

**THE JULIA EVELINA SMITH BIBLE: CHANGING SOCIETY'S
RULES—THE FIRST WOMAN TO TRANSLATE THE BIBLE**

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In the vast array of biblical scholars, Julia Evelina Smith is quite often overlooked. Fortunately, a Bible in The Dunham Bible Museum is displayed in recognition of her amazing accomplishments. Though she is often acknowledged for her success as an early activist for suffrage, Julia is also the first woman to translate the Bible into English. This historical achievement alone makes her worthy of praise, but in addition to that, she completed this great task in a time when women were stereotypically viewed as weak individuals. Smith is one of the many women of nineteenth-century America who refused to allow the ideas of their time to deter them from their goals. Julia Smith was a gifted and radical individual who overcame society's perception of women to become an accomplished Bible translator.

Julia was taught feminist ideas her entire life. She was born in 1792 on a farm in

Baptist preacher in the nineteenth century named William Miller. Using the Bible, Miller believed he had discovered October 22, 1844, as the exact day the world would end, and he became the famous head of a large movement of people who believed him.⁴ Before Miller's declarations were proven false in the Great Disappointment of 1844, Julia had begun to study the Bible in an attempt to come upon the same discoveries as he. In her studying, she found that the Bible could be read more easily if it were translated in a more literal sense. With no initial intention of sharing her work with the world, Julia began to translate out of admiration of the craft and for a more in-depth Bible study for her family and friends. In reference to her work, Julia wrote, "This translation was made for the gratification of six persons, the five Smith sisters, and one friend. They were all much interested in searching the Scriptures after the notorious Miller doctrine came out and they met weekly for that purpose."⁵

Motivated by her love of the Bible and its original languages, Julia completed her translation in seven years, and impressively, this was skillfully done without any help. In speaking of this amazing accomplishment, Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote, "Julia Smith translated the whole bible absolutely alone without consultation from anyone. And thi-20(d6(om)-1 0 0v)-271(se)3(ve)4

her life, there are none that express her setting a goal to become the first woman translator. The only certain aspect of Julia's motivation for translating is that she loved the Bible and she sought to gain a deeper understanding of it. Though she is rarely a topic of discussion amongst biblical scholars, Julia accomplished something magnificent that is worthy of honor.

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