

Sunday, April 23, 2023—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*

Lesson 202 The AV 1611: Producing A Proper Perspective on the Preface (Purpose, Number, Furniture, & Care)

Introduction

- In Lesson 201 we began looking at subsection thirteen to Myles Smith’s famous Preface to the AV of 1611, “The Translators to the Reader.” Titled “The Purpose of the Translators, With Their Number, Furniture, Care, Etc.,” subsection thirteen sets forth four things regarding the translation from the point of view of the translators: 1) their purpose, 2) their number, 3) their furniture, and 4) their care.
- In Lesson 201 we covered the following two points:
 - What Does “Furniture” Mean In the Title to Subsection Thirteen?
 - Their Purpose
- In this Lesson our goal is to continue looking at subsection thirteen by considering the following three points:
 - Their Number
 - Their Furniture
 - Their Care

The Purpose of the Translators, With Their Number, Furniture, Care, Etc.

Modern Spelling Transcription	Modern Form Edited by Rhodes & Lupas
¶15) But it is high time to leave them, and to show in brief what we proposed to ourselves, and what course we held in this our perusal and survey of the Bible. 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, (for then the imputation of Sixtus had been true in some sort, that our people had been fed with gall of Dragons instead of wine, with whey instead of milk:) 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. To that purpose there were many chosen, that were greater in other men's eyes than in their own, and that sought the truth rather than their own praise. Again, they came or were thought to come to the work, not <i>exercendi causa</i> (as one saith) but <i>exercitati</i> , that is, learned, not to learn:	¶15) But now we should show briefly what we proposed for ourselves, and what procedures we followed in our review and study of the Bible. Truly, good Christian Reader, we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, or even to make a bad one into a good one (for then the criticism of Sixtus had been partly true, that our people had been fed with snake venom instead of wine, with whey instead of milk), but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones to make one principal good one, not justly to be objected to. This has been our endeavor, our goal. For this purpose many men were chosen who had earned the esteem of others yet remained humble, who sought the truth rather than a name for themselves. Again, they came, or were thought to come, to the work as accomplished scholars, and not as students. For the chief overseer and supervisor under his

For the chief overseer and [NOTE: Greek letters omitted] under his Majesty, to whom not only we, but also our whole Church was much bound, knew by his wisdom, which thing also *Nazianzen* taught so long ago, that it is a preposterous order to teach first and to learn after, yea that [NOTE: Greek letters omitted] to learn and practice together, is neither commendable for the workman, nor safe for the work. [Idem in Apologet.] Therefore such were thought upon, as could say modestly with Saint *Jerome*, *Et Hebraeum Sermonem ex parte didicimus, et in Latino pene ab ipsis incunabulis etc. detriti sumus. "Both we have learned the Hebrew tongue in part, and in the Latin we have been exercised almost from our very cradle."* S. *Jerome* maketh no mention of the Greek tongue, wherein yet he did excel, because he translated not the old Testament out of Greek, but out of Hebrew. And in what sort did these assemble? In the trust of their own knowledge, or of their sharpness of wit, or deepness of judgment, as it were in an arm of flesh? At no hand. They trusted in him that hath the key of *David*, opening and no man shutting; they prayed to the Lord the Father of our Lord, to the effect that S. *Augustine* did; "*O let thy Scriptures be my pure delight, let me not be deceived in them, neither let me deceive by them.*" In this confidence, and with this devotion did they assemble together; not too many, lest one should trouble another; and yet many, lest many things haply might escape them. If you ask what they had before them, truly it was the *Hebrew* text of the Old Testament, the *Greek* of the New. These are the two golden pipes, or rather conduits, where-through the olive branches empty themselves into the gold. Saint *Augustine* calleth them precedent, or original tongues; Saint *Jerome*, fountains. The same Saint *Jerome* affirmeth, and *Gratian* hath not spared to put it into his Decree, That "*as the credit of the old Books*" (he meaneth of the Old Testament) "*is to be tried by the Hebrew Volumes, so of the New by the Greek tongue,*" he meaneth by the original *Greek*. If truth be tried by these tongues, then whence should a Translation be made, but out of them? These tongues therefore, the Scriptures we say in those tongues, we set before us to translate, being the tongues wherein God was pleased to speak to his Church by the Prophets and Apostles. Neither did we run over the work with that posting haste

Majesty, to whom not only we but also our whole Church was much indebted, knew in his wisdom what Gregory Nazianzen taught so long ago, that it is preposterous to teach first and learn later, and that to learn and practice at the same time is neither advisable for the workman, nor safe for the work. Therefore only such persons were selected as could say modestly with St. Jerome, "We have some acquaintance with the Hebrew language, and we have been trained in the Latin almost from our very cradle." Although St. Jerome was competent in Greek, he does not mention that language because he translated the Old Testament not out of Greek, but out of Hebrew. And on what basis did these come together? Relying on their own knowledge, or their sharpness of wit, or depth of judgment, as it were on their human abilities? Not at all! They relied on the one who has the key of David (Revelation 3.7), who opens and no man shuts. They prayed to the Lord, the Father of our Lord, in the spirit of St. Augustine: "O let the Scriptures be my pure delight; do not let me be deceived in them, nor let me deceive by them." In this confidence and with this devotion they came together; not so many in number that they would impede each other, and yet enough so that few things would escape their notice. If you ask what texts they worked from, it was the Hebrew text for the Old Testament, the Greek text for the New. These are the two golden pipes, or channels, through which the olive branches empty themselves into the gold (Zechariah 4.12). St. Augustine calls them precedent, or original, languages; St. Jerome calls them fountains. The same St. Jerome affirms, and Gratian has quoted him in his decree, that "as the trustworthiness of the old books (i.e., the Old Testament) is to be tested against the Hebrew volumes; so of the new by the Greek language (i.e., meaning by the original Greek)." If truth is to be tested against these languages, then what else should a translation be made from, but them? These languages therefore (that is, the Scriptures in those languages) were what we based our translation on, because it was in these languages that God was pleased to speak to his Church through his Prophets and Apostles. We did not speed through the work at a gallop like the Septuagint translators, if the tradition is true that they finished it in seventy-two days. Nor were we

that the *Septuagint* did, if that be true which is reported of them, that they finished it in 72 days; neither were we barred or hindered from going over it again, having once done it, like *S. Jerome*, if that be true which himself reporteth, that he could no sooner write anything, but presently it was caught from him, and published, and he could not have leave to mend it: neither, to be short, were we the first that fell in hand with translating the Scripture into English, and consequently destitute of former helps, as it is written of *Origen*, that he was the first in a manner, that put his hand to write Commentaries upon the Scriptures, and therefore no marvel, if he overshot himself many times. None of these things: the work hath not been huddled up in 72 days, but hath cost the workmen, as light as it seemeth, the pains of twice seven times seventy two days and more: matters of such weight and consequence are to be speeded with maturity: for in a business of movement a man feareth not the blame of convenient slackness. Neither did we think much to consult the Translators or Commentators, *Chaldee, Hebrew, Syrian, Greek or Latin*, no nor the *Spanish, French, Italian, or Dutch*; neither did we disdain to revise that which we had done, and to bring back to the anvil that which we had hammered: but having and using as great helps as were needful, and fearing no reproach for slowness, nor coveting praise for expedition, we have at length, through the good hand of the Lord upon us, brought the work to that pass that you see.

restricted or hindered from going over it again, once we had done it, like *St. Jerome*, if what he himself says is true, that he could not write anything that wasn't immediately caught away and published before he had a chance to correct it. In a word, we were not the first to undertake a translation of the Scripture into English, and consequently without any earlier examples to go by, unlike *Origen*, who was the first to undertake writing commentaries on the Scriptures, and therefore understandably overshot himself many times. There were none of these problems. The work was not crammed into seventy-two days, but cost the workmen, as light as it seems, the pains of more than twice seven times seventy-two days. Matters of such gravity and consequence are to be pursued with due deliberation: in matters of importance no one fears being blamed for taking all the time necessary. Nor did we hesitate to consult the work of translators or commentators, whether [ancient ones] in Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac, Greek, or Latin, or [modern ones] in Spanish, French, Italian, or German. We did not refuse to revise what we had done, and to bring back to the anvil what we had once hammered. But having and using as many helps as were necessary, and fearing no reproach for slowness, nor coveting praise for speed, we have finally, through the good hand of the Lord upon us, brought the work to its present state.
(Rhodes & Lupas 81-82)

Their Number

- After having set forth the translator's purpose as follows, "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," Smith turns his attention to the translators "number" in the next line.
 - "To that purpose there were many chosen, that were greater in other men's eyes than in their own, and that sought the truth rather than their own praise."
- Smith never states the exact number of the translators that were chosen. Rather he simply states that "there were many chosen" to the "purpose" identified in Lesson 201. Please recall from [Lesson 160](#) that the exact number of translators is debated by historians.

- “Though Bishop (soon to be Archbishop) Richard Bancroft circulated a letter from the King, sealed 22 July 1604, that states ‘we have appointed certain learned men, to the number of four and fifty,’ the surviving lists gives forty-seven names, divided into six companies, two each at Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge.” (Norton, 54)
- Oxford scholar Gordon Campbell concurs with Dr. Norton that “the surviving lists of translators are not entirely consistent.” (Campbell, 47) That said, “we know a good deal about most of them, and a majority were of sufficient standing in their profession to have been included in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.” (Campbell, 47)
- Regarding the “many” that were “chosen” Smith states, “that were greater in other men's eyes than in their own, and that sought the truth rather than their own praise.” While this is a very humble comment on the part of Smith, I see no reason not to take it at face value. Those who were “chosen” to participate in the work were selected on account of their great learning.
 - “Again, they came or were thought to come to the work, not *exercendi causa* (as one saith) but *exercitati*, that is, **learned, not to learn**: For the chief overseer and [NOTE: Greek letters omitted] under his Majesty, to whom not only we, but also our whole Church was much bound, knew by his wisdom, which thing also *Nazianzen* taught so long ago, that **it is a preposterous order to teach first and to learn after**, yea that [NOTE: Greek letters omitted] **to learn and practice together, is neither commendable for the workman, nor safe for the work.**”
- Put another way, the work of translation could only be achieved by those who had already learned “the original sacred tongues.” It was not “commendable for the workman” or “safe for the work” for those laboring on the project to “teach first and to learn after.” Therefore, they came to the work as “learned” and “not to learn.” Smith attributes this “wisdom” to Archbishop Richard Bancroft “the chief overseer” and “his Majesty” King James I.
- Many authors have chronicled the amazing academic credentials and achievements of the King James translators. Consider but one example from Helen Moore and Julian Reid from their book published by the Bodleian Library in commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the King James Bible, *Manifold Greatness: The Making of the King James Bible*:
 - “Socially, the translators came from varied backgrounds, some the sons of urban tradesmen, others the offspring of country gentlemen, or provincial artisans. The origins of some are entirely obscure. While all were members of the Church of England, they represented widely differing opinions of the essentials of doctrine and church discipline—salvation, justification, the wearing of vestments, the use of ritual, and so on, reflecting the tensions that existed within the Jacobean church. Academically, however, the translators inhabited the same world. An early education in Latin, the international language of scholarship, was followed by admission to university in their early to mid-teens to study for a Bachelor’s then perhaps a Master’s degree, encompassing a broad curriculum of Latin and Greek authors (including prose, poetry, drama, history, and

philosophy), mathematics and astronomy. They were expected to be able to compose in Greek and Latin, to translate into and out of those languages with ease, and to teach, debate, and converse in those languages as if they were their native tongues. Educated in a wide range of literary genres, they were acutely attuned not only to the meaning but also to the harmony, rhythm and cadence of the written and spoken word. Several of the translators taught themselves the biblical languages of Hebrew, Syriac and Aramaic, although these were not officially part of the curriculum, and many went on to hold official teaching posts within the University and their individual colleges. For the ablest, election to a college fellowship provided the chance to study for higher degrees, culminating in the doctorate of divinity, the ultimate goal for an ambitious scholar.” (Helen & Reid, 66-67)

- His Majesty’s desire that the project create “one uniform translation” and be conducted by the most “learned” men in his realm was captured by William Barlow at Hampton Court in *The Sum And Substance*:
 - “Whereupon his Highness wished, that some especial pains should be taken in that behalf for one uniform translation (professing that he could never, yet, see a Bible well translated in English, but the worst of all his Majesty thought the Geneva to be) **and this to be done by the best learned in both the Universities**, after them to be reviewed by the Bishops, and the chief learned of the Church; from them to be presented to the Privy Council; and lastly, to be ratified by his Royal authority; and so this whole Church to be bound unto it and none other: . . .” (Barlow, 47)
- Next, Smith offers the following in support of the “learned” nature of the translators selected by Bishop Bancroft and King James.
 - “Therefore such were thought upon, as could say modestly with Saint *Jerome*, *Et Hebraeum Sermonem ex parte didicimus, et in Latino pene ab ipsis incunabulis etc. detriti sumus.* “Both we have learned the Hebrew tongue in part, and in the Latin we have been exercised almost from our very cradle.” S. *Jerome* maketh no mention of the Greek tongue, wherein yet he did excel, because he translated not the old Testament out of Greek, but out of Hebrew.”
- The “learned” nature of the translators in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin extended from the “very cradle.” This is how “such were thought upon,” according to Myles Smith. The universality of the attainments of these men in the “original sacred tongues” was unmatched.
- In the next line Smith addresses the nature of their assemblage.
 - “And in what sort did these assemble? In the trust of their own knowledge, or of their sharpness of wit, or deepness of judgment, as it were in an arm of flesh? At no hand.”

- According to Smith, the translators did not trust in their own “knowledge,” “wit,” or “judgment.” Rather they prayed to the Lord beseeching Him for guidance.
 - “They trusted in him that hath the key of *David*, opening and no man shutting; they prayed to the Lord the Father of our Lord, to the effect that *S. Augustine* did; “*O let thy Scriptures be my pure delight, let me not be deceived in them, neither let me deceive by them.*”
- It was in this “confidence” and “devotion” that the translators assembled to do the work.
 - “In this confidence, and with this devotion did they assemble together; not too many, lest one should trouble another; and yet many, lest many things haply might escape them.”
- Once again, Smith never gives an exact number as to how many translators participated in the project. I am curious if he even knew himself. Instead, he says that they had the prefect number “not too many, lest one should trouble another” while at the same time, “and yet many, lest many things haply might escape them.”
- Having touched upon the translator’s “purpose” in Lesson 201 and their “number” in the present Lesson in the next line, Smith turns his attention to the “furniture” they used to complete their task as well as their “care” in doing so. While the first half of subsection thirteen was very orderly in terms of speaking about the translator’s “purpose” and then their “number” the second half of the paragraph fifteen goes back and forth between talking about the translator’s “furniture” and “care.”

Their Furniture

- Please recall from Lesson 201 that we discussed Myles Smith’s intended meaning when he used the word “furniture” in the title to subsection thirteen. I take Smith to be talking about the resources the translators had been “furnished” with to accomplish their task. In the body of paragraph fifteen Smith states the following:
 - “If you ask what they had before them, truly it was the *Hebrew* text of the Old Testament, the *Greek* of the New. These are the two golden pipes, or rather conduits, where-through the olive branches empty themselves into the gold.”
- In the next couple of lines, Smith elaborates on the Hebrew and Greek texts being “the two golden pipes, or rather conduits” that they were furnished for the completion of their task by quoting Augustine and Jerome.
 - “*Saint Augustine* calleth them precedent, or original tongues; *Saint Jerome*, fountains. The same *Saint Jerome* affirmeth, and *Gratian* hath not spared to put it into his Decree, That “*as the credit of the old Books*” (he meaneth of the Old Testament) “*is to be tried by the Hebrew Volumes, so of the New by the Greek tongue,*” he meaneth by the original

Greek. If truth be tried by these tongues, then whence should a Translation be made, but out of them? These tongues therefore, the Scriptures we say in those tongues, we set before us to translate, being the tongues wherein God was pleased to speak to his Church by the Prophets and Apostles.”

- The King James translators used the Reformation Era Hebrew and Greek texts as the source for their translation. Given the standards of their day, this would have been the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Textus Receptus. Herein lies the reason why the doctrine of preservation is so important to the defense of the pro-King James position. The King James translators were using the preserved Hebrew and Greek text when doing their work. As we observed in Lesson 201, there is no evidence that the King’s translators would have approved of continued revision of their work based upon the modern Critical Text and/or modern text critical methodologies and practice. Modern attempts to leverage the Preface to advance such an argument are ahistorical and guilty of the historical error of presentism.
- Later, in addition to the Hebrew and Greek texts, Smith identifies additional resources, implements, or “furniture” that the translators utilized when conducting their work.
 - “Neither did we think much to consult the Translators or Commentators, *Chaldee, Hebrew, Syrian, Greek or Latin*, no nor the *Spanish, French, Italian, or Dutch*; . . .”
- Simply stated, as “learned” men, the King James translators used every piece of “furniture” at their disposal when conducting their work. They left no stone unturned in their “perusal and survey of the Bible.”

Their Care

- In terms of “care” there are two major points that Smith touches upon: 1) speed and 2) thoroughness.
- First, Smith deals with the matter of speed or how long the translation process took (roughly, seven years). On this point, he references that legendary story from the Letter of Aristeus for how long it took to translate the Septuagint (LXX).
 - “Neither did we run over the work with that posting haste that the *Septuagint* did, **if that be true which is reported of them**, that they finished it in 72 days; neither were we barred or hindered from going over it again, having once done it, like S. *Jerome*, if that be true which himself reporteth, that he could no sooner write anything, but presently it was caught from him, and published, and he could not have leave to mend it: neither, to be short, were we the first that fell in hand with translating the Scripture into English, and consequently destitute of former helps, as it is written of *Origen*, that he was the first in a manner, that put his hand to write Commentaries upon the Scriptures, and therefore no marvel, if he overshot himself many times.”

- Note that Smith states that the translators did not “run over the work with that posting haste that the *Septuagint* did . . . that they finished it in 72 days.” So, the King James translators took their time when compared with the “haste” exhibited by those who created the LXX. It is important to note that Smith questioned the legendary story associated with the creation of the LXX when he wrote, “if that be true which is reported of them.” In contrast, Smith reports that the King James translators were not “barred or hindered from going over it again, having once done it.” Unlike Jerome and Origen, the translators were not “the first that fell in hand with translating the Scripture into English” and therefore were not “destitute of former helps.”
- In the next line Smith elaborates on how long the process took.
 - “None of these things: the work hath not been huddled up in 72 days, but hath cost the workmen, as light as it seemeth, the pains of twice seven times seventy two days and more: matters of such weight and consequence are to be speeded with maturity: for in a business of movement a man feareth not the blame of convenient slackness.”
- According to Smith, the project “hath cost the workmen” in that it was not completed in a mere 72 days but “twice seven times seventy two days and more.” A simple math mathematical computation of Smith statement renders the following results:
 - $7 \times 72 \text{ days} = 504 \text{ days}$
 - $2 \times 504 \text{ days} = 1,008$
 - $1,008 \text{ days} / 365 \text{ days in a year} = 2.8 \text{ years}$
 - Plus “more”. How much more?
- The undefined “more” as in more time, could have included more than four years depending on the contribution of each individual translator. For example, translators who served on the Committee of Final Review at the General Meeting at Stationers Hall in addition to their individual and Company work no doubt served longer than those who were done after they completed their Company work. An argument could be made that this additional time applied to Myles Smith himself. In addition to penning the Preface, Smith served on the First Oxford Company that worked on the Old Testament Prophets as well as seeing the project through to the press with the assistance of Thomas Bilson. Perhaps, the number represents an average amount of time served on the project though there is no way to know for sure.
- Another option is that Smith is just being apologetic in this statement as a means of answering those who complained that the project to create the King James Bible took too long. Smith’s statement is very similar to Christ’s admonition to Peter in the Gospel of Matthew regarding forgiveness.

- Matthew 18:33— Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.
- This view understands Smith’s statement to be a play on the scriptural idiom or figure of speech in Matthew 18:33. Just as Christ was not literally telling Peter to forgive someone 490 times, Smith is saying their work took much longer than the legendary view of the seventy translators who created the LXX.
- Perhaps a case could be made for both. An average of 2.8 years on a nearly seven-year project seems like it could be a reasonable average of time served.
- After noting how long the process took, Smith stated that, “matters of such weight and consequence [i.e., translating the scriptures] are to be speeded with maturity.” The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) uses this line from Smith’s Preface as a word usage example for definition two of its noun entry for “maturity:”
 - “†2. Deliberateness of action; mature consideration, due deliberation. *Obsolete.*”
- Put another way, “matters of such weight and consequence” can only be “speeded” as fast as “mature consideration” and “due deliberation” will allow.
- The OED also uses the following phrase from the Preface as a word usage example for the noun “slackness:” “for in a business of movement a man feareth not the blame of convenient slackness.” Definition two records the following meaning for “slackness:”
 - “2. Slowness; tardiness.”
- Meanwhile the OED defines “convenient” as follows in definition four of its entry for the adjective/noun form of the word:
 - “†4. Suitable, appropriate.
 - a. *to or for a purpose, etc. Obsolete.*
 - †b. Suitable to the conditions or circumstances; befitting the case; appropriate, proper, due. *Obsolete.*
 - †c. Of time: Due, proper. *Obsolete.*
- So, what did Myles Smith mean when he spoke of “convenient slackness” in the Preface? He was referring to “suitable” or “appropriate” “slowness” or “tardiness” in the execution of the work. Therefore, “in a business of movement a man feareth not the blame of convenient slackness” or the translators ought not be blamed for moving with suitable slowness to make sure their work was accurate.

- There are two primary reasons why the work progressed with “convenient slackness.” First was the consultation of all the available “furniture.”
 - “Neither did we think much to consult the Translators or Commentators, *Chaldee, Hebrew, Syrian, Greek or Latin*, no nor the *Spanish, French, Italian, or Dutch*;”
- The translators exhausted every available resource in a host of languages when conducting their work. Please recall from [Lesson 165](#) that translator John Bois corresponded with French scholar Isaac Casaubon over the smallest details of a handful of Apocryphal readings. All of the cushions of the “furniture” were searched for loose change by the King James translators in an effort to extract every bit of meaning possible out of the original language texts.
- The second reason that progress of the King James Bible was “speeded” with “convenient slackness” was that the work was constantly evaluated and revised on the “anvil” of truth.
 - “. . . neither did we disdain to revise that which we had done, and to bring back to the anvil that which we had hammered: but having and using as great helps as were needful, and fearing no reproach for slowness, nor coveting praise for expedition, we have at length, through the good hand of the Lord upon us, brought the work to that pass that you see.”
- It is difficult to say exactly how many times the translators “hammered” their work on the “anvil.” A strict accounting based on the letter of Bancroft’s Rules has led some to conclude that the text was revised fourteen times. (O’Steen, 93) While it is true that Bancroft’s Rules sought to govern the process, there is evidence that the “rules” were both followed and not followed at the same time. Recall that [Lesson 159](#) was devoted to a consideration of to what extent the “rules” were followed. After looking at many different items, we concluded Lesson 159 with the following take away - the Rules were not followed like a hard and fast checklist. In the end, they served more as guidelines than rules. As Dr. Gordon Campbell pointed out in his book *Bible: The Story of the King James Version*:
 - “Rules formulated in advance of a project are inevitably adjusted to accord with the practicalities of the job. In the case of the KJV, there is evidence both of shortcuts and of going the extra mile.” (Campbell, 43)
- Regardless of how many times the “work” passed over the “anvil”, it is clear that translators used all the available “furniture” and took as long as they deemed necessary to create “one principal good” English Bible that was “not justly to be excepted against.”

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