

Sunday, March 19, 2023—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
Lesson 199 The AV 1611: Producing A Proper Perspective on the Preface (Answer to Adversaries, Cont.)

Introduction

- In [Lesson 198](#) we looked at the following subsections.
 - The Speeches And Reasons, Both Of Our Brethren, And Of Our Adversaries Against This Work
 - A Satisfaction To Our Brethren
- Having acknowledged in subsection ten that both Catholics and Protestants were seeking to gainsay the King’s project to create “one uniform translation” (Barlow, 47), Smith elected to address his “Brethren” first in subsection eleven.
- Today we want to begin looking at subsection twelve titled “An Answer To The Imputations of Our Adversaries” where Smith provides answers to the translators’ Roman Catholic opposition. This is the longest subsection of the Preface, spanning two densely packed paragraphs. It is arguably one of the most important subsections to understand in terms of accurately grasping Smith’s overall argument. Consequently, we will be dealing only with paragraph thirteen in this Lesson. We will reserve comment upon paragraph fourteen for a future Lesson.

An Answer To The Imputations of Our Adversaries

Modern Spelling Transcription	Modern Form Edited by Rhodes & Lupas
¶13) Now to the latter we answer; that we do not deny, nay we affirm and avow, that the very meanest translation of the Bible in English, set forth by men of our profession, (for we have seen none of theirs of the whole Bible as yet) containeth the word of God, nay, is the word of God. As the King's speech, which he uttereth in Parliament, being translated into <i>French, Dutch, Italian,</i> and <i>Latin,</i> is still the King's speech, though it be not interpreted by every Translator with the like grace, nor peradventure so fitly for phrase, nor so expressly for sense, everywhere. For it is confessed, that things are to take their denomination of the greater part; and a natural man could say, <i>Verum ubi multa nitent in carmine, non ego paucis offendor maculis, etc.</i> A man may be counted a virtuous man, though he have made many slips in his life, (else, there were none virtuous, <i>for in many things we offend all</i>) [James 3:2] also a comely man and lovely, though he have some warts upon his hand, yea, not only freckles upon his face, but also scars. No cause therefore why the word translated should be denied to be the word, or forbidden to be current,	¶13) “Now to answer our enemies: we do not deny, rather we affirm and insist that the very worst translation of the Bible in English issued by Protestants (for we have seen no Catholic version of the whole Bible as yet) contains the word of God, or rather, is the word of God. In the same way, when the King’s speech delivered in Parliament is translated into French, German, Italian, and Latin, it is still the King’s speech, even if it is not interpreted by every translator with the same skill, or perhaps with as appropriate phrasing or always with as great clarity. For as everyone knows, things are classified by their major characteristics. Anyone will admit that a person may be regarded as virtuous even though he has made many slips during his life, otherwise no one could be called virtuous, because “all of us make many mistakes” (James 3.2). A person may be called handsome and charming, even though he may have some warts on his hand, and not only some freckles on his face, but also scars. So there is no reason why the word when it is translated should be denied to be the word, or should be declared inauthentic, simply because there may be

notwithstanding that some imperfections and blemishes may be noted in the setting forth of it. For whatever was perfect under the Sun, where Apostles or Apostolic men, that is, men endued with an extraordinary measure of God's spirit, and privileged with the privilege of infallibility, had not their hand? The Romanists therefore in refusing to hear, and daring to burn the Word translated, did no less than despite the spirit of grace, from whom originally it proceeded, and whose sense and meaning, as well as man's weakness would enable, it did express. Judge by an example or two. *Plutarch* writeth, that after that *Rome* had been burnt by the *Gauls*, they fell soon to build it again: but doing it in haste, they did not cast the streets, nor proportion the houses in such comely fashion, as had been most slightly and convenient; was *Catiline* therefore an honest man, or a good patriot, that sought to bring it to a combustion? Or *Nero* a good Prince, that did indeed set it on fire? So, by the story of *Ezra*, and the prophecy of *Haggai* it may be gathered, that the Temple built by *Zerubbabel* after the return from *Babylon*, was by no means to be compared to the former built by *Solomon* (for they that remembered the former, wept when they considered the latter) [Ezra 3:12] notwithstanding, might this latter either have been abhorred and forsaken by the *Jews*, or profaned by the *Greeks*? The like we are to think of Translations. The translation of the *Seventy* dissenteth from the Original in many places, neither doth it come near it, for perspicuity, gravity, majesty; yet which of the Apostles did condemn it? Condemn it? Nay, they used it, (as it is apparent, and as *Saint Jerome* and most learned men do confess) which they would not have done, nor by their example of using it, so grace and commend it to the Church, if it had been unworthy of the appellation and name of the word of God. And whereas they urge for their second defence of their vilifying and abusing of the *English* Bibles, or some pieces thereof, which they meet with, for that heretics (forsooth) were the Authors of the translations, (heretics they call us by the same right that they call themselves Catholics, both being wrong) we marvel what divinity taught them so. We are sure *Tertullian* was of another mind: *Ex personis probamus fidem, an ex fide personas?* Do we try men's faith by their persons? we should try their persons by their faith. Also *S. Augustine* was of

some imperfections and blemishes in the way it is published. For has there been anything perfect under the sun in which Apostles or their colleagues, people endued with an extraordinary measure of God's Spirit and privileged with the privilege of infallibility, were not involved? Therefore when the Romanists refused to hear, and even dared to burn the word when it is translated, they were only showing contempt for the Spirit of grace from whom it came originally, and whose sense and meaning it expressed as well as humanly possible. Consider some parallels. *Plutarch* writes that after *Rome* had been burnt by the *Gauls*, they soon set about rebuilding it. But they did it in haste, and they did not plan the streets or design the houses in the most attractive or practical way. Was *Catiline* therefore an honorable man, or a good patriot, when he tried to destroy it? Or was *Nero* a good prince, when he actually set it on fire? From the account of *Ezra* (Ezra 3.12) and the prophecy of *Haggai* (Haggai 2.3) it may be inferred that the temple built by *Zerubbabel* after the return from *Babylon* was in no way comparable to the one built earlier by *Solomon*. People who remembered the earlier one wept when they saw it, and yet was the new temple either regarded with disgust and rejected by the *Jews*, or profaned by the *Greeks*? We should think in the same way about translations. The translation of the *Septuagint* departs from the original in many places, and it does not come near the Hebrew for clarity, gravity, and majesty. And yet did any of the Apostles condemn it? Condemn it? Obviously they used it (as *St. Jerome* and most scholars confess), and they would not have done this, nor by their example of using it so honor and commend it to the Church, if it had been unworthy of the dignity and name of the word of God. Then they argue as their second reason, for vilifying and abusing *English* Bibles, or the portions of it they have seen, that the translations were made by heretics (they call us heretics by the same right that they call themselves Catholics, and they are wrong on both counts). This logic makes us wonder. We are sure *Tertullian* disagrees: "Do we judge peoples' faith by who they are? We should judge who they are by their faith." *St. Augustine* also disagrees, for when he found certain rules made by *Tychonius*, a *Donatist*, for better understanding the Word, he was not ashamed to make use of them, and even

another mind: for he lighting upon certain rules made by *Tychonius a Donatist*, for the better understanding of the word, was not ashamed to make use of them, yea, to insert them into his own book, with giving commendation to them so far forth as they were worthy to be commended, as is to be seen in *S. Augustine's* third book *De doctrina Christiana*. To be short, *Origen*, and the whole Church of God for certain hundred years, were of another mind: for they were so far from treading under foot, (much more from burning) the Translation of *Aquila* a Proselyte, that is, one that had turned *Jew*; of *Symmachus*, and *Theodotion*, both *Ebionites*, that is, most vile heretics, that they joined together with the *Hebrew Original*, and the Translation of the *Seventy* (as hath been before signified out of *Epiphanius*) and set them forth openly to be considered of and perused by all. But we weary the unlearned, who need not know so much, and trouble the learned, who know it already.

¶14) Yet before we end, we must answer a third cavil and objection of theirs against us, for altering and amending our Translations so oft; wherein truly they deal hardly, and strangely with us. For to whomever was it imputed for a fault (by such as were wise) to go over that which he had done, and to amend it where he saw cause? Saint *Augustine* was not afraid to exhort *S. Jerome* to a *Palinodia* or recantation; and doth even glory that he seeth his infirmities. If we be sons of the Truth, we must consider what it speaketh, and trample upon our own credit, yea, and upon other men's too, if either be any way an hindrance to it. This to the cause: then to the persons we say, that of all men they ought to be most silent in this case. For what varieties have they, and what alterations have they made, not only of their Service books, Portesses and Breviaries, but also of their *Latin Translation*? The Service book supposed to be made by *S. Ambrose (Officium Ambrosianum)* was a great while in special use and request; but Pope *Hadrian* calling a Council with the aid of *Charles the Emperor*, abolished it, yea, burnt it, and commanded the Service book of Saint *Gregory* universally to be used. Well, *Officium Gregorianum* gets by this means to be in credit, but doth it continue without change or altering? No, the very *Roman Service* was of two fashions, the New fashion, and the Old, (the one used in one Church, the other in another) as is to be seen

to insert them into his own book, duly commending them to the extent they were worth being commended (see his *De Doctrina Christiana*, book 3). In short, *Origen* together with the whole Church of God for some hundred years disagreed: they were so far from rejecting, much less from burning the translations by *Aquila*, a proselyte (i.e., a Jew by conversion), by *Symmachus* and by *Theodotion*, both *Ebionites* (i.e., vile heretics), that they added them together with the *Hebrew original* and the *Septuagint* (as noted by *Epiphanius* above), and published them openly to be considered and read by everyone. But this is tiresome for the general reader who is not interested, and boring for scholars, who know it already.

¶14) Yet before we finish, we must answer a third complaint and objection of theirs against us, of altering and amending our translations so often. This is truly a bold and odd accusation. For who was ever faulted (by anyone knowledgeable) for going over what they had done, and amending it where necessary? *St. Augustine* was not afraid to exhort *St. Jerome* to a *Palinodia* or reconsideration. The same *St. Augustine* was not ashamed to retract, we might say, revoke, many things he had written, and even boasts of seeing his own weaknesses. If we are to be loyal to the truth, we must be attentive to what it says, and disregard our own interests, and other men's too, if either stand in the way. So much for principles. Now to the accusers themselves we would say that of all people they have the least right to raise the charge. For how many different editions do they have, and how many alterations have they made, not only in their service books, manuals, and breviaries, but also in their Latin translation? The service book attributed to *St. Ambrose (Officium Ambrosianum)* had been in use and in great demand for a long while when Pope *Adrian* called a council with the aid of *Charles the Emperor*, and not only abolished it, but had it burnt, and commanded the service book of *St. Gregory* to be used universally. Then after the *Officium Gregorianum* is recognized as the authorized text, does it escape change or

in *Pamelius* a Romanist, his Preface, before *Micrologus*. the same *Pamelius* reporteth out *Radulphus de Rivo*, that about the year of our Lord, 1277, Pope *Nicolas* the Third removed out of the Churches of *Rome*, the more ancient books (of Service) and brought into use the Missals of the Friars Minorites, and commanded them to be observed there; insomuch that about an hundred years after, when the above name *Radulphus* happened to be at *Rome*, he found all the books to be new, (of the new stamp). Neither were there this chopping and changing in the more ancient times only, but also of late: *Pius Quintus* himself confesseth, that every Bishopric almost had a peculiar kind of service, most unlike to that which others had: which moved him to abolish all other Breviaries, though never so ancient, and privileged and published by Bishops in their Dioceses, and to establish and ratify that only which was of his own setting forth, in the year 1568. Now when the father of their Church, who gladly would heal the sore of the daughter of his people softly and slightly, and make the best of it, findeth so great fault with them for their odds and jarring; we hope the children have no great cause to vaunt of their uniformity. But the difference that appeareth between our Translations, and our often correcting of them, is the thing that we are specially charged with; let us see therefore whether they themselves be without fault this way, (if it be to be counted a fault, to correct) and whether they be fit men to throw stones at us: *O tandem maior parcas insane minori*: they that are less sound themselves, out not to object infirmities to others. If we should tell them that *Valla*, *Stapulensis*, *Erasmus*, and *Vives* found fault with their vulgar Translation, and consequently wished the same to be mended, or a new one to be made, they would answer peradventure, that we produced their enemies for witnesses against them; albeit, they were in no other sort enemies, than as *S. Paul* was to the *Galatians*, for telling them the truth [Gal 4:16]: and it were to be wished, that they had dared to tell it them plainlier and oftener. But what will they say to this, that Pope *Leo* the Tenth allowed *Erasmus*' Translation of the New Testament, so much different from the vulgar, by his Apostolic Letter and Bull; that the same *Leo* exhorted *Pagnine* to translate the whole Bible, and bare whatsoever charges was necessary for the work? Surely, as the Apostle reasoneth to

alteration? No, the Roman service itself was in two forms: the new form, and the old. The one was used in some churches, and the other in others, as the Romanist *Pamelius* notes in his preface to *Micrologus*. The same *Pamelius* cites *Radulphus de Rivo* to the effect that about a.d. 1277 Pope *Nicholas III* removed earlier service books from the churches of *Rome* and introduced the use of the Friars Minorites' missals, commanding them to be observed there, so that when *Radulphus* happened to be in *Rome* about a hundred years later, he found all the books to be new, of the new edition. Nor was this shifting back and forth done only in earlier times, but it has happened recently also. *Pius V* himself admits that almost every bishopric had its own kind of service, unlike the ones which others had. This moved him to abolish all the other breviaries, however ancient, privileged and published by Bishops in their Dioceses, and to establish and ratify only the one which he himself published in the year 1568. Now when the Father of their Church, who would gladly heal the sore of the daughter of his people gently and easily, and make the best of it, finds so much fault with them for their differences and inconsistencies, we hope the children have no great reason to boast of their uniformity. But the differences that appear among our translations, and our frequent corrections of them, is what we are charged with specifically. Let us see therefore whether they themselves are without fault in this respect (if it is a fault to make corrections), and whether they are qualified to throw stones at us: "they that are less healthy themselves ought not point out the infirmities of others" (*Horace*). If we should tell them that *Valla*, *Lefevre d'Etaples*, *Erasmus*, and *Vives* found fault with their Vulgate version, and consequently wished that either it should be corrected or a new version should be made, they would probably answer that we produced their enemies as witnesses against them. Yet they were no more enemies than *St. Paul* was to the *Galatians* for telling them the truth. If only they had dared tell them more plainly and oftener! But what will they say to the fact that Pope *Leo X*, by his Apostolic Letter and bull, sanctioned *Erasmus*'s translation of the New Testament, which differs so much from the Vulgate? And that the same *Leo* encouraged *Pagninus* to translate

the Hebrews, that if the former Law and Testament had been sufficient, there had been no need of the latter: [Heb 7:11, 8:7] so we may say, that if the old vulgar had been at all points allowable, to small purpose had labour and charges been undergone, about framing of a new. If they say, it was one Pope's private opinion, and that he consulted only himself; then we are able to go further with them, and to aver, that more of their chief men of all sorts, even their own Trent champions Paiva and Vega, and their own Inquisitors, Hieronymus ab Oleastro, and their own Bishop Isidorus Clarius, and their own Cardinal Thomas a Vio Caietan, do either make new Translations themselves, or follow new ones of other men's making, or note the vulgar Interpreter for halting; none of them fear to dissent from him, nor yet to except against him. And call they this an uniform tenor of text and judgment about the text, so many of their Worthies disclaiming the now received conceit? Nay, we will yet come nearer the quick: doth not their Paris edition differ from the Lovaine, and Hentenius his from them both, and yet all of them allowed by authority? Nay, doth not Sixtus Quintus confess, that certain Catholics (he meaneth certain of his own side) were in such an humor of translating the Scriptures into Latin, that Satan taking occasion by them, though they thought of no such matter, did strive what he could, out of so uncertain and manifold a variety of Translations, so to mingle all things, that nothing might seem to be left certain and firm in them, etc.? Nay, further, did not the same Sixtus ordain by an inviolable decree, and that with the counsel and consent of his Cardinals, that the Latin edition of the old and New Testament, which the Council of Trent would have to be authentic, is the same without controversy which he then set forth, being diligently corrected and printed in the Printing-house of Vatican? Thus Sixtus in his Preface before his Bible. And yet Clement the Eighth his immediate successor, published another edition of the Bible, containing in it infinite differences from that of Sixtus, (and many of them weighty and material) and yet this must be authentic by all means. What is to have the faith of our glorious Lord JESUS CHRIST with Yea or Nay, if this be not? Again, what is sweet harmony and consent, if this be? Therefore, as Demaratus of Corinth advised a great King,

the whole Bible, and provided all the expenses necessary for the work? Surely, as the Apostle reasons to the Hebrews (7.11; 8.7), if the former Law and Testament had been sufficient, there would have been no need of another. Similarly, if the old Vulgate had been completely adequate, there would be little reason to go to the labor and expense of preparing a new version. If they argue that this was only one Pope's private opinion, and that he consulted only himself, then we can go further and demonstrate that many more of their leaders, including their own champions at the Council of Trent, Paiva and Vega, and their own Inquisitors, Hieronymus ab Oleastro, and their own Bishop Isidorus Clarius, and their own Cardinal Thomas a Vio Cajetan, either make new translations themselves, or follow new ones that others have made, or note defects in the Vulgate version, without any fear of dissenting from it or disagreeing with it. And do they claim to represent a consistency of text and of judgment about the text, when so many of their own worthies disclaim the currently accepted opinion? But let us be more explicit. Does their Paris edition not differ from the Louvain edition, and Hentenius's edition differ from both, and yet all of them are sanctioned by ecclesiastical authority? And does Sixtus V not admit that some Catholics (he means some of his own persuasion) were so eagerly making translations of the Scriptures into Latin, that although they did not intend it, Satan could exploit the opportunity to show that such a variety of translations is confusing, and proves that nothing seems to be left certain and firm in them, etc.? And further, did the same Sixtus not ordain by an inviolable decree, with the counsel and consent of his Cardinals, that the Latin edition of the Old and New Testaments, which the Council of Trent pronounces to be authoritative, is precisely the one which he then published in a carefully corrected edition, printed by the Vatican Press? Sixtus states this in the Preface to his Bible. And yet Clement VIII, his immediate successor, publishes another edition of the Bible, containing innumerable differences from that of Sixtus, many of which are (weighty and substantial, and this edition is declared absolutely authoritative. If this is not an example of vacillating with the faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, what is? What kind of sweet harmony and consistency is this? Therefore, as

<p>before he talked of the dissensions of the <i>Grecians</i>, to compose his domestic broils (for at that time his Queen and his son and heir were at deadly feud with him) so all the while that our adversaries do make so many and so various editions themselves, and do jar so much about the worth and authority of them, they can with no show of equity challenge us for changing and correcting.</p>	<p>Demaratus of Corinth advised the great king Philip of Macedon, before criticizing the dissensions among the Greeks, he should settle his own domestic broils (for at that time his queen and his son and heir were in a deadly feud with him). So when our enemies are making so many different versions themselves and debating their value and authority, they cannot fairly challenge our right to revise and correct. (Rhodes & Lupas 78-81)</p>
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- Spanning two paragraphs (§13 & 14), subsection twelve, titled “an answer to the imputation of our adversaries”, is the longest portion of the Preface. In this subsection, Smith addresses the arguments of the translators’ Roman Catholic adversaries that he touched upon briefly in subsection ten, “the speeches and reasons of our brethren, and our Adversaries against the work.” Please recall from [Lesson 198](#) that Smith elected to answer to his Protestant/Puritan brethren first in subsection eleven, “a satisfaction to our brethren.”
- Having addressed his “brethren,” Smith opens subsection twelve with the following powerful statement against “the latter” i.e., the translators’ Roman Catholic opposition from subsection ten:
 - “Now to the latter we answer; that we do not deny, nay we affirm and avow, that the very meanest translation of the Bible in English, set forth by men of our profession, (for we have seen none of theirs of the whole Bible as yet) containeth the word of God, nay, is the word of God.”
- Before commenting on the meat of the sentence we need to mention something regarding the parenthetical statement, “for we have seen none of theirs of the whole Bible as yet.” When Smith penned that statement he was referring to the fact he had not yet seen a Catholic translation of the entire Bible. The Rheims New Testament was published by Gregory Martin in Rheims, France in 1582. Meanwhile the Old Testament was published in two volumes from Douai, France in 1609 (Genesis-Job) and 1610 (Psalms-2 Maccabees). Therefore, Smith statement about not having “seen none of theirs of the whole Bible as yet,” indicates that the Preface was written before Smith saw the second volume of the Douai, Old Testament published in 1610. This is potentially a clue as to when Smith wrote the Preface, possibly in late 1610 before the complete Doaiui, Old Testament was available to the translators to inspect.
- Returning now to the meat of the sentence, Smith affirms and avows that the translators believed “that the very **meanest** translation of the Bible in English, set forth by men of our profession, . . . containeth the word of God, nay, **is the word of God.**” According to Smith “the very meanest translation of the Bible in English” is still “the word of God.” What did Smith mean when he employed the word “meanest” in this context. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) provides some assistance in the form of the following entry for the adjective form of “mean.”
 - 3.c. “Undignified, low. Of literary style, etc.: lacking in elevation or adornment; unambitious (not always with depreciative connotations). *Now rare.*”

- In the context, I take Smith’s intended meaning to be this “now rare” reference to literally style. This is magnified by looking at the example Smith provides of the King’s speech in the next sentence.
 - “As the King's speech, which he uttereth in Parliament, being translated into *French, Dutch, Italian, and Latin*, is still the King's speech, though it be not interpreted by every Translator with the like grace, nor peradventure so fitly for phrase, nor so expressly for sense, everywhere.”
- Put another way, the “King’s speech” spoken in Parliament remains the “King’s speech” even when “meanly” translated i.e., “not interpreted by every Translator with the like grace, nor peradventure so fitly for phrase, nor so expressly for sense, everywhere.” Taken together, the first two sentences of this subsection convey the idea that even when lacking literary adornments and “grace” i.e., “meanly” done, a translation of the Bible “is the word of God” just as the “King’s speech” remains the “King’s speech.” This presents a high view of the results of the translation process in the mind of Myles Smith. The word of God remains the word of God in undiminished form though translated. And this despite the presence of “some imperfections and blemishes [that] may be noted in the setting forth of it.” Consider the next sentence:
 - “For it is confessed, that things are to take their denomination of the greater part; and a natural man could say, . . . A man may be counted a virtuous man, though he have made many slips in his life, (else, there were none virtuous, *for in many things we offend all*) [James 3:2] also a comely man and lovely, though he have some warts upon his hand, yea, not only freckles upon his face, but also scars. No cause therefore why the word translated should be denied to be the word, or forbidden to be current, notwithstanding that some **imperfections** and blemishes may be noted in the setting forth of it.”
- In the above citation we encounter the fifth occurrence of a form of the word “perfect” in the Preface with the word “imperfections.” According to Smith, there is “no cause therefore why the word translated should be denied to be the word, . . . notwithstanding that some imperfections and blemishes may be noted in the setting forth of it.” The question is what did Smith mean by “imperfections” given the greater context of the paragraph. The OED provides many different definitions for the English word “imperfections.” Consider the following entries for the noun form of the word:
 - “1. The condition or quality of being imperfect (chiefly in sense 2 of the adjective); defectiveness, faultiness; incompleteness.”
 - “2. An instance or example of defectiveness, faultiness, or incompleteness; a defect, a fault, a flaw; an inadequacy.”
- Careful readers will not need the parenthesis in definition 1 to see sense 2 of the adjective form of the word in the OED. When one follows this promoting they encounter the following entry, “lacking some quality or attribute necessary to perfection; less than perfect in quality or condition; substandard, flawed; defective, faulty.” This is no doubt that meaning that Smith had

in mind. Just as a man with “some warts upon his hand, yea, not only freckles upon his face, but also scars” can be considered “comely” and “lovely” so too can the word of God still be the word of God with “some imperfections and blemishes.” Consequently, Smith’s use of “imperfections” answers to “warts,” “freckles,” and “scars” that do no more to mar the word of God any more than physical imperfections mar the physical features of comely/lovely man. Therefore, given the greater context of the paragraph Smith is not talking about “imperfections” in the sense of false or incorrect information but rather “mean” or ungraceful, unadorned language.

- Immediately following his discussion of “imperfections” Smith turns his attention to absolute or ultimate perfection in the next sentence (see our discussion of the different senses of “perfect” in [Lesson 195](#)). According to Smith, only those who are “endued with an extraordinary measure of God’s Spirit” are capable of infallibility and perfection in the ultimate or absolute sense.
 - “For whatever was **perfect** under the Sun, where Apostles or Apostolic men, that is, men endued with an extraordinary measure of God’s Spirit, and privileged with the privilege of infallibility, had not their hand?”
- In this sixth occurrence of “perfect” in the Preface, Smith has the ultimate/absolute sense of “perfect” in view. Specifically, he ties perfection to “infallibility” a quality that is only possessed by men who are “endued with an extraordinary measure of God’s Spirit.” When used in the absolute sense, “perfect” carries the meaning of adjective entry 1.b in the OED: “In a state of complete excellence; free from any imperfection or defect of quality; that cannot be improved upon; flawless, faultless.” According to Smith, only the “Apostles or Apostolic men” were capable of producing this level of perfection because they were “endued with an extraordinary measure of God’s Spirit,” i.e., they were inspired.
- Given the entirety of the Preface and Epistle Dedicatory, while it is clear that Smith did not view himself or his fellow translators as inspired and therefore producing “perfection” in the absolute sense, it is equally clear that he did view their work as “perfect” in various lesser senses.
 - First, according to Epistle Dedicatory, the translators viewed their work as being “**more exact**” than the prior English Bibles that they were “revising,” “rubbing,” and “polishing.” In [Lesson 191](#) we observed that the word “exact” meant “perfectly done,” according to Robert Cawdrey’s 1604 *Table Alphabetical*. Moreover, we observed that the OED presents the following “obsolete” meaning for the adjective form of “exact,” “perfected, consummate, ‘finished’.” Derived from the Latin *exactus*, the word carries meanings related to “consummate,” “complete,” and a bringing “to perfection.” The OED elaborates upon the meaning of the word “perfect” during the early 17th century 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*).” 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.

- Second, in subsection eleven Smith stated the work of translators “perfected” the English Bible (See [Lesson 198](#)). Smith says, “Yet for all that, as nothing is begun and **perfected** at the same time.” In this occurrence we see the use of the past tense form of the verb “perfect” being employed in a context that speaks of the completion of the process that had begun at a prior time. According to the OED there is an “*obsolete*” meaning of “perfect” that means: “to complete or finish successfully; to carry through, accomplish. In early use also: † to bring to fulfilment or full development (*obsolete*).” I believe this was the meaning that Smith had in mind when he used the word “perfected” in subsection eleven. In other words, Smith viewed the work of the translators as completing, successfully finishing, improving upon, or bringing to completion the translational work begun by prior English Bibles. Therefore, Smith concludes that their translational forebears would have no reason to “mislike” the King James translators but would rather “thank” them for finishing their work.
- Third, “imperfections” in terms of “mean,” ungraceful, or unadorned language do not result in a translation not being the word of God.
- Lastly, Smith made all these statements within the framework of early 17th century understanding of the Reformation Text. Put another way, when the King James translators thought of the “original sacred tongues” they thought in terms of the Hebrew Masoretic Text for the Old Testament and the Greek Received Text for the New Testament. These were the “golden pipes, or rather conduits, where-through the olive branches empty themselves into the gold,” that Smith spoke of in subsection thirteen. The prior English Bibles that the translators were surveying and polishing were based on the Reformation Era text. Consequently, when modern critics and commentators seek to leverage the Preface to advance the notion that the King James translators would have supported the modern Critical Text, modern text critical methodologies, and modern versions they are guilty of the historical error of “presentism” i.e., “the imposition of present day values and assumptions on individuals and societies of the past.” (Wilson, 103) There is simply no evidence that the King James translators would have approved of modern text critical theory and practice and no amount of ahistorical leveraging of the Preface can alter this reality. Smith’s Preface and other primary source documents related to the AV need to be historically contextualized with an early 17th century framework. Myles Smith, speaking on behalf of the translators in the Preface, believed that their work “perfected” or completed the process of setting forth the Reformation Era text in English. The King James translators believed their work to be “more exact” i.e., “perfectly done” in the sense of OED 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.” Their estimation of their work was 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. They believed they had fulfilled the King’s desire for “one uniform translation” (Barlow, 47) by the creation of “one principal good one” that “not justly to be excepted against.”

- Returning now to the text of the Preface, in the next sentence Myles Smith accuses the Roman Catholic Church of despising “the spirit of grace” by “daring to burn the Word translated.”
 - “The Romanists therefore in refusing to hear, and daring to burn the Word translated, did no less than despite the spirit of grace, from whom originally it proceeded, and whose sense and meaning, as well as man's weakness would enable, it did express.”
- Following this sentence, Smith provides two examples, one from secular history and another from scripture.
 - “Judge by an example or two. *Plutarch* writeth, that after that *Rome* had been burnt by the *Gauls*, they fell soon to build it again: but doing it in haste, they did not cast the streets, nor proportion the houses in such comely fashion, as had been most slightly and convenient; was *Catiline* therefore an honest man, or a good patriot, that sought to bring it to a combustion? Or *Nero* a good Prince, that did indeed set it on fire? So, by the story of *Ezra*, and the prophecy of *Haggai* it may be gathered, that the Temple built by *Zerubbabel* after the return from *Babylon*, was by no means to be compared to the former built by *Solomon* (for they that remembered the former, wept when they considered the latter) [Ezra 3:12] notwithstanding, might this latter either have been abhorred and forsaken by the *Jews*, or profaned by the *Greeks*?”
- I take the examples of Rome burning and being rebuilt and, likewise, for Israel’s Temple to be illustrating the point even though they were “meaner” i.e., not as splendid or ornate they were still revered and respected nonetheless.
- In the next portion, Smith applies the reasoning set forth in the first half of paragraph thirteen to “translations” of the word of God.
 - “The like we are to think of Translations. The translation of the *Seventy* dissenteth from the Original in many places, neither doth it come near it, for perspicuity, gravity, majesty; yet which of the Apostles did condemn it? Condemn it? Nay, they used it, (as it is apparent, and as Saint *Jerome* and most learned men do confess) which they would not have done, nor by their example of using it, so grace and commend it to the Church, if it had been unworthy of the appellation and name of the word of God. And whereas they urge for their second defence of their vilifying and abusing of the *English* Bibles, or some pieces thereof, which they meet with, for that heretics (forsooth) were the Authors of the translations, (heretics they call us by the same right that they call themselves Catholics, both being wrong) we marvel what divinity taught them so.”
- According to Smith, the Apostles used the “translation of the seventy” (LXX) despite the fact that it “dissenteth from the Original in many places” and could not compare in terms of “perspicuity,” “gravity,” and “majesty;” i.e., it was “mean.” That Apostles would not have done this if the LXX “had been unworthy of the appellation and name of the word of God.” Smith’s overarching point here is that translations, even “mean” ones, are still the word of God despite any Catholic claims to the contrary.

- Next, Smith takes up a second defense offered by his Roman Catholic advisories for “vilifying and abusing of the *English Bibles*” namely “that heretics (forsooth) were the Authors of the translations.” Put another way, the Catholic Church justified burning the work of Tyndale, Coverdale, and Matthews because they were heretics according to the Church. Skipping the parenthesis for a movement, Smith “marvels” at what “divinity” taught the Catholics that the men in question were heretics. Within the parentheses Smith sarcastically questions by what “right” do the Catholics call those who translated the English Bible heretics or themselves Catholics, concluding that that they are “wrong” on both counts.
- Smith then contrasts the Catholic mind on these matters with those of Tertullian and Augustine.
 - “We are sure *Tertullian* was of another mind: *Ex personis probamus fidem, an ex fide personas?* Do we try men's faith by their persons? we should try their persons by their faith. Also *S. Augustine* was of another mind: for he lighting upon certain rules made by *Tychonius* a *Donatist*, for the better understanding of the word, was not ashamed to make use of them, yea, to insert them into his own book, with giving commendation to them so far forth as they were worthy to be commended, as is to be seen in *S. Augustine's* third book *De doctrina Christiana*.”
- From Tertullian, Smith draws out the principal that a man’s person should be tried by their faith not the other way around. Meanwhile, Augustine was willing to incorporate a “commendation” unto, as far as he was able, “certain rules” of interpretation in his own book (*De doctrina Christiana*) even though they originated with heretical Donatist Tychonius. The Catholics by contrast were not willing to follow suit, according to Smith.
- Smith’s final illustration in paragraph thirteen pertains to the actions of Origen and the “whole Church of God” towards the Ebionite translation of Aquila and Theodotion.
 - “To be short, *Origen*, and the whole Church of God for certain hundred years, were of another mind: for they were so far from treading under foot, (much more from burning) the Translation of *Aquila* a Proselyte, that is, one that had turned *Jew*; of *Symmachus*, and *Theodotion*, both *Ebionites*, that is, most vile heretics, that they joined together with the *Hebrew Original*, and the Translation of the *Seventy* (as hath been before signified out of *Eiphanius*) and set them forth openly to be considered of and perused by all.”
- While Smith’s exact point here regarding Origen is a little murky, I take him to be saying that neither Origen nor “the whole Church of God” treated the translational work of the Heretical Ebionites Aquila and Theodotion in the same manner that the Church of Rome treated Protestant English Bibles.
- Finally, Smith concludes the paragraph by stating,
 - “But we weary the unlearned, who need not know so much, and trouble the learned, who know it already.”
- In the next Lesson we will look at the remainder of subsection twelve by considering paragraph fourteen.

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