

THE KING JAMES VERSION IS THE BEST ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATION

ANYONE WHO WALKS INTO a Christian bookstore looking for a Bible will discover that there are a *lot* of different translations available. This can be very intimidating, especially if you're a new Christian and don't know very much about the Bible. Are all translations basically the same, or are some better than others? Given the number of different versions that are out there, how can you possibly tell which ones are good and which ones should be avoided? Is there any way to find out that doesn't involve going to seminary and learning Hebrew and Greek?

Most people don't spend a lot of time thinking about this; after all, it's a difficult subject and is rarely discussed in churches. It has taken me a great deal of study over the course of several years in order to reach my own conclusion. (This chapter is distilled from over 600 pages of research material that I've compiled – and that doesn't count the books that I've purchased about this subject.) This is a very difficult topic, but it's an important one. After all, God expects us to live our lives by His Word. It is therefore *very* important to make sure that the Bible we are reading is an accurate representation of what God has said. If our translation of the Bible is wrong then we are in a lot of trouble.

One fact that complicates the matter is that the Bible was not written in English. The original manuscripts contain a variety of languages, with the Old Testament being predominately Hebrew and the New Testament being predominately Greek. Before we can understand the Scriptures they have to be translated, and translating ancient languages is very difficult.

When people walk into a Christian bookstore and look at the different versions of the Bible, they generally assume that the different versions represent different translations of the same manuscript. In other words, they think that different translators took the same ancient manuscript and translated it in different ways. However, that is *not* the case. There are actually *two* groups of manuscripts, not one, and some Bible versions are based on one while others are based on the other. What you are seeing is not different translations of the *same* document, but translations of *different documents*.

You see, there are two different manuscript families: the Received Text (which is sometimes called the Textus Receptus) and the Critical Text (which is sometimes called the Westcott-Hort text). Some translations are based on one while other translations are based on the other. Here is how it breaks down:

Bible Translations based on the Received Text: King James Version (KJV), Geneva Bible, Great Bible, Matthew's Bible, Coverdale Bible, Tyndale Bible

Bible Translations based on the Critical Text: Everything else. (CEV, ESV, GW, GNT, HCSB, ISV, JBP, NAB, NASB, NCV, NET, NIV, NJB, NLT, NKJV (New King James Version), NRSV, REB, TNIV, TM)

One thing you may not have realized is that the New KJV is *not* an updated version of the KJV. It is actually a new translation of the Bible that is based on an entirely different manuscript – the same manuscript that the NIV is based on. (Yes,

I know you were told that the NKJV was just an updated version of the KJV, but you were lied to.)

The reason the KJV is different from the NIV is because they are translations of *different things*. Basically, all versions of the Bible released before the 19th century were based on the Received Text, while all versions since then (NIV, ESV, etc.) are based on the Critical Text.

This raises some important questions. Just what are the differences between the Received Text and the Critical Text? Are there any differences that matter, or are they basically the same? Are there any reasons to trust one manuscript family over the other? Where did these manuscripts come from and what are their histories?

These are important questions, and I will try to answer them.

THE RECEIVED TEXT AND THE CRITICAL TEXT ARE VERY DIFFERENT

The first point I'd like to make is that the Received Text and the Critical Text are different, and they are different in ways that affect the meaning of the text. Take the New Testament, for instance: the differences between the two manuscript families affect 7% of its content. The Critical Text deletes 9,970 Greek words out of 140,521, which amounts to almost 34 pages – roughly the combined lengths of Jude and Revelation²⁸. This is not a minor difference! The Critical Text (which is the basis for all translations of the Bible since the 19th century) eliminates 45 entire verses and 185 partial verses, along with individual words *all throughout the text*. The Critical Text either omits or flags as

²⁸ Thomas Strouse, *Review of "From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man"*, November 2000.

unreliable these verses:

- Matthew 12:47: "Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee."
- Matthew 17:21: "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."
- Matthew 18:11: "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost."
- Matthew 21:44: "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."
- Matthew 23:14: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."
- Mark 7:16: "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear."
- Mark 9:44: "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."
- Mark 9:46: "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."
- Mark 11:26: "But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."
- Mark 15:28: "And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors."
- Mark 16:9-20 (This is the entire ending of the book of Mark, including the Great Commission!)
- Luke 17:36: "Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left."
- Luke 22:43-4: "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony

he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

- Luke 23:17: “(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)”
- John 5:4: “For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.”
- John 7:53-8:11 (This is the story of the woman taken in adultery)
- Acts 8:37: “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”
- Acts 15:34: “Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.”
- Acts 24:7: “But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,”
- Acts 28:29: “And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.”
- Romans 16:24: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”
- 1 John 5:7: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”

These verses are all in the Received Text, but they are not in the Critical Text. Bibles based on the Critical Text either question these verses by adding a footnote saying they are not reliable, or eliminate them altogether. For example, try looking

up Acts 8:37 in your NIV Bible. It's not there, is it? But it *is* in the KJV.

The differences go beyond missing verses or passages; there are also many places where the individual verses are different in some way. I have given a few examples of this below, to illustrate the fact that the differences between the Received Text and the Critical Text are not trivial. In these examples I am using the KJV to illustrate the Received Text and the NIV to illustrate the Critical Text. Keep in mind that these differences are **not** due to different ways of translating the same manuscript; it is due to the fact that *the two versions are based on different manuscripts*.

Colossians 2:18

KJV: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,"

NIV: "Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions."

KJV says "hath not seen" while NIV says "has seen". One is opposite the other.

Luke 2:14

KJV: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

NIV: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

KJV says God's good will is toward men; NIV says it is toward men on whom His favor rests. These are not the same.

Mark 9:24

KJV: "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

NIV: "Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!""

KJV says that the father called Jesus Lord; the NIV does not.

Romans 14:10

KJV: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

NIV: "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat."

KJV says that we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, thus identifying Christ as God and saying that we will stand before Him to be judged. The NIV only identifies it as being God's judgment seat and removes the reference to Christ as God.

Ephesians 3:9

KJV: "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:"

NIV: "and to make plain to everyone the

administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things."

The KJV says that God created all things by Jesus Christ; the NIV does not specifically single out Jesus Christ as the Creator.

Fasting

The NIV removes almost every reference to fasting in the New Testament, including the only verse in the New Testament that gives a reason for fasting. The verses that are altered are: Matthew 17:21, Mark 9:29, Acts 10:30, 1 Corinthians 7:5, 2 Corinthians 6:5, 2 Corinthians 11:27.

Matthew 5:22

KJV: "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

NIV: "But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."

The KJV says angry without a cause; the NIV just says angry. This entirely changes the meaning of what Christ said.

As you can see in just this handful of examples (and there are many more!), the Received Text and the Critical Text are not "basically the same". In fact, this is what one group of translators had to say about it:

“The King James Version has grave defects. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the development of Biblical studies and the discovery of many manuscripts more ancient than those upon which the King James Version was based, made it manifest that these defects are so many and so serious as to call for revision of the English translation.” (Preface to the Revised Standard Version)

For the record, I *do not* agree with this translator; I think the Critical Text is the one that has the grave defects. The reason I used this quote is because I wanted to show you that the people who created the Critical Text did so because they rejected the Received Text and wanted something *different*. There are serious differences between the two – which means that translations based on the Critical Text (such as the NIV or even the NKJV) are different *in important ways* from translations based on the Received Text (such as the KJV or the Geneva Bible).

Given that the two texts are different, the question becomes this: which text is better? Where did the Received Text and the Critical Text come from? Are there any reasons to trust one over the other?

THE RECEIVED TEXT: HANDED DOWN THROUGH TIME

The Received Text (or Textus Receptus, as it is usually called) has a very simple origin: it is the version of the Bible that has been copied and recopied throughout the centuries and handed down through time. It is based on the idea that God has divinely preserved His Word and that the Bible has not become

corrupted or lost. This is important, because the Critical Text is based on the idea that the Bible *has* been lost and needs to be reconstructed by scholars. (I will get to that in the next section.)

Back in the 16th century there were multiple copies of the Greek New Testament available. Erasmus (one of the most eminent scholars of that period) collected these copies and divided them into two groups: those that were the generally accepted (or “generally received”) texts which were held and used by the Greek churches, and those that were based on manuscripts provided by the Catholic Church. Erasmus created what we now call the Received Text by using the manuscripts that had been passed down through time and held by the Greek churches. He ignored the manuscripts that the Catholic Church possessed because he believed they had been corrupted. (The manuscripts that were held by the Catholic Church were later used as the basis for the Critical Text.) After spending many years gathering his source material and separating the manuscripts, he compiled his Greek New Testament in a relatively short amount of time (less than a year).

The Greek texts that Erasmus based his New Testament upon were *not* ancient manuscripts, but were copies that had been copied from other copies down through the centuries. (There are some surviving manuscript fragments that are very old indeed, but no complete manuscripts exist.) This copying process was incredibly exacting. Some of the rules that were used by the ancient scribes are:

- Each column must have no less than 48 and no more than 60 lines. The entire copy must first be lined.
- No word or letter could be written from memory. The scribe must have an authentic copy before him, and he must read and pronounce each word aloud before writing it.
- Revisions must be made within 30 days after the work

was finished; otherwise it was worthless. If three mistakes were found on any page then the entire manuscript was condemned.

- Every word and every letter was counted. If a letter was omitted, an extra letter inserted, or if one letter touched another, the manuscript was condemned and destroyed.
- Copies were made from older copies, but in the process the older copies would wear out from use, which led to their demise. This is why there are no ancient copies of the manuscripts that Erasmus used: they had disintegrated long ago from being copied. There are some examples of very ancient manuscripts that are nearly complete, like the Latin Vulgate, but the reason they survived is because people believed they had been corrupted and refused to use them as source material. In short, the manuscripts that were seen as trustworthy were worn out and lost, while the ones viewed as corrupted survived because no one used them.

In summary, the Received Text is based on the idea that the manuscripts that had been handed down through the centuries were still accurate, had not been corrupted, and could be trusted. People held to this view because they believed that God had divinely preserved His Word through time; they did not believe it had become lost or corrupted.

There are a number of translations that are based on the Received Text. The most famous one is the King James Bible (but *not* the New King James Bible). Other translations based upon it include the Geneva Bible and the Tyndale Bible.

THE CRITICAL TEXT: FROM THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Critical Text is based upon the idea that the Bible has been corrupted over time and we can never really know exactly what it said. Instead, the best we can do is try to reconstruct the Bible through the guesswork of scholars, using manuscripts provided by the Catholic Church. Proponents of this view *do not* believe that God preserved His Word. It should be noted that the Critical Text forms the basis of *all translations of the Bible since the 19th century* (NIV, ESV, NAS, etc.).

The founding principle of the Critical Text is the idea that the text of the Bible has been lost and the best we can do is come up with an approximation of what the Bible might have said. Lest you think I am exaggerating, here are a few quotes from supporters of the Critical Text:

“The ultimate text, if there ever was one that deserves to be so called, is for ever irrecoverable.” (F. C. Conybeare, *History of New Testament Criticism*, 1910, p. 129)

“We do not know the original form of the gospels, and it is quite likely that we never shall.” (Kirsopp Lake, *Family 13, The Ferrar Group*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941, p. vii)

“It is generally recognized that the original text of the Bible cannot be recovered.” (R. M. Grant, “The Bible of Theophilus of Antioch,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 66, 1947, p. 173)

“In general, the whole thing is limited to

probability judgments; the original text of the New Testament, according to its nature, must be and remains a hypothesis" (H. Greeven, *Der Urtext des Neuen Testaments*, 1960, p. 20, cited from Edward Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, p. 67)

"The primary goal of New Testament textual study remains the recovery of what the New Testament writers wrote. We have already suggested that to achieve this goal is well nigh impossible. Therefore we must be content with what Reinhold Niebuhr and others have called, in other contexts, an 'impossible impossibility'" (R. M. Grant, *A Historical Introduction to the New Testament*, 1963, p. 51)

"...every textual critic knows that this similarity of text indicates, rather, that we have made little progress in textual theory since Westcott-Hort; that we simply do not know how to make a definitive determination as to what the best text is; that we do not have a clear picture of the transmission and alteration of the text in the first few centuries; and, accordingly, that the Westcott-Hort kind of text has maintained its dominant position largely by default" (Eldon J. Epp, "The Twentieth Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 43, pp. 390-391)

I'm going to repeat this one more time: the basic idea behind the Critical Text is that the original text of the Bible has been lost, and the best we can do is make educated guesses about it. Note how the people quoted (all *supporters* of the

Critical Text) talk about “probability judgments” and the “recovery” of the New Testament. While the Received Text is based on the idea that God *has* preserved His Word; the Critical Text is based on the idea that God *has not* preserved His word.

The Critical Text is also called the Westcott-Hort Text because of the two primary men behind it, Brooke Foss Westcott (1825-1901) and Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828–1892). Both of these men denied the infallibility of the Scriptures, believed that the Bible was mostly myth and not literal history, and claimed that Christ's death did not atone for our sins. There are many quotes from them that I could give, but I think these are enough to illustrate what they thought about the Bible:

“...the popular doctrine of substitution is an immoral and material counterfeit.” (Hort to Westcott, 1860, cited in *Life of Hort*, Vol. I, p. 430)

“No one now, I suppose, holds that the first three chapters of Genesis give literal history – I could never understand how any one reading them with open eyes could think they did...” (Westcott, writing to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1890, cited in *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott*, Vol. II, p. 69)

“I am inclined to think that no such state as 'Eden' (I mean the popular notion) ever existed, and that Adam's fall in no degree differed from the fall of each of his descendants...” (Westcott, *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott*, Vol. I, p. 78)

As you can see, not only did these men reject the idea that Christ died in our place to save us from our sins, but they

condemned that very idea as being *immoral*. These two men were *not* Christians and held a very low view of Scripture.

These men based their Critical Text on two major manuscripts that came from the Catholic Church (the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus), along with a handful of Egyptian manuscripts. Some of these documents were known to Erasmus when he assembled the Received Text, but like many of his contemporaries Erasmus rejected them because he thought they were corrupt.

The Vaticanus codex (also known also as Codex B) comes from the Vatican Library. Its history dates back to 1475, when it first appeared in the Vatican Library catalog. It is thought to date back to 4th century Egypt. The Sinaiticus codex (known also as Codex Aleph) was discovered by Constantine Tischendorf at Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai; he found the first part of it in 1844 and the second in 1859. Tischendorf found them in a wastebasket, where they had been placed with a lot of other papers that were about to be used to light a stove. (In other words, he found Codex Aleph in the garbage; it had literally been thrown away and was about to be burned.) These two documents form the majority of the differences between the Received Text and the Critical Text. When you see a footnote in your Bible that says "Some ancient manuscripts do not have this verse", it is referring to Codex Aleph and Codex B.

There are a couple points about these ancient manuscripts that should be mentioned. First, all of these documents are thought to have come from ancient Egypt, which was a hotbed of ancient heresies. If you were looking for accurate, faithful copies of the Scriptures it would be hard to pick a worse spot to look than ancient Egypt. At that time the people there had not only rejected orthodox Christianity, but they also thought nothing about modifying the text of the Bible itself. Dr. Edward Hills said this about the subject:

“For all these documents come from Egypt, and Egypt during the early Christian centuries was a land in which heresies were rampant. So much so that, as Bauer (1934) and van Unnik (1958) have pointed out, later Egyptian Christians seem to have been ashamed of the heretical past of their country and to have drawn a veil of silence across it. This seems to be why so little is known of the history of early Egyptian Christianity. In view, therefore, of the heretical character of the early Egyptian Church, it is not surprising that the papyri, B, Aleph, and other manuscripts which hail from Egypt are liberally sprinkled with heretical readings” (*The King James Version Defended*, p. 134)

Second, these documents do not agree among themselves. There are 3,036 differences *in just the Gospels*, not counting minor errors such as spelling (Herman Hoskier, *Codex B and its Allies*, vol. II, p. 1). Not only do these documents have serious disagreements with the Received Text, but they also have serious disagreements with each other!

Incidentally, this is why the supporters of the Critical Text talk about “probability judgments”. Since their two favorite manuscripts do not agree with each other, it is up to each scholar to decide for himself which version of a passage he likes the best.

Third, given that both Codex Aleph and Codex B were found in the possession of the Catholic Church, and that a manuscript very similar to it (the Latin Vulgate) has their official approval, we should take a moment to discuss how the Catholic Church views the Bible. The Catholic Church does not believe that the Bible is authoritative in and of itself; instead it teaches that the Scriptures derive their authority from the Catholic Church and that *only Catholicism* has the power to decide what is canon and what is not. Catholic fathers like Origen (185 AD – 254

AD), Eusebius (270 AD – 340 AD), and Jerome (340 AD – 420 AD) did not see a need to preserve the original Scriptures. Eusebius modified the text at will (not translated it, but *actually changed it*) and Jerome continued his efforts by preserving as canon the changes that Eusebius had made. Jerome's version became the official version of the Catholic Church, and the Council of Trent declared that it was the only authoritative version of the Scriptures – even though churches outside the Catholic Church would have nothing to do with it.

On top of all this, there is an even larger issue: given the way the Catholic Church spent *fifteen centuries* hunting down and killing people for the “crime” of believing that you are saved by grace through faith apart from works, why on earth would any Protestant believe what they have to say about the Bible? Not only has the Catholic Church preached a false gospel for more than a thousand years, but they have aggressively persecuted those who rejected Catholicism. As we discussed earlier in this book, over the course of its history the Catholic Church has murdered an estimated *50 million people*. Given the sheer number of people they have killed over the past 1500 years, it is quite possible that the Catholic Church is the worst enemy that Christianity has ever had. Why would any Protestant believe what they have to say about the text of the Bible?

It should also be noted that the Catholic Church has *vigorously* opposed Bible ownership. In fact, for more than a *thousand years* the Catholic Church ruthlessly hunted down and executed people for the crime of having a copy of the Bible. **Pope Gregory IX (1227 – 1241)** prohibited people from owning Bibles and prohibited Bible translations from being made. The **Council of Toulouse (1129)** and the **Council of Tarragona (1234)** prohibited people from possessing *or reading* translations of the Bible that were made in the common languages (the only languages that people could actually understand). Those who were found to possess Bibles (or portions thereof) were executed

and their Bibles were burned. **Pope Gregory X (1271 – 1276)** ordered that all copies of the Bible that had been translated into the common tongues be brought to Bishops and burned. **Pope Julius III (1550 – 1555)** issued a series of bulls commanding the destruction of all heretical and Lutheran books. This included vernacular translations of the Bible. **Pope Paul IV (1555 – 1559)** prohibited the possession of Bible translations not permitted by the Inquisition. Those who were found to possess Bibles were executed.

The Council of Trent prohibited *anyone* from reading the Bible without a license. **Pope Clement VII (1592 – 1605)** forbade anyone from granting these licenses, thus prohibiting the common people from reading the Bible under any circumstances. He then sent “missionaries” to the valley of Piedmont *for the express purpose of destroying all Bibles in that area* and those who owned them. Nicholas Walsh was murdered while in the act of translating the first Irish New Testament. **Pope Benedict XIV (1740 – 1758)** confirmed the Council of Trent's prohibitions against Bible translations. **Pope Pius VII (1800 – 1823)** *condemned* the Bible societies of the 19th century – and on and on it goes.

Given that the Catholic Church has a history of both modifying the text of the Bible *and executing people who dared to own a copy of it*, why would anyone believe that the manuscripts they provided can be trusted? The Catholic Church has done its very best to stamp out Bible ownership entirely. They have killed millions of people because they rejected salvation by works. When they come forward and claim that certain words and verses ought to be deleted from the Bible based on manuscripts *that they have provided*, why would anyone believe them?

All of this is on top of the fact that Codex Aleph and Codex B are quite different and contradict each other in many places. Since the two manuscripts are so inconsistent, Westcott

and Hort developed something called Textual Criticism in order to reconcile the problems. (This, incidentally, is where the name “Critical Text” came from). Some of its guiding principles are as follows:

- In matters of textual criticism, the Bible is to be treated just like any other book.

Westcott and Hort believed that there is no principle of divine inspiration and preservation. They did not believe that God had preserved His Word, or that there was anything particularly special about the Bible. They taught that it should be treated just like any other book. This is how they put it:

“The principles of criticism explained in the foregoing section hold good for all ancient texts preserved in a plurality of documents. In dealing with the text of the New Testament no new principle whatever is needed or legitimate” (Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, vol. 2, Introduction and Appendix, 1881).

The next time someone mentions “textual criticism”, remember that one of its guiding principles is that *there is nothing special about the Bible*.

- Early Christians were not careful about the text of the New Testament and had no special interest in its exact preservation.

Westcott and Hort believed that Christians were careless when they copied the New Testament and didn't really care if

their copies were accurate or not. That is completely wrong; as we mentioned earlier, the copies that were handed down through the centuries were made with great care.

However, this *was* true in ancient Egypt – *the very place where Westcott and Hort got the manuscripts they used to create their Greek New Testament!* They chose to reject manuscripts that had been carefully copied for centuries, and instead used manuscripts from a region that was known for both careless copying and tampering with the text!

- The Received Text that creates the foundation of the King James Bible is consistent because in the 4th century a group of editors got together and smoothed out any differences.

Westcott and Hort believed that the only reason the Received Text manuscripts are so uniform and free from contradiction (which should be a big point in their favor) is because someone got together and fixed all of the manuscripts. The problem with this theory is that there is no evidence such a council ever happened. One person put it this way:

“The weakness of Westcott and Hort’s theory of a 4th century Syrian revision which resulted in the substitution of the majority text of the B Aleph text is that such a revision is unknown to history. The whole scheme rests upon a supposition for which there is no historical evidence, and consists largely in making dogmatic assertions based upon uncertainties” (Terence Brown, *What is Wrong with the Modern Versions of the Holy Scriptures?* Trinitarian Bible Society, Article No. 41)

- The traditional text (received text) did not exist prior to the middle of the third century.

Westcott and Hort believed that the Received Text was only invented in the middle of the 3rd century and did not exist before that. This is not true! Writings of the Church fathers that predate the 3rd century contain thousands of quotations from it. Let me repeat that, in case you missed it: when the early Church quoted from the Bible they quoted the *Received Text*. Their quotations do *not* match the Critical Text. That alone ought to tell you which version can be trusted and which one can't.

- Manuscripts that are characterized by contradictions should be preferred over those that are not.

Westcott and Hort believed that manuscripts that were full of contradictions and problems were the best ones to use. They avoided clean manuscripts and preferred to work with texts that were full of problems and errors!

- Textual critics can use guesswork to determine the true correct reading.

Westcott and Hort believed that the true reading could be determined *by guesswork*. All a critic had to do was look at the different readings and picked the one they liked the best. Lest you think I am making this up, I checked the translator's notes at the back of my NIV Bible. This is what they had to say:

The Greek text used in translating the New Testament was an eclectic one. No other piece of

ancient literature has such an abundance of manuscript witnesses as does the New Testament. Where existing manuscripts differ, the translators made their choice of readings according to accepted principles of New Testament textual criticism. Footnotes call attention to places where there was uncertainty about what the original text was.

The word “eclectic” means “selecting or choosing from various sources”. The translators of the NIV actually come right out and admit that the NIV is based on manuscripts that contradict each other. In order to arrive at a final reading the translators used the rules of *textual criticism* – the very rules that we just discussed! A group of translators picked the reading they happened to like the best and just went with it – and that is the foundation for *every single modern translation of the Bible*. The only translations of the Bible that are *not* based on textual criticism are ones that predate the 19th century, like the King James Bible and the Geneva Bible.

DID GOD PRESERVE HIS WORD?

This issue really comes down to just one point: either God *did* preserve His Word, or He did not. If He did then we can know with certainty what God has revealed to mankind. We can live with confidence because we know that the words written in the Bible truly are the actual words of God. We can trust it with our lives because it contains exactly what God has said.

However, if God did *not* preserve His Word then that means His Word has been lost. It means that the Bible *might* contain God's revelation, but then again it might not. The Bible might have critical omissions or errors. Important things might

have been lost. All we can do is trust scholars to make their best guesses and then hope that those guesses are right. It means that we have to trust a document that *isn't trustworthy*.

Sure, you can argue that the original autographs are inspired and infallible and perfect in every way, but if God didn't preserve them in that state then that makes no difference. The Bible's inspiration only matters *if the original text has been preserved*. If it hasn't then the best we can do is make guesses about what God might have said. It means that the eternal, all-powerful God revealed His Word to mankind, commanded us to base our very souls on it, and then allowed it to be lost and corrupted. Let me repeat that: it means that *God willingly died for our sins but couldn't be bothered to keep His Word from being lost*. If that is true then the salvation of your soul depends upon a document that can't be trusted and that might be wrong in critical ways.

It's worth noting that God promised repeatedly that He would preserve His words – not His thoughts or ideas, but His *words*. Take a look for yourself:

Matthew 5:18: "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Matthew 24:35: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

Isaiah 40:8: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

God could not be more clear: "my words shall not pass away." He didn't say that His basic thoughts or ideas would be preserved; He said that His *words* would be preserved. That is a

very important promise.

Incidentally, it is useless to say “Well, God preserved His Word in Heaven, but it's been corrupted and lost on Earth”. You see, God gave His Word to *mankind*. If His Word has been lost on Earth then it can no longer accomplish its purpose. A Word that has been preserved in Heaven but lost on Earth is completely useless. After all, God gave it to us so that we might have hope:

Romans 15:4: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

If the Word has been lost then how can we have hope in it? How can we proclaim the gospel to the whole world (which is what God commanded us to do) if the Bible has been corrupted and we no longer know what it says? If the Bible has not been preserved then it *cannot be trusted* – and if the Bible cannot be trusted then Christianity cannot be trusted either.

TWO DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHIES

Despite what you may think, this is not about the King James Bible or the NIV Bible. The real issue is the two different manuscript families and the philosophies that are behind them. The Received Text is based upon the idea that God has preserved His Word through the centuries and that we can trust the text that has been copied and recopied. It claims that the text of the Bible has not been lost but has been divinely preserved. The King James Bible, the Geneva Bible, and the Tyndale Bible are all based on this.

On the other hand, the Critical Text is based on the idea that the text of the Bible *has* been lost. It claims that the

manuscripts we should trust the most are the ones that come from the Catholic Church – the very same church that spent more than *a thousand years* hunting down and murdering anyone who dared to own a copy of the Bible. It claims that while we can never really know what the Bible originally said, we can come up with an approximation by applying guesswork and the rules of textual criticism – rules made up by two men who believed that the Bible was largely myth and that Christ's death did not atone for our sins. The Critical Text is missing more than 30 pages of text from the New Testament, including individual words, verses, and entire passages. All modern translations are based on this foundation, including the ESV, the NIV, the NAS, the New KJV, the HCSB, and so forth.

Let me say this one more time: the real issue is *the manuscripts that the translations are based on*. Some churches proudly proclaim that they are “KJV Only” churches and denounce all other translations as coming straight from Hell. Some claim that the KJV is a divinely inspired translation, while others bizarrely insist that the original manuscripts of the Bible were written in English and reject anyone who claims otherwise. All of that is utter nonsense. I use the KJV because it is based on the Received Text and because I trust the Received Text more than I trust the Critical Text. However, it is by no means the only translation that is founded upon the Received Text; other translations that use it include the Geneva Bible, the Great Bible, Matthew's Bible, the Coverdale Bible, and the Tyndale Bible. Even if you side with the Received Text, there is absolutely no reason to be “KJV Only”. That is just going too far.

I have written this chapter for two reasons: first, so that you will understand why I use the KJV, and second, so that you will understand what the issues are surrounding the various translations of the Bible. When you select a translation you are also selecting a philosophy. I want to make sure you understand exactly what choice you are making – because you *are* making a

choice, whether you realize it or not.

HASN'T THE KJV BEEN CHANGED COUNTLESS TIMES?

One common argument against the KJV is that it has been changed thousands of times. This argument is made so often that you would imagine it was true, but it's actually very misleading.

It *is* true that there have been corrections made for printing errors, typographical changes, and spelling updates. The punctuation has also been updated. However, these changes were quite minor and *do not affect the actual translation*. Changing a word because it is spelled differently now than it was 400 years ago is not a big deal. Likewise, there is no reason for anyone to panic just because the rules of punctuation have changed over the past four centuries.

Dr. Donald Waite of Bible for Today compared the 1611 KJV with the 1917 KJV. Out of 791,328 words, he found only 1,095 changes that affected the way that the verses sound. The vast majority of these changes were minor – “towards” was changed to “toward”, “burnt” was changed to “burned”, etc. There were only 136 substantial changes, most of which were printer's errors that were corrected within 28 years of the KJV's original publication. Some of these 136 changes are:

1 Samuel 16:12 -- “requite good” changed to “requite me good”

Esther 1:8 -- “for the king” changed to “for so the king”

Isaiah 47:6 -- “the” changed to “thy”

Isaiah 49:13 -- “God” changed to “Lord”

Isaiah 57:8 “made a” changed to “made thee a”

Ezekiel 3:11 -- "the people" changed to "the children of thy people"

Nahum 3:17 -- "the crowned" changed to "thy crowned"

Acts 8:32 -- "shearer" changed to "his shearer"

Acts 16:1 -- "which was a Jew" changed to "which was a Jewess"

1 Peter 2:5 -- "sacrifice" changed to "sacrifices"

Jude 1:25 -- "now and ever" changed to "both now and ever"

So no, the KJV has *not* been changed thousands of times.
It is still the same as it was when it was released in 1611.

