

Sunday, April 27, 2025—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 263 Assessing the Printed History of the King James Text (Italics Evaluation)

Introduction

- In [Lesson 262](#) we continued our study of the italics in the AV. The Lesson explored the complexities surrounding italicized words in the King James Bible, particularly focusing on two case studies: 2 Samuel 21:19 and 1 John 2:23. We critically examined claims made by King James Only advocates, especially those of Dr. Peter S. Ruckman and Gene Kim, regarding the divine inspiration and significance of these italicized words. Through extensive historical and textual analysis, it was demonstrated that many of these claims are not supported by the evidence and instead offered a more nuanced understanding of why these words were included and how they relate to other translations and manuscript traditions.
- By way of review, Lesson 262 covered the following points:
 - The use of italics in the KJB is more complex than often portrayed by King James Only advocates.
 - Pre-1611 English Bibles and other language translations often included similar clarifications through marginal notes or different fonts.
 - The King James translators had access to various manuscripts and translations, including Beza's 1598 Greek New Testament, which included the disputed phrase in 1 John 2:23.
 - Claims that the KJV translators were divinely inspired to include words not found in any Greek manuscripts are not supported by historical evidence.
 - Understanding the purpose and history of italicized words is crucial for proper biblical interpretation and translation.
- Before moving on, consider this additional example from one of Dr. Ruckman's "chalk talks:"
 - [23:48] "The King James Bible was an honest translation. You thought about adding the Word of God like that? Well, when they add, they let you know where they added—so you wouldn't think it was a word right there. And sometimes you have to do that. Anybody knows that—you can pick up any Bible on this earth and look through it, and you'll find place after place after place where, if you didn't add a verb or add something, it wouldn't make any sense at all. The idioms change.

You said you believe God led them and guided them in that? Yeah, I sure do. I sure do. Matter of fact, I know. I know He did.

You say, “How do you know that?” **I read one time over there in 1 John chapter 2 that if a man denies the Son, he denies the Father. And I read, if he confesses the Son, then he has the Father also. That was half the verse—from the italics. Half the verse.**

When the King James translators sat down and came to that verse, they couldn’t find half the verse. But they said, “Seems to me like it belongs there.” So they wrote it down in italics.

You know what happened 200 years after they wrote that thing down? They found Greek manuscripts. You know what was in the Greek manuscripts? The half of the verse they put down in italics.

[Crowd Cheering] You better watch that book [24:54].” ([Vintage Dr Ruckman VHS put out by Christian Bible Church](#))

- Since we began discussing the italics in the AV in [Lesson 257](#), we have noted multiple times that italics are not consistent across all editions of the AV. In this Lesson I would like to look at some statistical data to determine just how varied the italics are between the 1611 and the standard text of today.

Italics Statistical Evaluation

- Chrisotpher Yetzer constructed and shared with me an Excel Spreadsheet that compares the use of italics in the 1611 and to so-called Pure Cambridge Edition (PCE) of circa 1900. Many King James advocates view the PCE as the “purest” form of the standard 1769 text. While I do not hold to the Pure Cambridge position, we will utilize the PCE in this Lesson for comparative purposes.
- Brother Yetzer’s spreadsheet looks only at the New Testament. The King James New Testament contains a total of 7,957 verses. The spreadsheet contains comparative entries for 2,491 verses reflecting 31.3% of the New Testament.
- Part 1 of the spreadsheet compares similarities and differences between the 1611 and the PCE in terms of italics for 2,464 verses. In this section one of the following is true:
 - The 1611 and PCE have identical italics.

Reference	1611	PCE
Matthew 2:3	When Herod the king had heard @these things@, he was troubled, and all Hierusalem with him.	When Herod the king had heard @these things@, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

- The PCE contains different italics than the 1611 in the same verse.

Reference	1611	PCE
Matthew 1:6	And lesse begate Dauid the King, & Dauid the King begat Solomon of her @that had bin@ the wife of Urias.	And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her @that had been the wife@ of Urias;

- The PCE contains italics in a verse that is not found in 1611.

Reference	1611	PCE
Matthew 1:17		So all the generations from Abraham to David @are@ fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon @are@ fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ @are@ fourteen generations.

- Part 2 of the spreadsheet contains entries where the 1611 had italics in the text and PCE contains no italics (27 verses).

In 1611 Not PCE	1611	PCE does not have any italics
Matthew 5:22	But I say vnto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the Iudgement: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Racha, shal be in danger of the counsell: but whosoever shall say, @Thou@ foole, shalbe in danger of hell fire.	

Part 1



Book	Total Verses	Identical Italics	Different Italics	% Difference
Matthew	304	46	260	85.5%
Mark	196	26	170	86.7%
Luke	319	41	278	87.1%
John	203	14	189	93.1%
Acts	304	25	279	91.7%
Romans	157	35	132	84.0%
1 Corinthians	177	53	124	70.0%
2 Corinthians	124	35	89	71.7%
Galatians	45	15	30	66.6%
Ephesians	36	11	25	69.4%
Philippians	30	12	18	60.0%
Colossians	40	15	25	62.5%
1 Thessalonians	24	7	17	70.8%
2 Thessalonians	13	6	7	53.8%
1 Timothy	37	17	20	54.0%
2 Timothy	26	12	14	53.8%
Titus	11	7	4	36.3%
Philemon	5	1	4	80.0%
Hebrews	128	44	84	65.6%
James	34	9	25	73.5%
1 Peter	50	14	36	72.0%
2 Peter	23	5	18	78.2%
1 John	25	10	15	60.0%
2 John	3	0	3	100%
3 John	3	0	3	100%

Jude	8	1	7	87.5%
Revelation	139	21	118	84.8%
Total	2,464	482	1,991	
Total %		19.5%	80.8%	

- Part 1 of the spreadsheet reveals that 482 of 2,464 verses or 19.5% have identical italics in both the 1611 and the PCE.
- Conversely, 1,991 of 2,464 verses or 80.8% have different italics when one compares the 1611 against the PCE.
- In addition, Part 2 of the spreadsheet contains an additional 27 verse entries in which the 1611 used italics that are not present in the PCE. If we add these 27 verses to our Part 1 total of 2,464, we are dealing with 2,491 total verses. Since these additional 27 verses listed in Part 2 completely lack any italics in the PCE we need to add 27 to our total number of differences from Part 1 (1,991). When we do so we arrive at a new total of 2,018.
 - Total verses—2,491
 - Total verses containing different italics—2,018
 - Total percentage of verses with difference italics between the 1611 and the PCE—81.0%
- The findings presented above only apply to the King James New Testament. At this time, comparable work has not been done with the Old Testament.
- It is important to note that I do not claim infallibility when it comes to the totals presented above. This process was extremely tedious and time consuming and is therefore subject to human error. That said, I believe errors, whatever they might be, to be minimal and immaterial to the cumulative force of the argument. Throughout its printed history, the italics in the AV are uneven and not printed with uniformity.
- Moreover, the findings presented in this Lesson only consider two specific editions from 1611 and the circa 1900 Cambridge imprint of the standard 1769 text. I have no doubt that if other editions were considered from say 1630, 1683, and 1762 that numbers would be different in each addition.
- In my mind these findings are a nail in the coffin for all the following arguments put forth by the King James Only establishment.
 - The text of the AV was never edited.
 - The text was edited between 1611 and 1769.

- The differences in italics across the editions are the work of later editors (i.e., not the translators themselves) comparing the English text against the Hebrew and Greek and amending the italics according to their interpretation of what the translators did.
 - The italics were inspired.
 - Which edition? Were the later editors that changed the italics inspired when they made their changes? Why could the Holy Spirit not get the italics right the first time?
 - Preservation requires verbatim identicality of wording.
 - Which King James edition is precisely correct in every detail to the exclusion of all others?
- In an unpublished paper on the King James italics John Uit de Flesch wrote:
 - “Over 50% of currently italicized words were not italicized in the original and early editions of the KJV. What this indicates is that the translators did not intend the italic/font change designation to be a hard and fast rule, but a “sometimes employed” guide. The idea that the translators were careful to make a clear designation between God’s words and their words is just not reality. In many, many places (a majority) they used the normal ordinary font to communicate added words. Even after the 1769 update, numerous examples of added words in regular font still exist (and occasionally italicized words that are directly in the Greek).” (de Flesch Email)
- He goes on to provide the following examples from the book of Luke. Please note that I have annotated these examples for clarity.
 - “Luke 17:27,29 “destroyed them all” both are precisely the same Greek phrase.

They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. (Lk. 17:27 KJV)

destroyed	G622	ἀπόλλεσεν ἀπόλλυμι <i>apollymi</i>		V-AAI-3S
them all. PHRASE	G537	ἅπαντας ἅπας <i>hapas</i>		A-APM

But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. (Lk. 17:29 KJV)

destroyed	ἠπόλλεσεν ἠπόλλυμι <i>apollymi</i>	G622	V-AAI-3S
[them]			
all.	ἅπαντας ἅπας <i>hapas</i>	G537	A-APM

- The Greek is the same in both verses but the italics in the AV is not identical.
- Luke 19:17, 22 “thou good servant, thou wicked servant”

And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. (Lk. 19:17 KJV)

thou good PHRASE	ἀγαθὲ ἀγαθός <i>agathos</i>	G18	A-VSM
servant:	δοῦλε δοῦλος <i>doulos</i>	G1401	N-VSM

And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: (Lk. 19:22 KJV)

[thou]			
wicked	πονηρὲ πονηρός <i>ponēros</i>	G4190	A-VSM
servant.	δοῦλε δοῦλος <i>doulos</i>	G1401	N-VSM

- Luke 10:30, 15:11 “a certain man”. Both of these verses have “certain” and “man” in Greek, but the italics of 10:30 indicates “man” was added to the text when it is in actually in the Greek text!)

And Jesus answering said, A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. (Lk. 10:30 KJV)

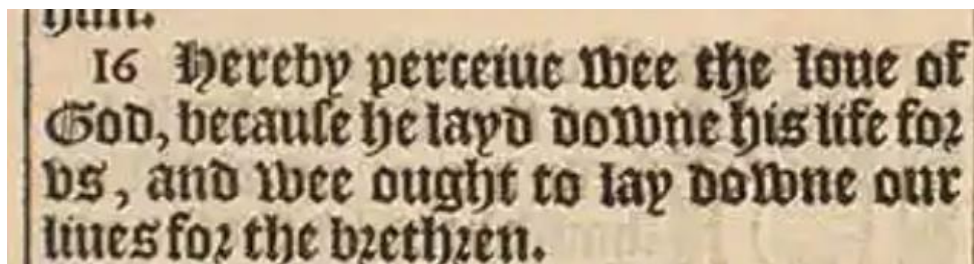
A certain PHRASE	ἄριστος ἄριστος tis	ἄριστος ἄριστος tis	X-NSM
[man]	ἄριστος ἄριστος anthrōpos	ἄριστος ἄριστος anthrōpos	N-NSM

And he said, A certain man had two sons: (Lk. 15:11 KJV)

A certain PHRASE	ἄριστος ἄριστος tis	ἄριστος ἄριστος tis	X-NSM
man	ἄριστος ἄριστος anthrōpos	ἄριστος ἄριστος anthrōpos	N-NSM

- Consider one more example cited by John Uit de Flesch.
 - “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:16 KJV)

Hereby perceiue wee the loue of God, because he layd downe his life for vs, and wee ought to lay downe our liues for the brethren. (1 John 3:16 KJV-1611)



Notice how the phrase “of God” is italicized? The original 1611 edition did not set these words off in any way. They were in ordinary font. Today’s readers will often assume that the translators “added” these words for clarity. This is not the case at all. In fact, the translators did see these words as original. What happened was when later editors tried to correct the italics situation in the KJV they used a Stephanus 1550 to do their work, and this was not the primary TR base used for the original work. Stephanus’ TR does not contain these words.” (de Flesch Email)

- Despite the inconsistencies and potential ambiguities regarding the use of italics, the fact is that they are a part of the Protestant Bible tradition. Christopher Yetzer stated the following regarding this in an unpublished essay on italics:
 - “By the beginning of the 17th century the practice of differentiating supplied words in the Bible had become a common Protestant practice. As opposed to the previous generation, the new translations printed in the early 1600s didn’t even need to clarify their practice of marking these words. Miles Smith, the author of the preface to the KJV, gave no explanation for the words in roman type (In 1611 the KJV used black letter type for the main text and roman for what was supplied to aid the sense). However at the Synod of Dordt, KJV translator Samuel Ward explained to the Dutch the English translators’ methods of translating, during which he said, “that words which it was anywhere necessary to insert into the text to complete the meaning were to be distinguished by another type, small roman.” In one manuscript supposed to have been made by the translators (although this hasn’t been sufficiently proven) the abbreviation “Rom.” is written near some words. The difficulty with most of the rules mentioned by Ward or others given to the translators is that they were not always followed to a tee as one might wrongly assume.” (Yetzer, 4)
- I agree with Brother Yetzer that “italics can demonstrate a great respect for the source text and the work of translation being done.” (Yetzer, 7)
 - “Only in the translation of a book in which each word is invested with momentous interest could men have deemed it necessary to specify a characteristic mark, words which are actually implied in the original, and omitted in it simply because [sic] not required by its idiom. If in the use of this mark our translators have erred, as I think they have, by excess, their motive deserves all praise.” Thomas Chase, “The Use Of Italics In The English Bible” *Friends Intelligencer*, 1879. (Quoted by Yetzer, 7)
- In the conclusion of his essay Brother Yetzer offers some practical advice why “understanding the use of italics in the KJV can be profitable.”
 - “From ditch to ditch

A clear understanding of italics will help us, the pro-KJV side, avoid the ditch that some have entered. In 2011 I remember being at a conference and hearing a sermon from one

of the main speakers, Dr. Johnny Pope (a man whom I greatly respect). In his sermon, commenting on John 18:8 he said, “I love the integrity of the Authorized Version translators; they put that ‘he’ in italics...”. Apart from the fact that the 1611 did not have the ‘he’ in italics (it seems to appear first in italics in the 1638 edition which 2 of the original translators are said to have worked on; therefore his comment is not necessarily wrong, although I think his intention may have been to refer to the initial work of all the translators.), Pope’s words created in my mind the idea that the translators must have had such integrity throughout the entirety of Scripture. Rick Norris quotes Ed DeVries as writing: “The translators of the KJV acknowledge that these words were not originally dictated by God and so they, to be honest (and to avoid the plagues of Revelation 22) set these words apart by placing them in italics” (Divinely Inspired, p. 65). We should be careful in how we defend the use of italics in the KJV. We should not overstate the facts. Sometimes in a rush to get out of this overemphasized ditch, people end up steering straight into the other ditch. They burn down the house to kill a mouse or throw the baby out with the bathwater. A careful and appropriate defense of the use of italics will avoid the ditch on our side.

TR or KJV?

By using here the term “TR” I intend it in the sense used in The Encyclopaedic Dictionary from 1896 where it is applied to both the Old and New Testament. The above information concerning the KJV translators’ methods of italics may help determine if differences between the KJV and the standard TRs were simply translational choices or textual decisions. In other words, did the KJV translators think that a variant reading was more accurate than the TR? In Mark 2:15 the majority of extant Greek manuscripts (possibly all of them) and the TR read *αυτον* [him] but the KJV reads “Jesus”. Were the translators saying that the Greek manuscripts were wrong or were they clarifying the sense for an English audience? I believe they were clarifying the sense for an English audience. Understanding the KJV translators’ typical practice of not applying italics in situations like these can be helpful for pastors and students when analyzing such passages.” (Yetzer, 8)

Works Cited

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