

WHICH KING JAMES BIBLE ARE WE REFERRING TO?

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Most people would assume that a translation remains the same until an official revision comes out, but this is hardly the case. Rather, most, if not all, translations usually make “minor”—whatever that means—corrections in every subsequent printing. The many printings of the King James Bible (KJB)¹ over the first three centuries show the different extents of liberty that the printers or editors took in this respect, so that today there is hardly anyone reading the original King James Version published in 1611.² The history of the King James Bible in itself tells how a seventeenth-century translation evolved through the hands of its printers and editors, with alterations characterized as genuine correction, modernization (especially orthography), and *bona fide* but unnecessary textual revision.

This history is a matter of concern not only for historians, but also for Bible translation practitioners. Every language which has its own translation obviously would have its revered *authorized* version, but the KJB’s prestige truly outranks any modern translation. Its influence goes beyond the land of English-speaking people and extends to many parts of the world through the vigorous ministries of English-speaking missionaries. If any Bible translation activity took place in these mission fields, the KJB was often found to be the model text or even the source text from which the local translation was made.³ But then, which King James Bible

1 The original publication was simply called *The Holy Bible* with the dedication (on the verso page) to the King. Generally speaking, it seems that the name “Authorized Version” is more widely used in Great Britain and “King James Version/Bible” elsewhere. David Norton, in his masterpiece *A Textual History of the King James Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 47, credits the Hebrew scholar Ambrose Ussher (brother of Archbishop James Ussher) with being the first person to use the term “authorized” in 1620; however, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (s.v.) traces this usage back only to 1824. As for the term “King James Version,” it may have first appeared in print in 1884 (Merriam-Webster, s.v.).

2 The facsimile of the original 1611 edition has been published from time to time. The more popular one is *The Holy Bible, conteyning the Old Testament, and the New; newly translated out of the originall tongues & with the former translations diligently compared and reuised. London, Imprinted by Robert Barker, printer to the King, 1611* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1965).

3 Prior to the twentieth century, the official policy of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) was that NT translations must be based on the *Textus Receptus*; it was also expected that the whole Bible would generally conform to the KJB. In 1880 James Egan Moulton and his Tongan collaborator David Finau finished a new Tongan translation in London. Because they followed closely the pre-published text of the English Revised Version (1881–1885) instead of the KJB, BFBS refused to publish their translation. See Raymond Rickards, *In Their Own Tongues: The Bible in the Pacific* (The Bible Society in the South Pacific and the Bible Society in Australia, 1996), 195–96.

are we referring to? This question is important especially for revision projects of KJB-based translations.

Recent years have seen a number of major publications on the making or influence of the KJB.⁴ The present paper, rather, purports to give an overview of the evolving history of the KJB.⁵ The KJB represents not only the culmination of nearly a century of translation work, it is also a text which continues to evolve. Changes—sometimes accidental, sometimes deliberate, some for the better, some for the worse—have been introduced in subsequent printings or editions. While differences between the different printings or editions must not be exaggerated, it is clear that the KJB published in 1611 is not entirely the same as what we are familiar with today. As the history unfolds, there are four noticeable periods in the development of the KJB.⁶ But first, let's look at the printing of the *editio princeps*.

The first edition

Notwithstanding the long-standing prestige that the King James Version has enjoyed in the history of the English Bible, it was never meant to be a new translation, but a revision of the Bishops' Bible (1568), the official Bible for the Church of England at that time. The publishers of the KJB over the centuries should at least partially be blamed for perpetuating such a misconception, for the original KJB preface has often not been included in modern reprints.⁷

Indeed the scope of the project was clearly spelled out in the first mandate of the fifteen "rules" or guidelines laid down by Bishop Richard Bancroft for

4 A few examples will suffice here: Alister McGrath, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How It Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2001); Adam Nicolson, *God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2003); Benson Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution It Inspired* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001); and David Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). See also David G. Burke, ed., *Translation That Openeth the Window: Reflections on the History and Legacy of the King James Bible* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009); many thanks to Charles Houser of the American Bible Society for making available the pre-published manuscript of this valuable contribution in the course of my writing.

5 The present article constitutes part of a paper originally presented in the Asia-Pacific Area Translation Consultation 2008; the other part of the paper will be published in a forthcoming issue of *The Bible Translator—Practical Papers* with the title "Revising the KJB Base Text (NT): Some Textual Concerns and Resources." Many thanks to the editors of these two journals for their patient guidance in making the publications possible.

6 The following synopsis basically reflects the layout of Norton's *Textual History*. David Norton (Professor at Victoria University of Wellington) is a renowned historian of the English Bible, author of the acclaimed *A History of the Bible as Literature* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and its condensed volume, *A History of the English Bible as Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). He is also the editor of the *New Cambridge Paragraph Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). In some ways, Lewis's "The King James Bible Editions: Their Character and Revision History" (pages 87–119 in Burke, ed., *Translation That Openeth the Window*) complements Norton's work, especially about the history of the printing of the KJB in America.

7 Without the preface, the publication, which gives "no sign anywhere of actual human involvement in its production," can easily be perceived as *an act of God*. See David G. Burke, "Introduction," in Burke, ed. *Translation That Openeth the Window*, xiii. From the same volume, Barclay M. Newman and Charles Houser, in "Rediscovering the Preface and Notes to the Original King James Version" (73–86), provide a very insightful study of these materials.

the translators (or rather, *revisers*): “The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the *Bishops’ Bible*, to be followed, and as little altered as the original will permit.” In addition, Rule 14 further specifies the versions that the committee needed to refer to: William Tyndale (revised NT 1534), Matthew’s (1537, incorporating Tyndale’s work), Miles Coverdale (1535), Whitchurch (i.e., the Great Bible, 1539–1540), and the Geneva Bible (1560).” In the words of the original translators:

we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one . . . , but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that hath been our endeavor, that our mark.⁸

Being a revision, the publication was not even registered in the records of the Stationer’s Hall;⁹ many publication details such as the exact date of publication, the number of copies printed, and the unit price were not officially documented.

It would have been expected that the reputed King’s Printer Robert Barker, who had inherited from his father the royal privilege (*cum privilegio*) to print the Bible in England, would exercise utmost care in the printing of the *editio princeps* of KJB. This unfortunately is not the case.

Many typographical errors (such as confusion of *u* and *n*, *e* and *t*, *c* and *t*) and inconsistent layout formats found in the first edition reflect not only the kinds of errors found in the pre-computer age, but also the printer’s (whether this refers to the compositor, proofreader, or distributor of the type) insufficient attention to the publishing process.¹⁰ One obvious example is the use of paragraph marks (¶). The original KJB is in a verse-by-verse paragraph format with actual paragraph breaks indicated by the paragraph mark following verse numbers. But this is not consistent; only one paragraph mark is found in Psalms, none after Acts 20, and only six in the whole Apocrypha.¹¹ Even the divine name is not consistent; capitals “LORD” are used throughout the Book of Genesis, but thereafter small capitals, “LORD.”

Most of these problems would not affect the sense of the text (although paragraphing may, arguably, do so); but there is another kind of problem, “hidden

8 Modern readers should not find it difficult to locate a full text of the original preface of the KJB over the internet. It is printed in full as “Appendix A: The Translators to the Reader,” in Burke, ed., *Translation That Openeth the Window*, 219–42.

9 By the British Copyright Act of 1709, proprietors of books (and music) printed after 10 April 1710 gave copies to the Company of Stationers in London. It is likely that this practice dates back to the sixteenth century or even earlier. The Company of London Stationers was incorporated in 1557.

10 Norton has counted 351 typographical errors alone, an average of one for every three and a half pages (Appendix 1). Alister McGrath (“The Story of the King James Bible,” in Burke, ed., *Translation That Openeth the Window*, 7) has noted two reasons for so many errors. First, the checking process: the proof copy was read aloud by the “reading boys” to the person checking against the original copy; errors could arise through homophones. Second, the constant pressure to reduce the production cost of the proofreaders.

11 The term “Apocrypha” is what was actually used in the original printing. It was placed between the Old and New Testaments. Fourteen books were included. In addition to the heading “Apocrypha” at the beginning of the section, each page repeated the term on its upper left- and right-hand corners. Then 2 Maccabees was followed with the note, “The end of Apocrypha.”

errors” as Norton calls them, that would make a difference in the meaning. They are called “hidden” because they were likely to be invisible to the proofreader—these are cases where the printed text appeared to make sense, but whether it was the intended rendering of the translators is the problem. For example, at Exod 35.11, the translators revised “his rings, his boards, his bars” towards the reading in the Geneva Bible, “his taches, and his boards, his barres,” but the words “and his boards” were left out. The omission was rectified in the second Cambridge edition (1638) and is kept in modern KJB editions (“his taches, and his boards, his bars”).¹² Such errors may come from various sources; the translators themselves might not have written down what they meant to write, or their draft may have been incorrectly copied in making the master copy.¹³ It is likely that this kind of error could have been avoided if the translator’s copy had been checked more diligently.

In the 1833 Oxford reprint of the 1611 edition,¹⁴ a full collation was made between the 1611 and the 1613 editions, consisting of all differences of words, excluding varieties of punctuation, spelling, and initial letters. There were more than 400 differences between the two editions.

(1) King’s Printer (1612–1617)

This short period sees no fewer than thirty printings of the KJB. Careless mistakes continue to be found and deliberate changes started to creep in. One amusing mistake from the printer found in some copies of the 1612 edition is the substitution of “Printers” for “Princes” in Ps 119.161: “Princes [Printers] have persecuted me without a cause” (the 1611 edition has “Princes”)—it certainly carries some prophetic foresight for our discussion here.

Among all these early printings or editions, the first two editions deserve special mention. In 1611, King’s Printer Robert Barker actually issued two separate KJB editions. Modern scholars have called them “The Great He Bible” and “The Great She Bible” because of their respective renderings of Ruth 3.15: the He Bible, supported by the Hebrew text, reads “He [Boaz] went into the citie [city],” whereas the She Bible reads “She [Ruth] went into the citie.” For some time, people did not know which one was the first edition, because the title pages of both editions are nearly the same, but the New Testament of the She Bible has the date 1613. Nowadays, most historians think that the He Bible was the first edition (although Scrivener thought otherwise). Norton’s conjecture is well-considered: printing of the second edition began in 1611; while some copies may have been sold in that year, the work was not finished until 1613. There are several hundred variations

¹² Norton, *Textual History*, 57–61.

¹³ It is beyond the scope of this paper to report the complex and unclear history of the making of the KJB. What is clear is the following: six companies of about forty-seven scholars were assigned to different portions of the Bible to produce draft translations. Copies of the Bishops’ Bible were given for their work; revisions were annotated in the text. We have records reflecting different stages of the revision process, such as Lambeth Palace Manuscript 98, the translation notes of John Bois, and the annotated Bishops’ Bible of 1602. However, in some cases different stages may be reflected in one manuscript.

¹⁴ The title is *The Holy Bible, an Exact Reprint page for page of the Authorized Version published in the year MDCXI* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1833).

between the two editions, most of them typographical, but some affecting the meaning.¹⁵

	1st edition (He Bible)	2nd edition (She Bible)
Exod 9.13	me	thee
11.8	all these	also these
21.26-27	let him go	let them go
Deut 17.16	he	she
Ruth 3.15	he went	she went
2 Sam 6.9	Arke of the Lord	Arke of God
Matt 26.36	Jesus	Judas
Acts 4.27	thy holy (child)	the holy (child)
1 Pet 1.22	souls	selues (= selves)

With the many more editions printed by the King's Printer, problems and errors also multiplied. One of the most remembered examples is the omission of the word "not" in the seventh commandment: "Thou shalt commit adultery" (Exod 20.14) in the 1630 octavo edition. This is what history remembers as the "Wicked Bible."¹⁶

(2) Editions from the University Presses (1629–1760)

This period marks the transition in the printing rights from the King's Printer to the hands of the two university presses. It is a period in which the commercial benefits of being scholarly were occasionally realized. Both Oxford and Cambridge published two major editions (Cambridge, 1629 and 1638; Oxford, 1675 and 1679).

The great care of the editors of the Cambridge editions contrasts sharply with that of the King's Printer. Scrivener himself commented very favorably on the complementary roles of the two Cambridge editions, which corrected what was "overlooked by the editors of 1611; by amending manifest errors; by rendering the italic notation at once more self-consistent and more agreeable to the design of the original Translators."¹⁷ The 1611 edition was printed in the type style known as "black letter." Words supplied for translation's sake (such as making implicit information explicit) were often set in small roman type. This typographical feature

¹⁵ Norton, *Textual History*, 66. "Overall, the second edition is of slight value for refining the text given in the first edition. It contains occasional revisions that appear to be scholarly and rare hints of recourse to the translators' own work" (73). Norton has provided a selective list of those variations from the two editions that may be of textual significance in Appendix 2 of his book. W. Aldis Wright, in his 1909 introduction to *The Authorized Version of the English Bible of 1611*, provides a comparative table of 658 variations between the two editions.

¹⁶ A similar mistake may be found in the so-called Unrighteous Bible (1653) in 1 Cor 6.9, "the unrighteous shall inherit the kingdom of God," instead of "shall not inherit."

¹⁷ F. H. A. Scrivener, *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611): Its Subsequent Reprints and Modern Representatives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1884), 21–22.

was not employed very consistently; in many places the supplied words are not indicated as one might expect. This inconsistency was probably the fault of the printer's compositors, who very often modified even the spelling of words in order to lengthen or shorten a line of type. In later editions, as the ordinary text was set in roman type, the supplied words were put in italics.¹⁸ The editors also made a special effort to modernize the spelling and to make it more consistent; some 591 new readings and spellings were supplied that became standard up to the present day, such as "Sem" to "Shem," "Caldees" to "Chaldees," and a more precise distinction between "naught" and "nought." What concerns us most are the textual changes. We see more textual changes in the first edition (by Thomas and John Buck) than there are in the second edition, about 199 readings according to Norton's counting. With the exception of a handful of passages where the change actually has made the text less literal, most of these changes purport to "improve" the text by making it more literal than the original translation. These changes reflect the editors' impulse to fix the KJB to be more literal than the originals. "In doing this they treat the translators' work as improvable, and take license to know better than them how their work should read."¹⁹

Compared with the Cambridge editions, the two Oxford editions did not make any substantial change to the text or any major improvement to the spelling of names. The Apocrypha was included in the first edition but for some reason in small print.²⁰ The second edition is of some significance to the subsequent printing of the KJB. For the first time, the dates of biblical events were given in the margin (e.g., 4000 B.C. for the Creation).²¹ The basis for the dates was Archbishop James Ussher's calculations in *Annales Veteris et Novi Testamenti* (1650–1654).

During the last fifty years of this period, John Basket, who leased the Oxford right to print Bibles, dominated the world of English Bible printing. The quality of Basket's printing is superb, but the text was plagued with serious proofreading errors. Most remembered is the 1717 printing: the heading to Luke 20 read "the parable of the vinegar" for "the parable of the vineyard." This is how the nickname "Vinegar Bible" (1717) arose.

(3) Setting the standard (1762–1769)

By the mid-eighteenth century the wide variation in the various modernized reprints of the KJB, combined with all the notorious misprints, had reached the proportion of a scandal. Eventually, the Universities of Oxford (Benjamin Blayney in 1769) and Cambridge (F. S. Parris in 1762) both sought to produce an updated standard text.

18 The Chinese Union Version (1919) likewise adopted a similar principle but used dotted lines instead of italics.

19 Norton, *Textual History*, 86.

20 Lewis, "The King James Bible Editions," 89.

21 The dates underwent some revision. The form that is familiar to most of us (4004 B.C. for the Creation) actually came from a later edition by Charles Bill and the executrix of Thomas Newcomb (London, 1701). This edition was prepared by Bishop William Lloyd at the request of Convocation in 1699 for an improved edition (Norton, *Textual History*, 100).

Whether on matters of orthography, italicization, marginal notes and cross-references, or textual change, Parris's corrections exhibit his scholarly alertness.²² However, his labor was completely overshadowed by the great fame associated with Benjamin Blayney. A Hebrew scholar in his own right and vice-principal of Hertford College, Blayney volunteered to take up the editorship to prepare a collation from four editions: the first edition, the Cambridge editions of 1743 and 1760, and Lloyd's 1701 folio.

In addition to the revision of extra-textual matters (chapter summaries, running titles, and cross-references), the changes that Blayney brought to the KJB of his day may be classified into five kinds: 1. greater and more regular use of italics; 2. minor changes in the text; 3. the adoption of modern spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; 4. changes in the marginal notes and references (including textual variants); and 5. correction of printers' errors.²³ Most of the changes that Blayney introduced are fully justified, but his judgment on the italics and minor changes is a disappointment. Blayney assumed wrongly that the translators of the 1611 New Testament had worked from the 1550 Robert Stephanus (or Estienne) edition of the *Textus Receptus* tradition, whereas it was from the later editions of Beza (most likely that of 1598). Accordingly, the current standard text mistakenly "corrects" about a dozen readings where Beza and Stephanus differ.²⁴ Altogether, Blayney's 1769 text differed from the 1611 text in some 24,000 places.²⁵

In spite of some rather obvious deficiencies,²⁶ Blayney's edition of 1769 has become the standard KJB text used both at home and abroad. It came to be known as "The Oxford Standard" edition, because it was widely accepted as a standard text by commentators and other publishers. For a period, Cambridge continued to issue Bibles using the Parris text, but the market had already acknowledged that the Oxford edition had fulfilled the task of standardization. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, almost all printings of the KJB have derived from the 1769 Oxford text—generally without Blayney's variant notes and cross references, and commonly excluding the Apocrypha.²⁷

The widespread use of Blayney's edition, being a standardized text, would naturally lead to a growing resistance towards both new translation and any change to the received form of the text of the KJB. Inevitably, this led to its ascendance to the status of a literary standard in English Literature ("AVolatory," as Norton calls it). Literary elegance was originally not one of the stated principles for the original KJB translators, nor is there evidence that the translators of the King James Bible had any great interest in matters of literature or linguistic development.

22 Some textual corrections that Parris made are still seen in our modern edition: "Thou art Christ" to "Thou art the Christ" (Matt 16.16); "the words of Jesus" to "the word of Jesus" (Matt 26.75); and "The servant is not greater than the Lord" to "The servant is not greater than his lord" (John 15.20).

23 For a full list of changes, see <http://www.bible-researcher.com/canon10.html>.

24 Scrivener, *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible*, 242.

25 Norton, *Textual History*, 120.

26 Scrivener (*The Authorized Edition of the English Bible*, 30–31) notes, for example, "Erza" as the header to Ezra 10 and the omission of chapter summaries for Proverbs 26–29.

27 The electronic text of Blayney has recently been made available in Larry Pierce's *Online Bible*.

Ironically, what was not intended is now reckoned to be the lasting contribution of the translators to the world, but the passion of translating God's word for the common people has not been remembered.

(4) Current text

Since the work of the original translators, F. H. A. Scrivener's *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible of the Authorized English Version* (1873)²⁸ offered by far the most substantial changes to the KJB text. "Scrivener chose a Cambridge edition of the Bible of 1858, which did not contain the Apocrypha, and the Apocrypha from a Cambridge edition of 1863 as the basis for his edition, making corrections that had escaped Blayney and his successors."²⁹ This is the first printing in the history of the KJB in which the text was arranged in paragraph format with the chapter and verse numbers moved to the margin, leaving an unbroken text for readers.

Scrivener's main purpose was to prepare a critical edition of the Authorized Version that would represent it,

as far as maybe, in the precise shape that it would have assumed, if its venerable Translators had shewn themselves more exempt than they were from the failings incident to human infirmity; or if the same severe accuracy, which is now demanded in carrying so important a volume through the press, had been deemed requisite or was at all usual in their age.³⁰

Following the same path as his predecessors (such as Thomas and John Buck in 1629), Scrivener considered that his duty was to *perfect* the KJB text by taking liberty to correct where he judged the translators to have erred, and where the original texts *should* have been rendered. A couple examples may suffice here. In Matt 23.24, he changed the original reading "strain **at** a gnat" to "strain **out** a gnat" because he believed that the original was a mistranslation and that the Greek word *diulizō* meant "to filter." Likewise, in Heb 10.23 he changed the word "faith" in "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith" to "hope" because this is what the Greek text reads (*elpis*)—and he was certainly correct. He also italicized the entire passage of the famous *Johanneum comma* (1 John 5.7-8) because of its disputed authenticity, although the original translators left no indication that they doubted its genuineness.³¹ Scrivener's general attitude perhaps is best described in his own words: "Every rendering must be judged upon its own merits, independently of the

28 The full title is *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible of the Authorized English Version, with the text revised by a collation of its early and other principal editions, the use of the italic type made uniform, the marginal references remodeled, and a critical introduction prefixed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1873). Scrivener thoroughly documented his revisions, including multiple appendices which include translation notes and instances of departure from the original KJB text.

29 Lewis, "The King James Bible Editions," 96. Scrivener counted 368 corrections that had been inserted by various hands since 1611, attributing 269 of them to Parris and sixty-six to Blayney.

30 Scrivener, *Cambridge Paragraph Bible*, 1–2.

31 This italicization has been removed from Zondervan's reprints of the *Cambridge Paragraph Bible*.

source from which it was drawn.”³² Scrivener’s perceived arrogance is likely the reason that his edition was not as popular as he thought it would be.³³

In addition to Scrivener’s edition, the edition published by the American Bible Society should also be mentioned here. After Independence, printers in America were released from the obligation to import the Bible from Britain, and were free to print their own editions. The first printing may be traced back as early as the 1810s.³⁴ In most cases, they received their master copy from Britain, so that errors found in earlier British printings characterized the initial efforts to print the Bible in America.

The American Bible Society (ABS) produced its first printing in 1821 from a similar edition of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), presumably Blayney’s edition. By the 1830s, this text served as the model for other American publishers. In response to the concern expressed in 1841 by the Board of Managers of ABS about the accuracy of the KJB text, a committee was set up to compare different printings (including ABS’s edition of 1833, and copies from London, Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh) with a goal to create a standard text. The New Testament was first issued in 1850, and the whole Bible in 1852. The committee spent three and a half years on the work and sorted out 24,000 variations in the copies compared, but stressed that “There is not one, which mars the integrity of the text, or affects any doctrine and precept of the Bible.”³⁵ However, this edition met with sharp criticism by A. C. Coxe, who faulted ABS for publishing a Bible “with notes and comments,” which he considered transgressing ABS’s original constitution. More important, he argued that it was not the task of the Bible Society to revise the KJB. It is quite clear that Coxe must have been inspired by Thomas Curtis’s *The Existing Monopoly, an Inadequate Protection, of the Authorised Version of Scripture* (1833). Curtis’s basic position was that, besides the many accidental errors, the modern texts contained a very substantial number of intentional changes from the authorized text, and that only those changes that corrected printing errors could be reckoned legitimate. Just as Curtis had made a vehement critique of the two university presses, so Coxe’s remark also aroused heated discussion within ABS. As a result, the entire original committee resigned and a new committee was set up to produce another standard text (New Testament

32 Scrivener, *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible*, 58. The *Cambridge Paragraph Bible* restored some readings of the 1611 text that had been replaced by other versions in various intervening editions, which he listed in his Appendix C.

33 This is Norton’s viewpoint. In America it appears that Scrivener’s text is still quite widely used. It was best known as the text in Luther Weigle, ed., *The New Testament Octapla: Eight English Versions of the New Testament in the Tyndale-King James Tradition* (New York: Nelson, 1946 [repr. 1962]). Weigle was chairman of the translation committee that produced the Revised Standard Version. More recently, the publisher Zondervan has decided to conform all of its newer editions of the KJB to Scrivener’s text, including the *Zondervan KJV Study Bible*. The popular Logos Bible Software now also carries the electronic version of Scrivener’s text; see <http://www.logos.com/logos3/new/cambridgeparagraphbible>.

34 Lewis, “The King James Bible Editions,” 99.

35 A. S. Herbert, *Historical Catalogue of Printed Editions of the English Bible 1525–1961* (London: BFBS; New York: ABS, 1968), 397–99. In evaluating these variations, the committee also spelled out their working principles.

in 1860, full Bible in 1861). All of the reconsidered changes approved by the new committee were printed in two pamphlets in 1858 and 1859.

From the 1860s to the present time, ABS has published two other revisions. According to the information provided by ABS, changes in these two editions (1932 and 1962) were limited to the format, such as conforming the orthography to American usage, adding pronunciation marks (for proper names), and keeping or omitting chapter summaries (eliminated in the 1932 edition). The revision of 1962 remains the standard text till the present day; this is also the text used in the Paratext software developed by the United Bible Societies. A few new features involved in this edition deserve our attention:³⁶

- **Italicization** was completely revised “based on ABS scholars’ understanding of the translator’s original intent.”
- **Paragraphing:** Most publishers still kept the original (and inconsistent) paragraph marks of the KJB, but in this revision, modern paragraph divisions were applied in accordance with modern editions of the original biblical texts (presumably, BHS and NA).
- **Section headings:** The original KJB had only chapter summaries; here section headings are employed to identify discourse units and, where appropriate, parallel passage cross-references are added.
- **Inclusion of the Apocrypha:** Since early days, ABS, following the practice of BFBS, always left out the Apocrypha, but here it is included as in the 1611 edition.³⁷

Concluding remarks

No version of the English Bible has been more regularly reprinted than the KJB, nor has any suffered more abuse at the hands of publishers and printers. The history of the KJB printings clearly illustrates this. After scrutinizing the history of the development of the KJB text, Norton concludes:

The modern KJB is a mutated version of a seventeenth-century text with partially modernised spelling, punctuation and presentation. Some of the mutations are necessary corrections of errors of negligence in the original, some of them are deliberate changes made in good faith to improve the text according to the judgment of many successive individuals, individuals who often worked anonymously and even more often left no account of their work. Many of these changes do not stand up to critical examination, and

³⁶ Thanks to Charles Houser for making available for my writing an internal document “The ABS KJV Bible with Apocrypha” (last revised 30 July 2008).

³⁷ No part of the 1611 edition has suffered as much as the corpus of the Apocrypha (fourteen books). Although it was included in the 1611 edition and in most early editions between the Old and New Testaments, basically after 1647 most printings left out the Apocrypha. Even though Blayney kept the Apocrypha, he removed all marginal references to it (113 in total). The BFBS also resolved not to include Bibles containing the Apocrypha in 1826, and this policy was followed by ABS in early days too.

the spelling, punctuation and presentation are all in acute need of further modernisation.³⁸

The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible (NCPB; Cambridge, 2005) edited by David Norton is meant to rectify the situation. The need for such thorough revision, as Norton himself argues, is twofold: first, “to undo mistaken changes”—that is, to restore the text to that of the original translators in the first edition, not that of subsequent revisers; second, “to revive the work of modernisation” in the area of spelling and punctuation—that is, “to continue to allow it [the text] to speak as clearly as possible in its own authentic voice to the contemporary reader.”³⁹ Using evidence as diverse as the manuscript work of the original translators, and the results of extensive computer collation of electronic texts, Norton has carefully stripped away accretions and errors, and produced a scholarly edition of the King James Bible for the new century that will restore the authority of the 1611 translation. Appendix 8 (155 pages long!) of his *Textual History* lists all the variants (approximately 1,085) between the first edition and the current text, with information as to the 1611 reading, when the variant was introduced, what the original text was, which reading has been followed, and why.

So which King James Bible are we looking for?

If we are looking for a KJB that reflects as much as possible the original translators’ work in 1611, then NCPB would be the right choice. But Norton’s restoration work is not always appreciated. Some KJB advocates would argue, “since 1611 editors of the AV have made what they believed were corrections and improvements. These changes have been made under the providence of Almighty God. The church and modern believers do not want or need to go back to the 1611 translation.”⁴⁰ But for the checking of revision projects, it seems that Blayney’s edition (1769) or Scrivener’s edition (1873) would be more relevant.

38 Norton, *Textual History*, 126–27.

39 Norton, *Textual History*, 131; square brackets mine.

40 See Rev. B. G. Felce, “The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible,” *Quarterly Record* 575 (April to June) 2006, <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/articles/felcencpb.pdf>. Felce is the vice-chairman of the General Committee in the Trinitarian Bible Society.