comparing these private revisions. This revision being completed, a company circulated its work, book by book, among the other companies. From this circulation there resulted revisions, made in the light of objections raised to the work of a company, and an excursus upon any objections which the original company did not agree to. Then the translators circulated their work among the learned men who were not official translators, and revised their work in view of suggestions from these men. Now the translators had to circulate these revisions among the other companies. Then, they prepared the final text. The final text they submitted to the general meeting in London, which spent nine months compounding disagreements among companies."[24]

Despite the limited information about the activities of the translators, the evidence strongly supports the view that they worked diligently according to their brief, with a single aim: to produce an accurate and intelligible translation into English of the texts available to them, believing that this was the very Word of God. For them, as it should be for us, the work was more important than the worker.

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24   Allen, quoted in Vance, *King James, op. cit.*, pp. 49-50.

The sources of the KJV

The Hebrew and Greek manuscripts used and the debt to earlier translations

Jonathan Burke

ALTHOUGH IT BECAME the most influential English Bible translation in history, the King James Version was by no means the first English Bible translation, nor even the first to be used widely by the common people. The history of complete Bible translations in English actually starts almost 230 years before the KJV was printed.[1]

In 1604 King James I agreed to the proposal for a new English Bible translation. James was eager to replace both the Bishops' Bible and the very popular Geneva Bible (having very strong objections to the interpretative notes in the latter). Various committees ('companies') were established to oversee the translation, using the revised version of the Bishops' Bible (1572) as a basis for their work.

The Hebrew manuscripts and texts used or consulted

The earliest Hebrew texts available in the time of the KJV translators dated to no earlier than the tenth century: the Aleppo Codex of the tenth century A.D. (an extremely accurate representation of the Masoretic Text[2]), and the Leningrad Codex of 1008 A.D. (an almost intact Masoretic manuscript). These original Hebrew text sources were used by the scholars of the fifteenth century to produce 'critical texts,'[3] from which translators could render the text into English. The table overleaf describes the source texts used by the KJV translators for their translation of the Old Testament.

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1. The 'Wycliffite' translation of the complete Bible into English is generally reckoned to have been completed around 1384.
2. The Masoretic Text (MT) is a textual tradition of the Old Testament by Jewish scribes from the seventh to the eleventh centuries A.D. It is known for the extreme care with which the text was prepared and copied, and for the extensive notations indicating vowel points, pronunciation and stress marks, textual variants, and commentary notes.
3. A critical text is an original-language text compiled by scholars from the best textual evidence available, and which typically contains numerous annotations and commentary discussing textual variants and making suggestions as to which is the most accurate reading. Critical texts are used as a convenient source for translators, to save them having to read, compare and assess multiple variant texts.

Table 1	Hebrew manuscripts and texts used or consulted by the 1611 translators	
Date (A.D.)	**Text**	**Details**
1522	The Complutensian Polyglot	Based on some of the earliest available manuscripts, this multilingual printed Bible contained the Hebrew Old Testament alongside the Latin Vulgate and the Greek Septuagint (with interlinear Latin). Whilst the editors followed principles of text criticism to resolve perceived problems, the text had no accents and the vowel points were not reliable.[4]
1519–1525	The Second Rabbinical Bible	Also known as the Mikraot Gedolot, or the Ben Hayyim edition (after the editor, Yaakov Ben Hayyim), and based on the Masoretic text. Thousands of errors resulted from Ben Hayyim's editing and his lack of access to the best texts.[5]
1572	The Antwerp Polyglot	This used the Complutensian Polyglot and the Ben Hayyim edition as the source of its Hebrew text. It included the Hebrew Old Testament, as well as the Vulgate, Septuagint and Targums.[6]

Greek manuscripts and texts used or consulted

The earliest Greek texts available in the time of the KJV translators were very varied in both age and quality. Like modern Bible translators, the KJV translators used several existing critical New Testament texts: the *Textus Receptus* of Robert Estienne (Latin name 'Stephanus'), the critical text of Theodore Beza (a revised version of the *Textus Receptus*), and the third edition of the *Novum Instrumentum omne* by Desidirius Erasmus, a Catholic priest and Humanist scholar. The relationship of these sources is complex.[7]

The text edited by Estienne, known as the *Textus Receptus*, was an eclectic critical text known originally as the *Editio Regia* (the 'Royal Edition'). Estienne drew on the Complutensian Polyglot

important early witnesses (second-century papyrus fragments and quotations in Christian writings prove this type arose in the second century) but is not as well supported by the Alexandrian text.

9. Contrary to popular belief, not all texts of the Alexandrian text type were written in Alexandria in Egypt, and in fact this text type is the earliest, most widespread and most well attested of all the text types, with the greatest level of agreement with all four text types (it shares textual agreement with the Western, Caesarean, and Byzantine types). Textual evidence shows that the Alexandrian text type remained popular until supplanted by the later Byzantine type from the ninth century onwards (second-century papyrus fragments and quotations in Christian writings prove that this type arose in the second century, and it remained commonly used throughout the next two centuries).

10. The Byzantine is the latest of the text types to have emerged (there are no early papyrus texts of the Byzantine type, and it is not quoted in the early Christian writings until the fourth century). No early translations were made from the Byzantine type (since it did not exist until later), and this text type has the largest number of additions and alterations, reflecting later Christian theological viewpoints.

11. A minuscule is a manuscript written in Greek 'longhand,' or cursive script, in lower case letters. New Testament minuscules commonly date from the tenth century A.D. There are almost 3,000 of them still in existence, and at least eighty per cent follow the Byzantine text. The standard notation for minuscules (by a regular Arabic numeral) was first used in the 1750s by the Swiss scholar Johann Wettstein (1693–1754).

12. The Latin reads: "*Textum* ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus *receptum* in quo nihil immulatum aut corruptum damus."

4. See Paul D. Wegner, *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible: Its History, Methods & Results* (London, InterVarsity Press, 2006), p. 98.
5. See **http://www.bibliahebraica.com/the_texts/rabbinic_bible.htm**
6. A Targum is an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible written or compiled between the Second Temple period and the early Middle Ages.
7. See the background note on the *Textus Receptus* on pp. 148-9.—*R.P.C.*
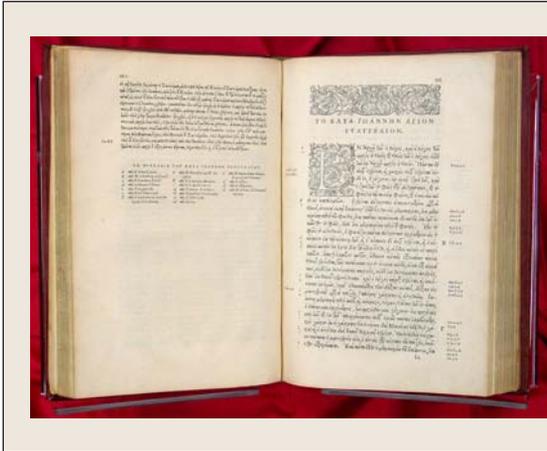8. This text type contains paraphrases and additions in the Gospels and Acts, but it is more conservative in the letters of Paul (in general this text type contains fewer interpolations than the Byzantine text type, but more than the Alexandrian). It is represented by some

Table 2　Greek texts used by the *Editio Regia* (later known as the *Textus Receptus*)

Date (A.D.)	Text	Details of content
Fifth century	Codex Bezae	A mainly Western text type,[8] with many omissions, interpolations, and false readings, four Gospels (only Luke is complete), some of Acts and sections of 3 John.
Eighth century	Codex Regius	An Alexandrian text type,[9] with various omissions and interpolations, many readings of the Byzantine text type[10] and almost all of the four Gospels.
Eleventh century	Minuscule 8[11]	A Byzantine text type, with the complete text of Acts, Paul's letters, the general letters and Revelation.
Eleventh century	Minuscule 42	A Byzantine text type, with the complete text of the four Gospels.
Eleventh century	Minuscule 237	A Byzantine text type, with the complete text of the four Gospels.
Eleventh century	Minuscule 2298	Contains Acts and the letters of Paul.
Twelfth century	Minuscule 38	A Byzantine text type, with the complete text of the four Gospels, as well as Acts and Paul's letters.
Twelfth century	Minuscule 2817	A Byzantine text type, with almost the complete text of Paul's letters, ending at Hebrews 12:18.
Twelfth century	Minuscule 9	A Byzantine text type, with the complete text of the four Gospels.
Twelfth century	Minuscule 111	A Byzantine text type, with the complete text of the four Gospels.
Twelfth–thirteenth centuries	Minuscule 120	A Byzantine text type, with the complete text of the four Gospels.
Thirteenth century	Minuscule 4	A mixed text type, but dependent on the Byzantine, with almost the complete text of the four Gospels, but with gaps in the text (Mt. 2:9-20; Mk. 15:42–16:14; Jno. 1:1-13; 1:49–3:11).
Thirteenth century	Minuscule 5	A mixed text type, but dependent on the Byzantine, with the entire New Testament except for Revelation.
Thirteenth century	Minuscule 6	A mix of the Alexandrian and Byzantine text types, with the entire New Testament except for Revelation.
Fourteenth century	Minuscule 393	A Byzantine text type, with the entire New Testament except for Revelation.

as well as on a range of Greek texts. The table above shows that the majority of the texts used by Estienne were very late and of widely varying quality. The table demonstrates just how few early texts of the Greek New Testament were available to the seventeenth-century translators.

It was not until 1633 that the name *Textus Receptus* came to be associated with the various editions of Estienne's text. The publishers Bonaventura and Abraham Elzevir included in their preface the Latin phrase meaning 'So [the reader] has *the text which is now received by all*, in which nothing is corrupt.'[12] The publishers used this as an advertising ploy, trading off the use of Estienne's text by the 1611 translators and the popularity of the Erasmian text (which has also, though incorrectly, become known as the *Textus Receptus*). This was misleading because there was no text which had been 'received by all.' Both the texts of Estienne and of Erasmus had been

edited, revised and republished many times since their first editions; and textual critics such as Theodore Beza had already been correcting them with older manuscripts from other text types,[13] as their deficiencies and inaccuracies became increasingly recognised and as older Greek texts became available.

The KJV translators also used the Greek text collated and edited by Erasmus. In 1516, Erasmus produced a Greek New Testament text which he based on just three manuscripts,[14] with three others consulted for corroboration,[15] as well as the Latin Vulgate. Of these six texts, five belonged to the Byzantine text type,[16] and none of them dated from any earlier than the eleventh century. One of these texts proved difficult to use,[17] since it was not entirely Byzantine, and contained a commentary which Erasmus could not always distinguish from the text itself. This text was also missing the last six verses of Revelation, so Erasmus translated these verses from the Latin Vulgate into Greek, as he did with various other passages where the Greek texts he had were unclear.[18]

The Greek text of Erasmus became extremely popular, and many different editions were published over the next eighty years, differing from each other in up to two hundred places. The infamous interpolation in 1 John 5:7 was not included until the third edition of 1522, Erasmus having previously omitted it on the basis that it had no support from earlier Greek texts.[19] The Erasmian text was one of the Greek sources of the 1611 KJV.

The result of the KJV translators' use of these three Greek textual sources was an English translation based on a collection of texts which, though largely Byzantine, also included eclectic readings from the Alexandrian, Caesarean and Western text types, as well as some readings not found in any

Greek manuscripts (since Erasmus had created these readings by translating passages from the Latin Vulgate into Greek). The text used for the KJV thus differs from the so-called Majority Text in around 1,838 places.[20]

The KJV's debt to earlier translations

A range of other English Bible translations were used as points of comparison by the KJV translators, and the different companies were instructed to use the wording of these translations when it

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13. Beza used Codex Claromontanus (sixth century, containing Paul's letters and Hebrews), and Codex Bezae (fifth century), both of which were of the Western text type. The use of these texts gave Beza access to earlier and more accurate readings of some passages.
14. Manuscripts 2^e (twelfth–thirteenth centuries), 2^ap (twelfth century) and 1^r (twelfth century).
15. Manuscripts 1^eap (twelfth century), 4^ap (fifteenth century) and 7^p (eleventh–twelfth centuries).
16. Manuscript 1^eap did not, but Erasmus considered it corrupt and did not use it very much.
17. Manuscript 1^r. [The numbering system used to identify these manuscripts was devised by the German-American scholar Caspar René Gregory (1846–1917) in 1908, in his ground-breaking book *Die Griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments*.]
18. The result was that his text contained some readings not found in any Greek manuscript at all. They were his own creation from the Latin; and later scholars noted that some of these renderings were not even correct Greek.
19. He finally included it after being presented with a single Greek text which included the verse (though there is evidence that the text was prepared specifically for this purpose).
20. Readers should note that the Majority Text is not the same as the *Textus Receptus:* it is a twentieth-century reconstruction of the Byzantine text type. See Daniel B. Wallace, "Some second thoughts on the Majority Text," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 146 (1989), pp. 270-90.

was closer to the meaning of the original language text than the *Bishop's Bible:*[21]

- *Wycliffe's translation* was a great landmark in that it was the first complete translation of the Bible into English. It is also famous for Wycliffe's determined efforts to render the text of the Latin Vulgate accessible to the common English reader.[22] At least some of the readings from Wycliffe's translation found their way into the KJV, including the 'classic' expressions "Vanity of vanities" (Eccl. 1:2), "born again" (Jno. 3:3) and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).[23]

- *Tyndale's translation*, dating from the 1520s, was famous not only for the resistance it met from the Church and Tyndale's ultimate execution as a heretic, but also because of Tyndale's determination to improve Bible knowledge among the common people. The KJV is heavily dependent on Tyndale's phrasing and wording.[24]

- *Coverdale's translation*, published in 1535 with the tacit permission of Henry VIII, could claim to be the first complete printed Bible in English. It was also the first to introduce chapter summaries, and the first to separate the books of the Apocrypha from the rest of the Old Testament. Although he could not acknowledge it at the time, Coverdale, who was a modern linguist rather than a Classical scholar, relied quite heavily on Tyndale. He nevertheless bequeathed some familiar phrases to the KJV, including Jael's "lordly dish" (Judg. 5:25) and the Parable of the Talents' "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Mt. 25:21).

- *The Great Bible* was the first English translation which may rightly be called an 'authorised version', as it was produced with the approval of Henry VIII and was 'appointed to be read in churches' (the same wording later carried by the KJV). Thomas Cromwell (Vicar General and the king's secretary) announced that its purpose was to provide the public with a reading Bible in their own language, which would be made accessible in all churches.[25] As a translation it was not revolutionary, being Miles Coverdale's revision of Matthew's Bible of 1537 (itself generally believed to have been John Rogers' revision of Tyndale).

- *The Geneva Bible* was produced by English Protestants in Geneva during the Catholic reign of Mary Tudor. It was not only an improvement on previous English translations in terms of accuracy, but it also introduced several features useful to the reader. The pages were reduced to quarto size (making the Bible more portable and easily read); a Roman-style font was used instead of the heavy Gothic black letter (improving readability); italics were used to indicate English words with no original language equivalent (added to improve the sense of the translation); and the text was divided into verses, which no complete English Bible had had before. These features were included in the later KJV. Notwithstanding the antipathy of King James towards certain features of the Geneva Bible, its influence on the translators of the KJV is still readily discernible.[26]

- *The Bishops' Bible* was a revision of the Great Bible, and was adopted by the Anglican Church in preference to the Geneva version, which was deemed to be biased towards Calvinism. Its

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21. In addition to the translations mentioned here, there is some evidence that the KJV translators also occasionally 'borrowed' wording from less-well-known versions. For example, Taverner's translation (1539) provided the KJV with the notable phrase "express image" in Hebrews 1:3.

22. In translating from the Vulgate, Wycliffe faithfully adhered to the wording of the Latin. He also seems to have adopted the same principle as Richard Rolle of Hampole, who wrote this about his work of translating the Psalms into English in the fourteenth century: "In this werke y seke no straunge Ynglys, bot lightest and communest, and swilk is moste lyk unto the Latyne." Quoted from Ronald D. Lesley, *Facts from History about our King James Bible* (second edition, 1997), **www.fbinstitute.com/engbible/4.html** .

23. Wycliffe's Bible was not, in fact, included in the list of versions to be consulted according to the Rules laid down for the KJV translators (Rule 14—see p. 136).

24. Tyndale's work and influence is dealt with at length by Nicholas White on pp. 123-31 of this Special Issue.

25. In September 1538, Cromwell wrote to all the English clergy: ". . . ye shall provide . . . one book of the whole Bible of the largest volume in English, and the same set up within some convenient place within the said church . . . whereas your parishioners may most commodiously resort to the same and read it." Quoted from F. F. Bruce, *The English Bible: A history of translations* (London, Lutterworth Press, 1961), p. 68.

26. Not only do all of Miles Smith's Bible quotations in his long preface to the 1611 version come from the Geneva Bible, but there are also many places where the KJV itself follows the Geneva version. For example: "There were giants in the earth in those days" (Gen. 6:4), "love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. 19:18), "miserable comforters" (Job 16:2), "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings" (Ps. 8:2 and Mt. 21:16), "Cast thy bread upon the waters" (Eccl. 11:1), "reap the whirlwind" (Hos. 8:7) and "grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55).

name was taken from the group of Anglican bishops who worked on the text. They were better educated in Greek and Hebrew than some of their predecessors, and many of their renderings were incorporated into the KJV, including such familiar phrases as "Be fruitful, and multiply" (Gen. 1:22), "bread from heaven" (Ex. 16:4), "tables of stone" (Ex. 31:18), "Unclean, unclean" (Lev. 13:45) and "kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:5).

- *The Latin Vulgate* and its English translation the *Douai-Rheims Bible* were also used as points of comparison,[27] and the Vulgate reading "Lucifer" in Isaiah 14:12 was included in the KJV as it had been in English Bible translations since Wycliffe. However, the KJV also added a marginal note identifying the alternative reading, "day star."

A good example of the complex way in which the KJV translators incorporated texts from earlier translations is seen in their rendering of 2 Corinthians 1:11. Here the words 'borrowed' from earlier English translations are annotated, with the original orthography preserved ('vs' for 'us', 'meanes' for 'means' etc.):

"You are also helping [Bishops' Bible] together [Geneva 1557] by [Bishops'] prayer for vs [Tyndale], that [Tyndale] for the [Geneva 1560] gift [Great] bestowed vpon vs [Geneva 1557] by the meanes of many [Tyndale] persons [Great], thankes may bee giuen [Tyndale] by [Geneva 1557] many on our behalf [Tyndale]."[28]

Over time the KJV itself was revised. Minor revisions took place in 1629, 1638, 1653 and 1701, which changed little. Major revisions in 1762 and 1769 were made to standardise the spelling and to remove archaic words such as 'sith,' resulting in some 75,000 changes.[29] The 1769 edition is that which is normally printed today.

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27. The Douai-Rheims Bible was the first Roman Catholic translation of the Bible into English (New Testament, 1582; Old Testament, 1609 and 1610). The notes of John Bois make it clear that the KJV revision company took account of the Douai-Rheims New Testament (see Ward Allen, *Translating for King James, op. cit.*, pp. 14-15); and examples of renderings from it in the KJV include "What . . . God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mt. 19:6), "many are called, but few are chosen" (Mt. 22:14), "publish . . . and . . . blaze abroad" (Mk. 1:45) and "what manner of time" (1 Pet. 1:11).
28. Adam Nicolson, *Power and Glory: Jacobean England and the making of the King James Bible* (London, HarperCollins, 2003), p. 221.
29. Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago, Moody Press, second revised edition, 1995), p. 568.