



**Charles Caldwell Ryrie.** *Let It Go Among Our People: An Illustrated History of the English Bible from John Wyclif to the King James Version.* Cambridge, Eng.: Lutterworth Press, 2004. 160 pp. \$75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7188-3042-7.



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### An Impressive Work for the General Reader

When I reviewed David Daniell's *The Bible in English* for H-Albion last year, I commented on the phenomenon of the number of books on the English Bible—inevitable perhaps in light of the 400th anniversary of the Hampton Court Conference, which inaugurated the King James Version. Books on the English Bible by Benson Bobrick, Alister McGrath, Brian Moynahan, Christopher de Hamel, Edwin Robertson, and David Norton have been joined by Adam Nicholson (*God's Secretaries*) and now David Price and Charles R. Ryrie.[1] This book was published to accompany exhibitions at the Bridwell Library at Southern Methodist University in Texas, at Princeton University Library, and at the John Ryland University Library in Manchester. But it is not an exhibition catalog.

This book stands out against the others for two reasons. First, it has a large book format (250x190mm) and color illustrations; second, it is written for the non-expert reader. Whereas McGrath, Bobrick, Nicholson, Daniell and others have written largely for an informed or scholarly audience, Price and Ryrie have written a history of the English Bible for the general reader. There is, consequently, nothing new in terms of scholarship in this

book, which travels a well-trodden path: from Wycliffe, through Erasmus, Tyndale, Coverdale, Cranmer, Geneva, the Bishops' Bible, and finally to the King James Version. The account is told simply but without the loss of a sense of the struggle and complexity of the achievements of translation and publication. Color illustrations bring the text to life. Wycliffe's original translation of the Lord's Prayer in Middle English is presented in one excellent illustration, there are also title pages of the major bibles—including Henry VIII's Great Bible, and an image of the first printing of the King James Bible showing the use of different type sets.

Within the text, boxes address points of interest, allowing the authors to point out some of the cul de sacs that exist in this story. They cover topics such as the use of original Hebrew phrases in the translation ("skin of my teeth," "lamb to the slaughter," "pour out my heart," and "sour grapes" among them), timelines, and features on publishers. In selecting some well-known passages—the Lord's Prayer, Matthew 11:28-30 ("come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden ..."), and I Corinthians: 13 ("though I speak with the tongues of men and of

angels ...”)–Price and Ryrie also compare the King James Version with other, and perhaps lesser, translations.

For students who do not have a detailed knowledge of the history of the King James Version, this book will be extremely useful. It is well written and enlivened with anecdotes and insights into the human aspects of the evolution of the translation. The book places the King James Version in its historical setting and thereby serves as a useful grounding in Reformation history. It is beautifully

produced with fine illustrations and as an introduction to the King James Version it is unsurpassed.

Note

[1]. See William Gibson, “Review of David Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*,” H-Albion, H-Net Reviews, August, 2004. <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=149871095336405>.

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