

Dedication to Queen Elizabeth, 1560 Geneva Bible

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To my knowledge, this is the only place on the internet where you can read the Puritan dedication to Queen Elizabeth from the 1560 Geneva Bible. For some reason the 1560 preface is widely reproduced, but not this dedication. I typed it out myself, checked it diligently against the original, and modernized the spelling. It is set out below, with paragraph numbers for easy reference.

The dedication was dated April 10, 1560. It was unsigned and anonymous in my copy. I suspect the primary author was the zealous Puritan William Whittingham, who revised Tyndale's New Testament in 1557, and/or John Calvin. I say this because some things written here strongly echo Whittingham's dedicatory epistle to a book by the Puritan Christopher Goodman: *How Superior Powers Ought to Be Obeyed by Their Subjects and Wherein They May Lawfully by God's Word Be Disobeyed and Resisted*. The purpose and topic of Goodman's book is evident from the title. Goodman was not a popular man with European rulers. It seems to me that neither Whittingham nor Calvin could affix their name in an epistle to the queen and expect a good reception, because of their revolutionary writings and

affiliations with men like Goodman. However, I cannot be sure about authorship, and in any case, it is not important to know. What matters is the content of this dedication to the queen. The reader should understand that it is consistent with the teachings that came from the leaders and scholars of Geneva at this time, though they are often forgotten or overlooked. This dedication gives important insight into the spirit and purpose of the Geneva Bible. It also reveals why Queen Elizabeth and King James did not like it.

A note on Christopher Goodman's book: It was typical of the revolutionary rhetoric of the Puritans. It was also diametrically opposed to William Tyndale's book, *The Obedience of a Christian Man*. Whittingham's endorsement of Goodman's book shows how contrary his spirit was to Tyndale. It also raises questions about the changes Whittingham made to Tyndale's New Testament. I examine some of these changes in Part 2 of *The Story of the Matthew Bible*, including how Whittingham interpreted Jesus' words to Peter about the use of the sword. It is fascinating, but disturbing too.

Some things to bear in mind:

(a) When I say 'Puritan,' I mean it in the classic, original sense, referring to the men with a post-millennial dream who returned to England from Geneva after Queen Elizabeth I ascended the throne in 1558. They believed they were called to purify and restore the Church and inaugurate the reign of the saints. As the reader will see, they considered certain Old Testament punitive practices (as they interpreted them) to be relevant under the New Covenant, to the extent that they, the Puritans, should "minister God's law" and execute severe punishments, including the execution of false prophets, heretics, and anyone who stood in the way of building God's Church. The highly esteemed Puritan Theodore Beza advocated 'tyrannicide' if need be. 'Tyrannicide' was a euphemism for 'regicide'; i.e., revolutionary execution of kings or queens by their subjects.

(b) When you see a reference in the dedication to “God’s mouth” or the “mouths of the Lord,” understand that it means Puritan ministers. Whittingham and his associates believed they were God’s mouth. Thus paragraph 5.2 means that the queen should consult with Puritan leaders. This is only one example. And where the dedication speaks of obeying the will of God “immediately” (para 8:3), it means obeying the instructions of Puritan ministers immediately. Paragraphs 9.2- 9.3 make this clear.

(c) Note that all the emphasis here is on building the Church. John Roger’s dedication to King Henry VIII emphasized giving the Bible to the people. Further, the reader will see how frequently the Puritans urged the queen to seek their counsel concerning the will of God, and ONLY their counsel. They never once urged her to read the Bible, but said they were the ones chosen by God to understand and teach what it meant (para 9.2). On the other hand, Rogers in his dedication urged the king to read the Bible, and he warned the king that false prophets would surround him and try to influence him. I hope to get a chance to post Rogers’ dedication soon.

(d) Note the mention in paragraph 8.2 about executing people who will not seek the Lord. The Puritans drew on Old Testament stories as precedents to follow for building the Church and governing the people. This is why they talk about such things as putting false prophets to death. Paragraph 5.1 refers to rooting out, cutting down, and destroying. But there are no particulars at all. What exactly is to be rooted out? Who are the people who will not seek the Lord? Who are the false prophets? The Puritans were holding their cards close to their chest. Because they were writing to the queen, they could not afford to be clear about their goals, which included terminating her role as the head of the Church so that they could establish a Presbyterian model.

(e) Items in round brackets are original. Items in square brackets are added by me: [*italicized words*] are modern synonyms and [regular font] indicates

words that I added to complete the sense.

(f) I added a few more notes at the end.

Dedication to Queen Elizabeth I, 1560 Geneva Bible

To the Most Virtuous and Noble Queen Elizabeth, Queen of England, France, and Ireland, etc. Your humble subjects of the English Church at Geneva, wish grace and peace from God the Father through Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 How hard a thing it is, and what great impediments let [*hinder*], to enterprise any worthy act, not only daily experience sufficiently showeth (most noble and virtuous Queen) but also that notable proverb doeth confirm the same, which admonisheth us, that all things are hard which are fair and excellent. And what enterprise can there be of greater importance, and more acceptable unto God, or more worthy of singular commendation, than the building of the Lord's Temple, the house of God, the Church of Christ, whereof the Son of God is the head and perfection?

2 When Zerubbabel went about to build the material Temple, according to the commandment of the Lord, what difficulties and stays daily arose to hinder his worthy endeavours, the books of Ezra and Esdras plainly witness: how that not only he and the people of God were sore molested with foreign adversaries, (whereof some maliciously warred against them, and corrupted the king's officers, and others craftily practiced under pretence of religion) but also at home with domestic enemies, as false prophets, crafty worldlings, faint-hearted soldiers, and oppressors of their brethren, who as well by false doctrine and lies, as by subtle counsel, cowardice, and extortion, discouraged

the hearts almost of all: so that the Lord's work was not only interrupted and left off for a long time, but scarcely at the length with great labour and danger after a sort brought to pass.

3.1 Which thing, when we weigh aright, and consider earnestly how much greater charge God hath laid upon you in making you a builder of his spiritual Temple, we cannot but partly fear, knowing the craft and force of Satan, our spiritual enemy, and the weakness and inability of this our nature: and partly be fervent in our prayers toward God that he would bring to perfection this noble work which he hath begun by you:

3.2 and therefore we endeavour ourselves by all means to aid, and to bestow our whole force under your grace's standard [*to rally all our forces under your grace's flag*], [you] whom God hath made as our Zerubbabel for the erecting of this most excellent Temple, and to plant and maintain his holy word to the advancement of his glory, for your own honour and salvation of your soul, and for the singular comfort [*strengthening/ encouragement*] of that great flock which Christ Jesus the great shepherd hath bought with his precious blood, and committed unto your charge to be fed both in body and soul.

4.1 Considering therefore how many enemies there are, which by one means or another, as the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin went about to stay the building of that Temple, so labour to hinder the course of this building [*work of building*] (whereof some are Papists, who under pretence of favouring God's word, traitorously seek to erect idolatry and to destroy your majesty: some are worldlings who, as Demas, have forsaken Christ for the love of this world: others are ambitious prelates, who, as Amasah and Diotrephes can abide none but themselves; and as Demetrious, many practice sedition to maintain their errors), we persuaded ourselves that there was no way so expedient and necessary for the preservation of the one, and destruction of

the other, as to present unto your Majesty the holy Scriptures faithfully and plainly translated according to the languages wherein they were first written by the holy Ghost.

4.2 For the word of God is an evident token of God's love and our assurance of his defence, wheresoever it is obediently received: it is the trial of the spirits, and as the Prophet saith, It is as a fire and hammer to break the stony hearts of them that resist God's mercies ⁽¹⁾ offered by the preaching of the same. Yea it is sharper than any two edged sword to examine the very thoughts and to judge the affections of the heart, and to discover [*reveal*] whatsoever lieth hid under hypocrisy and would be secret from the face of God and his Church. So that this must be the first foundation and groundwork, according whereunto the good stones of this building must be framed, and the evil tried out and rejected.

5.1 Now as he that goeth about to lay a foundation surely, first taketh away such impediments as might justly either hurt, let [*hinder*], or deform the work, so is it necessary that your grace's zeal appear herein, [so] that neither the crafty persuasion of man, neither worldly policy, or natural fear, dissuade you to root out, cut down, and destroy these weeds and impediments, which do not only deface your building, but utterly endeavour, yea and threaten the ruin thereof.

5.2 For when the noble Josiah enterprised the like kind of work, among other notable and many things he destroyed, not only with utter confusion the idols with their appurtenances, but also burnt (in sign of detestation) the idolatrous priest's bones upon their altars, and put to death the false prophets and sorcerers, to perform the words of the law of God: and therefore the Lord gave him good success, and blessed him wonderfully, so long as he made God's word his line and rule to follow, and enterprised nothing before he had inquired at the mouth of the Lord.

6 And if these zealous beginnings seem dangerous and to breed disquietness in your dominions, yet by the story of King Asa it is manifest that the quietness and peace of kingdoms standeth in the utter abolishing of idolatry, and in advancing of true religion. For in his days, Judah lived in rest and quietness for the space of five and thirty years, till at length he began to be cold in the zeal of the Lord, feared the power of man, imprisoned the Prophet of God, and oppressed the people: then the Lord sent him wars, and at length took him away by death.

7 Wherefore great wisdom, not worldly, but heavenly, is here required, which your grace must earnestly crave of the Lord, as did Solomon, to whom God gave an understanding heart to judge his people aright, and to discern between good and bad. For if God for the furnishing of the old temple gave the Spirit of wisdom and understanding to them that should be the workmen thereof, as to Bezaleel, Aholiab, and Hiram, how much more will he endue your grace and other godly princes and chief governors with a principal Spirit, that you may procure and command things necessary for this most holy Temple, foresee and take heed of things that might hinder it, and abolish and destroy whatsoever might impair and overthrow the same?

8.1 Moreover, the marvelous diligence and zeal of Jehosaphat, Josiah, and Hezekiah, are by the singular providence of God left as an example to all godly rulers, to reform their countries and to establish the word of God with all speed, lest the wrath of the Lord fall upon them for the neglecting thereof. For these excellent Kings did not only embrace the word promptly and joyfully, but also procured earnestly [*took earnest measures*] and commanded the same to be taught, preached, and maintained through all their countries and dominions, binding them and all their subjects both great and small with solemn protestations [*public declarations*] and covenants before God to obey the word, and to walk after the ways of the Lord.

8.2 Yea and in the days of serving Asa it was enacted that whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be slain, whether he were small or great, man or woman. And for the establishing hereof and performance of this solemn oath, as well Priests as Judges were appointed and placed through all the cities of Judah to instruct the people in the true knowledge and fear of God, and to minister justice according to the word,⁽²⁾ knowing that, except God by his word did reign in the hearts and souls, all man's diligence and endeavours were [*would be*] of none effect. For without this word we cannot discern between justice and injury, protection and oppression, wisdom and foolishness, knowledge and ignorance, good and evil.

8.3 Therefore the Lord, who is the chief governor of his Church, willeth that nothing be attempted before we have enquired thereof at his mouth. For seeing he is our God, of duty we must give him this pre-eminence, [so] that of ourselves we enterprise nothing but that which he hath appointed, who only knoweth all things, and governeth them as may best serve to his glory and our salvation. We ought not therefore to prevent [*go before*] him, or do anything without his word, but as soon as he hath revealed his will, immediately to put it in execution.

9.1 Now as concerning the manner [*design*] of this building, it is not according to man, nor after the wisdom of the flesh, but of the Spirit, and according to the word of God, whose ways are divers from man's ways. For if it was not lawful for Moses to build the material [*earthly*] Tabernacle after any other sort than God had showed him by a pattern, neither to prescribe any other ceremonies and laws than such as the Lord had expressly commanded, how can it be lawful to proceed in this spiritual building any other ways, than Jesus Christ the Son of God, who is both the foundation, head, and chief corner stone thereof, hath commanded by his word? And forasmuch as he hath established and left an order in his Church for the

building up of his body, appointing some to be Apostles, some Prophets, others Evangelists, some pastors and teachers, he signifieth that everyone according as he is placed in this body which is the Church, ought to enquire of his ministers concerning the will of the Lord, which is revealed in his word. For they are, saith Jeremiah, as the mouth of the Lord: yea, he promiseth to be with their mouth, and that their lips shall keep knowledge, and that the truth and the law shall be in their mouths.

9.2 For it is their office chiefly to understand the Scriptures and teach them. For this cause the people of Israel in matters of difficulty used to ask the Lord either by the Prophets, or by the means of the high Priest, who bare Urim and Thummin, which were tokens of light and knowledge, of holiness and perfection, which should be in the high Priest. Therefore when Jehosaphat took this order in the Church of Israel, he appointed Amariah to be the chief concerning the word of God, because he was most expert in the law of the Lord, and could give counsel and govern according unto the same. Else there is no degree or office which may have that authority and privilege to decide concerning God's word, except withal he hath the Spirit of God, and sufficient knowledge and judgement to define [*make a precise statement*] according thereunto. And as everyone is endued by God with greater gifts, so ought he to be herein chiefly heard, or at least that without the express word, none be heard, for he that hath not the word, speaketh not by the mouth of the Lord. Again, what danger it is to do anything, seem it never so godly or necessary, without consulting with God's mouth, the examples of the Israelites, deceived hereby through the Gibeonites: and of Saul, whose intention seemed good and necessary: and of Josiah also, who for great considerations was moved for the defence of true religion and his people, to fight against Pharoah Necho King of Egypt, may sufficiently admonish us.

10.1 Last of all (most gracious Queen) for the advancement of this building and rearing up of the work, two things are necessary.

10.2 First, that we have a [illegible] and steadfast faith in Christ Jesus, who must dwell in our hearts, as the only means and assurance of our salvation: for he is the ladder that reacheth from the earth to heaven: he lifteth up his Church and setteth it in the heavenly places: he maketh us lively [*living*] stones and buildeth us upon himself: he joineth us to himself as the members and body to the head. Yea, he maketh himself and his Church one Christ.

10.3 The next is, that our faith bring forth good fruits, so that our godly conversation [*manner of life*] may serve as a witness to confirm our election, and be an example to all others to walk as appertaineth to the vocation [*calling*] whereunto they are called, lest the word of God be evil spoken of, and this building be stayed [*delayed*] to grow up to a just height,⁽³⁾ which cannot be without the great provocation of God's just vengeance and discouraging of many thousands through all the world, if they should see that our life were not holy and agreeable to our profession.

10.4 For the eyes of all that fear God in all places behold your countries as an example to all that believe, and the prayers of all the godly at all times are directed to God for the preservation of your majesty. For considering God's wonderful mercies toward you at all seasons, who hath pulled you out of the mouth of the lions, and how that from your youth you have been brought up in the holy Scriptures, the hope of all men is so increased, that they cannot but look that God should bring to pass some wonderful work by your grace to the universal comfort of his Church. Therefore even above strength, you must show yourself strong and bold in God's matters: and though Satan lay all his power and craft together to hurt and hinder the Lord's building, yet be you assured that God will fight from heaven against this great dragon, the ancient serpent, which is called the devil and Satan, till he have accomplished the whole work and made his Church glorious to himself, without spot or wrinkle.
(4)

10.5 For albeit all other kingdoms and monarchies, as the Babylonians, Persians, Grecians, and Romans have fallen and taken end, yet the Church of Christ even under the Cross hath from the beginning of the world been victorious, and shall be everlastingly. Truth it is, that sometime it seemeth to be shadowed with a cloud, or driven with a stormy perfection [sic; *persecution?*], yet suddenly the beams of Christ the sun of justice shine and bring it to light and liberty. If for a time it be covered with ashes, yet it is quickly kindled again by the wind of God's Spirit: though it seem drowned in the sea, or parched and pined in the wilderness, yet God giveth ever good success. For he punisheth the enemies, and delivereth his, nourisheth them and still preserveth them under his wings.

10.6 This Lord of lords and King of kings who hath ever defended his, strengthen, comfort, and preserve your majesty, [so] that you may be able to build up the ruins of God's house to his glory, the discharge of your conscience, and to the comfort of all them that love the coming of Christ Jesus our Lord.

From Geneva. 10.April.1560.

Notes:

(1) Para 4.2 There are two teachings here about God's word which, coupled with what is missing, indicate a distorted understanding and a lack of true Christian knowledge. One is the idea that God's word is but a "token of his love." The other is that it is a "hammer." What is missing is the understanding that the preaching of the Word, who is Jesus, is a preaching of mercy and forgiveness for salvation, in the power of the Holy Spirit. This explains many changes the Puritans made to the New Testament. See for example my post about [1 Peter 13](#) and also [Psalm 23](#).

(2) Para 8.2 This is a veiled reference to appointing Puritan ministers and officials in secular and Church offices throughout the country, with effective judicial and executive control over civic and Church affairs, so they could run the country according to “God’s laws.”

(3)(4) Para 10.3 and 10.4 These passages express the Puritan postmillennial vision for the Church. This was the zeal that (in part) fuelled the Puritan revolt and murder of King Charles I in England in 1649. They believed that after they slew all who stood in the way of building the Church, whether “great or small,” the Church would grow to a glorious perfection according to the Geneva model. However, their dreams were dashed quite quickly, when the throne was restored to Charles II in 1661.

It seems to me that Puritan history and the English revolution, in which over 200,000 people lost their lives, is often misunderstood by the evangelical Church today, or painted with a false rosy hue. But a sense of the early Puritan spirit, and their willingness to take up the sword to build their Church, can easily be gained from this dedication. King James’ misgivings about the Geneva Bible were prophetic: Charles, whom the Puritan revolutionaries beheaded, was his own son.