An Introduction to Bible Translations

Trinity Baptist Church Discipleship Training

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Introduction:

The purpose of this study is to examine the principles for determining reliable English translations of the Bible. We will examine the approaches to Biblical translation taking examples from some of the modern texts. An important aspect of any study on Bible versions is the subject of textual criticism, the science through which we have obtained the Greek and Hebrew texts that are the basis for the modern translations.

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Part 1 – Textual Criticism

Definition of Textual Criticism

There are no complete copies of the original manuscripts in existence today. There are, however, thousands of manuscripts, some large and some only fragments, dating back to the first centuries of the church. Textual Criticism is the science that studies the ancient biblical texts in an attempt to recover the original form. Four major text types are generally identified: Alexandrian, Byzantine, Caesarean, and the Western text.

(*See Chart at the end of this study for an illustration of the progress of the Bible from original manuscripts to the translations we use today*)

1. Textual Criticism must not be confused with **Higher Criticism**. Textual criticism or lower criticism deals chiefly with the accuracy of the NT text itself. Higher Criticism is principally concerned with sources, writers, dates, and the order of the various documents within the Bible. Due to the influence of liberal academicians of the 19-20th centuries, particularly from Germany, much of higher criticism has become illegitimate.
2. The Bible was inspired by God and is perfect and infallible.
   B.B. Warfield: "Inspiration is that extraordinary, supernatural influence (or, passively, the result of it,) exerted by the Holy Ghost on the writers of our Sacred Books, by which their words were rendered also the words of God, and therefore, perfectly infallible" (*The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible,* Page 420).

3. Since no full copy of the original manuscripts exist today the work of Textual Criticism deals with the examination of various manuscripts extant in order to maintain the accuracy of the original autographs.
4. J.L. Dagg's excellent statement on our confidence in the Biblical text:

> "Although the Scriptures were originally penned under the unerring guidance of the Holy Spirit, it does not follow, that a continued miracle has been wrought to preserve them from all error in transcribing. On the contrary, we know that manuscripts differ from each other; and where readings are various, but one of them can be correct. A miracle was needed in the original production of the Scriptures; and, accordingly, a miracle was wrought; but the preservation of the inspired word, in as much perfection as was necessary to answer the purpose for which it was given, did not require a miracle, and accordingly it was committed to the providence of God. Yet the providence which has preserved the divine oracles, has been special and remarkable....The consequence is, that, although the various readings found in the existing manuscripts, are numerous, we are able, in every case, to determine the correct reading, so far as is necessary for the establishment of our faith, or the direction of our practice in every important particular. So little, after all, do the copies differ from each other, that these minute differences, when viewed in contrast with their general agreement, render the fact of that agreement the more impressive, and may be said to serve, practically, rather to increase, than impair our confidence in their general correctness. Their utmost deviations do not change the direction of the line of truth; and if it seems in some points to widen the line a very little, the path that lies between their widest boundaries, is too narrow to permit us to stray"
> (*A Manual of Theology,* pages 24-25)

I. Sources for the Text of the New Testament

A. The Jewish people maintained the Old Testament Scriptures in scrolls made of costly materials. By the time of the New Testament most writing was done in "book" or "codex" styles of manuscripts. They were generally written on both sides of papyrus and sewn into books. In later centuries vellum or parchment made from animal skins was used.

B. Greek copies or manuscripts of the NT text

1. This is the chief source of manuscript data
2. About 5300 manuscripts in whole or part exist of the Greek NT
3. They are divided into two classes
   a. Uncial or large hand resembling modern capital letters. There are about 140 of these manuscripts dating from the 4th to the 10th centuries. *(For an example of an uncial manuscript a copy of a section of Codex Washingtonianus (Mark 1:1-7) on page 3.)*
   b. Minuscule or small hand – they comprise the remaining manuscripts and fall between the 7th century and the invention of the printing press

SECTION OF CODEX WASHINGTONIANUS (MARK 1:1-7)
(from *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*)

C. Vernacular Versions - manuscripts translated into different tongues – some as early as the 2nd Century. It is Providentially amazing that so many early copies exist from widely separated regions with few corruptions.
D. Patristic Quotations – thousands of quotes from early church fathers

II. Major Manuscripts of the Greek NT – No two agree in every respect.
A uniform text had to wait until the invention of the printing press.
A. Codex Sinaiticus found at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai.
1. In modern Greek texts it is designated by the symbol "א"
2. From the 4th Century
3. It is the only Uncial that contains the entire NT.
4. It is written on 147 ½ leaves of very thin vellum in four narrow columns of 48 lines each. Each page measures 15 X 13 ½ inches
B. Codex Alexandrinus – named because it was supposed to have come from Alexandria.
1. From the 5th Century
2. It is entire with the exception of portions of Matthew, John, and 2 Cor.
3. It is written on thin vellum each page measuring 12 5/8 X 10 3/8 inches
4. Several different hands were employed in the manuscript
C. Codex Vaticanus - One of the oldest and best manuscripts of the Greek NT
1. In the modern Greek texts it is designated by the symbol "B"
2. From the 4th Century
3. It does not contain 1,2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, or Revelation. Also missing is Hebrews 9:14-13:25
4. Written on very fine vellum measuring 10 X 10 ½
5. It has been corrected and retraced by later hands
D. Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus
1. From the 5th Century
2. One half of each book is missing as well as all of 2 Thes. and 2 John
3. Several hands have corrected the manuscript
E. Codex Bezae – obtained by Theodore Beza from the monastery of St. Irenaeus
1. From the 5th Century
2. The hands of no less than 9 correctors have been traced
3. It contains only the Gospels and Acts and a fragment of 3 John
F. Codex Washingtonianus – kept in the Smithsonian Institute (See Page 3)
1. One of the earliest from the 4th Century
2. One of the best uncial manuscripts
3. It contains the Gospels in the order of Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark
4. Written on good vellum with 30 lines to each 6 X 9 inch page
5. It contains an apocryphal interpolation at the longer ending of Mark

III. Most manuscripts can be placed in one of at least four text families – in general tied to geographic locations
A. The Alexandrian text-type
1. Found in most papyri – earlier manuscripts
2. The Alexandrian text is thought to originate predominately around Alexandria, Egypt

3. The most important manuscripts that represents this text type are the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus.
4. This text-type is the basis for most modern translations

B. The Western text-type
1. Found consistently in the area of the western half of the Roman Empire
2. The most important manuscripts that represents this text type are the Codex Bezae and Codex Washingtonianus.

C. The Byzantine text-type
1. Found in Byzantium or Constantinople
2. Represents a later period and includes readings from a variety of other text-types.
3. The Textus Receptus is Byzantine in character.

D. The Caesarean text-type
1. Its existence is disputed by many today.
2. It is supposed that this text originated in Egypt and was to Caesarea where it was used by Eusebius.

IV. The Work of Textual Criticism

A. In the thousands of sources of right readings there are also wrong readings.
1. There are some 200,000 variant readings in the various manuscripts, versions, and patristic citations.
"'Not', as Dr. Warfield says, 'that there are 200,000 places in the NT where various readings occur, but that there are nearly 200,000 readings all told. . . Dr. Ezra Abbott was accustomed to remark that 'About nineteen twentieths of the variations have so little support that, although there are various readings, no one would think of them as rival readings, and nineteen-twentieth of the remainder are of so little importance that their adoption or rejection would cause no appreciable difference in the sense of the passages in which they occur' (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia,* Vol. 5, Page 2955).
2. Most of the variations are in matters of word order, spelling, tense, number, person, etc.
3. In spite of the variant readings the amount of agreement is amazing. Only about one word in every thousand has upon it substantial variation supported by such evidence as to call out the efforts of the critic in deciding between the readings."
4. It falls to the science of textual criticism to judge the ancient manuscripts to determine the correct text of the New Testament

B. There are several classes of errors
1. Unconscious errors of the eye where the copyist confuses letters or endings that are similar.
For example Ο for Θ Λ for Α or Δ ΠΑΝ for ΤΙΑΝ
2. Unconscious errors of the pen – transposing letters etc
3. Unconscious errors of speech – habitual forms of speech that cause confusion of vowels and diphthongs especially in dictation
4. Unconscious errors of memory – caused from the scribe reading a sentence and then incorrectly recalling the sentence when writing
5. Unconscious errors of judgement – misreadings of abbreviations

6. Conscious or intentional errors
    a. Historical corrections such as Mark 1:2 (Compare KJV with newer translations)
    b. Harmonistic corrections – efforts to harmonize the Gospels
    c. Doctrinal corrections – changes based upon the particular doctrinal position of the scribe

C. It must be understood that most variants are of little importance. No doctrine of the faith rests upon a variant reading of Scripture as its sole foundation.

IV. Disagreement today as to which Greek text should be used
(Differences in the Greek texts should not overshadow the overwhelming degree of agreement which exists among the ancient records.)

A. Today there are two basic Greek texts being used:
- The Alexandrian text-type
- The Received Text (designated by the symbol "TR")

1. The Alexandrian Text which is found in the Nestle-Aland 27th edition and various other modern revised editions
    a. This text is based upon a relatively few number of manuscripts discovered in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. (However, the work of textual criticism continues to examine all known manuscripts)
    b. Dependence upon these manuscripts is based upon their greater age. Included are the Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus manuscripts
    c. This text was influential in the Westcott-Hort edition of 1881 as well as the two main modern texts: The twenty-seventh edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament (NA^{27}) and fourth edition of the United Bible Society Greek New Testament (UBS 4th). Both of these modern Greek New Testaments are essentially the same differing mainly in matters such as punctuation and are less "Alexandrian" than the Westcott-Hort edition.
    d. Although modern Greek Texts are considered "Alexandrian" they actually also draw from Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine text-types.
2. The Received Text or Textus Receptus - The term designates the Greek text of Erasmus' third edition (1522), Stephanus' third edition (1550), Beza's eighth edition (1598), and Elzevir's second edition (1633). (More on this below) It was edited by F. H. A. Scrivener and published by Cambridge University Press in 1894 and 1902.
    a. This manuscript uses a much larger body of manuscripts than the Alexandrian Text, however, these manuscripts are much later with none earlier than the 5th century. Most are from area known as Byzantium and are referred to as the Byzantine text.
    b. Most of these readings are verified by the ancient papyri, ancient versions, and quotations by the early church fathers
    c. This text was used by William Tyndale in 1525 and the 1611 t translators of the Authorized Version.

3. The Majority Text
    a. Many modern scholars are persuaded that the best guide to a precise Greek text is the close consensus of the majority of Greek manuscripts.
    b. This text is similar to the Received Text (both are mainly Byzantine in character) yet not identical. The Received Text is often found in disagreement with the Majority Text.
    c. The problem with using a pure "majority" approach to textual criticism is that the vast majority of texts existing today are Byzantine text types. This does not take into consideration that the Alexandrian text type was more prevalent in the centuries closer to the time of the original writings of the New Testament. In addition, older manuscripts are not as affected by the errors that can result from a long series of transcriptions.

B. Many today believe that where there are variant readings in the manuscripts we must seek to determine through the application of sound principles which readings are actually identical with the original manuscripts.

General Methods of Critical Procedure:

1. An older reading is preferable to one later since it is presumed to be nearer the original.
2. A more difficult reading, if well supported, is preferred to one that is easier since the tendency is to substitute an easy smooth reading for one that is unusual or ungrammatical.
3. A shorter is preferable to a longer reading since there was a common tendency scribes towards additions and insertions rather than omissions.
4. A reading is preferable which best suits the particular style of the author.
5. A reading is preferable which reflects no particular bias.
6. The Genealogical Method – used by Hort and others.
    a. This method takes into account that readings do not exist independently of one another. He believed that every type of textual fact must be taken into account.
    b. According to Hort, numerical superiority does not necessarily produce a superior text since many may have been derived from a single source.

    For example: Of ten witnesses who appear in a courtroom four (A,B,C,D,) might offer one body of testimony while six (E,F,G,H,I,J,) might offer another. If further examination reveals that five of the latter group were merely echoing the testimony of the sixth (J) we do not actually have ten witnesses but five. Thus, according to Hort, the Received Text is not more reliable even though it uses a greater number of manuscripts.

Part II – Bible Translations

"It is true that the modern church in America has seemingly gone bonkers when it comes to Bible translations. How many Bible translations do we need? Do we need to have a Bible translation for every group, sub-group, and splinter group? Do we need a translation in every American dialect? Some people have two dozen different Bibles sitting on their shelves, and to what end" (*The King James Only Controversy,* Page 10)?

I. Most disagreement in Bible versions today arise from two different areas of study
   A. Textual disputes – disagreements over what was originally written by the Biblical authors. This can be seen in the preceding material.
      1. An example would be John 6:47. The Received Text adds the words εἰς ἐμὲ (eis emĕ) translated "on me"
         KJV **John 6:47** – "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth **on me** hath everlasting life."
         NAS **John 6:47** - "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life."
      2. Another example would be Revelation 1:8 where the Received Text deletes the word θεός (theos) translated "God"
         KJV **Revelation 1:8** – "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."
         NAS **Revelation 1:8** – "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."
   B. Translational Disputes – Disputes over how the text should be translated
      1. By far translational disputes are the chief reason for the many English translations today. In other words, how a particular Greek or Hebrew word should be translated. For example compare John 3:36 in the KJV and NAS
         KJV **John 3:36** – "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that **believeth not** the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."
         NAS **John 3:36** – "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who **does not obey** the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."
      2. Another example is 2 Timothy 3:16 where the word θεόπνευστος (theoneustos) is translated in various ways.
         ESV **2 Timothy 3:16** – "All Scripture is breathed out by God"
         KJV **2 Timothy 3:16** – "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God"
         NAS **2 Timothy 3:16** – "All Scripture is inspired by God"
         NIV **2 Timothy 3:16** – "All Scripture is God-breathed"
      3. Included in these disputes is method of translation, or how literally the original text should be translated.

II. Method of Translation

A. A literal method of translation.

1. In this approach the emphasis is upon maintaining a strict word for word translation of the original text.
2. Examples of this approach would include KJV (1611, 1769), NKJV (1982), NAS (1977, 1995), ESV (2001)
3. There are times when a strict literal translation of the original text makes little sense in English. During these times a more dynamic approach prevails. Some translations are less literal than others. In the example below the literal translation is "cut to the heart."
   ESV Acts 7:54 – "Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him."
   KJV Acts 7:54 – "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth."
   NAS Acts 7:54 – "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they *began* gnashing their teeth at him."
   διαπρίω (diaprio) - to saw asunder or in two, to divide by a saw
   καρδία (kardia) - the heart
4. It should be remembered that it is often difficult to translate any writing from one language to another. Idioms or figures of speech are often difficult to convey. The translator has to make a choice in how he expresses the thoughts and intents of the original writer. In this sense every translation is also an interpretation.

B. The "dynamic equivalence" approach

1. In the dynamic equivalence approach the emphasis is upon translating the meaning of the text, a "thought for thought" rather than a "word for word" translation. Eugene Nida championed this theory of translation in the mid-twentieth century.
2 The two landmark translations based on this approach were the Living Bible (1971), which is more of a paraphrase, and the New International Version (1978). Both have enjoyed popularity largely due to public relations and marketing. In recent history the NIV has been the dominant version in the Evangelical world.
3. The danger of this approach is it presents as translation that which should be left to interpretation and commentary.
4. A heavy use of the dynamic equivalence philosophy is at odds with the doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration.
5. Leland Ryken listed several of the cultural forces that paved the way for the success of dynamic equivalent Bibles during the 1970's:
   - A lack of other alternatives to the King James Bible at a time when the latter was badly showing its age and had become culturally obsolete with its archaic language.
   - An antiestablishment and antitraditional spirit welcomed translations that seemed novel and modern.
   - A loss of appreciation for, or even the ability to recognize, literary excellence.
   - A new preference for colloquialism over formality in written discourse.

- Evangelic zeal, accompanied by a pragmatic outlook that endorsed whatever religious materials produced the most conversions.
- A consumer-oriented and Gallop poll mentality that led translators and publishers to give readers what they wanted.
- A general laziness that has increasingly resulted in an obsession with making all pursuits, including Bible reading easy.
- New marketing techniques that could appeal to target markets (and that could eventually package "niche Bibles" for specific market groups).
- A narcissistic orientation that elevated the reader rather than the author or text to center stage in the reading process (in dynamic equivalence theory, the reader reigns, a view that came into vogue simultaneously with the triumph of the reader-response literary theory). [*The Word of God in English,* page 15]

5. The danger of the dynamic equivalent approach can be seen in the translation of Psalm 32:1-2 in *The Message* where forgiveness of sins is described as getting lucky with God.
KJV Psalm 32:1-2 – "Blessed *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven, *whose* sin *is* covered. 2 Blessed *is* the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is* no guile."
The Message Psalm 32:1-2 – "Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be—you get a fresh start, your slate is wiped clean. 2 Count yourself lucky—God holds nothing against you and your holding nothing back from him.

III. A non exhaustive survey of important English Bible translations

- *Wycliffe Bible* (1380) – the first English translation of the Bible. It was translated from the Latin Vulgate into Middle English.
- *Tyndale's New Testament* (1525) – a work which cost Tyndale his life in 1535 (he was burned at the stake), this translation has been described as "free, bold, and idiomatic." Eighty percent of Tyndale's Bible found its way into the KJV.
- *Coverdale's Bible* (1535) – Miles Coverdale, a close associate of Tyndale, produced the first complete Bible in English. Because it was sanctioned by Henry VIII it circulated freely in England.
- *Matthew's Bible* (1537) – Thomas Matthew was a pseudonym for John Rogers (he too died at the stake). It became the first "authorized version" in England. The Matthew's Bible was divided into chapters and paragraphs but no verses.
- *The Great Bible* (1539) – Received its name from its large size. It became the basis for the Bible passages in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer.
- *Geneva Bible* (1560) – the Bible of the Reformers produced in Switzerland by Puritan refugees who fled the persecution of Queen Mary. It became the household Bible of English-speaking Protestants. It was the Bible used by Shakespeare and came to America on the Mayflower. Its pages were filled with notes that provided running commentary on the biblical text.
- *Bishop's Bible* (1568) – Authorized by Queen Elizabeth and was intended to counteract the radical Puritan notes and bias of the Geneva Bible.

- *King James Bible* (1611) – the most famous of English Bibles. It supplanted the Geneva Bible within three decades and was the supreme English translation until the mid-twentieth century. It is an essentially literal translation that italicized words added to the original for the sake of intelligibility.
  Leland Ryken – "For all its excellence, the King James translation did not maintain its supremacy after the mid-twentieth century for three main reasons: Its language is now outdated, the translators' knowledge of ancient languages was less reliable than modern knowledge is, and the translation uses a New Testament text (*the Textus* Receptus) that most scholars no longer consider the most reliable (*Word of God in English*, page 51).
- *Revised Version* (1881) – I was initially very popular. The KJV was two centuries old and many saw its language as obsolete. Since it was a British project it failed to gain the support of American scholars.
- *American Standard Version* (1901) – The American answer to the *Revised Version* but was almost identical to it.
- *J.B. Phillips New Testament* (1947-1957) – This version paraphrased the New Testament and gave many an appetite for dynamic equivalence.
- *Revised Standard Version* (1957, revised 1971) – It was a revision of the American Standard Version with much greater stylistic and literary excellence. It was largely rejected among evangelicals because of alleged theological liberalism. It was revised in 1989 but not a true revision since this version was a dynamic equivalent translation given to gender neutral references.
- *New American Standard Bible* (1971) – This version is known for its reliability to the original language but considered weak in literary style. It was revised in 1995.
- *Good News Bible* (1976) also known as *Today's English Translation* – The first Bible to fully embrace the dynamic equivalence method of translation. It is a colloquial translation designed to sound like contemporary American speech and avoid theological language.
- *New International Version* (1978) – Also embracing the translation philosophy of dynamic equivalence, it soon became the most widely used English translation among American Evangelicals. The focus was upon readability with a reading level considered to be on the seventh-grade level. There is a new revision, *Today's New International Version* that carries translation license to the next level as it makes numerous changes to reflect gender neutrality.
- *New King James Version* (1982) – a revision of the KJV, this translation sought to maintain the tradition and character of the KJV while updating many of the words largely out of use today. The NKJV is based on the *Textus Receptus*
- *New Living Translation* (1996) – an effort to refute the charges that the *Living Bible* was unscholarly it is a translation based on the original texts, yet still a dynamic equivalence and colloquial translation
- *English Standard Version* (2001) – An effort to return to a more literal translation than most versions published during the twentieth century and a greater emphasis on literary style than that of the NASB and greater accuracy than the NKJV. The starting point for this translation was the RSV of 1971 with about six percent being changed.

III. The King James Only Movement

A. Those involved in the modern KJV Only movement fall into several categories

1. Personal preference – This group is only marginally KJV only. They do not insist that others agree with them. They simply believe the KJV to be the best English translation available today. They do not deny that other translations are the Word of God.
2. Textual Superiority – This group believes the underlying Greek and Hebrew texts used for the KJV are superior.
3. Textus Receptus Only – This group believes the Received Text itself was supernaturally preserved or even inspired itself. This group doesn't believe that the KJV is necessarily inerrant leaving open the possibility of a future more accurate translation as long as it comes from the TR.
4. Inspired KJV – This group believes that the KJV translators were inspired and thus the KJV is inerrant. The importance of the Received Text fades in significance. For this group the KJV is the only true Word of God.
5. The KJV as new revelation – This group believes that in 1611 God supernaturally re-inspired the Bible. The underlying texts have no importance. Some go so far as to say the Greek and Hebrew texts should be changed to reflect the text of the KJV.

B. The KJV as a personal choice

1. Since the KJV was the prevailing translation for over 400 years it was the text used by most of the scholarship of this era. Many prefer to read the same text as the past theologians whom they regularly read.
2. Few question the literary excellence and majestic language of the KJV.
3. Using the KJV for memorization as it has long been the standard for quoting passages of Scripture.
4. The "archaic language" argument against the KJV should not discourage its use. In his book, *Accuracy of Translation*, Robert Martin states an example of the "archaic language" attack and then answers it
   - "To the younger generation it is quiet clear that the KJV, for all its literary beauty, is hopelessly out of date. It may still speak to the Bible lover of the older generation who has become familiar with its sixteenth-century English, but for the majority of English-speaking people its language has become almost a foreign tongue. There is grave danger that the continued use of this version may give modern man the impression that the Bible belongs to another age, and that it is irrelevant to the twentieth century" (Sakae Kubo quoted from *Accuracy of Translation,* Pages 73-74).
   - Martin's response to Kubo – "This surely is an overstatement. The 'older generation' in question did not grow up speaking sixteenth-century English. As Kubo . . . *noted*, though it was a form of the English language different from what they used in their daily lives, *they* became familiar with it because a book which was very important to them was written in it. While Elizabethan English and archaic vocabulary may cause problems for children and others with very limited reading skills, the average literate adult adjusts to the Elizabethan style in a relative brief time" *Accuracy of Translation,* Page 74).

5. Using the KJV as your favorite translation must not deny the legitimacy of textual criticism which theoretically can result in a more accurate translation than the KJV. Many KJV Only advocates are unwilling to examine the principles underlying the modern texts.
"It should be axiomatic among Christian scholars that open discussion and liberty should prevail. That is one reason why KJV Onlyism has found no true proponent amongst Christian scholars: it denies anyone the freedom to examine the KJV on the very same basis as any other translation. The position is, by its nature, anti-intellectual, anti-scholarship, and anti-freedom" (*King James Only Controversy*, page 151).

C. The Textus Receptus as the only possible text.

1. "In the opinion of some conservative Christians, the application of the principles of textual criticism to the text of the New Testament is unnecessary, since in their view the Greek text used by the translators of the King James Version (the so-called Textus Receptus, or Received Text) represents exactly the inerrant and infallible original autographs of the New Testament. The expression of this view frequently is accompanied with the charge that emendation of the Received Text, by the substitution of variant readings from other manuscripts of the New Testament, is nothing less than tampering with the Word of God which our Lord providentially has preserved throughout all the centuries since the inspirited documents were written" (*Accuracy of Translation,* Page 77).
2. The first printed Greek New Testament was prepared by Desiderius Erasmus. Since Erasmus had no manuscript containing the entire New Testament he edited several together. None of the copies he used dated before the 12th century. In several places he translated the Latin Vulgate into Greek. Many are still a part of the Textus Receptus (for example: the last six verses of Revelation 21 [see "Book of life" in Revelation 22:19] and the entire verse of Acts 8:37).
    a. Erasmus issued five editions of his Greek New Testament
    The second edition was the basis of Luther's German translation
    b. In his first edition he was criticized for leaving out the disputed words of 1 John 5:7-8 which were found in many of the Latin Vulgate editions. He included them in his second edition but not in the next three editions.
3. Between 1546 and 1551 the French publisher Robert Estienne (also known as Stephanus) published four editions of the Greek New Testament. In the first two the Erasmus editions were used but the third edition was the first Greek New Testament to include variant readings from other manuscripts. The 1550 edition is still printed by some as the Textus Receptus although the title itself was used with reference to a modified form of the Stephanus text published by the Elzevir brothers in 1633. This edition contained a preface that stated that it contained the "text which is now received by all," thereafter being designated the "Textus Receptus."
4. Theodore Beza published nine editions of the Greek New Testament between 1565 and 1604 which generally followed the Stephanus text. The Beza edition of 1598 is the primary authority cited for the Trinitarian Bible Society's current printing of the Textus Receptus.

5. The King James translators used as their chief sources the 1550 and 1551 editions of Stephanus and Beza's editions of 1589 and 1598. They did not work from a single text known as the Textus Receptus. No single Greek text agreed with the KJV version until F.H.A. Scrivener produced such an edition in 1881.
6. The title "Textus Receptus" does not designate a single edition of the Greek New Testament but a family of editions which differ from each other in certain points which makes it unreasonable to defend the Textus Receptus as the only pure Word of God which must never be emended. If the history of the Textus Receptus is a history of revision why is it beyond revision today?

D. KJV as being inspired of God
1. What is the basis for such a claim? Why not the Geneva Bible or some other earlier English translation? KJV Only advocates have made the KJV the standard by which all other versions are to be judged. Should not the KJV be judged by the same standards all other translations are judged, i.e. faithfulness to the original languages?
2. The Bible does not permit re-inspiration. Revelation ended with the Apostles.
3. The original manuscripts or autographs are inspired and inerrant. Translations of these manuscripts are not claimed to be inerrant. Article 10 of the "Chicago Statement on Inerrancy" states:
> "We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original."
4. The KJV has gone through several revisions – 1616, 1629, 1638. Most modern KJV editions are from the revision made by Benjamin Blayney in 1769. Although the textual revisions have been minor, how does one maintain the inspiration of the 1611 version in the presence of *any* revisions?
5. Even printer's errors make the claim of an inerrant KJV untenable.
   a. In the 19th Century the United Bible Society examined six editions of the KJV and found 24,000 variants.
   b. Some modern KJV Bibles use the word "hungred" in Matthew 4:2 while others use the word "hungered." Which one is inerrant? (See also Jeremiah 34:16 "he" or "ye" had set at liberty - the Hebrew tells us it is plural but the radical KJV only advocate cannot resort to the Hebrew)
6. Some of the KJV Only adherents are caustic and rude attacking all who use other translations as being anti-Christian. Any statement against the KJV is portrayed as an attack against the Word of God. Christians should always deal with disputes in a spirit of meekness, gentleness and patience:
> **2 Timothy 2:24-25** – "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;"

IV. Concluding Comments

1. The best translations are those that follow the literal method of translation. This is most consistent with verbal plenary inspiration.
2. There are several excellent literal translations available today including:
    - King James Version
    - New King James Version
    - New American Standard Bible
    - English Standard Version
3. The KJV is a translation with a long tradition and known for its literary excellence and overall accuracy, but it is not the only accurate English translation.
4. Many find it easier to do their daily Bible reading from a modern translation
   A good study Bible is often an excellent aid in understanding the text.
5. Having several translations available is often helpful as a particular text is studied.

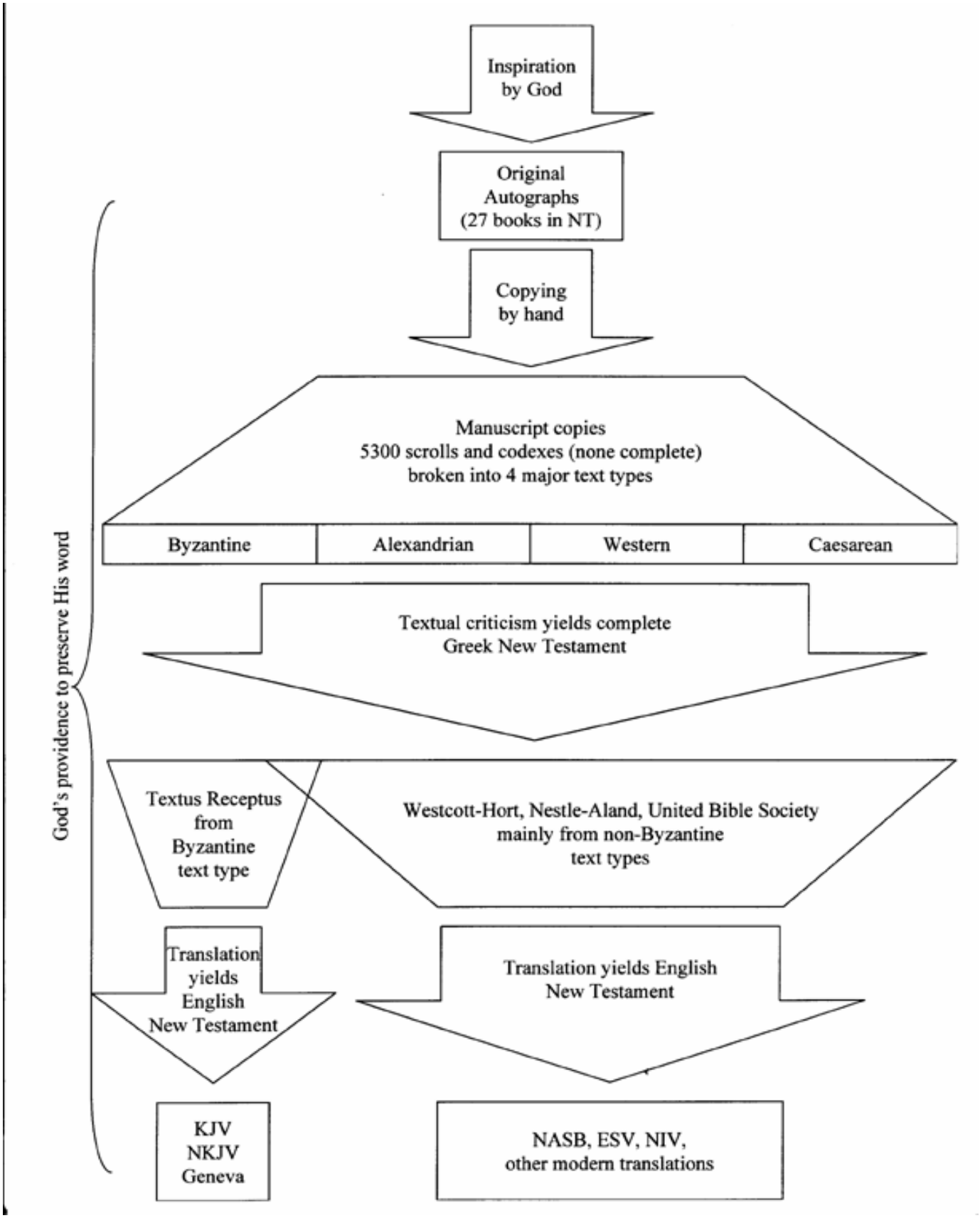

Chart created by
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