

Sunday, January 8, 2023—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 189 The AV 1611: The First Edition & The “He/She” Bible Controversy

Introduction

- In [Lesson 187](#), after the introduction, we considered the following points:
 - Confronting the Copyright Myth
 - A Brief Look at Early 17th Century Printing
- Then, [in Lesson 188](#), we elaborated on these points as well as responded to a question that was raised during the teaching of Lesson 187. We accomplished this by looking at the following:
 - More On the “Copyright Myth”
 - A 1612 New Testament
- In this Lesson we want to consider the question of how many printings there were in 1611 and how this relates to the great he/she Bible controversy.

The First Edition & The “He/She” Bible Controversy

- Discrepancies exist between how many print runs were published in 1611 and how to understand the differences between them or whether they constituted wholly different editions or different printings of the same edition.
- When it was first printed in 1611, the Authorized Version (AV) was published exclusively in a large folio edition. Gordon Campbell comments on this in *Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611-2011*:
 - “A folio is a large book, and the first edition of the KJV was large even by the unusual standard of folios; its thick pages measure approximately 11 inches by 16 inches. It was a heavy volume designed to sit on a lectern in a church; as the title pages explain, it was ‘appointed to be read in churches’.” (Campbell, 87-88)
- Dr. Brake records that five different folio editions were published over the years.
 - “There were five folio editions all with nearly interchangeable leaves word for word—1611, 1613, 1617, 1634, 1639/40. A smaller folio edition printed in 1613 had seventy-two lines per page instead of fifty-nine-lines of the other folio editions. The smaller edition reduced the total pages from 738 to 508. The print of each page of the fifty-nine-line editions used the same number of lines word for word, line for line. This enabled the printer to substitute reprinted pages when errors surfaced. However, careful comparison reveals many leaves have differences, mostly minor. If the printer needed additional copies, he used leaves left over from a previous printing. This no doubt led to missed copies as Fry has pointed out.” (Brake, *AMMT*, 29)

- Controversy surrounds how many folio editions of the AV were published in 1611. A.S. Herbert's *Historical Catalogue of Printed Editions of The English Bible 1525-1961* contains two entries for the year 1611 (DMH 309 & DMH 310). Gordon Campbell argues that the great "he" and "she" editions date from 1611:
 - "There were two folio editions of the KJV published in 1611, and they are known as the 'He' Bible and the 'She' Bible. The names arise from a well-known crux at Ruth 3:15; one 1611 Bible reads 'he went into the city', 'he' referring to Boaz; the other reads 'she went into the city', referring to Ruth. The difficulty is that the Hebrew text has 'he', but the sense of the passage demands that Ruth rather than Boaz go into the city. Setting aside the questions of which version is correct, it is now clear that the earlier of the two Bibles is the 'He' Bible, and the translators seem deliberately to have changed the pronoun from 'she' in the Bishops' Bible." (Campbell, 87)
- Dr. Donald L. Brake author of *A Visual History of the King James Bible* also comments upon this peculiarity.
 - "One issue that has fascinated scholars for years is the inconsistency in wording between the so-called "He" and "She" editions of the King James. These terms have become synonymous with the first and second editions of the King James Version based upon the Ruth 3:15 reading: "And he went into the citie," found in one edition and, "And she went into the citie," found in the other. Scholars have generally determined that the *he* reading of Ruth 3:15 is the rendering of the first edition and the *she* reading is the rendering of the second edition [Endnote 9 for Chapter 8 on page 266 reads, "It is common to refer to the 1611 edition as "first edition, first issue" and the 1613 edition as "first edition, second issue," but we are using "first edition" and "second edition" based on David Norton's convincing argument that the 1613 edition is a genuine second edition."].'" (Brake, 168)
- Herbert's *Catalogue* disagrees with Campbell and dates the "Great She Bible" to 1613 with entry DMH 319. Herbert discusses the controversy in his entries for DMH 309 and DMH 319.
 - "The 'He' and 'She' Bibles,--The intricate typographical problem connected with the early editions of King James' version are discussed at length in the following: F. Fry's *A Description of . . . the Editions, in large folio, of the Authorized Version . . .* (1865), F.H.A. Scrivener's *The Authorized Edition of the Bible . . .* (1884), and article in the *Athenaeum* (20 Sept. 1884), a pamphlet by W.E. Smith entitled *A Study of the Great 'She' Bible* (reprinted from the Library, 1890), and R. Lovett's *The English Bible in the John Rylands Library* (pp. 246-253). A useful summary of the facts and an explanation of the problems are given by A.W. Pollard in *Records*, pp. 66-73.

It is recognized that from 1611 to 1614 there are two distinct series of editions in various sizes, which differ throughout in many minor points of typography, and are generally distinguished by the names 'He' Bibles and 'She' Bibles, from their respective reading in Ruth 3:15 . . . The suggested explanation of this dualism is that the printing was at first carried on in two separate offices, in order to facilitate rapid production; and that two

standard copies were used, one of which had received a certain amount of additional correction from the press editors. *She* later became the accepted wording.

Bibliographers generally agree that the folio 'He' Bible of 1611 is the first impression of this version. Scrivener argues keenly for the priority in printing (though not necessarily in publication) of the folio 'She' Bible of 1613. But Smith shows that inferences drawn from apparent corrections or corruptions of the text are too precarious to be conclusive. He makes a minute comparison of the variants in the sizes of the ornamental initials, and in methods that the 'He' Bible was undoubtedly the earlier of the two." (Herbert, 132-133)

"Commonly known as the 'Great She Bible.' The general title is usually dated 1613, though the NT title bears the date 1611. Probably the greater part of the book was printed in 1611, but the publication, for some reason or other, was delayed till 1613. Scrivener supposes that this delay was due to the incorrectness of the edition; Smith suggests an accident in the print-office, which destroyed a large number of sheets." (Herbert, 136)

- Much of the modern confusion regarding this matter can be traced to the comments made by Scrivener. Historian and King James scholar Timothy Berg states the following in a yet unpublished paper on "The First Edition of the King James Bible."
 - "In his introduction to the Cambridge Paragraph Bible, F.H.A. Scrivener proposed, against the contemporary work of bibliographer Francis Fry, that the so-called "She" Bible and similar printings (DMH 319; STC 2224 – represented for him by a Bible belonging to the Syndics of CUP which he took as similar to a copy in the British Museum), sometimes dated 1611, sometimes 1613, were printed first and that they were the genuinely first edition. He argued that DMH 309/STC 2216 (represented for him by the 1833 facsimile of Oxford which he took to be similar to a copy in the British Library, explained below), often wrongly called the "He Bible,"¹ was "decidedly the more correct of the two, and irresistibly forces on the mind of any one that has minutely studied both, that whether we regard emendations of the sense or comparative exemption from typographical oversights, it had undergone revision, fitful and superficial perhaps, but not the less real on that account."² Thinking quite like a textual critic of his day, he argued that "if, out of two books substantially the same, one shall prove on examination more free than the other from mechanical imperfections and printers' errata, and at the same time full of small yet unequivocal corrections whether of the style or the matter of the performance, we cannot doubt that, in the absence of any considerable proof to the contrary, the common consent of mankind would pronounce that the better executed volume must needs be the later of the two."³ Thus DMH 319 or the "She Bible" was the first edition." (Berg)
- Later in the same paper Berg adds the following:
 - "In the last decade of the 19th century, Walter E. Smith conducted a careful study of the question of the priority of the "She" Bible and printed the results in three articles in the journal of the Bibliographical Society, *The Library*, arguing against Scrivener.⁴ While some questions about particulars remained, the "She" Bible was clearly a later edition.

His conclusions should have been definitive. In the beginning decades of the 20th century A. W. Pollard took up Scrivener's claims and argued against them in his introduction to the 1911 reprints of the 1611 by Oxford, and the later reprint of this material in *Records*. Scrivener argued "in entire ignorance of the customs of the book trade in the seventeenth century."⁵ It is true that DMH 309 was "the finer and better" but trade considerations rather than the common logic of scribal error needed to be employed to sort out genealogy. The priority of DMH 309 could be "proved bibliographically in a dozen different ways,"⁶ at least four of which he goes on to detail. Further, things had been increasingly complicated because scholars, especially Francis Fry, had sometimes spoken of "issues," "editions," or "printings," in ways not always carefully distinguished.⁷ Towards the end of the century A. S. Herbert, that careful bibliographical expert, noted his agreement with Smith against Scrivener.

... This confused state of printing, and especially its mixing of different pages, is quite descriptive of the second edition and its numerous untraceable, confused, and mixed, printings. But it is not as true of the first edition. Scrivener has had more influence than he should have. His claims were patently wrong, and all scholars of the KJB today would admit as much. As Norton observes, "Though it is probable that the 'She' Bible, in one of its formats, dates from 1611, it is genuinely a second edition, and better referred to as such..." Donald Brake conducted a survey of extant first editions. When wrestling with this question he concluded, "Modern scholars and Bible historians have generally accepted the 'He' reading as the first edition and 'She' as the first edition, second issue, hereafter referred to as the second edition... While it is common to use Francis Fry's designations referring to the 1611 as 'first edition, first issue' and the 1613 edition as 'first edition, second issue,' I agree with David Norton and A. W. Pollard's conclusion that the 1613 edition is a genuine second edition." (Berg)

- Dr. David Norton, as he so often does, serves to clear things up in his monumental work *A Textual History of the King James Bible*. It is to this work by Dr. Norton that Brother Berg was referencing in the previous citation.
 - "The nicknames 'He' and 'She' (after their readings at Ruth 3:15) make the first and second editions sound like a pair of equal age and standing, and they have often been taken as such. Though it is probable that the 'She' Bible, in one of its varying forms, dates from 1611,² it is genuinely a second edition, and better referred to as such to keep clear what will become very apparent: that it is, comparatively, of little value as evidence for the text the translators created. Pollard writes vehemently of the designations 'He' and 'She':

all such nicknames for editions of the Bible are objectionable, and this, which suggests that the two editions form a pair, is mischievous. Their relation is not that of equality as between man and woman, but the second is derived from the first, as a child from its parents, an entirely new and distinct edition, reprinted from the original, and not a contemporaneous issue. (Pollard, p. 36)

The nicknames are pernicious in a second way: they suggest that the paternity of later editions can be determined by which of the readings they have at Ruth 3:15. Since 'she

went’ is the commoner reading, the second edition is taken as being much more influential than it really was: most of the early editions that have ‘she went’ derive from the first edition, not the second.

The second edition is a page-for-page reprint of the first. The relationship quickly becomes clear through a comparison of the typography, especially in the matter of spacing: the compositor of the second edition adjusted his work to conform it to the first edition. This is most obvious at Exod. 14:10, where the first edition repeats three lines. The second corrects the error and so has to add space to the page to keep it finishing at the requisite point. The first compositor would have spotted his error instantly if he was working from the second edition.³

Whereas the first edition is almost completely uniform, the second is a mixture. The NT title page is dated 1611, but the title page of the whole is usually dated 1613. In some copies this is changed to 1611, while a few are dated 1611 (Herbert, p. 136). The title page itself is the woodcut version found in some first editions rather than Boel’s engraving. The mixed dates suggest that printing began in 1611; while some copies may have been sold in that year, the work was not finished until 1613; evidently about one third of the work was destroyed, so the text from Judges 13 to Ezekiel 20 had to be reset and printed.⁴

Now, the general uniformity of the first edition makes it likely, as Plomer suggested (above, p. 64), that it sold out quickly. The second edition was to supply further demand, and copies were made up intermittently as purchase orders came in. The muddle in Barker’s printing house was such that, once varying sheets were available, no two copies were made up of the identical set of sheets. Moreover, sheets continued to be available when the later large folios were made, so some copies of them have sheets from different editions, including sheets from the second edition.⁵

The most important consequence of this relationship for understanding the history of the text is that the later editions used previous printed editions as copy text: if they consulted the translators’ original, that was secondary and occasional. So, while the second edition – and to some extent the later Barker editions – *may sometimes* reflect what was in the original better than the first edition, it is not a better reproduction of the original. Rather, it exhibits the usual characteristics of a manual copy, whether by a scribe or a compositor, of introducing more errors than corrections, and of having some ‘corrections’ that are really simplifications of something difficult in the original.” (Norton, 65-66)

- These comments from Dr. Norton correspond with what we saw in Lesson 187 from Dr. Brake about early 17th century printing practices in the print shop of Robert Barker. Timothy Berg offers some additional perspective as to why perpetuating the ‘He/She’ Bible distinction is misleading and unhelpful.
 - “The difference in Ruth 3:15 led to the designations "He" (STC 2216) and "She" (STC 2217) Bibles, back when the relationship between these editions was less well understood. These titles have unfortunately stuck perhaps because it’s a more romantic and dramatic way to describe them. Numerous KJB Scholars have complained about

these designations (Pollard and Norton among them) and they really should go away. Here's a few reasons:

First, the designations give the misleading impression that the two are some kind of pair. They are not. STC 2217 is undeniably a later and truly second edition. They are not two separate "printings" but two genuinely distinct editions. The only significant scholar who ever thought STC 2217 was first was FHA Scrivener, because he applied NTTC [New Testament Textual Criticism] logic instead of book culture knowledge to the question and thought the better copy must be the later. He was corrected in his old age by Walter Smith and others. Sadly, due to his stature, he is still influential at this point among those that don't know the literature. STC 2217 is a really odd and ugly beast, sometimes including pages from STC 2216, and betraying a complex and hurried printing history. Title pages of STC 2217 often bear the dates of either 1611 or 1613, but in many copies the 1613 has been changed almost imperceptibly to read 1611. I think it likely that STC 2217 didn't appear till 1613, but it may have come off the press later in 1611. Scholars sometimes cite it as 1611/1613 due to the ambiguity. In either case STC 2217 is clearly a second and later edition.

Second, the designations give the mistaken impression that this is the only variant between them. In fact, one can rarely find two pages between them exactly identical and textual differences between them likely number in the thousands (due mostly to STC 2217 being so poorly done).

Third, the designations give the mistaken impression that one can tell something about a given copy based on whether it has "he" or "she" at the relevant spot in Ruth 3:15. This is not true. Because there is a variant in the Hebrew text here, editions of the KJB for centuries could swap readings at this passage, and which reading is present in a copy has exactly zero genealogical connection with either STC 2216 or STC 2217.

Fourth, listing this way instead of simply "first edition" (STC 2216) and "second edition" (STC 2217) has been capitalized on by a number of sellers who sell full copies or loose pages of a "first edition KJV" (usually at exorbitant prices) and then they add in a footnote or small print "She variant" or something like it. Actually, this is absolutely NOT a first edition. But these romanticized titles and lack of clarity make this possible." (Berg)

- Having settled the He/She Bible controversy, we can now direct our attention to asserting how many different printings of DMH 309|STC 2216 were issued in 1611. Given the data, it is reasonable to assume that there were at least two printings of the folio size Bible in 1611. Once again Brother Timothy Berg has helped us immensely by synthesizing this information in his yet unpublished essay on this topic.
 - "There are minor differences that have been noted between different printings of the first edition. William Aldis Wright, in creating the massive 5-volume facsimile of the KJB in Roman type for Cambridge University Press in 1909, examined below, noted that in "some copies" of the first edition, Ex. 21:26 has "them" for "him," Song of Songs 2:7 has "he" for "she," 1 Edras 5:58 has "seters forward" for "setters forward," the margin of 2

Macc. 4:40 has “Tyranuus” for “Tryannus,” and the words “by their knowledge of” are sometimes omitted in Ecclesiasticus 44:5. Norton lists each of these, silently corrects the last reference to Ecclesiasticus 44:4, adds one (Joel 3:14 displaced in some copies) but then strangely only credits Wright with three of them.¹³ Brake notes that some printings have 5 lines and some 6 at Mark 3:38, some have the royal coat of arms on the back of the genealogies and some don’t.¹⁴ (this is the wrong page in Brake?), and the initial letter at 2 Peter 1 is sometimes different.

1. Ex. 21:26 “them” for “him.”
 2. Song of Songs 2:7 “he” for “she.”
 3. II Sam 17:25 “Abigal” for “Abigail.”
 4. I Esdras 5:58 “seters” for “setters.”
 5. I Macc. 13 summary 40 for 46.
 6. The margin of 2 Macc. 4:40 “Tyranuus” for “Tyrannus.”
 7. “By their knowledge of” is sometimes omitted in Ecclesiasticus 44:5, sometimes not.
 8. The marginal note of Joel 3:14 is displaced one verse in some printings.
 9. Some printings have 5 lines at Mark 8:33, some 6.
 10. The first page of the Genealogy has 3 variant forms; 1. Royal Coat of Arms, 2. Blank page before Genealogy, 3. Blank page after genealogy.
 11. 2 different forms of the Map by John Speed; The supposedly earlier edition has the map with the seas stippled (multiple dots giving the appearance of grey shadowing), and no author or signature included.
 12. General title page as Copper engraving or woodcut (woodcut surely later after copper engraving broke). See Brake pg. 120-121.
 13. 2 Peter 1 Initial Letter. Brake, in his book "A Visual History of the King James Version", on page 179, "half man-half beast (apparently in some 1611 copies).” Nine-line monster, half man half beast, FN “apparently the creature in the initial appears in some 1611 editions, but not in my copies. The two facsimiles copies that have it also have the King James Coat of Arms. The creature appears in later folio editions, suggesting that the 1611 versions with the creature were printed later and perhaps mixed when assembled.” (Berg)
- The available evidence points strongly in the direction that there were two different printings of the folio edition in 1611.

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