

PREFACE TO THE KING JAMES VERSION 1873 EDITION

The most time-honored and widely used edition of the English Bible is the translation of 1611, commonly known as the **Authorized Version** or **King James Version (KJV)**. But though it has served as the standard translation for millions of users through nearly four centuries, there has never been a standard edition to which all printings are conformed.

No two early printings of the KJV were identical—not even the two printings of 1611—and no two modern settings are identical, either. These differences are due to accidental human error as well as to intentional changes by printers and editors, who sought to eliminate what they judged to be the errors of others and to conform the text to their standards of English usage. This said, most differences involve only spelling, punctuation, and italics, and few variations materially affect the meaning of the text.

As early as 1616 there were systematic attempts to revise and standardize the KJV. Other important early editions were issued by Cambridge in 1629 and 1638. In the eighteenth century, the two great English universities (who were also officially chartered printers) commissioned thorough and systematic revisions. The edition of **Dr. F. S. Paris** was published by **Cambridge** in **1762** and that of **Dr. Benjamin Blayney** by **Oxford** in **1769**. Though far from perfect, these remained the standard editions until ***The Cambridge Paragraph Bible of 1873***.

The Cambridge Paragraph Bible began with the simple plan of arranging the text of the KJV according to the sense of the literature: arranging the prose sections into paragraphs and the poetic sections into parallel lines. This simple plan, however, was enhanced by the editor's desire to create the most thorough standardization of the text ever attempted. To this task Dr. F. H. A. Scrivener devoted seven laborious years: 1866 to 1873.

Because the translators' original manuscript no longer exists, the KJV text must be established by consulting the earliest settings. Dr. Scrivener compared at least 15 early settings and important revisions, including both settings of 1611; Bibles of 1612, 1613, 1616, 1617, 1629, 1630, 1634, 1638, 1640; and the significant editions of Drs. Paris (1762) and Blayney (1769).

In his 120-page introduction, Dr. Scrivener addressed the various features of the KJV he worked to standardize:

Marginal notes. The KJV does not contain explanatory or doctrinal comments but does include annotations "for the explanation of the Hebrew and Greek words." In the Old Testament of 1611, there are 6,637 such notes. The more literal meaning of the original Hebrew or Aramaic ("Chaldee") is expressed in

4,111 notes, indicated by the abbreviation “Heb.” or “Chald.”; 2,156 give alternate renderings, indicated by the word “Or”; 63 give the meaning of proper names; 240 harmonize parallel passages; and 67 refer to various readings in the Hebrew manuscripts used by the translators.

In the New Testament of 1611, there are 765 marginal notes. Alternate translations are given in 583 notes, indicated by the word “Or”; 112 provide a more literal rendering of the Greek, indicated by the abbreviation “Gr.”; 35 are explanatory notes or brief expositions; and 35 relate to alternate readings in the Greek manuscripts used by the translators.

Significant notes from later editions have also been included in square brackets []. There are 368 additional notes in the Old Testament (for example, Gen. 1:20) and 105 in the New (for example, Mat. 1:20,21).

Many of the best King James Version Bibles include a significant system of cross references in addition to the translators’ notes. Cross references are indicated by letters (*a, b, c, etc.*), while translators’ notes are indicated by numbers (1, 2, 3, etc.).

Italic type. Italic type was used in the KJV, as in the Geneva Bible, to indicate words in the English translation that have no exact representative in the original language. Dr. Scrivener, following many earlier scholars, noted that the KJV translators were noticeably inconsistent in their use of italics, sometimes even in the same paragraph and verse. To cite one small pattern from the 1611 edition, Leviticus 11:20 has “upon all foure,” while for the same Hebrew 11:21 and 42 have “upon *all* foure,” and 11:27 has “on *all* foure.”

Dr. Scrivener carefully analyzed why italic type was used throughout the KJV, reduced this analysis to 14 major principles, and then applied these principles with meticulous consistency throughout the entire Bible. A substantial portion of the editor’s “seven laborious years” was devoted to this significant improvement.

Punctuation. Later printings of the KJV added a great deal of punctuation to the editions of 1611. Dr. Scrivener restored the major punctuation (periods, colons, parentheses, question marks) of 1611, and used commas and semicolons to help divide longer sentences into more manageable units for reading.

Spelling and capital letters. Spelling of proper names and common words was very fluid in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: “Inquire” and “enquire” were interchangeable, as were “ceiling,” “cieling,” and “sieling.” Most differences between modern settings of the KJV and early settings involve standardization of spelling. Dr. Scrivener’s general rule was that whenever a word was spelled more than one way, he conformed all occurrences to the standard spelling of the late nineteenth century.

Proper names, on the other hand, vary according to their spelling in the original languages, so “Elijah” throughout 1 and 2 Kings and in Malachi 4:5 becomes “Elias” throughout the New Testament, as in Matthew 11:14 and 17:3. For the benefit of modern readers, three spelling patterns are changed in this edition that are not changed in Scrivener’s edition: twenty-nine occurrences of “mo” and “moe” are conformed to “more”; four occurrences of “unpossible” are conformed to “impossible”; and “neesed” in 2 Kings 4:35 is spelled “sneezed.”

Paragraphs and poetry. According to Dr. Scrivener and other scholars, the paragraph marks (¶) were unequally and inconsistently distributed, and they disappear altogether after Acts 20:26. So, while consulted, the original marks were not always followed in *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible*. Hebrew poetry is characterized by rhyming of thoughts rather than rhyming of words. In *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible*, as well as in most modern translations, lines of similar or contrasting content are set in parallel lines to show this parallelism of thought. In Psalm 1, verse 5 has two lines of similar parallelism, while verse 6 has two lines of contrasting parallelism:

5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

The best King James Version Bibles use a verse setting, that is, each verse begins a new line and each verse is set as an independent unit. Paragraphs are indicated with the traditional paragraph mark (¶).

The best King James Version Bibles also conform their setting of the **King James** or **Authorized Version** to its most highly regarded edition: ***The Cambridge Paragraph Bible of 1873***, edited by **F. H. A. Scrivener**. As in the case of the first edition of the version of 1611, this is done out of “zeal to promote the common good, whether it be by devising any thing ourselves, or revising that which hath been laboured by others” (“The Translators to the Reader,” the preface to the version of 1611). With the original translators, we hope our efforts will be “welcomed,” not “with suspicion” but with “love,” and that the reissue of this edition will contribute to improvement of this great treasure of the English-speaking church.

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