

Sunday, May 19, 2019— Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 88 The Two Streams of Bibles Model of Transmission: Its Origins & Accuracy, Part 2 (Peshitta)

Introduction/Review

- Last week in [Lesson 87](#) we began looking at the origins and accuracy of the “two streams of Bibles” paradigm for how preservation/transmission was accomplished. In doing so, we covered the following points:
 - The “Two Streams of Bibles” View of Transmission
 - Historical Origins of the “Two Streams of Bibles” Paradigm
 - First Questioning of the “Two Streams of Bibles” Paradigm
- Given that Lesson 87 was the first time I have ever taught this information and I did not finish explaining point 3, I would like to review some of the key points in the introduction to this Lesson.

The “Two Streams of Bibles” View of Transmission

- On the first point, I highlighted my historic uncritical embrace of the “two streams of Bibles” paradigm of transmission. In addition, we looked at multiple examples of charts and diagrams created by various individuals and ministries depicting the “two streams Bibles model.” Lastly, we noted how all the various depictions of the “two streams” paradigm agree on the following points:
 - There are two streams/lines of Bibles. One emanating from Antioch and the other from Alexandria, Egypt.
 - One stream/line is pure (the Antiochian) and the other stream/line is corrupt (the Alexandrian).
 - The MSS of the Byzantine Text-Type are always placed in the pure stream/line. Whereas, the principle witnesses of the so-called Alexandrian Text such as Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲛ), Codex Vaticanus (B), and Codex Alexandrinus (A) are always placed in the corrupt stream /line.
 - The Itala (Old Latin), Peshitta, and Gothic translations, among others, are always placed in the pure stream/line, thereby giving the impression that these early translations are in complete agreement with the Textus Receptus (TR), the text of the Reformation, and the King James Bible because they are in the same stream/line.
 - In contrast, Jerome’s Latin Vulgate is always placed in the corrupt stream/line emanating from Alexandria, Egypt and culminating in the various editions of the Critical Text and Modern Versions.

- Therefore, these charts depict the Old Latin (Itala), Peshitta, and Gothic translations as “good” Bibles and the Vulgate as “bad.” More specifically, the Old Latin and Vulgate are pitted against each other as rivals in opposing streams/lines.
- Lastly, these charts leave their readers with the impression that there is an unbroken line of systematic and sequential corruption stretching back to the earliest centuries of church history in the following reverse order:
 - Modern Versions—NASV, NIV, NKJV, ESV (20th & 21st Centuries)
 - UBS/Nestle Aland Greek New Testaments (20th Century)
 - Revised Version (1881)
 - W&H Greek New Testament (1881)
 - Douay Rheims Translation (1582)
 - Codex Alexandrinus (A)—(5th Century)
 - Latin Vulgate (382)
 - Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲛ) & Codex Vaticanus (B) (330-350 supposedly)
 - Origen
 - Papyri
 - Alexandria, Egypt

Historical Origins of the “Two Streams of Bibles” Paradigm

- Regarding the historical origins of the “two streams of Bibles” transmissional model, we noted that it was first articulated by Benjamin G. Wilkinson in his 1930 book *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated*. Furthermore, we observed how once this notion was deposited into the thought stream by Wilkinson it was picked up by later defenders of the Traditional Text and the Authorized Version and advanced in an uncritical manner.
 - 1955—Jasper James Ray wrote *God Wrote Only One Bible* which contains a chapter titled “Historically Only Two Streams of Bibles Have Come to Us” (Cp. 2).
 - 1964—Peter S. Ruckman wrote *The Bible “Babel”* which contained diagrams of the “good” and “corrupt” trees found in Lesson 87 on pages 18 and 19 of Appendix A.
 - 1970—David Otis Fuller edited *Which Bible?* Fuller’s book contained an edited reprint of Wilkinson’s 1930 work *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated* including the entirety of Chapter 1 “Fundamentally, Only Two Different Bibles.”
- Further investigation this week revealed an even stronger tie between the work of Ray and Ruckman. It appears that Ruckman got his “two trees” illustration directly from J.J. Ray.
 - See Appendix A on page 10 to view the photographic evidence.
- Through the twin influences of Ruckman and Fuller the “two streams of Bibles” paradigm of transmission cemented itself into the argumentation of the King James Only movement. Later pro-King James authors repeated this talking point in some manner to varying degrees.

First Questioning of the “Two Streams of Bibles” Paradigm

- Having read much of the literature from the King James Only movement I had taken for granted the truthfulness of the “two streams of Bibles” paradigm. Since the notion is so prevalent in the literature of the movement, I assumed that it had been factually vetted for accuracy and therefore I accepted it as true.
- Knowing that I had never studied the truthfulness of the model for myself I started researching to see what I could find on the Peshitta and Gothic translations in the Summer of 2018. Therefore, it was not until recently, when preparing to teach the current segment of this class (September 2018—May 2019), that I encountered information while researching the Gothic Bible that caused me to question the paradigm’s veracity for the first time.
- In Lesson 87, I showed you how the Gothic Bible is depicted on many of the “two streams of Bibles” charts. Many of these charts place the Gothic in the pure stream/line along with the MSS of the Byzantine majority, the Textus Receptus (*TR*) and the King James Bible. Then we looked at specific passages in the Gothic that contained readings that King James advocates would find corrupt. Last, we compared our observations regarding readings from the Gothic Bible with the characterization of this translation in the writings of Gail Riplinger.
- Our major takeaway was that in its extant form, the Gothic Bible contains readings that advocates of the “two streams” of transmission paradigm would never tolerate from Modern Versions. Yet, they list the Gothic Bible in the pure stream of transmission on their charts.

First Questioning of the “Two Streams of Bibles” Paradigm Continued

- Since the Peshitta and Gothic translations are always listed in the “good” or “pure” stream/line of Bibles I decided to look at the Peshitta next.

Peshitta

- The Peshitta, along with the Gothic, is almost always listed in the pure stream of transmission on “two streams of Bibles” charts and diagrams. As far as I can tell this was done for the first time when J.J. Ray placed the Peshitta on his “good tree” of Bibles in his 1955 book *God Wrote Only One Bible*. Benjamin Wilkinson had not included the Peshitta on his “Two Parallel Streams of Bibles” table in 1930. Regarding the Peshitta, Ray stated the following:
 - “A number of textual authorities state that the Bible of the Syrian Church, the Peshitta, was translated from the Greek Vulgate into Syrian about 150 A.D. This view is favored by G.H. Gwilliam, learned Syrian scholar and editor. His views are supported by Burgon and Miller, and others. This Peshitta version is admired by Syriac scholars as a careful; faithful; simple; direct; literal version; clear and forceful in style. These characteristics have given it the title “Queen of the Versions.”

Antioch was the capital of Syria where the early believers were first called Christians, (Acts 11:26). In a few years the Syrian believers could be numbered by the thousands. Their Bible, the Peshitta, even today generally follows the Received Text. This is

another proof that the foundation for the King James Bible is older and more reliable than the Vatican MS which was elevated to the chair of authority by Westcott and Hort.”
(Ray, 78-79)

- As noted above, in 1964 Dr. Peter S. Ruckman followed Ray by placing the Peshitta on his “good tree” of Bibles in his book *The Bible “Bable.”*
- The following from the pen of Dr. David H. Sorenson in *Touch Not the Unclean Thing: The Text Issue and Separation* is emblematic of what is commonly said about the Peshitta in pro-King James literature:
 - “Another ancient translation of the New Testament is the Syrian Peshitta Version. It should be recalled that it was in Antioch of Syria that the disciples were first called Christians. Moreover, the church at Antioch was the sending church as well as the home church of the apostle Paul. . . Accordingly, a translation of the New Testament into Syrian was made in A.D. 150. This translation was called the Peshitta Version. Even Hort acknowledges that this translation paralleled the Received Text.

Of interest is that the word Peshitta is a Syrian word which means “common.” It thus was analogous to the later Latin term *vulgate* which essentially meant the same thing. It would also approximate to the later sense of the term Received Text (or in this case, “version”) of the Bible for a given language. There is little question, even by proponents of the critical text, that the Peshitta Version was translated from a Greek text rooted in the Received Text. . . The greater point, however, is that one of the earliest churches of the Christian era used a translation of the New Testament based upon the Received Text. That is a clear indication that the Received Text was the true text of the New Testament with roots leading back to the autographa.” (Sorenson, 79-81)

- Please note that neither Ray nor Sorenson cites any textual examples as evidence to substantiate their claims regarding the Peshitta. Rather, in the case of Ray, he appeals to the authority of other writers such as Gwilliam, Burgon, Miller, Robinson, or Vedder to substantiate his claims. The same could be said for a host of other pro-King James works.
- Using the [Peshitta New Testament](#) website I was able to check readings of English translations of the Peshitta for myself against the King James. The following points are a summary of what I found.
- First, the oldest extant witness to the Peshitta dates from the 5th century (400s). (Miller, 75)
- Second, it is important to note that there have been three major translations of the Peshitta into English in the last one hundred fifty years.
 - 1849—John Wesley Etheridge
 - 1851—James Murdock
 - 1933—George M. Lamsa

- 2006—Janet Magiera, an associate to Lamsa, published the *Aramaic Peshitta New Testament Vertical Interlinear* in three volumes.
- An examination of the readings found in these translations reveals that the extant witnesses to the Peshitta New Testament are anything but the showpieces of textual purity assumed by the “two streams of Bibles” paradigm. Extant copies and printed additions of the Peshitta in Syriac are widely varied in terms of their readings as the following examples will demonstrate. We will begin by comparing the same passages that we considered in Lesson 87 when looking at the extant Gothic Bible, in the same order: Mark 1:2; Colossians 1:14; I Timothy 3:16; Luke 2:33; John 7:53-8:11; Mark 16:9-20; Acts 8:24; I John 5:7

Mark 1:2

Etheridge (1849)	As it is written in Eshaia the prophet : Behold, I send my angel before thy face, Who shall make straight [Or, prepare] thy way.
Murdock (1851)	As it is written in Isaiah the prophet : Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way.
Lamsa (1933)	As it is written in Isaiah the prophet , Behold I send my messenger before your face, that he may prepare your way,
King James	As it is written in the prophets , Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

- Just as we observed last week with the Gothic, the Peshitta contains a Critical Text reading in Mark 1:2, a popular verse for easily discerning the textual basis of a given translation. Yet we are assured by Ray and Sorenson as well as other King James Only authors that the Peshitta was translated from an early form of the Received Text.

Colossians 1:14

Etheridge (1849)	in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins:
Murdock (1851)	by whom we have redemption and remission of sins:
Lamsa (1933)	By whom we have obtained salvation and forgiveness of sins.
King James	In whom we have redemption through his blood , even the forgiveness of sins:

- All three translations of the Peshitta leave out the blood of Christ in Colossians 1:14. Why would this be? Because the Syriac MSS and/or printed editions they are translating into English do not contain the phrase “through his blood” in the source language. Like we saw with the Gothic in Lesson 87, the Peshitta contains a Critical Text reading in Colossian 1:14, yet we are assured many times over in pro-King James literature of its textual purity.

I Timothy 3:16

Etheridge (1849)	And truly great is this mystery of righteousness, which was revealed in the flesh , and justified by the Spirit, and seen of angels, and preached among the peoples, and believed in the world, and taken up into glory.
Murdock (1851)	and truly great, is this mystery of righteousness, which was revealed in the flesh , and justified in the spirit, and seen by angels, and proclaimed among the Gentiles, and believed on in the world, and received up into glory

Lamsa (1933)	Truly great is this divine mystery of righteousness: it is revealed in the flesh , justifi-fied in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory.
King James	And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh , justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

- King James advocates excoriate the Critical Text and Modern Versions for attacking the deity of Christ in this verse for not reading “God was manifest in the flesh.” Yet many of the same people place the Peshitta in the line of pure Bibles along with King James on their “two streams of Bibles” charts despite it containing a reading in I Timothy 3:16 that they would not approve of in Modern Versions. Once again, the reason the Peshitta reads as it does in English is because of how the text reads in the extant Syriac MSS.

Luke 2:33

Etheridge (1849)	But Jauseph and his mother wondered at these words which were spoken concerning him.
Murdock (1851)	And Joseph and his mother were astonished at those things which were spoken concerning him.
Lamsa (1933)	And Joseph and his mother marvelled about these things which were spoken concerning him.
King James	And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

- In Luke 2:33, the Peshitta, like the Gothic, maintains the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ by reading Joseph not “father” as the Critical Text and Modern Versions do in this verse.

John 7:53-8:11

Etheridge (1849)	Does not contain the narrative of the woman taken in adultery.
Murdock (1851)	Contains the entire passage.
Lamsa (1933)	Contains the entire passage.
King James	Contains the entire passage.

- In the case of the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53-8:11), the extant evidence from the Peshitta is mixed. Etheridge was clearly translating from a MS copy or copies that did not contain the narrative whereas Murdock and Lamsa include the passage. Murdock’s translation includes the following footnote on John 7:53:
 - “This 53rd verse is wanting in many early editions of the Syriac N. Testament. So also, the whole story of the adulteress, in the following chapter, v. 1-11.” (Murdock, 181)
- Once again, the extant evidence speaks to the mixed nature of the Peshitta’s text. Yet none of these facts are ever discussed in King James Only literature.

Mark 16:9-20

Etheridge (1849)	Contains the entire passage.
Murdock (1851)	Contains the entire passage.
Lamsa (1933)	Contains the entire passage.
King James	Contains the entire passage.

- The extant textual witness to the Peshitta agree with the readings found in the Received Text and the King James Bible in this passage. The long ending of Mark is part of the Biblical text in Peshitta.

Acts 8:37

Etheridge (1849)	Omitted
Murdock (1851)	[And Philip said: If thou believest with all thy heart, it is allowable. And he answered, and said: I believe that Jesus Messiah is the Son of God.]
Lamsa (1933)	And Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
King James	And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

- In Acts 8:37, Etheridge omitted the verse altogether while Murdock included the verse with brackets around it thereby indicating the questionable nature of the reading. Moreover, Murdock included the following footnote explaining his decision to place brackets around the verse:
 - “This 37th verse is not in any of the earlier editions, and is excluded from the text of the London editions of 1816 and 1826.” (Murdock, 230)
- Again, in the case of Acts 8:37 we see discrepancies between the extant MSS of the Peshitta. Therefore, the textual situation with the Peshitta is not as clear cut as the “two streams of Bibles” model would have us believe.

I John 5:7

Etheridge (1849)	and the Spirit testifieth, because the Spirit himself is truth.
Murdock (1851)	[For there are three that testify in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one.]
Lamsa (1933)	For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.
King James	For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

- Lamsa’s rendering of I John 5:7 agrees completely with the KJB. Meanwhile, Murdock included the verse with brackets as Etheridge’s translations reads something else entirely. As in previous examples, Murdock provides a footnote explaining why he put brackets around verse 7:
 - “This verse is wanting in most MSS., and is omitted in the edit. London, 1826.” (Murdock, 437)
- So, once again we see that the extant MSS of the Peshitta disagree with each other in terms of their readings in some key verses with important textual variants.

Conclusion

- Charts and literature authored by King James advocates depicting the “two streams of Bibles” always place the Peshitta in the “pure” stream. Few, if any, textual examples are ever cited to justify such a placement. Instead, readers of these works find appeals to the authority of other

authors to substantiate the placement of the Peshitta in the pure stream of transmission, as in the case of J.J. Ray (See citation on page 3.). Ray is correct that Burgon used the Peshitta (Peshito) to justify the antiquity of individual Traditional readings against the Critical Text of Westcott and Hort and its principle uncial witnesses N & B. Burgon's use of the Peshitta to support the Traditional Text is on a reading by reading basis. Put another way, Burgon is not arguing, as are "two streams" advocates, that the Peshitta is representative of the King James tradition in every reading without qualification. To insinuate that Burgon was placing the Peshitta in the pure stream of transmission as Ray does in his book serves to mangle the witness of Burgon and hang conclusions upon him that he never made.

- Another example are the writings of Edward Miller, another author mentioned by J.J. Ray on page 78 of *God Only Wrote One Bible*. Ray portrays Miller, an associate of Burgon, as being wholly on board with his assertion that "the Peshitta, was translated from the Greek Vulgate." A consideration of Miller's comments regarding the Peshitta reveals that Ray has overstated his case.
 - "The result of this recension is said to have been the Peshito Version, which has hitherto been referred to in the second century. We may remark, by the way, that the Peshito must be got rid of by Extreme Textualists, or it would witness incontinently before the Fourth century to the 'Syrian' Text.." (Miller, 51)
 - "The Peshito [Peshitta] **resembles the Received Text**. It may have been actually in the hands of St. John. It did not include all the Catholic Epistles [II Peter; II & III John; and Jude], or the Revelation. The Peshito has been called 'The Queen of Versions.'" (Miller, 75)
 - "In a similar manner, the Peshito and Italic Versions—including under the latter class the best of the Old Latin Versions—were made two hundred years before those two Manuscripts [N & B], and—especially the former—support the Traditional Text." (Miller, 85)
- In some cases, the extant Peshitta supports the Traditional Text and in some cases it does not i.e., the extant evidence is mixed. Miller's comment that the Peshitta "resembles the Received Text" is a more accurate representation of the facts on the ground when compared with the picture painted by Ray, Ruckman, Sorenson, and the "two streams of Bibles" advocates.
- Even a cursory evaluation of the extant textual data regarding the Peshitta reveals its tradition is far from the specimen of purity that many King James advocates would have us believe. As we observed in our investigation of the Gothic Bible in Lesson 87, when it comes to transmission the situation is not as neat and tidy or clear cut as the "two streams of Bibles" model indicates. Rather than being an objective emblem of textual purity the extant Peshitta is viewed more accurately as a *mixed text* driving down the shoulder of Transmission Turnpike.
- As we saw last Sunday with the Gothic Bible, the Peshitta contains readings in its extant copies, that King James advocates would never tolerate in a Modern Version, yet their charts and diagrams depict the Peshitta as being fundamentally the same as the KJB. This is an untenable double standard in pro-King James argumentation that needs to be jettisoned or revised to accord with the textual and historical facts.

- In the next Lesson we will look at what happened when I publicly started asking questions regarding the “two streams of Bibles” paradigm of transmission.

Works Cited

Miller, Edward. *A Guide to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*. Covant Garden, London: George Bell & Sons, 1886.

Murdock, James. *The New Testament: A Literal Translation from the Syriac Peshitta Version*. New York, NY: Stanford & Swords, 1851.

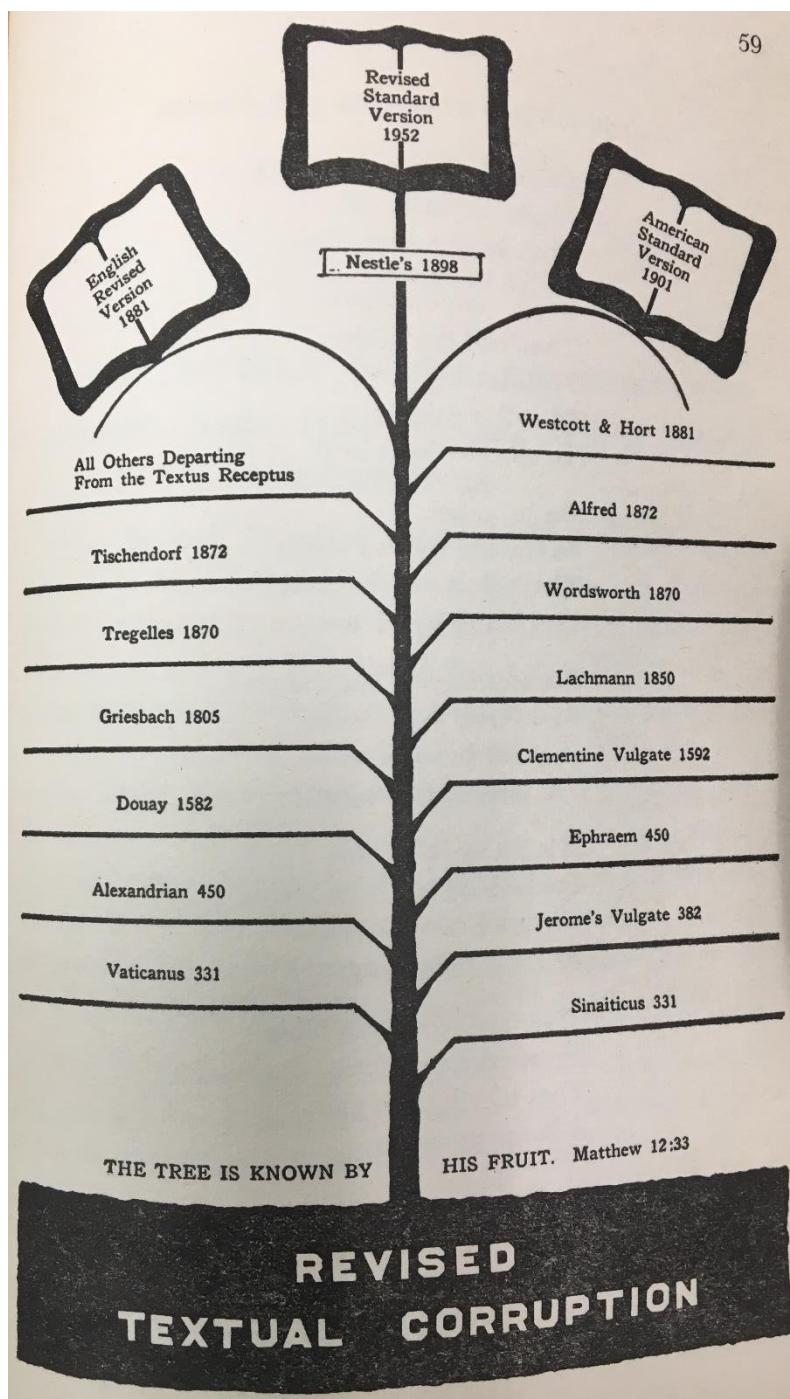
Ray, Jasper James. *God Wrote Only One Bible*. Junction City, OR: The Eye Opener Publishers, 1955.

Sorenson, David H. *Touch Not the Unclean Things: The Text Issue and Separation*. Duluth, MN: Northstar Baptist Ministries, 2001.

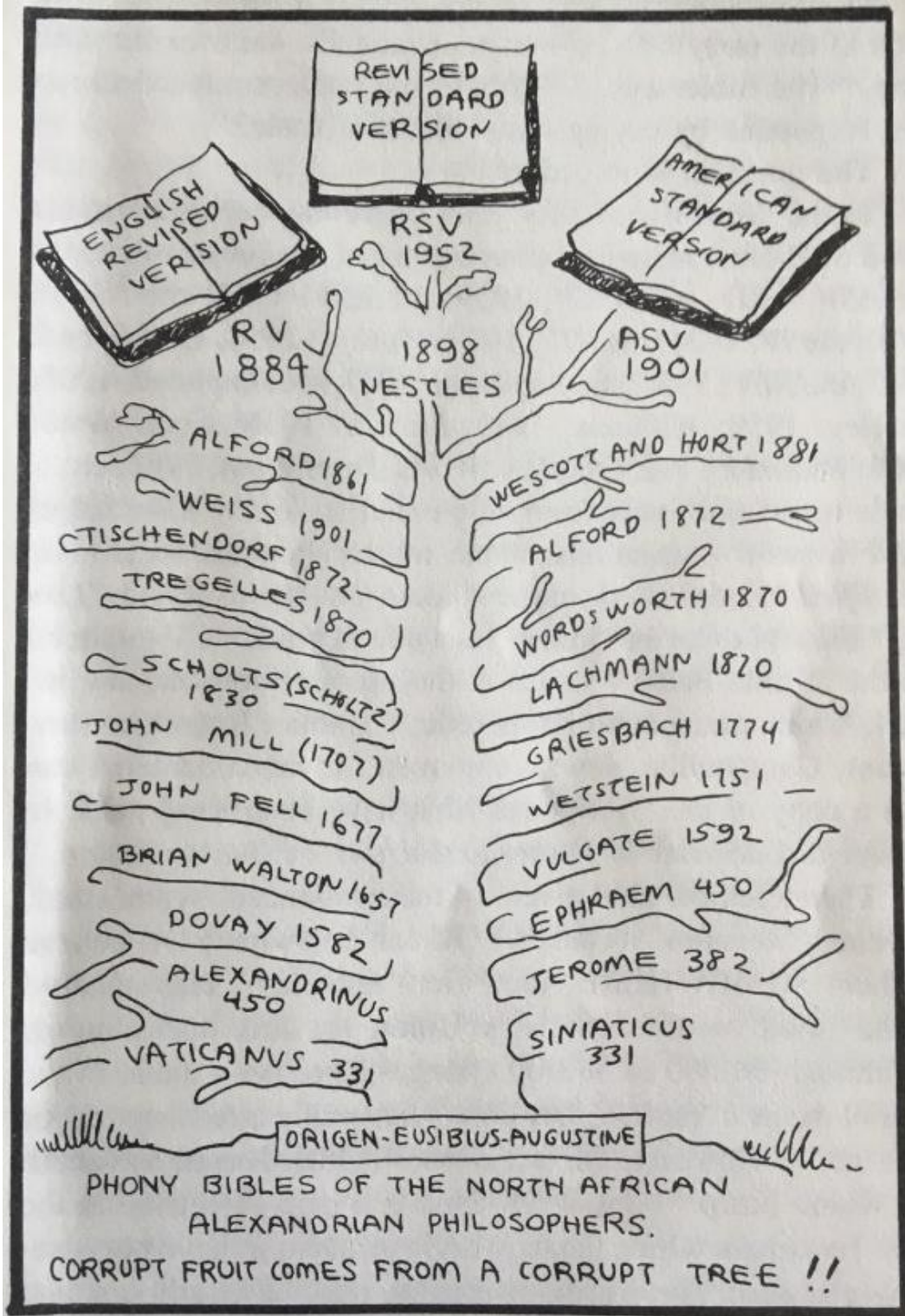
Appendix A

The Two Trees Illustration of J.J. Ray & Peter S. Ruckman

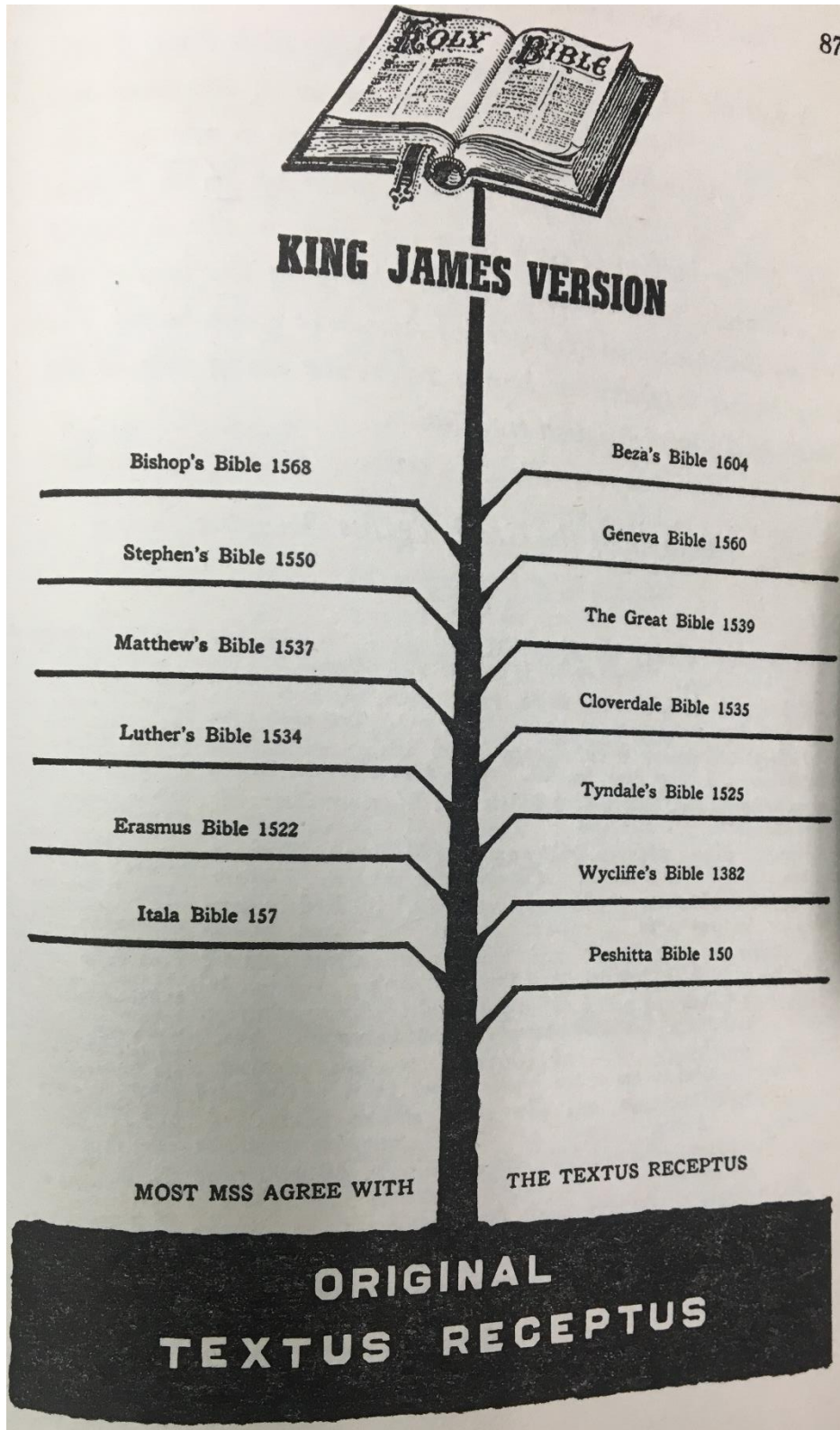
The purpose of this Appendix is to offer visual proof that Ruckman's illustration of the "two trees" of transmission from his 1964 book *The Bible "Bable"* is a nearly exact reproduction of J.J. Ray's charts from 1955.



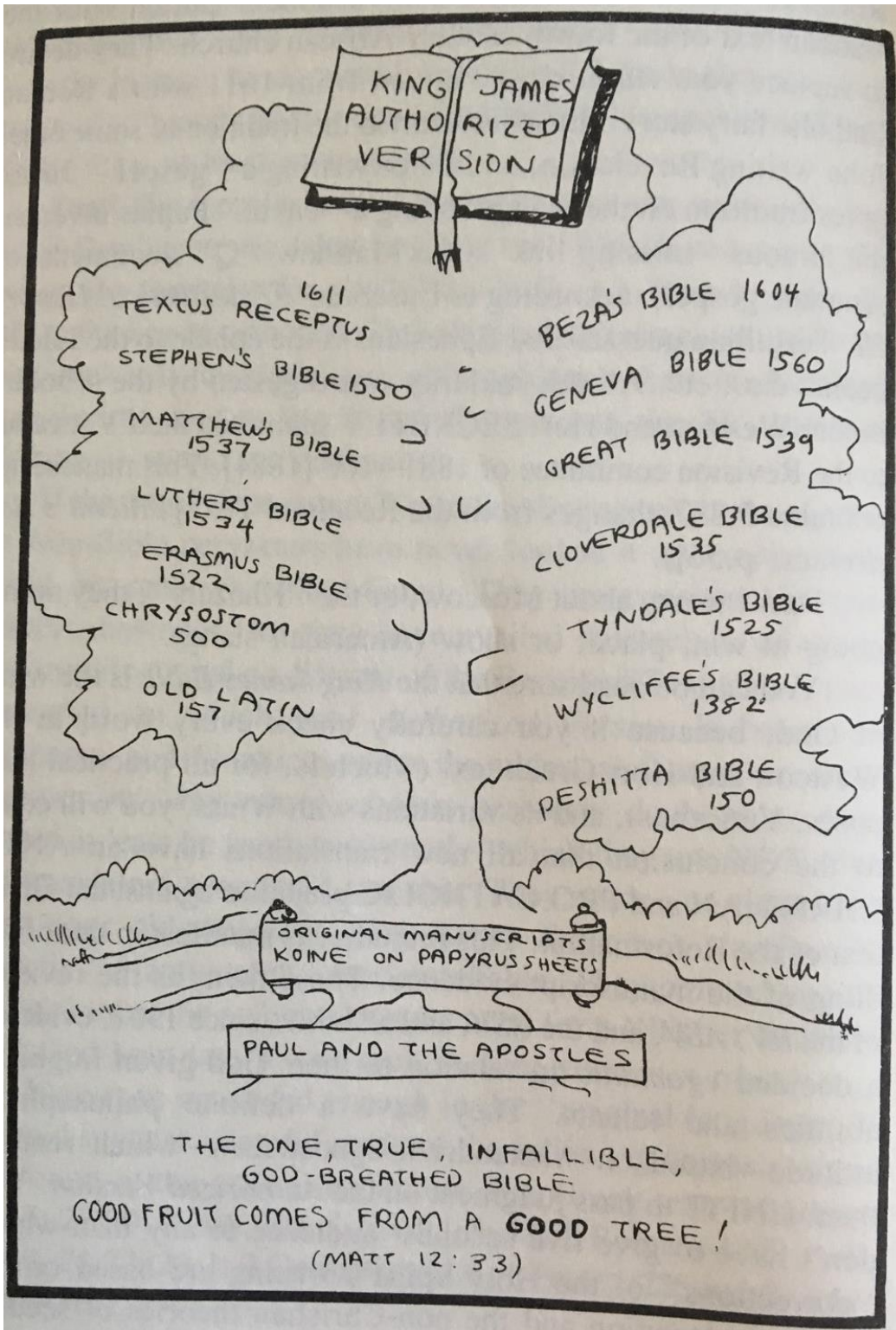
1955—*God Wrote Only One Bible* by J.J. Ray, page 59



1964—The Bible "Bable" by Peter S. Ruckman



1955—*God Wrote Only One Bible* by J.J. Ray, page 59



1964—The Bible “Bable” by Peter S. Ruckman