

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 having an English Bible a capital offense. In 1428, the bug up his body and burned it.

