

The Dr. Gene Scott Bible Collection

STATION 27: The KING JAMES Version



*A glimpse of Station 27,
showing several of the
large folios
from the First Edition.*

I: The Preparation and the Process

The "final" English version of the Bible, forever linked to the monarch who commissioned it, came about through an offhand comment at the Hampton Court Conference on Monday, January 16, 1604. Dr. John Reynolds mentioned to the king that there needed to be a new translation of the Bible as the former, made under Henry VIII and Edward VI, were *"corrupt and not aunswerable to the truth of the Originall."*

King James loved scriptural disputation and quotation (his

"Collected Workes," published in 1616 and including his "Daemonologie," are shown at this Station); he looked forward to a version to be forever associated with his name.

On February 10, 1604, the king ordained that the whole Bible be translated, as much as possible from the Hebrew and Greek, and that this version was the one to be used in all churches during services. He further desired that no marginal notes be made, as he found those in the Geneva version

*"partiall, untrue,
seditious, and savouring
too much of dangerous and
trayterous conceits."*

Within six months,

King James had approved the list of translators and was urging the work forward.

Six committees of translators were formed, consisting of a total of 54 men. Two committees each met at Oxford, Cambridge and Westminster. To the Oxford groups were entrusted the Gospels, Acts, and Apocalypse, plus the Prophets ("Great" and "Lesser") and Lamentations. Cambridge got the historical books of the Old Testament from Chronicles through Ecclesiastes, plus the Apocrypha. Westminster got the Pentateuch, the historical books of the Old Testament from Joshua through Second Kings, plus the Epistles. The translators acted under an express set of rules; chief among these was the injunction to follow the Bishops' version as much as possible. Other rules concerned names (those in "vulgar usage" were to be retained), ecclesiastical terms (the old were to be retained, e.g. "church" not to be translated "congregation") and words of multiple meanings (the Ancient Fathers's understanding was to prevail). Chapter divisions were to remain intact as far as possible, and marginal notes were to be confined to explanations of Hebrew and Greek terms or to link one passage to another.

Each committee had to send their finished version to the others for review; final differences would be resolved at a General Meeting of the chief representatives of each committee. The list of rules asked all Bishops to get input from such clergy as were *"skilful in the Tongues"*

and forward their observations to the committees. It

also listed the versions that could be used when they agreed with the

"original tongues"

better than the [Bishops'](#) version:

[Tyndale's](#), [Matthew's](#), [Coverdale's](#), "Whitchurch's" (Whitchurch was the printer closely associated with the "[Great](#)" Bible) and the [Geneva](#). Some time in 1607 the whole proceeding was set in motion. Nearly four years were spent in the efforts; in 1610, six men from each committee were sent to London to make the final determinations and commit the work to the presses. The final revision took nine months; their "baby" was finally delivered to the Company of Stationers (the printers' guild). It was first printed in a "Black Letter" folio in 1611.

The King James Version welds the best of the previous versions into a unified whole: the vigorous and crusty expressions of Tyndale, the musical phrases of Coverdale, the accurate and thoughtful translations of the Genevas with numerous new passages that reflect the repetitive nature of the Hebrew originals (e.g. "to die the death"). In a sense, the King James Version did not so much re-invent the Bible as reinforce the English versions which were already familiar and beloved throughout the land. The translators were scrupulous, and used every major Greek, Latin, and Hebrew text they could find, including the diglot produced by Coverdale in 1535 and [polyglots](#) such as Plantin's of 1572 (an interlinear Hebrew-Latin portion was a useful "crib" for the translators).

II: Results and Comparisons

One can find throughout the King James Version words, phrases and sentences born in others'

versions; one might second-guess some of the readings, and one commentator has written that if it has any repetitive fault, it is in the translation of Hebrew words instead of Hebrew phrases. But the over-all importance of the King James lies in its success - it has remained the standard English text for centuries, and even as revised in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (to reflect the intervening evolution of language), its musical words and phrases still ring true. At last, the English people were given a Bible in their common tongue which allowed the meaning and the beauty of the Holy Word to shine forth throughout the text, that scholars could agree was on the whole a commendable, felicitous translation, and which could be proudly read in churches and homes throughout the land.

When the King James Version was published, the Geneva Bible was the most popular, and so it remained for the first thirty years it co-existed with the "Authorized" Version. The reason was simple. Though the King James Version had new "Arguments" (or summaries) to the Books, its marginal notes failed to provide the sort of running commentary offered by the Genevas. Thus, even some of the translators of the King James Version kept their trusty Genevas as their primary Bibles. But the King James Version soon overtook the Genevas in currency, partly because the same printer, Robert Barker, produced both, and he chose to print more of the former than the latter.

The absence of explanatory notes called forth many annotations prepared and published over the ensuing centuries. Many a later "annotated" Bible has the King James Version as the text on which its notes are hung. Later translations, based on newly published Greek texts, were made sporadically; in many cases they merely modify the text to speak with the "accent of the age." None took wide-spread root, and none had the popular appeal of the old familiar King James Version. Clerics and common people alike echoed the old adage, *"If it was good enough for King James, it's good enough for me."*

The first few "editions" of the King James Version were folios that closely resemble each other. The printing of a complete Bible in a large size, especially with King James hurrying the production on, was a monumental undertaking. Tradition records that the actual printing was done in several establishments under Robert Barker's direction. It's very likely that the type used for the very first edition was kept "set up" between printings, so many pages within different "printings" of any given edition are identical; title pages dated one year were applied to Bibles that contained pages printed for prior "issues." Several "states" or "printings" of the "First Edition Folio" are known, two of them extremely rare (the Dr. Gene Scott collection is the **only** collection anywhere in the world that has all seven printings of the First Edition; others, including the British Museum and Bible House, have just five or six of the seven).

Mention must also be made of the two great streams of King James Versions that took different states as their "models": the "He" Bibles and the "She" Bibles, from the rendering of the pronoun at Ruth iii 15 (*"and he went into the city"* or *"and she went into the city"*). Though "she" became the standard wording, many "He" Bibles were produced, using prior "He" editions as models. A final mention must be made of the actual manuscript of the translation, with its notes, revisions and corrections; it remained the King's Printer's hands at least until 1660, and is believed to have burned in the Great Fire of London in 1666.

III: Early Folio Editions

It is a misnomer to think that the early King James Bibles were sold in forms resembling our modern "editions." Some 20,000 copies of the "First Edition Folios" were printed, bound and sold in the period

from 1611 to 1640; thus 29 years were needed to complete and bind these copies. Printed in batches of sheets in five separate establishments, all the books which we associate with the "First Edition" share common "Black Letter" type and page layout. The first and last words of any given page of text are identical; title pages may have varying dates. Any given "issue" or "printing" may contain pages that were actually printed for previous "issues." Dr. Scott presents these varying examples as "**printings**" rather than "editions," and this is **the only complete collection of all seven "printings"** or "issues" of the folio "First Edition."

"FIRST EDITION" (FOLIO)

- **First Printing** - The Great "He" Bible. Like previous English folio Bibles, printed from "Black Letter" type. Both title pages are dated **1611**; catalogued by Herbert as #309.
- **Second Printing** - The true Great "She" Bible, with the correct reading at Ruth iii 15. **One of three examples known**, and a world-class treasure of the Dr. Gene Scott Bible Collection. Both title pages are dated **1611**, thus distinguishing this from the Third Printing.
- **Third Printing** - Great "She" Bible with title pages dated **1613** (general title page) / **1611** NT title page). This is sometimes confused with the very rare "She" Bible of the 1611 Second Printing. Undoubtedly, this printing was put together from pages of the previous printing that had not yet been used, with new pages printed to "round out" the numbers required; for this reason, several different "states" are recorded. Catalogued by Herbert as #319.
- **Fourth Printing** - Title pages dated **1614** (general title) / **1617** (New Testament). This is **one of two known examples** of this printing, and it is unlisted by Herbert. It is the greatest treasure of this part of the collection.
- **Fifth Printing** - Both title pages dated **1617**. Catalogued by Herbert as #353.
- **Sixth Printing** - Title pages are dated **1634**, and incorporate the monogram of King Charles I (who acceded to the throne in March 1625). Herbert #487.
- **Seventh Printing** - Last of the large "Black Letter" First Edition folios, having title pages dated **1640** (general title) / **1639** (New Testament). By this time, the type shows signs of wear, and the marginal notes were reset in Roman type in place of the former italic.

SECOND FOLIO EDITION

- **1613** - Considered the "true" 1613 edition as its "Black Letter" type is smaller than that used for the First Edition folios starting in 1611. The text varies in some 400 places from the 1611 folio, and incorporates many mistakes, some noted by Herbert as "serious." For this reason, it was not reprinted.

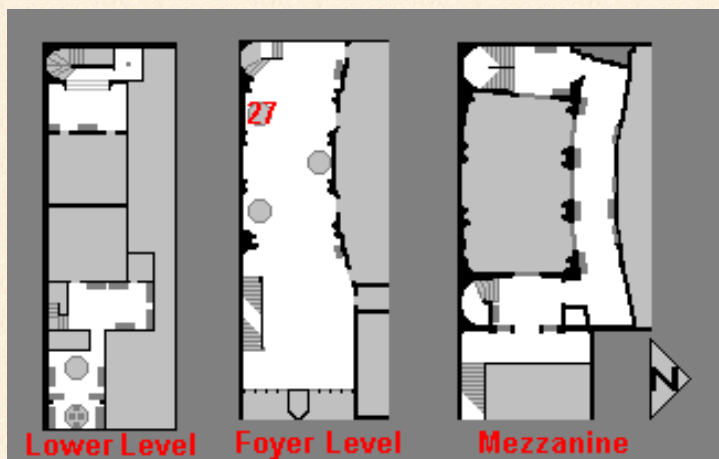
THIRD FOLIO EDITION

- **1616** - Omitting the words "Appointed..." on both title pages, this was printed by Barker in **Roman** type. The border of the title page is similar to that of some editions of the "Bishops' Bible."

The Dr. Gene Scott Bible Collection shows many other examples of the King James Version printed in the 17th and 18th Centuries at this Station, including first editions in smaller sizes, "error" editions (e. g. the "[Vinegar](#) Bible," the "Child Killer" Bible, the "Unrighteous Bible" and of course the extremely rare "[Wicked](#)" Bible) and regional and university editions.

STATION LOCATION MAP

Below is a floor plan map of the Cathedral in 3 sections, one for each level. The first section is the Lower Level, the second is the Foyer Level, and the third is the Mezzanine Level. This station is the West Octagon on the Foyer level, at the red #27.



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