

## **Church History and Evidences**

### **Notes: Differences in Greek manuscripts between KJV and ASV**

There are three main English Bible versions from which all others come:

- KJV (aka Authorized Version - AV) – 1611 – TR text (Textus Receptus)
- RV (1885) – Based on Westcott and Hort translation (1881) – NU-Text (Novum Testamentum Graece), CV text (Codex Vaticanus)
- ASV (1901) – Americanized version of the RV

Differences in Greek Manuscripts:

- The Textus Receptus (Latin: "received text") is the name subsequently given to the succession of printed Greek texts of the New Testament which was first collated by Desiderius Erasmus in the 16th century. It constituted the translation base for the translation of the New Testament into English by William Tyndale, the King James Version, and most other Reformation-era New Testament translations throughout Western and Central Europe. Stanley Porter explains, "The Textus Receptus is any form of the Greek text that goes back to the edition of Erasmus and the several late manuscripts he used. The Textus Receptus is a more restricted and limited form of Byzantine text, but it is not the Byzantine text as found in the edition of Robinson and Pierpont, or the Majority text found in the edition of Hodges and Farstad. Manuscripts of the Byzantine family represent the vast majority of the 5700 New Testament manuscripts that have currently been found and collated, no two of which are identical. These are now generally thought to represent a much later copy of the original text in contrast to the earlier yet corrupt copies of the Alexandrian text-type, but were the predominant text-type available to Erasmus
- The Majority Text (M-Text) represents the Byzantine text-type, which was used in Eastern Greek speaking churches and was dominant from the late middle ages onwards. It is similar to the Textus Receptus.
- The modern critical text (e.g. Novum Testamentum Graece or NU-Text) is close to the Alexandrian text-type, which accounts for some of the earliest New Testament manuscripts; it stands behind most modern English translations of the New Testament including the American Standard Version, New International Version, Revised Standard Version, New Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Bible, Jerusalem Bible, New American Bible, English Standard Version, and others.

The KJV and ASV translations are similar in the following ways:

- They both are literal translations of the original languages (Hebrew/Aramaic for the Old Testament, Greek for the New Testament).
- They both were translated by committees, not individuals. This is good because it significantly reduced mistakes and biases.

- They have both been tremendously popular since the date of their publication. Many believers have grown in their knowledge and understanding of God's Word through these great translations.
- Both translations do a very good job of communicating God's Word into the English language. Although they are derived from different manuscript traditions (see below), they agree in well over 90% of their text.

They are different in the following ways:

- The King James Version's New Testament was translated from the Greek Textus Receptus, which comes from what most scholars consider to be a supposedly younger, less reliable manuscript tradition. The ASB was translated from a modern critical edition, which allegedly considers many more manuscripts from different geographic locations, some of which supposedly go back much closer to the original autographs.

### **KJV History:**

In January 1604, King James convened the Hampton Court Conference, where a new English version was conceived in response to the problems of the earlier translations perceived by the Puritans, a faction of the Church of England.

The followers of John Wycliffe undertook the first complete English translations of the Christian scriptures in the 14th century. These translations were banned in 1409 due to their association with the Lollards (pre-protestant, c.1395). The Wycliffe Bible pre-dated the printing press but was circulated very widely in manuscript form, often inscribed with a date earlier than 1409 to avoid the legal ban. As the text translated in the various versions of the Wycliffe Bible was the Latin Vulgate, and as it contained no heterodox readings, there was in practice no way by which the ecclesiastical authorities could distinguish the banned version; consequently many Catholic commentators of the 15th and 16th centuries (such as Thomas More) took these manuscript English Bibles to represent an anonymous earlier orthodox translation.

In 1525, William Tyndale, an English contemporary of Martin Luther, undertook a translation of the New Testament. Tyndale's translation was the first printed Bible in English. Over the next ten years, Tyndale revised his New Testament in the light of rapidly advancing biblical scholarship and embarked on a translation of the Old Testament. Despite some controversial translation choices, and in spite of Tyndale's execution on charges of heresy for having made the translated bible, the merits of Tyndale's work and prose style made his translation the ultimate basis for all subsequent renditions into Early Modern English. With these translations lightly edited and adapted by Myles Coverdale, in 1539, Tyndale's New Testament and his incomplete work on the Old Testament became the basis for the Great Bible. This was the first "authorised version" issued by the Church of England during the reign of King Henry VIII. When Mary I succeeded to the throne in 1553, she returned the Church of England to the communion of the Roman Catholic faith and many English religious

reformers fled the country, some establishing an English-speaking colony at Geneva. Under the leadership of John Calvin, Geneva became the chief international center of Reformed Protestantism and Latin biblical scholarship.

These English expatriates undertook a translation that became known as the Geneva Bible. This translation, dated to 1560, was a revision of Tyndale's Bible and the Great Bible on the basis of the original languages. Soon after Elizabeth I took the throne in 1558, the flaws of both the Great Bible and the Geneva Bible (namely, that the Geneva Bible did not "conform to the ecclesiology and reflect the episcopal structure of the Church of England and its beliefs about an ordained clergy") became painfully apparent. In 1568, the Church of England responded with the Bishops' Bible, a revision of the Great Bible in the light of the Geneva version. While officially approved, this new version failed to displace the Geneva translation as the most popular English Bible of the age—in part because the full Bible was only printed in lectern editions of prodigious size and at a cost of several pounds. Accordingly, Elizabethan lay people overwhelmingly read the Bible in the Geneva Version—small editions were available at a relatively low cost. At the same time, there was a substantial clandestine importation of the rival Douay–Rheims New Testament of 1582, undertaken by exiled Roman Catholics. This translation, though still derived from Tyndale, claimed to represent the text of the Latin Vulgate

The newly crowned King James convened the Hampton Court Conference in 1604. That gathering proposed a new English version in response to the perceived problems of earlier translations as detected by the Puritan faction of the Church of England. Here are three examples of problems the Puritans perceived with the Bishops and Great Bibles:

Instructions were given to the translators that were intended to limit the Puritan influence on this new translation. The Bishop of London added a qualification that the translators would add no marginal notes (which had been an issue in the Geneva Bible). King James cited two passages in the Geneva translation where he found the marginal notes offensive to the principles of divinely ordained royal supremacy: Exodus 1:19, where the Geneva Bible notes had commended the example of civil disobedience to the Egyptian Pharaoh showed by the Hebrew midwives, and also II Chronicles 15:16, where the Geneva Bible had criticized King Asa for not having executed his idolatrous 'mother', Queen Maachah (Maachah had actually been Asa's grandmother, but James considered the Geneva Bible reference as sanctioning the execution of his own mother Mary, Queen of Scots). Further, the King gave the translators instructions designed to guarantee that the new version would conform to the ecclesiology of the Church of England. Certain Greek and Hebrew words were to be translated in a manner that reflected the traditional usage of the church. For example, old ecclesiastical words such as the word "church" were to be retained and not to be translated as "congregation". The new translation would reflect the episcopal structure of the Church of England and traditional beliefs about ordained clergy.

## Issues with KJV:

The King James version contains several mistranslations; especially in the Old Testament where the knowledge of Hebrew and cognate languages was uncertain at the time. Most of these are minor and do not significantly change the meaning compared to the source material. Among the most commonly cited errors is in the Hebrew of Job and Deuteronomy, where רֶאֱמֹ "Re'em" with the probable meaning of "wild-ox, aurochs", is translated in the KJV as "unicorn"; following in this the Vulgate unicornis and several medieval rabbinic commentators. The translators of the KJV note the alternative rendering, "rhinoceros" [sic] in the margin at Isaiah 34:7. On a similar note Martin Luther's German translation had also relied on the Vulgate Latin on this point, consistently translating רֶאֱמֹ using the German word for unicorn, "Einhorn." Otherwise, the translators on several occasions mistakenly interpreted a Hebrew descriptive phrase as a proper name (or vice versa); as at 2 Samuel 1:18 where 'the Book of Jasher' סֵפֶר הַיָּשָׁר properly refers not to a work by an author of that name, but should rather be rendered as "the Book of the Upright."

The King James Only movement advocates the superiority of the King James Version over all other English translations. Most adherents of the movement believe that the Textus Receptus is very close, if not identical, to the original autographs thereby making it the ideal Greek source for the translation. They argue that manuscripts such as Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, on which most modern English translations rely, are corrupted New Testament texts.

## History of the ASV:

By the first half of the 18th century, the Authorized Version had become effectively unchallenged as the English translation used in Anglican and English Protestant churches, except for the Psalms and some short passages in the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England. Over the course of the 18th century, the Authorized Version supplanted the Latin Vulgate as the standard version of scripture for English-speaking scholars. With the development of stereotype printing at the beginning of the 19th century, this version of the Bible became the most widely printed book in history, almost all such printings presenting the standard text of 1769 extensively re-edited by Benjamin Blayney at Oxford, and nearly always omitting the books of the Apocrypha. Today the unqualified title "King James Version" usually indicates this Oxford standard text.

Westcott and Hort published The New Testament in the Original Greek in 1881, in which they rejected what they considered to be the dated and inadequate Textus Receptus. Their text is based mainly on Codex Vaticanus in the Gospels

In the United States, the Revised Version was adapted and revised as the "Revised Version, Standard American Edition" (better known as the American Standard Version) in 1901. The American Standard Version is largely identical to the Revised Version of 1885, with minor variations in wording considered to be slightly more accurate.

## **Text-types:**

Most textual critics of the New Testament favor the Alexandrian text-type (i.e. ASV) as the closest representative of the autographs for many reasons. One reason is that Alexandrian manuscripts are the oldest found; some of the earliest Church Fathers used readings found in the Alexandrian text. Another is that the Alexandrian readings are adjudged more often to be the ones that can best explain the origin of all the variant readings found in other text-types.

Nevertheless, there are some dissenting voices to this consensus. A few textual critics, especially those in France, argue that the Western text-type, an old text from which the Vetus Latina or Old Latin versions of the New Testament are derived, is closer to the originals.

In the United States, some critics have a dissenting view that prefers the Byzantine text-type (i.e. KJV), such as Maurice A. Robinson and William Grover Pierpont. They assert that Egypt, almost alone, offers optimal climatic conditions favoring preservation of ancient manuscripts while, on the other hand, the papyri used in the east (Asia Minor and Greece) would not have survived due to the unfavorable climatic conditions. Thus, it is not surprising that ancient Biblical manuscripts that are found would come mostly from the Alexandrian geographical area and not from the Byzantine geographical area.

The argument for the authoritative nature of the latter is that the much greater number of Byzantine manuscripts copied in later centuries, in detriment to the Alexandrian manuscripts, indicates a superior understanding by scribes of those being closer to the autographs. Eldon Jay Epp argued that the manuscripts circulated in the Roman world and many documents from other parts of the Roman Empire were found in Egypt since the late 19th century.

According to the preface to the New King James Version of the Bible, the Textus Receptus, the Alexandrian text-type and the Byzantine text-type are 85% identical (that is, of the variations that occur in any manuscript, only 15% actually differ between these three).

## **New Testament Text-types:**

Early New Testament texts include more than 5,800 Greek manuscripts, 10,000 Latin manuscripts and 9,300 manuscripts in various other ancient languages (including Syriac, Slavic, Ethiopic and Armenian). The manuscripts contain approximately 300,000 textual variants, most of them involving changes of word order and other comparative trivialities. Thus, for over 250 years, New Testament scholars have argued that no textual variant affects any doctrine. Professor D. A. Carson states: "nothing we believe to be doctrinally true, and nothing we are commanded to do, is in any way jeopardized by the variants. This is true for any textual tradition. The interpretation of individual passages may well be called in question; but never is a doctrine affected."

The sheer number of witnesses presents unique difficulties, chiefly in that it makes stemmatics in many cases impossible, because many writers used two or more different manuscripts as sources. Consequently, New Testament textual critics have adopted eclecticism after sorting the witnesses into three major groups, called text-types.

Text type	Date	Characteristics	Bible version
<p>The Alexandrian text-type (also called the "Neutral Text" tradition; less frequently, the "Minority Text")</p>	<p>2nd–4th centuries CE</p>	<p>This family constitutes a group of early and well-regarded texts, including Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus. Most representatives of this tradition appear to come from around Alexandria, Egypt and from the Alexandrian Church. It contains readings that are often terse, shorter, somewhat rough, less harmonised, and generally more difficult. The family was once <sup>when?</sup> thought <sup>by whom?</sup> to result from a very carefully edited 3rd-century recension, but now is believed to be merely the result of a carefully controlled and supervised process of copying and transmission. It underlies most translations of the New Testament produced since 1900.</p>	<p>NIV, NAB, NABRE, Douay, JB and NJB (albeit, with some reliance on the Byzantine text-type), TNIV, NASB, RSV, ESV, EBR, NWT, LB, ASV, NC, GNB, CSB</p>
<p>The Western text-type</p>	<p>3rd–9th centuries CE</p>	<p>Also a very early tradition, which comes from a wide geographical area stretching from North Africa to Italy and from Gaul to Syria. It occurs in Greek manuscripts and in the Latin translations used by the Western church. It is much less controlled than the Alexandrian family and its witnesses are seen to be more prone to paraphrase and other corruptions. It is sometimes called the <i>Caesarean text-type</i>. Some New Testament scholars would argue that the Caesarean constitutes a distinct text-type of its own.</p>	<p>Vetus Latina</p>
<p>The Byzantine text-type; also, <i>Koine</i> text-type (also called "Majority Text")</p>	<p>5th–16th centuries CE</p>	<p>This group comprises around 95% of all the manuscripts, the majority of which are comparatively very late in the tradition. It had become dominant at Constantinople from the 5th century on and was used throughout the Eastern Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire. It contains the most harmonistic readings, paraphrasing and significant additions, most of which are believed <sup>by whom?</sup> to be secondary readings. It underlies the <i>Textus Receptus</i> used for most Reformation-era translations of the New Testament.</p>	<p>KJV, NKJV, Tyndale, Coverdale, Geneva, Bishops' Bible, OSB</p>