

# Comments on the Greek Received Text of F.H.A. Scrivener

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Scrivener's stated goal was to reproduce the Greek text underlying the KJV. It's said by some that he back-translated from the KJV text to determine the Greek source, but more likely his process involved use of the KJV to optimize his Greek text that he based on the 1598 Beza Received-Text edition, the one scholars say accords best with the KJV. He suggested KJV readings can derive from various Greek Received-Text editions or the Latin Vulgate or earlier English versions like that of Tyndale or various other-language versions. Thus textual critics think no single text underlies the KJV New Testament, but that notion is faulty.

Some factors masking knowledge of the Greek underlying the English:

1. Individual Greek (or Hebrew) words have variant possible meanings or meaning nuances, and different words can have equivalent, similar or related meanings. Thus, in examining the English, it isn't always certain which Greek word applies, any of certain different ones being possible. Context controls the renderings, but context isn't always conclusive, and word choice can relate to context differently in different languages.
2. A complex Greek word expressed by a group of English words can be mistaken for 2 or 3 other Greek words of similar or related meaning, making identification of the Greek underlying the English uncertain.
3. English language style that communicates in the most effective and accurate fashion can mask the Greek source, even though the English retains an exact equivalent of the meaning and context of the Greek.
4. Idioms or word connotations in either language can be alien to each other, complicating identifying the Greek underlying the English.
5. Literal Greek can distort English sense, requiring use of alternate or extra English words that can mask the identity of the underlying Greek.
6. Cultural differences can necessitate use of equivalent English that complicates identification of the underlying Greek.
7. Early Greek manuscripts lacked punctuation, and that used in editions of ~400 years ago could render boundaries of a Greek phrase uncertain at times when examining the Greek through the English, confusing the meaning of the Greek. Scrivener couldn't always be certain of how KJV translators handled this matter in rendering the English.

Thus, regardless of Scrivener's views, one can't always be certain of the Greek the KJV relates to, this being masked at times when seen through the English. Such cases require resorting entirely to Greek authority, as Scrivener did, resulting in a Greek text Greek-language readers rightly understand in relation to factors like context, style and culture, the text determined by Scrivener, one rightly representing the Received Text.

Critics commenting on Scrivener's text say his work shows the Received Text is not a single text, but a family of slightly variant editions. The proper Bible-believer position on this issue is to view determination of the text as a perfection process in which no one person alone has God's providential guidance in rendering His Word. Very minor variants were removed as the Received-Text perfection process began with Erasmus, continued in 1550/1551 Stephanus editions, among others, and neared completion in the 1598 Beza edition that was the main basis for the KJV. In God's providence, the final form was that determined by the large exceptionally well-qualified KJV committee as they examined the editions. Scrivener's role was verification of this KJV final-form Greek text, and his text providentially declared this Received Text to the world, contrasting it with the Alexandrian-type text of Wescott and Hort that was about to begin mesmerizing modernist scholars and greatly misleading English-language Bible readers (We note that Scrivener published objectionable Alexandrian variants from the Received Text).

A further point on KJV resemblance to various Received-Text editions, including language from editions of Erasmus as utilized by Tyndale, relates to Received-Text determination as a process. All contributors to the process would offer important readings that must be retained, but some would be omitted by successive contributors, and, by God's grace, the final form would restore them through KJV-committee wisdom and scholarship. These scholars were sufficient in number and qualifications to ensure recognition of all factors involved in identifying true readings.

Latin and early English texts contribute to understanding the KJV role in Scrivener's work. Regarding supposed KJV reliance on the Vulgate, this was a revision of the Old-Latin Italic Bible of Europe's early biblical church. In the Vulgate, original Italic readings will greatly outnumber those corrupted by Jerome's Alexandrian-text bias, so any Vulgate reading is extremely likely to derive from the text of an early biblical church. A KJV reading closely resembling the Latin can reflect Italic readings

having the best contextual nuances of Greek word-meaning and the best communicative style, which can mask the underlying Greek, so one can't say the KJV didn't always follow the Greek. Or a textual critic may overestimate the degree and significance of KJV resemblance to the Latin, being subtly influenced even by a style factor like Latinized Greek transliterations of Hebrew names in the New Testament (Elias, (Jeremias, Marcus, Judas etc.), which became English representatives of the Greek. And resemblance of KJV language to that of English versions like Tyndale's indicates they too were consulted to determine the best contextual nuances and communicative styles, resulting in the KJV having the best possible passage sense and style representing the Greek. KJV scholars did consult the Vulgate and several other versions, the analysis of which is a great way to ensure that all pertinent scholarship is considered in determining the best wording in relation to factors like context, culture and communication style.

But the Italic origin traces as far back in history as the mid-second century and likely ties to the apostolic era. The Italic Greek text would be the earliest full text assuredly connected to autograph originals (a few text fragments are earlier), imparting highest authority to Italic readings. Thus KJV agreement with the Italic is potentially an agreement of both versions with the autographs through their underlying Greek texts. A KJV Received-Text connection to the autographs would indicate God's hand at work in text preservation rather recently in history.

To sum up matters on KJV resemblance to various versions, at times the committee preferred, in whole or in part, versions like Tyndale's and the Italic to express a perfected finalized Greek Received Text, so one can't say they based their text on versions in lieu of a Greek text. Word-sense selection in the versions helped perfect and finalize the KJV Greek text.

Scrivener held a traditional view of the Greek text, and he opposed deviations from the Received Text by Wescott and Hort. He labored much on his own KJV edition, but did display error in disagreeing with certain genuine KJV renderings, which isn't acceptable to Bible-believers. And his views on his Greek-text study, and his textual-criticism views in general, as reported in the literature, are not acceptable. Scholars God uses in textual work are not always completely traditional, but they do always revere God's role in text history, as was the case with Scrivener. God uses men despite their failings, which is good news, for without that grace none of us could ever be very useful in doing God's great work.