Sunday, March 16, 2025—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
Lesson 258 Assessing the Printed History of the King James Text (Scrivener On AV Italics)

Introduction

- Lesson 257 explored the historical use of italics in Bible translations, particularly focusing on their implementation before the 1611 King James Version. The Lesson emphasized that the practice of using italics or other markings to denote supplied words in translations was not unique to the KJV but was a common practice among Reformation-era Bible translators across various languages. In the introduction I stated that our aim was to provide a factual and balanced view of the topic, countering misconceptions about the KJV being the first or only Bible to use italics.

- All told we considered the following points in Lesson 257:

    o Italics in Bible translations predate the 1611 King James Version.

    o Various Reformation-era Bibles in different languages (English, French, Italian, Spanish, Latin) used italics or similar markings.

    o The purpose of italics was to indicate words supplied by translators for clarity in the receptor language.

    o Different methods were used to denote supplied words, including brackets, smaller font sizes, and Roman type in black letter texts.

    o The use of italics in similar places across different translations suggests a shared tradition among Reformation-era translators.

    o The inconsistency of italicization across different editions of the KJV challenges the notion of inspired italics.

- In the current Lesson we want to continue exploring the issues related to the use of italics in the AV. To accomplish this task, we will consider the following points:

    o Contemporary Scholarly Views

    o Scrivener On AV Italics

Contemporary Scholary Views

- Professor David Norton, author of *A Textual History Of The King James Bible* is a modern scholar who rejects the use of italics in contemporary editions of the AV. When he edited the *New Cambridge Paragraph Bible* in 2005 for Cambridge University Press, he did not include the use of italics.

- o "These [italics] have been a perpetual source of difficulty to editors and bemusement to readers. Few readers now understand that they are almost always an attempt at a scholarly guide to the relationship between the English and the Hebrew and Greek, de-emphasizing words that have no equivalent in the original text but that are necessary in English. Nor do they realize how much they have grown over the years. The original italics were thoroughly inadequate, and the modern proliferation remains an ineffective guide to the original text for the few readers who understand their intention (Strong's numbers, interlinear and electronic Bibles are all infinitely better guides to the connections). Bemusing, inadequate and ineffective, whether in the original or the current form, the italics only make reading more difficult. Besides tradition, the only grounds for keeping them – and then only in the original form – is that they are the work of the translators, but these are poor reasons. They are not part of the text itself but a way of coding it for study purposes, and their only possible interest now is as something that might be studied for the very slight suggestion they give of the translators' sense of the relationships between English and Hebrew and Greek. Consequently they are not included in *The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible*, except, as noted below, in the margin." (Norton, 162-163)

- Put another way, Dr. Norton thinks they are a confusing distraction to modern readers. Part of the reason for this is because the purpose of italics has changed over the years.

- Professor Gordon Campbell also takes up the matter of the italics on page 190 of his book titled *Bible: The Story Of The King James Version, 1611-2011*:

  - o "Finally, there is the issue of the italics. In the 1611 version of the KJV, italics were used extensively (and unevenly) to indicate additional words supplied by the translators to render the text more comprehensible. In the first edition, italicized words were printed inconspicuously amongst the authoritative black-letter type used for words directly translated from the ancient languages. There are many difficulties associated with the italicized words for modern readers, in part because the use of italic has changed **(in 1611 it de-emphasized words, and now it emphasizes them)**. Scrivener valiantly tried to correct all the errors in italics in the first edition, but the gain in accuracy may have been secured at the cost of misunderstanding for his Victorian readers. David Norton took the bold decision not to distinguish supplied words in his text [*New Cambridge Paragraph Bible*]. The shedding of italics represents a loss, in that a distinction that was important to the translators in no longer visible." (Campbell, 190-191)

- Campbell indicates he does not agree with Norton's decision to drop the use of italics in *The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible* stating that it "represents a loss." In the next paragraph, Campbell addresses the thorny issue of editing classic works such as the AV or Shakespeare.

  - o "These are not simple issues, and the decisions embodied in the Cambridge Paragraph Bibles can all be defended. There is, however, a contrary case for a more generous view

of what constitutes the Bible. The analogy of the editing Shakespeare may be helpful. Shakespeare wrote his plays in scenes, and did not divided them into acts (that was done in the printing shop), but modern editors retain the act divisions; similarly, the lists of characters were not drawn up by Shakespeare, but are nonetheless included in modern editions. Such materials, together with stage directions that may not be Shakespeare's, are routinely included; it could be argued that a similar approach should be taken to editing the KJV." (Campbell, 191)

- To be clear, I do not agree with Norton's decision to remove italicized words from the text. As we saw in Lesson 257, the use of italics or similar markings were part of the Reformation Era Bible tradition. I believe them to be essential for accurate understanding and comprehension in English.

Scrivener On AV Italics

- In Appendix 2 of his recently published book *The Text of the King James Bible*, Dr. Laurence M. Vance deals with the subject matter of italics in the text of the AV. In the context, Vance is discussing the use of italics in I John 2:23 when he states that F.H.A. Scrivener is the only writer to offer a systematic analysis of the italics in the AV.

  o "The only detailed analysis of the italic type in the King James Bible is that of Scrivener in *The Authorized Editon of the English Bible (1611)*. He identified six reasons why the translators of the Authorized Version, and its subsequent editors, used italic type." (Vance, 457)

- Dr. Norton agrees with Vance regarding the importance of Scrivener's study of the use of italics in the AV. In footnote number 16 on page 162 of his *Textual History*, Norton states the following:

  o "[16]Scrivener, who himself made a heroic attempt to render the italics thorough and consistent, is scathing of both the work in 1611, with its 'undue haste and scarcely venial carelessness' (p. 63) and in later editions, where the changes 'have been too unsystematic, too much the work of the moment, executed by too many hands, and on too unsettled principles, to hold out against hostile, or even against friendly criticism' (p. 71). His detailed notes (pp. 61–81) remain the only study of the italics." (Norton, 162)

- Campbell, Norton, and Vance all acknowledge that Scrivener's treatment of the italics in the AV is the most thorough. Scrivener's coverage of this topic spans "Section III" of his book, some - twenty pages from 61 to 81. The section begins by discussing the historical use of italics in Bibles predating the AV. We covered this history, and more in Lesson 257 where we cited the work of Christopher Yetzer, whose contribution extends far beyond Scrivener's regarding this historical use of italics. On pages 61 and 62 Scrivener limited himself to discussing the Muster Latin Editon (1534), Geneva editions (1557 NT & 1560), and Bishops editions (1568 & 1572).

- o "From these two preceding versions, then held in the best repute, the Geneva and the Bishops' Bibles, the small Roman as distinguished from the black letter (now and as early as the Bible of 1612 respectively represented by the Italic and Roman type) was brought naturally enough into the Bible of 1611, and forms a prominent feature of it, whether for good or ill." (Scrivener, 62)

- In the following paragraph Scrivener gives his opinion on the use of italics in the AV thereby commencing his study of their use.

  - o "On this last point, namely, the wisdom or convenience of printing different words in the same verse or line in different kinds of type, with a view to the purpose explained above, it is not necessary for an editor of the Authorized Bible to express, or even to hold, an opinion. Italics, or whatever corresponds with them, may possibly be dispensed with altogether (though in practice this abstinence will be found hard to maintain); or they may be reserved for certain extreme cases, where marked difference in idiom between the two languages, or else some obscurity or corruption of the original text, seems to forbid a strict and literal translation. It is enough for the present purpose to say that our existing version was plainly constructed on another principle. Those who made it saw no objection to the free use of a typographical device which custom had sanctioned, and would have doubtless given a different turn to many a sentence had they been debarred from indicating to the unlearned what they had felt obliged to add of their own to the actual words of the original; the addition being always either involved and implied in the Hebrew or Greek, or at any rate being so necessary to the sense that the English reader would be perplexed or go wrong without it. Taking for granted, therefore, the right of the Translators thus to resort to the italic type, and the general propriety of their mode of exercising it, the only enquiry now open to us is whether they were uniform, or reasonably consistent, in their use of it.

    And in the face of patent and well ascertained facts it is impossible to answer such a question in the affirmative. Undue haste and scarcely venial carelessness on the part of the persons engaged in carrying through the press the issues of 1611, which are only too visible in other matters (see above, p. 8), are nowhere more conspicuous than with regard to this difference in the type. If it be once conceded that the Translators must have intended to use or refrain from using italics in the selfsame manner in all cases that are absolutely identical (and the contrary supposition would be strange and unreasonable indeed), their whole case in this matter must be given up as indefensible. There is really no serious attempt to avoid palpable inconsistencies on the same page, in the same verse : and those who have gone over this branch of their work will be aware that even comparative uniformity can be secured only in one way, by the repeated comparison of the version with the sacred originals, by unflagging attention so that nothing however minute may pass unexamined. This close and critical examination was evidently entered upon, with more or less good results, by those who prepared the Cambridge Bibles of 1629 and more especially of 1638 (for before these appeared the italics of 1611, with all their glaring faults, were reprinted without change'), and in the next century by Dr Parris

in 1762, by Dr Blayney and his friends in 1769 (see Appendix D). The rules to be observed in such researches, and the principles on which they are grounded, must be gathered from the study of the standard of 1611, exclusively of subsequent changes, regard being paid to what its authors intended, rather than to their actual practice." (Scrivener, 62-63)

- "The cases in which the italic character has been employed by the Translators of our Authorized Bible may probably be brought under the following heads:". This is the language that Scrivener begins his discussion of the italics in the AV. (Scrivener, 64) He then sets forth six classes for understanding the italics.

Class 1

- Scrivener's first class is stated as follows:

  o "When words quite or nearly necessary to complete the sense of the sacred writers have been introduced into the text from parallel places of Scripture." (Scrivener, 64)

- He then goes on to provide multiple examples from the book of II Samuel. Please note I have annotated this quote to include screenshots of the relevant examples as well as editorial comments in brackets.

  o "ch. v. 8. "And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, *that are* hated of David's soul, *he shall be chief and captain*." The last clause is supplied from i Chr. xi. 6.

1769 Oxford Folio (H1194)
II Samuel 5:8

I Chronicles 11:6

> 6 And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be † chief and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, <u>and was chief.</u>

[Scrivener is suggesting that these words were italicized for two reasons: 1) there are no corresponding words in the Hebrew and 2) they are meant to harmonize the verse with a parallel verse in I Chronicles 11:6.]

ch. vi. 6. "And when they came to Nachon's threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth his *hand* to the ark of God." Rather "*his hand*" (as in 1638) from i Chr. xiii. 9.

1769 Oxford Folio (H1194)
II Samuel 6:6

> 6 ¶ And when they came to *Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth <u>*his hand*</u> to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen ‖ shook *it.*

I Chronicles 13:9

> 9 ¶ And when they came unto the threshingfloor of ‖ Chidon, Uzza put forth <u>his hand</u> to hold the ark; for the oxen † stumbled.

[The 1611 read "his *hand*" in II Samuel 6:6. The 1638 Cambridge Folio (H520) read "*his hand*" at this verse.]

ch. viii. 4. "And David took from him a thousand *chariots*, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen." We derive "chariots" from i Chr. xviii. 4.

1769 Oxford Folio (H1194)
II Samuel 8:4

> 4 And David took ‖ from him a thousand ‖ *chariots*, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen : and David ᵉ houghed all the chariot *horses*, but reserved of them *for* an hundred chariots.

I Chronicles 18:4

> 4 And David took from him a thousand chariots, and ᵇ seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen : David also houghed all the chariot *horses*, but reserved of them an hundred chariots.

[The 1611 had "charets" in roman font in II Samuel 8:4.]

ibid. 18. "And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was *over* both the Cherethites and the Pelethites *was over*" (1629). In i Chr. xviii. 17 "*was* over" (1611).

1769 Oxford Folio (H1194)
II Samuel 18:17

> 18 ˣ And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was over* both the ᵞ Cherethites and the Pelethites ; and David's sons were ‖ chief rulers.

I Chronicles 18:17

> 17 ᶠ And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the Cherethites and the Pelethites ; and the sons of David *were* chief † about the king.

[The 1611 had "was *over*" in II Samuel 8:18 where the 1629 Cambridge Folio (H424) read "*was over*" in the same verse.]

ch. xxi. 9. " . . . slew *the brother of* Goliath the Gittie." In i Chr. XX. 5 we read "slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite."

1769 Oxford Folio (H1194)
II Samuel 21:9

> 19 And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philiſtines, where Elhanan the ſon of ‖ Jaare-oregim, a Beth-lehemite, ſlew *the brother of* Goliath the Gittite, the ſtaff of whoſe ſpear *was* like a weaver's beam.

I Chronicles 20:5

> dren of ‖ the giant: and they were ſubdued.
> 5 And there was war again with the Phi-liſtines ; and Elhanan the ſon of ‖ Jair ſlew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whoſe ſpear ſtaff *was* like a weaver's beam.

ch. xxiii. 8. "the same was Adino the Eznite: he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time." i Chr. xi. 11 supplies "he lift up, &c."

1769 Oxford Folio (H1194)
II Samuel 23:8

> 8 ¶ Theſe *be* the names of the mighty men whom David had : ‖ The Tachmonite that ſat in the ſeat, chief among the cap-tains; the ſame *was* Adino the Eznite: ‖ *he lift up his ſpear* againſt eight hundred, † whom he ſlew at one time.

I Chronicles 11:11

> 11 And this *is* the number of the mighty men whom David had ; Jashobeam, ‖ an Hachmonite, the chief of the captains : <u>he lifted up his spear</u> against three hundred slain *by him* at one time.

Thus Num. xx. 26 is filled up from ver. 24; Judg. ii. 3 from Num. xxxiii. 55 or Josh, xxiii. 13; i Kin. ix. 8 from 2 Chr. vii. 21 ; 2 Kin. xxv. 3 from Jer. xxxix. 2 and lii. 6; I Chr. ix. 41 from ch. viii. 35; i Chr. xvii. 25 from 2 Sam. vii. 27 ; I Chr. xviii. 6 from 2 Sam. viii. 6; 2 Chr. xxv. 24 from 2 Kin. xiv. 14; Ezra ii. 6, 59 from Neh. vii. 11, 61. In the Bible of 1638 Jer. vi. 14 " of the daughter" is italicized, as taken into the text for the words from cp. viii. 11. This is the simplest case, for the words supplied in italics are doubtless lost in the one ancient text, while they are preserved in the other." (Scrivener, 64-65)

<u>Conclusion</u>

- Thus far we have studied one of Scrivener's six Classes for the use of italics.

    o <u>Class 1</u>—"When words quite or nearly necessary to complete the sense of the sacred writers have been introduced into the text from parallel places of Scripture." (Scrivener, 64)

- In the next Lesson we will study the remaining five classes.

Works Cited

Campbell, Gordon. *Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611-2011.* Oxford University Press, 2010.

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