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Question 69 - Who were Gutenberg and Erasmus?

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101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

69. Who were Gutenberg and Erasmus?

A. Gutenberg

1. Gutenberg, Johann – (1396-1468), German inventor of printing with movable type, born in Mainz, Germany. Father's name was Gensfleisch. Johann took the name of Gutenberg, probably his mother's maiden name, or the name of her birthplace. Family later settled at Strassburg, where about 1438 he seems to have become a printer. About 1444 returned to Mainz, about 1450 formed a partnership with Johann Fust, a wealthy shrewd goldsmith in Mainz. Peter Schoffer later joining the partnership. They set up a printing press and started printing a Latin Bible. This Bible, known as the "Guttenberg Bible" or the "Mazarin Bible" or the "Forty-two Line Bible," was completed about 1455 or 1456, probably the earliest book printed on the new movable type press. Business and legal complications developed between Gutenberg and Fust. The latter having the money, gained possession of the type and the press. Gutenberg died about 1468 poor, childless, friendless, and practically unknown. It is said that his name did not appear on the title page of anything that he is thought to have printed. Though he was denied the honor and credit at the time, "the invention of Gutenberg should be classed with the greatest events in the history of the world. It caused a revolution in the development of culture, equaled by hardly any other incident in the Christian era." Most of the books which Gutenberg is believed to have printed were religious.

(Who Was Who In Church History. Elgin Moyer. Keats Publishing. New Canaan, Conn. 1974. p. 181)

2. Gutenberg caused great excitement in the fall of 1454 by exhibiting sample pages of his Bible at the Frankfurt trade fair. An Italian visitor (the future Pope Pius II) praised the Bible's lettering, which he said could be read without glasses. He further reported that all of the 180 or so copies of the Bible in production had found buyers.

- #### B. Erasmus, Desiderius – (1466-1536), Dutch scholar, prince of the humanists, born in Rotterdam, Holland, a brilliant child with an excellent memory. As a young man spent five unhappy years in a monastery (1486-1491), then was admitted to the priesthood, taking monastic vows at about the age of twenty-five. Continued clerical profession, never married, but never had a parish. The way opened for him to study at the University of Paris and at Orleans. From this time on he led the life of an independent, scholar-independent of country, of academic or

religious ties, of everything that could interfere with the free development of intellect and freedom of literary expression. Traveled extensively and made acquaintance with the chief celebrities of church and state. While at Oxford became intimate with Sir Thomas More, Dean Colet, Cardinal Woolsey, Bishop Fisher, Grocyn and Linacre. In Italy he "bathed in the fountain of the renaissance." Everywhere he went he was treated like a prince. Held in high favor with popes Julius II, Leo X, Adrian VI, Clement VII, and Paul III. The latter offered him the cardinal's hat, but he refused. Justus Jonas and Ulrich Zwingli visited him and honored him. The most cultivated man of his age, the admired leader of scholastic Europe from Germany to Italy and Spain, and from England to Hungary. Combined native genius, classical and brilliant learning, lively imagination, keen wit, and refined taste. He stands in the front rank of the humanists and forerunners of the Reformation, and on the dividing line between the middle ages and modern times. Cleared the way for the work of the reformers, but had little creative or organizing power. The first period of his life till 1524 was progressive and reformatory, the second part, until his death in 1536, was conservative and reactionary. An expert Greek scholar, and his Greek New Testament issued in 1516 was a valuable aid to the work of Luther. His classical, biblical, and patristic studies, and his exposures of ecclesiastical abuses, monastic ignorance, and bigotry were a definite boon to the Reformation. Sought to free the Church from medieval formalism and tradition, considering himself a preacher of righteousness. Interested in reform, but would not disassociate from the Church, which opposed reform. After a period of hesitation he turned back to his church and against Luther and Reformation. Someone said, "Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched." Died in his seventieth year, without a priest, invoking the mercy of Christ.

(Who Was Who In Church History. Elgin Moyer. Keats Publishing. New Canaan, Conn. 1974. p. 135)

70. Who were Martin Luther and Miles Coverdale?

- A. Martin Luther**, former Roman Catholic priest, and history's greatest Protestant Reformer who translated the New Testament from Greek into German in 1522.
- B. Coverdale, Miles** – (1488-1568), English translator of the Bible, born at Coverham, Yorkshire, England, studied at Cambridge University. In 1514 ordained priest at Norwich, and later entered the Augustine monastery at Cambridge.

Left the monastery and began evangelical preaching about 1528, spending the next seven years on the Continent where his Bible, the first complete translation in English, was published. Under commission of Thomas Cromwell he was in France (1538-1539) superintending the printing of a revised English version for the Anglican Church, to be known as the "Great Bible." In 1540 he edited "Cranmer's Bible" a revised edition of the "Great Bible." When Thomas Cromwell was

executed in 1540, Coverdale fled to the Continent where he spent the next eight years, and spent some time at Tubingen. Between 1543 and 1547 was Lutheran pastor and schoolmaster near Strassburg. Returning to England in 1548 he was well received and was made chaplain to King Edward VI and almoner to the queen dowager, Catherine Parr. In 1551 Coverdale was appointed bishop of Exeter, but was deprived of the office and imprisoned for two years when Mary came to the throne. In 1553 he owed his escape to the intercession of the Danish king, and spent some time in Denmark, Switzerland, and Germany. In 1559, two years after Elizabeth had come to the throne, he returned to England, but was not reinstated in his bishopric. From 1564 to 1566 he was rector of St. Magnus, near London Bridge. Due to infirmity and to his Puritanic leanings, he resigned the position. Coverdale "was a pious, conscientious, laborious. Generous, and a thoroughly honest and good man." He did little original literary work, but was a good translator. He won remarkable popularity as a preacher.

(Who Was Who In Church History. Elgin Moyer. Keats Publishing. New Canaan, Conn. 1974. p. 104)