

*The 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the Geneva Bible included a preface "TO OUR BELOVED IN THE LORD, The brethren of England, Scotland, Ireland, &c. Grace, mercy and peace, through Christ Jesus." Later editions changed the title "To the Christian Reader."*

Besides the manifold and continual benefits which almighty God bestoweth upon us, both corporal and spiritual, we are especially bound (dear brethren) to give him thanks without ceasing for his great grace and unspeakable mercies, in that it hath pleased him to call us unto this marvelous light of his Gospel, and mercifully to regard us after so horrible backsliding and falling away from Christ to Antichrist, from light to darkness, from the living God to dumb and dead idols, and that after so cruel murder of God's saints, as alas, hath been among us, we are not altogether cast off, as were the Israelites, and many others for the like, or not so manifest wickedness, but received again to grace with most evident signs and tokens of God's especial love and favour. To the intent therefore that we may not be unmindful of these great mercies, but seek by all means (according to our duty) to be thankful for the same, it behoveth us so to walk in his fear and love, that all the days of our life we may procure the glory of his holy name. Now forasmuch as this thing chiefly is attained by the knowledge and practicing of the word of God (which is the light to our paths, the key of the kingdom of heaven, our comfort in affliction, our shield and sword against Satan, the school of all wisdom, the glass wherein we behold God's face, the testimony of his favour, and the only food and nourishment of our souls) we thought that we should bestow our labours and study in nothing which could be more acceptable to God and comfortable to his Church than in the translating of the Holy Scriptures into our native tongue; the which thing, albeit that divers heretofore have endeavored to achieve, yet considering the infancy of those times and imperfect knowledge of the tongues, in respect of this ripe age and clear light which God hath now revealed, the translations required greatly to be perused and reformed. Not that we vindicate anything to ourselves above the least of our brethren (for God knoweth with what fear and trembling we have been now, for the space of two years and more day and night occupied herein) but being earnestly desired, and by divers, whose learning and godliness we reverence, exhorted, and also encouraged by the ready wills of such, whose hearts God likewise touched, not to spare any charges for the furtherance of such a benefit and favour of God toward his Church (though the time then was most dangerous and the persecution sharp and furious) we submitted ourselves at length to their godly judgments, and seeing the great opportunity and occasions, which God presented unto us in his Church, by reason of so many godly and learned men, and such diversities of translations in divers tongues, we undertook this great and wonderful work (with all reverence, as in the presence of God, as intreating the word of God, whereunto we think ourselves insufficient) which now God according to his divine providence and mercy hath directed to a most prosperous end. And this we may with good conscience protest, that we have in every point and word, according to the measure of that knowledge which it pleased almighty God to give us, faithfully rendered the text, and in all hard places most sincerely expounded the same. For God is our witness that we have by all means endeavored to set forth the purity of the word and right sense of the Holy Ghost for the edifying of the brethren in faith and charity.

Now as we have chiefly observed the sense, and labored always to restore it to all integrity, so have we most reverently kept the propriety of the words, considering that the Apostles who spake and wrote to the Gentiles in the Greek tongue, rather constrained them to the lively phrase of the Hebrew than enterprised far by mollifying their language to speak as the Gentiles did. And

for this and other causes we have in many places reserved the Hebrew phrases, notwithstanding that they may seem somewhat hard in their ears that are not well practiced and also delight in the sweet-sounding phrases of the Holy Scriptures. Yet lest either the simple should be discouraged, or the malicious have any occasion of just cavillation, seeing some translations read after one sort, and some after another, whereas all may serve to good purpose and edification, we have in the margent noted that diversity of speech or reading which may also seem agreeable to the mind of the Holy Ghost and proper for our language with this mark « .

Again where as the Hebrew speech seemed hardly to agree with ours, we have noted it in the margent after this sort » , using that which was more intelligible. And albeit that many of the Hebrew names be altered from the old text, and restored to the true writing and first original, whereof they have their signification, yet in the usual names little is changed for fear of troubling the simple readers. Moreover whereas the necessity of the sentence required anything to be added (for such is the grace and propriety of the Hebrew and Greek tongues, that it cannot but either by circumlocution, or by adding the verb or some word be understand of them that are not well practiced therein) we have put it in the text with another kind of letter, that it may easily be discerned from the common letter. As touching the division of the verses, we have followed the Hebrew examples, which have so even from the beginning distinct them. Which thing as it is most profitable for memory; so doth it agree with the best translations, &c., is most easy to find out both by the best concordances, and also by the quotations which we have diligently herein perused and set forth by this star \*. Besides this the principal matters are noted and distincted by this mark ¶. Yea and the arguments both for the book and for the chapters with the number of the verse are added, that by all means the reader might be holpen. For the which cause also we have set over the head of every page some notable word or sentence which may greatly further as well for memory, as for the chief point of the page. And considering how hard a thing it is to understand the holy Scriptures, and what errors, sects, and heresies grow daily for lack of the true knowledge thereof, and how many are discouraged (as they pretend) because they cannot attain to the true and simple meaning of the same, we have also endeavored both by the diligent reading of the best commentaries, and also by the conference with the godly and learned brethren, to gather brief annotations upon all the hard places, as well for the understanding of such words as are obscure, and for the declaration of the text, as for the application of the same as may most appertain to God's glory and the edification of his Church. Furthermore whereas certain places in the books of Moses, of the Kings and Ezekiel seemed so dark that by no description they could be made easy to the simple reader, we have so set them forth with figures and notes for the full declaration thereof, that they which cannot by judgment, being holpen by the annotations noted by the letters a b c, &c. attain thereunto, yet by the perspective, and as it were by the eye may sufficiently know the true meaning of all such places. Whereunto also we have added certain maps of cosmography which necessarily serve for the perfect understanding and memory of divers places and countries, partly described, and partly by occasion touched, both in the Old and New Testament. Finally that nothing might lack which might be bought by labors, for the increase of knowledge and furtherance of God's glory, we have adjoined two most profitable tables, the one serving for the interpretation of the Hebrew names, and the other containing all the chief and principal matters of the whole Bible; so that nothing (as we trust) that any could justly desire, is omitted. Therefore, as brethren that are partakers of the same hope and salvation with us, we beseech you, that this rich pearl and inestimable treasure may not be offered in vain, but as sent from God to the people of God, for the increase of his kingdom, the

comfort of his Church, and discharge of our conscience, whom it hath pleased him to raise up for this purpose, so you would willingly receive the word of God, earnestly study it and in your life practice it, that you may now appear in deed to be the people of God, not walking any more according to this world, but in the fruits of the Spirit; that God in us may be fully glorified through Christ Jesus our Lord, who liveth and reigneth for ever. Amen.

From Geneva, 10 April 1560.