

Sunday, February 21, 2021— Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
Lesson 137 The Bishops' Bible: Understanding the King James Connection

Important Notice

These notes have been revised twice since this lesson was taught on Sunday, February 21, 2021, at Grace Life Bible Church in Grand Rapids, MI. On Tuesday, February 23 citations from the pens of Gerald Hammond (p. 3) and Peter Ruckman (p. 4) were added to these notes, these quotes were read audibly during the teaching of the lesson but were not part of the original written notes. They were revised a second time on Friday, February 26 considering feedback from Pastor Richard Jordan. In the original teaching of the Lesson, I noted Brother Jordan's assertion in the transcribed notes from Grace School of the Bible (MS 103 Lesson 7) that Rule 1 was "largely ignored in practice" by the King James translated in favor of Rule 14 (see the citation on page 2). I stated in the original teaching of the lesson that I had reached out to Brother Jordan for information as to the basis of his statements. In the meantime, before I heard back from him, I presented Hammond and Ruckman as two possibilities for where Brother Jordan could have come by that understanding. It turns out that my speculations were wrong and needed to be corrected. Brother Jordan's statements were not based upon Hammond and/or Ruckman but upon Olga S. Opfell's 1982 work *The James Bible Translators*. I should have known this as earlier in MS 103 Lesson 7 Pastor Jordan mentioned his utilization of Opfell's work in the teaching of the Lesson. Therefore, I apologize to Pastor Jordan for "tagging" him with Ruckman on this point. Consequently, the notes were revised a second time to clear up any connection between Ruckman and Brother Jordan on this matter.

Introduction

- The last nine Lessons have focused on the popular and influential 1560 Geneva Bible. Having formally concluded that study last week in Lesson 136 we will now turn our attention to the next Bible of prominence, the Bishops' Bible.
- First appearing in 1568, the Bishops' Bible is perhaps the most overlooked and misunderstood of the pre-King James English Bibles. There are many reasons for this that we will try to unravel in the coming weeks.
- This morning we will begin this investigation by considering the following point:
 - Misconceptions Regarding the Connection Between the Bishops' & King James Bibles

Misconceptions Regarding the Connection Between the Bishops' & King James Bibles

- The impact of the Bishops Bible upon the King James Bible has been largely misunderstood by King James advocates. Many King James Only proponents maintain that the translators simply did not follow the rules set forth by King James and Bishop Richard Bancroft, the chief overseer of the project. Fifteen rules were given for the guidance of the translators as they conducted their work.

- Rule 1, given to the King James translators by Bishop Bancroft, was to follow the Bishops Bible unless the truth of the original determined otherwise.
 - “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 identified which translations should be consulted when it was determined that the Bishops Bible was incorrect in a given reading.
 - These translations to be used when they agree better with the Text than the Bishops Bible: Tindoll’s [Tyndale’s], Matthews, Coverdale’s, Whitchurch’s [Great Bible], Geneva.
- Many defenders of the King James have argued based upon Rule 14 that the translators ignored Rule 1 because they viewed the Bishops Bible as inferior to its predecessors, particularly Tyndale and Geneva.
- An example of this thinking can be found in the transcribed notes of the “Manuscript Evidence” class in Grace School of the Bible (GSB). In these notes Pastor Richard Jordan stated the following regarding the process adopted by the King James translators.
 - “1. The ordinary Bible read in the Church commonly called “The Bishops’ Bible” is to be followed and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit.

Now, that rule was largely ignored in practice. The reason is Number Fourteen. Rule Number One is modified by rule Number Fourteen.

14. These translations to be used when they agree better with the texts than the Bishops’ Bible: Tyndale, Matthews, Coverdale, Whitchurch, Geneva.

What Bible is the Whitchurch Bible? That’s the Great Bible. You don’t often see it called “The Whitchurch Bible.”

Now, we’ve studied the Tyndale, the Matthews, the Coverdale, the Whitchurch and the Geneva Bible last time. We saw Tyndale’s influence all through there. Because of that, Number One wasn’t followed too much.

The influence of those Bibles - write this down and remember it:

1. The most influential of the translations was Tyndale. (Do you see how they spell it - Tindoll? That’s the Old English spelling.)
2. The second most influential of the translations was Coverdale.

3. The third most influential was the Geneva.

4. The fourth was the Bishops’.

5. The Matthews (Tyndale and Coverdale) wasn’t used so much.” (Jordan, 89-90)

- Teaching in the early 1980s, Brother Jordan asserted that Rule 1 was “largely ignored in practice” by the King James translators. Pastor Jordan’s statements on this point were based upon Olga S. Opfell’s 1982 work *The King James Bible Translators*. Light gleaned from more recent research by Ward Allen, David Norton, and Lawrence M. Vance (see below) reveals that the translators did in fact follow Rule 1 with a high degree of fidelity.

Hammond & Ruckman on Rule 1

- Over the years other writers have questioned the degree to which the translators followed Rule 1 for a variety of reasons. Two such examples are Gerald Hammond and Peter S. Ruckman.
- Gerald Hammond’s 1982 publication *The Making of the English Bible* shows a high degree of confluence with Opfell’s work from the same year.
 - “The Authorized Version translators’ problem was quite straightforward. Their brief was not to make a new translation but, as far as possible, to base their work on the existing English text; and this, for James, the piper calling the tune, was the Bishops’ Bible. Hence came the first rule laid down in the list of the those “to be observed in the translation of the Bible:”

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.

But the pressure for a new translation had been an essentially puritan one, led at the conference by John Rainolds, in the belief that the existing versions ‘were corrupt and not answerable to the truth of the original.’ Both in answer to this call, and from their own scholarly abilities, the Authorized Version translators knew that the Bishops’ Bible was the most corrupt and the Geneva Bible the least; and if they were to use a copy text, making a good one better, then this good one would be the Geneva Bible. Further down the list of notes, at number 14, there was an order whose strict interpretation would inevitably result in a Bible closer to Geneva than to any other:

These translations to be used when they agree better with the text than the Bishops’ Bible: Tyndale’s, Matthew’s, Coverdale’s, Whitchurh’s, Geneva.

In essence this rule, and not the first, was the one the translators followed, and the Geneva Bible, not the Bishops’ Bible, became the foundation of the Authorized Version.” (Hammond, 144)

- In 1982 Ruckman published *The History of The New Testament Church Volume I, 4 B.C.—1600 A.D.* In this book Ruckman stated the following about the textual basis of the King James Bible:
 - “The Geneva Bible was another revision of Tyndale made by Wittington; it omitted the Apocrypha altogether [A demonstrably false statement.]. . . . Tyndale, then, was the main force behind English translations, and although Catholic rumors have always had it that the “AV was based on the Bishops’ Bible,” **it certainly was not**. The AV of 1611 is ninety percent the English of Tyndale.” (Ruckman, *Vol. I*, 482)
- In 1984, Ruckman published *The History of the New Testament Church Volume II* in which he stated the following in the Preface.
 - “Since the King James Bible (AV) was also a revision of Tyndale (as was the Geneva Bible), America got off to a flying start; she became the first nation to be organized and established with a Bible translated by anit-Catholic Christians whom Catholics had burned at the stake Vol. I, Chap. 13-15). . . Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, and Madison all cut their teeth on the AV of 1611; and whether they knew it or not, they Book they took to be the “Holy Bible” was written under the wise regulation that if they Tyndale Version and the Geneva Version stood against the “Bishops’ Bible” (the nearest thing to an English ASV at that time), the Bishops’ Bible was to be rejected in favor of Tyndale.” (Ruckman, x-xi)
- At the end of the above quote from Ruckman, the reader is prompted to see Preface Endnote number 3 which states the following in part:
 - “This is interesting as the common legend passed down from one university campfire to another is that because the translators were ordered to follow the Bishops’ Bible they did; the truth is; **they did NOT.**” (Ruckman, 404)
- Recall that on Sunday, October 18, 2020 I taught a Lesson titled “[A Brief History of the King James Only Movement](#)” in which, among other things, I noted how the modern King James Only movement in the United States was forged largely without a working knowledge of three key primary documents: 1) Bod. 1602, 2) MS 98, and 3) the notes of John Bois. The comments cited above by Hammond and Ruckman confirm the veracity of my statements from October 2020; especially as it pertains to Bod. 1602 and MS 98.

The Light of More Recent Scholarship

- More recent scholarly works by Ward S. Allen, David Norton, and Laurence M. Vance confirm that Rule 1, to follow the Bishops’ Bible, was taken very seriously by the King James translators.

- In his 2011 publication commemorating the 400th Anniversary of the King James Bible titled *The King James Bible: A Short History from Tyndale to Today*, Professor David Norton states the following regarding how seriously Rule 1 was to be taken.

- “Robert Barker, the King’s Printer, supplied forty unbound copies of the 1602 Bishops Bible for the translators’ to use, not only ensuring they worked from the right text by enabling them, if they wished to work by annotating it. The only description of how the companies worked comes from John Selden, who knew Andrews and Bedwell (and no doubt others of the translators) and so may be repeating what he knew from them of the first Westminster company’s practice. He says that

that part of the Bible was given to him who was most excellent in such a tongue (as the Apocrypha to Andrew Downes), and then they met together, and one read the translation, the rest holding in their hands some Bible, either of the learned tongues or French, Spanish, Italian, etc; if they found any fault they spoke, if not he read on.

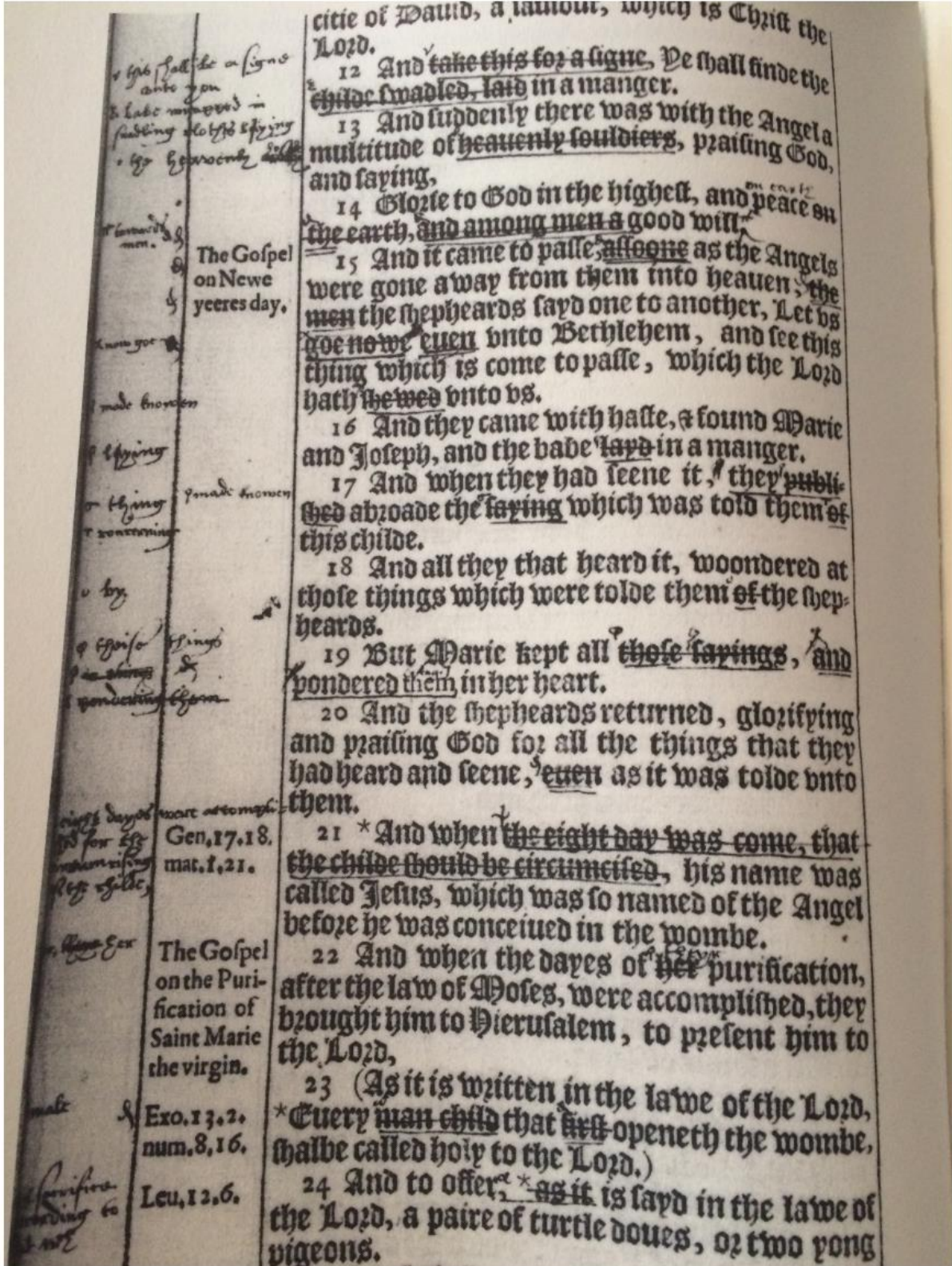
... The translation referred to was the Bishops’ Bible, and the practice of commenting on it as occasion arose seems sensible; presumably the comments were made in the light of each individual translators preparation for the meeting and their particular version (or perhaps, versions) he had been designed to keep an eye on.

Two pieces of work survive from the companies, annotations to parts of the Bishops’ Bible Gospels and a partial manuscript of the Epistles. The annotated Gospels may well represent the earliest surviving stage of the work. The translators worked on unbound sheets of the 1602 Bible, as is shown by the way many of the annotations disappear into the binding. Sheets from a least two parts of the work (plus unannotated sheets needed to make a complete Bible) were gathered together and bound sometime after the work on the KJB was completed as a complete 1602 Bishops’ Bible, Bodleian Library Bib. Eng. 1602b (here abbreviated to Bod 1602).

... The manuscript Lambeth Palace MS 98 comes from the Westminster NT company. It looks like a fair copy made from annotations such as those in the Gospels to enable review and further revision. Formally presented in two columns, it uses only the left column to give a partial revision of the Bishops’ Bible Epistles—partial in that this column gives 1,769 verses, and leaves numbered spaces for the remaining 1,013. The natural inference is that the company had made no changes to those 1,013 verses, it expected the manuscript to be used in relation to the Bishops’ Bible, where the missing text could be found.” (Norton, 94-96)

- The images on next two pages are photographs of Bod 1602. They clearly illustrate what Professor Norton is talking about in the above citation as they depict an annotated copy of the 1602 Bishops’ Bible with the handwritten notes of the translators in the margin.

<p>mult: Ende 7 Anle bened</p>	<p>Mat. 26. 17. mar. 14. 13.</p>	<p>7 * Then came the day of <u>Passover</u>, when of necessity the <u>Passover</u> must be killed.</p>
<p>8 J Und</p>	<p>8 2</p>	<p>8 And hee sent Peter and John, saying, Goe and prepare vs the <u>Passover</u>, that we may eat.</p>
<p>9 followe him x, w/ste</p>	<p>9 2</p>	<p>9 They said vnto him, where wilt thou that we should prepare it?</p>
<p>10 large & wate table furnished</p>	<p>10 2</p>	<p>10 And he said vnto them, Behold, when ye are entred into the citie, there shall a man meete you, hearing a pitcher of water; him followe in to the same house that he entreth in.</p>
<p>11 I have hartily desired</p>	<p>11 2</p>	<p>11 And ye shall say vnto the good man of the house, The master saith vnto thee, where is the ghest chamber, where I shall eat the <u>Passover</u> with my disciples?</p>
<p>12 I have more eate of brood</p>	<p>12 2</p>	<p>12 And he shall shew you a great upper cham- ber prepared, there make readie.</p>
<p>13 I have taken and I have chate</p>	<p>13 2</p>	<p>13 And they went, and found as hee had said vnto them, and they made readie the <u>Pass- over</u>.</p>
<p>14 I have taken and I have chate</p>	<p>14 2</p>	<p>14 * And when the houre was come, he sate downe, and the twelve Apostles with him.</p>
<p>15 I have taken and I have chate</p>	<p>15 2</p>	<p>15 And he said vnto them, which <u>heartily</u> desire, I have desired to eat this <u>Passover</u> with you before that I suffer.</p>
<p>16 I have taken and I have chate</p>	<p>16 2</p>	<p>16 For I say vnto you, <u>Henceforth</u> I will not in any wise eat of it any more, vntill it be fulfilled in the kingdome of God.</p>
<p>17 I have taken and I have chate</p>	<p>17 2</p>	<p>17 And when he had taken the cup, and gi- uen thanks, he said, Take this, and diuide it a- mong you.</p>
<p>18 I have taken and I have chate</p>	<p>18 2</p>	<p>18 For I say vnto you, I will not in any wise drinke of the fruit of the vine, vntill the kingdome of God shall come.</p>
<p>19 I have taken and I have chate</p>	<p>19 2</p>	<p>19 * And when he had taken bread, and giuen thanks, he brake it, and gaue vnto them, saying, This is my body which is giuen for you, this do in the remembrance of me.</p>
<p>20 I have taken and I have chate</p>	<p>20 2</p>	<p>20 Like wise also when he had supped, hee tooke the cup, saying, This cup is the new Te- stament in my blood, which is shed for you.</p>
<p>21 I have taken and I have chate</p>	<p>21 2</p>	<p>21 * Per behold, the hand of him that betray- eth me, is with me on the table.</p>
<p>22 I have taken and I have chate</p>	<p>22 2</p>	<p>22 And truly the sonne of man goeth as it is appointed, but woe vnto that man by whom he is betrayed.</p>
<p>23 I have taken and I have chate</p>	<p>23 2</p>	<p>23 And they began to enquire among them- selues, which of them it was that should doe this thing.</p>
<p>24 I have taken and I have chate</p>	<p>24 2</p>	<p>24 * And there was a strife among them, which of them should seeme to be the greater.</p>



city of David, a labour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And take this for a signe, Ye shall finde the childe swadled, laid in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of heavenly souldiers, praising God, and saying,

14 Glorie to God in the highest, and peace on the earth, and among men a good will.

15 And it came to passe, ~~as~~ as the Angels were gone away from them into heauen, the men the shepheards sayd one to another, Let vs goe now, even vnto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to passe, which the Lord hath ~~shewed~~ ^{reueled} vnto vs.

16 And they came with haste, & found Marie and Ioseph, and the babe layd in a manger.

17 And when they had seene it, they published abroad the saying which was told them of this childe.

18 And all they that heard it, woondered at those things which were tolde them of the shepheards.

19 But Marie kept all those sayings, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepheards returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seene, even as it was tolde vnto them.

21 * And when the eight day was come, that the childe should be circumcised, his name was called Iesus, which was so named of the Angel before he was conceiued in the wombe.

22 And when the dayes of her purification, after the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Hierusalem, to present him to the Lord,

23 (As it is written in the lawe of the Lord, * Every man child that first openeth the wombe, shall be called holy to the Lord.)

24 And to offer, * as it is sayd in the lawe of the Lord, a paire of turtle doues, or two yong pigeons.

12 take this for a signe
13 suddenly there was
14 Glorie to God in the highest

The Gospel on Newe yeeres day.

made known

made known

by

things

Gen. 17.18
mat. 1.21

The Gospel on the Purification of Saint Marie the virgin.

Exo. 13.2
num. 8.16

Leu. 12.6

Sanctification

- The 2015 work of Laurence M. Vance presented in *The Making of the King James Bible New Testament* concurs with the earlier work done by Ward and Norton. Vance reports:

- “There are two ways we know that the 1602 Bishops Bible was the basis of the Authorized Version.

First, there is the internal evidence: the sheer number of verses in the Authorized Version that match verbatim the text of the 1602 Bishops’ Bible. This will be seen in the collation of the New Testament of the 1602 Bishops Bible and the 1611 Authorized Version in the next section of this book.

And second, the external evidence: a 1602 Bishops’ Bible used by the King James translators currently cataloged in the Bodleian Library as “Bibl. Eng. 1602 b. 1.: The Bodleian Bishops’ Bible, as it is called, is a 1602 Bishop’s Bible with annotations of the King James translators that indicate changes to be made to the Bishops’ Bible. It is “the only known survivor” of the “40 large church bibles’ that were supplied by Robert Barker to the King James translators. Together with a manuscript (MS. 98) in the Lambeth Palace Library that records the translators at work as they transformed the Bishops’ Bible of 1602 into the Authorized Version of 1611.” (Vance, 51-52)

- At the of his book, Dr. Vance presents the findings of his collation between the 1602 Bishops’ Bible and the 1611 Authorized Version in a chapter titled “Analysis.” On page 249 Dr. Vance presents a table containing the following information:
 - “The results by book are summarized in the chart which follows. The chart indicates for each book of the New Testament, the total number of verses, the number of verses that are unchanged, the percentage of verses that are unchanged, the number of verses with 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 or more simple changes, the number of verses with complex changes, the total number of changes, the average number of changes per verse in those verses that exhibit changes, and the *approximate* percentage of the text of the Authorized Version that *basically* reads as the Bishops’ Bible.” (Vance, 248)
- According to Vance, “the *approximate* percentage of the text of the Authorized Version that *basically* reads as the Bishops’ Bible,” is 91% of the New Testament. (Vance, 249)
- The facts on the ground are simply contrary to the narrative embraced and espoused by many King James advocates. This is due in part to the fact that many of these primary documents, especially Bod 1602 and MS 98, were not widely known about outside of Britain during the 1950s and 60s when the King James Only movement was leaving the train station in the United States. More recently, many King James Only proponents have been reluctant to even consider the testimony provided by the surviving primary documents because they challenge and/or threatened the entrenched narrative of the movement.

- Given the fact that the Bishops' Bible was the source text for the King James, it is critical that we accurately understand its history. It is to this endeavor that we will now turn our attention. In future Lessons we will consider the surviving primary documents and their testimony to the translation process utilized by the King James translators in detail.

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