

Sunday, December 14, 2025—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*  
 Lesson 270 Assessing the Printed History of the King James Text (1873 Cambridge Paragraph Bible)

### **Introduction**

- [Lesson 269](#) concluded our discussion of the printed history of the King James Bible in America, focusing on how its text evolved in the U.S. during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In doing so, we considered three scholarly viewpoints on the matter.
  - David Norton’s Analysis—Norton explains that by the 1830s, the American Bible Society (ABS) editions became the standard for U.S. publishers. In 1847, ABS formed a Committee on Versions to create a uniform text, culminating in the controversial 1856 quarto edition. The committee collated six texts (including the 1611 and major British editions) and found ~24,000 variations, mostly in punctuation and spelling. Despite this, they claimed no doctrinal changes existed. Their work reinforced Blayney’s Oxford standard while modernizing spelling (e.g., “stablish” → “establish,” “alway” → “always”).
  - Gordon Campbell’s Perspective—Campbell critiques the ABS methodology, noting that the principle of following the majority of copies marginalized the 1611 text. The resulting American text largely mirrored Blayney’s but introduced modern spelling and minor textual adjustments for consistency. Examples include changes in indefinite articles and updates like “astonied” → “astonished.”
  - Laurence Vance’s Observations—Vance highlights that no single “standard” KJV text exists in the U.S. because it is public domain, allowing publishers to make minor clarifications. He recommends editions adhering to Cambridge standards for reliability.
- Over our three Lessons ([267](#), [268](#), [269](#)) on the American text we have made the following general observations. Orthographic changes in American KJB editions were normal linguistic updates, not corruptions. While wording differences exist between the 1611 and later editions, they are stylistic rather than doctrinal. Insisting on *verbatim identity* misrepresents historical reality and undermines the integrity of the King James position. Believers should adopt fact-based arguments rather than rhetoric, recognizing that American Christians historically viewed any KJB edition as God’s Word without concern for press or continent.
- In this lesson, we will explore *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible*, a landmark edition of the King James Version prepared by F. H. A. Scrivener in 1873. This work sought to present a critical text of the Authorized Version by collating early editions, standardizing italics, and revising marginal references. It also introduced a new paragraph-based layout, anticipating modern formatting practices. While Scrivener’s edition is praised for its scholarly rigor, some of his revisions—such as changes based on his judgment of the original languages—have sparked debate. Understanding this edition helps us appreciate both the history of the KJV text and the challenges of maintaining fidelity to its translators’ intent.

### F. H. A. Scrivener and *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible*

- We have already briefly touched upon Scrivener’s work on the text when we talked about the italics in Lessons [258](#), [259](#), and [260](#). In these Lessons *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible* received a couple of brief mentions as it related to the topic of italics.
- Professor Gordon Campbell devotes all of Chapter 9 of his *Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611-2011* to “The Cambridge Paragraph Bibles” [Note: Campbell does not italicize the title whereas Norton does.].
  - “The two greatest scholars of the text of the King James Version (KJV) are F.H.A. Scrivener (in the nineteenth century) and David Norton (in the early twenty-first century). Cambridge University Press chose Scrivener to prepare the Cambridge Paragraph Bible of 1873, and Norton for its successor of 2005. By the measure of textual scholarship, there are no better editions of the KJV, even though modernization of the text comes at a cost. Their one wholly avoidable fault is the title, which seems designed to frighten away potential buyers by highlighting a comparatively minor feature of these editions; the public is never going to be excited by the prospect of buying a book about paragraphs.

The KJV, following Robert Estienne and the Geneva Bible, arranged the chapters of the Bible into numbered verses, with each verse being laid out as what would now be thought of a paragraph—that is a new line and an indentation. There are paragraphs in the KJV, however, and they are indicated by the paragraph marker known as a paraph (¶). The first break with the traditional layout was a New Testament (with a revised text) laid out in paragraphs, which was published by John Wesley in 1755 [See images below.]. The first edition of the KJV to be published in paragraphs was published in 1838 by the Religious Tract Society: this edition replaced the paragraphs with the customary modern layout. This precedent was subsequently followed by the Revised Version and most subsequent translations. Scrivener moved the chapter and verse numbers to the margins, rearranged the text of the prose into paragraphs, and presented the rest of what he deemed to be poetry in verse form. The paragraphing may have been conducive to reading (or might have been were the design not so crowded), but was an anachronism.”  
(Campbell, 177-178)



THE FIRST BOOKE OF MOSES, called GENESIS.

CHAP. I.

1 The creation of Heauen and Earth, 3 of the light, 6 of the firmament, 9 of the earth separated from the waters, 11 and made fruitful, 14 of the Sunne, Moone, and Starres, 20 of fish and fowle, 24 of beasts and cattell, 26 of Man in the Image of God. 29 Also the appointment of food.

\* Pſal. 23. 6. and 136. 5. Act. 14. 15. and 17. 24. hebr. 11. 3.

**I**n the beginning God created the Heauen, and the Earth. 2 And the earth was without forme, and voyd; and darknesse was vpon the face of the deepe: and the Spirit of God moued vpon the face of the waters.

\* 2. Cor. 4. 6.

† Hebr. be- tweene the light and be- tweene the darknesse.

† Hebr. and the evening was, and the morning was &c.

\* Pſal. 136. 5 ver. 10. 12. and 51. 15. † Hebr. Ete- rnaſion.

3 And God ſaid, \* Let there be light: and there was light. 4 And God ſaw the light, that it was good: and God diuided the light from the darkneſſe. 5 And God called the light, Day, and the darkneſſe he called Night: and the evening and the morning were the firſt day. 6 And God ſaid, \* Let there be a firmament in the midſt of the Waters: and let it diuide the Waters from the Waters. 7 And God made the firmament; and diuided the Waters, which were vnder the firmament, from the Waters, which were about the firmament: and it was ſo.

8 And God called the \* firmament, Heauen: and the evening and the morning were the ſecond day.

\* Ier. 51. 15.

9 And God ſaid, Let the Waters vnder the heauen be gathered together vnto one place, and let the dry land appeare: and it was ſo.

\* Pſal. 33. 7. and 136. 5. Job. 38. 8.

10 And God called the drie land, Earth, and the gathering together of the Waters called hee, Seas: and God ſaw that it was good.

11 And God ſaid, Let the Earth bring forth graſſe, the herbe yeelding ſeed, and the fruit tree, yeelding fruit after his kinde, whole ſeed is in it ſelfe, vpon the earth: and it was ſo.

† Hebr. ſeede &c.

12 And the earth brought forth graſſe, and herbe yeelding ſeed after his kinde, and the tree yeelding fruit, whole ſeed was in it ſelfe, after his kinde: and God ſaw that it was good.

13 And the evening and the morning were the third day.

14 And God ſaid, Let there bee \* lightes in the firmament of the heauen, to diuide the day from the night: and let them be for ſignes and for ſeaſons, and for dayes and yeeres.

\* Deu. 4. 19 Pſal. 136. 7.

† Hebr. be- tweene the day and be- tweene the night.

15 And let them be for lightes in the firmament of the heauen, to giue light vpon the earth: and it was ſo.

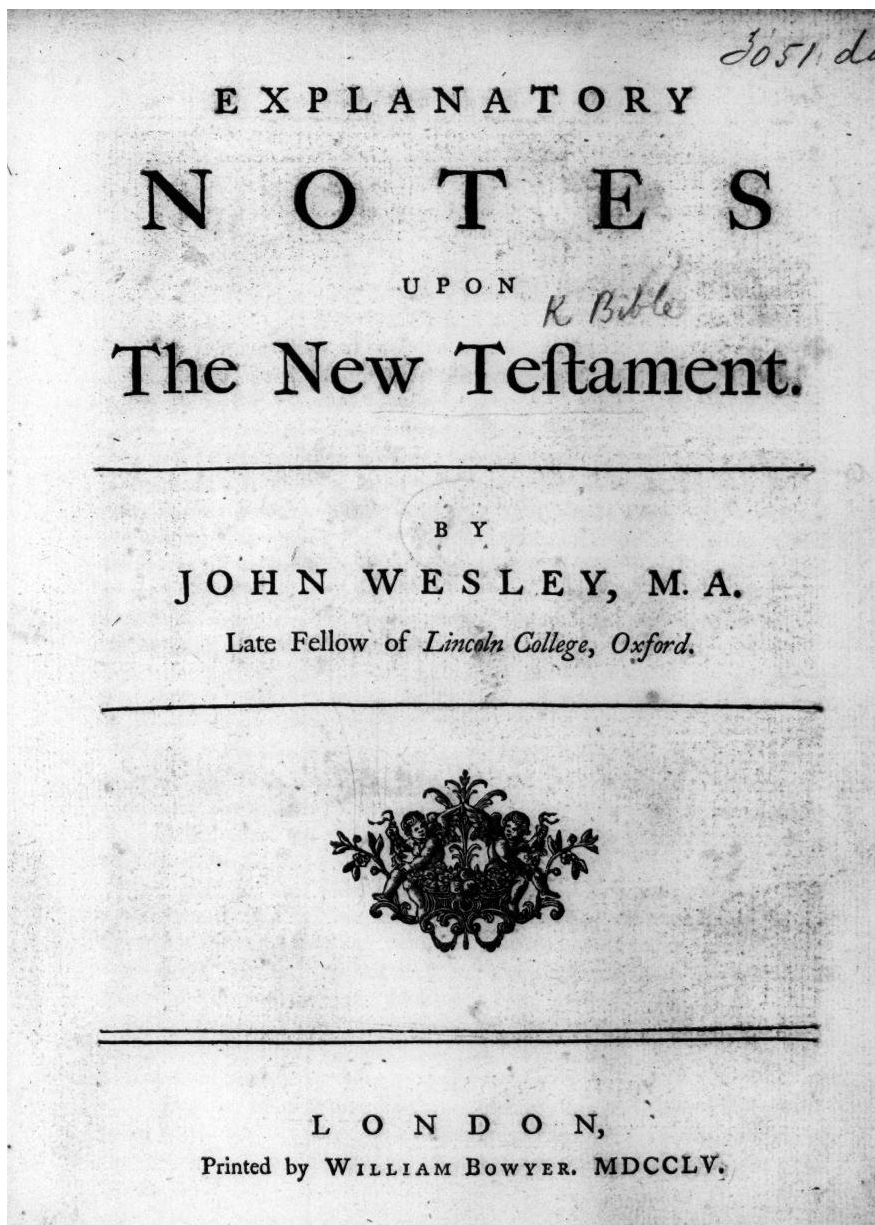
16 And God made two great lightes: the greater light to rule the day, and the leſſer light to rule the night: he made the ſtarres alſo.

† Hebr. for the rule of the day, &c.

17 And God ſet them in the firmament of the heauen, to giue light vpon the earth:

18 And to \* rule ouer the day, and ouer

\* Ier. 31. 35



Ch. ii. 6—15. ST. MATTHEW. 7

6 phet, \* And thou, Bethlehem in the land of Judah, art in no wise  
the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come forth  
7 a Ruler, who shall feed my people Israel. Then Herod, having privately  
called the wise men, inquired of them with great exactness, at what time  
8 the star appeared: And sending them to Bethlehem, he said, Go, in-  
quire exactly concerning the young child, and if ye find him, bring me  
9 word again, that I also may come and worship him. And having heard  
the king, they departed; and lo the star which they had seen in the  
East, moved on before them, till it came and stood over where the  
10 young child was. And seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceeding  
11 great joy. And being come into the house, they saw the young child,  
with Mary his mother; and falling down, they worshiped him. And  
opening their treasures, they presented to him gifts, gold, frankincense,  
12 and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream, not to return to  
Herod, they went back into their own country another way.  
13 And when they were gone back, behold an angel of the Lord ap-  
peareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child  
and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and continue there till I shall tell  
14 thee; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. And he  
arose, and took the young child and his mother by night, and retired  
15 into Egypt, And continued there till the death of Herod; that it might  
be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, † Out

V. 6. *Thou art in no wise the least among the Princes of Judah*: That is, among the Cities belonging to the princes or heads of thousands in Judah. When this and several other Quotations from the Old Testament are compared with the Original, it plainly appears, the Apostles did not always think it necessary exactly to transcribe the Passages they cited, but contented themselves with giving the General sense, tho' with some Diversity of Language. The words of Micah which we render, *Thou art the little*, may be rendered, *Art thou little?* And then the difference which seems to be here between the Prophet and the Evangelist vanishes away.

V. 8. *And if ye find him, bring me word*. Probably, Herod did not believe he was born: Otherwise, would not so suspicious a Prince have made sure work at once?

V. 10. *Seeing the Star*—standing over where the child was.

V. 11. *They presented to him gifts*. It was

\* Micah v. 2.

customary to offer some present, to any eminent person whom they visited. And so it is, as travellers observe, in the Eastern Countries to this day. *Gold*, &c. Probably these were the best things their Country afforded; or that these were the Presents ordinarily made to very great persons. This was a most seasonable providential Assistance, for a long and expensive Journey into Egypt, a Country where they were entirely strangers, and were to stay for a considerable time.

V. 15. *That it might be fulfilled*; that is, whereby was fulfilled. The original Word frequently signifies, not the Design of an Action, but barely the Consequence or Event of it—*Which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet*, on another occasion, *Out of Egypt have I called my Son*; which was now fulfilled as it were a new; *Christ* being in a far higher Sense the Son of God, than Israel, of whom the words were originally spoken.

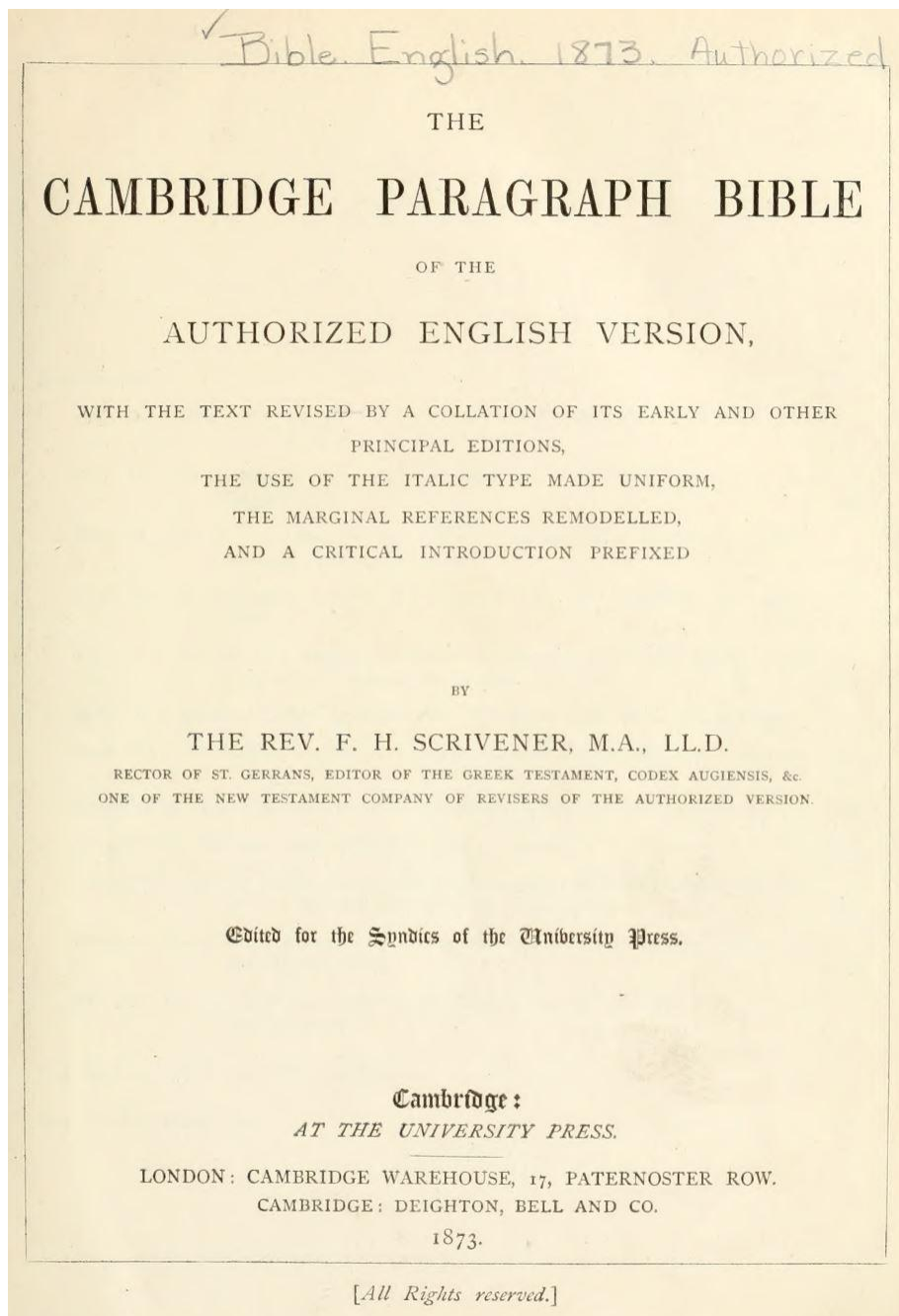
† Hof. xi. 1.

V. 16. *Then*

- Professor David Norton devotes an entire section of Chapter 7 of his *A Textual History of the King James Bible* to Scrivener and his *Cambridge Paragraph Bible*.
  - “By far the most substantial and responsible work on the text after the work of the translators themselves was F. H. A. Scrivener’s *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 remodelled, and a critical introduction prefixed* (1873; H1995). The collation was not only far more substantial than any previously attempted, even extending to minute work on the KJB’s sources, but it was responsible in the way that it provided a thorough account of the work.

*The Cambridge Paragraph Bible* had a double purpose, one part of which is indicated by the use of ‘paragraph’ in the title. It moved the chapter and verse numbers to the margin, leaving an ‘unbroken text [arranged] in paragraphs accommodated to the sense’, re-paragraphed the whole and presented the poetic parts in poetic form. In this way it anticipated many modern translations though, sadly, its cramped page layout makes it one of the most painful Bibles to read. Regrettably (rather than sadly), only a few editions of the KJB such as *The Reader’s Bible*, jointly published by the three guardians of the text in 1951, followed the attempt to create an unbroken text, presumably because of the conservative pressures already remarked on, and because such editions appeared as literary editions. Representation was so little Scrivener’s main interest that the single paragraph on it at the beginning of the original introduction disappears from his book, and his main purpose takes precedence: to prepare ‘a critical edition of the Authorized Version’ that would represent it, ‘as far as may be, 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’ (Scrivener, pp. 1, 2). Yet, for all the virtues this critical work has, *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible* remained outside the mainstream of the text and has rarely been re-issued (though the thought of re-issuing it still exists). Again, the likely reason is the public’s resistance to changes in the KJB whenever changes are advertised.” (Norton, 122-123)

- The following are screenshots from *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible* (H1995) to illustrate what Drs. Campbell & Norton are talking about.



## THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES,

CALLED

## GENESIS.

CHAP. I.

Before

CHRIST

4004 He-

brew, 5386?

Greek.

Ps. 33. 6. &amp;

136.

John 1. 1.

Acts 14. 15.

&amp; 17. 24.

Col. 1. 15, 17.

Heb. 1.

8-10. &amp; 11.

1. Heb.

1. Heb.

Jer. 4. 23.

2 Cor. 4. 6.

1. Heb.

between the

light and

between the

darkness.

So ver. 18.

1. Heb. And

the evening

was, and

the morn-

ing was, &amp;c.

So ver. 8, 13,

19, 23, 31.

4 Job 37. 18.

Ps. 136. 5.

Jer. 10. 12, &amp;

51. 15.

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IN the <sup>a</sup>beginning God created the hea-  
ven and the earth. And the earth  
was <sup>b</sup>without form, and void; and dark-  
ness *was* upon the face of the deep. And  
the Spirit of God moved upon the face  
of the waters.

And God said, <sup>c</sup>Let there be light:  
and there was light. And God saw the  
light, that *it was* good: and God di-  
vided <sup>1</sup>the light from the darkness. And  
God called the light Day, and the dark-  
ness he called Night. <sup>1</sup>And the evening  
and the morning were the first day.

And God said, <sup>d</sup>Let there be a <sup>1</sup>firm-  
ament in the midst of the waters, and  
let it divide the waters from the waters.  
And God made the firmament, and di-  
vided the waters which *were* under the  
firmament from the waters which *were*  
<sup>e</sup>above the firmament: and it was so.  
And God called the firmament Heaven.  
And the evening and the morning were  
the second day.

And God said, <sup>f</sup>Let the waters under  
the heaven be gathered together unto  
one place, and let the dry *land* appear:  
and it was so. And God called the dry  
*land* Earth; and the gathering together  
of the waters called he Seas: and God  
saw that *it was* good. And God said,  
Let the earth bring forth <sup>1</sup>grass, the herb  
yielding seed, *and* the fruit tree yielding  
fruit after his kind, whose seed *is* in it-  
self, upon the earth: and it was so. And  
the earth brought forth grass, *and* herb  
yielding seed after his kind, and the tree  
yielding fruit, whose seed *was* in itself,  
after his kind: and God saw that *it was*  
good. And the evening and the morn-  
ing were the third day.

And God said, Let there be lights in  
the firmament of the heaven to divide  
<sup>1</sup>the day from the night; and let them be

for signs, and for seasons, and for days,  
and years: and let them be for lights in  
the firmament of the heaven to give light  
upon the earth: and it was so. And  
God <sup>2</sup>made two great lights; the greater  
light <sup>1</sup>to rule the day, and the lesser  
light to rule the night: *he made* the stars  
also. And God set them in the firma-  
ment of the heaven to give light upon  
the earth, and to <sup>2</sup>rule over the day and  
over the night, and to divide the light  
from the darkness: and God saw that *it*  
<sup>1</sup>was good. And the evening and the  
morning were the fourth day.

And God said, Let the waters bring  
forth abundantly the <sup>1</sup>moving <sup>1</sup>creature  
that hath life, and <sup>1</sup>fowl *that* may fly  
above the earth in the <sup>1</sup>open firmament  
of heaven. And God created great  
whales, and every living creature that  
moveth, which the waters brought forth  
abundantly, after their kind, and every  
winged fowl after his kind: and God  
saw that *it was* good. And God blessed  
them, saying, <sup>1</sup>Be fruitful, and multiply,  
and fill the waters in the seas, and let  
<sup>1</sup>fowl multiply in the earth. And the even-  
ing and the morning were the fifth day.

And God said, Let the earth bring  
forth the living creature after his kind,  
cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the  
earth after his kind: and it was so. And  
God made the beast of the earth after  
his kind, and cattle after their kind, and  
every thing that creepeth upon the earth  
after his kind: and God saw that *it was*  
good.

And God said, <sup>k</sup>Let us make man in  
our image, <sup>1</sup>after our likeness: <sup>m</sup>and let  
them have dominion over the fish of the  
sea, and over the fowl of the air, and  
over the cattle, and over all the earth,  
and over every creeping thing that creep-

Deut. 1. 19.  
Ps. 136. 7, 8.  
1. Heb. for  
the rule of  
the day, &c.  
Jer. 31. 35.

1. Heb. let  
fowl fly.  
Compare ch.  
2. 19.  
1. Heb. for  
of the firm-  
ament of  
heaven.  
1. ch. 8. 17. &  
9. 1.

1. Heb. ten-  
der & mild.  
ver. 12.  
Deut. 32. 2.  
2 Sam. 23. 4.

1. Heb. be-  
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CXV. 5.	PSALMS.	CXVII. 2.
<p><sup>h</sup> Jer. 10. 5. <sup>h</sup> So Isai. 46. 7. Hab. 2. 18. <sup>l</sup> Isai. 44. 9. <sup>k</sup> Comp. Ps. 115. 17. <sup>l</sup> Not in Ps. 135.</p>	<p>They have mouths, <sup>h</sup>but they speak not: Eyes have they, <sup>l</sup>but they see not: <sup>k</sup>They have ears, but they hear not: Noses have they, but they smell not: <sup>l</sup>They <i>have</i> hands, but they handle not: Feet <i>have</i> they, but they walk not: Neither speak they through their throat.</p>	<p><sup>g</sup> Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. <sup>h</sup> Gracious <i>is</i> the LORD, and <sup>i</sup>right- eous; Yea, our God <i>is</i> <sup>h</sup>merciful. The LORD preserveth the <sup>k</sup>simple: <sup>l</sup>I was brought low, and he helped me.</p>
<p><sup>m</sup> So Isai. 44. 11. Jonah 2. 8. Hab. 2. 19. <sup>n</sup> Ps. 118. 2, 3, 4. So Ps. 135. 19, 20. <sup>o</sup> See Ps. 25. 2. Ps. 33. 20. So Deut. 33. 29. <sup>p</sup> See Ps. 84. 9. <sup>q</sup> See Ps. 135. 20.</p>	<p><sup>m</sup> They that make them are like unto them; So <i>is</i> every one that trusteth in them. <sup>n</sup> O Israel, <sup>o</sup> trust thou in the LORD: <sup>p</sup> He <i>is</i> their help and their <sup>q</sup>shield. <sup>o</sup> O house of Aaron, <sup>o</sup> trust' in the LORD: <sup>p</sup> He <i>is</i> their help and their <sup>q</sup>shield. <sup>r</sup> Ye that fear the LORD, <sup>o</sup> trust in the LORD: <sup>p</sup> He <i>is</i> their help and their <sup>q</sup>shield.</p>	<p>7 Return unto thy <sup>m</sup>rest, O my soul; For the LORD <sup>a</sup>hath dealt bountifully with thee. 8 <sup>o</sup> For thou hast delivered my soul from death, Mine eyes from tears, And <sup>o</sup> my feet from falling. 9 I will walk before the LORD <sup>p</sup>In the land of the living. 10 <sup>q</sup> I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: <sup>r</sup> I said in my haste, <sup>s</sup> All men <i>are</i> liars.</p>
<p><sup>r</sup> Ps. 135. 19. <sup>t</sup> So Ps. 112. 1. &amp; 118. 1, 4. <sup>u</sup> Heb. <i>with</i>. <sup>v</sup> Deut. 1. 11 (Heb.). <sup>w</sup> See Ruth 2. 20. <sup>x</sup> Ps. 121. 2. &amp; 124. 8. &amp; 134. 1. &amp; 145. 6. So Gen. 1. 1. Ps. 96. 5. <sup>y</sup> Comp. Ps. 148. 4. <sup>z</sup> See Ps. 6. 5. <sup>aa</sup> See Ps. 68. 4. <sup>ab</sup> See Ps. 31. 17. <sup>ac</sup> Ps. 113. 2. So Dan. 2. 20. <sup>ad</sup> See Ps. 105. 45.</p>	<p>The LORD hath been mindful of us: <sup>12</sup> he will bless <i>us</i>; He will bless <sup>e</sup>the house of Israel; He will bless <sup>e</sup>the house of Aaron. He will bless <sup>aa</sup>them that fear the <sup>13</sup> LORD, <i>Both</i> small <sup>1</sup>and great. The LORD shall <sup>u</sup>increase you more <sup>14</sup> and more, You and your children. You <i>are</i> <sup>v</sup>blessed of the LORD <sup>w</sup>Which made heaven and earth. <sup>x</sup>The heaven, <i>even</i> the heavens, <i>are</i> <sup>16</sup> the LORD'S: But the earth hath he given to the children of men. <sup>xx</sup>The dead praise not the <sup>y</sup>LORD, <sup>17</sup> Neither any that go down into <sup>z</sup>si- lence. <sup>a</sup>But we will bless the <sup>y</sup>LORD From this time forth and for evermore. <sup>b</sup>Praise the LORD.</p>	<p>11 <sup>t</sup> I said in my haste, <sup>s</sup> All men <i>are</i> liars. 12 What shall I <sup>1</sup>render unto the LORD For all his <sup>1</sup>benefits towards me? 13 I will take the <sup>u</sup>cup of salvation, <sup>x</sup>And call upon the name of the LORD. 14 <sup>y</sup> I will pay my vows unto the LORD Now in the presence of all his people. 15 <sup>z</sup> Precious in the sight of the LORD <i>Is</i> the death of his <sup>a</sup>saints. 16 Oh LORD, truly <sup>b</sup>I <i>am</i> thy servant; I <i>am</i> thy servant, and <sup>c</sup>the son of thy handmaid: Thou hast <sup>d</sup>loosed my bonds. 17 I will <sup>e</sup>offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, <sup>f</sup>And will call upon the name of the LORD. 18 <sup>g</sup> I will pay my vows unto the LORD Now in the presence of all his peo- ple, 19 In the <sup>h</sup>courts of the LORD'S house, In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. <sup>i</sup> Praise ye the LORD.</p>
<p><sup>ae</sup> So Ps. 13. 1. <sup>af</sup> So Ps. 66. 19. &amp; 118. 21. <sup>ag</sup> See Ps. 140. 6. <sup>ah</sup> See Ps. 86. 1. <sup>ai</sup> Heb. <i>in</i> <i>my days</i>. Comp. <sup>aj</sup> Kin. 20. 19. <sup>ak</sup> Ps. 18. 4. <sup>al</sup> So Ps. 55. 4. See Ps. 49. 12. <sup>am</sup> Ps. 118. 5. Lam. 1. 3 in the Heb. <sup>an</sup> Heb. <i>found me</i>. See Gen. 44. 34.</p>	<p>PSALM CXVI. I <sup>a</sup>love the LORD, because <sup>b</sup>he hath heard <sup>bb</sup>My voice <i>and</i> my supplications. Because he hath <sup>c</sup>inclined his ear un- to me, Therefore will I call upon <i>him</i> <sup>1</sup>as long as I live. <sup>d</sup>The sorrows of death <sup>e</sup>compassed me, <sup>3</sup> And the <sup>1</sup>pains of hell <sup>1</sup>gat hold up- on me: I found trouble and sorrow.</p>	<p>PSALM CXVII. O <sup>a</sup>praise the LORD, all ye na- tions: Praise him, all ye people. For <sup>b</sup>his merciful kindness is great toward us: And <sup>c</sup>the truth of the LORD <i>endureth</i> for ever. <sup>d</sup> Praise ye the LORD.</p>

- Dr. Campbell has much to more to say about the Cambridge Paragraph Bible.
  - “The Cambridge Paragraph Bible is, however, much more than a KJV divided into paragraphs. Its editor, F.H.A. Scrivener was a Greek manuscript specialist and a formidable textual editor; he was later to serve on the New Testament Company charged with preparation of the Revised Version. His introduction to the Cambridge Paragraph Bible was reprinted in a slightly revised form as *The Authorized Version of the English Bible (1611): Its Subsequent Reprints and Modern Representations (1884)*, and is still in print. Scrivener was a textual conservative, and believer in the Textus Receptus (the

Greek text on which the New Testament of the KJV was based), and that made him an admirer of the KJV.

In the mid-1860s Scrivener turned his formidable textual firepower on the KJV, which he studied with an eye trained to detect tiny variations in Greek texts. His objective was to construct a ‘critical [i.e., “analytical”] edition of the Authorized Version of the English Bible, having reference to its internal character rather than to its external history, and indicating the change for good or ill introduced to the text of the 1611 by subsequent reprints’. He catalogued the ‘changes for good or ill’ in three appendices.

- A. list of wrong readings of the Bible of 1611 amended in later editions
- B. variation between the two issues, both bearing the date of 1611
- C. list of original readings of the Bible of 1611 restored, later alterations being withdrawn.

The first appendix, of wrong readings of the Bible of 1611 amended in subsequent editions, runs to fifty-five packed pages. It pays particular attention to the Cambridge folio editions of 1629 and 1638, which were prepared with scrupulous attention to detail at a time when many of the original translators were still alive. These folios offer many corrected readings that were duly incorporated into Bibles for centuries to come.

The second appendix catalogues the variations between the two 1611 folios, the ‘He’ Bible and the ‘She’ Bible . . . and the third records the restored 1611 readings in the Cambridge Paragraph Bible. These lists constitute the first serious attempt to record the textual history of the KJV and, although there are occasional mistakes and oversights, the scholarly standard is very high. This is not, however, the whole story, because Scrivener ventured beyond restoration to an attempt to create an ideal text, one that the translators might have achieved had they been fully true to their principles. In Hebrews 10:23, for example, he changed ‘the profession of our faith’ to ‘the profession of our hope’

23 <sup>t</sup> Let us hold fast the <sup>u</sup> profession of  
<sup>our</sup> <sup>v</sup> hope without wavering; (for <sup>w</sup> he

(the reading of the Bishops’ Bible) on the grounds that ‘faith’ is likely a misprint occasioned by ‘faithful’ later in the verse; similarly his understanding of Greek led him to change ‘strain at a gnat’ (Matthew 23:24) to ‘strain out a gnat’.

undone. <sup>1</sup> Ye blind guides, which strain  
out a gnat, and swallow <sup>m</sup> a camel.

And, although the translators had decided that the Johannine Comma (I John 5:7) was genuine, Scrivener thought that they were wrong and placed the verse in italics to show that he regarded it as an interpolated sentence rather than Holy Writ.

Spirit is truth. For there are three that 7  
bear record *in heaven, the Father, the  
Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three  
are one. And there are three that bear wit- 8  
ness in earth, °the Spirit, and 1the water,*

Despite the occasional flaws, the quality of Scrivener's text in the Cambridge Paragraph Bible is high, but its impact was low, and it never threatened the supremacy of Blayney's text." (Campbell, 178-180)

- Dr. Norton adds the following comments regarding Scrivener's 1873 work:
  - The importance of Scrivener's work is everywhere attested in the present book. Nevertheless, just as there are weaknesses in the introduction that necessitated this new book being written, so there are aspects of *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible* that would still have needed reworking even if it had become the standard text. Consequently I focus here on the two main areas where I disagree with Scrivener's work: his treatment of variants and his approach to spelling.

Implicit throughout is the idea that an editor's duty is to perfect the text in the light of the originals. By highlighting the translators' human infirmity, Scrivener opens the way to changing the text even where there is no printing error involved. This aligns him with most previous editors, feeling himself able to correct the text where he judges the translators to have erred. Rather than treating the KJB as the work of the translators, he treats it as a textual process. Where editors have contributed to this, their contributions are entitled to the same respect as those of the translators. What he writes of the marginal notes, that 'every rendering must be judged upon its own merits, independently of the source from which it was drawn' (Scrivener, p. 58), describes his general attitude. So the aim to present 'the precise shape that it would have assumed' if the translators had not nodded implicitly assumes that the translators would have agreed with the changes if their attention had been drawn to their necessity. In short, sometimes editors know better than authors, and the authors would have agreed with them. Perhaps they would have, but there is a large measure of supposition, perhaps even arrogance, in such a position.

Scrivener himself repeats a story of one of the translators, Richard Kilbye, that should be cautionary for all editors who presume to go against the readings of the first edition where they are not manifestly printing errors:

The Doctor [Kilbye] going to a Parish Church in Derbyshire...found the young preacher to have no more discretion than to waste a great part of the hour allotted for his sermon in exceptions against the late translation of several words (not expecting such a hearer as Dr Kilbye), and shewed three reasons why a particular word should have been otherwise translated. When Evening Prayer was ended, the preacher was invited to the Doctor's friend's house, where after some other conference the Doctor told him, he 'might have preached more useful doctrine, and not have filled his auditors' ears with needless exceptions against the late translation; and for that word for which he offered to that poor congregation three reasons why it ought to have been translated as he said, he and others had considered all of them, and found thirteen more considerable reasons why it was translated as printed.'

The moral is worth stressing: editors assume at their peril that the translators erred. Enough examples have come to light in the course of the present work (to say nothing of textual criticism in general) to prove the existence of this danger, and to prove that Scrivener himself succumbed to it. There is a difference between 'would' and 'should'. Aiming to give the text 'in the precise shape that it *would* have assumed', Scrivener is giving it in the shape he thinks it *should* have assumed. He tests the variants not by the evidence for the translators' judgements, but by his view of how the original texts should have been translated. The result is more conservative than Blayney's text, for he restores about a third of the original readings (listed in his appendix C); nevertheless, in general terms it comes to this: the reader of the *Cambridge Paragraph Bible* can never be certain that the text is that of the translators because Scrivener is at heart a reviser.

Scrivener's spelling is both old-fashioned and quirky. Though he approves in general terms of 'clearing the sacred page of uncouth, obsolete, and variable forms, which could answer no purpose save to perplex the ignorant, and to offend the educated taste' (p. 94), he cut himself off from full modernisation in several ways. His general – though not absolute – rule was this: 'whenever an English word is spelt in the two issues of 1611 in two or more different ways, to adopt in all places that method which may best agree with present usage' (p. 94). Consequently, where these two editions did not have an example that fitted with present usage, the old form was often preserved, as 'ebeny' (Ezek. 27:15). Moreover, his judgement of present usage was conservative, and significantly influenced by his view that spellings that reflected etymology were to be preferred even if they went against present usage. So, instead of 'scent' he gives 'sent', 'following the ordinary, if not the universal practice of the seventeenth century, inasmuch as *sent* is true to the etymology, and is invariably used in all the five places where the word occurs'. He restores 'sailer' at Rev. 18:17 because Johnson declares it 'to be more analogical than *sailor*', and because it remained in use after 1638 (p. 96). Some of the old forms such as 'marish' and 'astonied' he keeps because they are 'not wholly banished from our modern books', and their 'presence tends to lend richness and variety to the style' (p. 100). He is similarly conservative with grammatical forms, keeping many of the

archaic past tenses such as ‘dipt’ because they ‘contribute to produce a pleasing variety in the style of a version, and are grammatically just as accurate as the modern forms’ (p. 102; inconsistently, he also uses ‘dipped’). Such attitudes and practice, hardly to be excused by remembering that the *Oxford English Dictionary* was then an unborn child, make his work on spelling valueless.” (Norton, 123-125)

- From my point of view, I agree with both Campbell and Norton that Scrivener, while conducting important work on the history of text, made too many revisions in the *Paragraph Bible* that did not necessarily reflect the decisions of the translators themselves. The example above regarding I John 5:7 stands out as a prime example.
- Norton concludes his discussion of “the current text” in Chapter 7 by summarizing the state of the Victorian Text of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - “The few changes between Blayney and the current text reflect the relatively simple progress of the Oxford text. With the Cambridge text things were not so straightforward. After Parris’s work it seems to have lost its way, or, perhaps more accurately, as Curtis’s narrative reveals, it lost all knowledge of the way it had taken. At some point around the beginning of the nineteenth century it departed from Parris’s work in ways that must have been the result of substantial effort. I take the 1817 octavo as representative, though from Curtis’s observations it is clear that this text goes back at least as far as 1805.<sup>16</sup> It is an eclectic combination of old and new work that is most interesting for the number of 1611 readings it restores, most notably ‘shewed’ at Hos. 6:5, a reading found only in the first edition, some 1612 quartos and the 1616 folio. There must have been collation with one of these editions; one guesses with the first. Consequently, many readings that Cambridge had introduced as long ago as 1629 disappear. How many other texts were involved is impossible to know, but in places some of Blayney’s readings appear, and there are also a few independent changes such as ‘Uzzah’ for ‘Uzza’ at 1 Chr. 6:29, following the spelling in 2 Samuel 6. Often, in its preference for 1611 readings, I find this a better text than Blayney’s, but it is impossible to find a clear or consistent principle running through it.

Following all the concerns raised by Curtis, Cambridge silently abandoned this text: it could hardly do otherwise since it knew so little about its own work and could not make any credible claims to having a standard. It followed the one proclaimed standard, Oxford’s, almost entirely.<sup>17</sup> The text was now effectively settled, and, rather than dismissing Curtis as the crank he has generally been taken to be, we must recognise him as a serious worker who played an important role in achieving this result.

I have taken three 1857 texts to check the state of the Victorian text in the hands of its three official guardians and compared it with the current text. There are five variations: at Judg. 13:19 the 1857 editions have ‘wonderously’ for the current ‘wondrously’, at 2 Chr. 2:16 Oxford and Eyre and Spottiswoode have ‘flotes’ for ‘floats’, at Job 30:6 all have ‘cliffs’ for the current ‘clifts’, and at Matt. 26:39 and Mark 1:19 ‘farther’ for ‘further’. By

1931 Cambridge had changed these to the current spellings, and the current text was finished.<sup>18</sup>

Cambridge has called its main edition of the Bible without the Apocrypha ‘concord’. Whether or not this was to mark the Universities’ joint care to ensure that their texts agreed, they do agree, and what they agree on has the inestimable merit of over two centuries of near uniformity. We must be absolutely clear what it really is: a text that all but fossilised in the 1760s. 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 judgement 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 the spelling, punctuation and presentation are all in acute need of further modernisation.” (Norton, 125-127)

## Conclusion

- In this lesson, we examined the significance of *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible* and its place in the printed history of the King James Version. F. H. A. Scrivener’s 1873 edition represented the most thorough collation of early KJV texts since the original translators, aiming to produce a critical edition that corrected errors and standardized features such as italics and marginal notes. His paragraph-based layout anticipated modern formatting, though it never became mainstream. While Scrivener’s work is widely respected for its scholarly rigor, his willingness to revise readings based on his judgment—rather than strictly preserving the translators’ decisions—remains controversial. Ultimately, *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible* stands as both a milestone in textual scholarship and a reminder of the tension between historical fidelity and editorial improvement.
- Based on the content presented in this Lesson, *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible* never became the standard or replaced the 1769 Blayney text for several reasons:
  - Public Resistance to Change—Readers of the King James Version were highly conservative and resistant to any advertised changes. Scrivener’s edition introduced visible alterations—such as paragraph formatting and some textual revisions—which made it appear less traditional.
  - Departure from Translators’ Decisions—Scrivener aimed to create an “ideal” text, correcting what he believed were errors or inconsistencies. This meant altering some readings (e.g., “strain at a gnat” → “strain out a gnat”), which critics argued went beyond preserving the translators’ work.

- Unpopular Layout—The paragraph-based design, while intended to improve readability, was considered crowded and awkward. It broke with the familiar verse-by-verse format that readers were accustomed to.
- Limited Reprints and Adoption—Cambridge rarely reissued the *Paragraph Bible*, and other publishers did not adopt its format or text. The Blayney text had already been entrenched as the Oxford standard since the 18th century, making it difficult for any new edition to displace it.
- Perceived Scholarly, Not Practical—Scrivener’s work was viewed as a critical edition for specialists rather than a practical Bible for churches and homes, reducing its appeal for widespread use.

### Works Cited

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