

## Introduction

The American Standard Version (ASV) was published in 1901 as a revision of the English Revised Version of 1885, which itself was a revision of the King James Version. The ASV has been criticized for using ‘translation English’, and has been described as “strong in Greek, but weak in English.” And while it is true that there are many places where the ASV has employed a more literal translation to the detriment of English style, it is also true that in many places the reading of the ASV is an improvement, in terms of both style and accuracy, over the King James Version. More likely than not it was the ASV’s departure from the Textus Receptus, the use of ‘Jehovah’ instead of ‘the LORD’, and the modification of a few key texts (as in Col. 1:16 and 2 Tim. 3:16) that caused many to write off the ASV as an unacceptable alternative to the King James Version. The other major departure that the ASV made from the King James Version was the exclusion of the Apocrypha. However, there was probably no backlash against this decision as, by that time, most publishers were no longer printing the King James Version with the Apocrypha anyway. Nevertheless, the ASV remains firmly within the King James tradition. In fact, most people, if they were to hear the ASV being read, would assume that it was the King James Version. And for those who have not grown up reading the King James Version, the ASV is by and large easier to read and to understand.

The ASV’s most noticeable departure from the King James Version is the different textual basis in the New Testament. The American Revision Committee relied

primarily upon three editions of the Greek New Testament as they went about their work: Westcott and Hort (1881), Samuel Tregelles (1857-1879), and the Textus Receptus (likely Scrivener's edition). Westcott and Hort introduced their Greek text on the assumption that there was a recension of the Byzantine text in the fourth century that became the basis for all subsequent Byzantine manuscripts. Based on this assumption, Westcott and Hort basically counted (or discounted) the overwhelming majority of Byzantine manuscripts as originating from one manuscript, removing them from the equation, so that they could give preference to a small handful of manuscripts, led by Codex Vaticanus (B) and Codex Sinaiticus (S). Although the assumption of a fourth century recension has now largely been discredited due to an utter lack of evidence, Westcott and Hort's preference for a small handful of manuscripts has endured, and modern critical texts such as those of Nestle-Aland and UBS have become the standard Greek text accepted in academic circles today.

Yet there are critical flaws in the underlying methodology of the reasoned eclecticism practiced in the editions of Nestle-Aland and UBS. In his essay, *The Case for Byzantine Priority*, Dr. Maurice Robinson makes the following observation:

Modern eclecticism creates a text which, within repeated short sequences, rapidly degenerates into one possessing no support among manuscript, versional, or patristic witnesses. The problem deteriorates further as the scope of sequential variation increases.

In other words, when the text critical decisions of Nestle-Aland and UBS are considered over the course of a few verses (and sometimes only one verse), it is often the case

that the resulting text as a whole has no support in any Greek manuscripts, ancient translations, or quotations from the church fathers; rather, it is a conjectural text. This critical flaw of the modern eclectic approach has never been adequately addressed by its proponents. As a result, many prefer the Byzantine text, which is based on the overwhelming majority of Greek manuscripts.

The Byzantine Text is not quite the same as the Textus Receptus, which is the textual basis of the New Testament in the King James Version. While the Textus Receptus is within the Byzantine family of texts, there are some readings that have very little support among Greek manuscripts, the most famous of which is the Johannine comma in 1 John 5:7-8. And so, while the Textus Receptus is preferable to modern critical texts, it does not consistently follow the vast majority of Greek manuscripts.

Due to the shortcomings of both the modern critical texts and the Textus Receptus, the present edition of the American Standard Version has been modified to conform to *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform 2018* by Robinson and Pierpont. The readings adopted by Robinson and Pierpont very often have the support of ninety-eight or ninety-nine percent of Greek manuscripts, and even when they do not, it is rare that their readings are supported by less than eighty percent of Greek manuscripts. These Byzantine Greek manuscripts, which number in the thousands, represent many, many separate streams of transmission. And while they are generally later in date, they must surely have been copied from earlier manuscripts of the same textform. Even Westcott and Hort concede that the Byzantine text dates at least as far back as the fourth cen-

ture, which is contemporaneous with Codex Vaticanus (B) and Codex Sinaiticus (S). Thus the Byzantine textform is ancient, well-attested, and highly uniform, even while existing in many, many separate streams of transmission. Thus it has the strongest claim to being the original text of the New Testament. I invite those seeking further information to read Robinson's essay in full.

In making modifications to adapt the ASV to the Byzantine textform, every effort has been made to stay within the style and vocabulary of the ASV. When available, alternate renderings in the ASV footnotes were used. Otherwise, modifications to the text were most often derived from the King James Version itself; however, Young's Literal Translation (1898) and Darby's New Testament (1890) were also consulted. When the Byzantine text is closely divided, the alternate renderings are footnoted.

In addition to modifying the textual basis for the New Testament, the present edition includes the Apocrypha. All the books that appear in the New Revised Standard Version or the Rahlfs-Hanhart edition of the Septuagint have been included. The vast majority of the Apocryphal books have been adapted from the English Revised Version. The books of 3 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees, as well as Psalm 151, have been adapted from Brenton's translation of the Septuagint. The book of Odes, which is a compilation of songs from the Bible, is derived from three sources: Brenton's translation, the ASV, and my own translation of chapter 14 (which draws heavily from Brenton). The Psalms of Solomon, which are found in many manuscripts of the Septuagint, have been adapted from G. Buchanan Gray's translation. Although the Psalms of Solomon have the weakest claim to canonicity of any of the books in this edition, the final two psalms in the book

are particularly noteworthy because of their messianic nature. While modern-day Protestants largely eschew the Apocryphal books, they were read as Scripture from the time of the early church until the time of the Reformation.

A number of minor changes have been introduced in the present edition. Although the American Revision Committee introduced some edits to the English Revised Version to make the language sound more American and less British, they left a surprising number of British spellings in the text. In the present edition, these spellings have been brought into conformity with standard American English. For example, *marvelled* has been updated to *marveled*. Similarly, the American Revision Committee retained some British words such as *corn*, *farthing*, and *shilling*, which have been updated to *grain*, *penny*, and *denarius* respectively. Concerning the hyphenation of words, the American Revision Committee was quite inconsistent in its application, and, by modern standards, made excessive use of the hyphen. Consequently, hyphenation and word breaks has been brought into alignment with commonly accepted standards. Concerning the spelling of names and geographic places, the American Standard Version is a great improvement over the King James Version and requires little updating. Yet it was necessary to update some names to their commonly accepted forms. For example, *Sadoc* has been updated to *Zadok*. However, in the Old Testament, hyphens have been retained when they highlight the meaning of the underlying Hebrew. For example, Beth-lehem remains hyphenated because it highlights the underlying Hebrew words the mean *house* and *bread*. Concerning archaic words, it was not the intent of the

American Revision Committee to completely modernize the Scriptures. Rather, they focused on updating only the most obscure words and spellings, as well as words that were misleading because their meanings had changed over time. The American Revision Committee recognized that, for the most part, archaic language adds to the majesty of the style and translation, which is why so many people love the King James Version; however, there are a few cases in which the archaic forms retained by the American Revision Committee sound quite strange, if not incorrect, to modern ears. Consequently, words such as *digged*, *builded*, and *fishes*, along with a handful of others, have been updated to their modern equivalents such as *dug*, *built*, *fish*, etc. Concerning alternate renderings, in a few rare instances a footnoted reading seemed preferable to the main text of the ASV and was adopted for this edition (1 Cor. 7:36-37; Gal. 6:5; Phil. 1:27; 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 9:4; 2 Pet. 2:4). Other minor changes have been made for stylistic consideration, although they are quite infrequent. Concerning punctuation and formatting, instances of double punctuation (such as ,— and ;—) have been eliminated so that only the em dash remains. Minor adjustments have also been made to paragraphing and poetic formatting, particularly in the Apocryphal books.

In addition to the changes listed above, further adjustments were necessary to bring the Apocryphal books into alignment with the translational and stylistic preferences of the American Revision Committee. The Greek word Ἅιδης has been consistently rendered as *Hades*; similarly the Greek word δαίμων has been consistently rendered as *demon* or *demons*. The words *who* and *that* have been substituted for *which* when relating to persons. In indicative clauses, the word *be* has been replaced with

the appropriate indicative form. The word *for* has been omitted before infinitives. The words *the which* have simply been rendered as *which*. The word *an* has been updated to *a* before aspirated *h*; similarly *thine* and *mine* have been updated to *thy* and *my* respectively before aspirated *h*. The verb *spoil* has been updated to *plunder* or *despoil*. The word *reins* has been updated to *heart* or *mind*. (These last two changes were also applied in a few instances in the Old Testament and New Testament to bring the translation into alignment with the stated preferences of the American Revision Committee.) The word *its* has been substituted for *his* or *her* when relating to impersonal objects that are not personified. In a few rare instances highly archaic or obscure terms not found in the American Standard Version have been updated. Similarly other words that were updated in the ASV have been updated in the Apocrypha as well. For example, the word *coasts* has been updated to *borders*. In some instances (particularly in 3 and 4 Maccabees, Odes, and Psalms of Solomon) archaic verb forms have been introduced to bring the translation into alignment with the rest of the books.

It is my hope that the *American Standard Version, Byzantine Text with Apocrypha* will be a resource for those who desire a translation that is stylistically reminiscent of the King James Version, and that also provides a literal translation of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the Byzantine text of the New Testament, and the Greek and Latin of the Apocryphal books, which have unfortunately been removed from most modern Bibles. To God be the glory!

Robert Adam Boyd, Editor  
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American Standard Version Byzantine Text  
The Holy Bible with Apocrypha, American Standard Version  
conformed to the Byzantine Text New Testament

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Language: English

Dialect: Archaic American

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