

08_Wycliffe's Seeds Continue to Sprout

How We Got the Bible (2016), Patrick Mead, Fourth Avenue

Now, we're entering into my favorite part of the story of how we got to English Bible.

Some of the other bets have been quite a bit of data, but now it's all story.

And I like story.

Do you want to?

Sure.

I was just going to leave it there.

I know how that goes.

These people always wanted to talk.

All right.

Remember Wycliffe and Huss?

You did those stories.

If you did not hear those stories, you're going to be a bit behind the curve.

Please go back and listen online to those classes.

Remember that Wycliffe was called the light, the morning star of the Reformation, but he also lit the light for personal freedom and for freedom in society.

A lot of the Declaration of Independence and a lot of Lincoln's speeches actually traced back to phrases from Wycliffe.

One of Wycliffe's students was named John Purvey.

He kept translating bets of Wycliffe's, rather taking Wycliffe's translation and handwriting them and getting them into the community.

We're going to be at slide three, is where we'll start, 1394.

Remember what happened?

Wycliffe's writing and then later Chaucer standardized English.

In the late 1300s, for the first time, somebody could write something in English in York and somebody in London could read it.

English was so different back then, according to your regions, that before then that didn't happen.

Now there was in English everybody could read.

By 1394, the Archbishop of York, a man named Arendelle, was able to declare at the funeral of Anne of Bohemia, who was Queen of England, wife of Richard II.

Remember Bohemia was the Czech Republic, and remember who was there?

John Huss.

Again, remember that the British royal family is not British.

It is more German, Dutch, and Czech than it is English.

Every time I see them prancing about in kilts, I'm going, ah, fair enough.

The Queen of England was Anne of Bohemia.

At her funeral, the Archbishop of York declared that she had read the four gospels in English, and was therefore, he said, more learned in the scriptures than the priests and bishops in England, because they hadn't read it.

They had not read the gospels.

She had.

By the way, this was scandalous and caused all kinds of problems, but it proved that that little light that Wycliffe shined had picked up and was being spread around.

The Roman Church reacted, by the way, very strongly to Archbishop Arendelle's sermon for the funeral of Anne of Bohemia.

They sent, the Pope personally sent men after Arendelle to reeducate him by force, and it took a while, but after 14 years, Arendelle was beaten down.

So he wrote that, from henceforth, no unauthorized person shall translate any part to the Holy Scripture into English or any other language under any form of book or treatise.

He gave up.

He was beaten back down.

He was eventually, he eventually even went further.

He invited in the Inquisition.

The Inquisition had not been allowed in England, but he invited it in, and he was pushed all the way over to supporting, stomping out the Lawlords.

Do you remember the Lawlords?

The Lawlords were those that followed Wycliffe, and the word Lawlord means idiot, uneducated, but they took it on.

The Lawlords were here, but when they went deep underground, they called themselves the Secret Society.

This is not on the notes, by the way.

I just thought you might be interested in knowing the 12 treatises of the Lawlords, just so that you can see how much your freedom in America actually came from religious freedom started in the 1300s.

Notice what they said.

Number one, the state of the English church is that the church is too involved in temporal power.

The church should lead the things of the church and not try to be the state.

Two, priest, the whole ceremony of who can be a priest and who cannot be a priest does not come from Scripture.

Third, the idea that priests have to be celibate is not acceptable.

It's not what Scripture says.

For the doctrine of transubstantiation, that is that the bread and wine is too holy to be touched by humans, and it becomes a body and blood of Christ.

They said it's pagan.

That's the worship of everyday objects.

We'll go further quickly, because we're going to get to what matters to you.

Exorcisms and Hallowings, they said, has no basis in Scripture.

And here's what's interesting.

The sixth conclusion asserts it's inappropriate for men who hold high office in the church to simultaneously hold high office in temporal political power.

We're not politicians.

We should stay out of it, is what they said.

No prayers for the dead, no pilgrimages, forget confession to priests, and tenth one, we as Christians should refrain from warfare.

We do not crusade.

Crusades are blasphemous, they said, because Christ taught men to love and forgive their enemies, not kill them.

And then, female vows of continents and abortion, the idea that females have vows of celibacy often end up becoming pregnant and needing abortion back in that time.

That was very common, and you're saying no.

And then, arts and crafts, the twelfth one was, the church is spending too much time making beautiful objects of art and craft when people should simplify their lives and use their time and fortunes to reach others for Jesus.

Well, that's what the Lawlord said.

So, all that said, the Inquisition was now brought in to destroy the Lawlords.

Mark Bishop Arundel also pushed a law that all books had to be licensed by the church, or you couldn't print a book.

Think about that, and here's the shocker, that's the way things were all through Europe.

You couldn't publish a book on anything unless a church said it's okay to publish that book.

The Roman Catholic Church also wanted to send a lesson that even death would not help, would not help you escape their clutches, so 44 years after his death they dug up the body of John Wycliffe, they held a trial, found the bones guilty, and they burned them and threw the ashes into the river.

But as Fox's Book of Martyrs reminds us, the river that received those ashes was called the Swift.

It flows into the Avon.

The Avon flows into the Severn.

The Severn goes into the Bristol Channel, and the Bristol Channel goes to the sea and the uttermost parts of the earth.

They had meant to destroy Wycliffe, but God was at work.

Remember the Dancing Birds?

God's at work.

About this time, God does a bunch of things at the same time.

Meanwhile, in Germany, in 1454, a printer was working on an idea he'd had for a long time.

He carved blocks of wood in a shop in Mainz, Germany, and experimented with pressing them into ink and then onto paper.

He'd created the world's first movable type.

In other words, instead of carving a whole page of a book, he carved one letter, and then he was able to carve another letter so he could move them around and reuse them.

It was painstaking, it was hard, but this was a huge technological leap.

The world would never be the same after Gutenberg.

In fact, before then, copying a Bible took 18 months.

After Gutenberg, it took a few weeks to copy a Bible.

Think of the difference that made.

If you're having a hard time visioning it, think of this, take 18 months of your salary.

Somebody would have to pay you to make a copy.

Now, three weeks of your salary.

All of a sudden, what was too expensive for anybody except a Lord to have, more people could afford it, and the Bible began to turn loose.

Again remember, at this time, you had no choice who you're going to be when you grew up.

Kids will often tell me that they hate that question.

Every adult says, what do you want to be?

As soon as they know they're going to university, people say, what are you going to major in?

Now we say, be patient with them.

They're just trying to live through you because their life has been wrecked and ruined.

What I really mean is this.

We all are excited that you get to choose.

That's exciting.

You get to choose who and what you want to be.

That was not true for the majority of our history, and it is not true still in the majority of the world.

The majority of the world, if you're born poor, you're going to die poor.

The majority of the world, if you were born outside of the professions, you cannot ever be allowed inside of the professions.

Only in Western Europe did the idea grow of freedom, and it started with Wycliffe, Huss, and the ability to read because once you read, you knew things.

Here's an example.

I was speaking in Northern Mississippi for a week, but I was only speaking in the evenings, and there's nothing to do in Northern Mississippi.

I was only a half hour away from Memphis, so I'd go up to Memphis, and sometimes I would sit on Beale Street and play the guitar with the homeless guys.

That was a hoot.

I loved that.

If I was a millionaire, that's where I'd sit every day, I think, just going, oh, not going to work.

I'm going to go talk to my homeless buddies.

It was a hoot, and they thought I was funny as well because I didn't sound like them, but we enjoyed that.

But also, I saw, I liked museums, and I said, National Civil Rights Museum.

And I thought, oh, I'll go.

I drove up to it.

I didn't realize it was in the Lorraine Hotel where Martin Luther King was shot.

When I pulled up and saw the hotel, I was thinking, that looks familiar, and then it hit me, got chills.

I was thinking I would spend an hour there.

I spent an all day long there.

You stand there and look at the bus that was burned.

You stand and you look.

I was the only white guy there, and there were times in some of the rooms where the African American people would look at me, and I just, I wanted to be able to say so much, I wasn't here.

But I'm aware that I was born white, and I mean, I was born on third base.

I didn't hit a triple.

I was born on third base.

I then went and bought the three.

They're all that thick.

They're all 1,000 pages, near enough, three volume series by Taylor Branch, America and the King Years, because I was getting angry, because I was learning stuff I'd never been told.

I read the books, and Cami would ask me how I was feeling, and I would even turn to her, and I'm saying, I'm getting angry.

Why weren't we taught any of this in school?

I didn't know any of this.

I think of the stupid things I've said and done in my life, which I wouldn't have said if somebody had told me.

See, that's what reading does.

All of a sudden you see things from a different way, and all of a sudden you start clicking and going, wait a minute, things need to change.

Back in the 1400s, to call on common men to let them read, and let them read what they wanted to read, was as radical as throwing a bunch of tea into Boston Harbor, or Gandhi sitting down at a deli train station.

And that brings us to somebody you've never heard of, but you need to hear it to advance the story, a guy by the name of Thomas Lenaker.

He was the first of a string of men born at exactly the right time.

Five years after Gutenberg invented the modern movable printing press, Lenaker was born.

Right after that, John Colette and Erasmus were born.

Right after that, Martin Luther was born.

Right after that, we're talking just a few years, Tyndale was born.

They would be the ones, that handful of men, to overthrow Roman rule that had lasted over a thousand years.

After their lives, we would be more free to decide if we wanted to be Catholic or not, or if we decided to believe in nothing or not.

None of them could have done what they had done had Wycliffe not translated portions of Scripture and handed them to students and said, get them out there.

Let them see.

The Lawlords prepared the grounds for them.

The secret society were spies for Jesus, taking the Scripture to hidden and forbidden places.

Have you ever heard or read the biography of Brother Andrew?

God's Smuggler, is the name of it?

If you've not read it, you can buy it for like a penny on Amazon.

It's been out for so long.

God's Smuggler.

He's only known by Andrew, although now we know his full name.

But for many years, he smuggled Scripture through the Iron Curtain.

He smuggled it into places that were not allowed to have Scripture.

That's what the Lawlords and the Secret Society did.

Well, Lenaker.

Lenaker was not a sloth.

He got a handful of doctorates, medicine, philosophy, and science.

And as was the custom of the day, he got his highest doctorate in theology.

Theology was known as the queen of all sciences, that you couldn't understand any other science unless you understood theology.

He was also a kind-hearted man.

The Muslims, Ottoman Empire at that time, had been pushing into Europe.

It had taken Constantinople, Istanbul.

It had taken that and shoved, it had taken Hungary.

It had taken a lot of southern Spain.

It had taken a lot of Europe.

Well, those people were now living, those Christians that were driven out were living in refugee camps, very much like the Syrians are living in them today.

In the 1400s, it was the Christians in refugee camps in the middle of Europe.

So Lenaker went and worked in the refugee camps, loving on them, being their doctor, being their friend.

But he also, they brought books with them.

They brought books that the West had forgotten about.

Modern medicine, philosophy, Aristotle, Plato, Socrates.

But they also brought scriptures, older than anything that existed in the West.

Think about that.

They believed that whenever Constantinople fell, for example, that Jesus had lost, all he was doing was spreading the word.

It would turn around and go back.

That will take centuries to get done what he needs done.

I remember we lived in Morgantown, West Virginia, a town of 23,000 people, and the university there had 28,000.

I looked at Camus once and I said, you know something, I think God got tired of telling us, go into all the world because we're never dead.

So now he's put us in a little town where all the world came to end.

He's always moving.

Anyway, Lenaker began to study these scriptures and found that the Greek text varied so much from the Vulgate Bible, which was the only version allowed, that he told a friend in a letter, we still have the letter, either I am not a Christian or the ancient text before me are not the gospel.

These differ so much from our Bible.

One of those two has to be true.

He eventually joined the law lords, maybe the secret society.

That's a bit debated.

Of course, he didn't put that on your resume, but we think he joined the secret society.

He confided to John Colette, C-O-L-E-T, if you want to know that one, if you want to look them up, that the Latin Bible, which is the only Bible in existence at the time, only one.

He said it is so seriously corrupt and does not represent what the Greek texts say.

Colette was so disturbed by this that he took a leave of absence from his work to go to Italy and study ancient biblical Greek brought there by those refugees and learn from them and read the books they brought.

Two years later, 1496, he went back to Oxford and he and Lenaker produced the first book of Greek grammar ever produced in the Western world.

Do you understand what that means?

Now a person who can read can teach themselves Greek, which means they can go to the ancient manuscripts and they can find what the Bible really says.

Boom.

You might be thinking, but who would go do that?

It used to be we all grabbed any information we could grab to learn because we didn't have phones to stare at and television to stare at and malls to walk through.

We understood knowledge is power and so you gained knowledge.

You taught yourself what you could learn.

About this time, a really bad guy, King Henry VIII.

This is normally if we were doing a melodrama where you would go boo.

Or if you liked Herman and Hermit, you'd be going, oh, I'm Henry VIII though I am.

Henry VIII, nasty guy, but needed a personal physician.

If you've ever seen pictures or paintings, rather, of Henry VIII, you know why.

Not in good shape, gout and everything else, obesity.

So he asked about who is the best doctor in the land and they said Thomas Linnaker.

Ding, ding, ding.

Thomas Linnaker became Henry VIII's personal physician.

So he also began talking to him about scripture.

Well, he talked to him about his diet, about why he had every sexual disease known by man.

And if you know anything about Henry VIII and the Roman Catholic Church, you know he was already looking for an excuse to get out of that.

So God placed a good man, Thomas Linnaker, beside one of the worst men in English history, King Henry VIII.

By the way, competition to be the worst man in English history is really stiff.

So he might not have been the worst, but he was getting there.

Please remember, all history takes place at the same time.

The shockwaves are still rolling from the fall of Constantinople and these books are getting closer to England.

They're now in Austria, they're now in Italy, they're now in Northern Spain.

The Muslims are pressing in, which means the Christians feel, are we falling?

Have we sinned?

And when you think have I sinned, what do you do?

You self-examine.

You self-examine.

You start grabbing information.

After I said you don't know, you can go from here to here, unless what your beginning point is, are we okay with Jesus?

Well here, learn Greek.

Look at these texts that are coming in.

The slide nine there, Byzantium, was the old name for Constantinople.

It meant, today the word Byzantine, if you heard Byzantine, it means so overly, well-maintly complicated.

Because by that time, it was over there, the government system was so corrupt.

That's why the Muslims were able to take it.

As they shoved the Christians out, it also woke people up to the idea of, we have too many laws.

There are too many regulations.

Government is too big.

All of this started right there.

Again, they brought their books with them, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, the early church fathers, Origen, Eusebius, or Eusebius, all of those.

Those books show up now, and Roman Catholics can't stop them all.

I see the Roman Catholics and talking about the head guys.

Average Roman Catholics loved the books, would wanted to receive the books.

Now the dam was broken.

Sorry to use a word.

It doesn't have an end on the end, so it's acceptable.

The dam had broken.

The information was out there, and people were printing it.

People were passing it along.

Now John Colette, remember him?

He was so taken by the scriptures, Lenaker had shown him, he did the unthinkable.

He quoted scripture in public, without a license.

And he did it at St.

Paul's Cathedral in London.

He did not hide his light under a bushel.

He stood and read the words, it makes me shudder, read the words of Paul to a congregation for the first time in the common tongue for 1100 years.

They heard the words of Paul.

People wept out loud.

There was no sermon.

He just read the words of Paul.

The common people jammed the church every single week.

There were lines of people wanting to get in.

Colette insisted something very odd.

He said, Paul meant what he said and said what he meant.

Let's just hear the words of Paul.

He also said, anything else Rome says does not trump Paul.

And that is where Rome fights back.

This is jaw-droppingly brave.

Let's back up for a second.

Rome did use scripture, but only when it wanted to.

And then an allegorical, non-historical, sub-authoritative way.

The first writer that I know of to treat scriptures in allegory was origin, a bishop in North Africa.

In other words, the story of Noah and the ark is not about a guy named Noah or an ark.

It's a mystical language that has hidden meanings.

The measurements are mystical, and the number of animals is mystical.

Which animals were gathered first, which were gathered next?

All of that has mystical underlying allegorical connotations.

When you apply that to the number of holy days, in which days are more holy than others, and that then becomes how many penances are required of Christians, it was Byzantine.

It was mind-bogglingly complex and entirely subjective.

John Colette rejected this.

He told the people, the words of the Bible mean what they appear to mean.

Read them.

You don't need a sermon.

You just need the words.

The only way he could survive this is that his father was the Lord Mayor of London.

This is, all right, Americans, let me explain something.

There is London, and then there's the city of London.

London is massive.

It's one of the world's biggest cities, very complex city as well.

To be a taxi driver there, you have to have what they call the knowledge to be licensed.

That means you must know every street, every lane, every address in London.

It takes on average six years study to learn it, and you are tested before you get your license.

It's equivalent of a master's degree, but in the middle there's the city of London.

You have the mayor of London, but then you have the Lord Mayor of London, the city of London.

It's a very different thing.

I could explain all that, but your eyes would roll up in your head, and blood would come out your ears.

The point is, he is second only to the king, and I say he because we haven't had a female Lord Mayor yet of London.

You're aware we've got our second female Prime Minister right now, Theresa May, but not Lord Mayor there.

Well, the Prime Minister cannot go to the city of London to do an event without the permission of the Lord Mayor.

John Colette's father was the Lord Mayor of London, therefore he controlled the gates, and they searched out and they weeded out the agents of Rome.

The Inquisition threatened Colette, but they couldn't get to him.

They also didn't want to push too hard because remember who the king was, Henry VIII.

He was looking for a reason to break from Rome.

Colette then openly broke the law by traveling to Oxford and teaching in English scripture.

It was illegal to teach in any Latin, in any language but Latin.

When I say that, I don't mean just scripture.

You couldn't teach history except in Latin.

You couldn't teach because it was considered a holy language.

To this day at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, one of the oldest universities in Europe, when you get your diploma, it's in Latin, even your name.

So let's say one of the most common names in Scotland is Aleister.

It would be Alexander because that's the Latin name.

My name would be Patricia because Patrick means Patricia, one of the higher order.

My mother called me that with a sense of irony.

Even your name is Latin on your diploma.

Now they teach in English there, but some traditions in Britain don't go away.

So he taught in English.

That meant the common farmers standing outside the window could hear and understand for the first time in history somebody who was not in the upper classes could learn from university.

John Colette did that and he taught them how to translate bits of scripture in English and he also said out loud, the Vulgate Bible is corrupt and unreliable, it is not the word of God.

The faculty of Oxford sent John Colette to St.

Paul's Cathedral.

They thought it would keep him out of the public eye because nobody went to church, but thousands went there every Sunday.

By the way, before he showed up, 200 people on an average Sunday.

If you've ever been to St.

Paul's, you've got to go.

Massive.

Well, did you see the wedding of Diana way back in the day?

St.

Paul's.

Massive.

200 people.

He packed it, like we said.

In the crowd listening carefully was a man known to us as Erasmus.

Erasmus decided what was needed, if he was understanding this correctly, was a new, accurate Greek New Testament so that all scholars could see what the oldest manuscripts said and how inadequate a Bible the Vulgate was.

As soon as he said that out loud, he got death threats and a death warrant.

He was expelled from his teaching job at Oxford and friends alerted to him, the Inquisition is coming to kill you.

You've got to run.

So he fled to Europe, never again returned to England.

I know what you're thinking, fled to Europe, that's closer to Rome, you're right.

But he didn't just go to Europe.

He went to Switzerland.

Switzerland has always been its own place.

Even Hitler marching through Europe stopped and went around Switzerland.

Are you aware of why that is true?

One is they're protected by mountains.

It's hard to get through the mountains.

Two, the national sport of Switzerland is shooting.

They do long distance shooting is a national sport.

As you're driving on the highways there between two big mountains, if you know where to look, you can look up on this mountain where they're shooting at targets on that mountain.

Plus, every man, sorry, this sexist, every man in Switzerland aged 18 to 41 is a member of the army, must receive training and has at his house a fully automatic firearm and can carry a sidearm with just a few rules.

I've been in Switzerland many times where he's standing on the street and here come guys with bicycles riding to work with fully automatic weapons on their back.

By the way, robbery rate in Switzerland almost zero, almost zero, done happen.

Why?

Because you're not coming through the door with anything better than what they've got on the other side of it and they're trained.

So even back in that day, they were known for the crossbow.

Our William Tell, the crossbow and fighting.

So Erasmus goes to Switzerland.

Safe in its mountains, he published a Greek New Testament that had the Latin text side by side with the ancient text and he included notes pointing out the errors in the Vulgate, the false doctrines that spread from those errors.

That was the beginning of the death of the Vulgate.

When a man they tried to kill, they drove to the one safe place on earth.

What's next door to Switzerland?

Oh yeah, Germany.

What's in Germany?

Tons of printing presses.

It starts getting printed.

It starts getting out.

But you might say, but it's in Greek.

Oh, but wait, what was translated and published 20 years before a Greek grammar that anybody could teach themselves Greek?

Do you see God's timing?

All of a sudden it is a flood.

Quote from Erasmus, I should have had this on a slide.

I utterly dissent from those who are unwilling that the sacred scriptures should be read by the unlearned translated into their own language.

I wish that even the weakest woman should read the gospels, should read the epistles of St.

Paul, I long that the husbandman, common laborer, should sing some portion of them to himself as he follows the plow.

He wants it out in the hands of everybody.

Side note here.

There was a Roman Catholic cardinal named Hemenes spelled with an X, X-I-M-E-N-E-S, Hemenes, of Toledo, Spain.

He also published a complete Bible that had both testaments in Greek and a Hebrew version of the Old Testament and a Latin translation of the Old Testament, but the Catholic Church sat on it.

It went nowhere.

It's a shame.

We don't know more about what happened to him, but that was a brave and a scholarly thing.

English authorities banned Erasmus and banned his books, and Erasmus was not a fighter.

He was a scholar.

He was doing the salesman.

He wasn't a man of action.

He'd published it, but then he didn't do anything with it.

So somebody else came along.

Somebody at just the right time came and picked up Erasmus' work and, like a super spy, took it to the ends of the earth.

But we have to talk about him next week, because I have many miles to go before I sleep.

I hope that you're enjoying this.

These stories go on and on.

They are amazing, the twists and turns.

And you will start back again next week.