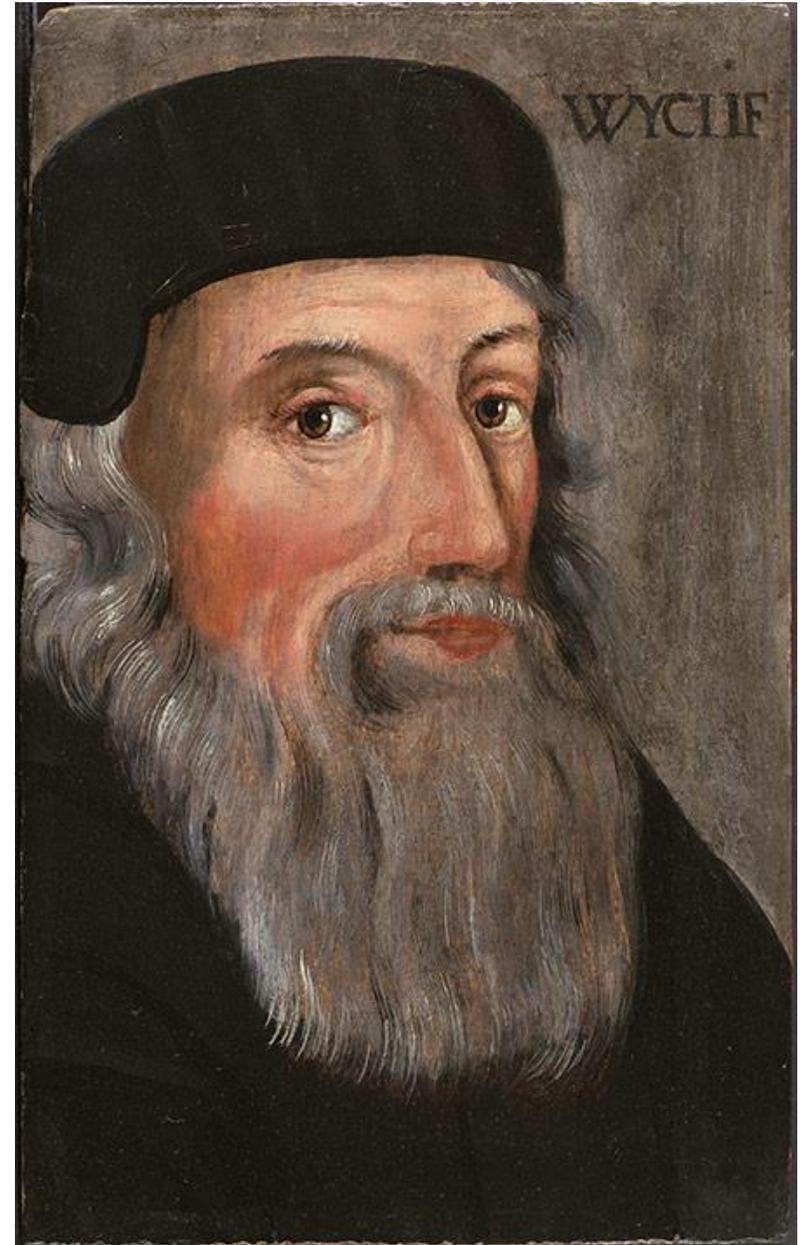




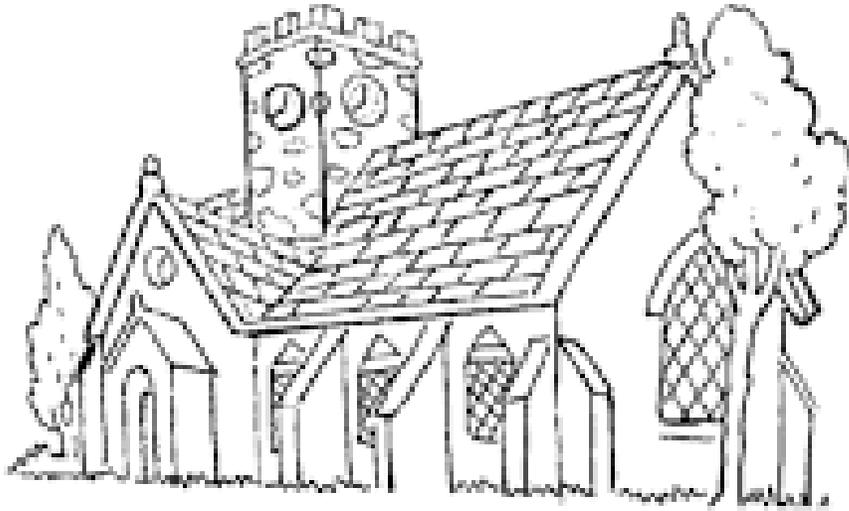
JOHN
WYCLIFFE
Morningstar of
the Reformation

- John Wycliffe is widely considered one of the medieval forerunners of the Protestant Reformation.
- His criticism of the practices and beliefs of the church foreshadowed those of later reformers.



JOHN WYCLIFFE'S CAREER AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Seminary professor at the University of Oxford
- Theologian and priest
- Bible translator
- Church reformer
- “Heretic”



- John Wycliffe was born in 1330 in the North Riding of Yorkshire, England.
- He was educated at Oxford.
- He taught at Oxford and became a regent master in arts at Balliol College, Oxford in 1360.

Wycliffe challenged many of the common ideas of his day in religion and politics

- Challenge to the wealth and power of the church and clergy; also a challenge to the king and nobles
- Challenge to the doctrine of transubstantiation
- Challenge to the idea that the Scriptures should not be translated into common languages

Challenge to the wealth and power of the church and clergy:

- **Simony** is the act of selling church offices and roles or sacred things. (Acts 8:5-24)
- **Indulgences** are a way to reduce the amount of punishment one has to undergo for sins (not found in Scripture); often were sold.

The Thirty-Three Conclusions on the Poverty of Christ

Wycliffe wrote this treatise around 1380. In this work, he asserted:

- Priests should not accept secular employment.
- The pope should not intervene in civil affairs.
- Secular rulers can take property from the pope or the cardinals when they abuse their privileges.

Challenge to the doctrine of transubstantiation

What is transubstantiation?

Transubstantiation is believed to be the change of substance or essence by which the bread and wine offered in the sacrifice of the sacrament of the Eucharist during the Mass, become, in reality, the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

- Wycliffe was a Realist philosopher
- He believed that universal concepts have a real existence



- If the bread and wine are no longer bread and wine, then they no longer exist
- Wycliffe believed that belief in transubstantiation led to idolatry and was unscriptural

England had been virtually free from heresy until Wycliffe published two treatises in 1375–76. He argued that the exercise of lordship depended on grace and that, therefore, a sinful man had no right to authority. Priests and even the pope himself, Wycliffe went on to argue, might not necessarily be in a state of grace and thus would lack authority.

Such doctrines appealed to anticlerical sentiments and brought Wycliffe into direct conflict with the church hierarchy, although he received protection from John of Gaunt. The beginning of the Great Schism in 1378 gave Wycliffe fresh opportunities to attack the papacy.



From August 1380 until the summer of 1381, Wycliffe was in his rooms at Queen's College, Oxford, busy with his plans for a

translation of the Bible and an order of Poor

Preachers who would take Bible truth to the people.

A translation of the Bible into the common language, or vernacular, spoken by the people, was an essential part of Wycliffe's challenge to the church. Because the church had become corrupted and discredited, the common people needed to know the word of God for themselves.

Wycliffe's Bible is the name now given to a group of [Bible translations](#) into [Middle English](#) that were made under the direction of [John Wycliffe](#). They appeared over a period from approximately 1382 to 1395.



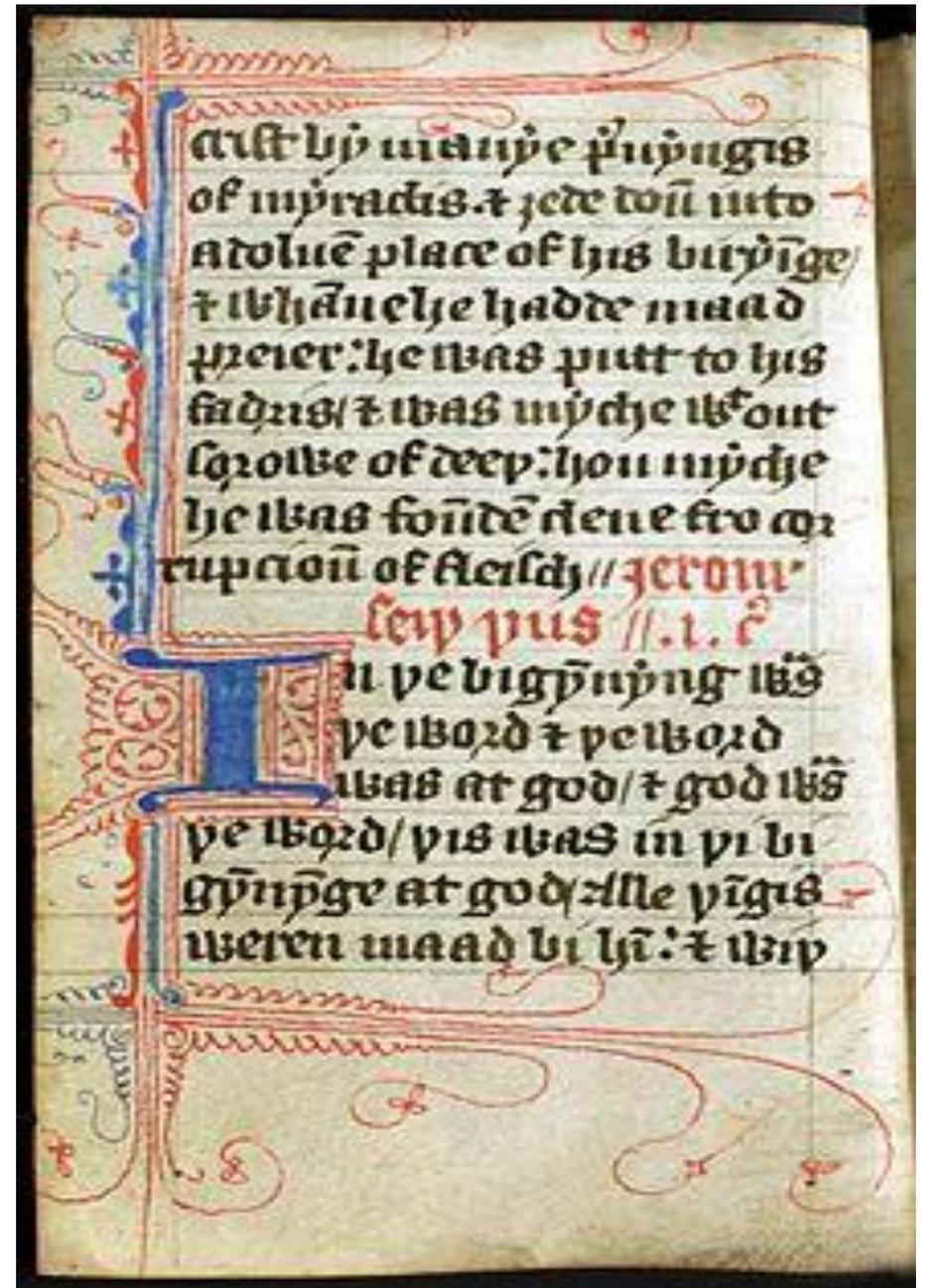
Long thought to be the work of Wycliffe himself, the Wycliffe translations are now generally believed to be the work of several hands. [Nicholas of Hereford](#) is known to have translated a part of the text; [John Purvey](#) and perhaps [John Trevisa](#) are names that have been mentioned as possible authors.

The translators worked from the [Vulgate](#), the Latin Bible that was the standard Biblical text of Western Christianity, and the text that conforms fully with Catholic teaching. Wycliffe had no authorization from the king or the pope to make a translation of the Bible, but his translation was very popular.

Wycliffe Bible texts are the most common manuscript literature in [Middle English](#).

More than 250 manuscripts of the Wycliffe Bible survive.

One copy sold at auction on 12/5/16 for \$1,692,500.00.



Surviving copies of the Wycliffe Bible fall into two groups, an early version and a later version. Both versions exhibit a slavish regard to the word order and syntax of the Latin originals; the later versions give some indication of being revised in the direction of idiomatic English.

Genesis 1:3

Latin Vulgate: **Dixitque Deus fiat lux et facta est lux**

Early Wycliffe: **And God seide, Be maad lizt; and maad is lizt**

Later Wycliffe: **And God seide, Lizt be maad; and lizt was maad**

Douay-Rheims: **And God said: Be light made. And light was made**

Wycliffe believed:

- The Scriptures are a sufficient rule of life apart from canon (church) law
- Every man, whether clergyman or layman, has the right to examine the Bible for himself
- The Scriptures are rightly “the property of the people”



Wycliffe established an order of “Poor Priests” or itinerant, wandering preachers to go barefoot and poorly clothed, with no money and a long staff, to carry his message to the people.

The Peasants' Revolt - 1381

At the same time as Wycliffe was commissioning his "Poor Preachers" to preach throughout England, peasants were rising up in protest of excessive taxation. The Peasants' Revolt rose up in Essex and Kent (southeast England), and spread to London.

- The first Lollard group centered on some of Wycliffe's colleagues at Oxford led by Nicholas of Hereford
- The movement gained followers outside of Oxford
- The anticlerical undercurrents of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 were ascribed, probably unfairly, to the influence of Wycliffe and the Lollards.

- In 1382 William Courtenay, archbishop of Canterbury, forced some of the Oxford Lollards to renounce their views and conform to Roman Catholic doctrine.
- The sect continued to multiply among townspeople, merchants, gentry, and even the lower clergy.
- Several knights of the royal household and a few members of the House of Commons gave support.

- Beginning in 1399, the new English King Henry IV began a campaign to stamp out heresy.
- The persecution of Lollards and other heretics caused the movement to go “underground.”
- For many years the movement was supported mainly among tradespeople and artisans, supported by a few clerical adherents.

Increasing Persecution of John Wycliffe and Death

Pope Gregory XI issued a papal bull, or proclamation, against Wycliffe on May 22, 1377. The bull denounced 18 of Wycliffe's ideas as erroneous and dangerous to Church and State.

Wycliffe continued to publish writings that criticized the church up until his death in December 1384.

- On November 17, 1382, Wycliffe was summoned before a synod at Oxford.
- He still commanded the favour of the court and of Parliament, to which he addressed a memorial.
- He was neither excommunicated then, nor deprived of his living.

- In his last years Wycliffe suffered terribly from rheumatism
- He was partially paralyzed due to a stroke
- He suffered another stroke on December 29, 1384 and died two days later.



JEAN WICLIF.

The Council of Constance declared Wycliffe a heretic on 4 May 1415, and banned his writings, effectively both excommunicating him retroactively and making him an early forerunner of Protestantism. The Council decreed that Wycliffe's works should be burned and his bodily remains removed from consecrated ground. This order, confirmed by Pope Martin V, was carried out in 1428.^[7] Wycliffe's remains were dug up and burned and the ashes cast into the River Swift.

The Legacy of John Wycliffe and the Lollards

Wycliffites in England were often designated by their opponents as "Bible men." The idea that Christians should read and know the Scriptures for themselves was new and often considered heretical in Wycliffe's day, although we take this for granted now.

John Wycliffe and his followers enabled the Scriptures to be accessed by anyone who could read in English. This helped fuel the translation of the Scriptures into other languages as well.

Wycliffe Bible Translators, founded in 1942, has made translations of either portions of the Bible, the New Testament, or the whole Bible in over 3,350 of the 7,350 languages on Earth, including 245 sign languages. (As of Oct. 2018)

Wycliffe's writings in Latin greatly influenced the philosophy and teaching of the Czech reformer Jan Hus.

The ideas of the Lollard movement, although heavily persecuted, continued and nearly 200 years later were instrumental in spreading the Protestant Reformation throughout England.

The translation of the Bible into English formed a very important part of the struggle of representative government against autocracy and liberty against dictatorship.

Wycliffe's work helped lay the foundation for some of the basic freedoms that we now enjoy, such as freedom of religion and freedom of speech. And today we have a large number of Bible translations available to us in English.