH SEEKS WISDOM FROM THE BIBLE, BY DALE KILBURN