

A Brief Historical Overview of the Bible Versions

When it comes to choosing a Bible, there's really only two choices: a modern version or the King James Bible (KJB). The reason for this is because ALL modern versions are translated from a group of manuscripts collectively called the Alexandrian Texts while the King James Bible is translated from a completely different set of manuscripts called the Byzantine Texts.¹

The primary Alexandrian Text is the Septuagint. The Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament that was allegedly translated before the time of Christ in Alexandria, Egypt (c. 285-250 B.C.). We say *allegedly* because there's only *one* witness of this: the *Letter of Aristeas* (Dt. 19:15). The Septuagint itself, or our modern version of it, is real enough. But the story surrounding its origin is highly suspect, to say the least.²

About 500 years later, a man named Origen updated (i.e. revised) the Septuagint and added *his own version* of the Greek New Testament to it (c. 240 A.D.). This is the Septuagint that most have in mind when they speak of it today: the Old *and* New Testament in Greek as revised by Origen, or perhaps more correctly, Eusebius (see below). But technically, it's just the Old Testament portion. And unbeknownst to many, the Septuagint has *always* included the books of the Apocrypha as part of its Old Testament canon.

After his death in 254, Eusebius then used Origen's Septuagint to produce 50 Bibles for Constantine (c. 331). Three of these are known to remain: Codex Vaticanus B, which was found in the Vatican library in 1481; Codex Alexandrinus A, which was given as a gift to King James I from Cyril Lucar, the Eastern Orthodox Bishop of Alexandria in 1627; and Codex Sinaiticus Aleph, which was found in a monastery trash can in 1844.³ As revised by Eusebius, these three all contain the Old and New Testaments in Greek and the books of the Apocrypha.

Between 331 and 1881, a period of some 1550 years, little is heard of the Septuagint. Jerome used it for his Romish Latin Vulgate (c. 400). But apart from that, there's virtually no mention of it outside of Rome. That is, until 1881 when two English apostates named Westcott & Hort published their New Testament in Greek called *The New Testament in [not-so] Original Greek*. Days later, they released the first "modern version" of the Bible in English called the English Revised Version (ERV). At first they only published the New Testament. But four years later in 1885, they published the Old followed by the Apocrypha in 1895. And in 1901, a full version with both Testaments was sold on U.S. shores as the American Standard Version (ASV). Thus the Alexandrian Texts were now available to English-speaking peoples everywhere. Initially they weren't well received. But over time, they've prevailed (1 Cor. 5:6).

¹ The Alexandrian Texts are also called the Minority or Critical Texts while the Byzantine Texts are also called the Majority or Traditional Texts. The Byzantine Texts are called the Majority Texts because about 95% of the extant (existing) manuscript evidence is of the Byzantine Text-type while the remaining 5% is Alexandrian.

² There are many problems with this *Letter*. But as the story goes, 72 Jewish men, six from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, met in Alexandria and translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek over the course of 72 days.

³ A "codex" is manuscripts written in book form as opposed to a rolled scroll.

In the 1960s, new manuscript discoveries of the Alexandrian Text-type compelled Kurt Aland and Bruce Metzger to revise Westcott & Hort's Greek New Testament. (Sometimes they worked together, sometimes apart.) In conjunction with Erwin Nestle, Aland produced his first Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament in 1963 (NA²⁵); and working with the United Bible Societies, Metzger produced his first in 1966 (UBS). Both Aland and Metzger are now deceased, but their organizations have since produced several new editions (revisions, really). The Nestle-Aland Greek text is currently in its Twenty-Eighth Edition (NA²⁸) and the United Bible Societies in its Fifth (UBS⁵). The two are virtually identical. And along with Westcott & Hort, these are the preferred Greek texts used in many Bible colleges and seminaries today.⁴

But away from Alexandria and outside of Rome we find a much different set of manuscripts in circulation. These are the Byzantine Texts. At the time of Christ, the Roman Empire was united. But in the third century, Rome divided itself into the Western and Eastern Empire. The West was ruled from Rome and the East from Byzantium (Constantinople), which in honor of its capital is how the Eastern Roman Empire also came to be known as the Byzantine Empire. The apostles travelled throughout this region, and several New Testament books are named after its cities (Corinth, Philippi, etc.), and so the Byzantine Text moniker is fitting – although they weren't called by this name until much later.

But the Hebrew Masoretic Texts (HMT) were always close at hand. This was the Hebrew Old Testament used by Bible-believing Christians outside of Rome. They were copied and preserved for many centuries by a group of Jewish scribes called the *Masora*. So in speaking of the Byzantine Texts, it's often done with the Hebrew Masoretic Texts in mind; although technically, it's only the New Testament Greek portion.

But in contrast to the Alexandrian Texts, the Byzantine Texts weren't gathered and printed under one cover until Desiderius Erasmus' published his New Testament in Greek in 1516.^{5,6} It was originally published under its Latin title, *Novum Testamentum omne* ("All the New Teaching"), but was later more popularly dubbed the Textus Receptus ("Received Text"). Soon after, English versions started appearing. Among them, Tyndale's New Testament in 1526 and the first complete English Bible, the Geneva Bible, in 1560. In 1607, formal work began on the KJB with its completion occurring in 1611. And so most, if not all, English Bibles up to and including the KJB were translated from the Byzantine Texts. That is, until 1881, some 270 years later, when Westcott & Hort began publishing their English versions based on the Alexandrian Texts. So let it be understood that the debate between the Bible versions isn't about which English version we should be reading from, per se, but from which set of manuscripts we should be using when making our translations. Why? Because ALL modern versions are translated

⁴ Thus providing one reason why our church leadership is so faithless.

⁵ A year later in 1517, Luther pinned his Ninety-Five Thesis on the Wittenberg door which set the stage for the Reformation. Luther then used Erasmus' 2nd Edition (1519) to produce his German Bible which he completed in 1534; and it was from Erasmus' 3rd Edition (1522) that William Tyndale published his English New Testament in 1526 – an act for which Rome strangled and burned him at the stake in 1536.

⁶ On this point, it must be remembered that the New Testament books were written and circulated individually, and so they had to find them one-by-one. Or in many cases, a small section at a time, and then decide which books belonged in the Bible and then the correct reading. Needless to say, this was very labor intensive.

from the Alexandrian Texts while the KJB is translated from the Byzantine! In other words, the translation isn't as important as its source text. It doesn't matter what the language translation is – English, Spanish, Chinese, etc. – what you really want to know is whether it's based on the Alexandrian or Byzantine Texts. This information is often found in a Bible's opening pages. If it uses any Alexandrian term (Septuagint, Westcott & Hort, Nestle-Aland, etc.), then you know you're reading from a translation based on the Alexandrian Texts. But if it says Hebrew Masoretic Text and Textus Receptus, then you know you're reading from a translation based on the Byzantine Texts.⁷ So again, the emphasis is – or should be – on the source text, and not its language translation.

Digressing, translators don't purposely mistranslate as it'd be too easy to expose them and what they've done. So what they do is change the source text or find an alternate reading, and then correctly translate that. That way, they can say they've made an accurate translation. But what they're not telling you is that the source text has been changed. They know that most people don't know Hebrew or Greek, and they know that most Christians are jittery about questioning the wording found in God's Word, and so they take advantage of this by introducing subtle (and not-so-subtle) changes that alter the meaning of the text. But in their deception, these Alexandrian translators never view themselves as corruptors of God's Word, but as *restorers* (2 Cor. 2:17, 4:2). In their mind, God hasn't perfectly preserved his Word, and so it's up to them (i.e. man) to "restore" it.⁸ But remember, discernment isn't knowing the difference between what's right and wrong; it's knowing the difference between what's right and what's *almost right*.

To further explain, Rome has never wanted God's people to possess the written Word of God. In times past, they'd simply confiscate your Bible and put you to death. But this was neither feasible nor profitable. They had to adapt. So what they did was translate their Alexandrian Texts into modern languages and then market them as being the "oldest and most reliable."⁹ They then weaved a web of lies to mask the true nature of their manuscripts and the men behind them. Westcott & Hort were the first. So when modernists, those who prefer the newer more 'modern versions' of the Bible, want to make a new version, all they do is mix and match the wording of Sinaiticus A; Vaticanus B, and Alexandrinus A, and then give their new *version* of the Truth a new name, such as NASB, NIV, ESV, etc. This is Rome's way of interjecting its lies while getting so-called 'Protestants' to pay for it; hence, Protestants are actively funding their own demise. You can see this in any 'Christian' bookstore. Modern versions sold to Protestants have the books of the Apocrypha removed while the same version sold to Catholics includes them. Why? Because all modern versions are based on the Septuagint, and the Septuagint has *always* included the books of the Apocrypha *as part of its canon*.

⁷ And yes, there are times when these are mixed; and so you have to be careful.

⁸ Is. 40:8; Ps. 12:6-7; Mt. 5:18-19 etc.

⁹ Of which they are neither. For example, the Syriac Peshitta (c. 150 A.D.) and the Itala "Old Latin" Vulgate (c. 157 A.D.) both pre-date the Septuagint. And as it pertains to reliability, there are over 3,000 discrepancies between Sinaiticus and Vaticanus in the four gospels alone. But agreement amongst the entire TR is around 90%. And of the remaining 10%, they mostly disagree with themselves. So what constitutes the "oldest and most reliable" is as it's defined by modernists and not factual history.

From Rome’s perspective, this was marketing genius! (1) It provided them with a much needed *public* facelift; (2) they’re able to supplant the biblical doctrines of the KJB with their own; (3) they’re able to undermine, vilify, and dilute the presence of the KJB; (4) and it provides them with a constant and very lucrative revenue stream.

But where we didn’t have one before, there now exists a distinction between a ‘bible’ and the Word of God. The two terms were once synonymous: the Bible was the Word of God and the Word of God was the Bible. But with the introduction of these modern versions, such was no longer the case. The Bible is the Word of God because it contains the *words* of God. But if those words no longer exist – if words have been added, subtracted, or diluted so as to undermine the meaning of what was intended – then it’s no longer the Word of God; it’s only a “version” of the Truth (“perversion,” really).¹⁰

But in looking at the accompanying chart, note the contrasts between the two text-types. (1) The Alexandrian Texts came out of Egypt while the Byzantine came out of Israel and Asia Minor. Similarly, there’s no biblical record of the apostles ever having travelled to Egypt. (2) The Alexandrian Texts were brought together and canonized “early” in history and the Byzantine “later.”¹¹ (3) For 1500+ years, the Alexandrian Texts were only used *within* Rome while the Byzantine circulated freely *without* (less Rome’s persecution). (4) The Alexandrian Texts are continually being revised while the Byzantine have remained the same since 1611.¹² (5) And as indicated, all modern versions are derived from the Alexandrian Texts while the KJB is derived from the Byzantine. Thus there are major differences between the two text-types that cannot be reconciled – and this is only a small sampling.

So the short of it is this: either we side with the Alexandrian Texts that were used to establish and further the cult of Rome or we side with the Byzantine Texts that were used to set the world free from its dominion.¹³ It’s that simple. No one familiar with the topic disputes the history of what’s been presented here, they only dispute its final conclusion. Why? Because it requires a decision. So for the reasons outlined here... and many more, there’s really only one choice in English for Bible-believing Christians: the King James Bible.¹⁴ The KJB is God’s Word in English... not because it’s English, in English, or because it’s a KJB, it’s a Bible because it was translated from the godly Byzantine Texts and not the adulterous Alexandrian.¹⁵ It is not a *version* of the Truth. Selah.

¹⁰ Dt. 4:2, 12:32; Rev. 22:18-19 etc.

¹¹ This is why modern version frequently include a footnoted or bracketed reference to their texts being “The oldest and more reliable...”

¹² The KJB has only been edited, not revised. A *revision* brings about a change in the message of the text while an *edition* only corrects spelling mistakes, changes font, etc. Hence, the modern versions are all revisions while the KJB has only been edited. But if the Alexandrian Texts are always being revised, how can they be “the most reliable”? Selah.

¹³ Note that Vaticanus B was found in the *Vatican* library; that Alexandrinus A was a gift to England sent from *Alexandria*; and that Sinaiticus Aleph was found in a *monastery* – thus revealing their Romish heritage.

¹⁴ For Spanish, this author recommends the Reina Valera Gomez Bible (RVG).

¹⁵ We know from their writings that Origen, Eusebius, Westcott & Hort, etc. were all apostates. Their many adulterations of God’s Word have been well-documented by many authors.

The Bible Versions – Basic Timeline

Alexandrian Texts (The Bible of Rome)		Byzantine Texts (The Bible of Biblical Christianity)
Septuagint (LXX) <i>B.C. (Before Christ)</i>	c. 1445-433 B.C. → ← c. 250 B.C.	Hebrew Old Testament Complete
<i>A.D. (anno Domini – in the Year of Our Lord)</i> New Testament Complete Origen’s Septuagint Eusebius’ 50 Bibles (Septuagints) Three remaining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Codex Sinaiticus Aleph ▪ Codex Vaticanus B ▪ Codex Alexandrinus A Jerome’s Latin Vulgate	← 100 A.D. → ← c. 240 ← c. 331 ← c. 400	New Testament Complete
Jerome’s Latin Vulgate Officially Adopted by Rome	← 1546 1516 → 1526 → 1560 → 1611 →	Erasmus publishes NT in Greek (TR) Tyndale publishes NT in English Geneva Bible King James Bible
Westcott & Hort American Standard Version (U.S)	← 1881 ← 1901	
Nestle-Aland\UBS Greek NTs	← 1963\66	
All Modern Versions	← Present →	King James Bible