THE FIRST IRISH TRANSLATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT*

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Summary Die erste Übersetzung des Alten Testaments in die irische Sprache war, wie das Neue Testament von 1602, eine Protestantische Initiative und hatte ein missionarisches Ziel. William Bedell, Propst vom Trinity College, Dublin (1627-29), und Bischof in Irland (1629-41), war ihre Inspiration und treibende Kraft. Die Übersetzung der King James Bible in der Ausgabe von 1628, die möglichst wörtlich und verstehbar sein sollte, wurde 1635/1636 abgeschlossen. Übersetzer war William King, der Korrektor James Nangle, aber Bedell selbst hat auch daran gearbeitet. Erst im Jahre 1685 ist die Übersetzung (ohne Apokryphen) veröffentlicht worden – vor allem dank den Bemühungen von Andrew Saul, Narcissus Marsh, Hugh Reily (Herausgeber) und dem berühmten Wissenschaftler Robert Boyle der das Projekt finanziert hat.
Keywords: Alten Testaments, Übersetzung, die irische Sprache, Bedell, King James Bible.

0. Introduction

By comparison with translations into the vernacular of the Old Testament in the rest of Europe, the first Irish translation of the Old Testament was quite late in arrival. Begun over a quarter of a century after the publication in 1602/3 of the first Irish translation of the New Testament, the translation of the Old Testament into Irish was probably completed by 1635 or 1636. Fifty years would pass, however, before the translation would be published. While a number of people contributed to the making, editing and eventual publication of the translation, it was an English puritan clergyman, William Bedell, who was the inspiration and driving force behind the original project.

1. William Bedell

William Bedell was born in Essex in England, in the village of Black Nutley, in 1571. He was sent to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, which opened its doors in

* Die erste Übersetzung des Alten Testaments in die irische Sprache (1685).

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1584, and there he spent seventeen years under the mastership of Laurence Chaderton (c. 1546-1640), one of the revisers of the King James Bible of 1611. Emmanuel College was a moderate puritan college where great emphasis was placed on the study and interpretation of the bible and on its languages. Here Bedell gained his BA and MA and was elected a fellow in 1593. He was ordained in 1597 and in 1601 he left the college, becoming rector of the parish of St. Mary in Bury St. Edmonds, in Suffolk, in 1602 (Bendall 1999: 83-87).

In 1607 Bedell went to Venice as chaplain to the British ambassador Sir Henry Wotton (1568-1639). Venice had been in conflict with Pope Paul V in Rome and had been placed under interdict in 1606 but relations between them had improved shortly before Bedell's arrival in the city on 21 April 1607 and the interdict had been lifted. Bedell, then in his mid-thirties, spent three and a half years immersed in the cultural and religious life of Venice, years that were to have an important formative influence on him. According to his son William, he was

> much improv'd in point of prudence and moderation; meeting there with men, tho' of another persuasion from himself in many points of religion, yet very conscientious and unblameable in life and conversation.[1]

Later on, in Ireland, he was accused by some of being too well-disposed towards Catholics (*cf.* Shuckburg 1902: 26, 324; McNeill 1943: 99-100). In Venice Bedell befriended the radical Servite priest Paolo Sarpi (1552-1622/23), who helped him with his Italian, and a Talmudic scholar, Leone da Modena (1571-1647/48), who is said to have taught him how to pronounce Hebrew. He preached in Latin and Italian, and translated the "Booke of Common Prayer" and other works "into the Italian toung".[2] While in Venice Bedell secured a copy of Diodati's translation of the bible into Italian. The Geneva-born Diodati (1576-1649) had brought out a second edition of his translation in 1607. Bedell also procured a 13th century manuscript of the Hebrew bible from Leone da Modena. Both of these he brought back with him to England. The Hebrew Bible of 1284 is in the library of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

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[1] His biography of his father in Shuckburg (1902: 1-75); this quote, p. 13. See Ford (1995: 73-98, 89); McCafferty (2009: 173-187); Cabal (2012: 43-57, 44, 48-53).

[2] In a letter from Venice to Samuel Ward, 30 November 1613, Bedell mentions the "slender services" he endeavoured to perform "in Translating the Booke of Common Prayer, his Majesty's Booke; Sir Edwin Sands his booke, The Third Homily of Chrysostome touching Lazarus, and some other thinges into the Italian toung" (Shuckburg 1902: 254, 82). It is doubtful if the Italian version of the *Book of Common Prayer*, produced in 1685 by Edward Brown, owed anything to the translation of Bedell who is not mentioned in the preface.

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Bedell returned to England with Wotton in 1610 and took up his post again in the parish of St. Mary. He married Leah Maw, a widow with five children, and together they had three sons and a daughter. In 1616 he moved to the more prosperous parish of Horningsheath, near Bury. His association with Sarpi continued in England and he translated several of his works (Sarpi 1625, 1626).[3] In 1624 he published an exchange of correspondence between himself and James Wadsworth (c. 1572-1623), a close friend from his time in Emmanuel College, who had converted to Catholicism (Bedell 1624). On a visit to London in 1627 Diodati met Bedell and was surprised to find that he had so humble a position in the church. Things were to change quickly, however. With the support of James Ussher (1581-1656), Archbishop of Armagh, and George Abbot (1562-1633), Archbishop of Canterbury, and Wotton's recommendation to the king, Bedell was, later that year, appointed provost of Trinity College, Dublin (Shuckburg 1902: 24, 265-266; Parr 1668: 376; Anon 1833: 602). After much soul searching and a visit to Ireland Bedell accepted the position and moved with his family to Dublin in 1628.

In Dublin Bedell began to institute reforms in Trinity College, drawing up new statutes and rules and reorganising the college finances. His interest in the Irish language is evident from the beginning. In his first letter from Dublin to his friend Dr Samuel Ward (1572-1643), Master of Sidney Sussex College in Cambridge, written on 16 July 1628, he intimated his intention of endeavouring "to understand the tongue of this country which I see (although it be accounted otherwise) is a learned and exact language and full of difficulty" (McNeill 1843: 86; Ó Cuinn 1971: 4-5). To his knowledge of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac and Italian Bedell now added Irish and engaged the young son of a Protestant minister to help him with the language.

Ireland was then an Irish-speaking country for the most part[4] but the Protestant Church in Ireland (the church established by law), whose higher clergy were mostly English, was ambiguous about the Irish language (McCafferty 2007: 103). An Act of 1537, which sought to enforce "English Order, Habit & Language" in Ireland, was still in force and justified the official policy of anglicisation. For Bedell, however, if the ministers of the established church were to have any hope of converting the Irish to Protestantism, it was essential for them to be able to communicate with them in their own language. His answer to his critics was that "those people had souls which ought not to be

[3] His son William states that he also translated two volumes of Sarpi's history of the Council of Trent (Shuckburg 1902: 88-89; McNeill 1943: 82-83, 86, 102).

[4] The Irish language belongs to a sub-group of the Celtic linguistic group, together with Scotch Gaelic and Manx (Q-Celtic); the other sub-group contains Welsh, Breton and Cornish (P-Celtic).

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neglected till they would learn English" (Shuckburg 1902: 41). In Trinity College he introduced a rule that all Irish students of divinity should study the Irish language, and he provided a yearly grant of £3 to assist them. He introduced prayers in Irish in the chapel on holy days and had a chapter of the New Testament in Irish read at dinner by one of the Irish members of the College (Mahaffy 1903: 203; Jones 1872: 145). He employed Muircheartach Ó Cionga (Murtagh King), a member of a Co. Offaly family traditionally associated with learning and literature in Irish, to read "an houre euery day" from the Irish translation of the *Book of Common Prayer* to those Irish students of the college "already chosen" for ministry in the established church (Shuckburg 1902: 296). This exercise was designed to improve their use and pronunciation of the language. There is evidence that King, as he will be referred to hereafter, was a poet in the classical Irish style (McCaughey 2001: 38, n. 1; de Brún 1986: 118, n.1).

With the introduction of Irish prayers in Trinity College came the need for the Psalter in Irish. While the *Book of Common Prayer* had been translated into Irish by Uilliam Ó Domhnaill, the Psalter as a book had not, probably due to time constraints. Bedell had King translate the first psalm which was then shown to two former students of Trinity College who approved it (de Brún 1986: 118). By 5 March 1628/29 Bedell reported in a letter to the Archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher, "Our Translation goeth on in the *Psalms*, and we are now in the 88*th*" (Parr 1686: 403).

In September 1629 Bedell became bishop of the united dioceses of Kilmore and Ardagh (Kilmore alone from 1633). He encountered many difficulties in his new field of labour and became embroiled in a number of controversies. He continued his pro-Irish language policy, appointing Irish-speaking ministers to benefices (Jones 1872: 44; Ford 1995: 40), and publishing a short catechism in Irish and English in 1631, using material from Ó Domhnaill's Irish translations of the New Testament of 1602/3 and the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1608/9.

2. The Old Testament

Bedell's appointment as bishop did not interrupt the work that was being done in Trinity College on the Psalter, and on 15 February 1629/30, a few months after his arrival in his diocese, he was able to report to Archbishop Ussher that Mr Nangle, whom he had employed as a reviser and corrector of King's translation, was writing out fair the Irish translation of the Psalter for the "Press"; King, he hoped, was making progress on the historical books (Parr 1686: 423). By this time Bedell had evidently set his mind on the translation of the whole of the Old Testament. Apart from some psalms and Old Testament readings that were translated by Uilliam Ó Domhnaill (d. 1628) for his Irish version of the *Book of Common Prayer*, very little of the Old Testament had been

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translated into Irish before this – the ten commandments, the blessing of Num 6:24-26 and Eccl 36:1-3 (Ó Cuív 1994: 76-81, 122-125).

According to his son William, Bedell "judg'd the scriptures as essential to the church as the building of stone walls" (Shuckburg 1902: 55). Mindful of the opposition to the Irish language among his own co-religionists, Bedell consulted widely among ecclesiastical and state officials before embarking on his biblical project. Having obtained broad support he pressed ahead withhis project with King as translator, and Nangle as reviser and corrector. According to Bedell's son, an Irish servant in the household who could write Irish well (unnamed) acted as scribe, writing out "fair, sheet by sheet", as King and Nangle "translated and corrected" (Shuckburg 1902: 56). The evidence is not quite as simple as that. The translation in manuscript, which survives in two volumes in Marsh's library in Dublin (*Genesis* to *Ruth*, *1 Samuel* to *Canticle of Canticles*) and in one volume in Cambridge (Prophets and the Apocrypha),[5] was written mainly by one scribe but a second hand is evident in the psalms (51, 52, 53 and 60) and in the apocrypha (de Brún 1986: 120, n. 21; Williams 1986: 52), and there are interlinear corrections or variants throughout, written for the most part in a different ink. Moreover, in the letter to Archbishop Ussher of 15 February 1629/30, cited above, Bedell states that James Nangle was then writing out fair the Irish translation of the psalms for the press. If this was the case, then the main hand in the manuscript may be that of Nangle.[6]

While King and Nangle were working on the translation they stayed with Bedell in his house in Kilmore (Shuckburg 1902: 56). The two men were Protestants at this point, but when they converted from Catholicism is not clear. Bedell ordained King on 22 September 1633 and a week later appointed him to the vicarage of Templeport in Co. Cavan, thus providing him with a living; Nangle was given a benefice in Mostrim, Co. Cavan, in April 1636 (Leslie 2008: 588, 710).

By February 1633/34 the translation had evidently made great strides, as Bedell was able to report to his close friend Samuel Ward that the translation was now being "written out fair" (de Brún 1986: 120, n. 21; Williams 1986: 52). In November 1634 the translation of the Old Testament was discussed at the Convocation of the established church held at Dublin, and conflicting opinions were expressed about it. Bedell was strongly in its favour but John Bramhall (1594-1663), Bishop of Derry, opposed it. Bedell's arguments, aided by the support of Archbishop Ussher of Armagh, won the day. It seemed that the way was now clear to publish the translation. It was also decided at the Convocation

[5] Marsh's Library MS Z4.2.3a-b; University Library Cambridge Dd.9.7.

[6] But see de Brún (1986: 120).

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that in parishes where all or most of the people were Irish, the bible and two copies of the *Book of Common Prayer* in "the Irish tongue" should be provided for them as soon as possible, the charge to be borne wholly by the parish (Monck-Mason 1843: 226). In Bedell's own diocese the vast majority of the people were Catholic and Irish-speaking; in several parishes, his son William wrote, "there was not one British or protestant, save the minister's family, and sometimes not all his family so either" (Shuckburg 1902: 40).

3. The text translated

The text that was used for the translation is described by Alexander Clogie in his biography of Bedell as "the last translation of the English Bible (read in all churches)". This is how he and many others referred to the King James Bible, first published in 1611 (Shuckburg 1902: 132). While it is commonly referred to as the 'Authorized Version', the King James Bible was never formally authorized. Bedell, however, would have seen it as the 'official' bible and he even used its psalms in church instead of those of the *Book of Common Prayer* (Shuckburg 1902: 152-153). Bedell knew some of those who were involved in the translation, in particular Laurence Chaderton, his old master from Emmanuel College, Cambridge. The fact that this new translation was "Appointed to be read in Churches", as its title described it, did not mean that older versions such as the Bishops' Bible or the more popular Geneva Bible were immediately replaced in church or in the home by the new translation. A new bible was probably bought only when it could be afforded.

On which edition of the King James Bible was the Irish version of the Old Testament based? The fact that the translation was in progress in 1629, if not earlier, points towards an edition from 1629 at the latest. In his study of the textual history of the King James Bible David Norton suggests that its entire text seems to have been set thirteen times in the first three years with the probability that two editions were produced in 1611 alone (Norton 2005: 62-63). Among the subsequent editions, that of 1616 was the first in which a serious attempt was made to correct printers' mistakes and revise the text where it was felt necessary to do so (Dore 1888: 337; Norton 2005: 78-79). Further changes are to be found in the edition of 1628, a copy of which is in Marsh's library in Dublin, and in the first Cambridge edition of 1629. Norton, in his study, details many of the changes that were introduced in the 1629 edition (Norton 2005: 41-42, 59-60, 82-89).

There are indications in the Irish version that point towards the use by the translators of an edition of the King James Bible later than that of 1611. Two examples point towards the editions of 1616 or 1628. In the King James Bible of 1611 the printed text of Lev 26:40a runs: "If they shall confesse the iniquitie

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of their fathers", the phrase "their iniquitie" being omitted, probably by the printer. This was corrected in the 1616 edition to "If they admitted their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers" and is the reading of the 1628 edition. It is this version that is reflected in the Irish translation "Ma admhuid siad a néagceart agus éicceart a naithreadh" ("If they admit their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers").[7] In the 1611 edition of the King James version of 2 Chron 32:5, when Hezekiah was preparing Jerusalem to face Sennacherib, he is said to have "prepared Millo in the city of David". This was altered in the 1616 edition to he "repaired Millo", which is also the reading of the 1628 edition. It is this reading that underlies the Irish "leasuigh" ("repaired").

There is evidence that the translators used the 1628 rather than the 1611 edition of the King James Bible. The Irish translation of Ps 77:10a points in this direction. While the 1616 edition of Ps 77:10a has "This is my death", the 1628 edition has "This is mine infirmity", a reading that is reflected in the Irish version "Asi so mheasláinte" ("This is my infirmity").[8] Another pointer is to be found in Hos 6:5a which the King James edition of 1611 translates with "Therefore have I shewed them by the Prophets". The verb "shewed" is altered in the 1616 edition to "cut downe" and in the 1628 edition to "hewed". The Irish translation – "do gheárr mé iad leis na fáighibh" (lit. "I cut/ hewed them by the prophets") – reflects the 1628 rather than the 1616 edition.[9]

Further support for the use of the 1628 edition is the fact that a number of changes that were introduced in the 1629 edition of the King James version are not reflected in the Irish translation. The reading "Lord" of Deut 26:1 of the 1611 edition, for example, was changed to "The Lord thy God" in the 1629 edition (Norton 2005: 41) but the Irish version reflects the former which is also that of the 1628 edition. The plural "servants" was introduced into the 1629 edition of 1 Sam 28:7b (Norton 2005: 41) but the Irish version has the singular, as has the 1628 edition. While the phrase "to the rock of David" of the 1611 edition of 1 Chron 11:15 was changed to "to the rock to David" in the 1629 edition, the Irish version "carraig Dhabhí" ("rock of David") reflects the original version which is also that of the 1628 edition. In Song of Songs 4:6 the plural "mountains" of the 1611 and 1628 editions of the King James Bible is reflected in the Irish plural "sléitibh" ("mountains") rather than the singular introduced in the 1629 edition. In Esth 1:8a, the 1611 edition has "For the king had appointed". This was changed in the 1629 edition to "For so the king had appointed" (Norton 2005: 41). The Irish version with "óir d'órduigh an Rí" ("For

[7] The underlined words in Irish and English correspond to one another.
[8] Diodati's version, "Cio ch'io sono infermo è ...", is in the same vein.
[9] Diodati: "gli ho uccisi".

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the king ordered") reflects the 1611 version which is also that of the 1628 edition. The printed version of 1685 reflects the change introduced in 1629.

Finally, it may be noted that the Irish translation was made from a so-called "she-bible" rather than a "he-bible". These appellations are based on the reading at Ruth 3:15 which appeared in the two editions of the King James Bible that were printed in 1611 (Norton 2005: 65). According to the biblical story, Ruth had spent the night in the threshing floor at the feet of Boaz and next morning Boaz told her to bring the mantle that she was wearing and to hold it out. When she did so he measured "six measures of barley, and laid it on her". The King James Bible continues either with "And he went into the city" or "And she went into the city". The edition with the former is known as the "he-bible", the edition with the latter, the "she" bible. The Irish translation of Ruth 3:15 – "agus dimthigh sí don chathruigh" ("and she went to the city") – reflects the use of the latter. It is likely that Bedell purchased this 1628 edition of the King James Bible after his appointment to Trinity College in Dublin.

4. The translation

The task that Bedell gave King and Nangle was to translate the English text "into the plainest Irish, most understood of the vulgar", that is, into an Irish that would be understood by the ordinary people (Shuckburg 1902: 132). And this is what they did. The Irish of the Old Testament differs somewhat from that of the the Irish translation of the New Testament published in 1602/3 by Uilliam Ó Domhnuill. One well-known Irish writer of the early 17th century, Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire, mentions the use of two registers for writing Irish – the *eochair órdha* or "golden key" and the *eochair mhaide* or "wooden key" (Ó Maolchonaire 1975: 2) – the one literary, the other demotic. The Irish writers of the period were capable of using a more literary or a more demotic style as the occasion demanded. The Irish of the Old Testament could be said to belong to the "eochair mhaide" or lower register or more demotic style. The translation is natural and clear and relatively easy to understand, as Bedell wished it to be. It is for the most part a literal translation.

Alexander Clogie (1614-98), Bedell's son-in-law, who refers to himself in his biography of his father-in-law as A.C., gives a description of the process of checking the translation for the press in which he himself was involved (Shuckburg 1902: 56):

> And for the fitting of the copy of the translation for the press, he [Bedell] never rose from the table after dinner and supper till he had examined a sheet and compared it with the original Hebrew and the 72 interpreters, together with Diodati his Italian translation (which he prized very much). His manner was this: his son Ambrose did usually read a chapter in English, my Lord having one copy of the

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> Irish translation and A.C. another; and after this he [Bedell] read the first verse out of Irish into Latin, and A.C. the next, and so to the end; and where was found any mistake of the English phrase or emphasis by the Irish translator, my Lord did immediately correct it.

This passage suggests that the Irish was retranslated into Latin and then the Latin into English and the comparison then made with the English of the King James Bible. This particular method of 'checking' the translation probably contributed to the literalness of the translation.

Neither King nor Nangle knew Hebrew but Bedell did,[10] and there is evidence of reference being made to the Hebrew text both in the translation itself and in the interlinear corrections and variations in the original manuscript. In Ps 68:4, for example, the original Irish version did not reproduce the English phrase of the King James version, "him that rideth upon the heavens", which appears to have been influenced by the Vulgate, but has *do ni marcuigheachd thríd an diothram* ("he rode through the wilderness"). The Hebrew term עֲרָבָה in v. 4 means "desert", "steppe" or "wilderness", and this is how the Irish version interprets it. This is not the interpretation of the Septuagint or Diodati or the Vulgate. It is likely that Bedell consulted his Hebrew bible in this case. Clearer still perhaps is the example of Ps 51:10a where "create in me" of the King James version is rendered in Irish with *cruthaigh dhamh* ("create for me") which is the literal translation of the Hebrew בְּרָא־לִי. The Septuagint, Vulgate, Diodati and others have "create in me".[11]

The translation of Ps 68:30a represents another case in which the Irish translators may have checked the Hebrew text. The version of the King James reads "Rebuke the company of spearmen", which is that of the Bishops' and Geneva Bibles, but a marginal note has the alternative "Or, the beasts of the reedes". The Irish translators preferred the version found in the margin of the King James but rendered the Hebrew literally with *Imdhearg beathadhach an ghiolcuidh* ("Rebuke the beast of the reed"), the terms for "beast" and "reed" being in the singular. The King James translators preferred to convey the sense of the text. The Septuagint has "beast/ animal" in the plural and "reed" in the singular (*ἐπιτίμησον τοῖς θηρίοις τοῦ καλάμου*), while Diodati has "beast" and "reed" in the plural. It is likely that Bedell checked the Hebrew text to enable him to decide between the two versions put forward in the King James Bible,

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[10] The Hebrew text would have been available to Bedell in the Hebrew manuscript that he brought from Venice and in a number of polyglots: Complutensis (1514-17), Antwerp (1568-72), Heidleberg (1586-1616), the Septuagint in the poluglots and in the Sixtine edition issued in Rome in 1586 (Swete 1914: 172-174).

[11] For the printed edition of 1685 Reily returned to the King James Bible or the Vulgate with "Cruthaigh ionnam croidhe glan" ("Create in me a clean heart").

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for while the Irish translation could be interpreted in a generic sense as equivalent to a plural, it seems more likely that it represents a literal rendering of the Hebrew.

Prov 19:18 may provide another example of the use of the Hebrew text. The King James version runs: "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying". For the final phrase "for his crying" the margin of the King James Bible has two alternative readings, namely, "to his destruction" and "to cause him to die". The Irish version *chum amharbhtha* ("for his killing") representes a literal rendering of the Hebrew phrase אֶל־הֲמִיתוֹ and is closest to the second alternative reading provided in the margin of the King James Bible. This is also the reading of the Vulgate ("ad interfectionem... eius"). It seems likely that Bedell, faced with three alternatives, would have checked the Hebrew text to decide which of them should be translated into Irish.

Clogie also stated that Bedell made use of the version of Diodati to correct the translation but evidence for this is difficult to establish. Abbot pointed to the interlinear correction in the manuscript at 2 Kgs 6:25 as providing one example, for here *sbrogaille*, which means a bird's "craw" or "crop", probably renders the term "gozzo" ("crop") which is in the margin of Diodati's Italian bible (Abbot 1904-5: 350; Williams 1986: 54).[12] There are other possible examples. The King James version of Ps 68:11 reads: "The Lord gave the word: great *was* the company of those that published *it*". This is translated into Irish with *Tug an Tighearna focal don tslúagh mhór ban ag foilsiúgh nuaidheacht ngairdeach* ("The Lord gave a word to the great crowd of women announcing joyful news"). While the reference to females in the Irish translation may reflect the feminine Hebrew participle הַמְבַשֶּׂרוֹת ("bringing news"), the reference to announcing the "joyful news" may reflect to some extent Diodati's version, "quelle che hanno annuntiate le boune novelle" ("those who announced the good news"). Another possible example of Diodati's influence is to be found in the Irish version of Ps 101:8a, which in the King James Bible reads "I will early destroy all the wicked of the land". The Irish translation runs: *Ann sna maidnibh gearrfa mé go moch uile chionntuigh na talmhan* ("In the mornings I will cut early all the guilty of the land"). The initial phrase *Ann sna maidnibh* ("In the mornings") may reflect the influence of Diodati's initial phrase "Ogni mattina" ("Every morning").[13]

According to Clogie, Bedell also consulted the Septuagint. Here again examples are difficult to find. A possible example may be found in Gen 33:19 where

[12] The King James Bible at 2 Kgs 6:25b reads: "And the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung"; the Irish translation, "agus an ceathramhadh cuid do cléibhín do chac coluim" ("and the fourth part of a small basket of the dung of a dove").

[13] Diodati: "Ogni mattina distruggero tutti gli empi del paese"; the Vulgate's introductory phrase is in the singular: "in matutino interficiebam omnes peccatores".

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Jacob is said to have bought a field for "for an hundred pieces of money". A marginal note in the King James Bible offers the alternative translation "for a hundred sheep". The Irish translation of this has Jacob buying the field for *céud uan* ("a hundred lambs"). This is also the translation of the Septuagint and the Vulgate. It seems likely that Bedell would have checked the Hebrew here, and in light of the vague nature of the Hebrew term קְשִׂיטָה in v. 19b ("a measure of weight"/ "an unknown amount"), preferred the alternative offered in the margin of the King James Bible, influenced perhaps by the rendering of the Septuagint.[14] In Ps 109:2, the King James version renders the Hebrew term רָשָׁע, which signifies "guilty" or "impious", with "wicked". The term is rendered with "peacaidh" in the Irish version which reads: *Oír atá béul an pheacaidh... oscuilte am aghaidh* ("For the mouth of the sinner... is opened against me"). This agrees with the version of the Septuagint (*στόμα ἁμαρτωλοῦ*).[15] The final example is Ps 19:4a which the King James Bible translates with: "Their line is gone out through all the earth". The Hebrew קָוָּם means "cord" or "measuring line", hence the translation. The Septuagint, however, has *φθόγγος* which means "sound", "tone" or "voice". The Irish translation has the term *fuaim* ("sound") suggesting that the Irish translators followed the Septuagint here. An interlinear correction on the original manuscript reads *líne* ("line"), in keeping with the King James version and the Hebrew text.[16]

5. The fate of King's translation

The translation of the Old Testament was probably already written out fair by 1635 or 1636. In a letter of 2 September 1637 to Archbishop Laud of Canterbury Bedell described King as the person "who hath translated the psalms into Irish first and after all the old testament" (Shuckburg 1902: 342). By then opposition to the project which was always there had become more pronounced, especially among those who did not approve of Bedell's promotion of the Irish language in the first place, seeing it as contrary to the act of Henry VIII against the use of the Irish language. The opposition to Bedell's project took the form of attacks on King and on the work itself.

Accusations of various kinds were made against King – principally by a Scottish cleric, William Bayley, a son-in-law of Bedell's chancellor Cook; Bayley had been admitted to a parish in the diocese of Kilmore by Bedell but later on he petitioned the Lord Deputy for King's parish. King was accused among

[14] The Irish manuscript offers "céud píosa airgid" ("a hundred pieces of money") as an alternative and it is this reading that was chosen for the printed edition of 1685.

[15] See also Vulgate: "os peccatoris".

[16] See also the Vulgate reading "sonus" ("sound"). The translation in Diodati is quite different.

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other things of neglecting his cure, of being "unlearned in Holy Scripture and Divinity", of being an indistinct and unintelligible reader, of administering the sacraments improperly, of having a Catholic wife and of allowing his children to be "popishly educated". In the eyes of Bayley and others, King was a none too convinced Protestant. The translator of the Old Testament into Irish was prosecuted, deprived, fined and placed under arrest (Shuckburg 1902: 342, 344-347).

More serious for Bedell's biblical project was the fact that the accusations against King led to doubts being cast on his translation of the Old Testament. It was suggested that since he was a person "so inconsiderable in the world", nothing of his "could be worthy of publick use in the church of God" (Shuckburg 1902: 134). Bedell was mindful of the problems that the accusations against King could cause for the project that was dear to his heart (Shuckburg 1902: 342). Although Clogie suggests Bedell was prepared to print the translation of the Old Testament at his own expense (Shuckburg 1902: 135), it seems likely that his father-in-law was depending for financial support on Sir George Rathcliffe (1593-1657), a member of the Irish Privy Council and a friend of the Lord Deputy. In a letter to Archbishop Laud (1573-1645) of 2 September 1637 Bedell, in relation to the translation, wrote (Shuckburg 1902: 342):

> whatever become of Mr King, I hope it shall not miscarry. God hath stirred up the spirit of Sir George Rathcliffe to undertake the charge, which hath been the only lett of printing it. I *humbly desire your grace to take notice of Sir George* his noble offer, and to encourage him therein.

A year later Bedell again wrote to Laud, recounting how despite all his efforts, Bayley had held on to King's benefice, and reporting that King, himself, was in dire straits. In his letter of 12 November Bedell described King as "so weake in body, and dejected in minde and impoverished in estate" due to "the want of the fruites of his living" and his wife's "continuall prolling" (plundering) from him; it was a marvel, he wrote, that he was still alive; indeed, he added, his adversary Mr Bayley had "confidently affirmed to my Lord Primate (as before to me) that he was dead". A few weeks later, while defending King in a letter to the Lord Deputy Strafford (Thomas Wentworth, 1593-1641), Bedell was critical of King's wife and her Catholic ways (Jones 1872: 179-180). He was increasingly worried about the effects the King case would have on his biblical undertaking. If the wrongs done to King affected only his person, Bedell argued, they were of less consideration, but when they affected his "greate worke", the "Translation of God's booke", so necessary for both his Majesty's kingdoms, mortally wounding it, that was another matter (Jones 1872: 179-180). In the face of further attacks on King and on the translation Bedell reminded his opponents that the Lord Primate, the Bishop of Meath, Lord Dillon, Sir James Ware and others had recommended and vouched for King in the first place. He and Clogie strongly

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defended King. According to Alexander Clogie, King was considered "fully master" of the Irish language, "both in prose and meter by the testimony and approbation of all that knew him" (Shuckburg 1902: 132). Bedell himself described him as "a man of ye knowne sufficiency for the Irish especially, either in prose or verse, as few are his matches in the Kingdome", and he laid down a challenge to his enemies (Jones 1872: 178):

> let the worke itselfe speake, yea, let it be examined *rigoroso examine*, if it be fownd approveable, let it not suffer disgrace from ye small boast of the workeman; but let him rather (as old Sophocles, accused of dotage) be absolved for the sufficiency of the worke.

King was old and in poor health, however, and was unable to extricate himself from the situation that his opponents had created for him. In a letter to Archbishop Laud of 20 December 1638 Bedell refers to King and states rather ruefully: "it fell out as I feared, that his worke would suffer with him" (Shuckburg 1902: 351). At this point Bedell's hopes of printing the Irish translation of the Old Testament seemed to have been dashed. King and his work had been very effectively discredited. Worse was to follow.

In 1641 the uprising that was threatening broke out in Ulster on 23 October. Most of the English settlers fled their lands but Bedell stayed in his house. He was treated well by his Catholic neighbours and initially allowed to live there but later, when the Catholic bishop took over the episcopal palace, Bedell and his family were moved to the island castle of Lough Oughter; here they were well accommodated, given food and money and allowed to practise their faith (Jones 1872: 73). After Christmas they were moved from the castle on the lake to the house of one of Bedell's clerical friends Denis Sheridan (c. 1610-83), vicar of Killesher (Leslie 2008: 435). Sheridan retrieved Bedell's desk and some of his books and papers from the episcopal palace, including the Hebrew manuscript that he had got in Italy and presumably also the Irish translation of the Old Testament (Jones 1872: 75-76). Clogie reported that many of Bedell's books and notes went astray at this time. Bedell died on 9 February 1641/2 from fever caught in Sheridan's house. He was very well respected in the area and the "rebels" accompanied his corpse to the place of burial where they "gave him a volley of shot and said: *Requiescat in pace ultimus Anglorum*" (Shuckburg 1902: 205). The insurgency spread throughout the country and continued up to 1649, when Oliver Cromwell, victorious in the civil war England, came to Ireland with his new model army and effectively ended the uprising. King's translation of the Old Testament survived, initially in Sheridan's house, where Bedell died, and later in the possession of Henry Jones (1605-81/2), dean of the diocese of Kilmore.

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6. Editing and Publishing the Irish Old Testament

In August 1675, Robin Bacon, amanuensis to the Irish-born, English-educated philosopher Robert Boyle, Earl of Cork (1627-91), often called the "father of chemistry", included among the things "fit to be done in the Kingdom of Ireland" the translation and printing "in the vulgar character" of the Bible (Maddison 1958: 81-82). The following year, Henry Jones, now Bishop of Meath (1661-81/82), wrote in a letter of dedication to the Earl of Essex, prefixed to the text of a sermon delivered in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, that he had Bedell's translation into Irish of the Old Testament in his possession and wished that it were "printed and published" (Jones 1676; Clarke 2009: 1026). The opportunity soon arrived. In 1678 Robert Boyle was actively engaged in having the Irish New Testament of 1602/3 reprinted. A convinced Anglican with Calvinistic leanings, Boyle had generously supported the translation of the bible into various languages including Welsh and Turkish. When Jones became aware that Boyle was involved with the new edition of the New Testament, he saw the possibility of having the Irish translation of the Old Testament published. In a letter to Boyle of 4 August 1680 he offered him the manuscript for publication. For him the completion of the bible in Irish was a "worke greately to Gods glory, in bringing, by his grace, many from darknes to light, & of deserved praise to the happy undertaker"; he had thought of seeking help for its publication from members of the Dublin parliament but found that many were against it. It was, he wrote, "almost a principle in theire Politiques to suppresse that Language utterly, rather then in so publique a way to countenance it" (Hunter 2008: V, 208).

Jones was also in touch with Andrew (fitzJohn) Sall (1624-82), an Irish-speaking ex-Jesuit who had become a Protestant in very public circumstances and was working with Boyle on the reprint of the Irish New Testament of 1602/3 (Ó Fearghail 2012: 372-373). Sall had intimated to Jones that the manuscript of the Irish translation of the Old Testament would have to be revised before being printed, and Jones, in a letter of 5 November 1681, declared to Boyle his intention of immediately putting the manuscript into Sall's hands (Hunter 2008: V, 264, 272). In London, meanwhile, Hugh Reily (Aodh Ó Raghallaigh), who was also, it seems, a former Catholic priest (de Brún 1986: 122; Ó Fiaich 1976: 49, n. 20), and who was preparing a reprint of the Irish New Testament for Boyle, was aware of the existence of the Bedell manuscript and was anxious to begin working on it (Hunter 2008: V, 274, 275).

When Sall was eventually given Bedell's manuscript in early December 1681 he found it to be "a confused heap, pittiefully defaced and broken"; it was, he wrote to Boyle, a "work of verie great labour to bring it into some order". He

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told Boyle that he had sent for a bookbinder to bind what he could gather, hoping to make up a "compleat old testament, by the help of God and of Mr Higgin the Irish lecturer" in Trinity College Dublin. It would be a work of great labour, he added, and no little time "to draw up a cleere copie of the whole purged from errors and foolish additions or alterations interfaced by som unluckie corrector pretending to criticisme in Irish" (Hunter 2008: V, 279). The latter comment refers to the numerous corrections and revisions in the manuscript, mostly interlinear, which date from the time of the original translation (*cf.* de Brún 1986: 120). The task now was to prepare a transcript of the manuscript for the printer.

In addition to Andrew Sall, the group of people involved in the project included the English provost of Trinity College, Dublin, Narcissus Marsh (1638-1713). Like Bedell, he was very interested in the Irish language. He employed Paul Higgins (Pól Ó hUiginn, 1628-1724), a former Catholic priest and Vicar General of the diocese of Killala, to teach the Irish students in Trinity College to read and write their native language, and he involved him in the Old Testament project. Higgins may well have been of the same learned bardic family as the poet Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (1550-91) of Co. Sligo (Ó Fiaich 1976: 42-51; Ó Moghráin 1945: 87-101). Another Irish scholar of that name, Domhnall Óg Ó hUiginn, of Kilclony, Co. Galway, was involved in the translation into Irish of the New Testament of 1602/3. Higgins probably translated into Irish the first seventeen psalms which were missing from the manuscript, and for this would have received £3. However, whether it was his version that was eventually used or a version made by Hugh Reily in London is not entirely clear.[17] Sall himself had employed a scribe Uilliam Ua Duinnín (William Denine) who could speak and write Irish very well and who was given a room in Trinity College (de Brún 1986; Williams 1986: 82). They were joined later by another Irish scholar, John Mullan (Seán Ó Maoláin), a former Catholic priest (see below). The final member of the team was the editor, London based Hugh Reily, who prepared the final copy for the printer.

In a letter to his friend Thomas Smith, Marsh described the method by which the transcript was checked against the original manuscript (T[odd] 1833: 767-768). When a quantity of the sheets was transcribed Marsh got Sall (when he was able), Higgins, Mullan and Denine, and occasionally "some other Gentlemen well skill'd in Irish", to compare the transcript with Bedell's original copy, and to translate the Irish back into English so that Marsh, with his copy of Walton's Polyglot to hand, could "observe whether it came up to the originall". When

[17] See letter of Boyle to Marsh, 14 February 1683/4, Marsh's Library Z4.4.8, letter n. 19 (Maddison 1958: 95; Mac Murchadha Caomhánach 1912: xiii).

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doubts arose, which was seldom, it seems, they debated "the true import of the words" and agreed on "a more proper expression". They left a marginal note for Boyle to confer with Reily in London about it, but this, in Marsh's view, led to "very few alterations" in the printing. Nevertheless, it is evident from a comparison between the original manuscript and the published version of 1685 that Reily did make quite a few alterations to the manuscript for publication.

According to the agreements Boyle made ("not without difficulty") with the printer and with Hugh Reily, work was to begin on the printing of the Irish Old Testament on 14 August 1682; penalties were built into the contract for failure to meet specified deadlines.[18] Although Reily was employed to correct the proofs, he ended up doing a great deal more. The decision to exclude from the printed version the brief summary introductions to the chapters that had been translated from the 1628 edition of the King James Bible was probably his – presumably in consultation with Boyle. In a letter of 2 September 1682 to Marsh Boyle expressed his agreement with Reily's decision to exclude the marginal readings of the King James Bible, which gave alternative translations of a particular word or phrase, doubting that "in an Irish version, intended chiefly for Papists, it would be safe and prudent to put various Renderings, at least in ye first Edition that may breed some scruples & suspitions in ye Readers".[19]

As in the case of the 1681 reprint of the New Testament of 1602/3, biblical cross references were included. In the letter to Marsh just mentioned Boyle remarked: "as for ye Parallell Places yt you and I desire should be put in the margins; Mr Reily says that he has been & will be carefull to have them noted there". For this Reily probably used the same edition of the King James Bible that he had used for the reprint of the New Testament – *The Holy Bible Containing the Old Testament and the New* published in Edinburgh in 1675, or *The Holy Bible* published in Oxford in 1680 (Ó Fearghail 2012: 375). Some marginal notes that were taken from the King James Bible at the time of the original translation into Irish were preserved in the printed version.

Reily also had a great deal of editing to do to prepare the manuscript for the printer, much of which, he felt, should have been done in Dublin. He continually criticised the work of the scribe, William Denine, and his lack of professionalism, citing his "too many omissions, sometimes of whole sentences, sometimes of words, very often of letters and syllables"; he complained that he never compared his copy with the "originall manuscript", that he seldom or ever took note of "periods and distinctions", that he commonly forgot "accents of words" and when he remembered them was sure to put them in the "wrong

[18] Boyle to Marsh, 12 August 1682, Marsh's Library Z4.4.8, letter n. 6 and enclosure.
[19] Marsh's Library Z4.4.8, letter n. 7.

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place", creating more work for him since he had "first to blot out his and then to write new ones".[20] Reily's complaints led to the employment of John Mullan and his involvement satisfied Reily who described Mullan as the "ablest" yet employed and even expressed the wish that he had "taken a little more liberty" and saved him "ye labor I am forced to take in altering divers passages".[21]

Boyle was so concerned with Reily's criticisms and corrections that he sent a proof of some of the pages edited by Reily to Robert Huntington (c. 1636-1701), Marsh's successor as provost of Trinity. Provost Huntington reassured him in January 1684/5 that certain people in Dublin found no fault with Reily's corrections. Huntington also mentioned that the bishop of Meath (Anthony Dopping, 1643-1697) "had particularly recommended it to the perusal of one of his clergy, who generally allows it" (Birch 1744: V, 618-619). This seems to have satisfied Boyle.

Reily also voiced criticisms of the original translation. He complained about the variety of expressions used for "ye same words in ye originall" (an issue that frequently arises in translations); he complained of the slavish following of the English version – "it follows too much ye English translation even in such phrases as are peculiar to ye English tongue, and translates them verbatim into Irish", keeping sometimes the same order of words as in English & thereby obscuring the sense "extremely"; he claimed that he took more pains in mending these faults tho not obliged, than in correcting ye print", and he expressed the hope that his extra exertions would be rewarded (Birch 1745: 616-617). Marsh defended the translation in a letter to Boyle, accepting the criticism that it followed the English verbatim to the detriment of the Irish idiom but maintaining on the authority of those who understood the language that the Irish, though less elegant, was "proper enough, and never the less intelligible by the vulgar people". In their view, it was "a good, plain, familiar translation", and, he added, "if it were more elegant, it would not be so fit, as now it is, for common use" (Birch 1744: V, 612).

Sall's death in April 1682, was undoubtedly a blow to the project, but Marsh stepped into the breach, so to speak, and took upon himself "the care to see the Irish Bible transcribed and fitted for the press" (Birch 1744: V, 610). In May 1683 he was consecrated bishop of Ferns and Leighlin and was replaced as provost of Trinity College, Dublin, by another Englishman – Robert Huntington – but he did not leave the college for almost another year. Huntington's arrival was of great assistance to Marsh and helped the project along so much that when Marsh eventually left the college for his diocese around Easter 1684 "all the Canonicall

[20] Reily to Boyle, 18 September 1682, Marsh's Library Z4.4.8, letter n. 8 (enclosure).
[21] See Reily to Boyle, January 1682/3, Marsh's Library Z4.4.8, letter n. 13 (enclosure).

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books had been prepared and fitted for the Press"; as for the apocrypha, he wrote to his friend Thomas Smith, most, if not all of them were transcribed "but never compar'd & examin'd" (T[odd] 1833: 771).

For the printing of the New and Old Testaments Boyle had a new set of Irish characters cut in England by Joseph Moxon (1627-1691) which were modelled on the Louvain A. type used by the Irish Franciscans (Lynam 1969: 8-10, 14-16; McGunne 1992: 52-53; Reed 1952: 168-179). An attempt had been made to raise funds for the project but in the end it was Boyle himself who bore the costs. The printing went on almost hand in hand with the transcription but progress was slow.[22] The psalms were printed in March 1684/5, and before the end of 1685 the rest of the Old Testament except the apocrypha was probably in print. That is the date on the title page which runs as follows:

> *Leabhuir na Seintiomna ar na ttarruing go gaidhlig tre chúram & dhúthracht an Doctúir UILLIAM BEDEL, roimhe so Easbug Chille móire a Néirinn, Agus ar na ccur a ccló chum maithios puiblidhe na Tíre sin*
>
> *The Books of the Old Testament translated into Irish by the Care and Diligence of Doctor William Bedel, Late Bishop of Kilmore in Ireland, And, For the Publick Good of that Nation. Printed at London, Anno Dom. MDCLXXXV.*

Fifty advance copies of the Old Testament – unbound, to save customs charges, and without title page or preface – were sent to Huntington in Trinity College, Dublin, in March 1685/6, to be distributed as gifts (Maddison: 1958, 96). The preface, if it was ever written, was not included.

The cost of transcribing Bedell's manuscript came to £44-7s-6d which included the cost of paper, pens and ink, £3 for translating the seventeen psalms that were missing, and £4.10s to John Mullan for revising the transcript; the printer's costs came to £333.[23] The printer's name is not given but it was clearly Robert Everingham, the man who had printed the New Testament in 1681 and who was to print other copies of the Irish Old Testament for Gaelic speakers in Scotland.

The Irish translation of the Old Testament did not contain the apocrypha – Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus or Sirach, Baruch, the additions to Daniel, and the books of the Maccabees. King had translated the books and Mullan had transcribed them for Reily and eventually handed over the transcript to Marsh when he was paid an additional £2 1s 6d for his labours. Marsh passed the copy on to Huntington.

Neither Boyle, a puritan, nor Marsh, it seems, wanted the apocrypha printed with the rest of the bible. In a letter to Marsh of February 1683/4 Boyle wrote

[22] See Boyle to Marsh, 2 September 1682, Marsh's Library Z4.4.8, letters nn. 18 and 19.
[23] See Boyle to Marsh, 8 July 1682, Marsh's Library Z4.4.8, letter 3 (enclosure).

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that his Lordship "had cause enough to hesitate, whether they should be published together with the truely canonical ones". One reason he gave was that they would "much increase the bulke of the volume". The real reason was rather different. Protestants, he wrote, "have not been wont to thinke them necessary" for its "compleateness". And he added: "as for my part, I confess I do not".[24] Nevertheless, he wrote, "as to the Expediency of their being or not being annexed to the Bookes whose authority is on all hands agreed on, I shall be content to submit to better Judgement".[25] Marsh was evidently of the same view but he was anxious that the manuscript be not "lost".[26] It was indeed preserved and is in Cambridge University library but only a part of it was every published (Ó Cuinn 1971).

Despite the fact that the the Lord Deputy in Ireland was favourably disposed towards the translation, many, according to Marsh, were against it (Birch 1744: 614). Huntington did not hold out much hope for its success in Ireland. He felt that the Irish would not be very fond of the translation. But he reminded Boyle that he had done more for the Irish people "than all their priests ever did", and the reason – "because your design and theirs is mighty different, you intending nothing else but to make them knowing and wise unto salvation" (Birch 1744: 619). As Huntington foresaw, the venture met with no great success. Boyle himself admitted as much in a letter to James Kirkwood, a Church of Scotland minister, in March 1687/8 (Hunter 2008: VI, 252):

> And my maine designe... to acquaint the Native Irish with the Divine Oracles; as soon as I had with the same Characters caus'd an Edition to be made of an Irish Version of the Old Testament, which the Excellent Bishop Bedle had long agoe procur'd, and which, after the lately mention'd Publication of the New Testament, divers of the Reverend Protestant Clergy in Ireland, besides some worthy Prelates, intended to promote, but by various occurrences were hinder'd from accomplishing their good desires.

7. Gaelic Speakers in Scotland

In the 17th century the Gaelic language was spoken throughout the Highlands and Isles of Scotland. In 1687 Boyle was made aware of the extent to which Gaelic was spoken in Scotland by the Church of Scotland minister James Kirkwood (c. 1650-1708) who was then working in England (rector of Astwick, Bedfordshire). Kirkwood discussed with Boyle "the sad state of religion in the Highlands of Scotland where they had neither bibles nor catechisms in their

[24] Boyle to Marsh, 14 February 1683/4, Marsh's Library Z4.4.8, letter n. 19; see also Boyle to Marsh, 28 November 1685, Z4.4.8, letter n. 20.

[25] Boyle to Marsh, 14 February 1683/4, Marsh's Library Z4.4.8, letter n. 19.

[26] Boyle to Marsh, 28 November 1685, Marsh's Library Z4.4.8, letter n. 20.

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own language" (Maddison 1958: 97). Since the distribution of the Irish Old Testament in Ireland had not gone very well Boyle had copies on hand to send to Scotland and he immediately offered to send thirty-one bound copies for the use of the clergy and parishes of the diocese of Ross – and one "with a gilt back" for the bishop of the diocese. He also promised to send a hundred copies unbound. According to Kirkwood, Boyle, at his own expense, sent 200 copies of the Old Testament as a gift to Scotland. By 15 May 1690 sixty-six Old Testaments had been distributed in Scotland – ninety-nine, by August 1599.

In 1689, Robert Kirk (1644-92), minister of Aberfoyle, in the highlands of Scotland, and a Gaelic scholar, transcribed the Irish New Testament of 1681 and the Irish Old Testament of 1685 into Roman characters which could be more easily read by the Gaelic speakers of Scotland who were not familiar with the Irish script (Williams 1986: 97-100). The combined volume was printed in 1690 by Robert Everingham in a smaller format. The printer gave an estimate for 3,000 copies at 1s 10d each for paper and printing, and 8d per copy for binding, bringing the total to £375. Boyle was to contribute £8 6s 8d for the printing of one hundred copies (Maddison 1958: 100). It is estimated that 3000 copies of the bible were printed for Scotland (Hunter 2008: VI, 315, 343-355). There were criticisms of the distribution of the Irish bible in Scotland by those who wished to see the Gaelic language extirpated from Scotland, criticisms that called forth a lengthy refutation at the time (Hunter 2008: VI, 346-349). It is probably fair to say that the translation of the Old Testament into Irish benefitted the Gaelic speakers of Scotland more than the Gaelic speakers of Ireland – in the short term at least.

If the Irish finally had an Old Testament in Irish before the end of the 17th century, it was thanks in no small part to William Bedell and Murtagh King, to those who saved and preserved the original manuscript, and to Robert Boyle, Andrew Sall, Narcissus Marsh, Hugh Reily and others who worked to see the Irish Old Testament in print. Through their efforts and the efforts of those who had translated the New Testament into Irish decades earlier, the Irish had a bible in their vernacular for the first time in their history. This was no small achievement in itself, and represents a triumph of perseverance considering the tenor of the times.

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