

John Harmar and the Reina-Valera Spanish Bear Bible

Introduction

This writer paid a most informative visit to Winchester College at the invitation of two brothers in Christ. The visit was in part prompted because John Harmar, King James Bible translator, spent much of his life at the college, which houses his study. The visit was especially notable for the introduction to a vivid illustration from one of John Harmar's foreign language Bibles showing that ***"The words of the LORD"*** Psalm 12:6 are indeed ***"sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb"*** Psalm 19:10. See over-page following the brief overview below of the college, John Harmar and his work. It is hoped that the reader will thereby be encouraged to follow Paul's exhortation closely. ***"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"*** 1 Corinthians 15:58. See **References**¹ for resources used in this work.

The College

Winchester College is a linguistics college for 13-19 year-olds and the foremost in the world. The library contains many early copies of the scriptures including early King James editions. The library also houses the study of one of the King James translators, John Harmar 1555-1613. It is reported of John Harmar that:

Winchester Warden

Harmar was Winchester's Headmaster from 1588 to 1595 and Warden from 1596 until his death.

Master Translator

John Harmar was a member of the Second Oxford Company responsible for translating the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the book of Revelation. Many of the earliest available scriptural texts providing the basis of the new translation were written in Greek, and other sources that were important to consult were written in Latin. It was altogether fitting that Harmar, who had been called a "most noble Latinist and Grecian", be a member of the team.



John Harmar not only devoted four years of intense effort to this task, but at the conclusion of the translation he was one of three known men who were asked to serve on the committee of reviewers and revisers of the whole. The others we know who shared this task were John Bois and Andrew Downes. These men went through the entire Bible, checking the translation, resolving issues raised by the companies, and spotting concerns arising for the first time and dealing with them. This review in which John Harmar was a major player took nine months to complete according to John Bois. The painstaking effort it required is reflected in Bois' notes. The resultant translation owes much to their effort.

"an example of the believers"

John Harmar died not long after the AV1611 was born. However, as ***"an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity"*** 1 Timothy 4:12 it could equally be testified of John Harmar ***"And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me"*** Ezekiel 9:11.

The Reina-Valera Spanish Bear Bible

One item of John Harmar's library was the Reina-Valera Spanish Bible known as the Bear Bible. L to R Casiodoro de Reina, Cipriano de Valera. Being in Spain it was not possible for them to produce an entirely pure text untainted by Catholic corruptions but they did well, nevertheless i.e. ***"She hath done what she could"*** Mark 14:8. One source says this.



The Spanish Bible, and the many Protestant revisions of it are today commonly referred to as "*Reina-Valera Spanish Bibles.*" This is because of two men, [Casiodoro de Reina](#) and [Cipriano de Valera](#). Casiodoro was the first to translate the ENTIRE Spanish Bible into Castilian Spanish ([Castellano](#)). His work was printed in 1569, and because of a picture of a bear on the coverpage of his Bible, it became known as "THE BEAR BIBLE," or in Spanish, "*La Biblia del Oso.*" Cipriano de Valera later *revised* the work of Casiodoro de Reina and his revision was printed in 1602. Other sources explain the nature of "THE BEAR BIBLE."

The "Bible of the Bear" so named after the printing device of Samuel Apiarinus...is the earliest edition of the complete Bible in Spanish. Thomas Guarin, however, is the printer for this edition, but Apiarinus is certain to have been involved with the publication. The Hebrew inscription [in the edition] is taken from Isaiah 40:8: "The word of our God shall stand forever."



The depiction of the bear-cub reaching for the hive dripping with honey is reminiscent of the passage in the book of Ezekiel where the prophet is given a scroll by the Son of Man to eat: "Then I did eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness." [Ezekiel 3:3] Next to the tree a book is open and inscribed with the Tetragrammaton thus signifying the presence of God in the hunger and delight of the bear...There had been earlier Bibles in Spanish, but de Reina's, first printed in Basel, was the most influential. The de Reina Bible was revised in 1602 by Cipriano de Valera, originally a member of the same monastic order as de Reina, who was, from 1559, a professor at the University of Cambridge.

Though it was revised again several times up to the twentieth century, this Spanish Protestant translation is still known, and still in use, as the Reina-Valera Bible. It has a status among Spanish Protestants somewhat equivalent to that of the King James Bible among English speakers. The charming printer's mark of the bear climbing a tree for honey identifies the work of the Bern printer Mattias Apiarius, whose name (in his native German, "Biener") means "beekeeper." An apiary is of course a bee yard or place where bees are kept and bee-keepers are called apiarists.

Be Like a Hungry Bear

As was shown to this writer, the well-worn path reveals that the cub keeps coming back for more as the bees take the ingredients from the Book to make the honey in the hive, located in ***"the tree of life"*** Genesis 2:9, 3:22, 24, Revelation 2:7, 22:2, 14. Our tree is of course ***"the branch of the Lord...beautiful and glorious"*** Isaiah 4:2. Finally, note the bear doesn't mind any stings he gets. Remember therefore that ***"The words of the LORD"*** Psalm 12:6 both sweeten *and* sting i.e. comfort *and* discomfort but because ***"It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good"*** 1 Samuel 3:18. ***"And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter"*** Revelation 10:10.

References

- ¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winchester_College *Winchester College*
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Harmar *John Harmar*
kingjamesbibletranslators.org/bios/John_Harmar/ *John Harmar*
www.rrb3.com/bibles/spnbibl/reina_valera_explanation.htm *The Reina-Valera Spanish Bible*
manifoldgreatness.wordpress.com/2013/03/16/casiodoro-de-reina-and-the-bear-bible/ *Casiodoro de Reina and the Bear Bible*