Yale Summer Study

June 4-8, 2018

The Bible and the Reformation

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IV
The Paracelsus

The *Paracelsus* is the preface to Erasmus' Greek and Latin edition of the New Testament, which Froben first published in February 1516.1 The word itself is Greek and means a summons or exhortation. In this context it is a summons or exhortation to the Christian to study Holy Scripture, where alone he will find the teachings of Christ in all their fullness and life. These incomparable writings, Erasmus declares in his concluding words, "bring you the living image of His holy mind and the speaking, healing, dying, rising Christ Himself, and thus they render Him so fully present that you would see less if you gazed upon Him with your very eyes."

The *Paracelsus* is one of the great classic statements of Erasmus' biblical humanism.2 Its argument is simple and somewhat repetitive, and the essay, as important as it is, would seem to have been written in haste. Yet it is a moving and even powerful document, and it expresses as well as any other single work the religious ideals of Erasmus. There is frequent use and a definition in it of the famous Erasmian term "the philosophy of Christ." It also contains the oft-quoted passage of Erasmus wherein he hopes that Holy Scripture will be translated into the vernacular and be read by all and that the farmer and the weaver will sing verses from it at their work.

The illustrious Lactantius Firmianus, good reader, whose eloquence Jerome especially admires, as he begins to defend the Christian religion against the pagans desires especially an eloquence second only to Cicero's be given him, thinking it wrong, I believe, to want an

1. The Latin text is in *Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus: Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Hajo Holborn (Munich, 1933), pp. 139-49. The present translation was made by the editor from the Holborn edition. The only other English translation, insofar as the editor knows, is a rather quaint early one attributed to William Roy and published at Yarburg in Hesse in 1529. See Plate 5.

2. For appraisals of the *Paracelsus*, see Phillips, *Erasmus and the Northern Renaissance*, pp. 77-85, and Jacques Etienne, *Spiritualisme érasmien et théologiens lowanistes* (Louvain, 1956), pp. 18-22.
equal eloquence. But I indeed might heartily wish, if anything is to be gained by wishes of this kind, so long as I exhort all men to the most holy and wholesome study of Christian philosophy and summon them as if with the blast of a trumpet, that an eloquence far different from Cicero's be given me: an eloquence certainly much more efficacious, if less ornate than his. Or rather [I might wish for that kind of eloquence], if such power of speech was ever granted anyone, as the tales of the ancient poets not entirely without cause attributed to Mercury, who as if with a magic wand and a divine lyre induces sleep when he wishes and likewise snatches sleep away, plunging whom he wished into hell and again calling them forth from hell; or as the ancient tales assigned to Amphion and Orpheus, one of whom is supposed to have moved hard rocks, the other to have attracted oaks and ashes with a lyre; or as the Gauls ascribed to their Ogmius, leading about whither he wished all men by little chains fastened to their ears from his tongue; or as fabled antiquity attributed to Marsyas; or really, lest we linger too long on fables, as Alcibiades imputed to Socrates and old comedy to Pericles, an eloquence which not only captivates the ear with its fleeting delight but which leaves a lasting sting in the minds of its hearers, which grips, which transforms, which sends away a far different listener than it had received. One reads that the noble musician Timotheus, singing Doric melodies, was wont to rouse Alexander the Great to a desire for war. Nor were they lacking in former times who considered nothing more effective than the entrararies which the Greeks call *epodes*. But if there were any such kind of incantation anywhere, if there were any power of song which truly could inspire, if any Pytho truly swayed the heart, I would desire that it be at hand for me so that I might convince all of the most wholesome truth of all. However, k is more desirable that Christ Himself, whose business we are about, so guide the strings of our lyre that this song might deeply affect and move the minds of all, and, in fact, to accomplish this there is no need for the syllogisms and exclamations of the orators. What we desire is that nothing may stand forth with greater certainty than

3. Lactantius Firmianus was an early fourth-century Christian writer, and the author of a defense of the Christian faith entitled *Institutiones divinae*. He had a reputation for great eloquence.
the truth itself, whose expression is the more powerful, the simpler it is.

And in the first place it is not pleasing to renew at the present time this complaint, not entirely new but, alas, only too just and perhaps never more just than in these days that when men are devoting themselves with such ardent spirit to all their studies, this philosophy of Christ alone is derided by some, even Christians, is neglected by many, and is discussed by a few, but in a cold manner (I shall not say insincerely). Moreover, in all other branches of learning which human industry has brought forth, nothing is so hidden and obscure which the keenness of genius has not explored, nothing is so difficult which tremendous exertion has not overcome. Yet how is it that even those of us who profess to be Christian fail to embrace with the proper spirit this philosophy alone? Platonists, Pythagoreans, Academics, Stoics, Cynics, Peripatetics, Epicureans not only have a deep understanding of the doctrines of their respective sects, but they commit them to memory, and they fight fiercely in their behalf, willing even to die rather than abandon the defense of their author. Then why do not we evince far greater spirit for Christ, our Author and Prince? Who does not judge it very shameful for one professing Aristotle's philosophy not to know that man's opinion about the causes of lightning, about prime matter, about the infinite? And neither does this knowledge render a man happy, nor does the lack of it render him unhappy. And do not we, initiated in so many ways, drawn by so many sacraments to Christ, think it shameful and base to know nothing of HIS doctrines, which offer the most certain happiness to all? But what purpose is served to exaggerate the matter by controversy, since it is what I might call a kind of wicked madness to wish to compare Christ with Zeno or Aristotle and His teaching with, to put it mildly, the paltry precepts of those men? Let them magnify the leaders of their sect as much as they can or wish. Certainly He alone was a teacher who came forth from heaven, He alone could teach certain doctrine, since it is eternal wisdom, He alone, the sole author of human salvation, taught what pertains to salvation, He alone fully vouches for whatsoever He taught, He alone is able to grant whatsoever He has promised. If anything is brought to us from the Chaldeans or Egyptians, we desire more eagerly to examine it because of the fact that it comes from a strange world,
and part of its value is to have come from far off; and oftentimes we are anxiously
tormented by the fancies of an insignificant man, not to say an impostor, not only to no
avail but with great loss of time (I am not adding a more serious note, for the matter as it
stands is most serious). But why does not such a desire also excite Christian minds who
are convinced and it is a fact that this teaching has come not from Egypt or Syria but from
heaven itself? Why do not all of us ponder within ourselves that this must be a new and
wonderful kind of philosophy since, in order to transmit it to mortals, He who was God
became man, He who was immortal became mortal, He who was in the heart of the Father
descended to earth? It must be a great matter, and in no sense a commonplace one,
whatever it is, because that wondrous Author came to teach after so many families of
distinguished philosophers, after so many remarkable prophets. Why, then, out of pious
curiosity do we not investigate, examine, explore each tenet? Especially since this kind of
wisdom, so extraordinary that once for all it renders foolish the entire wisdom of this world,
may be drawn from its few books as from the most limpid springs with far less labor than
Aristotle's doctrine is extracted from so many obscure volumes, from those huge
commentaries of the interpreters at odds with one another and I shall not add with how
much greater reward. Indeed, here there is no requirement that you approach equipped with
so many troublesome sciences. The journey is simple, and it is ready for anyone. Only
bring a pious and open mind, possessed above all with a pure and simple faith. Only be
docile, and you have advanced far in this philosophy. It itself supplies inspiration as a
teacher which communicates itself to no one more gladly than to minds that are without
guile. The teachings of the others, besides that fact that they give hope of a false happiness,
drive off the natural talents of many by the very difficulty, it is clear, of their precepts. This
doctrine in an equal degree accommodates itself to all, lowers itself to the little ones,
adjusts itself to their measure, nourishing them with milk, bearing, fostering, sustaining
them, doing everything until we grow in Christ. Again, not only does it serve the lowliest,
but it is also an object of wonder to those at the top. And the more you shall have
progressed in its riches, the more you shall have withdrawn it from the shadow of the power
of any other. It is a small affair to the little ones and more than the
highest affair to the great. It casts aside no age, no sex, no fortune or position in life. The sun itself is not as common and accessible to all as is Christ's teaching. It keeps no one at a distance, unless a person, begrudging himself, keeps himself away.

Indeed, I disagree very much with those who are unwilling that Holy Scripture, translated into the vulgar tongue, be read by the uneducated, as if Christ taught such intricate doctrines that they could scarcely be understood by very few theologians, or as if the strength of the Christian religion consisted in men's ignorance of it. The mysteries of kings, perhaps, are better concealed, but Christ wishes His mysteries published as openly as possible. I would that even the lowliest women read the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles. And I would that they were translated into all languages so that they could be read and understood not only by Scots and Irish but also by Turks and Saracens. Surely the first step is to understand in one way or another. It may be that many will ridicule, but some may be taken captive. Would that, as a result, the farmer sing some portion of them at the plow, the weaver hum some parts of them to the movement of his shuttle, the traveler lighten the weariness of the journey with stories of this kind! Let all the conversations of every Christian be drawn from this source. For in general our daily conversations reveal what we are. Let each one comprehend what he can, let him express what he can. Whoever lags behind, let him not envy him who is ahead; whoever is in the front rank, let him encourage him who follows, not despair of him. Why do we restrict a profession common to all to a few? For it is not fitting, since baptism is common in an equal degree to all Christians, wherein there is the first profession of Christian philosophy, and since the other sacraments and at length the reward of immortality belong equally to all, that doctrines alone should be reserved for those very few whom today the crowd call theologians or monks, the very persons whom, although they comprise one of the smallest parts of the Christian populace, yet I might wish to be in greater measure what they are styled. For I fear that one may find among the theologians men who are far removed from the title they bear, that is, men who discuss earthly matters, not divine, and that among the monks who profess the poverty of Christ and the contempt of the world you may find something more than worldliness. To
me he is truly a theologian who teaches not by skill with intricate syllogisms but by a disposition of mind, by the very expression and the eyes, by his very life that riches should be disdained, that the Christian should not put his trust in the supports of this world but must rely entirely on heaven, that a wrong should not be avenged, that a good should be wished for those wishing ill, that we should deserve well of those deserving ill, that all good men should be loved and cherished equally as members of the same body, that the evil should be tolerated if they cannot be corrected, that those who are stripped of their goods, those who are turned away from possessions, those who mourn are blessed and should not be deplored, and that death should even be desired by the devout, since it is nothing other than a passage to immortality. And if anyone under the inspiration of the spirit of Christ preaches this kind of doctrine, inculcates it, exhorts, incites, and encourages men to it, he indeed is truly a theologian, even if he should be a common laborer or weaver. And if anyone exemplifies this doctrine in his life itself, he is in fact a great doctor. Another, perhaps, even a non-Christian, may discuss more subtly how the angels understand, but to persuade us to lead here an angelic life, free from every stain, this indeed is the duty of the Christian theologian.

But if anyone objects that these notions are somewhat stupid and vulgar, I should respond to him only that Christ particularly taught these rude doctrines, that the Apostles inculcated them, that however vulgar they are, they have brought forth for us so many sincerely Christian and so great a throng of illustrious martyrs. This philosophy, unlettered as it appears to these very objectors, has drawn the highest princes of the world and so many kingdoms and peoples to its laws, an achievement which the power of tyrants and the erudition of philosophers cannot claim. Indeed I do not object to having that latter wisdom, if it seems worthwhile, discussed among the educated. But let the lowly mass of Christians console themselves certainly with this title because, whether the Apostles knew or other Fathers understood these subtleties or not, they surely didn't teach them. If princes in the execution of their duties would manifest what I have referred to as a vulgar doctrine, if priests would inculcate it in sermons, if schoolmasters would instill it in students rather than that erudition which they draw from the fonts of Aristotle and Averroës, Christendom would
not be so disturbed on all sides by almost continuous war, everything would not be boiling
over with such a mad desire to heap up riches by fair means or foul, every subject, sacred
as well as profane, would not be made to resound everywhere with so much noisy
disputation, and, finally, we would not differ from those who do not profess the philosophy
of Christ merely in name and ceremonial. For upon these three ranks of men principally the
task of either renewing or advancing the Christian religion has been placed: on the princes
and the magistrates who serve in their place, on the bishops and their delegated priests, and
on those who instruct the young eager for all knowledge. If it happen that they, having laid
aside their own affairs, should sincerely cooperate in Christ, we would certainly see in not
so many years a true and, as Paul says, a genuine race of Christians everywhere emerge, a
people who would restore the philosophy of Christ not in ceremonies alone and in
syllogistic propositions but in the heart itself and in the whole life. The enemies of the
Christian name will far more quickly be drawn to the faith of Christ by these weapons than
by threats or arms. In the conquest of every citadel nothing is more powerful than the truth
itself. He is not a Platonist who has not read the works of Plato; and is he a theologian, let
alone a Christian, who has not read the literature of Christ? Who loves me, Christ says,
keeps my word, a distinguishing mark which He himself prescribed. Therefore, if we are
truly and sincerely Christian, if we truly believe in Him who has been sent from Heaven to
teach us that which the wisdom of the philosophers could not do, if we truly expect from
Him what no prince, however powerful, can give, why is anything more important to us than
His literature? Why indeed does anything seem learned that is not in harmony with His
decrees? Why in the case of this literature that should be revered do we also allow
ourselves, and I shall say almost to a greater extent than do the secular interpreters in the
case of the imperial laws or the books of the physicians, to speak whatever comes to mind,
to distort, to obscure? We drag heavenly doctrines down to the level of our own life as if it
were a Lydian rule, and while we seek to avoid by every means appearing to be ignorant
and for this reason gather in whatever is of account in secular literature, that which is of
special value in Christian philosophy I shall not say we corrupt, but and no one can deny
we restrict to
a few, although Christ wished nothing to be more public. In this kind of philosophy, located as it is more truly in the disposition of the mind than in syllogisms, life means more than debate, inspiration is preferable to erudition, transformation is a more important matter than intellectual comprehension. Only a very few can be learned, but all can be Christian, all can be devout, and I shall boldly add: all can be theologians.

Indeed, this philosophy easily penetrates into the minds of all, an action in especial accord with human nature. Moreover, what else is the philosophy of Christ, which He Himself calls a rebirth, than the restoration of human nature originally well formed? By the same token, although no one has taught this more perfectly and more effectively than Christ, nevertheless one may find in the books of the pagans very much which does agree with His teaching. There was never so coarse a school of philosophy that taught that money rendered a man happy. Nor has there ever been one so shameless that fixed the chief good in those vulgar honors and pleasures. The Stoics understood that no one was wise unless he was good; they understood that nothing was truly good or noble save real virtue and nothing fearful or evil save baseness alone. According to Plato, Socrates teaches in many different ways that a wrong must not be repaid with a wrong, and also that since the soul is immortal, those should not be lamented who depart this life for a happier one with the assurance of having led an upright life. In addition, he teaches that the soul must be drawn away from the inclinations of the body and led to those which are its real objectives although they are not seen. Aristotle has written in the Politics that nothing can be a delight to us, even though it is not in any way despised, except virtue alone. Epicurus also acknowledges that nothing in man's life can bring delight unless the mind is conscious of no evil, from which awareness true pleasure gushes forth as from a spring. What shall we say of this, that many notably Socrates, Diogenes, and Epictetus have presented a good portion of His teaching? But since Christ both taught and presented the same doctrine so much more fully, is it not a monstrous thing that Christians either disregard or neglect or even ridicule it? If there are things that belong particularly to Christianity in these ancient writers, let us follow them. But if these alone can truly make a Christian, why do we consider them as
almost more obsolete and replaced than the Mosaic books? The first step, however, is to
know what He taught; the next is to carry it into effect. Therefore, I believe, anyone should
not think himself to be Christian if he disputes about instances, relations, quiddities, and
formalities with an obscure and irksome confusion of words, but rather if he holds and
exhibits what Christ taught and showed forth. Not that I condemn the industry of those who
not without merit employ their native intellectual powers in such subtle discourse, for I do
not wish anyone to be offended, but that I think, and rightly so, unless I am mistaken, that
that pure and genuine philosophy of Christ is not to be drawn from any source more
abundantly than from the evangelical books and from the Apostolic Letters, about which, if
anyone should devoutly philosophize, praying more than arguing and seeking to be
transformed rather than armed for battle, he would without a doubt find that there is nothing
pertaining to the happiness of man and the living of his life which is not taught, examined,
and unraveled in these works. If we desire to learn, why is another author more pleasing
than Christ Himself? If we seek a model for life, why does another example take
precedence for us over that of Christ Himself? If we wish some medicine against the
troublesome desires of the soul, why do we think the remedy to be more at hand
somewhere else? If we want to arouse a soul that is idle and growing listless by reading,
where, I ask, will you find sparks equally alive and efficacious? If the soul seems
distracted by the vexations of this life, why are other delights more pleasing? Why have we
steadfastly preferred to learn the wisdom of Christ from the writings of men than from
Christ Himself? And He, since He promised to be with us all days, even unto the
consummation of the world, stands forth especially in this literature, in which He lives for
us even at this time, breathes and speaks. I should say almost more effectively than when
He dwelt among men. The Jews saw and heard less than you see and hear in the books of
the Gospels, to the extent that you make use of your eyes and ears, whereby this can be
perceived and heard.

And what kind of a situation is this, I ask? We preserve the letters written by a dear friend,
we kiss them fondly, we carry them about, we read them again and again, yet there are
many thousands of Christians who, although they are learned in other respects, never read,
however, the evangelical and apostolic books in an entire lifetime. The Mohammedans hold fast to their doctrines, the Jews also today from the very cradle study the books of Moses. Why do not we in the same way distinguish ourselves in Christ? Those who profess the way of life of Benedict hold, study, absorb a rule written by man, and by one nearly uneducated for the uneducated. Those who are in the Augustinian order are well versed in the rule of their founder. The Franciscans reverence and love the little traditions of their Francis, and to whatever corner of the earth they go, they carry them with them; they do not feel safe unless the little book is on their person. Why do these men attribute more to a rule written by man than does the Christian world to its rule, which Christ delivered to all and which all have equally professed in baptism? Finally, although you may even cite a thousand rules, can anything be holier than this? And I wish that this may come to pass: just as Paul wrote that the law of Moses was not full of glory compared with the glory of the Gospel succeeding it, so may all Christians hold the Gospels and Letters of the Apostles as so holy that in comparison with them these other writings do not seem holy. What others may wish to concede to Albert the Great, to Alexander, to Thomas, to Egidio, to Richard, to Occam, they will certainly be free, as far as I am concerned, to do, for I do not want to diminish the fame of anyone or contend with the studies of men that are now of long standing.  

4 However learned these may be, however subtle, however seraphic, if they like, yet they must admit that the former are the most tried and true. Paul wishes that the spirits of those prophesying be judged whether they are of God. Augustine, reading every kind of book with discretion, asks nothing more than a just hearing also for his own works. But in this literature alone [i.e., Holy Scripture] what I do not comprehend, I nevertheless revere. It is no school of theologians that has attested this Author for us but the Heavenly Father Himself through the testimony of the divine voice, and He has done this on two occasions: first at the Jordan at the time of the Baptism, then on Mount Tabor at the Transfiguration. "This is my beloved Son," He says, "in whom I am well pleased; hear Him."  

s O solid and truly irref-


5. Matthew 3:17; 17:5.
ragable authority, as the theologians say! What is this phrase, "Hear Him"? Certainly He is the one and only teacher, let us be the disciples of Him alone. Let each one extol in his studies his own author as much as he will wish, this utterance has been said without exception of Christ alone. A dove first descended on Him, the confirmation of the Father's testimony. Peter next bears His spirit, to whom the highest Pastor three times entrusted the feeding of His sheep, feeding them without a doubt, however, on the food of Christian doctrine.6 This spirit was born again, as it were, in Paul, whom He himself called a "chosen vessel" and an extraordinary herald of His name.7 What John had drawn from that sacred font of His heart, he expressed in his own writings. What, I pray, is like this in Scotus (I do not wish that this remark be taken as a pretext for abuse), what is like this in Thomas? Nevertheless, I admire the talents of the one, and I also revere the sanctity of the other. But why do not all of us apply ourselves to philosophy in these authors of such great value? Why do we not carry them about on our persons, have them ever in our hands? Why do we not hunt through these authors, thoroughly examine them, assiduously investigate them? Why devote the greater part of life to Averroës rather than to the Gospels? Why spend nearly all of life on the ordinances of men and on opinions in contradiction with themselves? The latter, in fact, may now be the views of the more eminent theologians, if you please; but certainly the first steps of the great theologian in the days to come will be in these authors [of Holy Scripture].

Let all those of us who have pledged in baptism in the words prescribed by Christ, if we have pledged sincerely, be directly imbued with the teachings of Christ in the midst of the very embraces of parents and the caresses of nurses. For that which the new earthen pot of the soul first imbibes settles most deeply and clings most tenaciously. Let the first lisplings utter Christ, let earliest childhood be formed by the Gospels of Him whom I would wish particularly presented in such a way that children also might love Him. For as the severity of some teachers causes children to hate literature before they come to know it, so there are those who make the philosophy of Christ sad and morose, although nothing is more sweet than it. In these studies, then, let them


engage themselves until at length in silent growth they mature into strong manhood in Christ. The literature of others is such that many have greatly repented the effort expended upon it, and it happens again and again that those who have fought through all their life up to death to defend the principles of that literature, free themselves from the faction of their author at the very hour of death. But happy is that man whom death takes as he meditates upon this literature [of Christ]. Let us all, therefore, with our whole heart covet this literature, let us embrace it, let us continually occupy ourselves with it, let us fondly kiss it, at length let us die in its embrace, let us be transformed in it, since indeed studies are transmuted into morals. As for him who cannot pursue this course (but who cannot do it, if only he wishes?), let him at least reverence this literature enveloping, as it were, His divine heart. If anyone shows us the footprints of Christ, in what manner, as Christians, do we prostrate ourselves, how we adore them! But why do we not venerate instead the living and breathing likeness of Him in these books? If anyone displays the tunic of Christ, to what corner of the earth shall we not hasten so that we may kiss it? Yet were you to bring forth His entire wardrobe, it would not manifest Christ more clearly and truly than the Gospel writings. We embellish a wooden or stone statue with gems and gold for the love of Christ. Why not, rather, mark with gold and gems and with ornaments of greater value than these, if such there be, these writings which bring Christ to us so much more effectively than any paltry image? The latter represents only the form of the body if indeed it represents anything of Him but these writings bring you the living image of His holy mind and the speaking, healing, dying, rising Christ Himself, and thus they render Him so fully present that you would see less if you gazed upon Him with your very eyes.
Martin Luther

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT 1545 (1523)

There are some who have a small opinion of the Old Testament, thinking of it as a book that was given to the Jewish people only, and is now out of date, containing only stories of past times. They think that they have enough in the New Testament and pretend to seek in the Old Testament only a spiritual sense. Origen, Jerome, and many persons of high standing have held this view, but Christ says, “Search in the Scriptures, for they give testimony of me,” and St. Paul bids Timothy continue in the reading of the Scriptures, and declares, in Romans 1:2, that the Gospel was promised by God in the Scriptures, and in 1 Corinthians 15:3, he says that Christ came of the seed of David, died, and rose from the dead, according to the Scriptures; and St. Peter, too, points us back, more than once, to the Scriptures.

They do this in order to teach us that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are not to be despised, but to be read, because they themselves base the New Testament upon them, and prove it by them, and appeal to them, as St. Luke writes, in Acts 17:11, saying that they at Thessalonica searched the Scriptures daily to discover whether it agreed with what Paul taught. The ground and proof of the New Testament are surely not to be despised, and therefore the Old Testament is to be highly regarded. And what is the New Testament except an open preaching and proclamation of Christ, appointed by the sayings of the Old Testament and fulfilled by Christ?

But in order that those who know no better may have incentive and instruction for reading the Old Testament, I have prepared this introduction, with whatever ability God’ has given me. I beg and faithfully warn every pious Christian not to stumble at the simplicity of the language and the stories that will often meet him there. He should not doubt that however simple they may seem, these are the very words, works, judgments, and deeds of the high majesty, power, and wisdom of God; for this is Scripture, and it makes fools of all the wise and prudent, and stands open to the small and foolish, as Christ says, in Matthew 11:25.

Therefore let your own thoughts and feelings go, and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines, which can never be worked out, so that you may find the wisdom of God that He lays before you in such foolish and simple guise, in order that He may quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling-clothes and the mangers in which Christ lies, and to which the angel points the shepherds.
Simple and little are the swaddling-clothes, but dear is the treasure, Christ, that lies in them.

Know, then, that the Old Testament is a book of laws, which teaches what men are to do and not to do, and gives, besides, examples and stories of how these laws are kept or broken; just as the New Testament is a Gospel-book, or book of grace, and teaches where one is to get the power to fulfill the law. But in the New Testament there are given, along with the teaching about grace, many other teachings that are laws and commandments for the ruling of the flesh, since in this life the spirit is not perfected and grace alone cannot rule. Just so in the Old Testament there are, beside the laws, certain promises and offers of grace, by which the holy fathers and prophets, under the law, were kept, like us, under the faith of Christ.

Nevertheless, just as the peculiar and chief teaching of the New Testament is the proclamation of grace and peace in Christ, through the forgiveness of sins; so the peculiar and chief teaching of the Old Testament is the teaching of laws, the showing of sin, and the furtherance of good. Know that this is what you have to expect in the Old Testament.

We come, first, to the books of Moses; he teaches in his first book how all creatures were made, and (as the chief cause for his writing) whence sin came, and death, namely, by Adam's fall, from the devil's wickedness. But immediately thereafter, before Moses gets to the law, he teaches whence the help is to come, by which sin and death are to be driven out; namely, not by the law or men's own works (since there was no law as yet), but by “the seed of the woman,” Christ, promised to Adam and Abraham. Thus from the beginning of the Scriptures, and throughout them all, faith is praised above all works and laws and merits. The first book of Moses, therefore, is made up almost entirely of illustrations of faith and unbelief, and the fruits that faith and unbelief bear, and is almost a Gospel-book.

Afterward, in the second book, when the world was now: full, and was sunk in blindness, so that men scarcely knew any longer what sin was or where death came from, God brings Moses forward with the law and takes up a special people, in order to enlighten the world again by them, and by the law to reveal sin anew. Thus He organizes this people with all kinds of laws, and separates it from all other peoples, has them build a tabernacle and begins a form of worship, appoints princes and officers, and provides His people splendidly with both laws and men, to rule them in the body before the world, and in the spirit before God.

The special topic of the third book is the appointment of the priesthood, with the statutes and laws according to which the priests are to act in
teaching the people. There we see that a priestly office is instituted only because of sin, to proclaim sin to the people and make atonement before God. Thus all of its work is to deal with sin and sinners. Therefore no temporal wealth is given to the priests and they are neither commanded nor permitted to rule men's bodies, but the only work that is assigned them is to care for the people who are in sin.

In the fourth book, after the laws have been given, the princes and priests instituted, the tabernacle and the form of worship set up, and everything that pertains to a people of God made ready, then the work and the practice of all this begins, and a test is made of the way that such an order of things will go and what will happen under it. That is why this book says so much about the disobedience of the people and the plagues that came upon them, and some of the laws are interpreted and the number of the laws is increased. For that is the way it always goes; laws are quickly given, but when they are to go into effect and be enforced, they meet with nothing but hindrance, and nothing will go as the law demands. This book is a notable example of how there is nothing at all in making people righteous with laws, but, as St. Paul says, laws cause only sin and wrath.

In the fifth book, after the people have been punished because of their sins, and God has enticed them a little with grace, in order that by His kindness in giving them the two kingdoms they might be moved to keep His law with pleasure and love, — then Moses repeats the whole law, with the story of all that has happened to them (except what concerns the priesthood), and explains anew everything that belongs either to the bodily or to the spiritual government of a people. Thus Moses, as a perfect lawgiver, fulfilled all the duties of his office; he not only gave the law, but was there when men were to fulfill it, and when things went wrong, he explained it and re-established it. But this explanation in the fifth book really contains nothing else than faith toward God and love to one's neighbor; for all God's laws come to that. Therefore, down to the twentieth chapter, Moses, in his explanation of the law, guards against everything that may destroy faith in God, and from there to the end of the book, against everything that hinders love.

It is to be observed, in the first place, that Moses provides so exactly for the organization of the people under laws as to leave human reason no room to choose a single work of its own, or to invent its own form of worship; for he not only teaches fear, love, and trust toward God, but also provides so many ways of outward worship, — sacrifices, thanksgivings, fasts, mortifications, etc., — that no one needs to choose anything else.
Moreover he gives instructions for planting and tilling and marrying and fighting and ruling children, servants, and households, buying and selling, borrowing and repaying, and everything that one can do, either outwardly or inwardly. It goes so far that some of the prescriptions are to be regarded as foolish and useless.

Why, dear sir, does God do that? In the end, because He has taken this people to be His own and has willed to be their God; therefore He would so rule them that all their doings may surely be right in His eyes. For if anyone does anything for which God's Word has not first given warrant, it counts for nothing before God and is labor lost, for in the Fifth Book in Deuteronomy 4:2 and Deuteronomy 12:32, He forbids any addition to His laws, and in Deuteronomy 12:8 He says that they shall not do what seems to them right. The Psalter, too, and all the prophets lament that the people are doing good works that they themselves have chosen and that were not commanded by God. He cannot and will not suffer those who are His to undertake to do anything that He has not commanded, no matter how good it may be; for obedience, which depends on God's Word, is of all works the noblest and best.

Since this life, however, cannot be without external forms of worship, He put before them all these forms and included them in His commandment, so that if they must or would do God any outward service, they might take one of these, and not some form of service that they themselves had invented. So they could be sure and certain that their work was done in obedience to God and His Word. Thus they are prevented on every hand from following their own reason and free will, in doing good and living aright; and yet room, place, time, person, work, and form are so determined and prescribed, that they cannot complain that they must follow the example of alien worship.

In the second place, it is to be noted that the laws are of three kinds. Some speak only of temporal things, as do our imperial laws. These are established by God chiefly because of the wicked, that they may not do worse things. Such laws are for prevention rather than for instruction; f414 as when Moses commands to dismiss a wife with a letter of separation, or that a husband shall bring an “offering of jealousy” for his wife, and may take other wives besides.

All these are temporal laws. — There are some, however, that teach the external worship of God, as was said above.

Over and above these are the laws about faith and love, so that all other laws must and ought to be measured by the laws of faith and love; that is to say, they are to be kept where their observance does
not conflict with faith and love; but where they conflict with faith and love, they are entirely void.

Therefore we read that David did not kill the murderer Joab, though he had twice deserved death; and in 2 Samuel 14:11 he promises the woman of Tekoa that her son shall not die, though he has slain his brother; Absalom, too, he did not kill. Moreover, David himself ate of the holy bread of the priests, and Tamar thought the king might give her in marriage to her stepbrother, Amnon. From these and similar stories one sees plainly that the kings, priests, and heads of the people often transgressed the laws boldly, at the demand of faith and love, and therefore that faith and love are always to be mistresses of the law and to have all laws in their power. For since all laws aim at faith and love, none of them can be valid, or be a law, if it conflicts with faith and love.

Even to the present day, then, the Jews are greatly in error when they hold so strictly and so hard to some of the laws of Moses. They would rather let love and peace be destroyed than eat or drink with us, or do things of that kind. They do not see the real meaning of the law. This understanding of it is necessary to all who live under laws, and not to the Jews only; for Christ says, in Matthew 12:11, that one might break the Sabbath if an ox had fallen into a pit, and might help it out, though that would be only a temporal necessity and a temporal injury; how much more then ought one boldly break all kinds of laws when bodily necessity demands it, provided nothing is done against faith and love, as Christ says that David did when he ate the holy bread.

But why does Moses mix up his laws in such a disorderly way? Why does he not put the temporal laws together in one group and the spiritual in another, and the laws of faith and love in still another? Moreover, he sometimes repeats a law so often and uses certain words so many times that it becomes tedious to read it or listen to it. The answer is that Moses writes as the case demands, so that his book is a picture and illustration of government and life. For this is what happens when things are moving, — now this work has to be done and now that, and no man can so arrange his life (if he is to act in a godly way) that this day he uses only spiritual laws and that day only temporal, but God disposes the laws as He sets the stars in the heavens and the flowers in the fields, and a man must be ready every hour for anything, and do the first thing that comes to his hand. The books of Moses are mixed up just this way.

That he is so insistent and often repeats the same thing shows the nature of his office; for one who is to rule a people with laws must always hold on, always insist, and be patient with the people, as with asses. No work of law is done with pleasure and love; it is all forced and compelled. Since Moses, then, is a lawgiver, he has to show by his
insistence that the work of the law is a forced work, and has to make the people weary, until, through this insistence, they recognize their illness and their dislike for God's Law, and long for grace, as appears below.

In the third place, Moses' true intention is to reveal sin, and put to shame all the presumption of human ability; therefore St. Paul calls him in Galatians 2 and 3, "a minister of sin," and his office "an office of death;" and in Romans 3 and Romans 7:7, he says, "By the law cometh only the knowledge of sin," and "by the works of the law no one becomes righteous before God. For by the law Moses can do, no more than tell what men ought to do and not to do; but power, and ability to do it and not to do it he does not give, and so he lets us stick in sin. If we, then, stick in sin, death presses instantly upon us as vengeance, and punishment for sin.

Therefore Paul calls sin "the sting of death," because it is by sin that death has all its right and power over us. But if it were not for the law, there would be no sin; therefore it is all the fault of Moses, who, by the law, stirs up and censures sin, and then upon sin death follows, with its power, so that Moses' office is rightly called by St. Paul an office of sin and death; for by his law-giving he brings nothing upon us but sin and death.

Nevertheless, this office of sin and death is good and very necessary; for where God's law is not, there human reason is so blind that it cannot recognize sin. Human reason does not know that unbelief and despair of God is sin; nay, it knows nothing about man's duty to believe God and trust Him; thus it goes on, hardened in its blindness, and feels this sin not at all, doing meanwhile some works that would otherwise be good and leading an outwardly honorable life. Then it thinks it stands well, and enough has been done in this matter. We see this in the heathen and the hypocrites, when their life is at its best. Besides, the reason does not know that the wicked inclination of the flesh and hatred against enemies are sin, but because it feels that all men are so inclined, it holds that these things are natural and right and thinks it enough to guard against outward wrongdoing.

Thus it goes on and regards its illness as strength, its sin as right, its bad as good, and can make no progress.

See, then! To drive away this blindness and hardened presumption, Moses' office is necessary. Now he cannot drive them away, unless he reveals them, and makes them known. He does this by the law, when he teaches that men ought to fear, trust, believe, and love God; and ought to have beside no evil desire or hatred for any man. When Nature, then, hears this aright, it must be frightened, for it certainly finds
neither trust nor faith, neither fear nor love to God, and
neither love nor purity toward one’s neighbor, but only unbelief, doubt,
contempt and hatred to God, and only evil will and desire toward
one’s neighbor. But where it finds this, death is instantly before its eyes,
ready to devour such a sinner and swallow him up in hell.

See, that is what is meant by bringing death upon us by sin and killing us
by sin, that is, stirring up sin by the law, and setting it before our eyes, and
driving all our presumption into despondency and trembling and despair,
so that a man can do no more than cry, with the prophet, “I
am rejected by God,” or, as we say in German, “I am the devil’s; I can never
be saved.”

That is what St. Paul means by those short words in 1 Corinthians 15:56,
“The sting of death is sin,’ but the strength of sin is the law.” It is as if he
were saying, “Death stings and slays us, because of the sin that is found in
us and makes us guilty of death; but sin is found in us and gives us
so mightily to death, because of the law, which reveals sin to us
and teaches us to recognize it; we did not know it before, and therefore
felt secure.”

Now see with what power Moses conducts and performs his office. For, in
order to put Nature to the very utmost shame, he not only gives laws that
speak of natural and true sins, such as the Ten Commandments, but he
makes sins of things that are in their nature, no sins, and forces and p
erasers sins upon them in heaps. For unbelief and evil desire are, in
their nature, sin, an worthy of death; but not to eat leavened bread on
Easter, and to eat any unclean beast, to make no sign on the body, and all
those things that the Levitical priesthood deals with as sin, — these things
are not, in their nature, sinful or wicked, but they become sins because
they are forbidden by the law. This law can be done away; but the
Ten Commandments cannot be done away, for sin against the
Ten Commandments would be sin, even though there were
no commandments, or they were not known; just as the unbelief of
the heathen is sin, even though they do not know or think that it is sin.

Thus we see that these many laws of Moses were given not only to prevent
anyone from choosing ways of his own to do good and live well, as has
been said above, but rather that sins might become more, and be heaped
up beyond measure, to burden the conscience so that hardened blindness might have to recognize itself and feel its own. inability
and nothingness in respect of good, and thus be compelled and forced by
the law to seek something beyond the law and its own ability, namely,
God’s grace, promised in Christ, Who was to come. Every law of God is
good and right, even if it only bids men carry dung or gather straw, and no
man can be righteous or good of heart who does not keep this good law, or
who keeps it unwillingly. But Nature cannot keep it otherwise than unwillingly; therefore, through God’s law, it must recognize and feel its wickedness, and it must sigh and long for the aid of divine grace in Christ.

Then, when Christ comes, the law ceases, especially the Levitical law, which, as has been said, makes sins of things that are not in their nature, sinful. The Ten-Commandments do not cease, in the sense that they are no longer to be kept or fulfilled, but Moses’ part in them ceases, and no longer strengthens sin by the Ten Commandments, and sin is no longer the sting of death. For through Christ sin is forgiven, God is reconciled, and man’s heart has begun to be inclined to the law. Moses can no longer rebuke it and make it sinful, because it has not kept the commandments and is guilty of death, as he did before grace came and before Christ was there.

St. Paul teaches this, in 2 Corinthians 3:7, when he says that the glory in the countenance of Moses ceases because of the glory in the countenance of Jesus Christ; that is, the work of Moses, which makes sinners of us and puts us to shame with the brightness of the knowledge of our wickedness and nothingness, no longer causes us pain and no longer terrifies us with death. For we now have the glory in the face of Christ, that is, the work of grace whereby we know Christ, by whose righteousness, life, and strength we fulfill the law and overcome death and hell. The three apostles saw Moses and Elias on Matthew Tabor, and yet were not frightened at them, because of the tender glory in the face of Christ; but in Exodus 34, where Christ was not present, the children of Israel could not endure the glory and brightness in Moses’ face, and he had to put a covering over it.

There are three kinds of pupils of the law. The first are those who hear the law and despise it, and lead an impious life, without fear. To these the law does not come. They are signified by the calf-worshipers in the wilderness, on whose account Moses broke the tables; he did not bring them the law.

The second are those who attempt to fulfill it by their own power, without grace. They are signified by the people who could not look on Moses’ countenance, when he brought the tables a second time. To these the law comes, but they endure it not; therefore they put a covering over it and lead a life of hypocrisy, with outward works of the law, though the law makes everything sin, if the covering is removed. For the law shows that our ability is nothing without Christ’s grace.

The third are those who see Moses clearly, without a covering. These are they who understand the meaning of the law and how it
demands impossible things. Then sin comes into power, death is mighty, Goliath’s spear is like a weaver’s beam and its head weighs six hundred shekels of brass, and all the children of Israel flee before him, but David only. Christ, our Lord, saves us from all that; for if Christ’s glory did not come along with this glory of Moses, no one could bear the glory of the law, the terror of sin and death. These pupils fall away from all works and presumption and learn from the law nothing else except to recognize sin and to sigh for Christ; and this is the true work of Moses and the true purpose of the law.

So Moses himself has told us that his work and teaching should last until Christ, and then cease, when he says in Deuteronomy 18, “A prophet shall the Lord thy God raise up unto thee from among thy brethren, like unto me; him shalt thou hear, etc.” This is the noblest saying in all of Moses; indeed it is the very pith of him; and the apostles appealed to it and made great use of it to strengthen the Gospel and abolish the law; all the prophets, too, drew heavily upon it. For since God here promises another Moses, whom they are to hear, it follows of necessity that he would teach something different from Moses; and Moses gives up his power to him, and yields to him, so that he may be heard. This prophet cannot, then, teach law, for Moses has done that to the uttermost, and for the law’s sake there would be no need to raise up another prophet. Therefore this word was certainly spoken concerning the teaching of grace and concerning Christ.

For this reason also, St. Paul calls the law of Moses “the Old Testament,” and Christ does the same when He institutes “the New Testament.” Thus it is a testament, because in it God promises and bequeaths to the people of Israel the land of Canaan, if they keep it. He gave it to them, also, and it was confirmed by the death and blood of sheep and goats. But since this testament rested not upon God’s grace, but upon men’s works, it had to grow old and cease, and the promised land had to be lost again, because the law cannot be fulfilled by works. And another testament had to come, which would not grow old, and would not rest upon our deeds, but upon God’s words and works, so that it might last forever. Therefore it is confirmed by the death and blood of an eternal Person, and an everlasting land is promised and given.

Let this be enough about the books and work of Moses. ‘What, then, are the other books, the prophets and the histories?’ I answer: They are nothing else than what Moses is; for all of them do the work that Moses does, and guard against the false prophets, that they may not lead the people to works, but allow them to stay in the work of Moses and the knowledge of sin. They hold fast to this purpose, in order to keep the people conscious of their own impotence through a right understanding of the law, and thus drive them to Christ, as Moses does. Therefore
they enlarge upon what Moses says of Christ, and furnish two kinds of examples, — pies of those who understand Moses and those who do not understand him rightly, — together with examples of the punishments and rewards that come to both.

Thus the prophets are nothing else than administrators and witnesses of Moses and his work, to bring everyone to Christ through the law.

In conclusion, I ought also indicate the spiritual meaning presented to us by the Levitical law and the Mosaic priesthood. But there is too much of this to write; it needs space and time, and should be expounded with the living voice. For Moses is, indeed, a well of all wisdom and understanding, out of which has sprung all that the prophets knew and said. Moreover, even the New Testament flows out of it and is founded in it, as we have heard. Let it be my service to give a little hint to those who have the grace and understanding to search for it.

If, then, you would interpret well and surely, set Christ before you; for He is the man to whom it all applies. Make nothing else of the high priest Aaron than Christ alone, as is done by the Epistle to the Hebrews, which is almost enough, all by itself, to interpret all the figures of Moses. Likewise it is certain that Christ Himself is both the sacrifice and the altar, for He sacrificed Himself, with His own blood; as the same Epistle announces.

Now, as the Levitical high priest, by his sacrifice, took away only the artificial sins, which were in their nature no sins, so our high priest, Christ, by His own sacrifice and blood, has taken away the true sin, which is in its nature sin, and He has gone in once through the veil to God to make atonement for us. Thus you should apply to Christ personally and to no one else, all that is written about the high priest.

But the high priest's sons, who are engaged in the daily sacrifice, you should interpret to mean ourselves, who, in the presence of our father Christ, sitting in heaven, live here on earth in the body, and have not passed through to Him except by faith, spiritually. Their office of slaughter and sacrifice signifies nothing else than the preaching of the Gospel, by which the old man is slain and offered to God, burned and consumed by the fire of love, in the Holy Ghost; and this sacrifice is a sweet savor to God, that is, it produces a conscience that is good, pure, and secure before God. This is the interpretation that St. Paul makes, in Romans 12:1, when he teaches that we are to offer our bodies to God, a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice; and this we do (as has been said) by the constant practice of the Gospel, by preaching it and believing it.
Let this suffice for the present as a brief suggestion for seeking Christ and the Gospel in the Old Testament. He that reads this Bible should know that I have been careful to put the Name of God that the Jews call Tetragrammaton in capital letters, and the other, which they call Adonaihaf in capitals; for among all the names of God, these two alone are applied in the Scriptures to the real, true God, while the others are often ascribed to the angels and saints. I have done this so that men can draw the strong conclusion that Christ is true God, since Jeremiah 23:6 calls HimLORD, saying, “They shall call HimLORD, our Righteousness.” The same thing is to be found in more passages.

Herewith, I commend all my readers to Christ, and ask that they will help me get from God the power to carry this work through to a profitable end, for I freely admit that I undertook too much, especially in trying to put the Old Testament into German. The Hebrew language, sad to say, has gone down so far that even the Jews know little enough about it, and their glosses and interpretations (which I have tested) are not to be trusted. I think that if the Bible is to come up again, we Christians are the ones who must do the work, for we have the understanding of Christ, without which the knowledge of the language is nothing. Because they were without it, the old interpreters, even Jerome, made mistakes in many passages.

Though I cannot claim that I have got everything, nevertheless, I venture to say that this German Bible is plainer and surer, at many points, than the Latin, and so it is true that if the printers do not, as usual, spoil it with their carelessness, the German language has here a better Bible than the Latin language. I call upon its readers to say whether this is so.

And now, of course, the mud will stick to the wheel, and there will be no one so stupid that he will not want to be my master in this work, and criticize me here and there. Let them go. From the beginning I have considered the fact that it would be easier to find ten thousand to criticize my work than one to do a twentieth of it after me. I, too, would like to be a great scholar and give brilliant proof of what I know by criticizing St. Jerome’s Latin Bible, but he also could defy me to do the work after him.

If there is anyone who is so far above me in scholarship, let him undertake to translate the whole Bible into German, and let him tell me, after that, what he can do. If he does better than I, why should he not be preferred to me. I thought I was a scholar, and I know that, by God’s grace, I am more learned than all the sophists in the universities; but now I see that I cannot handle even my own native German tongue. Nor have I read, up to this time, a book or letter which contained the real German language. No one thinks of speaking German rightly either, especially the people in the chancelleries and the miserable preachers and wretched writers who think they have the right to change the German tongue, and invent new words for
us every day, — beherzigen, behandigen, erspriesslich, erschiesslich, and the like. Yes, my dear man, there are also bethoren and ernaren. In a word, if we were, all of us, to work together, we would have plenty to do in bringing the Bible to light, one with his knowledge, another with his language. Even as it is, I have not worked at this alone, but have used the services of anyone whom I could get. Therefore I ask everyone to desist from abuse and leave the poor people undisturbed, and help me, if he can. If he will not do that, let him take up the Bible himself and make one of his own. Those who only abuse and worry others, are certainly not so godly and honest that they would care to have a pure Bible, since they know that they cannot produce it; but they would like to be clever masters of another’s science, though in their own science they have never been even pupils.

PREFACE TO THE NEW TESTAMENT 1545 (1522)

It would be right and proper that this book should appear without preface and without any other name than that of its authors, and convey only its own name and its own language. But many wild interpretations and prefaces have driven the thought of Christians to a point where no one any longer knows what is Gospel or Law, Old Testament or New. Necessity demands, therefore, that it should have an announcement, or preface, by which the simple man can be brought back from the old notions to the right road, and taught what he is to expect in this book, so that he may not seek laws and commandments where he ought to be seeking the Gospel and God’s promises.

Therefore it should be known, in the first place, that the idea must be given up that there are four Gospels and only four Evangelists. The division of the New Testament books into legal, historical, prophetic and wisdom books, is also to be rejected entirely. Some make this division, thinking that by it they are somehow comparing the New with the Old Testament. On the contrary, it is to be held firmly that,] Just as the Old Testament is a book in which are written God’s laws and commandments, together with the history of those who kept and of those who did not keep them; so the New Testament is a book in which are written the Gospel and the promises of God, together with the history of those who believe and of those who do not believe them. For Gospel is a Greek word, and means in Greek, a good message, good tidings, good news, a good report, which one sings and tells with rejoicing. So, when David overcame the great Goliath, there came among the Jewish people the good report and encouraging news that their terrible enemy had been smitten and they had been rescued and given joy and peace; and they sang and danced and were glad for it.
So the Gospel, too, is a good story and report, sounded forth into all the world by the apostles, telling of a true David who strove with sin, death, and devil, and overcame them, and thereby rescued all those who were captive in sin, afflicted with death, and overpowered by the devil; He made them righteous, gave them life, and saved them, so that they were given peace and brought back to God. For this they sing, and thank and praise God, and are glad forever, if only they believe firmly and are steadfast in faith.

This report and encouraging tidings, or evangelical and divine news, is also called a New Testament, because it is a testament, when a dying man bequeath his property, after his death, to heirs whom he names, and Christ, before His death commanded and bequeathed this Gospel, to be preached into all the world, and thereby gave to all who believe, as their possession, everything that He had, that is, His life, in which He swallowed up death; His righteousness, by which He blotted out sin; His salvation, with which He overcame everlasting damnation. A poorman, dead in sin and tied for hell, can hear nothing more comforting than this precious and tender message about Christ, and from the bottom of his heart, he must laugh and be glad over it, if he believes it true.

Now to strengthen this faith, God promised this Gospel and testament in many ways, by the prophets in the Old Testament, as St. Paul says, in Romans 1:1, “I am separated to preach the Gospel of Christ, which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scripture, concerning His Son, who was born of the seed of David, etc.”

To indicate some of these places: — He gave the first promise, when He said to the serpent, in Genesis 3:15, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall tread on thy head and thou shalt sting his heel.” Christ is the seed of this woman, and He has trodden upon the devil’s head, i.e., sin, death, hell, and all his power, for without this seed, no man can escape sin, death, or hell.

Again, in Genesis 22:18, He promised Abraham, “Through thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” “Christ is the seed of Abraham,” says St. Paul, in Galatians 3:16, and He has blessed all the world through the Gospel, for where Christ is not, there is still the curse that fell upon Adam and his children when he had sinned, so that all of them together are guilty of sin, death, and hell, and must belong to them.

Against this curse the Gospel blesses all the world by the public announcement, “He that believeth in this seed shall be blessed,” that is, rid of sin and righteous, and shall remain alive and be saved forever; as Christ Himself says, in John 11:26, “He that believeth in me shall never die.”
Again, He made this promise to David, in 2 Samuel 7:12, when He said, "I will raise up thy seed after thee, who shall build a house to my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." That is the kingdom of Christ, of which the Gospel speaks, an everlasting kingdom, a kingdom of life, salvation, and righteousness, and all those who believe shall enter into it from out of the prison of sin and death.

There are many more such promises of the Gospel in the other prophets also, for example, in Micah 5:2, "And thou, Bethlehem, Ephratah, though thou art small in comparison with the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall come for me Him who is Lord in Israel"; and again in Hosea 13:14, "I will redeem them from hell and rescue them from death; death, I will be to thee a poison; hell, I will be to thee a pestilence."

The Gospel, then, is nothing but the preaching about Christ, Son of God and of David, true God and man, who by His death and resurrection has overcome all men's sin, and death and hell, for us who believe in Him.

Thus the Gospel can be either a brief or a lengthy message; one can describe it briefly, another at length. He describes it at length, who describes many works and words of Christ, — as do the four Evangelists; he describes it briefly who does not tell of Christ's works, but, indicates shortly how by His death and resurrection He has overcome sin, death, and hell for those who believe in Him, as do St. Peter and St. Paul.

See to it, therefore, that you do not make of Christ a second Moses or of the Gospel a book of laws and doctrines, as has been done heretofore; and certain prefaces, even those of St. Jerome, speak for this. For the Gospel does not really demand works of ours by which we become righteous and are saved, nay, it condemns such works; but it does demand faith in Christ, that He has overcome for us sin, death, and hell, and thus makes us righteous, and gives us life and salvation, not through our works, but through His own works, death, and suffering, in order that we may avail ourselves of His death and victory, as though they were our own.

To be sure, Christ, in the Gospel, and St. Peter and St. Paul besides, do give many commandments and doctrines, and expound the law, but these are to be counted like all Christ's other works and benefits. To know His works and the things that happened to Him, is not yet a knowledge of the Gospel, for if you know only these things, you do not yet know that He has overcome sin, death, and devil. So, too, it is not yet knowledge of the Gospel, when you know these doctrines and commandments, but only when the voice comes that says, "Christ is your own, with His life,
teaching, works, death, resurrection, and all that He is, has, does, and can do."

We see, also, that He does not compel us but invites us kindly and says, "Blessed are the poor, etc.", and the apostles use the words, "I exhort," "I entreat," "I beg." Thus one sees on every hand that the Gospel is not a book of law, but really a preaching of the benefits of Christ, shown to us and given to us for our own, if we believe. But Moses, in his books, drives, compels, threatens, smites and rebukes terribly; for he is a law-giver and driver.

Hence it comes that to a believer no law is given by which he becomes righteous before God, as St. Paul says in I Timothy 1, because he is alive and righteous and saved by faith, and he needs nothing more, except to prove his faith by works. Nay, if faith is there, he cannot hold himself back; he shows himself, breaks out into good works, confesses and teaches this Gospel before people, and risks his life for it. Everything that he lives and does is directed to his neighbor's profit, in order to help him, not only to the attainment of this grace, but in body, property, and honor. He sees that this is what Christ has done for him, and he follows Christ's example.

That is what Christ meant when He gave, at last, no other commandment than love, by which men were to know who were His disciples and true believers. For where works and love do not break forth, there faith is not right, the Gospel does not take hold, and Christ is not rightly known. See, then, that you so approach the books of the New Testament as to learn to read them in this way. [From all this you can now judge all the books and decide, among them which are the best. John's Gospel and St. Paul's Epistles, especially that to the Romans, and St. Peter's first Epistle are the true kernel and marrow of all the books. They ought rightly be the first books and it would be advisable for every Christian to read them first and most, and by daily reading, make them as familiar as his daily bread.

In them you find not many works and miracles of Christ described, but you do find it depicted, in masterly fashion, how faith in Christ overcomes sin, death, and hell, and gives life, righteousness, and salvation. This is the real nature of the Gospel, as you have heard.

If I had to do without one or the other, — either the works or preaching of Christ, — I would rather do without His works than His preaching; for the works do not help me, but His words give life, as He Himself says. Now John writes very little about the works of Christ, but very much about His preaching, while the other Evangelists write much of
His works and little of His preaching; therefore John's Gospel is the one, tender, true chief Gospel, far, far to be preferred to the other three and placed high above them. So, too, the Epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter surpass the other three Gospels, — Matthew, Mark and Luke.

In a word, St. John's Gospel and his first Epistle, St. Paul's Epistles, especially Romans, Galatians and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first Epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that it is necessary and good for you to know, even though you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore St. James' Epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to them; for it has nothing of the nature of the Gospel about it. But more of this in other prefaces.
Tyndale's Prefaces

NEW TESTAMENT, 1526


To the Reader

Give diligence, reader (I exhort thee) that thou come with a pure mind, and, as the Scripture saith, with a single eye, unto the words of health and of eternal life, by the which (if we repent and believe them) we are born anew, created afresh, and enjoy the fruits of the blood of Christ. Which blood crieth not for vengeance, as the blood of Abel, but hath purchased life, love, favor, grace, blessing, and whatsoever is promised in the Scriptures, to them that believe and obey God, and standeth between us and wrath, vengeance, curse, and whatsoever the Scripture threateneth against the unbelievers and disobedient, which resist, and consent not in their hearts to the law of God, that it is right, holy, just, and ought so to be.

Mark the plain and manifest places of the Scriptures, and in doubtful places see thou add no interpretation contrary to them; but (as Paul saith) let all be conformable and agreeing to the faith.

Note the difference of the Law and of the Gospel. The one asketh and requireth, the other pardoneth and forgiveth. The one threateneth, the other promiseth all good things to them that set their trust in Christ only. The gospel signifieth glad tidings, and is nothing but the promises of good things. All is not gospel that is written in the gospel book: for if the law were
away, thou couldest not know what the gospel meant, even as thou couldest not see pardon, favor, and grace except the law rebuked thee, and declared unto thee thy sin, misdeed, and trespass.

Repent and believe the gospel, as saith Christ in the first of Mark. Apply alway the Law to thy deeds, whether thou find lust 1 in the bottom of thine heart to the law-ward, and so shalt thou no doubt repent, and feel in thyself a certain sorrow, pain, and grief to thine heart, because thou canst not with full lust do the deeds of the law. Apply the gospel—that is to say the promises—unto the deserving of Christ, and to the mercy of God and his truth, and so shalt thou not despair, but shall feel God as a kind and a merciful father. And his spirit shall dwell in thee, and shall be strong in thee, and the promises shall be given thee at the last (though not by and by, lest thou shouldest forget thyself, and be negligent) and all threatenings shall be forgiven thee for Christ's blood's sake—to whom commit thyself altogether—without respect either of thy good deeds or of thy bad.

Them that are learned Christianly I beseech—forasmuch as I am sure, and my conscience beareth me record, that of a pure intent, singly and faithfully I have interpreted it, as far forth as God gave me the gift of knowledge and understanding—that the rudeness of the work now at the first time offend them not, but that they consider how that I had no man to counterfeit, neither was helped with English of any that had interpreted the same or such like things in the Scripture beforetime. Moreover, even very necessity and cumbrance (God is record) above strength—which I will not rehearse, lest we should seem to boast ourselves—caused that many things are lacking which necessarily are required. Count it as a thing not having his full shape, but as it were born before his time, even as a thing begun rather than finished. In time to come (if God have appointed us thereunto) we will give it his full shape, and put out if ought be added superfluously, and add to if ought be overseen through negligence, and will enforce to bring to compendiousness that which is now translated at the length, and to give light where it is required, and to seek in certain places more proper English, and with a table to expound the words which are not commonly used and show how the
Scripture useth many words which are otherwise understood of
the common people, and to help with a declaration where one
tongue taketh not another; and will endeavor ourselves, as it
were, to seeth 2 it better, and to make it more apt for the weak
stomachs; desiring them that are learned and able, to
remember their duty, and to help thereunto, and to bestow
unto the edifying of Christ's body (which is the congregation of
them that believe) those gifts which they have received of God
for the same purpose. The grace that cometh of Christ be with
them that love him.

Pray for us.

1 "Lust" here is used in a good sense: eagerness to obey.
2 "Seeth" means "boil, cook."

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PENTATEUCH, 1530.

Below is the preface to Tyndale's translation of the
Pentateuch, printed in 1530. The text is taken from
Appendix B of Dewey Beegle's God's Word into
English (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1964). I have
modernized the spelling and punctuation.

W.T. to the Reader

When I had translated the New Testament, I added a pistle
unto the latter end, in which I desired them that were learned
to amend if ought were found amiss. But our malicious and wily
hypocrites which are so stubborn and hardhearted in their
wicked abominations that it is not possible for them to amend
anything at all (as we see by daily experience when their both
livings and doings are rebuked with the truth) say, some of
them, that it is impossible to translate the scripture into
English, some that it is not lawful for the lay people to have it
in their mother tongue, some that it would make them all
heretics — as it would no doubt from many things which they of
long time have falsely taught, and that is the whole cause
wherefore they forbid it, though they other cloaks pretend. And some, or rather every one, say that it would make them rise against the King, whom they themselves (unto their damnation) never yet obeyed. And lest the temporal rulers should see their falsehood, if the scripture came to light, causeth them so to lie.

And as for my translation in which they affirm unto the lay people (as I have heard say) to be I wot not how many thousand heresies, so that it cannot be mended or corrected, they have yet taken so great pain to examine it, and to compare it unto that they would fain have it and to their own imaginations and juggling terms, and to have somewhat to rail at, and under that cloak to blaspheme the truth, that they might with as little labor (as I suppose) have translated the most part of the Bible. For they which in times past were wont to look on no more scripture than they found in their Duns or such like devilish doctrine, have yet now so narrowly looked on my translation, that there is not so much as one "i" therein, if it lack a tittle over his head, but they have noted it, and number it unto the ignorant people for an heresy. Finally in this they be all agreed, to drive you from the knowledge of the scripture, and that ye shall not have the text thereof in the mother tongue, and to keep the world still in darkness, to the intent they might sit in the consciences of the people, through vain superstition and false doctrine, to satisfy their filthy lusts, their proud ambition, and unsatiable covetousness, and to exalt their own honor above King and Emperor, yea, and above God himself.

A thousand books had they lever [i.e. rather] to be put forth against their abominable doings and doctrine, than that the scripture should come to light. For as long as they may keep that down, they will so darken the right way with the mist of their sophistry, and so tangle them that either rebuke or despise their abominations with arguments of philosophy and with worldly [worldly?] similitudes and apparent reasons of natural wisdom. And with wresting the scripture unto their own purpose clean contrary unto the process, order, and meaning of the text, and so delude them in descanting upon it with allegories, and amaze them expounding it in many senses before the unlearned lay people (when it hath but one simple literal sense whose light the owls cannot abide), that though
thou feel in thine heart and art sure how that all is false that
they say, yet coudest thou not solve their subtle riddles.

Which thing only moved me to translate the New Testament.
Because I had perceived by experience, how that it was
impossible to stablish the lay people in any truth, except the
scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother
tongue, that they might see the process, order, and meaning of
the text. For else whatsoever truth is taught them, these
enemies of all truth quench it again, partly with the smoke of
their bottomless pit whereof thou readest Apocalypse 9 — that
is, with apparent reasons of sophistry and traditions of their
own making, founded without ground of scripture — and partly
in juggling with the text, expounding it in such a sense as is
impossible to gather of the text, if thou see the process, order
and meaning thereof.

And even in the Bishop of London's house I intended to have
done it. For when I was so turmoiled in the country where I was
that I could no longer there dwell (the process whereof were
too long here to rehearse), I this wise thought in myself: this I
suffer because the priests of the country be unlearned, as God
it knoweth there are a full ignorant sort which have seen no
more Latin than that they read in their portesses and missals,
which yet many of them can scarcely read (except it be
Albertus's De secretis mulierum, in which yet, though they be
never so sorribly learned, they pore day and night and make
notes therein and all to teach the midwives as they say, and
Lindwood, a book of constitutions to gather tithes, mortuaries,
offerings, customs, and other pillage, which they call, not
theirs, but God's part and the duty of holy church, to discharge
their consciences withal — for they are bound that they shall
not diminish, but increase all things unto the utmost of their
powers), and therefore (because they are thus unlearned,
thought I) when they come together to the alehouse, which is
their preaching place, they affirm that my sayings are heresy.
And besides that they add to of their own heads which I never
spake, as the manner is to prolong the tale to shorten the time
withal, and accuse me secretly to the Chancellor and other
Bishop's officers. And indeed when I came before the
Chancellor, he threatened me grievously, and reviled me and
rated me as though I had been a dog, and laid to my charge
whereof there could be none accuser brought forth (as their manner is not to bring forth the accuser), and yet all the priests of the country were that same day there. As I this thought, the Bishop of London came to my remembrance, whom Erasmus (whose tongue maketh of little gnats great elephants and lifteth up above the stars whosoever giveth him a little exhibition) praiseth exceedingly among other in his annotations on the New Testament for his great learning. Then thought I, if I might come to this man's service, I were happy. And so I gat me to London, and through acquaintance of my master came to Sir Harry Gilford the King's Grace's Controller, and brought him an oration of Isocrates which I had translated out of Greek into English, and desired him to speak unto my lord of London for me, which he also did as he showed me, and willed me to write a pistle to my lord, and to go to him myself which I also did, and delivered my pistle to a servant of his own, one William Heblithwayte, a man of mine old acquaintance. But God which knoweth what is within hypocrites saw that I was beguiled, and that that counsel was not the next way unto my purpose. And therefore he gat me no favor in my lord's sight.

Whereupon my lord answered me, his house was full, he had more than he could well find, and advised me to seek in London, where he said I could not lack a service. And so in London I abode almost an year, and marked the course of the world, and heard our praters — I would say "our preachers" — how they boasted themselves and their high authority, and beheld the pomp of our prelates and how busied they were, as they yet are, to set peace and unity in the world (though it be not possible for them that walk in darkness to continue long in peace, for they cannot but either stumble or dash themselves at one thing or another that shall clean unquiet all together), and saw things whereof I defer to speak at this time, and understood at the last not only that there was no room in my lord of London's palace to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England, as experience doth now openly declare.

Under what manner therefore should I now submit this book to be corrected and amended of them, which can suffer nothing to be well? Or what protestation should I make in such a matter unto our prelates, those stubborn Nimrods which so mightily
fight against God and resist his holy spirit, enforcing with all
craft and subtlety to quench the light of the everlasting
testament, promises, and appointment made between God and
us? And heaping the fierce wrath of God upon all princes and
rulers; mocking them with false feigned names of hypocrisy,
and serving their lusts at all points, and dispensing with them
even of the very laws of God, of which Christ himself testifieth
(Matthew 5) that not so much as one tittle thereof may perish
or be broken. And of which the prophet sayeth (Psalm 118):
Thou hast commanded thy laws to be kept "meod", that is in
Hebrew "exceedingly," with all diligence, might, and power, and
have made them so mad with their juggling charms and crafty
persuasions that they think it full satisfaction for all their
wicked living, to torment such as tell them truth, and to burn
the word of their soul's health, and slay whosoever believe
thereon.

Notwithstanding, yet I submit this book and all other that I
have other made or translated, or shall in time to come (if it be
God's will that I shall further labor in his harvest) unto all them
that submit themselves unto the word of God, to be corrected
of them — yea, and moreover, to be disallowed and also burnt,
if it seem worthy when they have examined it with the Hebrew,
so that they first put forth of their own translating another that
is more correct.
John Calvin (1509-1564)
PREFACE TO OLIVÉTAN’S NEW TESTAMENT (1539)

Epistle to the Faithful Showing that Christ Is the End of the Law

To all those who love Christ and his gospel, Greetings. God the Creator, the most perfect and excellent Maker of all things, who had already shown himself more than admirable in their creation, made man as his masterpiece, to surpass all other creatures. Man is endowed with a singular excellence, for God formed him in his own image and likeness, in which we see a bright refugence of God’s glory. Furthermore, man would have been able to continue in the state in which he was formed, if he had been willing to bow down in humility before the majesty of God, magnifying him with deeds of grace; not to seek his glory in himself, but knowing that all good things come from above, always to turn his mind on high and to glorify the one and only God to whom belongs the praise.

But the wretched man, wanting to be somebody in himself, began incontinently to forget and misunderstand the source of his good; and by an act of outrageous ingratitude, he set out to exalt himself in pride against his Maker and the Author of all that is excellent in him. For this reason, he went down in ruin and lost all the dignity and superiority of the state in which he was first created; he was despoiled and divested of all his glory and deprived of all the gifts which were his; and this, to confound him in his pride and to constrain him to understand what he was unwilling to do voluntarily: that he was by himself nothing but vanity, and would never have been anything else except with the help of the Lord of power.

Therefore, seeing that God’s image and likeness was thus defaced, and man was without the graces which God in his goodness had bestowed upon him, God began to hold man in abhorrence and disavowed him as his handiwork. Since he had put man there and ordained [his life] for his own enjoyment and pleasure in him, as a father with his beloved child, He now held him in contempt and abomination. Whereas before everything in man pleased him, it now gave him displeasure; everything that he would have loved, now aroused his wrath; everything that he had contemplated with the good will of a father, he began to detest and to look at with regret. In short, the whole man with all that he had, his deeds, his thoughts, his words, his life, wholly displeased God, as though man were a special enemy and adversary of God; so much so that God repented of having made him. After having been thrown into such a confusion, man was fruitful in his cursed seed, to beget descendants like himself; that is, vicious, perverse, corrupt, void, and deprived of all good, rich and abundant in evil.
Still, the Lord of mercy, who not only loves but is himself love and kindness, being ready in his infinite goodness to love him who deserved no love, did not altogether destroy men, or overwhelm them in the abyss of their iniquity. But on the contrary, he sustained and supported them gently and patiently, giving them time and opportunity to return to him and to apply themselves again to that obedience from which they had turned aside. And even though he disguised himself and kept silent, as though he wished to hide himself from them, leaving them to go after their desires and the yearnings of their lusts, without law, without order, without any correction of his Word, he nevertheless has given them notice enough [of his presence] to move them to seek, feel, and find him, and to know him and honor him as is his due.

For he has raised everywhere, in all places and in all things, his ensigns and emblems, under blazons so clear and intelligible that no one can pretend ignorance in not knowing such a sovereign Lord, who has so amply exalted his magnificence; who has, in all parts of the world, in heaven and on earth, written and as it were engraved the glory of his power, goodness, wisdom, and eternity. Saint Paul has therefore said quite rightly that the Lord has never left himself without a witness; even among those to whom he has not sent any knowledge of his Word. It is evident that all creatures, from those in the firmament to those which are in the center of the earth, are able to act as witnesses andmessengers of his glory to all men; to draw them to seek God, and after having found him, to meditate upon him and to render him the homage befitting his dignity as so good, so mighty, so wise a Lord who is eternal; yea, they are even capable of aiding every man wherever he is in this quest. For the little birds that sing, sing of God; the beasts clamor for him; the elements dread him, the mountains echo him, the fountains and flowing waters cast their glances at him, and the grass and flowers laugh before him. Truly there is no need for long searching, since everyone could find him in himself, because every one of us is sustained and preserved by his power which is in us.

Meanwhile, in order to reveal his infinite goodness and kindness more fully among men, he was not content to teach all men as we have just described; but he made his voice to be heard especially by a certain people, whom he elected, by his good will and free grace, from among all the nations of the earth. These were the children of Israel, to whom he showed himself clearly by his Word, and declared to them by his marvelous works what he intended them to know. For, he drew them away from subjection to Pharaoh the king of Egypt, under whom they were held down and oppressed, to deliver them and set them at liberty. He accompanied them night and day in their flight, as one more fugitive in their midst. He fed
them in the desert. He made them to possess the Promised Land. He gave victories and triumphs to their hands. And as though he were nothing to the other nations, he willed expressly to be called the God of Israel, and to have Israel called his people, on condition that they would recognize no other Lord and receive none else as their God. And this alliance (covenant) was confirmed and handed down by authentic instruments of testament and testimony given by himself.

Nevertheless, these people, all of whom shared in the experience of their cursed race, showed themselves to be true heirs of the wickedness of their father Adam. They were unmoved by all these remonstrances [of God], and did not listen to the teaching by which God admonished them. The creatures that had the glory and magnificence of God stamped upon them were of no help to the Gentiles, and failed to make them glorify him to whom they testified. And the Law and the Prophets did not have the authority to lead the Jews in the right way. All have been blind to the light, deaf to admonitions, and hardened against the commandments.

It is true enough that the Gentiles, astonished and convinced by so many goods and benefits which they saw with their own eyes, have been forced to recognize the hidden Benefactor from whom came so much goodness. But instead of giving the true God the glory which they owed him, they forged a god to their own liking, one dreamt up by their foolish fantasy in its vanity and deceit; and not one god only, but as many as their temerity and conceit enabled them to forge and cast (feindre et fondre); so that there was not a people or place which did not make new gods as seemed good to them. Thus it is that idolatry, that perfidious panderer, was able to exercise dominion, to turn men away from God, and to amuse them with a whole crowd of phantoms to which they themselves had given shape, name, and being itself.

As for the Jews, even though they received and accepted the messages and commandments which their Lord sent them by his servants, they have nonetheless intemperately falsified the faith before him, turned carelessly away from him, violated and despised his law, hated it, and resisted walking in its ways. They have become strangers to the house of God and run as dissolute men after other gods, worshiping idols after the manner of the Gentiles, contrary to the will of God.

Wherefore, if God were to approach his people, whether Jew or Gentile, a new covenant was needed: one which would be certain, sure, and inviolable. And to establish and confirm it, it was necessary to have a Mediator, who would intercede and come between the two parties,
to make concord between them; for without this, man would have had always to live under the ire and indignation of God, and would have had no means of relief from the curse, misery, and confusion into which he was snared and had fallen. And it was our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the true and only eternal Son of God, who had to be sent and given to mankind by the Father, to restore a world otherwise wasted, destroyed, and desolate.

Also from the very beginning, the world was not without the hope of recovering the loss suffered in Adam. For even Adam, in spite of his incontinency after his ruin, was given the promise that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent; which is to say that Jesus Christ born of a virgin would strike down and destroy the power of Satan.

After that, this promise was renewed more fully to Abraham, when God told him that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in his seed. This meant that from his seed would come Jesus Christ according to the flesh, by whose blessing all men of every land would be sanctified. And the same promise was renewed to Isaac, in the same form and in the same words; and after that it was announced often, repeated and confirmed by the testimony of the various prophets, so as to state plainly, and most reliably, of whom Christ was to be born, at what time, in what place; what afflictions and death he was to suffer, and with what glory he was to rise from the dead; what was to be his Kingdom, and to what salvation he was to bring his own.

In the first place, it is foretold for us in Isaiah, how he was to be born of a virgin, saying: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and shall bear a son, and you shall call his name Immanuel (Isa. 7:14). The time is described for us in Moses, when good Jacob says, The scepter shall not be taken from the line of Judah, nor the government from his hand, until the coming of the One who is to be sent; and the same is the expectation of the nations (Gen. 49:10). And this was verified when Jesus Christ came into the world; for the Romans, after having divested the Jews of all government and rule, had, thirty-seven years before [the coming of Christ] ordained Herod king over them, whose father was Antipater the Edomite and his mother an Arabian; he was therefore a foreigner. It had happened sometimes before that the Jews had been without a king; but they had never before been left as they were now without counselors, rulers, and lawgivers. Another numbering [of the time of Christ's birth] is given in Daniel, by the reckoning of the seventy weeks (Dan. 9:24). The place of his birth was given us clearly by Micah, who said, And thou Bethlehem Ephrata, thou are the least among the thousands of Judah; but from thee shall come for me the One who shall reign over Israel; and his coming shall be for all the days of eternity (Micah 5:2). As for the afflictions he was to bear for our deliverance and the death he was to suffer for our redemption, Isaiah and
Zechariah have spoken of those matters fully and with certainty. The glory of his resurrection and the nature of his Kingdom, and the grace of the salvation he was to bring to his people — these things were fully treated by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah.

Such promises, declared and testified to by these holy men who were filled with the Spirit of God, have been the comfort and consolation of the children and elect of God, who have nourished, supported, and sustained their hope in these promises, waiting upon the will of the Lord to show forth what he had promised. Many kings and prophets among them have desired greatly to see its accomplishment, never ceasing all the while to understand, in their hearts and spirits by faith, the things they could not see with their eyes. And, God has confirmed his people in every possible way during their long waiting for the great Messiah, by providing them with his written law, containing numerous ceremonies, purifications, and sacrifices, which were but the figures and shadows of the great blessings to come with Christ, who alone was the embodiment and truth of them. For the law was incapable of bringing anyone to perfection; it only presented Christ, and like a teacher spoke of and led to him, who was, as was said by Saint Paul, the end and fulfillment of the law.

Similarly, many times and in various seasons, God sent his people kings, princes, and captains, to deliver them from the power of their enemies, to govern them in peace, to recover their losses, to give them flourishing reigns, and by great prowess to make them renowned among all the other peoples. He did all this to give them a foretaste of the great miracles they were to receive from this great Messiah, who was to be endowed with all the power and might of the Kingdom of God.

But when the fullness of time had come and the period foreordained by God was ended, this great Messiah, so promised and so awaited, came; he was perfect, and accomplished all that was necessary to redeem us and save us. He was given not only to the Israelites, but to all men, of every people and every land, to the end that by him human nature might be reconciled to God. This is what is stated plainly in the next book (the New Testament), and set forth there openly. This book we have translated as faithfully as we were able according to the truth and the style of the Greek language, to enable all Christians, men and women, who know the French language, to understand and acknowledge the law they ought to obey and the faith they ought to follow.\textsuperscript{61}

\textit{It is to declare this thing (reconciliation), that the Lord Jesus, who is its foundation and substance, has ordained his apostles, whom he has charged and commanded to publish his grace to the whole world. And the apostles, in order to discharge their duty properly and}
plainly, not only have taken pains and shown diligence in fulfilling their embassy by the preaching of the word by mouth, but they have also followed the example of Moses and the prophets, and have left an eternal remembrance of their doctrine by reducing it to writing; in which they have first told the story of the things the Lord Jesus did and suffered for our salvation, and then shown us its value, what profit we gain from it, and how we are to receive it. This whole collection is called the new Testament, and is called such in relation to the Old, etc.

And this book is called the New Testament in relation to the Old, which, in so far as it had to be succeeded by and related to the New, and was shaky and imperfect in itself, was abolished and abrogated. It is the new and the eternal, which will never grow old and fail, because Jesus Christ is its Mediator. He has ratified and confirmed it by his death, by which he has accomplished full and complete remission of all sins (prevarications) which remained under the first testament.

Scripture is also called gospel, that is, new and joyful news, because in it is declared that Christ, the sole true and eternal Son of the living God, was made man, to make us children of God his Father, by adoption. Thus he is our only Savior, to whom we owe our redemption, peace, righteousness, sanctification, salvation, and life; who died for our sins and rose again for our justification; who ascended to heaven for our entry there and took possession of it for us and [it is] our home; to be always our helper before his Father; as our advocate and perpetually doing sacrifice for us, he sits at the Father's right hand as King, made Lord and Master over all, so that he may restore all that is in heaven and on earth; an act which all the angels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles did not know how to do and were unable to do, because they had not been ordained to that end by God.

As the Messiah had been promised so often in the Old Testament by the many testimonies of the prophets, so also Jesus Christ was by sure and certain testimonies declared to be the One, and none other, who was to come and was to be waited for. For the Lord God has made us so completely certain in this matter, by his Word and his Spirit, by his angels, prophets, apostles, and even by all his creatures, that nobody is in a position to contradict it without resisting and rebelling against God's power. In the first place, the eternal God has testified to us by his voice itself (which is without doubt irrevocable truth), saying, Behold my well beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him (Matt. 9:7). And as Saint John says, the Holy Spirit himself is our great witness in our hearts (1 John 5:1). The angel Gabriel, sent to the Virgin Mary, said to her: Behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and shall bear a Son, and shall call his name Jesus; for he shall be great and shall be called the Son of
the Most High. And the Lord God shall give him the throne (le siege) of his father David, and he shall reign forever in the house of Jacob; and there shall be no end to his Kingdom (Luke 1:32–33). This same message was given in substance to Joseph; and later also to the shepherds, who were told that the Savior was born, who was Christ the Lord (Matt. 1:20–21; Luke 2:10–11). And this message was not only brought by an angel, but was confirmed by a multitude of angels, who all together glorified the Lord and announced peace upon earth. Simeon the Just confessed it nobly in the spirit of prophecy: and taking the little child in his arms, he said: Now, O Lord, let thy servant depart in peace according to thy word. For my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples (Luke 2:29–31). John the Baptist also spoke of him as was fitting, when he saw him coming to the river of Jordan, and said, Behold the lamb of God; behold him who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Peter and all the apostles have confessed, testified, preached all the things which belong to salvation, of which the prophets had foretold that they would be accomplished in Christ the true Son of God. And those whom the Lord has ordained to be witnesses down to our own age have amply demonstrated the same by their writings, as their readers can see well enough.

All these witnesses come together into a unity so well, and they are of one accord among themselves so fully, that it is easy to recognize in such agreement most certain truth. For there could not be such harmony in lies. Besides, it is not only the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the angels, the prophets and apostles that bear witness to Jesus Christ; his own wonderful works show forth his most excellent power. The sick, the lame, the blind, the deaf, the mute, the paralytic, lepers, lunatics, demoniacs, and even the dead raised by him have carried the emblems of his power. By his power, he has given life; in his name, the works he has had given him to do were sufficient witnesses to him (John 10:25). Besides, even the wicked and the enemies of his glory were constrained by the very force of truth to confess him and to acknowledge something [of his glory]: for instance, Caiphas, Pilate, and his wife. I do not care to bring up the witness of the devils and unclean spirits, seeing that Jesus Christ rejected them.

In short, all the elements and all the creatures have given Jesus Christ the glory. At his command, the winds ceased, the raging sea subsided, the fish brought two drachmas in his belly, the stones (to render him witness) were broken to pieces, the veil of the Temple was torn in the middle, the sun was darkened, the graves were opened, the many bodies were restored to life. There has been nothing in heaven or on earth which has not witnessed that Jesus Christ is God, Lord and Master, and the great Ambassador of the Father sent
here below to accomplish the salvation of mankind. All these things were announced, manifested, written, and signed in this Testament, by which Jesus Christ has made us his heirs in the Kingdom of God his Father, and declares to us his will (like a testator to his heirs) that it [his Testament] be put into execution.

Furthermore, we are called to this inheritance without respect for persons; male or female, little or great, servant or lord, master or disciple, cleric or lay, Hebrew or Greek, French or Latin — no one is rejected, who with a sure confidence receives him who was sent for him, embraces what is presented to him, and in short acknowledges Jesus Christ for what he is and as he is given by the Father.

In the meantime, all we who bear the name of Christians, male or female, shall we permit ourselves to dishonor, to conceal, and to corrupt this Testament, which is so rightly ours, without which we could not pretend any right to the Kingdom of God, without which we should be ignorant of the great blessings and promises which Jesus Christ has given us, of the glory and beatitude he has prepared for us? We do not know what God has commanded or forbidden us; we cannot tell good from evil, light from darkness, the commandments of God from the ordinances (constitutions) of men. Without the gospel everything is useless and vain; without the gospel we are not Christians; without the gospel all riches is poverty, all wisdom, folly before God; strength is weakness, and all the justice of man is under the condemnation of God. But by the knowledge of the gospel we are made children of God, brothers of Jesus Christ, fellow townsmen with the saints, citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, heirs of God with Jesus Christ, by whom the poor are made rich, the weak strong, the fools wise, the sinners justified, the desolate comforted, the doubting sure, and slaves free. The gospel is the Word of life and truth. It is the power of God for the salvation of all those who believe; and the key to the knowledge of God, which opens the door of the Kingdom of Heaven to the faithful by releasing them from sins, and closes it to the unbelievers, binding them in their sins. Blessed are all they who hear the gospel and keep it; for in this way they show that they are children of God. Woe to those who will not hear it and follow it; because they are children of the devil.

O Christians, men and women, hear this and learn. For surely the ignorant man shall perish in his ignorance, and the blind who follows another blind man will fall into the ditch with him. There is but one way to life and salvation, and that is faith and certainty in the promises of God which cannot be had without the gospel; for by hearing it and knowing it living faith is provided, together with sure hope, and perfect love for God and a lively love toward our neighbor. Where then is your hope, if you contemn and scorn to hear, see, read, and retain
this holy gospel? Those who have their affections fixed upon this world chase with every means whatever they think will bring them happiness, without sparing labor, body, life, or reputation. And all this is done in the service of this wretched body, which has a life so vain, miserable, and uncertain. When it is a question of life immortal and incorruptible, of beatitude eternal and immeasurable, of all the treasures of Paradise, shall we not endeavor to pursue them? Those who give themselves to the mechanical arts, however low and mean these may be, expend pain and labor to learn and know them; and those who aspire to a reputation of greatest excellence torment their minds day and night, to understand something of the human sciences, which are nothing but wind and smoke. Should we not then much more be employed and diligent in the study of this divine wisdom, which passes beyond the whole world and penetrates as far as the mysteries of God, which it has pleased him to make known by his holy Word!

What then shall estrange and alienate us from this holy gospel? Shall injuries, curses, disgrace, and want of worldly honor? But, we know well that Jesus Christ has traveled the same road which we have to follow, if we would be his disciples; that we must not refuse to be despised, mocked, humiliated, and rejected before men. For it is thus that we shall be honored, prized, glorified, and exalted in God's judgment. Will there be banishments, proscriptions, privation from goods and riches? But we know that if we shall be banished from one country, the whole earth is the Lord's, and if we be thrown out of the earth itself, nonetheless we shall not be outside of his Kingdom. [We know] that when we are despoiled and impoverished, we have a Father who is rich enough to nourish us; even that Jesus Christ was made poor, so that we might follow him in his poverty. Will there be afflictions, prisons, tortures, torments? But we know by the example of Jesus Christ that this is the way to arrive at glory. Finally, will there be death? But death does not do away with a life that is worth having.

In short, if we have Jesus Christ with us, we shall come upon nothing so accursed that he will not turn it into a blessing; nothing so execrable that it shall not be made holy; nothing so evil that it shall not turn into our good. Let us not lose our comfort when we see all earthly powers and forces against us; for the promise cannot fail, that the Lord on high will hold in mockery all the assemblings and efforts of men who would conspire against him. Let us not be desolate, as though all hope were lost, when we see true servants of God die and perish before our eyes. For it was said truly by Tertullian, and so it has been approved and shall be until the consummation of the age, that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.
And we have a still greater and a more sure consolation, when we turn our eyes away from this whole world and set aside all that we can see before us, to wait with patience for the great judgment of God, by which in one moment all the machinations of men against him shall be struck down, brought to nought, and overturned. This shall be when the Kingdom of God, which we now see in hope, shall become manifest; when Jesus Christ shall appear in majesty with his angels. It shall then be that the good and the evil shall be present before the judgment seat of this great King. Those who have remained firm in this testament, who have followed and kept the will of this good Father, shall be at his right hand as his true children, and shall be blessed with the fulfillment of their faith, which shall be eternal salvation. And since they were not ashamed to own and confess Jesus Christ, when he was despised and condemned before men, they shall also share in his glory, and shall be crowned with him in eternity. But the perverse, rebellious, and condemned, who have despised and rejected this holy gospel, and similarly those who for the sake of holding on to their honor, riches, and high estate have been unwilling to be humbled and made low with Jesus Christ; who for fear of men have cast aside the fear of God and like bastard [sons] disobeyed this Father — these shall be on the left hand; they shall be executed and cast out; for the reward of their unfaithfulness, they shall receive eternal death.

Therefore, when you hear that the gospel presents you Jesus Christ in whom all the promises and gifts of God have been accomplished; and when it declares that he was sent by the Father, has descended to the earth and spoken among men perfectly all that concerns our salvation, as it was foretold in the Law and to the Prophets — it ought to be most certain and obvious to you that the treasures of Paradise have been opened to you in the gospel; that the riches of God have been exhibited and eternal life itself revealed. For, this is eternal life; to know one, only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, whom he has established as the beginning, the middle, and the end of our salvation. He [Christ] is Isaac, the beloved Son of the Father who was offered as a sacrifice, but nevertheless did not succumb to the power of death. He is Jacob the watchful shepherd, who has such great care for the sheep which he guards. He is the good and compassionate brother Joseph, who in his glory was not ashamed to acknowledge his brothers, however lowly and abject their condition. He is the great sacrificer and bishop Melchizedek, who has offered an eternal sacrifice once for all. He is the sovereign lawgiver Moses, writing his law on the tables of our hearts by his Spirit. He is the faithful captain and guide Joshua, to lead us to the Promised Land. He is the victorious and noble king David, bringing by his hand all rebellious power to subjection. He is the magnificent and triumphant king Solomon, governing his kingdom in
peace and prosperity. He is the strong and powerful Samson, who by his death has overwhelmed all his enemies.

It follows that every good thing we could think or desire is to be found in this same Jesus Christ alone. For, he was sold, to buy us back; captive, to deliver us; condemned, to absolve us; he was made a curse for our blessing, sin offering for our righteousness; marred that we may be made fair; he died for Our life; so that by him fury is made gentle, wrath appeased, darkness turned into light, fear reassured, despisal despised, debt canceled, labor lightened, sadness made merry, misfortune made fortunate, difficulty easy, disorder ordered, division united, ignominy ennobled, rebellion subjected, intimidation intimidated, ambush uncovered, assaults assailed, force forced back, combat combated, war warred against, vengeance avenged, torment tormented, damnation damned, the abyss sunk into the abyss, hell transfixed, death dead, mortality made immortal. In short, mercy has swallowed up all misery, and goodness all misfortune. For all these things which were to be the weapons of the devil in his battle against us, and the sting of death to pierce us, are turned for us into exercises which we can turn to our profit. If we are able to boast with the apostle, saying, O hell, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? it is because by the Spirit of Christ promised to the elect, we live no longer, but Christ lives in us; and we are by the same Spirit seated among those who are in heaven, so that for us the world is no more, even while our conversation is in it; but we are content in all things, whether country, place, condition, clothing, meat, and all such things. And we are comforted in tribulation, joyful in sorrow, glorifying under vituperation, abounding in poverty, warmed in our nakedness, patient amongst evils, living in death.

This is what we should in short seek in the whole of Scripture: truly to know Jesus Christ, and the infinite riches that are comprised in him and are offered to us by him from God the Father. If one were to sift thoroughly the Law and the Prophets, he would not find a single word which would not draw and bring us to him. And for a fact, since all the treasures of wisdom and understanding are hidden in him, there is not the least question of having, or turning toward, another goal; not unless we would deliberately turn aside from the light of truth, to lose ourselves in the darkness of lies. Therefore, rightly does Saint Paul say in another passage that he would know nothing except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And such knowledge although mean and contemptible to the mind of the flesh is nevertheless sufficient to occupy us all our lives. And we shall not waste our time if we employ all our study and apply all our understanding to profit from it. What more would we ask for, as spiritual doctrine for our souls, than to know God, to be converted (transformez) to him, and to have his glorious image imprinted in us, so that we may partake of his righteousness, to
become heirs of his Kingdom and to possess it in the end in full? But the truth is that from the beginning God has given himself, and at present gives himself more fully, that we may contemplate him in the face of his Christ. It is therefore not lawful that we turn away and become diverted even in the smallest degree by this or that. On the contrary, our minds ought to come to a halt at the point where we learn in Scripture to know Jesus Christ and him alone, so that we may be directly led by him to the Father who contains in himself all perfection.

Here, I say once again, is enclosed all the wisdom which men can understand, and ought to learn in this life; which no angel, nor man, dead or living, may add to or take away from. This is where we ought to stop and put a limit to our understanding, mixing nothing of our own with it and refusing any doctrine whatever which might be added to it. For anyone who undertakes to teach one other syllable beyond what is taught us in it, ought to be accursed before God and his church.

And you kings, princes, and Christian lords, who are ordained of God to punish the wicked and to uphold the good in peace according to the Word of God — to you it belongs to have this sacred doctrine, so useful and needful, published, taught, and understood in all your lands, realms, and lordly domains, to the end that God may be magnified by you, and his gospel exalted; because by right it is his due that all kings and kingdoms obey him in all humility and serve his glory. Remember that sovereign Empire, above all kingdoms, principalities, and lordships, was given by the Father to the Lord Jesus; and he is to be feared, held in awe, and honored by everyone, great or little. Remember what was foretold by the prophets: that all the kings of the earth would render him homage as their superior, and would adore him as their Savior and their God; let this come true in you. And remember that it is no dishonor for you to be subject to such a great Lord, as though in this way your own majesty and high place would be reduced and become as nothing; for it is the greatest honor you may lawfully desire, to be known and regarded as the officials and lieutenants of God. It is unthinkable that Jesus Christ, in whom God wills to be glorified and exalted, should not have dominion over you; and in fact it is reasonable enough that you should be the ones to give him this preeminence, provided your own power is founded in him alone. Otherwise what an ingratitude it would be that you should want to shut out him who has established you in the power you possess, and maintains and keeps you in it! What is more, you ought to know that there is no better foundation, nor one firmer, for keeping your domains in true prosperity, than to have him as Chief and Master, and to govern your peoples under his hand; and that without him they [your domains] can be neither permanent nor endure for
long, but shall be accursed of God and shall consequently fall down in confusion and ruin. Since God has thus given you the sword in hand for governing your subjects in his name and by his authority; since he has done you the honor of giving you his name and \text{title}; since he has sanctified your position above those of others, to make a portion of his glory and majesty reflected in it — let each one of you engage himself by his own hand to magnify and exalt him who is God's true and glorious image, in whom he fully represents himself to us. Moreover, to do this, it is not enough merely to confess Jesus Christ, and to profess to be his own, so that you have the title without the truth and reality of the matter; you must give place to his holy gospel and receive it with obedience and humility. This is an office every man must fulfill; but it belongs to you especially to see to it that the gospel is heard, to have it published in your lands, in order that it may be known by the people who have been committed to your charge; in order that they may know you as servants and ministers of this great King, and may serve and honor him, by obeying you under his hand and under his guidance.

This is what the Lord requires of you through his prophet, when he calls you the guardians of his church. For this tutelage and protection is not a matter of enlarging the riches, privileges, and honors of the clergy, which makes them high and haughty, living in pomp and in all dissoluteness, contrary to their proper estate; much less is it a matter of maintaining the clergy in their pride and inordinate displays; it is rather a matter of seeing to it that the entire teaching of the gospel is kept in its purity and truth; that the Holy Scriptures are faithfully preached, read, and perused; that God is honored according to the rule given us in them, and the church is well governed; that all which is contrary to the honor of God, or to the good government of the church, be corrected and repressed; so that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ may flourish by the power of his Word.

O you who call yourselves bishops and pastors of the poor people, see to it that the sheep of Jesus Christ are not deprived of their proper pasture; and that it is not prohibited and forbidden to any Christian freely and in his own language to read, handle, and hear this holy gospel, seeing that such is the will of God, and Jesus Christ commands it; for it is for this cause that he has sent his apostles and servants throughout the whole world; giving them the power to speak in all tongues, so that they may in every language preach to every creature; and he has made them debtors to the Greeks and the barbarians, to the wise and the simple, in order that none might be excluded from their teaching. Surely, if you are truly their vicars, successors, and imitators, it is your office to do the same, watching over the flock and seeking every possible means to have everyone instructed \text{in the faith of Jesus}
Christ, by the pure Word of God. Otherwise, the sentence is already proclaimed and put down in writing, that God will demand their souls at your hands.

It is the will of the Lord of lights by his Holy Spirit, by means of this holy and saving gospel, to teach the ignorant, to strengthen the feeble, to illumine the blind, and to make his truth to reign among all peoples and nations, to the end that the whole world may know but one God and one Savior, Jesus Christ; one faith, and one gospel. So be it.
Geneva Bible Preface

TO OUR BELOVED IN THE LORD,

The brethren of England, Scotland, Ireland, &c.

Grace, mercy and peace, through Christ Jesus.

Besides the manifold and continual benefits which almighty God bestoweth upon us, both corporal and spiritual, we are especially bound (dear brethren) to give him thanks without ceasing for his great grace and unspeakable mercies, in that it hath pleased him to call us unto this marvelous light of his Gospel, and mercifully to regard us after so horrible backsliding and falling away from Christ to Antichrist, from light to darkness, from the living God to dumb and dead idols, and that after so cruel murder of God's saints, as alas, hath been among us, we are not altogether cast off, as were the Israelites, and many others for the like, or not so manifest wickedness, but received again to grace with most evident signs and tokens of God's especial love and favour. To the intent therefore that we may not be unmindful of these great mercies, but seek by all means (according to our duty) to be thankful for the same, it behoveth us so to walk in his fear and love, that all the days of our life we may procure the glory of his holy name. Now forasmuch as this thing chiefly is attained by the knowledge and practicing of the word of God (which is the light to our paths, the key of the kingdom of heaven, our comfort in affliction, our shield and sword against Satan, the school of all wisdom, the glass wherein we behold God's face, the testimony of his favour, and the only food and nourishment of our souls) we thought that we should bestow our labours and study in nothing which could be more acceptable to God and comfortable to his Church than in the translating of the Holy Scriptures into our native tongue; the which thing, albeit that divers heretofore have endeavored to achieve, yet considering the infancy of those times and imperfect knowledge of the tongues, in respect of this ripe age and clear light which God hath now revealed, the translations required greatly to be perused and reformed. Not that we vindicate anything to ourselves above the least of our brethren (for God knoweth with what fear and trembling we have been now, for the space of two years and more day and night occupied herein) but being earnestly desired, and by divers, whose learning and godliness we reverence, exhorted, and also encouraged by the ready wills of such, whose hearts God likewise
touched, not to spare any charges for the furtherance of such a benefit
and favour of God toward his Church (though the time then was most
dangerous and the persecution sharp and furious) we submitted
ourselves at length to their godly judgments, and seeing the great
opportunity and occasions, which God presented unto us in his Church,
by reason of so many godly and learned men, and such diversities of
translations in divers tongues, we undertook this great and wonderful
work (with all reverence, as in the presence of God, as intreating the
word of God, whereunto we think ourselves insufficient) which now God
according to his divine providence and mercy hath directed to a most
prosperous end. And this we may with good conscience protest, that we
have in every point and word, according to the measure of that
knowledge which it pleased almighty God to give us, faithfully rendered
the text, and in all hard places most sincerely expounded the same. For
God is our witness that we have by all means endeavored to set forth
the purity of the word and right sense of the Holy Ghost for the edifying
of the brethren in faith and charity.

Now as we have chiefly observed the sense, and labored always to
restore it to all integrity, so have we most reverently kept the propriety
of the words, considering that the Apostles who spake and wrote to the
Gentiles in the Greek tongue, rather constrained them to the lively
phrase of the Hebrew than enterprised far by mollifying their language
to speak as the Gentiles did. And for this and other causes we have in
many places reserved the Hebrew phrases, notwithstanding that they
may seem somewhat hard in their ears that are not well practiced and
also delight in the sweet-sounding phrases of the Holy Scriptures. Yet
lest either the simple should be discouraged, or the malicious have any
occasion of just cavillation, seeing some translations read after one
sort, and some after another, whereas all may serve to good purpose
and edification, we have in the margent noted that diversity of speech
or reading which may also seem agreeable to the mind of the Holy
Ghost and proper for our language with this mark « .

Again where as the Hebrew speech seemed hardly to agree with ours,
we have noted it in the margent after this sort », using that which was
more intelligible. And albeit that many of the Hebrew names be altered
from the old text, and restored to the true writing and first original,
whereof they have their signification, yet in the usual names little is
changed for fear of troubling the simple readers. Moreover whereas the
necessity of the sentence required anything to be added (for such is the
grace and propriety of the Hebrew and Greek tongues, that it cannot
but either by circumlocution, or by adding the verb or some word be
understand of them that are not well practiced therein) we have put it
in the text with another kind of letter, that it may easily be discerned
from the common letter. As touching the division of the verses, we have
followed the Hebrew examples, which have so even from the beginning
distinct them. Which thing as it is most profitable for memory; so doth it agree with the best translations, &c., is most easy to find out both by the best concordances, and also by the quotations which we have diligently herein perused and set forth by this star *. Besides this the principal matters are noted and distinguished by this mark ¶. Yea and the arguments both for the book and for the chapters with the number of the verse are added, that by all means the reader might be holpen. For the which cause also we have set over the head of every page some notable word or sentence which may greatly further as well for memory, as for the chief point of the page. And considering how hard a thing it is to understand the holy Scriptures, and what errors, sects, and heresies grow daily for lack of the true knowledge thereof, and how many are discouraged (as they pretend) because they cannot attain to the true and simple meaning of the same, we have also endeavored both by the diligent reading of the best commentaries, and also by the conference with the godly and learned brethren, to gather brief annotations upon all the hard places, as well for the understanding of such words as are obscure, and for the declaration of the text, as for the application of the same as may most appertain to God's glory and the edification of his Church. Furthermore whereas certain places in the books of Moses, of the Kings and Ezekiel seemed so dark that by no description they could be made easy to the simple reader, we have so set them forth with figures and notes for the full declaration thereof, that they which cannot by judgment, being holpen by the annotations noted by the letters a b c, &c. attain thereunto, yet by the perspective, and as it were by the eye may sufficiently know the true meaning of all such places. Whereunto also we have added certain maps of cosmography which necessarily serve for the perfect understanding and memory of divers places and countries, partly described, and partly by occasion touched, both in the Old and New Testament. Finally that nothing might lack which might be bought by labors, for the increase of knowledge and furtherance of God's glory, we have adjoined two most profitable tables, the one serving for the interpretation of the Hebrew names, and the other containing all the chief and principal matters of the whole Bible; so that nothing (as we trust) that any could justly desire, is omitted. Therefore, as brethren that are partakers of the same hope and salvation with us, we beseech you, that this rich pearl and inestimable treasure may not be offered in vain, but as sent from God to the people of God, for the increase of his kingdom, the comfort of his Church, and discharge of our conscience, whom it hath pleased him to raise up for this purpose, so you would willingly receive the word of God, earnestly study it and in your life practice it, that you may now appear in deed to be the people of God, not walking any more according to this world, but in the fruits of the Spirit; that God in us may be fully glorified through Christ Jesus our Lord, who liveth and reigneth for ever. Amen.
From Geneva, 10 April 1560.
Bible (King James)/Preface

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TO THE
Most High and Mighty Prince JAMES,
By the Grace of God, King of GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE, and IRELAND, Defender of the Faith, &c.
The Translators of the Bible wish Grace, Mercy, and Peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

GREAT and manifold were the blessings, most dread Sovereign, which Almighty God, the Father of all mercies, bestowed upon us the people of England, when first he sent Your Majesty's Royal Person to rule and reign over us. For whereas it was the expectation of many, who wished not
well unto our Sion, that upon the setting of that bright Occidental Star, Queen Elizabeth of most happy memory, some thick and palpable clouds of darkness would so have overshadowed this Land, that men should have been in doubt which way they were to walk; and that it should hardly be known, who was to direct the unsettled State; the appearance of Your Majesty, as of the Sun in his strength, instantly dispelled those supposed and surmis ed mists, and gave unto all that were well affected exceeding cause of comfort; especially when we beheld the Government established in Your Highness, and Your hopeful Seed, by an undoubted Title, and this also accompanied with peace and tranquility at home and abroad.

But among all our joys, there was no one that more filled our hearts, than the blessed continuance of the preaching of God's sacred word among us; which is that inestimable treasure, which excelleth all the riches of earth; because the fruit thereof extendeth itself, not only to the time spent in this transitory world, but directeth and disposeth men unto that eternal happiness which is above in Heaven.

Then not to suffer this to fall to the ground, but rather to take it up, and to continue it in that state, wherein the famous Predecessor of Your Highness did leave it: nay, to go forward with the confidence and resolution of a Man in maintaining the truth of Christ, and propagating it far and near, is that which hath so bound and firmly knit the hearts of all Your Majesty's loyal and religious people unto you, that your very name is precious among them: their eye doth behold You with comfort, and they bless You in their hearts, as that sanctified Person, who, under God, is the immediate Author of their true happiness. And this their contentment doth not diminish or decay, but every day increaseth and taketh strength, when they observe, that the zeal of Your Majesty toward the house of God doth not slack or go backward, but is more and more kindled, manifesting itself abroad in the farthest parts of Christendom, by writing in defence of the Truth, (which hath given such a blow unto that man of sin, as will not be healed,) and every day at home, by religious and learned discourse, by frequenting the house of God, by hearing the Word preached, by cherishing the Teachers thereof, by caring for the Church, as a most tender and loving nursing Father.

There are infinite arguments of this right christian and religious affection in Your Majesty; but none is more forcible to declare it to others than the vehement and perpetuated desire of accomplishing and publishing of this work, which now with all humility we present unto Your Majesty. For when Your Highness had once out of deep judgment apprehended how convenient it was, that out of the Original Sacred Tongues, together with comparing of the labours, both in our own, and other foreign Languages, of many worthy men who went before us, there should be one more exact Translation of the holy Scriptures into the English Tongue; Your Majesty did never desist to urge and to excite those to whom it was commended, that the work might be hastened, and that the business might be expedited in so decent a manner, as a matter of such importance might justly require.

And now at last, by the mercy of God, and the continuance of our labours, it being brought unto such a conclusion, as that we have great hopes that the Church of England shall reap good fruit thereby; we hold it our duty to offer it to Your Majesty, not only as to our King and Sovereign, but as to the principal Mover and Author of the work: humbly craving of Your most Sacred Majesty, that since things of this quality have ever been subject to the censures of illmeaning and discontented persons, it may receive approbation and patronage from so learned and judicious a Prince as Your Highness is, whose allowance and acceptance of our labours shall more honour and encourage us, than all the calumniations and hard interpretations of other men shall dismay us. So that if, on the one side, we shall be traduced by Popish Persons at home or abroad, who therefore will malign us, because we are poor instruments to make God's holy Truth to be yet more and more known unto the people, whom they desire still to keep in ignorance and darkness; or if, on the other side, we shall be maligned by selfsconceited Brethren, who run their own
ways, and give liking unto nothing, but what is framed by themselves, and hammered on their anvil; we may rest secure, supported within by the truth and innocency of a good conscience, having walked the ways of simplicity and integrity, as before the Lord; and sustained without by the powerful protection of Your Majesty's grace and favour, which will ever give countenance to honest and christian endeavours against bitter censures and uncharitable imputations.

The Lord of heaven and earth bless Your Majesty with many and happy days, that, as his heavenly hand hath enriched Your Highness with many singular and extraordinary graces, so you may be the wonder of the world in this latter age for happiness and true felicity, to the honour of that great GOD, and the good of his Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord and only Saviour.

The Translators To The Reader

Editor's Notes: The original marginal notes are included in [blue brackets] within the body of the text. Some supplemental notes, defining uncommon words, are included in ((green double parenthesis)) within the text. The text is based on the standard Reference Edition section and verse numbers by A.V. Bible Tracts & Books.¹

Some browsers may not display the "symbol font" Greek (Greek) characters. Most of the letters are the same as their English equivalents. C is greek Chi. F is greek Phi. Q is greek Theta. W is greek Omega. Y is greek Psi. Upper-case V is lower case greek final s.

§1 The best things have been calumniated.
((calumniated = slandered - knowingly and falsely accused of a crime.))

EAL to promote the common good, whether it be by devising anything ourselves, or revising that which hath been laboured by others, deserveth certainly much respect and esteem, but yet findeth but cold entertainment in the world.

- 2 It is welcomed with suspicion instead of love, and with emulation ((envious dislike)) instead of thanks: and if there be any hole left for cavil ((a false or mocking argument)) to enter, (and cavil, if it do not find a hole, will make one) it is sure to be misconstrued, and in danger to be condemned.
- 3 This will easily be granted by as many as know story ((history)), or have any experience.
- 4 For, was there ever anything projected, that savoured any way of newness or renewing, but the same endured many a storm of gainsaying, or opposition?
- 5 A man would think that civility, wholesome laws, learning and eloquence, synods, and Church-maintenance, (that we speak of no more things of this kind) should be as safe as a sanctuary, and [ἐξωθήσει] out of shot, as they say, that no man would lift up the heel, no, nor dog move his tongue against the motioners of them.
- 6 For by the first, we are distinguished from brute-beasts led with sensuality:
- 7 by the second, we are bridled and restrained from outrageous behaviour, and from doing of injuries, whether by fraud or by violence:
- 8 by the third, we are enabled to inform and reform others, by the light and feeling that we
have attained unto ourselves:

- 9 briefly, by the fourth being brought together to a parle ((a discussion)) face to face, we sooner compose our differences than by writings, which are endless:
- 10 and lastly, that the Church be sufficiently provided for, is so agreeable to good reason and conscience, that those mothers are holden to be less cruel, that kill their children as soon as they are born, than those nursing fathers and mothers (wheresoever they be) that withdraw from them who hang upon their breasts (and upon whose breasts again themselves do hang to receive the spiritual and sincere milk of the word) livelihood and support fit for their estates.
- 11 Thus it is apparent, that these things which we speak of are of most necessary use, and therefore that none, either without absurdity can speak against them, or without note of wickedness can spurn against them.

§2 Anacharsis with others

- 1 Yet for all that, the learned know that certain worthy men have been brought to untimely death for none other fault, but for seeking to reduce their countrymen to good order and discipline:
- 2 and that in some commonweals [Locri] it was made a capital crime, once to motion the making of a new law for the abrogating of an old, though the same were most pernicious:
- 3 and that certain, [Cato the elder.] which would be counted pillars of the State, and patterns of virtue and prudence, could not be brought for a long time to give way to good letters and refined speech, but bare themselves as averse from them, as from rocks or boxes of poison:
- 4 and fourthly, that he was no babe, but a great clerk, [Gregory the Divine.] that gave forth (and in writing to remain to posterity) in passion peradventure, but yet he gave forth, that he had not seen any profit to come by any synod or meeting of the clergy, but rather the contrary:
- 5 and lastly, against Church maintenance and allowance, in such sort as the ambassadors and messengers of the great King of kings should be furnished, it is not unknown what a fiction or fable (so it is esteemed, and for no better by the reporter himself, [Naucerus.] though superstitious) was devised: namely, that at such time as the professors and teachers of Christianity in the Church of Rome, then a true Church, were liberally endowed, a voice forsooth was heard from heaven, saying, Now is poison poured down into the Church, etc.
- 6 Thus not only as oft as we speak, as one saith, but also as oft as we do anything of note or consequence, we subject ourselves to everyone's censure, and happy is he that is least tossed upon the tongues; for utterly to escape the snatch of them it is impossible.
- 7 If any man conceit that this is the lot and portion of the meaner sort only, and that princes are privileged by their high estate, he is deceived.
- 8 As the sword devoureth as well one as the other, as it is in Samuel; [2Sam.11:25] nay, as the great commander charged his soldiers in a certain battle to strike at no part of the enemy, but at the face; and as the King of Syria [1Kings 22:31] commanded his chief captains to fight neither with small nor great, save only against the King of Israel: so it is too true, that envy striketh most spitefully at the fairest, and at the chiefest.
- 9 David was a worthy prince, and no man to be compared to him for his first deeds, and yet for as worthy an act as ever he did (even for bringing back the ark of God in solemnity) he
was scorned and scoffed at by his own wife. [2Sam.6:16]

- 10 Solomon was greater than David, though not in virtue, yet in power: and by his power and wisdom he built a temple to the Lord, such a one as was the glory of the land of Israel, and the wonder of the whole world.
- 11 But was that his magnificence likened of by all? We doubt of it.
- 12 Otherwise, why do they lay it in his son's dish, and call unto him for [seisacpeian] easing of the burden? Make, say they, the grievous servitude of thy father, and his sore yoke, lighter. [1Kings 12:4]
- 13 Belike he had charged them with some levies, and troubled them with some carriages; hereupon they raise up a tragedy, and wish in their heart the temple had never been built.
- 14 So hard a thing it is to please all, even when we please God best, and do seek to approve ourselves to everyone's conscience.

§3 The highest personages have been calumniated

- 1 If we will descend to later times, we shall find many the like examples of such kind, or rather unkind, acceptance.
- 2 The first Roman emperor [C. Caesar. ((see)) Plutarch] did never do a more pleasing deed to the learned, nor more profitable to posterity, for conceiving the record of times in true suppotation, than when he corrected the Calendar, and ordered the year according to the course of the sun: and yet this was imputed to him for novelty, and arrogancy, and procured to him great obloquy. ((reproach))
- 3 So the first christened emperor [Constantine.] (at the leastwise that openly professed the faith himself, and allowed others to do the like) for strengthening the empire at his great charges, and providing for the Church, as he did, got for his labour the name pupillus, [Aurel.Victor.] as who would say, a wasteful prince, that had need of a guardian, or overseer.
- 4 So the best christened emperor, [Theodosius.] for the love that he bare unto peace, whereby to enrich both himself and his subjects, and because he did not seek war but find it, was judged [Zosimus.] to be no man at arms, (though indeed he excelled in feats of chivalry, and shewed so much when he was provoked) and condemned for giving himself to his ease and to his pleasure.
- 5 To be short, the most learned emperor of former times, [Justinian.] (at the least, the greatest politician) what thanks had he for cutting off the superfluities of the laws, and digesting them into some order and method?
- 6 This, that he hath been blotted by some to be an epitomist, that is, one that extinguished worthy whole volumes, to bring his abridgements into request.
- 7 This is the measure that hath been rendered to excellent princes in former times, even, cum bené facerent, malè audire, for their good deeds to be evil spoken of.
- 8 Neither is there any likelihood that envy and malignity died and were buried with the ancient.
- 9 No, no, the reproof of Moses taketh hold of most ages:
- 10 You are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men. [Num.32:14]
- 11 What is that hath been done? that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun, [Eccl.1:9] saith the wise man.
- 12 And S.Stephen, As your fathers did, so do you. [Acts 7:51]
§4 His Majesty's constancy, notwithstanding calumniation, for the survey of the English translations

- 1 This, and more to this purpose, his Majesty that now reigneth, (and long and long may he reign, and his offspring for ever, himself and children, and children's children always) [Autov, kai paideV kai paidwn pantote paideV.] knew full well, according to the singular wisdom given unto him by God, and the rare learning and experience that he hath attained unto; namely, that whosoever attempteth anything for the public (specially if it pertain to religion, and to the opening and clearing of the word of God) the same setteth himself upon a stage to be glutted upon by every evil eye, yea, he casteth himself headlong upon pikes, to be gored by every sharp tongue.
- 2 For he that meddles with men's religion in any part meddles with their custom, nay, with their freehold; and though they find no content in that which they have, yet they cannot abide to hear of altering.
- 3 Notwithstanding his royal heart was not daunted or discouraged for this or that colour, but stood resolute, as a statue immovable, and an anvil not easy to be beaten into plates, as one saith; [Suidas. wsper tis andriaV aperirpetoV kai akmwn anhlatoV.] he knew who had chosen him to be a soldier, or rather a captain, and being assured that the course which he intended made much for the glory of God, and the building up of his Church, he would not suffer it to be broken off for whatsoever speeches or practices.
- 4 It doth certainly belong unto kings, yea, it doth specially belong unto them, to have care of religion, yea, to know it aright, yea, to profess it zealously, yea, to promote it to the uttermost of their power.
- 5 This is their glory before all nations which mean well, and this will bring unto them a far most excellent weight of glory in the day of the Lord Jesus.
- 6 For the Scripture saith not in vain, Them that honour me, I will honour; [1Sam.2:30] neither was it a vain word that Eusebius [geosebeia, Eusebius lib.10 cap.8.] delivered long ago, that piety towards God was the weapon, and the only weapon, that both preserved Constantine's person and avenged him of his enemies.

§5 The praise of the Holy Scriptures

- 1 But now what piety without truth? what truth (what saving truth) without the word of God? what word of God (whereof we may be sure) without the Scripture?
- 2 The Scriptures we are commanded to search (John 5:39; Isa.8:20).
- 3 They are commended that searched and studied them (Acts 17:11 and 8:28,29).
- 4 They are reproved that were unskilful in them, or slow to believe them (Matt.22:29; Luke.24:25).
- 5 They can make us wise unto salvation (2Tim.3:15).
- 6 If we be ignorant, they will instruct us; if out of the way, they will bring us home; if out of order, they will reform us; if in heaviness, comfort us; if dull, quicken us; if cold, inflame us.
- 7 Tolle, lege; tolle, lege: [S.August.confess.lib.8.cap.12.] Take up and read, take up and read the Scriptures, (for unto them was the direction) it was said unto S.Augustine by a supernatural voice.
- 8 [S.August. de utilit. credendi, cap.6.] WHATSOEVER IS IN THE SCRIPTURES, BELIEVE ME, SAITH THE SAME S.AUGUSTINE, IS HIGH AND DIVINE; THERE IS VERILY TRUTH, AND A DOCTRINE MOST FIT FOR THE
refreshing and renewing of men’s minds, and truly so tempered, that every one may draw
from thence that which is sufficient for him, if he come to draw with a devout and pious mind,
as true religion requireth. Thus S.Augustine.

* 9 And S.Hierome: *Ama scripturas, et amabit te sapientia,* etc. [*S.Hieronym. ad Demetriad.*]
  Love the Scriptures, and wisdom will love thee.
* 10 And S.Cyril against Julian; [*S.Cyril 7° contra Julianum.*] Even boys that are bred up
  in the Scriptures, become most religious, etc.
* 11 But what mention we three or four uses of the Scripture, whereas whatsoever is to be
  believed or practised, or hoped for, is contained in them? or three or four sentences of the
  Fathers, since whosoever is worthy the name of a Father, from Christ’s time downward, hath
  likewise written not only of the riches, but also of the perfection of the Scripture?
* 12 [*Tertul. advers. Herm.*] I adore the fullness of the Scripture, saith Tertullian against
  Hermogenes.
* 13 And again, [*Tertul. de carne Christi.*] to Apelles an heretick of the like stamp, he saith: I
do not admit that which thou bringest in (or concludest) of thine own (head or store, *de tuo*)
without Scripture.
* 14 So Saint Justin Martyr before him: [*Justin. protrept. proV ellh. oion te.*] We must know by all
  means, saith he, that it is not lawful (or possible) to learn (anything) of God or of right plety,
save only out of the Prophets, who teach us by divine inspiration.
* 15 So Saint Basil after Tertullian: [*S.Basil. peri pizeV deurfaniaV kathgoria.*] It is a manifest
  falling away from the Faith, and a fault of presumption, either to reject any of those things
  that are written, or to bring in (upon the head of them, *epeisagein*) any of those things that are
  not written.
* 16 We omit to cite to the same effect S.Cyril B. of Jerusalem, in his 4 Cataches.
* 17 Saint Hierome against Helvidius, Saint Augustine in his third book against the letters of
  Petilian, and in very many other places of his works.
* 18 Also we forbear to descend to latter Fathers, because we will not weary the reader.
* 19 The Scriptures then being acknowledged to be so full and so perfect, how can we excuse
  ourselves of negligence, if we do not study them? of curiosity, if we be not content with them?
* 20 Men talk much of eiresiwh, [*Eiresiwh suka ferei, kai pionawV arTouV, kai meli en kotulh, kai elaiow,*
  etc. An olive bow wrapped about with wool, whereupon did hang figs, and bread, and honey in a
  pot, and oil.] how many sweet and goodly things it had hanging on it; of the Philosopher’s
  stone, that it turneth copper into gold; of *Cornucopia,* that it had all things necessary for food
  in it; of *Panacca* the herb, that it was good for all diseases; of *Catholic* the drug, that it is
  instead of all purges; of *Vulcan’s* armour, that it was an armour of proof against all thrusts,
  and all blows, etc.
* 21 Well, that which they falsely or vainly attributed to these things for bodily good, we may
  justly and with full measure ascribe unto the Scripture, for spiritual.
* 22 It is not only an armour, but also a whole armory of weapons, both offensive and
  defensive; whereby we may save ourselves and put the enemy to flight.
* 23 It is not an herb, but a tree, or rather a whole paradise of trees of life, which bring forth
  fruit every month, and the fruit thereof is for meat, and the leaves for medicine.
* 24 It is not a pot of *Manna,* or a cruse of oil, which were for memory only, or for a meal’s
  meat or two, but as it were a shower of heavenly bread sufficient for a whole host, be it never
  so great; and as it were a whole cellar full of oil vessels; whereby all our necessities may be
  provided for and our debts discharged.
• 25 In a word, it is a pantry ((bread Pantry)) of wholesome food, against fenowed [mouldy.] traditions; a physician's shop [koinon iatreion. S.Basil. in Psal.primum.] (Saint Basil calleth it) of preservatives against poisoned heresies; a pandect ((a complete body)) of profitable laws against rebellious spirits; a treasury of most costly jewels against beggarly rudiments; finally, a fountain of most pure water springing up unto everlasting life.

• 26 And what marvel? the original thereof being from heaven, not from earth; the author being God, not man; the inditer, the Holy Spirit; not the wit of the Apostles or Prophets; the penmen, such as were sanctified from the womb, and ended with a principal portion of God's Spirit; the matter, verity, piety, purity, uprightness; the form, God's word, God's testimony, God's oracles, the word of truth, the word of salvation, etc.; the effects, light of understanding, stableness of persuasion, repentance from dead works, newness of life, holiness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost; lastly, the end and reward of the study thereof, fellowship with the Saints, participation of the heavenly nature, fruition of an inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that never shall fade away.

• 27 Happy is the man that delighteth in the Scripture, and thrice happy that meditateth in it day and night.

§6 Translation necessary

• 1 But how shall men meditate in that, which they cannot understand? How shall they understand that which is kept close in an unknown tongue? as it is written, Except I know the power of the voice, I shall be to him that speaketh, a Barbarian, and he that speaketh, shall be a Barbarian to me. [1Cor.14]

• 2 The Apostle excepteth no tongue; not Hebrew the ancientest, not Greek the most copious, not Latin the finest.

• 3 Nature taught a natural man to confess, that all of us in those tongues which we do not understand, are plainly deaf; we may turn the deaf ear unto them.

• 4 The Scythian counted the Athenian, whom he did not understand, barbarous; [Clem. Alex. 1º Strom.] so the Roman did the Syrian, and the Jew (even S.Hierome himself called the Hebrew tongue barbarous, be like because it was strange to so many:)

• 5 [S.Hieronym. Damas.] so the Emperor of Constantinople [Michael. Theophili fil.] calleth the Latin tongue, barbarous, though Pope Nicolas do storm at it:

• 6 [2. Tom. Concil. ex edit. Petri Crab.] so the Jews long before Christ called all other nations, Lognaim, which is little better than barbarous.

• 7 Therefore as one complaineth, that always in the Senate of Rome, [Cicero 5º de finibus.] there was one or other that called for an interpreter: so lest the Church be driven to the like exigent, it is necessary to have translations in a readiness.

• 8 Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water, even as Jacob rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well, by which means the flocks of Laban were watered [Gen.29:10].

• 9 Indeed, without translation into the vulgar tongue, the unlearned are but like children at Jacob's well (which was deep) [John 4:11] without a bucket or something to draw with: or as
that person mentioned by *Isaiah*, to whom when a sealed book was delivered, with this
motion, *Read this, I pray thee*, he was fain ((compelled by circumstances)) to make this
answer, *I cannot, for it is sealed.* [Isa.29:11]

§7 The translation of the Old Testament out of the Hebrew into Greek

• 1 While God would be known only in *Jacob*, and have his Name great in *Israel*, and in none
other place, while the dew lay on *Gideon’s* fleece only, and all the earth besides was dry; [See
*S.August.lib.12. contra Faust.c.32.*] then for one and the same people, which spake all of
them the language of *Canaan*, that is, *Hebrew*, one and the same original in *Hebrew*
was sufficient.

• 2 But when the fullness of time drew near, that the Sun of righteousness, the Son of God,
should come into the world, whom God ordained to be a reconciliation through faith in his
blood, not of the *Jew* only, but also of the *Greek*, yea, of all them that were scattered abroad;
then, lo, it pleased the Lord to stir up the spirit of a *Greek* prince (Greek for descent and
language), even of *Ptolomy Philadelph*, King of *Egypt*, to procure the translating of the Book
of God out of *Hebrew* into *Greek*.

• 3 This is the translation of the *Seventy* interpreters, commonly so called, which prepared the
way for our Saviour among the Gentiles by written preaching, as Saint *John Baptist* did among
the *Jews* by vocal.

• 4 For the *Grecians*, being desirous of learning, were not wont to suffer books of worth to lie
moulding in kings' libraries, but had many of their servants, ready scribes, to copy them out,
and so they were dispersed and made common.

• 5 Again, the *Greek* tongue was well known and made familiar to most inhabitants in *Asia*, by
reason of the conquest that there the *Grecians* had made, as also by the colonies, which
thither they had sent.

• 6 For the same causes also it was well understood in many places of *Europe*, yea, and of
*Africa* too.

• 7 Therefore the word of God being set forth in *Greek*, becometh hereby like a candle set
upon a candlestick, which giveth light to all that are in the house, or like a proclamation
sounded forth in the market-place, which most men presently take knowledge of; and
therefore that language was fittest to contain the Scriptures, both for the first preachers of
the Gospel to appeal unto for witness, and for the learners also of those times to make search
and trial by.

• 8 It is certain, that that translation was not so sound and so perfect, but that it needed in
many places correction; and who had been so sufficient for this work as the Apostles or
apostolic men?

• 9 Yet it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them to take that which they found (the
same being for the greatest part true and sufficient) rather than by making a new, in that new
world and green age of the Church, to expose themselves to many exceptions and cavillations
as though they made a translation to serve their own turn, and therefore bearing witness to
themselves, their witness not to be regarded.

• 10 This may be supposed to be some cause, why the translation of the *Seventy* was allowed
to pass for current.

• 11 Notwithstanding, though it was commended generally, yet it did not fully content the
learned, no, not of the *Jews*.
• 12 For not long after Christ, Aquila fell in hand with a new translation, and after him Theodotion, and after him Symmachus: yea, there was a fifth and a sixth edition, the authors whereof were not known.

• 13 These with the Seventy made up the Hexapla, and were worthy and to great purpose compiled together by Origen.

• 14 Howbeit the edition of the Seventy went away with the credit, and therefore not only was placed in the midst by Origen, (for the worth and excellency thereof above the rest, as Epiphanius gathereth) [Epiphan. de mensur, et ponderibus] but also was used by the Greek fathers for the ground and foundation of their commentaries. [See S.August. 2o. de doctrin, Christian. c. 15o Novell, diatex, 146.]

• 15 Yea, Epiphanius above-named doth attribute so much unto it, that he holdeth the authors thereof not only for interpreters, but also for prophets in some respect: and Justinian the Emperor, enjoining the Jews his subjects to use specially the translation of the Seventy, rendereth this reason thereof, because they were, as it were, enlightened with prophetical grace. [profectiV w sper cantoV perilamiasV autonV.]

• 16 Yet for all that, as the Egyptians are said of the Prophet [Isa.31:3] to be men and not God, and their horses flesh and not spirit: so it is evident, (and Saint Hierome [S.Hieron. de optimo genere interpret.] affirmeth as much) that the Seventy were interpreters, they were not prophets; they did many things well, as learned men; but yet as men they stumbled and fell, one while through oversight, another while through ignorance, yea, sometimes they may be noted to add to the original, and sometimes to take from it; which made the Apostles to leave them many times, when they left the Hebrew, and to deliver the sense thereof according to the truth of the word, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

• 17 This may suffice touching the Greek translations of the Old Testament.

§8 Translation out of Hebrew and Greek into Latin

• 1 There were also within a few hundred years after Christ translations many into the Latin tongue: for this tongue also was very fit to convey the Law and the Gospel by, because in those times very many countries of the West, yea of the South, East, and North, spake or understood Latin, being made provinces to the Romans.

• 2 But now the Latin translations were too many to be all good, for they were infinite Latin interpretes nullo modo numerar! possunt, saith S.Augustine.) [S.Augustin. de doctr. Christ, lib. 2.cap.11.]

• 3 Again, they were not out of the Hebrew fountain (we speak of the Latin translations of the Old Testament) but out of the Greek stream, therefore the Greek being not altogether clear, the Latin derived from it must needs be muddy.

• 4 This moved S.Hierome, a most learned father, and the best linguist without controversy, of his age, or of any that went before him, to undertake the translating of the Old Testament, out of the very fountains themselves; which he performed with that evidence of great learning, judgement, industry, and faithfulness, that he hath for ever bound the Church unto him, in a debt of special remembrance and thankfulness.

§9 The translating of the Scripture into the vulgar tongues
1 Now though the Church were thus furnished with Greek and Latin translations, even before the faith of CHRIST was generally embraced in the Empire: [S.Hieronym. Marcell, Zosim.] (for the learned know that even in S.Hierome's time the Consul of Rome and his wife were both Ethnics, and about the same time the greatest part of the Senate also) yet for all that the godly-learned were not content to have the Scriptures in the language which themselves understood, Greek and Latin, (as the good lepers [2King.7:9] were not content to fare well themselves, but acquainted their neighbours with the store that God had sent, that they also might provide for themselves) but also for the behoof and edifying of the unlearned which hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and had souls to be saved as well as they, they provided translations into the vulgar for their countrymen, insomuch that most nations under heaven did shortly after their conversion hear CHRIST speaking unto them in their mother tongue, not by the voice of their minister only, but also by the written word translated.

2 If any doubt hereof, he may be satisfied by examples enough, if enough will serve the turn.

3 First, S.Hierome [S.Hieron. præf. in 4. Evangel.] saith, Multarum gentium linguis Scriptura ante translata, docet falsa esse quæ addita sunt, etc., i.e. The Scripture being translated before in the languages of many nations, doth shew that those things that were added (by Lucian or Hesychius) are false.

4 The same Hierome elsewhere [S.Hieron. Sophronio.] affirmeth that he, the time was, had set forth the translation of the Seventy, sae linguae hominibus, i.e. for his countrymen of Dalmatia.

5 Which words not only Erasmus doth understand to purport, that S.Hierome translated the Scripture into the Dalmatian tongue, but also Sixtus Senensis, [Six. Sen. lib. 4. Alphon à Castro lib. 1. ca. 23.] and Alphonsus à Castro, (that we speak of no more) men not to be excpected against by them of Rome, do ingenuously confess as much.

6 So S.Chrysostome, [S.Chrysost. in Johan. cap. 1. hom. 1.] that lived in S.Hierome's time, giveth evidence with him: The doctrine of S.John (saith he) did not in such sort (as the philosophers did) vanish away: but the Syrians, Egyptians, Indians, Persians, Ethiopians, and infinite other nations, being barbarous people, translated it into their (mother) tongue, and have learned to be (true) philosophers, he meaneth Christians.

7 To this may be added Theodorit, [Theodor. 5. Therapeut.] as next unto him both for antiquity, and for learning.

8 His words be these, Every country that is under the sun is full of these words (of the Apostles and Prophets) and the Hebrew tongue (he meaneth the Scriptures in the Hebrew tongue) is turned not only into the language of the Grecians, but also of the Romans, and Egyptians, and Persians, and Indians, and Armenians, and Scythians, and Sautomatians, and briefly into all the languages that any nation useth. So he.

9 In like manner, [P.Diacon. li. 12. Isidor, in Chron. Goth. Sozom. li. 6. cap. 37.] Ulpilas is reported by Paulus Diaconus and Isidor (and before them by Sozomen.) to have translated the Scriptures into the Gothic tongue:

10 John Bishop of Seville by Vasseus, to have turned them into Arabic about the year of our Lord 717: [Vaseus in Chron. Hispan.]

11 Beda by Cistertiensis, to have turned a great part of them into Saxon:

12 Efnard by Trithemius, to have abridged the French Psalter, as Beda had done the Hebrew, about the year 800:
§10 The unwillingness of our chief adversaries, that the Scriptures should be divulged in the mother tongue, etc.

1 Now the Church of Rome would seem at the length to bear a motherly affection towards her children, and to allow them the Scriptures in their mother tongue: but indeed it is a gift, not deserving to be called a gift, an unprofitable gift: [dwrən dərən kouk oal̄səmən. Sophocles.] they must first get a licence in writing before they may use them, and to get that, they must approve themselves to their confessor, that is, to be such as are, if not frozen in the dregs, yet soured with the leaven of their superstition.

2 Howbeit, it seemed too much to Clement the Eighth that there should be any licence granted to have them in the vulgar tongue, and therefore he overruled and frustratheth the grant of Pius the Fourth. [See the observation (set forth by Clement's authority) upon the 4th rule of Pius the IV's making in the Index, lib. prohib. pag. 15. ver. 5.]

3 So much are they afraid of the light of Scripture, (Lucifugae Scripturarum, as Tertullian speaketh) [Tertul. de resur. carnis.] that they will not trust the people with it, no not as it is set forth by their own sworn men, no not with the licence of their own bishops and inquisitors.

4 Yea, so unwilling they are to communicate the Scriptures to the people's understanding in any sort, that they are not ashamed to confess that we forced them to translate it into English.
5 This seemeth to argue a bad cause, or a bad conscience, or both.
6 Sure we are, that it is not he that hath good gold that is afraid to bring it to the touchstone, but he that hath the counterfeit; neither is it the true man that shunneth [John 3:20] the light, but the malefactor, lest his deed should be reproved: neither is it the plain dealing merchant that is unwilling to have the weights or the meteyard brought in place, but he that useth deceit.
7 But we will let them alone for this fault, and return to translation.

§11 The speeches and reasons, both of our brethren and of our adversaries, against this work
1 Many men's mouths have been open a good while (and yet are not stopped) with speeches about the translation so long in hand, or rather perusals of translations made before: and ask what may be the reason, what the necessity of the employment.
2 Hath the Church been deceived, say they, all this while?
3 Hath her sweet bread been mingled with leaven, her silver with dross, her wine with water, her milk with lime? (Lacte gypsum malè misceture, saith S.Ireney.) [S.Iren. 3. lib. cap. 19.]
4 We hoped that we had been in the right way, that we had had the oracles of God delivered unto us, and that though all the world had cause to be offended and to complain, yet that we had none.
5 Hath the nurse holden out the breast, and nothing but wind in it?
6 Hath the bread been delivered by the fathers of the Church, and the same proved to be lapidosus, as Seneca speaketh?
7 What is it to handle the word of God deceptfully, if this be not? Thus certain brethren.
8 Also the adversaries of Judah and Jerusalem, like Sanballat in Nehemiah, mock, as we hear, both at the work and the workmen, saying: What do these weak Jews, etc.? will they make the stones whole again out of the heaps of dust which are burnt? although they build, yet if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stony wall. [Neh.4:3]
9 Was their translation good before? Why do they now mend it? Was it not good? Why then was it obstructed to ((forced upon)) the people? Yea, why did the Catholics (meaning Popish Romanists) always go in jeopardy, for refusing to go to hear it? Nay, if it must be translated into English, Catholics are fittest to do it. They have learning, and they know when a thing is well, they can manum de tabulâ.
10 We will answer them both briefly: and the former, being brethren, thus, with S.Hierome, Damnamus veteres? [S.Hieron. Apolog. advers. Ruffin.] Minimè, sed post priorum studia in domo Domini quod possumus laboramus. That is, Do we condemn the ancient? In no case: but after the endeavours of them that were before us, we take the best pains we can in the house of God.
11 As if he said, Being provoked by the example of the learned that lived before my time, I have thought it my duty, to assay whether my talent in the knowledge of the tongues may be profitable in any measure to God's Church, lest I should seem to have laboured in them in vain, and lest I should be thought to glory in men (although ancient) above that which was in them. Thus S.Hierome may be thought to speak.
§12 A satisfaction to our brethren

1. And to the same effect say we, that we are so far off from condemning any of their labours that travailed before us in this kind, either in this land or beyond sea, either in King Henry's time, or King Edward's (if there were any translation, or correction of a translation in his time) or Queen Elizabeth's of ever-renowned memory, that we acknowledge them to have been raised up of God, for the building and furnishing of his Church, and that they deserve to be had of us and of posterity in everlasting remembrance.

2. The Judgement of Aristotle is worthy and well known: If Timotheus had not been, we had not had much sweet music; but if Phrynis (Timotheus's master) had not been, we had not had Timotheus. [Arist. 2. metaphys. cap. 1.]

3. Therefore blessed be they, and most honoured be their name, that break the ice, and give the onset upon that which helpeth forward to the saving of souls.

4. Now what can be more available thereto than to deliver God's book unto God's people in a tongue which they understand?

5. Since of a hidden treasure, and of a fountain that is sealed, there is no profit, as Ptolemy Philadelph wrote to the Rabbins or masters of the Jews, as witnesseth Epiphanius: [S. Epiphani. loco ante citato.] and as S. Augustine saith: A man had rather be with his dog than with a stranger (whose tongue is strange unto him.) [S. Augustin. lib. 19. de civil. Dei. c. 7.]

6. Yet for all that, as nothing is begun and perfected at the same time, and the later thoughts are thought to be the wiser: so, if we building upon their foundation that went before us, and being holpen by their labours, do endeavour to make that better which they left so good, no man, we are sure, hath cause to dislike us; they, we persuade ourselves, if they were alive, would thank us.

7. The vintage of Abiezer, that strake the stroke: yet the gleaning of grapes of Ephraim was not to be despised. See Judges 8, verse 2.

8. Joash the king of Israel did not satisfy himself, till he had smitten the ground three times; [2. Kings 13:18, 19] and yet he offended the Prophet for giving over then.

9. Aquila, of whom we spake before (§ 7:12), translated the Bible as carefully and as skilfully as he could; and yet he thought good to go over it again, and then it got the credit with the Jews, to be called kata akribias, that is, accurately done, as Saint Hierome witnesseth. [S. Hieron. in Ezech. cap. 3.]

10. How many books of profane learning have been gone over again and again, by the same translators, by others? Of one and the same book of Aristotle's Ethics, there are extant not so few as six or seven several translations.

11. Now, if this cost may be bestowed upon the gourd, which affordeth us a little shade, and which to-day flourisheth but to-morrow is cut down, what may we bestow, nay, what ought we not to bestow, upon the vine, the fruit whereof maketh glad the conscience of man, and the stem whereof abideth for ever?

12. And this is the Word of God, which we translate.

13. What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord? [Jerem. 23:28]

14. Tanti vitrum, quanti verum margaritum (saith Tertullian,) [Tertul. ad Martyr.] [Si tanti vilissimum, vitreum, quanti pretiosissimum Margaritum: Hieron. ad Salvin.] if a toy of glass be of that reckoning with us, how ought we to value the true pearl?

15. Therefore let no man's eye be evil, because his Majesty's is good; neither let any be grieved that we have a Prince that seeketh the increase of the spiritual wealth of Israel, (let Sanballats and Tobiah's do so, which therefore do bear their just reproof but let us rather bless
God from the ground of our heart, for working this religious care in him to have the translations of the Bible maturely considered of and examined.

- 16 For by this means it cometh to pass, that whatsoever is sound already (and all is sound for substance, in one or other of our editions, and the worst of ours far better than their authentic vulgar) the same will shine as gold more brightly, being rubbed and polished; also, if anything be halting, or superfluous, or not so agreeable to the original, the same may be corrected, and the truth set in place.

- 17 And what can the King command to be done that will bring him more true honour than this? and wherein could they that have been set a work, approve their duty to the King, yea, their obedience to God, and love to his Saints, more, than by yielding their service, and all that is within them, for the furnishing of the work?

- 18 But besides all this, they were the principal motives of it, and therefore ought least to quarrel it: for the very historical truth is, that upon the importunate petitions of the Puritans, at his Majesty's coming to this crown, the conference at Hampton Court having been appointed for hearing their complaints, when by force of reason they were put from all other grounds, they had recourse at the last to this shift, that they could not with good conscience subscribe to the Communion book, since it maintained the Bible as it was there translated, which was, as they said, a most corrupted translation.

- 19 And although this was judged to be but a very poor and empty shift, yet even hereupon did his Majesty begin to bethink himself of the good that might ensue by a new translation, and presently after gave order for this translation which is now presented unto thee. Thus much to satisfy our scrupulous brethren.

§13 An answer to the imputations of our adversaries

- 1 Now to the latter we answer, that we do not deny, nay, we affirm and avow, that the very meanest translation of the Bible in English, set forth by men of our profession, (for we have seen none of theirs of the whole Bible as yet) containeth the Word of God, nay, is the Word of God.

- 2 As the King's Speech which he uttered in Parliament, being translated into French, Dutch, Italian, and Latin, is still the King's Speech, though it be not interpreted by every translator with the like grace, nor peradventure so fitly for phrase, nor so expressly for sense, everywhere.

- 3 For it is confessed, that things are to take their denomination of the greater part; and a natural man could say, Verùm ubi multa nitent in carmine, non ego paucis offendor maculis, etc. [Horace.] A man may be counted a virtuous man though he have made many slips in his life, (else there were none virtuous, for in many things we offend all [James 3:2]) also a comely man and lovely, though he have some warts upon his hand, yea, not only freckles upon his face, but also scars.

- 4 No cause therefore why the Word translated should be denied to be the Word, or forbidden to be current, notwithstanding that some imperfections and blemishes may be noted in the setting forth of it.

- 5 For whatever was perfect under the sun, where Apostles or apostolic men, that is, men endued with an extraordinary measure of God's Spirit, and privileged with the privilege of infallibility, had not their hand?

- 6 The Romanists therefore in refusing to hear, and daring to burn the Word translated, did
no less than despite the Spirit of grace, from whom originally it proceeded, and whose sense and meaning, as well as man's weakness would enable, it did express.

- 7 Judge by an example or two.
- 8 Plutarch writeth, [Plutarch. in Camillo.] that after that Rome had been burnt by the Gauls, they fell soon to build it again: but doing it in haste, they did not cast the streets, nor proportion the house in such comely fashion as had been most sightly and convenient; was Catiline therefore an honest man, or a good patriot, that sought to bring it to a combustion? or Nero a good prince, that did indeed set it on fire?
- 9 So, by the story of Ezra and the prophecy of Haggai it may be gathered that the Temple built by Zerubbabel after the return from Babylon was by no means to be compared to the former built by Solomon (for they that remembered the former wept [Ezra 3:12] when they considered the latter:) notwithstanding, might this latter either have been abhorred and forsaken by the Jews, or profaned by the Greeks?
- 10 The like we are to think of translations.
- 11 The translation of the Seventy dissenteth from the original in many places, neither doth it come near it for perspicuity, gravity, majesty; yet which of the Apostles did condemn it?
- 12 Condemn it? Nay, they used it, (as it is apparent, and as Saint Hierome and the most learned men to confess) which they would not have done, nor by their example of using it, so grace and commend it to the Church, if it had been unworthy the appellation and name of the Word of God.
- 13 And whereas they urge for their second defence of their vilifying and abusing of the English Bibles, or some pieces thereof, which they meet with, for that heretics, forsooth, were the authors of the translations, (heretics they call us by the same right that they call themselves Catholics, both being wrong) we marvel what divinity taught them so.
- 14 We are sure Tertullian [Tertul. de præscript. contra hæræses.] was of another mind: Expersonis probamus fidem, an ex fide personas? Do we try men's faith by their persons? we should try their persons by their faith.
- 15 Also S.Augustine was of another mind: for he, lighting upon certain rules made by Tychonius, a Donatist, for the better understanding of the Word, was not ashamed to make use of them, yea, to insert them into his own book, with giving commendation to them so far forth as they were worthy to be commended, as is to be seen in S.Augustine's third book De Doctrinâ Christianâ. [S.August. 3. de doct. Christ. cap. 30.]
- 16 To be short, Origen, and the whole Church of God for certain hundred years, were of another mind: for they were so far from treading under foot, (much more from burning) the translation of Aquila, a proselyte, that is, one that had turned Jew; of Symmachus, and Theodotion, both Ebonites, that is, most vile heretics, that they joined them together with the Hebrew original, and the translation of the Seventy (as hath been before signified out of Epiphanius) and set them forth openly to be considered of and perused by all.
- 17 But we weary the unlearned, who need not know so much, and trouble the learned, who know it already.

§14 ((A third cavil.))

- 1 Yet before we end, we must answer a third cavil ((a false or mocking argument)) and objection of theirs against us, for altering and amending our translations so oft; wherein truly they deal hardly, and strangely with us.
2 For to whom ever was it imputed for a fault (by such as were wise) to go over that which he had done, and to amend it where he saw cause?

3 Saint Augustine [S.Aug. Epist. 9.] was not afraid to exhort S.Hierome to a Palinodia or recantation; the same S.Augustine [S.Aug. lib. Retractat. Video interdum vitia mea. S.Aug. Epist. 8.] was not ashamed to retractate, we might say revoke, many things that had passed him, and doth even glory that he seeth his infirmities.

4 If we will be sons of the Truth we must consider that it speaketh, and trample upon our own credit, yea, and upon other men's too, if either be any way a hindrance to it. This to the cause.

5 Then to the persons we say, that of all men they ought to be most silent in this case.

6 For what varieties have they, and what alterations have they made, not only of their service books, portessses, and breviaries, but also of their Latin translation?

7 The service book supposed to be made by S.Ambrose (Officium Ambrosianum) was a great while in special use and request: but Pope Adrian, calling a Council with the aid of Charles the Emperor, abolished it, yea, burnt it, and commanded the service book of Saint Gregory universally to be used. [Durand. lib. 5. cap. 2.]

8 Well, Officium Gregorianum gets by this means to be in credit, but doth it continue without change or altering? No, the very Roman service was of two fashions, the new fashion and the old, (the one used in one Church, the other in another) as is to be seen in Pamelius, a Romanist, his preface, before Micrologus.

9 The same Pamelius reporteth out of Radulphe de Rivo, that about the year of our Lord 1277 Pope Nicolas the Third removed out of the churches of Rome the more ancient books (of service) and brought into use the missals of the Friars Minorites, and commanded them to be observed there; insomuch that about a hundred years after, when the above-named Radulphe happened to be at Rome, he found all the books to be new, (of the new stamp.)

10 Neither was there this chopping and changing in the more ancient times only, but also of late: Pius Quintus himself confesseth, that every bishopric almost had a peculiar kind of service, most unlike to that which others had: which moved him to abolish all other breviaries, though never so ancient, and privileged and published by bishops in their dioceses, and to establish and ratify that only which was of his own setting forth, in the year 1568.

11 Now, when the father of their Church, who gladly would heal the sore of the daughter of his people softly and slightly, and make the best of it, findeth so great fault with them for their odds and jarring, we hope the children have no great cause to vaunt of their uniformity.

12 But the difference that appeareth between our translations, and our often correcting of them, is the thing that we are specially charged with; let us see therefore whether they themselves be without fault this way, (if it be to be counted a fault, to correct) and whether they be fit men to throw stones at us: O tandem maior parcas insane minori; [Horat.] they that are less sound themselves ought not to object infirmities to others.

13 If we should tell them that Valla, Stapulensis, Erasmus, and Vives found fault with their vulgar translation, and consequently wished the same to be mended, or a new one to be made, they would answer peradventure, that we produced their enemies for witnesses against them; albeit they were in no other sort enemies than as S.Paul was to the Galatians, [Galat.4:16] for telling them the truth: and it were to be wished that they had dared to tell it them plainlier and oftener.

14 But what will they say to this, that Pope Leo the Tenth allowed Erasmus's translation of the New Testament, so much different from the vulgar, [Sixtus Senens.] by his apostolic letter
and bull? that the same Leo exHORTed Pagnine to translate the whole Bible, and bare whatsoever charges was necessary for the work?

15 Surely, as the Apostle reasoneth to the Hebrews, [Heb.7:11, & 8:7] that if the former Law and Testament had been sufficient, there had been no need of the latter: so we may say, that if the old vulgar had been at all points allowable, to small purpose had labour and charges been undergone about framing of a new.

16 If they say, it was one Pope's private opinion, and that he consulted only himself; then we are able to go further with them, and to aver, that more of their chief men of all sorts, even their own Trent champions, Paiva and Vega, and their own inquisitors, Hieronymus ab Oleastro, and their own bishop Isodorus Clarus, and their own cardinal Thomas à Vio Caletan, do either make new translations themselves, or follow new ones of other men's making, or note the vulgar interpreter for halting, none of them fear to dissent from him, nor yet to except against him.

17 And call they this an uniform tenor of text and judgement about the text, so many of their worthies disclaiming the now received conceit?

18 Nay, we will yet come nearer the quick: doth not their Paris edition differ from the Louvaine, and Hentenius's from them both, and yet all of them allowed by authority?

19 Nay, doth not Sixtus Quintus [Sixtus V. præfat. fixa Biblia.] confess that certain Catholics (he meaneth certain of his own side) were in such a humour of translating the Scriptures into Latin, that Satan taking occasion by them, though they thought of no such matter, did strive what he could, out of so uncertain and manifold a variety of translations, so to mingle all things, that nothing might seem to be left certain and firm in them, etc.?

20 Nay, further, did not the same Sixtus ordain by an inviolable decree, and that with the counsel and consent of his cardinals, that the Latin edition of the Old and New Testament, which the Council of Trent would have to be authentic, is the same without controversy which he then set forth, being diligently corrected and printed in the printing-house of Vatican? Thus Sixtus in his preface before his Bible.

21 And yet Clement the Eighth his immediate successor, publisheth another edition of the Bible, containing in it infinite differences from that of Sixtus, (and many of them weighty and material) and yet this must be authentic by all means.

22 What is to have the faith of our glorious Lord JESUS CHRIST, with Yea and Nay, if this be not?

23 Again, what is sweet harmony and consent, if this be?

24 Therefore, as Demaratus of Corinth advised a great king, before he talked of the dissensions among the Grecians, to compose his domestic broils, (for at that time his queen and his son and heir were at deadly feud with him) so all the while that our adversaries do make so many and so various editions themselves, and do jar so much about the worth and authority of them, they can with no show of equity challenge us for changing and correcting.

§15 The purpose of the translators, with their number, furniture, care, etc.

1 But it is high time to leave them, and to shew in brief what we proposed to ourselves, and what course we held, in this our perusal and survey of the Bible.

2 Truly, good Christian reader, we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, (for then the imputation of Sixtus had been true in some sort, that our people had been fed with gall of dragons instead
of wine, with whey instead of milk:) but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that hath been our endeavour, that our mark.

- 3 To that purpose there were many chosen that were greater in other men's eyes than in their own, and that sought the truth rather than their own praise.
- 4 Again, they came, or were thought to come, to the work, not exercendi causâ (as one saith), but exercitati, that is, learned, not to learn: for the chief overseer and ergodîwktâV under his Majesty, to whom not only we, but also our whole Church was much bound, knew by his wisdom which thing also Nasianzen [Nazianzen. eîV m. episk. parou. Idem in Apologet.] taught so long ago, that it is a preposterous order to teach first and to learn after, yea, that to en piqw kerameian manqanein, to learn and practise together, is neither commendable for the workman, nor safe for the work.
- 5 Therefore such were thought upon, as could say modestly with Saint Hierome, Et Hebræum Sermonem exparte didicimus, et in Latino Penè ab ipsis incunabulis, etc. detriti sumus. Both we have learned the Hebrew tongue in part, and in the Latin we have been exercised almost from our very cradle.
- 6 S.Hierome maketh no mention of the Greek tongue, wherein yet he did excel, because he translated not the Old Testament out of Greek, but out of Hebrew.
- 7 And in what sort did these assemble? In the trust of their own knowledge, or of their sharpness of wit, or deepness of judgement, as it were in an arm of flesh? At no hand.
- 8 They trusted in him that hath the key of David, opening, and no man shutting; they prayed to the Lord, the Father of our Lord, to the effect that S.Augustine [S.Aug lib. 11. Confess. cap. 2.] did: O let thy Scriptures be my pure delight, let me not be deceived in them, neither let me deceive by them.
- 9 In this confidence and with this devotion, did they assemble together; not too many, lest one should trouble another; and yet many, lest many things hapy might escape them.
- 10 If you ask what they had before them, truly it was the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the Greek of the New.
- 11 These are the two golden pipes, or rather conduits, wherethrough the olive branches empty themselves into the gold.
- 12 Saint Augustine [S.August. 3. de doctr. c. 3. etc.] calleth them precedent, or original, tongues; Saint Hierome, fountains. [S.Hieron. ad Suniam et Fetel.]
- 13 The same Saint Hierome [S.Hieron. ad Lucinium, Dist. 9. ut veterum.] affirmeth, and Gratian hath not spared to put it into his decree, That as the credit of the old books (he meaneth of the Old Testament) is to be tried by the Hebrew volumes, so of the New by the Greek tongue, he meaneth by the original Greek.
- 14 If truth be to be tried by these tongues, then whence should a translation be made, but out of them?
- 15 These tongues, therefore, (the Scriptures, we say, in those tongues,) we set before us to translate, being the tongues wherein God was pleased to speak to his Church by his Prophets and Apostles.
- 16 Neither did we run over the work with that posting haste that the Septuagint did; if that be true which is reported of them that they finished it in 72 days; [Joseph. Antiq. lib. 12.] neither were we barred or hindered from going over it again, having once done it, like S.Hierome, [S.Hieron. ad Pammac. pro libr. advers. Jovinian.] if that be true which himself reporteth, that he could no sooner write anything, but presently it was caught from him, and
published, and he could not have leave to mend it:
- 17 neither, to be short, were we the first that fell in hand with translating the Scripture into English, and consequently destitute of former helps, as it is written of Origen, that he was the first, [πρῶτος οὖν] in a manner, that put his hand to write commentaries upon the Scriptures, and therefore no marvel if he overshot himself many times.
- 18 None of these things: the work hath not been huddled up in 72 days, but hath cost the workmen, as light as it seemeth, the pains of twice seven times seventy-two days, and more: [filēi gar oknein pragm anh prassw mega. Sophoc. in Elect.] matters of such weight and consequence are to be speeded with maturity; for in a business of moment a man feareth not the blame of convenient slackness.
- 19 Neither did we think much to consult the translators or commentators, Chaldee, Hebrew, Syrian, Greek, or Latin, no, nor the Spanish, French, Italian, or Dutch;
- 20 neither did we disdain to revise that which we had done, and to bring back to the anvil that which we had hammered:
- 21 but having and using as great helps as were needful, and fearing no reproach for slowness, nor coveting praise for expedition, we have at the length, through the good hand of the Lord upon us, brought the work to that pass that you see.

§16 Reasons moving us to set diversity of senses in the margin, where there is great probability for each
- 1 Some peradventure would have no variety of senses to be set in the margin, lest the authority of the Scriptures for deciding of controversies by that show of uncertainty should somewhat be shaken.
- 2 But we hold their judgement not to be so sound in this point.
- 3 For though whatsoever things are necessary are manifest, as S.Chrysostome saith, [παντά τα ἀνάγκαια ἀναλάβει S.Chrysost. in 2.Thess. cap. 2.] and as S.Augustine, in those things that are plainly set down in the Scriptures, all such matters are found that concern Faith, Hope, and Charity; [S.Aug. 2. de doctr. Christ. cap. 9.]
- 4 yet for all that it cannot be dissembled ((disguised)), that partly to exercise and whet our wits, partly to wean the curious from loathing of them for their everywhere plainness, partly also to stir up our devotion to crave the assistance of God’s Spirit by prayer, and lastly, that we might be forward to seek aid of our brethren by conference, and never scorn those that be not in all respects so complete as they should be, being to seek in many things ourselves,
- 5 it hath pleased God in His divine providence here and there to scatter words and sentences of that difficulty and doubtfulness, not in doctrinal points that concern salvation, (for in such it hath been vouch’d that the Scriptures are plain) but in matters of less moment, that fearfulness would better be seem ((be suitable to)) us than confidence, and if we will resolve, to revolve upon modesty with S.Augustine, (though not in this same case altogether, yet upon the same ground) Melius est dubitare de occultis, quàm litigare de incertis: [S.August. ii. 8. de Genes. ad liter. cap. 5.] it is better to make doubt of those things which are secret, than to strive about those things that are uncertain.
- 6 There be many words in the Scriptures [ἀπὸ λεγομένα] which be never found there but once, (having neither brother nor neighbour, as the Hebrews speak) so that we cannot be holpen by conference of places.
- 7 Again, there be many rare names of certain birds, beasts, and precious stones, etc.,
concerning which the Hebrews themselves are so divided among themselves for judgement, that they may seem to have defined this or that, rather because they would say something, than because they were sure of that which they said, as S.Hierome somewhere saith of the Septuagint.

8 Now in such a case, doth not a margin do well to admonish the reader to seek further, and not to conclude or dogmatize upon this or that peremptorily?

9 For as it is a fault of incredulity, to doubt of those things that are evident, so to determine of such things as the Spirit of God hath left (even in the judgement of the judicious) questionable, can be no less than presumption.

10 Therefore as S.Augustine saith, [S.Aug. 2. de doctr. Christian. cap. 14.] that variety of translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of the Scriptures: so diversity of signification and sense in the margin, where the text is not so clear, must needs do good, yea, is necessary, as we are persuaded.

11 We know that Sixtus Quintus [Sixtus V. præf. Bibliæ.] expressly forbiddeth that any variety of readings of their vulgar edition should be put in the margin, (which though it be not altogether the same thing to that we have in hand, yet it looketh that way) but we think he hath not all of his own side his favourers for this conceit.

12 They that are wise, had rather have their judgments at liberty in differences of readings, than to be captivated to one, when it may be the other.

13 If they were sure that their high priest had all laws shut up in his breast, as Paul the Second bragged, [Plat. in Paulo secesso.] and that he were as free from error by special privilege as the dictators of Rome were made by law inviolable, it were another matter; then his word were an oracle, his opinion a decision.

14 But the eyes of the world are now open, God be thanked, and have been a great while: [omoiopaqhV. trwtoV g ci crwV esti.] they find that he is subject to the same affections and infirmities that others be, that his skin is penetrable; and therefore so much as he proveth, not as much as he claimeth, they grant and embrace.

§17 Reasons inducing us not to stand curiously upon an identity of phrasing

1 Another thing we think good to admonish thee of, gentle reader, that we have not tied ourselves to an uniformity of phrasing, or to an identity of words, as some peradventure would wish that we had done, because they observe that some learned men somewhere have been as exact as they could that way.

2 Truly, that we might not vary from the sense of that which we had translated before, if the word signified the same thing in both places [polushma.] (for there be some words that be not of the same sense everywhere) we were especially careful, and made a conscience, according to our duty.

3 But that we should express the same notion in the same particular word; as, for example, if we translate the Hebrew or Greek word once by purpose, never to call it intent; if one where journeying, never travelling; if one where think, never suppose; if one where pain, never ache; if one where joy, never gladness, etc.;

4 thus to mince the matter, we thought to savour more of curiosity than wisdom, and that rather it would breed scorn in the atheist than bring profit to the godly reader.

5 For is the kingdom of God become words or syllables?

6 Why should we be in bondage to them, if we may be free? use one precisely when we may
use another no less fit as commodiously?
• 7 A godly father in the primitive time shewed himself greatly moved that one of newfangleness called krabbaton skimpowV, [A bed. Niceph. Calist. lib. 8. cap. 42.] though the difference be little or none; and another reporteth [S.Hieron. in 4. Jonaæ. See S.Aug. epist. 10.] that he was much abused for turning cucurbita (to which reading the people had been used) into hedera.
• 8 Now if this happen in better times, and upon so small occasions, we might justly fear hard censure, if generally we should make verbal and unnecessary changings.
• 9 We might also be charged (by scoffers) with some unequal dealing towards a great number of good English words.
• 10 For as it is written of a certain great philosopher, that he should say, that those logs were happy that were made images to be worshipped; for their fellows, as good as they, lay for blocks behind the fire: so if we should say, as it were, unto certain words, Stand up higher, have a place in the Bible always, and to others of like quality, Get ye hence, be banished for ever, we might be taxed peradventure with S.James's words, namely, To be partial in ourselves, and judges of evil thoughts. [Leptologia. adolescencia. to spoudazein epi onomasi. See Euseb. proparaskeu. ii. 12. ex Platon.]
• 11 Add hereunto, that niceness in words was always counted the next step to trifling, and so was to be curious about names too: also that we cannot follow a better pattern for elocution than God himself; therefore He using divers words in His holy writ, and indifferently for one thing in nature, we, if we will not be superstitious, may use the same liberty in our English versions out of Hebrew and Greek, for that copy or store that he hath given us.
• 12 Lastly, we have on the one side avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans, who leave the old Ecclesiastical words, and betake them to other, as when they put washing for Baptism, and Congregation instead of Church:
• 13 as also on the other side we have shunned the obscurity of the Papists, in their Azimes, Tunike, Rational, Holocausts, Præpuce, Pasche, and a number of such like, whereof their late translation is full, and that of purpose to darken the sense, that since they must needs translate the Bible, yet by the language thereof it may be kept from being understood.
• 14 But we desire that the Scripture may speak like itself, as in the language of Canaan, that it may be understood even of the very vulgar.

§18 ((Conclusion.))
• 1 Many other things we might give thee warning of, gentle reader, if we had not exceeded the measure of a Preface already.
• 2 It remaineth that we commend thee to God, and to the Spirit of His grace, which is able to build further than we can ask or think.
• 3 He removeth the scales from our eyes, the vail from our hearts, opening our wits that we may understand His Word, enlarging our hearts, yea, correcting our affections, that we may love it above gold and silver, yea, that we may love it to the end.
• 4 Ye are brought unto fountains of living water which ye digged not; do not cast earth into them, with the Philistines, [Gen.26:15] neither prefer broken pits before them, with the wicked Jews. [Jer.2:13]
• 5 Others have laboured, and you may enter into their labours.
• 6 O receive not so great things in vain; O despise not so great salvation!
• 7 Be not like swine to tread under foot so precious things, [Matt.8:34] neither yet like dogs to tear and abuse holy things.
• 8 Say not to our Saviour with the Gergesites, Depart out of our coasts; neither yet with Esau [Heb.12:16] sell your birthright for a mess of pottage.
• 9 If light be come into the world, love not darkness more than light; if food, if clothing, be offered, go not naked, starve not yourselves.
• 10 Remember the advice of Nazianzene, [Nazianz. peri ag. bap. deion panhginon parelqein kai
thnikeuta pragmateian epizhein.] It is a grievous thing (or dangerous) to neglect a great fair, and to seek to make markets afterwards:
• 11 also the encouragement of S.Chrysostome, [S.Chrysost. in epist. ad Rom. Cap. 14. orat. 26. in bqik. amhcanon sôdra amhcanon.] It is altogether impossible, that he that is sober (and watchful) should at any time be neglected.
• 12 Lastly, the admonition and menacing of S.Augustine, [S.August. ad artic. sibi falso
object. Artic. 16.] They that despise God's will inviting them, shall feel God's will taking vengeance of them.
• 13 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; [Heb.10:31] but a blessed thing it is, and will bring us to everlasting blessedness in the end, when God speaketh unto us, to hearken; when He setteth His Word before us, to read it; when He stretcheth out His hand and calleth, to answer, Here am I; here we are to do thy will, O God.
• 14 The Lord work a care and conscience in us to know Him and serve Him, that we may be acknowledged of Him at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the Holy Ghost, be all praise and thanksgiving. Amen.

References

1. Original A_V_ Bible PREFACE - The Translators to the Reader


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This page was last edited on 30 November 2017, at 19:34.

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