

Sunday, May 17, 2020—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 117 The Coverdale Bible: Assessing the Contents of the First Complete English Bible

Introduction

- Thus far we have done four studies on the Coverdale Bible. In doing so, we have sought to assess the following aspects of the project:
 - The Coverdale Bible: Assessing Its Impetus ([Lesson 113](#))
 - The Coverdale Bible: Assessing Its Source ([Lesson 114](#))
 - The Coverdale Bible: Assessing Coverdale's Ability as a Translator ([Lesson 115](#))
 - The Coverdale Bible: Assessing Coverdale as a Reviser of Tyndale ([Lesson 116](#))
- Since Coverdale's Bible was the first complete English Bible ever printed, prudence dictates that we spend some time looking at its contents since it set the standard for printed English Bibles moving forward.
- The trend setting nature of Coverdale's Bible is most apparent when it comes to his handling of the Apocrypha, a topic which will comprise the bulk of this Lesson.
- Before discussing the Apocrypha, I would like to comment on the following aspects of the project.
 - Organization, Layout, & Features
 - Marginal notes

Organization, Layout, & Features

- The first complete Bible in English was a small folio in size. There are fifty-seven lines of text per page and the type face is comprised of angular black letters. (Dore, 93)
- In terms of front material, as we have already seen, Coverdale's Bible contained 1) Title Page, 2) Dedication to Henry VIII, 3) Prologue: Myles Coverdale Unto the Christian Reader, and 4) Books of the Holy Bible i.e., Table of Contents Pages.

The booke of the hole Byble,

how they are named in Englysh and Latyn / how longe they are wyrtten in the allegacions, how many chapters every booke hath, and in what leafe every one begynneth.

- According to these pages, Coverdale divided the Bible into six parts:

- The Books of the First Part
 - Genesis to Deuteronomy
- The Books of the Second Part
 - Josua [Joshua] to Hester [Esther]
- The Books of the Third Part
 - Job to Solomon's Balettes [Ballads]
- The Prophets
 - Essay [Isaiah] to Malachy [Malachi]
- The Apocrypha
 - Esdras to Macabees
- The New Testament
 - Matthew to Revelation

The booke of the hole Byble,

how they are named in Englysh and Latyn how longe they are written in the allegacions, how many chapters euery boke hath, and in what leafe euery one begynneth.

The booke of the fyrst parte.

Abbreviation.	Boke.	Chapters.	Leafe.
Gen.	Genesis, the fyrst boke of Moyses.	l.	fyrst.
Exo.	Exodus, the seconde boke of Moyses.	xl.	xxiii.
Leut.	Leuiticus, the thyrde boke of Moyses.	xxvii.	xlvi.
Num.	Numerus, the fourthe boke of Moyses.	xxxvi.	lv.
Deut.	Deuteronomion, the fyfth boke of Moyses.	xxxiii.	lxxiii.

The booke of the seconde parte.

Abbreviation.	Boke.	Chapters.	Leafe.
Jos.	Josue, the boke of Josua.	xxiii.	ii.
Jud.	Judicum, the boke of the Judges.	xxi.	xli.
Ruth.	Ruth, the boke of Ruth.	iiii.	xxviii.
I. Reg.	Regum, the fyrst boke of the kynges.	xxi.	xxvi.
II. Reg.	Regum, the seconde boke of the kynges.	xxviii.	xl.
III. Reg.	Regum, the thyrde boke of the kynges.	xxii.	lii.
IIII. Reg.	Regum, the fourthe boke of the kynges.	xxv.	lxxvi.
I. Par.	Paralipomenon, p. I. boke of p. Cronicles.	xxv.	lxxvi.
II. Par.	Paralipomenon, p. II. boke of p. Cronicles.	xxvii.	lxxvii.
I. Eld.	Eldre, the fyrst boke of Eldas.	l.	cxvi.
II. Eld.	Eldre, the seconde boke of Eldas.	xxii.	cxv.
Hester.	Hester, the boke of Hester.	l.	cxvii.

The booke of the thyrde parte.

Abbreviation.	boke.	Chapters.	Leafe.
Job.	Job, the boke of Job.	xlvi.	fyrst.
Psal.	Psalterium, the Psalter.	cl.	xi.
Pro.	Proverbia, the proverbes of Salomon.	xxxi.	xxviii.
Eccle.	Ecclesiastes, the preacher of Salomon.	xxi.	xlvi.
Cant.	Cantica Canticorum, Salomons balettes.	vi.	l.

The Prophetes.

Abbreviation.	Boke.	Chapters.	Leafe.
Esa.	Esaia, Esay the prophete.	lxvi.	ii.
Jer.	Jeremias, Jeremy the prophete.	lii.	xxiii.
Lren.	Lreni, the lamentacions of Jeremy.	v.	xlvi.
Bar.	Baruc, Baruc the prophete.	vi.	li.
Ezech.	Ezechiel, Ezechiel the prophete.	xlvi.	lv.
Dan.	Daniel, Daniel the prophete.	xi.	lxxvii.
Ose.	Oseas, Oseas the prophete.	xxii.	lxxviii.
Joel.	Joel, Joel the prophete.	ii.	lxxviii.
Amos.	Amos, Amos the prophete.	ix.	lxxviii.
Abd.	Abdias, Abdias the prophete.	i.	xc.
Jon.	Jonas, Jonas the prophete.	iiii.	xc.
Miche.	Micheas, Micheas the prophete.	vii.	xcii.
Na.	Naum, Naum the prophete.	iii.	xcviii.
Abac.	Abacuc, Abacuc the prophete.	iii.	xcv.
Soph.	Sophonias, Sophony the prophete.	iii.	xcvi.
Agg.	Aggeus, Aggeus the prophete.	ii.	xcvii.
Zacha.	Zacharias, Zachary the prophete.	xxiii.	xcviii.
Mal.	Malachias, Malachy the prophet.	iii.	ci.

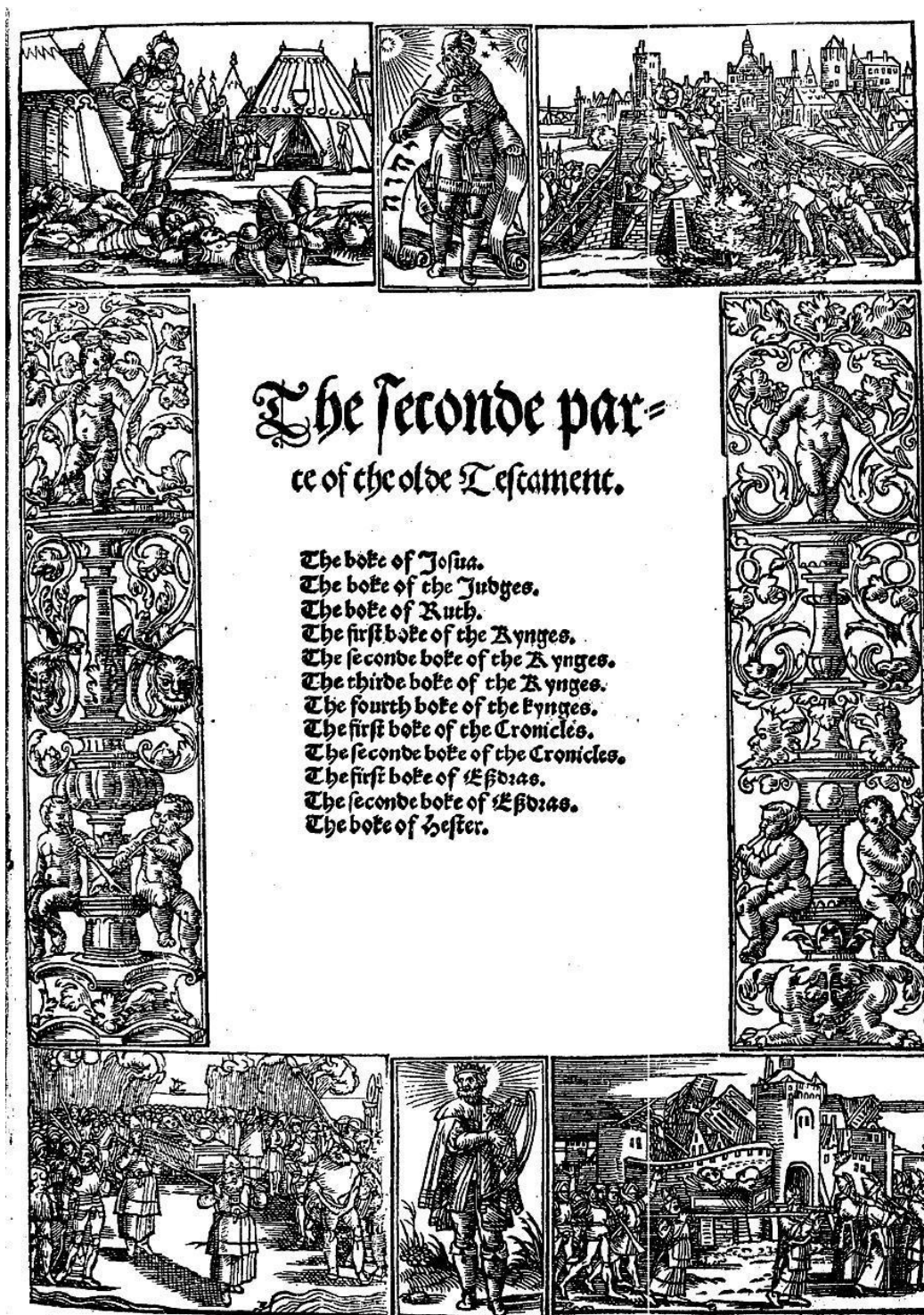
The Apocrypha.

Abbreviation.	Boke.	Chapters.	Leafe
III. Eldre.	Eldre, the thyrde boke of Eldras.	ix.	ii.
III. Eldre.	Eldre, the fourth boke of Eldras.	xxvi.	viii.
Tob.	Tobias, the boke of Tobias.	xiii.	xx.
Judith.	Judith, the boke of Judith.	xxvi.	xxviii.
Certaine Chapters of Isester.		vi.	xxx.
Sap.	Sapientia, the boke of wysdome.	xxx.	xxxv.
Eccli.	Ecclesiasticus, Iesus Syrac.	ii.	xxxix.
Sus.	Susanna, the storye of Susanna.	i.	lvi.
Bel.	Bel, the storye of Bell.	i.	lviii.
I. Mac.	Machabeorum, the first boke of the Mach.	xxvi.	lix.
II. Mac.	Machabeorum, The secorde boke of the Mac.	xxv.	lxxiii.

The new Testamēt.

Abbreviation.	Boke.	Chapters.	Leafe
Math.	Mathew the Euangelist.	xxviii.	ix.
Mar.	Marke the Euangelist.	xxvi.	xxv.
Luc.	Luke the Euangelist.	xxiii.	xxv.
Joh.	Jhon the Euangelist.	xxi.	xi.
Act.	The Actes of the Apostles.	xxviii.	ii.
Rom.	The Epistle to the Romaynes.	xxvi.	lxvi.
I. Cor.	The first epistle to the Corinthians.	xxvi.	lxxv.
II. Cor.	The secorde epistle to the Corinthians.	xiii.	lxxviii.
Gal.	The epistle to the Galathians.	vi.	lxxxii.
Ephe.	The Epistle to the Ephesians.	vi.	lxxxiii.
Phil.	The epistle to the Philippians.	iii.	lxxxvi.
Col.	The epistle to the Colossians.	iii.	lxxxvii.
I. Tess.	The first Epistle to the Tessalonians.	v.	lxxxix.
II. Tess.	The secorde Epistle to the Tessalonians.	iii.	xc.
I. Timo.	The first Epistle unto Timothy.	vi.	lxi.
II. Timo.	The secorde Epistle unto Timothy.	iii.	xcij.
Tit.	The epistle unto Titus.	iii.	xciii.
Phile.	The epistle unto Philemon.	i.	xciiii.
I. Pet.	The first epistle of S. Peter.	h.	xcv.
II. Pet.	The secorde epistle of S. Peter.	iii.	xcvi.
I. Joh.	The first epistle of S. Jhon.	h.	xcviii.
II. Joh.	The secorde epistle of S. Jhon.	i.	xcix.
III. Joh.	The thirde epistle of S. Jhon.	i.	cc.
Heb.	The epistle unto the Hebrewes.	xiii.	c.
Jac.	The epistle of S. James.	h.	ciii.
Jud.	The epistle of S. Jude.	i.	cvi.
Apo.	The Revelation of S. Jhon.	xxi.	cvi.

- Each one of these six parts had a dedicated title page. The following is an example of “The Books of the Second Part” i.e., Joshua through Esther. The other five “parts” have similar title pages.



- Another feature of Coverdale's Bible was the use of wood cut illustrations and drop caps to decorate the page and offer visual aids to the reader. The following example is taken from Genesis 1. Similar artwork and drop caps can be found throughout the work.

The first booke of Moyses, called Genesis. Ho. i.



The first Chapter.

2
ad
sa
b
a
ic



And God sayde: let there be lighte, & there was lighte. And God sawe the lighte that it was good. Then God benydet & lighte from darkness, and called the lighte, Daye, and the darkness, Nighte. Then of the eveninge and morninge was made the first daye.

It began mynys God created hea- ven & earth: and & earth was voyde and emptye, and darkness was vpon the deep, & the spirit of God moved vpon the water.

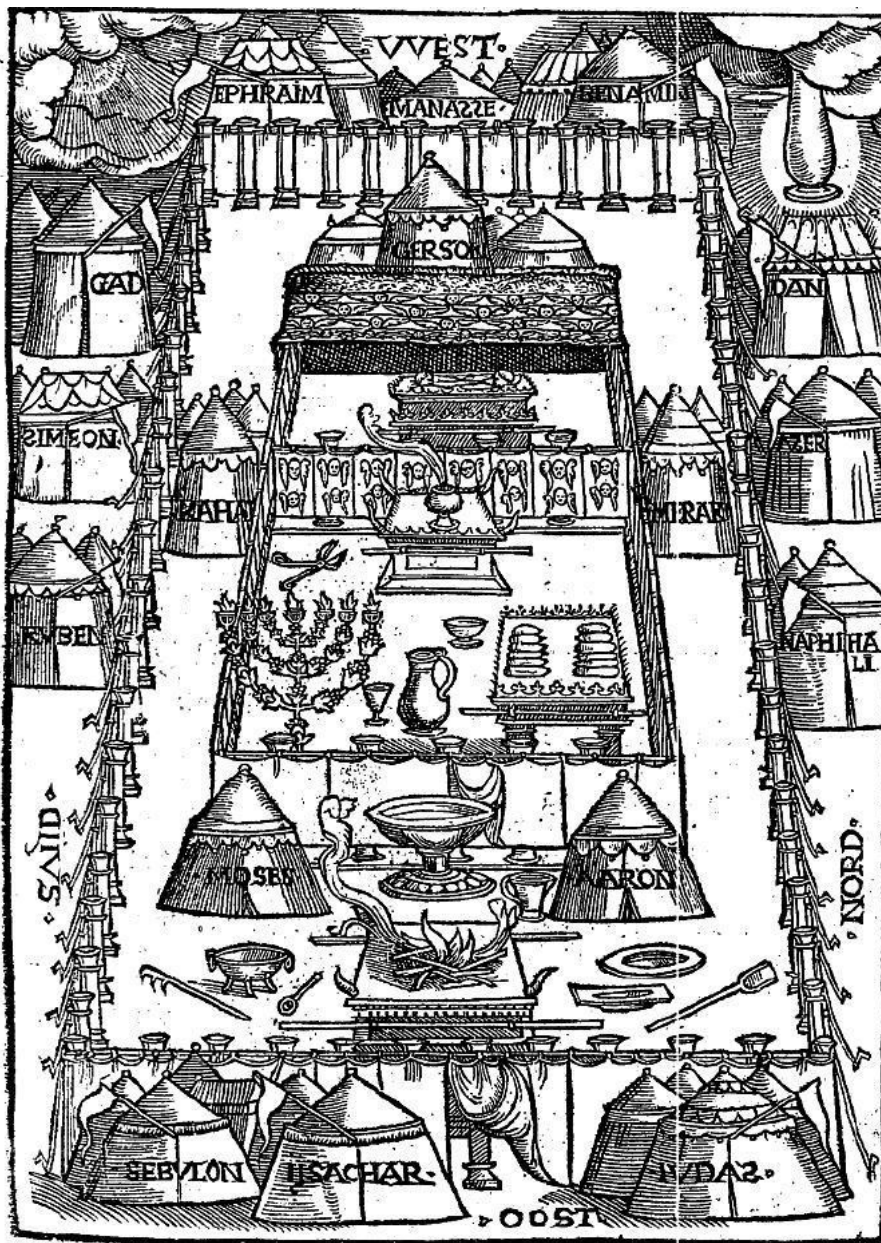
And God sayde: let there be a firmament betwene the waters, and let it be daye & night. Then God made & firmament, and parted the waters vnder the firmament, from the waters aboue the firmament: And so it came to passe. And God called & firmament, Heauen. Then of the eveninge & morninge was made the seconde daye.

And God sayde: let the waters vnder hea- ven gather themselves into one place, & the dryelonde maye appere. And so it came to passe. And God called & dryelonde, Earth: and the gatheringe together of waters called he, & Sea. And God sawe & it was good.

And God sayde: let & earth bringe forth greene grasse and herbe, that beareth fruite: & fruite full trees, that maye beare fruite, every one after his kinde, hauynge therein seede in them: & upon the earth. And so it came to passe. And the earth brought forth greene grasse and herbe, & beareth fruite every one after his kinde, & trees bearinge fruite, &

100 ad.b
Pro. 4.4

- The following is a wood cut of the children of Israel camped around the tabernacle from Exodus 40.



- Coverdale also included in introduction of each canonical book in which he provided a short written summary of each chapter. The following is an example from the book of Genesis.

Marginal Notes

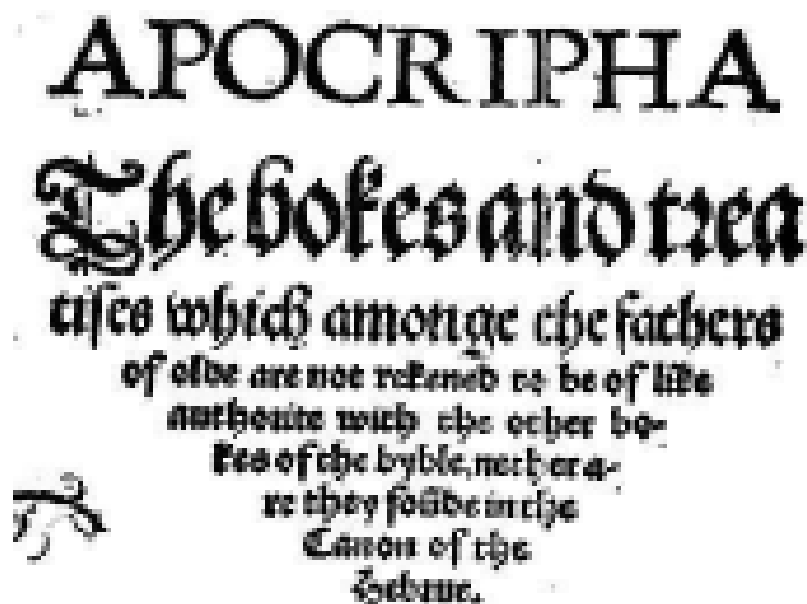
- Regarding Coverdale's use of marginal notes, J.I. Mombert states the following in his *English Version's of the Bible* from 1883. Please note that I have updated as much of the spelling as possible.
 - "The very limited number of notes (sixty-six in all, forty-seven in the Old Testament, and nineteen in the New) in Coverdale's Bible indicates very plainly that they also are drawn from the versions which stand to his in the relation of parent to child. They furnish both alternative readings and explanatory matter; e. g.
 - Gen. iii:6. "A pleasant tree to make wise." "Some read: while it made wise" Luther, Zurich.
 - Gen. xvii. 2. "I am the Almighty God" Luther, Pagninus and Vulgate. "Some read: *I am the God Schadai*" (that is, plenteous in power, abundant, sufficient, and full of all good). Zurich Bible (*das ist ein vollmachtigen, vund ein liberfliissige genugsamme vnd volly alles gutenn*).
 - Gen. xli. 45. "Zaphnath Paena, that is to saye, an expounder of secret things, or a man to whom secrete things are opened." The Hebrew spelling is taken from Tyndale and the Zurich Bible, the explanation from Pagninus with the clauses reversed: "Vir cui absconditarevelata sunt, vel absconditorum expositor."
 - Exod. xvii. 16. "The Lord Nissi (so Luther and Zurich), that is: the Lord is he that raiseth me up." Pagninus: Dominus elevatio mea.
 - 2 Kings xxv. 6. "And he gave judgment upon him," Luther. "Some read: And they talked with him of judgment." Zurich: sy redtend mit jm vom rechten. Pagninus: locuti sunt cum eo iudicium.
 - Matth. i. 8. "Before they came together," Erasmus. "Some read: before they sat at home together." Zurich: ee sy miteinander zu hausz sassend. (a specimen of the Zurich improved reading of) Luther: ehe er sie heimholete. Tyndale (2d ed.): came to dwell together.
 - Matth. xxvi. 7. "A box with precious ointment," Tyndale. (2d ed.) An alabaster box of p. o. "Some read: a glass with precious water." So Luther.
 - Mark iii. 21. "He taketh too much upon him," Zurich. "Some reade: he wil go out of his witt." Luther: Er wird von Sinnen kommen." (Mombert, 169)

- Before moving on to talk about the Apocrypha it is important to note that Coverdale's marginal notes bear witness to the secondary and eclectic nature of his translation. From his marginal notes we can see how his "five sundry interpreters" impacted his English renderings. In the marginal notes we see the familiar names of Luther, Tyndale, Vulgate, Pagninus, and Zurich all of which were noted as sources in previous Lessons. There is also one mention of Erasmus.

Apocrypha

Please note that much of the material covered in this section was extracted from my 2012 booklet [*The Apocrypha and the King James Bible*](#).

- As we know, it was in 1535, that Miles Coverdale published the first complete English Bible. Coverdale's Bible set a precedent in one history-making matter related to the relationship between formatting and doctrine. In versions predating Coverdale's, the apocryphal books were scattered throughout the Bible and included within the text of the Old Testament thereby indicating that they possessed the same authority as the Canonical Old Testament books. The Coverdale Bible was the first to locate the Apocrypha between the Old and New Testaments.
- Coverdale indicated the secondary nature of the Apocrypha by utilizing two important visual cues: 1) he set the Apocryphal books apart in the table of contents from the rest of the Old Testament (See the pictures from Coverdale's table of contents on pages 3 and 4 of these notes.), and 2) he included a separate title page for the Apocrypha upon which he noted their secondary status and the fact that they were not recognized by the Hebrew people as canonical.
 - "The books and treatise, which among the fathers of old are not reckoned to be of like authority with the other books of the Bible, neither are they found in the Canon of the Hebrews." (Myles Coverdale Apocrypha Title Page)





- Coverdale was the first translator to set apart the apocryphal books as having a distinct place and a lesser value than the canonical books. His precedent established the standard format for Protestant English Bibles. (Brake, 55-56)
- F.F. Bruce concurs with Donald Brake regarding when the apocryphal books were first placed between the Testaments. Bruce writes,

- “Coverdale’s Bible of 1535, following a Zurich Bible of 1524-1529, first separated the apocryphal books from the canonical books of the Old Testament and placed them after Malachi, with special introduction of their less authoritative character. There was one exception: Baruch was still placed after Jeremiah. But in a 1537 edition of Coverdale, Baruch was removed from there and placed after Tobit.” (Bruce, 163)
- The Matthew’s Bible of 1537, which added the Prayer of Manasseh as well as the Great Bible of 1539 followed Coverdale’s lead in placing the Apocryphal books between the Testaments. The Geneva Bible of 1560 prefaced the Apocryphal section (between the Testaments) with the strongest statement to date against the canonicity of the Apocryphal books.

A P O C R Y P H A .

T H E A R G U M E N T .

THese bokes that follow in order after the Prophetes vnto the Newe testament, are called Apocrypha, that is bokes, which were not receiued by a comune consent to be read and expounded publickly in the Church, nether yet serued to proue any point of Christian religion, saue in asmuche as they had the consent of the other Scriptures called Canonical to confirme the same, or rather whereon they were grounded: but as bokes proceeding from godlie men, were receiued to be read for the aduancement and furtherance of the knowledge of the historie, & for the instruction of godlie maners: which bokes declare that at all times God had an especial care of his Church and left them not vtterly destitute of teachers and meanes to confirme them in the hope of the promised Messiah, and also witnesse that those calamities that God sent to his Church, were according to his prouidence, who had bothe so threatened by his Prophetes, and so broght it to passe for the destruction of their enemies, and for the tryal of his children.

- “These bokes that follow in order after the Prophets unto the New Testament, are called Apocrypha, that is books, which were not received by a commune consent to be read and expounded publicly in the Church, nether yet served to prove any point of Christian religion, save in as much as they had the consent of the other Scriptures called Canonical to confirm the same, or rather whereon they were grounded: but as books proceeding from godly men, were received to be read for the advancement and furtherance of the knowledge of the history, for instruction in godly manners: which books declare that at times God had an especial care of his Church and left them not utterly destitute of teachers and means to confirm them in the hope of the promised Messiah, and also witnesses that those calamities that God sent to his Church, were according to his providence, who had both so threatened by his Prophets, and so brought it to praise for the destruction of their enemies, and for the trial of his children.”
- Moreover, the Geneva translators printed the Prayer of Manasseh as an appendix to II Chronicles, adding a notation as to its apocryphal character.

*This prayer is
not in the E-
brave, but is
translated out
of the Greek.*

- “This prayer is not in the Hebrew, but is translated out of the Greek.”
- The Bishops Bible of 1568 also separated these books from the rest of the Old Testament and included a separate title-page; however, they included no apologetic reason for doing so. This omission angered the Puritan party within the Church of England, which agreed with the Genevan tradition and was against the canonicity of the Apocrypha.
- The first English Bibles to omit the Apocrypha were some copies of the Geneva version published at Geneva in 1599. There is a gap in the page-numbering between the Testaments, indicating that the decision to omit the Apocrypha was made after the pages were printed and prior to binding. (Bruce, 164)
- By the early 17th Century when the translation work on the Authorized Version began, there was already historical precedent for including the Apocrypha in a separate section between the Testaments. Furthermore, Protestants had been using this device to put forth their belief that the Apocryphal books were not inspired Scripture since the Coverdale Bible of 1535.
- Consequently, the King James translators were merely following the standard Protestant practice of the day as to how to handle the Apocrypha in the English Bible. These realities reflect the religious tension still present in the early 17th Century; the Church of England retained the custom of reading from the Apocrypha in public worship services during certain seasons of the year. (Hills, 98)
- In 1615, Archbishop Abbot, Bancroft’s successor, forbade any printer from issuing a Bible without the Apocrypha, on pain of one year’s imprisonment. (Bruce, 164)
- An edition of the Geneva Bible published at Amsterdam in 1640 omitted the Apocrypha deliberately: it was not simply the binder’s doing this time. A defense of the omission was inserted between the Testaments.

- “This omission was in line with the prevailing tendency in England at this time, where, in 1644, Parliament ordered that the canonical books only should be publicly read in Church. This tendency was reversed after the Restoration, but the exclusion of the Apocrypha became increasingly popular among the Nonconformists. It is noteworthy that the first English Bible printed in America (1782-3) lacked the Apocrypha.” (Bruce, 164)
- It was Coverdale’s Bible from 1535 that set this precedent for this later history in terms of how the Apocrypha was handled in Protestant editions of the Bible.

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