In the Beginning is Alister McGrath's history of the King James Bible, and as the subtitle explains, his explanation of How It Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture. McGrath's story begins with the development of the printing press, describes the forces (before, during, and after the Reformation) fueling the demand for English vernacular translations of the Bible, and considers the impact of the King James Version on Western worship and politics. McGrath deftly blends an arch and charming, donnish argot with breezy, tough, brass-tacks directness. Of the ongoing process of creating new biblical translations, he writes, Its has yet to end; indeed, it will not end, until either history is brought to a close or English ceases to be a living language. Elsewhere, describing the cultural influence of the Authorized Version, he explains, Without the King James Bible, there would have been no Paradise Lost, no Pilgrims Progress, no Handels Messiah, no Negro spirituals, and no Gettysburg address.) A professor of historical theology at the University of Oxford, McGrath has written a number of popular books about Christianity (including Theology for Amateurs). In The Beginning continues his work of making complex matters of theological thought and history accessible to a wider audience. --Michael Joseph Gross

My Personal Review: Although its the most widely-read and best-selling book in history, surprisingly little is known about the King James Version of the bible by most of those who read it on a daily basis. As it turns out, millions of people who consider it to be the very word of God dont even realize that its a translation rather than an original. Many of those who are familiar with its origins, and who heap praise on it as a peerless literary gem, are not aware that the original bible was written
in the everyday language of the common working man, and that the
elegance of the prose in the KJV was essentially a fortuitous accident
rather than the intent of its translators. The translation was carried out at a
crucial turning point in the English language, and the committees
established by James I struggled continuously with which words they
should use: those of the current day, even though they knew those words
would soon be passé and possibly unintelligible to future generations, or
the newer usages, which they couldn't be sure would last? As an example,
the early 17th century word for the neuter possessive we know as its was
his. This has led not only to a number of puzzling passages but also to
many that are tortured attempts to get around the problem: Rather than Its
height was twenty cubits, we get The height was twenty cubits thereof,
which we may think is elegant but not when that awkward construction
appears three times in a single sentence describing the proper
construction of an ark.

IN THE BEGINNING, a splendidly readable account of how the KJV came
to be, is filled with such fascinating tidbits, as well as more substantive and
disturbing ones. Church authorities were bound and determined that bibles
only be available in Latin, feeling (correctly) that their power arose at least
to some extent from the inability of their congregations to understand the
Book without assistance from clergy. But the Reformation that was
sweeping Europe at the time was based in part on the belief that the bible
should be available to all the people, in their own language (hence the
term vernacular bible), just as the original was. (The Old Testament was in
the Hebrew and Aramaic of farmers and laborers; same for the Greek of
the New Testament.) This was no scholarly debate, either; William Tyndale
was publicly strangled for writing an English version of the bible.

One of the strengths of IN THE BEGINNING is how well it acquaints us
with the power of the ruthless Middle Ages church and its inseparability
from government. The role of politics in the structure of the KJV is
explored, too, such as in the decision-making that led to the inclusion of
the Gospel of John and the Apocrypha, neither of which was universally
viewed as the word of God as were the other sections. Despite a good
deal of maddening repetition that often makes the book sound like a
committee report (Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, then
tell them what you told them), its a compelling and intriguing read, its
scholarship exemplary and its conclusions well-grounded. Especially
revealing are the comparisons among several translations of well-known
passages, which demonstrate the extraordinary degree to which all-too-
human, seemingly arbitrary decisions (the Greek word ekklesia was
translated as church but was more closely akin to congregation) crept into
a work which, more than any other, shaped our language and culture.

Because of that undeniable influence, IN THE BEGINNING is a must-read
for anybody who thinks, even if they're non-Christians or non-believers
altogether.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price: