

Sunday, January 22, 2023—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 191 The AV 1611: Assessing Its Preliminary Contents, Part 2 (Title Page & Epistle Dedicatory)

Introduction

- In [Lesson 190](#) we began the process of assessing the preliminary contents of the AV of 1611. Our purpose is to understand the 1611 as a historical artifact: what was included and what it can tell us about the life and times of the King James Translators. To accomplish this, we began following closely with Oxford Professor Gordon Campbell's book *Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611-2011*. While there are other books that talk about aspects of the contents found within the AV of 1611, Campbell's is the most complete. Dr. Campbell offers the following physical description of the 1611 King James Bible.
- Regarding the preliminary material, Dr. Campbell stated the following:
 - “At the beginning of most surviving copies there is a thick section of preliminaries (74 pages), consisting of
 - A title page
 - A dedicatory epistle to King James
 - A preface from the translators to the reader
 - A calendar
 - An almanac
 - A table for the calculation of Easter
 - A table and calendar setting out the order of psalms and lessons to be said at morning prayers throughout the year
 - A list of the books of the Testaments and the Apocrypha
 - The royal coat of arms and the Latin phrase indication that the book was printed ‘by authority of the King’
 - Genealogies
 - A table of the place names in Canaan
 - A map of Canaan” (Campbell, 87-88)
- In Lesson 190 we began the process of looking at the preliminary material by discussing the meaning and significance of the artwork found on the Title Page. Before moving on we have an additional observation to make regarding the Title Page.

Title Page Cont.

- The phrase “Appointed to be read in churches” in the center of the Title Page is an important phrase in my mind for a few reasons. First, as I discussed in Lesson 182 when we were discussing the notes of John Bois, during the General Meeting the text was subjected to arial review and fine-tuned for how it would sound when it was read out loud in a church service. Second, I think it speaks to the grandness of the size of the first folio edition which was clearly designed to be a pulpit Bible for use in public worship. As we have seen, smaller sized Bibles for personal use would come later.

- Helen Moore and Julian Reed, the editors of *Manifold Greatness: The Making of the King James Bible* for the Bodleian Library, devoted an entire section to this topic. It is worth noting here.
 - “The Bible in early modern England was not only read privately, but also heard. Domestic devotional practices of the period included reading the Bible out loud, an exercise which often brought together all the social elements of the household from the head of the house to the servants. The way most English people encountered the Bible, however, was when it was read aloud in public worship in parish churches: parish worship was, in the words of one historian, a ‘soundscape’. The Epistle Dedicatory to the KJB maintained that the aim of the translators was that ‘God’s holy Truth [will] be yet more and more known unto the people’ professing the ‘great hope that the Church of England shall reap good fruit thereby’. This goal was accomplished in no small part by the new translation’s role in public worship.

The translators were not saying something new but building on centuries of reading the Bible aloud in divine service as well as over half a century of doing so in the vernacular. In fact, the very process of translation for the KJB involved members of the various committees hearing verses read aloud. The Preface to the 1599 Book of Common Prayer stated that the early Fathers of the church maintained ‘that the people by the daily hearing of Holy Scripture read in the Church should continually profit more and more in the knowledge of God’. In contradiction to St Paul’s injunction to have worship conducted in ‘such a language spoken to the people . . . as they might understand and have profit by hearing the same’, the Preface to the Book of Common Prayer lamented that for many centuries after Latin had ceased to be vernacular, the Bible was still read in that tongue ‘so that they have heard with their ears only . . . and not been edified thereby’. Richard Hooker, one of the most tenacious defenders of the Elizabethan Settlement, remarked: ‘touching . . . the use of Scripture . . . openly read . . . [it brings about] inestimable good which the Church of God by the very mean hath reaped’. Hooker went further than edification as a reason for reading the Scriptures aloud in public worship:

I see not how we should possibly wish a proof more palpable, than this manifest received and everywhere continued custom of reading them publicly as the Scriptures. The reading therefore of the word of God, as the use hath ever been, in open audience, is the plainest evidence we have of the Church’s Assent and Acknowledgement that it is his word.

Since the Reformation, the Bible yokefellow in its role as a text for the public worship of God had been the Book of Common Prayer. Its Preface maintained that unlike the liturgical observances of the medieval church, which needed a small library to perform, ‘curates shall need none other books for their public service but this book and the Bible’. Further, the Prayer Book directed, through tales of readers for the year, which parts of the Bible should be read in public services. The daily lectionary largely directed reading through a book of the Old Testament and New Testament in order, resulting in a large portion of the Bible being read aloud in the course of a year. Lessons appointed for

Communion Sundays and holy days reflected the themes of the church year shaped around the events in the life of Christ or a saint's day.

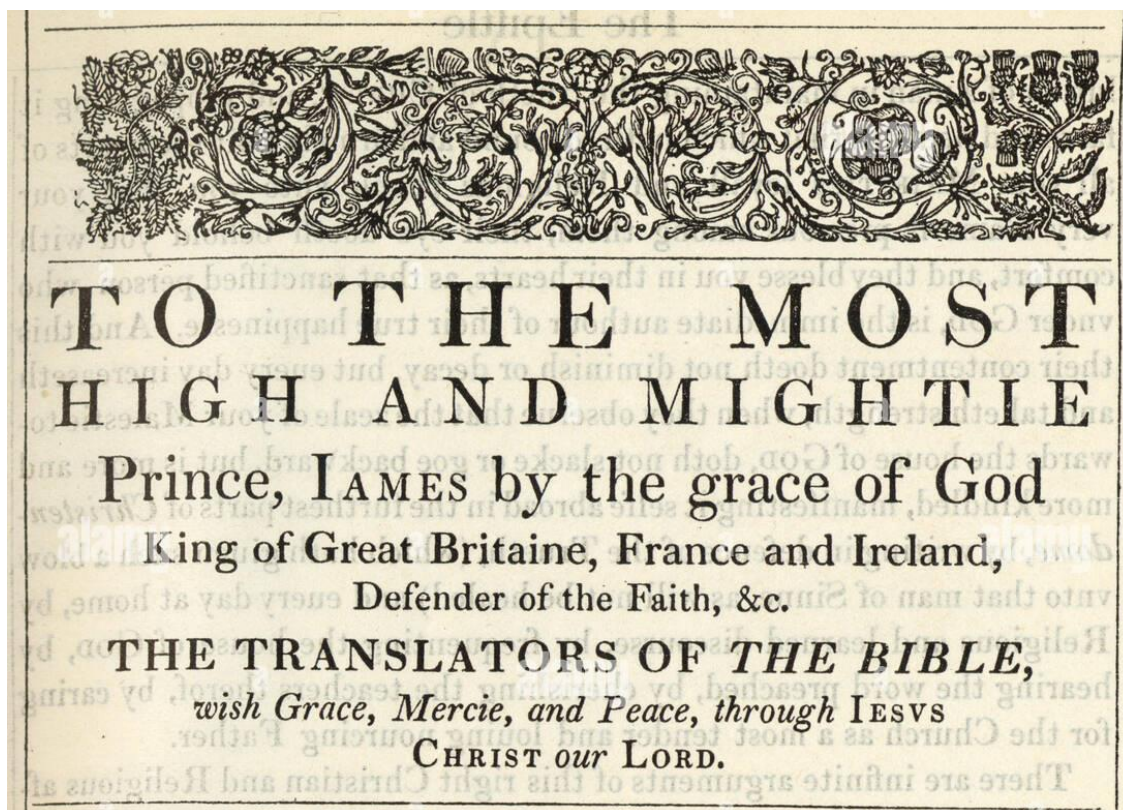
A striking thing about worship in conformity to the Book of Common Prayer was the sheer amount of the Bible in English to which congregations were exposed. On Sunday, inhabitants of a 'conforming' parish (that is, one in which worship was conducted according to the Prayer Book) would hear read an Old and New Testament passage plus psalms in Morning Prayer, and then the epistle and gospel passages for the service of Ante-Communion or the full service, if Communion was taking place. Evening Prayer had the same structure as Morning Prayer. In other words, congregations were exposed to at least six passages of scripture per Sunday as well as a number of Psalms. Psalm signing, often in metrical translation, grew in popularity in parish churches after the Reformation. The Prayer Book itself reproduced the translation of the Henrician Great Bible for the epistle and gospel readings for the Communion service on Sunday and major holy days, and for the liturgical Psalter. During Elizabeth's reign, the translation for all the other public readings of the Bible came from either the official Bishops Bible (1568) or the widely used, but unauthorized, Geneva Bible. It was this role the 1611 Bible was expected to fill. The KJB did not replace the Great Bible for the Communion readings until the revisions of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

The structures provided by the Prayer Book therefore exposed the laity—whether they could read or not and whether they could afford their own Bible or not—to considerable portions of the scriptures Sunday by Sunday. This Reformation emphasis on hearing clearly what was said or sung in church necessitated some reorganization of internal church architecture and, from Elizabeth's reign onwards, the provision of new pulpits, reading desks and lecterns often with sounding boards to aid these new requirements. By 1611, therefore, the laity had come to expect to be able to be active hearers of God's word 'openly read' in church." (Moore & Reid, 134-136)

- Thus, the emphasis on the Elizabethan aesthetic that we discussed in Lesson 182. The King James translators fine-tuned the English text with an ear for how it would sound when it was read audibly in church. Put another way, the word of God needed to sound like the word of God i.e., majestic. The King James Bible fulfilled this purpose perfectly for centuries.

Dedicatory Epistle to King James

- The next item found in the preliminary material to the 1611 KJB was a Dedicatory Epistle to King James.



- The Epistle Dedicatory is six paragraphs long and spans three pages in the 1611. Dr. Campbell states the following regarding it:
 - “The KJV is dedicated ‘to the most high and mighty prince James, by the grace of God king of Great Britain, France and Ireland’. The country of Great Britain existed only in the mind of King James; he wanted England and Scotland to unite, but they were not to do so until 1707, almost a century later. The claim to the throne of France was a vestige of a claim first made in 1340 and not withdrawn until 1810, ten years after the throne of France had ceased to exist. In the dedication King James is said to be, ‘the principal mover and author of the work’; this is not meant to imply that he contributed to the process of revision, but rather that it was his commission that made it happen.

The author of the dedication is not known, but, as the style seems different from that of Miles Smith, who wrote the preface on behalf of the translators, the obvious candidate would seem to be Thomas Bilson, bishop of Winchester.” (Campbell, 302-303)

- The first three paragraphs of the Epistle are mostly high-level flattery directed at King James. The fourth and fifth paragraphs, however, merit our attention. In the fourth paragraph the King’s role in the production of the AV is addressed (Please note that I have updated the spelling for ease of reading.)

There are infinite arguments of this right Christian and Religious affection in your MAJESTIE: but none is more forcible to declare it to others, then the vehement and perpetuated desire of the accomplishing and publishing of this Worke, which now with all humilitie we present vnto your MAJESTIE. For when your Highnesse had once out of deepe iudgment apprehended, how conuenient it was, That out of the Originall sacred tongues, together with comparing of the labours, both in our owne and other forreigne Languages, of many worthy men who went before vs, there should be one more exact Translation of the holy Scriptures into the *English tongue*; your MAJESTIE did neuer desist, to vrge and to excite those to whom it was commended, that the worke might be hastened, and that the businesse might be expedited in so decent a maner, as a matter of such importance might iustly require.





- “There are infinite arguments of this right Christian and religious affection in Your MAJESTY; but none is more forcible to declare it to others than the vehement and perpetuated desire of the accomplishing and publishing of this work, which now with all humility we present unto your Majesty. For when Your Highness had once out of deep judgment apprehended, how convenient it was, that out of the Original sacred tongues, together with comparing of the labours, both in our own and other foreign Languages, of many worthy men who went before us, there should be one more **exact Translation** of the holy Scriptures into the English tongue; your MAJESTY did never desist to urge and to excite those to whom it was commended, that the work might be hastened, and that the business might be expedited in so decent a manner, as a matter of such importance might justly require.”
- As we will see in a future Lesson, the “Preface: The Translators to The Reader” is often rhetorically leveraged by those seeking to score points for their position on both sides of the bible version debate. That said, I have seen little to no discussion of this paragraph from the Epistle Dedicatory. The author, whoever it was, attributes to the King’s “judgment” the production of “one more exact Translation of the holy Scriptures into the English Tongue.” How should we understand this phrase in its early 17th century context?
- Instead of looking at Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* from 1828, which is more than two hundred years removed from the publication of the AV in 1611, we need to consider the meaning of the word in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.
- In 1604, the same year work commenced on the production of the AV, Robert Cawdrey published *A Table Alphabetical of Hard Usual English Words*. Cawdrey’s *Table* possesses the following entry for the English word “exact,” “**perfectly done**, or to require with extremitie.”

exact, perfectly done, or to require with extremitie.

- A few years prior, in 1596, Edmund Coote published *The English School-master* that contained a similar definition for “exact” to the one published by Cawdrey in 1604, i.e., “**perfect** or require with extremitie.” (Lexicons of Early Modern English) Interested parties are encouraged to visit the [Lexicons of Early Modern English](#) and run a search for themselves.
- Meanwhile, the *Oxford English Dictionary* presents the following meaning for the adjective form of “exact,” “**Perfected**, consummate, ‘finished’.”

exact, adj.1 Text size: A **A**

View as: [Outline](#) | [Full entry](#) Quotations: [Show all](#) | [Hide all](#) Keywords: [On](#) | [Off](#)

Pronunciation: [?] Brit.  /ɪɡˈzækt/,  /ɛɡˈzækt/, U.S.  /ɪɡˈzæk(t)/,  /ɛɡˈzæk(t)/

Frequency (in current use): ●●●●●●●●

Etymology: < Latin *exactus*, past participle of *exigere*: see EXACT *v.*
 The Latin adjective has the senses (1) ‘highly finished, consummate’, from the verb in the sense ‘to complete, bring to perfection’, and (2) ‘accurate, precise’, from the verb in the sense ‘to calculate precisely’. See EXACT *v.*
 (Show Less)

I. Perfected, consummate, ‘finished’.

†1. Of qualities, conditions, attainments, etc.: Consummate, finished, refined, perfect. Rarely in bad sense. *Obsolete*. [Thesaurus »](#)

- In addition to the main definition, note the contents of the “etymology” section on the origin and usage of the word. Derived from the Latin *exactus*, the word carries meanings related to “consummate,” “complete,” and a bringing “to **perfection**.” Second, note that this meaning of the word is now “*obsolete*” in modern usage.
- So, in the late 16th and early 17th century there was a meaning of the word “exact” that meant “perfectly done” (*Table Alphabetical*) or “perfected” (*OED*). Therefore, by the standards of the day, the author of the Epistle Dedicatory is crediting the King’s “judgement” with having “perfected” the English Bible by providing for “one more **exact Translation** of the holy Scriptures into the English Tongue,” i.e., the King James Bible.
- Now, this raises the question of what did the English word “perfect” mean in the late 16th and early 17th century when the author of the Epistle Dedicatory ascribed this quality to the AV. The word “perfect” does not have its own entry in 1604 *Table Alphabetical* but it was used to define the following words by Robert Cawdrey: “absolute,” “exquisite,” and “mature.” This tells us that in the early 17th century when the AV was translated that “perfect” possessed multiple different meanings in English. Readers of the AV know this to be the case when they encounter verses like II Timothy 3:17, “That the man of God may be **perfect**, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” The word “perfect” in this verse means “mature” as recorded in the *Table Alphabetical*.

- The *OED* elaborates upon the meaning of the word “perfect” during the time-period in question with more detail than we can cover in this Lesson. It is instructive to note there is a connection between “exact” and “perfect” in definition 6.b., “Accurate, correct; spec. (of a copy, representation, etc.) accurately reproducing or reflecting the original; †(of a notion, thought, record, etc.) **exactly** corresponding to the facts (*obsolete*).”

b. Accurate, correct; *spec.* (of a copy, representation, etc.) accurately reproducing or reflecting the original; †(of a notion, thought, record, etc.) exactly corresponding to the facts (*obsolete*).

Thesaurus »

- 1523 in J. B. Paul *Accts. Treasurer Scott.* (1903) V. 218 For perfite noumer of thare cariage hors to be send in bill to the secretaire.
 1541 T. ELYOT *Image of Gouvernance* Pref. sig. aiiiv In this boke was expressed of gouernance so perfit an ymage.
 1574 W. BOURNE *Regim. for Sea* (1577) xvii. 46 The perfit houre and minute of the chaunges of the Moone.
 1576 T. DIGGES in L. Digges *Prognostication* (rev. ed.) (title) A perfit description of the caelestiall orbes.
 1611 M. SMITH in *Bible* (King James) Transl. Pref. 4 That Translation was not so sound and so perfect, but that it needed in many places correction.

- Note two things about the above image from the *OED*. First, one of the provided words usage examples is from Myles Smith’s famous Preface to the AV. Second, this usage is now *obsolete*. This is precisely what the author of the Epistle Dedicatory meant when he wrote, “one more **exact Translation** of the holy Scriptures into the English Tongue,” i.e., that the translators work was an “accurate,” and “correct,” reproduction of the original thereby “exactly corresponding to the facts.” Put another way, the translators viewed their work as an exact/perfect reproduction of the original language text in English.
- Adding another layer of evidence for this argument we can also look at the entry in the *Middle English Dictionary* for the word “[parfit](#)”, the Middle English equivalent of the word “perfect.” The fifth definition of “parfit” reads, “(a) Exact, precise; (b) corresponding exactly to a type or standard.”

5. (a) Exact, precise; (b) corresponding exactly to a type or standard; ~ **cercle**.

[Show 8 Quotations](#)

- Notice that the Middle English word “parfit” is defined as “exact” a word that meant “perfectly done” according to the 1604 *Table Alphabetical*.
- The statement under investigation from the Epistle Dedicatory should be paired with the following line penned by Myles Smith in the Preface to the 1611,
 - “Truly (good Christian Reader) we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new Translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that hath been our endeavor, that our mark.”

- The King James translators, according to their own testimony compared prior English Bibles with the “original sacred tongues” along with “other foreign language” Bibles to produce “one more **exact Translation** of the holy Scriptures into the English Tongue.” Their estimation of their work was that it was “exact” i.e., “perfectly done” in that it was “accurate,” “correct,” and “accurately reproducing or reflecting the original.” Put another way, they viewed their work as perfectly representing the contents of the “original sacred tongues” in English.
- And they did so while rejecting *verbatim identity* of wording as the standard. This is evidenced by the section of the Preface where Smith explains that they had “not tied ourselves to an uniformity of phrasing, or to an identity of words,” when doing their work. This is further evidenced by the alternative readings offered in the margins of the AV. I will have more to say about this issue in a stand-alone video I plan on making in the near future.
- The fifth paragraph of the Epistle Dedicatory is also worthy of note. In this paragraph the author leverages that King’s approval and sanctioning of the work against those who would seek to cast dispersion upon it.
 - “And now at last, by the Mercy of God, and the continuance of our Labours, it being brought unto such a conclusion, as that we have great hopes that the Church of England shall reap good fruit thereby; we hold it our duty to offer it to Your Majesty, not only as to our King and Sovereign, but as to the principal Mover and Author of the work: humbly craving of Your most Sacred Majesty, that since things of this quality have ever been subject to the censures of ill meaning and discontented persons, it may receive approbation and Patronage from so learned and judicious a Prince as Your Highness is, whose allowance and acceptance of our labours shall more honour and encourage us, than all the calumniations and hard interpretations of other men shall dismay us. So that if, on the one side, we shall be traduced by Popish Persons at home or abroad, who therefore will malign us, because we are poor Instruments to make GOD'S holy Truth to be yet more and more known unto the people, whom they desire still to keep in ignorance and darkness; or if, on the other side, we shall be maligned by self-conceited Brethren, who run their own ways, and give liking unto nothing, but what is framed by themselves, and hammered on their Anvil; we may rest secure, supported within by truth and innocency of a good conscience, having walked the ways of simplicity and integrity, as before the Lord; and sustained without by the powerful protection of Your Majesty's grace and favour, which will ever give countenance to honest and Christian endeavours against bitter censures and uncharitable imputations.”
- A proper reading of the Preface cannot be separated from the insights provided by the Epistle Dedicatory. The translators viewed their work as “perfect” by the standard identified above. We will say more about the Preface in future Lessons.

Works Cited

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