

Sunday, October 1, 2023—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
Lesson 213 The AV 1611: Examining The Marginal Notes (Political & Partisan Notes)

Introduction

- In Lesson 212 we covered the following three points:
 - Review Past Discussion of the Marginal Notes
 - Types of Marginal Notes
 - Examining the *Literatura Bautista* Article
- Under the first point we reviewed observations regarding the marginal notes that we had covered in prior Lessons. In doing so we revisited the comments made by King James at the Hampton Court Conference regarding the production of a new Bible. King James strongly objected to the Geneva Bible on account of its marginal notes. In William Barlow’s account of the Hampton Court Conference as set forth in the *Sum and Substance*, King James is reported to have stated the following:
 - “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**) . . . withal, he gave this caveat (**upon a word cast out by my Lord of London that no marginal notes should be added, having found in them which are annexed to the Geneva translation (which he saw in a Bible given him by an English Lady) some notes very partial, untrue, seditious, and favouring too much of dangerous, and traitorous conceits**) . . .”
(Barlow, 47)
- It was on account of these comments by King James that Archbishop Richard Bancroft moved to limit the use and function of marginal notes by setting forth the following “rules” to govern their employment in the new Bible.
 - 6—No marginal notes at all to be affixed, but only for the explanation of the Hebrew or Greek words, which cannot without some circumlocution so briefly and fitly be expressed in the text.
 - 7—Such quotations of places to be marginally set down as shall serve for the fit reference of one scripture to another.
- In addition to reviewing the above points, we considered the different types of marginal notes set forth in the 1611 using the following markings.
 - † = literal translations
 - || = alternative English renderings

- * = cross references
- Before looking at examples of the different types of marginal notes, as I had originally intended, we need to consider the degree to which the marginal notes accomplished the stated purpose of King James in not “annexing” “partial,” “untrue,” and “seditious” notes to the text.
- To accomplish this task, we will be using Jacobus A. Naude’s essay “The Role Of the Metatexts In the King James Version As A Means of Mediating Conflicting Theological Views” in *The King James Version At 400: Assessing Its Genius as Bible Translation and Its Literary Influence* to frame the discussion. This is the same essay we cited in Lesson 212 when discussing the various types of marginal notes found in the 1611.
- Regarding how the King James translators used the marginal notes in a nonpartisan manner and thereby satisfying the King’s request, Naude states the following:
 - The translators’ position concerning notes was a reaction especially to the numerous interpretative, polemical, antimonarchical, and devotional notes that cluttered the margins of the Puritans’ Geneva Bible. But more importantly, this policy concerning restricting the metatextual material in the notes played a role in mediation between the viewpoints of the Anglicans and the Puritans. To illustrate the role of the presence or absence of notes in restricting or opening up the interpretation of the biblical text, we will examine representative examples of the interplay between translated text and metatextual notes with respect to central issues in the debate between Anglicans and Puritans—the king and the monarchy, Calvinistic theology, and church polity involving especially bishops.” (Naude, 170)
- In his essay Naude looks at examples in the following three categories of marginal notes:
 - The King And The Monarchy
 - Bishops And Church Polity
 - Puritan Theology
- The above points are reproduced below directly from Naude.

The King and the Monarchy

- “A central debate between Anglicans and Puritans involved the king and the role of the monarchy. The Geneva Bible used marginal notes to highlight the Puritan perspective concerning the king. For example, in 1 Kgs 12:9 the translation of the KJV and the Geneva Bible are identical:

KJV	Geneva	Geneva Note
And he said unto them, What counsel give ye, that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us, lighter?	And he said unto them, ^c What counsel give ye, that we may answer this people, which have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke, which thy father did put upon vs, lighter?	^c There is no thing harder for them, that are in authority, then to bridle their affections and follow good counsel.

However, the Geneva Bible has a note that provides a critical assessment of the inability of “them, that are in authority” to “bridle their affections and follow good counsel.” The KJV translators agreed with the wording of the Geneva Bible, but avoided the note, thus silencing the Puritans over criticism of the monarchy.

The metatextual strategy of the KJV translators is similar in Prov 31:4:

KJV	Geneva	Geneva Note
It <i>is</i> not for kings, O Lemuel, <i>it is</i> not for kings to drink wine, nor for Princes, strong drink:	It is not for Kings, O Lemuel, it is not for Kings to drink wine nor for princes ^c strong drink,	^c That is, the King must not give him self to wantonness & neglect his office, which is to execute judgment.

The biblical text itself cautions kings concerning the use of alcohol, but the Geneva Bible adds a note to expand the principle to “wantonness” and the neglect of his office, “which is to execute judgment.” In this way, the metatext of the Geneva Bible explicates an application of the verse to kings by broadening the interpretation. The KJV translators agreed with the wording of the Geneva Bible but shunned the note, thus silencing the criticism of the king as well as the expansion of the interpretation of the verse to general “wantonness” and injustice by the monarchy.

In Exod 1:19 the metatextual note of the Geneva Bible is antimonarchical, but its relation to the translated verse is different:

KJV	Geneva	Geneva Note
And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women: for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them.	And the midwives answered Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew ^s women are not as the women of Egypt: for they are lively, and are delivered yer ye the midwife come at them.	^s Their disobedience herein was lawful, but their dissembling evil.

The Geneva translators provide a note in order to guide the reader in the interpretation of the acts of the Israelite midwives. Their disobedience to the king was proper; only their dishonesty was evil. The KJV rendering of the verse is nearly identical to that of the Geneva Bible, but no such notes is given. The absence of the metatext means that the interpretation of the midwives’ actions is open and the reader must determine whether they behaved appropriately in disobeying the king. In this way, the KJV translators silenced the Puritans’ approval of disobedience to the king.

Much less frequently, the KJV translators added a marginal note where none is found in the Geneva Bible, as in Eccl 4:13:

KJV	KJV note	Geneva
Better is a poor and a wise child, then an old and foolish king †who will no more be admonished.	† Heb. who knoweth not to be admonished.	Better is a poor and wise childe, then an olde and foolish King, which will no more be admonished.

The KJV agreed with the rendering of the Geneva Bible, but added a note concerning another (more literal) reading of the Hebrew source text. While the translated text could be understood as criticizing an obstinate king who refuses to be admonished, the alternative rendering of the KJV softens the verse by picturing a senile king who in old age no longer has the good sense to be admonished. The alternative viewpoints of the KJV and Geneva Bible with respect to the monarchy in this verse are further highlighted by their respective subject headings at the beginning of the chapter (Eccl 4), another type of metatext:

KJV Subject Heading For Ecclesiastes 4	Geneva Subject Headings For Ecclesiastes 4
1) Vanity is increased unto men by oppression, 4) By envy, 5) By idleness, 7) By covetousness, 9) By solitariness, 13) <u>By willfulness</u>	1 Innocents are oppressed. 4 Men's labors are full of abuse and vanity. 9 Man's society is necessity. 13 <u>A young man poor, and wise to be preferred to an old King that is a fool.</u>

Whereas the KJV summarizes the contribution of verse 13 to the chapter as “willfulness,” which is a means by which “vanity is increased unto men,” the Geneva Bible summarizes verse 13 with an explicit mention that a poor, wise young man is “to be preferred to an old King that is a fool.”

Another general strategy of the Geneva notes is to explicate the reference of epithets and other descriptive expressions in the text. This also occurs with respect to verses involving the monarchy. In the lament of David for Saul and Johnathan in 2 Sam 1:19, we can see how this metatextual strategy furthers the Geneva translators' negative view of the monarchy:

KJV	Geneva	Geneva Note
The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!	O noble Israel, ^h he is slain upon thy hie places: how are the mighty overthrown!	^h Meaning Saul.

The Geneva bible narrows the interpretation of the lament to a king viewed elsewhere in the text as evil and illegitimate. The KJV has not such note, thus opening up the interpretation concerning whether the reference is to Saul alone, to Saul and Jonathan jointly, or to all of the slain Israelites. Furthermore, the KJV rendering of the Hebrew with the literal translation “fallen” provides a negative view of the demise of the monarch in contrast with the Geneva translation “overthrown,” which indicates legitimate forceful removal of an illegitimate ruler.

The Geneva strategy of using notes to explicate referents in the text is similarly followed in Prov 31:1-2:

KJV	Geneva	Geneva Note
<p>The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. What, my son! and what, the son of my womb! and what, the son of my vows!</p>	<p>THE WORDS OF KING ^aLEMUEL: The ^bprophecy which his mother taught him. What my son! and what ye son of ^cmy womb! and what, O son of my desires!</p>	<p>^aThat is, of Solomon, who is called Lemuel, that is, of God because God had ordained him to be King over Israel. ^bThe doctrine, which his mother Bathsheba taught him. ^cBy this often repetition of one thing she declareth her motherly affection</p>

The Geneva notes in Prov 31:1 identify Lemuel with Solomon and his mother with Bathsheba. In this way the interpretation of Prov 31:1-9 is narrowed to refer to the life and reign of Solomon, as recorded in the narratives of I Kings. Furthermore, the “prophecy” that his mother taught the king is characterized by the Geneva notes as simply a “doctrine” as opposed to a prophetic message. In 31:2 the Geneva note serves to highlight their interpretation of the repetitive exclamation in the verses as reflecting “motherly affection.” The note, then, furthers the Geneva translators’ unusual rendering of Hebrew ׀ןן as “my desires” as opposed to the direct rendering of the Hebrew as “my vows” in the KJV. By avoiding the metatextual note of the Geneva Bible, the KJV translators left open the identification of Lemuel (an otherwise unknown figure in the Bible) and Lemuel’s mother. Furthermore, the KJV translators refrain from making explicit the nature of the “prophecy” of Lemuel’s mother, instead leaving the interpretation open to the reader. Nor do the KJV translators explicate the pragmatic nuance of the repetitive expression that being the mother’s exhortation to her sons. In every way, the KJV silences the metatextual explications and interpretations of the Geneva Bible as a means to allow a diversity of interpretations and characterizations.

The translation and interpretation of the Hebrew term (“anointed”) also related to the controversy concerning the monarchy, but with an additional theological twist—the term can also be interpreted christologically. The Geneva translators often explicate the referent of the anointed one by means of a note. In I Sam 12:5 the identity of ‘his Anointed’ is explicated in a footnote along with a polemical statement that the king “is anointed by the commandment of the Lord” (that is, not solely on a hereditary basis):

KJV	Geneva	Geneva Note
<p>And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and his Anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand: And they answered, He is witness.</p>	<p>And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and his ^dAnointed is witness this day, that ye have found nought in mine hands. And they answered, He is witness.</p>	<p>^dYour King, who is anointed by the commandment of the Lord.</p>

The KJV rendering of the verse is in essence identical to that in the Geneva Bible (KJV of “you have not found ought” versus Geneva “ye have found nought”), but the note of Geneva is silenced. For additional examples in which the KJV refrains from explicating the identity of the anointed one even when it is not controversial or polemical, see I Sam 16:6 and Ps 105:15 in table 2 in the appendix; Luke 2:26 is similar.

In some verses, the Geneva note provides not just the explication of identity of the anointed one, but an interoperative explication. In Ps 89:51, for example, the Geneva footnote promotes a christological interpretation:

KJV	Geneva	Geneva Note
Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Lord: wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine Anointed.	For thine enemies have reproached <i>thee</i> , O Lord, because they have reproached the ^l footsteps of thine Anointed.	^l They laugh at us, we patiently wait for the coming of the Christ.

In the original context of the psalm, the anointed one is the king. However, the metatext of the Geneva notes guides the reader in a christological interpretation that the anointed one is Christ and the anointed one’s footsteps are the coming of Christ. The metatext also guides the reader in appropriating the sentiments of the psalm for the reader’s current situation by paraphrasing it: “they laugh at us, we patiently wait for the coming of Christ.” The KJV translators keep the interpretation open, neither promoting nor foreclosing with a christological interpretation or an almost devotional appropriation of the sentiments of the reader’s current situation.

Occasionally, the KJV translators rendered the Hebrew term directly in contrast to the interpretive rendering in the Geneva, as in Ps 2:2:

KJV	Geneva	Geneva Note
The Kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying,	The Kings of the earth band themselves, and the princes are assembled together against the Lord, and against his ^l Christ.	^l Or, anointed.

The Geneva Bible translates “his Christ,” thus promoting an explicitly christological interpretation of the verse, with the alternative literal translation in a note. In contrast, the KJV translators declined to interpret, translating directly “his Anointed” and providing no note to an alternative, christological rendering of the Hebrew.” (Naude, 170-175)

Bishops And Church Polity

- “A second area that fueled Puritan-Anglican controversy involved the role of bishops and church polity. The contrast in the interplay between text and metatextual notes in both KJV and Geneva is striking. One of the most instructive examples involves Ps 109:8 (top row) and its intertextual citation in Acts 1:20 (bottom row):

KJV	KJV Note	Geneva	Geneva Note
*Let his days be few: and let another take his office. (Ps. 109:8)	*Act. 1.20 Or, charge.	Let his days be few, and let another take his charge. (Ps. 109:8)	
For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: *And his Bishopric let another take. (Acts 1:20)	* Psal. 109.8 Or, office; or charge.	For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be void, and let no man dwell therein: also, Let another take his charge. (Acts 1:20)	Or, ministry.

In Ps 109:8 the Hebrew word ִּתְּקַח was rendered in the KJV as “his office,” with the alternative translation “his charge,” the Geneva Bible’s translation in the note. In this way the KJV translators both acknowledge the difficulty in rendering the Hebrew term and allowed for both an Anglican interpretation (“office”) and the Puritan one (“charge”). The Geneva Bible provides no alternative rendering and thus promotes only the Puritan interpretation. In Acts 1:20 the text of Ps 109:8 is cited and the Greek New Testament uses the term $\epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\kappa\omicron\tau\eta\nu$. The KJV renders the term as “Bishoprick” with a metatextual note to suggest renderings promoting a Puritan point of view—“office” or “charge.” By contrast, the Geneva Bible renders “charge” and provides only an explication based on their theological stance: “Or, ministry.” The KJV translators were clearly using the resources of metatextual notes to promote a balanced, evenhanded approach to the controversy regarding the ecclesiastical structures, in contrast to the Geneva Bible, which promoted a Puritan point of view by going as far as to suppress the normal etymological connection of $\epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\kappa\omicron\tau\eta\nu$ to bishops.

In Philippians 1:1 the KJV and Geneva Bible agree completely on the translation of the Greek, but the Geneva Bible promotes a Puritan view of church structure in a note:

KJV	Geneva	Geneva Note
Paul and Timotheus the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the Saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons:	Paul and Timotheus the servants of JESUS CHRIST, to all the Saintes in Christ Iesus which are at Philippi, with the ^a Bishops, and Deacons:	^a By bishops here he meaneth them that had charge of the word & governing, as pastors doctors, elders; by deacons, such as had charge of the distribution, & of the poor and sick.

The note in the Geneva Bible directs the reader’s interpretation of bishop to specify not an individual ordained as bishop but rather “them that had charge of the word & governing, as pastors, doctors, elders.” Similarly, the Geneva translations wanted readers to interpret “deacons” as consisting of “such as had charge of the distribution, & of the poor and sick,” rather than (as was the case in the Church of England) a deacon as an ordained position with liturgical functions. While avoiding the Geneva note, while simultaneously agreeing with the Geneva’s rendering of the verse, the KJV translators opened the interpretation of the verse. (See also 1 Tim. 1:1 and table 3)

As a conservative example illustrating the general principal, consider I Peter 2:25:

KJV	Geneva
For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the shepherd and Bishop of your souls.	For ye were as sheep going astray: but are now returned unto the shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

The term ἐπισκοπήν (“bishop”) is used in I Peter 2:25 in a metaphoric sense to refer to Christ. This use of “bishop” does not figure in the controversy concerning church polity. As a result, not only are the translations of the Geneva and KJV identical, but the Geneva translators felt no need to provide an explanatory comment explicating the identity of the bishop.” (Naude, 176-177)

Puritan Theology

- “The KJV policy of suppressing interpretative notes extended to instances in which the Geneva Bible used notes to promote Puritan theology. In Isa 2:4, for example, the KJV provides a note that comments on the theologically neutral alternative rendering “scythes” for “pruning hooks”:

KJV	KJV Note	Geneva	Geneva Note
And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.	Or, sythes.	And ^g he shall judge among the nations, & ^h rebuke many people: they shall ⁱ break their swords also into mattocks, and their spears into siethes: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn to ^k fight any more.	^g The Lord, who is Christ, shall have all power given him. ^h That they may acknowledge their sins & turn to him. ⁱ He showeth the fruit of peace, which the Gospel should bring: to wit, that men should do good one to another, where as before they were enemies. ^k He speaketh not against the use of weapons and lawful war, but showeth how the hearts of the godly shall be affected one toward another: which peace and love doeth begin and grow in this life, but shall be perfected, when we are joined with our head Christ Jesus.

The Geneva Bible, by contrast provides four interpretive notes. The first promotes a christological interpretation with eschatological overtones. The following three notes present a devotional theological viewpoint. In addition, the fourth note insures that the verse cannot be interpreted in a pacifist way by providing it with an eschatological interpretation. By eschewing all theological notes, the KJV translators prevent a Calvinist worldview and eschatology for shaping the reading of the text.

In Eccl 3:1 the KJV and the Geneva Bible render the Hebrew differently:

KJV	Geneva	Geneva Note
To every thing <i>there is</i> a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.	To all things <i>there is</i> an ^a appointed time, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.	^a He speaketh of this diversity of time for two causes, first to declare ye there is nothing in this world perpetual: next to teach us not to be grieved, if we have not all things at once according to our desires, neither enjoy them so long as we would wish.

The KJV translates “a season” where the Geneva has the Calvinistic phrase “an appointed time.” The Geneva provides a note to further guide the reader’s theological understanding of the verse. The KJV’s metatextual silence leaves the interpretation of the verse—and its application to the reader open.

The KJV is not burdened with marginal notes that are partial, untrue, seditious, or treacherous toward kingship, but rather by the technique of silence promotes the idea of divine rule by monarchs.

We have seen that the Geneva Bible’s notes as metatexts served to regulate the reader’s mental preparation to read the translated verses in accordance with the Puritan views concerning the king and the monarchy, ecclesiastical structure, and Calvinistic theology. The KJV translators judiciously used notes as metatexts in a highly restricted way. Often the notes provide alternative reading or renderings of the source text that may supply an alternative theological possibility, but only rarely do the notes provide an overt theological or ideological interpretation. More frequently, the KJV translators silenced the ideological notes of the Geneva Bible, thus simultaneously opening up the translated verse to multiple interoperative possibilities while suppressing a distinctively Puritan ideological reading.” (Naude, 178-179)

Conclusion

- In the conclusion to his essay Naude states the following in part regarding the metatextual philosophy and practice of the King James translators:
 - “By utilizing a technique of keeping silent about contemporary issues and instead focusing on the basic principles of translation, the metatexts of the KJV regulate the reader’s mental preparation for a translation that diverges from the accepted sectarian

interpretations in order to ensure that the broader, nonsectarian interpretations will be considered orthodox. In this respect the KJV adopted a stand toward both metatext and translation strategy that was diametrically opposed to that of the Geneva Bible, even though much of the specific wording of the KJV was drawn from or agrees with the Geneva Bible. Furthermore, to exude the appeal of the familiar, the visual presentation of the KJV was drawn from the history of Bible presentation, which culminated in the latest version of the Bishops Bible (1568).

The metatexts of the KJV, far from being incidental to the ideology and goals of the king who commissioned its translation, are instead subtle but powerful means of mediation for advancing, achieving, and implementing goals of political unity and theological harmony.” (Naude, 180-181)

- In the next Lesson we will look at examples of marginal notes to see what we can observe for ourselves.

Works Cited

Barlow, William. *The Sum and Substance of The Conference*.

Naude, Jacobus A. “The Role Of The Metatexts In the King James Version As A Means of Mediating Conflicting Theological Views” in *The King James Version At 400: Assessing Its Genius As Bible Translation and its Literary Influence*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013.