



SAMUEL FOX, OF NOTTINGHAM

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## Our Quotation—13

***“We must not have Christ Jesus the Lord of life put any more in a stable amongst the horses and asses, but He must now have the best chamber, the heart.”***

GEORGE FOX, to Friends, 1657, *Journal*, bicent. ed. i. 391.

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## George Fox and Sixteenth Century Bibles

**J**N the Cambridge edition of *The Journal of George Fox* is given (vol. i. p. 160), in addition to Fox's famous letter to Cromwell, 1654, another very brief and cryptic warning of the same date, in which Isaiah viii. 19-21 is quoted in the following form :

“Should men run unto ye Dead for ye Livinge. If any man want light let him looke upon ye Law and the Testimony whether they speake not after this meaninge : if he doe this he suffers hunger, he is out of patience, and Blaspheme his kinge & his God.”

To the quotation is added the note: “This was taken out of ye bible at Gravesend.”

Norman Penney has this note: “An authority on Biblical MSS. states that he does not know from what version of Isaiah the words are taken.” The passage may

serve as text for some comments on Fox's use of older Bibles, for the solution of this quotation is not found in some foreign version but in an early English Bible.

The Bible best known and habitually used by Fox was the so-called Authorized Version issued in the year 1611. Prior to that the more important Bibles were the Bishops' Bible, first issued in 1568, the Geneva Bible (also called Breeches Bible), 1560, and the Great Bible (also called Cranmer's), 1539. All these are dependent each on the earlier ones and all on the pioneer work of Tyndale. They often resemble each other closely, but it is usually possible to distinguish the version employed. Thus the quotation from Isaiah is evidently from the Great Bible, as will be seen by the following transcript from the first edition :

“ Shulde men renne unto the dead for ye lyvyng? If eny man want lyght, lett him loke upon the lawe, and the testimony, whether they speake not after this manyng. If he do not thys, he stombleth and suffreth hunger. And if he suffre hunger, he is out of pacience and blasphemeth his King and his God.”

There is some difference in spelling. The copy of Fox has suffered the omission by *homoioteleuton* of the words between “ hunger ” and “ hunger.” Otherwise the source of Fox is plain. The other versions read differently. Just how Fox expected the new Protector to use this passage as divine warning I do not know, but evidently Fox did not forget its divergent rendering. Norman Penney quotes a letter, dated Gravesend, 27 i. 1655, from Henry Fell to G. Fox, in which the writer adds : “ I sent those words taken out of y<sup>e</sup> old bible in a letter to Hump. Bache in Tower Street & likewise those few words to oliver which I had in characters.” Still later, in 1659, the same passage in the same version appears at the end of the *Great Mistery of the Great Whore unfolded*, p. 375. At the foot of the preceding page Isaiah ix. 5 (6) is printed in Hebrew (with some typographical errors) as a kind of colophon. Then occur a series of comparisons between English versions or between the English version and the original Greek New Testament. Only three Old Testament passages are given ; Isaiah viii. 20-22 is the first and longest. It is quoted at more length than in the letter to Cromwell, but evidently

from the same translation. Some variants have crept in (and still more occur in the later edition, Philadelphia, 1831). The other two passages are Amos iii. 6 and Proverbs xxiii. 1-3. In them also the "old translation" is evidently the same, for they agree with Cranmer 1539, in the first case *verbatim*, in the second more nearly than with the other versions. It will be remembered that the Bible at Swarthmoor meetinghouse given by George Fox was a Great Bible of 1541.

Further inquiry into Fox's Scripture quotations is suggested by a note in his doctrinal works published after his death (*Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 1706, p. 468) :

"Reader, be pleased to observe, that the author of this treatise having the ancient approved Bible, printed in Queen Elizabeth's reign; most of the quotations being taken out of the same, differs in some expressions from our new translation, but not in substance."

This is evidently the editor's note, for the original tract, *A Testimony of What we believe of Christ, etc.*, printed in the year 1677, has no such note.

This tract seems to lend itself readily to the discovery of the particular version of the Scripture quoted. It is quite lengthy, over fifty folio pages, and is largely a catena of extensive New Testament passages quoted in their order of occurrence. The principal versions found in Bagster's *English Hexapla* seem to offer convenient collation, but none of the columns there printed (Tyndale, Cranmer, Geneva, Rheims and Authorized) agrees with the wording of Fox's quotations. Nor does the text of the official Bishops' Bible agree. But our baffling is only temporary. The Genevan Version printed by Bagster is, unfortunately, the New Testament of 1557, which was considerably revised when issued in the Geneva Bible of 1560 and never had any direct influence. The Geneva Bible, on the contrary, was the most popular of all the versions in England, except the Authorized, passing through from 130 to 170 editions and only going out of favor in the reign of Charles I.<sup>1</sup> A little comparison of Fox's tract shows that this is the Bible employed. The

<sup>1</sup> See John Eadie, *The English Bible*, 1876, vol. ii. pp. 35, 52.

following are a few of the passages quoted where its difference from the Authorized Version appears :

Acts iii. 21, whom the heavens must contain until the time that all things be restored.

John vii. 38, out of his belly shall flow rivers of waters of life.

Romans iii. 25, whom God hath set forth to be a reconciliation.

Romans vi. 5, for if we be grafted with him into the similitude of his death.

Ephesians iv. 4, even as you are called into one hope of your vocation.

Philippians i. 21, Christ is to me both in life and death, advantage.

Hebrews iv. 12, For the word of God is lively and mighty in operation.

Hebrews xii. 1, let us . . . cast away everything that presses down and the sin that hangeth so fast on.

Jude 9, Michael . . . durst not blame him with cursed speaking.

Revelation xxi. 21, the streets of the city are of pure gold, as shining glass.

Most of the variations from the Geneva Version in this tract may be explained as reminiscences of the Authorized Version. That was the version Fox commonly used and his recollection of it would make it almost impossible for him to copy accurately any other version. His contemporaries remarked on his memory of the Bible. "I have heard some of his friends say," says Gerard Croese,<sup>2</sup> "that though the Bible were lost it might be found in the mouth of George Fox." The influence of the Authorized Version in the tract appears in such familiar passages as the following :

Acts x. 34, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter (Gen. "accepter") of persons.<sup>3</sup>

John iii. 16, God so loved the world that he sent (Gen. "hath given") his only begotten son.

<sup>2</sup> *The General History of the Quakers*, 1696.

<sup>3</sup> The "old translation" of this verse (Cranmer) is the form quoted by Fox in *The Heathen's Divinity*, 1671: "there is no respect of persons with God."

Luke ii. 7, She . . . laid him in a manger (Gen. "cratch").

In the context of the last passage the two versions are mixed. This happens elsewhere. Thus in quoting 1 Corinthians i. 22, 23, Fox follows the Geneva Version in "the Grecians seek after wisdom" but relapses to the Authorized Version in "to the Greeks foolishness." The use of the two versions produces some curious cases of conflation, where both renderings of the Greek original occur :

Phil. i. 8, I long after you all from my very heart-root or bowels (A.V.).

Heb. ii. 10, that he should consecrate the prince of their salvation through sufferings (A.V.) and afflictions.

Acts xxiv. 16, and herein I endeavour myself to exercise a good conscience (Gen. "and herein I endeavour myself to have alway a clear conscience" ; A.V. "and herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense").

Allowing for errors of memory and of scribal transmission, the problem of the quotations in the tract seems to be satisfactorily explained by the use of the Geneva Version with memory of the Authorized Version. One passage only seems to invalidate that explanation : Hebrews i. 3 is quoted in the form "express image of his substance," where both the Genevan and Authorized Versions translate as "his person." This change can be no accident of scribes or printers ; "substance" and "person" are variant renderings of the Greek. Fortunately Fox himself supplies the explanation. The list of comparisons between the old (Cranmer) version and the new at the end of the *Great Mystery* includes also this passage where the former is quoted as "the very image of his substance." Fox evidently had long preferred that last word and quietly substitutes it (along with some A.V. echoes) in copying out passages of Hebrews from the Geneva Bible.<sup>4</sup>

It would be interesting to know which edition of the Geneva Bible Fox used. They were very numerous ; sixty

<sup>4</sup> Another quotation from Cranmer (Matthew v. 37) occurs in Fox's *Small Treatise Concerning Swearing*, 1675 : "Now in the old Bible it is 'but your communication shall be yea, yea, nay, nay, for whatsoever is added more than these, it cometh of evil.'"

are assigned to the reign of Elizabeth alone. Apparently they differ very slightly from each other. Even the editions of S. Thomson are scarcely distinguishable. Since the note to the reader in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated* is not known to be Fox's own (and it does not sound like his style), we cannot be sure that the copy he employed was printed in that reign. The author of the note may have been familiar with copies which contained an address to the Queen (as did the editions from 1560 to 1585) and may have described it so on that account.

It would be more interesting to know why George Fox used this unusual text in this particular tract. It is dated "Worcester Prison, the 25 of the 11 Moneth, 167 $\frac{1}{2}$ ." The suggestion is obvious that he could not get access to a regular Bible because of the restrictions of his imprisonment. On the other hand a reference to "Arias Montanus his interlineary translation" of the New Testament in this same tract suggests that he had certain Biblical helps and was using his leisure for study. We may recall that he spent a morning on the voyage to America "findeing out the signification of the foure Rivers of Eden, according to the Hebrew together with the misticall meaneing of them."<sup>5</sup> Perhaps some evidence that Fox's use of the Geneva Version was due to necessity and not preference is found in the fact (not noted by the editor) that two others of his essays written in Worcester Prison show similar use of the Geneva Bible :

(I) *A Warning to England*, etc. Worcester Prison this 1st of the 11th month 1674.

<sup>5</sup> *Camb. Journ.* vol. ii. p. 180. More likely the reference to Arias Montanus is from memory, since in 1671 the same passage was studied by Fox and others on the basis again of "the Greek cobby with Arias Montanus his interlineary translation." *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 170. It need not be supposed that George Fox himself used the Greek and Hebrew readily. John Hull, who reports the conversation on ship-board, had been a minister and in his own writings refers to Arias Montanus. John Stubbs, who was present at both Biblical discussions, was admitted even by Roger Williams (*George Fox Digg'd out of his Burrowes*, 1676, p. 38) to be "learned in the Hebrew and Greek." *Camb. Journ.* vol. ii. p. 78, gives a bit of Hebrew (not however in Hebrew letters nor in Fox's handwriting) which Fox quoted at his trial at Lancaster in 1664 at which he adds: "They all Gazed: and there was A great Calme." (Ellwood editions omit.) It is evident that Fox, in spite of his frequent comparison of University trained ministers to Pilate because they knew Greek and Latin and Hebrew, borrowed freely, remembered diligently and used thriftily the philological learning of his friends.

(2) *For all the Bishops and Priests in Christendom,*  
Worcester Prison, the 11th month 1674

The same textual phenomena recur, agreements with the Geneva Version and with the Authorized Version, and confluations. Thus in the initial quotations we have in (1) Heb. xii. 29, For, even (so Gen. ; A.V. omits) our God is a consuming fire, and in (2) Acts i. 20, Let his habitation be void (Gen. ; A.V. "desolate") . . . and let another take his office (A.V. mg. ; A.V. and Gen. read "bishoprick").

In (1) the influence of the Genevan Version is everywhere apparent, in (2) it is evident in many phrases as Ebedmelech, the black moor (A.V. "Ethiopian"), wise and learned (A.V. "prudent"), without bag (A.V. "purse") and scrip, young scholar (1 Tim. iii. 6, A.V. "novice"), wrapped in error (2 Peter ii. 18), makers of sects (Jude 19), or by such difficult verses as Colossians ii. 18. But the Authorized Version is more prominent than in the other papers, whether because the passages quoted in this paper (invectives against false teachers) were more familiar to Fox or because he made more thorough comparison of the two versions. Cases of conflation are frequent as

- Jude 10, brute (A.V.) beasts without reason (Gen.).
- Jude 11, cast away by the deceit (Gen.) and error (A.V.) of Balaam's wages.
- 2 Cor. xii. 17, Did I make a gain of you (A.V.) or peel you (Gen.).
- 1 Tim. iii. 8, Deacons must be grave (A.V.) and honest (Gen.).

But there can be little doubt that the Genevan Bible was in Fox's hands when he wrote, for he quotes *verbatim* its arguments on both 2 Corinthians and 2 Thessalonians, calling the readers' attention to them as "your own margin," "your own marginal notes."

These words suggest another explanation of Fox's use of the Geneva Bible—its appeal to certain readers as their own approved version. It was, however, the Puritan Bible and not so appropriate to use against "all that call themselves papists, bishops, ministers and teachers of the gospel," in the year 1674. We therefore must return to the conjecture that Fox was limited in his reading materials in prison. Perhaps there is some old letter stored away in D,



which will confirm this conjecture, reminding us of Paul's request that the books and especially the parchments be brought to him (2 Timothy iv. 13) or of still another prisoner, William Tyndale, who at Vilvorde in 1535 begged for his Hebrew Bible, Grammar and Dictionary.<sup>6</sup>

No doubt other interesting evidences of Fox's use of earlier Bibles lie undiscovered among his voluminous writings.<sup>7</sup> One would suppose that some of the earlier versions would have left a few proverbial phrases in the current language of his day which would occur, without specific quotation, in his writings and those of other Friends. For example, when Howgill refers in a famous passage to the lost piece of silver of Luke xv. as a groat,<sup>8</sup> he is following a rendering that appears in Cranmer but not, I believe, in the later versions. I have discovered scarcely any evidence of influence on Fox of the Bishops' Bible. Perhaps none was to be expected. A possible exception is his use of the phrase "hang down the head" in the titles of two of his tracts against fasting. This evidently comes from Isaiah lviii. 5, where, however, A.V. and Geneva Bible read "bow down the head," and only the Bishops' Bible "hang down the head." The same phrase occurs in an address to the Government as printed in Ellwood's edition of Fox's *Journal* (bi-cent. edition, vol. i. p. 364), but the Cambridge *Journal*, vol. i. p. 335, using a still more unusual phrase, gives "hould downe the head." In any case the editor tells us in his note that the paper was written by Margaret Fell, not by Fox.

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<sup>6</sup> Demaus, *William Tyndale* [1871], p. 475.

<sup>7</sup> A list of nine essays written by Fox while at Worcester is given in his *Journal* (Cambridge edition, vol. ii. p. 311f, cf. bi-cent. edition, vol. ii. p. 230f.). Three have already been mentioned. Two cannot be certainly identified (see notes). I have not examined the Biblical text used in the others. It is striking that although the imprisonment covered nearly fourteen months, five of these essays appear to be dated in one month (11th mo. 1674), and only two of the five were printed before 1676. There is slight evidence of the use of the Geneva Bible in Fox's letters from Worcester Jail, e.g., Luke xii. 51 in *Epistles*, No. 300, dated the 2nd of 7th month, 1673.

<sup>8</sup> "Return home to within; sweep your houses all, the groat is there." *Works*, 1676, p. 70.