

## *On the New Testament of the Orthodox Study Bible*

-Adapted from an article in the OSB

The text of The Orthodox Study Bible New Testament is the New King James Version. The NKJV translators and editors, while sensitive to English idiom, believe in the divine inspiration of Scripture and have adhered faithfully to the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. The Koine Greek of the New Testament is influenced by the Hebrew background of the writers, for whom even the gospel narratives were not merely flat utterance but were often sung in various degrees of rhythm.

The style of the New King James Version is therefore designed to enhance the vividness and devotional quality of the Holy Scriptures: Words or phrases in *italics* indicate expressions in the original language which require clarification by additional English words; *textual notes* which will assist the reader to observe the variations between the different manuscript traditions of the New Testament; *oblique type* in the New Testament indicates a quotation from the Old Testament; *prose divided into paragraphs* indicates the structure of thought; *poetry structured as contemporary verse* reflects the poetic form and beauty of the passage in the original language; and whenever the *covenant name of God* is quoted in the New Testament from a passage in the Old Testament, it has been translated from the Hebrew (YHWH) and the Greek (*Kyrios*) as LORD or GOD (i.e., all capitals letters).

The text of the New Testament has more manuscript support than any other body of ancient literature. More than five thousand Greek, eight thousand Latin, and many more manuscripts in other languages attest the integrity of the New Testament. There is only one basic New Testament used by Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Orthodox, by conservatives and liberals. The traditional text of the Greek-speaking churches was first published in 1516, and later called the *Textus Receptus* or Received Text. Although based on the relatively few available manuscripts, these were representative of many more which existed at the time but only became known later. Those readings in the *Textus Receptus* which have weak support are indicated (in a section below each page's right Scripture column) as being opposed by both Critical and Majority Texts.

Since the 1880s most contemporary translations of the New Testament have relied upon a relatively few manuscripts discovered chiefly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such translations depend primarily on two manuscripts, Codex Vaticanus and codex Sinaiticus, because of their greater age. The Greek text obtained by using these sources and the related papyri (our most ancient manuscripts) is known as the Alexandrian Text. However, some scholars have grounds for doubting the faithfulness of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, since they often disagree with one another, and Sinaiticus exhibits excessive omission.

Another view point of New Testament scholarship holds that the best text is based on the consensus of the majority of existing Greek manuscripts. This text is called the *Majority Text*. Most of these manuscripts are in substantial agreement. Even though many are late, and none is earlier than the fifth century, usually their readings are verified by papyri, ancient versions, quotations from the early Church Fathers, or a combination of these. The Majority Text is similar to the Textus Receptus, but it corrects those readings which have little or no support in the Greek manuscript tradition.

Today, scholars agree that the science of New Testament textual criticism is in a state of flux. Very few scholars still favor the Textus Receptus as such, and then often for its historical prestige. For about a century most have followed a *Critical Text* which depends heavily upon the Alexandrian type of text, and more recently many have abandoned this Critical Text for one that is more eclectic (i.e., from a variety of sources). A small but growing number of scholars prefer the Majority Text, which is close

to the traditional text except in the book of Revelation. The most important Critical and Majority Text variant readings in the New King James Version are indicated in a section below each page's right Scripture column, but it is most important to emphasize that fully eighty-five percent of the New Testament text is the same in the Textus Receptus, the Alexandrian Text, and the Majority Text.

Where significant variations occur in the New Testament Greek manuscripts, textual notes are classified as follows:

(1) NU-Text: These variations from the traditional text generally represent the Alexandrian type of text. They are found in the Critical Text published in the twenty-sixth edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament (N) and in the United Bible Societies' third edition (U), hence the acronym, "NU-Text."

(2) M-Text: This symbol indicates points of variation in the Majority Text from the traditional text. M stands for whatever reading is printed in the published *Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, whether supported by overwhelming, strong, or only a divided majority textual tradition.