



“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” Matthew 28:20

Church of Christ • 13800 S. 4080 Road • P.O. Box 527 • Oologah, Oklahoma 74053

The King James Version:

A Brief Summary of the Textual Evidence

Joseph D. Meador

Although the majestic King James Version of the Bible has come under repeated attack, a summary of the textual evidence demonstrates that this translation of God’s Word is far superior to the numerous would-be translations and versions of today. Yet, the criticism is heard that “the newer versions are more reliable because they use better Greek manuscripts.” Indeed, how do we respond to the sincere critics of the KJV on these grounds?

Are the newer versions really based upon superior Greek manuscripts? A critical examination of the evidence does not yield that conclusion. According to current figures (1992), the Greek manuscript base supporting the Authorized (KJV) Version has some 5,210 textual witnesses (papyrus fragments, uncial and cursive manuscripts and lectionaries). However, the textual witnesses supporting the Western or Nestle/Aland readings number only 45 papyrus fragments, uncial and cursive manuscripts. These 45 texts provide the foundation for all modern versions and translations of the English Bible as well as for the two Greek Testaments endorsed by most modern critical scholars. Both of these Greek Testaments are based upon the Nestle/Aland text.

At this point, the history of textual cataloging becomes important. The system of cataloging and listing the manuscripts of the New Testament text was introduced by Johann Jakob Wettstein. Wettstein was born at Basle, Switzerland in 1693 and published his

two-volume edition of the New Testament in 1751-52 from Amsterdam. William Bowyer, of London, first published a New Testament with Wettstein’s improvements in 1763. Regarding the cataloging of manuscripts, Wettstein designated the uncial manuscripts (those written in upper case Greek letters) by capital letters. Wettstein cataloged the minuscule manuscripts (those written in lower case Greek letters) by a system of Arabic numerals. Wettstein cataloged approximately 125 Greek manuscripts in his edition of the New Testament. Between the years of 1820 and 1836 J.M.A. Scholz cataloged 616 additional new manuscripts, and from 1861 to 1894 F.H.A. Scrivener cataloged an additional 3,000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament text. C.R. Gregory, working from 1884 to 1912, cataloged over one-thousand new manuscripts bringing the total to over 4,000 documented Greek manuscripts. Kurt Aland has had the responsibility of cataloging Greek manuscripts for the scholarly community for some years and he has listed 5,255 known Greek manuscripts containing all or part of the New Testament text.

As stated above it is important to note that the overwhelming majority of these manuscripts, about 90% according to Kurt Aland, have been found to contain the Traditional text (Textus Receptus or Received Text). In 1992 that figure was increased to 99% by textual scholar D.A. Waite. He explains that “the vast majority of extant New Testament manuscripts all use the Received Text. This includes about 99% of them, or about 5,210 of the 5,255 manuscripts.”

Accordingly, the Authorized (KJV) Version is in complete agreement with 90% to 99% of the textual evidence, as opposed to the modern versions. Why would anyone knowingly criticize the KJV for its Greek textual base? Indeed, why do so many promote and strongly advocate the modern versions which can only claim a mere 1% to 10% of the actual textual evidence; and what does such a disagreement with the majority of textual witnesses say about the Greek texts upon which these modern versions are founded?

In the marginal notes of most modern versions it is stated in writing that the “best” or “oldest” manuscripts omit certain verses or even entire sections of Scripture. We humbly ask: *by what authority?* Indeed, to the modernist, his idea of “best” is that which only equals from 1% to 10% of the overall textual evidence! Certainly a much higher percentage would be required in any court of law if the textual accuracy of the Bible were on trial, and in one sense, the KJV is on trial. It is under vigorous protest from without and from within. Let us then be ready and willing to carefully examine the majority of the evidence and not render a hasty verdict of guilt based upon such scant testimony.

Although the popular and influential works of modernist textual critics such as Aland, Metzger Nestle, Reinecker, et.al., are so widely accepted, we believe that a formal study of

the New Testament text is incomplete and lacking without a responsible investigation of the works of : John Burgon, F.H.A. Scrivener, Hermann von Soden, Robert Wilson, Edward Hills, Jakob Van Bruggan, Zane Hodges, Wilbur Pickering, Harry Sturtz, and D.A. Waite, et.al. These and other textual scholars have ably defended the textual integrity of the KJV on the highest plains of true scholarship.

In summary, the KJV is based upon the majority of textual witnesses, some extending back to A.D. 150, predating by two-hundred years the so-called “best” or “oldest” manuscripts of the modernist and liberal higher critics. Therefore, the textual foundation of the Authorized (KJV) Version, as a translation, is solid and stable as it remains in truth the Word of God! □

Editor’s Note:

Though the above article is somewhat dated, and newer translations have been published since the article was written, it is still relevant and reveals some important facts which ought to be considered by every person seeking to understand God’s eternal word. Most modern translations continue to use inferior manuscripts. Why is that important to know? How can a student of the Bible who relies upon translations know the truth from inadequate translations? This is not to say the King James Version is correct in every passage translated. Students must do their own study and make comparisons. However, if the basis of the translation is not accurate, how can the translation be accurate?

Critics of the King James Version of the Bible often distribute listings of so-called mistakes in translation. Having seen a number of these lists, the vast majority of the “mistakes” are either outdated words or misunderstood words. Since living languages are fluid and word meanings change, this is expected. Every adequate and capable teacher or preacher of the Bible must define terms used within the Scriptures. Is this not true even of those teachers and preachers who use modern translations? Of course, it is. Word meanings must be explained to convey thoughts. Especially is this true when special words are used which are not found in normal conversations such as words associated with redemption.

Thankfully, one modern translation used the same manuscript (Textus Receptus) as the King James Version (KJV). In my personal judgment, the New King James Version (NKJV) is a good translation and has updated the English language used within it. This does not mean I endorse every passage translated within it (but as noted previously, I do not endorse every passage translated within the KJV). However, I have found the NKJV to be reliable for the most part. Like with all translations, Bible students must check, compare, and study each passage. To many English readers, the old English of the KJV is difficult to understand. To those who speak English as a second language, the old English is almost impossible. The NKJV is a viable, reasonable, and practical alternative.

Chuck Northrop

Observations and Concerns

July 26, 2023

Welcome Visitors! We appreciate the encouragement you provide us by your coming.

Praise in Psalm: “O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8:9).

Declaration of Appreciation: Let us give a special note of thanksgiving for those who serve in various capacities during worship.

Summer Series — The speaker this evening is **Chris Nelson**. His topic Is “*A Doer of the Work, This Man Shall Be Blessed in His Deed*” (James 1:25).

Our sympathy is extended to the *Mooney family* on the passing of Mrs. Bobbye Mooney. She is a friend and neighbor of the Nelsons.

Remember in Prayer:

- ▶ *Sherry Carmona* recently had knee surgery and is recovering well.
- ▶ *Betty Jackson*, sister-in-law of Doyle and Dicie and daughter-in-law of Walter, fell and is in a rehab center in Owasso.
- ▶ *Mark Odell*, cousin of Nelda Hudson, suffered a severe fall that resulted in facial injuries and two broken shoulders. He is recovering at a rehab center.
- ▶ *Fred Phillips* is having many health struggles and is in a hospital in Fairfax.

August Anniversary: *Vance & Darla Smith* – 2; August Birthdays: *Sammy Gray* – 5; *Marcella Dennis* – 11, *Darla Smith* – 11; *Russ Earl* – 29; *Lisa Earl*.– 30.

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

Schedule of Services	Assignments			
		Wednesday, July 26	Sunday, July 30 AM	Sunday, July 30 PM
	Announcements	Russ Earl	Chuck Northrop	Paul Praschnik
	Song Leader	Bill Dilks	Ross Swearingen	Doyle Jackson
	Prayer	Paul Praschnik	Russ Earl	Ross Swearingen
	Lord’s Supper (speaker)		Doyle Jackson	Russ Earl
	Lord’s Supper		Chris Nelson	
	Lesson	Chris Nelson	Chuck Northrop	Chuck Northrop
	Prayer / Door Attendant	Ross Swearingen	Paul Praschnik	Chris Nelson
Sundays				
Bible Classes.	9:30 AM			
Worship	10:30 AM			
Worship	5:00 PM			
Wednesdays				
Bible Classes.	7:00 PM			
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