

Sunday, January 24, 2021— Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*  
 Lesson 133 The Complete Geneva Bible: Contents & Features

## Introduction

- In [Lesson 128](#) we discussed the production and influence of the 1560 Geneva Bible. In doing so, we observed that the Geneva Bible was the Bible choice among Englishmen for at least 100 years after its production even after the Authorized Version was published in 1611.
- Please recall the following quote regarding this remarkable volume from the pen of Dr. David Daniell in his book *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*:
  - “This remarkable volume, ‘the first great achievement in Elizabeth’s reign,’ printed in London and in Edinburgh after 1575, and always in large quantities, became at once the Bible of the English people. It remained so, through 140 editions—editions, not simple reprintings—before 1644. As will be seen in later chapters (20 and 22), the New Testament was revised by Laurence Tomson in 1576, and the new notes by ‘Junius’ replaced those to Revelation in 1599. In 1610, fifty years after the first making, all three versions were in full printing flood, 120 editions of all sizes having been made. It seemed that nothing would stop them. The translators working for King James after 1604, in aiming ‘to make a good one, better’ were referring to the Geneva Bible, and in the KJV long Preface, ‘The Translators to the Reader,’ they quoted Scripture almost always from there [i.e., the Geneva]. But politics ruled. Even the inception, in January 1604, of the 1611 KJV was a political act by reactionary bishops against Geneva Bibles. As will be seen, the large printing of the “King James’ version in 1611, in spite of its immediate unpopularity, was organized in order to push out the Geneva Bibles. Ugly and inaccurate quarto editions of the Geneva Bible, all falsely dated 1599, were printed in Amsterdam, and possibly elsewhere in the Low Countries, up to 1640, and smuggled into England and Scotland against Establishment wishes. The last with full text and notes in England were printed in 1644. Between 1642 and 1715, eight editions of KJV were published with Geneva notes, seven of them in folio, and two of them in one year (1679), statistics which tell their own story...

The influence of the Geneva Bible is incalculable. Before the London printings, it was freely available in England in large enough numbers to stir Archbishop Parker into initiating his rival Bishops Bible in 1568. For over fifty years it was sometimes second to that in Anglican pulpits and on Anglican lecterns. Even so, a study of more than fifty sermons by bishops between 1611 and 1630, including Andrewes, the chief of the KJV revisers, and Laud, the enemy of all things evangelical, shows that in twenty-seven sermons the preacher took his text from the Geneva version, and only in five from the Bishops’. Of the remaining twenty-odd, only about half quote from KJV, and half seem to have made their own version.

The Geneva Bible was, however, the Bible of the English and the Scots at home, and in local reading groups and ‘prophesyings.’ In Scotland, the Edinburgh ‘Bassandyne Bible’

of 1579, the first Bible printed in Scotland, a straight reprint of the first Geneva Bible in folio, made in 1561, was ordered to be in each parish kirk. It was dedicated to ‘Prince James’ — so much for his reported claim at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 that he had only recently been shown a copy (see below, p. 433).

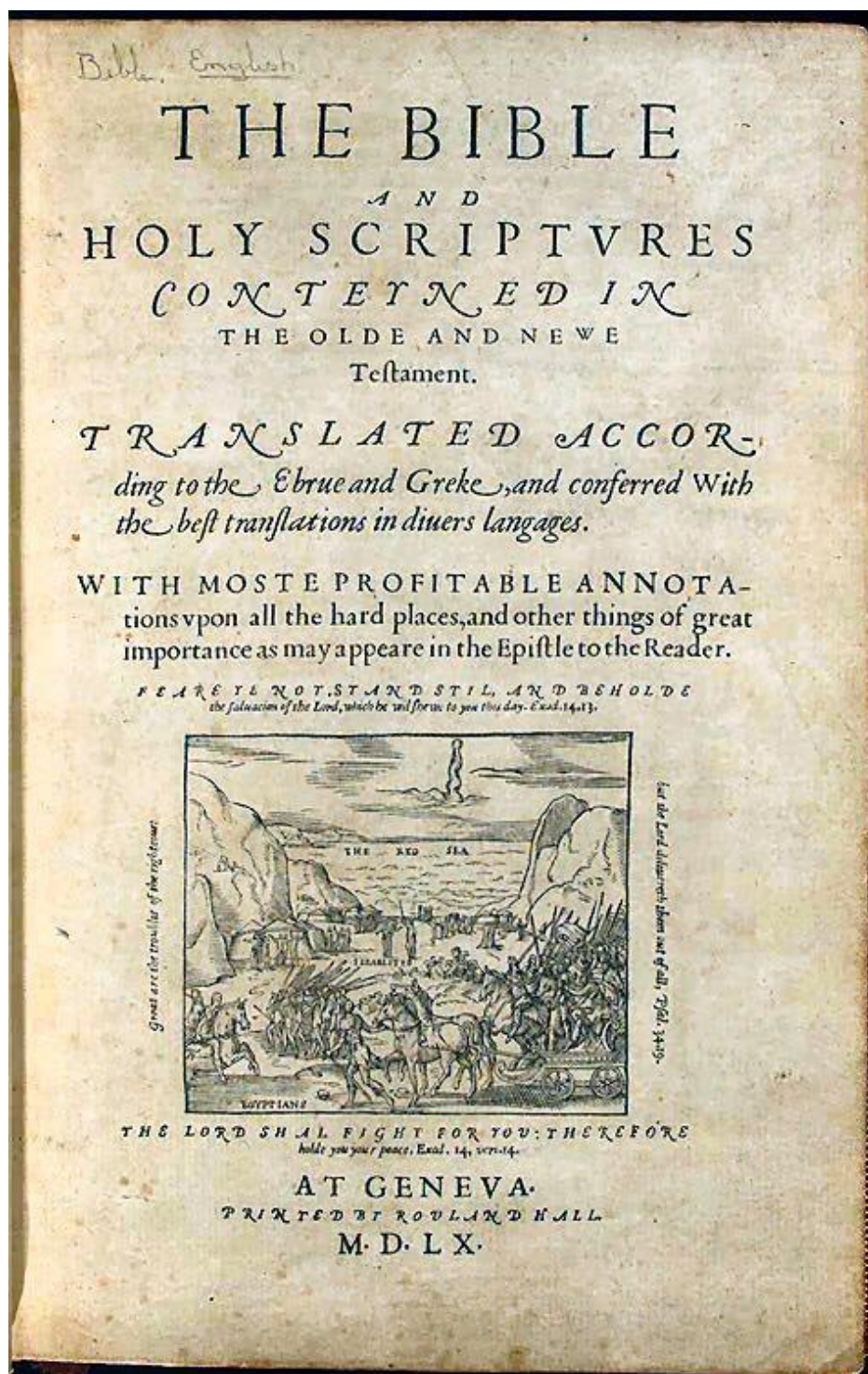
[A Scottish] Act of Parliament, passed soon after the publication of the Bible, made it mandatory that every householder worth 300 marks of yearly rent and every yeoman and burgess worth £500 in stock should have a Bible and a Psalm book, in the vulgar tongue, in their homes, under a penalty of ten pounds; and there is evidence that this act was enforced.

Early in the seventeenth century [1600s] the Geneva Bible was taken back to Europe, to Amsterdam and the other Netherlands Separatist centres, and from there to America, where, as successive waves of colonists landed, it flourished mightily. It was the Bible of the Elizabethan and Jacobean poets and prose writers, including Shakespeare. If Othello does say that the exemplar who ‘threw the great pearl away’ was ‘the base Judean’ as the Folio text has it, and not ‘the base Indian’, then he took the phrase, with many more, from the Geneva Bible.” (Daniell, 294-295)

- One of the reasons for the enduring popularity and influence of the Geneva Bible is on account of its ancillary contents that accompanied the Biblical text. In this lesson we want to consider the following aspects of this important volume.
  - Title Page
  - Table of Contents
  - Epistle Dedicatory to Queen Elizabeth
  - Address to the Reader

### **Title Page**

- In Lesson 122 we devoted nearly an entire Lesson to a discussion of the Title Page of the 1539 Great Bible. This was on account of its historical and political significance. Recall the ornate image of King Henry VIII distributing the English Bible to his political and liturgical underlings who then delivered it to the parish churches.
- By contrast, the Title Page to the 1560 Geneva Bible, the next complete English Bible, is straightforward and simplistic. Consider the following image.



- The title page reads as follows:
  - “The Bible and Holy Scriptures Contained in The Old and New Testament. Translated according to the Hebrew and Greek, and conferred with the best translations in diuers languages.

- With most profitable annotations upon all the hard places, and other things of great importance as may appear in the Epistle to the Reader.
- In the center is a wood cut image of the Red Sea crossing surrounded by scripture quotations.



- The verses surrounding are as follows:
  - Top—Fear ye not, stand still, and behold the salvation of the Lord which he will shew to you this day. Exod. 14:13
  - Bottom—The Lord shall fight for you: therefore hold you your peace. Exod. 14:14
  - Sides—Great are the troubles of the righteous: but the Lord deliuereth him out of them all. Psal. 34:19

## Table of Contents

- Following the Title Page there is a table of contents page bearing the following title:
  - “The names and order of all the books of the Old and New Testaments with the number of their chapters, and the leaf where they begin.”

THE NAMES AND ORDER OF ALL THE BOOKES of the olde and newe Testamēt with the nombre of their chapters, and the leafe where they begyn							
Genesis chapters	50	leafe	1	Prouerbes chap.	31	leafe	267
Exodus	40		24	Ecclesiastes	12		277
Leuiticus	27		45	The song of			
Nombres	36		59	Salomon	3		280
Deuteronomie	34		80	Ifaiah	66		285
Iofhua	24		96	Ieremiah	52		306
Judges	21		108	Lamentations	5		331
Ruth	4		119	Ezekiel	48		333
1 Samuel	31		121	Daniel	12		357
2 Samuel	24		136	Hofea	14		365
1 Kings	22		148	Ioel	3		368
2 Kings	25		164	Amos	9		370
1 Chronicles	29		178	Obadiah	1		372
2 Chronicles	36		191	Ionah	4		373
The prayer of Manasseh, apocryphe	207		207	Micah	7		374
Ezra	10		207	Nahum	3		376
Nehemiah	13		212	Habakkuk	3		377
Ester	10		219	Zephaniah	3		378
Iob	42		222	Haggai	2		379
Pfalms	150		235	Zechariah	14		380
				Malachi	4		384
THE BOOKES CALLED APOCRYPHA.							
1 Esdras	9		386	Baruc with the epistle of			
2 Esdras	16		393	Ieremiah	6		444
Tobit	14		405	The song of the thre children			447
Juderh	16		409	The storie of Sufanna			448
The rest of Esther	6		416	The idole Bel and the dragon			449
Wisdome	19		417	1 Maccabees	16		450
Ecclesiasticus	51		424	2 Maccabees	15		464
THE BOOKES OF THE NEWE TESTAMENT.							
Matthewe	28		2	1 Timotheus	6		97
Marke	16		17	2 Timotheus	4		99
Luke	24		26	Titus	3		100
Iohn	21		42	Philemon	1		101
The Actes	28		54	To the Ebrewes	13		102
The Epistle of Paul to the Romains	16		70	The Epistle of			
1 Corinthians	16		76	Iames	5		107
2 Corinthians	13		83	1 Peter	5		108
Galatians	6		87	2 Peter	3		110
Ephesians	6		89	1 Iohn	5		111
Philippians	4		92	2 Iohn	1		113
Colofians	4		93	3 Iohn	1		113
1 Theffalonians	5		95	Iude	1		114
2 Theffalonians	3		96	Reuelation	22		114

- The Geneva Bible like the Coverdale, Matthew's, and Great Bible separated the Biblical contents into three sections: 1) Old Testament, 2) The Books Called Apocrypha, and 3) The Books of the New Testament.
- Note that except for the Prayer of Manasseh, sandwiched between II Chronicles and Ezra, the Apocryphal books are separated into their own section. That said, Manasseh is still noted as "apocryphe" in the Table of Contents.
- 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 booke that follow in order after the Prophetes vnto the Newe testament, are called Apocrypha, that is booke, which were not receiued by a comone consent to be red and expounded publikely 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 booke proceeding from godlie men, were receiued to be red for the aduancement and furtherance of the knowledge of the historie, & for the instruction of godlie maners: which booke 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 witnessse that those calamities that God sent to his Church, were according to his providence, 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.*

- In addition to being accorded their own place in the canon between the Testaments, the Apocryphal books are stamped "Apocrypha" on the top of each page, thereby signifying their non-inspired status.
- For more information on the history of the Apocrypha in the English Bible, interested parties are encouraged to see my essay [The Apocrypha and the King James Bible](#).

### Epistle Dedicatory to Queen Elizabeth

- Following the Table of Contents, readers of the Geneva Bible encounter a four-page Epistle Dedicatory to Queen Elizabeth.

TO THE MOST VERTUOUS AND NOBLE QUEEN ELIZABETH, QUEEN OF ENGLAND, FRANCE, AND IRELAND, &c. YOUR HUMBLE SUBJECTS OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH AT GENEVA, WISH GRACE AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER THROUGH CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.

\* \* \*

- This text above reads as follows:
  - “To the most virtuous and noble Queen Elizabeth, Queen of England, France, and Ireland, &c. Your humble subjects of the English Church at Geneva wish grace and peace from God the Father through Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- In his *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*, Dr. David Daniell states the following regarding this four-page Epistle Dedicatory.
  - “The most suitable epithet for what follows in this four-page address is ‘bracing’. It is made of Scripture references, particularly Old Testament history, most especially the work of rebuilding Jerusalem. The Queen is reminded ‘how much greater charge God hath laid upon you in making you a builder of his spiritual Temple’. She is to be Josiah in destroying idols: ‘the Lord gave him good success and blessed him wonderfully, so long as he made God’s word his line and rule to follow, and enterprised nothing before he had enquired at the mouth of the Lord’. She is told that she must earnestly crave wisdom of the Lord. Two things, her Geneva subjects warn her, are necessary:

first, a lively and steadfast faith in Christ Jesus: next, that our faith ring forth good fruits: . . . For the eyes of all that fear God in all places behold your countries as an example to all that believe, and the prayers of all the godly at all times are directed to God for the preservation of your majesty. For considering God’s wonderful mercies towards you at all seasons, who hath pulled you out of the mouths of the lions, and how that from your youth you have been brought up in the holy Scriptures, the hope of all men is so increased, that they can not but look that God should bring to pass some wonderful work by your grace to the universal comfort of his church . . . Therefore even above strength you must show yourself strong and bold on God’s matters. . .” (Daniell, 302-303)

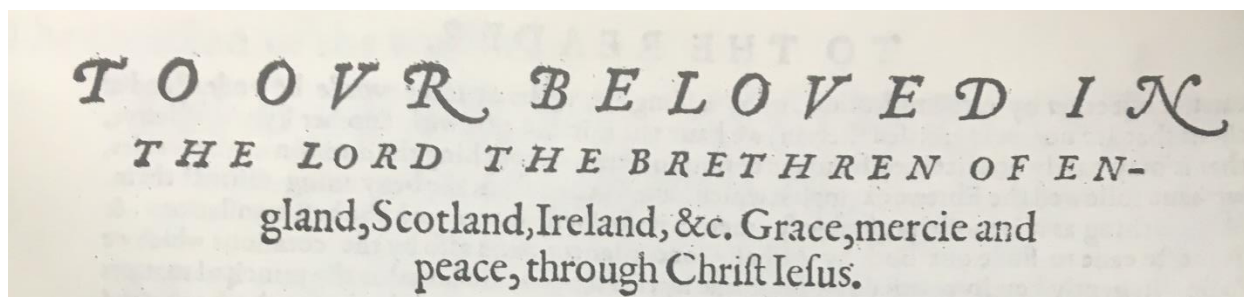
- Gerald Hammond offers some additional perspective on the Epistle Dedicatory in his *The Making of the English Bible*:

- “The preliminary matter to the first edition begins with an epistle to Elizabeth. Queen for little more than a year, she is treated to an exhortation from her ‘humble subjects of the English church at Geneva’ as to how she should rebuild her country. Building is a metaphor which runs throughout, and a parallel is plainly drawn between Elizabeth’s task in building the English Church and the building of the temple by Zerubbabel, when he was not only ‘sore molested with foreign adversaries . . . but also at home with domestical enemies, as false prophets, crafty worldlings, faint hearted soldiers, and oppressors of their brethren’. The chief foundation for her building is to be this Bible, ‘the holy Scriptures faithfully and plainly translated according to the languages wherein they were first written by the Holy Ghost’.

Compared with the flattering dedications to Henry VIII by Coverdale and to James I in the Authorized Version, this epistle is a forthright document. It tells Elizabeth to wipe out opposition immediately and without compromise—just as any building needs to be based on the rasing down of what stood before—regardless of the promptings of ‘worldly policy or natural fear’. If she fails to act quickly then she might well suffer the fate which those ideal biblical kings Jehoshaphat, Josiah, and Hezekiah contrived to avoid, that is the ‘wrath of the Lord’ falling upon them ‘for the neglecting thereof’. And Elizabeth is finally reminded that she owes her survival this far to ‘God’s wonderful mercies toward you at all seasons, who hath pulled you out of the mouth of the lions’, with the added comment that men have great hopes of her because ‘from your youth you have been brought up in the holy Scriptures’. (Hammond, 90)

### Address to the Reader

- Following the Epistle Dedicatory to Queen Elizabeth is a two-page address to the English reader: “To our beloved in the Lord the brethren of England, Scotland, Ireland, &c. Grace, mercy and peace, through Christ Jesus.”



- The first of the three paragraphs extols the general merits of the word of God and encourages people to exercise faith therein. Much is said in this long paragraph that we will not devote time to discussing in these lessons. That said, the second and third paragraphs outline the thought process and methodology of the translators. It is in these paragraphs that they discuss how they handled the rendering of Hebrew and Greek words in the English text. For example, in these paragraphs we read the following:



- “And for this and other causes we have in many places reserved the Hebrew phrases, notwithstanding that they may seem somewhat hard in their ears that are not well practiced and also delight in the sweet sounding phrases of the holy Scriptures. Yet lest either the simple should be discouraged, or the malicious have any occasion of just calculation, seeing some translations read after one sort, and some after another, whereas all may serve to good purpose and edification, we have in the margin noted that diversitie of speech or reading which may also seem agreeable to the mind of the holy Ghost and proper for our language with this mark “.

Again whereas the Hebrew speech seemed hardly to agree with ours, we have noted it in the margin after this sort “, using that which was most intelligible. And albeit that many of the Hebrew names be altered from the old text, and restored to the true writing and first original, whereof they have their signification, yet in the usual names little is changed for fear of troubling the simple readers.”

- Explanation is given regarding the use of italics.
  - “Moreover whereas the necessity of the sentence required anything to be added (for such is the grace and propriety of the Hebrew and Greek tongues, that it cannot but either by circumlocution, or by adding the verb or some word be understand of them that are not well practiced therein) we have put it in the text with another kind of letter, that it may carefully be discerned from the common letter.”
- Elucidation is given as to why the chapter and verse division/numbering have been adopted as well as “arguments” appended to the text.
  - “As touching the division of the verses, we have followed the Hebrew examples, which have so even from the beginning distinct them. Which thing as it is most profitable for memory: so doth it agree with the best translations, & is most easy to find out both by the best Concordances, and also by the quotations which we have diligently herein persued and set forth by this star \*. Besides this the principal matters are noted and distinguished by the mark q. Yea the arguments both for the book and for the chapter with the number of the verses are added, that by all means the reader might be holpen.”
- Headings were added to every page to help the reader locate information in the Biblical text.
  - “For which case also we have set over the head of every page some notable word or sentence which may greatly further aswell for memory, as the for the chief point of the page.”
- In addition, annotations were added to help bring understanding to the “hard places” of the text.
  - “And considering how hard a thing it is to understand the holy Scriptures, and what errors, sects, and heresies, grow daily for lack of true knowledge thereof, and how many

are discouraged (as they pretend) because they can not attain to the true and simple meaning of the same, we have also endeavored both by the diligent reading of the commentaries, and also by the conference with the godly and learned brethren, to gather brief annotations upon all the hard places, as well for the understanding of such words as are obscure, and for the declaration of the text, as for application of the same as may most apperteine to Gods glory and the edification of his Church.

- Maps were also added to aid the reader in understanding the geographical movements found in the Biblical text.
  - “Whereunto also we have added certain maps of Cosmography which necessarily serve for the perfect understanding and memory of divers places and countries, partly described and partly by occasion touched, both in the old and new Testament.”
- Lastly, tables were added to the back of the volume for aiding the readers understanding with matters deemed important but for which there was no room to explain in the book and chapter arguments or in the margin.
  - “Finally, that nothing might lack which might be bought by labors, for the increase of knowledge and furtherance of God’s glory, we have adjoined two most profitable tables, the one serving for the interpretation of the Hebrew names; and the other containing all the chief and principal matters of the whole Bible: so that nothing (as we trust) that any could justly desire, is omitted.”
- The letter “to the reader” closes with the following admonition.
  - “Therefore, as brethren that are partakers of the same hope and salvation with us, we beseech you, that this rich pearl and inestimable treasure may not be offered in vain, but as sent from God to the people of God, for the increase of his kingdom, the comfort of his Church, and the discharge of our conscience, whom it hath pleased him to aid us for this purpose, so you would willingly receive the word of God, earnestly study it and in all your life practice it, that you may now appear indeed to be the people of God, not walking any more according to this world, but in the fruits of the Spirit, that God in us may be fully glorified through Christ Jesus our Lord, who liveth and reigneth for ever. Amen. From Geneva 10 April, 1560.”

## **Conclusion**

- Next week will look more closely at some of the features mentioned in the “Address to the Reader” namely:
  - Book & Chapter Arguments
  - Illustrations & Maps
  - Tables
  - Marginal Notes

## **Works Cited**

Daniell, David. *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003.

Hammond, Gerald. *The Making of the English Bible*. New York, NY: Philosophical Library, 1983.