

Sunday, November 6, 2022— Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 184 Pre-1611 Evidence for the Text: The General Meeting & The Notes of John Bois, Part 6

Introduction

- In [Lesson 183](#) we looked at Gerald Hammond’s comments on Bois’ notes and the General Meeting found in his book *The Making of the English Bible*.
- In this Lesson, I would like to conclude our study of the General Meeting by finishing our look at Dr. Edward C. Jacobs’ essay “Two Stages of Old Testament Translation for the King James Bible.”

“Two Stages of Old Testament Translation for the King James Bible” by Edward C. Jacobs

- In [Lesson 174](#) as part of our discussion of the impact of Bod 1602 on Old Testament readings in the AV, we considered Dr. Edward Jacobs’ 1980 essay for *The Library* titled “Two Stages of Old Testament Translation for the King James Bible” in which he expanded on his arguments from his 1975 essay “An Old Testament Copytext for the 1611 Bible” (discussed in [Lesson 173](#)).
- Regarding his earlier essay from 1975, Dr. Jacobs stated the following in 1980:
 - “This Bible [Bod 1602] has copious handwritten annotations throughout much of the Old and New Testaments. Scholars had long considered these annotations of little value, but Professor Allen thought otherwise. Under his direction, I studied the Old Testament while he studied the New Testament. My published conclusions argue that the Old Testament annotations represent a valid record of a large portion of the work of the Old Testament translators as it existed in its finished state before it was sent to the General Meeting for final review. I based such conclusions on three sorts of evidence: the bibliographical state of the Bible; the annotator's hand and method; and textual collation of the annotations with the King James Bible and earlier English translations.” (Jacobs, 17)
- The purpose of Dr. Jacobs’ 1980 essay is stated as follows:
 - “Since establishing these conclusions, I have sought to determine whether the Old Testament annotations can establish quantitatively and qualitatively the amounts and types of revisionary work that the Old Testament companies and the General Meeting performed.” (Jacobs, 17)
- In this Lesson we want to review the contents of this important essay as well as present new material that is pertinent to our discussion of the General Meeting.

Review

- The first half of Jacobs’ essay is devoted to sharing his quantitative findings regarding the number of revisions performed by the translational companies and the General Meeting. This

takes the form of presenting a somewhat complicated table accompanied by explanatory text. The following is a copy of Jacobs' table. I will leave the PowerPoint on the screen throughout the Lesson and annotate it as we proceed.

TABLE I. Quantitative Distribution					TABLE I. Quantitative Distribution				
GROUP I					GROUP II				
Total Vss	A (0)	B (1-3)	C (4-7)	D (8+)	Total GM revisions	A	B	C	D
First Oxford Company (Nabub & Hab)	103	6 5.8%	23 22.3%	24 23.3%	50 48.6%	2 of 103 1.9%	5 of 23 21.7%	5 of 24 20.8%	13 of 50 26%
C+D = 71.9%					C+D = 72%				
First Westminster Company (Ruth)	85	5 5.9%	19 22.3%	26 30.6%	35 41.1%	34 of 85 40%	2 of 19 10.5%	6 of 26 23.1%	9 of 35 25.7%
C+D = 71.7%					C+D = 76.4%				
First Cambridge Company (Song of Solomon)	112	0	9 8%	21 18.8%	82 73.2%	32 of 112 28.6%	0	5 of 21 23.8%	27 of 82 32.9%
C+D = 92%					C+D = 100%				
Totals	300	11 3.6%	51 17%	71 23.7%	167 55.7%	91 30.3%	4 4.3%	11 12%	57 62.7%
A+B = 20.3% C+D = 79.4%					A+B = 16.3% C+D = 83.6%				

TABLE I. Quantitative Distribution					TABLE I. Quantitative Distribution				
GROUP III					GROUP IV				
Total GM revisions	B ¹ (1-3)	C ² (4-7)	D ³ (8+)	Total GM revisions less errors	B ¹ (1-3)	C ² (4-7)	D ³ (8+)	Total errors	Total vss % wrong/right
First Oxford Company (Nabub & Hab)	22 88%	1 4%	2 8%	25 of 103 24.3%	17 85%	1 5%	2 10%	5 19.4%	103 4.9%
C+D = 72%					C+D = 76.4%				
First Westminster Company (Ruth)	31 36.4%	3 3.5%	0	34 of 85 40%	28 90.3%	3 9.7%	0	3 3.5%	85 94.1%
C+D = 100%					C+D = 100%				
First Cambridge Company (Song of Solomon)	28 25.3%	4 36%	0	32 of 112 28.6%	22 88%	3 12%	0	10 22.3%	112 9%
C+D = 100%					C+D = 100%				
Totals	91 30.3%	8 8.8%	2 2.1%	101 33.7%	67 88.1%	7 9.2%	2 2.7%	20 6.7%	300 93.3%

From pages 18 & 19 of "Two Stages of Old Testament Translation For the King James Bible" by Edward Craney Jacobs in The Library March 1980

- The purpose of Group III is to chart "how many additional revisions the General Meeting provided for each of the 91 verses that it further revised." (Jacobs, 21) Professor Jacobs explains as follows:
 - "Group III consists of four vertical columns. Column one, labelled 'Total GM revisions', shows the total verses and percentages that the General Meeting further revised of each translator company's work. Columns two through four, labelled 'B2', 'C2', and 'D2', employ the same classification-numerical scheme established for the work of the translator companies in Group I.

Columns 'B2', 'C2', and 'D2', classify the verses that the General Meeting further revised according to the number of revisions that the General Meeting supplied for each verse. Column 'B2' for First Oxford Company states that the General Meeting further revised 22 of 25 verses of this Company's work, but did so by supplying only minor changes of 1-3 words per verse. Column 'C2' states that the General Meeting made moderate revisions of 4-7 words for one verse already revised by the Company. Column 'D2' indicates that the General Meeting made significant revisions of 8 or more words for two verses already revised by the Company.

Important conclusions follow from an analysis of Group III. While the General Meeting further revised 91 of 300 verses, some 30.3%, its revisions were almost totally of a minor sort, quantitatively speaking; 81 of the 91 verses further revised, or 89%, are in Category 'B2'. For only 10 of 91 verses, or 10.9%, has the General Meeting made more than minor revisions. Thus, there is an inverse relationship between Columns 'A-D' of Group I and Columns 'B2-D2' of Group III. The nature of that relationship is this: in Group I, 62 of

300 verses, or 20.3% of the verses that the translator companies revised, are in Categories 'A' and 'B'. But in Group III, 81 of 91 verses, or 89% of the verses that the General Meeting further revised, are in Category 'B2'. In Group I, 238 of 300 verses, or 79.4% of all verses that the translator companies revised, are in Categories 'C' and 'D'. Whereas in Group III, 10 of 91 verses, or 10.9% of the verses that the General Meeting further revised, are in Categories 'C2' and 'D2'.

Such a relationship substantiates Professor Allen's answer to a problem that scholars have long pondered. How much revisionary work could the General Meeting have accomplished in the short span of nine months or so? Could this committee have done much more than give formal assent to the work of the translator companies? Professor Allen's work, *Translating For King James*, has answered this question. In particular, his analysis of Bois's notes for 1 Peter argues convincingly that the General Meeting paid the closest attention to its task. And the figures regarding the inverse relationship cited above bear out Professor Allen's conclusions. The General Meeting reviewed carefully all of the translation work, approved the majority as it stood, some 70% or so, and to the remaining 30% that it found lacking, supplied mainly minor revisions of one to three corrections per verse. Based on these complete sample books, it will not do, then, to assert that the General Meeting revised 30% of the work of the companies. It did not completely revise 30% of the translators' work. Rather, 89% of this 30% figure, or 81 of 91 verses further revised, constitutes only further minor changes of one to three revisions. Conceivably, nine months of work would have been sufficient for the General Meeting to review all the work of the companies." (Jacobs, 21-23)

New Material

- The second half of Professor Jacobs' paper from 1980 contains a discussion of the qualitative types of linguistic revisions made by the Old Testament companies and the General Meeting. In Lesson 174 we did not discuss this portion of the Dr. Jacobs's essay. I intentionally saved it to consider as part of our discussion of the General Meeting.
- Dr. Jacobs describes the collation found in "Part III" of his essay as follows:
 - "The textual collation follows this methodology: at the left-hand margin appears the name of the sample book. Beneath the name there follows the chapter-verse number from the Bishops' Bible, 1602, for each verse revision that the General Meeting has made. For Ruth, Nahum, and Habakkuk, the Bishops' Bible chapter-verse numbers correspond to the same chapter-verse numbers in the King James Bible. But such is not always the case in Song of Solomon. In this book the translator company has at times revised the verse numbers so that the Bishops' Bible, 1602, and the King James Bible do not agree in numbering. To prevent confusion, I indicate, wherever necessary, in parentheses following the Bishops' Bible chapter-verse number, the number of the verse as found in the King James Bible. For example, the Song of Solomon collation below begins with '1. 2 (3)'. This number indicates that Bishops' Bible 1. 2 corresponds to King James Bible 1.3.

In order to tie in Table 1, the statistical table in Part II, with the collation, I cite also in parentheses after each chapter-verse number two capital letters. The first letter is either

'A', CB\ 'C', or 'D'. The second letter is either 'B2', 'C2', or 'D2'. These two groups of letters refer to Groups I and II, respectively, in Table I, Part II and tell how many revisions a translator company has already made for each verse, and how many further revisions the General Meeting made afterwards. Nahum 1. 4 is followed by '(D,B2)'. This designation indicates that First Oxford Company made eight or more revisions for 1. 4 and that the General Meeting made three or less further revisions for the verse. In this case, the collation shows that the General Meeting made one change. It corrected a verb error.

To the right of the name of the sample book, following each chapter-verse number, there appears the text of the verse portion under consideration. First appears the verse as printed in the Bishops' Bible, 1602. Second appears the verse as revised, if at all, by the translator company. Third follows the verse as revised by the General Meeting, assuming, of course, that the King James text that is here cited represents the state of the text as it stood at the end of the work of the General Meeting in 1610.²⁰ The following abbreviations appear:

BB = Bishops' Bible, 1602
 OX = First Oxford Company
 CB = First Cambridge Company
 WM = First Westminster Company
 GM = General Meeting

... The collation cites only those portions of verses that make clear the further revisions that the General Meeting has performed. The parentheses containing the capital letter indicators that follow chapter-verse numbers make clear to the reader how much revisionary work the entire verse had received from the translator company before being sent to the General Meeting. A reader using a facsimile of the King James Bible together with this collation can determine what the revised state of the entire verse was when it was sent to the General Meeting. There is, at present, no facsimile of the Bishops' Bible, 1602. One must use a Bishops' Bible, a microfilm copy, or photographic copies if one wishes to examine further the state of the verse as it was in 1602.

A final directive. The revisions that the General Meeting performed are summarized in Table II following the collation. But after those collated verses below that contain errors made by the annotator, there appears the word 'Comments', followed by the phrase 'Error corrected: class # 1 [or #2, or #3]'. These numbers designate three classes of errors. Class #1 errors are obvious errors that the annotator has made, such as a failure to erase (i.e. line through) the text completely, or to supply a complete revised reading for the erased text.

Class #2 errors I so designate because the logical or grammatical context of a verse argues that an error exists. Class #3 errors refer to revisions that may or may not be errors — 'doubtful errors', if I may be allowed such a contradiction. Such a category is necessary because the verse context does not support an either/or judgement. Some readers may classify some errors of class #3 into class #2, or vice versa. Others may even question if errors so classified in #2 or #3 are errors at all." (Jacobs, 25-27)

- Consider the following example of Jacobs collation on the book of Nahum originally revised by the First Oxford Company.

Nahum

1. 4 (D,B ²)	BB	the spring also of Libanus is destroyed.
	OX	and the flou[y]re of Lebanon is languisheth.
	GM	and the floure of Lebanon languisheth.
	<i>Comments:</i> Error Corrected: class #1.	
1. 6 (D,B ²)	BB	his fiercenesse
	OX	<i>unrevised</i>
	GM	his furie
1. 11 (D,B ²)	BB	such as thought euill
	OX	that imagine
	GM	that imagineth
	<i>Comments:</i> Error Corrected: class #1.	
1. 13 (C,B ²)	BB	I will breake
	OX	<i>unrevised</i>
	GM	will I breake
2. 6 (C,B ²)	BB	The riuer gates are opened,
	OX	The gates of the rivers are opened,
	GM	The gates of the riuers shall bee opened,
2. 11 (D,B ²)	BB	the feeding plot of Lions whelpes,
	OX	the feeding plot of the yong Lions,
	GM	the feeding place of the yong Lions?

- Jacobs' collation covers 9 pages (27-36). It includes samples from Nahum, Habakkuk, Ruth, and Song of Solomon. In doing so, it compares the work of the First Oxford, Cambridge, and Westminster Companies against the textual changes made at the General Meeting. Following the collation, Dr. Jacobs presents Table II titled "Summary of the Textual Revisions Made by the General Meeting." The following images are of Table II.

TABLE II. *Summary of Textual Revisions Made by the General Meeting*

Type of revision	1st Oxford Company <i>Nabum and – Habakkuk</i>	1st Westminster Company <i>Ruth</i>	1st Cambridge Company <i>Song of Solomon</i>
Error Corrected	1. 41; 1. 11; – 3. 1 2. 13; 3. 13	1. 20; 2. 10; 3. 9; 3. 13; 4. 15	1. 5; 2. 8; 3. 4; 3. 6; 4. 1; 5. 6; 5. 7; 5. 17; 8. 9; 8. 12
Sp. change proper nouns	3. 18	1. 14; 2. 1; 2. 3; 2. 8; 2. 14; 2. 15; 2. 19; 2. 23; 3. 2; 4. 1; 4. 5; 4. 8	1. 4; 2. 8; 3. 5; 3. 9; 5. 8; 5. 17; 6. 4; 8. 4
Noun revised	1. 6; 2. 11 – 3. 10	3. 10; 4. 15	1. 10
Noun added			3. 7
Noun deleted			2. 8
Verb revised	3. 6 – 2. 18; 2. 19	3. 18; 4. 15	1. 2; 1. 10; 2. 8; 8. 9
Verb added		1. 22	5. 1
Verb deleted		1. 2	
Verb tense revised	2. 6	4. 3	8. 11
Noun-verb revised		1. 1	
Noun-verb added			3. 9
Pronoun revised	– 2. 15		2. 8
Pronoun added	3. 7	1. 22; 2. 13; 4. 8	
Pronoun deleted	– 2. 19	2. 23	
Adjective revised	3. 3 – 1. 7; 2. 18	1. 19	2. 10; 2. 13; 7. 6
Adjective added	– 2. 18	4. 15	3. 7; 4. 3
Adjective deleted			1. 2; 1. 4; 2. 8
Adverb revised			3. 9; 4. 2

TABLE II. *Continued*

<i>Type of revision</i>	<i>1st Oxford Company Nabum and – Habakkuk</i>	<i>1st Westminster Company Ruth</i>	<i>1st Cambridge Company Song of Solomon</i>
<i>Adverb added</i>		4. 18; 2. 23	
<i>Adverb deleted</i>	– 2. 19	1. 15; 1. 19; 2. 14	6. 5
<i>Conj. revised</i>	– 2. 18		
<i>Conj. added</i>	– 2. 13; 3. 19	1. 2	
<i>Conj. deleted</i>	– 2. 19	1. 2; 1. 4; 1. 8; 2. 18	
<i>Interjection deleted</i>			3. 1
<i>Preposition revised to conjunction</i>		1. 3; 1. 22	
<i>Prep./prep. phrase revised</i>	– 2. 19	1. 2; 3. 3	3. 7; 7. 3
<i>Prep. phrase added</i>	– 2. 3; 2. 19	3. 13	3. 2; 3. 9
<i>Prep. phrase deleted</i>	– 3. 7	3. 12; 3. 13	
<i>Other phrases added</i>	– 2. 19		
<i>Other phrases deleted</i>		4. 4	
<i>Other phrases revised</i>	– 2. 18		
<i>Clause revised</i>	– 2. 18	1. 2; 1. 22	
<i>Clause deleted</i>	3. 19		6. 13
<i>Clause revised to a phrase</i>	– 2. 18		
<i>Plural revised to a singular</i>	– 3. 11; 3. 13	1. 14; 3. 18	
<i>Possessive added</i>		3. 13	6. 3
<i>Word order revised</i>	1. 13	1. 19	
<i>Major revisions: multiple changes</i>	– 2. 18; 2. 19	1. 2; 1. 22	3. 9; 6. 13

- In conjunction with Table II, Dr. Jacobs offers the following summative observations regarding the work of the General Meeting.
 - “Study of the textual collation and Table II gives a clear and certain view of the work of the General Meeting. The General Meeting truly functioned as a committee of final review for the six translator companies. It performed neither massive revisions, nor did it do a cursory task of review. It carefully scrutinized all the work of the companies and found the majority of the revisions to be in good order. But for some thirty per cent it made slight revisions. Table II corroborates Table I and makes clear the nature and extent of these revisions. Twenty-one spelling revisions of proper nouns account for the single most frequent revision. Other categories such as 'Verb revised', 'Adjective revised', 'Adverb deleted', and 'Preposition added' account for nine, seven, five, and five revisions, respectively. Very few verses contain major revisions.

Study of the qualitative nature of the revisions of the General Meeting suggests that it probably did not embroil itself in doctrinal controversy. None of its revisions, of Song of Solomon, for example, suggests controversy about how to read this difficult Old Testament book. Neither do the revisions for Ruth, Nahum, or Habakkuk appear to alter significantly the English text prepared by the translator companies.

The General Meeting's revisions functioned primarily to improve style. The great majority of the revisions result in more graphic renderings of the text through changes such as the revision of a noun or verb, the condensing of a phrase, the reworking of a subordinate clause into a co-ordinate one, or, in some few cases, the expansion of a phrase or a clause. First Westminster Company's Ruth is the sample book that the General Meeting has revised most significantly; second is First Cambridge Company's Song of Solomon; third is First Oxford Company's Nahum and Habakkuk. Excepting Habakkuk 2. 18, the General Meeting made no significant stylistic revisions of First Oxford Company's work. Revisions such as 'plot' to 'place' (Nahum 2. 11) and 'streame' to 'ouerflowing' (Hab. 3.10) are typical of the General Meeting's revision of these books.

Despite the lapse of over three hundred and fifty years, we can quarrel with very few of the revisions of the General Meeting. These sample books clearly show us many new aspects of the work of the King James translators, especially that of the General Meeting. Yet more work remains to be done. Other Old Testament books of this annotated Bishops' Bible require study to see if they agree with the findings presented here. And the revisions of the General Meeting need to be studied in relation to earlier English Biblical translations and to Hebrew texts available to the translators in order to determine what debts the General Meeting may owe to them. (Jacobs, 36-39)

- Dr. David Norton offers the following summative statement about the notes of John Bois in *A Textual History of the King James Bible*:
 - “The second puzzling feature of Bois's notes is that they do not account for all the work that had to be done on the Epistles and Revelation. Much more work happened between the preparation of MS 98 and the printing of the text than his notes account for. 2,974 changes were made independently of the preparation of MS 98, but Bois records just

under 500 items of discussion, the majority of which concern the originals rather than particularities of English translation. Even if each of these items of discussion led to a change in the text (which did not happen), they would account for less than a twelfth of the changes. It may be that he did not record all the discussions he was present at, but somewhere and somehow there is significantly more work to be accounted for.” (Norton, 20)

Works Cited

- Jacobs, Edward C. “Two Stages of Old Testament Translation for the King James Bible” in *The Library* Vol. s6-11, Issue 1, March 1980.
- Norton, David. *The Textual History of the King James Bible*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.