

**Review: Adam Nicolson, *God's Secretaries*, Harper Collins,
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Pages: 273

Good Information but Nothing Spiritual

The author, seemingly a Christianity-inclined agnostic (p. 241) has collected some good facts and historical background surrounding translation of the world's greatest Book.

However, when branching into theological and textual matters [sometimes historical too], he easily loses his way.

For example, he claims Hebrew and Greek manuscripts used in the 16th/17th centuries were less accurate (p. 224); quite wrong. The 'new' and more 'accurate' manuscripts are simply the [corrupt] and rejected Vaticanus (AD1475), and modern reproduction the Sinaiticus (AD1859). The Latin-Vulgate Douay Rheims translation is even said to be a "great" translation (p. 82)!

Theologically, the Anabaptist doctrine [which includes believer's baptism, cf. Acts 8.37] was "lunacy" (p. 55), and the murderous Jesuit Order are merely "mainstream" Catholics (p. 84). Further, they had no involvement in the 1605 Jesuit Treason [Jesuit Garnet was a "good" man and the 'inviolability' of the confessional is taken to be a trustworthy alibi!]. Their many assassination attempts on Elizabeth I are also absent from any context.

He also seems to revel in homosexual innuendo, between two college students William Sancroft and Arthur Bonnest (pp. 131-2).

Those deceived by materialistic philosophy will be incapable of experiencing the power of the King James Bible (I Corinthians 2.14); including the saving of your soul by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15.1-4).

Preface (xi-xiv)

The Reformers “dethroned the Pope and enthroned the Bible”.

I) A poore man now arrived at the *Land of Promise* (pp. 1-19)

Sir Robert Carey was a commander against the Spanish Armada and “court dandy”. On 26 March, 1603, he rode all night and day after Elisabeth’s death to reaching James VI of Scotland in Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh.

The seventy-hour race required pre-arranged stabled horses along the Great North Road.

James awarded Carey a place in his court but a week later was pushed out.

The Scottish Crown was bankrupt and had no standing army.

David Rizzio was secretary and lover of Mary, Queen of Scots. He was murdered while she was in an adjacent room.

James’ father was Henry Darnley, who murdered Mary’s next lover the Earl of Bothwell by blowing up his house.

James was placed in the care of Presbyterian Governors, including George Buchanan. He became immensely intellectual, speaking Greek before breakfast, Latin before Scots’.

The English had been sending James between £3,000 and £5,000 per annum (or 'annuity').

James was crowned King at Tudor palace at Richmond. Cecil had been in secret correspondence with him two years prior.

James and his family went on a kingdom tour on 5 April, 1603.

An Anglo-Scottish shipping ensign was designed; the saltire of St Andrew, and St George’s English cross.

On April 21 James made a great error in executing a cut-purse without trial, to which some suggested, “[w]hy not a man be tried before he hath offended?”

Government torture and execution was not uncommon, with heads hard-boiled for weather resistance, to be spiked on the south end of London Bridge.

Sir Oliver Cromwell, MP, was a loyal monarchist.

The poet John Donne hoped to become Dean of St Paul’s Cathedral in London.

II) The multitudes of people covered the beautie of the fields (pp. 20-41)

The Venetian Ambassador reported 40,000 in London for seeing James’ new court.

Puritan ministers had maypoles cut up and used for firewood.

Sub-urbs referred to the under-city.

The child mortality rate for children under ten was 25% in England at the time.

The word “stroke” (Lt. *plaga*) had its origins in an angel striking one dead, leaving a bluish mark on the flesh.

Lancelot Andrewes was Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge, Dean of Westminster Abbey, and prebendary of St Paul’s Cathedral. He could speak fifteen modern languages and six ancient, enabling him to serve as “Interpreter-General” at the Day of Judgment.

With the disappearance of people like Andrewes went the possibility forever of such a Bible translation as the AV.

The best way of avoiding the plague it was thought was to simply leave the city.

The Millenary Petition was the seed from which the translation would grow.

One Richard Parker in *A Scholasticall Discourse in the Signe of the Crosse* said, “The vsing of the Crosse is but an idle apische toye”.

III) He sate among graue, learned and reuerend men (pp. 42-61)

Puritan Separatists believed in no overarching structure beyond local gatherings.

John Reynolds was Master of Corpus Christi Oxford, and had been Dean of Lincoln Cathedral.

In the 1580s and 90s, Richard Bancroft had hunted out the Elisabethan Presbyterian movement, work which included executions.

At Hampton Court, James first asked the reformists to retire.

Bishop of Peterborough made a fool of himself in front of James for once suggesting an ancient father had baptised using sand instead of water.

For five hours James humiliated the Puritans.

John Reynolds never married.

James thought bishops without a king (an “episcopal republic”) was a possibility, but a king without bishops too revolutionary.

The Geneva Bible has “tyrant” over 400 times in the text.

Of the new translation, “His Highness wished...for one vniforme translation...to be read in the whole Church, and no other.”

IV) Faire and softly goeth far (pp. 62-83)

English suspicion of Scottish freeloaders was common.

Bancroft would harry separatists out to Amsterdam, Leiden, and America.

Elisabeth left the Exchequer low from the war against Catholicism in Ireland and Netherlands, so each translator was to pay for £20 per annum to cover costs.

The Archbishop of Canterbury had given each of fourteen bishops three or books of the Bible to translate for the Bishop's Bible.

England's population at the time was about four million.

The first public companies were created: Muscovy Company [1555], Eastland (for the Baltic) [1579], the Levant (for eastern Mediterranean and Asia) [1581], the Guinea (for West Africa) [1588], and the East India Company (for the sub-continent) [1600].

Each of the six translator companies was to have eight members, with six director supervisors.

The rules:

I) The Bishops Bible to be followed and little altered as possible.

It was said Robert Barker had forty printed for use.

Only 8% of the King James is linked to the Bishop's Bible.

II) Names of the prophets to be retained.

Some puritans named their children Sin-deny, Fear, Love, Patience, and Wrestling (e.g. William Brewster).

III) Old ecclesiastical words to be kept viz., "church" and not "congregation".

If presbyter only and everywhere means elder, what need for bishops and archbishops?

If *ekklesia* meant local congregation then expensive superstructures would be irrelevant.

IV) When a word has diverse significations, the one most commonly used is to be kept.

V) Division of chapters to be kept.

VI) No marginal notes.

VII) Internal scripture references to be included.

VIII) Each man in a company after completing work to submit it for review to the rest of the company.

IX) Each company should send its work to the rest for review.

X) Any reviewing company was to send back changes, and if rejected a decision to be made at the general meeting.

XI) "Special obscurities" were to be sent to the whole realm for any learned man to advise on.

XII) "Every bishop" rule.

XIII) Company directors named.

XIV) The Great Reformation Bibles were to be followed: Tyndale, Matthews, Coverdale, Great, Geneva, [and of course the Bishops].

Christ and the Apostles are said to have quoted from the Septuagint [translated 130BC]

V) I am for the medium in all things (pp. 84-104)

Only 10% (80 of 8,000) refused to conform to the Church of England.

A few hundred separatists attempted escape from England to the Netherlands but were betrayed by the ship's captain fifty-two were then held in hideous London jails (one man, eighteen-year-old Roger Waters for a year).

Leading Separatist Henry Barrow was arrested in 1587 and was interrogated by Andrewes. He spent three years alone in prison before being executed.

The central question was whether Christians needed a Church interpreter for them.

The privateness of the Puritan spirit was its defining sin; Separatists would quote, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate."

VI) The danger never dreamt of, that is the danger (pp. 105-116)

5th of November, 1605 was the Gunpowder Plot.

Spain was the Catholic Church's military arm.

The author believes no tunnel ever existed, neither was there a cellar.

Jesuits Garnet and Oldcorne fled to Hindlip House near Worcester, but after eight days were found (on Monday 27 January, 1606). They were forced to come out of a crippling crouch hole due to the smell of their own excrement.

Garnet had written *A Treatise on Equivocation*. Before execution he was dragged feet first by a horse so that "his head declining downward, and lying so near to the ground as may be, being thought unfit to take benefit of common air".

VII) O let me bosome thee, let me preserve thee next to my heart (pp. 117-136)

By the 1620s, 55 per cent of the population were illiterate.

Puritans opposed: Fasting in Lent, holy days, kneeling at communion, church officials, infant baptism, and using a ring for marriages.

London lawyer John Manningham (1602): “A puritan is such a one as loves God with all his soul, but hates his neighbour with all his heart.”

The Puritan translators were really moderates.

Puritan Samuel Ward’s diary of ninety-five leaves from the 1590s has survived.

Laurence Chaderton died age ~102 in 1640.

VIII) We have twice and thrice so much scope for oure earthlie peregrination... (pp. 137-146)

IX) When we do luxuriate and grow riotous in the gallantness of this world (pp. 147-172)

Once Bancroft had disseminated the rules and translators chosen, the entire process drops from view.

Lambeth Manuscript 98, is a vellum-bound 125 page book was found in 1995 by American E.E. Willoughby in the Lambeth Palace library. It is titled *An English Translation of the Epistles of Paul the Apostle*.

Another discovery is a 1608 letter from William Eyre requesting a manuscript return from James Ussher, Chancellor of St Patrick’s Cathedral in Dublin. (This is unrelated to the translation project itself.)

All Privy Council documents from 1600 to 1613 were destroyed in a Whitehall fire.

King James: “Were I not a king, I would be a University-man.”

Willoughby also discovered a 1602 Bishops Bible used in the translation in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

The Oxford Translators first gathered 13th February, 1605, at Oxford.

Both of George Abbot's parents had "embraced the truth of the Gospel in King Edward's days and were persecuted in Mary's reign." One Tuesday in July, 1621, he man-slaughtered a gamekeeper while hunting. He would not hesitate to execute separatists.

Sir Henry Saville was called the greatest scholar of his age. He argued the study of mathematics turned a man into an educated, civilised human being.

Giordano Bruno was a rejected Italian Free-Thinker espousing an astronomy of infinite worlds.

For an edition of Chrysostom's work, Saville consulted two Jesuit scholars: Andreas Schott and Fronton du Duc.

In 1582, Elisabeth made him her Greek tutor.

He never took holy orders.

X) True Religion is in no way a gargalisme only (pp. 173-197)

By 1608, the CoE's anti-Nonconformist campaign had waned. The same year golf was introduced from Scotland.

The Separatist model was the ancient church of Antioch.

Fifty-seven of the Scrooby Separatists in the summer of 1607 sold their possessions and made their way to Boston on the Lincolnshire. From there a boat had been hired to take them to Amsterdam. The captain betrayed them, but the plot leaders were soon released on bail.

The CoE in the York commission records as one of its successes "the destruction of a Separatist cell at Scrooby in Nottinghamshire".

There were approximately 8,000 or so pulpits across England at the time and sermon attendance was compulsory.

It is said James I would sleep with Andrewe's sermons under his pillow.

Luther: "He who does not believe even one part of it cannot believe any of it".

XI) The grace of the fashion of it (pp. 198-215)

By the end of 1608, arrangements were being made for manuscript collection.

Since 1577, Bible publishing rights had been sold as a monopoly to the Barker family; a 1651 pamphlet claimed he paid £3,500 pounds for the licence.

Each revising committee member was paid £75 per annum.

In the 1950s Ward Allen and Gustavus Paine's found a thirty-nine page work by John Bois of the translation.

Bois was born 4 January 1561 and had read the whole Bible through by age five. By fourteen he was at St John's in Cambridge. Every week there would be a Greek lecture in his room to his fellows at 4 A.M.

Due financial difficulties he was forced to sell his library at a low price (it would have consisted of a thousand or so books).

He was the *amanuensis* for the final committee. At this meeting of twelve, one would read the respective translation aloud and the rest (while holding in their hands some other foreign Bible) would speak up if need be). They made thirty revisions per day.

XIII) Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut vp his tender mercies? (pp. 216-243)

By the spring of 1611 a final text had emerged.

Miles Smith and Thomas Bilson wrote the chapter and running heads. Smith was sixty-four at the time.

Tyndale enthusiasts have calculated 94% of the NT of the AV is from his translation.

A “manuscript copy of the Bible” was sold twice in the 17thC; once to Cambridge University Press, once to a firm of London printers. It has since disappeared.

The 1631 Wicked Bible had “Thou shalt commit adultery” at Exodus 20.14.

The Great Bible had 20,000 copies printed in 1540 and sold for ten shillings, twelve if bound. No similar record exists for the AV.

A total of 350 scholar-years had been devoted to the labour.

In 1768, Dr Edward Harwood, a Bristol Presbyterian, published a New Testament that subsequently flopped.

Appendices (pp. 245-263)

-In 1522 Luther published his New Testament and 3,000 copies were printed.

-The first Czech Bible was printed 1488 (Latin Vulgate based).

-1526: Dutch Bible.

-1530: French Bible (Vulgate-based).

-1540: Icelandic New Testament.

-1541: Swedish Bible.

-1548: Finnish New Testament.

-1550: Danish Bible.

-1569: Spanish Bible.

-1557-60: Slovene New Testament.

-1563: Croatian New Testament.

-1561: Polish Bible (Vulgate-based).

-1590: Hungarian Bible.

A prebendary was a cathedral chapter member who received a yearly prebend; a share of the cathedral estate income.

The 'route' of CoE progression was usually: Oxford or Cambridge fellow, college master, cathedral prebendary, cathedral dean, bishoprick.