

The rise and fall of a translational compound: “the only begotten” in the English versions of the New Testament

Piotr Blumczyński
University of Wrocław, Poland

ABSTRACT

The present paper is an attempt to account for the emergence of the designation “only begotten” in the English Bible, its widespread use in pre-modern versions, and its gradual and almost complete disappearance from most contemporary translations. A close examination of the origins of this designation, traceable to its Latin cognate *unigenitus* first introduced into the biblical tradition by St. Jerome to render selected occurrences of the Greek adjective *monogenēs*, reveals a unique theological inspiration behind it. “Only begotten,” recurring in English translation of the Bible for almost six centuries as an important christological title, has recently been replaced by translational solutions reflecting a more accurate understanding of the underlying Greek word.

KEYWORDS: monogenes, only begotten, unigenitus, Vulgate.