

Sunday, May 16, 2021— Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*  
 Lesson 148 The Rheims New Testament: Assessing The Text, Part 2

### **Introduction/Review**

- Last week in Lesson 147 we began a textual assessment of the 1582 Rheims New Testament. In doing so we covered the following points.
  - Wycliffe-Rheims Connection
  - Latinisms
  - Dark Phrases
  - Fashionable Words
  - Catholic Renderings
- Today, in Lesson 148 we want to continue our textual investigation of the Rheims by considering the following additional points:
  - Catholic Annotations
  - Rheims & Tyndale: The Dirty Little Secret

### **Catholic Annotations**

- In addition to the Catholic Renderings that we observed in Lesson 147, the “Annotations” found in the Rheims New Testament were thoroughly Roman Catholic in their theology. Blackford Condit states the following regarding the matter in *The History of the English Bible* from 1882:
  - “. . . the intention of the translators fully appears in their annotations, where without stint or cover, they plead their cause, and in every possible instance, interpret the Scriptures in favor of the doctrine and doings of Rome. These notes are controversial as well as expository. In their preface the translators declare that they “set forth large ANNOTATIONS, thereby to shew the studious Reader in most places pertaining to the controversies of this time; but the hereticall corruptions and false deductions, and also the Apostolike tradition, the exposition of the holy Fathers, the decrees of the Catholike Church and the most ancient Councils; which meanes whosever trusteth not, for the sense of the holy Scriptures, but had rather follow his private judgment, or the arrogant spirit of these Sectaries, he shall worthily through his own wilfulnesse be deceived. Since these annotations form so important a part of the Rheims version the following collation is subjoined: [The following images are taken from Condit pages 309-312.]

**Matt. II. 2.** *Come to adore.* “This comming so farre of deuotion to visite and adore Christ in the place of his birth, was properly a Pilgrimage to his person ; and warranteth the faithfull in the like kinde of externall worship done to holy persons, places, and things.” Verse 11. *Adored him.* “This bodie, (saith Chrysostome,) the Sages adored in the cribbe. Let vs at the least imitate them ; thou seest him not now in the cribbe, but on the altar ; not a woman holding him, but the Priest present, and the holy Ghost powred out abundantly vpon the sacrifice.” Verse 16. *Murdred.* “By this example we learne how great

credit we owe to the Church in canonizing Saints, and celebrating their holy daies; by whose onely warrant, without any word of Scripture, these holy Innocents have bene honoured for Martyrs, and their holy day kepte euer since the Apostles time, although they died not voluntarily."

III. 8. *Fruit worthy.* "He preacheth satisfaction by doing worthy fruits or works of penance, which are, (as S. Hierome saith in 2. Joel) fasting, praying, almes, and the like." In refuting this, Fulke affirms: "that Hierome does not say that fasting, praying and almes, are satisfactions for sinne, but tokens of repentance."

IV. 1. *Desert.* "As John the Baptist, so our Saviour by going into the desert, and there liuing in contemplation euen among bruit beasts, and subject to the assaults of the Deuill for our sinnes, giueth a warrant and example to such holy men as haue liued in wildernesse for penance and contemplation, called Eremites."

VI. 24. *Two Masters.* "Two religions, God and Baal, Christ and Caluin, Masse and Communion, the Catholike Church and Hereticall Conuenticles. Let them marke this lesson of our Saviour that thinke they may serue all masters, all times, all religions. Againe these two masters doe signifie God and the world, the flesh and the spirit, iustice and sinne."

XII. 32. *Nor in the world to come.* "S. Augustine and other holy Doctors gather hereupon, that some sinnes may be remitted in the next life, and consequently proue Purgatorie thereby."

XXI. 8. *Garments in the way.* "These offices of honour done to our Sauior extraordinarily, were very acceptable; and for a memorie hereof, the holy Church maketh a solemne Procession euery yeare vpon this day, specially in our Countrey when it was Catholike, with the B. Sacrament reuerently caried, as it were Christ vpon the asse, and strawing of rushes and flowers, bearing of palmes, setting vp boughes, spreading and hanging vp the richest clothes, the quire and queristers singing, as here the children and the people; all done in a very goodly ceremonie, to the honour of Christ, and the memorie of his triumph vpon this day. The like seruice and the like

duties done to him in all other solemne Processions of the B. Sacrament, and otherwise be undoubtedly no lesse gratefull."

**XXIV. 30. *The signe of.*** "The signe of the Sonne of man, is the holy Crosse which then shall appeare to the Iewes to their confusion. . . . It shalbe no lesse confusion to heretikes that cannot abide the signe thereof."

**XXVI. 26. *My body.*** "He said not, This bread is a figure of my body; or, This wine is a figure of my bloud; but, This is my body, and, This is my bloud; . . . when some Fathers call it a figure or signe, they meane the outward formes of bread and wine." In confuting this, Fulke quotes several of the Church Fathers whose combined testimony is against the doctrine of transubstantiation.

**Luke X. 35. *Supererogate.*** "S. Augustine saith, that the Apostle (I. Cor. 9) according to this place did supererogate, that is, did more then he needed, or was bound to doe, when he might haue required all duties for preaching the Gospel, but would not, . . . whereof it cometh, that the workes which we doe more then precept, be called workes of supererogation; and whereby it is also euident against the Protestants, that there be such workes."

**XVII. 14. *To the Priests.*** "This leprosie signifieth sinne, which though God may and can heale without any mans means, yet he doth it not ordinarily but by the Priests ministrie; therefore let no man despise Gods ordinance, nor say that it is ynough to confesse to God, though he neuer come at the Priest." Here auricular confession is assumed. For as Fulke suggests, it remains to be proven that it is an ordinance of God.

**XXII. 19. *This is my body.*** "Although sense tell thee it is bread, yet it is the body, according to his wordes. Let faith confirme thee, iudge not by sense, after the wordes of our Lord let no doubt rise in thy mind, . . . Of the verite of flesh and bloud there is left no place to doubt; by the profession of our Lord himselfe, and by oure faith, it is flesh and bloud indeed. Is not this truth? To them be it vntrue, which denie Iesus Christ to be the true God."—*Which is giuen.* "As the former words make and proue his body present, so these words plainly signifie, that it is

## **Rheims & Tyndale: The Dirty Little Secret**

- At least two writers point out the reliance of Gregory Martin and his team of Rheims translators on earlier English translations. The very Bibles deemed heretical on the title page and in the Preface to the Rheims New Testament impacted its production. Put another way, for all their blowing against corrupt Protestant English Bibles the fact that the Rheims is reliant upon them remains one of its best kept secrets.
- Professor David Daniell points this out in *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence* in which he states the following:
  - “Gregory Martin scrupulously defends his method, but nowhere does he mention that he is dependent on the earlier English versions, with almost continuing heavy borrowing from Tyndale, from Coverdale’s 1538 Diglot, and from Geneva. The opening of the Parable of the Prodigal Son at Luke 15:11-13 will suggest the position:

And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of substance that belongeth to me. And he divided unto them the substance. And not many days after the younger son gathering all his things together went from home into a far country: and there he wasted his substance living riotously. . .

This is 80 per cent Tyndale: ‘portion’ came from Geneva; the first ‘substance,’ in Tyndale, Geneva and KJV ‘goods,’ is the Latin *substantia*, used by Martin here three times for the two distinct Greek words *οὐσία* (*ousia*, substance, property) for the son’s things and *βίος* (*bios*, living, livelihood) for what the father gives. ‘Not many days’ is both the Latin *non post multos dies*, and the Greek . . ., which Tyndale had paraphrased to ‘not long after’, followed by the Great Bible and Geneva: KJV followed the Latin, ‘not many days’. Martin is alone in ‘all his things’ (Latin, *omnibus*), where Tyndale’s more thorough ‘all that he had’ from the Greek intensive of ‘everything,’ . . . went forward through Great and Geneva, weakened in KJV to ‘all’. Martin is also alone in ‘went from home’ rather than Tyndale’s ‘took his journey’ (Great, Geneva and KJV); there the one Greek word . . . has the sense of going abroad; the Latin in three words, *pergere profectus est*, intensifies the sense of travel. Martin’s phrase does not reach out far enough.

The parable ends (vv. 31-2)

Son, thou art always with me, and all my things are thine. But it behoved us to make merry and be glad, because this thy brother was dead, and is revived, was lost, and is found.

Again, 80 per cent Tyndale, with Martin’s changes not going forward to KJV. (The change of tense from ‘was’ to ‘art’ came from Geneva.)

A comparison of the Rheims New Testament with Tyndale shows widespread striking similarities of phrase, paralleled in Geneva. To take a random, brief, example in Romans 1:8-10. Here is Tyndale:

First verily I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is published throughout all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, beseeching that at one time or another, a prosperous journey (by the will God) might fortune me, to come unto you.

(Verse 9, the sentence ‘For . . . prayers’, is KJV exactly; the rest is clearly dependent.) Here is Gregory Martin [Rheims]:

First I give thanks to my God through JESUS CHRIST for all of you, because your faith is renowned in the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve in my Spirit in the Gospel of his Son, that without intermission I make a mention of you always in my prayers, beseeching, if by any means I may some time at the length have a prosperous journey by the will of God, to come unto you.

It would be tedious to take more examples. The point is, it is hoped, sufficiently made: that Gregory Martin’s declaration of a Latin base, though correct in some vocabulary and phrasing, conceals very large silent dependence on the earlier translators, Tyndale and those in Geneva—the very ‘heretics’ that he so denounces as leading the flock to the Devil. Tyndale in particular gave him ‘chapter after chapter’, as Carleton noted, following Westcott, who also noted the dependence on Geneva. Martin is also more dependent on the Greek text than he declares. He gives Greek readings in the margins of most pages: something admirable, for reasons of accuracy; sometimes less so “For advantage of the Catholic cause’. The most significant dependence on the Greek original receives no mention; that is, the weight to be given to a definite article, for which, lacking articles, the Latin was no help.” (Daniell, 362-364)

- Gerald Hammond is another writer who addresses the textual connection between the Rheims New Testament and previous English Translations. Hammond assesses the relationship in his book *The Making of The English Bible*:
  - “When the Rheims New Testament appeared it must have struck the Protestant Englishmen who encountered it as slightly perplexing—at once a part of their biblical tradition and a thing apart. For a start it was English, a mighty concession to the Protestant polemic of the last fifty years. Almost as significant was its undeniable dependence on the English versions. Heretical they might have been, but they formed the skeleton and a lot of the flesh of the Catholic translation. To give one obvious example, this is the Rheims rendering of the first two verses of I Corinthians 13:

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

‘Charity’ for ‘love’ is the principal change this makes to the Geneva rendering of the verses; otherwise, the closeness of the Rheims to the Protestant versions is striking. In verse 1 ‘sounding brass’ and ‘tinkling cymbals’ have been happily retained, as is verse 2’s knowing knowledge and removing mountains. And if we look at verse 12 of this chapter, we can see how easily the Rheims fits into the lineage of the English versions. From it and Geneva, the Authorized Version comes to create its final definitive rendering.

*Geneva:* For now we see through a glass darkly, but then *shall we see* face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known.

*Rheims:* We see now by a glass in a dark sort, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know as also I am known.

*AV:* For now we see though a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.

(Hammond, 158-159)

## Conclusion

- In the end, the 1582 Rheims New Testament is a textual and theological oddity. Its authors decry the heretical nature of its Protestant predecessors while relying upon them for much of the work. Yet, at the same time, the text and annotations present a thoroughly Roman Catholic interpretation of scripture.
- Dr. David Norton author of *The King James Bible: A Short History From Tyndale to Today* points out that the Rheims New Testament was not often printed as a stand alone edition by Catholic authorities.
  - “The Rheims NT, as published by the Catholics, was a rare book, reprinted only four times, 1600, 1621, 1633 and 1738.” (Norton, 32)
- The Old Testament was printed in two installments from Douay, France in 1609 and 1610. The complete Bible became known as the Douay Rheims and remained the primary Roman Catholic English translation until the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- In the next Lesson we will discuss the Protestant reaction to the Rheims New Testament.

### Works Cited

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