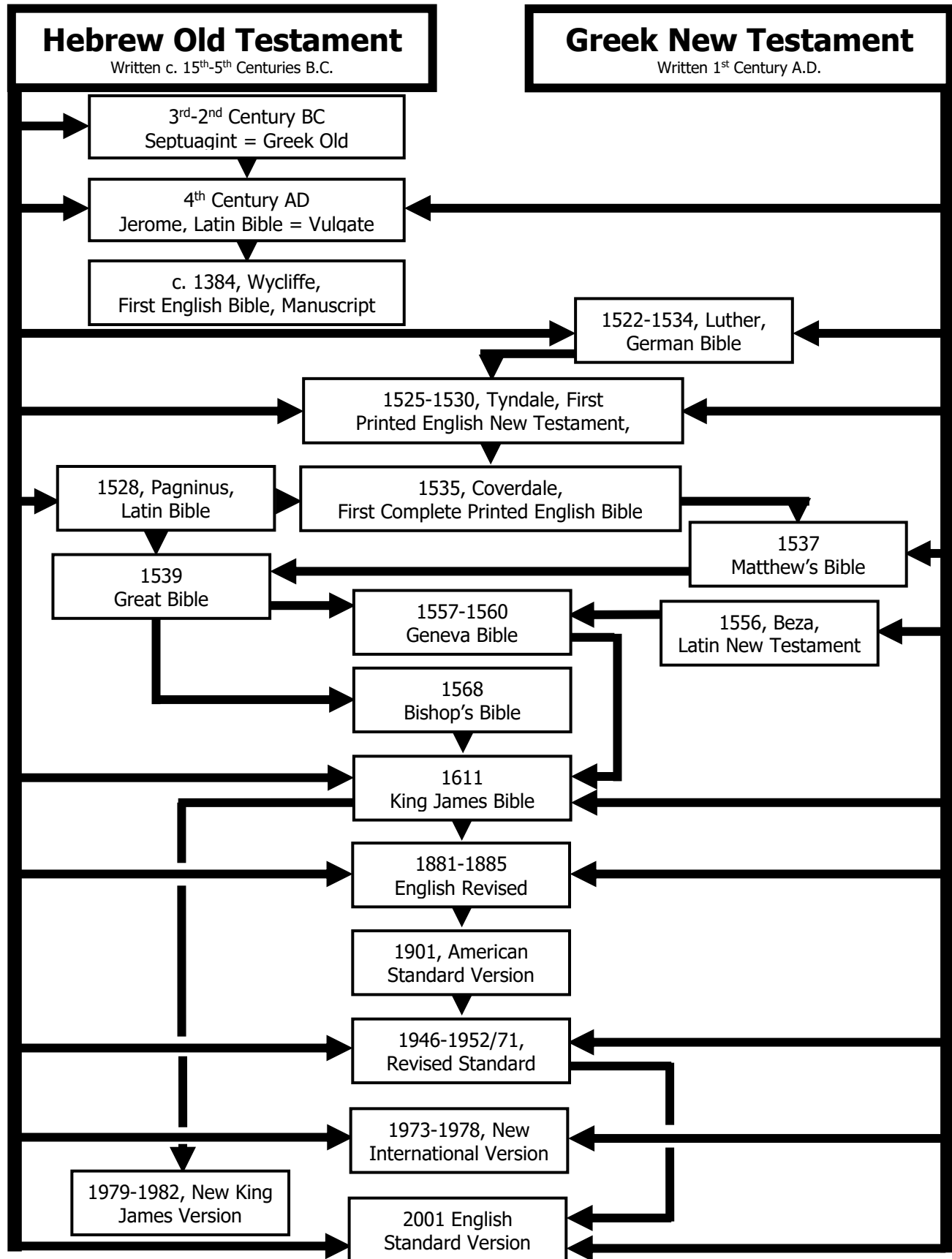


HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE



Notes for the History of the English Bible

Greek Septuagint. The Old Testament was translated into Greek during the third and second centuries B.C. for Jews living outside Palestine. The name "Septuagint" (Latin for 70) reflects the tradition that it was translated in Egypt by 70 elders in 70 sessions. It became the Bible from which early Christians read and preached.

Greek New Testament. The whole of the New Testament was written in Greek, the language of the Mediterranean world in the first century A.D.

Latin Bible (Vulgate). About 382 A.D. the Bishop of Rome asked Jerome to prepare a Latin translation of the entire Bible. It became the common Bible of the Church in Western Europe and was called the "Vulgate" (meaning common).

Wycliffe's Bible in English. John Wycliffe led a movement of poor priests, called Lollards, who preached to the people of England in their own language instead of the Latin used in the churches. Under his direction, the first translation of the entire Bible into English was made from Latin about 1384. Wycliffe's Bibles were, of course, written entirely by hand.

Tyndale's printed English New Testament. The English language underwent changes between the times of Wycliffe and William Tyndale. Church authorities prohibited Tyndale from making a new English translation. He went to Germany and translated the New Testament from Greek to English, publishing it about 1525. Tyndale also translated portions of the Old Testament from Hebrew to English, but was arrested and executed before he could finish this work.

It should be noted that the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg about 1450, along with the invention of cheaper ways of making paper, contributed directly to the appearance of printed Bibles in the sixteenth century. Many copies of the Bible could now be produced in much less time.

Coverdale's first printed Bible English Bible. Miles Coverdale also had to flee from England to Germany to complete a translation of the entire Bible into English. He produced the first printed Bible in English in 1535.

King James Version. Numerous English translations of the Bible appeared soon after King Henry VIII separated from the Roman Catholic Church and formed the Church of England. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, when King James I came to the throne of England, many versions meant confusion. Which English translation was best? Which should be read in the churches? In 1604, King James moved to resolve these questions by commissioning 54 outstanding English scholars to make a new version. The result, in 1611, was the King James Bible that surpassed all others in beauty and style. The King James Version remained the preferred Bible of English-speaking people for more than 250 years.