

The KJV-Only Question

Evidence Behind the Tract

Release 2.2

26 August 2026

US Letter · 9 pages

Last link review

26 August 2026

This source dossier accompanies the two-sided handout *If You Love the KJV, You Should Know These 9 Facts*. It is not an argument against reading, preaching, or preferring the KJV. It examines the stricter claim that one exact KJV form must bind every English-speaking Christian.

A word to the reader. This dossier is for anyone who wants to check the tract's history, quotations, and reasoning for himself. The sources include primary documents, specialist research, and representative advocates of the KJV-only case. The question is narrow: have Scripture or history shown that the KJV's exact English wording is the one finally controlling form for every English-speaking Christian?

1 • Use and preference

"I read, love, and preach from the KJV." The tract gladly makes room for this.

2 • Best English translation

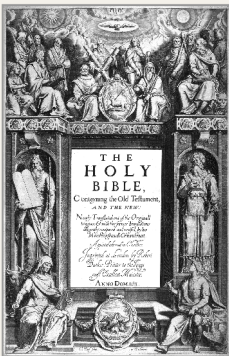
"I believe the KJV is the best English translation." That judgment is not the target.

3 • Text-tradition preference

"I favor the TR or Byzantine tradition." Christians can faithfully disagree.

4 • Exact-English exclusivity

"The KJV's exact English wording alone is perfectly preserved and finally controlling." This is the claim examined here.



What the 1611 title page tells us

It calls the work "Newly Translated out of the Originall tongues" and says the former translations were "diligently compared and revised." This is primary evidence that translation from Hebrew and Greek, comparison, and revision belonged together in the KJV's method.

What it cannot tell us by itself: The title page does not decide whether God later gave the finished KJV a unique providential status. That conclusion still needs its own biblical and historical case.

HOW THE SOURCES WERE CHOSEN

Primary documents and institutional manuscript records come first. Specialist scholarship explains technical questions. Accessible mirrors are used only when they make verification easier.

WHERE WE AGREE

God preserves His Word. Byzantine numerical predominance is real. Westcott and Hort mattered. The Comma has early Latin history. Most later KJV changes are minor.

OUR STANDARD

Scripture is the final norm. Confessions record historic belief; they do not create doctrine. No textual camp, editor, edition, or translation is treated as infallible by assumption.

A NEEDED DISTINCTION

Evidence may fit a belief without uniquely proving it. History can show that a conclusion does not follow automatically without claiming to disprove every possible act of providence.

The Translators in Their Own Words

PRIMARY-SOURCE CORE

Short quotations from the 1611 preface are presented in context through source 1. Scrivener's statement comes from his 1881 Cambridge edition, Preface p. vii (source 2).

OTHER PROTESTANT TRANSLATIONS

“the very meanest translation ... containeth the word of God”

The qualifier is “in English, set forth by men of our profession.” This is not approval of every possible translation; it is a denial that imperfection makes a faithful Protestant Bible cease to be God's Word.

COMPARISON

“variety of Translations is profitable”

They approvingly cite Augustine on using translation comparison to find the sense of Scripture. This does not imply all renderings are equally good.

ORIGINAL-LANGUAGE STANDARD

“If truth be to be tried by these tongues ...”

The preface identifies the Hebrew OT and Greek NT as the Scriptures set before the translators. The 1611 title page independently names the “Originall tongues.”

SCRIVENER ON THE AV'S BASIS

“was not a translation of any one Greek text then in existence”

Scrivener treated Beza 1598 as the closest single authority but noted many divergences. His continuous Greek text represents the presumed AV basis only as far as prior Greek evidence allowed.

WHY THESE QUOTATIONS MATTER

They strongly establish that KJV exclusivity was not the translators' stated doctrine. They also show that original-language appeal, translation comparison, margins, and qualified language about imperfection were compatible with reverence for Scripture.

IMPERFECTIONS

“some imperfections and blemishes may be noted”

The translators use this concession while defending earlier English translations as God's Word. In their argument, faithful translation did not require verbal perfection.

THEIR STATED AIM

“to make a good one better”

The full contrast is not making a bad translation good, but making a good one better—or, out of many good ones, one principal good one.

RESPONSIBLE UNCERTAINTY

“not to be captivated to one, when it may be the other”

This appears in their defense of marginal alternatives involving difficult senses and differences of readings—not a blanket claim that every margin is a manuscript variant.

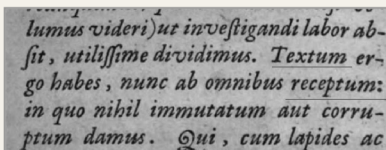
HISTORIC PRESERVATION LANGUAGE

“kept pure in all ages”

Westminster 1.8 and the 1689 Baptist Confession 1.8 apply this phrase to the Hebrew OT and Greek NT, then call for vernacular translation (sources 9–10).

WHAT THEY DO NOT SETTLE

A later advocate may argue that providence produced a result beyond the translators' self-understanding. The quotations do not make that theory impossible; they place the burden on its positive biblical and historical case.



lumus videri) ut investigandi labor ab- sit, utilissime dividimus. Textum er- go habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo nihil immutatum aut corru- ptum damus. Qui, cum lapides ac

The label “Textus Receptus”

The familiar label derives from the Elzevirs' 1633 publisher's preface—*textum ... receptum*—and was later applied retrospectively to earlier related, non-identical printed editions (source 3).

The image is public-domain source evidence from the 1633 edition; the modern label does not turn multiple editions into one historically unchanging printed text.

#	FACT	SOURCE EVIDENCE	WHY IT MATTERS
1	Earlier English translations called God's Word	Translators' Preface, section defending Protestant English Bibles: even the "meanest" by "men of our profession" can be called God's Word; later, "variety of Translations is profitable." [1]	The translators did not make verbal perfection a condition for calling a faithful translation God's Word. This does not make every translation equally faithful.
2	Imperfections compatible with Bible status	The phrase "imperfections and blemishes" occurs inside the same defense. The tract's theological conclusion is a stated inference from their argument. [1]	Their view of translation allowed real imperfection without excusing careless or doctrinally corrupt work.
3	Hebrew and Greek as translation standard	Preface names "the Hebrew text of the Old Testament" and "the Greek of the New"; title page says translated from the original tongues. [1]	This identifies their source and appeal, though it does not resolve every textual variant debated today.
4	Margins and acknowledged uncertainty	Preface defends diversity of senses and differences of readings, preferring not to be "captivated to one." [1]	They did not treat honest uncertainty as unbelief. Not every KJV margin, however, records a manuscript variant.
5	No one printed Greek text exactly matched the AV	Scrivener, Preface p. vii; Combs, DBSJ 1 (1996), pp. 35, 50-52. Related Erasmus/Stephanus/Beza/Elzevir texts differ; "TR" derives from 1633. [2-3]	A history of one identical printed Greek edition does not hold up. Broad continuity within the TR family remains real.
6	Broad source use	Preface lists Hebrew/Greek, former translations, and translators/commentators across nine named languages. [1]	The work involved wide comparison. The list does not mean every source carried equal weight.
7	Erasmus reconstructed Revelation's ending	Krans documents the Rev. 22:16b-21 lacuna, Erasmus's own admission of supplying Greek from Latin, dependent exact "book" Greek forms, independent Greek "tree," and older Latin support for "book." [5]	The history is complex. That does not make the KJV worthless or erase the pre-Erasmian Latin support for "book."
8	Post-1611 printed-form standardization	1611 exact reprint; Article VI distinguishes canonical books from "other Books"; Cambridge notes Apocrypha is seldom found now; Norton documents editorial history and KJV variation at Ruth 3:15 ("he"/"she"). [1, 4, 6-7]	The complete printed form was not untouched after 1611. The KJV nevertheless remained substantially stable, and Anglicans did not use the Apocrypha to establish doctrine.
9	KJV-era senses can mislead today	Wright, <i>Bible Word-Book</i> , entries "Conversation," "Let," "Prevent"; direct KJV contexts and historical dictionaries for "suffer." [8]	English changed. The historic renderings need explanation for some readers; that does not make them translation errors.

Taken together. These facts cannot disprove every providential theory. They do show that exact-English exclusivity was not the translators' stated doctrine and does not follow automatically from the KJV's production or publication history.

#	ARGUMENT	WHAT IS TRUE, AND WHAT MUST BE TESTED	WHAT THE EVIDENCE STILL REQUIRES
1	Preservation plus providence identifies the KJV	Grant: God's Word endures (Isa. 40:8; Matt. 24:35), and doctrine may use sound inference. A cumulative case may also appeal to church reception, Byzantine/TR continuity, stability, and fruit. Test: neither text names an edition. Psalm 12's "seven times" modifies refined silver in v.6. WCF/1689 1.8 apply "kept pure" to Hebrew/Greek, then require translation. Those considerations still need a rule that does not assume the answer and that uniquely selects one exact KJV form. [9-10; OV-C-OV-E]	Preservation is biblical; the inference to one exact KJV form needs positive warrant. Confessions are historical witnesses, not final authority, and do not settle TR/Byzantine/critical-text debates.
2	Modern Bibles remove verses	Grant: scribes omitted material and modern editors can err. Test: scribes also added/harmonized. "Removed" assumes the disputed longer reading is original. Every printed Greek edition makes textual decisions. ECM describes comparison of Greek witnesses, versions, citations, and textual relationships; disputed major passages remain visible in notes/brackets. Verse numbering is post-apostolic. [11, 17]	First ask what the author wrote. A skipped inherited number is not independent evidence of deletion. This does not certify every modern editorial choice.
3	Modern versions weaken doctrine	Grant: some variants make a doctrine less explicit locally; some renderings are poor. Test: doctrinal explicitness cannot decide originality. The Comma has meaningful early Latin history but Greek biblical-manuscript support is sparse and late; the earliest known Greek biblical manuscript with a form is GA 629 (1362-63). Jude 5 points the other way: several modern versions read "Jesus"; KJV "Lord." [12-13, 23]	Establish readings by textual evidence and doctrine from the whole canon. Theology matters, but it cannot replace evidence for what the author wrote.

Where the preservation argument must take one more step

Premise 1

God's Word endures.



Premise 2

Providence, reception, continuity, stability, and fruit converge.



Conclusion claimed

One standardized KJV English form is uniquely perfect.

This is the stronger form of the argument, not a claim that preservation alone proves the KJV. Providence, reception, continuity, stability, and fruit may count as evidence. Yet Christians who affirm those things still reach more than one view of preservation. One more question must be answered: what biblical rule selects this exact KJV form over another KJV setting, a TR edition, a Byzantine reconstruction, or another faithful translation?

PSALM 12

The tract does not need to settle whether "them" in v.7 refers most naturally to the afflicted people or to God's words. Its narrower conclusion survives either reading: the "seven times" simile does not predict English revision stages or name the KJV.

THE JOHANNINE COMMA

The dossier does not repeat the slogan "Erasmus invented the Comma." Source 12 makes the meaningful Latin history visible; source 13 supplies the concrete late and sparse Greek manuscript accounting.

#	ARGUMENT	WHAT IS TRUE, AND WHAT MUST BE TESTED	WHAT THE EVIDENCE STILL REQUIRES
4	Byzantine majority outweighs Alexandrian minority	Grant: most surviving Greek NT manuscripts, especially medieval minuscules, are broadly Byzantine; a Byzantine/Majority defense is legitimate. Test: Robinson-Pierpont explicitly distinguishes Byzantine consensus from the TR. The Comma and Rev. 22:19 “book” are not Greek-majority readings. All traditions have copying relationships, so totals are not independent ballots; age matters without “oldest always wins.” [11, 18]	The numerical majority may support a Byzantine case. It does not by itself establish every TR reading, a particular recognition rule, or the KJV’s exact English wording.
5	Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Westcott-Hort corrupt modern texts	Grant: both codices contain errors/corrections and receive substantial weight; Westcott-Hort influence was real; modern editors can err. Test: official records date Vaticanus and conventionally Sinaiticus to the fourth century; Nongbri widens Sinaiticus’ possible range into the early fifth. Their age does not make them infallible, but alleged defects must be tested reading by reading. Current ECM/Nestle work is not the 1881 text or theory reproduced unchanged. [11, 14-16]	Association with a scholar or codex cannot decide a reading. Evidence must test both the inherited criticism and the modern decision variant by variant.
6	Stability and blessing prove perfection	Grant: KJV fruit, literary excellence, common wording, memorization, and worship continuity are real goods. Test: Norton documents corrections, modernization, and limited wording changes; major standardization came in 1762/1769. Most changes are minor. Usefulness and fruit do not prove that every English word choice is exclusively perfect. [4]	“Never changed” is inaccurate without using sensational change counts. A faithful, stable, greatly blessed translation need not be the uniquely binding English standard.

LUCIFER

Translation, not deletion

BDB p.237 treats Hebrew *hēlēl* as “shining one” / morning-star imagery in the taunt against Babylon’s king. Latin *lucifer* is not intrinsically a satanic name: the Vulgate uses it positively at 2 Pet. 1:19. **[19-20]**

EASTER / PASSOVER

The KJV supplies the context

LSJ gives Passover/Paschal feast. Luke 22:1 calls Unleavened Bread “the Passover”; Acts 12:3 places Peter’s arrest during those days. “Easter” is historically intelligible English; “Passover” is not corruption. **[21, 24]**

HOLY GHOST / SPIRIT

Both appear in the KJV

Luke 11:13 has “Holy Spirit”; Eph. 4:30 has “holy Spirit.” “Ghost” and “Spirit” render the same Greek lexical words though inflection, word order, and articles vary. **[22]**

JUDE 5

A useful counterexample

NA28 and several modern translations identify “Jesus” as the deliverer from Egypt; the KJV reads “the Lord.” This does not settle every variant; it disproves the claim that critical readings move only toward less explicit Christology. **[23]**

Doctrine rests on the whole Bible. The Trinity (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14), Christ’s deity, redemption by blood, and fasting remain explicitly taught apart from one disputed wording. That observation does not determine a variant; it keeps one disputed reading from carrying the weight of an entire doctrine.

The KJV-Only Case in Its Own Words

REPRESENTATIVE SOURCES

The tract's six headings summarize recurring arguments found in the publications below. They are not quotations, and no one source is made to speak for every KJV defender. The point is to answer the serious versions of these arguments in the form their advocates actually use.

OV-A · Trinitarian Bible Society, "Why do we use the Authorised Version?"

tbsbibles.org/.../WhyTheAV argues that modern versions omit important verses, rest substantially on Vaticanus/Sinaiticus, and affect doctrine. TBS also states elsewhere that it regards the AV as the best available translation rather than a perfect one. Its position is therefore included as a nearby but distinct view.

OV-B · Trinitarian Bible Society, "The Twin Doctrines of Scripture"

tbsbibles.org/page/TheTwinDoctrinesOfScripture expressly joins inspiration and providential preservation, appealing to Westminster 1.8. It presents the preservation argument without itself settling the tract's narrower question.

OV-C · King James Bible Research Council, doctrinal statement

kjbrc.org/about/doctrinal-statement says the KJV accurately preserves the inerrancy of the Received and Masoretic texts for English speakers. Its published essay "On Inspiration, Preservation and the King James Bible" says the KJV is pure/perfect/inerrant and has no translational errors while explicitly rejecting "double inspiration."

OV-D · King James Bible Research Council, "Why Use the King James Bible?"

kjbrc.org/why-use-the-king-james-bible appeals to Psalm 12:6-7, Matt. 24:35, other preservation texts, providence, and the traditional text. This is a serious providential argument and is considered here in that stronger form.

OV-E · Chick Publications, "Preservation Is the Central Issue" and *Why the King James Bible Is the Perfect Word of God*

chick.com/information/article?id=preservation-is-the-central-issue combines preservation promises, availability, historic use, and fruit, then says only one English Bible meets the criteria. Its linked workbook identifies the 1611 KJV as God's perfectly preserved words in English. This is a direct example of the strict, cumulative position examined here; it is not attributed to every KJV defender.

WHAT WE GLADLY AFFIRM

God preserves His Word. The Byzantine tradition deserves serious attention. Editors, translators, and scholars can err. The KJV has borne extraordinary fruit and remains worthy of love and use.

WHERE WE MUST DISAGREE

None of those truths, alone or together, gives a clear biblical rule that makes one exact English form the final authority for every Christian. That conclusion must be shown, not assumed.

What this dossier is—and is not—claiming

- This dossier does not demonstrate that every modern translation or every modern textual decision is good.
- It does not adjudicate all variants, prove a modern critical edition infallible, or declare "oldest always wins."
- It does not deny divine preservation or providence; it tests whether cited premises uniquely select one exact English form.
- It does not resolve every interpretation of Psalm 12:7, Isaiah 14 typology, the precise early Latin origin of the Comma, or every palaeographic date.
- External links can change. Each was reviewed on 26 August 2026; bibliographic titles, authors, dates, and pinpoints are supplied to keep sources findable.

Why publish the sources? A reader should not have to trust a tract's confidence or tone. Follow the links, read the quotations in context, and correct the case wherever the evidence requires it. Truth does not need protection from honest examination.

- 1 **KJV Translators, “The Translators to the Reader” (1611)**
Readable complete transcription; cross-check against the Oxford 1833 page-for-page, letter-for-letter reprint. **Pinpoints:** defenses of Protestant translations; goal of revision; original tongues; margins; variety of translations; multilingual consultation. **Use:** claims 1–4, 6, title-page context. bible-researcher.com · archive.org
- 2 **F. H. A. Scrivener, *The New Testament in the Original Greek according to the Text Followed in the Authorised Version* (Cambridge, 1881)**
Pinpoint: Preface p. vii; signed Christmas 1880. Explains that no one then-existing Greek text exactly corresponded to the AV and describes an evidence-limited reconstruction of its presumed basis. books.google.com
- 3 **William W. Combs, “Erasmus and the Textus Receptus,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 1 (1996), 35–53**
pp. 35, 50–52: 1633 *textum ... receptum* label; Erasmus/Stephanus/Beza/Elzevir history; reported differences among editions. Comparison counts are retained as reported rather than treated as exact universal totals. dbts.edu
- 4 **David Norton, *A Textual History of the King James Bible* (Cambridge, 2005)**
chs. 5–7, pp. 82–128: correction/corruption 1629–1760; standardization in 1762/1769; current text, including “he”/“she” variation at Ruth 3:15. Supports a mostly-minor editorial history with some wording changes. cambridge.org/core
- 5 **Jan Krans, “Erasmus and the Text of Revelation 22:19,” *TC* 16 (2011)**
pp. 1–6, 16–18: minuscule 2814’s lacuna; Erasmus’s admissions of Latin-to-Greek supplementation; “book/tree” Greek and Latin evidence; dependence of later exact-TR Greek copies. research.vu.nl
- 6 **Cambridge, *Bibles and Prayer Books Catalogue* (2024)**
p. 20: Cambridge Cameo description: like early KJVs, available with the Apocrypha, “seldom found in modern editions.” Useful publisher-history confirmation, though the 1611 facsimile remains the primary evidence. cambridge.org
- 7 **Church of England, *Thirty-Nine Articles*, Article VI**
Primary doctrinal standard listing canonical books and saying the “other Books” may be read for example/instruction but are not applied “to establish any doctrine.” This provides the necessary context for the KJV’s inclusion of the Apocrypha. churchofengland.org
- 8 **William Aldis Wright, *The Bible Word-Book*, 2nd ed. (1884)**
pp. 164–65, 367–68, 475–76: “conversation,” “let,” and “prevent.” Supplement: Merriam-Webster, “suffer”, archaic “allow/permit.” Supports semantic change, not allegations of mistranslation. archive.org · merriam-webster.com

-
- 9 **Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.8 (OPC text)**
Historic Reformed witness: Hebrew OT and Greek NT immediately inspired, providentially “kept pure,” authentic/final appeal; then translation into common languages. Evidence of confessional formulation, not Scripture itself. opc.org
-
- 10 **Second London Baptist Confession (1689), 1.8**
Historic Particular Baptist parallel to Westminster 1.8. The same original-language and vernacular-translation structure appears here in a Baptist standard. baptistconfession.org
-
- 11 **Institute for New Testament Textual Research, Editio Critica Maior**
Official overview of evidence and methodology. Supplement: German Bible Society, “The Nestles’ History”, documenting development beyond Westcott-Hort. uni-muenster.de/die-bibel.de
-
- 12 **Rodrigo Galiza and John W. Reeve, “The Johannine Comma,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 56.1 (2018)**
Academic case for meaningful early Latin history. It documents evidence that deserves consideration while its precise proposed origin remains disputed. digitalcommons.andrews.edu
-
- 13 **Elijah Hixson, “The Greek Manuscripts of the Comma Johanneum” (2020)**
Specialist manuscript inventory with links to INTF records. Concrete result: earliest known Greek biblical manuscript with a form of the Comma is GA 629 (1362–63); several later witnesses are marginal and forms vary. evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com
-
- 14 **Codex Sinaiticus Project, “Date”**
Official project statement giving the conventional fourth-century palaeographic date. It supports a conventional range, not calendar-year precision. codexsinaiticus.org
-
- 15 **Vatican Library, Vat.gr.1209 manuscript detail**
Official Vatican metadata record for Codex Vaticanus; date field sec. IV (fourth century). Uses the detail endpoint rather than only the image viewer. digi.vatlib.it
-
- 16 **Brent Nongbri, “The Date of Codex Sinaiticus,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 73 (2022)**
Peer-reviewed reassessment proposing that palaeographic evidence permits a wider early-fourth-to-early-fifth-century range. Presented as a proposal, not a settled fifth-century redating. doi.org/10.1093/jts/flac083
-

- 17

Trinitarian Bible Society, “The Verse Divisions in the Holy Scriptures”

Pro-AV institutional source stating that chapter/verse divisions are uninspired reference aids and that Estienne introduced familiar numbered NT verse divisions in his 1551 Greek NT. tbsbibles.org

- 18

Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform*, Preface

Pro-Byzantine primary methodological witness distinguishing Byzantine consensus from the TR. Supplements: the official INTF ECM overview on textual relationships and CSNTM/Lanier on why oldest does not automatically win. byzantinetext.com · uni-muenster.de · csntm.org

- 19

Brown-Driver-Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (1907), p. 237, הַיֵּל

Lexical support for “shining one” / morning-star imagery in the Isaiah 14 taunt against Babylon’s king. The precise background of this rare word remains debated; the tract uses qualified wording. hbionline.org

- 20

Vatican, *Nova Vulgata*, 2 Peter 1:19

Official Latin text using *lucifer* positively where the KJV says “day star.” Establishes that Latin *lucifer* is not intrinsically a satanic proper name. vatican.va

- 21

Liddell-Scott-Jones, *πάσχα (pascha)*, Scaife/Perseus

Named Greek lexicon entry: Passover or Paschal feast, with meal/lamb senses in context. Direct New Testament context in source 24 carries the Acts 12 argument. atlas.perseus.tufts.edu

- 22

KJV, Luke 11:13 and Ephesians 4:30

Direct check that the KJV prints “Holy Spirit” and “holy Spirit.” This link establishes the English wording; no claim about Greek morphology rests on it. biblegateway.com

- 23

Matthew Midwinter, “Who Led Israel Out of Egypt? An Examination of Jude 5” (RTS)

Technical discussion of the “Jesus” reading. Supplement: esv.org Jude 5 for a direct modern-translation example. It shows that a modern critical reading can be more explicitly Christological at a particular verse; it does not prove every critical reading correct. rts.edu · esv.org

- 24

KJV, Luke 22:1 and Acts 12:3–4

Direct KJV context: Luke calls Unleavened Bread “the Passover”; Acts places Peter’s arrest during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Supports the festival-sense rebuttal without calling “Easter” heretical or unintelligible. biblegateway.com

Correction route. The stable public landing page is kjb-source-dossier.pages.dev. Report the exact claim, source number, and challenged wording through the church or distributor that supplied the tract. Substantiated corrections are applied to the tract and dossier together while the printed QR remains stable.