St. Jerome and the Bible

Do you know who translated the first Bible the common person could understand? St. Jerome. It took him a long time and he was reluctant to do it but the final product ended up as the standard version for more than 1,000 years. It all began as the fourth century drew to a close. The state of the Bible was far from perfect. What was needed was a complete and accurate translation, and this is where that prominent scholar came in.

His name was Jerome and he was Pope Damasus' secretary. The pope decided it was time to prepare a proper Bible with all the books, and like anyone in his position would do, he turned the job over to his secretary.

At first, Jerome was reluctant. He knew how much work would be involved, and he knew anyone who dared to rewrite the word of God would be thoroughly scrutinized and criticized from many quarters. But he accepted the responsibility, and since he was a scholar he did it thoroughly.

He consulted existing Latin copies to help him find the best wording for his version of the New Testament, but he didn't stop there.

To get the most accurate text, he also examined the original Greek manuscripts, which varied slightly from one to another. And for the Old Testament he went back to the original Hebrew and Aramaic.

Since he wasn't a Hebrew scholar, Jerome actually moved to Bethlehem and spent the rest of his life there. He learned as much about the language and culture of the patriarchs as he could, and, after working on his project for 20 years, he finally finished it in the fifth year of the fifth century, a date that became a landmark in Church history.

The result of his labors was a Bible that was accurate, easy

to read and designed for the people. The merits of his work were so obvious that it was the standard version of the Bible for more than 1,000 years. Although it isn’t as widely used today, for centuries it was the version of the Bible that brought God’s word to the world.