

The History of the King James Bible – Part 9 – The Bible into English Early Efforts by John Wycliffe

Italics – Often times when you are going to have a literal translation from one language to another you are going to need more words in one language in order to say the exact same thing. – A fact of translation.

In English we have the word “toothbrush” (one word). In order to say the exact thing in Spanish you must translate “cepillo de dientes” (brush of the teeth which is 3 words).

People point to the italics in the KJV as a criticism to say words were added to the “original”. The KJV translators were honest enough to italicize these added words to have the exact rendering in English from the Greek and Hebrew.

1 John 3:16 “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” – Here we understand that God both loved us and laid down His life for us. When the liberal versions take hold of a verse like this they just say, “he loved us” and we are left to wonder who?!

If we take away “our” we might be inclined to lay down lives for God! – No, we need to lay down our own lives for the brethren as a living sacrifice.

Translating is not taking a word and giving the equivalent word in another language.

In Deuteronomy 8:3 the thing man needs to live by is every “word” that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD and the “word” is in italics. – Luke 4:4 says, “And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but every word of God.” – Jesus quotes the italicized “word”!

We have translators from the Masoretic text honest enough to say we do not have an exact equivalent in Hebrew to the word “word” in Deut 8:3 but the exact translation requires the word “word” in Deut 8:3. – Jesus proves this!

The pure word of God got to England through missionaries from Asia Minor, from Antioch, up to modern France and to England as early as the 1st century AD. – The world had been reached in Paul’s lifetime (Col 1:23).

The Christianity of the ancient Celts and Britons were Apostolic in nature and their bible was the old Latin. – Their bible was translated in 157AD and about 100 years after a man (who was not a saint nor a Catholic) by the name of Patrick carried God’s word and the gospel up into the British Isles and laid a good foundation there.

From 410-550AD the ancient Britons were virtually displaced by the pagan Anglo Saxons and in 597AD Pope Gregory sent a monk by the name of Austin to England to convert its’ inhabitants and Austin influenced the RCC and the corrupt Latin Vulgate into England.

Since the English language developed from the Teutonic invaders who populated Angleland the Latin vulgate could not be read by the people. – Therefore, there arose a necessity for a translation into Anglo Saxon or the old English tongue. – From then God allowed the Roman church to make a law that would only allow the word to be read in a false church and in a language people did not know.

In 670AD a man called Caedmon (a cow herder) who worked at the monastery at Wiltshire had a dream and in the dream an angel commanded him to sing songs based on scripture. – So, he found a book of Exodus and learned verbally the stories of Exodus. Then he learned of the incarnation, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the Apostles and he translated these from Latin as it was written as it was read to him into Celtic/Saxon language and put these into metrical form (poetry/music) about the countryside singing them to other farmers and peasants.

So, the earliest English rendering of God’s word we have is a cowboy hearing the bible taught in Latin figuring out how he could make a sing out of that in a language he and his friends knew and would sing the stories around a campfire. – This is the earliest record of God’s word in our language.

He sang these songs with the accompaniment of a harp and he sang these songs among people who memorised and repeated them.

The Salter of Aldheim came out in 700AD. – Aldheim was the Bishop of Sherborne and translated the Psalms into English as the first such translation into what can be called English.

Ecgberht, Bishop of Northumbria lived at the same time as Aldheim and translated Matthew, Mark and Luke into old English and a copy of the translation exists to this day in the British Museum.

Bede, The Venerable was a brilliant English scholar. He is known as the father of English history. His work was called “The Ecclesiastical History of England”, which was his greatest. – He translated the gospel of John.

King Alfred the Great of 870-901AD was a mightily intelligent man who loved God and His word. – This king of England, for the benefit of the people, personally translated the 10 commandments, the Psalms and much of the 4 gospels because he believed the greatest legacy he could leave to his people upon his death was God’s word in their possession, in their language!

Lindisfarne gospels in 950AD by a priest named Aldred. – He put together an interlinear Anglo-Saxon paraphrase of the gospels written over copied of the old Latin version. – He got hold of the Antiochian line Old Latin and wrote it out double-spaced and wrote between the lines (as best he could) the general sense of what was in that Old Latin in the language of England so people could read it.

The Rushworth gospels done by an Irishman called Macrogol in 1000AD and the Wessex gospels were also of 1000AD, and these were the oldest English gospels still in existence (Matt, Mark, Luke, and John).

Alfred, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1000AD was dubbed the Grammarian and translated the first 5 books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, Esther, Job and part of Kings into English (old English). – King Ethelred II wanted Alfred to give him the best literature on warfare and Alfred determined the OT to be the best example!

Chaucer’s work (e.g. Canterbury Tales) was written in “middle English” and a good education for those wanting to read the modern English of the KJV.

Middle English

This followed Old English after the Norman invasion of 1066AD, and the establishment of Norman rule brought the Latin language to return and it took over 200 years for English to return as part of Christianity. – The first of these was in 1215AD from an Augustinian monk named Orm and he did a metrical paraphrase of the book of Acts for use in church liturgy.

He used Anglo Saxon words with Norman syntax and grammar (very difficult to read).

William Shoreham was a parish priest in Kent and translated the Psalms into southern English (more common language of the day).

Richard Rolle the hermit of Hampole produced a translation of the Psalms from the Latin vulgate in approximately 1300AD.

John Trevisa of Cornwall (1342-1402AD) translated the whole bible from the Latin into middle English.

These were mere precursors for the big work yet to come.

You must know about these men:

- **John Wycliffe**
- **William Tyndale**
- **Myles Coverdale**
- **John Rogers**

Without the above men you would not have the bible we possess today.

John Wycliffe was born in 1320AD in Yorkshire and attended Oxford University around 1340AD and graduated in 1350AD. – He gained his PHD in 1367AD. – He lectured in Oxford until 1382AD.

He lived during a time of a great power struggle between the parliament of England and the Pope.

The English people deeply resented the support of the French against the English during the “100 years’ war”. – Occasionally (as seen then) the Pope supports and finances the losing side (i.e. Hitler and Germany).

God used this political interest on the part of the Papacy to get you your bible! The Pope’s interference in the benefit of England to become Europe’s great power was used by God to cause a great resistance against the darkness of the RCC from England. – Before this there was no great opposition to Rome.

All this at the same time God is raising up a man to translate the English bible apart from the Roman bible. He is using secular wars and politics to prepare the hearts of the people for His bible in their language! Praise God and this is how it works!

In 1366AD Pope Urban V demanded back-taxes from England. The Pope says, “where’s our money!” and the parliament refused to pay and passed a law that no king of England would pay the Pope 1 penny without the consent of the English people.

Wycliffe shaped up as a vocal supporter of the people against the Pope. He lived in a period known as “The Babylonian captivity of the Church” and the “Great Schism” when England and Rome were divided and seized upon the disarray to hammer for a way for the church.

In 1377AD Wycliffe sent a statement listing 19 heresies of the RCC and mailed it to the Pope. – There were not many people sending letters in those days and not many intelligent people who could compose an argument and put it together in writing. – So, when the Pope got mail, he took a look at it. Especially from a man lecturing at Oxford being in support of the not tax to Rome rebellion!

The Pope countered this 19 heresies letter by issuing 5 papal bulls against Wycliffe personally. – He couldn’t refute Wycliffe’s truth so decided to attack him personally as has been Satan’s tactics from the beginning.

Wycliffe was protected from harm by John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, who was a wealthy and powerful man. – For 11 years Wycliffe engaged in political and ecclesiastical warfare against the papacy and in 1378AD he began to wage a doctrinal battle.

This is what Wycliffe spoke against:-

1. RCC is teaching salvation by good works. – Wycliffe said if that were true then Christ died in vain, and the writings of the Apostles were false.
2. Spoke against indulgences. – This is allowance for a period of time to commit any sin you want without confessing and God will forgive it by giving money to the RCC.
3. Praying the dead saints. – One mediator before God and men the man Christ Jesus.
4. Auricular confession. – This causes dirt to be held on those confessing their sins to men and no charges made against priests that commit great crime.
5. All church offices above pastors and deacons are unscriptural. – Where in the scripture do we find cardinals, archbishops and popes?
6. Transubstantiation.

As a result of this letter, he was expelled from Oxford in 1382AD for denying transubstantiation.

His popularity among the people and the English nobility protected him from personal harm. – Everyone knew he was from God and did not want to touch him.

He suffered a stroke while preaching at his church at Lutterworth in 1384AD and he died 3 days later.

Wycliffe realised that the greatest way to break the power of Rome was for everybody to be able to read what he had read. – God's word.

He said as a quote in "The life of John Wycliffe":-

"What sort of antichrist is this who, to the sorrow of Christian men, is so bold as to prohibit the laity from learning this holy lesson which is so earnestly commanded by God. Every man is bound to learn it that he may be saved but every layman who shall be saved is a very priest of God's own making. And every man is bound to be a very priest."

Wycliffe translated the NT in 1380AD and the OT in 1382AD from the Latin vulgate into middle English. – Sadly, the vulgate is all he had and he was assisted by other men in the work.

Copies of the bible were made by hand and very expensive as this was pre-Gutenberg. – It took an experienced scribe about 10 months to complete 1 bible! Once they came out those bibles were widely circulated.

God had already established Wycliffe's reputation and used that, so people had a great interest in Wycliffe's bible when it came out.

This bible became very popular and in one case a man paid a load of hay for the privilege of borrowing a Wycliffe bible for 1 hour! That was great worth to a farmer and shows the desire and thirst for God's word when available. – Shame on us for not utilising fully our unlimited access to it.

A copy of the bible cost Nicholas Belward 4 marks plus 4 pence. – This sum was considered sufficient annual salary for a man living in that day!

Wycliffe's bible included the Apocrypha, had the epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans.

Several friends of Wycliffe who helped distribute the bible were burnt at the stake with the bibles hanging around their necks. – How much does God's word mean to you?

The Synod of Oxford in 1408AD forbade the reading of Wycliffe's bible.

The Council of Constance in 1415AD condemned John Huss and Wycliffe.

In 1428AD (44 years after Wycliffe died) his bones were dug up, put on trial and he was burned at the stake. – All in the name of "The holy mother church" of course!

About 30 manuscripts of Wycliffe's original translation still exist.

John Wycliffe has been called "The morning star of the reformation". – Approximately 150 years before Luther Wycliffe ploughed the ground for an attack on the darkness of the RCC.

Wycliffe's version influenced the authorised version in a number of places.

Wycliffe's disciples prayer "***Oure fadir that art in heunes, halewid be thi name; thi kyngdoom come to; be thee wille don 'in erthe as in heune; yyue to us this dai oure 'breed ouer othir substance; and foryyue to us oure dettis, as we foryyuen to oure dettouris; and lede us not in to temptation, but delyuere us fro yeiel. Amen.***"