

REPORT ON THE MAKING OF THE
VERSION OF 1611 PRESENTED TO THE
SYNOD OF DORT [1618].

Session Seven.

20 November, Tuesday am.

TRANSLATION

The theologians of Great Britain offered a written explanation of the design and plan in accordance with which the business of the very accurate English version was instituted by the most Serene King James, of what plan was observed in distributing the work, and what rules were laid down for the translators; with the intent that any points which might be judged useful to us might be taken from it. A copy of this document is subjoined:

Method which the English Theologians followed in the version of the Bible.

The theologians of Great Britain, unwilling to give a sudden and unconsidered answer to so important a question, considered it their duty to hold an early consultation, and since honourable mention has been made of the very accurate English translation lately set forth, with great care and at great expense, by the most Serene King James, to notify to this numerously attended Synod the design and plan with which this sacred business was furnished by his most Serene Majesty.

Firstly, in the distribution of the work he willed this plan to be observed: the whole text of the Bible was distributed into six sections, and to the translation of each section there were nominated seven or eight men of distinction, skilled in languages.

Two sections were assigned to certain London theologians; the four remaining sections were equally divided among the theologians of the two Universities.

After each section had finished its task twelve delegates, chosen from them all, met together and reviewed and revised the whole work.

Lastly, the very Reverend the Bishop of Winchester, Bilson, together with Dr. Smith, now Bishop of Gloucester, a distinguished man, who had been deeply occupied in the whole work from the beginning, after all things had been maturely weighed and examined, put the finishing touch to this version.

The rules laid down for the translators were of this kind:

In the first place caution was given that an entirely new version was not to be furnished, but an old version, long received by the Church, to be purged from all blemishes and faults; to this end there was to be no departure from the ancient translation, unless the truth of the original text or emphasis demanded.

Secondly, no notes were to be placed in the margin, but only parallel passages to be noted.

Thirdly, where a Hebrew or Greek word admits two meanings of a suitable kind, the one was to be expressed in the text, the other in the margin. The same to be done where a different reading was found in good copies.

Fourthly, the more difficult Hebraisms and Græcisms were consigned to the margin.

Fifthly, in the translation of Tobit and Judith, when any great discrepancy is found between the Greek text and the old vulgate Latin they followed the Greek text by preference.

Sixthly, that words which it was anywhere necessary to insert into the text to complete the meaning were to be distinguished by another type, small roman.

Seventhly, that new arguments should be prefixed to every book, and new headings to every chapter.

Lastly, that a very perfect Genealogy and map of the Holy Land should be joined to the work.