



John Wycliffe

(Jon Wiclif)
1330-1384

“Englishmen learn Christ's law best in English. Moses heard God's law in his own tongue; so did Christ's apostles.”



“The laity ought to understand the faith, and since the doctrines of our faith are in the Scriptures, believers should have the Scriptures in a language familiar to the people, and to this end the Holy Ghost endued them with knowledge of all tongues.”



“The gospel alone is sufficient to rule the lives of Christians everywhere - any additional rules made to govern men's conduct added nothing to the perfection already found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ”

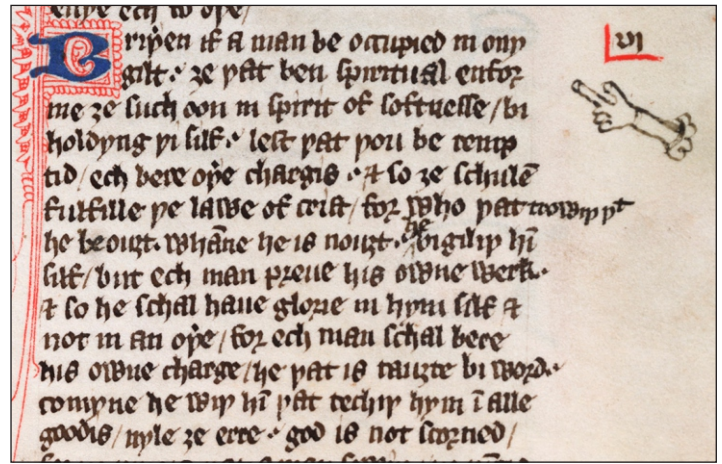
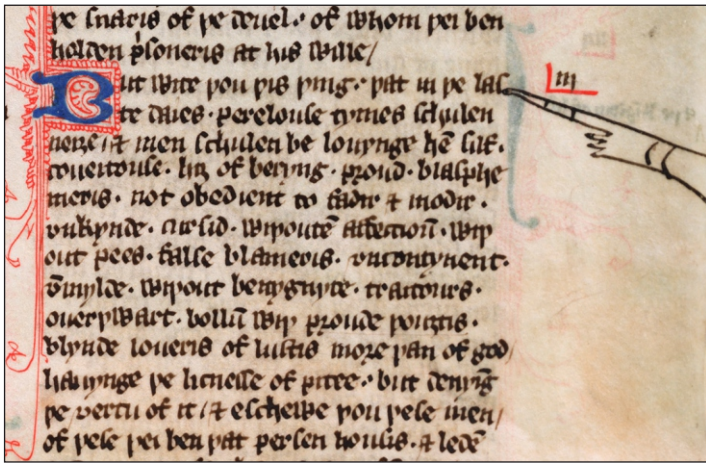


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The beginning of John's Gospel (1:1-3a) from a copy of the Wycliffe Bible. It reads, “In the bigynnyng was the word, and the word was at god, and god was the word. This was in the bigynnyng at god. Alle thingis weren maad bi hym ...”

The Wycliffe Timeline

- 700** – Bede (Saint Bede, Bede the Venerable) translates John's Gospel into English.
- 1323** – Walter Lollard is executed at Cologne, Germany.
- 1330** – John Wycliffe is born near Richmond, England.
- 1346** – He enrolls in Balliol College at Oxford University.
- 1346 - 1353** – The Black Death bubonic plague kills up to 200 million people in Europe and Africa.
- 1356** – Wycliffe earns bachelor of arts from Merron College (Oxford).
- 1361** – He earns Master's degree from Balliol College (Oxford).
- 1366** – Wycliffe granted doctorate of theology.
- 1374** – Appointed to represent King Edward III before a papal delegation.
- 1376** – Returns to England and is named rector of Lutterworth and Royal Chaplain.
- 1377** – In May, Pope Gregory XI declares Wycliffe a heretic and “Master of Errors.” By December, he agrees a kind of “house arrest” at Oxford.
- 1381** – Peasant's Revolt sees up to 30,000 rioters march on London.
- 1381** – With the revolt being attributed partially to his influence, Wycliffe is dismissed from Oxford and returns to Lutterworth where he intensifies work on an English Bible translation.
- 1382** – Wycliffe suffers the first of two strokes.
- 1384** – Wycliffe suffers second stroke and dies on Dec. 31.
- 1401** – Parliament passes “On the Burning of a Heretic,” condemning the Lollards.
- 1408** – Possessing English Bible becomes a capital offense.
- 1415** – Wycliffe posthumously condemned as a heretic.
- 1428** – His body is exhumed, burned and scattered in the River Swift.



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This printing of a Wycliffe Bible dates to 1410 and includes a few interesting “finger pointers” in the margin. While it is possible they were included by the original scribe, most often manucula (Latin for “little hand”) were added by readers. The two manucula pictured are listed below:

2 Timothy 3:1

But wite thou this thing, that in the laste daies perelouse tymes schuleneiye, and men schulen be louynge hem silf,

Galatians 6:1

Britheren, if a man be occupied in ony gilt, ye that ben spiritual, enforme ye such oon in spirit of softnesse, biholdinge thi silf, lest that thou be temptid.

Wycliffe’s Translation

Genesis 1:1-3

- 1 In the bigynnyng God made of nouyt heuene and erthe.
- 2 Forsothe the erthe was idel and voide, and derknessis weren on the face of depthe; and the Spirynt of the Lord was borun on the watis.
- 3 And God seide, Liyt be maad, and liyt was maad.

John 3:16

For God louede so the world, that he yaf his `oon bigetun sone, that ech man that bileueth in him perische not, but haue euerlastynge lijf.

Romans 6:23

the wagis of synne is deth; the grace of God is euerlastynge lijf in Crist Jhesu our Lord.

King James Version

Genesis 1:1–3

- 1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
- 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
- 3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.