MAKING HISTORY

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Category: Bible Translation

History isn't something that happened 'then', it's something we live in 'now'.

One of the remarkable things about the Bible is that it claims to be a story which includes all of human history. It isn't simply a book of stories about the past, it is a narrative which starts with the creation of the world and carries on the story through to the new heaven and new earth and beyond. The Bible story isn't so much a part of human history, as human history is lived out within the story of the Bible. When we read the Bible, we don't just study the lives of people from a different age, we find that their story is actually our story. We find that we are literally living within the story of the Bible.

This was brought home to me very forcibly last night when the good folks at Hereford Cathedral hosted an evening for Wycliffe Bible Translators. One of the treasures of the Cathedral is the Mappa Mundi, which is a map, but so much more. In an ingenious fashion, the Mappa Mundi lays out a Biblical history from creation to eternity. The geography may be a bit skew-whiff, but the history is amazing!

The Cathedral is also home to some very old Bibles. For the first time in my life, I got to see both a Wycliffe Bible and a very early edition of the King James Version (a 'he Bible' so called because of a missing letter 's' in the book of Ruth). It was an amazing privilege to be so close to to such important historic artefacts. I was also struck by the way that these old books are a living representation of the eternal story they tell. They don't just recount the Biblical narrative, they are also memorials to the lives of those who worked so hard (and sometimes suffered horribly) to make them available to us.

The story of the Bible shaped the lives of the translators, who in turn translated the text so that others could encounter God through it and now, those books are a memorial to the lives of those who worked on them. I rather like that!

And it is still happening today! The world has changed drastically since the days of Wycliffe, as the photograph of a hand-written Wycliffe Bible lying in front of a PC shows. But the Story of the Bible is still as relevant as it ever was, and people are still finding that it is shaping their lives and around the world, translators are working on translating the Bible into over fifteen hundred different languages. The Bible encompasses history and it continues to make history.