

A Textual History of the King James Bible. By David Norton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, x+387 pp., \$95.00, hardcover.

David Norton is Reader in English at Victoria University of Wellington. His other publication is *A History of the Bible as Literature*, two volumes (Cambridge, 1993), which has been revised and condensed as *A History of the English Bible as Literature* (Cambridge, 2000).

Cambridge University Press recently commissioned him to re-edit their standard text of the King James Bible. This revised text is published as *The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible*. Until this recent revision, their standard text had been based on the 1769 revision of Benjamin Blayney. An earlier revision made by F. H. A. Scrivener appeared in 1879 as *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible*, but that edition failed to achieve popular acceptance. Norton's text is a thorough revision of Scrivener's text, correcting his errors and moving the text back into harmony with the text of 1611. *A Textual History of the King James Bible* traces the history from 1611 to the present, with a detailed description of the principles Norton followed in revising the standard text. The resultant text, according to Norton, "is the most faithful presentation of the King James Bible there has ever been" (p. 148). The book contains a bibliography, a general index, an index of words, and an index of Scripture references.

The book is divided into three parts, the first of which provides a history of the text from 1611 to the present, the second describes the making of *The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible*, and the third contains nine appendices. The first four chapters portray the original making of the King James Bible; included are discussions of the surviving documentation of the work, such as Lambeth Palace Manuscript 98, the translation notes of John Bois, and the annotated Bishops' Bible of 1602. Chapter 5 discusses the changes made in the major revisions of 1629 and 1638. Chapter 6 describes the revisions of F. S. Parris (1762) and Benjamin Blayney (1769) that developed into the current standardized text. Chapter 7 presents the current state of the standard text, including the revisions made by the American Bible Society and Scrivener's production of *The Cambridge Paragraph Bible* (1879). Norton estimated that the current standard text has approximately 11,000 departures from the 1611 text, not including changes of spelling and punctuation (p. 117).

Chapter 8 discusses variants and spelling. Two basic principles define Norton's editorial methodology: (1) "the text should be that of the translators, not that of subsequent revisers," and (2) "the text should be modernized" (p. 131). In implementing the first principle, Norton opted for "the preservation of archaisms that might otherwise be modernized" (p. 140). For example, the following obsolete or archaic 1611 words have been restored—the possible modernization is given in parentheses: affright (frighten), afore (before), agone (ago), band (bond), betime (betimes), betwixt (between), bide (abide), dureth (endureth), endamage (damage), fat (fatten), grave (engrave), inhabitants (inhabitants), in sunder (asunder), inwards (innards), leasing (lying), magnificent (magnificent), minish (diminish), neesings (nostrils), and plat (plot) (pp. 140-41). Unfortunately, the restoration of such words will make this edition of the King James Bible more difficult to read and understand. It also appears that Norton accepted most if not all the original translators' decisions where they followed the Latin Vulgate or the Greek Septuagint rather than the traditional Hebrew and Greek texts.

In implementing the second principle, Norton also tended to be overly conservative, retaining the older spelling of many words, and retaining or restoring alternate spellings when he concluded that it was the intention of the original translator. On the other hand, he usually modernized and standardized spelling of words in general, and standardized the spelling of

names and compound words—the one exception being the deliberate failure to standardize the spelling of names between the Old and New Testaments. The archaic verb forms are retained as well as the archaic pronouns, *ye*, *thee*, *thou*, etc. However, many modernizations were made, for example: “sod” was changed to “seethed” (Gen. 25:29), “astonied” to “astonished,” “ensample” to “example,” “fats” to “vats,” “marishes” to “marshes,” “sith” to “since,” “throughly” to “thoroughly,” and “utter” to “outer.”

Chapter 9 deals with punctuation, paragraph divisions, and the formats for prose, verse, and poetry. In general, Norton modernized punctuation according to contemporary convention, except that speech is marked only by an initial capital letter without quotation marks. Paragraph divisions were made as he stated, “chiefly guided by my own sense of the text” (p. 158). Prose is presented in standard paragraph format rather than offering each verse as an individual paragraph. The format of poetry is used only in those places exhibiting clear signs of poetry; consequently, many passages regarded as poetry by modern translators appear as prose in *The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible*.

Appendix 1 lists approximately 372 printer’s errors in the first (1611) edition of the King James Bible. Appendix 2 lists approximately 432 variations found between the first and second edition. Appendix 3 contains a possible list of changes the king’s printers intended to make in the 1611 first edition when using it as a copy text for later printings. Appendix 4 provides a selective collation of the 1613 edition with the first and second editions. Appendix 5 presents a selective collation of the 1617 edition with the first and second editions. Appendix 6 introduces Kilburne’s list of errors. Appendix 7 provides Blayney’s account of the collation and revision he made in 1769. Appendix 8 consists of 155 pages listing approximately 1,085 changes Norton made to the current standard text, not counting spelling and punctuation; approximately one-third of these changes restore the original readings of the 1611 edition. Finally, Appendix 9 presents approximately 172 words whose spelling has been modernized, not including the variation of usage for the indefinite articles *a* and *an*, and the words *my* or *mine*, *thy* or *thine*, and *no* or *none*.

The New Cambridge Paragraph Bible should be a necessary edition for everyone who prefers the King James 1611 tradition. It will indeed be “the most faithful presentation of the King James Bible there has ever been” with the exception of rather mild modernization of the language. However, the language will be more archaic and less easy to read and understand than current editions of the King James Bible. I suspect that many people will still prefer the standard text of 1769. As for *A Textual History of the King James Bible*, the book should be in the library of every educational institution, and in public libraries. It will be of interest to scholars and students who are interested in the true history of the King James Bible and the current state of its text.

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