

MINEOLA BIBLE INSTITUTE AND SEMINARY

Page | 1

The King James Version of the Bible

Radically Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity



Bishop D.R. Vestal, PhD
Larry L Yates, ThD, DMin

“Excellence in Apostolic Education since 1991”

Copyright © 2019

Mineola Bible Institute and Seminary

All Rights Reserved

Page | 2

This lesson material may not be used in any manner for reproduction in any language or use without the written permission of Mineola Bible Institute and Seminary

The King James Version of the Bible

Copyright by James Jackson
(Used by Permission)

Page | 4

The King James Version of the Bible offers traditional and scholarly reading. Clearly the Majority Text faithfully preserves the inspired revelation. The Majority Text faithfully represents the inspired text of the Scriptures. This text is sometimes called, the Byzantine Text, the Received Text (Exteroeptors) or the Traditional Text. It is the most accurate translation of the inspired Word of God, of which Erasmus, played a major part in giving us.

The Authorized King James text has faithfully served the body of Christ for almost 400 years. I know that God has the power to preserve His Word and that He wouldn't leave us out in the dark with an "imperfect" translation. In the Authorized King James Version, God assembled, and moved with His Spirit, a team of some of the world's best scholars to translate His Word into the world's most popular language, English.

The complete translator's notes of the Authorized King James scholars are not included in today's editions. This is unfortunate because these notes say a lot about these men - they were humble, loved the Word of God, loved the king, were berated by the Catholic religion, and they desired a translation for the common man who was kept in darkness. Some of the translators were killed for their faith. This book was forged in blood and tears.

Unlike many of today's translators, the Authorized KJV translators let us know which words they had to add in translating, in order to give the full meaning of the original text (these are the words in italics in the KJV). Other translators have added words too - but, they don't tell you what they've added. These men went through the extra trouble of identifying which words they added. That's real scholarship and integrity.

Let's not accept the premise that the tried and true Authorized King James is somehow outdated and is to be replaced by dozens of new translations. A standard test determined the Authorized KJV reading level to be 5th grade, because it contains mostly one and two-syllabic words, making it one of the easiest to read.

One of the leading principles of the Protestant Reformation was the sole and absolute authority of the Holy Scriptures. The New Testament text in which early Protestants placed such implicit reliance was the Textus Receptus (Received Text), which was first printed in 1516, under the editorship of Erasmus.

The defense of the Textus Receptus is a necessary part of the defense of Protestantism. It is entailed by the logic of faith, the basic steps of which are as follows: 1st, the Old Testament text was preserved by the Old Testament Priesthood and the scribes and scholars that grouped themselves around that Priesthood. 2nd, the New Testament text was preserved by the universal priesthood of believers by faithful Christians in every walk of life. 3rd, the Traditional Text, found in the vast majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts, is the True Text, because it represents the God-guided usage of this universal priesthood of believers. 4th, the first printed text of the Greek New Testament was not a blunder or a set-back, but a forward step in the providential preservation of the New Testament. Hence, the few significant departures of that text from the Traditional Text are only God's providential corrections of the Traditional Text in those few places in which such corrections were needed. 5th, through the usage of Bible-believing Protestants, God placed the stamp of His approval on this first printed text, and it became the Textus Receptus (Received Text).

The formation of the Textus Receptus was guided by the special providence of God. There were three ways in which the editors of the Textus Receptus; Erasmus, Stephanus, Beza, and the Elzevirs, were providentially guided. In the 1st place, they were guided by the manuscripts, which God in His providence, had made available to them. In the 2nd place, they were guided by the providential circumstances in which

they found themselves. Then in the 3rd place, and most of all, they were guided by the common faith. Long before the Protestant Reformation, the God-guided usage of the Church had produced throughout Western Christendom, a common faith concerning the New Testament text, namely, a general belief, that the currently Received New Testament text, primarily the Greek text and secondarily, the Latin text, was the True New Testament Text, which had been preserved by God's special providence. It was this common faith, that guided Erasmus and the other early editors of the Textus Receptus.

The logic of faith leads us 1st, to a belief in the infallible inspiration of the original Scriptures, 2nd, to a belief in the providential preservation of this original text, down through the ages, and 3rd, to a belief in the Bible text, current among believers, as the providentially preserved original text. This is the common faith, which has always been present among Christians. For Christ and His Word are inseparable, and faith in Him and in the Holy Scriptures has been the common characteristic of all true believers, from the beginning. Always, they have regarded the current Bible text, as the infallibly inspired and providentially preserved True Text.

This faith, however, has from time to time, been distorted by the intrusion of unbiblical ideas. For example, many Jews and early Christians believed, that the inspiration of the Old Testament had been repeated, three times. According to them, not only had the original Old Testament writers been inspired, but also Ezra, who rewrote the whole Old Testament, after it had been lost. And the Septuagint, likewise, they maintained, had been infallibly inspired. Also, the Roman Catholics have distorted the common faith, by their false doctrine, that the authority of the Scriptures rests on the authority of the Church. It was this erroneous view, that led the Roman Catholics to adopt the Latin Vulgate, rather than the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, as its authoritative Bible. And finally, many conservative Christians today, distort the common faith by their adherence to the theories of naturalistic New Testament textual criticism. They smile at the legends concerning Ezra and the Septuagint, but they themselves, have concocted a myth even more absurd, namely, that the true New Testament text

was lost for more than 1,500 years and then restored by Westcott and Hort. But, in spite of these distortions, due to human sin and error, this common faith in Christ and in His Word has persisted among believers from the days of the Apostles until now, and God has used this common faith providentially to preserve the Holy Scriptures. Let us now consider how it guided Erasmus and his successors in their editorial labors on the Textus Receptus.

Erasmus was born at Rotterdam in 1466; the illegitimate son of a priest, but well cared for by his parents. After their early death, he was given the best education available to a young man of his day at first, at Deventer and then at the Augustinian monastery, at Steyn. In 1492, he was ordained, priest, but there is no record that he every functioned, as such. By 1495, he was studying in Paris. In 1499, he went to England, where he made the helpful friendship of John Colet, later dean of St. Paul's who quickened his interest in Biblical studies. He then went to France and the Netherlands.

In 1505, he again visited England and then passed three years, in Italy. In 1509, he returned to England, for the third time, and taught at Cambridge University, until 1514. In 1515, he went to Basil, where he published his New Testament in 1516, then back to the Netherlands for a sojourn at the University of Louvain. Then he returned to Basil, in 1521, and remained there until 1529, in which year he removed to the imperial town of Freiburg-im-Breisgau. Finally, in 1535, he again returned to Basil and died there the following year, in the midst of Protestant friends, without relations of any sort, so far as known, with the Roman Catholic Church.

One might think that all this moving around would have interfered with Erasmus' activity as a scholar and writer, but quite the reverse is true. By his travels, he was brought into contact with all the intellectual currents of his time and stimulated to almost superhuman efforts. He became the most famous scholar and author of his day and one of the most prolific writers of all time, his collected works filling ten large volumes in Leclerc edition of 1705. As an editor, also, his productivity was tremendous. Ten

columns of the catalogue of the library in the British Museum are taken up with the bare enumeration of the works translated, edited, or annotated by Erasmus, and their subsequent reprints. Included are the greatest names of the classical and patristic world, such as Ambrose, Aristotle, Augustine, Basil, Chrysostom, Cicero, and Jerome. An almost unbelievable showing. To conclude, there was no man in all Europe better prepared, than Erasmus, for the work of editing the first printed Greek New Testament text, and this is why, we may well believe, God chose him and directed him providentially in the accomplishment of this task.

In order to understand how God guided Erasmus providentially, let us consider the three alternative views, which held in Erasmus' day, concerning the preservation of the New Testament text, namely, the "humanistic" view, the "scholastic" view, and the "common" view, which is also called the "common faith."

The "humanistic" view was well represented by the writings of Laurentius Valla (1405-57), a famous scholar of the Italian renaissance. Valla emphasized the importance of language. According to him, the decline of civilization, in the dark ages, was due to the decay of the Greek and Latin languages. Hence, it was only through the study of classical literature, that the glories of ancient Greece and Rome, could be recaptured. Valla also wrote a treatise on the Latin Vulgate, comparing it with certain Greek New Testament manuscripts, that he had in his possession. Erasmus, who from his youth, had been an admirer of Valla, found a manuscript of Valla's treatise, in 1504, and had it printed in the following year. In this work, Valla favored the Greek New Testament text over the Vulgate. The Latin text often differed from the Greek, he reported. Also, there were omissions and additions in the Latin translation, and the Greek wording was generally better, than that of the Latin.

The "scholastic" theologians, on the other hand, warmly defended the Latin Vulgate, as the only true New Testament text. In 1514, Martin Dorp of the University of Louvain wrote to Erasmus asking him not to publish his forthcoming Greek New Testament. Dorp argued, that if the Vulgate contained falsification of the original Scriptures and

errors, the Church would have been wrong, for many centuries, which was impossible. The references of most Church Councils, to the Vulgate, Dorp insisted, proved that the Church considered this Latin version to be the official Bible and not the Greek New Testament, which, he maintained, had been corrupted by the heretical Greek Church. And after Erasmus' Greek New Testament had been published, in 1516, Stunica, a noted Spanish scholar, accused it of being an open condemnation of the Latin Vulgate, the version of the Church. And about the same time, Peter Sutor, once of the Sorbonne and later, a Carthusian monk, declared that, "If one, in one point, the Vulgate were in error, the entire authority of Holy Scripture, would collapse."

Believing Bible students today, are often accused of taking the same extreme position, in regard to the King James Version, that Peter Sutor took more than 450 years ago, in regard to the Latin Vulgate. But, this is false. We take the third position, which we have mentioned, namely, the "common" view. In Erasmus' day, this view occupied the middle ground between the humanistic view and the scholastic view. Those that held this view, acknowledged that the Scriptures had been providentially preserved, down through the ages. They did not, however, agree with the scholastic theologians in tying this providential preservation to the Latin Vulgate. On the contrary, along with Laurentius Valla and other humanists, they asserted the superiority of the Greek New Testament text.

This "common" view remained a faith, rather than a well-articulated theory. No one, at that time, drew the logical, but unpalatable conclusion, that the Greek Church, rather than the Roman Church had been the providentially appointed guardian of the New Testament text. But this view, though vaguely apprehended, was widely held, so much so, that it may justly be called, the "common" view. Before the Council of Trent (1546), it was favored by some of the highest officials of the Roman Church, notably, it seems, by Leo X, who was Pope from 1513 to 1521, and to whom Erasmus dedicated his New Testament. Erasmus' close friends also, John Colet, for example, and Thomas Moore and Jacques LeFevre, all of whom, like Erasmus, sought to reform the Roman Catholic

Church from within, likewise adhere, to this “common” view. Even the scholastic theologian, Martin Dorp, was finally persuaded by Thomas Moore, to adopt it.

In the days of Erasmus, therefore, it was commonly believed by well-informed Christians, that the original New Testament text, had been providentially preserved in the current New Testament text, primarily in the current Greek text, and secondarily, in the current Latin text. Erasmus was influenced by this “common” faith, and probably shared it, and God used it providentially, to guide Erasmus in his editorial labors, on the *Textus Receptus*.

Between the years 1516 and 1535, Erasmus published five editions of the Greek New Testament. In the first edition (1516), the text was preceded by a dedication to Pope Leo X, an exhortation to the reader, a discussion of the method used, and a defense of this method. Then came the Greek New Testament text, accompanied by Erasmus’ own Latin translation, and then Erasmus’ notes, giving his comments on the text, followed this. In his 2nd edition, (1519), Erasmus revised both, his Greek text and his own Latin translation.

When Erasmus came to Basil, in July 1515, to begin his work, he found five Greek New Testament manuscripts, ready for his own use. These are now designated by the following numbers: 1 (an 11th-century manuscript of the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles), 2 (a 15th-century manuscript of the Gospels), 2ap (a 12th-century manuscript of Acts and the Epistles), 4ap (a 15th-century manuscript of Acts and the Epistles), and 1r (a 12th-century manuscript of Revelation). Of these manuscripts, Erasmus used 1 and 4ap, only occasionally. In the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles his main reliance was on 2 and 2ap. (12).

Did Erasmus use other manuscripts besides these five, in preparing his *Textus Receptus*? The indications are, that he did. According to W. Schwarz (1955), Erasmus made his own Latin translation of the New Testament, at Oxford, during the years 1505-6. His friend, John Colet, who had become Dean of St. Paul’s, lent him two Latin

manuscripts for this undertaking, but nothing is known about the Greek manuscripts, which he used. He must have used some Greek manuscripts or others, however, and taken notes on them. Presumably therefore, he brought these notes with him, to Basil, along with his translation and his comments on the New Testament text. It is well known also, that Erasmus looked for manuscripts everywhere, during his travels and that he borrowed them from everyone he could. Hence, although the Textus Receptus was based mainly on the manuscripts, which Erasmus found at Basil, it also included readings taken from others, to which he had access. It agreed with the common faith, because it was founded on manuscripts, which in the providence of God, were readily available.

Through his study of the writings of Jerome and other Church Fathers, Erasmus became very well informed, concerning the variant readings of the New Testament text. Indeed, almost all the important variant readings known to scholars today, were already known to Erasmus more than 460 years ago and discussed in the notes (previously prepared), which he placed after the text in his editions of the Greek New Testament.

In his notes, Erasmus placed before the reader, not only ancient discussions concerning the New Testament text, but also, debates which took place in the early Church over the New Testament Canon and the authorship of some of the New Testament books, especially Hebrews, James 2, 2nd Peter, 2nd and 3rd John, Jude, and Revelation. Not only did he mention the doubts reported by Jerome and the other Church Fathers, but also added some objection of his own. However, he discussed these matters, somewhat warily, declaring himself willing at any time, to submit to “the consensus of public opinion and especially to the authority of the Church.” In short, he seemed to recognize, that in re-opening the question of the New Testament Canon, he was going contrary, to common faith.

But, if Erasmus was cautious in his notes, much more was he so, in his text, for this is what would strike the reader’s eye immediately. Hence, in editing of his Greek New Testament text, especially Erasmus, was guided by the common faith in the current text.

And back of this common faith, was the controlling providence of God. For this reason, Erasmus' humanistic tendencies do not appear in the Textus Receptus, which he produced. Although not himself, an outstanding man of faith, in his editorial labors on this text, he was providentially influenced and guided by the faith of others. In spite of his humanistic tendencies, Erasmus was clearly used of God, to place the Greek New Testament text in print, just as Martin Luther was used of God, to bring in the Protestant Reformation, in spite of the fact that, at least at first, he shared Erasmus' doubts, concerning Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation.

The God who brought the New Testament text safely through the ancient and medieval manuscript period, did not fumble when it came time to transfer this text to the modern printed page. This is the conviction, which guides the believing Bible student, as he considers the relationship of the printed Textus Receptus to the Traditional New Testament text, found in the majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts.

These two texts are virtually identical. Kirsopp Lake and Associates (1928) demonstrated this fact, in their intensive researches in the Traditional Text (which they called the Byzantine Text).

Using their collations, they came to the conclusion, that in the 11th chapter of Mark, "the most popular text in the manuscripts of the tenth to the fourteenth century," differed from the Textus Receptus, only four times. This small number of differences seems almost negligible in the view of the fact, that in this same chapter (Aleph "B" and "D"), differ from the Textus Receptus 69, 71, and 95 times, respectively. Also add to this the fact, that in this same chapter, "B" differs from Aleph, 34 times and from "D," 102 times, and that Aleph differs from "D," 100 times. There are, however, a few places in which the Textus Receptus differs from the Traditional text, found in the majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts. The most important of these differences are due to the fact, that Erasmus influenced by the usage of the Latin-speaking Church in which he was reared, sometimes followed the Latin Vulgate, rather than the Traditional Greek Text.

Are the readings, which Erasmus thus introduced into the Textus Receptus, necessarily erroneous? By no means, ought we to infer this. For it is inconceivable, that the divine providence, which had preserved the New Testament text during the long ages of the manuscript period, should blunder, when, at last, this text was committed to the printing press. According to the analogy of faith, then, we conclude that the Textus Receptus was a further step in God's providential preservation of the New Testament text and that these few Latin Vulgate readings, which were incorporated into the Textus Receptus, were genuine readings which had been preserved, in the usage of the Latin-speaking Church. Erasmus, we may well believe, was guided providentially by the common faith to include these readings in his printed Greek New Testament text. In the Textus Receptus, God corrected the few mistakes of any consequence, which yet remained in the Traditional New Testament text of the majority of the Greek manuscripts.

God works providentially through sinful and fallible human beings, and therefore, His providential guidance has its human, as well as its divine, side. And these human elements were evident in the first edition (1516) of the Textus Receptus. For one thing, the work was performed so hastily, that the text was disfigured with a great number of typographical errors. These misprints, however, were soon eliminated by Erasmus himself, in his later edition and by other early editors, and hence, are not a factor, which need to be taken into account in any estimate of the abiding value of the Textus Receptus.

The few typographical errors, which still remain in the Textus Receptus of revelation, do not involve important readings. This fact, clearly attributable to God's special providence, can be demonstrated by a study of H. C. Hoskier's monumental commentary on Revelation (1929), which takes the Textus Receptus, as its base. Here, we see that the only typographical error, worth noting, occurs in Revelation 17:8, "the beast that was, and is not, and yet, is." Here, the reading, "kaiper estin" (and yet, is),

seems to be a misprint for “kai paresti” (and, is at hand), which is the reading of Codex 1r, the manuscript which Erasmus used in Revelation.

The last six verses of Codex 1t, (Revelation 22:16-21), were lacking, and its text, in other places, was sometimes hard to distinguish from the commentary of Andreas of Caesarea, in which it was embedded. According to almost all scholars, Erasmus endeavored to supply these deficiencies in his manuscript, by re-translating the Latin Vulgate into Greek. Hoskier, however, was inclined to dispute this on the evidence of manuscript 141. In his 4th edition of his Greek New Testament (1527), Erasmus corrected much of this translation Greek (if it was indeed such), on the basis of a comparison with the Complutensian Polyglot Bible (which had been printed, at Alcalá in Spain, under the direction of Cardinal Ximenes and published in 1522), but he overlooked some of it, and this still remains in the Textus Receptus. These readings, however, do not materially affect the sense of the passages, in which they occur. They are only minor blemishes, which can easily be removed or corrected, in marginal notes. The only exception, is “book” for “tree” in Revelation 22:19, a variant, which Erasmus could not have failed to notice, but must have retained, purposely. Critics blame him for this, but here, he may have been guided providentially by the common faith, to follow the Latin Vulgate.

There is one passage in Revelation, however, in which the critics, rather inconsistently, blame Erasmus for not moving in the direction of the Latin Vulgate. This is Revelation 22:14a, “Blessed are they that do His commandments, etc.” Here, according to Hoskier, Aleph and “A” and a few Greek minuscule manuscripts read, “wash their robes,” and this is the reading favored by the critics.

A few other Greek manuscripts and the Sahidic version read, “have washed their robes.” The Latin Vulgate reads, “wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb.” But, the Textus Receptus reading of Erasmus, “do His commandments,” is found in the majority of the Greek manuscripts and in the Bohairic and Syriac versions and is undoubtedly, the Traditional reading.

It is customary for naturalistic critics to make the most of human imperfections in the Textus Receptus and to sneer at it, as a mean and almost sordid thing. These critics picture the Textus Receptus, as merely a moneymaking venture on the part of Froben, the publisher. Forben, they say, heard that the Spanish Cardinal, Ximenses, was about to publish a printed Greek New Testament text, as part of his great Complutensian Polyglot Bible. In order to get something on the market first, it is said, Froben hired Erasmus as his editor and rushed a Greek New Testament through his press, in less than a year's time. But, those who concentrate in this way on the human factors involved in the production of the Textus Receptus, are utterly unmindful, of the providence of God. For in the very next year, in the plan of God, the Reformation was to break out, in Wittenberg, and it was important that the Greek New Testament should be published, first, in one of the future strongholds of Protestantism by a book seller, who was eager to place it in the hands of the people and not in Spain, the land of the Inquisition, by the Roman Church, which was intent on keeping the Bible from the people.

After the death of Erasmus, in 1536, God in His providence, continued to extend the influence of the Textus Receptus. One of the agents through whom He accomplished this was the famous French printer and scholar, Robert Stephanus (1503-59). Robert's father, Henry and his stepfather, Simon de Colines, were printers who had published Bibles, and Robert was not slow to follow their example.

In 1523, he published a Latin New Testament, and two times, he published the Hebrew Bible, entirely. But, the most important, were his four editions of the Greek New Testament in 1546, 1549, 1550, and 1551, respectively. These activities aroused the opposition of the Roman Catholic Church, so much, that in 1550, he was compelled to leave Paris and settle in Geneva, where he became a Protestant, embracing the Reformed faith.

Stephanus' first two editions (1546 and 1549), were pocket-size (large pockets) printed with type cast, at the expense of the King of France. In text, they were

compound of the Complutensian and Erasmusian editions. Stephanus' 4th edition (1551), was also pocket-size. In it, the text was for the first time, divided into verses. But, most important, was Stephanus' 3rd edition. This was a small folio (8½ by 13 inches), likewise, printed at royal expense.

In the margin of this edition, Stephanus entered variant readings, taken from the Complutensian edition and also 14 manuscripts, one of which, is thought to have been "Codex D." In text, 3rd and 4th editions, Stephanus agreed closely with the 5th edition of Erasmus, which was gaining acceptance everywhere, as the providentially appointed text. It was the influence, no doubt, of this common faith, which restrained Stephanus from adopting any of the variant readings, which he, had collected.

The mention of Geneva, leads us immediately, to think of John Calvin (1509-64), the famous reformer, who had his headquarters in this city. In his commentaries, Calvin mentions Erasmus by name, 78 times, far more often than any other contemporary scholar. Most of these references are criticisms of Erasmus' Latin version and once Calvin complains about Erasmus' refusal to admit that the passage in question teaches the deity of Christ. But, five references deal with variant readings, which Erasmus suggested in his notes and of these, Calvin adopted three. On the basis of these statistics, therefore, it is perhaps not too much to say, that Calvin disapproved of Erasmus, as a translator and theologian, but thought better of him, as a New Testament textual critic.

In short, there appears in Calvin, as well as Erasmus, a humanistic tendency to treat the New Testament text like the text of any other book. This tendency, however, was checked and restrained by the common faith in the current New Testament text, a faith in which Calvin shared to a much greater degree, than did Erasmus.

Theodore Beza (1519-1605), Calvin's disciple and successor at Geneva, was renowned for his ten editions of the Greek New Testament, nine published during his

lifetime and one, after his death. He is also famous for his Latin translation of the New Testament, first published, in 1556, and reprinted more than 100 times.

The Elzevirs were a family of Dutch printers with headquarters at Leiden. The most famous of them was Bonaventure Elzevir, who founded his own printing establishment, in 1608, with his brother, Matthew, as his partner and later his nephew, Abraham. In 1624, he published his first edition of the New Testament and, in 1633, his 2nd edition. His texts followed Beza's editions mainly, but also included readings from Erasmus, the Complutensian, and the Latin Vulgate. In the preface to the 2nd edition, the phrase, **“Textus Receptus” made it's first appearance.** “You have, therefore, the text now received by all (textum ab omnibus recptum), in which we give nothing changed or corrupt.”

This statement has often been assailed as a mere printer's boast or “blurb,” and no doubt, it was partly that. But, in the providence of God, it was also a true statement. For by this time, the common faith in the current New Testament text, had triumphed over the humanistic tendencies, which had been present, not only in Erasmus, but also Luther, Calvin, and Beza. The doubts and reservations expressed in their notes and comments had been laid aside and only their God-guided texts had been retained. The Textus Receptus really was the text received by all. Its reign had begun and was to continue unbroken, for 200 years. In England, Stephanus' 3rd edition, was the form of the Textus Receptus, generally preferred, on the European continent, Elizevir's 2nd edition.

Not only modernists, but also many conservatives, are now saying, that the King James Version ought to be abandoned, because it is not contemporary. The Apostles, they insist, used contemporary language in their preaching and writing, and we too, must have a Bible in the language of today. But, more and more, it is being recognized that the language of the New Testament was Biblical, rather than contemporary. It was the Greek of the Septuagint, which in its turn, was modeled after the Old Testament Hebrew. Any Biblical translator, therefore, who is truly trying to follow in the footsteps of

the Apostles and to produce a version, which God will bless, must take care to use language which is above the level of daily speech, language which is not only intelligible, but also Biblical and venerable. Hence, in language, as well as text, the King James Version is still by far, superior to any other English translation of the Bible.

Previous to the Reformation, a number of translations were made of the Latin Vulgate into Anglo-Saxon and early English. One of the first of these translators was Caedmon, an inmate of the monastery of Whitby in northern England, who retold in alliterative verse the Biblical narratives, which had been related to him by the monks. Bede (672-735), the most renowned scholar of that period, not only wrote many commentaries on various books of the Bible, but also translated the Gospel of John into Anglo-Saxon. King Alfred (845-901), did the same for several other portions of Scripture, notably the Ten Commandments and the Psalms. And eclipsing all these earlier translations in importance, was that made by John Wycliff of the entire Latin Bible into English of his day, the New Testament appearing, in 1380, and the Old, in 1382. Not long after Wycliff's death, his close associate, John Purvey, prepared a second edition of his English Bible, more satisfactory in language and style than the first.

The first printed English version of the Bible was that of William Tyndale, one of England's first Protestant martyrs. Tyndale was born in Gloucestershire, in 1484, and studied, both at Oxford and Cambridge. About 1520, he became attached to the doctrines of the Reformation and conceived the idea of translating the Scriptures into English. Unable to do so in England, he set out for the Continent in the spring of 1524 and seems to have visited Hamburg and Wittenberg. In that same year, (probably at Wittenberg), he translated the New Testament from Greek into English for dissemination in his native land. It is estimated, that 18,000 copies of this version were printed on the continent of Europe, between 1525 and 1528 and shipped secretly to England. After this, Tyndale continued to live on the Continent as a fugitive, constantly evading the efforts of the English authorities to have him tracked down and arrested. But, in spite of this ever-present danger, his literacy activity was remarkable. In 1530-

31, he published portions of the Old Testament, which he had translated from the Hebrew and, in 1534 a revision, both of this translation and also of his New Testament. In this same year, he left his place of concealment and settled in Antwerp, evidently under the impression that the progress of the Reformation in England had made this move a safe one. In so thinking, however, he was mistaken. Betrayed by a friend, he was imprisoned, in 1535, and was executed the following year. According to Foxe, his dying prayer was this: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." But, his life's work had been completed. He had laid securely, the foundations of the English Bible. A comparison of Tyndale's Version with the King James, is said to indicate that from five-sixths to nine-tenths of the latter, is derived from the martyred translator's work.

After Tyndale had given the initial impulse, a number of other English translations of the Bible appeared in rapid succession. The first of these was published in 1535, by Myles Coverdale, who translated, not from Hebrew and Greek, but from the Latin Vulgate and from contemporary Latin and German versions, relying heavily, all the while, on Tyndale's version. In 1537, John Rogers, a close friend of Tyndale, published an Edition of the Bible bearing on its title page, the name "Thomas Matthew," probably a pseudonym for Rogers himself. This "Matthew Bible" contained Tyndale's version of the Old and New Testaments and Coverdale's version of those parts of the Old Testament, which had not been translated by Tyndale. Then, in 1539, under the auspices of Thomas Cromwell, the king's chamberlain, Coverdale published a revision of the Matthew Bible, which because of its great size was called, the Great Bible. This, Cromwell established as the official Bible of the English Church and deposited it in ecclesiastical edifices, throughout the kingdom. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, two revisions were made of the Great Bible. The first was prepared by English Protestants in exile, at Geneva, and published there, in 1560. The second, was the Bishop's Bible, published in 1568, by the English prelates under the direction of Archbishop Parker. And finally, the Roman Catholic remnant in England were provided by their leaders with a translation of the Latin Vulgate into English, the New Testament being published, in 1582, and the Old, in 1609-10. This is known as the Douai Version, since it was prepared at Douai in Flanders, an important center of English Catholicism, during the

Elizabethan age.

Work on the King James Version began in 1604. In that year, a group of Puritans under the leadership of Dr. John Reynolds, president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford suggested to King James I, that a new translation of the Bible be undertaken. This suggestion appealed to James, who was himself, a student of theology and of the Scriptures, and he immediately began to make the necessary arrangements for carrying it out. Within six months, the general plan of procedure had been drawn up and a complete list made of the scholars who were to do the work. Originally, 54 scholars were on the list, but deaths and withdrawals reduced it finally, to 47. These were divided into six companies, which checked each other's work. Then, the final result was reviewed by a select committee of six and prepared for press. And because of all this careful planning, the whole project was completed in less than seven years. In 1611, the new version issued from the press of Robert Barker in a large folio volume, bearing on its title page, the following inscription: "The Holy Bible, containing the Old Testament and New Testament: Newly Translated out of the Original tongues; & with the former Translations diligently compared and revised by his Majesties special Commandment, appointed to be read in Churches." The original tongues referred to in the title, were the current printed Hebrew Bibles for the Old Testament and Beza's printed Greek Testament for the New. The "former translations," mentioned there, included not only the five previous English versions mentioned above, but also the Douai Version, the Latin Version, however, is mainly a revision of the Bishop's Bible, which in turn, was a slightly revised edition of Tyndale's Bible. Thus, the influence of Tyndale's translation upon the King James, was very strong indeed.

The translators of the King James Version evidently felt themselves to have been providentially guided in their work. This belief plainly appears in the "Preface of the Translators," written by Dr. Miles Smith, one of the leaders of this illustrious band of scholars. Concerning his co-laborers, he speaks as follows: "Truly, good Christian Reader, we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one; but, to make a good one better, or

out of many good ones, one principal good one, not justly to be expected against; that hath been our endeavor, that our mark. To that purpose, there were many chosen, that were greater in other men's eyes, than in their own, and that sought the truth, rather than their own praise... and in what sort did these assemble? In the trust of their own knowledge, or have their sharpness of wit, or deepness of judgment, as it was an arm of flesh? At no hand. They trusted in Him, that hath the key of David, opening, and no man shutting; they prayed to the Lord, the Father of our Lord, to the effect that St. Augustine did, "O let Scriptures be my pure delight; let me not be deceived in them, neither let me deceive by them." In this confidence and with this devotion, did they assemble together, not too many, lest one should trouble another; and yet many, lest many things haply might escape them."

God, in His providence, has abundantly justified this confidence of the King James translators. The course of history has made English a worldwide language, which is now the native tongue of at least 300 million people, and the second language of many millions more. For this reason, the King James Version is known the world over and is more widely read, than any other translation of the Holy Scriptures. Not only so, but the King James Version has been used by missionaries as a basis and guide for their translation work, and in this way, has extended its influence, even to converts who know no English. For more than 350 years, therefore, the reverent diction of the King James Version has been used by the Holy Spirit, to bring the Word of Life to millions upon millions of perishing souls. Surely, this is a God-guided translation, on which, God working providentially, has placed the stamp of His approval.

The marginal notes, which the translators attached to the King James Version, indicate how God guided their labors providentially. According to Scrivener (1884), there are 8,422 marginal notes in the 1611 edition of the King James Version, including the Apocrypha. In the Old Testament, Scrivener goes on to say, 4,111 of the marginal notes give the more literal meaning of the original Hebrew or Aramaic, 2,156 give alternative translations, and 67 give variant readings. In the New Testament, 112 of the marginal notes give literal rendering of the Greek, 582 give alternative translations, and

37 give variant readings. These marginal notes show us, that the translators were guided providentially through their thought processes, through weighing every possibility, and choosing that which seemed to them, the best.

The 1611 edition of the King James Version also included 9,000 “cross references” to parallel passages. These are still very useful, especially for comparing the four Gospels with each other.

These “cross references” show that from the very start, the King James Version was intended, not merely as a pulpit Bible to be read in Church, but also, as a study Bible to guide the private meditations of God’s people.

As the marginal notes indicate, the King James translators did not regard their work as perfect or inspired, but they did consider it to be a trustworthy reproduction of God’s Holy Word, and as such, they commended it to their Christian readers.

Two editions of the King James Version were published, in 1611. The first is distinguished from the second, by a unique misprint, namely “Judas,” instead of “Jesus” in Matthew 26:36. The second edition corrected this mistake, and also in other respects, was more carefully done. Other editions followed in 1612, 1613, 1616, 1617, and frequently thereafter. In 1629 and 1638, the text was subjected to two minor revisions. In the 18th century, the spelling and punctuation of the King James Version were modernized, and many obsolete words were changed to their modern equivalents. The two scholars responsible for these alterations were Dr. Thomas Paris (1762), of Cambridge, and Dr. Benjamin Blayney (1769), of Oxford, and it is to their efforts, that the generally current form of the King James Version, is due. In the 19th century, the most important edition of the King James Version was the Cambridge Paragraph Bible (1873), with F. H. A. Scrivener, as its editor. Here, meticulous attention was given to details, such as, marginal notes, use of italic type, punctuation, orthography, grammar, and reference to parallel passages. In 1884 also, Scrivener published his Authorized Edition of the English Bible, a definitive history of the King James Version, in which, all

these features and many more, are carefully discussed. Since that time, however, comparatively little research has been done on the history of the King James Version, due probably to loss of interest in the subject.

It is often asked, “why keep on with the old King James and it’s 17th century language?” Granted that the Textus Receptus is the best text, but why not make a new translation of it in the language of today? In answer to these questions, there are several facts, which must be pointed out.

In the first place, the English of the King James Version, is not the English of the early 17th century. To be exact, it is not a type of English that was ever spoken anywhere. It is Biblical English, which was not used on ordinary occasions, even by the translators who produced the King James Version. As H. Wheeler Robinson (1940) pointed out, one need only compare the preface written by the translators with the text of their translation, to feel the difference - but, to it’s faithful translation of the original. Its style is that of the Hebrew and of the New Testament Greek. Even in their use of the “thee” and “thou,” the translators were not following 17th century English usage, but Biblical usage, for, at the time these translators were doing their work, these singular forms had already been replaced by the plural, “you” in polite conversation.

In the second place, those who talk about translating the Bible into the “language of today,” never define what they mean by this expression. What is the “language of today?” The language of 1881, is not the language of today, nor the language of 1901, nor even, the language of 1921. In none of these languages, we are told, can we communicate with today’s youth. There are even some who feel that the best way to translate the Bible into the language of today, is to convert it into “folk songs.” Accordingly, in many contemporary youth conferences, and even worship services, there is little or no Bible reading, but only crude kinds of vocal music, accompanied by vigorous piano and strumming guitars. But, in contrast to these absurdities, the language of the King James, is enduring diction, which will remain, as long as the English language remains, in other words, throughout the foreseeable future.

In the third place, the current attack on the King James Version and the promotion of modern-speech versions, is discouraging the memorization of the Scriptures, especially by children. Why memorize or require your children to memorize something that is out of date and about to be replaced by something new and better? And, why memorize a modern version, when there are so many to choose from? Hence, even in conservative Churches, children are growing up, densely ignorant of the Holy Bible, because they are not encouraged to hide it's life-giving Words, in their hearts.

In the fourth place, modern-speech Bibles are unhistorical and irreverent. The Bible is not a modern human Book. It is not as new as the morning newspaper, and no translation, should suggest this. If the Bible were this new, it would not be the Bible. On the contrary, the Bible is an ancient; divine Book, which nevertheless, is always new, because in it, God reveals Himself. Hence, the language of the Bible should be venerable, as well as intelligible, and the King James Version fulfills these two requirements, better than any other Bible in English. Hence, it is the King James Version, which converts sinners, soundly, and makes of them, diligent Bible students.

In the fifth place, modern-speech Bibles are unscholarly. The language of the Bible has always savored the things of heaven, rather than the things of the earth. It has always been Biblical, rather than contemporary and colloquial. Fifty years ago, E. J. Goodspeed and others, who were pushing modern versions, denied this fact. On the basis of the papyrus, discoveries which had recently been made in Egypt, it was said, that the New Testament authors wrote in the everyday Greek, of their own times. This claim, however, is now acknowledged to have been, an exaggeration. As R. M. Grant (1963) admits, the New Testament writers were saturated with the Septuagint, and most of them, were familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures. Hence, their language was not actually that of the secular papyri of Egypt, but Biblical. Hence, New Testament versions must be Biblical and not contemporary, and colloquial, like Goodspeed's version.

Finally, in the sixth place, the King James Version, is the historic Bible of English-speaking Protestants. Upon it, God, working providentially, has placed the stamp of His approval through the usage of many generations of Bible-believing Christians. Hence, if we believe in God's providential preservation of the Scriptures, we will retain the King James Version, for in doing so, we will be following the clear leading of the Almighty.

The translators that produced the King James Version relied mainly, it seems, on the later editions of Beza's Greek New Testament, especially his 4th edition, (1588-9). But, also, they frequently consulted the editions of Erasmus and Stephanus and the Complutensian Polyglot. According to Scrivener (1884), out of the 252 passages in which these sources differ sufficiently to affect the English rendering, the King James Version agrees with Beza, against Stephanus 113 times, with Stephanus against Beza 59 times, and 80 times with Erasmus, or the Complutensian, or the Latin Vulgate against Beza and Stephanus. Hence, the King James Version ought to be regarded, not merely as a translation of the Textus Receptus, but also, as an independent variety of the Textus Receptus.

The texts of the several editions of the Textus Receptus were God-guided. They were set up under the leading of God's special providence. Hence, the differences between them, were kept down to a minimum. But, these disagreements were not eliminated altogether, for this would require, not merely providential guidance, but a miracle. In short, God chose to preserve the New Testament text providentially, rather than miraculously, and this is why even the several editions of the Textus Receptus, vary from each other slightly.

But, what do we do in these few places in which the several editions of the Textus Receptus disagree with one another? Which text do we follow? The answer to this question is easy. We are guided by the common faith. Hence, we favor that form of the Textus Receptus, upon which more than any other God, working providentially, has placed the stamp of His approval, namely, the King James Version, or more precisely, the Greek text, underlying the King James Version. This text was published, in 1881, by

the Cambridge University Press under the editorship of Dr. Scrivener and there have been eight reprints, the latest being, in 1949. In 1976, another edition of this text, was published in London, by the Trinitarian Bible Society. We ought to be grateful, that in the providence of God, the best form of the Textus Receptus, is still available to believing Bible students.

For the sake of completeness, however, it would be well to place in the margin, the variant readings of Erasmus, Stephanus, Beza, and the Elzevirs.

God's preservation of the New Testament text was not miraculous, but providential. The scribes and printers, who produced the copies of the New Testament Scriptures and the true believers, who read and cherished them, were not inspired, but God-guided. Hence, there are some New Testament passages, in which the true reading cannot be determined, with absolute certainty. There are some readings, for example, on which the manuscripts are almost equally divided; making it difficult to determine which readings belongs to the Traditional Text. Also, in some of the cases in which the Textus Receptus disagrees with the Traditional Text, it is hard to decide which text to follow. Also, sometimes, the several editions of the Textus Receptus differ from each other and from the King James Version. The case is the same with the Old Testament text.

In other words, God does not reveal every truth with equal clarity. In Biblical textual criticism, as in every other department of knowledge, there are still some details in regard to which we must be content, to remain uncertain. But, the special providence of God, has kept these uncertainties down to a minimum. Hence, if we believe in the special providential preservation of the Scriptures and make this the leading principle of our Biblical textual criticism, we obtain maximum certainty, all the certainty that any mere man can obtain, all the certainty that we need. For we are led, by the logic of faith to the Masoretic Hebrew text, to the New Testament Textus Receptus, and to the King James Version.

Do we, believing Bible students, “worship” the King James Version? Do we regard it as inspired, just as the ancient Jewish philosopher, Philo (d. 42 A.D.), as many early Christians regarded the Septuagint, as inspired? Or do we claim the same supremacy for the King James Version that the Roman Catholics claim for the Latin Vulgate? Do we magnify its authority above that of the Hebrew and Greek Old and New Testament Scriptures? We have often been accused of such excessive veneration for the King James Version, but these accusations, are false. In regard to Bible versions, we follow the example of Christ’s Apostles. We adopt the same attitude toward the King James Version, that they maintained, toward the Septuagint.

In their Old Testament quotations, the Apostles never made any distinction between the Septuagint and the Hebrew Scriptures. They never said, “The Septuagint translates this verse, thus and so, but in the original Hebrew it is this way.” Why not? Why did they pass up all these opportunities, to display their learning? Evidently, because of their great respect for the Septuagint and the position which is occupied in the providences of God. In other words, the Apostles recognized the Septuagint, as the providentially approved translation of the Old Testament into Greek. They understood that this was the version that God desired the Gentile Church, of their day, to use as its Old Testament Scripture.

In regard to Bible versions, then, we follow the example of the Apostles and the other inspired New Testament writers. Just as they recognized the Septuagint, as the providentially appointed translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, so we recognize the King James Version and the other great historic translations of the Holy Scriptures, as providentially approved. Hence, we receive the King James Version, as the providentially appointed English Bible. Admittedly, this venerable version is not absolutely perfect, but it is trustworthy. No Bible-believing Christian who relies upon it, will ever be led astray; but, it is just the opposite with modern versions. They are untrustworthy, and they do lead Bible-believing Christians astray.

It is a fact, rather than the modern version’s acceptance of scholarship; the King James scholarship, far exceeds all others. The learned men, who labored on the King

James Version, were men of exceptional ability. Although they differed among themselves on matters of Church order, administration, and doctrine, they approached the task, with a reverent regard for Divine Inspiration, Authority, and an Inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. They believed, that the Bible was and is, God's sacred truth. The most learned men, of the day, were chosen for the work of translating the Scriptures. These men had a profound knowledge of the languages in which the Bible was written.

The credentials of the translators attest their scholarship. There were fifty-four scholars who were chosen to accomplish the translation of the Scriptures. Because of death or withdrawal, the final committee numbered forty seven men, which divided up into six committees. The committees met at Westminster, Cambridge, and Oxford. Their scholarship was accompanied by a deep conviction of the Divine origin of the records that they were translating. These men were not only scholars, but they were men of faith.

There are many Greek manuscripts, that they used, that are available today. A recent list gives these figures as:

Papyrus manuscripts - 81

Majuscules (manuscripts written in capital letters) - 267

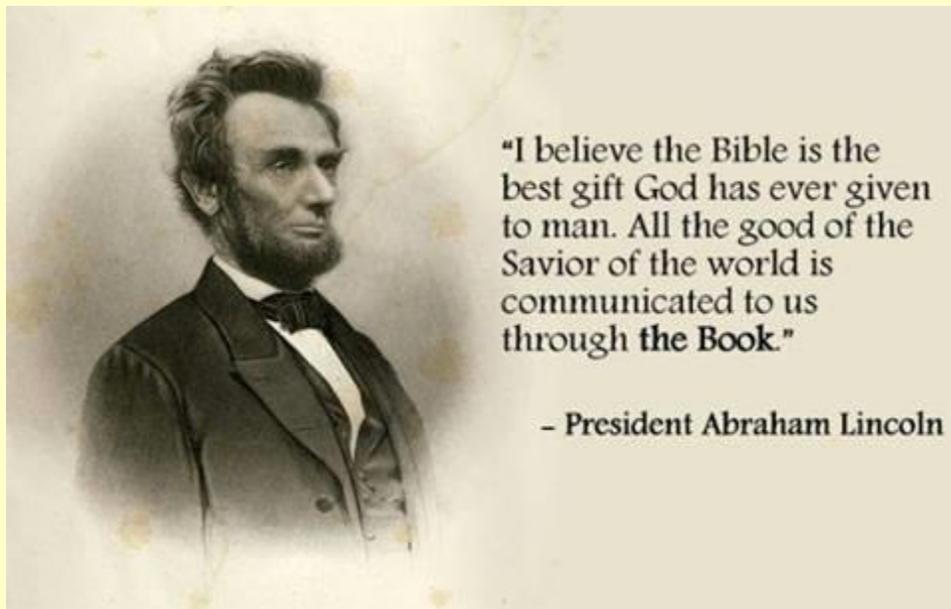
Minuscules (manuscripts written in smaller script) - 2,764

Along with the above-mentioned manuscripts, there are also those manuscripts containing the Scripture lessons, that were read publicly in Churches. These numbered 2,143. Together, the manuscripts number 5,255. For a Book, as ancient as the Bible, there are more than sufficient manuscripts available, to provide an accurate translation. Approximately 95% of the manuscripts, confirm the accuracy of the King James Version.

As we have seen, Erasmus played a vital part in the handing down, to us, of the King

James Version of the Bible. Perhaps the greatest compliment paid to Erasmus, happened in 1559, twenty-three years, after this death. That is when Pope Paul IV, put Erasmus' writings on the "Index" of books, forbidden to be read by Roman Catholics.

The Authorized King James text, has faithfully served, the body of Christ for almost 400 years. Based on scholarship, readability, and the good fruit it has produced; we can believe it is the "Inspired Word of God." Its language, is still far superior, to any other English translation of the Bible. The King James is important, in that, in it the English language conveys the Word of God, to whomever has received Christ as their Saviour, and are willing to follow HIM. The Majority Text is of the utmost importance, in that, it can be traced back, historically, to the Churches that experienced true revival. GOD has preserved HIS WORD to us, through the King James Version of the Bible.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fuller, David Otis

Is The King James Version Nearest To The Original Autographs?

Tabernacle Baptist Church

Lubbock, TX (undated)

Grady, Dr. William P.

Final Authority "A Christian's Guide to the King James Bible"

Grady Publications, Inc.

Knoxville, TN. 1993

Gipp, Samuel C., Th. D.

Gipp's Understandable History of the Bible

Daystar Publishing

Northfield, OH 1987

Melton, James L.

How I Know The King James Bible is the Word of God

Bible Baptist Church

Sharon, TN. 1997

Moorman, Dr. Jack

Forever Settled "A Survey of the Documents and History of the Bible"

The Dean Burgon Society Press

Collingswood, NJ 1999

Ruckman, Peter S.

The Christian Handbook of Biblical Scholarship

Bible Baptist Bookstore

Pensacola, FL. 1988

Ruckman, Peter S.

Manuscript Evidence

Bible Baptist Bookstore

Pensacola, FL. 1970