

# The Library.

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## The Great "She" Bible.—I.

EVERY librarian has heard of the "He"<sup>1</sup> and the "She" Bible. The number of copies to be found both in public and private collections is very large, and the interest of these books, as being the original form of King James' noble version, which we still use, is great, yet certain questions in connection with them remain in obscurity. Even the most fundamental question—*which* is the true original edition—cannot be regarded as completely settled.

I propose in this paper to clear up, so far as I can, the various disputed points, especially in connection with the "She" Bible.

The following are the Black Letter folio editions of the A.V. :

- (1) The "He" Bible, 1611.
- (2) The "She" Bible, 1611 or 1613.
- (3) A smaller type edition, on paper of the same size as the others, with seventy-two lines instead of fifty-nine to the column, 1613.
- (4) 1617.
- (5) 1634.
- (6) 1640.

All of these (excluding No. 3) closely correspond to one another in general appearance, and have been most carefully arranged so that each leaf always ends on the same word. Hence the sheets of all can be intermixed at pleasure, and we often find composite copies. Although in a general way the five editions so nearly correspond, yet on close collation, innumerable differences, chiefly in spelling, chapter initials, use of capitals, division of lines, and not infrequently in actual words, disclose themselves. Only one class of variation, which is developed

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<sup>1</sup> So called from the readings in Ruth *iji*. 15.

largely in the later editions, does not, as far as I have observed, appear in the Black Letter copies: the use of italics<sup>1</sup> remains constant.

In this paper I shall be mainly concerned with the editions (1) and (2). The "He" Bible is the one which is commonly (and I have no doubt correctly) regarded as the true first edition. It is the one which was so accurately reprinted at Oxford in 1833. Copies are not infrequently met with in booksellers' catalogues, and are to be found in many libraries, as the British Museum, Sion College, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Bodleian, the Cambridge University Library, &c. It bears the date 1611 both on the Old Testament title page (which exists in two forms, printed and engraved) and also on the New Testament title (which is printed only). It may be at once recognised by the fact that it has the true reading in Ruth iii. 15 (he went into the citie), also by an extraordinary misprint in Exodus xiv. 10, where three lines are printed twice over. This edition I shall for brevity style A.

The "She" Bible has (*in common with almost every other edition*) the reading *she* in Ruth iii. 15; a much more distinctive mark is the reading "Judas" (for Jesus) in Matt. xxvi. 36.

The date on the New Testament title page of this edition is always 1611 (though it may be easily distinguished from that of A by having the words "*Appointed to be read in Churches,*" which are wanting in the New Testament title of A). It is probably this circumstance which has caused the "She" Bible to be commonly called the "second issue of 1611." The first title is frequently wanting; when found it is often 1613, sometimes (perhaps) 1611. For brevity I shall refer to the She Bible as BC, or B, or C.<sup>2</sup>

Although these editions are usually called the first and second issues of 1611, yet some writers consider them contemporaneous (*e.g.*, the Rev. J. H. Blunt in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, viii. 389, speaks of "two contemporary issues of folio volumes, separately composed and printed for the sake of speedy production, in the year 1611"), whilst the Rev. F. H. Scrivener,

<sup>1</sup> Represented in the Black Letter editions by Roman type.

<sup>2</sup> The reason for this will appear fully hereafter. These Bibles contain a large number of duplicated sheets, which I class as B and C respectively. When I speak of BC Bibles my remark applies to both classes of She Bible, whereas a B Bible or a C Bible means one in which the duplicated sheets are for the most part of the B, or of the C class respectively.

in the very valuable introduction to his Cambridge Paragraph Bible of 1873, strenuously maintains the priority of *bc*, which he considers to have been printed first, and rejected by the translators on account of its inaccuracy in favour of the more carefully revised *a* edition, but to have been ultimately published, by a kind of fraud on the part of the printers, after the translators were dispersed.

It is not at all clear why these two books should be called *issues* rather than *editions*. They differ considerably in every single page.<sup>1</sup> In the aggregate the variations must amount to many thousands. It is at any rate clear that if *bc* was printed first *a* must have undergone large and careful correction. If *a* was first *bc* has met with some correction, much corruption.

In any case it is hardly possible for two books to have a better claim to the dignity of being considered as separate *editions*, and this irrespective of the vexed question of date.<sup>2</sup>

For the idea of two contemporary issues, both presumably printed from separate copies of the MS., or rather of the corrected Bishops' Bible, there is no shred of proof. The fact already noted that every leaf ends on the same word (and that often by painful contrivance), is conclusive proof that one must have been set up from the other.

But which was first? In this question we have a case of Scrivener against the world; but Scrivener has given such close attention to the matter that we may well pay his theory the compliment of careful consideration.

These are his words: "The question which of the two recensions is the earlier, must be decided partly by external, partly by internal, considerations. The latter will speak for themselves, and it may be taken for granted that no one will doubt the great superiority on the whole of the text of [*A*]<sup>3</sup> to the other, or hesitate to mark in it many improvements and corrections which betray a later hand, while the instances in which [*bc*] is superior, or not inferior to the other are scanty, slight and incapable of suggesting the converse inference."

It will be observed that he appears to assume the extra-

<sup>1</sup> Three partial exceptions to this statement will be noted hereafter.

<sup>2</sup> *b* and *c* are so closely intertwined that they may properly be classed as two *issues* of one *edition*.

<sup>3</sup> These letters are not used by Scrivener. I substitute them for brevity and clearness for the circumlocutions which he employs. His typical copy of the *BC* edition is a *B* copy belonging to the Syndicate of the Pitt Press.