A New Set of Spectacles: The Assembly's Annotations, 1645-1657

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Summary: *With the collapse of press censorship that followed the impeachment of William Laud in the Fall of 1640, a group of London printers took advantage of their new-found freedom and encouraged the House of Commons to convene an assembly of divines whose sole task was to revise the notes located within the margins of the Geneva Bible. The new annotations, it was agreed, were to be affixed to the margins of the Authorized Version, which would subsequently be sold as an annotated Bible. London's newly liberated presses, however, produced a flood of Bibles, and the price of Bibles naturally fell. Such market conditions meant that an annotated Bible, more costly to produce, would be rendered unmarketable. Fortuitously, the men assembled to compose the new annotations came up with a set far too lengthy to be confined to the margins of the Authorized Version. The resulting commentary, which was published in 1645 as a separate volume, proved to be a marketable alternative.*

When the Authorized Version of the Bible made its debut in 1611, the reading public's reaction to the new translation was hardly a positive one. Its margins contained no textual commentary, the very feature that had made the Geneva Bible the popular favorite in England for three-quarters of a century. The vast majority of England's literate persons, it seems, preferred an annotated Bible over a Bible with bare margins. As a result, during the reign of James I and for most of his son's reign, the Geneva Bible held its own against what was a newer and, arguably, a better translation. Long after its printing was banned in 1616, it remained the Bible used in most English-speaking house-

holds. The King and many of the bishops, on the other hand, viewed the Geneva Bible and its anti-authoritarian marginal notes with a great deal of suspicion.

When during the primacy of William Laud numerous obstacles were placed in the way of procuring a new copy of the Geneva Bible, its distribution quite naturally began to wane. Laud's impeachment in the fall of 1640, however, was immediately followed by the collapse of press censorship. One might expect that under the auspices of a free press, the Geneva Bible would have experienced something of a revival. It did not. Such a revival was impossible, moreover, because English printers chose not to reissue the esteemed text from their presses. Considering how in the fall of 1640, conditions seemed ripe for its resurgence, it is indeed difficult to understand why the Geneva Bible was not immediately reprinted in England. My purpose, therefore, is to attempt to explain why this should have happened.

In November 1640, faced with a financial crisis and a Scottish uprising, Charles I summoned the parliament that would eventually topple him from his throne. Having been hastily dismissed eleven years earlier for its progressive, reform-minded politics, parliament was determined to take full advantage of the King's political and financial weakness and force him to accept the changes he had at one time possessed the power to resist. One of the new parliament's first acts was to put an end to the censorship which had banned many of England's best loved books.¹ Few books were cherished more than the Geneva Bible. In 1640, moreover, almost an entire generation had passed since the Geneva Bible had been printed in England.

The work of exiled English Protestants residing in Geneva during the bloody reign of Mary Tudor (1553-1558), the Geneva Bible made its debut in 1560 and was an immediate success. It owed its appeal to the clarity of its prose, the conditions under which it was produced, and the men who produced it. By far its most important asset, however, was its marginal commentary "upon all the hard places." We can quite reasonably attribute the Geneva Bible's immense popularity to its exegetical notes, which were, in John Eadie's assessment, "lucid, dogmatic, and practical, presenting such aspects of truth and duty as were then all but universally prized."² For almost a century the Geneva Bible remained the preferred household Bible for English-speaking Protestants.³ The Bishops' Bible (1568) offered little competition, and even the Authorized Version of 1611 did not immediately supplant the Geneva Bible as the most popular text. Between 1575 and 1616 successive editions of the Geneva Bible were introduced yearly. More than 60 editions of the Geneva Bible appeared after 1611 alone. In that very year, in fact, it was issued in folio by the King's printer.

Although the vast majority of the literate public found in the Geneva Bible's marginalia an edifying and valuable scriptural "aid," its notes were not loved by all. They raised more than a few eyebrows among the bishops. James I despised them because of what he perceived to be their seditious content. The King made no secret of his hostility toward the Geneva Bible when at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 he declared, "I profess I could never yet see a Bible well translated in English; but I think that, of all, that of Geneva is the worst." His orders for the Authorized Version mandated that

no marginal notes should be added, having found in them which are annexed to the Geneva translation (which he saw in a Bible given him be an English Lady) some notes very partial, untrue, seditious, and savoring too much of dangerous, and traiterous conceits. As for example, *Exodus* 1.19, where the marginal note alloweth *disobedience to Kings*. And *2 Chronicles* 15.16, the note taxeth *Asa* for deposing his mother, *only*, and *not killing her*.

In his opposition to exegetical tools, James was adamant. The sixth of his fifteen rules "to be observed in the translation of the Bible" mandated that "no marginal notes at all. . . be affixed, but only for the explanation of the Hebrew and Greek words." As a result, the Authorized Version contained no textual commentary. The reading public, however, had grown accustomed to having at their disposal scriptural aids for both private study and devotions and therefore continued to use the Geneva Bible at home. Still, the controversiality of its notes had won the Geneva Bible many enemies, some of whom occupied powerful positions. Backed by a King ever anxious to counter the Geneva Bible's influence, William Laud eventually succeeded in his attempt to prevent its printing in England. In 1616 the Geneva Bible was added to a growing list of banned books, after which it had to be imported from Holland. By 1630 even its importation had been forbidden. The demand for the Geneva Bible was so great, however, that booksellers risked harsh penalties by smuggling copies into England.⁴ Dutch printers cooperated by assigning a false date of 1599 to the title page, so it would appear as though the smuggled copies had been produced in England prior to the ban.

With the collapse of press censorship in November 1640 and the "printing explosion"⁵ that followed, many literate persons in England undoubtedly expected that the Geneva Bible would once again be printed on English soil. While it is clear that having to smuggle copies of the Geneva Bible over from Amsterdam had to some extent impeded its circulation, it is equally clear that the inconvenience incurred had done nothing to diminish the Geneva Bible's immense popularity, especially among dissenters. The fact that a copy of the

Geneva Bible was such a difficult item to obtain had probably boosted its popularity.⁶ In 1640, to be sure, popular demand for scriptural aids was greater than ever. For the first time in almost a quarter of a century, English printers were free to issue fresh copies of the Geneva Bible to meet the ever-present demand for the esteemed text. Oddly enough, they did not. In fact, the Geneva Bible was never again printed in England.

Why, with the presses freed and the monopoly of Bible-printing at an end,⁷ did London stationers choose not to reprint the Geneva Bible? Presumably, copies were still being imported from Holland, but it is difficult to understand why the Geneva Bible would continue to be imported when it could much more easily have been produced at home. After 1644, moreover, copies could no longer be imported from the Continent because it had ceased being printed there as well. *Prima facie*, the decision of English printers not to reissue a known bestseller such as the Geneva Bible appears to have been a foolish one. That the Geneva Bible was no longer printed *anywhere* after 1644 might suggest that by mid-century the demand for scriptural aids had subsided. English printers, however, felt that this was not the case at all.

By 1640 when demand for the Geneva Bible was ostensibly at its highest point ever, a group of London printers was at that moment petitioning the House of Commons for the license to have exegetical notes added to the margins of the Authorized Version. Initially, the printers had contemplated simply attaching the old Geneva notes to the Authorized Version. Later it was decided that it would be better if the Geneva notes were revised first. The license was granted, and a committee of divines was convened by the House of Commons. Despite the public's unfavorable reaction to the Authorized Version, it had for more than 30 years resisted the imposition of a commentary upon its margins. Finally, when the nation was on the brink of civil war, the presses had been freed from the pressures of Laudianism, and Charles I was no longer in a position to regulate their output,

hence were diverse of the stationers and printers of London induced to petition the Committee of the Honorable House of Commons, for license to print the Geneva notes upon the Bible, or that some notes might be fitted to the new translation: which was accordingly granted, with an order for review and correction of those of the Geneva edition, by leaving out such of them as there was cause to dislike, by clearing those that were doubtful, and by [revising] those as were defective. . . For which purpose letters were directed to [the divines] from the Chair of the Committee for Religion, and personal invitations to others, to undertake and divide the task.⁸

The divines soon discovered, however, that the margins of the text were too confining, and it was agreed that the new annotations should constitute a separate volume. What began, in other words, as a project to revise the Geneva notes in order that they might be updated and made to match the text of the Authorized Version ended up as a commentary so lengthy and so detailed that it could no longer be confined to the margins of the text.

In 1645 England witnessed the premier appearance of a Bible commentary that was designed to be purchased separately as a companion to the Authorized Version. The *Annotations Upon all the Books of the Old and New Testament*, or the *Assembly's Annotations*, were originally contained in one volume. Successive editions were enlarged to make up two volumes, published in 1654 and again in 1657. Thus, the literate public's demand for exegetical tools did not abate, but rather was satisfied by the emergence of a completely new set of annotations expected to take the place of the old Geneva notes.

Thus, by choosing not to reprint the Geneva Bible, London stationers were not ignoring consumer demand. They simply recognized that there were many different ways of satisfying that demand. Having considered their options they chose what they believed would best satisfy the reading public's demand for scriptural aids. Ultimately, their decision not to reprint the Geneva Bible, but rather to petition for a license to affix a commentary to the margins of the Authorized Version reflects their resourcefulness as well as their own peculiar assessment of market conditions.

"The people," the Preface to the *Assembly's Annotations* explained, "complained that they could not see into the sense of Scripture, so well as formerly they did by the Geneva Bible, because their spectacles of annotations were not fitted to the understanding of the new text, nor any other supplied in their stead."⁹ The absence of exegetical notes was, according to the divines, the principal flaw that the reading public had found in the Authorized Version. Surely, the printers also understood this. As with James I's hostile reaction to the Geneva Bible, in which "it was not so much the translation as the accessories that he objected to,"¹⁰ the reading public's unenthusiastic response to the Authorized Version was, the printers and divines realized, not so much a criticism of the translation itself as it was a criticism of its *lack* of accessories. In most other respects the Authorized Version was regarded as the work of good, qualified scholars, some of whom were good Puritans as well.¹¹ It was not so unpopular as to be unmarketable. On the contrary, with some important modifications, not to the text itself but to its margins, the Authorized Version

could, the printers believed, satisfy the reading public, just as the Geneva Bible had once done. In other words, their petition to have notes fitted to the Authorized Version, instead of relying upon a proven bestseller, demonstrates their confidence in the Authorized Version's *marketability*.

Furthermore, by petitioning to have annotations added to the margins of the Authorized Version, the printers were, in fact, taking part in a century-long debate between the reading public, on one side, and the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, on the other, over the role of scriptural aids and exegetical tools. While they had virtually no say as to which translation was used in the pulpit, the vast majority of literate persons had shown their preference for an annotated Bible. Time and again, they chose for themselves and for their households a Bible equipped with explanatory notes to guide them through the text. The authorities, on the other hand, for reasons of their own, sought by various measures to deprive the reading public of scriptural aids. The Geneva Bible, as we have seen, was vigorously opposed by the King and many members of the higher clergy. Furthermore, the King refused to permit any sort of exegetical tool in the translations he sanctioned.

Without notes the church's official translation never became the popular favorite. As early as 1539 when the Great Bible became the church's first official "vernacular" Bible, a significant portion of the reading public preferred the *annotated* Matthew Bible (1537) for home use. Similarly, when the church adopted the Bishops' Bible as its official translation in 1568, the Geneva Bible had already established itself as the household Bible of choice. Although the Authorized Version became the church's official translation in 1611, it was not widely used in the home until after the middle of the seventeenth century. The reading public had become accustomed to scriptural aids, and no translation could ever be expected to achieve widespread circulation as a book for the home unless accompanied by a commentary of some sort. Opting for annotations affixed to the church's official translation would rectify the problematic situation of having for public use a different Bible than the one used privately by a majority of the reading public at home. Here was a chance for the printers to promote national unity by fostering a situation in which the Bible of the church and the household Bible of the people were one and the same.

With the license to revise the Geneva notes granted, the assembled divines were faced with the issue of how best to perform the task set before them. "First," they explained,

as we had no thoughts of such a service, until by Authority we were called unto it, so since we have accepted of it, we have thought of nothing so much, as how we might discharge it, with best advantage to the glory of God, and the instruction of his people, and therefore we have put ourselves to much more pains (for many months) in consulting with many more authors, in several languages, then at first we thought of, that . . . we might bring in such observations, as might not only serve to edify the ordinary reader, but might likewise gratify our brethren of the ministry, at least such among them, as have not the means to purchase, or leisure to peruse so many books as (by order of the Committee) we were furnished withall, for the finishing of the work committed to our hands.¹²

As they endeavored to shed light upon the Scriptures, the divines considered both what the people wanted as well as what was the people *needed* for their spiritual nourishment. Their goal, we must remember, was not simply to cater to public opinion, but to offer at the same time a truly edifying exegetical companion to the Bible. Ultimately, their work was simplified because that is exactly what the people had demanded from the beginning. Thus, the only way to fulfill their commission and satisfy popular demand was to provide a commentary that was faithful to the hallowed truths of the Calvinistic Reformation.

The *Assembly's Annotations* arose under the auspices of the Long Parliament (1640-1653), which later authorized the composition of such masterpieces as the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) and Catechisms (1648). In fact, of the eight learned divines who labored to produce the annotations, at least six — William Gouge, Thomas Gattaker, John Ley, Francis Taylor, Daniel Featly, and one Mr. Reading — later served on the Westminster Assembly. The annotations, as a result, were the product of some of the best Reformed minds in England, as their content well attests.

The Calvinistic tone of the notes is unmistakable. They set forth, as did the Geneva notes before them, the Reformed doctrines of human depravity, free grace, and unconditional election.

All whom [God] elected shall believe in Christ and obey the Gospel (John 7.37).

God by his election framed a new body out of mankind in opposition to the first, whose head was Adam, in whom they all did sin and die, and ordained Christ to be their head, that in him, all might be gathered and made partakers of him by his grace, life and glory; so also hath he accomplished this counsel of his in time, dispensing all his graces unto his chosen by Christ in his sacred communion. . . . Election or choice here is taken for the eternal decree of

election, which is of certain men in time drawn out of the common lump of corrupt mankind (Ephesians 1.4).

Christ is the meritorious, grace the efficient and faith the instrumental cause of our justification and salvation: grace and faith stand one with another, to which these two are [both] contrary to [being] saved by ourselves and our works. And because it might be objected that faith is our work, and consequently that if we are justified by faith we are justified by works, the Apostle immediately addeth that though this faith be in us, yet it is not of us; that is, not from the power of nature, but that it is merely the gift of God (Ephesians 2.8).

We are God's workmanship, both in respect to our first creation and in respect of our regeneration, which is a second creation: . . . for he speaketh not of us as we were by nature, but as new creatures in Christ by grace (Ephesians 2.10).

On the subject of foreknowledge, the divines explained that "those whom God foreknew" in Romans 8.29 refers to "those whom [God] marked out as it were out of all other men in the world, and set his affection upon." Foreknowledge, they argued, is actually synonymous with "preordination, or foreappointment" (I Peter 1.2). Moreover, the "election of grace" in Romans 11.5, they posited, refers to the act "not whereby men choose grace, but whereby God chooseth us of his grace and goodness."

The new annotations were in many ways reminiscent of the old Geneva notes in both their content and, at times, their wording. In some instances, the divines had chosen to quote Lawrence Tomson's notes on the New Testament verbatim:

God is most free, and cannot be taxed with injustice, though he cast brighter beams of his favor upon one than another; for although he chose and predestined to salvation them that are not yet born, without any respect of worthiness; yet he bringeth not the chosen to their appointed end, but by the means of his mercy, which is a cause next under predestination: Now mercy presupposes misery, and misery, sin, and a voluntary corruption of mankind, and this corruption presupposeth a pure and perfect creation. Moreover, mercy is shown by degrees, to wit, by calling by faith to justification and sanctification, so that at length we come to glorification. Now all these things ordinarily following the purpose of God, do clearly prove, that he can by no means seem unjust in loving and saving his (Romans 9.15).

God did not choose us because we were, or otherwise would have been holy; but to the end that we should be holy, being clothed with Christ's righteousness through faith (Ephesians 1.4).

Since the annotations were originally intended to be contained within the margins of the Authorized Version, it was expected that they would be quite brief. In the end, the laboring divines deemed this to be a burdensome and unnecessary requirement and they decided that the annotations should be more substantial than the Geneva notes. As they explained in the Preface to the 1645 edition:

Though we hold the Geneva annotations to be in the main points of religion, sound and orthodox in doctrine, and guilty of no error, . . . (and taking them for such as for those times wherein they were made, were very worthy of praise for their profitable use, for then they were the best that were extant in English) we conceive for ourselves, that we shall better discharge the trust reposed in us, and do more answerably to the intention of those who set us on work, and better satisfy the expectation of such others as set observant eyes upon our assiduous and sociable pursuance of the service imposed on us, if (being as repairers of buildings to rip into an old house) we rather took it quite down, and built a new one, [rather] than patched it up, with here and there a new piece of our own putting in, which would not be decently suitable to the other parts, nor any way answerable, either in measure or manner of structure, to such a model . . . some apprehensive men have already prefigured to our performance.¹³

The Preface to the third edition (1657) reveals more still:

These Annotations were at first intended, as those before in the Geneva Version, for marginal notes only affixed to the text. To which purpose, in the directions then delivered unto us, it was required that they should be much of the same size with them. . . Our endeavor was to be as brief and concise as well we might, and we were therefore constrained . . . to let pass many things not unworthy otherwise of due observation and large discussion, that our notes, having only a narrow by-place assigned them on the outside of the leaf, might not in undue and undecent manner so enlarge their quarter, as to encroach beyond just proportion upon the spaces that were to be reserved for the text. Hence it came to pass, when the work came abroad, that diverse notes seemed not so full nor so clear, . . . while “endeavor and brevity bred,” as usual, “some obscurity”: and much was missed by many, . . . which well might, and would have been the greatest part of it inserted, had the lists and limits prescribed us afforded room with any fitness to receive it. . . Afterwards upon some second thoughts and further consideration, it seemed good unto those, who had put us upon this work, to alter their course at first propounded and to publish the Annotations apart by themselves; the grounds of that former limitation and confinement both of us and them being now removed; some of those, who having gone far beyond the bounds formerly fixed, had by mutual advice and agreement resolved to abridge, were then requested to lay that labor aside, and to let their parts go entire as they were.¹⁴

The resulting notes were far more comprehensive than even those attached to later editions of the Geneva Bible.¹⁵ No longer confined to the margins, the new commentary was naturally able to cover more of the Scriptures. More detailed, however, could also mean more cumbersome, and the divines hoped that the new annotations would achieve widespread circulation.

Ultimately, as the divines sought to create a scriptural aid that would both edify and satisfy the reading public, they identified even more options than the printers. The printers were confident that an annotated Authorized Version could satisfy popular demand for scriptural aids. Still, they were at first convinced that an annotated Bible was their only option. The divines, on the other hand, seem to have felt that an annotated Bible was not the only acceptable or marketable alternative. Moreover, the quality of their annotations eventually convinced the printers that the reading public would accept a *parallel* commentary in lieu of a marginal commentary.

One might argue, of course, that the divines were more concerned with the glory of God and the edification of the saints than they were with marketability. Ultimately, however, the decision to issue the new annotations as a separate volume was a wise one from a marketing point of view. In truth, the annotations were *more* marketable as a separate volume. Great as the demand for exegetical tools was, an annotated Bible, more expensive because it was naturally more costly to produce, could not be expected to compete with the numerous cheap Bibles that flooded the market in 1640 once the monopoly of Bible-printing ended.¹⁶ Annotated Bibles, however popular, would inevitably be priced out of the market.¹⁷ A separate commentary, on the other hand, could be expected to do quite well. While “unofficial guides to interpretation of the Bible, Biblical dictionaries and concordances, versifications of Scripture, were published in significant numbers,”¹⁸ a concise yet scholarly Bible commentary (printed in English), such as the *Assembly’s Annotations*, at the time of its initial appearance was one of a kind.

Not surprisingly, the *Assembly’s Annotations* were received with enthusiasm as soon as they appeared. The Preface to Matthew Poole’s *Annotations on the Holy Bible* (1685) testifies to their popularity. “About the year 1640,” the writer tells us,

some deliberations were taken for the composing and printing other English notes (the old Geneva notes not so well fitting our new and more correct translation of the Bible). These were at first intended to be so short, that they might be printed together with our Bibles in folio or quarto. But those divines who were engaged in it found this would not answer their end; it being not

possible by so short notes to give people any tolerable light into the whole text; yet they so contracted their work, that it was all dispatched in one volume; which though it were at first greedily bought up, yet we cannot say it gave so general a satisfaction (by reason of the shortness of it) as was desired and expected. So as upon the second edition it came forth quite a new thing, making two just volumes. This was so acceptable to the world, that within sixteen years¹⁹ it was ready for a third edition, with some further enlargements.²⁰

Several things are revealed here. First of all, we are told that the reading public readily accepted the new notes despite the fact that they did not appear as marginalia. In fact, it would be safe to say that the notes succeeded precisely because they were not confined to the margins. The laboring divines seem to have realized that literate English Protestants were hungry for an exegesis of the Scriptures both more detailed and more comprehensive than marginal notes could provide. The notes' marketability, in other words, was not at all compromised by the fact that they had to be purchased as a separate volume. On the contrary, the notes sold quickly, we are told. Within less than a decade, moreover, the reading public was ready for an expanded version of the notes, which was issued as two volumes in 1654. The second edition was so successful that only three years later in 1657 the notes were once again updated and enlarged.

Clearly, it was their lengthiness that had rendered the later editions of the notes even more popular than the first edition. So comprehensive, in fact, was the third edition that it was marketed as "an entire Commentary on the Sacred Scripture: The like never before published in English." While neither the Geneva notes nor the first two editions of the new notes had aimed at covering the whole Bible, the third edition, the divines argued, "may not unduly be deemed An entire Commentary upon the whole Body of the Bible; . . . such (it may with good warrant be averred) as hath not at any time appeared in our Language before."²¹ The final edition of the annotations became the closest thing to a comprehensive Bible commentary that English readers had yet seen. While other commentaries had preceded it, they were not detailed enough to be deemed truly comprehensive. For example, although the annotations of the Italian reformer John Diodati had been translated into English and appeared in print in 1641, they did not cover all of the Scriptures. There were, the divines explained, "many Chapters which Diodati hath either wholly passed over without any Note at all, or only here, and there made a . . . short Note." In those same areas neglected by Diodati, however, the divines boasted to have "made

many learned and useful Annotations: And . . . fully cleared sundry difficulties, which Diodati hath passed over in silence, or professed that, *This difficulty is not to be resolved.*”²² Certainly there were other foreign-language commentaries that had not yet been translated into English. Thus, it was not until 1657 that the reading public had the option of purchasing an English commentary that could legitimately claim to cover the entire Bible. Over a quarter of a century elapsed before Matthew Poole’s annotations appeared on the market.

When the *Assembly’s Annotations* made their debut 350 years ago, they were the first of their kind. For the very first time there existed in English a scholarly commentary, both detailed and Reformed, to accompany the Authorized Version. The printers and the laboring divines had succeeded in producing an exceedingly marketable alternative to the annotated Bible, and many more would follow the path that they had boldly forged. Although the printers’ initial reaction to the breakdown of press censorship had been to petition for license to issue the Authorized Version as an annotated Bible, extensive marginalia would certainly have made it more costly and therefore less likely to capture the market from the flood of cheap Bibles that appeared after 1640. A separate commentary, on the other hand, was a much wiser choice, and the first step in that direction was taken when the laboring divines disregarded their instructions and produced a much lengthier commentary than the printers had initially envisioned. It is, of course, impossible to tell whether the divines, in an astute assessment of market conditions, had foreseen that the collapse of the monopoly would render an annotated Bible unmarketable or had by sheer inadvertence gone beyond the prescribed limits. In the end, it was the printers who decided to alter their previous course and issue the annotations as a separate volume. While they could have requested that the divines go back and abridge their work, they chose instead to accept the lengthy annotations as they were.

The *Assembly’s Annotations* responded to the reading public’s hunger for a commentary to accompany the text of the Authorized Version. The fact that they met with immediate success demonstrates that the demand for scriptural aids was as great in 1645 as it had been in 1560 when the Geneva Bible first appeared on the market. Moreover, the successful marketing of a set of annotations of use only to those who owned or planned to purchase a copy of the Authorized Version suggests that whatever ambivalence the reading public had once felt towards the new translation had been overcome. As far as literate English Protestants were concerned, the Authorized Version’s major flaw had been corrected. At long last, they had a set of spectacles with which they could look into the text of the Authorized Version with the same satisfaction and

understanding they had previously felt only with the Geneva Bible. Shortly after the new annotations became available for public consumption, the Authorized Version gradually began to displace the Geneva Bible as the most popular household Bible. However, the Authorized Version that by mid-century had superseded the Geneva Bible was not the same Bible that James I had commissioned. While the actual text remained untouched, the way in which it was read and interpreted had been irreversibly altered. After 1645 the Authorized Version was seen by a great many people through the spectacles of the new annotations. A text, after all, means whatever its readers say it means, and the meanings attached to the text were bound to be affected by the new interpretive apparatus provided by the *Assembly's Annotations*. What had not changed, of course, was the market for scriptural aids. The reading public had remained steadfast in their demand for spectacles to accompany the Authorized Version, and their resolve ultimately outlived the forces that had tried so hard to suppress it.²³

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Notes

1. On the subject of censorship in Stuart England, see Christopher Hill's *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1961), pp. 96-100.
2. John Eadie, *The English Bible* (London: Macmillan, 1876), 2:15.
3. See Brooke Foss Westcott, *A General View of the History of the English Bible* (London: Macmillan, 1868), p. 96; William Lowther Clarke, *Concise Bible Commentary* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), p. 330; Derek Hirst, *Authority and Conflict: England, 1603-1658* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 78.
4. Christopher Hill mentions that "[in] 1632 a man was imprisoned for importing Geneva Bibles" — e.g. *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (New York: Penguin Press, 1993), p. 58.
5. Christopher Hill, *A Nation of Change and Novelty: Radical Politics, Religion and Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 219.
6. Also, it should be noted that it was less expensive. Between 1616 and 1640 a copy of the Geneva Bible, though imported, sold for less than a copy of the Authorized Version, which, because of the monopoly of Bible-printing, was a costly item.
7. Hill, *The English Bible . . .*, pp. 65-66.
8. *Annotations Upon all the Books of the Old and New Testaments; Wherein The text is Explained, Doubts Resolved, Scriptures Paralleled, and Various Readings Observed. By the Joynt-Labour of Certain Learned Divines, thereunto appointed, and therein employed* (1645), Preface. Hereafter cited as the *Assembly's Annotations*.

9. *Ibid.*
10. F.F. Bruce, *The History of the Bible in English*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 97.
11. In his discussion of the Authorized Version, Christopher Hill mentions that “Puritans divines played a large part in the work alongside members of the hierarchy” — e.g. *Century of Revolution*, p. 97.
12. *Assembly’s Annotations*, Preface.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Assembly’s Annotations* (1657), vol. 1, Preface.
15. One historian reminds us that “by the end of the sixteenth century the Geneva Bible had become far different from the 1560 edition. Tomson’s notes on the New Testament in 1576, the two Calvinistic catechisms added in 1568 and 1579, and the Junius notes to Revelation that appeared in editions from 1599 on — all reinforced the Calvinistic tone of the Geneva Bible.” See Lloyd E. Berry’s introduction to *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 16. Needless to say, these changes also added significantly to the length of the marginal notes.
16. Hill, *The English Bible*, pp. 65-66.
17. When in 1649 and again in 1679, a special edition of the Authorized Version was printed with the old Geneva notes, it failed to attract consumer attention. See Eadie’s *The English Bible*, 2:37.
18. Hill, *The English Bible*, p. 52.
19. Clearly, the writer is referring to the *Assembly’s Annotations*, yet he errs in claiming that 16 years had elapsed between the first and the third edition, when in reality only 12 years had passed. Perhaps, he refers to the time between the printers’ petition, which he places *around* 1640, and the issuing of the third edition in 1657, which would make approximately 16 years.
20. Matthew Poole, *Annotations on the Holy Bible* (1685), vol. 2, Preface.
21. *Assembly’s Annotations* (1657), vol. 1, Preface.
22. *Ibid.*
23. An earlier slightly different version of this article was published in *Cromwelliana* (July 1994), 7-23.