

King James Bible - The History

The King James Bible, published in 1611, was England's authorized version of the Bible translated from the original Hebrew and Greek languages into English at the request of King James I of England. At the time, other English Bibles existed, but King James did not like the most popular translation, the Geneva Bible, because he felt that some of the marginal notes encouraged disobedience to kings. So when a Puritan scholar, Dr. John Reynolds, suggested a new English translation of the Bible at a 1604 conference of bishops and theologians at Hampton Court Palace, King James readily agreed. By June of 1604, fifty-four of England's foremost scholars and linguists were formed into six panels to translate particular groups of Old Testament and New Testament books and the Apocrypha (the Apocrypha was dropped from later editions) into English. Even though King James agreed to the new Bible translation, and the translators dedicated their work "to the most high and mighty prince James," the King James Version was never officially recognized by the king, nor was it ever authorized as the only text permitted to be read in church. Despite this, it soon replaced both the Bishops' Bible and the Geneva Bible in popularity and became the leading text for private use.

King James Bible - The Translators

Of the original 54 men chosen to translate the King James Bible, only 47 finished the more than seven-year project, which was governed by very strict rules of translation. The translators were scholarly men who were experts in the biblical languages, and they were convinced of the inerrancy and authority of Scripture. Dr. Henry M. Morris, President of the Institute for Creation Research, said of these men, "It is almost certain that no group of Bible scholars before or since has ever been as thoroughly fit for their task as was the King James Translation Team."

The planning of the translation project stipulated that the translators should be broken up into six panels, and each panel was given certain books of the Bible to translate. After the translations were done, a committee of 12-two translators from each of the six panels-reviewed the work based on a detailed set of guidelines that was established to ensure that the translators' personal eccentricities and political prejudices were not included in this new version.

King James Bible - The Purpose

The King James Bible was developed to be read out loud at church services, so in light of this, the translators gave diligent attention to rhythm and punctuation to give the text a fresh oral quality that no other translations to date could match. These men were so dedicated to their task of translating the Bible into the common language of the people that they included the following in the Bible's preface entitled, "The Translators to the Reader:"

Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most Holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water, even as Jacob rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well, by which means the flocks of Laban were watered.

King James Bible - Comparison to the Original Manuscripts

The King James Version translation effort was based primarily on the Bishops' Bible, but the translators also used the Tyndale, Matthew, Coverdale, Great, and Geneva Bibles; and because many of the translators were skilled in both Hebrew and Greek, they could also refer to the Masoretic text (Hebrew Old Testament) and the Septuagint (Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures) during their work. If all of the Bibles listed here were traced back to their origins (a work beyond the scope of this writing) the path would lead directly back to the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments that exist today.

Because its translators strove for accuracy, beauty, power, and literal faithfulness to the Greek and Hebrew texts, the King James Bible has endured as one of the most beloved translations for centuries. In fact, it was unrivaled in its first 250 years. In 1881, 50 scholars developed the English Revised Version, and they had this to say about the King James Version:

We have had to study this great Version carefully and minutely, line by line; and the longer we have been engaged upon it the more we have learned to admire its simplicity, its dignity, its power, its happy turns of expression, its general accuracy, and, we must not fail to add, the music of its cadences, and the felicities of its rhythm.

The King James Bible is still found in many homes and churches today, and it is living proof that the beauty and inerrancy of God's Word has been safeguarded over the centuries.

HOW WAS THE BIBLE FORMED?

The Bible is an assorted collection of ancient writings. Christians believe there is something special about these works because God orchestrated their formation. Of course, ordinary people like you and me wrote the various poems and letters and historical accounts that became books of the Bible. But somehow God inspired these writings, unlike any other works of literature, so that they provide us with a unique and accurate picture of life, history, reality, and God himself.

This raises a question: if so much is riding on this collection of books, how do we know we have the “right” books? What if God inspired someone, but their book didn't make the cut? Or what if we got the wrong books and, consequently, our whole view of God is wrong? Fortunately, there's ample historical documentation about the formation of the Bible that can be of great help as we tackle these challenging questions.

To begin with, little debate exists about the Old Testament. Early in their history, the Jewish people began to collect writings that were important to their history and faith. These included the Ten Commandments and the Law, originally given by God to Moses; historical documents that traced God's relationship with humanity and Israel; poems, songs, and wisdom literature that Israel used for worship and character formation; and the messages of great prophets whom God called to guide and correct the people.

By the time of Jesus, most Jews considered this collection of works authoritative. This Hebrew Bible included thirty-nine different books (the same books Christians call the Old Testament, though in different order) and described events from the creation of the world until roughly 400 B.C. Various other Jewish books, later called the Apocrypha, were written between 400 B.C. and the time of Jesus, but Jews did not consider them as part of the authoritative canon. Jesus himself only quoted from Old Testament books and never referenced the apocryphal writings. There remain some Christians today (e.g., the Roman Catholic Church) that include the Apocrypha in their Bibles, but neither Jews nor early Christians believed in their authority and we should follow their lead.

The development of the New Testament took place over the first few centuries of the early church. Shortly after Jesus' death, writings began to appear from a growing group of both Jews and non-Jews who believed he was not only Israel's messiah, but also a savior for the world. First, there were letters between these early Christians, mostly from a preacher named Paul to his converts. But as the movement grew and the stories of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were told over and over, some individuals accepted the responsibility to accurately record the great events that had unfolded around them.

Thus, what emerged from the first century A.D. was an assortment of writings that included “gospel” accounts of Jesus' life, teachings, and climactic death and resurrection; letters from church leaders to specific individuals or churches regarding specific issues; and apocalyptic writings that describe God's cosmic plans for history and humanity.

More writings appeared in the centuries that followed, and on some occasions church leaders were faced with decisions regarding which books should be considered biblical. Consensus developed, and in A.D. 367 the respected church leader Athanasius published a universal list of twenty-seven accepted New Testament books, the same books in our Bibles today. As this decision-making process unfolded, several important criteria guided early church leaders. It's important to understand, however, that these criteria did not appear as a checklist by which bishops “voted” books in or out. Rather, they gradually emerged as Christian communities elevated certain texts as having significant and lasting value for the Christian faith. There were three primary criteria for evaluating a work.

1) *Apostolic authorship*. It was important that a work be authored by or associated with an apostolic witness; one of those first generations of people who had actually seen the risen Jesus. This excluded documents that were written much later, as useful as they may be. Second and third century Christians understood that these first apostles could best convey the truth about Jesus' life and its significance.

2) *Widespread usage and acceptance*. The early church grew quickly and broadly. As a result, Christians of different backgrounds, nationalities, and even schools of thought developed. But when a text maintained or gained universal usage and acceptance among the vast majority of diverse groups, this attested to its authenticity.

3) *Conformity to the rule of faith*. Perhaps the most significant factor regarding the value of a document was its consistency (or lack of) with the general beliefs and practices recognized in early churches. Therefore, writings with especially questionable theology or practices dissimilar to those passed down from the apostles were intensely scrutinized.

In light of these considerations, the four gospels, Acts, the thirteen Pauline letters, 1 Peter, and 1 John, were universally acknowledged as biblical by the end of the second century. Only Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation faced more scrutiny, but were eventually accepted. Together with the Old Testament, this is the Bible Christians read today.

Ultimately, we believe that God guided the process of the Bible's formation. And while God can reveal himself to humans in many different ways, the Bible remains of chief significance for the church and all who seek him. It is not only an anchor for faith, but also an epic narrative that tells of creation, brokenness, redemption, and hope. And like the ancient Hebrews, early disciples, and Christians of the past 2000 years, in the word of God we can begin to find our part in the story.

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Athanasius

Saint Athanasius (circa 293-373), Christian theologian, bishop, and Doctor of the Church, who championed the cause of orthodoxy in the 4th-century struggle against Arianism; Born in Alexandria, Egypt, Athanasius received a classical education before entering the famous theological school of his native city. He was ordained a deacon as a young man and served as secretary to the bishop of Alexandria. It was then that he began to take a prominent position in the great theological struggle that culminated in the Council of Nicaea in 325. At Nicaea, Athanasius opposed Arius, the Alexandrian priest who advanced the doctrine known as Arianism; his life is intimately connected with the progress of the Arian controversy, and he was by far the most formidable antagonist encountered by that heresy. Athanasius formulated the homoousian doctrine, according to which the Son of God is of the same essence, or substance, as the Father; Arius, on the other hand, maintained that the Son was of a different substance from that of the Father and was merely a creature, much more perfect than any other creature, who was used by God in subsequent works of creation.

Athanasius became bishop of Alexandria around 328. During the Arian controversy, politics mingled with theology, and each side labored to win the favor of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great. The Arian Party was both influential and very active at the imperial court. Athanasius was exiled five times; more than one-third of his episcopate was spent away from his see. His fifth and final exile lasted only four months and ended in 364. He spent the rest of his life in quiet labor at his post in Alexandria. The theological battle was practically over, and the victory rested with the cause of Nicene orthodoxy (*see* Nicene Creed). Athanasius was a voluminous writer; of great value are his *Discourses Against the Arians*, *History of the Arians*, *Apology Against the Arians*, and *On the Decrees of the Nicene Synod*. He died May 2, 373. His feast day is May 2.

Arianism

Arianism, a Christian heresy of the 4th century that denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ. It was named for its author, Arius. A native of Libya, Arius studied at the theological school of Lucian of Antioch, where other supporters of the Arian heresy were also trained. After he was ordained a priest in Alexandria, in 319, Arius became

involved in a controversy with his bishop concerning the divinity of Christ. In 325 Arius finally was exiled to Illyria because of his beliefs, but debate over his doctrine soon engulfed the whole church and agitated it for more than half a century. Although his doctrine was eventually outlawed throughout the Roman Empire by Emperor Theodosius I in 379, it survived for two centuries longer among the barbarian tribes that had been converted to Christianity by Arian bishops.

Arius taught that God is unbegotten and without beginning. The Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, therefore, because he is begotten, cannot be God in the same sense that the Father is. The Son was not generated from the divine substance of the Father; he did not exist from all eternity, but was created out of nothing like all other creatures, and exists by the will of the Father. In other words, the relationship of the Son to the Father is not natural, but adoptive. In proposing this doctrine, Arius was attempting to safeguard the absolute transcendence of God, which in his view was compromised by theological tendencies such as Monarchianism.

The teaching of Arius was condemned in 325 at the first ecumenical council at Nicaea (*see* Nicaea, Councils of). The 318 bishops assembled there drafted a creed that stated that the Son of God was “begotten not made,” and consubstantial (Greek *homoousios*, “of the same substance”) with the Father—that is, the Son was part of the Trinity, not of creation (*see* Nicene Creed). Previously, no creed had been universally accepted by all churches. The status of the new creed as dogma was confirmed by bans against the teaching of Arius.

Despite its condemnation, the teaching of Arius did not die. In part this was due to the interference of imperial politics. Under the influence of the Greek church historian Eusebius of Caesarea, whose orthodoxy had also been questioned, Emperor Constantine I recalled Arius from exile about 334. Soon after, two influential people came to the support of Arianism: Constantine's successor, Constantius II, was attracted to the Arian doctrine; and the bishop and theologian Eusebius of Nicomedia, later patriarch of Constantinople (present-day Istanbul), became an Arian leader.

By 359 Arianism had prevailed and was the official faith of the empire. The Arians quarreled among themselves, however, and divided into two parties. The semi-Arians consisted mostly of conservative eastern bishops, who basically agreed with the Nicene Creed but were hesitant about the unscriptural term *homoousios* (consubstantial) used in the creed. The neo-Arians said that the Son was of a different essence (Greek *heteroousios*) from, or unlike (Greek *anomoios*), the Father. This group also included the Pneumatomachi (combatants against the Spirit), who said that the Holy Spirit is a creature like the Son. With the death of Constantius II in 361 and the reign of Valens, who persecuted the semi-Arians, the way was opened for the final victory of Nicene orthodoxy, recognized by Emperor Theodosius in 379 and reaffirmed at the second ecumenical council (Constantinople I) held in 381. Nevertheless, the Gothic bishop Ulfilas had spread Arianism to his people, and they preserved this faith as a distinctive feature of their national identity. Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths and founder of the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy, displayed great tolerance toward his orthodox Catholic subjects, whereas the Arian Vandals fiercely persecuted the Catholics after seizing the Roman provinces of Africa. The final conversion of all the Germanic peoples to Catholicism did not occur until the end of the 6th century.

See Constantinople, Councils of; *See also* Athanasius, Saint

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Monarchianism

Monarchianism, Christian heretical doctrine of the 2nd and 3rd centuries opposed to the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity; it strongly maintained the essential unity of the Deity and was intended to reinforce monotheism in Christianity. Monarchians were divided into two groups, the Adoptionists, or Dynamic Monarchians, and the Patripassians, or Modalistic Monarchians. The Adoptionists taught that Christ, although of miraculous birth, was a mere man until his baptism when the Holy Spirit made him the Son of God by adoption. This doctrine was taught by Paul of Samosata, at one time bishop of Antioch. Adoptionism, or adoptianism, was revived in Spain about the end of the 8th century, when it was again condemned as heresy.

The Patripassians believed in the divinity of Christ, but regarded the Trinity as three manifestations, or modes, of a single divine being. They taught that the Father had come to earth and suffered and died under the appearance of the

Son; hence their name (Latin *pater*; *patris*, "father"; *passus*, "to suffer"). This doctrine was taught by the Roman Christian prelate Sabellius and is thus sometimes referred to as Sabellianism.

Providential Preservation of Scripture

Our final characteristic is the most revealing. It says that the Word of God has been divinely preserved and has had an active role within the church throughout every age. Before we delve into this discussion, it is necessary to gain a little background information. When looking into the history of the biblical text, we must be aware that the original manuscripts were written in the common languages of their day. Basically, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. The first manuscripts of the Bible, written by the inspired authors, are no longer in existence. Only copies of copies remain as witnesses to their original words. When these copies are compared with one another, several hundred thousand differences can be noted. Most of the variants are misspellings or other obvious errors ⁷, but thousands of other variants must be closely evaluated. To help evaluate variant readings, scholars have divided the manuscripts into text-types, i.e., groups of manuscripts containing similar readings. Throughout the years, scholars have examined the existing manuscripts, considered their various readings, and have constructed their own Greek or Hebrew text which they believe accurately represents the readings of the original manuscripts. When a translation is to be produced, scholars either choose existing Greek and Hebrew texts from which to translate, or they formulate their own text. The text of the Old Testament has been essentially settled ⁸ since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The New Testament text, however, has been the cause of much heated debate. For the past hundred years there has been a rivalry between two Greek texts the Received Text ⁹ and the Critical Text. ¹⁰The Received Text was derived primarily from the Byzantine text-type and includes texts published by Erasmus, Stephens, Beza, and Elzevir. The New Testament of the King James Version is a translation of this Greek text. The Critical Text is derived primarily from the Alexandrian text-type and includes such published texts as the United Bible Society, Nestle-Aland, and Westcott-Hort. The New Testaments of most modern versions such as the RSV, TEV, NEB, and NASB are translated from these critical texts.

A Bible version is considered only as good as the text from which it is translated. ¹¹ Therefore we must determine which Greek text is superior the Received Text or the Critical Text. This may sound like an impossible task for someone without a background in textual criticism. But by following the biblical teaching of preservation, we will not find it difficult. The preferred Greek text must be one which has played an active role within the church throughout every age. The Critical Text has received wide acclaim within the past hundred years, as evidenced by the large number of Bible versions translated from it. As stated above, its readings are largely influenced by the Alexandrian line of manuscripts (or text-type). Out of over 5,000 Greek manuscripts in existence, only a small handful (often less than ten) contain this text-type. ¹² However, prominent among these few are two manuscripts which many scholars value more highly than most other manuscripts. They are called Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, and they date a little over 200 years from the original writings. ¹³Sinaiticus was discovered in 1844 by Constantine Tischendorf while visiting St. Catherine, a monastery at the base of Mt. Sinai. He found 43 leaves of it in a basket just before it was to be burned. ¹⁴ Several years later he acquired the remainder of the leaves from the monastery, and by 1862 he had published the complete manuscript. Vaticanus' history is not as dramatic as Sinaiticus. Pope Nicholas V brought it to the Vatican in 1448. ¹⁵ For hundreds of years, the Roman Catholic Church guarded it so closely that no Protestant scholar of ability was allowed to study it for any length of time. ¹⁶ Those who were granted permission to look at the manuscript were searched to assure they didn't have paper or ink. Then if they were caught looking too closely at any passage, two attendants would snatch the manuscript from them! ¹⁷ In 1866, however, the Vatican finally allowed Constantine Tischendorf, under supervision, to copy the manuscript. In 1867 he published it. Realizing that these old manuscripts contained significantly different readings than those of the Received Text, Tischendorf was jubilant. He believed that his efforts had at last restored the inspired Word of God to mankind after having been lost for 1,500 years.

In Tischendorf's time, the New Testament had been in existence for approximately 1,700 years. The Alexandrian Text had been out of circulation for 1,500 of these years. If the Alexandrian Text is the pure form of the New Testament text, then it would mean that the church was deprived of its benefits for 88 percent of the time since it was written! Such an idea is strangely out of step with the biblical description of the inspired Word of God. The Scriptures have been alive and abiding in God's church throughout the ages. They have never been lost, only to be discovered in a wastepaper basket or lying on a forgotten shelf in the Vatican. In addition, the benefits of the Alexandrian Text to the church have been dubious indeed. Not only does this text-type not meet our biblical standard

of accurately representing the Word of God, but it has trouble meeting scholarly standards for accuracy of transcription. Minor differences within text-types are normal; however, the number of variants within the Alexandrian Text is enormous. Not including minor errors such as spelling, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus disagree with each other over 3,000 times in the space of the four Gospels alone.¹⁸ This means that one or the other must be wrong 3,000 times. That averages to a disagreement on almost every verse of the Gospels! It is, in fact easier to find two consecutive verses in which these two manuscripts differ the one from the other, than two consecutive verses in which they entirely agree.¹⁹ Undoubtedly these manuscripts suffer from scribal carelessness. Vaticanus exhibits numerous places where the scribe has written the same word or phrase twice in succession,²⁰ a clear indication that the writing was not checked. The scribe of Sinaiticus occasionally skipped lines in copying and made so many obvious errors that during the time Sinaiticus was used, ten different readers noted corrections.²¹ However, instead of questioning the reliability of these manuscripts, scholars have accepted many of their peculiar readings. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus are the basis for most of the two hundred omissions from the modern New Testament versions mentioned earlier in this booklet. For several years the Alexandrian Text was blindly considered to be a pure or neutral representation of the original text of the Bible writers. But recent scholarship has confirmed that what has been restored should not be considered the original text, but simply the text that had the highest authority in Alexandria, Egypt in the third century.²²

Alexandria, Egypt, an area to which none of the original manuscripts were addressed,²³ has little claim upon our confidence as possessing a pure text. A look into the history of Alexandria, especially during the time these manuscripts are believed to have been produced, is quite revealing. Alexandria, a great center of commerce and Hellenistic culture, was renowned for its schools of philosophy. Philosophical teachings permeated the community including the Christian church. Christian thinkers regarded Greek philosophy as a tool for understanding and applying Scripture, and like the pagans around them, they started a school which became the main focus and stimulus of their intellectual and spiritual life. The leaders of the school were usually experts in Greek philosophy, and they greatly influenced the theology of the Christians in Alexandria. One of the most notable leaders of this school was Origen. Origen studied deeply into Platonism and Stoicism, seeking to harmonize their philosophic principles with the Scriptures. To do so, he allegorized the Scriptures a process that allowed him to interpret them any way he wished. Further, he questioned the authenticity of certain portions of Scripture that did not conform to his own idiosyncratic beliefs. His teachings not only promoted a critical attitude toward the Scriptures, but they helped breed numerous heresies in Alexandria, including the doctrine of Arianism.²⁴ The Arian controversy centered around the nature of Christ. The Arians taught that Christ was a created being, while the conservatives of the day taught that Christ was eternal, wholly uncreated, and equal with the Father. For over sixty years the controversy raged. Just when it looked as if one side had won, the other side would rise to dominance. Constantine, the great mixer of paganism and Christianity, was emperor when the controversy began in A.D. 320. More interested in politics than pure religion, Constantine favored whichever side seemed to his advantage. At first, Constantine exiled the Arian leaders, but three years later (A.D. 328), he not only welcomed their return but made one of them his personal advisor.²⁵ It was during this upsurge of Arianism that Vaticanus and Sinaiticus are believed to have been produced.²⁶ Several scholars believe that they may be identified with two of fifty Bibles that Constantine ordered to be prepared in A.D. 331.²⁷ Vaticanus and Sinaiticus were both written on parchments of vellum by talented calligraphers, a very expensive specification included in Constantine's order.²⁸ Constantine called upon Eusebius of Caesarea to be in charge of the preparation of the Bibles. Eusebius is well known as an enthusiastic admirer of Origen, and was inclined to favor the Arians. If such a one was in charge of preparing these manuscripts, it is no wonder the Critical Text and consequently nearly every modern version lacks fervent support for the deity of Christ. If Eusebius used any of the critical skills of his mentor, he was likely to dissect the Scriptures, thinking he was correcting them. This may explain some of the omissions characteristic of the Alexandrian Text and likewise of most modern versions. Other obviously careless omissions in these manuscripts may have been because Constantine's order required extreme haste in accomplishing the work. Repeatedly, Constantine urged Eusebius to press the project with all speed. Corrections would not only be costly but time-consuming, and few were likely made.²⁹ Of course, without further documentation, no one can be certain of the exact history of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. But it seems likely that they were affected by the philosophical schools of Alexandria. Whether through Eusebius, other misguided critics, or one of the countless heretics that Alexandria bred,³⁰ it is apparent that the Alexandrians' attempt to correct the Scriptures failed. Within 200 years this text-type fell into discredit and disuse.³¹ It is interesting to realize that several of the omissions and peculiar readings of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus were once found only in Roman Catholic Bibles. Dr. Benjamin G. Wilkinson, history professor and late president of Washington Missionary

College, has proposed that Jerome, a great admirer of both Origen and Eusebius, transmitted many Eusebio-Origen errors into the Latin Vulgate.³² The Latin Vulgate has been the recognized Bible of Catholics for centuries. The English Rheims-Douay version is translated from it. History is replete with episodes of violence wrought by the Catholic Church against all who did not receive the Latin Vulgate. To deny their Scriptures was to deny the Church's self-appointed authority. When the modern versions began to appear with several readings previously propagated only in Catholic Bibles, Thomas S. Preston of St. Ann's Church of New York was recorded in Dr. Warfields' Collection of Opinions and Reviews as saying, It is to us a gratification to find that in very many instances they have adopted the reading of the Catholic Version, and have thus by their scholarship confirmed the correctness of our [Catholic] Bible.³³ In summary, we find that the Critical Text hardly fits the biblical description of the Sacred Text. It is based on a text-type that lay idle for 1,500 years except for some renderings retained within the Catholic Church. In addition, the text reflects the Arian views prominent in the fourth century in Alexandria, and it contains numerous omissions likely due to misguided editing and careless copying. An examination of the Received Text, on the other hand, yields quite a different story. Unlike the small number of manuscripts supporting the Alexandrian Text, the Received Text is derived from the Byzantine text-type which is represented in 80 to 90 percent of all Greek manuscripts.³⁴ That amounts to approximately 4,000 witnesses! Dotted over hundreds of years, these witnesses come from many different places Greece, Constantinople, Asia Minor, Palestine, Syria, Alexandria, other parts of Africa, not to mention Sicily, southern Italy, Gaul, England, and Ireland.³⁵ This is quite a contrast to the limited locality and time-range of the Alexandrian Text. Although none of the Greek manuscripts of the Byzantine text-type date before A.D. 400, most scholars agree that in order for this text-type to be so widespread and predominant among the Greek manuscripts, it had to have a much earlier existence.³⁶ Indeed, distinctive Byzantine readings are found in all of the oldest versions,³⁷ in the papyri,³⁸ and in the Scriptural quotations of the early church fathers.³⁹ In numerous places the Byzantine text-type can be shown to be as early or earlier than any text-type.⁴⁰ It was the authoritative Scriptures of the Syrian church, the Waldensian church of northern Italy, and the Greek Orthodox Church. Wilkinson's study also suggests the Byzantine text-type was the Scriptures of such early churches as the Celtic church in Scotland and Ireland, and the Gallic church in southern France.⁴¹ During the Dark Ages, apostasy seemed almost to swallow up Christendom, but God still had a people with whom His Word would live and abide forever. As the true church fled into the wilderness (Revelation 12:6, 14), it resisted error and clung to the Scriptures. Prominent among these faithful believers were the Waldensians, who used a Latin translation of Byzantine manuscripts dating back to A.D. 157.⁴² Traveling about as merchants and peddlers, they quietly passed on their precious hand-copied portions of Scripture. When Greek language and literature once again began to be studied, Europe awoke as from the dead after 1,000 years of darkness. A revival of learning ensued and God raised up a man to lay the foundation of the mightiest reformatory movement in history. Erasmus was endowed with such a giant intellect that he could do ten hours of work in one. He amazed Europe with his prodigious scholarship. Ten columns in the catalogue of the library of the British Museum are taken up with the works he translated, edited or annotated.⁴³ In addition, he was a prolific writer. A reformer at heart, Erasmus wrote several books that rocked Europe by exposing the ignorance of the monks, the superstitions of the priesthood, and the bigoted, coarse religion of the day.⁴⁴ Of all his publications, however, his crowning work was the New Testament in Greek. This was the first scholarly attention paid to the Greek text of the New Testament in over a thousand years. A later revision of this Greek text became known as the Textus Receptus or Received Text. When Erasmus prepared his Greek New Testament, there were hundreds of manuscripts for him to examine, and his wide travels certainly permitted him to do so. But after much study, he chose to use but a few representative manuscripts. These manuscripts, like the vast bulk of all New Testament Greek manuscripts, were of the Byzantine text-type the same text-type that had been preserved and used by the church in the wilderness. This was no coincidence. Through the publication of Erasmus' Greek New Testament, God's providence was preparing the way for the many subsequent translations that would guide His true Church as two-thirds of Europe broke away from the Catholic Church in the Great Protestant Reformation. As the torch of truth was passed on to the Reformation, we find version after version translated from the Received Text. Luther, that great giant of the Reformation, used a Waldensian Bible and Erasmus Greek text (the Received Text) in producing his German translation of the New Testament. Similarly based were Olivetan's French translation, Diodati's Italian translation, and Tyndale's English translation.⁴⁵ When the time was right, God's providence directed for an English translation to be produced that would sum up the best of all ages. With Erasmus' Greek text, several Waldensian-influenced Bibles, and the literary excellence of Tyndale,⁴⁶ forty-seven scholars produced the King James Version of 1611. The translators of the KJV were men of spiritual integrity as well as outstanding scholars. The general chairman of the project was Lancelot Andrews, one of the greatest linguists of his day. Known to spend five hours a day in prayer, his personal piety was unquestioned. Even the usually arrogant

King James had great respect for him. Although these men did not all agree doctrinally, they all had reverent regard for the divine inspiration of Scripture. In addition, the translating was engineered so that no one man would have undue influence upon any portion of Scripture. Every part of the work was reviewed critically at least fourteen times. With the Old Testament based on the Masoretic text-type and the New Testament based on the Byzantine text-type, the work was accomplished just in time for it to be carried by our pilgrim fathers to America where for three hundred years it became the authorized Scriptures for millions of English-speaking people in the New World. In addition, it has been the Bible of every English-speaking country on the face the globe. It has been the guide of conduct to men and women in every class of life and of every rank in learning and education. So deeply has its language entered into our common tongue, that one probably could not take up a newspaper or read a single book in which some phrase was not borrowed, consciously or unconsciously, from the KJV. The wide and positive influence of the Authorized Version cannot be exaggerated. ⁴⁷The New Testament Scriptures of the early church, the wilderness church, the Reformation church, and the Scriptures of our founding fathers were all in essence the Received Text. The blood of martyrs has been shed over it, nations have been founded upon it, and divine providence has protected it. The Received Text is the Greek text that has played an active role in the church through-out the ages, and as such it best fits our third characteristic of the inspired Word of God.