

Sunday, March 7, 2021— Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 139 The Bishops' Bible: Understanding the Scope & Process of the Project

Introduction

- Last week in Lesson 138 we studied the religious context of the Elizabethan Age as a backdrop for understanding the factors that gave rise to the Bishops' Bible. Recall that Elizabeth's desire to walk a "middle way" between high church Anglicans and the Puritans spilled over into a discussion about the Bible itself. After originally supporting the Geneva Bible, Archbishop Matthew Parker came to believe that a new translation was necessary that was devoid of the Calvinistic marginal notes that endeared the Geneva Bible to the Puritan faction.
- In this Lesson we want to look at the person of Archbishop Parker and understand the scope and process of his project to replace the Geneva Bible with a new translation that the Bishops of the Anglican Church could support.

Archbishop Matthew Parker & the Bishops' Bible

- Professor David Daniell offers the following biographical information regarding Archbishop Parker in *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*:
 - "He was licensed to preach in 1533, and became Anne Boleyn's [Elizabeth's mother] chaplain in 1535. In 1544 he was made Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and Dean of Lincoln in 1552. He supported Lady Jane Grey 1553, and then lived in hiding until Mary I died in 1558. Elizabeth made him Archbishop of Canterbury in December 1559. He revived Convocation and through it published the Thirty-Nine Articles. He was soon embroiled in his own Vestiarian [vestments or liturgical dress] Controversy, becoming increasingly anti-Puritan. He died in 1575. His library remains a glory of Corpus Christi, Cambridge." (Daniell, 338)
- Last week in Lesson 138, while looking at the Elizabethan context that gave rise to the Bishops' Bible, we observed the following regarding Archbishop Matthew Parker from the pen of Donald L. Brake.
 - . . . Archbishop [Matthew] Parker initially supported the reading of the Geneva Bible but later, as he became more anti-Calvinistic, he began to support a new translation. He saw the success of the Geneva Bible as an attack on the authority of the bishops. All religious authorities universally condemned Tyndale's version. Since Coverdale's translation and the Great Bible were not translated from the original languages, they were considered inferior. . .

The widespread popularity accorded the Geneva Bible after 1560 did not include the majority of the clergy in the Church of England. Although they recognized the superiority of the translation, the Calvinistic notes were offensive. Recognizing the

inadequacies of the Great Bible, someone suggested an official translation be undertaken that could complete the task previously given to Coverdale.” (Brake, 162-164)

- Likewise, from Blackford Condit, we read the following in Lesson 138:
 - “The progress of this and of other moral reforms during the time of Elizabeth, are traceable directly to the influence of the English Bible. Since 1526 the New Testament has been scattered broadcast among the people. And since 1535 and 1537, there has been no lack of the Holy Scriptures in the mother tongue. To the praise of Queen Elizabeth be it said, that during her reign the people were free to print, circulate and read the Bible as their conscience dictated. There was an edition of Cranmer’s Bible, 1540, published during this reign, but the Genevan Bible was in the greatest demand. Numerous editions of the New Testament of the Genevan version, also of Tyndale’s translation, were printed and put into circulation. In all of this the people were satisfied, but the bishops were ill at ease. Very soon after the accession of Elizabeth they set themselves about publishing a new version of the Bible. The result of this undertaking was the Bishops’ Bible of 1568.” (Condit, 272)
- All sources report that Archbishop Matthew Parker was the driving force behind the creation of the Bishops’ Bible. Condit sates the following regarding the matter:
 - “Matthew Parker, bishop of Canterbury, was the leader in this enterprise. Among his reasons for setting forth a new version was, that the copies of the Great Bible were so scarce that it was impossible to supply the churches; notwithstanding, a new edition of the Great Bible was published in 1562, also in 1566. Another reason was that these Bibles were “very faultily printed.” He might have added still another to the effect that he hoped by putting forth a new version, to supersede the Genevan Bible, which was becoming more and more popular with the people, and which was most distasteful to the archbishop on account of its being the representative of Puritanism and Nonconformity. Though the archbishop was a scholar, a liberal patron of learning, and a man of unquestioned piety, yet he was so thoroughly attached to the queen’s polity of reducing the under clergy to one way of thinking and acting, that he had little sympathy with any thing that stood in the way of conformity to the new ecclesiastical regulations.” (Condit, 272-273)
- Later in the same chapter Condit adds,
 - “So far as Archbishop Parker was the prime mover in this work, the Bible is rightly designated as “Parker’s Bible.” Sometimes it is called “Queen Elizabeth’s Bible,” not for any part taken by her in furthering the enterprise, but simply on account of its being the only newly revised edition of the Bible done in England during her reign. But the most significant name is that of “Bishops’ Bible,” so called for the active co-operation of the bishops in the work of revision. The work began in 1563-4, and was not completed till

1568.” (Condit, 275)

- According to Dr. Brake, the project began in 1563 and included the following Bishops.
 - “In 1563 a massive translation project was launched, and Archbishop Parker was selected as the chief editor. The following men were given the task to complete various parts of the Bishops’ Bible: W. Allen, bishop of Exeter; R. Davies, bishop of St. David’s; E. Sandys, bishop of Worcester; A. Pearson, canon of Canterbury; A Perne, canon of Ely; R. Horne, bishop of Winchester; T. Bentham, bishop of Litchfield; E. Grindal, bishop of London; J. Parkhurst, bishop of Norwich; R. Coxe, bishop of Ely; E. Guest, bishop of Rochester; G. Goodman, dean of Westchester; and Giles Lawrence, professor of Greek at Oxford.” (Brake, 164, 165)
- When the project was finished, Archbishop Parker, who’s health was failing, presented a copy of the Bishops’ Bible to Queen Elizabeth via her Secretary of State William Cecil. The Bible was accompanied by a letter of explanation dated October 5, 1568. Contained within the letter, among other things, was a breakdown of the bishops who worked on the project along with their respective assignments. J.I. Mombert has reproduced this information in his 1883 book *English Versions of the Bible* as the following screenshots from pages 268 and 269 will attest.

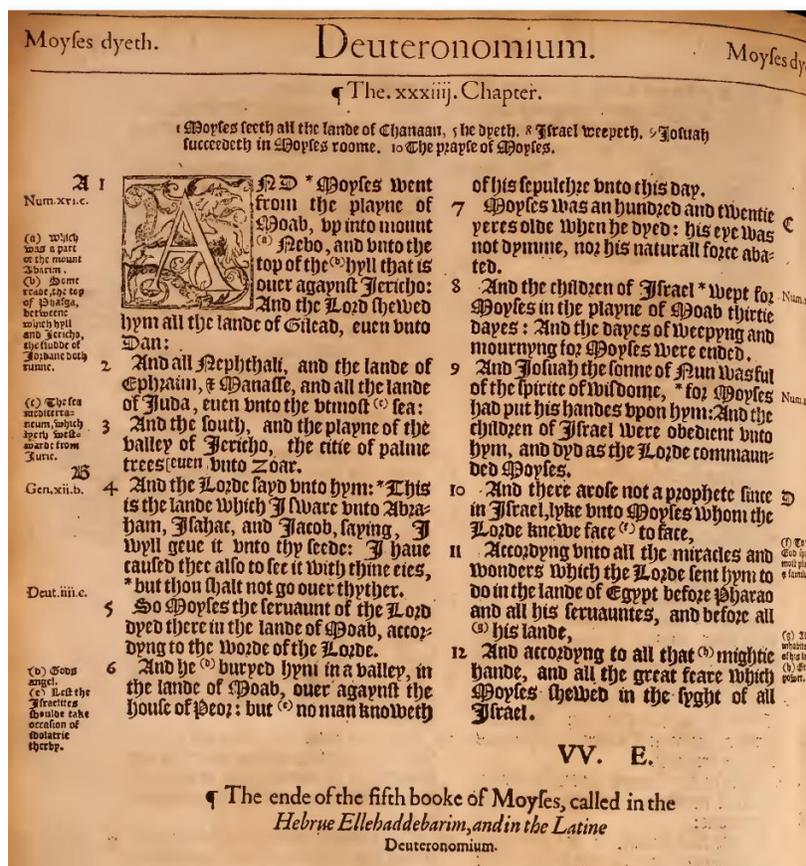
The Sum of the Scripture.	} M. Cant. [abp. Parker.]
The Table of Christ's line.	
The Argument of the Scriptures.	
The first Preface to the whole Bible.	
The Preface into the Psalter.	
The Preface into the New Testament.	} M. Cant. [abp. Parker.]
Genesis.	
Exodus.	} Cantuariæ. [Andrew Pierson, prebend?]
Leviticus.	
Numerus.	
Deuteronium.	W. Exon. [bp. Alley.]
Josuaë.	} R. Meneven. [bp. Davies.]
Judicum.	
Ruth.	
Regum, 1, 2.	} Ed. Wigorn. [bp. Sandys.]
Regum, 3, 4.	
Paralipomenon, 1, 2.	
Job.	} Cantuariæ. [Andrew Pierson, prebend?]
Proverbia.	
Ecclesiastes.	} Cantabrigiæ. [Andrew Perne, canon of Ely.]
Cantica.	
Ecclesiasticus.	} J. Norvic. [bp. Parkhurst.]
Susanna.	
Baruc.	
Maccabeorum.	
Esdras.	} W. Cicestren. [bp. Barlow.]
Judith.	
Tobias.	
Sapientia.	
Esaïas.	} R. Winton. [bp. Horne.]
Hieremias.	
Lamentationes.	
Ezechiel.	} J. Lich. and Covent. [bp. Bentham.]
Daniel.	

Prophetæ minores.	Ed. London. [bp. Grindal.]
Matthæus.	} M. Cant. [abp. Parker.]
Marcus.	
Lucas.	} Ed. Peterb. [bp. Scambler.]
Johannes.	
Act a Apostolorum.	} R. Eliensis. [bp. Cox.]
Ad Romanos.	
1 Epistola Corin.	D. Westmon. [Gabriel Goodman, dean.]
2 Epistola Corin.	} M. Cant. [abp. Parker.]
Ad Galatas.	
Ad Ephesios.	
Ad Phillippenses.	
Ad Collossenses.	
Ad Thessalon.	
Ad Timotheum.	
Ad Titum.	
Ad Philemon.	
Ad Hebræos.	} N. Lincoln. [bp. Bullingham.]
Epistolæ Canonicæ.	
Apocalipsis.	

- At Archbishop Parker's suggestion, the initials of the Bishop responsible for a given section of the revision were added to the text. This was done so that the revisers "might be the more diligent as answerable for their doings." (Mombert, 269). That said, the initials found in the text as noted by Mombert below do not match the list (see images on page 3) presented to William Cecil in the letter dated October 5, 1568.

The Pentateuch, W. E. W. Exon. William Alley, bp. of Exeter.
 2 Samuel, R. M. R. Meneven. Richard Davies, bp. of St. David's.
 2 Chronicles, E. W. E. Wigornen. Edwyn Sandys, bp. of Worcester.
 Job, A. P. C. Andrew Pearson, canon of Canterbury.
 Psalms, T. B. Thomas Becon [?].
 Proverbs, A. P. C. Andrew Pearson, canon of Canterbury.
 The Song of Solomon, A. P. E. Andrew Perne, canon of Ely.
 Lamentations, R. W. R. Winton. Robert Horne, bp. of Winchester.
 Daniel, T. C. L. Thomas Cole, bp. of Lichfield and Coventry.
 Malachi, E. L. E. Londin. Edmund Grindal, bp. of London.
 2 Maccabees, J. N. J. Norvic. John Parkhurst, bp. of Norwich.
 Acts, R. E. R. Elien. Richard Cox, bp. of Ely.
 Romans, R. E. R. Elien. Richard Cox, bp. of Ely.
 1 Corinthians, G. G. Gabriel Goodman, dean of Westminster.

- The following is an image taken from the end of The Pentateuch following the book of Deuteronomy. Note the initials W.E. for William Allen.



- The list appended to the Archbishop's letter of 5 October 1568 is no doubt inaccurate. Regarding this, Mombert notes, "it is known that [Giles] Lawrence, whose initials do not occur anywhere, took a large share in the revision. According to Lewis, he and other critics were employed by the archbishop to peruse the old translation and diligently to compare it with the original text." (Mombert, 270)
- Included in the Parker's letter was a subjoined memorandum titled "Observations respected of the Translators," which set forth the rules or directions to be followed by the translators. These rules read as follows:

First—To follow the common English translation used in the churches; and not to recede from it, but where it varieth manifestly from the Hebrew or Greek original.

Item—To use sections and divisions in the text as Pagnine in his translation useth, and for the verity of the Hebrew to follow the said Pagnine and Münster especially, and generally others learned in the tongues.

Item—To make no bitter notes upon any text, or yet to set down any determination in places of controversy.

Item—To note such chapters and places as contain matter of genealogies, or other such places not edifying with some strike or note, that the reader may eschew them in his public reading.

Item—That all such words as sound in the old translation, to any offense of lightness or obscenity, be expressed with more convenient terms and phrases.

- Parker's project was similar to one that Archbishop Cranmer had purposed many years prior i.e., a revision of the Great Bible by Anglican Bishops. Regarding the matter Condit writes,
 - "Parker's plan for revising the Bible was the same as that attempted by Archbishop Cranmer, in which Parker was more successful, since the clergy are now in sympathy with the English Scriptures, as they were not in Cranmer's time." (Condit, 273)
- The Bishops' Bible was to be a revision of Cranmer's edition of the Great Bible from 1540.
 - "Cranmer's Bible, 1540, was chosen as the basis of the revision. While it was the accepted version of the English Church, yet it was so inferior to the Genevan Bible that it was unacceptable to many who were prominent in the episcopal party. Complaints were made even before the issue of the Genevan Bible against Cranmer's version, although at the same time it was admitted that as a version it was "nearer the Hebrew than the translation usually ascribed to Jerome." Parker's first rule for the guidance of the revisers was: "To follow the common English translation used in the churches." (Condit, 277)

- Included within the material dated October 5, 1568 that Parker sent to Cecil was a letter to Queen Elizabeth from the Archbishop. Mombert reproduced the letter as follows on page 270.

Among divers observations which have been regarded in this recognition, one was, not to make it vary much from the translation which was commonly used by the public order, except where either the verity of the Hebrew and Greek moved alteration, or where the text was, by some negligence mutilated from the original. So that I trust your loving subjects shall see good cause in your majesty's days to thank God and to rejoice, to see this high treasure of His holy word to set out as may be proved (so far forth as man's mortal knowledge can attain unto, or as far forth as God hath hitherto revealed) to be faithfully handled in the vulgar tongue, beseeching your highness that it may have your gracious favour, license, and protection, to be communicated abroad, as well for that in many churches they want their books, and have long time looked for this, as for that in certain places be publicly used some translations which have not been laboured in your realm, having inspersed diverse prejudicial notes, which might have been also well spared. I have been bold in the furniture with few words to express the incomparable value of this treasure.

- Despite the Archbishop's request that Elizabeth "license" the new Bible, official royal sanction would not be forthcoming. That said, the volume was received and endorsed by ecclesiastical authorities i.e., the Bishops of the Anglican Church. Consider the following citation from the pens of Mombert and Brake.
 - "It is vain to speculate on the reasons for why the royal authority was not accorded to the Bishops' Bible, which not until 1577 was "set forth by authority;" i.e., by episcopal authority." (Mombert, 270)
 - "Although the Bishops' Bible was never officially licensed as the authorized Bible, the church and state enthusiastically received it. Clearly superior to the Great Bible, its actual translation fell short of the quality and simplicity of the Geneva translation. It never gained the popular support that many had hoped it would." (Brake, 165)
- Dr. Brake concludes his comments on the Bishops' Bible with the following paragraph:
 - "Fear seems to have prevented a truly revised text that conformed to standard language of the day. The Bishops' Bible was no more than a slight revision of the Great Bible. Parker's theological persuasion meant that he refused to acknowledge superior readings from the Genevan text. Even with all its faults, many editions of the Bishops' Bible were published from 1568 to 1602. Yet it was not a Bible for the people but rather for continued theological debate. Its primary influence came when it was selected by the

King James translators to be the standard version to be followed in the new translation [It was King James and Bishop Bancroft that established Rule 1 not the King James translators themselves.]" (Brake, 166)

Works Cited

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