

Sunday, June 4, 2023—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*  
 Lesson 207 The AV 1611: Producing A Proper Perspective on the Preface (Apologetic Analysis)

### **Introduction**

- In [Lesson 206](#) we began an apologetic analysis of Myles Smith’s famous Preface from 1611. In order to ascertain the historical context and the apologetic value of Smith’s Preface, we laid out the following points and subpoints for consideration.
  - Arguments for Apologetic Application
  - Smith’s Preface: An Extension of the Martin-Fulke Controversy
    - Work of Christopher Yetzer
    - Work of Katrin Ettenhuber
  - Conclusion
- We only had enough time in Lesson 206 to cover the first point and half of the second. Therefore, in this Lesson we will pick up our look at the Preface as “an extension of the Martin-Fulke Controversy” by looking at the work of Katrin Ettenhuber before offering some summative remarks by way of conclusion.

### **Smith’s Preface: An Extension of the Martin-Fulke Controversy, Cont.**

#### *Work of Katrin Ettenhuber*

- Brother Yetzer is not alone in viewing the Martin-Fulke controversy as the proper historical context from which to understand Smith’s famous Preface to the AV. In 2015, Oxford University Press published an anthology titled *The Oxford Handbook of The Bible In Early Modern England, c. 1530-1700*. In this anthology there is an essay titled “ ‘A Comely Gate to So Rich And Glorious A Citie’: The Paratextual Architecture of the Rheims New Testament and the King James Bible” authored by Katrin Ettenhuber which advances a similar line of argumentation as Brother Yetzer.
- Ettenhuber explains the concept of “paratextual architecture” in the essay’s introduction as follows:
  - “. . . Gerard Genette’s concept of the paratext, or ‘threshold’ of interpretation: the idea that the production of meaning depends to a significant degree on the framing or material packaging of a text, through features like prefaces, notes, and indexes. The preface, more particularly, is described in Genette’s *Paratexts* as “vestibule” that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back. It is an “undefined zone” between the inside and outside [of the text]. The key movements outlined by Genette ‘stepping inside’ and ‘turning back’, acquired heightened significance in the textual aspects of the Rheims New Testament and the King James Bible: maps, genealogical charts, indexes, chapter summaries, and various types of annotation provided multiple

points of entry into the scriptures, as do the various interests embedded in the preface and the margins. But the structure of these textual edifices is also built on pivotal movement of historical recuperation; their different visions of how readers can return to the Christian past to determine the shape of the scriptures in the present. The 1611 translation emphasizes the primacy of context—of ‘*Person, Time, and Place*’—in the production and communication of the biblical message, and with it the possibilities and limitation offered by specific moments in history: the Septuagint, for instance, was ‘fitted to contain the Scriptures’ in an age when the Greek language held the greatest promise of spreading God’s word, but ‘not so sound and so perfect, but that it needs in many places correction’. In the Rheims Bible, by contrast, change and revision are associated with the ‘windings and turning of divers errors’; it follows a different model of history, tracing a direct and continuous ‘line of Prophetical and Apostolical interpretation’ of the ‘most ancient’ text, whose lessons are ‘delivered unto us as it were from the hand to hand’. In both cases, I will suggest, the method and rationale of translation, the treatment of sources and intertexts, and the combination and arrangement of paratextual material, are deeply inflected by constructions of the cultural, ecclesiological, and philological past.” (Ettenhuber, 55-56)

- Section I of Ettenhuber’s essay is titled “As Neere As Is Possible, To Our Text: Construction of Continuity In The Rheims Translation,” It expounds upon the paratextual view of the Rheims New Testament set forth by Gregory Martin in the Preface.
  - “In Gregory Martin’s Preface to the Rheims translation, the process of textual transmission is depicted as transparent, continuous, and largely unproblematic: the Vulgate text—‘most ancient’ and authoritative, in the translator’s estimation—is passed down ‘from hand to hand’, as we have seen; where the minor issues have ‘crept in’, through ‘evident corruptions made by the copyists’ [*sic*] or ‘faults now a days committed by the Printer’, they are easily spotted and rectified. The timeless truth of scriptures is guaranteed by uninterrupted institution and spiritual continuity, as Martin’s constant appeals to ‘the ancient fathers, General Councils, and the Churches of all the west part’ attest: ‘let us in the name of God follow them, speak as they spake, translate as they translated, interpret as they interpreted, because we believe as they believed’ (c2<sup>v</sup>). The paratextual architecture of the Rheims translation reinforces the primacy of ‘universal’ and ‘uniform’ consent at every turn (b1<sup>r</sup>). . . What the reader is asked to ‘behold’ here is not a specific moment in history, but a timeless tableau which unites scripture past, present liturgical practice, and future narratives of conversion and triumph. As we move from text to margin to end note, guided by asterism, and daggers (stars and crosses of sorts), the Rheims translators encouraged us to draw a direct line from the manger at Bethlehem to the sixteenth-century Catholic Church.” (Ettenhuber, 57)
- Ettenhuber’s essay covers paratextual issues beyond the Preface to the Rheims New Testament. For example, Ettenhuber mentions that a “four-page section consists of a list of books held to be authentic by the church, and a five-point program that established its principles or canonicity.” (58) As one might expect, Martin’s “paratextual architecture” is thoroughly Roman Catholic and

designed to support the tradition and magisterium of the Church. Regarding the interplay between text, margin, and endnotes in Martin's Bible, Ettenhuber writes,

- “This has the obvious effect of turning the margin into a tool of marginalization, and other faiths into ‘heretics’ and ‘usurpers’ of the promised scriptural land . . . This desire to establish proximity of time and place between contemporary Catholic practice and collective judgment of the early church consistently informs the translators’ interpretive and linguistic choices: ecclesiology frequently merges with philology [“the branch of knowledge that deals with the historical, linguistic, interpretative, and critical aspects of literature” *Oxford English Dictionary* 1.].” (Ettenhuber, 58)
- In the final paragraph of Section I, Ettenhuber draws the reader’s attention to the Rheims Preface. In the paragraph Ettenhuber draws attention to Martin’s use of Augustine to support the Roman Catholic view of history.

- “Throughout the Preface, individual judgment is pushed into the ‘private’ sphere of ‘Sectaries’ and fringe opinion, where it cannot threaten to relativize or subvert authority; virtuous lay readers of the early church, Martin notes with evident approval, ‘referred them selves in all hard places, to the judgment of the ancient fathers and their master in religion, never presuming to contest, control, teach or talk of their own sense and phantasy, in deep questions of divinity’ (a3<sup>v</sup>). By the same token, however, the ‘Universal Church’ must deliver to ‘the good and simple’ universal rules of doctrine and religious conduct, as the following exposition of a passage from Augustine’s *Contra Cresconium* demonstrates (b2<sup>v</sup>-b3<sup>r</sup>). In doubtful points of doctrine

that in deed are not decided by Scripture, he [Augustine] gives us the goodly rule to be followed in all, as he exemplifieth in one. *Then do we hold (said he) the variety of the Scriptures, when wee doe that which now hath seemed good to the Universal Church, which the authority of the Scriptures themselves doth commend; so that, forasmuch as the holy Scripture can not deceive, whosoever is afraid to be deceived with the obscurity of questions, let him therein ask counsel of the same Church, which the Holy Scriptures most certainly and evidently sheweth and pointeth unto.* Aug. Ii. I. Cont. Crecson. C. 13. (b3<sup>r</sup>)

Martin’s Augustine is elevated and canonized through the process of citation; he is made to pronounce globally on the relationship between scripture and authority, called not simply to speak for his own time, but adjudicating past practice and laying down laws for future conduct.” (Ettenhuber, 59-60)

- It is my opinion that Martin’s leveraging of Augustine to support the Roman Catholic view of scripture is what prompted Myles Smith to cite the church fathers so often in his Preface to the 1611. Smith was trying to demonstrate that the Catholic Church did not have the market cornered in terms of use of the Church Fathers. The final sentence of Section I alludes to the fact that the Protestants took exception with Martin’s Preface and responded in kind.

- “The attitude towards citation and interpretation, and the view of history that underpins it, comes to be questioned by Protestant controversialists in response to the publication of the Rheims New Testament, in defense of their church, and of their own translations.” (Ettenhuber, 60)
- Section II of Ettenhuber’s essay is titled “This Is Your Usual Kinde of Reasoning, Of A Particular To Inferre An Universal: The Particularity of History In the King James Bible.” In this Section Ettenhuber endeavors to demonstrate how Protestants sought to counter the argumentation of Gregory Martin set forth in the Preface to the Rheims New Testament. This took shape initially around William Fulke’s 1582 publication *A Defense of the Sincere and True Translation of the Holie Scriptures into the English Tongue Against the Cavils of Gregory Martin* and later around Myles Smith’s famous Preface to the AV from 1611, which Ettenhuber views as an extension of Fulke’s argumentation. Ettenhuber states the following regarding the connection between Fulke’s book and Smith’s Preface.
  - “As we will see, this text [Fulke’s] provides the best point of entry for understanding the rationale behind Smith’s Preface to the King James Bible.” (Ettenhuber, 60)
- Regarding Fulke’s answer to Martin, Ettenhuber states the following:
  - “In order to gauge the difference between the Roman and Protestant approaches to ecclesiology and translation, we must first attend to Fulke’s attempt to redefine the meaning of the terms ‘universal’ and ‘particular’. In the quotation that introduced this section Fulke uses both terms to describe a form of argument, but they are ultimately inseparable from his broader perspective on church history and doctrine:

the Popish Church . . . is not Catholike, but particular and heretical, yea Antichristian, and hath no succession in doctrine, for the Apostles and the Bishops of the Primitive Church, whose doctrine it hateth and persecuteth. For it is continuance in the same doctrine, that S. Augustine commendeth, and not sitting in the same place, where the Apostles and ancient Bishops sat. (c6<sup>v</sup>)

Once again, the rhetoric gravitates relentlessly towards topographical and chronological discourse, but the positions are now inverted. ‘Continuance’ and ‘succession’ appear not as seamless lines of descent—and ideally the meeting of present and past ‘in the same place’—but as more complexly particularized moments of dialogue between different cultures. For Fulke, the desire to rejoin ‘the Apostles and ancient Bishops’ and sit in their seat only signifies arrogant presumptions; past and present, though connected by ‘the same doctrine’, have distinct identities and require particular forms of analysis and understanding. Thus paradoxically, it is in the insistence of extrapolating timeless, global meaning from individual cases that the Catholic Church reveals itself as the ‘particular and heretical’ Church of Rome, rather than the true, universal embodiment of Christianity. Throughout his response to Martin’s Preface, Fulke thinks about the process

of doctrinal and philological transmission in terms of ‘place’—their spatial, cultural, and textual situation—and maintains that we cannot determine our relationship with authentic apostolic doctrine without first attending to the local and specific context of beliefs and practices.” (Ettenhuber, 60-61)

- Later Ettenhuber discusses how Smith’s Preface from 1611 is best viewed as an extension of Fulke’s response to Martin.
  - “The project of claiming doctrinal ‘continuance’ and ‘succession’ for the Protestant cause continues in Miles Smith’s Preface to the King James Bible, ‘The Translators to the Reader’. But where Fulke’s argument is limited by the parameters of refutation, Smith returns to first principles, and instead of engaging in controversy aims to make a positive case for specifically Protestant forms of historiography and philology. Throughout his introduction to the 1611 Bible, Smith picks up on the connections between doctrine and translation that characterize the Rheims Preface. Furthermore, like their Rheims counterparts, the King James translators arrange the paratextual furniture in a way that reflects the place of their church in history.” (Ettenhuber, 61-62)
- After digressing for a moment to talk about the “genealogical charts” and other paratextual furniture found in 1611, Ettenhuber resumes her discussion of the Preface by discussing the apologetic framework of Smith’s argument against Martin.
  - “This dual precondition of full existence, ‘one blood. . .divided’ and ‘language. . . divided’, is the starting point for Smith’s defense of Protestant ecclesiology and philology. Babel and the Flood (in another paradoxical spin on Christian chronology) divided us from the apostolic past and ‘what ever was perfect’ then: ‘Apostle or Apoltolike men’ were able to make themselves understood to all because they were ‘privileged with the privilege of infallibility’ (A6<sup>v</sup>). Instead of ‘uniform’ and constant and transhistorical communion, Smith offers a vision of the past as radically plural and particular. Those who followed in the tradition of the Apostles, he asserts were ‘men and not God,’ ‘Interpreters, . . . and not prophets’, and ‘as men they stumbled and fell’ (A5<sup>r</sup>). One might be tempted to conclude that the past is a different country, but that would be missing the point: the absence of topographical and territorial metaphors in Smith’s Preface is itself one way of measuring the distance between Protestant and Catholic models of language and history.

But if the apostolic mission cannot be replicated exactly, if we cannot travel back to ‘the same place’, in what sense can Smith’s church—and its new translation of the scriptures—claim ‘continuance’ with early Christianity? The answer lies in a continual process of development, change, and accommodation. In order for eternal truth to be communicated as the living word, Smith contends, it must remain responsive to cultural change, ‘notwithstanding that some imperfection and blemishes may be noted in the setting forth of it’ (A6<sup>v</sup>). At a time when Greek was the ‘fittest’ means of conversation, for instance, the Septuagint had the effect of a ‘candle set upon a candlestick, which

giveth light to all that are in the house’, but in contrast to the Roman desire to revert to the ‘authentic’ text, translation forms a pragmatic point of departure rather than an inviolable point of origin: ‘that Translation was not so good and so perfect, but that in need in many place correction’ (A5<sup>r</sup>). For Smith, translation has a forward momentum and takes account of institutional and linguistic evolution: ‘blessed be they and most honored by their name, that break the ice, and giveth onset upon that which helpeth forward of the saving of souls’ (A6<sup>r</sup>). The 1611 translation sees itself emphatically as part of this ongoing process of reinvention and renew: ‘we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new Translation, . . . but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principle good one’ (B1<sup>v</sup>).

In their attempt to improve Previous English versions of the Bible, the King James translators returned to Hebrew and Greek, ‘the two golden pipes, or rather conduits, . . . the fountains, . . . [the] the precedent, or original tongues’ (B1<sup>v</sup>). This means that the Vulgate is regarded as ultimately instrumental, a pragmatic medium of communication, rather than the absolute ‘authentic’ standard of perfection invoked by the Rheims Preface. Latin translations were necessary, Smith argues, because ‘within a few hundred years after CHRIST, . . . very many Countries of the West, yea of the South, East and North, spake or understood Latin, being made Provinces to the *Romans*’ (A5<sup>r</sup>). But even at this point in the history of scripture, the movement is towards textual revision and linguistic evolution: Smith notes, with reference to Augustine, that ‘the *Latin* translations [of the Old Testament] were too many to be all good, for they were infinite’ and that they derived from a ‘muddie’ ‘*Greek* stream’; this is why Jerome, the ‘best linguist without controversy, of his age, or of any that went before him’ was charged with the task of surveying extant translations and eventually undertook ‘the translating of the Old Testament, out of the very fountains themselves’. And it is Jerome who articulates the philological and historiographical principles that led Smith to assert that ‘to have the Scriptures in the mother-tongue is not a quaint conceit lately taken up . . . but hath been thought upon, and put in practice of old’ (A5<sup>v</sup>); in his Preface to the translation of the Pentateuch, Jerome insists that ‘we condemn the ancient . . . [i]n no case; but after the endeavours of them that were before us, we take the best pains we can in the house of God’. In order to consolidate his case, and simultaneously counter the Rheims translators’ emphasis on the timeless authority of the fathers, Smith highlights the constant patristic drive towards revision and self-correction; ‘Saint *Augustine* was not ashamed to exhort *S. Jerome* to a *Palinodia* or recantation; the same *S. Augustine* was not ashamed to retract, we might say revoke, many things that had passed him, and down even glory that he seeth his infirmities’ (B1<sup>r</sup>).

If textual development and change are the working principles of the earliest Christian scholars, Smith suggests, Roman theologians have little justification for objecting to ‘the difference that appeareth between our Translations, and our often correcting of them’ (B1<sup>r</sup>). By way of adding controversial braces to the belt of principle, however he also claims that the Catholic Church fails to live up to its own demands of ‘uniformity’ (another word that resonates richly with the rhetoric of Rheims’ Preface): did not Pope

Sixtus V ‘ordain by inviolable decree’ that the Bible produced under his reign was the last word, when a mere two years later, Clement VII, ‘his immediate successor, publisheth 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?’ And in a final rhetorical question he asks, ‘what is sweet harmony and consent, if this be?’ (B1<sup>v</sup>.)” (Ettenhuber, 64-66)

- Next, Ettenhuber discusses Smith’s comments on the linguistic choices of the King James translators and explains how they feed back into a historical disagreement between Catholics and Protestants.
  - “The project of philological re-evaluation is inseparable from the prime goal of effective communication. Smith’s continuing connection with those ‘that break the ice’ is ‘to deliver God’s book unto God’s people in a tongue which they understand’ (or, in a more bracing quotation from Augustine’s *City of God*, ‘A man had rather be with his dog then with a stranger (whose tongue is strange unto him)’ (A6<sup>v</sup>). ‘[W]e desire that the Scripture may speak like it self, as in the language of Canaan, that it may be understood even of the very vulgar’ (B2<sup>v</sup>); by contrast, the Rheims approach merely creates stylistic ‘obscurities, . . . in their *Azimes, Tunike, Rational, Holocausts, Praepuce, Pasche*, and any number of such like, whereof their late Translation [i.e., Rheims] is full’ (B2<sup>v</sup>). In order to achieve this aim, Smiths argues, the King James translators have committed themselves not to ‘the very words’, but to a more idiomatic approach that reflects the ‘sense and meaning’ of ‘the, spirit’, ‘[f]or it is confessed, that things are to take their denomination of the great part’ (A6<sup>v</sup>). However, Fulke’s discussion of the same issues makes clear, the argument about archaic diction and literal translation inevitably feeds back into one about history:

That in translation of the scriptures, the very words must be kept, as near as it is possible, and phrase of the tongue into which we translate will bear, we do acknowledge. . . That the ancient doctors refused not the Barbarisms and the solecisms of the vulgar Latin translation, which they had, it was because they did write in Latin, to be understood of the common people, to who the Latin tongue was vulgar, and that translation familiar: not that those Barbarisms and solecisms by long use became venerable, or that it is any example for you, to bring in Latin and Greek words into the English text, neither used before, nor understood now of the English people.

. . . Fulke’s ally Smith notes (once again in deliberate reply to Martin’s Preface), the translation must reflect the linguistic diversity of lived discourse: ‘we have not tied our selves to an uniformity of phrasing, or to an identity of words, as some peradventure would wish’ (B2<sup>v</sup>). The translation did ‘not vary from the sense of that which we had translated before, if the word signified the same thing in both places’; at the same time, however, ‘that we should express the same notion in the same particular word; as for

example, . . . Journeying, never Traveling, . . . we thought to savor more curiosity than wisdom' (B2").

Smith insists throughout that the word of God must and will withstand some accommodation to linguistic context and cultural change: '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' (A6"); in fact, Smith claims, the King James translators' approach finds its 'pattern for elocution' in 'God' himself, 'using divers words, in his holy writ, and indifferently for one thing in nature' (B2"). The marginal notes to the Preface constantly rearticulate the 'wisdom' of the translators' method: in addition to citations from scripture and from patristic, classical, medieval, and early modern proof texts, Smith's margins are populated by Greek words." (Ettenhuber, 67-68)

- Ettenhuber also addresses Smith's use of citations from the church fathers and how it compares to Martin's usage in his Preface to the Rheims New Testament.
  - "The Preface continues its process of linguistic reinvention in its treatment of patristic quotation: Smith notes, as we have seen, that 'S. Augustine was not ashamed to retract, we might say revoke, many things that had passed him' (B1r). Rhetorical strategies such as this one—changing the verb 'retractate' to 'revoke', in order to usher it into the seventeenth century—reaffirm the crucial link between translation and ecclesiology, doctrinal and linguistic choices. To the Rheims translators, the literal reading of 'retractate' preserves the spirit of Augustine's authority, for the King James translators, Augustine becomes an icon of renewal; were he alive in 1611, the first order of business would be to 'retractate' his allegiance to a 'heretical and particular' Catholic church and its outdated adherence to contrived Latinity. In Smith's Preface, as we have seen, it is the ancient fathers themselves who reject the idea of dogmatic conservatism and instead insist throughout on the contextual contingency of their work. True 'continuance' with the early church, then, depends on an acknowledgement of cultural and linguistic discontinuities (in the same way that scriptural opacity paradoxically facilitates a more profound understanding of its message); the Protestant identity of the King James Bible emerges not simply through a break with the Catholic past, but by emphasizing the tears and seams in the fabric of human history." (Ettenhuber, 68)
- In the next paragraph Ettenhuber draws attention to "the most commonly noted distinction between Protestant and Catholic approaches to the Bible," during the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.
  - "In this remark, Smith also affirms what was perceived as the most commonly noted distinction between Protestant and Catholic approaches to the Bible in the early modern period (at least in theory); he reifies the judgment of the individual reader, over and above that of collective authority:

They that are wise, had rather have their judgments at liberty in differences of readings, than to be captivated to one, when it may be the other. If they were sure



that their high Priest had all laws shut up in his breast, as Paul the Second bragged, [Plat. in Paulo secundo.] and that he were as free from error by special privilege, as the Dictators of Rome were made by law inviolable, it were another matter; then his word were an Oracle, his opinion a decision. But the eyes of the world are now open, God be thanked, and have been a great while, they find that he is subject to the same affections and infirmities that others be, that his skin is penetrable. (B2<sup>r</sup>)

Smith’s analogy between textual ‘uniformity’ and papal infallibility paves the way for another class trope: the liberation of the Protestant reader from the ‘bondage’ of the Roman magisterium (B2<sup>v</sup>). And once again, this is a topical argument in more senses than one: Smith insists that judgment cannot reside absolutely in a single place—the Pope’s breast’, Rome—and thus replaces the notion of Petrine succession with a more historically supple and particularized notion of doctrinal continuity.” (Ettenhuber, 68-69)

- Ettenhuber concludes her essay with the following paragraph:
  - “It is worth restating that, in their fundamental positions on scripture reading, Smith’s and Martin’s prefaces offer few surprises. The chief interest and importance of both pieces resides in the systematic connection they make between doctrinal and textual decisions, and between hermeneutic and historical method. The Rheims and King James Bibles do not simply promulgate ideas about the reader’s relationship with scripture in discursive prefaces, but manipulate the book as material object to encourage desire in the reader. Through their approach to citation and annotation, and in their use of maps, genealogical charts, and indices, these two Bibles embody two radically different views of scripture truth and church history. In practice, readers doubtless deviated from the path set out by their guides. But it will be easier to understand the nature and significance of readerly choices—including moments of overt resistance or compliance—if we have a better understanding of the concepts and strategies authors used to the textual movements of their audience. The pressure to succeed in this project was nowhere more intense than in a culture that read topography as a way into the kingdom of heaven.” (Ettenhuber, 69)

## Conclusion

- After considering the work of Brother Christopher Yetzer and Katrin Ettenhuber, I am convinced that one of the primary functions of Myles Smith’s famous Preface was apologetic in nature. One of Smith’s main goals was to positively set forth a Protestant case for their view of church history, the scriptures in general, and English Bible translations specifically. As such, it was intentionally designed to defend the Protestant view considering Gregory Martin’s Preface to the Rheims New Testament.
- Therefore, the King James Preface needs to be understood in its proper historical context. It was written at a definitive point in time to address a circumscribed set of then contemporary factors.

Consequently, modern attempts to leverage the Preface to support 21<sup>st</sup> century views of text and translation are ahistorical and 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)

- In the next Lessons we will conclude this term by looking at this very subject. Namely, ways in which the Preface is leveraged and how many of these attempts are guilty of Presentism.

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