

## Our English Bible

I own or have owned many English Bibles. An inherited family Bible weighs over 13 1/2 pounds, with a copyright date of 1883 and the publisher listed as John E. Potter and Company in Philadelphia. It was passed on to me from my father and mother and contains much more than the Scriptures. Included, for example, are Brown's Complete Concordance, a separate pictorial history and dictionary, an illustrated list of "Christian denominations of the world," as well as "several hundred engravings, maps and plans, on wood and steel."

Vishal Mangalwadi wrote a book called *The Book That Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011). His background as an Indian scholar and his depth of appraising history demonstrate conclusively that the main contributors to Western civilization have had their worldviews built solidly on the Bible.

In the foreword, J. Stanley Mattson, founder and president of the C.S. Lewis Foundation in Redlands, California, compares Mangalwadi's book to Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, in terms of its wide-ranging assessment of Western cultures and civilization. It is his contention that the research of Mangalwadi "*establishes the fact that the Bible and its world view...combined to serve as the single most powerful force in the emergence of Western civilization*" (xvi and xvii, emphasis in the original).

Mangalwadi's pilgrimage "began in a moral struggle." He stole and, knowing that it was wrong, heard the good news of Jesus Christ, who "became the most precious person in my life." Various questions confronted him when he attended University and he began to read the Bible. Mangalwadi questioned Hindu philosophies, but in the Bible, he found not only the notion of freedom, but also of nation.

The men who enabled the revolution of the western mind were Bible translators and in England, chief among them, was William Tyndale. Up until his time and afterward, "[t]he bishops had been burning people alive who possessed even fragments of its [the Bible's] copies." Rome was in demise, but the papacy took its place of power, and it was John Wycliffe who put "his pen against the Pope's sword" and challenged the Roman churches authority. Up until then, the intellectual elite controlled the "Bible," which was the Latin vulgate, translated by Jerome. They did not like "the idea that the Bible could be translated into a rustic dialect like English." They liked, for example, Jerome's translation of repentance as "doing penance."

What Tyndale and Wycliffe did for English speakers, Martin Luther did for the Germans—gave the masses a Bible they could read and understand.

The first Protestant study Bible was the Geneva Bible, published in 1660, with illustrations, maps and other study aids. The King James Bible followed, although the King himself "opposed the Puritans who championed the Geneva Bible," because he upheld the divine right of kings (p. 155). The Geneva Bible used the word "tyrant" to refer to kings—the KJV never did (p.156).

William Carey was the father of vernacular education in India and was a model for countless other missionary-educators. Alexander Duff, a Scottish missionary, started a college in Calcutta in 1830. But what is it that, in Mangalwadi's description, "made the West the best"? To answer, he examines the effects of corruption in various countries, including England. It was into this country with its "spiritual and moral quagmire [that] stepped John Wesley" in almost the same year as Jonathan Edwards in America. Wesley preached 45,000 sermons on the Bible and he "deplored the stupidity and futility of war, especially Britain's war with the American colonies." Wesley died as he lived, in humility and poverty, and his funeral instructions were that "six poor men, in need of employment, be given a pound each to carry his body to the grave."

The biblical revival resulted in the formation of a number of missionary societies: Baptist Missionary, London Missionary, Wesleyan Mission, Church Missionary, China Inland Mission, the British and Foreign Bible and others—all within a few years of each other. There are also a number of social issues that were improved that can be traced to Wesley: the abolition of slavery, factory schools, founding of the Salvation Army, and many humanitarian efforts as well.

Freedom is also a product of the Bible: "[O]nly cultures founded on the Bible have viewed freedom as a virtue worth dying for" because they see freedom as humility and the essence of God and his image.

Finally, Mangalwadi considers the future and asks, "Must the sun set on the West?" a question that we must ask as well. Because the value of "relativism" has been our prevailing worldview, the traditional value system of our Christian forefathers is not tolerated today. Instead, a variety of secular fatalism often prevails, and repentance and forgiveness do not. There is moral and spiritual bankruptcy in India, but in our nation (and others) as well. Our own universities, once founded by godly men of moral courage, are now in dire need of resurrection from the deadness of a culture and life without God and his power. It does not look good for the West.

Mangalwadi has written a powerful and persuasive book, replete with examples and stories of how the Bible changed the West into principled Christian cultures and nations. I believe every person should read it carefully. Hopefully, it might change our thinking from American nationalism to global missional concerns and actions. My back is not strong or I would proudly lug my 13 ½ pound Bible to church.

Karl and Joice Franklin  
Bible Translators

