

# Can We Trust The Bible?

## 1. Can/Do/Should we trust God?

While it might seem like circular logic to use the Bible to defend our trust in the Bible, the Bible at its most basic level includes examples of historic people who recommend that we trust in God:

- Proverbs 3:5-7
- Psalm 9:9-10
- Jeremiah 17:7-8

## 2. Can/Do/Should we trust sinners? [with the Bible]

While it is prudent to be cautious of trusting sinners, we must acknowledge that everyone whose pen wrote the Bible, everyone whose pen copied what was written, everyone who translated what was copied, and aside from Jesus who preached, everyone who has shared what was written, copied, and translated were sinners.

Jesus, though He wasn't a sinner, used the scriptures that were penned, copied, and translated by sinners when He spoke.

However, when we look at the history the Bible records, do we see examples of times where sinners had a plan, God had a different plan, and we witness whose plan wins out? Does the Bible, or your own past, give examples of times where God's plan supersedes our plans?

### Old Testament:

- **Balaam** — Hired to curse Israel, but blesses them instead. (*Numbers 22-24*)
- **Jonah** — A prophet who wanted to run away from sharing God's message. (*Book of Jonah*)
- **Cyrus** — An emperor who knew nothing about God but who God used to help His people. (*Isaiah 45:1-5*)

### New Testament:

- **Peter** — Insisted he would never deny Jesus on the night Jesus was arrested. (*All four gospels*)
- **Saul/Paul** — An enemy of God's early church becomes a powerful missionary for God. (*Acts 9*)
- **Caiaphas** — A high profile opponent to Jesus shares a powerful prophecy about Him. (*John 11:47-52*)

*God likes to use what the world considers insignificant for His purposes: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31*

## 3. What is God's will and God's goal for His people?

- **John 3:16-17** — God's goal isn't to judge us or condemn us, but to redeem us from sin.
- **Titus 3:4-5** — God loves us not because of who we are, but because of who He is.

### God's goal for the Bible

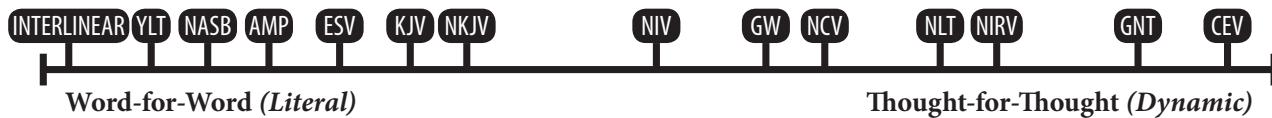
- **Acts 5:34-39** — Be careful about picking sides in this debate. You might discover you're fighting God.
- **John 5:39-40** — God's goal for the Bible points us to Jesus. Jesus is the Source of salvation.
- **John 14:6** — Jesus is the way, the Truth, and the Life. No one goes to the Father except through Him.

# Bible Translation Theory

## Translation Spectrum:

Translating anything from one language to another is a somewhat subjective process. When translating, one can choose to translate very literally or more dynamically. A more dynamic translation may better reflect how the author might have written the text if the author could speak/write in the language being translated into.

The Bible is no exception. This is one reason we have so many English translations. Each one falls a little differently on the translation spectrum:



## Manuscript Source:

Translating the Bible is tricky because, unlike most any other document we want translated today, the Bible exists in thousands of manuscripts, some quite long and comprehensive, while others are only a small fragment of a chapter. Centered in today's Bible translation debate today is what set of manuscripts should be used when translating the Greek New Testament. Our main options available are:

Alexandrian (Critical) Text	Byzantine (Majority) Text	Textus Receptus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Oldest dated manuscripts.</li><li>Mainly found in Egypt/Palestine.</li><li>Earliest manuscripts date in the second century.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Greatest number of copies found.</li><li>Primarily found in Southern Europe (Greece region).</li><li>The majority text is closer to the Textus Receptus, but not identical.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The first known compilation of various manuscripts.</li><li>Collected by one man, Erasmus, from a handful of incomplete late century, Byzantine manuscripts.</li><li>Erasmus wanted to standardize the Latin and Greek texts. For verses/passages not included in his Greek manuscripts, he back-translated from the Latin Vulgate.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Basis of most modern translations, such as the NASB, ESV, NIV, CEV, NLT, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No known translations exist exclusively from the majority text.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Basis of most reformation era translations. Also the basis of the following translations: KJV, NKJV, YLT, GEN, etc.</li></ul>

## The Five Biggest Differences:

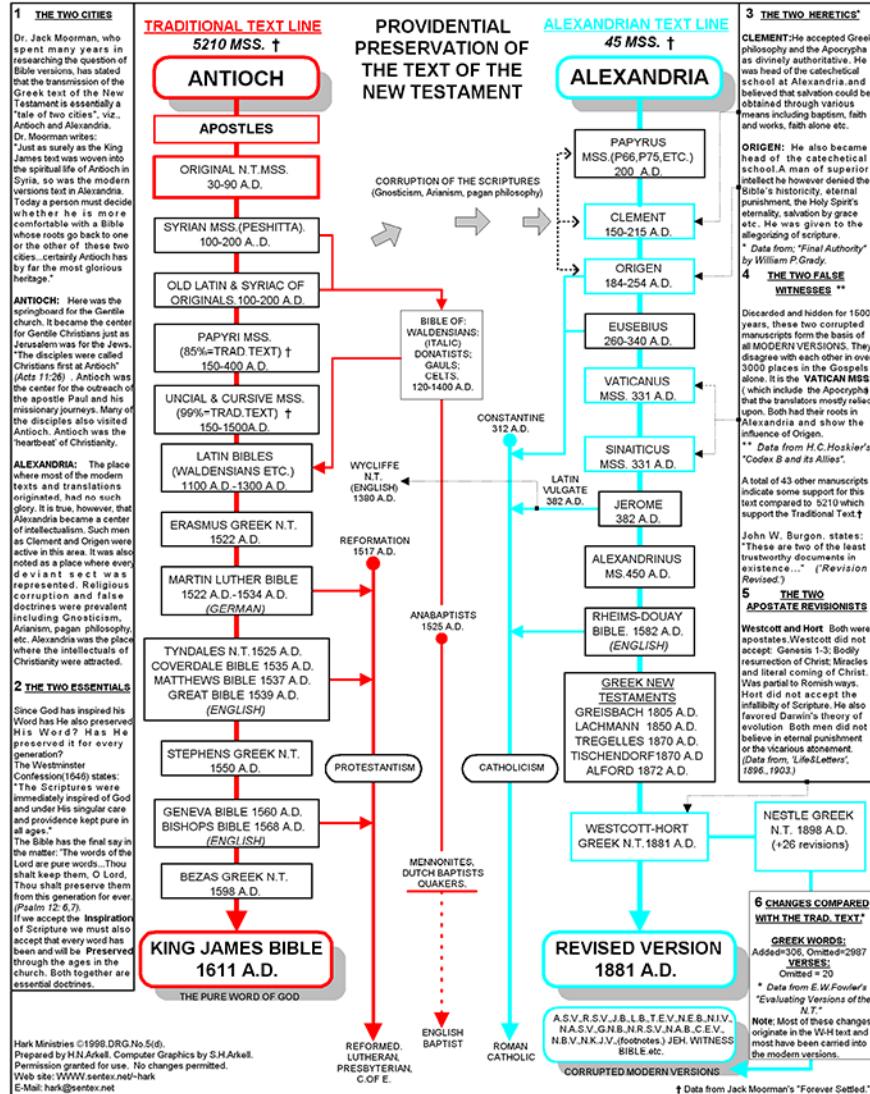
While there are thousands of little differences between the manuscripts, the five biggest, most major differences are as follows:

- John 8 — The woman caught in adultery
- Mark 16 — The longer ending of Mark's gospel
- 1 John 5:7 — A reference to the Trinitarian nature of God
- John 5:3b-4 — The angel stirring the waters at the pool of Bethesda
- Luke 22:44 — Whether Jesus literally sweat blood on the night of His arrest

# Responding to a KJV Only Pastor

Derek Ouellette — September 2, 2011

<http://www.covenantoflove.net/kjv-debate/responding-to-a-kjv-only-pastor/>



Recently a pastor came into my work place – a Christian bookstore – and started making off the cuff comments that the King James Version is the most reliable translation of the Bible. King James Only advocates blow in and out of my store from time to time causing a whole bunch of ruckus like a mini-tornado raining havoc in our Bible department. Yet rarely are pastors willing to be so controversial. Determined to convince me of the truth of his KJV superiority, he vowed to bring me a “chart” with – apparently – convincing evidence. I tried to explain to him that I’ve seen these charts before and that my Bible College professor was a King James Only advocate who taught me these charts. But he was unconvinced and determined to give me *his* chart (to the right), convinced that if I saw it I may change my mind. The next time he came into the store I returned the favour by giving his chart back to him with a letter of my response attached. The following is that letter.

## A letter responding to a KJV only advocate, pastor Garcia

**Dear Brother Garcia,**

Thank you for taking the time to invest your convictions and beliefs into my life. I know you feel strongly in what you believe about the KJV, as do I. Because you took the time to give me a chart that you believe is convincing, for my consideration, I have decided to return the favour by offering my thoughts on your chart for your consideration.

I know that you say that you are not a KJV *only* advocate, but these charts have been created by KJV only proponents. The “history” in them is really a fabrication sprinkled with truth so as to make them believable in the hopes of convincing some. These are strong words and I have just put the cart before the horse, therefore allow me a few moments of your time to share only a few of the reasons why I feel the way I do.

### **1) The Antioch (Byzantine)[\[1\]](#) text-types go back to the apostles, but the Alexandrian text-types do not?**

The first observation I’d like to make is the claim that the chart makes that the Byzantine text-types (“Antioch”) go all the way back to the apostles but that the Alexandrian text-types do not. This is a presumptuous and deceitful claim. The fact is that *all* text-types have the same origin in the apostolic autographs.[\[2\]](#) As the originals were circulated and copied they began to naturally take on certain common features in certain geographic areas – most of which are quite minor – which created “families” of manuscripts (patterns which manuscripts of geographical areas have in common). The text-types that went toward the Byzantine-Antioch area took on their own common features, and those that went toward Africa (Alexandria) took on their own features. The text-types are slightly different, but neither can claim apostolic origin *to the exclusion of the other*. But for the person who doesn’t think this through, they can be easily deceived which is why I believe the person who created this chart should repent of the sin of propagating this untrue history of the origin of the Alexandrian text-types.

### **2) “The Two Heretics” Clement and Origen and their corrupt manuscripts**

The chart claims a “guilt by association” which, if untrue, amounts to sin and requires repentance. Clement and Origen are both Church Fathers from Alexandria. While Origen believed some “odd” stuff to be sure (all the Church Father’s had some odd beliefs and they all disagreed with each other on many points),[\[3\]](#) there is no proof whatsoever that the Alexandrian text-types originated with Clement and Origen and no proof at all that they had any “corrupting” influence on the Alexandria text-types. Such a leap is lacking historical credibility in the hopes of deceiving some into believing their version of “history”. The creators of this chart – again – need to repent. Furthermore, it must be remembered that some of the most Orthodox Church Fathers – such as Athanasius, that great defending of the deity of Christ – also comes from Alexandria.

Now observe how this same tactic used to prove that the Alexandrian text-type is corrupt (by associating them with the same *geographical* area as Clement and Origen) can be turned around and used against itself. The area around *Antioch* and *Byzantium* was infested with Arians, *those who denied the deity of Christ*. By using the charts own “reasoning” we might say that the Antiochian or Byzantine text-types are corrupt because they were polluted by the Christian Arian heretics.[\[4\]](#) I won’t make that claim because to

do so would be unfounded in history and deceitful. Unfortunately the chart that you have provided me with *is* willing to stoop to that level to convince some.

### 3) Westcott and Hort were apostate?

The claim that Westcott and Hort were “apostate” is absolutely untrue. This charge is common by KJV only advocates who vilify Westcott and Hort because they were the first to use the Alexandria text-type. Westcott and Hort are seen by the Christian academic community as being orthodox scholars. Does that mean that everything they believed was correct? No, of course not. But to call them “apostate” is tantamount to a character assassination and is unbecoming of any Christian (remember, Martin Luther was called “apostate” by Rome and John Wycliffe was called an “apostate” in England, both for trying to give the Bible to the average person; now Westcott and Hort are called “apostates” for trying to give us more reliable Greek manuscripts). And even if – for the sake of argument – Westcott, Hort, Clement and Origen were all loud-mouth heretics condemned by the Church, there still remains a complete lack of evidence to suggest that what these individuals personally believe had any corrupting effect on the Bible.

If the creators of these charts claim to be Christians than they ought to relent from this deceitful approach and turn this discussion to the facts. They need to stop attempting to discredit the Alexandrian text-types by claiming them as corrupt by associating them with individuals as though some big conspiracy to replace the KJV is going on.

For the reasons just given, these charts lack credibility to me. They are created by agenda driven fundamentalists who will stoop to any level to convince some that the Alexandria text-type is unreliable. They also ignore historically relevant points that go against their beliefs (discussed *anon*). They are clearly deceived because they obviously believe this “history”, but more than that, they are deceiving others by promoting it. I know that you are *not* responsible for creating this chart and others like them. If you disagree with me for legitimate reasons, say for example, by holding to the conviction that since there are more Byzantine manuscripts than Alexandria manuscripts concluding that the majority rules and that you therefore believe that the KJV is more accurate, I can respect that and I will respectfully disagree. But I cannot respect this chart, those like them and those who create them.

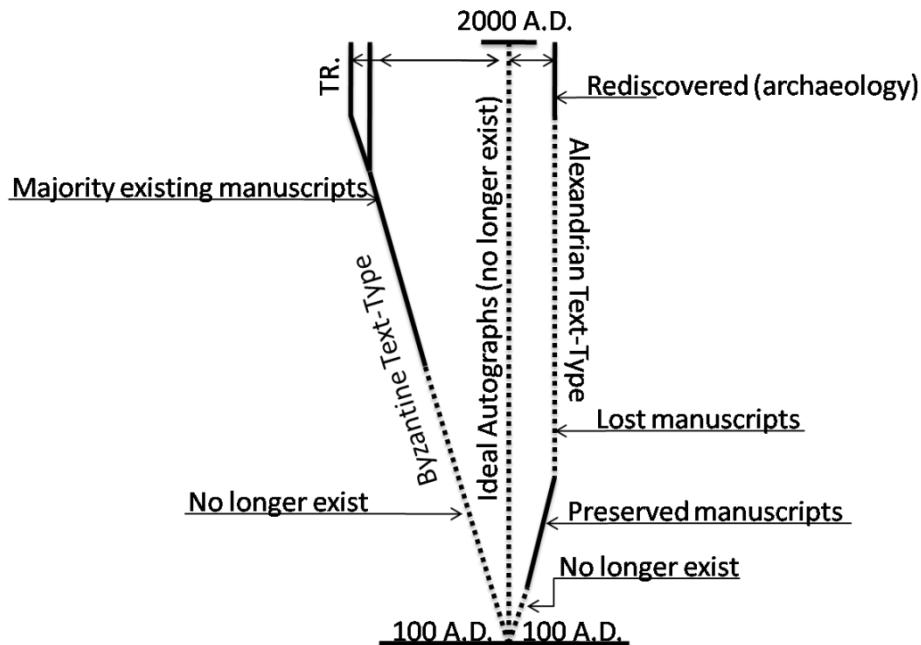
Now I wish to share with you a few reasons why I believe the Nestle-Aland and UBS<sup>[5]</sup> manuscripts are more reliable than the *Textus Receptus* (and thus why modern translations are based on text-types that are closer to the original than the one the KJV relies on).

#### 1) The *Textus Receptus* was created using only seven relatively recent and incomplete Greek manuscripts and at times had to rely on the Latin Vulgate.<sup>[6]</sup>

The *Textus Receptus* was a great manuscript in its day and Erasmus did a fantastic (if somewhat hurried) job of putting it together given the resources available to him. But those sources were extremely limited as Erasmus only had access to seven incomplete manuscripts<sup>[7]</sup> and none of which date back older than approximately 1000 A.D. That means that the *TR* is based on manuscripts that are *900 years removed from the originals*. Second, while the chart points out that there are 5200+ Byzantine (Antiochian) manuscripts (Majority), the *Textus Receptus* is *related* by not *identical* to them<sup>[8]</sup> because it is not based on 5200 manuscripts, *but only seven!* It is important to add that these seven were incomplete thus causing Erasmus to rely on the Vulgate to fill in the gaps. Unfortunately in many cases the Vulgate disagrees with the Greek, thus corrupting the *TR* and thus the KJV.<sup>[9]</sup>

## 2) The Alexandrian text-types are older, and thus closer to the original.

What is more important to you, majority or age? If you are convinced that the majority rules, than you may prefer the KJV (keeping in mind that the KJV *does not actually reflect the majority* since it stands on only *seven* incomplete manuscripts), but if you are convinced that the older the manuscript, the closer to the original and thus the more accurate, than you will tend to look toward the Alexandrian text-types. This is my approach. Consider the following crude chart I quickly made for you ([a chart of my own!](#)):



The dotted line up the middle represents the original autographs that no longer exist. Our goal is to come up with a Greek manuscript that is as close as possible to that original. The Western Church quickly stopped using the Greek and instead the Latin (the Vulgate) became the authorized Bible. But the Greek Orthodox Church (which was in Byzantium) never stopped using Greek manuscripts. They were copied and recopied. Obviously the more copies that are made the more scribal errors occur.<sup>[10]</sup> This is illustrated in the chart by the Byzantine line angled away from the center dotted line. For various reasons common in history we no longer have many Byzantine manuscripts that date back to the first seven or eight or nine hundred years of Christendom. Thus the part of the Byzantine line that is dotted reflects the trajectory of the Byzantine text-type that we no longer have access to because they no longer exist, and the solid part of that same line reflects those Byzantine manuscripts that do exist today. Since there are so many of them and since they are copies of copies of copies (et cetera...), with each new copy that was made they traveled further from their source. This is reflected at the top of the chart where an arrow is illustrating the distance of *today's Majority* (what your chart calls "Antioch") manuscripts and the *TR* (*Textus Receptus*) have journeyed from the original autographs.

Like the Byzantine text-type, we no longer have the earliest Alexandrian manuscripts dated from when they were written to approximately 125 A.D. However, we do have manuscripts today that date from 125 A.D. to about 700 A.D., predominately Alexandrian. There are not many of them by comparison, but they do exist. For a variety of reasons these manuscripts were lost to us, but the most notable reason is attributed to the rise of Islam in the Middle East and Africa. While Christianity in the West and Byzantine areas flourished (until the approximately the middle of the medieval period) allowing Christians to copy and recopy manuscripts freely, Christianity in Africa was squashed by Islam and the Christian scriptures

destroyed or forbidden or perhaps simply suppressed (perhaps Christians hid them in the sand to preserve them and save them from Muslims?). Fast forward to the eighteenth and nineteenth century with the introduction of archaeology these buried manuscripts – preserved by Africa’s dry climate – have been rediscovered (see my chart). Faced now with these older manuscripts that date back closer to the originals by almost 1000 years more than anything they had at that time, what would you do? Wouldn’t you compare the current younger manuscripts with the older ones? And faced with a discrepancy, wouldn’t you place greater stock in the manuscripts that are closer to the originals? That is only common sense, and that is why the Alexandrian text-types are so important.

Yet unlike the KJV which depends wholly upon *one* manuscript – the *Textus Receptus* – modern translations depend upon textual criticism which is the science of comparing *all of the manuscripts* (not just Alexandrian ones!) in order to attain as much as possible to the originals. The work has resulted in what is referred to as the “Nestle-Aland” and “UBS” manuscripts. Biblical scholars nearly unanimously recognize these as being the most accurate (but by no means perfect) which is why all modern translations are rooted in them.

## Conclusion

Brother Garcia, the King James Bible is a beautiful translation and at times its translation choices are to be preferred over many modern translations. It is poetic, historic and valuable. But if the question we are asking is, “Does it more *accurately* reflect the originals than modern translations?” The answer is beyond a doubt that it does not. I utilize the King James Bible from time to time, and the New King James Version has been very influential in my life. I’m often critical towards the NIV and I’m not a big fan of the NLT either, and when I study I source as many Bible translations as possible. Yet when pushed I must ostensibly agree with most-all Bible scholars and historians, that the *Textus Receptus* (and thus the KJV) is not as close to the original as the Nestle-Aland and USB (and thus most modern translations).

For your consideration,  
**Derek Ouellette**

**Afterward:** Jorge (pastor Garcia’s son) has brought up the point that he personally prefers the KJV over modern translations because the KJV does not “water down” important words when translating into English. Yet such concerns need to be taken on a case by case study and should not be seen as a “KJV” versus “modern translations” issue since we are no longer talking about text-types, but translation theory. The case example that Jorge brought up is homosexuality, suggesting that modern translations have watered themselves down by translating the Greek into something else. Yet if you visit the Online Parallel Bible (<http://bible.cc/>) and type “homosexuality” in the search bar you’ll quickly discover that such concerns are unfounded.

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[1] What this chart refers to as the “Traditional Text Line” or “Antioch” is usually simply called the Byzantine Text-Type of Majority Text-Type. So from here on I’m going to use the term “Byzantine” rather than “Antioch”, but I mean the same thing.

[2] “Autographs” is the term used to speak of the original writings of the apostles.

[3] See “A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs” by Bercot.

[4] See “The King James Only Controversy”, pg. 43-44, 51 (n.25)

[5] The Nestle-Aland and USB rely heavily on the Alexandrian text-types because they are by far the oldest text-types and thus the closest to the original that we have today. *But they do not rely exclusively on them.* They utilize all 5500+ manuscripts including the Byzantine manuscripts. This is called the “eclectic” approach meaning that the Nestle-Aland and USB examine all of the existing manuscripts to determine as closely as possible what the original writers actually wrote.

[6] See “The King James Only Controversy”, pg. 66. This is common knowledge and is well sourced on Wikipedia ([here](#))

[7] See “One Bible Only”, p.84

[8] A historical fact that the chart leaves out.

[9] See “The King James Only Controversy”, p.66 ff. I don’t mean to imply that it is “corrupt” in the sense the the KJV Only advocates often do. The KJV is still useful, but it is inaccurate and in fact less accurate than modern translations.

[10] See “The Book: A History of the Bible” by Christopher De Hamel, p.320. It’s also important to observe here the sacred texts tend to “expand” over time – which is precisely what happened to the Byzantine manuscripts, and why the KJV contains additions not found in most other translations. Cf. p.27

**Note:** The names of Garcia and Jorge have been changed to protect their identity.