

## TWELVE POINTS OF LIGHT

### POINT 7: JOHANNES GUTENBERG - FIRST PRINTED BIBLE

#### INTRODUCTION

##### A. Importance

1. His invention, printing from movable type, made the Scriptures potentially accessible to every person.
2. It sparked a revolution in society as well as the church.
3. It made the Protestant Reformation possible.

##### B. Timeline

- 1272 Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*
- 1302 *Unam Sanctam* proclaims papal supremacy
- 1321 Dante completes *Divine Comedy*
- 1380 Wycliffe supervises English Bible translation
- 1413 Hus burned at stake
- 1453 Constantinople falls; end of a millennium of Christianity in Eastern Roman Empire
- 1456 Gutenberg produces first printed Bible
- 1479 Establishment of Spanish Inquisition begun against baptized Jews and Moors
- 1512 Michelangelo completes Sistine Chapel frescoes
- 1516 Erasmus publishes Greek New Testament
- 1517 Luther posts his *Ninety-Five Theses*
- 1536 William Tyndale burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English

##### C. Bible translator John Wycliffe (1330 - 1384)

###### 1. Contemporary issues

###### a. Access to the Bible

- 1) For centuries, scribes copied it by hand and with rise of monasteries, it became the occupation of monks.
- 2) That every family could own a Bible was unthinkable

###### b. *The Great Dying*

- 1) Black Death or bubonic plague spread throughout Europe in the 14<sup>th</sup> century
  - a) Carried by fleas and rats from the East through the trade routes
  - b) Reached Constantinople in 1347 and England by 1348
- 2) Up to ½ of the population of Europe perished
  - a) Many died without last rites - one bishop said if no priest is present at death, faith must take place of Sacrament.
  - b) Wycliffe believed plague was God's punishment on "covetousness, sensuality, and fraud" of clergy

###### c. Church position on Bible translation

- 1) Henry Knighton, a Catholic chronicler of Wycliffe's times, *Christ gave His Gospel to the clergy and the learned doctors of the Church so that they might give it to the laity and to weaker persons, according to the message of the season and personal need. But this Master John Wyclif translated the Gospel from Latin into English - the Angle not the angel language. And Wyclif, by thus translating the Bible, made it the property of the masses and common to all and more open to the laity, and even to women who were able to read...And so the pearl of the Gospel is thrown before swine and trodden underfoot and what is meant to be the treasure both of clergy and laity is now become the joke of both.*
- 2) Archbishop of Canterbury Arundel, *that pestilent and most wretched John Wycliffe, of damnable memory, a child of the old devil, and himself a child or pupil of Antichrist, who, while he lived, walking in the vanity of his mind - with a few other adjectives, adverbs, and verbs, which I shall not give - crowned his wickedness by translating the Scriptures into the mother tongue.*

- 3) Archbishop Arundel, to a synod of clergy in 1408, *Since it is dangerous, as St. Jerome witnesses, to translate the text of Holy Scripture from one language into another, because in such translations the same meaning is not easily retained in all particulars...we decree and ordain that no one shall in future translate on his authority any text of Scripture into the English tongue or into any other tongue, by way of book, booklet, or treatise. Nor shall any man read, in public or in private, this kind of book, booklet, or treatise, now recently composed in the time of the said John Wycliffe...under penalty of the greater excommunication.*
2. Wycliffe's basic doctrinal views
    - a. Ecclesiology (the Church)
      - 1) The true church is the Body of Christ, composed of the "congregation of the predestined."
      - 2) The only Head of the Church is Christ.
      - 3) Emphasized the individual's direct relationship to God through Christ.
    - b. Eucharist (Communion)
      - 1) Transubstantiation became a dogma of the Church in 1215.
      - 2) Wycliffe held a "receptionist view" where the determining factor governing the presence of Christ is the faith of the individual participant.
      - 3) He held the position of remanence (bread and wine remain unchanged).
    - c. Bibliology (Scriptures)
      - 1) He emphasized the authority of the Word of God, *Holy Scripture is the preeminent authority for every Christian, and the rule of faith and of all human perfection.*
      - 2) Every Christian has the right to know the Bible, *Forasmuch as the Bible contains Christ, that is all that is necessary for salvation, it is necessary for all men, nor for priests alone. It alone is the supreme law that is to rule Church, State, and Christian life, without human traditions and statutes.*
      - 3) Christians need a copy of the Bible in their own language, *Christ and His Apostles taught the people in the language best known to them. It is certain that the truth of the Christian faith becomes more evident the more faith itself is known...The laity ought to understand the faith and, as doctrines of our faith are in the Scriptures, believers should have the Scriptures in a language which they fully understand.*
  3. Notes of interest
    - a. He trained *poor preachers* who traveled around England teaching God's Word to common people in English.
    - b. Leading theologian and philosopher at Oxford, the most outstanding university of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.
    - c. Responsible for very first translation of entire Bible into the English language. It was made from a Latin translation of a hand-written manuscript a thousand years old and before any verse numbers had been assigned.
    - d. Considered "father of English prose" because of clarity and popularity of his writings which helped shape the English language.
    - e. Received 5 bulls of heresy from one pope, tried by the Catholic Church of England 3 times, summoned by 2 popes to Rome, but never imprisoned nor went to Rome.
    - f. Was never excommunicated but his body was exhumed 44 years after his death. His bones were burned and the ashes scattered in a nearby river.
    - g. His influence was so great that it helped give rise to the Protestant Reformation.
    - h. Martin Luther was accused of renewing the errors of Wycliffe and Hus by making the Scriptures his final authority.

<b>JOHANNES GUTENBERG (1398 - 1468)</b>
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A. Invention

1. Gutenberg developed an interest in printing by watching his father, a scribe, copy books.
  - a. He hoped to find a quicker, less tedious way to copy books.
  - b. He wanted a method that would eliminate scribal errors.

2. Became skilled in engraving and metal working.
  - a. Perfected several unique techniques by 1440.
    - 1) A hand held mold that could adjust to cast any letter accurately and in large quantities.
    - 2) A durable tin alloy that melted and solidified quickly and without distortion.
    - 3) An oil-based ink.
    - 4) A modified printing press.
  - b. He produced items for sale which were probably indulgences for pilgrims on their way to Aix-la-Chapelle.
3. Returned to Mainz, his hometown, in 1448, and established his printing business.
  - a. He had two typefaces underway
    - 1) A Latin Psalter printed in 1457
    - 2) *The Bible of 42 Lines*
      - a) It is also called the Mazarin Bible and was Jerome's Latin translation, the Vulgate.
      - b) It was printed between 1450 and 1456, and is oldest surviving printed book in the world.
      - c) Two hundred were produced and less than 50 copies survive.
  - b. He borrowed money for his business.
    - 1) He failed to repay the large loan.
    - 2) His creditor, Johann Fust, took Gutenberg to court and obtained rights to his press.

#### B. Impact

1. In 1456, only 33 languages had any part of the Bible.
2. By 1483, when Martin Luther was born, every large European country had at least one printing press and more copies of books were produced than in several of the previous centuries together.
3. New interest in learning Greek and Hebrew sprang up due to the printing of ancient texts in Italy, Germany and France and gave rise to the translation of Scriptures into common languages.

<b><i>WILLIAM TYNDALE (1494 - 1536)</i></b>
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#### A. Accomplishments

1. Mastered eight languages - Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English, French, and German.
2. Produced the first-ever mechanically printed New Testament in English.
  - a. His translations were so fundamentally correct and smooth in word flow that more than 90 percent of his wordings appeared in the King James Version published more than 100 years later.
  - b. More than 75 percent of his wordings appear in the Revised Standard Version of 1952.

#### B. Opposition

1. Many of the Catholic parish priests in his day were so corrupt that they were widely known as *common drunkards* and hosts to *brothel women*.
2. English Catholic church imposed a law making it a crime punishable by death to translate the Bible into English.
3. In 1519, church authorities publicly burned a woman and six men for teaching their children English versions of the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed.
4. Catholic authorities spent several thousand dollars twice in an attempt to buy and burn every copy of Tyndale's first edition of the English New Testament.
5. At the age of 42, he was strangled and then burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English.

<b><i>CONCLUSION</i></b>
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- A. Gutenberg's technical skills produced a printing press which promoted the Reformation.
- B. Martin Luther referred to books and pamphlets as "God's highest and extremest act of grace, whereby the business of the Gospel is driven forward."
- C. God sovereignly moves man and machine toward fulfillment of His eternal purposes.

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