

Why We Hold to the KJV

Part 10 – Mutilated Manuscripts, Modernists & Modern Versions

Text: Matthew 7:15-20

Introduction:

1. There is a key fact each believer needs to be familiar with in this debate – there are two competing Greek texts that have come down to us. "There is a foundational fact about Bible versions today that must be understood by every student and that is this: All of the translations of the Protestant Reformation were based on the same Greek text whereas all of the modern versions are based on a different Greek text, and that accounts for thousands of changes."¹
2. We could call it the tale of two cities – Alexandria of Egypt and Antioch of Syria. From Antioch came the Traditional, Received Text which forms the overwhelming majority of manuscripts. This is the text that underlies the KJV and other Protestant Reformation Bibles. From Alexandria came the Critical Text that forms the basis of the modern versions and represents a tiny percentage of available manuscripts. David Sorenson writes, "The Traditional Text of the New Testament can be traced, primarily through translations thereof from the mid-second century. However, another significant textual base developed later and would have profound implications to this very hour. Whereas the Traditional Text finds its roots in Antioch of Syria, the home church of the Apostle Paul, the modern Critical Text traces its lineage back to Alexandria, Egypt."
3. In this lesson we focus on the two corrupt manuscripts behind the critical text² which form the textual foundation of the modern versions. The critical text and the modern versions it has produced are the product of unbelieving, apostate scholarship.

I. THE MUTILATED MANUSCRIPTS BEHIND THE MODERN VERSIONS

The critical text is primarily based on two, corrupt Greek manuscripts, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. An understanding of this is crucial to the whole debate. The corruptions we find in the modern versions (e.g., verses and words missing, critical notes) are not random. They are there because of the manuscripts they are translated from.

¹ D. Cloud, *Faith Vs. the Modern Bible Versions*, p. 64.

² Critical in the sense that it differs from the Majority Text.

A. VATICANUS³

Some facts about Vaticanus:

1. The Vaticanus Greek codex gets its name from its location, which is the Vatican Library. Its history is unknown prior to 1475, when it first appeared in that library's catalogue.
2. It is thought to date from the mid-4th century and to have originated in Egypt. "Hort was inclined to assign it to Rome, and others to southern Italy or Caesarea; but the association of its text with the Coptic (Egyptian) Versions and with Origen, and the style of writing (notably the Coptic forms used in some of the titles), point rather to Egypt and Alexandria" (Frederic Kenyon, *The Text of the Greek Bible*).
3. Westcott and Hort preferred the Vaticanus manuscript as their chief authority above all other Greek manuscripts. It was "their touchstone" (Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 14).
4. It is a very strange and corrupt manuscript:
 - a. It was corrected by revisers in the 8th, 10th, and 15th centuries (W. Eugene Scott, *Codex Vaticanus*, 1996).
 - b. In fact, the entire manuscript has been mutilated: "...every letter has been run over with a pen, making exact identification of many of the characters impossible" (*Vaticanus and Sinaiticus* - www.waynejackson.freeseve.co.uk/kjv/v2.htm). This was probably done in the 10th or 11th century. All of the revision and overwriting "makes precise palaeographic analysis impossible" (Scott, *Codex Vaticanus*). Dr. David Brown observes: "I question the 'great witness' value of any manuscript that has been overwritten, doctored, changed and added to for more than 10 centuries" (*The Great Uncials*).
 - c. Missing portions were supplied in the 15th century by copying other Greek manuscripts. This segment (pages 1519-1536) of the manuscript "is catalogued separately as minuscule 1957" (Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 109).
 - d. In the Gospels it leaves out 749 entire sentences and 452 clauses, plus 237 other words, all of which are found in hundreds of other Greek manuscripts. The total number of words omitted in B (Vaticanus) in the Gospels alone is 2,877 as compared with the majority of manuscripts (Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, p. 75).
 - e. According to Robert Sargent, Vaticanus manifests 7,578 differences with the Textus Receptus:⁴
 - Omits 2,877 words.
 - Adds 536 words.
 - Substitutes 935 words.

³ Majority of information drawn from "Faith Vs. the Modern Bible Versions" by D. Cloud.

⁴ English Bible Manuscript Evidence, p. 278.

- Transposes 2,098 words.
- Modifies 1,132 words.
- f. Vaticanus omits Mark 16:9-20, but a blank space is left for that section of Scripture. Incidentally, the blank space left by the scribe serves as a silent witness to any who have eyes to see that those verses were in existence before Vaticanus. Clearly the scribe was instructed to leave them out.
- g. It also contains the Old Testament apocrypha and the Epistle of Barnabas.
- 5. The fact this manuscript is the property of the Roman Catholic Church should raise alarm bells for the Bible believer. The Roman Catholic church has never been the custodian of the truth. She has been the greatest persecutor of the Bible and Bible believers down through the centuries. The fact textual critics are so in love with this manuscript and elevate it against the Received Text reveals how spiritually blind they are. The Vatican Library is the last place on earth we would expect to find the pure, preserved Word of God.

B. Sinaiticus (Aleph)⁵

1. Its history
 - a. The Sinaiticus codex was discovered by Constantine Tischendorf at St. Catherine's Monastery (Greek Orthodox) at Mt. Sinai. He discovered the first part in 1844 and the second in 1859. In May 1844, on his way to Mt. Sinai, Tischendorf stopped in Rome and had an audience with Pope Gregory XVI. Like Catholicism, the Greek Orthodox Church has a false gospel of grace plus works and sacraments and holds the unscriptural doctrine of venerating relics. St. Catherine's Monastery has one entire room filled with skulls! Again, this is not the place where we would expect to find the pure, preserved Word of God!
 - b. Following is the story of how Tischendorf found the Sinaiticus: "In the year 1844, whilst travelling under the patronage of Frederick Augustus King of Saxony, in quest of manuscripts, Tischendorf reached the Convent of St. Catherine, on Mount Sinai. Here, observing some old-looking documents in a basketful of papers ready for lighting the stove, he picked them out, and discovered that they were forty-three vellum leaves of the Septuagint Version. He was allowed to take these: but in the desire of saving the other parts of the manuscript of which he heard, he explained their value to the monks, who being now enlightened would only allow him to copy one page, and refused to sell him the rest. On his return he published in 1846 what he had succeeded in getting under the name 'Codex Frederico-Augustanus,' inscribed to his benefactor" (Edward Miller, *A Guide to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 24).

⁵ Information drawn from D. Cloud, *Faith Vs. the Modern Bible Versions*.

Some enemies of the defence of the King James Bible have claimed that the manuscripts were not found in a “waste basket,” but they were. That is exactly how Tischendorf described it. “I perceived a large and wide basket full of old parchments; and the librarian told me that two heaps like this had been already committed to the flames. What was my surprise to find amid this heap of papers...” (*Narrative of the Discovery of the Sinaitic Manuscript*, p. 23). John Burgon, who was alive when Tischendorf discovered the Sinaiticus and also personally visited St. Catherine’s to research ancient manuscripts, testified that the manuscripts “got deposited in the waste-paper basket of the Convent” (*The Revision Revised*, 1883, pp. 319, 342).

2. The strangeness of Codex Sinaiticus
 - a. The Sinaiticus was written by three different scribes and was corrected later by several others. (This was the conclusion of an extensive investigation by H.J.M. Milne and T.C. Skeat of the British Museum, which was published in *Scribes and Correctors of Codex Sinaiticus*, London, 1938.) Tischendorf counted **14,800 corrections** in this manuscript (David Brown, *The Great Uncials*, 2000). Dr. F.H.A. Scrivener, who published *A Full Collation of the Codex Sinaiticus* in 1864 testified: “The Codex is covered with alterations of an obviously correctional character brought in by at least ten different revisers, some of them systematically spread over every page, others occasional, or limited to separate portions of the Ms., many of these being contemporaneous with the first writer, but for the greater part belonging to the sixth or seventh century.” Thus, it is evident that scribes in bygone centuries did not consider the Sinaiticus to represent a pure text. Why it should be so revered by modern textual critics is a mystery.
 - b. A great amount of carelessness is exhibited in the copying and correction. “Codex Sinaiticus ‘abounds with errors of the eye and pen to an extent not indeed unparalleled, but happily rather unusual in documents of first-rate importance.’ On many occasions 10, 20, 30, 40 words are dropped through very carelessness. Letters and words, even whole sentences, are frequently written twice over, or begun and immediately cancelled; while that gross blunder, whereby a clause is omitted because it happens to end in the same words as the clause preceding, occurs no less than 115 times in the New Testament” (John Burgon, *The Revision Revised*). It is clear that the scribes who copied the Sinaiticus were not faithful men of God who treated the Scriptures with utmost reverence. The total number of words omitted in Aleph in the Gospels alone is 3,455 compared with the Greek Received Text (Burgon, p. 75).

II. THE MODERNISTS BEHIND THE MODERN VERSIONS

The promoters of the Critical Text behind the modern versions have with rare exception been theological liberals who deny verbal inspiration and other cardinal doctrines of the Word of God. Modern Evangelicalism, with rare exception, has been saturated with textual criticism. Very few Evangelicals today hold to a TR/KJV only position. Their commentaries often contain critical notes with frequent appeals to “the oldest and best manuscripts”. Many names could be mentioned in connection with the field of textual criticism but let’s name a few of the key figures who were instrumental in popularising the critical text.⁶

A. Johann Jakob Griesbach (1745-1812)

1. Griesbach, a German, was one of the most important names in the development of modern textual criticism. While some (particularly evangelicals and fundamentalists) have tried to downplay his role, he was, in fact, extremely influential. Marvin R. Vincent says, “With Griesbach, really critical texts may be said to have begun” (Marvin Vincent, *A History of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, 1899, p. 100).
2. Griesbach was influenced from his undergraduate days by the rising tide of Rationalism sweeping over Germany and “was a foe of orthodox Christianity” (D.A. Thompson, *The Controversy Concerning the Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to Mark*, p. 40). Griesbach was strongly influenced by his teacher at Halle, the modernist **JOHANN SEMLER** (1725-91).
3. Semler is “often regarded as the father of German rationalism” (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 115). He was greatly influenced by Roman Catholic Richard Simon’s 1689 book, *Critical History*.
 - a. Semler rejected the traditional view that the entire canon of Scripture is infallibly inspired.
 - b. Semler taught that the writers of the New Testament accommodated the teachings of Christianity to the needs of various classes of people, “which explains the appeal to miracles.”
 - c. Semler looked upon the book of Revelation as “the production of an extravagant dreamer” and argued that it was not inspired or canonical.

⁶ Information drawn from D. Cloud, *Faith Vs. the Modern Bible Versions*.

- d. Semler believed that the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles contained error.
- e. Semler claimed that 2 Corinthians 9 was not originally part of Paul's epistle but was inserted later by scribes, and that Romans 16 was originally part of a letter to the Corinthians that got attached to the epistle to the Romans by mistake.
- f. Semler taught that the moral truths of the Bible could, with equal truth, be "characterized as a revelation, or as a progressive development of the natural reason."

B. Westcott and Hort

Westcott and Hort said that in certain matters they venerated the name of **Griesbach** "above that of every other textual critic of the New Testament" (*New Testament in Greek*, 1881, vol. 2, p. 185). They adopted many of his principles of textual criticism and popularized them in their writings. A.T. Robertson states that Hort held Griesbach "to be the great man in textual criticism before his own day" (*An Introduction to Textual Criticism*, p. 30). In fact, Hort felt that "he was in reality taking up the work of Griesbach afresh" (Robertson, *An Introduction*, p. 29). Bruce Metzger observes: "Griesbach laid foundations for all subsequent work on the Greek text of the New Testament ... The importance of Griesbach for New Testament textual criticism can scarcely be overestimated" (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, pp. 119, 121). Metzger reminds us that Westcott and Hort did not collate any manuscripts or provide a critical apparatus; rather they "refined the critical methodology developed by Griesbach, Lachmann, and others, and applied it rigorously" (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 129). Kurt and Barbara Aland, though claiming that Griesbach's influence "is today in danger of being exaggerated," admit that "his influence was extraordinary as a model for many subsequent editors" (Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 9).

1. Their backgrounds⁷

- a. Brooke Foss Westcott (1825-1901) was the Anglican Bishop of Durham. He was quite sympathetic to the Oxford Movement (move within the Church of England towards the Catholic Church).
- b. Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828-1892) was Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University. Hort hated the Received Text. In 1851 he wrote, "I had no idea till the last few weeks of the

⁷ R Sargent, *English Bible Manuscript Evidence*, p. 266-277

importance of texts, having read so little Greet Testament and dragged on with the villainous Textus Receptus...Think of that vile Textus Receptus leaning entirely on late MSS; it is a blessing there are such early ones.”

2. Their beliefs⁸

Both Westcott and Hort were pro-Catholic, anti-evangelical, unsaved men. The following quotations are taken from their personal writings:

- a. Westcott — “I wish I could see to what forgotten truth Mariolatry bears witness.”
- b. Hort — “I am very far from pretending to understand completely the ever-renewed vitality of Mariolatry.” “I have been persuaded for many years that Mary worship and ‘Jesus worship’ have much in common in their cause and results.”
- c. Westcott — “No one now, I suppose, holds that the first three chapters of Genesis, for example, gives a literal history ... I could never understand how anyone reading them with open eyes could think they did.”
- d. Hort — “But the book which most engages me is Darwin. Whatever may be thought of it, it is a book that one is proud to be contemporary with ... at present my feeling is strong that the theory is unanswerable.”
- e. Westcott — “I never read the account of a miracle but I seem instinctively to feel its improbability, and discover some want of evidence in the account of it.” [rationalism & empiricism!]
- f. Hort — “The positive doctrines even of the Evangelicals seem to me perverting rather than untrue. There are, I fear, still more serious differences between us on the subjects of authority, and especially authority of the Bible.”
- g. Westcott — “The battle of inspiration of the Scriptures has yet to be fought, and how earnestly I pray that I might aid in that.”
- h. Hort — “Westcott ... and I have started a society for the investigation of ghosts and all supernatural appearances and effects, being all disposed to believe that such things really exist, and ought to be discriminated from hoaxes and mere subjective disillusions.”
- i. These two men advocated teachings such as baptismal regeneration, prayers for the dead, and sacerdotalism; they

⁸ Ibid.

rejected (among other things) the infallibility of the scriptures, the literal return of Christ, and the existence of a personal Devil.

3. Their influence

- a. They were behind the English Revised Version of 1881 which was the first prominent English version based on the critical Greek text. All subsequent modern English versions are built upon this foundation.
- b. There was much deception involved in the Revised Version. Knowing there would be much opposition from the Christian community of that day if anything too radical was proposed, promises were made in public to keep the changes to a minimum.
- c. For example, the Rev. Charles Ellicott, a prominent member of the revision committee, made promises that the critical text would not be used and that the changes would be minimal. In reality, he allowed Westcott and Hort to introduce their new Greek text clandestinely on the very first day the translation committee met! Consider the following quotes from Ellicott's speeches and writings prior to the start of the Revision:
 - "We may be satisfied with the attempt to correct plain and clear errors, **BUT THERE IT IS OUR DUTY TO STOP**" (Charles Ellicott, *Speech in Convocation*, Feb. 1870, p. 83).
 - "Nothing is more satisfactory at the present time than the evident feelings of veneration for our Authorized Version, **AND THE VERY GENERALLY-FELT DESIRE FOR AS LITTLE CHANGE AS POSSIBLE**" (Ellicott, *Considerations on Revision*, May 23, 1870, p. 99).
 - "We should hardly be far wrong **IN ESTIMATING THE AMOUNT OF CHANGES** that would be introduced in any English revised Version of the whole 6944 verses of the New Testament, **AS NOT EXCEEDING ONE FOR EVERY FIVE VERSES, OR UNDER FOURTEEN HUNDRED IN ALL**, very many of these being of wholly unimportant character" (Ellicott, May 23, 1870, p. 52).
COMMENT: The actual changes made by Ellicott and the revisers numbered 36,000, or four and one-half changes per verse!
- d. The whole project was cloaked in secrecy, a marked difference to the translation process of the KJV which was marked by transparency, academic scrutiny and translation standards of the highest order.
 - "The English N.T. Revision Company laboured for ten long years behind closed doors, **ALL WAS SILENT**, the general public knew very little about what was going on

behind those closed doors. The same rule of secrecy prevailed in the American Company” (George Coy, *The Inside Story of the Anglo American Revised New Testament*)

- Westcott and Hort had been working together on their text since 1853. It modified the Greek Received Text underlying the King James Bible in more than 5,700 places. In 1870 Westcott and Hort printed a tentative edition for private distribution only. This they circulated *under pledge of secrecy* within the company of N.T. revisers (George Coy, *The Inside Story of the Anglo American Revised New Testament*)
 - The Revision committee was dominated by one man, F.J.A. Hort, who was joined by his cohorts B.F. Westcott and J.B. Lightfoot. They swayed the vote in favour of the critical text.
- e. Transparency is one of the features of truth. There is nothing to hide. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “But thou hast **fully known my doctrine**, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,” (2 Tim. 3:10)
- f. Secrecy and deception are the marks of false teachers and heresy.
- Romans 16:18 “For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by **good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.**”
 - 2 Peter 2:3 “And through covetousness shall they with **feigned words** make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.”
 - Jude 1:4 “For there are certain men **crept in unawares**, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - Matthew 7:15 “**Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.**”
- g. Under the influence of Westcott and Hort, Unitarian George Vance Smith was added to the translation committee. George Vance Smith was a Unitarian minister who denied the deity and atonement of Jesus Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, and the divine inspiration of Scripture. He clearly believed that the Revised Version favoured Unitarianism, contrary to the claims of modern scholars that “no doctrine is affected” by different versions.

- He was pastor of St. Saviour's Gate Unitarian Chapel in York. Smith was outspoken in his rejection of Jesus Christ as God, claiming that Christ was merely a "humble teacher" and that only after Jesus' death did he begin to be deified by his followers (G. Vance Smith, *Texts and Margins*, p. 39).
- Smith taught that salvation was not purchased by Christ's blood (Smith, *The Bible and Its Theology*, p. 246).
- Smith taught that God's wrath does not abide on sinners and that they do not have to be redeemed; that all are spiritual sons of God (Smith, *The Bible and Its Theology*, pp. 253, 298).
- Smith denied the divine inspiration of the Bible, likening it merely to the "genius of Shakespeare" and claiming that its words are "dead" (Smith, *The Bible and Its Theology*, pp. 269, 276, 277).
- There was a huge uproar against Smith's presence on the translation committee within the Anglican Church with several thousand ministers signing a petition to have him removed from the committee. The Upper House of the Church of England passed a resolution in February 1871 that anyone denying the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ should not be permitted to participate in the revision work. Westcott, Hort and their close friend J.B. Lightfoot stood by Smith and threatened to resign if he was removed from the committee. There were some men of principle such as Bishop Wilberforce who wisely resigned from the project at this point.
- Vance Smith later testified that the textual changes in the English Revised Version and the Westcott-Hort Greek New Testament reflected his own heretical theology. Some of the passages listed by Smith as being theologically "superior" in the modern texts and versions as opposed to the King James Bible were Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 3:16; Titus 2:13; and 1 Jn. 5:7, and that is because these passages in the critical text weaken the doctrine of Christ's deity and thus provide better support for Smith's heresies.

III. THE MODERN VERSIONS AND THE CRITICAL TEXT

- A. Believers need to be aware that the corrupt Greek text and the work of heretical critics like Westcott and Hort forms the basis of all the modern versions.
- B. Remember this when they come out with the next version and claim it is the “most accurate and up to date”.
- C. Illustration: Ken Ham’s claim that the new LSB⁹ translation is the most accurate Bible. They claim it is a word for word translation. However, it is a word for word translation of the corrupt text and therefore perpetuates the same kinds of errors as all the other modern versions.
- D. The LSB is based on the Nestle text¹⁰. The Nestles’ Greek New Testament combines the readings of the Sinaiticus and the Vaticanus, as it was based on Tischendorf (who gave preference to the Sinaiticus) and Westcott/Hort (who gave preference to the Vaticanus). “This B Aleph text of the nineteenth century gained universal currency in Eberhard Nestle’s *Novum Testamentum Graece*, as it was based upon the editions of Tischendorf and Westcott-Hort together with that of Bernhard Weiss (which also gave preference to B)” (Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 103).¹¹
- E. For example:
 - 1. ‘God’ is changed to ‘He’ in 1 Timothy 3:16. “And by common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.”
 - 2. The word ‘repentance’ is removed from Matthew 9:13 “But go and learn what this means: ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”
 - 3. The include Matthew 17:21, a key verse on prayer and fasting, but include a footnote claiming “early mss omit this verse”.
 - 4. 1 John 5:7 is removed.

⁹ The LSB is an update of the NASB.

¹⁰ The work of EBERHARD NESTLE (1851-1913) The Nestle’s text, which first appeared in 1895, was based on Tischendorf’s 8th edition of 1869-72, Westcott and Hort’s edition of 1881, and D. Bernhard Weiss’ edition of 1902 (TBS Article No. 56). Tischendorf stayed close to the Sinaiticus, while Westcott and Hort preferred the Vaticanus. Thus, the Nestle Text is founded largely upon the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus manuscripts. The Nestle’s Text has gone through 27 editions and has been widely used in Bible College and seminary classrooms and translation work. (D. Cloud)

¹¹ D. Cloud, *Faith Vs. the Modern Bible Versions*

5. They include Acts 8:37 (The Eunuch's confession) but then undermine it with the footnote "early Mss omit this verse" thus casting doubt on its validity.
- F. On the one hand Ken Ham seeks to defend the Word of God, in particular, a literal understanding of Genesis. But on the other hand, he is undermining the Word of God by promoting a corrupt translation of the Scriptures. It is a reminder of the typical dangers with para church ministries.

Conclusion: Stick with the uncorrupted, pure Word of God in English, the KJV!