

Sunday, January 19, 2025—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
Lesson 252 Assessing the Printed History of the King James Text (1762: “You” & “Ye”)

Introduction


- Since [Lesson 249](#), we have been discussing the editorial work of F.S. Parris primarily as it relates to his 1743 Duodecimo edition with a bit from his 1762 Octavo sprinkled in for good measure. In addition, we have been using Gordon Campbell’s book *Bible: The Story Of The King James Version 1611-2011* as a means of framing the discussion of Parris’ editorial work.
- All told we have considered the following aspects of his work:
 - Changes in noun forms for singular not plural. ([Lesson 249](#))
 - Restored definite articles that had been omitted in 1611. ([Lesson 249](#))
 - Changes in definite articles to a possessive pronoun. ([Lesson 249](#))
 - Addition of apostrophes and possessive forms. ([Lesson 251](#))
 - Idioms & Modern Forms ([Lesson 251](#))
- In this Lesson we want to continue our study of Parris by looking at changes to the use of “you” and “ye” in the 1762 and 1769 folio editions. It is believed by most observers including Gordon Campbell, David Norton, and Lawrence Vance that Benjamin Blaney finished in 1769 what F.S. Parris began in 1762 in terms of updating the use of “you/ye” in the text of the AV. As part of this Lesson, we will be considering whether this view is accurate.

Changes In “You” & “Ye”


- It is commonly understood by King James advocates that pronouns beginning with the letter “t” are singular and those beginning with a “ye” are plural. These rules are summarized nicely in a blog entry by Pastor Hammon of Long Hill Baptist Church in Trumbull, CT from 2018 titled “Mind Your T’s & Y’s: Understanding King James Pronouns.” Pastor Hammond summarizes the basic rule as follows:
 - “In our King James bible, pronouns that begin with “T” are always singular (i.e. they refer to one person); Pronouns that begin with “Y” are always plural (i.e. they refer to multiple people). Someone observed that a helpful way to remember this rule is that “t” resembles one "stick" whereas “y” pictures two (or more) sticks stacked together. . .

“T” pronouns are always singular. “Y” pronouns are always plural.” (Hammond)


- In the same article, Pastor Hammond explains why the older forms utilized by the KJB more accurately reflect in the English the precision of the underlying Hebrew and Greek. Regarding the matter he states:
 - “Recall that the New Testament is translated from Greek. Biblical Greek differentiates between singular pronouns that refer to one person (thou, thee, thine) and plural pronouns that refer to multiple people (you, ye). Biblical Greek also differentiates between pronouns that serve as subjects and objects in a sentence. Unfortunately, modern English no longer maintains a system of pronouns that bear the same level of precision. Fortunately, however, the Elizabethan English of our King James Bible utilizes a system of pronouns that perfectly reflects the precision of the original Greek.” (Hammond)
- Professor Gordon Campbell concludes his coverage of the editorial work of F.S. Parris in *Bible: The Story Of The King James Version* with a discussion of the changes made in the use of “you” and “ye” in the King James text.
 - “Finally, Parris tackled the problem of the inconsistent use of ‘ye’ and ‘you’ in the 1611 text. As I explained in Chapter 4, the distinction between ‘ye’ (the nominative plural) and ‘you’ (the accusative plural) had been distinctly old-fashioned for decades before the KJV was prepared, but the distinction was nonetheless preserved in verses such as ‘Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you’ (Matthew 5:11).” (Campbell, 135-136)
- In order to try to better understand the difference between the “nominative plural” and the “accusative plural”, I asked Google the following question, “what is the difference between nominative plural and accusative plural?” The following is a screenshot of the answer.

In grammar, "nominative plural" refers to the form of a noun when it is the subject of a sentence (who is doing the action), while "accusative plural" refers to the form of a noun when it is the direct object of a verb (who or what is being acted upon); essentially, the nominative indicates the "doer" and the accusative indicates the "receiver" of the action, both in the plural form. 

Key points:

- **Nominative:** Used for the subject of a sentence.
- **Accusative:** Used for the direct object of a verb. 

Example:

- "The dogs (nominative plural) chased the cats (accusative plural)."
 - "Dogs" are the subjects performing the action, so they are in the nominative case.
 - "Cats" are the direct objects being chased, so they are in the accusative case. 

- Pastor Hammond’s blog article conclusions with the observations gleaned from Google.
 - “Biblical Greek also uses different forms of pronouns to identify *subjects* and *objects* in a sentence. Recall that, in a sentence, a *subject* is the person who is performing an action. The object is a person or thing that is receiving action. Consider this sentence: “Mary is feeding the baby.” “Mary” is the *subject*, i.e. the one performing the action. “Baby” is the *object*, i.e. the one upon whom the action is being performed. . .

A Helpful Chart of King James Bible Pronouns:

“T” pronouns are singular (and always 2nd person)

Thou = subject form

Thee = object form

“Thy” & “Thine” show possession

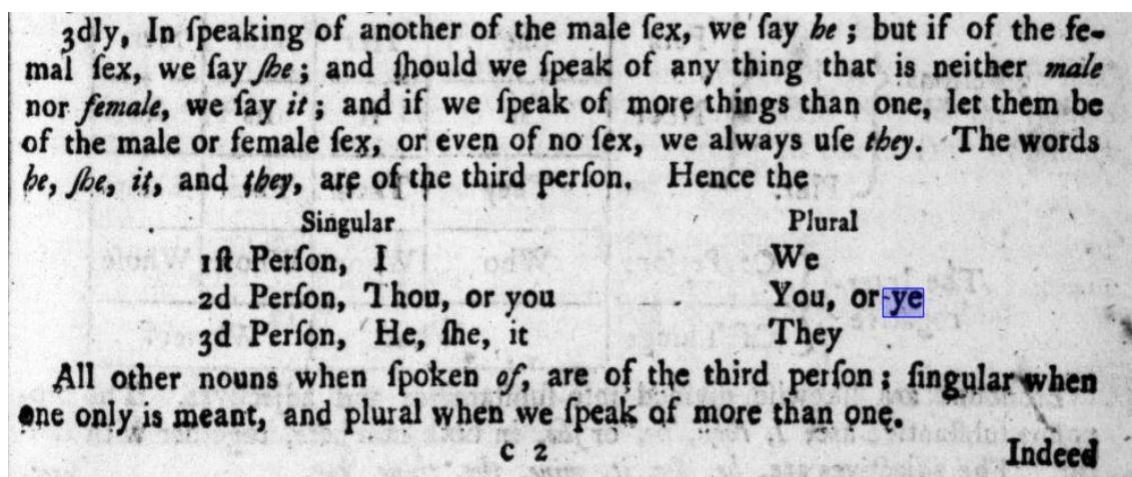
“Y” pronouns are plural (and always 2nd-person)

Ye = Subject form (performs action)

You = object form (received action) Remember: If someone offers you an I-O-U, you expect to receive something. (IOU ~ YOU)

“Your(s)” shows possession” (Hammond)

- Consider the following screenshots from an 18th century grammar book titled [*The Royal English Dictionary*](#) by Daniel Fenning from 1763. In Chapter 7 titled “Of Pronouns” he states the following on pages 11 and 12.



Indeed though we speak only of a single person, we use *you*, which is plural; but never *ye*. So likewise out of complaisance, we frequently use *your* for *thy* and *yours* for *thine*. We likewise use *you* instead of *ye*, seldom placing *ye* before the verb, though it be the nominative or foregoing state, unless by way of distinction, familiarity, or contempt; as, “*Ye* are the men.” Again, which is likewise against the rules of grammar, we commonly use *ye* after the verb or a proposition; as, “I will give *ye* a specimen;” or, “I will take it away from *ye*.”

When pronouns are declined, they are said to have a foregoing state and a following state.

The *foregoing state*, is that in which a word is used before a verb; and the *following state* that in which it is used after the verb.

A T A B L E of all the P R O N O U N S in the several States.

		The foregoing State	The following State	Their Possessives to be used	
				With a Substantive	Without a Substantive
1 Person	Sing.	I	Me	My	Mine
	Plur.	We	Us	Our	Ours
2 Persons	Sing.	Thou or you	Thee	Thy	Thine
	Plur.	Ye or you	You	Your	Yours
3 Persons	Sing.	Male	He	Him	His
		Fem.	She	Her	Her
		Neut.	It	It	Its
	Plur.	They	Them	Their	Theirs
The Interrogative	Of Persons	Who	Whom	Whofe	Whofe
	Of Things	What		Whereof	

- According to Fenning’s “Table,” in the 18th century “you” could be either 2nd person singular or plural. Moreover, he notes on page 12 that the technical rules of English grammar are frequently violated in the practical/functional use of “you” and “ye.”
- Compare Fenning’s “Table” with a similar one from a century earlier. The following “Table” is taken from page 32 of John Wallis work *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* [Grammar of the

English Language] from 1653. Note how “you” is not listed in the 2nd person singular column as it was in Fenning’s a century later.

		Pronom. Primitiva, in statu		Eorum Possessiva	
		Respo.	Obliguo.	Cum Substantivo.	State Substantivo.
Perf. 1.	Singularis.	<i>I</i>	<i>mee</i>	<i>my</i>	<i>mine</i>
	Pluralis.	<i>Wee</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>our</i>	<i>ours</i>
Perf. 2.	Singularis.	<i>Tbou</i>	<i>thee</i>	<i>thy</i>	<i>thine</i>
	Pluralis.	<i>Tee</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>your</i>	<i>yours</i>
Perf. 3.	Sin.	Maf.	<i>Hee</i>	<i>him</i>	<i>his</i>
		Fœ.	<i>Shee</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>hers</i>
		Neu.	<i>It</i>		<i>Its</i>
	Pluralis.	<i>They</i>	<i>them</i>	<i>their</i>	<i>theirs</i>
Interrogativum.	Personarum.	<i>Who</i>	<i>whom</i>	<i>who's</i>	
	Rerum.	<i>What</i>		<i>whereof</i>	

- It appears that confusion and uneven application in the technicalities of English grammar was what Parris and Blaney were trying to clean up when they edited their respective texts in 1762 and 1769.
- At this point, prudence dictates that we jump back to see what Dr. Campbell said about the matter previously in his book. Chapter 4 is titled “The Translation” in which Campbell discusses various aspects of the translation of 1611. In this chapter there is a subsection titled “The Language” in which various aspects of the language utilized by the 1611 are discussed. It is here that Professor Campbell discussed the historical use of “you” and “ye” in the English language.
 - “If asked to characterize the language of the KJV, many readers of the bible would point to its archaic elements, notably the use of ‘ye’ and ‘thee’ and ‘thou’ and ‘-eth’ endings, and some would point to its sonority. Some would assume, if pressed, that the language was rooted in the spoken language of 1611. In several respects, however, the language was archaic when the KJV was published, and that points to the background of the translators as well as the history of the translation. Just as the use of archaic formal words such as ‘chastise’ and archaic informal terms as ‘crack on’ by Boris Johnson (the mayor of London) point to his educational background (Eton and Oxford), so the language of the translators reflects their conservatism and slightly out-of-touch language.

They were content to leave in place the language of earlier generations that was embodied in previous translations.

In the early sixteenth century, the second-person nominative form of the personal pronoun was ‘thou’ for the singular and ‘ye’ for the plural; the accusative forms were ‘thee’ for the singular and ‘you’ for the plural. This distinction between ‘ye’ and ‘you’ was fading by the mid-sixteenth century, and thereafter ‘you’ was used for both forms—except in plays written in a formal idiom (notably those of Shakespeare) and in the KJV. Matthew 5:11, for example, reads ‘Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you’; the distinction between nominative ‘ye’ and accusative ‘you’ would have struck ordinary readers in 1611 as archaic.” (Campbell, 73)

- Jumping back to page 136, Campbell finishes the first citation above by stating,
 - “By the mid-eighteenth century the distinction was obsolete, and ‘you’ was used in all cases. Parris could have decided to modernize to contemporary usage, but the decision to eliminate ‘ye’ would have brought ‘thee’ and ‘thou’ down with it, and Parris was not that radical. He therefore chose the other course, which was to restore the distinction in places where the original translators had failed to observe it, so initiating the process whereby revision of the KJV archaized as well as modernized the original text. Perhaps his resolution failed, or Parris simply ran out of time, because the principle was not fully implemented; indeed, it is much more in evidence in his text of Genesis than in later books.” (Campbell, 136)
- Professor David Norton also addresses the historical uses of “you” and “ye” at some length in *A Textual History of the King James Bible*.
 - “The largest single grammatical problem tackled by these editors [Parris & Blaney] is ‘you’ and ‘ye’, a problem made more complicated by a disjunction between linguistic practice and grammatical prescription. ‘Ye’ was originally the nominative and vocative form [“The vocative case is a grammatical case used to directly address a person or thing in a sentence. It’s often used with nouns or pronouns and can be identified by punctuation and context.” (Google)], with ‘you’ used for other cases, but this distinction was breaking down in late medieval times. OED notes of ‘you’ that ‘between 1300 and 1400 it began to be used also for the nominative ye, which it had replaced in general use by about 1600’; and of ‘ye’, that ‘when you had usurped the place of ye as a nom., ‘ye’ came to be used (in the 15th c.), vice versa, as an objective sing. and pl. (= “thee” and “you”)’. The first edition of the KJB reflects the confusion between the two by using ‘you’ as a nominative 289 times, and ‘ye’ for the accusative or dative 12 times. Statistically, this is little more than 4% of the 7,251 occurrences of ‘ye’ and ‘you’, which suggests that the general use of ‘you’ for ‘ye’ by 1600 is only weakly reflected in the KJB. Nevertheless, there are places in the KJB where the two words or forms are mixed so freely that it is clear that fixed practice has broken down, and possibly that the two were not given distinct pronunciations. A couple of verses provide a particularly useful example:

Ye shall obserue to doe therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you: you shall not turne aside to the right hand, or to the left. You shall walke in all the wayes which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may liue, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your dayes in the land which ye shall possesse. (Deut. 5:32–3)

‘Ye shall’ at the beginning is obviously inconsistent with ‘you shall’ later in the sentence and at the beginning of the second verse, and the later uses of ‘ye’ as subject.

In the time of Blayney and Parris, the mid-eighteenth century, the replacement of ‘ye’ by ‘you’ was still more a matter of usage than grammatical prescription. So Johnson as a grammarian gives ‘ye’ as the nominative and ‘you’ as the ‘oblique’ form, but, as a lexicographer, he notes that ‘you’ ‘is used in the nominative; and though first introduced by corruption, is now established’. Robert Lowth, in his *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762), is less old-fashioned: he gives ‘Ye or You’ for the nominative, but dismisses instances of ‘ye’ in other cases as improper or ungrammatical, even as manifest solecisms (p. 22). In these circumstances Parris and Blayney had three choices:

1. they could, following the standards articulated by Lowth, keep all the original usages of ‘you’ and correct the dozen wrong uses of ‘ye’ to ‘you’;
2. they could make the text consistent according to the translators’ predominant usage, using ‘ye’ for the nominative and ‘you’ for the other cases;
3. or they could follow the now-established usage and give ‘you’ throughout.

Each choice was grammatically defensible. The first would allow inconsistent usage and be largely true to the original. The second would be unimpeachable but old-fashioned. The third would begin to change the general linguistic character of the text: might not ‘thee’ and ‘thou’ be replaced with ‘you’; and, if that change is made, might not the old-fashioned endings (‘-eth’ etc.) be eliminated? By this time the language of the KJB had become what Johnson calls ‘solemn language’: it was the accepted language of the Bible and religion, distinguished from ordinary language, so such changes would probably have been unacceptable.

Parris seems to have chosen the second option but then to have had doubts (or become careless); after Genesis, where he made fourteen of the seventeen necessary changes, he usually but not always left what he found as he found it. It was Blayney who carried out the second option with admirable thoroughness. That this was a conscious move towards making the KJB speak uniformly ‘solemn language’ fits with his replacement of the modern with archaic verb forms in the Apocrypha. (Norton, 111-113)

- Chapter 3 of Lawrence M. Vance’s book *The Text Of The King James Bible* is titled “Editions Of The Authorized Version.” In this chapter, Dr. Vance catalogues changes made to the AV across all the major folio editions (1629, 1638, 1762, & 1769). Spanning pages 181 to 199, Vance notes

204 total changes to the use of “you” and “ye” in the canonical text of the KJB. Consider the following breakdown of these changes by year and number.

- 1629—7 changes, 3.4% (Gen. 18:27; Ex. 16:23; Jud. 21:22; Is. 30:11; John 9:27; II Cor. 2:8; Gal. 1:6)
- 1638—4 changes, 1.9% (Duet. 1:43; Mark 11:26; Col. 4:6; I John 2:13)
- 1762—132 changes, 64.7%
- 1769—61 changes, 29.9 %
- Total—204 changes
 - “ye” to “you”—6 changes, 2.9% (Duet. 1:13, 40; Is. 30:11; 32:11; Zech. 6:7; 9:12)
 - “you” to “ye”—198 changes, 97.0%
- These numbers gleaned from Vance reflect changes catalogued in the flagship folio editions and do not reflect any changes that might have occurred in the lesser, smaller sized editions. Note also that the vast majority did not occur until the 18th century under the editorship of Parris (1762) and Blaney (1769). Given the fact that there are 204 examples of changes in the use of “you” and “ye” we cannot look at all of them. Therefore, we will consider three case studies.

Case Study #1—Genesis 18:5

- The earliest change logged by Vance, in terms of both date and canonical order, occurred in Genesis 18:5 in 1629. We will follow the changes made to this verse as a case study beginning with the base text of the 1602 Bishops Bible.

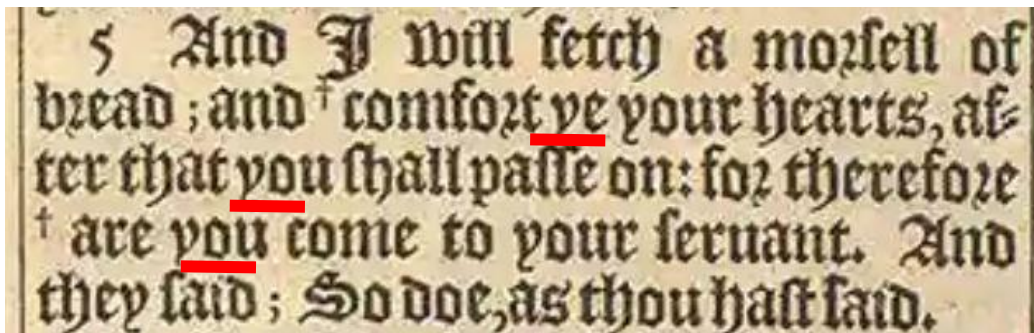
Genesis 18:5

1602 Bishops

5 And I will fet a morzell of bread to comfort your hearts withall, and then shall you goe your wayes: for therefore are you come to your seruant. And they said, Doe as thou hast said.

Genesis 18:5

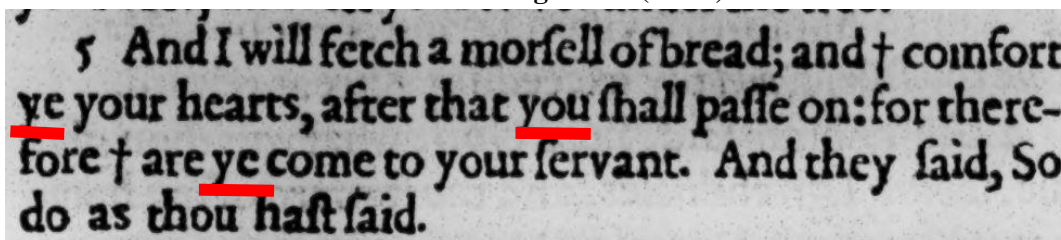
1611



- The King James translators made the following changes Genesis 18:5:
 - 1602—“And I will set a morsell of bread to comfort your hearts withal” was revised to read “And I will fetch a morsell of bread; and comfort **ye** your hearts” in the 1611.
 - “comfort your hearts” became “comfort **ye** your hearts” in the 1611. The insertion of “ye” in this clause was the intentional choice of the translators.
 - 1602— “and then shall you go your ways” is amended to read “after that **you** shall pass on” in the 1611.
 - 1602—“for therefore are you come to your servant” was advanced into the 1611 unchanged by the King James translators.
 - 1602—“and they said, do as thou hast said” became “and they said; **so** doe, as thou hast said” in the 1611.

Genesis 18:5

1629 Cambridge Folio (H424)



- The 1629 Cambridge editors changed the second “you” in Genesis 18:5 to a “ye.”

Genesis 18:5
1762 Cambridge Folio (H1142)

5 And I will fetch a morsel of bread,
and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye
shall pass on: for therefore are ye come
to your servant. And they said, So do as
thou hast said.

- In 1762 Parris changed the first “you” in Genesis 18:5 to a “ye” thereby completing a second editorial change to the original work of the King James translators in 1611.
- In this example, the changes noted by Vance track neatly because they were in fact made in the flagship folio editions of 1629, and 1762. That said, later editors clearly altered the original choices of the King James translators by twice changing “you” (1611) to “ye” (1629 & 1762). Therefore, modern readers of the AV are reading an edited text whether they care to admit it or not.

Case Study #2—Genesis 9:4

- In the case of Genesis 9:4, Dr. Vance records a change from “you” to “ye” occurring in the 1762 Cambridge folio edition (H1142). Unfortunately, this is yet another example of oversight being made by only consulting the flagship folio editions. Please consider the following evidence.

Genesis 9:4
1602 Bishops

4 * But flesh in the life thereof, which is the
blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

- The base text of the Bishops Bible read “shall ye not eat” in 1602.

Genesis 9:4
1611

4 * But flesh with the life thereof,
which is the blood thereof, shall you not
eat.

- The translators of 1611 made two changes to Genesis 9:4:
 - 1602—“But flesh in the life thereof” became “but flesh with the life thereof” in the 1611.
 - 1602— “shall ye not eat” was changed to read “shall **you** not eate” in the 1611.
 - “ye” was changed to “you” by the King James translators i.e., “you” was their preferred reading.

Genesis 9:4

1762 Cambridge Folio (H1142)

4 But flesh with the life thereof, *which*
is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

- According to Dr. Vance, the original Bishops reading of “ye” was reinstated by F.S. Parris in 1762. Unfortunately, this is not correct since the 1683 Cambridge Quarto edition (H780) had already changed “you” to “ye” in Genesis 9:4 nearly eighty years earlier.

Genesis 9:4

1683 Cambridge Quarto (H780)

4 But flesh with the life thereof, *which*
is the bloud thereof, shall ye not eat.

- Recall from above that 193 or 94.6% of the 204 “you/ye” changes catalogued by Vance in Chapter 3, were ascribed to the 1762 and 1769 folio editions of Cambridge and Oxford respectively. Of these 193 changes, my research uncovered that 132 or 68.3% of them had already been made in the 1683 Cambridge Quarto edition (H780). This is a staggeringly high number of edits that were not supposed to have been made until nearly eighty years later.
- This underscores a point we have been making for a while now (since [Lesson 250](#)); the true printed history of the text is not limited to the flagship folio editions as has been assumed by Norton, Campbell, and Vance; the real story unfolds year by year and printing by printing. Moreover, the 1683 Cambridge Quarto edition (H780) is a pivotal and massively undervalued edition in discerning the printed history of the text.

Case Study #3—Dueteronomy 1:13

- The first two case studies looked at changes from “you” to “ye” of which there are 193 examples. In this third case study we will consider an example of change from “ye” to “you” in the printed history of the King James text. Recall from above that there are only six examples of this

category of revision. Yet again, we will begin with a consideration of the base text, the Bishops Bible of 1602.

Deuteronomy 1:13

1602 Bishops

13 **Bring you men of wisdom and of understanding, and expert according to your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.**

- Note that the base text reads as follows in the first clause, “Bring **you** men of wisdom and understanding.” Note the “you” reading as you compare the 1602 Bishops with the AV of 1611.

Deuteronomy 1:13

1611

13 † **Take ye wise men, and understanding, and knowen among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.**

- This verse exhibits heavy revision by the King James translators. The first 2/3 of the verse was reworked.
 - 1602—“Bring you men of wisdom and understanding” is revised to read “Take **ye** wise men, and understanding,”
 - 1602—“and expert according to your tribes” became “and known among your tribes” in the 1611.
 - 1602—“and I will make them rulers over you” was accepted into the AV without revision.
- Note, that the translators intentionally changed the Bishops “you” to “ye” in the first clause. Put another way, it was their choice that the text read “Take **ye** wise me,” i.e., the use of “ye” over “you” was their choice.

Deuteronomy 1:13
1762 Cambridge Folio (H1142)

13 † Take ye wise men and understand-
ing, and known among your tribes, and I
will make them rulers over you.

- The 1762 edition edited by Parris retained the “ye” reading at Deuteronomy 1:13. The “ye” reading remained unchanged for the first 151 years of the text’s history.

Deuteronomy 1:13
1769 Oxford Folio (H1194)

13 ° † Take you wise men, and under-
standing, and known among your tribes,
and I will make them rulers over you.

- Benjamin Blaney edited the text in 1769 for Oxford University Press. In doing so, he reinstated the Bishops reading and changed “ye” back to a “you” in Deuteronomy 1:13.

Conclusion

- In all three case studies later, editors altered the text contrary to the decisions of the King James translators. It appears that this was done based upon a technicality of English grammar regarding the use of second-person plural pronouns in nominative or accusative form.
- As helpful as Pastor Hammond’s blog article was in identifying the grammatical issues involved in the proper use of “you” and “ye,” his comments reveal a blind spot in his understanding of the printed history of the King James text. Unaware that editors have changed “ye” to “you” six times (see above for more information) in the KJB, Hammond wrote the following when speaking about the changes made in modern versions:
 - “It is fair to ask if these “old fashioned” pronouns really matter – especially given that most modern Bible versions have replaced them with simpler, more familiar words. For example, modern translations typically replace “ye” with “you.” While that change may seem reasonable, readers must understand that dropping the use of the Elizabethan pronouns necessarily obscures the meaning of the Greek and Hebrew words that underlie our English translation. **In fact, when translators change “ye” to “you,” they are necessarily changing God’s words!**” (Hammond)

- Does Hammond’s comment apply to the KJB as well? Did Blaney corrupt the word of God when he made one such change in Deuteronomy 1:13 noted above? This is why King James advocates must have an accurate understanding of the printed history of the text. Without such an understanding one’s rhetoric is in danger of defeating the position they are rightly arguing for. The case of truth is not aided by factually inaccurate information.
- For our purposes, the bottom line is this: the text the readers of the AV use in the 21st century i.e., the standard 1769 text is not an identical match to the AV of 1611. While these changes in the use of “you/ye” are not substantive, they indicate an edited text, nonetheless.

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