The King James Version (KJV) is right hailed as one of the great classics – arguably *the* great classic – of English literature. But most people have no idea where it came from and how it came into existence. And so I am going to take a side-path (OK, a tangent) in my thread to devote a few posts to the KJV, also known as the Authorized Version (AV).

To start with, contrary to what a lot of people think, the KJV, which appeared in 1611 under, yup, King James of England, was not the first translation of the Bible into English. Not even close. The first English translation was by John Wycliff (or his followers), done long before, in 1382. Wycliff, however, did not translate the Bible from the original languages, Hebrew and Greek, but from the Latin Vulgate. That makes sense, since the Catholic church had always used the Latin version (ultimately going back to the fifth-century church father Jerome). And almost no one in the 14th century even knew Greek and Hebrew, let alone had access to Greek and Hebrew manuscripts.

Wycliff’s translation caused a furor in the Catholic Church (there was, of course, no Protestant church yet – not till the early 16th century. Christians in the west were all Catholic). The furor arose in part because ...

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