

WHO TRANSLATED OUR BIBLE?

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It was "bloody Mary" who next sat on the English throne. What a cruel lot was she! How she hated the Bible! One of her first laws was to stop the people from reading it, for she meant to bring the whole nation back to Popery. Oh, how *could* they give up the Book they had learned to prize so highly? How *could* they return to the poor, foolish rites of priestcraft? They had been feeding upon the Bread of Life: could they be satisfied with the husks and stubble served out to them by monks and cardinals? Then came dark days to England—dark, *very* dark. Again people were called upon to choose between Bible Religion and Popery; and at what a fearful risk men chose the former! It was the Bible and *death*; yet there were not only men but delicate women and dear children who counted not their lives dear to them for the steadfast love which they bore to the Word of God. Good John Rogers, the picture of whom burning at the stake you have often seen, was the first of that noble band of English martyrs who at this time sealed their attachment to the Saviour by their blood. In spite of laws and spies many a little congregation used to steal away into thick forests, into lonely fields, into cellars and barns, to read the Book of Life; but constables were everywhere on the watch, and many a one was suddenly taken up by armed men, who bound and committed to prison the poor unfortunate ones, whence, if they persisted in refusing to return to Popery, they were led to the burning pile. Thus full 300 of England's best subjects—*best*, because they loved and obeyed the Word of God—were victims to the bigotry of bloody Mary. But these martyrs were witnesses for Christ; they were *living letters* of the excellency, the patience, the joy, the hope, the consolation, which a serious study of the Bible can give to the soul of man.

After an unhonoured reign Mary at length died, unloved and unlamented; and her sister Elizabeth ascended the throne. There was a custom, on the coronation of a prince, to release prisoners; when this had been done, and men long bound came forth to light and freedom, one of Elizabeth's lords said, "There are yet 4 or 5 others to be freed." "Ah, who are they?" she asked. "Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul," was the answer; "they have been long shut up so that they could not talk to the common people, who are eager to see them abroad again." Elizabeth was a Protestant, and she was ready enough