

Sunday, November 21, 2021— Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
Lesson 157 Pre-Jamesian Calls for a New Translation

Introduction

- Last week in [Lesson 156](#) we looked at the decision King James made at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 to sanction the production of a new English Bible. Please recall that prior to becoming King of England in 1603, James had already determined in a meeting of the Scottish Kirk in 1601 that a new English Bible was necessary. Some historians view the publication of the Authorized Version as the culmination of James' decision from 1601. This also helps explain why James acted so quickly and decisively when John Rainolds floated the idea at Hampton Court. Parties interested in knowing more about this matter are encouraged to consult Lesson 156.
- Today, in Lesson 157 we will consider the calls for a new translation that existed within England before the death of Queen Elizabeth and the ascendancy of James.

Pre-Jamesian Calls For A New Translation

- 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 detail the need for a revision and the principles 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. (Stephen, 461) David Norton reports that Broughton was especially concerned with what he perceived to be inconsistencies in the Biblical chronology. (Norton, *The KJB*, 81)

To the Most High and Mighty PRINCE
ELIZABETH,

*By the grace of God, Queen of England, France, and
 Ireland, Defendor of the Faith, &c.*

MY pains in opening and declaring the Conent, which the Scripture hath, I humbly presented to your majesty, *Novemb. 17. 1589.* knowing it a Princes honour and work to defend and countenance this Argument. While Divines jar in their

Your Majesties Subject,

Hugh Broughton.

- Careful observers of the images above will notice that Broughton mentions a previous letter addressed to Queen Elizabeth on November 17, 1589. Research reveals that this earlier letter can be found in Broughton's 1589 work titled *A Concept of Scripture*.

To the most high and
mightie Prince Elizabeth, by the grace
of God, Queene of Englande,
France, and Ireland, defender
of the faith, &c.



THE whole Booke of GOD (most gracious Soueraigne) hath so great an harmony, that every part of it may be knowne to breath from one Spirit. All soundeth the same poynt: that by CHRIST the sonne eternall, we are made heires of lyfe: whom they that know not, abide alwayes in wrath. Prophecies in every age, the first larger, the latter narrower, all breifly tolde, all for euent fully recorded: these shew the constancie of this truth. The like reuolutions are of Abraham, Iacob and his children together, of Sems house: and agayne to Iapheths sonnes, and all families: wherein the former be stampes of the latter: so that in one speeche, an other thing also is spoken. These shew the eye of IEHOVAH, and his spirite. The kinde of places, and tymes, the lights of narrations, are registred so profitably, that it should be a blasphemy to as firme any one to be idle. Our LORD his fathers are recorded from Adam, by Dauid and Nathan, to his Grandfather E'v: likewise they, after who he is heyre to the kingdome of Dauid, Salome. A line so long as it continued: and afterwards they who from Nathan were heys to Salomons house. So other Families, who came all of one, as from them all come: they by Moses and the prophets be plentifully expressed. In like sort the places of their dwellings are cleere taught. The course of time is most certayne observed: even vnto the fulnesse, the yeere of saluation, wherein our Lord died. Of which time the very houre was foretolde by an Angell,

not.

not seauen yeeres before, but seuentie times seuen yeeres. Dan. 9, 24.
 To this all, other Ebrewes and prophane Greekes, beare witnesse
 stronglye agaynst them selues. These helpes be s^rarres in the Storye.
 The frame of all this, with coupling of ioyntes and proportion of bo-
 dy, will much allure to study, when it is seene howe about one worke all
 Families, Countries, and Ages, buylde or pull downe: and finde the kind-
 nes or seueritie of GOD. For this worke I endeoured, to call auncient E-
 brewes and Greekes, to further the building of iustice & peace, to come
 from Salem and Athens, to these endes of the earth; the possession o
 Christ: to speake in England the tongue of Eber and Iauan. This
 my paines, I humbly presente unto your Maiestie.

Your Maiesties subiect

HUGH BROUGHTON

Presented Nov. 17. 1589. see his Life & Letters.

- This of course means that for nearly a decade and a half (fourteen years) before Hampton Court in 1604, calls for a new translation of the Bible had been presented to Queen Elizabeth.
- 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 translations 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 tend 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.” (Stephen, 461) Despite this, support for his “application for carrying it out was unsuccessful.” (Stephen, 461)
- Despite Archbishop Whitgift’s name being tied to the proposed 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.” (Stephen, 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)

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.

- 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 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 reached 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.

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, distributing, and translating God's word. Why should we view the circumstances surrounding the decision to revise 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 other words, the doctrine of preservation is yet again confirmed in history.
- Therefore, 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.

Works Cited

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