AKC 6 – 14 October 2011

THE BIBLE, LITERATURE, ARTEFACT, SCRIPTURE
LECTURE 6: The Bible in English (1611-2011)
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INTRODUCTION

2011 is the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Bible in 1611. The 2011 Trust: Prince Charles as Patron, Frank Field MP Chairman; lots of activities both in Britain and around the world. See their website at http://www.kingjamesbibletrust.org. BBC TV and radio programmes; Lord (Melvyn) Bragg; Richard Dawkins; Desert Island Discs; Exhibitions in Lambeth Palace Library, Bodleian Library Oxford, King’s College London; Service in Westminster Abbey this week, 16/11/2011; Archbishop of Canterbury preaching.

1. THE BIBLE IN ENGLISH UP TO 1600

Venerable Bede translated St John’s Gospel into Old English, and other parts of the Bible such as the Psalms were also translated before the Norman Conquest. John Wycliffe (1328-84); Wycliffite Bibles from 1407 onwards William Tyndale (New Testament in 1526), Miles Coverdale (1535), the Matthew Bible published by John Rogers is the first authorized English Bible in 1537, which is itself revised by Coverdale as the Great Bible (1538) and culminating in the Geneva Bible (1557-60) and the Bishops’ Bible (1568); in response, the Catholic English translation from the Vulgate, begun in Douai and finished in Reims, published the New Testament in 1583 and the Old Testament in 1609-10.

2. THE KING JAMES VERSION, 1604-1611

a) Origins and methods

Hampton Court Conference 1604, under the new King James I of England (VI of Scotland) Over fifty translators, organized into six companies in Oxford, Cambridge and London, under the direction of Bancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury. They are bishops and scholars including the ‘King’s Professors’ (Regius Professors of Oxford and Cambridge) and only one, Sir Henry Savile, is not an ordained priest in the Church of England. They are all experts in Latin, Greek and Hebrew and their libraries are predominantly in these languages. William Branthwaite. John Bois.

b) The Principles in the Prefaces

The translators stress that the Bible is Holy Scripture, ‘God’s sacred word among us’ ‘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.’

(KJV, Dedicatory Preface).

1. ‘To make a good one better’ standing in the tradition from Tyndale to Bishops’ Bible;
2. To do the translation ‘out of the original sacred tongues’ ie using the best Hebrew and Greek manuscripts available (the Masoretic Text for the Old Testament, the Textus Receptus for the New Testament);
3. To make ‘one more exact translation of the holy Scriptures into the English tongue’ which means into understandable English so that even the vulgar could understand.
3. **THE TYNDALE-KJV TRADITION**

   a) *The family tree – RV – ASV – RSV – NRSV*

   **RV:** The Revised Version, translated in the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey; NT 1881; OT 1884; Not a great success. Did not use many American suggestions.
   **ASV:** American Standard Version, 1901 – incorporating American recommendations.

   b) *The Principles in the Prefaces*

   The Bible is viewed by all the translators as Holy Scripture.
   1. ‘To make a good one better’ – to improve upon each one before, using best phrases.
   2. To do the translation ‘out of the original sacred tongues’ ie using the oldest Hebrew and Greek manuscripts; many much older manuscripts found during 19th century.
   3. To make ‘one more exact translation of the holy Scriptures into the English tongue’ recognising that KJV language is very archaic, and words have changed their meaning.

   ‘The Bible is more than an historical document to be preserved. And it is more than a classic of English literature to be cherished and admired. It is a record of God's dealing with men, of God's revelation of Himself and His will. It records the life and work of Him in whom the Word of God became flesh and dwelt among men. The Bible carries its full message, not to those who regard it simply as the heritage of the past or praise its literary style, but to those who read it that they may discern and understand God's Word to men. That Word must not be disguised in phrases that are no longer clear, or hidden under words that have changed or lost their meaning. It must stand forth in language that is direct and plain and meaningful to people today. It is our hope and our earnest prayer that this Revised Standard Version of the Bible may be used by God to speak to men in these momentous times, and to help them to understand and believe and obey his Word.’ (Preface to the RSV)

4. **OTHER ‘FAMILIES’ OF ENGLISH BIBLES**

   These all go back to the original Hebrew and Greek, and start all over again.
   **NEB:** 1961 NT; the New English Bible, 1970, Revised English Bible, 1989 inclusive language.
   **JB:** 1966, Jerusalem Bible; Roman Catholic; 1985 New Jerusalem Bible.
   **NIV:** 1973 NT, the New International Version, 1978; more evangelical, TNIV 2002.
   **GNB:** 1976 vocabulary level or reading age is more accessible or understandable – tabloid.

5. **CONCLUSION – WHICH BIBLE TO CHOOSE?**

   - Full details about the AKC course, including the handouts, can be found on the AKC website at: [http://www.kcl.ac.uk/akc](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/akc)
   - If you have any queries please contact Laura Collins at: [akc@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:akc@kcl.ac.uk).
   - The AKC Examination will take place on Friday, 30th March 2012 between 14.30 and 16.30.
   - **You must enrol on the AKC via OneSpace.** We will also give you access to the AKC eLearning pages and Discussion board/Chat in due course.
   - AKC Forum and Discussion meetings to be announced soon.