

Sunday, December 11, 2022— Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 187 The AV 1611: Confronting the Copyright Myth & Early 17th Century Printing

Introduction

- In [Lesson 185](#) we touched upon the early rumors that Bishops of the Anglican Church, most notably Archbishop Richard Bancroft, may have altered as many as fourteen places in the King James text before it was published in 1611. Olga S. Opfell, Alister McGrath, and Kenneth Fincham among others all discuss the possibility that these rumors originated with Miles Smith who, along with Thomas Bilson, saw the text through to the press in the print shop of the king's printer Richard Barker. I concluded this section of [Lesson 185](#) with the following statement:
 - “Alleged textual tampering by Bancroft is discussed by many of the relevant sources commenting on the late stages of the translation process. It seems that Miles Smith's allegation of tampering on the part of Bancroft originated from within ten years of the text first being printed in 1611. Despite these early rumors, the reality is that we simply do not know what readings, if any, Bancroft altered before he died in late 1610. That said, I do suspect that I Corinthians 12:28 could have been one of the passages Bancroft changed before he passed.” (This was discussed briefly in [Lesson 170](#)).
- Last week, we continued our discussion of this topic by looking at additional information from the *Gibson Papers*, in the possession of Lambeth Palace Library in which we find the following statement regarding Dr. Richard Bret who served on the 1st Oxford Translational company:
 - “Dr. Bret reported that the Bps. [Bishops] altered very many places that the translators had agreed upon: He had a note of the places. According to another report, Archbishop Bancroft himself insisted upon certain changes being made in a few places.”
- Lawrence M. Vance, B.F. Westcott, and Charles C. Butterworth all cite this document/statement in their respective works that we quoted in [Lesson 186](#). Recall that I have seen a photo of the handwritten document in the possession of Lambeth Palace but I am not at liberty to share it due to copyright restrictions.
- Next, we investigated Dr. Thomas Hill's sermon dated [April 3, 1648](#), in which he addressed some of these rumors. Recall the following general statement:
 - “I have it from certain hands, such as lived in those times, that when the Bible had been Translated by the Translators appointed, the New Testament was looked over by some of the great Prelates, (men I could name some of their persons) to bring it to speak Prelatical Language, and they did alter (as I am informed by the means of one that was a great observer in those times, and lived them) fourteen places in the New Testament, to make them speak the Language of the Church of England, that was so cryed up: and I'll tell you some of them.” (Hill)

- In doing so we looked at the six examples offered by Dr. Hill, one of which was I Corinthians 12:28, which we spent the most time discussing in Lesson 186. My comments on Dr. Hill's sermon in general and upon I Corinthians 12:28 specifically, caused a stir online this past week as I suspected they might. Most notably Nick Sayers of Revolution Church in Australia created a YouTube video titled "[Some thoughts on Brian Ross' video about Bancroft's 14 Changes](#)" in which he expressed his misgivings about the content of Lesson 186. This also prompted discussion on Nick's Facebook Group "Textus Receptus Academy." Interested parties are encouraged to click on the link above to Nick's video and check it out for themselves in light of Lesson 186. In addition, I received a couple of emails from concerned citizens and some comments were posted on our YouTube by Brother Christopher Yetzer.
- Before moving on I would like to clarify the following regarding my use of Dr. Hill's sermon in Lesson 186.
 - First, I was using Hill's sermon in conjunction with Dr. Bret's comments in the *Gibson Papers* as data points to substantiate the rumors of textual tampering on the part of Anglican Bishops during the first half of the 17th century up to and possibly including Archbishop Richard Bancroft.
 - Second, Dr. Hill mentioned Thomas Bilson by name in his paragraph on Acts 2. It is unclear whether Bilson is one of the people referenced two paragraphs earlier when Hill mentioned "Prelates" who amended to the text to speak "Prelatical Language."
 - Third, I never said that I agreed with all of Hill's examples or even that they were good examples. In fact, I find many of them confusing and hard to follow. My explanation in Lesson 186 was designed to try and explain what Hill was arguing in his sermon.
 - Lastly, I think there is strong evidence to suggest that I Corinthians 12:28 was altered by someone before the text was published in 1611. I am working on a separate document in which I lay out all my reasons for thinking this.
- Time permitting, we will consider the following points in the duration of this Lesson.
 - Confronting the Copyright Myth
 - A Brief Look At Early 17th Century Printing

Confronting the Copyright Myth

- The question of whether the KJB is or was ever copyrighted is a perplexing one for modern King James Only advocates. It is commonly repeated in pro-King James argumentation and literature that the KJB resides in the public domain and was therefore never copyrighted. This is used as a rhetorical device to score points against Modern Versions which most certainly carry modern copyrights. Argumentation such as this is only partially correct.

- I devoted an entire chapter of my book *The King James Bible In America: An Orthographic Historical, and Textual Investigation* to “Confronting the Copyright Myth.”
 - “The King James text resides in the public domain in the United States. This is certainly not the case, however, in Great Britain where the authority for printing the Authorized Version is vested in the Crown. Even the popular internet-based Bible research website Blue Letter Bible acknowledges this fact by including the following disclaimer at the bottom of every page of King James text: “Outside of the United Kingdom, the KJV is in the public domain. Within the United Kingdom, the rights to the KJV are vested in the Crown”.

Outside of the United Kingdom, the Authorized Version entered the public domain after the Revolutionary War. These facts run contrary to standard narrative within the King James Only movement. The right or privilege to print the King James text remains under the Crown’s authority in the United Kingdom to this day. Moreover, when these facts are followed to their logical conclusion a different and far more instructive narrative emerges.

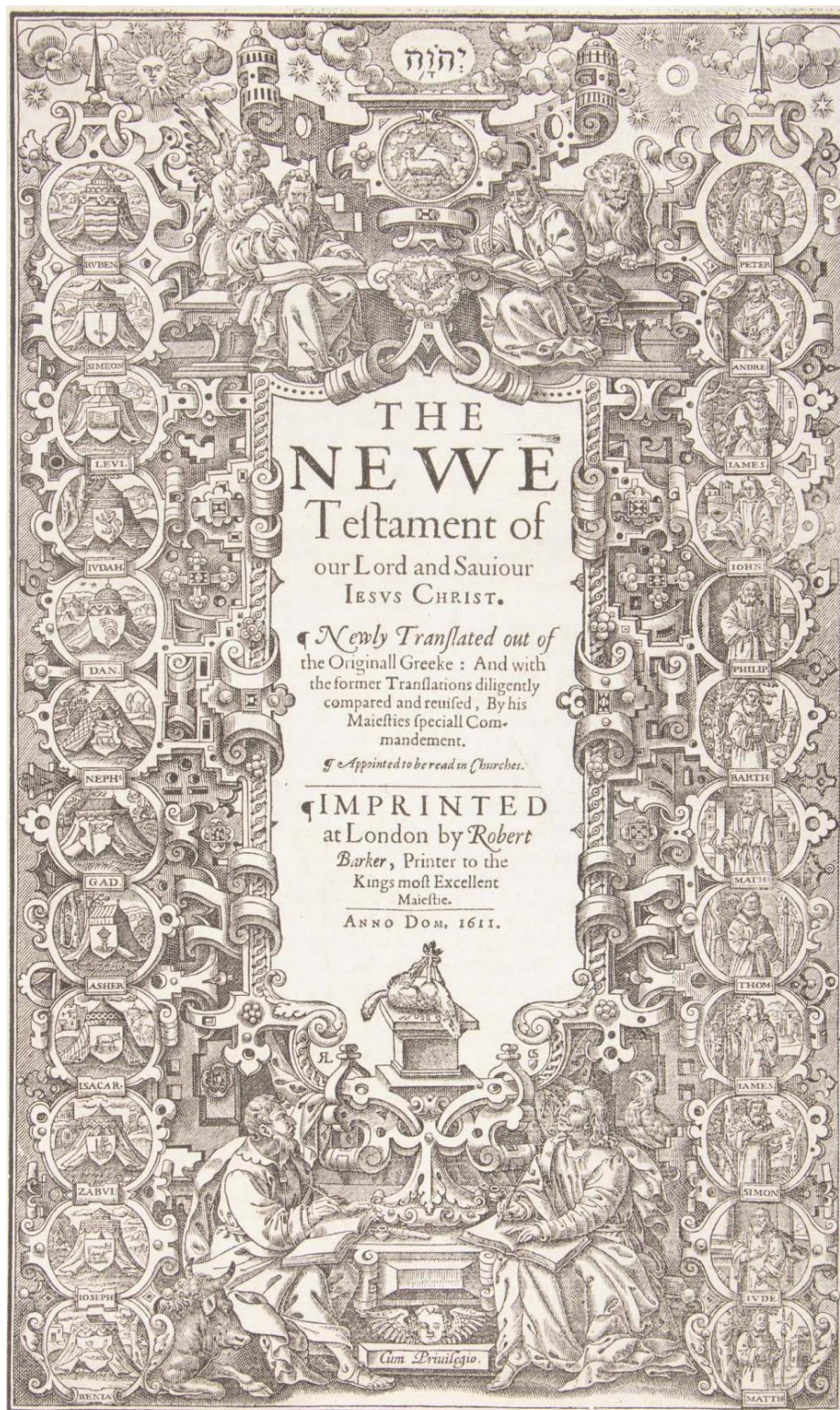
English law does not view the Crown as owning a copyright or other intellectual property right in the Authorized Version but instead having the duty to ensure accuracy in its printing. With respect to the Authorized Version, “The king did not own the Bible as intellectual property, but rather had a duty of ensuring accuracy in printed Bibles.”⁷³ Consequently the Crown’s responsibility was to ensure that the text of the KJB was printed accurately and with fidelity. The Crown discharged its custodial authority by limiting/controlling who it bestowed with the privilege of printing the text.

It is precisely on account of the fact the British Crown possessed the right to grant or deny printing rights that the KJB exists in the current state exhibited by Oxford and Cambridge printings more than four hundred years after it was first published in 1611. Possessing custodial oversight gave the Crown the authority to decide who would be granted the privilege of printing and thereby limited the number of people impacting the text. Thus, British printings were limited to only Crown approved printers in primarily four locations: London, Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh. Far from being a detriment to its printed history, the Crown’s custodial authority has helped maintain the level of textual consistency exhibited by the modern printings put forth by Oxford and Cambridge University presses.

... The title page for the New Testament found in the original 1611 bears the following inscription in Latin at the bottom of the page: *Cum Privilegio*.... Translated, these Latin words literally mean “with privilege” or “right” that is, “with the right of reproduction”.

... With these FACTS in mind, please consider the following points. First, it is an historical myth to maintain that the KJB was never restricted/controlled in terms of its

printing because it remains so to this day in its country of origin. Second, far from being detrimental to its textual history, the very fact that printing the KJB is a privilege bestowed by the British Crown has resulted in the British printings being preserved nearly verbatim over time while many non-substantive textual changes have appeared in printings outside of the United Kingdom. The Crown's approved printers were not at liberty to alter text without leaving themselves open to penalties for doing so. So not only is it a falsehood that the King James text was never controlled, it is this very reality which served to ensure the uniformity of the text as it traversed the seas of time and history. The standards utilized by LCBP [Local Church Bible Publishers] to prepare their booklets were the texts published at Oxford and Cambridge; both of which were published *cum privilegio* or "with privilege". Without the Crown's oversight of the text, one wonders if the twin standards used by LCBP to judge all other printings would exhibit the remarkable degree of conformity that they possess or whether they would exhibit the variety found in the American printings of the KJB. On this basis, any comments regarding the KJB being in the public domain need to be restricted to printings in America or other parts of the English-speaking world outside the jurisdiction of the British Crown." (Ross, 87-95)



- While Robert Barker possessed the sole privilege/patent for printing the text he did so at considerable personal expense.

- “Printing the KJV was an expensive undertaking, not least because Barker seems to have had to pay the enormous sum of £4,000 for the rights to the translation. He financed the project by selling or mortgaging shares in the office of the king’s printer to two rival printers: Bonham and John Bill. The names of Barker, two Nortons (Bonham and his cousin John) Bible, and their descendants were to appear on Bibles for generations. Because the KJV was classified as a revision rather than a fresh translation, it does not appear in the register of new books known as the Stationers’ Register. In the absence of a date entry in the register, we are left without any knowledge of when in 1611 the KJV began to be sold. The popular notion that it was published on 2 May is often repeated, but this is a myth: there was no such thing as a publication date in the seventeenth century, and there is no evidence to link the KJV to May or any other month.” (Campbell, 87)

A Brief Look At Early 17th Century Printing

- Dr. Donald L. Brake, author of *A Visual History of the King James Bible* offers an interesting summary of the printing process as it existed in 1611.
 - “It is difficult to assess how many Bibles may have been printed in Barker’s first run. In 1540 Henry VIII ordered a Great Bible placed in every church in England; and while the King James Version was not directly appointed to be read throughout the kingdom, it was authorized for reading in British churches—a fact that argues for the versions’ broad acceptance at least by the Anglicans. Charles Ryrie suggests as many as 20,000 copies were printed. Adam Nicholson, author of *God’s Secretaries*, proposes that 20,000 copies of the 1540 Great Bible were printed at a cost of ten shillings each or twelve shillings if the copies were bound; however, he is quick to point out that no record has been found to establish with certainty the number of copies of the KJV printed or the cost per copy. Barker’s legendary financial difficulties, which led him to unhappy union with business partners, seem to suggest that a first printing of 20,000 may be an excessive estimate. Since a new printing began soon after 1611, it is questionable that an initial run of 20,000 copies would have sold out that quickly. As mentioned earlier, a run of 1,500 may be more realistic. No organized attempt to destroy Bibles and Barker’s printing of Geneva Bibles at the same time would argue for a smaller run than 20,000. After all, there are only about 150 copies that survived. Yet in spite of Barker’s financial struggles, he published a smaller, more conveniently sized quarto edition of the KJV in 1612, adding further mystery to the number of this first print run.

When modern scholars examine existing copies of the 1611 King James Bibles, they find it challenging to reconstruct the exact print and collation process. They have discovered that, among other things, reprinted pages (corrected pages) from one edition often appeared in later editions. But how did this occur? We do know that the printer did not immediately bind books as they came off the press. Left-over pages were stored until the market demanded additional printed Bibles. Then when orders were received, individual pages were taken from shelves, collated, bound and sold. Remaining pages from one

edition were often bound with subsequent editions since the printers were more concerned with convenience than with maintaining a pure translation. To add to the confusion, print-shop formats of the period commonly set presses page-for-page. Barker's often used formats that began and ended at exactly the same point were: large, black-type folios (page folded once), Roman quartos (page folded twice), and Roman-type octavos (page folded three times). This practice allowed pages to be inserted into Bible from one typeset run to another, creating a high risk of mixed copies—pages from one edition or corrected edition of the Bibles inserted into another edition.

A second, seventeenth-century printing practice most likely accounts for at least some of the mixed readings scholars have identified. Proofreaders corrected pages as they came off the press, literally while the presses were still rolling; as a result, mixing corrected and uncorrected pages during the storing and collating of pages were inevitable. And while the above-mentioned scenarios are undocumented and somewhat speculative, they are rooted in historical knowledge of printing practices of the day and provide an account for the mixed readings in other shorter passages and leaves (pages) of the folio edition of the King James Version.

Several additional complexities made matters even more intractable. Multiple editions of the Geneva Bible may have been in various stages of print while the King James Version was being typeset and printed, exponentially increasing the possibility of mixing print runs. Also, multiple presses most likely operated in multiple locations. If this was the case, how did Barker determine whose office was responsible for proofing and printing different portions of Scripture? What system was orchestrated to implement consistency among multiple sites? And in a revealing observation that attests to the business pressures of Bible printing from the earliest days of the King James Version, Norton, states that Barker often presold books before they were completely printed to pay for supplies and personal costs. Thus, it is impossible for us today to gain more than a clouded picture of what occurred during the 1611 printing.” (Brake, 166-167)

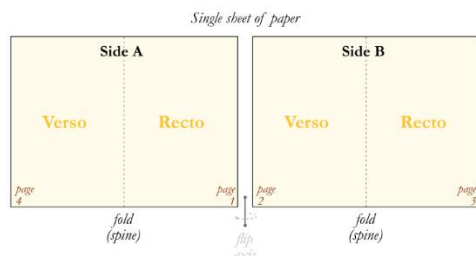
- While some of these statements from the pen of Dr. Brake might seem overly speculative, they provide context in seeking to understand what transpired when we look at the actual first edition of the King James Bible printed in 1611. In a later work published in 2017, Dr. Brake offered different numbers for how many volumes were printed in the first printing of 1611.
 - “Some have suggested only about 1500-2500 copies were originally printed, a common number for first runs. To the author, this seems more likely since the Barkers were in financial stress, and a second print in 1613 came so shortly after the 1611 printing. With no organized attempt to destroy this edition of the Bible, its large folio size designed for pulpit use and with about 195-200 extant copies today, the number of 20,000 originally printed is probably incorrect.” (Brake, *AMMT*, 28)
- Before moving on, we need to make sure that we understand the words folio, quarto, and octavo. These words are referring to the size of a printed book.

- Folio—typically 12"x19"
- Quarto—typically 9.5"x12"
- Octavo—typically 6"x9"
- The 1611 was originally printed in folio size. In 1612 both quarto and octavo sizes of the King James Bible were published. The following images are provided to help visualize the differences between the various sizes.



FOLIO

abbreviated
fo 2°



- 4 pages of printed text
- 2 on each side
- 1 fold
- creates 2 leaves
- each leaf is 1/2 size of the original sheet

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folio>

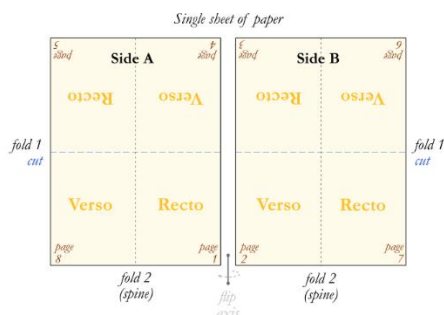
Example of a Folio Gathering



Folios would be inserted within each other to form, for example, gatherings of 8 leaves (above). Gatherings are sewn through the central fold prior to binding the book. Multiple gatherings are stacked and made into a book.

QUARTO

abbreviated
Qto, 4to or 4°

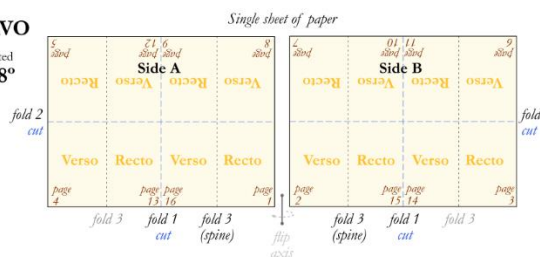


- 8 pages of printed text
- 4 on each side
- 2 folds, 1 cut
- creates 4 leaves
- each leaf is 1/4 size of the original sheet

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quarto>

OCTAVO

abbreviated
8vo, 8°



- 16 pages of printed text
- 8 on each side
- 3 folds, 2 cuts
- creates 8 leaves
- each leaf is 1/8 size of the original sheet

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octavo>

For "left-to-right reading" books.

- “Beginning in 1612, Barker printed complete KJBs in three basic formats: black letter quartos, roman type quartos and roman type octavos.” (Norton, 73) A.S. Herbert records these editions as follows in his *Historical Catalogue of Printed Editions of The English Bible 1526-1961*.
 - Roman type quartos: 1612, H313, H314 (Herbert, 134-135)
 - Roman type octavos: 1612, H315, H316 (Herbert 135)
- Meanwhile, 1613 saw the publication of first black letter quarto edition. (Herbert, 139)
- So, by 1613 there were three different size editions of the King James Bible in print; large folios, quartos, and octavos in two different fonts, black letter and roman type. As we will see in a future Lesson each one of these editions introduced their own unique printer errors and variants.

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