

Sunday, March 30, 2025—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 260 Assessing the Printed History of the King James Text (Scrivener on The Italics)

Introduction

- In [Lesson 259](#) we continued looking at what F.H.A. Scrivener had to say about the use of italics in the AV. The Lesson delved into Scrivener's systematic analysis of the use of italics in the King James Bible. We examined three of Scrivener's six classes of italics usage, explaining how these italicized words were added to clarify meaning, harmonize parallel passages, and make the compact Hebrew language more intelligible in English. The Lesson emphasized the translators' expertise, and the complexities involved in accurately conveying the original text's meaning.
- All told we considered the following points in Lesson 259:
 - Scrivener identified six classes of italics usage in the King James Bible.
 - Class 1: Words added to harmonize parallel passages.
 - Class 2: Words added to make compact Hebrew expressions understandable in English.
 - Class 3: Words added to clarify grammatical figures like *zeugma* (the use of a word to modify or govern two or more words usually in such a manner that it applies to each word in a different sense (as “opened” in “opened the door and her heart to the stray kitten”) or makes sense with only one word (as “rolling” in “rolling lightning and thunder”). ([Merriam-Webster.com](https://www.merriam-webster.com))
 - We highlighted the importance of understanding the translators' decisions while sometimes disagreeing with Scrivener's interpretations.
- In this Lesson we want to continue our look at Scrivener's six classes.

Scrivener On The AV Italics

- In Appendix 2 of his recently published book *The Text of the King James Bible* (2025), Dr. Laurence M. Vance deals with the subject matter of italics in the text of the AV. In the context, Vance discusses the use of italics in I John 2:23 when he states that F.H.A. Scrivener is the only writer to offer a systematic analysis of the italics in the AV.
 - “The only detailed analysis of the italic type in the King James Bible is that of Scrivener in *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611)*. He identified six reasons why the translators of the Authorized Version, and its subsequent editors, used italic type.” (Vance, 457)

Class 4

- Scrivener's fourth class is stated as follows:
 - "Akin to the preceding is the practice of inserting in the Authorized Version a word or two, in order to indicate that abrupt transition from the *oblique* [speech that is quoted indirectly or uses a different person than the original speaker] to the *direct* form of speech, which is so familiar to most ancient languages, but so foreign to our own:" (Scrivener, 67)
- Beginning on page 67, Scrivener provides the following examples for Class 4.
 - "Gen. iv. 25. "And she bare a son, and called his name Seth: for God, *said she*, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel."

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25 ¶ And Adam knew his wife again ;
and she bare a son, and ' called his name
† || Seth : For God, said she, hath ap-
pointed me another seed instead of Abel,
whom Cain slew.

Ex. xviii. 4. "And the name of the other was Eliezer ; for the God of my Father, *said he*,
was mine help."

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4 And the name of the other *was* || Elie-
zer ; for the God of my father, said he,
was mine help, and delivered me from
the sword of Pharaoh :

2 Sam. ix. 11. "As for Mephibosheth, *said the king*, he shall eat at my table."

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Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table; as one of the king's sons.

Jer. xxi. 11. "And touching the house of the king of Judah, *say*, Hear ye the word of the Lord."

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And touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

Judith v. 23. "For, *say they*, we will not be afraid of the face of the children of Israel."

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23 For, say they, we will not be afraid of the face of the children of Israel: for, lo, it is a people that have no strength nor power † for a strong battle.

Acts i. 4. "Which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me."

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Kingdom of God:
4 And, ¶ being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, ' which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

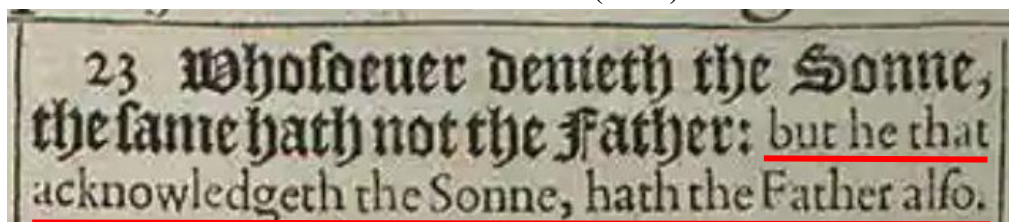
“The inconvenience of a sudden change of person, unbroken by any such words supplied, may appear from Gen. xxxii. 30, “And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” Just as abrupt is the construction in Gen. xli. 52 (compare ver. 51); Tobit viii. 21. In 2 Mace. vi. 24 “said he” continued in Roman type till 1638.” (Scrivener, 67-68)

- Scrivener provides Genesis 32:30 as an example of the awkwardness in English when italics is not inserted into the verse. Likewise, in Genesis 41:52 where Scrivener instructs his readers to compare it with the previous verse (51) which does italicize, “*said he.*” In the case of II Maccabees 6:24, the 1611 did not have “said he” in roman font i.e., unitalicized. It remained unitalicized until the 1638 Cambridge Folio edition.

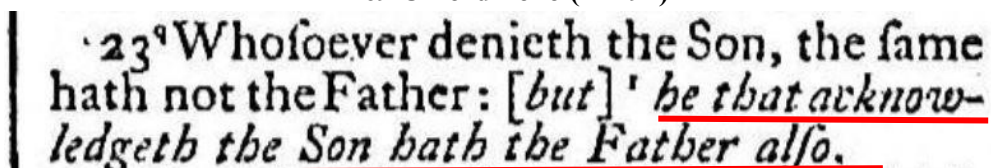
Class 5

- The fifth class is stated as follows by Scrivener:
 - “Another use of italics is to indicate that a word or clause is of doubtful authority as a matter of textual criticism.” (Scrivener, 68)
- Regarding this fifth class, Scrivener states that there is only one clear example in the canonical text of scripture in I John 2:23.
 - “Of this in the Authorized Version we can produce only one unequivocal instance in the Canonical books, i John ii. 23 (see Appendix E, p. 254);” (Scrivener, 68)

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1769 Oxford Folio (H1194)



- We will have a lot more to say about I John 2:23 in a future Lesson when we discuss King James Only arguments regarding the use of italics. For now, understand that Scrivener’s 5th class of italics indicates the doubtful textual authenticity of the latter half of the verse. Also note that this is the only “unequivocal” instance of Class 5 noted by Scrivener in the canonical scriptures.

- Scrivener does go on to discuss some additional *possible* examples of Class 5.
 - "...for it is not quite certain that the change of type in Judg. xvi. 2 ; xx. 9, employed to point out words borrowed from the Septuagint, intimates any suspicion of a *lacuna* in the text. Some doubt also hangs over i Cor. xiv. 10 "none *of them*" (see Appendix E, pp. 245, 251, where the italics were removed in 1638). In subsequent editions occur the following instances, most of them being due to the Cambridge edition of 1638, those that are not so having another date affixed to them:

Deut. xxvii. 26 ("all"). Josh. xxii. 34 ("Ed"). i Sam. ii. 16 ("Nay" 1629 Camb.). 2 Kin. xix. 31 ("of hosts"); xx. 13 (the second "all" appears in most Hebrew Bibles, and we should restore the Roman character). 2 Chr. v. i ("all"); xvii. 4 ("LORD"). Job x. 20 ("cease then, *and*," 1611 inconsistently : we should read with 1638, "cease *then, and*," or leave all in Roman as 1629 Camb., since both particles are found in *Keri*). Ps. xli. 2 ("And he shall be," *Chetiv*, not *Keri*); lxix. 32 ("and be glad"). Prov. xx. 4 (*therefore*: but *ἡ* of *Keri* is in Symmachus and the Vulgate, so that we should restore the type of 1611). Jer. xiii. 16 ("and make," yet *ἡ* of *Keri* is in the Septuagint and Vulgate). Lam. v. 7 ("and are not," "And have." These two conjunctions are both wanting in *Chetiv*, but present in *Keri*, yet 1769 italicizes the first, not the second). Mark viii. 14 ("the disciples," first italicized in 1638). Mark ix. 42 (see Appendix E). John viii. 6 (1769: see Appendix E). In Acts xxvi. 3 "*because I know*," and the first "*and*" in ver. 18, the italics are due to 1769. i John iii. 16 (see Appendix E, p. 255).

Thus in the Apocrypha 1629 italicizes *on me* in Tobit xi. 15, [Greek character] being wanting in the Complutensian, but we had better return to the Roman type. For similar cases examine Ecclus. iii. 22 (1629 and 1769); I Mace. iii. 18 (1638); x. 78 (1638); xi. 15 (1638, *partim recte*); xiv. 4 (1638)." (Scrivener, 68-69)

- Before considering Scrivener's final Class, I would like to consider some additional comments on I John 2:23 from the pen of Laurence M. Vance in *The Text Of The King James Bible*.
 - "Although the phrase is in the Vulgate, it is not in Erasmus's Latin translation. It is also not found in the Greek of the Complutensian Polyglot, Stephanus, or Elzevir. And neither does it appear in the Majority Text. However, Beza includes the phrase in his last three editions:
 - πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱὸν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει
 - This is also the reading of the Critical Text. The reason why the word "but" is in italics in the King James Bible is because it is not found in the Greek text, but deemed essential to the English sense (Scrivener's sixth category)." (Vance, 458)

- Vance also touches upon some additional possible examples noted by Scrivener:
 - “Other verses in the New Testament related to 1 John 2:23 and Scrivener’s fifth category included John 8:6; Acts 26:3, 18; 1 John 3:16, but in each case the italics were not added until 1769.

John 8:6

This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not*.

Beza’s last three editions alone add μή προσποιέομαι, “as though he heard them not.”

Acts 26:3

Especially *because I know* thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

Beza’s last three editions alone add εἶδως, “I know.”

Acts 26:18

To open their eyes, *and* to turn them *from* darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Beza’s editions alone replace τοῦ, “the” with καί, “and.”

1 John 3:16

Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

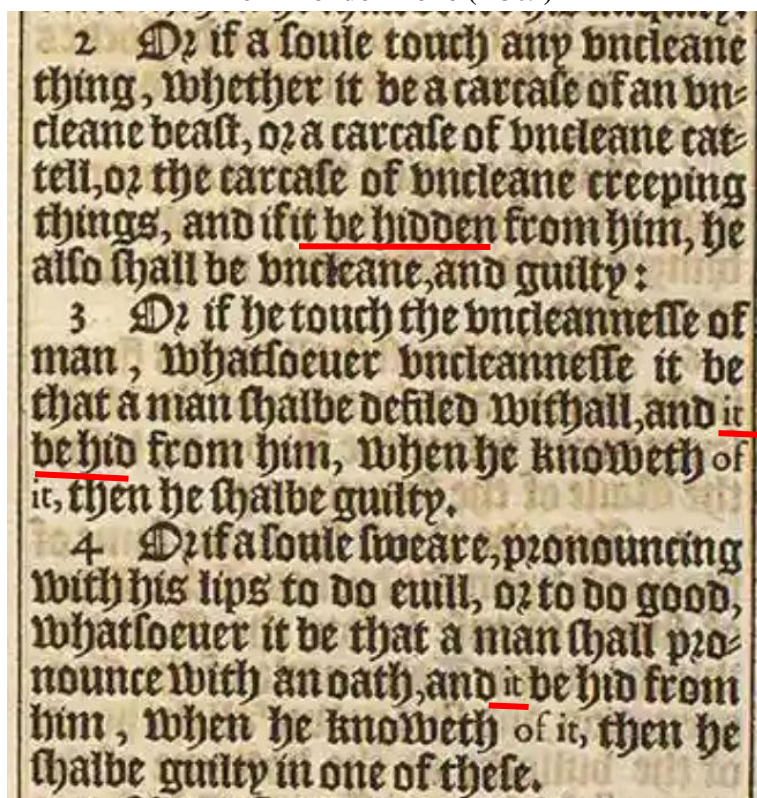
Beza’s last three editions alone add τοῦ θεός, “of God.” (Vance, 458-459)

Class 6

- Scrivener identifies the sixth class of italics as follows:
 - “The last class to which we may refer the italicized words in our version, is that wherein the words supplied are essential to the English sense, although they may very well be dispensed with in the Hebrew or Greek; nay more, although very often they could not be received into the original without burdening the sentence, or marring all propriety of style.” (Scrivener, 69)
- The sixth class is elaborated on as follows:

- “This last head comprises a far greater number of cases than all the rest put together, and it may reasonably be doubted whether much advantage accrues from a change of type where the sense is not affected to an appreciable extent. Whether we say “the folk that are with me” (Gen. xxxiii. 15) with the Bible of 1611, or “the folk that *are* with me” with the Cambridge edition of 1629, could make no difference whatever, except to one who was comparing English with Hebrew idioms, and such a person would hardly need to carry on his studies in this fashion. One thing, however, is quite clear, that if it be well thus to mark the idiomatic or grammatical divergences between languages, **all possible care should be devoted to secure uniformity of practice; cases precisely similar should be treated in a similar manner. Now this is just the point at which our Authorized Version utterly fails us; we can never be sure of its consistency for two verses together.**” (Scrivener, 69-70)
- Scrivener elaborates on the inconsistent use of italics across the editions of the AV throughout the rest of the paragraph.
 - “To take one or two instances out of a thousand: why do we find “*it* be hid” in Levit. v. 3, 4, and “it be hidden” in ver. 2, the Hebrew being the same in all?”

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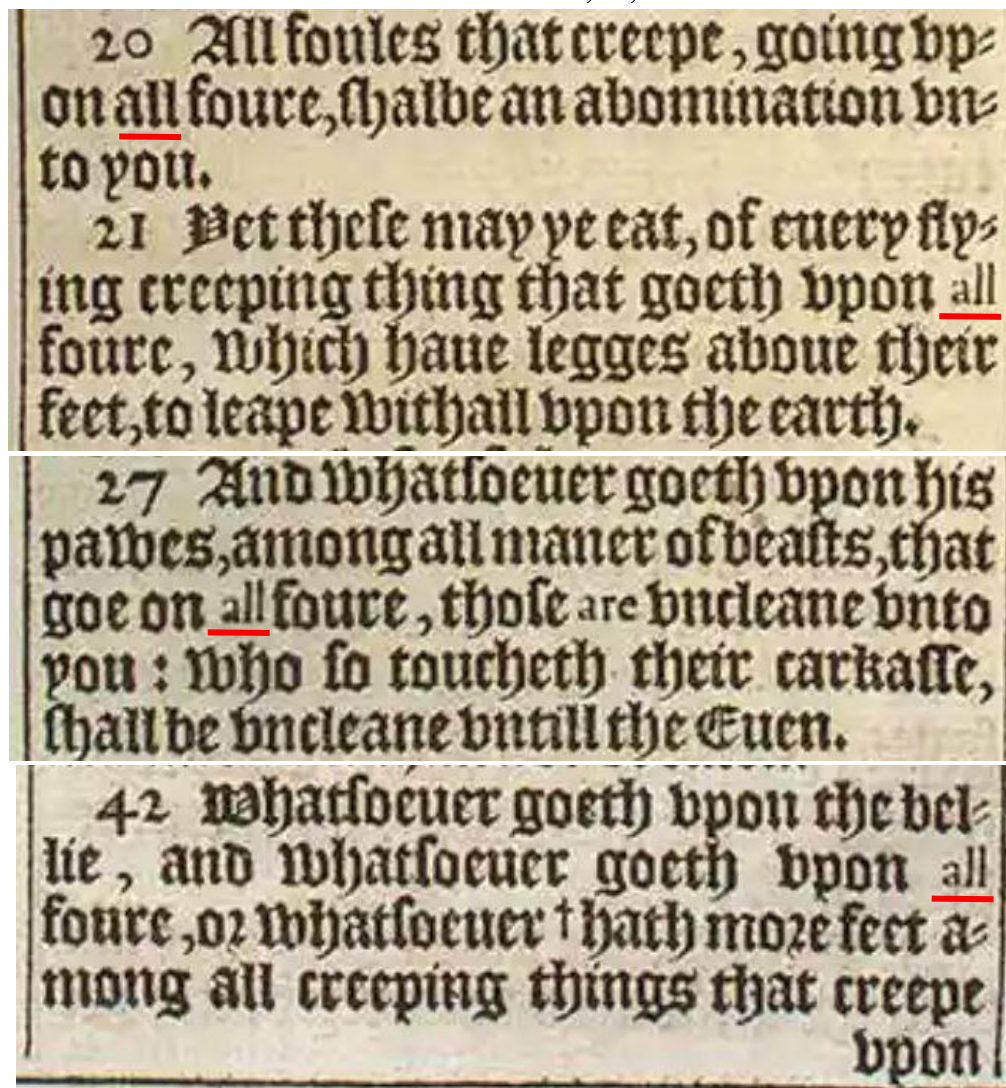


[Scrivener is asking why “it” in Roman Font in Lev. 5:3-4 but not in verse 2 when the Hebrew (*ālam*) is the same throughout? Modern editions no longer italicized “it” in verses 3 & 4.]

Or why should the same Hebrew be represented by “upon all four” in Levit. xi. 20, but by “upon (or “on”) *all* four” in ver. 21, 27, 42?

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Leviticus 11:20-21, 27, 42



Even in graver matters there is little attempt at uniformity. Thus *οὗτος* Heb. iii. 3 is “this man” in 1611, but “this man” in Heb. viii. 3, a variation retained to this day; in I Pet. iv. 11 “*let him speak*” is italicized in 1611, but the clause immediately following “*let him do it*” not before 1629. The foregoing gross oversights, with countless others, are set right by the revisers of 1629 and 1638, yet these later editors have been found liable to introduce into the printed text nearly as many inconsistencies as they removed. Thus, for

example, whereas “which were left” Lev. x. 16 adequately renders the Hebrew article with the participle of the Niphal conjugation, and so in 1611 was printed in ordinary characters, the edition of 1638 wrongly italicizes “*which were*” here, but leaves untouched “that were left” in ver. 12, a discrepancy which still cleaves to our modern Bibles. The same must be said of “ye *are* to pass” (“*are*” first italicized in 1629) Deut. ii. 4 compared with “thou art to pass” ver. i8: “*even* unto Azzah” ver. 23 (“*even*” correctly italicized in 1638, indeed the word is expressed in ver. 36), but “even unto this day” left untouched in ver. 22: “the slain *man*” (“*man*” first in 1629) Deut. xxi. 6, but “the slain man” ver. 3: “*their* backs” (“*their*” first in 1629) Josh. vii. 12, but “their backs” ver. 8. The reader will find as many instances of this nature as he cares to search for in any portion of our modern Bibles he may please to examine, and from the whole matter it is impossible to draw in the main any other conclusion than this: that the changes introduced from time to time have been too unsystematic, too much the work of the moment, executed by too many hands, and on too unsettled principles, to hold out against hostile, or even against friendly criticism.” (Scrivener, 70-71)

- In summation, Scrivener identified the following six classes for the use of italics in the AV.
 - Class 1—“When words quite or nearly necessary to complete the sense of the sacred writers have been introduced into the text from parallel places of Scripture.” (Scrivener, 64)
 - Class 2—“When the extreme compactness of the Hebrew language produces a form of expression intelligible enough to those who are well versed in it, yet hardly capable of being transformed into a modern tongue.” (Scrivener, 65)
 - Class 3—“Just as little objection will probably be urged against the custom of our Translators in italicizing words supplied to clear up the use of the grammatical figure known as the *zeugma*, whereby, in the Hebrew no less than in the Greek and Latin languages, an expression which strictly belongs to but one member of a sentence, with some violation of strict propriety, is made to do duty in another.” (Scrivener, 66)
 - Class 4—“Akin to the preceding is the practice of inserting in the Authorized Version a word or two, in order to indicate that abrupt transition from the *oblique* [speech that is quoted indirectly or uses a different person than the original speaker] to the *direct* form of speech, which is so familiar to most ancient languages, but so foreign to our own:” (Scrivener, 67)
 - Class 5—“Another use of italics is to indicate that a word or clause is of doubtful authority as a matter of textual criticism.” (Scrivener, 68)
 - Class 6—“The last class to which we may refer the italicized words in our version, is that wherein the words supplied are essential to the English sense, although they may very well be dispensed with in the Hebrew or Greek; nay more, although very often they could

not be received into the original without burdening the sentence, or marring all propriety of style.” (Scrivener, 69)

- Scrivener also addresses what Parris (1762) and Blayney (1769) did to the text in terms of changing the italics.
 - “Dr Blayney in his Report to the Oxford Delegates (Appendix D) appeals to the edition of Dr Paris (1762) as having “made large corrections in this particular,” adding that “there still remained many necessary alterations, which escaped the Doctor's notice” and had to be set right by himself and his friends. And it cannot be doubted that the two Bibles of 1762 and 1769 between them largely increased the number of the words printed in italics, although the effect was rather to add to than to diminish the manifest inconsistencies of earlier books. Thus Blayney (and after him the moderns) in Luke xvii. 29 (ἅπαντας) italicizes “*them*” before “all,” yet leaves untouched “them all” ver. 27: in Luke xix. 22 he reads “*thou* wicked servant,” retaining “thou good servant” in ver. 17. Nor can the correctness of Dr Paris be praised overmuch. In putting into Roman type the “*good*” of 1611, Eccles. vii. I, he has been blindly followed by the rest, though a glance at the Hebrew would have set them right: yet some of his errors in italics were removed in 1769, e.g. “wayside” Matt. xiii. 4; Mark X. 46; Luke viii. 5. Hence it becomes manifest that, in preparing a critical edition of our vernacular Translation, which shall aim at meeting the wants and satisfying the scholarship of the present age, nothing less than a close and repeated comparison of the sacred originals, line by line, with the English Bible, will enable us to amend the mistakes which lack of time and consideration has led certain of the most eminent of preceding editors to pass by unnoticed, or even to exaggerate while attempting to remedy them.” (Scrivener, 71-72)
- On pages 74 through 81 of *The Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611)* Scrivener offers 14 observations regarding italics “grounded on the practice of our Translators.” (Scrivener 71) His list is preceded by the following statement:
 - “After this general survey of the whole subject, it is proper to state certain rules, applicable to particular cases, which a careful study of the Bible of 1611 will shew that our Translators laid down for themselves, but which haste or inadvertence has caused them to carry out very imperfectly in practice. It will be seen that many of their omissions were supplied in one or other of those later editions which display care in the matter, while almost as many have remained to be set right by their successors. “Whether the Translators, if they had foreseen and fully considered how far the system of italics which they adopted, when carried out, would lead, would have adopted it, ...may be a question. And whether the abundance of the italics... does not in a measure defeat its own purpose by withdrawing attention from them, is perhaps a question also. But as it was, the course adopted by the editors of 1611 having been to mark by italics not important insertions only, but to aim at marking in this manner everything, even trifling pronouns and auxiliary verbs, not in the originals, carrying out however their intention very imperfectly : the choice for after editors lies between adopting a different system, and

carrying out theirs to the full'.” Between these alternatives few perhaps will censure those who have chosen the latter withOut much hesitation.” (Scrivener, 71)

- Due to their highly technical nature, I have elected not to include Scrivener’s 14 observations in these notes. Interested parties are encouraged to check them out for themselves online. See pages 74 through 81 of [*The Authorized Editon of the English Bible \(1611\)*](#).

Works Cited

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