

Saturday, May 23, 2015—Great Lakes Grace Bible Conference—The Textual History of the English Bible: Discerning the State of the Text Before 1611

Introduction

- Today I have chosen the tall order of discerning the state of the English Bible before 1611 as my topic. At the outset, and in the interest of not being misunderstood, I would like to be clear about the following:
 - I am a King James Bible believer. I believe that the King James Bible is God's word for English speaking people. It has been translated from the proper text (*Textus Receptus* or *TR*) using the proper method (literal equivalency).
 - I am also a mid-Acts Pauline dispensationalist who believes some very specific things regarding God's working in time during the dispensation of grace. God is at work in the world today in the lives His of saints through His written word. God is not physically intervening like He was in time past with Israel.
- I further maintain, that what I believe about one (the Bible) ought not to conflict with what I believe about the other (God's working in time during the dispensation of grace). Doctrinal consistency is very important and should be sought after diligently.
- Herein lies a unique problem for all those who are King James Bible believers and mid-Acts Pauline dispensationalists. Historically, the King James position has been championed most visibly and vocally by Acts 2 Baptists who vehemently oppose our dispensational position. Consequently, much has been said in pro-King James literature that is not only inconsistent with our dispensational position specifically; but is also detrimental to an accurate enunciation of the King James position in general.
- If asked, I would be hard pressed to think of even one book on the King James position that I could recommend to someone without reservation or equivocation. The available literature on the matter is full of doctrinal problems of a dispensational nature, documentation problems, plagiarism, ad hominem attacks, or tabloid style sensationalism.
- Over the past four years (since the King James conferences in 2011), I have become convinced that we, mid-Acts Pauline dispensationalists, need to chart our own course with respect to the Bible issue by doing our own research and creating our own literature and resources.
- It is my belief that the King James Bible was the result of a nearly 100 year process of refinement that began with William Tyndale in 1526. Tyndale's rough draft was further refined through the publication of the following English translations of the *TR*: Coverdale (1535), Matthews Bible (1538), Great Bible (1539), Geneva Bible (1560), and the Bishops Bible (1568).

- Could any of these pre-King James English translations of the *TR* have rightly been called God's word for English speaking people? Was the King James textually necessary to establish all the correct readings in English? What was the state of the text in 1604 when the decision for an additional translation was made?
- In addition to seeking the answer these questions, the goal of this lesson is to investigate the historical context in which the decision to retranslate was made in 1604. Was that decision the result of divine supernatural intervention whereby God pulled the political strings of King James to authorize a new translation? Or, was there already a movement within the Bible believing English speaking word before 1604 that saw the need for a new translation?
- I believe that the historical evidence speaks to the truthfulness of the later as opposed to the former. If the doctrine of preservation is valid we should see it conforming itself in history. Furthermore, the later view is a consistent mid-Acts dispensational position regarding God's working in time, i.e., God works through believers as they believe and apply God's word to the details of their lives.
- In order to accomplish our purposes we will consider the following points and sub points.
 - Preliminary Political Considerations
 - Hampton Court and the English Bible
 - Discerning the State of the English Bible in 1604
 - Underlying Textual Comparisons
 - Dispensational Comparisons
 - Different Ways of Saying the Same Thing
 - Substantive Differences in Meaning
 - Conclusion

Preliminary Political Considerations

- Queen Elizabeth I died on the morning of March 24, 1603. Later that same day, James VI of Scotland was declared King James I of England (Sir Robert Cecil, Elizabeth's chief minister had been negotiating this move behind closed door since 1601.).
- On April 5, 1603 James left Edinburgh for London, promising to return every three years (a promise he did not keep), and progressed slowly southwards. As James migrated southward he was met on the way by a delegation of Puritans carrying a document called the Millenary

Petition. The petition outlined Puritan grievances against the Anglican Church as well as their desire to reform some of its practices.

- The Millenary Petition is claimed, but not proven, to have had 1,000 signatures of Puritan ministers. This carefully worded document expressed Puritan distaste regarding the state of the Anglican Church, and took into consideration James' religious views as well as his liking for a debate, as written in the King's *Basilikon Doron* (1599).
 - *Basilikon Doron* is separated into three books, serving as general guidelines to follow to be an efficient monarch. The first describes a king's duty towards God as a Christian, the second focuses on the roles and responsibilities in office and the third concerns proper behavior in the daily lifestyle. The work repeats James' argument for the divine right of kings, as set out in *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598), which was also written by James. It too warns against "Papists" and derides Puritans. It advocates removing the Apocrypha from the Bible. **The King's criticism of both Catholics and Puritans is in keeping with the king's philosophy of following a "middle path," a notion that would later manifest itself in James' decision to authorize a new translation into English.**
- Through the Millenary Petition, the Puritans sought to use their knowledge of James' writings to petition the King for further reforms to the Anglican Church of which James was now the head. Puritan objections set forth in the Millenary Petition include: 1) The signing of the cross during baptism, 2) Confirmation, 3) the administration of baptism by lay people, 4) the use of the rings in marriage ceremonies, 5) bowing at the name of Jesus, 6) requirement of the surplice and cap, and 7) the awarding of multiple ecclesiastical positions, and receiving pay for each. In addition, the Puritans disliked the terms Priest and Absolution (terms they perceived as Roman Catholic), wanted a stricter observance of the Sabbath (which was originally supported by James up until the 1617 publication of *The Book of Sports*), and claimed that ministers should be both "able and sufficient men."
- Conspicuously missing from the Millenary Petition is any language regarding a desire for a new translation of the Bible into English. The Petition was the impetus for the Hampton Court Conference in January 1604 (The meeting was originally set for November 1603 but has to be moved on account of an outbreak of Plague) it was at this meeting that James made the decision to authorize a new translation of the Bible into English.

Hampton Court and the English Bible

Note: The point of this section is not to set forth all the details of what transpired at the Hampton Court Conference. For our purposes we will limit our comments to those aspects of Hampton Court that aid with understanding the history of the English Bible.

- By 1604, there were two Bibles vying for acceptance within in England; the Geneva and the Bishops.

- Originally published in 1560 (New Testament only in 1557), by English exiles seeking to escape persecution under the reign of Bloody Mary, the Geneva Bible was the Bible of the Puritans and most popular among the people of England.
- At the same time, the Bishops Bible (1568) was the official Bible of the Church of England. A fact that highlights the popularity of the Geneva over the Bishops is that all the Biblical allusions/quotations found in the plays of William Shakespeare all came from the Geneva Bible and not the Bishops.
- By the time of the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, England was in the uncomfortable position of using two different Bibles. Further complicating matters was the reality that the situation had become political. The Puritans, who wanted further reforms to the Church of England, as evidenced by the Millenary Petition, favored the Geneva. Meanwhile, the high churchmen present at Hampton Court favored the Bishops. (Norton, *The KJB*, 81)
- On the second day of the meeting, Monday, January 16, 1604 the Puritans were called to stand before King James. John Reynolds (Rainolds) was their chief speaker. At the end of the day, after being excoriated by James up one side and down the other, at the tail end of a list of suggestions, seemingly out of nowhere, Reynolds dropped the first seed of the King James Bible. Accounts vary somewhat but Reynolds is reported to have said:
 - “May your Majesty be please that the Bible be new translated?” (Nicolson, 57)
 - “. . . Moved his Majesty that there might be a new translation of the Bible, because those which were allowed in the reigns of Henry the eight and Edward the sixth were corrupt and not answerable to the truth of the original.” (Norton, *The KJB*, 83)
- It is important to note that Reynolds’ request for a new translation appears to have been a complete afterthought. There is no mention of any Puritan misgivings regarding the English Bible in the Millenary Petition or on the agenda of items submitted to the King before Hampton Court.
- Regarding Reynolds’ request, English Bible Historian David Norton writes, “This was not one of the topics that Reynolds had said he would raise, and so appears almost as a casual interjection.” (Norton, *Textual*, 5) King James biographer David Teems titles his chapter on Hampton Court, “With all the Lightness of an Afterthought” to capture the apparent flippant nature with which Reynolds appears to have made his request. (Teems, 164-178)
- Reynolds buttressed his request by citing three passages from the Great Bible (1539): Galatians 4:25, Psalm 105:25, and Psalm 106:30 that he believed were poorly translated. According to [William Barlow’s](#) account, Reynolds stated the following regarding each passage:

- Galatians 4:25—“the Greek word *sustoicheo* (“answereth” in the King James) is not well translated, as now it is; Bordereth, neither expressing the force of the word, nor the Apostle’s sense, nor the situation of the place.”
 - Great Bible (1539)—For mount Syna is Agar in Arabia, and **bordreth** upon the city, which is now called Jerusalem, and is in bondage with her children.
 - Geneva Bible (1560)—(For Agar or Sina is a mountain in Arabia, and it **answereth** to Jerusalem which now is) and she is in bondage with her children.
 - Bishops Bible (1568)—For Agar is the mount Sina in Arabia, and **bordreth** upon the city, which is now [called] Jerusalem, and is in bondage with her children.
- Psalm 105:28—“They were not obedient; the original being, they were not disobedient.”
 - Great Bible (1535)—He sent darkness, & it was dark, and they were **not obedient** unto his word.
 - Geneva Bible (1560)—He sent darkness, and made it dark: and they were **not disobedient** unto his commission.
 - Bishops Bible (1568)—He sent darkness, & it was dark: and they **went not** from his words.
- Psalm 106:30—“Then stood up Phinees and prayed, the Hebrew hath executed judgement.” (Barlow)
 - Great Bible (1535)—Then stood up Phinehes and **prayed**, & so the plague ceased.
 - Geneva Bible (1560)—But Phinehas stood up, and **executed judgment**, and the plague was stayed.
 - Bishops Bible (1568)—Then stood up Phinehes, he **executed justice**: and so the plague ceased.
- Upon further consideration, Reynolds’ request not only appears flippant but weak. In his account, Barlow states the following regarding the three passages cited by Reynolds, “to which motion there was, at the present, no gainsaying, **the objections being trivial, and old, and already in print.**” (Barlow) In other words, the three passages cited by Reynolds’ to bolster his argument for a new translation did not contain anything that wasn’t already known to those present at the meeting.

- Why did Reynolds cite the Great Bible from 1539 when two subsequent English translations existed, namely the 1560 Geneva and 1568 Bishops? The readings in question cited by Reynolds from the Great Bible were identical to the Bishops Bible, the official Bible of the Anglican Church; but had been corrected in the 1560 Geneva Bible the Bible of the Puritans.
- Reading between the lines, David Norton points out the subtle nature of Reynolds' request. By citing these three passages Reynolds attacked the Bible of the church establishment and offered in its place as an alternative the Bible of the Puritans, i.e., the Geneva. According to Norton, "Reynolds probably hoped that his suggestion for a new translation would be dismissed and the much simpler solution be followed, adoption of Geneva as the official Bible of the Church." (Norton, *The KJB*, 84)
- In *A Textual History of the King James Bible* David Norton points out that "if the problem was simply a matter of a few such readings, they might easily be dealt with in the next printing of the Bishops Bible". (Norton, 6) Given the fact that the Geneva Bible corrects the three passages cited by Reynolds, when compared against the Great and Bishops Bibles, and that Reynolds offers exactly those readings provided by the Geneva it appears that the goal of his request was the royal sanctioning of the Geneva Bible for use in public worship in the Anglican Church.
- Barlow's notes record the reaction of Richard Bancroft, the soon to be named Archbishop of Canterbury, "if every man's humour should be followed, there would be no end of translating." (Barlow)
- The King's response no doubt surprised Bancroft and disappointed Reynolds. James supported the notion of a new translation while denying Reynolds implicit request for the royal sanctioning of the Geneva Bible.
 - "Whereupon his Highness wished, that some especial pains should be taken in that behalf for one uniform translation (**professing that he could never, yet, see a Bible well translated in English, but the worst of all his Majesty thought the Geneva to be**) and this to be done by the best learned in both the Universities, after them to be reviewed by the Bishops, and the chief learned of the Church; from them to be presented to the Privy Council; and lastly, to be ratified by his Royal authority; and so this whole Church to be bound unto it and none other: Mary, withal, he gave this caveat (**upon a word cast out by my Lord of London that no marginal notes should be added, having found in them which are annexed to the Geneva translation (which he saw in a Bible given him by an English Lady) some notes very partial, untrue, seditious, and favouring too much of dangerous, and traitorous conceits:** as, for example, Exod. 1:19, where the marginal notes alloweth disobedience to Kings. And 2 Chron. 15:16, the note taxeth Asa for deposing his mother, only, and not killing her." (Barlow & Norton, *The KJB*, 84)
- It turns out that James also believed that there needed to be "one uniform translation" but he would never sanction or recognize the Geneva on account of its marginal notes that he viewed as seditious and undermining the Divine Right of Kings. According to Adam Nicolson, author of

God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible, James caught Reynold's suggestion regarding the official sanctioning of the Geneva and reversed it by answering, "Yes; I will give you the opposite of what you want."

- "A translation was to be uniform (in other words with no contentious Geneva-style interpretations set alongside or within the text); with the learned authority of Oxford and Cambridge (which at least in their upper echelons, were profoundly conservative institutions, both of which had sent to the king long and high-flown refutations of every point in the Puritans' Millenary Petition); to be revised by the bishops (the very influence that Reynolds did not want); then given, for goodness' sake to the Privy Council, in effect a central censorship committee with which the govern would ensure that its stamp was on the text, no deviations or subversions allowed; and finally to James himself, whose hostility to any whiff of radicalism this afternoon would be clear. . . The treasured Geneva Bible would be forced to retreat into the privacy of people's homes and could no longer be used for public preaching." (Nicolson, 60)
- Regarding James' decision, David Teems writes, "this was James' *Irenicon* or message of peace, meant to reconcile the differences. (Teems, 169) In other words, by agreeing to the translation, James had struck a "middle path" between the Anglicans and Puritans. James' decision at Hampton Court is precisely in line with the political philosophy he outlined in *The True Law of Free Monarchies* and *Basilikon Doron* from the late 1590s. In short, it is quintessential James.
- Regarding this notion David Norton writes, "He (James) may further have thought that agreeing to the proposal would show him sympathetic to the puritans while allowing him to strike a blow at the mainstay of their beliefs. He may also have thought that in would keep the leaders of all parts of the Church busy and working together." (Norton, *The KJB*, 85)
- On the surface, it might appear that James responded rashly to the Reynolds' request. After all, the Puritans never mentioned prior to Hampton Court that they even desired a new translation of the Bible. How does one explain the swift and decisive nature of James' decision?
- In point of fact, James was already of a mind that the English Bible needed to be retranslated before 1604. John Spotswood's [*History of the Church of Scotland*](#) records that James favored a new translation of the Bible into English in a 1601 meeting of the general assembly of the Church of Scotland.
 - "A proposition was made for a new translation of the Bible, and the correcting of the Psalms in metre: his Majesty did urge it earnestly, and with many reasons did persuade the undertaking of the work, showing the necessity and the profit of it, and what a glory the performing thereof should bring to this Church: speaking of necessity, he did mention sundry escapes in the common translation, and made it seem that he was no less conversant in the Scriptures then they whose profession it was; and when he came to speak of the Psalms, did recite whole verses of the same, showing both the faults of the metre and the discrepancies from the text. It was the joy of all that were present to hear

it, and bred not little admiration in the whole Assembly, who approving the motion did recommend the translation to such of the brethren as were most skilled in the languages, and revising of the Psalms particularly to Mr. Robert Pont; but nothing was done in the one or the other.” (Spotswood, 465)

- While nothing substantial was ever done with this Scottish resolution, Spotswood reports “the revising of the Psalms he (James) made his own labour, and at such hours as he might spare from the public cares, went through a number of them, commending the rest to a faithful and learned servant.” (Spotswood, 465) James’ translation work on the Psalms was published in 1631 under the authorization of King Charles I. (Norton, *The KJB*, 83)
- What this proves is that prior to Hampton Court in 1604, James through his own study of the English Bible had come to believe that all was not as it should be. This notion was no doubt solidified via his own translation work in the Psalms. Independent from any Puritan prodding, James had come to believe that the English Bible needed to be revised before Hampton Court in 1604. Consequently, when Reynolds floated the idea for a new translation James seized the opportunity to do something he already believed needed to be done.
- Spotswood depicts James as having fulfilled his purpose from 1601 to “perfect” the English Bible via the translation of the King James Bible. For James this was the continuation of a process that began in 1601 during a meeting of the Church of Scotland. To this end Spotswood states the following,
 - “. . . yet the king did not let his intention fall to the ground, after his happy coming to the Crown of England; which with great pains and the singular profit of the church they perfected.” (Spotswood, 465)
- Before moving off this point it is important to note that in the 1601 meeting of the Church of Scotland, King James was merely agreeing with a proposition made by someone else calling for a “new translation of the Bible.” In addition, after much discussion, the motion was adopted by the Church of Scotland, according to Spotswood. This proves that there were others in addition to the King who believed the English Bible needed revising.
- A deeper look into the history of the English Bible before 1604 reveals that King James and the Church of Scotland were not the only ones clamoring for a new translation of the Bible into English. Historical evidence from the 1590s proves that a growing chorus of Bible believing Christians within the English speaking world had come to believe that a retranslation of the English Bible was in order and were calling for such a revision.
- Leading the charge in the 1590s was Hebraist and scholar Hugh Broughton. In 1597 Broughton published *An Epistle to the Learned Nobility of England Touching Translating the Bible from the Original*. Broughton’s *Epistle* sets forth in great detail the need for a revision and the principals upon which it should be undertaken.

- The project of assisting on a better version of the Bible was one which Broughton had long cherished and championed. Prior to 1597 Broughton addressed Queen Elizabeth on the subject in a letter dated 21 June 1593. Broughton's letter called for a revision to be conducted by him along with five other scholars. Only necessary changes were to be made with the goal of harmonizing the Scriptures. (Stephan, 461) David Norton reports that Broughton was especially concerned with what he perceived to be inconsistencies in the Biblical chronology. (Norton, *The KJB*, 81)
- While it seems impossible to know for sure how much support Broughton ultimately had for his revision plans there is evidence that the idea had some traction in late 16th century England. A.W. Pollard's 1911 publication *The Holy Bible: A Facsimile in a reduced size of the Authorized Version published in the year 1611* contains a draft copy of an "Act of Parliament for a New Version of the Bible." The purposed Act of Parliament calls for the perfecting of the multiple errors found in the vulgar (English) translations of the Bible. Pollard's reproduction is from a manuscript housed at the British Museum, MS. 34729 fol. 77, it states in part:
 - "An act for the reducing of diversities of Bibles now extant in the English tongue to one settled vulgar translated from the original.

For avoiding the multiplicity of errors, that are rashly conceived by the inferior and vulgar sort by the variety of the translation of bible to the most dangerous increase of papistry and atheism. And whereas many from the high to low of all sorts have been desirous greatly to have the holy book of God which for the Old Testament is in Hebrew for the New all originally in Greek to be translated in such sort, that such as study it, should in no place be snared, which work no doubt the lords spiritual of this Parliament with the painful travails of such of both Universities as they shall or may call unto them, may with the grace of Almighty God perfect, which will tended to her Majesties immortal fame being amongst the Christian princes universally known to be not inferior to any in the furthering and defending of the faith of Christ . . . Bee it therefore enacted by the Queens most excellent Majesty by the assent of the lords spiritual and temporal and the commons in this Parliament assembled and by the authority of the same. . ."

(Pollard, 138-139)

- The name of Bishop John Whitgift the Archbishop of Canterbury (1583 to 1604) during the reign of Elizabeth is attached to the resolution. The mention of Bishop Whitgift in addition to the clear reference to the "Queens most excellent Majesty" indicates that the resolution dates from the 1590s or late in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.
- The entry on Hugh Broughton found in Leslie Stephan's *Dictionary of National Biography Vol. VI* (1886) claims that Broughton's proposal for a new translation was backed by "sundry lords, and among them some bishops." (Stephan, 461) Despite this support his "application for carrying it out was unsuccessful." (Stephan, 461)

- Despite Archbishop Whitgift's name being tied to the purposed Act of Parliament in a letter to Sir William Cecil (Elizabeth's chief minister) dated 11 June 1597, Broughton blames Whitgift for "hindering his proposed new translation." (Stephan, 461)
- So, by 1604 the idea that a new translation was needed had been around for some time. A cross section of the English speaking world, represented by both secular and religious authorities in Scotland and England had supported the idea even though no decisive action was taken prior to 1604. David Norton writes, "it seems that England did not have the pure truth of the Bible, and there was uncomfortable awareness of errors, in both versions, especially in the Bishops' Bible." (Norton, *The KJB*, 81)
- The question is; why? Why had the conclusion been reached that a further translation of the Bible into English was in order? It is to answering these questions that we will now turn our attention.

Discerning the State of the English Bible in 1604

- As we have already seen, by 1604 there were two translations vying for acceptance in the English speaking world, the Geneva Bible of 1560 and the Bishops Bible of 1568. While the Geneva was the Bible of the people and Puritans the Bishops was the official Bible of the Church of England.
- It is important to note that the King James translators viewed themselves as revisers, not as creators of a new translation. In the preface to the 1611, the translators stated,
 - "Truly, good Christian reader, we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one . . . but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one, not justly to be expected against, that hath been our endeavor, that our mark."
- This statement is consistent with the rules provided to the translators by the new Archbishop Richard Bancroft. Rule 1 stated that the Bishops Bible was to serve as the base text for the project and was only to be deviated from as the truth of the original allowed. Meanwhile, Rule 14 stated what other versions were to be consulted when they were found to "agree better with the text than the Bishops Bible". These included: Tyndale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Whitechurch's, and Geneva.
 - Rule 1: The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the Bishops' Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit.
 - Rule 14: These translations to be used when they agree better with the text than the Bishops Bible, viz.: Tyndale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Whitechurch's, and Geneva.
- Using Rule 1 as a starting point, a recent collation of the King James New Testament with the Bishops New Testament was conducted by Lawrence Vance. Vance's findings published in his

2015 book *The Making of the King James New Testament* reveal that the King James and Bishops Bibles are essentially identical in 91 % of the New Testament readings. Vance further concluded that in passages where the Bishops and the King James read differently; and there was no original reading supplied by the King James translators, the majority of the time the King James readings were supplied by the Geneva.

- Not only are these findings in line with what the King James translators said about their own work in the preface but they are also consistent with David Norton's thesis in *The King James Bible: A Short History From Tyndale to Today*. Norton views Tyndale as the first rough draft of the King James Bible and that all subsequent TR translations of the Bible into English (Coverdale, Matthews, Great, Geneva, and Bishops) were further draft refinements ultimately culminating in the King James.
- This approach is absolutely essential to bear in mind when endeavoring to discern the state of the English text before 1611. In order to ascertain the text's state in 1604 we will compare the King James with its two immediate predecessors vying for dominance at the time of Hampton Court, namely the Geneva and Bishops Bibles. To accomplish this task, we will look at the following four types of comparisons and provide at least three examples for each type:
 - Underlying Textual Comparisons
 - Dispensational Comparisons
 - Different Ways of Saying the Same Thing
 - Substantive Differences in Meaning

Underlying Textual Comparisons

- Comparing the Geneva and Bishops Bibles with the King James is not even remotely the same as comparing the King James with a modern version (NIV or ESB). The King James and its English predecessors originate from the same underlying Greek text, i.e., the *Textus Receptus*.

Mark 1:1-2

Geneva	Bishops	NIV
1) The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2) As it is written in the Prophets , Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.	1) The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God. 2) As it hath been written in the prophets : Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.	1) The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, 2) as it is written in Isaiah the prophet : "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"

Colossians 1:14

Geneva	Bishops	NIV
In whom we have redemption through his blood , that is, the forgiveness of sins,	In who we have redemption through his blood , the forgiveness of sins:	In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Galatians 2:16

Geneva	Bishops	NIV
Know that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ , even we, I say, have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ , and not by the works of the Law, because that by the works of the Law, no flesh shall be justified.	Know that a man is not justified by the deeds of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ : And we have believed on Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ , and not by the deeds of the law, because by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified.	Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ . So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

Dispensational Comparisons

- Dispensational truth remains intact in both the Geneva Bible and Bishops Bible as the following verses demonstrate.

Galatians 2:7

Geneva	Bishops	NIV
But contrariwise, when they saw that the Gospel over the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the Gospel over the circumcision was unto Peter;	But contrary wise, when they saw that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the Gospel of the circumcision was committed unto Peter.	On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised , just as Peter had been to the circumcised .

Ephesians 3:6

Geneva	Bishops	NIV
That the Gentiles should be inheritors also, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel,	That the gentiles should be inheritors also, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the Gospel:	This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel , members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

II Timothy 2:15

Geneva	Bishops	NIV
Study to shew thyself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, dividing the word of truth aright .	Study to shew thy self approved unto God, a workman not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth .	Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth .

Different Ways of Saying the Same Thing

- The Geneva Bible’s reading in II Timothy 2:15 highlights an important consideration, while the wording between the King James and the Geneva Bible’s is not exactly the same, the meaning is identical, i.e., a different way of saying the same thing.
 - Geneva: “. . . **dividing the word of truth aright.**”
 - King James: “. . . **rightly dividing the word of truth.**”

- In 2011, I taught a lesson at the July conference in Chicago on “[Inerrancy and King James Bible.](#)” Drawing heavily from David Norton’s research in *The Textual History of the King James Bible*; I concluded that we should not demand **exact sameness** or **verbatim wording** as our definition of inerrancy. This conclusion was reach largely on account of the FACT that there are textual differences between the various editions of the King James that are greater than simply differences in spelling and punctuation. The King James Bible is inerrant because it does not report/convey any information that is false. Modern versions err, because they and their underlying Greek text have been altered so drastically, so as to affect Bible doctrine, i.e., they report information that is false.

- Many of the differences between the Geneva, Bishops, and King James are just different ways of saying the same thing. In other words, they are not substantive differences in meaning. Please consider the following examples.

Job 15:2

Geneva	Bishops	King James
Shall a wise man speak words of the wind , and fill his belly with the East wind?	Shall a wise man’s Answer be as the wind , and fill a man’s belly as it were with the wind of the east?	Should a wise man utter vain knowledge , and fill his belly with the east wind?

Job 16:20

Geneva	Bishops	King James
My friends speak eloquently against me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.	My friends Give me many words to scorn , and mine eye poureth out tears unto God.	My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.

Mark 8:24

Geneva	Bishops	King James
And he looked up, and said, I see men, for I see them walking like trees.	And he looked up, & said, I see men: for I perceive the walk as [they were] trees.	And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

Luke 13:3

Geneva	Bishops	King James
I tell you, nay: but except ye amend your lives , ye shall all likewise perish.	I tell you nay: but except ye repent , ye shall all likewise perish.	I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent , ye shall all likewise perish.

Acts 9:28

Geneva	Bishops	King James
And he was conversant with them at Jerusalem,	And he had his conversation with them at Jerusalem,	And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

- Many more examples like these could be cited, but time and space will not permit. When I first conceived of this study, I thought that examples of this type (Different Ways of Saying the Same Thing) were all I would find between the three versions in question. In fact, my original working title for this study was, “What If there was no King James Bible: Would We Still Have God’s Word in English?”
- Brothers David Reid and Charlie McQuellen advised me against arguing for a counter factual hypothetical. I am glad they so advised, because upon further investigation I concluded that the King James was absolutely necessary in terms of establishing the correct readings in English and that there are substantive differences in meaning between the King James and its two prominent predecessors the Geneva and Bishops Bibles.

Substantive Differences in Meaning

- For our purposes a substantive difference in meaning is a difference of the sort that affects the inerrancy of Scripture. In other words, the difference is so great that it affects the doctrine being taught and/or the details or order of events. In short, these are examples that affect the veracity and trustworthiness of the text.

II Samuel 21:19

Geneva	Bishops	King James	NIV
And there was yet another battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanah the son of Jaare-oregim, a Bethlehemite slew Goliath the Gittite : the staff of whose spear was like a weaver’s beam.	And there was another battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaere Oregim a Bethlehemite slue Goliath ye Gethite : the staff of whose spear was as great as a weaver’s cloth beam.	And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, a Bethlehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite , the staff of whose spear <i>was</i> like a weaver's beam.	In another battle with the Philistines at Gob, Elhanan son of Jair-Oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite , who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod.

- Both the Geneva and Bishops readings in this case contradict themselves when they report in I Chronicles 20:4-5 that Elhanan slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath. The King James Bible

corrects the reading and the contradiction by inserting the phrase “the brother of” into II Samuel 21:19.

- I Chronicles 20:5— And there was yet another battle with the Philistines: and Elhanan the son of Jair slew Lahmi, the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whose spear staff was like a weaver’s beam. (Geneva)
- I Chronicles 20:5— And there was battle again with the Philistines, & Elhanan the son of Jair slue Lahemi the brother of Goliath the Gethite, whose spear was like a weaver’s beam. (Bishops)
- This is an example of a substantive difference in meaning that is corrected in the King James. The King James corrected the error and presents a pure reading. For more information on the translation of II Samuel 21:19 please read the article [“Brother of Goliath” or “Goliath” in 2 Samuel 21:19?”](#) on the KJV Today webpage.

Malachi 2:16

Geneva	Bishops	King James
If thou hatest her, put her away, saith the Lord God of Israel, yet he covereth the injury under his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore keep yourselves in your spirit, and transgress not.	If thou hatest her, put her away, saith the Lord God of Israel: yet he couereth the injuru under his garment, saith the Lorde of hosts, and be ye kept in your spirit, and transgress not.	For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away : for <i>one</i> covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

- Both the Geneva and Bishops readings make out like God is okay with the practice of divorce. Meanwhile the King James texts states very clearly that God “hateth putting away,” i.e., divorce.

John 1:1-4

Geneva	Bishops	King James
1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and that Word was God. 2) This same was in the beginning with God. 3) All things were made by it , and without it was made nothing that was made. 4) In it was life, and the life was the light of men.	1) In the beginning was the word, & the word was with God: and that word was God. 2) He was with God in the beginning. 3) All things were made by it : and without it , was made nothing that was made. 4) In it was life, and the life was the light of men,	1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2) The same was in the beginning with God. 3) All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. 4) In him was life, and the life was the light of all men.

- Christ’s deity is undermined by the readings found in the Geneva and Bishops Bibles by referring to the second member of the Godhead as an “it” as opposed to “him” in the King James.

- There are many additional examples from each of the four categories that could be considered if we had more time. In preparation for this study I conducted my own collation/comparison of the Geneva, Bishops, and King James Bibles; I have made that document available on my church's website for those interested in further study of this topic.
- After conducting the collation, I am absolutely convinced that the King James Bible needed to happen as a further revision of the text in order to accurately establish all the correct readings in English. While the Geneva and Bishops would still be preferable when compared with modern versions all was not as it should have been in these earlier translations.
- Given the fact that the Bishops New Testament essentially agrees with 91% of the King James New Testament it would be fair to say that what the English speaking world possessed in 1604 was very good but needed a final polishing to establish all the correct readings in English. With the King James all the readings that should be there are present and all the readings that are not accurate are left out.

Conclusion

- How do we explain this accomplishment? Was the King James Bible the result of divine miraculous supernatural intervention as many King James supporters have asserted? Did God providentially intervene to pull James' political strings thereby causing him to capitulate to Reynolds' request for a new translation? Were the translators inspired in the same sense as Paul when he wrote Romans?
- Or, were there Bible believing English Christians who knew all was not as it should be in their English Bibles prior to 1604? Was God working in and through these Bible believing saints who cared about the state of the English text to further refine the text?
- Which answer is more in line with what we believe about God's working in time as mid-Acts Pauline dispensationalists? In my estimation it is the second. The preservation of God's word throughout the dispensation of grace was accomplished by Bible believing Christians with a heart bent on copying, disturbing, and translating God's word. Why should we view the circumstances surrounding the decision to retranslate the Bible in 1604 differently?
- I believe that adopting the view I have presented in this study is not only in line with the doctrine/process of preservation but is also supported by our views about God's working in time in the dispensation of grace. Moreover, it is also supported by a mounting pile of heretofore ignored or neglected historical evidence. At least a decade before 1604, there was a mounting chorus of voices calling for a retranslation of the Bible into English, one of which was King James himself.
- I firmly believe that this places us on the firmest ground possible because it allows us to prove from history what the doctrine of preservation teaches one to believe regarding the matter. In others, the doctrine is yet again confirmed in time and history.

- This is why we need to be willing to forge our own path on the Bible issue and not allow positions regarding the Kings James forged by Acts 2 Baptists to dominate our thinking on the matter. Believing in divine, miraculous, political, or providential intervention may be okay for them but it is certainly out of step with what we believe as mid-Acts Pauline dispensationalists.

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