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978-1-108-02463-1 - The Authorized Version of the English Bible (1611)

Frederick Henry Ambrose Scrivener

Excerpt

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THE AUTHORIZED EDITION OF THE
ENGLISH BIBLE (1611),
ITS SUBSEQUENT REPRINTS AND MODERN
REPRESENTATIVES.

A CRITICAL edition of the Authorized Version of the English Bible, having reference to its internal character rather than to its external history, and indicating the changes for good or ill introduced into the original text of 1611 by subsequent reprints, would have been executed long ago, had this Version been nothing more than the greatest and best known of English Classics. And such a design has been rendered all the more necessary by the fact that a formal revision of the Translation itself is now in progress, having been undertaken about fourteen years ago under the auspices of the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury. If a judgment may be formed from previous experience in like cases, the revised and unrevised Versions, when the former shall be at length completed, are destined to run together a race of generous and friendly rivalry for the space of at least one generation, before the elder of the two shall be superseded in the affections of not a few devout persons, who, in so grave a matter as the daily use of Holy Scripture, shall prove slow to adopt changes which yet they will not doubt to be made, on the whole, for the better. With

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so sharp a struggle before it, it is only right that the Authorized or King James's Bible should be represented, as far as may be, in the precise shape that it would have assumed, if its venerable Translators had shewn themselves more exempt than they were from the failings incident to human infirmity; or if the same severe accuracy, which is now demanded in carrying so important a volume through the press, had been deemed requisite or was at all usual in their age. The purpose of the present work is to discuss, within as moderate a compass as the subject will permit, the principles which have been adopted in editing the following pages, the reasons whereon they are grounded, and the difficulties which have been encountered in the prosecution of an arduous but by no means a wearisome task. For the reader's convenience it will be divided into seven Sections, the chief contents of which are here subjoined.

Section I. On the history of the text of the Authorized Version, from A. D. 1611 down to the present time.

Section II. On its marginal notes; and on the original texts, both Greek and Hebrew, employed by the Translators.

Section III. On the use of the Italic type by the Translators, and on the extension of their principles by subsequent editors.

Section IV. On the system of punctuation adopted in 1611, and modified in more recent Bibles.

Section V. On the orthography, grammatical peculiarities, and capital letters of the original, as compared with modern editions.

Section VI. On the references to parallel texts of Scripture which are set in the margin.

Section VII. Miscellaneous observations relating to the present edition, and general Conclusion.

To this short treatise is annexed, besides several other

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Appendices, a full Catalogue of the places in which the text of modern Bibles differs from that of the standard of 1611, with the dates at which the variations were severally adopted, so far as by diligent care they have been ascertained.

The Translators' address to the Reader, prefixed to the edition of 1611, is reprinted at the end of this volume.

SECTION I.

On the history of the text of the Authorized Version of the English Bible, from A.D. 1611 down to the present time.

MOST readers will be aware that numberless and not inconsiderable departures from the original or standard edition of the Authorized Translation as published in 1611, are to be found in the modern Bibles which issue from the press by thousands every year. Some of these differences must be imputed to oversight and negligence, from which no work of man can be entirely free; but much the greater part of them are deliberate changes, introduced silently and without authority by men whose very names are often unknown. Now, if such alterations had been made invariably for the worse, it would have been easy in future editions to recall the primitive readings, and utterly to reject the later corruptions. This, however, is far from being the case. Not a few of these variations, especially those first met with in Cambridge folio Bibles dated 1629 and 1638, which must have been superintended with much critical care, amend manifest faults of the original Translators or editors, so that it would be most injudicious to remove them from the place they have deservedly held in all our copies for the last 250 years¹. A full and, it may be hoped, a fairly

¹ On a question of so great importance as that of retaining changes for the better already

made by previous editors of the Authorized Version, it is safe to be fortified by the judgment of so

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complete list of these changes is given in Appendix A at the end of this volume, to which the student is referred once for all: the attempt therein made to assign the period at which they were severally admitted into the text, although great pains have been bestowed upon the investigation, must be regarded as sometimes only approximately successful. Other copies, of an earlier date than that cited, may occasionally have anticipated it in making the given correction; but these inaccuracies will hardly affect the general results, or impair the conclusions to which they lead. One class of variations has been advisedly excluded from the Catalogue, as seeming rather curious than instructive or important; namely, that arising from errors which, having crept into editions later than that of 1611, after holding a place in a few or in many subsequent issues, have long since disappeared from the Bibles now in use. Of this kind is that notorious misprint in the Cambridge folio of 1638, once falsely imputed to ecclesiastical bias, "whom ye may appoint over this business" ("ye" for "we") Acts vi. 3; a blemish which obstinately maintained its ground in some copies, at least as late as 1682¹. The several editions of

cautious and well-informed a writer as Dr Cardwell: "There is only one case, perhaps, in which it would become the duty of the privileged editor to enter into questions of criticism, without some express authority to support him. If a given mistake of the Translators had already been corrected before his time, if the public opinion had concurred, either avowedly or tacitly, in the change, he might reasonably hope that the general acknowledgment of the truth would relieve him from the obligation of returning into error. I say nothing of the boldness which first made the alteration; I

only commend the sound judgment which, after it was generally adopted, did not hesitate to retain it" (*Oxford Bibles*, 1833, p. 2, by Edward Cardwell, D.D., Principal of S. Alban's Hall, Oxford).

¹ Hartwell Horne, to whose *Introduction* all English students of the Bible owe more than they can ever duly acknowledge, adds another instance of less importance (though he does not quite know its true history), which shall serve as a sufficient specimen of the whole class. In 1 Tim. iv. 16 for "the doctrine" of the books from 1611 to 1630, we read "thy doctrine" in 1629 (Camb.) down to

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the Authorized Version which have been used in the formation of our Catalogues and in our suggested revision of the text are chiefly, though not exclusively, the following.

(1) The standard or primary one published in 1611, "Imprinted at London by *Robert Barker*, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Majestie." Here, however, we are met on the threshold of our researches by the perplexing fact that at least two separate issues bear the date of that year, yet differ from each other in so many minute particulars, that we cannot help raising the question which is the earlier or more authoritative, and consequently the more suitable to be taken as the model to which subsequent reprints ought to be accommodated. On this subject, so interesting to students of the English Bible, much information has been imparted by Mr Fry of Bristol, whose materials will be thankfully used by many that feel unable to adopt his conclusions, and might desire a little more scholarlike precision in the method of his investigations¹. The two chief issues of 1611 may be respectively represented by a folio now in the British Museum (3050. g. 2), and another in the same Library (3050. g. 1) of which Mr Fry says in a manuscript note that "it is every leaf correct, and may be taken as a standard copy of this issue." There is yet a third class of books, bearing date the same year, containing (some more, some less) sheets of six leaves or twelve pages each, or occasionally only two or four leaves of a sheet, which appear to be reprints of portions of one or the other of the aforementioned issues, the preliminary matter being made up from the folio of 1617 or elsewhere, a circumstance which compli-

1762. Blayney (1769) restored "the," but Horne has seen "thy" in Bibles of the commencement of the present century. *Introduction*, Vol. II. Pt. II. p. 79 note (1834).

¹ *A Description of the Great*

Bible, 1539,.....also of the editions, in large folio, of the Authorized Version of the Holy Scriptures, Printed in the years 1611, 1613, 1617, 1634, 1640. By Francis Fry, F.S.A., folio, London, 1865.

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cates the question not a little, so that in what we have to say it will be advisable to exclude all considerations respecting these reprinted portions¹. This may be done the better, inasmuch as Mr Fry's researches have discovered only six such leaves in the Pentateuch, five in the Apocrypha, none in the New Testament. These reprints are bound up with and form a complete book with portions of each issue in two other Bibles in the Museum (1276. l. 4 and 3050. g. 3) respectively. The textual differences between the two original issues have been diligently collected below in Appendix B, from which only very manifest misprints of both books have been excluded: by a careful examination of our collation, in those portions where there are no known reprints, the student can form an independent judgment respecting the internal character of each of them. In preparing the present volume, a Bible belonging to the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press (A. 3. 14, wanting sheet A containing the Title-page, Dedication, and part of the Translators' Preface) has been substituted for the Museum book 3050. g. 2, and for 3050. g. 1 the Oxford reprint of 1833, as being a well-known publication which exactly resembles it in all places consulted, and was itself taken verbatim, with unusual care for insuring accuracy, from a Bible in the Library of the Delegates of the Oxford Uni-

¹ Gen. xlvi. 12—xlix. 27; Num. xxi. 2—xxvi. 65; Josh. x. 9—xi. 11; xv. 13—xvii. 8; Judg. xiv. 18—xx. 44; Ruth i. 9—2 Sam. ix. 13; xi. 26—xiv. 19; xv. 31—xvii. 14; xix. 39—xxii. 49; 1 Kin. i. 17—xvi. 3; xvii. 20—xxii. 34; 2 Kin. i. 15—2 Chr. xxix. 31; Ezra ii. 55—Job xxii. 3; xxv. 4—xxxii. 28; xxxiv. 5—xli. 31; Ps. vi. 3—Prov. vi. 35; ix. 14—xiv. 28; xvii. 3—Eccles. ii. 26; vi. 1—Cant. vii. 1; Isai. i. 1—xxxii. 13; xli. 13

—Jxiii. 1; Jer. i. 7—vii. 26; xi. 12—xv. 10; xxvi. 18—Ezek. xiv. 22; xvii. 22—xx. 44; Zech. xiv. 9—Mal. ii. 13; 1 Esdr. iv. 37—v. 26; Eccles. xvi. 7—xx. 17; Baruch iii. 1—iv. 28; Song, ver. 20—Hist. Susanna, ver. 15: in all 244 leaves (but not so many in any one copy), distinguished by the comparison of B. M. 3050. g. 2 with 44 other copies, in respect to initial letters and minute typographical variations (*Fry*, Table 2).

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versity Press at that time in actual use. Copies of both issues or recensions of 1611 survive in great numbers in private as well as in public hands, since, when the Translation was completed, every Church had to be furnished with at least one without delay. Fifteen copies of that which it followed, twelve of the other, are enumerated in the Advertisement which preceded the publication of the Oxford reprint (dated Jan. 14, 1834), and Mr Fry has seen at least seventy, although he seldom gives us information as to where they are severally located¹.

The question which of the two recensions is the earlier must be decided partly by external, partly by internal considerations. The latter will speak for themselves, and it may be taken for granted that no one will doubt the great superiority on the whole of the text of the Oxford reprint to the other, or hesitate to mark in it many designed improvements and corrections which betray a later hand (Appendix B § 11.), while the instances in which the Syndics' book is superior or not inferior to the other (App. B § 1.) are scanty, slight, and incapable of suggesting the converse inference².

¹ Besides those named above the author has examined (not to mention some in private hands) resembling Camb. Synd. A. 3. 14, S. John's Coll. Cambridge (T. 2. 24); King's College (53); Jesus Coll. Cambridge (A. 7. 7 with the false date of 1613 on the title-page of the O. T.); Lambeth Muniment Room: resembling the Oxford reprint, Brit. Mus. (466. i. 6); Sion College Arch. x. 3; Cambridge University Library (i. 15, 16); Emmanuel College (B. I. 23), and the very fine copy in the Bodleian.

² A few instances are as good as a thousand, if only they be unequivocal. We would press Ezek.

xliv. 29, where what we call the first issue treats the final *mem* as if it were double; Amos vi. 7, where the second issue corrects the wrong number of the first; but 1 Macc. x. 47 seems conclusive, where our second issue, deeming "true peace" too strong a rendering of *λόγων ειρηνικῶν*, banished "|| True" into the margin. There are no reprints in these leaves. It is fair to add two instances in App. B which we have found tending to an opposite conclusion, in the false arrangement of the margins of Wisd. iii. 14; Mark vii. 4, in the Oxford reprint. But the general drift of the internal evidence sets strongly the other way.

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Both contain innumerable errors of the press, some peculiar to a single issue¹, not a few (including nearly all the false textual references in the margin, see below Sect. vi.) common to both. It is useful to remember one characteristic *erratum* of each, which will enable us to determine at a glance to which recension a particular volume in our hands belongs. The Syndics' copy and its fellows have "Judas" instead of "Jesus" in Matt. xxvi. 36; the Oxford reprint and its associates read twice over the following words (forming three complete lines) in Ex. xiv. 10 "the children of Israel lift up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them, and they were sore afraid: and" the printer's eye wandering back from the second "the children of Israel" in the verse, to the first². Yet in spite of this portentous blunder, the recension which contains it is decidedly the more correct of the two, and irresistibly forces on the mind of any one that has minutely studied both, that whether we regard emendations of the sense or comparative exemption from typographical oversights, it had undergone revision, fitful and superficial perhaps, but not the less real on that account. Hence it seems not quite reasonable, in answer to the enquiry "Which of the two issues was first printed?" to say with Mr Fry, "I do not think that any evidence on this point can be adduced, from the existence of an error in one, and the absence of it in another copy" (*A Description, &c.* p. 23). Not certainly from noting a single error or from noting twenty, for such an argument is cumulative in its weight, and can only be appreciated by patient enquirers:

¹ In compiling a list of errata in the Syndics' copy (A. 3. 14) much aid was given by the corrections made in that book by Gilbert Buchanan, LL.D., of Woodmansterne, Surrey, in the winter of 1813-4, when engaged in re-

vising for the King's Printer his quarto edition of 1806.

² It deserves notice that this could easily be done if the type were set up from the Syndics' copy, where "the children of Israel" begins a line in both parts of the verse.

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but if, out of two books substantially the same, one shall prove on examination more free than the other from mechanical imperfections and printers' *errata*, and at the same time full of small yet unequivocal corrections whether of the style or the matter of the performance, we cannot doubt that, in the absence of any considerable proof to the contrary, the common consent of mankind would pronounce that the better executed volume must needs be the later of the two.

And what considerable proof to the contrary has Mr Fry been able to allege? Direct evidence on the subject there is none, for never was a great enterprise like the production of our Authorized Version carried out with less knowledge handed down to posterity of the labourers, their method and order of working. There still remains the bibliographical branch of this investigation, and it will demand some attention. The first point we take up makes little in favour of Mr Fry's view of the priority of that issue which the Oxford reprint follows with such faithful exactness. All copies of the other issue, if they have a title-page at all, exhibit a respectable and elaborate woodcut (repeated before the New Testament with the necessary change in the printed words) that had often done duty before, notably in the Bishops' Bible of 1602. It represents the four Evangelists with their proper emblems at the top and bottom of the cut, the tents and armorial bearings of the twelve tribes on the left of the letter-press, the twelve Apostles on the right of it, the Paschal Lamb slain on the altar beneath it, the Lamb Triumphant under the Incommunicable Name surmounting all. But in many copies of the recension to which the Oxford reprint belongs the title-page is of a totally different character. It is a very elegant copper-plate engraving, of whose refined beauty Mr Fry's reproduction on stone (Plate 34) gives but a poor idea. Here Moses stands

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cornutus on the left of the letter-press title, Aaron on the right, the Apostles and Evangelists above and below in attitude and form quite different from the conventional manner of artists; above, the Incommunicable Name, the Dove, the Lamb Triumphant; below, the Pelican and her young; at the foot of this masterpiece the subscription *C. Boel fecit in Richmond*, Cornelius Boel of Antwerp then working at Richmond in Surrey. Now the point to be noted is this. It is admitted by Mr Fry and by every one else that in no copy of what he calls the second issue is there an engraved title, whereas some copies of *his* first issue have the engraved plate, others the woodcut, a few possibly, though not certainly, both, prefixed to the Old Testament. The inference seems a natural one that Boel's plate not being ready when the earliest copies of our Authorized Version were published, the old woodcut was made to serve in its place for a while, and that those copies of Mr Fry's first and our second issue which contain Boel's copper-plate, are in all probability the latest of any. If there be any more simple solution of the matter, it would be well to state it.

But that which is most dwelt upon by such as would invert what internal evidence points out as the true order of the two issues rests on facts relating to the reprinted leaves which Mr Fry has demonstrated with great pains and ingenuity. Out of 25 copies of *his* first issue which he examined, 23 were leaf for leaf alike, agreeing entirely with each other: in one copy two leaves, in another six, were of the rival issue. Forty-five copies of this latter issue were then collated, of which the large number of 41 were found to vary from each other in some of the reprinted leaves supplied (see p. 6 note), and only two pairs were entirely identical. "I have now shewn" he proceeds to sum up "from the actual comparison of a very large number of the