

# Concerning Bible Translations

If you walk into a Christian bookstore you'll discover there are a *lot* of different translations of the Bible. 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? How can you tell which ones are good and which ones should be avoided? Is there a way to learn more about Bible translations that doesn't involve going to seminary and learning Hebrew and Greek?

Many people don't spend much time thinking about this. It's a difficult subject and is rarely discussed in churches – but it's extremely important! You see, God requires us to live our lives by His Word. That means it's *very* important to make sure the Bible we're reading is an accurate representation of what God has said! If the translation that we're using is wrong then we're in a lot of trouble.

What makes all of this so complicated is the fact that the Bible wasn't written in English. Its original manuscripts contain a variety of languages, with the Old Testament being mostly Hebrew and the New Testament being mostly Greek. Before we can understand the Scriptures they must be translated, and translating ancient languages is hard.

When people walk into a Christian bookstore and look at different translations of the Bible they may assume that each one represents a different translation of the same manuscript. In other words, different translators took the same ancient document and translated it in different ways. However, that's *not* the case. There are actually *two* groups of manuscripts, not one! Some Bible translations are based on one while others are based on the other. What you're seeing is not different translations of the *same* document, but translations of *different* documents.

There are two major 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 the Received Text while other translations are based on the Critical Text. Here's 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's actually a new translation of the Bible that's based on an entirely different manuscript – the same manuscript the NIV is based on. The key reason the KJV is different from the NIV is because they're translations of *different things*. Nearly all English translations of the Bible which were released before the 19<sup>th</sup> century were based on the Received Text, while nearly all translations made since then (the NIV, ESV, etc.) were based on the Critical Text.

This raises some important questions. 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'll try to answer them.

## **The Received Text And The Critical Text Are Very Different**

The Received Text and the Critical Text 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 Revelation<sup>1</sup>. This isn't a minor difference! The Critical Text (which is the basis for all translations of the Bible since the 19<sup>th</sup> century) eliminates 45 entire verses and 185 partial verses, along with individual words *all throughout the text*. The Critical Text omits, cuts, or flags as 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.”

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1 Thomas Strouse, Review of “From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man”, November 2000.

- **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're not included in the Critical Text. Bibles which are based on the Critical Text either question these verses (by adding a footnote that says they're not reliable) or by eliminating 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 individual verses are different in some way. I've listed a few examples below to illustrate the fact that the differences between the Received Text and the Critical Text aren't trivial. In these examples I'm 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. They're 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 these examples (and there are many more!), the Received Text and the Critical Text are not basically the same. 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 major differences between the two manuscript families, which means that translations that are based on the Critical Text (such as the NIV or even the NKJV) are different *in important ways* from translations that are based on the Received Text (such as the KJV or the Geneva Bible).

Given that the two texts are different, 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 the Textus Receptus, as it's sometimes called) has a very simple origin: it's the version of the Bible which has been copied and recopied throughout the centuries and handed down through time. It's based on the idea that God has divinely preserved His Word and that the Bible hasn't 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.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century there were many different copies of the Greek New Testament available. Erasmus (one of the greatest 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 is now called the Received Text by using the manuscripts which had been passed down through time and held by the Greek churches. He rejected the manuscripts the Catholic Church provided 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 years gathering his source material and separating 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 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 or 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 have survived is because people (like Erasmus) believed that 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.

The Received Text is based on the idea that God has divinely preserved His Word through time and has prevented it from being corrupted or lost. For that reason it makes sense to trust that the manuscripts which have been handed down through the centuries are accurate, have not been corrupted, and can be relied upon.

There are a few translations that are based on the Received Text. The most famous one is the King James Bible (but *not* the New King James Bible). There are others as well, such as 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 through the ages and we can never really know 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 nearly *all translations of the Bible since the 19<sup>th</sup> century* (NIV, ESV, NAS, etc.).

Once again, the core 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 it might have said. Lest you think I'm 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 Neibuhr 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 what it might have said. Notice 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 didn't 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)

Not only did these men reject the idea that Christ died in our place to save us from our sins, but they also condemned such a thing as *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 (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 he rejected them because he believed 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's thought to date back to 4<sup>th</sup> century Egypt – although there's a case to be made that it's a forgery and isn't ancient at all.

The Sinaiticus codex, known also as Codex Aleph, was supposedly discovered by Constantine Tischendorf at Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai (although there's a strong case this document is a forgery as well). He claimed to have discovered the first part of it in 1844 and the second in 1859. 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's referring to Codex Aleph and Codex B.

For reasons I'll discuss later I believe that at least Sinaiticus is a forgery. However, even if you accept these documents as genuine ancient manuscripts there are still solid reasons to mistrust them. First of all, if these documents are real then they would have come from ancient Egypt, which was a hotbed of ancient heresies. If you were looking for faithful copies of the Scriptures it would be hard to pick a worse spot to look than ancient Egypt! The people of ancient Egypt 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 don't agree among themselves. There are 3,036 differences *in just the four 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 disagree with each other! Incidentally, this is why the supporters of the Critical Text talk about "probability judgments". Since their two favorite manuscripts don't agree with each other it's 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 doesn't 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's canon and what's not. Catholic fathers like Origen (185 AD – 254 AD), Eusebius (270 AD – 340 AD), and Jerome (340 AD – 420 AD) didn't 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 made. Jerome's version became the official version of the Roman 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

refused to have anything to do with it.

On top of all this there's an even larger issue. Given the fact that the Catholic Church spent *fifteen centuries* hunting down and killing people for believing that you're saved by grace through faith alone (apart from works), why would any Protestant believe what Catholicism has to say about the Bible? Not only has the Catholic Church preached a false gospel for more than a thousand years, but they've aggressively persecuted those who rejected Catholicism<sup>2</sup>. Over the course of its history the Catholic Church has murdered an estimated *50 million people*. Given the sheer number of people the church has killed over the centuries it's existed, it's quite possible that the Catholic Church is the worst enemy that Christianity has ever had.

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 the common 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 which 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

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2 For more information on this topic see: <http://stories.cyragon.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Catholicism.pdf>



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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 which they provided can be trusted? The Catholic Church has done its very best to stamp out Bible ownership entirely. It's killed millions of people who rejected salvation by works. When the Catholic Church comes forward and claims that certain words and verses ought to be deleted from the Bible based on nothing more than manuscripts *that they provided*, why would anyone believe them?

As was said earlier, Codex Aleph and Codex B are quite different. They 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 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's no principle of divine inspiration and preservation. They didn't believe that God had preserved His Word or that there was anything particularly special about the Bible. They believed 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's 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 care if their copies were accurate or not. This is completely wrong! As we discussed earlier, the Scriptures which 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 which 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 uniform and free from contradiction is because someone got together and fixed all the manuscripts. The problem with this theory is that there's no evidence such a council ever happened. One person put it this way:

“The weakness of Westcott and Hort's theory of a 4<sup>th</sup> 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 didn't exist before that. This belief is false. There are many writings from the early church which predate the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and contain *thousands* of quotations from it. The only way the early church could have quoted the Received Text is if it existed at the time!

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

Westcott and Hort believed that manuscripts which 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 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 is look at the different readings and pick the one they like best.

Lest you think I'm making this up, I checked the translator's notes at the back of my NIV Bible. This is what they said:

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 came right out and admit that the NIV is based on manuscripts which contradict each other. In order to arrive at a final reading the translators used the rules of *textual criticism* – the very rules we just discussed! A group of translators picked the reading they happened to like the best and went with it – and that's the foundation for nearly *every modern translation of the Bible*.

# The Sinaiticus Codex (Aleph) Is A Fraud

There's good reason to believe that “Codex Aleph” is actually a modern forgery and isn't an ancient document at all. How do we know this? Because the person who created it has come forward and told his story. This is what Dr. William Cooper wrote in *The Forging of Codex Sinaiticus*:

“To cut a very long story short, in the 1830s [Constantine] Simonides was commissioned by an official of the Greek Orthodox Church to write a likeness of an ancient copy of the Bible which was supposed to be a gift for the then Tsar of Russia. It was meant to be a 'thank you' present for the many rich kindnesses that the Tsar had bestowed on the church. Simonides, taken in by the lie, duly fulfilled his commission, writing the book out at the Mount Athos monastery, and had supposed the book (which he referred to as Codex Simonides) to have been on its way to the Tsar when he later came across it, much altered and aged, whilst visiting St Catherine's monastery in the Sinai desert. He was profoundly disturbed at the evasive answers that he was given when he asked how the codex came to be at Sinai, and was even more disturbed when he found it later being published and broadcast as a genuine and ancient copy of the Scriptures. He immediately went public about his own authorship of the manuscript, though to no avail of course. The world was eagerly swallowing the lies that were being told about his book, now renamed Codex Sinaiticus, whilst he himself was being denounced as a hopeless fraud.”

The Catholic Church has a long history of advancing its doctrines by creating fraudulent manuscripts, and Codex Aleph is just the latest example of this. It seems that the Catholic Church used Simonides to create a fraudulent manuscript and then used that fraud to deceive the world into rejecting the Received Text and accepting an extremely corrupted Critical Text. That fraud was so successful that it impacted nearly every translation of the Bible which exists today (with the exception of the King James Version).

There's exceptionally strong evidence that Codex Aleph is a fraud. Here's how Dr. Cooper sums it up (*The Forging of Codex Sinaiticus*, chapter 12):

“1) The entire manuscript is written on parchment that is unoxidized, supple and certainly not as ancient as it is claimed, and whose collagen is virtually undecayed.

“2) Almost every page of the manuscript bears telltale signs of forgery, mostly involving fading the text and discoloring the page in a most amateurish attempt to make it look much older than it truly is.

“3) Certain pages are unnaturally and inexplicably mutilated.

“4) Some pages display square wormholes. Others display 'normal' wormholes aplenty, yet there are no lines of ingress that a real worm would have made to reach the tastiest portions. There are also no matching wormholes in the immediately adjacent pages to account for them.

“5) The Codex contains a text of the Epistle of Barnabas which is written in essentially modern

Greek and contains many grammatical and vocabularic evidences of having been translated into Greek from a late Latin recension. It is written, moreover, in the same hand - "Scribe A" - as most of the New Testament. It also complies with many of the scholarly emendations of that Latin text that had been suggested and recommended by scholars who lived and worked during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; and its text, moreover, is identical to that printed by Simonides in 1843, sixteen years before Tischendorf found it nestling inside Sinaiticus.

"6) The Codex also contains a text of the Shepherd of Hermes which is again in modern Greek and contains many grammatical and vocabularic evidences of having been translated into Greek from a late Latin recension, most likely the Palatine. Its text is also identical to that printed by Simonides (through Leipzig University) in 1856, some three years before Tischendorf found it nestling within the pages of Sinaiticus.

"7) And finally, there is an act of sheer fraud in the removal from Sinaiticus' pages of the ending of Mark's Gospel and its substitution with a fake ending, carried out by the same scribe who removed the ending of Mark's Gospel from Codex Vaticanus and substituted it with a fake but identical ending to that in Sinaiticus. Scholars and modern editions of the Bible which claim that the best and most ancient manuscripts omit Mark 16:9-20 are merely perpetuating a lie based upon an act of sheer fraud.

“Any one of these points would be damning enough proof on its own, but when all the points are brought together then they are damning evidence indeed. Codex Sinaiticus is a fake, and is no fit authority by which to judge or assess the Scriptures, the immutable Word of God.

“That Word has been preserved pure and entire in the Textus Receptus – the Received Text – of which all the Reformation Bibles of Europe are translations. The Textus Receptus is attested and verified by more than 5000 early manuscript witnesses, against the one or two demonstrably forged manuscripts which support Sinaiticus and Vaticanus which are themselves forgeries. The Received Text, translated into English in the King James Bible, therefore has no rival.”

## **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 He has revealed to mankind. We can live with confidence because we know that the words which are written in the Bible truly are the actual words of God. We can trust the Scriptures with our lives because they contains exactly what God has said.

However, if God did *not* preserve His Word then that means His Word has been lost. It means the Bible *might* contain God's revelation, but then again it might not. The Bible could 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*.

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 it 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 live our lives by it, and then allowed it to be lost and corrupted. It means that *God willingly died for our sins but was unwilling to keep His Word from being lost*. If that's true then the salvation of your soul depends on a document that can't be trusted and which might be wrong in critical ways.

It's worth noting that God repeatedly promised 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 couldn't 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's a very important promise!

It's useless to say that God may have preserved His Word in Heaven, but it's been corrupted and lost on Earth. God gave His Word to *mankind*. If His Word has been lost on Earth then it can no longer accomplish its purpose! A Bible that's been preserved in

Heaven but lost on Earth is useless to us. One of the reasons God gave His Word to us is 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 Bible 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 hasn't been preserved then it can't *be trusted* – and if the Bible can't be trusted then Christianity can't be trusted either.

## Two Different Philosophies

This isn't about the King James Bible or the NIV Bible. The real issue is the two different manuscript families and the philosophies which are behind them. The Received Text is based on the idea that God has preserved His word through the centuries and we can trust the text that's been copied and recopied. It claims 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 these principles.

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 best manuscripts are the ones which come from the Catholic Church – the very church that spent *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 a good approximation by using guesswork and the rules of textual criticism – rules invented up by two men who believed that the Bible was largely myth and Christ's death didn't 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. Nearly all modern translations are based on this foundation, including the ESV, the NIV, the NAS, the New KJV, and the HCSB.

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're "KJV Only" 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 nonsense. The reason I use the KJV is because it's based on the Received Text and I trust the Received Text more than the Critical Text. However, it's not the only translation that's founded upon the Received Text. Even if you side with the Received Text there's no reason to be "KJV Only". That's going too far.

I wrote this document for two reasons: so that you'll understand why I use the KJV, and so that you'll understand the issues surrounding Bible translations. When you choose a translation you're also choosing a philosophy. I want to make sure you understand exactly what choice you're 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's been changed countless times. This argument is made so often that you might imagine it's 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 *don't affect the actual translation*. Changing a word because it's spelled differently now than it was 400 years ago is not a big deal! Likewise, there's 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 25 -- “now and ever” changed to “both now and ever”

The KJV has *not* been changed thousands of times. It's still the same as it was when it was released in 1611.