

English theologian and Oxford University professor John Wycliffe (c.1324-1384) was an early proponent of reform of the Roman Catholic Church. Most significant was his belief that Christians should have access to the Bible in the vernacular rather than learning Latin in order to read or hear the Word. Between 1382 and 1384, Wycliffe and his associates, known as the Lollards, created the first complete translation of the Bible into English out of the Latin Vulgate.

In 1378, Wycliffe had written *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, in which he affirmed that the Bible taken literally was the sole law of the church and that a translation without interpretation was needed so that the humblest person could learn from it. His translations, two principal versions of which have survived in over 150 manuscripts, include a literal version and a later more idiomatic English version.

Jan Hus (1370 - 1415), a leader of the Czech reform movement which anticipated the Protestant Reformation by a century, was strongly influenced by Wycliffe's writings and translated some into Czech. In 1415, the Catholic Council of Constance decreed Jan Hus to be a "Wycliffite" heretic and sentenced him to burn at the stake. At that time, they also ordered that Wycliffe's remains be exhumed and burned. Bishop Richard Fleming of Lincoln did this in 1428 and cast the ashes into the Swift River.

Wycliffe is called the "Morning Star of the Reformation" because of this translation work and his writings on the corruption of the church. Wycliffe's influence on Hus and, in turn, Hus's on Martin Luther, led the way for the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.

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A Smaller Biblia Pauperum, conteynynge thyrtie and eyghe wodecuttes illustratyng the lyfe, parblis, and miracles off Oure Blessed Lorde & Savioure Jhesus Crist, with propre descrypcions thereof extracted fro the orignall texte of Iohn Wiclf. Reprint with Preface by The Late Verie Rev. Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, D.D., Unwin, 1844, London.



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John Wycliffe: Morning Star of the Reformation

