

Review: *The Story of the English Bible*, International Baptist Mission, n.d.

Runtime (min): 43

A Story Well Told

A passionate presentation on the greatest piece of literature in history, the English Bible, known today as the Authorized Version. Dr. Ken Connolly (1927-2005) moves location across England bringing to life key events long forgotten by today's world.

The viewer is taken back 650 years to Dr John Wycliffe and his English translation from the corrupted Latin Vulgate. With ink and quill he managed to equip each of his Lollard disciples with a hand-written copy. For sowing the seeds of reformation across England Rome punished them with fire at the stake, Bibles about their necks.

To the Pope's horror the Lollard doctrine was still alive a hundred years later during the time of Erasmus and William Tyndale. In the interim Bohemia was ignited via the martyrdom of John Huss who had learnt from Wycliffe's students from that place. The Reformation proper had to wait for God's timing-the invention of the printing press and fall of Constantinople to the Turks.

A self-exiled and hunted Tyndale managed to translate the NT directly from Greek despite opposition of Roman Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall and his agents. Taking the wise in their own craftiness, God ensured Tunstall's monies for buying up Tyndale's NT went to Tyndale himself, via a sympathetic merchant Augustine Packington. For every copy bought and burnt three superior ones could be made.

Tyndale was arguably the most important individual in the whole chain of events. His Bible, then the Matthews, Great, Geneva, and King James are given as the translation line. The Taverner and Bishop's are not discussed.

Dr. Connolly concludes with an impassioned plea to never forget what sadly most have, that people gave their blood for the Bible from conviction

wrought in their hearts.

The Biblical heritage archives in London is the largest collection of relevant documents in the world. The English Bible's history is traced over a 231 year period (from Wycliffe in 1380 to the AV1611).

John Wycliffe has been heralded as the 'morning star of Reformation'. He trained his Oxford students and sent them out to preach, and as it happened to be burnt at the stake. They were barefooted and prohibited from begging.

Lollards were equipped with a Bible translated from the inferior Latin Vulgate. Each was *written by hand* and their cost was extreme: ten months to produce at a cost of 40 pounds, when there were 240 pennies to the pound and 2 pennies bought a chicken, 4 a pig. It took one month's wages for a person to buy a single page.

Hundreds of Lollards were burned publicly with their Bibles around their necks across England, usually a large place called Smithfield, a few kilometres from London, also at the Lollard's Pit in Norwich, East Anglia. They were also found as far as Prague and Switzerland. 170 copies have survived to this day despite the burnings.

Lambert Palace, residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury and place of the Lollard's tower, where said people were jailed before death. The derogatory term may have come either from the Old English 'vagabond', or from the Latin for 'tare'.

Forty-four years after Wycliffe's death the Roman Church commanded his bones be dug up and burned to insure against him entering heaven, for the prevailing superstition was burning a body made resurrection impossible. They only managed to get the courage to carry out this task after another eleven years.

Wycliffe's ashes were cast into the River Swift, adjacent to Lutterworth. This flowed south into the River Avon, then west for a long ways until the River Severn, which flows south west ending at the Bristol Channel, then

to the Celtic Sea, Atlantic Ocean and the whole world.

The Lollard's were able to successfully reproduce, proven by the fact Rome was concerned about their influence in England during the time of Tyndale, over 145 years after Wycliffe's death.

The key world events of the English Bible's history were the almost simultaneous fall of Constantinople and invention of the printing press.

On the latter, Johannes Gutenberg as a young child dropped a carved wooden block into an ink bucket, and noticed the mark it left on paper. Twenty year's later he turned this experience into a reality by inventing the moveable type printing press. The first book ever printed was the Latin Vulgate. Due to indebtedness, Gutenberg sadly ended life a pauper.

On the former, fleeing Greeks brought their culture, language, and most importantly Biblical manuscripts which found homes in the Universities of Europe. A renowned scholar and humanist called Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus collated what he believed was the Greek Bible, and in 1516 in the (now titled) Erasmus' Tower, Cambridge University issued a Greek/Latin diglot. It was immediately banned by the King.

The narrator claims Erasmus believed education could save a man, rather than the cross of Christ.

Thomas Bilney, studying for the priesthood found no inner peace in Catholicism and sought out Erasmus' Greek NT. From reading he found the true Gospel and became the first convert of the Reformation. Leading Cambridge Professors (including Bilney's teachers) became converted. Their meeting point was the White Horse Inn.

Through the White Horse Inn William Tyndale became exposed to the Reformation. He found tutoring work at Little Sodbury Manor, owned by Sir John Walsh. This was a cover for his translation work for six months until his presence began to endanger the family. Failing to persuade Bishop Tunstal in London to sponsor the work, he went into self-imposed exile on the continent, there befriending Luther.

Tunstal had a price put on his head and Tyndale was hounded continually.

Despite the persecution, in December 1525 he managed to complete his translation. Tyndale smuggled thousands of his Bibles into England inside bags of flour. with help from friendly German merchants who controlled the Port of London a that time.

One Augustine Packington was entreated to help Tunstall buy up all the Tyndale New Testaments. Unbeknown to Tunstall, Packington was a friend of Tyndales. A price of four times the cost was negotiated, enough to replace each copy of the (slightly defective) first edition with three more superior ones:

“He taketh the wise in his own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.”

Job 5.13

Tunstall ceremonially burnt each NT at the foot of St. Paul's cross. Today only one 1526 NT remains-a testament to the thoroughness of persecution undertaken by the Roman Bishop.

In 1535, Tyndale was betrayed by a friend and imprisoned in the Castle of Vilvoorde. For 18 months he kept on translating the Hebrew Old Testament in terrible conditions. Simultaneously burnt and strangled in October, 1536 his last words were: “Lord, open the King of England's eyes!”

One John Rogers took Tyndale's unfinished OT translation, completed it and mailed them to England for publication. The publisher there sent them to the Archbishop of Canterbury who sought approval from King Henry VIII. The work was printed under a pseudonym, Thomas Matthews. This was astoundingly set forth with the King's 'most gracious' licence, an answer to Tyndale's prayer to open his eyes. Roger's managed to place two large ornate letters, 'W T' at the end of the book of Malachi in honour of Tyndale.

Anti-monarchical footnotes of the Matthew's Bible became it's downfall. The Secretary of State commissioned Myles Coverdale to produce a Bible from the Matthew's but without the footnotes.

His work became known as the Great Bible and it was completed 1539. It

achieved royal approbation and was ordered chained to each parish by the King, to be made available 24 hours per day, and with a reader in case of any illiterate. Amazingly, Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall's name was on the approval page (the same persecutor of Tyndale's work).

In 1553, Mary Tudor, daughter of Henry VIII, ascended the throne and set about to destroy the Reformation. She managed to burn over 300 at the stake. This caused many to flee to the safe haven of Geneva. From there the Geneva Bible was translated in 1560, the first edition of which was called the Breeche's Bible for its translation in Genesis 3.7 of 'breeches'.

It was the Geneva Bible that 102 pilgrims left with for America, departing 1565 from Plymouth, South West England on the Mayflower for the two month journey. Four years after its voyage the ship became stranded in the River Thames. A farmer towed it in and built a barn out of it called the Mayflower Barn, in Jordans, Buckinghamshire.

Hampton Court was built by Cardinal Woolsey in 1515 and epitomises the excesses of the Roman Church. It took 2,500 workers to build it and 500 servants to maintain. 250 tons of lead piping was installed to avoid taking water from the Thames.

It was at this place in 1604 that King James I was petitioned to commission a new translation of the Bible. Puritan and 'third university of England' Dr John Rainolds of Oxford put forward this request and found favour with the King.

King James appointed John Bancroft, Bishop of London to oversee the work. It was undertaken by six committees, two each from Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge. Fifty to sixty men, unsurpassed scholars ultimately produced what is still known today as *the* English Bible. committees

It was physically done in the Jerusalem Chamber inside Westminster Abbey, named after Henry IV's death in that place in 1413 when it was told he was actually in Jerusalem.