Sunday, December 5, 2021— Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
Lesson 159 The Rules to Be Observed in Translation, Part 2 (To What Extent Were the Rules Followed?)

Introduction

- Last week in Lesson 158 we looked at "The Rules to Be Observed in Translation" set forth by Bishop Richard Bancroft to govern the project. All told we considered the following general topics:
    - How the Rules came about.
    - What the Rules were.
    - Scholarly commentary on the purpose and function of the Rules.
- Today, in Lesson 159, we want to consider to what extent the Rules were actually followed by the King James translators when doing their work.

To What Extent Were the Rules Followed?

- While we touched on this subject briefly in certain places in Lesson 158, the topic requires some further attention on account of the many misconceptions that people have about the matter. There is much confusion about the matter in pro-King James literature and teaching. For example, some maintain that Rule 1 was completely ignored in favor of William Tyndale. While others leave one with the impression that all fifteen Rules were followed exactly the way they were drawn up without any deviation. The reality is much messier.
- Gordon Campbell does an excellent job addressing this question in his book *Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611-2011*:
    - "To what extent were these guidelines followed? Anyone who has worked with untried procedures set out in advance of a project will be aware that the practicalities of implementation mean that some procedures will not be followed. It is difficult to judge exactly how the translators worked, but there are several documents that afford glimpses into their practices. The most important of these from the perspective of guiding principles was a report by one of the translators to the Synod of Dort.

      In 1618, seven years after the KJV had been published, the assembly now known as the Synod of Dort was convened in Dordrechet by the Dutch Reformed Church to deal with the dispute between Calvinists and Arminians; just as the Hampton Court Conference had commissioned a new version of the Bible, so the Synod of Dort approved a new translation of the Bible into Dutch. The five English delegates to the Synod included the resolute Calvinist Samuel Ward, a member of the Cambridge company that translated the Apocrypha. Ward submitted an account, written in the international language of Latin,

which set out the procedures that governed the work of the KJV. He also listed eight rules that had guided the process of translation. Although the first two simply summarize elements in the original fifteen rules, the other six are, in effect, supplementary rules; because they were formulated retrospectively (and in Ward's Latin are sometimes phrased in the past tense), they have the inestimable advantage of reflecting what actually happened rather than what was supposed to happen.

> The translators were not being asked to create a new version of the Bible, but rather to revise the established version, removing any blemishes or inaccuracies.
>
> Parallel pages would be recorded in the margins, but there would be no marginal commentary.
>
> Where a Hebrew or Greek word admits two meanings of a suitable kind, the one was expressed in the text, the other in the margin. The same to be done where variant readings were found in different (but reputable) versions of the Hebrew and Greek texts.

The use of the margin for alternative readings was controversial, because, as Miles Smith explains in the preface to the KJV, such a 'show of uncertainty' could shake belief 'in the authority of the Scriptures for deciding of controversies.' He therefore mounts a carefully argued defence of the practice, noting that nothing essential to salvation is ambiguous, but that there are instances, such as 'rare names of certain birds, beasts, and precious stones,' when it is better to be honest about uncertainty than to 'dogmatize upon this or that peremptorily.'

> The more difficult Hebraisms and Graecisms were consigned to the margin.
>
> In the translation of Tobit and Judith, when any great discrepancy is found between the Greek text and the old vulgate Latin, they followed the Greek text by preference.

The 'old vulgate Latin' refers to Jerome's translation from the Aramaic text of the apocryphal books of Tobit and Judith; that text was based on the Greek rather than the lost Hebrew originals. The Greek text followed by preference is the Septuagint.

> Words that it was anywhere necessary to insert into the text to complete the meaning were to be distinguished by another type, small roman.
>
> New arguments were to be prefixed to every book and new headings to every chapter.

An 'argument' is a summary of contents, but in the end 'arguments' were never prefixed to the books of the Bible. Headings were, however, furnished for each chapter.

A very perfect genealogy and map of the Holy Land was to be joined to the work." (Campbell, 40-42)

Procedures in Practice

- In addition to laying out a summary of the document that Samuel Ward submitted to the Synod of Dort in 1618 recapping the translational procedures utilized by the King James translators, Gordon Campbell comments on what these procedures looked like in practice.

    - "Perhaps the most impractical of the rules was number 8, which implied that all members of the company would translate or amend all the books that had been assigned to the company. There is some evidence that in practice the work was divided up. The contemporary biography of John Bois, a member of the Cambridge company responsible for the Apocrypha, says that 'part of the Apocrypha was allotted to him. . . [and] when he had finished his own part, at the earnest request of him to whom it was assigned, he understood a second.' Similarly, one manuscript list (now in the British Library) of the ten members of the Westminster company responsible for the books from Genesis to 2 Kings divides the company into two groups, one responsible for the Pentateuch and the other for the remaining books in their section.

      The rule that seems to have been broken most often is number 2, on the spelling of proper names. Isaiah, the English name of the prophet derives from the abbreviated form of his Hebrew name used in the title of his book (a fuller Hebrew form is used in the text). It must, however, have been the precedent of the Bishops' Bible that caused the revisers to call him "Esai' in the 1611 text of 2 Kings 19:2; from 1629 onwards, the name was spelt Isaiah. On the twenty-one occasions in which he appears in the New Testament, however, the name is spelt Esaias, its Greek form. Similarly, Jeremiah is so spelt in the Old Testament, but in Matthew's Gospel he appears as Ieremie on three occasions (2:17; 16:14; 27:9) in the 1611 text, and in modern texts of the KJV as Jeremy; we may be relieved to know he is not 'vulgarly' called Jerry.

      Rules formulated in advance of a project are inevitably adjusted to accord with the practicalities of the job. In the case of the KJV, there is evidence both of short cuts and of going the extra mile." (Campbell, 42-43)

- Campbell's commentary highlights a dynamic interplay between the various Rules as the translators did their work. Sometimes one Rule took precedence over another. Other times Rules were not consistently followed across the totality of the work. The exchange between Rules 1, 2, and 3 make for an interesting case study.

    - 1—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.

2—The names of the prophets, and the holy writers, with other names in the text, to be retained, as near as may be, accordingly as they are vulgarly used.

3—The old ecclesiastical words to be kept, *viz*.: as the word 'Church' not to be translated 'Congregation' etc.

- In Lesson 137 The Bishops' Bible: Understanding the King James Connection we discussed the commonly held view among King James advocates that Rule 1 was ignored by the translators in favor of Rule 14.

    - 14—These translations to be used where they agree better with the text than the Bishops' Bible, viz: Tyndale's Matthew's Coverdale's, Whitchurch's, Geneva.

- Interested parties are encouraged to revisit the full citations from the pens of Peter S. Ruckman and Gerald Hammond on this matter in Lesson 137. For our purposes in this lesson the following abbreviated quotations from Ruckman will suffice:

    - ". . . 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)

    - "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, *Vol. II*, 404)

- More recent scholarship by Ward S. Allen, David Norton, and Lawrence M. Vance, among others, reveals that Ruckman was dead wrong in his assertions quoted above. In his 2015 book *The Making of the King James Bible New Testament* Vance conducted a full collation of the New Testaments found with a 1602 Bishops' Bible and the 1611 Authorized Version. After conducting this collation Vance found that, "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) As we will see in a future Lesson, the evidence is overwhelming that Rule 1 was followed and that the 1602 Bishops' Bible served as the base text for the entire project. In fact, Rule 1 may have been the most followed Rule of all. This, of course, would mean once again that a leading light of the King James Only movement was completely wrong and did know what he was talking about.

- The comments cited above from the pen of Gordon Campbell accent the interchange between the various Rules as the translators set about doing their work. Let's consider the interplay between Rules 1 and 2 as an example. Recall, that Campbell said that Rule 2, regarding the spelling of names, was "broken" more frequently than any other Rule.

- The name "Isaiah" with the modern spelling occurs 32 times in 32 verses in the Old Testament in the King James Bible. II Kings 19:2 is the only time that "Isaiah" was spelled with the older

spelling "Esai" in the 1611 edition of the KJB. Meanwhile, the 1602 Bishops text had "Isai", the older spelling, in all 32 verses that the prophet is named in the Old Testament. Aside from the one outlier in II Kings 19:2 the translators updated and standardized the spelling of "Isaiah" in the 1611 Old Testament.

- In contrast, the word "Esaias", the old Greek spelling of "Isaiah", occurs 21 times in 21 verses in the King James New Testament. A comparison with the 1602 Bishops New Testament reveals that every time the Old Testament prophet is mentioned his name was spelled "Esayas" just as it appears in the 1611 New Testament. Herein we see the tension between the various Rules set forth to govern the project. When given the chance to standardize the spelling of "Isaiah" (Rule 2) the translators elected to follow the Bishops' in the New Testament and thereby adopt the old Greek spelling. The same cannot be said for the Old Testament where the older Hebrew spelling was updated in every place except one.

- These realities accent the preferences/priorities of the various translational companies as they did their work. Moreover, it speaks to how strictly Rules 8-10 were followed regarding the various companies reviewing each others work. If those Rules were followed the way they were written up, consistent adherence to Rule 2 was clearly not a priority or the spelling of "Isaiah" would have been standardized throughout the Biblical text. The same could be said for the spelling of "Jeremiah" as noted above by Gordon Campbell. These observations raise questions as to how strictly Rules 8-10 were followed.

- Rule 3, regarding the use of "old ecclesiastical words", is also interesting to consider in this context. In Lesson 141 we discussed how the 1568 Bishops' Bible was revised in 1572. One of the distinct features of the 1572 revision was the intentional choice to reintroduce ecclesiastical terminology back into the text. An example would be the use of the Latin word "charity" for "love" in I Corinthians 13. The revision of 1572 used the word "charity" 28 times in 24 verses. These ecclesiastical word changes were passed forward into the 1602 Bishops' text which served as the base text for the King James translators. When one compares the 1602 base text with the Authorized Version of 1611, they will find occurrences of the word "charity" in the exact same 28 places.

- In many cases, following Rule 3 was as simple as following Rule 1 since the Bishops' Bible had already been revised in favor of more ecclesiastical language.

- Noting the interplay that existed between the various Rules serves to highlight the priorities of the translators. Given the surviving evidence, it does seem that Rule 1 was probably the Rule that was most strictly and consistently adhered to. This much is clear, that Rules were not followed like a hard and fast checklist. In the end, they served more as guidelines than rules. As Campbell pointed out above:

    - "Rules formulated in advance of a project are inevitably adjusted to accord with the practicalities of the job. In the case of the KJV, there is evidence both of shortcuts and of going the extra mile." (Campbell, 43)

Works Cited

Campbell, Gordon. *Bible: The Story of the King James Version.* Oxford University Press, 2011.

Ruckman, Peter S. *The History of the New Testament Church Volume I*. Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1982.

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