

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Bibliology – Appendix A
How We Got the English Bible

Introduction

- Since we are talking about the Word of God, it is good to know something about the Bible you use.
 - Bible was not inspired in English.
 - It was translated.
 - How did it come to you through history?
 - Can you trust it?
 - Does God prefer one translation over another?
- Every Bible reference I will give is from English translations. So this is an important subject to study.
 - Though it is not technically part of Systematic Theology. That is why it is an appendix here.

How We Got the Bible

- Old Testament
 - God inspired the prophets to write down exactly what He wanted written down, but through their own style and personality.
- New Testament
 - God inspired the Apostles and some close associates (Mark, Luke, Jude, author of Hebrews) to write down what He wanted written down, but through their own style and personality.
- These were the Original Autographs.
 - They were perfect and without flaw.



Manuscripts

- The original autographs were copied hundreds of thousands of times and dispersed throughout the world (in both OT times and NT times).
 - These copies are called manuscripts.
- The original autographs have been lost to history, but we have so many thousands of manuscripts that it is possible to reconstruct the original with 99% certainty.



Manuscripts

- Old Testament Manuscripts
 - Greek LXX (3rd Century BC.) – full Greek translation of the Hebrew OT.
 - Dead Sea Scrolls (2nd Century BC.) – Every book of the OT, except Esther. Written in Hebrew.
 - Masoretic Text (AD 1000) – Preserved text tradition of the Jews. Very accurate. Written in Hebrew.
- New Testament Manuscripts
 - Alexandrian Family (minority)
 - Byzantine Family (majority)
- Although there are many other types of manuscripts that are used, these are the main manuscripts used for Bible translation.

Translation is an Ancient Process

- Greek LXX
 - In the midst of the Greek era, with many Jews dispersed throughout the Greek world, Hebrew was less and less used.
 - Translating the OT into Greek allowed dispersed Jews to still read the Scriptures of their fathers and understand them.
 - This also paved the way for the Greek NT.
- Latin Vulgate
 - By the 5th Century AD, the Western Roman Empire spoke primarily Latin. They could not understand Greek. To make the Bible understandable to the common people, this translation was made.
- These highlight the purpose of translation.



How Did We Get the English Language?

- As the Bible was being written, English didn't even exist.
- It began with invasions from continental Europe beginning in the 5th century.
 - Angles – German tribe. This is where we get the word "English."
 - Jutes – Germans (Jutland Denmark)
 - Saxons – Germans (around Denmark)
 - Their conquest of Britannia and their mixing of dialects created Anglo-Saxon. This is Old English.
- In the 11th Century, the Normans conquered England.
 - The mixture of French, Ecclesiastical Latin, and Anglo-Saxon created Middle English. We can understand this.



Before English Bibles

- The only Bible was the Latin Vulgate.
 - By this time in history, most Europeans no longer knew Latin. Especially in England.
- Artwork of the Church (windows, statues, paintings)
 - This was the only means for a non-literate people to interact with Biblical material.
- Anglo-Saxon Biblical Material
 - Caedmon (7th century) – translated Bible stories and songs into Anglo-Saxon (Old English)
 - Aldhelm (d. 709) – translated Psalms, 10 Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer into Anglo-Saxon.
- Venerable Bede (d. 735) – All Four Gospels were translated into Anglo-Saxon.

Middle English Bibles

- John Wycliffe (1330-1384)
- Wanted to get the Bible out to the people.
 - He did not know Greek or Hebrew, so he translated the Vulgate into English.
 - Spread the English Bible to the people (Lollards).
- Pre-Reformer – rejected much RCC doctrine, and biblical truth led to the spread of this.
 - People started to criticize the church for teaching wrongly, and the political rulers for not living according to the Bible.
- Both church and state realized the threat, and in 1414 made possession of an English Bible a capital offense. In 1428, they dug up his body and burned it.



Middle English Bibles

- William Tyndale 1494-1536)
 - Produced the first printed English Bible. The NT was translated from Greek. Published in 1526.
 - King Henry VIII wanted him dead and sought to destroy his Bibles. Around 18,000 were printed, only 3 have survived.
 - His final edition was in 1534. The KJV used 90% of all of Tyndale's Words. As such, many of our words come from him – Passover, Propitiation, Scapegoat, etc.
- In 1535, he was kidnapped in Antwerp by Henry VIII's agents. He was strangled and burned.
 - Last words were a prayer for the king.



Middle English Bibles

- Miles Coverdale (1488-1569).
 - He was the first to publish an entire "printed" OT and NT.
 - Used Tyndale's NT.
- Thomas Matthew (1500-1555)
 - Real name was John Rogers; still got martyred.
 - His Bible was a revision that had most of Tyndale's work and the Coverdale OT.
- Richard Taverner (published 1539).
 - Another revision not too different from Matthew's.



Middle English Bibles

- The Great Bible (1539)
 - This was the first Bible authorized by the King of England (Henry VIII). He previously licensed Coverdale's, but he authorized this one.
 - It was really big (hence great).
 - Henry became a Protestant (for a dubious reason), and so now he authorized a Protestant Bible.
 - No footnotes.
- After he died in 1545, his son Edward IV became King. He also was a Protestant. He died in 1553.
 - Mary Tudor became queen. Hateful Catholic who tried to move England back to RCC. Many were forced to flee.



Middle English Bibles

- Geneva Bible (1560)
 - Many who fled from Mary went to Geneva and were influenced by John Calvin.
 - They created the Geneva Bible with strongly Calvinistic footnotes.
 - It was the first Bible to have versification. Chapters go back to 1200 (Stephen Langton).
 - If not for the KJV, this would have been the standard English Bible for centuries.



Middle English Bibles

- Bishop's Bible (1568)
 - Mary eventually was executed and replaced by Elizabeth I.
 - She sought a middle way between Catholics and Protestants = Anglicanism.
 - The Bishop's Bible was supposed to be usable by both.
 - It was based off the Great Bible.
 - Most people preferred the Geneva Bible
- In 1604, James I became King of England. He did not want the most used Bible to be one not authorized by the government.
 - Thus, he commissioned the KJV.

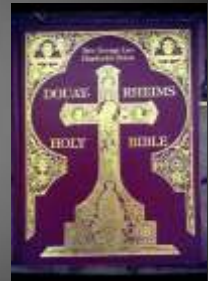


Middle English Bibles

- King James Version (1611)
 - King James I chose 47 scholars, split them into 6 groups to work on different sections (one group on the Apocrypha – removed in 1700s).
 - He chose 12 editors to make final changes.
 - There were to be no footnotes.
 - It has 90% word agreement with Tyndale.
 - With Shakespeare, it helped standardize English.
- Ironically, it was opposed back then.
 - Not as reverent as the Geneva.
- It had one major revision in 1769 by Dr. Benjamin Blaney.
 - There were 75,000 changes made to it (spelling, modernization, weights and measures, etc.)

Middle English Bibles

- The Douay Version (1609-1610)
 - RCC would not use the KJV.
 - They made their own translation based off the Vulgate. Part of the Counter-Reformation.
 - They claimed God inspired the Vulgate.
- The Douay-Rheims Challonor Version (1810)
 - This was the authorized Catholic Bible for Catholics in America. It was still based off the Vulgate.



A Word About the Manuscripts

- When most of these Middle English Bibles were translated, they were based off the Textus Receptus (Received Text).
 - This was created in the early 1500s by Erasmus. He put together a Greek text based off a handful of very late Greek manuscripts.
 - Some portions were missing, so he translated from the Vulgate to the Greek to fill in those portions.
 - After his death, it went through a few revisions by Protestants.
 - That was the Greek text that was used.
- This is important because it shows that our modern translations are based on far better manuscripts.
 - Nearly 6,000 from both Alexandrian and Byzantine families.
 - This is why the KJV only position is irrational.

Modern English Translations

- Given our strong manuscript tradition, we can be sure the basis of our translations is solid.
- But what about the translations themselves?
- There are two prevailing philosophies of translation.
 - Formal/Literal Equivalence = Translating the words as literal as possible – this can sacrifice readability.
 - Dynamic/Functional Equivalence = Translating the main idea of sentences – this can sacrifice word accuracy.
- Ultimately, what is the main goal?
 - The goal is to understand the Biblical text. A translation that is so literal that it makes bad English that is difficult to understand actually defeats the purpose of translations altogether.
 - However, a translation that cares little about the actual words of the ancient language makes doing deeper studies difficult. Also, it can miss the cultural nuances from the text that should be preserved.

Modern English Translations

- The Revised Version 1881
 - This was the first major overhaul to the KJV.
 - The goal was continuity with the KJV, but the better manuscripts demanded a new translation.
 - Also it was 270 years after the KJV was published.
 - Americans and British worked together on this, and they made us promise not to do our own thing for at least 20 years.
- Well, 20 years later, we did just that.



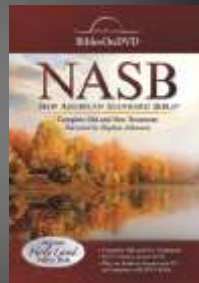
Modern English Translations

- American Standard Version, ASV (1901)
 - A distinctly American overhaul of the KJV, based on better manuscripts and a better knowledge of the original languages.
 - It was a favorite of seminaries for verse by verse study.
 - It became the basis for the NASB.
- Revised Standard Version, RSV (1952)
 - Kept continuity with KJV, but was much smoother English.
 - Some liberal Protestants worked on it, which made it suspect to evangelicals.



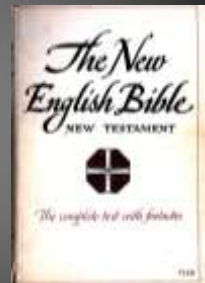
Modern English Translations

- Berkeley Version (1959)
 - This was the conservative response to the RSV.
 - It never caught on.
- New American Standard Bible, NASB (1963, 1971)
 - Produced by the Lockman Foundation.
 - Was based on the best manuscripts and based on the ASV.
 - It is the most literal translation, but the hardest to read too. The English is often awkward and incorrect.
 - Great for verse-by-verse study.



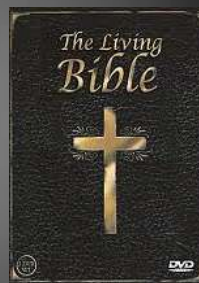
Modern English Translations

- Jerusalem Bible (1966)
 - This is a RCC Bible, but it is actually based on the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts.
 - It has mistranslated portions to support RCC doctrine (i.e. Mary's perpetual virginity).
- New English Bible (1970)
 - A British publication (think of it as a British NIV).
 - It was independent of the KJV tradition, and translated from the ground up for our own day.



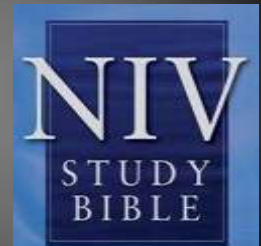
Modern English Translations

- The Living Bible (1971)
 - This is not a translation. Ken Taylor on a train trip paraphrased the ASV so his kids could understand it.
 - Well, it caught on and became popular due to its understandability.
 - It's problems were it was done by one person, and it was not based on manuscripts. The NLT fixed this problem.
- New American Bible (1971)
 - Standard Bible for Catholics in US



Modern English Translations

- Today's English Version, TEV (1976)
 - This is on the far end of dynamic equivalence. It is translated into 6th grade English.
- New International Version, NIV (1978)
 - The TR of the modern era. Best selling Bible (even more than the KJV).
 - A blend between formal and dynamic equivalence. Understandable, but accurate enough for deeper study.
 - It had some errors; TNIV fixed them.



Modern English Translations

- New King James Version, NKJV (1982)
 - It is modern English, but based on the KJV manuscripts.
 - Some people are wrongly and emotionally attached to the Textus Receptus thinking it is divinely inspired. So they believe all modern translations are corrupt.
 - The NKJV attempted to provide a modern English translation to such people.
 - Of course, KJV Only people reject this Bible too since they believe God inspired the actual English words of the KJV.



Modern English Translations

- New Revised Standard Version, NRSV (1989)
 - It was an accurate update to the RSV, however, it was gender neutral (not towards God).
 - The idea is that English language has changed to more gender neutral speech, and leaving gender specific pronouns can confuse the modern reader.
 - Some see it as placating to modern feminism.
 - Also, it misses the important cultural nuances of biblical times.



Modern English Translations

- New Living Translation, NLT (1996)
 - This was based on the Living Bible.
 - Scholars consulted the original languages, and corrected any errors from the Living Bible.
 - So it is a very readable Bible, but not good for studying.
- New English Translation, NET (2000)
 - Made for the Internet, and free to all.
 - Detailed footnotes about original languages. Pioneered by DTS.
 - Great for pastors and seminary students.



Modern English Translations

- English Standard Version, ESV (2001)
 - This is an evangelical revision of the RSV.
 - It is probably the most readable translation of formal equivalence. It's good for expository preaching.
 - It was, in part, a reaction to the TNIV that was concurrently being produced. The TNIV was going to make the world's most read Bible gender neutral.
- The Message, MSG (2002)
 - It was paraphrased by Eugene Peterson. Only one person!



Modern English Translations

- Holman Christian Standard Bible, HCSB (2003)
 - A SBC NIV, but more accurate.
 - A blend between formal and dynamic equivalence, but more formal than the NIV.
 - Possibly market driven.
 - Unique characteristics – Yahweh, Messiah, etc.
- Today's International Version, TNIV (2005)
 - Same translational philosophy as regular NIV, but fixed the errors.
 - However, it is gender-neutral. It has not caught on like the NIV.

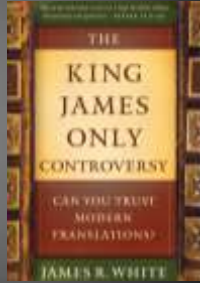


KJV Only Controversy

- This is very unnecessary.
 - The Bible never promises translations will be perfect.
 - It has caused great division in the body of Christ.
 - No two languages can translate perfectly into each other anyway.
 - The originals do not change for a reason – we can always have 100% certainty of them.
 - Translations should constantly change since current language constantly changes.
 - The goal of translation is to take the divine revelation of the original languages, and put it into other languages so that people can understand what the originals actually said.

KJV Only Controversy

- KJV Only Advocates are often highly uniformed about:
 - How manuscripts have come down to us.
 - The process that copyists used to preserve the text.
 - The constant change of human language.
 - The motivations behind the creation of the KJV in the first place.
 - What Bible says about itself.
 - How to understand manuscript variations.



Historical Irony

- When Jerome made the Latin Vulgate, people rioted in N. Africa.
 - They thought the LXX was inspired because the apostles used it sometimes. Jerome knew it was just a translation.
 - He argued that fewer people knew Greek in his day, and so he wanted a Bible that could be understood by the majority.
 - They accused his translation of being from the devil.
- When Erasmus began working on the TR, people all over Europe verbally attacked him.
 - They thought the Vulgate was inspired by God!
 - Erasmus argued the original was Greek, and it would be more accurate.
- When modern English translations were being made, some argued they were of the devil.
 - They thought Erasmus' TR was inspired. They even went as far as to say the English of the KJV is inspired, and where it disagrees with the original Greek, you should correct the original Greek.

KJV Controversy

- Peter Ruckman and Gail Riplinger are two of the most graceless, hateful, and insulting people I have ever read.
 - They make fun of and insult all who disagree with them.
 - They make KJV onlyism a salvation issue.
 - They lie by misquoting those they disagree with in order to make them seem evil.
- The tree of KJV onlyism has only produced bad fruit.



Irrationality of KJV Onlyism

- No one today speaks 1611 Middle English.
 - We speak modern English. Most do not readily understand Middle English. Words have changed meaning a lot in 400 years.
- It is blind faith to argue that a Greek NT created by a Catholic in the 1500s is somehow more accurate than the 5,000+ ancient manuscripts available today.
- It is blind faith to believe that God inspired the KJV translators to translate perfectly.
 - Read their own preface. They make it clear they did not make a perfect translation.
- It has been extremely divisive of the true body.

Conclusion

- God has truly been gracious to Christians by allowing so many Bible translations to be available for us.
- Through a rich history, the English Bible comes down to us today.
- Know your goal when reading the Bible to determine what Bible you will use.
 - I recommend a HCSB or NIV for daily reading and a ESV or NASB for detailed studying. I do not recommend a totally dynamic translation, nor a totally formal one.
- As we go through the rest of this course, you can trust the English verses that I will be quoting.