

Endnotes and Conclusion

Endnote I: Comparing The Old and The New

When comparing the Old Testament of the “Wycliffe Bible” (WOT) with the New Testament of the “Wycliffe Bible” (WNT), the Old having been translated and revised **after** the New, three general observations can be made:

1. The WOT has fewer obsolete and archaic words than the WNT. “Stream”, “river”, “mountain”, “called”, “pasture”, and other “modern” words are found only in the WOT. Also, more conjunctions and prepositions are found in the WOT, providing more “passage flow” (though inconsistently, appearing in one verse, but not in another). In short, the WOT, particularly its “Later Version”, often reads and sounds more modern than the WNT.

2. The WOT has a much richer vocabulary than the WNT. It was a true delight to regularly encounter new words, familiar and recognizable, many of them destined to become an early or even the initial example of an entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Such words as: abate, acre, all be it (“albeit”), ancestry, annealed, anvil, apes, apothecary, armory, ascribed, assigned, at once, bald, bark, basket, beadle, bequest, blithe, blue, bordellery, bridal, bridle, buckle, button, buttresses, called (only “clepide” is found in the WNT), carols, carriages, cement, chamberlain, chandelier, chieftain, chronicles, church, circumstance, clap, cluster, comb, compel, complain, composition, conditions, congregation, conquest, consecration, consistory, conspiracy, constitution, contradiction, conversant, convocation, copy, correction, cradle, craftsman, crocodile, cruet, cushions, default, depose, devoutly, displease, dissolute, doctrine, doe, dower (“dowry”), dragon, dromedaries, elephants, eloquent, enjoin, ere, err, errand, eschew, estimation, examine, exiting, faucet, fawn, felony, flatter, fords, forths, fostered, fret, furbish, genitals, glob, gnats, goblin, gripe, grovel, hailstones, hatchet, hoarse, hooves, housewife, hovering, hue, hymn, hyperbole, illusions, inkhorn, irrevocable, jolly, judicial, kettles, lattice, leviathan, libation, librarians, literature, litters, manacles, margin, matrimony, mattocks, mediator, medicine, memory, menial, merit, mesh, mirth, mischief, mooted, mountain (only “hill” and “mount” are found in the WNT), muck, muttering, mystic, navy, neckerchief, nesh, nieces, noisome, oak, obstinate, odours, ordures, ostrich, ouch, palace, palate, papyrus, pasture (only “lesewe” is found in the WNT), peacocks, pebble, peer, pelican, perpetual, perverted, pillars, pillows, pinnacles, pint, pippin, piss, plow, presume, presumptuously, punched, quemeful, quick, rampant, ransom, ravenous, raze, reckless/ly, remorse, reparations, reptiles, restore, ribbon, riddles, rider, rifled, river (only “flood”, “flume”, and “strand” are found in the WNT), rochet, sanguine, satrap, scored, scot, scoured, scruples, seasonable, secretary, sect, “shet” (now a vulgarism, but then deemed suitable for the Bible), shrubs, skulls, sleight, smart, smock, snare, soap, soil, spacious, spider, spigot, spurn, square, squire, stallion, stein, stream, studiously, sundry, supplant, suspicion, tankard, timber, top, trap, trifler, trowel, turds, turrets, twinkle, uncle, unculpable, unicorn, unknit, unwittingly, urine, ushers, vanquished, venison, wardrobe, wattle, wedding,

Endnotes & Conclusion

wedlock, whale, whorehouse, wicket, and wright.

3. Because Hebrew via Latin to English (and Hebrew directly into English as well), lends itself to much greater variation than that of Greek via Latin to English (or Greek directly into English), there are many more significant differences between the “Early” and “Later” versions of the WOT than between the two versions of the WNT. Many of these alternate renderings are textually relevant; others were simply too fascinating to ignore. See the files on the *Wycliffe’s Bible* CD or the online efiles for literally thousands of WOT “Early Version” verses which, due to space limitations, could not be in the printed version of *Wycliffe’s Old Testament*. They provide countless additional examples of Wycliffe’s and Purvey’s insightful scholarship.

* * *

Endnote II: Regarding the “Early Version”

The “Early Version” of the “Wycliffe Bible” has long been criticized by Bible historians as being too literal, often unintelligible, at best a deeply-flawed 1st attempt. But in fact, significant portions of the “Early Version” of the WOT were transferred unchanged to the “Later Version” and are identical to the text found in *Wycliffe’s Old Testament*. However, it is true, that overall, the “Early Version” is a less satisfying read than the “Later Version”. It is not so finely-tuned and contains many more poorly-ordered phrases which interrupt the flow. That is why hand-written variations of the “Later Version” of the WOT became part of the foundation on which the Old Testament of the King James Version (KJV) was built.

And yet, comparing all three versions side-by-side, it becomes clear that the KJV translators often rejected revisions made in the “Later Version” of the WOT, and instead reverted to words and phrases found in the “Early Version”. Why did they do this? Sometimes the “Early Version” had a more accurate rendering of the original Hebrew; other times the “turn of phrase” in the “Early Version” was more compelling. As well, the KJV translators often followed the “Early Version” regarding prepositions (e.g., “the” in the “EV”, replaced by “a” in the “LV”), verb forms (e.g., “saying” and “sitting” in the “EV”, replaced by “said” and “sat” in the “LV”), and phrase order within a verse (e.g., “a/b/c” in the “EV”, rearranged into “b/a/c” in the “LV”).

But of greatest consequence are the scores of significant individual words that appear in the “Early Version” of the WOT, were not used in the equivalent “Later Version” verses, but later were copied by the KJV translators. Translation is an inexact science. A single word can often be rendered several ways (as the “Wycliffe” versions themselves demonstrate). Therefore these linguistic agreements (not in every instance, but often enough) are meaningful and important to note. Examples of WOT “Early Version” and KJV word agreement include: bare (“childed” in “LV”); between (“betwixt” in “LV”); captives (“prisoners” in “LV”); covenant (“bond” in “LV”); divide/d (“part/ed” in “LV”); dwelt (“dwelled” in “LV”); elders (“elder men” in “LV”); even (“eventide” in “LV”); Gentiles (“heathen men” in “LV”); go in (“enter” in “LV”); heaven (“the air” in “LV”); kingdom

Endnotes & Conclusion

("realm" in "LV"); let go ("deliver/ed" in "LV"); letters ("epistles" in "LV"); Levites ("deacons" in "LV"); lifted ("raised" in "LV"); measured ("meted" in "LV"); mountains ("hills" in "LV"); nor ("neither" in "LV"); O! ("A!" in "LV"); of it ("thereof" in "LV"); or ("either" in "LV"); region ("country" in "LV"); rightwiseness ("EV")/righteousness (KJV) ("rightfulness" in "LV"); river ("flood" in "LV"); slaughter ("slaying" in "LV"); slay/slew ("kill"/"killed" in "LV"); stream ("strand" in "LV"); substance ("chattel" in "LV"); that ("which" in "LV"); then ("therefore" in "LV"); the Lord our God ("our Lord God" in "LV"); the Lord their God ("their Lord God" in "LV"); the Lord thy God ("thy Lord God" in "LV"); the rightwise ("EV")/the righteous (KJV) ("a just man" in "LV"); them or they ("those" in "LV"); These things saith the Lord ("EV")/Thus saith the Lord (KJV) ("The Lord saith these things" in "LV"); two ("twain" in "LV"); unto ("till to" in "LV"); upon ("on" in "LV"); and wrath ("ire" in "LV"). All of these words were in the lexicon of the "Early Version" of the WOT. Two hundred years later they reappeared in the KJV.

There are fewer instances where the WOT "Later Version" and the KJV agree, and the "Early Version" differs, or where all three are distinct. Some examples include: after ("EV"), by ("LV"), according to (KJV); entry ("EV"), entering ("LV" and KJV); gone in ("EV"); entered ("LV"); went in (KJV); in it ("EV"), therein ("LV" and KJV); morrow ("EV"), morrowtide ("LV"), morning (KJV); wild fields ("EV"), field places ("LV"), fields/plains (KJV).

* * *

Endnote III: The Old Testament: Who Needs It?

*If the New Testament is the story of a Man,
then the Old Testament is the story of a people.
If the New Testament is personal and intimate,
then the Old Testament is communal and expansive.
If the New Testament is a sonata,
then the Old Testament is a symphony.*

"Old" and "New". Progenitor and Progeny. The family resemblance is striking. Both are majestic and eternal, yet also commonplace and temporal. They share so much. The Holy Spirit. God the Father. God the Redeemer. God the Saviour. The Holiness of God. The Might of God. The Word of God. The Call to Righteousness. The Book of Life. Human Sin. Divine Justice and Mercy. Heaven and Hell. Revelations. Apocalypse. The Well of Living Water. The Way of Truth.

These realities, and so many others, are found in both books.

Two books with a shared heritage. But one book with two distinct purposes.

For the Jewish people, whom God addressed and called apart, who safeguarded these Holy Scriptures for a millennium, and then shared them with the world, their "Ta'na'kh"¹

¹ The Hebrew Bible is called the "Ta'na'kh" (Tanach), which is a 3-letter acronym for Torah (the Pentateuch),

Endnotes & Conclusion

(Tanach) is the early record of their nation, the remembrance of things past, the prophecies of things to come, but most importantly, the recounting of their unique relationship with Almighty God.

For Christians, the Old Testament sets the cosmic and temporal contexts for the New Testament. It is “Part One” of a unique two-part epic. Jesus, then Peter and Paul, Matthew and John, and numerous others in the New Testament, frequently quote from the Old Testament. Without the Old, the New would be adrift, cut off from its life-giving roots. And as we all know, any living organism cut off from its roots will soon wither and die. Even “the Living Word”.

But the reach and relevance of the Old Testament, its importance and significance, far exceed these already substantial achievements.

On the temporal plane, *that is life, here and now*, the Old Testament is essential for anyone seeking to understand the human condition and humankind, for anyone seeking the answers to the most fundamental questions of life and death. In other words, the Old Testament is as relevant as today’s newspaper.

On the eternal plane, *that is the infinite and forever*, the Old Testament is nothing less than a formal introduction to God Himself. And so it is for anyone seeking a relationship with Him. Its supreme significance, its inestimable value, its ultimate purpose, is that it enables all of us, each and every one of us, if we so desire, the opportunity to begin to comprehend The Incomprehensible. For anyone seeking to come to know the Lord their God, the Lord God of Hosts, the Creator of the Universe, the Old Testament is, in a word, indispensable.

Who needs the Old Testament? Everyone.

* * *

In Conclusion

The Old Testament of the “Wycliffe Bible”, written more than 600 years ago by John Wycliffe and John Purvey, is a work of genius, deserving our respect, indeed our awe. The “Later Version”, in particular, is a fine, fluent, reverent rendering. Rich in vocabulary, replete with memorable phrases, produced under life-threatening conditions, the Wycliffe Old Testament is a worthy first English vernacular translation of the “Ta’na’kh” (Tanach).

John Wycliffe and John Purvey have earned their standing in the pantheon of English Literature, alongside such luminaries as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Tyndale, and the translators of the King James Version of the Bible.

Nevi'im (the Prophets), and Ketuvim (the Writings). It has 39 books, ordered as follows:

Torah: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

The Prophets: Joshua, Judges, 1ST & 2ND Samuel, 1ST & 2ND Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

The Writings: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1ST & 2ND Chronicles.