

Chapter 6: THE TEXTUAL SOURCE OF HEBREW VERSIONS

Because of the central ••72•• position given to the Tetragrammaton within Hebrew versions, our study of the Tetragrammaton and the Christian Greek Scriptures must evaluate these translations and the textual source from which they are derived.

A Hebrew version is found!

In the early stages of this Tetragrammaton study, a search was made for available "J" documents. As a result, the Hebrew version J¹⁸ was discovered in a local library.¹ However, it was only after re-reading the title page of J¹⁸ some two years later that its significance became clear. A second version was found several years later in a second library.

The Watch Tower Society universally uses the word *version* to mean *translation*. More typically, the action of rendering a text from one language into another is called *translation*, while the resulting book is called a *version*. An English Bible is one in which the biblical ••73•• languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) have been translated into English. Thus, every English Bible is a version, including both the *King James Version* and the *New World Translation*. Similarly, any Hebrew version consists of the Christian Greek Scriptures translated into the Hebrew language. (Obviously, only the Christian Greek Scriptures could be translated into a Hebrew version. The Hebrew Scriptures in the Hebrew language is not a version.)

That is what J¹⁸ is. *It is a translation! J¹⁸ is a translation from Greek into Hebrew.*

As a Hebrew version, J¹⁸ is not unique. It is merely one of many Hebrew versions cited in the "J" footnotes. However, it is important because it is a Hebrew version which became available for study.

Evaluating J¹⁸

J¹⁸ is one of the Hebrew versions used by the New World Bible Translation Committee to substantiate its use of the Tetragrammaton. The 1969 edition of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* gives the following information on page 29 regarding this version:

J¹⁸

Greek Scriptures in Hebrew. In London, England, in 1885, a new Hebrew translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures was published. This new translation was commenced by Isaac Salkinson and completed after his death by Christian David Ginsburg. Our oldest copy is of the third edition published in 1891. This has been compared with the small edition published by the Trinitarian Bible Society, London, England, in 1939, and also with the Hebrew-English New Testament published in

¹ Three separate editions of this Hebrew translation are grouped together as the single "J" reference identified as J¹⁸. As indicated by the New World Bible Translation Committee, each edition contains the same Hebrew text. The first edition was published in 1885. The second edition was published in 1939. The third edition was published in 1941 and included an English side text. Though the imprint date is not given, the edition used for this study was published by the Trinitarian Bible Society of London and includes the English side text.

In spite of the lack of a publication date in the Hebrew version used for this study, it can be definitively identified as J¹⁸ by two unique footnote references. At Acts 22:17 the Apostle Paul says, "But when I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance*..." The asterisk (*) in the *New World Translation Reference Edition* takes us to the footnote which says,

"17* "I fell into a trance," אָב; J^{13,14,17,22}, "Jehovah's hand was upon me"; J¹⁸, "Jehovah's spirit clothed me."

As cited in this footnote reference, this version we are using clearly has this identifying phrase at Acts 22:17 which says,

לְבָשָׁתִּי	יְהוָה	רוּחַ
me clothed	Jehovah (of)	spirit (the) and

This version which we are using is also identifiable as J¹⁸ by the solitary J¹⁸ citation in the footnote at Romans 14:4 since this version uses יְהוָה at this verse. (See footnote 12 in Chapter 14.)

Needless to say, the references at Acts 22:17 and Romans 14:4 amply identify this version as J¹⁸. The attention to detail also gives us an insight into the exacting effort made by the New World Bible Translation Committee in its work.

1941 by the same Society. [The 1985 edition of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* lists no dates.]

Based on the footnote reference material found in the *New World Translation*, we anticipate finding the Tetragrammaton in this Hebrew version. When we study the 237 *Jehovah* references, a large number of the footnotes cite J¹⁸. As expected, we will find confirmation of the Tetragrammaton exactly as listed in the *New World Translation*. Look carefully at the passage from Luke 1:16-34 reproduced on page 77. Luke 1:16, 17, 25, 28, and 32 all contain *Jehovah* references.² In each of these verses, the use of the Tetragrammaton can be verified. The footnotes ••74•• appear in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* for these verses as follows:

16*, 17# Jehovah, J^{7-18,22-24}; Lord, ÅAB.

25* Jehovah, J^{7-18,22,23}; Lord, ÅAB.

28* Jehovah, J^{5,7-18,22,23}; Lord, ÅAB.

32* Jehovah, J^{5,-18,22-24}; Lord, ÅAB.

Fortunately for us, J¹⁸ includes an English text on each facing page, allowing us to identify the Tetragrammaton and other material within the Hebrew text. The reader must be aware, however, that since all of these versions were translated into modern Hebrew, the Tetragrammaton in all of the "J" reference versions contains Hebrew vowel points. Consequently, the written form is somewhat different from what we are accustomed to seeing in Watch Tower publications. (The Watch Tower Society generally reproduces the Tetragrammaton without vowel points. For an explanation of Hebrew vowel points, refer again to Chapter 1. Refer also to the *New World Translation Reference Edition*, page 1570, Appendix 3A for more complete information.)

However, we must look at the flyleaf information from the Hebrew Christian Scripture version identified as J¹⁸. It is important enough that the title page has been reproduced on page 76.

**THE
NEW TESTAMENT
OF
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST**

Translated out of the original Greek: and with
the former translations diligently compared
and revised, by His Majesty's special command

Did you notice the lines giving reference to the source material for the Hebrew version? Read them again!

Translated out of the original Greek: and with
the former translations diligently compared ...

As we observed earlier, the word *version* simply means *translation*. Yet, while studying the Tetragrammaton in the Christian Scriptures of these Hebrew versions, it seldom occurs to us that we are talking about *translations* from the ancient Greek text.

Hebrew versions come from the Greek Scriptures

••75•• Hebrew versions are merely translations from another language into Hebrew.³ (In almost all cases, the Hebrew version was translated from *Koine* Greek, though J⁹ was translated from the

² These passages were randomly chosen simply because of the large number of times the Tetragrammaton was represented on a single page. Any other Tetragrammaton footnote references in this version would also verify the use of the Tetragrammaton in the J¹⁸ version.

³ In the August 15, 1996 *The Watchtower* article entitled, "Jesus' Coming or Jesus' Presence—Which?" the writers cite an example of contrasting Hebrew words. (The article is not, however, dealing with the divine name.) In the article on page 13, this comment regarding Hebrew versions is made: "Bear in mind that modern Hebrew versions are *translations* that may not present exactly what Matthew penned in Hebrew." (Italics theirs.)

Latin *Vulgate*. In Chapter 5, we considered the intriguing possibility that the Shem-Tob *Matthew* [J²] is a late recension of Matthew's Hebrew Gospel. If this is true, then J² must be classified as an original document rather than a translation. Further, the revisions of Shem-Tob's *Matthew* would be classified as revisions of an original Hebrew document rather than revisions of a translation. These revisions may include J³ and J⁴.) Of course, it is of interest that these particular Hebrew translators used the Tetragrammaton in their Hebrew versions. However, we are not primarily concerned with a Hebrew translator's choice of words, but the specific word used by the writers of the *original* text from which the Hebrew version was translated. While writing the Christian Greek Scriptures, *did the inspired writers use the Tetragrammaton* (written in Hebrew as יהוה) or did they use the Greek word *Kyrios* (Κύριος) in such passages as Luke 1:16, 17, 25, 28, and 32?

This particular Hebrew version tells us from which text it was translated. J¹⁸ was "*Translated out of the original Greek.*" Where, then, must we look for evidence that the original writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures used the Tetragrammaton 237 times? *We must look in the Greek Scriptures themselves!* Yet, as we have already discovered, the most reliable Greek text possessed by the Watch Tower Society uses *Kyrios* in each of these 237 instances. *In no case does the Tetragrammaton appear in the Westcott and Hort Greek text.*⁴ In 223 instances, this Greek text clearly uses the Greek word *Kyrios*

(••76••)

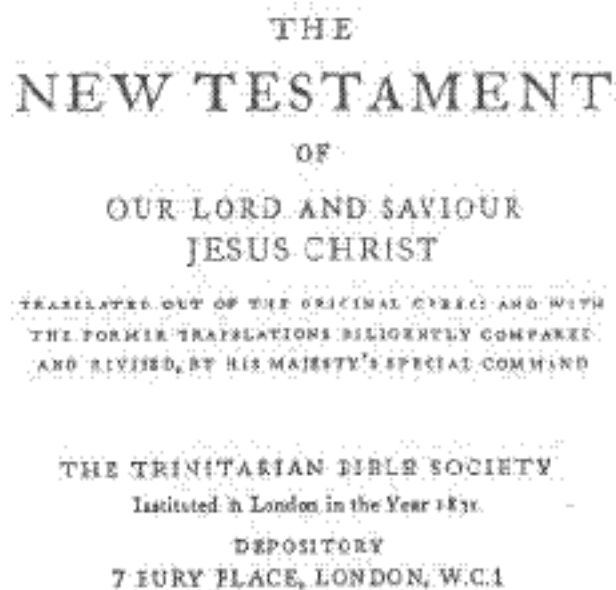


Figure 2. The English and Hebrew title pages from the Hebrew version identified as J¹⁸. Note the credit stating that the text was TRANSLATED OUT OF THE ORIGINAL GREEK.

⁴ There is another possibility which must be pursued regarding the reliability of the Greek text itself. Is the Westcott and Hort text on which the *New World Translation* based the most accurate Greek text? Is it possible that the translators of these Hebrew versions had a more reliable Greek text in the 14th to 16th centuries than exists today? Refer to Appendix E for an evaluation of the Greek texts wherein we discover that the primary text available to these Hebrew version translators was the work of Erasmus.

(Κύριος) in one of its cognate forms.⁵ In 13 instances, the Greek word *Theos*(θεος) is ••78•• used, and in one instance it comes from grammatical agreement in the sentence which again refers to *Kyrios* (Κύριος).⁶

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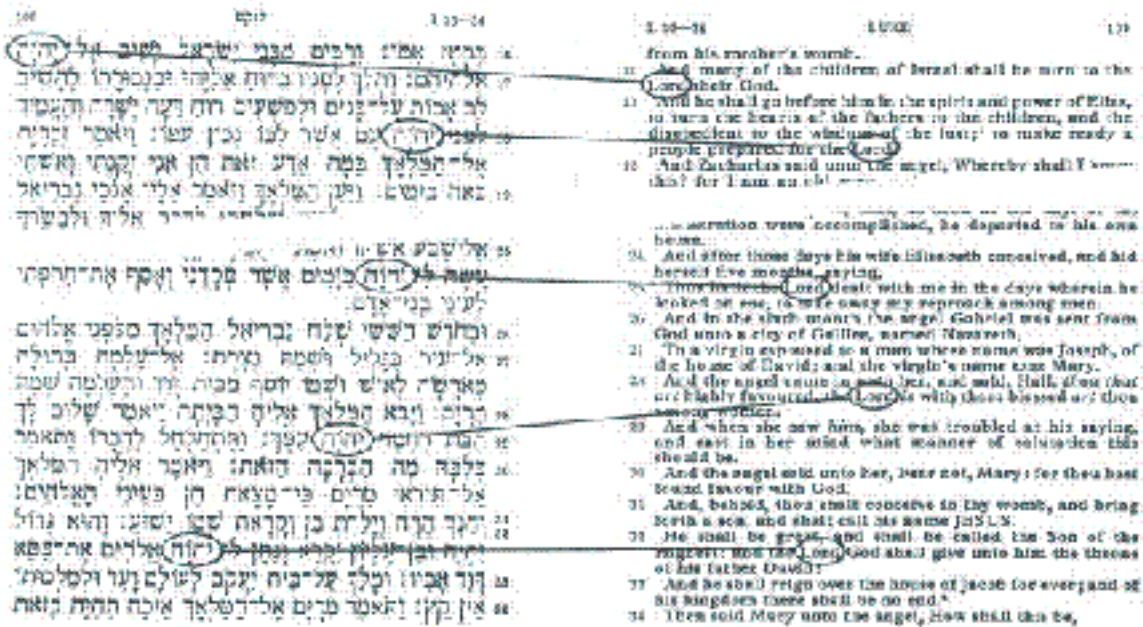


Figure 3: Luke 1 from the Hebrew version identified as J¹⁸.

Consider the implications of Hebrew texts as versions. With the exception of Shem-Tob's *Matthew* and its revisions, *all Hebrew textual sources which the New World Translation uses to substantiate that the Tetragrammaton was in the original writings of the Christian Greek Scriptures are themselves translated from the Greek text itself.*

There would be no reason to doubt that *all* Hebrew versions, unless otherwise noted, came from Greek manuscripts. However, in the absence of doing independent research on each "J" document, we can make the following statement: First, with the possible exception of the Shem-Tob *Matthew* and its revisions, no ancient Hebrew Christian documents are known to exist today. Secondly, the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* (in both its 1969 and 1985 editions) lists the following: J⁵ is "translated from the Greek;" J⁷ is a "translation from Greek Scriptures;" J⁶, J¹¹, J¹³, J¹⁵, J¹⁷, J¹⁸, J¹⁹, and J²⁴ are "translations;" J⁸, J¹², J¹⁴, and J¹⁶ are "versions;" J², J²², J²³, J²⁵, J²⁶, and J²⁷ are listed without a source; J³, J⁴, and J¹⁰ are revisions of another "J" reference; J⁹ is a "translation from the Latin *Vulgate*;" J¹ is listed as "a version ... from an ancient manuscript of *Matthew* in Hebrew;" J²¹, is the *Emphatic Diaglott*, a Greek text which uses *Kyrios*(Κύριος) in the Greek text but introduces *Jehovah* in the English text; and J²⁰, the *Concordance to the Greek Testament*, which lists all entries under the heading ΚΥΡΙΟΣ (Κύριος).

⁵ The word *cognate* means one of numerous forms of a word having a single root. The English words *sitting*, *sit*, and *sat* are cognate forms of the English verb infinitive *to sit*. See Appendix C for the cognate forms of *Kyrios* (Kuvrio").

⁶ This information is given in Appendix B.

The reader of "*All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial*" is left with no doubt that all of these versions (with the exception of J⁹) have the Greek texts as their source.

From at least the 14th century onward, translations of the Greek Scriptures into the Hebrew language have been produced. These are of interest in that a number of them have made restorations of the divine name into the Christian Scriptures. The *New World Translation* makes many references to these Hebrew versions under the symbols "J" with a superior number (page 319).

On page 309 of the same text, a box on the chart describing the *New World Translation* says, "23 Hebrew Versions ... translated either from the Greek or from the Latin Vulgate..." As already mentioned, however, J² may be a recension of an actual Christian Hebrew Gospel, and J³ and J⁴ may be a revision of this recension.

As a result of our present evaluation of textual material, we now realize that 26 (or possibly 23) Hebrew translations used to verify the ••79•• presence of the Tetragrammaton were themselves translated from a known Greek text *which does not contain the Tetragrammaton*.

Evidence used to support the Tetragrammaton

Since we no longer possess the original Christian Greek Scripture documents, we must reconstruct the text from the approximately 5,000 extant manuscript copies currently available. Some system must be devised to accomplish this task. In a general sense, this is done with a system of reciprocal relationships between the best ancient texts and the presently accepted Greek text. This can most simply be illustrated as a *textual source* line moving in time from the ancient manuscripts to the present Greek text, in which the most reliable of these manuscripts become the source of the accepted modern Greek text. However, the modern Greek text must be evaluated for its accuracy. This is done through a return *supporting evidence* line moving toward textual affirmation from the current Greek text back to the most reliable Greek manuscripts.

Does this reciprocal relationship between the most ancient extant Greek manuscripts and the modern Greek text result in a reliable reproduction of the writings of the inspired Christian authors? It must be obvious that our entire faith in the Christian Scriptures is dependent on this system for gathering evidence. The subject of this book is the Tetragrammaton, and not the entire body of Scripture writings. Yet, we must recognize that the certainty of any one part of the Christian Scriptures is no greater or lesser than the certainty of the whole. *We cannot bring the textual transmission of Kyrios in 237 instances into doubt without bringing the textual transmission process of the entire Christian Greek Scriptures into question. Conversely, if we find the Christian Greek Scriptures to be a trustworthy communication from God to man, we cannot make an exception wherein only the Tetragrammaton was removed leaving no trace in any known manuscripts today.* We are not suggesting that the reliability of God's Word depends on personal understanding. We are saying, however, that if the textual transmission process has been vindicated through careful study of ancient manuscripts for the whole of the Christian Greek Scriptures, it must be accepted as equally reliable for 237 instances of the Tetragrammaton.

Figure 4 graphically represents this system of evidence. The *textual source* line for both Erasmus'⁷ Greek text and the more recent ••80•• Westcott and Hort Greek text comes from ancient Greek

⁷ We will refer here and later to Erasmus' Greek text rather than precisely identifying a number of texts resulting from his work. Erasmus was a Dutch theologian who lived from 1466-1536. He published the first printed Greek text in 1516. His first edition was based on inferior manuscripts ranging from the tenth to the 15th centuries. He later published revisions in 1519, 1522, 1527, and 1535 with increased use of better and older manuscripts. Following Erasmus, others published Greek manuscripts which were largely based on his text, though they incorporated even earlier manuscripts. These later scholars included Robert Estienne Stephanus who published editions from Paris in 1546, 1549, 1550, and 1551. Theodore Beza published nine Greek texts in Geneva between 1565 and 1604. The *Textus Receptus* on which later editions of the *King James Version* is based is the 1550 edition of Stephanus. A later but very important text was produced by Johann Griesbach between 1796 and 1806. Its significance lies in its system of manuscript classification and the degree of his critical textual work. This is the text of the *Emphatic Diaglott* published by the Watch Tower Society. The Greek text of Erasmus and his immediate successors was a great advancement for that time. However, the 1881 edition of Westcott and Hort found in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* is a far superior Greek text. (*Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, pp. 313-314.)

manuscripts.⁸ As indicated in this figure, the earliest available Greek texts use the Greek word *Kyrios* in the majority of the 237 *Jehovah* passages found in the *New World Translation*. In no case do any of the copies of the Greek writings use the Tetragrammaton (יהוה). We can also see in the figure that the *supporting evidence* line for *Kyrios* (Κύριος) in the Westcott and Hort text goes back to the earliest available copies of the Greek writings.

However, the figure shows us something quite different regarding the *textual source* line for the divine name as found in the Christian Scriptures of the *New World Translation*. (The reader must be aware that this figure shows only the *textual source* and *supporting evidence* lines for the Tetragrammaton in the *New World Translation*. With the exception of the Tetragrammaton, the *textual source* and the *supporting evidence* for the remainder of the *New World Translation* is through the reliable Westcott and Hort Greek text which is traceable to the earliest copies of the Greek Scriptures.) The *New World Translation* uses 26 (or 23) Hebrew versions as the textual source for the Tetragrammaton in 236 of the 237 instances which use the divine name in the Christian Greek Scriptures. As a result, *the textual source and the supporting evidence are the same Hebrew versions*. There is no outside supporting evidence. But notice that these versions ••81•• were translated from Erasmus' Greek text. One can clearly study the Erasmus text in each of these 237 passages to determine whether or not the Tetragrammaton is used. Today we know that it is not! (See Appendix E for reproductions of Erasmus' Greek text.)

From our present perspective of textual and historical evidence, we now realize that the translators of the *New World Translation* should have asked, "What word does the *original Greek manuscript* use in each of these 237 instances?" The answer is easily determined. The *Kingdom*

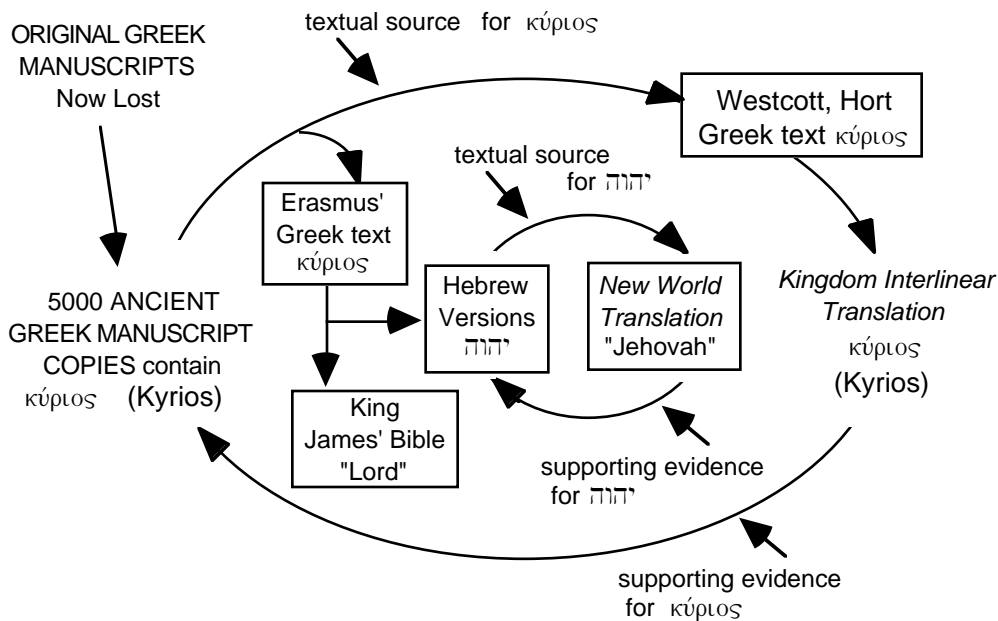


Figure 4: The textual sources for *Kyrios* (Κύριος) and the Tetragrammaton (יהוה) as used in the *New World Translation*.

⁸ The reader should understand that neither Erasmus nor Westcott and Hort had access to the original Christian Greek Scriptures. Of course, they were working from copies of copies. The Westcott and Hort text, however, represents very early manuscripts. It relies heavily on the Greek manuscripts identified as א (Aleph) and B (Vatican MS. 1209), both of which are highly reliable fourth century manuscripts. (See Appendix A for a description of these two manuscripts.)

Interlinear Translation shows us that the original Greek Scripture writers used the word *Kyrios* (Κύριος) in 223 of the 237 instances in which *Jehovah* has been inserted into the Christian Greek Scriptures of the *New World Translation*.

After evaluating the textual evidences, we also discover that it cannot be argued that the Hebrew Christian Scriptures came from more reliable ancient sources which have now been lost. All the Hebrew Christian Scriptures used as "J" references were translated since 1573⁹ C.E., and the most frequently quoted early Hebrew translation was published in 1599 C.E. These were not translations done from ancient, ••82•• lost texts. These Hebrew translations came from the same Greek texts which were used for the King James Version translated in 1611.

As we evaluate our personal understanding of the Tetragrammaton in the Christian Greek Scriptures, we often discover that we have failed to grasp the significance of the Hebrew versions as being mere *translations*. We frequently fail to realize that the footnote evidence used for the "restoration of the divine name" in the *New World Translation* is ultimately based on the very Greek texts which the translators are disputing.

We have raised an important area of inquiry in this chapter. If the Hebrew versions were based on early Greek manuscripts which have now been lost, we would need to carefully pursue a study to reconstruct these ancient texts. In so doing, we would determine whether the Hebrew versions contain manuscript evidence supporting the inspired Christian writers' use of the Tetragrammaton.

In contrast, however, we have discovered that the Hebrew versions are based on Greek manuscripts which are readily examined today. These Greek manuscripts clearly substantiate the use of *Kyrios* rather than the Tetragrammaton.



CHAPTER SUMMARY. Hebrew Christian Scriptures have two sources; they are either *recensions* or *translations*. In Chapter 5 we evaluated a recension of an early Hebrew gospel. In this chapter, we have considered an important topic when evaluating Hebrew versions. Of necessity, Hebrew versions are translated from manuscripts of another language. Consequently, it will be these source language manuscripts which will give us important information regarding the inspired Christian writers' use of the Tetragrammaton.

All Hebrew *versions* trace their source to ancient Greek manuscripts of the Christian Greek Scriptures. (The only exception is J⁹ which comes from the *Latin Vulgate*.) Inasmuch as these versions were published in the 16th century and later, we are able to verify the Greek text used as their source. In 223 instances, the Greek word *Kyrios* (Κύριος), rather than the Tetragrammaton, is found in the Greek text. The Tetragrammaton used in these Hebrew translations was never derived from יהוה in the Greek text.

⁹ This omits J¹⁻⁴ which we are counting as recensions and revisions rather than translations. J² is dated from 1385.