

# Comparing Translations

τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἑμὰ τῆς φωνῆς μου ἀκούουσιν

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Also available for downloading in Adobe PDF format [Comparing Translation](#) (619K). 

## Introduction

While studying your Bible, how many times have you wondered how other translations might read? After comparing a few versions, did you notice the wide variance between the selections of words from version to version? If the words are so different, how can a person tell if they are accurate? This exercise was developed so that you may easily compare many different translations without the necessity of going to a religious bookstore and laboriously opening and searching through a multitude of different versions or editions in order to gain an understanding of how they read. It is also designed to give you a basic education in the many disciplines of translation, manuscript history, theories of transmission, textual criticism, and a few other fundamentals. Our inherent purpose is to make these often esoteric subjects very understandable for the average unenlightened reader. The language of this work endeavors to resist the complicated vocabulary of academe for the contemporary usage of kitchen-table discussion. We are interested in balance, for there are many books and web sites offering information about translations of the Bible yet most, regrettably, do not give the visitor an opportunity to objectively review available translations in a side-by-side comparison. Far too many web sites are enamored with proving or refuting different theories of textual transmission or advancing a preference for one particular translation. Many are polemic in nature while others are excessively hermeneutical or even pedantic. How often have you searched for a web site, hoping to discover an informative, concise, and balanced perspective of these subjects with the additional opportunity to actually compare several verses from currently available translations? Well, here is your opportunity. The next few sections are intended to give you an overview of the disciplines of textual transmission and translation, based on observations from many voices who represent textual theories and viewpoints ranging from King James Onlyism to anything but King James, naturally including many who prefer the Authorized Version but do not defend it as a uniquely inspired work, others who purposefully love the word of God and try to objectively determine the accuracy of readings without emotional attachment to any one translation, and students who unpretentiously love the variety of dissimilar translations without regard to theology, doctrine, or textual transmission.

This writer does not presume to be an expert on all facets of textual criticism, or possess an exhaustive understanding of all three declensions of the Greek language and the nuances of verb tense, although he has read and translated from several Greek texts for more than twenty-five years and scrupulously compared most currently available translations with those texts - verse by verse and word by word. His desire is to return the grace of his personal education for the benefit of the aspiring student who loves the Bible and needs an accurate, balanced, yet unsophisticated lift to their own literary advancement.

Since personal bias unfortunately weaves itself into even the most honest academic efforts, it is appropriate to momentarily pause, in order for this writer to explain his general view of Divine inspiration and textual transmission; thus, allowing the visitor to more properly appreciate the true energy behind this exercise, and to excuse the appearance of unintentional bias or academic predilection. Balance is an elusive quality, for when one desires to display perspectives equally, it usually involves the elevation of one position to achieve that intention. Hence, in the pursuit of balance, one may unintentionally appear to side with the opinion in ascendance. Even the usage or selection of words can impair one's quest of impartiality. For example, the Battle of Antietam is Union terminology because Union General McClellan's headquarters was immediately situated next to Antietam Creek, whereas the Confederacy called it the Battle of Sharpsburg because General Lee's headquarters was in the nearby town of Sharpsburg. Additionally, the Union referred to this American tragedy as the Civil War but the Confederacy called it the War Between The States. How does the objective historian refer to this battle without seeming to favor one side from the outset? Genuinely capable writers are marked with bias from the mere choice of their words. Pronunciation and inflection can also reveal unintended nuances of a speaker. If the name of the 4th century bishop Augustine is pronounced as *ahh-GUST-tun* there is a very good chance that the speaker is Catholic, and if the name is pronounced *AAH-gust-teen* there is an above average chance that the speaker is Protestant. No swifter weapon can kill the genuine intent of a writer or speaker than the selection or inflection of his words. The following paragraph will demonstrate this principal, for the very first word has been used by many other writers to buttress an entirely different proposition than is the intention of this article. This word is so volatile and over-used that most students immediately suffer a knee-jerk reaction and leap from its presence without regarding the possibility of a multifaceted definition.



Preservation is that word. Because this word has been repeatedly employed to buttress one particular view of textual transmission, its use by this writer may color his genuine intention. This writer believes that God exists in a personal, knowable form and has intentionally revealed attributes of the Divine nature and purpose, in two different economies represented respectively in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God has preserved the transmission of these revelations in an early oral form and later in a written form that is yielded through various collections of manuscripts; in spite of invading armies, ecclesiastical ineptitude, [Blatant Scribal Corruption](#), politically motivated early church bishops, over zealotness of Reformers, textual critics following herd-mentality, uniqueness of languages, and innovations in translation.

This belief rests on a variety of scriptures such as the unambiguous statements of God that He will preserve His revelations by instructing persons to preserve His Words as in Jeremiah 36:28. See also Matthew 24:35, See also Deuteronomy 4:2, Daniel 12:4,9, John 14:26, and Revelation 22:18-19. These passages reveal a principle: What God does and says is perfect and should be preserved. If words have meanings, then God is continuously superseding the inarguable frailty of humankind and his poverty in communication by preserving these Divine revelations to the exclusion of inadvertent or intentional human error. Literature of human origin cannot claim preservation by Divine agency, for historical truthfulness has often been the predictable causality of literary revisionists that follow invading armies (*history is written by the winners*). Scripture originates with God and is preserved by God. This writer believes that God is supervising a continuous process whereby Divine truths will always be preserved across generations, cultures, and languages, by holy men and women inspired by God to safeguard the translation of scriptures into diverse languages.

It is posited that the general transmission of God's revelations appear in every translation, but regrettably no single translation seems to exclusively or exhaustively contain all of the original Divine revelation beyond criticism. This writer believes that God always supersedes the faithfulness or frailty of the translator because the work of the Kingdom is too important to be halted for the whimsical propensity of one or several individuals. King Saul could have been the most glowing monarch of Israel, but due to his unapologetic dismissal of God's promptings, a new king was divinely prescribed (1 Samuel 16:1). In the field of biblical translation, this writer suggests that if one individual or a group of translators decides to unapologetically slant their work for undisclosed reasons, God will then encourage others to produce more faithful works. Therefore, accurate biblical translation depends on a simple two-fold process whereby God sovereignly preserves Divine revelations through devout men and women who are spiritually guided by their own pliability to Divine promptings.

Additionally, proper understanding of these Divine revelations necessitates spiritual pliability on the part of the reader. Scripture will be studied by non-spiritual individuals in vain because it is the Holy Spirit who grants illumination and interpretation to God-breathed words. Scholars may treat biblical manuscripts with commonness and mechanically examine them as ancient classic texts, but as Christ stated, it is only the childlike who may understand the will of God. *“Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein”* Mark 10:15.

In other words, spiritually yielded individuals are supernaturally guided to understand biblical revelation in spite of how their own translation may read. Apostle Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 2:10: *“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”* Contrary to the natural dependency on intellect, whim, colleagues, and experience to understand non-biblical literature, comprehension of the Bible is dependent on the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit in measure to the yieldedness of the reader. This is a continuous process of Spirit-led comparisons. *“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual”* 1 Corinthians 2:13.

Translators can be friends or traitors **1** but God lovingly supersedes either predilection, according to God’s own promise of Divine preservation for all believers. Preservation is therefore a distinct attribute of God. *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it”* Isaiah 55:8-11. Devout men and women will always be inspired by God with a genuine quest to translate Bibles that will more effectively convey God-preserved revelations into the living languages of all nations and cultures.

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## Textual Considerations



requently one hears the terms Autographs or Originals. They are referring to the actual documents sent to the various churches or individuals by the biblical writers, and unfortunately, no longer exist. Only copies of these remain in several different forms. The earliest copies are Egyptian papyrus fragments dating from the second century, to Majuscules (Latin *mâiusculus*: large letters) or Uncials (Latin *unciâlis*: tall) from the early to middle centuries, and Minuscules (Latin *minusculus*: smaller) or Cursives from the middle to later centuries. Naturally, there are a few early cursives and some late Uncials, but they generally hold to the former scheme. If each scribe produced a perfect copy each time, the entire discussion of textual criticism would be meaningless. But, this is just the problem, for well-intending scribes repeatedly lost their place or unknowingly introduced words from a similar account, such as inadvertently incorporating Luke’s description from memory while actually copying Matthew, or vice-versa. Whole lines and paragraphs were often skipped because two lines started with the exact same construction of letters. Incorrectly copied [Single Letters](#)

resulting in different words dramatically changed meanings as in this theological fiasco. But errors of this type are not limited to early centuries, for modern typists can do the very same thing with computers since this type of error is occasioned by human inattentiveness. Also contributing to this problem was the fact that most early Uncials were written in large letters that were all bunched together in order to save paper, a very precious commodity. Review this [Copying Example](#) to see what this paragraph would have looked like to an early biblical scribe. You will notice how difficult it is to read, let alone copy. Because of the expectancy of scribal errors, a skilled Corrector would independently review finished works and make necessary changes; thus, the first correction of a manuscript quite often rendered - the proper document. E.C. Colwell writes in [Scribal Habits in Early Papyri](#): “P66 has 54 leaps forward, and 22 backward; 18 of the forward leaps are haplography...P75 has 27 leaps forward, and 10 backward...P45 has 16 leaps forward, and 2 backward. From this it is clear that the scribe looking for his lost place looked ahead three times as often as he looked back. In other words, the loss of position usually resulted in a loss of text, an omission.” [2](#) Colwell further states that P66 also has over 400 alterations made by later Correctors. In some areas, before the finality of canonization, bishops intentionally directed scribes to make “theological” changes that would incorporate local beliefs or traditions, hoping that quick dissemination of these copies would result in the ecclesiastical acceptance of local beliefs as the original. Bruce Metzger writes in [The Text of the New Testament](#): “Church Fathers accused the heretics of corrupting the Scriptures in order to have support for their special views.” [3](#) In the Fourth century, Jerome complained that scribes “...write down not what they find but what they think is the meaning; and while they attempt to rectify the errors of others, they merely expose their own.” [4](#) Colwell further concludes in [Origin of Text-types](#): “The overwhelming majority of (divergent) readings were created before the year 200 A.D.” [5](#) G.D. Kilpatrick and H. J. Vogels likewise affirm that “Most deliberate changes, if not all were made by 200.” [6](#) Frederick Scrivener writes in [A Plain Introduction](#): “The worst corruptions to which the New Testament has ever been subjected, originated within a hundred years after it was composed.” [7](#) Oxford scholar John William Burgon, the only person to catalog over 86,000 citations of the early Church Fathers writes in [The Revision Revised](#): “Those of Asclepiades, at all events, will be found discordant from those of Theodotus ... With the foregoing copies again, those of Hermophilus will be found entirely at variance. As for the copies of Apollonides, they even contradict one another.” [8](#) This mixture of good and bad manuscripts has resulted in serious confusion and misunderstandings, for an early manuscript should not universally imply good, nor late always suggest bad. Colwell and Scrivener offer us the image of pollution entering a stream near its source, and naturally, the farther downstream from its source, the more diffused and clear the stream appears. Thus, a rogue manuscript from the second century is still a rogue, conversely, a good late document could faithfully preserve a significant part of the original transmission; and naturally, a late manuscript could exhibit a mixture from several pollutants. Copies were routinely produced from older manuscripts before the latter would suffer the ravages of being thumbed to pieces and respectfully burned. Usually, conventional wisdom assigns goodness to early documents, however, if an early manuscript has survived in pristine condition, it is appropriate to ask: “Why has it survived in such good condition? Why was it NOT thumbed to pieces? Was it not used?” Some later manuscripts display a variety of different text-types, and are valuable for just that reason, because they afford experts with a resource for calculating and presuming the journey of transmission for similar groups or text-types.

But not all textual experts agree on the weight that age should contribute to the general value of a document. Another school of thought prefers the [difficult versus easy](#) characteristic of an individual reading: *proclivi lectioni praestat ardua* (the harder reading is to be preferred) or *lectio brevior lectio potior* (the shorter reading is the more probable reading). It is contended by a significant number of textual experts that if a copyist elected to change a manuscript for purposes of style only, he would edit a difficult construction of words into an expression that would read more easily, rather than change an easy reading into a more obtuse construction of words. Usually this requires more words and therefore increases the length; thus, the earlier reading is most probably [difficult and short](#). Although not easily provable, it is entirely logical and enjoys the contemporary measure of value by most textual scholars. It has been the work of devoted textual experts over many centuries, well disciplined in the various mechanics of criticism to retrieve, from all possible sources, what they deem most likely to have been the original transmission. But textual criticism is not an exact science, and frequently, even the best Critics have succumbed to bias and presumption. In too many cases, the latter has been extremely obvious, due unfortunately to such elements as herd mentality, theological affiliation, or positional entrenchment resulting from the heat of debate and speculative confrontation.

## Byzantine? Alexandrian? Western? Caesarean?



Are these new ice cream flavors? No. Each name is a Family of manuscripts that bears close similarities and represent one type or style of writing, thus, they are also called Text-Types. Many early churches also wanted copies of the Apostolic letters for their own edification, and handwritten reproductions inevitably contained accidental errors as a simple result of confusing words, letters, or as [Jerome](#) previously noted, scribes infusing their own guess work. As early congregations grew in the four distinctly Christian areas of the Roman Empire (Antioch, Alexandria, Carthage/Rome, Caesarea) their copies began to reflect the unique style and peculiar readings of their own location. Just as children bear the genetic or facial markings of their parents, so did these manuscripts continue their own distinctive stylistic markings. These differences enable one to not only categorize them according to text-type, but to also presume reasonable components of their production. As all trees are identifiable from their bark, leaves, and form, one is enabled to speculate on the process of their growth according to local climate. Likewise, as one gains a reasonable degree of understanding of each manuscript family, noticeable differences in style and word predominance enable one to speculate on the process of their formation. This process is rarely grounded on scientific principles, but almost always predominated by one's own subjectivity. Textual critics must continuously guard against self-delusion for their best friend and worst enemy are quite often one and the same - presumption.



**Four Christian Areas**

**Byzantine Text:** This is the largest family, or localized text-type, comprising about ninety-four percent of all Greek manuscripts. It originates from the empire of the same name which had sheltered its preservation for many centuries until threatened invasions from Ottoman Turks drove eastern Greek scholars towards the Latin Catholic West, taking along their Biblical manuscripts. Translators, especially during the Reformation, began using this new text-type and the Byzantine text became the underlying text for Martin Luther, William Tyndale, and Theodore Beza. Its distinctive, slightly longer and editorially polished readings eventually supplanted the Latin Vulgate, and became the principal text-type of every major non-Catholic translation until the Nineteenth century. Bruce Metzger writes in *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, “*The framers of this text sought to smooth away any harshness of language, to combine two or more divergent readings into one expanded reading, and to harmonize parallel passages.*” **9** Modern scholars are of the opinion that its longer readings are the result of conflating different sources into one. The following chart shows a phrase in John 10:19 which exhibits three different Greek word constructions along with their corresponding manuscript family.

<u>Greek</u>	<u>Translation</u>	<u>Textual Family</u>
SCHISMA <b>OUN</b>	division <b>THEREFORE</b>	WESTERN
SCHISMA <b>PALIN</b>	division <b>AGAIN</b>	ALEXANDRIAN (Modern Translations)
SCHISMA <b>OUN PALIN</b>	division <b>THEREFORE AGAIN</b>	BYZANTINE (King James Version)

Experts describe the above as conflation (mixing two or more sources to form a new reading) where the Byzantine phrase is the longer reading; borrowing **AGAIN** from the Alexandrian text-type and **THEREFORE** from the Western. This theory of Byzantine conflation was postulated by Brooke Westcott and Fenton Hort who contended that the Byzantine or King James text was a late text, specifically because it contained so many of these expanded readings (see later section). However, the theory of conflation is increasingly being challenged as more distinctive Byzantine readings are appearing in the Egyptian papyri which dates from the second and third centuries. Harry Sturz writing in *The Byzantine Text-Type: New Testament Textual Criticism*: “*In the John 10:19 passage, while P45 and P75 support the Alexandrian reading, P66, the earliest papyrus, reads SCHISMA OUV PALIN.*” **10** In other words, the earliest known papyrus fragment agrees with the Byzantine. This does not conclusively prove an early date for the entire Byzantine text-type, but it does profoundly invalidate the conclusion that longer readings are “always” the result of conflation. For it is entirely reasonable to suggest the exact opposite; instead of Byzantine

conflation, the other texts experienced scribal omission. In this case the Western could have omitted PALIN (again,) and the Alexandrian could have omitted OUN (therefore). In any case, we are now presented with the question: What really happened in this verse, conflation or omission? Many translations routinely omitted parts of eight verses in Luke chapter 24 (3, 6, 9, 12, 36, 40, 51, 52) solely because they were also omitted by the Western family or text-type represented in Bezae Cantabrigiensis (D) while the Byzantine included all of them. Now that P75 has confirmed their early existence, the latest modern translations have now re-inserted them all (compare RSV-1948 with NRSV-1989).

**Alexandrian Text:** The second largest group houses about three to four percent of Greek manuscripts and originated in the Christian community of Alexandria, Egypt. (Metzger) - *“Characteristics...are brevity and austerity. That is, it is generally shorter than the text of other forms, and it does not exhibit the degree of grammatical and stylistic polishing that is characteristic of the Byzantine...”* **11** The two leading manuscripts of this family are Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (  $\aleph$  ), both dated in the middle fourth century. They are similar in type, but have enormous divergences between themselves. Philip Mauro writes in True or False: *“In the Gospels alone Vaticanus has 589 readings quite peculiar to itself, affecting 858 words,  $\aleph$  has 1460 such readings, affecting 2640 words...Codex Vaticanus differs from the Received Text in the following particulars: It omits at least 2,877 words; it adds 536 words; it substitutes 935 words; it transposes 2,098 words; and it modifies 1,132; making a total of 7,578 verbal divergences. But the Sinaitic Ms. is even worse, for its total divergences in the particulars stated above amount to nearly nine thousand.”* **12** Oxford scholar John William Burgon, the only individual to personally collate all five of the old Uncials asserted: *“It is easier to find two consecutive verses in which B and  $\aleph$  differ from each other than two consecutive verses in which they entirely agree.”* **13** Herman C. Hoskier writes in Codex B and its Allies: *“In the Gospels alone, B and  $\aleph$  differ over 3,000 times without considering minor errors such as spelling.”* **14** (There are 3,779 verses in the four Gospels.) These variances between manuscript families, especially the monumental disagreements within the Alexandrian family have caused not a few heated discussions, since many words, e.g., Christ, appear with far less frequency in this text-type than in the Byzantine (e.g: Matthew 23:8, Luke 4:41, John 4:42, Acts 15:11, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 5:4, Galatians 3:17, Philippians 4:13, 1 Thessalonians 3:13, 2 Timothy 4:22, Hebrews 3:1, 1 John 1:7, Revelation 12:17). See also Ephesians 3:14 (Lord Jesus Christ). This has led King James Only voices to accuse modernists of “taking Christ out” of the New Testament, and have established numerous web sites containing extensive lists of all the words not appearing in modern translations. Regrettably, too many of these sites have become pulpits for the author to berate or accuse modern translators of heinous, devilish, or conspiratorial behavior. Although some misdeeds in modern translations have been carefully documented, one should exercise caution when judging the work of people who simply translated from a Greek text laying before them. It is the underlying manuscripts that are the chief reason for the differences! In spite of the wide variance among Alexandrian manuscripts, they exhibit a “text-type” that appears to predate the Byzantine, even though the latter has now been found as “distinctive readings” among the earliest papyri. D.A. Carson, writes in The King James Debate: *“The question is whether or not the Byzantine text-type existed before the fourth century, not whether or not Byzantine readings existed before the fourth century.”* **15**

**Western Text:** This text group originates from the North African city of Carthage and its sister Rome, deriving its name from this area being farther to the “west” of the earliest missionary activities in the regions of Greece, Turkey, Syria, and Judea. (Metzger) - *“The chief characteristic of Western readings is fondness for paraphrase. Words, clauses, and even whole sentences are freely changed, omitted, or inserted.”* **16** The premier exhibits of the Western manuscript family (text-type) is Bezae Cantabrigiensis in the Gospels and Codex Claromontanus in Paul's letters.

**Caesarean Text:** This is really a sub-group of Alexandrian manuscripts with a garnish of Western influence. It was the text of Eusebius and Cyril of Jerusalem. Metzger describes it as *“characterized by a distinctive mixture of Western readings and Alexandrian readings. One may also observe a certain striving after elegance of expression.”* **17** The principal exhibit of the Caesarean text is THETA, a Ninth century Uncial. In 1924, B.H. Streeter gave this newly discovered family the name Caesarean because he believed that the ancient scholar Origen used this text in Caesarea after he had fled there in 231 A.D. from Alexandria. **18**

**Qumran Text**, more commonly known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, are mostly fragmented sections from eleven caves

that offer us a great treasure of knowledge about culture, language, theology, and paleography in ancient Judea. However, only in the narrow field of translation, their importance is over rated and little is gained for these reasons; (1) there is no irrefutable evidence of the presence of the New Testament, (2) although their literature is all religious in nature, only about fourteen percent is entirely biblical, (3) the Old Testament, as yet reconstructed, shows marginal divergence from the standard Masoretic Hebrew Text. Excusing the spelling and transposition of words, one is hard pressed to show an entirely “new” biblical concept heretofore unknown in historic rabbinical tradition that is worthy of inclusion in a modern translation. Cave's One and Eleven offered the best preservation but unfortunately, most scrolls were deposited in Cave Four which experienced the greatest destruction from the effects of weather. So, what then is all the fuss about? It is largely the other eighty-six percent of their literature that is causing most of the headlines, for it raises perplexing questions about our current understanding of both Christianity and Judaism, especially involving perceptions of the Messiah, for these authors were expecting two: a Priestly Messiah and a Kingly Messiah.

In a nutshell, a Wicked Priest is responsible for a persecution, which leads a few saintly people to conclude that priestly governance of Temple rituals has become defiled. They leave Jerusalem for the desert in order to pursue an isolated communal life that is strictly dedicated to God. Shortly, a leader called the Righteous Teacher explains how to faithfully serve God through discipline. Ultimately, they view themselves as the only true Sons of God, the true Israel. Only they were faithful to the Law. Most of their lives were consumed with the anticipation of a future struggle between the forces of good (Sons of Light) and evil (Sons of Darkness).

Pere Roland de Vaux was the first to excavate the site (1949) and the first to associate the Essene sect with this community. Some authorities now dispute this claim and suggest a Sadducean group wrote the manuscripts elsewhere, that the site never was a monastery but perhaps a customs house, and that the ink wells of de Vaux's scriptorium were more properly associated with tax receipts and bills of lading. Others contend that a Roman fortress or quasi-military colony better explains the presence of the large military tower, something which does not harmonize well with a peaceful religious sect. And still others plead that there is too much conflicting evidence to properly explain the settlement of [Qumran](#).

## THE??? Greek Text



here is no such thing as THE Greek text, anymore than there could be THE manuscript. Readers should be intellectually alert when they encounter terms such as original Greek, original Hebrew, “the” Greek, or Autographs because none of these exist and promotional literature frequently boasts how translators referred to *the original Greek and Hebrew*. It would be permissible for one to refer to *original languages* of the Bible, however, too many translators and marketing representatives utilize this opportunity to allow readers to believe that they have access, not to original language, but to original words! This is simply fallacious, because no one is able to produce any original biblical work. Translators use “a” Greek text and rarely, if ever, look at manuscripts or photocopies. Textual experts have been reviewing thousands of manuscripts over many centuries, especially noting their agreements and differences, categorizing them according to text-type, and compiling their findings into “A” Greek text. Because of this constant process of evaluation, Greek texts, themselves, are in a continuous state of revision. The Nestle Greek Text began in the 1880's by Eberhard Nestle, his son Erwin continued the work of his father beginning with the Thirteenth edition in 1927, and more recently, Kurt and Barbara Aland contributed to its preservation with a Twenty-Sixth and Twenty-Seventh edition; thus, it is presently called, the Nestle-Aland Greek Text. Upon the passing of the late Kurt Aland, it would appear that Barbara is now continuing the work herself. In former centuries, other scholars, such as Erasmus, Griesbach, Beza, Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles have, likewise, produced more than one edition of “a” Greek text. The King James Version is principally based on Beza's 1589 and Stephanus' 1550, 1551 editions. Modern translators rarely, if ever, look at manuscripts or even photographic copies. They use “A” Greek text which usually contains the scriptural text with notes directing the user to the Manuscript Apparatus at the bottom of the page, such as the very popular 3rd and 4th editions of the Greek New Testament by the United Bible Societies. Nonetheless, all such

productions are simply nothing more than “A” continuously evolving Greek text. It is entirely presumptuous for the informed to misdirect the uninformed by suggesting: “*Let's check the original Greek*” when there exists no such opportunity. Conversely in the interest of balance, there are passages which read exactly the same in almost all known manuscripts (John 1:1). Is it then permissible to conclude that these instances are faithful reproductions of the original composition? The point attempted herein to be made is simply that unless one actually possesses the Original of any copied work (legal, diplomatic, or biblical), one should refrain from enouncing with ontological certitude the exact nature of the unseen progenitor. Words have clear definable meanings and original does not mean similar -- *it means original*.

In the early 1800's, J.M.A. Scholz listed about 600 manuscripts, toward the latter part of the century, F.H.A. Scrivener catalogued almost 3,000 manuscripts, and C.R. Gregory increased this list to more than 4,000. The late Kurt Aland had been responsible for assigning official numbers to all newly discovered manuscripts and listed total of 5,255 Greek manuscripts in Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 87, p. 184.

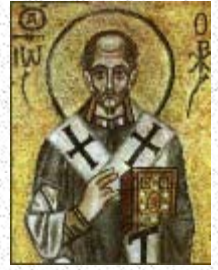
**Papyrus Fragments** are usually incomplete portions of the New Testament written on papyrus that have been unearthed from the sands of Egypt within the last one hundred fifty years. One of the first exploratory digs commissioned by the Egyptian Exploration Society yielded a multitude of non-biblical fragments from a town called **Oxyrhynchus** (ox-ee-RIN-chuhs). Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt began unearthing this city in 1896, and it soon yielded an unbelievable treasure of ancient papyri: school exercises, bills of laden, tax receipts, grocery lists, and even a possible list of undocumented sayings by Jesus (OXY 654). These discoveries are a treasury of everyday life, which has given researchers a much better understanding of early Egyptian language and customs. Once the third most important city in Egypt, Oxyrhynchus has been called the "Wastepaper City" because of its astonishing yield of documents. Biblical fragments also began showing up, here and in many other Egyptian digs. New significant biblical finds were given a "P" number. Used for identification purposes only, these numbers do not chronologically infer their antiquity. John Rylands acquired P52 after it was unearthed from an Egyptian tomb dating to about 115-120 AD. Allowing 20-30 years for such a copy to arrive in Egypt from the original place of writing (Ephesus?), it would validate the traditional date of 95 AD for the writing of the forth Gospel by Apostle John. Despite its small size, this portion of the Gospel of John (18:31-33 and 37-38) is currently the earliest known documentation of the Bible. Many fragments are small and contain little text but some are large and comprise many New Testament books. British mining engineer Alfred Chester Beatty acquired several fragments in 1930-31: P45 (Gospels & Acts), P46 (Pauline Epistles & Hebrews), and P47 (much of Revelation). Swiss collector Martin Bodmer acquired several fragments and published them in 1955-56: P66 (John), P72 (1-2 Peter & Jude). P74, and P75 (much of Luke & John). The Bodmer and Beatty manuscripts combined, permit us to reconstruct nearly 90% of the New Testament from the 2nd to 3rd centuries. (Excluded will be Philemon, Titus, 1-2 Timothy, James, 1-2 Peter, and 1-2-3 John). Because many fragments exhibit a mixture of text-types, Philip Comfort writes in Early Manuscripts & Modern Translations of the New Testament: “...P66 Is not fully Alexandrian nor fully Western nor fully Byzantine. Scholars are hard pressed to give P66 a fitting label” (see more detailed note below). Papyrologists (people who study papyri) are knowing their finest hour.



Former Director of the British Museum, Sir Frederic G. Kenyon concludes in The Bible and Archaeology, “*The interval, then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New testament may be regarded as finally established.*” The late Kurt Aland listed 84 such P numbered fragments but there are now well over a hundred. See [List 1](#), [List 2](#), and [List 3](#).

**Patristic Citations** are numerous quotations of scripture by early church leaders, bishops, and dignitaries who wrote extensively and cited scripture quite frequently. These numerous mentions of scripture in their sermons and letters are extremely valuable in the course of trying to reconstruct the original form of the New Testament. If all known manuscripts were to disappear, it would be possible to use these Citations alone to reassemble nearly 80% of the New Testament. Their use of

scripture appears in sermons, commentaries, and personal letters to each other. Some of the most recognized are: Athanasius, Polycarp, Tertullian, Chrysostom (John), Origen, Jerome, Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Ambrose, Hippolytus, Irenaeus, and Augustine. Complicating a more clear understanding of the text-type of these Church Fathers are the many slight divergences from known text-types of the period. Further disheartening to the skillful researcher is the fact that a bishop might quote the same verse in two or three different ways, to which one might ask: "Was he quoting from memory? Was he copying directly from a manuscript? Was he merely alluding to scripture? Were these men as concerned about exactitude as the modern student?" For this reason, their citations are not commonly referenced except in the scholarly arena. In fact, some textual critics have been charged with appealing to Patristic Citations, only when a quotation "matches" the argument of that researcher. Oxford scholar John William Burgon is the only person to catalog over 86,000 quotation of the early Church Fathers. His monumental work remains unpublished in the British Museum.



**Uncials/Majuscules** is a class of early manuscripts having near complete portions of the New Testament, and written in what appears to be large capital letters with most lines not containing spaces or punctuation between letters. Slowly chiseled Roman square inscription letters gradually evolved into the Uncial form that could be written much quicker, a necessity of the scribe. Biblical Uncials (Latin: unciâlis - tall), also called Majuscules (Latin: mâiusculus - large letters), date from about the Third century to around the Ninth. Most are in codex form (stitched and glued as modern books) and each one is identified with a single capital letter just like vitamins are similarly labeled at the drug store: A=Alexandrinus, B=Vaticanus, C=Ephraemi Rescriptus, D=Bezae Cantabrigiensis, E to Z (skipping J), and, **Ⲛ** (1st Hebrew letter)=Sinaiticus. This labeling scheme of identifying manuscripts began when Brian Walton assigned the letter A to Alexandrinus in his six volume London Polyglot (1655) because this Uncial was the first to be known in the scholarly world. Some of the more professionally copied works had the same number of columns and lines per page, and usually the same count of letters per line; such as Codex Sinaiticus (above right) which was produced about 350-370 AD in Saint Catherines Monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai. It is on a thinner vellum than most Uncials and the only one to include nearly all of the New Testament. There are 346½ delicate leaves with four columns of 48 lines on each 15" x 13½" page. German scholar Constantine Tischendorf discovered the first forty-three of its pages in the monastery wastebasket in 1844 but was denied the remainder by the skeptical monks, who also resisted his pleas on a return trip in 1853. Finally, under the patronage of the Russian Tsar Alexander II, patron of the Greek Orthodox Church, Tischendorf was able to convince the monks to donate the manuscript to the Tsar (head of the Greek Church) for safe keeping. In 1933, the Soviet government sold it to the British Museum for £100,000. He judged that four separate individuals contributed to writing the basic text, and that seven later Correctors placed their alterations on its face (currently deemed to be nine). Tischendorf further stated that these alterations involved a total of over 15,000 changes, including multiple changes in the same place. It is the most textually blighted manuscript in existence. Since most manuscripts have incurred some type of correction and often by multiple scribes, identification methods (sigla) are used by Committees producing Greek Texts to distinguish the original scribe from the Corrector(s). Before the ascendancy of the Papyri in New Testament scholarship, textual critics of previous generations most often appealed to Vaticanus and Sinaiticus for determining the selection of readings. In the days of Westcott & Hort, these two Uncials became touchstones for deciding which readings most closely resembled the originals. Although the Big Five Uncials have enjoyed a prestigious niche in the history of Textual Criticism, it may be confidently stated that there are more textual disagreements among these Five Uncials in just the four Gospels, than all the hundreds of Byzantine Cursives combined, in all twenty-seven books of the New Testament - a glaring testimony to the difficulty of [Copying Uncial Manuscripts](#). With the rise in importance of the Papyri, the reverence for this type of manuscript has greatly diminished. Kurt Aland lists 267 numbered Uncials.



**Cursives/Minuscules** is a class of later biblical manuscripts stretching from about the Ninth century into the Fifteenth century. In order to both improve communication and produce a greater number of biblical manuscripts, the church decided to reform its writing about 790 AD. The scholar Alcuin of York, an English abbot in the monastery at Tours, France, developed a

systematic approach to writing that included a hand or font known as the Caroline Miniscule. Biblical manuscripts from this period are generally called Minuscules (Latin: minusculus - smaller) or Cursives (Latin: cursivus - to run) because letters are formed in such a way as to appear to run together. Uncials and Minuscules co-existed for about two centuries with the gradual disappearance of the former. Alcuin further increased legibility by incorporating punctuation in manuscripts and subdividing the text into paragraphs and sentences, with capital letters at the beginning of each sentence. Unlike square-rigid monospaced capital lettered sentences, words now began to stand out as a series of subconnections. Multi-colored "Illumination" was added to the more professionally crafted manuscripts, which included huge ornately fashioned dropped capitals, or intricately designed pictures that interpreted the accompanying scripture. This innovation especially flourished during the Gothic period (13th-15th). Each of these developments in writing styles also contributed to better dating manuscripts. These documents comprise the bulk of all manuscripts, and closely resemble the Byzantine text-type. Aland lists 2,764 Cursives or Minuscules.



**Lectionary** comes from a Latin root word meaning to read. Most eastern churches used the same passage of scripture or liturgy on a certain Sunday or ecclesiastical holiday each year, and rather than carry the entire Bible in manuscript form to the pulpit, these repeatedly used scriptures or lections were housed in a specially constructed book called a Lectionary. These works are extremely important because if all other manuscripts were suddenly lost, nearly 90% of the New Testament could be reconstructed from these Lectionaries alone. Because this text was repeatedly heard by congregations, year after year, it is an important source to measure textual transmission and mixture. Unfortunately, of all the textual sources available to the New Testament translator and student, the Lectionaries are the least studied and understood. Nestle did not cite witnesses until the 27th Edition and Von Soden made no reference to them at all. A complete and thorough examination of their text-type has never been done. What little is known about them is that their text most closely resembles the Byzantine text-type, and the UBS Greek Texts almost always cites them in company with the Byzantine variant. Aland lists 2,143 Lectionaries.



**Early Versions:** (Waltz), (Cath. Ency) In the first several centuries, the Bible was translated into several other languages, and many of these translations or Versions still exist. In the last quarter of the second century appeared the first Latin translation which was called the Old Latin. Then came the Syriac Versions (Peshitta, Curetonian, Philoxenian), the Egyptian Coptic Versions (Sahidic in the south, Bohairic from the north), the Gothic in the middle of the 4th century, the Armenian of the 5th century, and the Ethiopic of the 6th. There are nearly 2,900 Versions representing these various languages. Although not as significant as individual Greek manuscripts, nonetheless, they are additional witnesses to transmission and are routinely documented in the Manuscript Apparatus of most Greek Texts.



## Westcott & Hort



For more than a hundred years, these two British professors from Cambridge University have been severely censured, rebuked, profaned, and demonized by the more conservative or evangelical wing of Christianity. Most of what they believed has now been largely discounted, but they still get the credit (or blame) for changing the path of religious history in the field of textual criticism. Although they continued the same textual theories of Griesbach and Lachmann, Brooke Westcott and Fenton Hort remain the centerpiece because of the unique task that was assigned to them and more importantly, how they went about processing that charge. Brooke Foss Westcott was born on January 12, 1825 in Birmingham, England. He studied at Trinity College in Cambridge, England, and completed graduate school in 1851, after which he began teaching at Harrow School. Westcott gradually received church appointments, eventually arriving to one of the thirty-six honorary chaplains to the King of England. Fenton John Anthony Hort was born on April 23, 1828 in Dublin, Ireland, and also studied at Trinity College in Cambridge. In the course of time, they became colleagues and

started working together in 1853 on their own theory of New Testament textual criticism. Each man publically disdained the Received Text and mutually observed glaring differences between Lachmann and Tischendorf.

Seriously threatened by the advance of the Ottoman Turks during the early 15th Century and the subsequent fall of their capital at Constantinople in 1453, scholars fled the eastern Byzantine Empire and brought along their biblical manuscripts; hence, it has been called the Byzantine text-type. This new text was noticeably different from the Alexandrian Text of the western Roman Catholic Church. Most of the Reformers used this new text, especially Luther in his German translation and Tyndale in his English. It was fresh, exciting - not in the staid Latin of the period but in Greek - the very language of the Gospels. Other eastern literature gave new understanding to the events of the past, because most literature of the western Roman Empire was destroyed by invading nomadic tribes. In many instances, all that is known of certain particulars of ancient Rome is due solely to this eastern literature that traveled with escaping scholars and merchants. So widespread was the demand for all this new eastern literature, that the invention of the printing press by Johann Gutenberg became a necessity - not a novelty. This surge for learning was the very fuel of the Renaissance. The Byzantine Text became the text-type of English Bibles, including the King James Version of 1611. Several editions of this version have been issued (*technically not revisions - please see next paragraph*) and the present issue is actually the 1769 edition, following King George's command for the translators to take the 1701 and the 1611 and make them one and the same. This writer possesses a special reprint of the actual 1611 with its majestic woodblock cuts and peculiar spellings. It is slightly different (mostly spellings) from the 1769 which modern readers enjoy, but not very much. The well known phrase, Textus Receptus or Received Text, is a special product of Abraham and Bonaventure Elzevir (1624, first edition) and is not a complete representation of the entire Byzantine text, anymore than Jerome's Latin Vulgate (405) may be considered a faithful representation of all Old Latin manuscripts. Received Text is a term that originated from a Latin phrase in their second edition of 1633: "*textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum...*" (the text that you have is now received by all). Because of these close textual relationships, many biblical students innocently conclude that Received Text, Erasmus, Stephanus, King James Bible, and Byzantine all mean the same thing. There are some differences between each, but interpretively, they all posture on the same side of the aisle.

In 1870, the Upper House of the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury of the Church of England appointed a Revision Committee to make the first genuine revision of the Authorized Version and both Westcott and Hort were appointed. Although Bishop Ellicott was chairman, he was no match for Hort in Textual Criticism and Hort gradually displaced the other committee members in prominence, to become the main voice of the Revisionists. The Revised Version was issued in 1881 (New Testament) and 1884 (Old Testament). It was passionately literal, interpretatively rigid, hopelessly preferential, and just plain hard to read, which explains why its verses are rarely, if ever, quoted in any literary work. It was the first major English translation to break with the Textus Receptus following the massive influx of Byzantine manuscripts from the East.

Several previous editions of the King James Version had been issued but were not actually revisions in the truest sense, because no attempt had been made to significantly alter the text from that of the original printing in 1611. Most editions were issued to correct printing errors. The original 1611 contained the Old Testament Apocrypha because the government required publishing firms to include it, and its removal thus necessitated still another edition. The first true revision of the King James Version began in 1871 with a translation committee being convened to produce the Revised Version. They were charged with several tasks, principally the specific instruction to make as "few changes" as necessary, and to place the "reason for each change" in the margin. What actually transpired was totally unexpected and far beyond the original commission, for Brooke Westcott and Fenton Hort used the committee to produce an entirely "new" translation based on their own recently compiled Greek Text from the Alexandrian text-type used by the Roman Catholic Church. It was not a revision but a creation. In fact, Hort was unabashedly enamored with the Vatican's own manuscript - Vaticanus B. According to notes of the proceedings, he would summarily dismiss most readings that did not match this Uncial or its near relative Sinaiticus. Hort called the Syrian text (his term for the Byzantine) a late text because its only manuscripts dated from later centuries.

Many British scholars were in an uproar over this departure from the traditional Byzantine family. They disagreed with its unwarranted textual manipulations and feared that it would bring about a renewal of Catholicism in England. Leading the charge was Oxford scholar John William Burgon who scathingly chastised Fenton Hort in his

monumental refutation, The Revision Revised. If Burgon was so skillful at Textual Criticism, why then is he so neglected or defamed by modern authorities? It may be for the very same reason that he also lacked ecclesiastical promotion during his life time - *he rocked too many boats*. Burgon wrote forcefully with a confidence that often came across to his contemporaries as intemperate defiance, and perhaps even elitist. If one is able to intellectually disassociate Burgon's personality from his writing, many of his arguments are quite reasonable. For example, modern scholars have now generally dispensed with Hort's 4th Century Lucian of Antioch Recension Theory as the source of the Byzantine Text, not because early Church Councils and Church Fathers are completely silent on the matter, but rather because too many distinctive Byzantine readings have now been cataloged in the Papyri, predating Lucian by almost two centuries. Additionally, Lucian accepted the heresy of Arius and it would be incredible to believe that the entire Athanasian Church would accept a recension written by an Arian heretic. Could one political party accept a convention platform document written by a rival party? Would the Democratic National Committee accept a platform written by conservative Republicans? Logically, this theory is profoundly flawed. The entire theory was without evidence from the beginning and the more that distinctive Byzantine readings appear in early Papyri only contribute to the growing assessment that it never could have taken place. No matter how one desires to frame the discussion, Burgon was entirely correct on this point. F.F. Bruce writes in History of the Bible in English: “Some scholars did attempt to reply to Burgon -- competently, like Professor William Sanday of Oxford ... and less competently, like Bishop Ellicott, chairman of the Revisers, who was no match for Burgon in textual criticism ... The one scholar who could have answered Burgon conclusively -- Dr. Hort, chose to say nothing.” **19**

In his refutation, considering Hort's suggestion of a fourth century recension to account for the creation of the Byzantine text, Burgon writes, “(Hort) ... invites us to believe that the mistaken textual judgment pronounced at Antioch in A.D. 350 had an immediate effect on the text of Scripture throughout the world. We are requested to suppose that it resulted in the instantaneous extinction of codices like B (Vaticanus), **Ⲛ** (Sinaiticus), wherever found; cause codices of the A type (Byzantine) to spring up like mushrooms in their place, and that, in every library of ancient Christendom. We are further required to assume that this extraordinary substitution of new evidence for old ... fully explains why Irenaeus and Hippolytus, Athanasius ... Chrysostom, and the two Cyrils ... show themselves strangers to the text of B and **Ⲛ**. We read and marvel.” **20** In other words, although no definite proof exists of a recension of the Byzantine text in the Fourth century, even if it had occurred, how could this new text-type immediately appear everywhere throughout Christendom and immediately supplant the Alexandrian Type in such a way that many early church writers had no familiarity with it? This recension theory is no longer plausible. F.G. Kenyon writes in Handbook To The Textual Criticism Of The New Testament: “There is no historical evidence that the Traditional Text was created by a council or conference of ancient scholars. History is silent concerning any such gathering ... it would be strange if historians and Church writers had all omitted to record or mention such an event as the deliberate revision of the New Testament in its original Greek.” **21** Gradually distancing themselves from the Hort recension (artificial creation) theory, modern experts now admit their uncertainty of the true origin of the Byzantine text-type because (1) its longer, editorially polished readings suggest a later date, but (2) many of those readings now appear in the early papyri, yet (3) it also displays a mixture of readings from the other text-types. Philip Comfort writes in Early Manuscripts & Modern Translations of the New Testament: “The textual critic today cannot adopt a reading just because it is supported by Codex Vaticanus as did Westcott and Hort or just because it is supported by an early papyrus MS or two. The situation is too complex for such a simplistic approach; there is too much evidence that must be weighed .... For example, P66 is not fully Alexandrian nor fully Western nor fully Byzantine. Scholars are hard pressed to give P66 a fitting label.” **22** This fragment may be the earliest dated papyrus fragment, if not P52.

Because the Revisers discarded the traditional Byzantine text for the Alexandrian, other textual experts and especially more conservative scholars joined the bandwagon, positing a veritable flood of good and bad arguments in opposition of Westcott & Hort. Most are credible, some hopeless. Following is a very brief sampling of their more interesting questions/positions:

- Lucian (*Westcott & Hort's recension theory*) followed the heresy of Arius. Would the entire Athanasian church accept a newly created Bible that was written by a heretic?

- Since the Alexandrian text originated in Egypt and those scribes began with copies of the “northern” originals, were their copies faithful reproductions of the originals in the first place?
- The heat of Egypt is unique for preservation. It is not reasonable to expect early manuscripts to have been preserved in northern climates which were the recipient of Paul's letters.
- Is not the entire Alexandrian cause resting upon a monumental presumption of agreement with “northern” originals?
- Is the Byzantine text-type a late text “only” because the paper is late?

Recently many of these distinctly Byzantine readings have been clearly documented in papyrus fragments of the early 2nd and 3rd centuries by several different researchers. Harry Sturz has exhaustively listed distinctive Papyrus Byzantine readings in each of these four different categories: [23](#)

1. Byzantine Alignments Opposed by Western, Alexandrian, and Westcott/Hort
2. Byzantine-Western Alignments Opposed by Alexandrian and Westcott/Hort
3. Byzantine-Alexandrian Alignments Followed by Westcott/Hort BUT Opposed by Western
4. Byzantine with Varying Support from Western/Alexandrian BUT Opposed by Westcott/Hort

Papyrus comparisons have urged at least a few textual scholars to remark that the wholesale disregard for all Byzantine or Antiochian readings is no longer wise, as Bruce Metzger, *“The lesson to be drawn from such evidence, however, is that the general neglect of the Antiochian readings which has been so common among many textual critics is quite unjustified.”* [24](#) Although not conclusive, this is also a serious challenge to the Difficult-Short theory. Sturz further makes the reasonable conclusion, *“With so many distinctively Byzantine readings attested by early papyri, doubt is now cast over the 'lateness' of other Antiochian readings.”* [25](#) In other words, since all Byzantine readings were thought to be late simply because of their length, polish, and late paper but now that some have clearly been shown to be early, is it wise to continue assuming that length, textual polish, and paper automatically suggests lateness? This re-evaluation of the Byzantine text has forced many scholars to reject Westcott & Hort's major position. Kurt Aland, perhaps the most qualified manuscript expert, writes in Significance for the Papyri: *“It is impossible to fit the papyri, from the time prior to the fourth century, into these two text-types [Alexandrian and Byzantine]...The increase of the documentary evidence and the entirely new areas of research which were opened to us on the discovery of the papyri, mean the end of Westcott and Hort's conception.”* [26](#)

It comes as no surprise that in the Introduction to the 26th edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek Text (which formerly used Vaticanus as a touchstone) we read: *“Neither Codex Vaticanus nor Codex Sinaiticus (nor even P75 of two hundred years earlier) can provide a guideline we can normally depend on for determining the text. The age of Westcott-Hort and of Tischendorf is definitely over.”* [27](#) The brilliant scholar Gunther Zuntz exhibits a steadfast preference for the “text of the papyri” and questions both the origin of the Byzantine and the neutrality of the Alexandrian which he frequently regards as a mixture of sources. He does not revere Burgon or show himself a friend to King James voices, but interestingly writes in The Text of the Epistles: *“...a number of Byzantine readings, most of them genuine, which previously were discarded as late, are anticipated in P46...we are now warned not to discard the Byzantine evidence en bloc...the extant Old Uncials and their allies cannot be relied upon to furnish us with a complete picture of the textual material which the fourth and fifth centuries inherited from earlier times...P46 has given us proof of that.”* [28](#)

## Herd Mentality

Nonetheless, the Alexandrian text-type has survived as the foundation of almost every modern translation since 1881. The reader may now wonder that if much of Westcott-Hort's position has been disproved and discarded (especially a 4th century recension which created the Byzantine Text), why then are modern translations still predominately using this Alexandrian text. The answer is simple, as Philip Comfort stated above. Although

distinctly Byzantine readings have been documented in the papyri, it is only here-and-there readings, not significant portions or whole manuscripts bearing unquestionable identity to the Byzantine text-type. For this reason alone, many scholars are hesitant to switch back to a text that does not precede the fourth century, as a distinct text-type. Other reasons also prevail. Even though scholars Metzger and Zuntz see the papyri devoid of a uniform text-type, it marginally exhibits greater support for the Alexandrian text-type, especially in the gospel of John. The fragment P75, a late second century or early third century witness of only the four gospels, bears a distant resemblance to Vaticanus so as to be labeled its direct progenitor by some. The entire verse of John 5:4 is omitted or doubtfully placed in the margin by current translations principally because of its attestation joined by P66, Sinaiticus, and Vaticanus. These main players also omit John 7:53-8:11, the story of the women caught in adultery, hence modern translations or The HERD follow suit.

When there is any departure among these witnesses (see also [Burgon](#)), P75 generally stays with Vaticanus, and P66 mostly shows itself a friend to Sinaiticus, **29** although the latter occasionally split. Although modern translators generally prefer the Alexandrian text-type, not all modern versions have always chosen the earliest readings, for P66 and Sinaiticus (earliest) often agree with the Byzantine against P75 and Vaticanus (later), as in John 8:38 where the former read “you have seen” and the latter “you have heard.” It would appear that The Herd prefers the earliest selections of readings, UNLESS they are too closely aligned with Byzantine variations.

Many voices repeatedly pointed to Matthew 5:22 where Jesus interprets anger “without cause” as sin. Why is this important to the discussion of textual criticism? Because out of fifty-three hundred Greek manuscripts, every one that contains this verse also contains the Greek word EIKE (without justifiable reason) except three: P67, Vaticanus, and Sinaiticus. **30** Only these three witnesses out of 5,300 manuscript sources! Granted, there are many different criteria for the final selection of a reading, but number of witnesses continues to be a prime consideration. We should additionally pause on these factors; (1) Leading experts such as Bruce Metzger and Kurt Aland have disowned Vaticanus and Sinaiticus as reliable witnesses alone, (2) P67 is an obscure 3rd century fragment containing only the Gospels which is rarely given evidence in the Manuscript Apparatus of most Greek Texts until this point, and (3) the patristic witnesses are inconclusive since Irenaeus, Origen, and Eusebius all quote it each way. This is remarkable but certainly not the only example of the preponderance of reasonable evidence being rejected for the momentary elevation of an obscure rarely cited witness, along with two others that have generally been disowned.

Why is it that all other manuscripts, of all four text-types, of all categories which agree with the Byzantine are now discarded for the elevation of an obscure, rarely cited 3rd century fragment? The Western text of Bezae Catabrigensis (D) accords with the Byzantine reading, along with the third Corrector of Sinaiticus, plus all the church Lectionaries, and most of the early Versions. Is it not easier to believe that three witnesses omitted one word than to defend the tenuous position that multiplied thousands of scribes added it? If these scribes were influenced by an earlier progenitor what is it? Modern textual criticism is certainly not free of academic bias, for the Western manuscript Bezae is routinely given preeminence when it “disagrees” with the Byzantine, yet quietly discarded to the margin when it agrees. This and other similar circumstances may suggest that evidence alone, frequently takes a backseat to predilection or HERD mentality. If the earliest witnesses agree with the Byzantine they are discarded or marginalized. If a clear majority of all witnesses from all text families of all text types agree with the Byzantine, they are discarded or marginalized for the elevation of a few or a single obscure witness. In other words, if evidence clearly, predominately, or suggestively points toward the acceptance of a distinct Byzantine reading (and the subsequent implications and consequences), follow The HERD instead.

Another example of HERD mentality is use of the King James Version to buttress the validation of a new modern translation, without fully explaining the difference in underlying text-types. The reader is allowed to believe that the King James Version is only being updated, when in fact the new version is based on an entirely different family of manuscripts. Why is it necessary to even mention the KJV in a Preface or Introduction to the Reader?

Perception is the key - not factual statements, and lest the visitor presume that this writer is taking cheap shots at the two following translations, it is necessary to momentarily divulge that these two versions are components of a select few translations that are regularly used by this writer during personal Bible reading.

**New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

"We owe to it [KJV] an incalculable debt. Yet the King James Version has serious defects. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the development of biblical studies and the discovery of many biblical manuscripts more ancient than those on which the King James Version was based made it apparent that these defects were so many as to call for **revision**. The task was begun by authority of the Church of England ... and the American Standard Version ... was published in 1901."

In 1928 the copyright of the latter was acquired by the International Council of Religious Education and thus associated in this Council through their boards of education and publication. The Council appointed a committee of scholars to have charge of the text of the **revision**. After studying the questions...in 1937 the Council authorized a **revision**."

**New American Standard Version (NASV)**

"In the history of the English Bible translations, the King James Version is the most prestigious. This time-honored ... **became the basis for** the English Revised Version appearing in 1881... The American counterpart of this last work was published in 1901 as the American Standard Version. Recognizing the values of the American Standard Version, the Lockman Foundation felt an urgency to **update** by incorporating recent discoveries of Hebrew and Greek textual sources and by rendering it into more current English."

Perception, not true and factual statements is the issue. A textual expert will read the above introductions and understand them quite differently from the casual Bible student. Does the latter clearly understand from these Introductions that the KJV is based on an entirely different family of manuscripts than the modern translation being offered? Will the reader understand that the former is based on 94% of all Greek manuscripts and the latter is based on about 4%? Why does the KJV need to be referenced at all? Does the average reader seeing the word "revision" (NRSV) on three separate occasions in two different paragraphs, clearly understand that the word revision actually refers to the 1901 ASV - not the KJV?

There is a definite connectedness in each of the above, for the translators start by mentioning the KJV and then end with their own new version. A natural flow of logic permits even the serious reader to conclude from the above that the KJV was acceptable for its time but that the translation committee is only revising it for the convenience of modern readers. This is not the case at all.

Why make reference to the KJV in the first place? Why does the KJV need to somehow be 'connected' with any current translation process? Why not just be completely honest with the reader and fully explain the whole manuscript family scheme? The important word here is perception - not facts.

For all the good that modern translators have accomplished in educating the readership, and bringing many passages alive with freshness, they need to be honest and divulge their use of the Alexandrian text-type, even if it does comprise only three to four percent of all Greek manuscripts and early Christian resources. Why is there such boldness to defend the Alexandrian text-type in scholarly circles, yet undeniable reluctance to inform the buying public? It would not be intemperate to suggest that publishers stand close to the King James for reasons of marketability, but corporately discard its textual transmission for reasons of peer scholarship. Bible readers should have the right to fully understand the background of what they are reading.

**Some Final Notes**

Balance is an elusive quality, for when one desires to display perspectives equally, it usually means elevating one position to achieve that intention. Hence, in the pursuit of literary balance, one unintentionally appears to side with the opinion in ascendance. It is not the desire, within this exercise to elevate the Byzantine text above its undue

position in the scheme of manuscript evaluation or theories of transmission, only to illustrate that determined efforts by modernists to completely discard it from any consideration is intellectually unjustified. As previously indicated by [Aland](#), [Metzger](#) and [Zuntz](#), the appearance of heretofore presumed late Byzantine readings in the papyri is worthy of notice, especially as the number of these findings increases, because this leans toward invalidating the opinion that “all” longer, polished constructions are the result of time and modification. Additionally, the Byzantine comprises several identifiable sub-groups which is priceless for determining the route of text-type transmission, now that Aland (see above) has indicated the lack of text-type distinctiveness in the papyri before the Fourth century. In order to preserve balance, one must also be allowed to observe the enormous divergency of readings and disagreements in the Alexandrian text among its premier witnesses, but not so as to also denigrate its contribution to the study of textual transmission.

Many recent translations exhibit more careful appreciation for modern readers who desire short sentences, unsophisticated vocabulary, and smoother construction. Word selection is generally found near the sixth grade level, and some interpretative efforts have improved the comprehension of more difficult passages where ambiguity remains from a literal rendering. This obvious remanufacturing of the basic text requires discipline, for innovation predictably invites the inclusion of personal ideas of the translators. Awareness of these inclusions has prompted the demonization of their efforts or charges of conspiratorial behavior by some voices. For example, best selling author Gale Riplinger has linked their individual accomplishments to a monumental New Age cabal, wherein translation committees are directly accused of satanic manipulation, in order to promulgate New Age bibles for the religion of the end-time, one world system. But most of the evidence that has been presented is clearly more reflective of the difference in text-type and sub-grouping among manuscript families which has been known for nearly two centuries. Frederick Scrivener and E.C. Colwell (see above) have indicated that the greatest number of textual variants were introduced within two hundred years of the originals. Perhaps an argument could be successfully made for a scribal conspiracy, but there simply appears no convincing evidence that modern translators have conspired together under the influence of satanic voices. (See opinions from both sides in the [Bibliography: New Age](#))

Most scholars have generally dismissed the conclusions of Brooke Westcott and Fenton Hort, and both have virtually become straw men for the missiles of the extreme conservative position and King James Only voices. But Hort was, at least, right about one thing; textual criticism not being an exact science “... *is entirely subjective.*”

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## Literally Speaking



Formal Equivalence (word for word, as opposed to meaning-based or Dynamic Equivalence) is the term which describes the more cautious approach to biblical translation, because the translator earnestly searches for a target language word that most closely aligns with each manuscript word in the most unambiguous sense. If a Hebrew or Greek word means to “run” then literal translators should render the word “run” in the target language instead of shuffle, amble, move, skip, prance, or stroll, because neither of these verbs convey the most literal sense of running. On some occasions localized colloquialisms, slang, or idiomatic constructions force the translator to be interpretive but most words in the majority of languages have very definite meanings. “Ich werde” in German means “I will” in English - a very simple promise. These words do not mean: “I might, or I could, or I should, or I’ll think about it.” Understanding cultural and socially distinctiveness is also paramount. When being introduced, Americans generally ask: “What’s your name?” whereas Germans say “Wie heissen Sie?” - How are you called? Interchanging these expressions into the other language would produce awkwardness. Translators must understand these cultural peculiarities. Formal Equivalence (also called Verbal Equivalence) is a much stricter discipline and there are tumultuous presumptions expected of literal word for word translation. Before the profusion of modern versions utilizing meaning-based methods such as Dynamic Equivalence, Paraphrase, and Theme (discussed below), the general approach to translation was the literal method. Tyndale, Coverdale, Geneva, Douay, Bishops, King James, Revised Version, American Standard, and Revised Standard translations were all produced during the age of Formal Equivalence, and they are still reviewed with a much more critical eye and less forgiveness. One could almost say that during this

period, to translate implied that a literal process was involved. Faithfulness and literalness were deemed as common bedfellows and for this reason (with extremely few exceptions) to not be literal was to be unfaithful to the craft. Many scholarly papers have excoriated literal translators over the years for seemingly inconsequential infractions of verb tense, missing a dative, ignoring the genitive, misinterpretation, or inclusion/exclusion of the definite article. Formal Equivalence is an exacting discipline and literal translators should be forewarned - *of their peers*.

*And. And. And. But. But. But. For. For. For.* The text of the Bible was written by a conjunction loving culture that created long sentences by tying several clauses together with conjunctions. Quickly look through the four gospels using a very literal translation, you will notice that almost every fourth or fifth sentence begins with the word AND. This is one of several quick (but obvious not conclusive) methods for checking the literalness of a translation. Notice how conjunctions have been preserved in KJV and NASV or obliterated in NIV and NRSV. Students preferring the old RSV will also notice many other changes of literary style in the NRSV. Sentence length is another brief test for the literalness of a translation because the normative procedure had been to closely follow the manuscripts which had some very protracted sentences. However, modern readers prefer short sentences with an unsophisticated vocabulary. Thus, *“And Jesus answering said unto them”* of Luke 20:34 and numerous others places is reduced to simply *“Jesus replied.”* Ephesians 1:3-14 is the longest sentence found in the Greek New Testament by this writer, comprising a total of 270 words. The following list demonstrates how it has been preserved or modified.

Translation	Sentences	Published
American Standard (ASV)	1	1901
J.P. Green (LITV)	1	1987
Young (YLT)	1	1898
Modern King James (MKJV)	2	1962
King James (KJV)	3	1611
New King James (NKJV)	4	1982
New American Standard (NASV)	4	1960
New Revised Standard (NRSV)	6	1989
J.B. Phillips (PHL)	6	1958
New American Bible (NAB)	6	1970
New English Translation (NET)	7	1997
New International Version (NIV)	8	1973
New Living Translation	15	1996

It should be clear from any reasonable study of sentence length and use of conjunctions that modern translations reject what previously was the norm. One of the classic objections to literal translations is that the sentences are too long and the wording too rough -- yet this is precisely the very trait to be found in most biblical Greek manuscripts. These are criticisms which might be considered affirmations for a literal translator, *perhaps even a compliment*.

### Interpretation

*“If the literal sense makes sense, seek no other sense”* has been a trustworthy standard for literal translation. Therefore, the literal translator should employ interpretation only when its necessity appears obvious, but herein is the central issue, for many wish to argue fervently over the meaning of obvious. Unfortunately, if carried to extremes, a strict literal translation can easily become slavish, pedantic, rigid, or wooden. Although translators apply Formal Equivalence to much of the text, routine exceptions for interpretation are common in all literals. For example, in Romans 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13 (and other places), there is a negative construction of two Greek words that literally means “not to be” and the KJV translates them routinely as *“God forbid.”* Is this interpretatively correct? Yes. Is this literal? No. The specific Greek words or word variants for God and Forbid do not occur in any known manuscript. One might then ask: Would the original phrase, *not to be*, have sufficed, if translated rigidly? Possibly, but it might also weaken the impact as well as entertain assumptive questions concerning that biblical writer. To preempt such occasions, all literal, word for word translations will infrequently display momentary excursions into the wispy clouds of interpretation - sometimes by choice and sometimes by necessity.

This highlights one of the exasperating problems of a literal translator, for in some cases, there is no unambiguous one-to-one correspondence between two languages, especially in the idiomatic sense (real meaning). Vocabulary can also be difficult if not, at times, impossible to yield appropriate receptor words. There are four different words for love in Greek while the English language offers only one - love. STERGEIN is rooted in one's own nature. ERAN is the love of passion and sex. PHILEIN is based on a pleasurable response from something. AGAPAN is a love that is evoked from a sense of value found in an object which causes one to highly prize that object. English is unprepared to adequately reproduce these shades of meaning.

**Stergein** is rooted in obligatory affection for objects of similar nature. It is the natural affection that human parents have for their children and similarly, the protective devotion of animals for their offspring. This word is not found in its root form in the Greek New Testament but does appear twice with an “alpha” prefix which negates the original meaning. Thus, “unnatural affection” is the usual translation of Romans 1:31 and 2 Timothy 3:3. It is also found with PHILEIN in Romans 12:10 to produce a compound meaning “kindly affection.” Stergein is obligatory love.

**Eran** is not found in the Greek New Testament in any word variant. It was used by pagan writers to describe sexual passion, the dynamic enveloping of the conscious mind, to the near disregard of surroundings. Eran is passionate love.

**Philein** is used about forty times and is the pleasure love that returns from a person or object. It is often a very normal, “unimpassioned” friendship of one person for another. For example, put two motorcycle riders in the same room at some event and when they discover their mutual interest, they will most likely be lost in their own private world of conversation about chrome and rubber. Put two graduates of the same college in the same work place and they will develop a unique friendship because of the pleasurable memories of life at that college. In each situation, the affection developed because of pleasure, in spite of no other commonality. In the first case, it was the PLEASURE of motorcycles: the roar of hot exhaust, the danger of taking curves too fast, the brilliance of polished chrome, the thrill of aerated freedom that drew these riders together. Philein is a pleasure responsive love (not a love *for* pleasure).

**Agapan** is used in its verb, noun, and adjective forms over three hundred times. It is evoked by an “awakened sense” of value for a person or object. Agapan goes beyond the pleasurable response of Philein to recognize the “precious value” in something. In contrasting Philein and Agapan, the former is a love of pleasure and the latter is a love of esteem; the former takes pleasure in and the latter gives value to; the former delights in receiving while the latter excels in giving. Agapan was used grudgingly by secular writers during the Greek Classical period and use of the noun form, Agapēsis, was rare. This was true, perhaps, because the human condition did not frequently share in this type of love, plus the other three encompassed the whole human experience (Stergein-Obligation, Eran-Passion, Philein-Affection). Here was a word, nearly dormant, waiting for something to give it prominence, and that happened with the telling of God's love for people through His “esteem” for us. Imputed love that we did not deserve. Agapan possessed the necessary concept to fully expound the love of God. Agapan was made for biblical writers. Agapan is God's merciful esteem for us.

English vocabulary is unprepared to adequately reproduce these shades of meaning and translators have abandoned any refined pursuit of their explanation. Thus, we arrive at the infrequent impasse of literal word-for-word translation; in some cases there is no receptor word, and in other situations, being too literal creates one ill effect while speculation produces another.

The word construction of John 8:25 has troubled scholars for centuries so it is understandably inviting for the translator to employ interpretation rather than follow a pure literal methodology. Jesus is here responding to a question from His detractors “*Who are you?*” by stating to them that He is exactly who He has been saying or professing from the beginning (of His ministry). A literal rendering might be: “***The beginning that which also I say to you.***” NRSV interprets this passage into an exclamation of frustration: “*Why do I speak to you at all?*” In other words: “If you guys don't understand who I am by now, why do I even bother trying anymore?” It grasps the

meaning but it is not literal. Surprisingly, this is a notable departure from the original, and more literal, RSV which reads: *“Even what I have told you from the beginning.”*

This raises a very pertinent but complicated question. When and for what reasons should literal translation be permitted to digress into interpretation? Is it simply a matter of personal choice? Has there already been a precedent established by translation committees? Should we redefine the word literal? Does literal mean following all the words, or just those words that are helpful? What is the difference between this and meaning based? For example, in Mark 4:1 the second gospel writer states that in order to speak to a large multitude, Jesus sat in the sea: *“**And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea**”* (KJV - translated exactly as Mark wrote it). Did Jesus sit down in the boat or in the water? Admittedly, this matter would be irrelevant for a translation following the methodology of Dynamic Equivalent or Paraphrase (discussed below) because each would predictably discard the troublesome phrase and make the sentence convey the meaning that Jesus sat down in the boat. However, literal translations must adhere to a different set of presumptions and the question is not where or how Jesus sat down, but when should translators remain literal and when should they engage in interpretation. When should the reader be encouraged to ascertain unusual or difficult readings by their own abilities and literary resources? Translators and readers fall on both sides of the issue. Some earnestly contend for the manuscripts while others similarly aver for interpretation. Unfortunately, confusion may also arise when the uninformed criticizes a literal translation for making a nonsensical reading when all the translator did was present the manuscript to the reader. Who then is at fault? The informed translator's choice or the uninformed readers misunderstanding?

### Nonsensical Phrases

To highlight these questions even further, another troublesome passage which has plagued scholars, commentators, and translators for centuries is Isaiah 15:5 where the Hebrew words *“**...Eglath-selishiyah**”* are simple to understand yet make absolutely no sense in the context of the passage. There is no linking adverb or preposition or conjunction nor general syntax, or anything else that even attempts to suggest how they should be translated - nothing! The words simply mean a female cow that is three years old. KJV, NKJV, Green, Young, and Douay translate each word exactly as written. New American and Jerusalem Bible transliterate the Hebrew words inside brackets to alert the reader to its strangeness. RSV and NRSV add the preposition “to” which suggests that it is the name of a town in the vicinity of Zoar. NASV inserts the conjunction “and” which similarly creates the illusion of a second town. NIV further adds to the confusion by inserting “as far as” which not only presumes the name of a town, but then expects the reader to also believe that the new mystery location is situated beyond Zoar. There is no evidence in biblical or secular literature nor archeological inscriptions that suggest to the slightest degree that any town with this name ever existed. Without context or substantiated grammar this passage often becomes an illusion created by the translators. Interestingly, NKJV inserts the word “like” which suggests that the mystery words are not a town but really a description of how the fugitives were running to Zoar - the Moabite refugees were fleeing like three year old heifers. Amusing but not scholarship.

In balance, the word heifer has been used by biblical writers to describe attributes or qualities such as in Hosea 4:16. Unfortunately, without an adverb, a preposition, a conjunction, or other grammatical link, this phrase remains awkward, unexplainable with certitude, and challenges Formal Equivalence to render such passages for the benefit of the novice reader without creating an illusion.

### Blanks / Paradox / Ambiguity

Italicized words have benefited translators by allowing them to offer possible solutions to difficult problems or resolve minor anomalies. For example, verbs are missing in some New Testament sentences. There are no main verbs in all manuscripts containing the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-10) where Greek texts simply read: “Blessed the poor, Blessed the meek, or Blessed the peacemakers.” Naturally, this does not conform to the basic principles of proper English without the verb ARE being included. KJV italicizes these words so that you will know that something has been supplied to the underlying text, in order to make sense of the passage. Thus, we properly have: *“**Blessed are the poor,**” “**Blessed are the meek,**” or “**Blessed are the peacemakers.**”* First to use italics in this

fashion was the Geneva Bible of 1560.

Cross-referencing also benefits translators. In 1 Samuel 13, the numbers pertaining to the reign of King Saul have been lost through scribal transmission. It appears that every manuscript containing this verse has a glaring omission of dates. Volumes of learned opinions have been written on this passage, for it is well known in the scholastic community. Not a few have suggested that it properly belongs with the preceding chapter because it would then explain that all those events took place in the first year of Saul's reign. The Septuagint has omitted the reading entirely and begins with the second verse. Biblia Hebraica literally renders: "*Saul was ... years old at his reign and he ruled for ... two years over Israel.*" Most translations did not attempt to guess the original numbers, but NASV conjectured from other passages such as Acts 13:21 and extra-biblical works (Josephus' statement that Saul reigned 18 years before Samuel's death and 22 years after it - Antiquities 6:14:9) that the years must have been forty. Thus cross-referencing can solve problems (and sometimes create them). It is interesting to note that NIV did the same thing but then reversed the numbers.

"Saul was forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty two years over Israel." - NASV

"Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty two years." - NIV

KJV did the same thing in 2 Samuel 21:19 where the text appears to invalidate David as the slayer of Goliath the Philistine giant (1 Samuel 17): *There was war with the Philistines again at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam*" (NASV). Although many translations ignored the discrepancy and left the text as is, KJV translators cross-referenced the parallel reading in 1 Chronicles 20:5 "*And there was war again with the Philistines; and Elhanan the son of Jair slew Lahmi THE BROTHER OF Goliath the Gittite, whose spear staff was like a weaver's beam*" which informs us that Elhanan actually slew Lahmi who was the brother of Goliath. The words "the brother of" were then italicized into the 2 Samuel passage. Thus, the use of italics and cross-referencing can be applied to resolve discrepancies or to highlight a meaning.

Ambiguity is noticeable in passages such as 1 Corinthians 7:36 where some translations present the "virgin" as a father's daughter while others suggest a groom's fiancée. A few versions even made this passage more difficult to understand. Search your favorite Bibles and ask these questions: "To whom is this woman associated? Father? Husband? Who is permitting who to marry who?"

## **Historical Present**

Original language tenses will always challenge translators because some tenses do not carry the same context in different languages such as the Greek Aorist and Imperfect. Especially perplexing for the die-hard literalist is the common use by Greeks of the Historical Present. To add emphasis and drama to a conversation while relating a "past" experience, they leap into the present tense at the point to be emphasized or highlighted.

For example, in Matthew chapter 14 (KJV, Darby, Young)

Past tense conversation	16	Jesus said unto them ...
Switch to Present tense	17	And they <u>SAY</u> unto him ...
Revert to Past tense	18	He said ...

The idea behind leaping from the past tense into the present tense is to make the conversation more vivid and real at that point, by trying to transport the listeners or readers back in time to enjoy that moment as though they were actually there. It works for Greeks but immediately sounds odd and disconnected in English. For this reason, modern translations generally ignore the Historical Present and leave the entire conversation in the past tense.

NASV sets these verbs in the past tense but employs an imaginative marking device (asterisk) to denote the present of such verb tenses. The above verse 17 reads: "*And they \*said to Him.*" Since this translation is generally

used by students, it can be a noteworthy attempt to help the more serious reader understand the context of a passage. In this case, they would then hear in their minds: “And they SAY...”

### Genitives

Greek genitives can be formidable. Some may be translated using a corresponding form such as a prepositional phrase, but too often the English phrase must then be adjusted to retain the original meaning of the genitive. Especially challenging will be verses such as 2 Corinthians 4:6 where there is a string of eight genitives in the latter part of the verse. Most literals have tried to preserve some elements of these genitives while the Dynamics toy with alternate phrasing, and the Living Bible has actually changed the word GNOSIS (knowledge) into something of an idiom (*made us understand*).

**KJV:** “...light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”

**TEV:** “...light shine in our hearts, to bring us the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of Christ”

**LB:** “...has made us understand that it is the brightness of his glory that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ”

### Obsolete Vocabulary

Another factor which affects translation is the emotionally charged preference or displeasure for the King James Version. Proponents speaking with heartfelt conviction on both sides of this issue have too often obscured a basic appreciation for one of the most historic accomplishments in English literature, and perhaps the only Bible that has ever acquired the label of being “the” Word Of God - deserved or undeserved. King James Onlyists inadvertently provide ammunition for the guns of their foes by requesting an exclusive proposition in a tenuous framework, and modernists provide reciprocal ammunition by labeling the KJV a poor translation based on a derelict Greek text. Textual Criticism is beginning to validate the earliness and strength of this text. The scholars from Oxford, Cambridge, and Westminster, although unfamiliar with the papyri enjoyed by modern textual critics, were individuals of impeccable academic credentials. They understood the nuances of language well, did not exhibit ignorance of their craft or unawareness of transmission theory, and displayed a profound reverence for the task before them. In a few cases, one might be enticed to argue that the difficulty of reading the King James in the New Testament is frequently a result of the translators following Greek word order too carefully (see 2 Corinthians 6:12 or James 5:1). Objection to its archaisms is noteworthy but generally excusable for words do fall into disuse and frequently change meaning. Arguments persist on what qualifies as archaic, obsolete, or non-current. The following table lists some of the more unfamiliar KJV words and expressions.

Word	Scripture	Meaning
Blains	Exodus 9:9	Sores
Daysman	Job 9:33	Arbiter or judge
Fetch A Compass	2 Samuel 5:23	Circle around behind
Let	2 Thess. 2:7	Obstruct or interfere
Rereward	Joshua 6:13	Rear Guard
Prevent	Psalms 88:13	Precede
Tabering	Nahum 2:6	Beating on
Wen	Leviticus 22:22	Ulcerous sore

Unfamiliar words are not confined to just the King James Version, for other translations also contain words that may not be readily understandable for an eight-grade reading level. Here is the short list on a few modern versions:

**NASV:** almug, darics, denarius, ephah, fatlings, hin, kors, minas, snuffers, terebinth

**NRSV:** buckler, calyxes, coneys, denarius, ephod, freshets, gerahs, handpike, mantelet, onycha, spelt, stacte, terebinth, trigon, weal

NIV: armlets, breakers, cors, denarii, galled, hoopoe, mina, porphyry, satraps, stadia, terebinth, vaunts

Many of these words can be troublesome but there are not that many for which the exact meaning cannot be ascertained with modest consideration for how the words are employed in the framework of the passage. Many will contend that a dictionary should not be required in order to read the Bible. An objection that would probably be mute to readers of numerous modern periodicals such as Popular Science or National Geographic, for these monthly issues (directed towards average readers) contain many words that require a dictionary or encyclopedia for accurate comprehension. National Geographic alone will offer: amphora, bard, paleozoic, qua, and waft. It is very important for the modern reader to utilize a dictionary for the most accurate comprehension of modern literature. Similarly to the biblical reader, many of the terms in Leviticus, the customs in Proverbs, and the geography of Ezekiel will be unfamiliar to most people not employing a Hebrew dictionary or commentary.

### **Footnotes and Margins**

From the earliest period of biblical scribal activity, Hebrew copyists routinely used the [Margin](#) area of their manuscript to either note variant readings [Kethiv](#) (literally “what is written” and pronounced “keh-TEEV”) or note opinions [Quee](#) (literally “what is to be read” and pronounced “keh-RAY”). These marginal notes give translators an opportunity to explain and resolve many of the textual problems that have been previously mentioned. Without this innovation, the reader would be solely at the mercy of the text and assuredly misunderstand the reasoning of the translator. For example, some textual critics have marked doubtful the passage of John 8:1-11. RSV excused it to the footnotes (with explanation) but NRSV restored it to the text. Occasionally upon arriving at controversial passages, scribes might leave blank an entire column of a new manuscript because they were not certain if the passage was genuine or not, thus the basic text becomes a “marginal note.” At a time when the biblical Canon was not yet decided and there already existed a variety of readings, some scribes would allow the opportunity for a future Corrector to fill in the passage if it proved to be genuine. The last twelve verses of the Gospel of Mark have been marked doubtful by some scholars, and translators must then decide whether to place these verses in the text or the margin. In either case, the reader usually expects an explanation for these well known passages. Similarly, the original scribe of Codex Sinaiticus did not include the last twelve verses of Mark, but was so uncertain of their possible genuineness that he left enough of the column blank so that a later Corrector may restore the passage if it should prove to be genuine. Over recent years, many independent authors, especially publishing study bibles, make extensive use of the margin to assist the reader with commentary or invaluable chain-references to many other scriptures containing related information.

Formal Equivalence or literal word for word translation is a special discipline that is very much respected by the serious bible student. It is still the diplomatic rule for international conferences when attendees require the most accurate rendering of their colleagues. This rigidity finds opposition in younger and more casual readers who are demanding easy to read text with modern terminology - too often at the expense of reliability. New methods of translation to soften the language were inevitable.

## **Dynamic Equivalence**



Thought for thought is another way of explaining Dynamic Equivalence, a recent innovation that provides for more comprehensible reading. Translation theorist Eugene Nida (who served as translations secretary for the American Bible Society) suggested that biblical translations should have the same “dynamic” impact on modern readers as the original conveyed to its first audience.

Dynamic (thought for thought) Equivalence has now become a popular method of biblical translation that frequently uses alternate receptor words to hopefully produce the original impact or dynamics to the modern reader. However, this is often difficult because historical and cultural differences usually need explaining, and

objective, non-assuming interpretation is a very delicate process. For example, the word beauty as used to describe a woman in the modern era generally means a cute face and slender build, whereas in the Roman world it might have implied full-figured or even portly. Sweat is loathsome to the modern career women but aristocratic women of Rome highly prized the sweat that was hand scraped from athletes and gladiators. It was collected in jars and then rubbed over their own bodies. The word “book” meant an expandable scroll in the Roman world, but now generally refers to a collection of sheets glued together at one edge, a structure termed Codex. These differing values must be communicated by the translator or the reader continues under a modern illusion. By using Dynamic Equivalence, translators are free to use more readable expressions instead of being forced to reproduce original language idioms. However, the disadvantage of the Dynamic method is that there is a price to pay for readability. Dynamic Equivalent translations lose precision because they omit subtle cues to meanings which only literal translations can preserve. Additionally, they also run a greater risk of incorporating doctrinal views of the translator into the text because of this greater liberty. In order to address this situation, a few translators have resorted to yet another innovation in translating, the Paraphrase, where entirely different words are used to transmit and highlight concepts through interpretative language which makes the basic text a commentary. By openly admitting to the use of commentary, the translator escapes criticism of the Dynamic method. Used carefully, this greater freedom can enlighten the reader, but unadvisedly it may discolor ancient values and forthrightly obscure historical truths.

### **Transposition of Words and Phrases**

Following is a brief example of each methodology using John 18:34 with a concise explanation of how they differ from one another. Numerous verses could have been selected for such a comparison and this verse has no unusual properties. In most cases, it properly reflects the same attributes and particulars that would have been noticed from other verses. It was selected because it was a pivotal moment in the trial of Jesus. To maintain continuity through these following comparisons, the previous verse is offered from [Literal Translation by Jay P. Green](#).

"Then Pilate again went into the praetorium and called Jesus,  
and said to Him, Are You the King of the Jews?" - John 18:33 (LITV)

Verse 34 is principally composed of these three clauses: Jesus, Yourself, and Others. In the first clause, Jesus responds to the question in the previous verse. The verb (*he answered*) is in the Aorist (past) tense, 3rd person singular. The middle clause identifies Pilate (*you*) and the verb (*you say*) rests in the present tense, 2nd person singular. In the last clause, outside interests may have coached Pilate's decision making, and the verb (*they said*) is in the Aorist (past) tense, 3rd person plural.

απεκρίθη	Ἰησοῦς	ἀπὸ	εαυτοῦ	σὺ	τοῦτο	λέγεις	ἢ	ἄλλοι	εἶπόν	σοι	περὶ	ἐμοῦ
answered	Jesus	from	yourself	you	this	you	or	others	they	to	about	me
						say			said	you		

LITERAL: King James Version

**“Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?”**

*First noticeable is the greater length because almost every word is translated. Grammar and syntax is carefully observed, verb tense and person are mostly regarded. Word order in the KJV exactly follows Greek texts: 1-Jesus, 2-Yourself, and 3-Others.*

DYNAMIC: New International Version

**“Is that your own idea, Jesus asked, or did others talk to you about me?”**

*Length has been shortened because several different words have been substituted for modern readers who prefer short sentences (first five do not literally appear in Greek texts). NIV often engages in paraphrasing to stress modern word usage. IDEA does not translate a literal word but suggests mental evaluation to highlight the motive behind the question. Jesus clause is moved to the middle and is changed into a question which departs from Greek texts where the interrogative begins after the Jesus clause. Syntax, grammar, and word order begin to suffer in Dynamic Equivalence because of its very nature.*

PARAPHRASE: Living Bible

**“King, as you use the word or as the Jews use it? Jesus asked.”**

*Shortest of all examples because the text has been completely redone. KING is borrowed from previous verse to continue same thought but excuse more words in deference to the modern reader. JEWS is not a translation but an interpretation of the unidentified others. Jesus clause is moved to the end and likewise follows the Dynamic by changing it into a question, easier now because the interrogative begins in the second. These few particulars highlight the major function of paraphrasing which attempts to convey similar meanings by using different and fewer words along with major textual reconstruction. No surprise that grammar, syntax, and word order, suffer most in the Paraphrase because it involves monumental reinterpretation of ancient understandings into modern contexts.*

Why so many Bibles? That question has become a central issue because of the explosion of newer and more controversial versions over the last forty years. Most older Christians grew up on one or two translations but the modern biblical student may have more than twenty! One of the reasons for this explosion is the simple fact that the latter two methods give more freedom to use alternate words that present a variety of meanings. This is much easier than being held literally captive to each Greek word. Additionally, this has also let the genie out of the bottle, for there remains no universal safeguard to guarantee the authenticity of their interpretations. Now the race is on for translators to be the most imaginative and visionary. Indicative of the inquisitiveness of human nature, many are accepting the challenge to produce more sensationally reading bibles that exhibit a greater latitude of imagination. Dynamics and Paraphrases are interpretative by nature and this should be well understood by the reader, because this freedom has often removed the guard rails of safety where not a few verses have leaped from roadbeds of propriety into fields of recklessness.

### **Modification can elicit new meanings**

An example of this new free expression can be found in Matthew 1:19 where paraphrased by Today's English Version (Good News for Modern Man) reads “Joseph ... always did what was right,” an indefensible theological faux pas. Is it possible for a temporal human being to always do the right thing? In every situation? Without error? Free from peer criticism? Even the New English Bible, which gained a deserved reputation for minor excursions of recklessness offers an acceptable: “*being a man of principle.*” This is adequate because men of principle may occasionally do things wrongly. In their attempt to interpret a Greek word meaning righteous, TEV has failed to consider that the underlying Greek word means righteousness, a quality that is *conferred* instead of achieved. Using the word *DO* implies that righteousness is dependent on our behavior, and *ALWAYS* further suggests an impossible pursuit. This seriously undermines the awesome majesty of grace, for God bestows righteousness upon us through our confessions - in spite of our sinful behavior. Literal versions naturally play it safe and translate the word as Just or Righteous. Perhaps the inclusion of the word *TRIED* would have been theologically more wholesome and contextually defensible: “Joseph...always *tried* to do the right thing.”

One serious difficulty in making a fair and balanced comparison of various translations is the actual intent of the sponsoring committee. Unless we appreciate their stated framework, we accomplish little more than offering our own presumptions of their work. Introductions and editorial remarks are usually helpful in understanding the underlying process of these committees. Yet, many times we still need to read between the lines, because committees do not unwaiveringly attend their own statements of purpose. Because of its current popularity (thus being fair game), we shall review an excerpt taken from the Introduction to the New International Version which admits to a moderate degree of textual, style, and grammatical remanufacturing:

“...because thought patterns and syntax differ from language to language, faithful communication of the meaning of the writers of the New Testament demands **frequent modifications** in sentence structure and constant regard for the contextual meanings of words.”

Textual modifications in the NIV frequently: (1) create additional commentary which readers may assume to be original, (2) omit words that will never be missed without cross-reference, (3) alter meanings from that intended by the biblical writer. Such occasions give readers different understandings ranging from the inconsequential to the notable. Following is a brief sampling of each type:

#### CHANGES:

Luke 1:15 - John being filled with the Holy Spirit before birth has been lost (see also Luke 1:41-44)

NIV - “from birth”

TNIV - “even before he is born”

NRSV - “even before his birth”

NLT - “even before his birth”

ISV - “before he is born”

NASV - “while yet in his mother's womb”

PALMER - “beginning yet in his mother's womb”

COTTON PATCH - “while his mother is still carrying him”

British pastor and theologian John Gill adds this commentary:  
*“whilst in his mother's womb, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions render it: like Jeremiah (1:5), he was sanctified, set apart, and ordained to be the prophet of the Highest, before he came out of his mother's womb.”*

John 16:31 - Jesus' words are in the form of a question but the NIV changes it into an answer. Notice that the new TNIV has rejected the previous NIV interpretation.

NIV - “You believe at last!”

TNIV - “Do you now believe?”

KJV - “Do ye now believe?”

NASV - “Do you now believe?”

NAB - “Do you believe now?”

NLT - “Do you finally believe?”

PHILLIPS - “So you believe in me now?”

ADDITIONS:

Hebrews 11:11 - Emphasis on the faith of Sarah has been transferred to Abraham who is not mentioned in this verse from any manuscript. There are variant readings and interpretations on this verse but none that clearly subjugate Sarah from the nominative case with the closest verb being LAMBANO (receive). In other words, Sarah received something. Notice that the new TNIV has rejected the previous NIV interpretation.

NIV - "By faith **Abraham, even though he was past age** -- and Sarah herself was barren -- **was enabled to become a father because he** considered him faithful who had made the promise."

TNIV - "And by faith even Sarah, who was past age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise."

KJV - "Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed..."

AMP - "Because of faith also Sarah herself received physical power to conceive a child..."

NASV - "By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life..."

CEV - "Even when Sarah was too old to have children..."

YOUNG - "By faith also Sarah herself did receive power to conceive seed, and she bare after the time of life..."

PHILLIPS - "It was by faith that even Sarah gained the physical vitality to become a mother despite her great age..."

All words appearing in red have been added as commentary by the NIV. There is no mention of Abraham in this verse. The real emphasis is on the faith of Sarah because she believed in what God had promised. Due praise to her has been obscured. Not only does each word lack manuscript support but the added words might easily mislead the reader to believe that Abraham was also barren. He was not - only Sarah was barren. Abraham with Hagar produced Ishmael before this time and with Keturah, six more children after Sarah's death. (Genesis 25:1).

OMISSIONS:

Sentences and phrases are routinely shortened as in Mark 11:22 (Matthew 13:37, Luke 9:13, and others)

NIV - "Jesus answered"

KJV - "*And answering he said unto them*"

NASV - "*And Jesus answered saying to them*"

NLT - "*Then Jesus said to the disciples*"

AMP - "*And Jesus, replying, said to them*"

CEV - "Jesus told *his disciples*"

NAB - "Jesus said *to them in reply*"

Modern readers tend to prefer brevity and might argue that such

examples are really a compliment. In any case, this example stands to illustrate how the translators routinely excuse the appearance of numerous words.

Little words are omitted much of the time. BEHOLD occurs 222 times in 218 verses of the New Testament but is usually discarded (e.g., Matt. 1:20, Mark 13:23, Luke 10:19, John 16:32, Acts 20:22).

### Concepts or Analogies Obfuscated

Additionally, the NIV frequently interjects novel and even questionable concepts, such as the routine exchanges of capstone for cornerstone throughout the New Testament. Archeology has confirmed that biblical writers most certainly had a foundation stone in their mind. ***“Behold, I lay in Zion for a FOUNDATION stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure FOUNDATION”*** Isaiah 28:16. ***“And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for FOUNDATIONS; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the Lord”*** Jeremiah 51:26. ***UPON this rock I will build my church”*** Matthew 16:18. ***“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house UPON a rock”*** Matthew 7:24 and Luke 6:48. Repeatedly, biblical writers use the word “foundation” or “upon” or other words that reasonably create an image of this stone being “underneath” a structure. No where in the New Testament do there appear words distinctively linking the past ministry of Jesus or the future ministry of the Church with the TOP of a wall (Ephesians 2:20, 1 Corinthians 3:10-12, 1 Timothy 6:19). No other translation has followed the NIV. In fact, the new TNIV has changed each instance back to Cornerstone.

κεφαλὴν γωνίας In most of the New Testament, we discover the literal Greek words  
head (of the) corner KEPHALEN GONIAS or “head of the corner” (excluding Ephesians).

Matthew 21:42 - KJV

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?

PHILLIPS	Head of the Corner
NASV	Chief Corner Stone
NRSV	Cornerstone
EVS	Cornerstone
NIV	Capstone

Mark 12:10 - KJV

And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.

PHILLIPS	Head of the Corner
NASV	Chief Corner Stone
NRSV	Cornerstone
EVS	Cornerstone
NIV	Capstone

Luke 20:17 - KJV

And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?

PHILLIPS	Head of the Corner
NASV	Chief Corner Stone
NRSV	Cornerstone
EVS	Cornerstone
NIV	Capstone

Acts 4:11 - KJV

This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the

PHILLIPS	Head of the Corner
NASV	Corner Stone

head of the corner.

NRSV Cornerstone  
 EVS Cornerstone  
 NIV Capstone

Ephesians 2:20 - KJV

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

PHILLIPS Corner-stone  
 NASV Corner Stone  
 NRSV Cornerstone  
 EVS Cornerstone  
 NIV Corner stone

1 Peter 2:7 - KJV

Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.

PHILLIPS Head of the Corner  
 NASV Corner Stone  
 NRSV Head of the corner  
 EVS Cornerstone  
 NIV Capstone

Actually these were stone pads in the building's foundation, directly underneath the corner of intersecting walls. Field stone was used to construct the walls of most smaller buildings, and being the most unstable at corners, these pads helped to insure the building's integrity. Here is the analogy. These pads held the weight, interlocked the walls, and provided stability for the entire building and precisely describe Christ's relationship to the church; for He undergirds the church, interlocks the members, and provides stability for their faith. However, a capstone is a crown block which rests on the top of a wall. It undergirds nothing, interlocks nothing, and could be removed without affecting the integrity of the building whatsoever. The NIV has ruined the very analogy that the biblical writers were trying to make.

Characteristic of Jesus	Biblical Writers & Foundation Stone	NIV Capstone
INVISIBLE in Heaven	INVISIBLE in the ground	Visible on top
SUPPORTS the church	SUPPORTS the building	Nothing is supported
INTERLOCKS members	INTERLOCKS adjacent walls	Interlocks nothing
(if removed) Church collapses	(if removed) Building collapses	(if removed) Nothing changes

This writer has seen numerous ancient building particulars in the ruins of archeological digs while traveling in the Middle East and is convinced that biblical writers of both Testaments had a foundation stone in mind - not a crown block. Hymn authors understood this foundational undergirding analogy, for their titles and verses have captured this same essence of Christ in their hymns: The Churches One Foundation by Samuel J. Stone, How Firm A Foundation by George Keith, and the powerful Christ Is Made A Sure Foundation, a 7th century Latin hymn translated by John M. Neale. This textual alteration may be of little consequence to novice readers or those who delight in innovation, but it does sadly push the envelope for serious biblical study, because the precise analogy of the biblical writers has been obfuscated.

These numerous examples do not mean that the NIV Committee was not seriously endeavoring to produce a more readable and understandable version, but the point herein to be made is the real danger of crossing that line between literalness and interpretation where there remains no inherent guard rail to restrain one from allowing the text to reflect theological disposition, presumption, or imagination. It requires an extra amount of caution on a leash to successfully use this methodology.

Robert L. Thomas (see bibliography) pleasingly demonstrates that serious translation often uses Equivalence as a

system of hermeneutical interpretation and exegesis whereas Nida emphatically separated each methodology. Thomas further contends that Equivalence and exegesis frequently overlap, and offers adequate explanation, such as: *De Waard and Nida object to formal-equivalence renderings of Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," by stating flatly, "want no longer means 'to lack' but rather 'to desire.'" In contrast, contemporary dictionaries give the intransitive verb "want" a first meaning of "lack" or "have a need," exactly what the psalmist intended to say. Rather than correcting the formal-equivalence translators, the linguistic specialists should have acknowledged the legitimacy of their word choice. They would also have been more credible if they had prefaced their critical remark with "in our sphere of knowledge" or "according to our judgment," but to say without qualification "want no longer means 'to lack'" raises questions about their judgment in general.*

Dynamic Equivalence can be a helpful method when exercised with caution and respect, otherwise, unguarded attempts to explain result not only in misunderstanding, but as [Jerome](#) stated above concerning scribal activity, translators blend and mix their own guesswork. Paraphrase on the other hand is mostly conjecture, and readers must clearly understand this fact or the opinions of the translator may be construed to be the language of the Divine.

## Paraphrase

Kenneth Taylor's publication of [The Living Bible](#) popularized a new form of translation called paraphrasing. Although not historically the first such enterprise, its wide acceptance certainly established a translational milestone. Paraphrases are more than just translation, for by definition, the author tries to place besides (para = parallel) the correct translation, "other words" which contain similar meanings. Since this frequently employs commentary, the paraphraser must execute gigantic levels of self-discipline, in order to prevent the acceptance of conjecture as Scripture. Paraphrases attempt to reconstruct the literal equivalent in an "idiomatic sense" of the culture and time period of the modern world. Because of the novelty of this textual innovation, The Living Bible has enjoyed both blessings and cursings from the readership because it is distinctly the commentary of one person who has entered areas of interpretation, heretofore, inviolate for normal translation. For example, in 1 Samuel 30:20 the rendering is quite expletive (S.O.B.), and in Revelation 18:22, irrefutably anachronistic (piano). But the Introduction of the Living Bible clearly delineates its own framework of caution:

"Its purpose is to say as exactly as possible what the writers of the Scriptures meant, and to say it simply, expanding where necessary for a clear understanding by the modern reader... ..There are dangers in paraphrases, as well as values. For whenever the author's exact words are not translated from the original languages, there is a possibility that the translator, however honest, may be giving the English reader something that the original writer did not mean to say."

Some criticisms of Paraphrases are unjustified, simply because the argument fails to maintain that a Paraphrase, by nature, resists the civility of normal interpretation for the speculative. However, speculation must still be united with reasonability, for in Mark 11:23, The Living Bible places the tossed mountain in the *Mediterranean Sea*. Even though manuscripts do not indicate the specific body of water that Christ had in mind, it is less problematic to consider the *DEAD SEA*, which is only eighteen miles distant (as opposed to seventy), encompasses over five hundred square miles (12 miles x 46 miles), and nearly within eyesight from the very point where Jesus was speaking. Reason and logic must be a close friends with speculation.

## Thematic

Clarence Jordan, founder of Koinonia Farm in Americus, Georgia, in his [Cotton Patch Version](#) has taken translation across the horizon into a new land which this writer calls "thematic interpretation," another step beyond the normal demarcation of the Paraphrase. In this unfolding of the author's imagination, a THEME is used to alter the entire context, but yet hopefully in a way that artfully explains the biblical writer's intent. Jordan's theme is a laid back "southern walk through Georgia" which delivers *Zack Harris the preacher* for Zacharias the priest in Luke, and Apostle Paul's first missionary journey to the island of Crete by way of *Pensacola and Montgomery -- riding on*

*a bus!* For some people, this type of translation is blasphemy or heresy. Admittedly, in order to enjoy (or tolerate) this kind of approach, you must first accept the premise. Many do not.

***Other thematic personages...***

Jesus	Skipper
Peter	Rock
Jarius	Jarrell
Cleopas	Clifford
Ananias	Harry
Zacchaeus	Zeke
Chief Priests	Seminary Professors
Scribes	Denominational Executives
Sadducees	Humanists

***Other thematic locations...***

Israel	Georgia
Galilee	Valdosta
Capernaum	Columbus
Jerusalem	Atlanta
Mount of Olives	Peach Orchard Hill
Damascus	Chattanooga
Tarsus	Tallahassee

Although Clarence Jordan holds a Ph.D. in New Testament Greek from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, his very imaginative use of a Theme has been regarded as both heresy and hilarity, depending on the acceptance of the premise by the reader. In all cases, extreme caution must be utilized in such variations because the reader may inadvertently accept a thematic suggestion as actual truth. Regardless of ones theological habitude, the Bible prescribes very serious consequences for those who knowingly create stumbling blocks on the pathway to truth (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19, Matthew 18:6). For those individuals whose predilection leans towards the novel or extraordinary, these mythological departures may be slight, but others who fervently regard every biblical word as inviolate, the very concept of thematic interpretation is immediately an unforgivable departure which they are more than willing to abandon. For the benefit of the online visitor, here is an example of a “theme” alteration in Clarence Jordan's, the Cotton Patch Version

Acts 2: When Thanksgiving Day arrived, they were all gathered in one place. Then all of a sudden there came from the sky a rumbling like a tornado, and it filled the whole house where they were gathered. And they saw forked flames as from a fire, and it stayed in contact with each one of them. Everybody was bursting with Holy Spirit and started talking in whatever different languages the spirit directed. Now at that time there were a lot of delegates gathered in Atlanta, religious people from countries all over the world. So when they heard this great noise, they all came running together. And then they heard these folks talking to each one of them in their own native tongue, and were they excited! Amazed and astounded no end, they said, “Look, aren't all these speakers Americans? Then how is it that each of us is hearing it in his own native tongue -- French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Chinese, Russian, Italian, Greek, Turkish, Burmese, Hebrew, Swedish, Afrikaans, Hindi -- in our own languages we are hearing them tell of God's mighty doings.” Everybody was dumfounded and puzzled, saying one to another, “What's the meaning of this?” but others sneered, “They're tanked up on white lightning.”

Hopefully, you have enjoyed this modest educational introduction to the elusive disciplines of textual criticism, transmission theory, manuscript text-type, and translation methods. It has been the wish of this writer to demystify these often esoteric terms, providing you with a more complete understanding of why translations differ so much from each other.

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### ~ Footnotes ~

<sup>1</sup> Traduttore Traditore: Old Italian proverb meaning **The translator is a traitor**. If one translates the idiomatic sense, it will be unwelcome for those expecting a literal sense. Likewise, if one expresses the literal sense, it will be disappointing to one anticipating the idiomatic sense. Readers yield their trust for a translated work and naturally feel betrayed upon discovering the original meaning.

<sup>2</sup> E.C. Colwell, *Scribal Habits in Early Papyri: A Study in the Corruption of the Text, the Bible in Modern Scholarship*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1965, pp. 376-77.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, Oxford University Press, London, 1964, p. 201.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Metzger, *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Colwell, *The Origin of Text-types of New Testament Manuscripts*, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961, p. 138.

<sup>6</sup> G. D. Kilpatrick, *Atticism and the Text of the Greek New Testament*, Regensburg: Pustet, 1963, p. 128.

<sup>7</sup> Frederick Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, 4th Edition 2 Vols, London: Bell & Sons, 1894, Vol II., p. 264.

<sup>8</sup> John Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, London: Murray, 1885, p. 323.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce Metzger, Introduction to: *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Stuttgart: Biblia-Druck GmbH (German Bible Society), 1975, p. xx.

<sup>10</sup> Harry Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type & New Testament Textual Criticism*, New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, p. 84.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce Metzger, *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

<sup>12</sup> David Fuller, *True or False*, Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1973, p. 78.

<sup>13</sup> John Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Herman C. Hoskier, *Codex B and Its Allies*, London: Bernard Quaritch, 1914, Vol 2, I.

<sup>15</sup> D.A. Carson, *The King James Debate: A Plea for Reason*, Grand Rapids: Baker House Books, 1979, p. 110.

<sup>16</sup> Bruce Metzger, *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

- <sup>17</sup> Bruce Metzger, *Ibid.*, p. xx.
- <sup>18</sup> B.H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, London: Macmillan, 1924, p. 57.
- <sup>19</sup> F.F. Bruce, *History of the Bible in English*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 151.
- <sup>20</sup> David Fuller, *Ibid.*, (Burgon, Revision Revised) p. 193.
- <sup>21</sup> F.G. Kenyon, *Handbook To The Textual Criticism Of The New Testament*, London: Macmillan, 1912, p. 302.
- <sup>22</sup> Philip Comfort, *Early Manuscripts & Modern Translations of the New Testament*, Wheaton: Tyndale House, pp. 14-15.
- <sup>23</sup> Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type & New Testament Textual Criticism*, New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers (four separate chapters), pp. 145-227.
- <sup>24</sup> Bruce Metzger, *Lucian and the Lucianic Recension of the Greek Bible*, *New Testament Studies*, 8 (April, 1962), pp. 38-39.
- <sup>25</sup> Sturz, *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.
- <sup>26</sup> Kurt Aland, *The Significance of the Papyri for Progress in New Testament Research: The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965, pp. 334-337.
- <sup>27</sup> Eberhard & Erwin Nestle and Kurt & Barbara Aland - Introduction to *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Stuttgart: Biblia-Druck GmbH (German Bible Society), 1979, p. 43.
- <sup>28</sup> Gunther Zuntz - *The Text of the Epistles*, London: Oxford University Press, 1953, pp.55-56.
- <sup>29</sup> United Bible Societies, *THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT*, Stuttgart: Biblia-Druck GmbH (German Bible Society), 3rd Edition. A few examples are John 1:13,28; 3:25; 4:11; 6:42,55; 7:9,12,37,46; 8:16,38; 10:22; 12:32; 13:18,26; 14:7; 16:22; 17:12; and 20:30.
- <sup>30</sup> United Bible Societies, *THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT Ibid.*, p. 13. See also Nestle-Aland Greek Text, *NOVUM TESTAMENTUM GRAECE*, 26th Edition, p. 10.

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