

BBI 2009
Dan Lehigh

How the Bible Came to Us
(The "Englising" of God's Word)



The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever.

- Isaiah 40:8

For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest
letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

- Matthew 5:18

The Englishing of the Bible
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Introduction:

God spoke

Hebrew, Aramaic & Greek

St. Jerome

Latin Vulgate (405 AD)

If my occupation had been to plait rush baskets or to weave mats out of palm leaves, in order by the sweat of my brow, to gain my daily bread, envy would have spared me.

But since, in obedience to the precepts of the Savior, I have, for the good of souls, chosen to prepare the bread which perishes not and have wished to clear the path of truth of the weeds which ignorance has sown in it, I am accused of a twofold crime.

If I correct errors in the sacred text I am denounced as a falsifier; if I do not correct them, I am pilloried as a disseminator of error.

-St. Jerome

Conditions of the English clergy

The burning of heretics

Autographs / Inerrancy

The view that has persisted throughout the centuries and is common among evangelicals today is that inerrancy (or infallibility, inspiration) of the Scriptures pertains only to the text of the original autographs.

- New Evidence that Demands a Verdict 342

I decide that either the text is corrupt, or the translator did not follow what was really said, or that I failed to understand it.

It needs to be reiterated quite unambiguously that evangelical restriction of inerrancy to the autographs:

(1) is a restriction to the autographic text, thereby guarding the uniqueness of God's verbal message.

(2) does not imply that present Bibles, because they are not fully inerrant, fail to be the Word of God.

- Augustine

General Rules

The autographs were inspired and inerrant.

It's another study, but we can be very confident that while the copies/and translations are not inspired and inerrant the way the autographs are, they accurately reflect the message of God's Word and for all practical purposes are the inspired Word of God.

We can be very confident that what we have in a good translation is the Word of God.

...doesn't apply to a translation that contains doctrinal or deliberate departures from the originals (Watchtower, cults).

In summary:

Let's talk a bit about the autographs. We think they all have perished. Small fragment magala...Scholars using powerful/sophisticated tools have determined that they are either a piece of an original manuscript or a direct number one copy from it!

That's pretty incredible! It is fashionable today to teach that the Scriptures were written years after the fact. Here are pieces of Scripture that go back to either the original or one copy from it.

Inspiration & Authority

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness – 2 Tim 3:16

theopneustos (Gr) "inspiration", "God-breathed"

"inspiration" "The mysterious process by which God worked through human writers, employing their individual personalities and styles to produce divinely-authoritative and inerrant writings (Geisler)

Inerrancy

The Bible claims to be from God.

God is true, never lies, never errs.

Therefore if Scripture comes from God it cannot contain errors.

Inerrancy is not:

- Correct grammar
- Figures of speech

2 Tim. 3:16 - All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God¹

2 Peter 1:20-21 - Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. ²¹For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost. 2

¹*The King James Version, 1769.*

²*The King James Version, 1769.*

Biblical Criticism (Miller)

The science which seeks, by careful and detailed inquiry, to secure the exact words of the original manuscripts of the Bible from the external evidence of manuscripts, versions and quotations, and to determine the composition, date, authorship, and historical value as judged by internal evidence

Scribal Errors

- Unintentional
- Intentional

Unintentional

Errors of the eye

Errors of the ear

Errors of speech

Errors of the mind/memory

Errors of carelessness or ignorance

Intentional (rare)

Approx. 20,000 NT manuscripts, versions, commentaries, writings of all or part of NT.

Families by style of writing; scribe.

The Bible in England

Augustine came to Kent in AD 597.

The Lindisfarne Gospels are from approx. 550 AD

Caedmon of Whitby Abbey... approx. 670 AD

Aldhelm, a bishop (died 709)

Bede born 674

King Alfred became king of Wessex at 22 in 865.

The 14th century brought great changes.

Black death (1348-9) – one third of the people died.

The papacy was in decline.

The background was in place for John Wyclif, the morningstar of the reformation.

John Wycliffe was born between 1320/1330 in Yorkshire in a small village called Wycliffe-on-Tees.

He attended Oxford

First trial by authorities

Second trial by authorities

forbidden to return to Oxford. He went to Lutterworth

NT in 1380 into English.

The whole Bible was translated in 1384.

In 1401 the De Heretico Comburendo promised death to heretics by burning alive.

In 1408 the constitutions were formed to combat Wycliffe's Bible in English.

Pope Gregory VII said:

The pope can be judged by no one: the Roman church has never erred and never will err till the end of time; the Roman church was founded by Christ alone; the pope alone can depose and restore bishops; he alone can make new laws, set up new bishoprics, and divide old ones; he alone can translate [transfer] bishops; he alone can call general councils and authorize canon law; he alone can revise his judgments; his legates, even though in inferior orders, have precedence over all bishops; an appeal to the papal courts inhibits judgment by all inferior courts; a dully ordained pope is undoubtedly made a saint by the merits of St. Peter.

In 1401 William Sawtrey, a Lollard priest

He was burned alive and in public at Smithfield in London.

John Huss was convicted and burned on the banks of the Rhine.

Sir John Oldcastle

He was hanged from a gallows in a chair while a fire was lit beneath him.

The stage was set for our next martyr hero, William Tyndale.

Tyndale was born near the Welsh border in the early 1490s.

The family also used the name "Hutchyns".

He hired himself to Mr. John Walsh

"I defy the pope and all his laws. If God spare my life ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest."

Cuthbert Tunstall

Mr. Humphrey Monmouth, a kindly, wealthy cloth merchant.

Tyndale remained in London for approx. one year. He realized that it would never be possible to have his NT printed in England and so made the heart-wrenching decision to leave his beloved England for the continent.

Tyndale and his helper William Roye went to Cologne in summer 1525.

Peter Quentell

disaster

Worms

Peter Schoeffer was engaged to finish the printing. Less than six months later printed copies were being loaded on barges for shipment to England.

Would you pick up the Bible if you knew you could burn because of it?

Henry VIII

Ann Boelyn

who needs the pope?

Anglican and not Roman Catholic

Ann was a sympathizer to the reformers.

Thomas More, the Chancellor of England was gearing up his heresy hunting. Many men and women died as the authorities arrested them for possessing or reading the Bible in English. Smugglers were busy. There were many little creeks and quiet anchorages in England where they could land to discharge their cargoes. The NT in English began to flood into England.

We need to take a look at some people and events before we continue.

The Church

English Language

Erasmus Desiderius (des-i-deer'-ee-uhs)

Sir Thomas More

Martin Luther and the Reformation

Funny story about the bishop of London...

He wanted to buy up Tyndale's copies of the NT in order to burn them.

He contacted a merchant on the continent, not realizing he was a friend of Tyndale's. The merchant told him he could get the books. He went to Tyndale

and said, "You have a great store of books by you. I have a right good buyer for them." Tyndale asked who it was.

When he was told it was the bishop he said, "But he will burn them."

The merchant answered, "Yes, but we will charge him 4X the price. You will have money to revise the NT." The deal was struck. The bishop had the books; Tyndale had the money, and soon the Bibles were flowing into England again.

Later when More was interrogating a bookseller he asked him where Tyndale got his money. The man said, "Do you really want to know?" More promised him leniency if he would tell. Said he, "It is the bishop of London who supplies the money."

More said, "I thought so!"

Cardinal Wolsey
Thomas Cranmer

Henry VIII

...king of England from 1509 to 1547.

He had six wives and several mistresses.

Edward VI, Henry's son, succeeded him.

Mary assumed the throne after a near civil war

Elizabeth

James VI of Scotland succeeded to the throne as James I of England, Scotland and Wales.

It was James I who was the driving force behind the King James Bible.

Tyndale – part 2

John Foxe in his book of Martyrs writes:

We have now to enter into the story of the good martyr of God, William Tyndale; who, as he was a special organ of the Lord appointed, and as God's mattock to shake the inward roots and foundations of the pope's proud prelacy, so

the great prince of darkness, with his impious imps, having a special malice against him, left no way unsought how craftily to entrap him, and falsely to betray him, and maliciously to spill his life, as by the process of his story here following may appear.

More said that 'no good Christian manne hauing any drop of witte in his head' should marvel that the New Testament had been burnt, for it had not. What had been consumed in the fire at St. Paul's Cross was Tyndale's Testament, 'for so hadde Tyndall after Luthers counsayl corrupted and chaunged it from the good and wholesome doctrine of Christ to the devilishe heresyas of their own, that it was cleane a contrarye thyng'. Tyndale was 'a hellhound in the kennel of the devil...discharging a filthy foam of blasphemies out of his brutish bestly mouth'. The work was as 'full of errors as the sea is of water', More said, and much of it was 'wilfully mistranslated .. to deceive blind unlearned people'.

The Parable of the Wicked Manmon

The Obedience of a Christian Man.

It was not the manner of the English to be chivalrous or kind to each other.

Some examples of More:

He described Tyndale as 'a hell-hound in the kenel of the dyuy' who discharged blasphemies 'out of his brutyshe bestely mouth', and a 'drowsy drudge' who 'hath drunken depe in the dyuy's dregges'. When his anger courses directly from his heart on to page, More's other facets—the cool and temperate lawyer, the humanist author of Utopia, the discreet diplomat, the measured politician, the courtly servant of the king—are eaten up by his hatred, and vanish. He claimed that Tyndale was so full of evil, so crammed with pus like a boil in a biblical plague, that he must burst; but this also describes the malice that More himself bore Tyndale. His enemy 'is the beast who teaches vice, a forewalker of Antichrist, a devil's limb', More scribbled. 'He sheweth himself so puffed up with the poison of pride, malice and evil, that it is more than a marvel that the skin can hold together.'

Hamburg.

Henry Phillips

Vilvoorde

We have a letter written by Tyndale from his cold, damp cell.

I believe, right worshipful, that you are not unaware of what may have been determined concerning me. Wherefore I beg your lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here through the winter, you will request the commissary to have the kindness to send me, from the goods of mine which he has, a warmer cap; for I suffer greatly from cold in the head, and am afflicted by a perpetual catarrh, which is much increased in this cell; a warmer coat also for this which I have is very thin; a piece of cloth too to patch my leggings. My overcoat is worn out; my shirts are also worn out. He has a woollen shirt, if he will be good enough to send it. I have also with him leggings of thicker cloth to put on above; he has also warmer night caps. And I ask to be allowed to have a lamp in the evening; it is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark. But most of all I beg and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the commissary, that he will kindly permit me to have the Hebrew bible, Hebrew grammar, and Hebrew dictionary, that I may pass the time in that study. In return may you obtain what you most desire, so only that it be for the salvation of your soul. But if any other decision has been taken concerning me, to be carried out before winter, I will be patient, abiding the will of God, to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ; whose Spirit (I pray) may ever direct your heart. Amen. W. Tindalus.

Early in October 1536 Tyndale was led to the public place of execution.

He did not write his own epitaph.

A passage he left from 1 Corinthians serves us well. "And though I gave my body even that I burned, and yet had no love, it profiteth me nothing." That he used love and not charity was a prime reason More wanted him burned.

He died for love of God's words and their readers, and the most familiar work in the English language is thereby given the added grace of being a labor of love.

The KJ Bible

The King James Version of the Bible stood in a long line of English translations.

There was in manuscript:

- 1384 Wycliffe's translation (from Latin)
- 1396 Purvey's revision of Wycliffe

There were in print:

- 1525 Tyndal's New Testament (from the Greek)
 - 1530 Tyndal's Old Testament (from the Hebrew)
 - 1534 Tyndal's New Testament revised
 - 1535 Coverdale's (from the Latin, Luther and Zwingli)
 - 1537 Matthew (based on Tyndale)
 - 1539 Taverner's revision (based on Matthew)
 - 1539 Great Bible (based on Matthew)
 - 1557 Whittingham's New Testament
 - 1560 Geneva Bible
 - 1568 Bishop's Bible
 - 1582 Rheims New Testament (based on the Latin)
 - 1610 Douai Bible (Old Testament based on Latin)
 - 1611 Authorized KJ Version
 - 1881 Revised New Testament
 - 1885 Revised Old Testament
 - 1901 American revision (of the revised version)
- after 1900 Modern translations

Millenary Petition.

James called a conference at Hampton Court

At the conference it was suggested that James authorize a new translation of the Bible or authorize the Geneva Bible as the official Bible of England.

54 translators arranged into six companies.

two at Westminster

two at Oxford

two at Cambridge

The translation work started in earnest in 1607 and was completed in 1611.

The King James Only Controversy

The radical, fundamental, King James only movement is not only illogical but irrational.

The King James only controversy by its very nature brings disruption and contention right into the pews of our churches.

"The King James Bible alone = the Word of God alone".

If you are interested in pursuing the subject, James R. White's The King James Only Controversy is an excellent book.

The KJV translators wrote in the preface:

Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light, that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most Holy Place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water.

1. We possess more and better texts than the KJ translators used.
2. We possess a much richer knowledge of the text, languages, culture and customs now than they did in 1611.
3. The English language used in the KJV was already becoming obsolete in 1611.

following questions:

1. Do we understand what we read because we are familiar with the wording or because someone told us what they mean?

2. Do we obey what the words say or what they mean?

3. Would it not be simpler and better to have a translation which would at the first reading, without comment, suggest the meaning the writer intended?

4. Is it not time to do what the KJ scholars said they were attempting to do, "to deliver God's book unto God's people in a tongue they understand"?

Just a few observations:

- The King James translators were all Anglican churchmen or scholars. As such they practiced and taught "infant baptism". Most if not all of today's KJ only people do not agree with infant baptism, but see no contradiction in the KJ translators' belief and practice of baptizing babies.
- The KJ 1611 and all English Bibles till about 1729 included the apocryphal books which are not accepted by those who espouse the KJ only position.
- The issue of which KJ 1611 to follow is relevant:

Some people assume that the KJ Bible is a fixed phenomenon like the faith which was once delivered unto the saints:

However a current KJ differs in numerous details from the KJ printed in 1611. Books printed in the 17th century were very carelessly printed by modern standards. There were actually two editions of the KJ printed in 1611 differing in details from each other.

The point of all this is not to bash the KJV, but to point out that it is a translation like other translations with the problems and errors that are bound to be part of translations.

It is a remarkably good translation for what the translators had to work with. Its majestic prose and stately language have dominated for over 400 years, but we now have the tools and knowledge to do better. To insist that it is somehow inspired and inerrant

in the same way the autographs are is to convey on it a worship which the translators who did it would totally reject.

When we are dealing with the very Word of God it behooves us to get as close as we can to what the original writers penned. We do them no honor to insist that a 16th-century translation which they recognized as imperfect and fallible is perfect and the standard by which other translations should be judged.

We need to remember that when the KJ was published in 1611 it was violently rejected by many who felt it was too liberal and filled with error.

Hugh Broughton, who had been passed over as a translator, wrote of the new translation, "It crosseth me". It was so poorly done that it would grieve him as long as he lived. He insisted that he would rather be tied between wild horses and torn apart than to let it go forth among the poor people with his blessing. He contended that the translators had put the errors in the text and the correct readings in the margins.

It took approx. 60 years for the KJ to topple the Geneva from its place of prominence, but from then on it reigned supreme till the advent of the modern translations.

Jack Lewis writes:

The KJV came to be loved by the English-speaking people. For more than two centuries it accomplished what a Bible translation should. It spoke directly to the heart of the common man. That he forgot it was a translation and came to think that it was the original Bible does not negate its worth.