

[The Origin and History of the Bible]

[Lecture I: The English Bible]¹

Earl C. Davis

1. A: Results

Ever since the opening of the Protestant Reformation this search for the Original Bible has been going on. What is the result? Thus far we may say this:

First, that by 496 [C.E.] certainly the head of the Catholic Church defined the books that entered into the Bible, naming the very same books that we now know. We also know that as early as possibly 180 A.D. there was some kind of a defined group of books that were regarded as on the same plane as the Old Testament.

[Second.] We have discovered a few very old manuscripts, one that is a complete New Testament. This manuscript has been revised and corrected five times, and last time in the 16th century. The second is a large fragment, very old. This also has been revised by later scribes.

[Third.] We find that among the various manuscripts found there are several hundred thousand variations from a standard text, 200,000 at least.

¹ Among the manuscripts left by Earl C. Davis were a large collection of manuscripts that concerned various aspects of the history of the Bible. A number of these were organized into numbered lectures. Unfortunately, these did not include lectures 1 and 2. This manuscript, which curiously begins with "Results," could be lecture 1. It introduces the idea that "the Bible" is not a fully finished final document revealed as Scripture at birth, but rather is a text with a long history of creation, and, in particular with the English Bible, a long history tied to translation. This leads quite naturally to another manuscript, which starts with a question about the challenges of translation and moves from there into details about the challenges of "textual criticism." I believe this could be lecture 2. And this lecture in turn leads into a manuscript identified as "lecture 3" that delves into detail on modern (c. 1900) textual criticism.

[Fourth.] We find that some of these variations are of fundamental importance.

[Fifth.] We find that the nearest that we can come to an original manuscript of records of events in the first half of the first century is in a manuscript written possibly as early as 331, or three hundred years after the events. In this manuscript are 29 documents, Gospels and Epistles. Twenty-seven are now regarded as Scripture. Two documents included in this old copy of the Bible written in 331 were later rejected from the canon.

[Sixth.] The nature, origin, and trustworthiness of these 27 books which we find accepted in the Bible of 331 will be the subject of other lectures. But for the moment this is the fact, that the nearest we can get to the original Bible is in these two manuscripts of 331.

[Seventh.] Arguing from experience with all other manuscripts, and from known data, we know that, while they are doubtless substantially true to earlier documents, there is not a passage but that is open to a suspicion of textual error in them, but we have no means of knowing.

Unsatisfactory as this is to many minds, it is a fact, which we have to recognize, and take into consideration in measuring truly the origin and history of the Bible. If these conclusions seem to disturb your conception of the Bible, hold your judgement in abeyance until more evidence is in.

2. B: Introduction

In 1538 an injunction was issued in which all clergy in the English Church were ordered to provide before a specified day,

one boke (copy) of the whole Bible, in the largest volume, in Englyshe, sett up in summe conveyent place within the churche that ye may have cure of, whereat your parishioners may most commodiously resort to the same and rede yt.

Cited in Hoare, Page 193.²

² Henry William Hamilton-Hoare (1844-1931) English scholar. This quote is from his book, *The Evolution of the English Bible; An Historical Sketch of the Successive Versions from 1382 to 1885*, New York: Dutton & Co., 1901, p. 172. The order was given in

Strype, in his life of Cranmer, says,

It was wonderful to see with what joy this book of God was received, not only among the learned sort, but generally, all England over, among all the vulgar and common people, and with what greediness God's Word was read. Everybody that could bought the book, or busily read it, or got others to read it to them. Cited in Hoare, 194.³

Many well-disposed people used much to resort to the hearing thereof, especially when they could get any that had an audible voice to read to them. ... One John Porter used sometimes to be occupied in that goodly exercise, to the edifying of himself as well as others. This Porter was a fresh young man and of big stature; and great multitudes would resort thither to hear him, because he could read well and had an audible voice. Green, Vol. 111, page 10.⁴

The reformation spirit was too strong for men who had no mental balance. They were drunk with the new wine, and liberty degenerated with them into disreputable and offensive license. The preacher in the pulpit often found his exhortations completely drowned in a tumult of voices shouting verses of the Bible out loud in various parts of the Church, and occasionally adding to them improvised expositions. Hoare 196.⁵

1538 by Thomas Cromwell (1485-1540) Chief Minister to King Henry VIII from 1534 to 1540.

³ John Strype (1643-1737) English Chronicler who transcribed manuscripts related to English history. This quote is from his *Memorials of the Most Reverend Father in God Thomas Cranmer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1840, p. 91, (first published in 1693). Davis is getting the quote from Henry William Hamilton-Hoare, *The Evolution of the English Bible; An Historical Sketch of the Successive Versions from 1382 to 1885*, New York: Dutton & Co., 1901, pp. 172.

⁴ John Richard Green (1837-1883) English historian. This quote is provided in his *History of the English People*, Volume II, New York: American Book Exchange, 1881, p. 14.

⁵ Henry William Hamilton-Hoare, *The Evolution of the English Bible; An Historical Sketch of the Successive Versions from 1382 to 1885*, New York: Dutton & Co., 1901, pp. 173-174.

It would be rather surprising to preachers to come to the vestibule of the church, and find a large crowd gathered about some layman, listening with almost breathless eagerness to the words that he was reading from a book chained to a table. Even more interest than can be seen at Eagle Bridge on September afternoons when the World series is being shown on the boards.⁶ Yet such was the interest when the Bible first was brought out into the vernacular, or vulgar language of the common English people, that they had great difficulty in supplying the demand for books and reading thereof. So far as I know this is the only incident in history where the chain has been used in the interests of freedom and knowledge.

1538, the year when the King's Secretary ordered Bibles chained in every church for public reading, was an epoch-making event in modern history. It is not stretching the imagination too much to say that it marks the beginning of modern liberal education. But during these years, of which 1538 marks a convenient date in English history, great developments were taking place all over Europe. Two sets of dates to which your attention is called will make this point clear.

The one is the set of dates which mark the date of the translation of the Bible into the various vulgar languages of Europe.

Bohemian	Complete Bible, 1488
German	Lutheran Bible, N.T. 1522; O.T., 1534
Danish and Norwegian	N.T., 1539, Complete Bible, 1550
Italian	1532
Dutch	1532
Sweden	1541
Spanish	N.T. 1543, Bible, 1567-9
Hungary	1551-62
Polish	1561
Russian Gregory Ver.	N.T. 1556-61, complete Bible, 1674
Portuguese	1681
Geneva Bible (French)	1588

As these figures indicate we are dealing, not merely with the little isolated history of the translation of the Bible into English, or the language of the common people of England, but we are simply using this history of an English Bible as an

⁶ Likely Davis refers to the bridge in Pittsfield, MA, where Eagle Street intersects North Street, both streets converge on a bridge over the rail line. Davis was minister of the Unity Church in Pittsfield from 1905-1919.

illustration [of] what was going on over the entire western world.

To the translation of each one of these versions there is attached a very interesting illuminating history. We shall get a glimpse of the history of this process in England and let that stand in our mind as a fairly accurate picture of what was taking place in every country during the same years.

3. C: English Bible

Most of us know and read the Bible in English. In so doing we do not consider the fact that the Bible which we have is the product of a long process of evolution. We seem to regard the Bible as if all copies were precisely the same, with no variations in words or passages, and with no possibility of variations in meaning.

Such is not the case. Our English Bible is a translation. The Old Testament was Hebrew. Translated into Greek, into Latin, into English. The New Testament is translated from Greek into English, and Christ used the Aramaic language in which language there is no utterance of Jesus which has survived.

Our task, then, is to get back as near as possible to original sources; to trace the processes of history, and to outline for ourselves what has taken place.

Revised Version. There are two versions of the Bible, or rather translations of the Bible, [that are] in common use in Protestant circles. One is the Revised Version of 1881. The other is the authorized version, or [the] King James Version of 1611. As far back as 1810, Dr. Marsh, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, and later Bishop of Peterborough, said, "We cannot possibly pretend that our authorized version does not require amendment."⁷ But it was more than half a century later that Parliament provided for the so-called "Revised Version." A large number of eminent scholars were Churchmen [and] were invited by Parliament to become members of the revising committee. This committee was instructed to,

⁷ Herbert Marsh (1757-1839) Bishop of the Church of England. Marsh's comments are quoted in William Selwyn, *Notes on the Proposed Amendment of the Authorized Version of the Holy Scriptures*, Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1865, p. 34.

introduce as few alterations as possible consistent with faithfulness, and to keep as far as possible to the language of the earlier authorized version.⁸

In other words, it was a very conservative committee, and did a conservative work. The New Testament Edition was ready in 1881, the O.T. in 1885.

The work by the English Committee was begun in 1870. Work by the American Committee was begun in 1872.

About 10% of the words in the revised version are different than the words in the Authorized version. Total number of words in the Revised Bible, 792,444. Words introduced by revisers, 70,772.

British Company of N.T. Revisers began its work on the 22nd of June 1870, and finished the same on the 11th of November, 1880. Held 407 meetings.

American N.T. Company began its work October 4, 1872. Finished October 22, 1880.

British O.T. Revision Company began its work June 30, 1870. Finished June 20, 1884. Held 792 meetings.

American O.T. Company began its work October 3, 1872, and finished 1884.

The Revised New Testament was published in May 1881.

The Revised Old Testament was published in May 1885.

American Standard Version, Professor Thayer, 1901.

Twentieth Century Bible. And other modern versions. Cheyne's translations of the Psalms etc. Bible for Modern Readers.

King James Version of 1611. Between the Revised Version and the King James Version nothing of importance happened in the matter of translating the Bible. But the King James Version marks a very important date in this history. In order to understand its importance, we must go back and trace events up to 1611.

⁸ See "Aspects of Revision—September 1870," *The Contemporary Review*, Vol. 15, August–November 1870, p. 223

When the Anglo-Saxon people were converted to Christianity by missionaries in the sixth century, they committed themselves to a religion of a book. That book was written in Latin, the Latin Vulgate of Jerome. They could not read a single word of the Bible, even if they were permitted. But their first poet, Caedmon, sang some of the Bible stories for them in "the vernacular," or the vulgar language, so that they understood them. From the time of Caedmon on, until the edition of King James appears, this idea of rendering the story of the Bible into the vernacular was always expressing itself among the English people.

Septuagint.⁹ A Greek translation of the Old Testament. Date, somewhere between 270 and 130 B.C. Legend of accuracy of original. Jews regarded the translation as a national calamity. The Septuagint was the Bible of the Early Church, especially the Greek portion of it.

Very complicated history.

Printed Edition. "Complutensian Polyglot" was the first great complete [Bible] by Cardinal Ximenes,¹⁰ 1514-1517, 1526. Printed in parallel columns: Hebrew on left, Vulgate in middle and Septuagint on right.

Vulgate. Augustine (354-430)¹¹ speaks of "Latinorum interpretum infinita verietas" (De doct. Christ, ii.16, H.B.D. IV 874).¹² The great variety of Latin translations brought great confusion not only in disputes but in services and treatises.

⁹ In addition to several of his "Biblical Studies" manuscripts with titles like, "Lecture IV," Davis left several other manuscripts, including one with two headings over two pages, "Septuagint" and "Vulgate." Davis has hand-written "C-1-a" and "C-1-b" on each of these two pages. Thus, it seems reasonable that he wanted them to be part of section C in this lecture. Their contents do more-or-less fit here.

¹⁰ Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (1436-1517) Spanish cardinal and statesman, best known for funding the Complutensian Polyglot Bible.

¹¹ Augustine of Hippo (354-430) theologian and philosopher, bishop of Hippo Regius in Numidia.

¹² I have been unable to find a source for "H.B.D." This quote from Augustine can be found in Henry Barclay Swete (1835-1917, English biblical scholar, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge) *The Old Testament in Greek*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900, p. 89.

Jerome (born 340-42)¹³ was [a] great scholar, friend of Pope Damasus,¹⁴ [and] was commissioned by Damasus to prepare a translation into Latin of the Bible. In 383 the four gospels appeared. Just how much of the remainder of "the Vulgate," as this Bible in later years came to be called, Jerome translated is not clear. His translation of the Gospels was a clear vigorous work for which he was severely criticized. He was accused of tampering "with our Lord's own words and denying the inspiration of Scripture." (H.B.D. IV P 875).

From 390-405 was spent in this work.

After Jerome's death this translation was accepted by the Church very slowly. Many times, it was revised and corrected during the next thousand years.

Council of Trent, April 8, 1546, authorized an official Vulgate text of the Bible. The result was the "Sixtine Vulgate" (1590) "Sixtus V. [It was] opposed by the Jesuits. Clementine VIII¹⁵ called it all in, and issued a new edition which has been known as "Clementine Vulgate." [It] differed from the Sixtine text in 3,000 or more places. [The] Introduction was prepared by Bellarmine,¹⁶ the Jesuit whose opposition to Sixtus' edition (because Sixtus has placed one Bellarmine's books on the index) caused the recall of the Sixtine edition.

This Clementine Vulgate of 1592 is the authorized version of the Catholic Church.

¹³ Jerome of Stridon (c.342-420) early Christian priest theologian and translator.

¹⁴ Pope Damasus I (c.305-384) bishop of Rome from 366 to 384, presided over the Council of Rome of 382 that determined the canon or official list of sacred scripture.

¹⁵ Pope Clement VIII (1536-1605) bishop of Rome from 1592 to 1605.

¹⁶ Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) Jesuit and cardinal of the Catholic Church canonized a saint in 1930. Bellarmine is also remembered for his stances against Galileo and Bruno.

Outline.

Caedmon	670
Wycliffe manuscript of New Testament . . .	1380
Printing Bible at Mainz . . .	1456
Tyndale . . .	1525
Coverdale . . .	1535
Thomas Matthew, John Rogers . . .	1537
Great Bible . . .	1539
Geneva Bible N.T. . . .	1557
Bishop Bible . . .	1568
Roman Catholic, Rheims N.T. . . .	1582
Douay . . .	1609-10
King James . . .	1611
Revised Version, N.T. . . .	1881
Revised Version, Bible . . .	1885
American Standard Version . . .	1901

Caedmon. A poor peasant taken into a monastery near Whitby [England] by Abbess Hilda, a poet by nature. Taught by monastic teachers, he learned the stories of the Bible, and paraphrased them into narrative poetry and set them in circulation among the people. He took these old stories from the Vulgate and told them in such a manner that his teachers were glad to become his hearers. Of these songs of Caedmon, nothing survives.

This Caedmon incident is interesting as illustrating the point that was referred to above. In order for those who were interested in bringing the English people the story of the Christian religion, and the Bible of the Christian people, either the Anglo-Saxons must learn Latin, so as to read the Vulgate, or the Latin Vulgate must be translated into Anglo-Saxon. Caedmon began this work.

During the centuries from the times of Caedmon (670) to the 14th [century] when the great European revolution was getting under way, there was always something being done in the way of rendering the Bible into the vernacular. There are extant several manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon versions of the Gospels.

4. [D: Historical Setting of the Translation]¹⁷

449 A.D. Germanic tribes, Angles, Saxons, and Jukes crossed over and settled in Kent. Found Kelts there. Kelts had come in contact with Romans under the Ceasars.

596 [C.E.]. [Pope] Gregory sent St. Augustine to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. So that we really have two forces contending in Britton for supremacy, the wild barbarian, and the Romanized Christian. The one is represented by the Empire and the Papacy, and the other by the Kings and the people, the Anglo-Saxons of Britton.

The Papacy was allied with the Franks, which has an important bearing on this whole history. The Papacy was at the height of its power under Innocent III, Gregory IX and Innocent IV, 1198-1254. During this time the inquisition was developed. England felt the supremacy of the Papacy in the submission of King John in 1213, and England's becoming a Papal Fief, and its king "the Pope's Man."

But the evidence of the development of the popular opposition to this centralizing power is not lagging far in the rear. Those Anglo-Franks [sic]¹⁸, wild barbarians that they were, were assimilating some knowledge and experience. They became Christians, but not saints. In 675 Caedmon, a poor peasant who had been taught the stories of the Bible was reciting them in Anglo-Saxon verse. The old inherent race characteristics were working underneath.

In 1215 the Magna Charta became a fact of history. In 1265 the first Parliament was set up in England, witness to the strong Anglo-Saxon people.

Meanwhile, the alliance between the Papacy and the French, and the Papacy and self-indulgence had become so strong, that there was a division in the ranks. The long and disgraceful residence

¹⁷ This manuscript that I have identified as "lecture 1" ends with these paragraphs on Caedmon. There are several other manuscripts the contents of which make it reasonable to follow here as additional sections of this first, "lecture 1." These include, "Historical Setting of the Translation," "John Wycliffe," "Tyndale," and "Coverdale's Bible." I have added these manuscripts here as part of my reconstructed-perhaps created-"lecture 1."

¹⁸ Davis almost certainly intended "Anglo-Saxons."

of the Papacy at Avignon, 1305-1377, and the Hundred Year's War between France and England, 1338-1458, indicate that there was strong movement in England against the Papacy.

The conflict between these two forces is at its height in the Hundred Year's War. Says the historian, Green,

Whether in its national or in its European bearings it is difficult to over-estimate the importance of the contest that was now to open between these two nations. To England it brought a social, a religious, and in the end a political revolution. The Peasant Revolt, Lollardry, and the New Monarchy were the direct issues of the Hundred Year's War.¹⁹

With this sketch as a background, we will turn to the history of the first man who rendered into English, into the common tongue of the Anglo-Saxon, the bible. This was John Wycliffe.²⁰

5. [E:] John Wycliffe

When the Hundred Year's War between England and France broke out in 1338, the Popes were at Avignon; John Wycliffe, a lad of fourteen, was just entering Oxford; Chaucer was ten years old.

A spirit of restlessness and discontent was abroad, and rival claimants were competing far and wide for intellectual and social allegiance: Latin Christianity and Teutonic, tradition and scripture, canonists and legists; realists and nominalists; authority and conscience; capital and labor.
Hoare 68.²¹

¹⁹ John Richard Green (1837-1883) English historian. This quote is from his book, *England*, New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, 1898, Book IV, p. 406.

²⁰ The narrative text of the manuscript with these remarks about the "Historical Setting of the Translation" appears to end here—and to be appropriately followed by text from another manuscript on John Wycliffe. However, in the manuscript with this "Historical Setting" narrative, there are two additional pages, essentially a long list of dates and events. I have included these in an appendix.

²¹ Henry William Hamilton-Hoare, *The Evolution of the English Bible; An Historical Sketch of the Successive Versions from 1382 to 1885*, New York: Dutton & Co., 1901, p. 68.

One of the great figures of the great conflict, perhaps the greatest, was this same John Wycliffe, the last of the schoolmen and the first of the reformers.

Wycliffe remained at Oxford, one of the great schoolmen, until 1366. During that time England had been swept by the Black Death three times or more, 1349-50, 1362, and 1364. Very severe had been the disease, and its effect upon social conditions had been very marked. Statutes were passed in 1352 forbidding the laboring man from receiving any higher wage than he received before the Plague. In 1550 Pope Clement VI had enforced a pilgrimage to Rome to raise money through the sale of indulgences to pay the already overburdensome expenses of a spendthrift and licentious papal court. In 1362 Langland's "Piers the Plowman" came out indicating the state of mind that the people were in.

In 1366 Pope Urban made a demand upon England for certain arrears of tribute. Parliament repudiated his demand, and called John Wycliffe, schoolman, master of Balliol at Oxford, for a formal defense of the stand which Parliament took. This introduces Wycliffe in the political life during which his political treatises were written, quite as radical in character as the doctrines of the later reformation. In 1374, he was appointed one of the Royal Commissioners to meet with delegates from the Papacy in conference over the distribution of ecclesiastical patronage. In 1377 he published his defense of the decision of Parliament, "De Dominio," in the matter of the demands of Pope Urban.

In January 1377 the Papal Court returns from Avignon to Rome. In this same year he [Wycliffe] is cited to appear at St. Paul's. Five papal bulls are issued against him. In a letter of Pope Gregory XI to Archbishop Sudbury, and the Bishop of London, on May 1377, in which the Pope calls for proceedings against Wycliffe, he writes,

We have heard forsooth with much grief by the intimation of many credible persons that John Wycliffe, rector of the Church at Lutterworth in the diocese of Lincoln, professor of the sacred page, does not fear to assert, profess and publicly proclaim certain propositions and conclusions which (albeit with certain change of terms) appear to breathe the perverse opinions and unlearned

doctrines of Marsilius of Padua, and John of Jandun, of condemned memory.²²

But the university of Oxford reports as to the soundness of Wycliffe's doctrine. Meanwhile, Wycliffe sets in operation his order of Poor Priests, who went about the country preaching against the wealthy and overbearing priests. They proved a very effective agent in accomplishing the desired result. During this same momentous year in 1377 Wycliffe was consulted by Parliament as to whether the Peter's Pence should be paid. The next year he witnessed (and it was the decisive factor in determining his attitude toward the Papacy) the Great Schism as it has been called, the spectacle of two or even three Popes claiming succession to the throne of St. Peter. From the moment, the Papacy really lost its grip on European life. From now on a new purpose seems to have dominated this powerful man. His energies are not directed against the abuses of the Papacy as against the institution itself. He continues organizing his Poor Priests and preparing a translation of the Bible. Against the claims of the Priests, and the Church, he is bringing the Bible to the eyes of the Anglo-Saxon, aided and backed by his Poor Priests, many of whom, as John Ball is witness, preached the doctrine of communism. King John was hard pressed for income and resorted to a Poll Tax to be collected by the clergy. The result was the Peasant's Revolt. This caused Wycliffe to lose the support of the upper classes. He finished his translation of the first complete English Bible in 1382. In 1384 he died.

The Peasant's Revolt had failed. The Poor Priests were without leader and apparently all that Wycliffe had worked for was defeated and dead, for in 1408 a statute was passed forbidding unauthorized Bibles. In 1389 people in Leicester were compelled to stand in the public square all day for having read in Wycliffe's Bible and having held to his doctrines. One more interesting fact to be noted is this, that for the most part the people who were interested in this Bible translating were commons, not upper-class folk. Wycliffe had written in his "De Officio Pastoralis,"

As lords in England have the Bible in French, so it were not against reason that they hadden the same in English.²³

²² John Brown, *The History of the English Bible*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, p. 19.

²³ Wycliffe's quote is provided in Henry William Hamilton-Hoare, *The Evolution of the English Bible; An Historical Sketch of the*

Perhaps another point will also suggest the significance of this translation of Wycliffe's. John of Trevisa writes,

So that now (1385) in all the grammar schools of England, children leaveth French and construeth and learneth in English.
Hoare 93.²⁴

6. [F:] Tyndale

From the time of Wycliffe to the time of Tyndale's New Testament in 1525 practically nothing was done, outwardly at least, in this matter of translating the Bible into the vernacular. Yet we get glimpses of what was going on beneath the surface during this period of very severe reaction. Some copies of Wycliffe's Bible were made, and the Lollards were busy,

You cannot travel anywhere in England, but of every two men you meet one will be a Lollard.²⁵

In spite of all efforts to prevent it, the doctrines and teachings of Wycliffe spread. Richard Hun, who died in the Lollard's Tower on 1514 was accused of having in his possession "the damnable works of Wycliffe." Tyndale, although he lived a century and a half nearly after Wycliffe, was motivated by the same purpose as his predecessor from whose hand he took the light of truth. In 1528 Tyndale writes in the introduction to, "The Obedience of a Christian Man,"

Alas! the curates themselves, for the most part, wot no more what the New or Old Testament meaneth than do the Turks—neither care they but to mumble so much every day as the pie and popinjay speak, they wot not what, to fill their bellies withal. If they will not let laymen have

Successive Versions from 1382 to 1885, New York: Dutton & Co., 1901, p. 87.

²⁴ John of Trevisa (1342-1402) Cornish writer and translator. This quote from John of Trevisa is provided by Henry William Hamilton-Hoare, *The Evolution of the English Bible; An Historical Sketch of the Successive Versions from 1382 to 1885*, New York: Dutton & Co., 1901, p. 84.

²⁵ Quote provided in Henry William Hamilton-Hoare, *The Evolution of the English Bible; An Historical Sketch of the Successive Versions from 1382 to 1885*, New York: Dutton & Co., 1901, p. 87.

the word of God in his mother tongue, yet let the priests have it, for which the great part of them do understand no Latin at all, but sing and patter all day with the lips only that which the heart understandeth not.
Hoare 116.²⁶

In order to understand the full swing of the times in which Tyndale was working you have but to recall some of the big epoch-making events that took place within his time. America was discovered; voyages of exploration and conquest in all part of the world were undertaken; Copernicus was writing his astronomical treatises; the study of Greek in the Universities was being introduced. In 1520 the famous Polyglot Bible was published. In short, these are the events of one of the most wonderful periods of human history. As historians look back upon it now, and measure it in terms of centuries, it seems that the closing years of the 15th century and the opening years of the 16th century were witnessing the birth of a new era.

But there were three events between the time of Wycliffe and the time of Tyndale that directly contribute to the section of this study with which we are now concerned.

First. The fall of Constantinople in 1453, because it sent over all Europe the scholars driven from the monasteries of the East. In no small degree they are responsible for the revival of interest in Greek culture.

Second. The discovery of the Art of Printing about 1453. Introduced into England in 1470 by Caxton.²⁷

Third. The publication of a printed Greek New Testament by Erasmus in 1516 together with the famous *Complutensian Polyglot* of 1520 above mentioned.²⁸

²⁶ Tyndale's quote is provided in Henry William Hamilton-Hoare, *The Evolution of the English Bible; An Historical Sketch of the Successive Versions from 1382 to 1885*, New York: Dutton & Co., 1901, p. 103.

²⁷ Johannes Gutenberg (c. 1400-1468) German inventor and craftsman. He developed a movable-type printing press. The Gutenberg Bible was first published in 1455. William Caxton (c.1422-c.1492) English merchant, diplomat, and writer, introduced a printing press into England in 1476.

²⁸ Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus-Erasmus (c.1466-1536) Dutch Christian humanist. Among many publications he produced a first edition of a Latin and Greek New Testament in 1516. The

The times were ripe now for completing the task which Wycliffe had begun. The Poor Priests, or Lollards, as they were called, had inoculated the minds of the people with the heresies of Wycliffe, and a taste for scripture. Printing had provided the machinery, and political-economic development had developed the tension of contending parties almost to the point of splitting. Henry VIII was growing restive under the strain of the irresistible conflict between the interests of the Anglo-Saxon people and the Roman hierarchy.

About 1515 Tyndale received his degree from Oxford and went up to Cambridge, attracted possibly by the fact that Erasmus had been lecturing there. Tyndale belonged to the group in the University who were interested in Greek. Greek was the new study, the study of the radicals, just as sociology has been of late in this country. In 1521 we find him as Tutor in the family of Sir John Walsh. The story is told that in the table discussions here his purposes were clearly formulated. Sir John Walsh and the young tutor had many an argument over the Old and the New. One day at the table, so the record declares, a visiting ecclesiastic being sore pressed in argument by Tyndale, said, "We were better without God's Law than the Popes." In reply to which Tyndale is said to have defied the Pope, declaring,

If God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou doest.²⁹

Whether that be fact or legend, it relates the purpose of Tyndale's life, and indeed of the movement of which he was leader. Said Erasmus in the *Introduction* to his Greek Testament of 1516,

I would that all private women should read the Gospel and Paul's Epistles. And I wish that they were translated into all languages that they may be read and known, not only by the Scotch and Irish, but also by the Turks and Saracens. Let it be that many would smile, yet some would

Complutensian Polyglot Bible, published in 1517, including the entire Bible in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Aramaic.

²⁹ Tyndale's quote is provided in Henry William Hamilton-Hoare, *The Evolution of the English Bible; An Historical Sketch of the Successive Versions from 1382 to 1885*, New York: Dutton & Co., 1901, p. 121.

receive it. I would that the husbandman at the plough should sign something from hence, that the weaver at his loom should sing something from hence, that the traveler might beguile the weariness of his journey by narrations of this kind.

Brown 40.³⁰

Tyndale himself perceived that the only way to meet the opposition to the much-needed reforms was through a process of stirring men to thought by putting into their hands such a book as would stir them.

Hence his translation of the Bible. With this in mind, he made his way to London where he hoped for the necessary quiet and aid in his great project of bringing the Bible to the life of all people of the realm. He applied to the Bishop of London for a place in the bishop's service so that he might gain the leisure for his great work. For nearly a year he remained in London but soon,

...understood at the last not only that there was no room in my Lord of London's palace, to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England, as experience doth now openly declare.³¹

In the spring of 1524 Tyndale went over to Hamburg where he continued to work at the translating of the New Testament into English. In 1525, with ten pounds in money, he went to Cologne, even then famous for its printing, and made arrangements to have the New Testament printed, secretly, on the press of Peter Quentel. Three thousand sheets had been printed when a spy learned the secret. Henry VIII was notified, Tyndale and his assistant, William Roye, took their sheets thus printed and fled to the City of Worms. Here an octavo edition was printed which reached England in the spring of 1526, being shipped in bales of merchandise and corn ships.

At first the ecclesiastical authorities made light of the reports which they heard of the country being flooded with

³⁰ Erasmus' quote is provided in John Brown, *The History of the English Bible*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, pp. 39-40.

³¹ Tyndale's quote is provided in John Brown, *The History of the English Bible*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, p. 41.

English New Testaments, but finally were forced to take notice thereof.

The Bishop of London determined that steps should be taken to stop this heresy. Orders were given that these books should be burned wherever found. Then they arranged a public burning. On the 4th of May a great procession was formed from Fleet prison to the Cathedral. All the officers of the law and the Church were in full glory in this procession.

That is a great occasion. Just let yourselves picture the scene. All the great dignitaries of the Christian Church marching through the streets of London from Fleet Street to the Cathedral, and then amid ceremony and pomp that would have delighted the vanity of a savage, they proceeded to burn the copies of Tyndale's New Testament.

But not all of these dangerous books were thus destroyed, nor was the printing of them stopped. Meanwhile, Tyndale was working on the translation of the Bible in Marburg, resulting in the publication of the first English Pentateuch in 1530, the year in which the Royal Proclamation was issued against Heretical Books. Shortly after, the Supremacy of the King was acknowledged, and the Clergy had submitted to the King in lieu of the Pope, and England was practically running free from the Pope.

Tyndale, while living at Antwerp in the house of an Englishman, was again betrayed into the hands of the authorities by an informer. In the spring of 1535, he was arrested and taken to prison at Vilvorde where he remained in captivity for a year and a half. In 1536 he was tried and condemned to death. On Friday October 6, 1536 he was led to the scaffold, strangled and then burnt.

My pains therein taken, my poverty, my exile out of mine own natural country, and bitter absence from my friends; my hunger, my thirst, my cold, and great danger wherewith I am everywhere encompassed, and finally, other hard and sharp fighting, I enduring by reason that I hoped with my labors to do honor to God, true service to my Prince, and pleasure to his Commons.³²

³² Tyndale's quote is provided in John Brown, *The History of the English Bible*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, p. 52.

Tyndale was out of the way. Many Bibles had been burned. But the man at the plow and the weaver in the mill were reading the Bible, nevertheless.

7. [G:] Coverdale's Bible, Matthew's Bible

Coverdale's Bible. Tyndale had not finished his work, but there were others doing the same task. Miles Coverdale, a man of different character than Tyndale, who had possibly met Tyndale at Hamburg and worked with him in that town, brought out another edition of the entire Bible. This edition, printed abroad, reached England in 1536. Coverdale was a man of poetic quality and added a certain charm and style to the English Bible, which a man like Tyndale could hardly attain. Coverdale's translation of the Psalms is the translation still used in the Book of Common Prayer.

Matthew's Bible. Even while Tyndale was dragging out the weary days in prison, great changes were taking place in England. The rupture between the King and the Papacy was completed. Cromwell had been made ecclesiastical Vicegerent. As a result of petitions by the Puritans, negotiations were under way for an authorized translation of the Bible. More,³³ who represented the middle of the road people of this age, wished to reform the Catholic Church and bring about the much-needed changes without breaking the continuity of Church organization. He did not object to a translation of the Bible, but what he objected to was to have it translated by a man of Tyndale's type. The comparison of a few words will make this point clear and throw a vast amount of light upon the entire problem of translating:

³³ Thomas More (1478-1535) English lawyer, judge, philosopher, and statesman. He served as Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor from 1529 to 1532. He wrote *Utopia* in 1516. He refused to sign the Oath of Succession, confirming Anne Boleyn's role as Queen. He was arrested, tried for treason, and executed on July 6, 1535.

Traditional words in Common use in the church	Tyndale's Substitution for same in his translation
"grace"	"favour"
"charity"	"love"
"confess"	"acknowledge"
"penance"	"repentance"
"priest"	"Elder"
"Church"	"congregation"
"Salvation"	"health"

The rendering of Tyndale made the Bible conform to his ideas while the conventional rendering, the traditional one, made it conform to established practices. While this controversy was under way, and Miles Coverdale's Bible was going out in successive editions (it was the best seller for many years) the new nationalistic government was growing lenient. Coverdale sent out his edition in 1537 with the King's license. In that same year there appeared under the name of "Matthew's Bible" another English Bible, [also] under the King's license. A great mystery has always been associated with this ["Matthew's"] Bible. But as the facts come to light, it appears almost certain that one John Rogers, who was the literary executor of William Tyndale, had taken Tyndale's translation and published it with the King's license during the very year Tyndale was burned for having translated it.

The first news of the appearance of this Bible in England appears to have been in a letter from Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, to Cromwell as follows:

My especial good lord, these shall be to signify unto the same that you shall receive by the bringer thereof a bible in English, both of a new translation and of a new print... which in mine opinion is very well done, and, therefore, I pray your lordship to read the same. And as for the translation, so far as I have read thereof, I like it better than any other translation heretofore made...I pray you, My Lord, that you will exhibit the book unto the King's highness, and to obtain of his grace, if you can, a license that the same may be sold and read of every person, without danger of any act, proclamation or ordinance to the contrary, until such time as we bishops shall set forth a better translation which I think will not be till the day after doomsday.³⁴

³⁴ Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) leader of the English reformation and Archbishop of Canterbury during the reigns of Henry VIII,

Says Dr. Westcott of this event:

By Cranmer's petition, by Cromwell's influence, and by Henry's authority, without any formal ecclesiastical decision, the book was given to the English people, which is the foundation of the text of our present Bible. From Matthew's Bible—itsself a combination of the labors of Tyndale and Coverdale—all later revisions have been successively formed. In that the general character and mould of our whole version was definitely fixed. The labors of the next seventy-five years were devoted to improving it in detail.

Brown 61.³⁵

The Great Bible. The Great Bible, as it was called, came out in 1539, and is important and interesting on two accounts. In the Royal Injunctions of 1538, sent to Cranmer by Cromwell the following order to the clergy appears:

You shall provide on this side the next feast of Easter next coming, one book of the whole Bible of the largest volume, in English, and that same set up in some convenient place within the said church that you have cure of, whereas your parishioners may most commodiously resort to the same and read it; the charges of which book shall be rateably borne between you, the parson, and the parishioners aforesaid.³⁶

Section three of the same says,

You shall discourage no man privily or apertly from the reading or the hearing of the said Bible, but shall expressly provoke, stir, and exhort every person to read

Edward VI and, briefly, Mary I. His quote is provided in John Brown, *The History of the English Bible*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, pp. 60-61.

³⁵ Brooke Foss Westcott (1825-1901) English bishop, biblical scholar, and theologian. Westcott is quoted in John Brown, *The History of the English Bible*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, p. 61.

³⁶ Thomas Cromwell (1485-1540) English statesman and lawyer. He served as the Chief Minister to Henry VIII from 1534-1540 when he was beheaded on orders of the King. This quote from Cromwell is provided in John Brown, *The History of the English Bible*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, pp. 62-63.

the same, as that which is the very lively word of God, that every Christian man is bound to embrace, believe and follow, if he look to be saved.³⁷

The means, of course, that the task to which Wycliffe set himself in 1375 or thereabout is accomplished. The Bible in the vernacular had become established. The printing hereof had become a lucrative business, and the Church was settling down to the task of smoothing it down, correcting errors, etc.

In 1560 the Genevan Bible appeared, bearing the stamp of the Calvinistic theology which was to dominate the English speaking and the French Protestant worlds for two hundred years or more. In 1568 came the Bishop's Bible, printed under the direction of Bishop's with desire to replace the Great Bible, as it did to a great extent.

In 1582 the Rheims New Testament appeared under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church. Translated from the Vulgate.

In 1610 the Douay Old Testament, from the Vulgate appeared.

St. James Version. When King James came to London in the spring of his coming to the throne in 1603, he is said to have been waited upon by some Puritans who urged upon him the necessity of a new translation of the Bible, partly because so many errors by printers had crept into the text. Big companies of men were organized to translate the Bible, and the result was [the] King James Bible of 1611. Known as the authorized version.

This closes the long struggle. The King James version remained the accepted version until the last century. But it is interesting, as a final thought, to note some of the events that happened around this period. In 1597 Bacon's *Essays* appeared. In 1611 Shakespeare's *Tempest* was played at Court; in 1611 *Henry VIII* played at court. In 1616 Shakespeare died.

The great Renaissance and Reformation of Elizabethan England had run its course. Already the seeds of the political revolution were bearing fruit. The Puritans, with Bible in hand, were overthrowing the government, and under persecution, were leaving England for Holland. In 1608 Milton was born. In the same year the Pilgrim fathers left for Amsterdam. Oliver Cromwell was a

³⁷ This continues the quote from Cromwell provided in John Brown, *The History of the English Bible*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, p. 63.

lad of a dozen years of age when the King James version of the Bible came out.

8. Appendix 1: Dates from the last two pages of the "Historical Setting" Manuscript³⁸

449	Germanic tribes, known later as Anglo-Saxons, arrived in England on the shores of Kent. They were a far wilder race than the Germans who had overrun and sacked Rome. They were heathen both in fact and name. They drove the Kelts, whom they found in Britton, to the East.
596	Pope Gregory sent Saint Augustine to convert these Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. The Kelts were already Christian. So great was the feeling of opposition on the part of the Christian Kelts to the purpose of the missionaries that it was a long time before the Kelts would help them to convert the Anglo-Saxons. In time these race differences were lost, but many people still see the survivals of them in modern English political struggles.
787	Appearance of the Northmen, conquerors of the English.
800	Coronation of Charles the Great (Frank) as Emperor.
828	Egbert become King of all the English.
1198-1254	Innocent III, Gregory IX, Innocent IV. Culmination of the Papal power, and development of the inquisition.
1213	Submission of King John. England a papal Fief, and its King the Pope's man.
1215	Magna Charta
1265	First Parliament in England
1294-1313	Pope Boniface VIII
1305-1377	Popes at Avignon

³⁸ The last two pages of the manuscript, "Historical Setting of the Translation" includes a long set of dates and events. They clearly are not part of the narrative Davis wrote but are a kind of outline sketch of the history he aims to cover. I include them here. In addition, there was a single page of "Important Dates" among the manuscripts. This list of dates and events is less inclusive than the longer two-page list at the end of "Historical Setting." But it does include three dates/events not on that list. I have added them here in blue.

1338-1453	The Hundred Year's War. Green Vol. I, Page 402 ³⁹
1324	Wycliffe's birth
1328	Chaucer's birth
1348-9	The Plague, Black Death. About half of the population died.
1350	Clement VI. "Jubilee pilgrimage" to Rome enforced, in spite of plague, to raise money through sale of indulgences.
1352	Statute of Laborers, to keep down the rate of wages.
1360	John Ball, "Mad Priest of Kent."
1361	Wycliffe elected Master of Balliol.
1362	Langland's Vision of Piers the Ploughman. Black Death reappears.
1377	Papal Court returns to Rome. [In] May, five Papal Bulls against Wycliffe. Wycliffe sets on foot his order of Poor Priests, Lollards. Wycliffe consulted by Parliament as to payment of Peter's pence.
1378	Beginning of Great Schism.
1379	Wycliffe on "Truth of Scripture"
1381	Outbreak of Peasant's War
1382	English Bible complete in manuscript.
1384	Death of Wycliffe
1401	Statute enacting the burning of heretics.
1453	Capture of Constantinople by Turks.
1516	First edition of Erasmus New Testament in Greek. More's <i>Utopia</i> .
1517	Luther's Theses published.
1525	Tyndale's New Testament published. Printed.
1526	Geneva independent
1526	The Primate and Bishop of London orders Tyndale's New Testament to be burned.
1530	Royal Proclamation against heretical books; great burning of Tyndale's New Testament.
1534	Break of Henry VIII with Pope
1537	Matthew's Bible licensed.
1616	Shakespeare dies.

³⁹ Davis inserts a quote, already transcribed above at the end of section 4, from John Richard Green's book, *England*.

9. Appendix 2: Outline of points on English Bible⁴⁰

1. Early Old T. in Hebrew*
Early N.T. in Greek: Aramaic used.
2. Vulgate: 383. Four gospels. Jerome, Born 340-342
3. 449. Anglo-Saxons began the conquest of Britain in 449; Kelts killed or driven out.
4. 596. St. Augustine was sent to England to convert the Anglo-Saxons. Jutes.
5. ⁴¹ 600, About. Caedmon was told the stories of the Bible and recited them in poetic story telling. Beginning of knowing the Bible by Anglo-Saxons.
6. 1338 to 1453. Hundred Years War.
7. John Wycliffe, 1324-1384. First English Bible.
Poor Priests, Lollards
8. 1453. Fall of Constantinople
Printing
9. 1382. Wycliffe's Bible; From Vulgate.
10. 1516. Printed Greek New Testament. Erasmus.
11. 1525. Tyndale. From Greek manuscripts, etc.
12. 1611. Authorized Version. King James.
Many versions within the past hundred years.
13. 1536. Friday, October 6, 1536, Tyndale was led to the scaffold, strangled, and burnt.
From that day to this it has been less dangerous to translate the Bible.

⁴⁰ In addition to a text on the English Bible, among the manuscripts left behind is an "Outline of points on the English Bible," which does serve as a kind of outline for this lecture. I include it here as an appendix.

⁴¹ Labeled "6" in original and numeration off to the end; here I put in numerical order.