

# **DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE**

**How Our English Versions Came Into Being**

First edition - 1991

Revised edition - 1992

Further revised edition - 1997

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## INTRODUCTION:

1. Latin was a common language used for literature in New Testament times ("An Introduction to the New Testament" Goodspeed, page 69)
  - a. Latin was the official language of the Roman Empire ("General Biblical Introduction" H.S. Miller, page 235)
  - b. One of the three languages inscribed above the cross was "in Latin" (John 19:19-20). The Greek reads "*Rhomaisti*" which means "in Roman" (Vine).
2. The New Testament was translated into Latin at a very early time.
  - a. The "Old Latin" version was produced in North Africa between AD 175-250 (Twilley, page 39; Price, page 84)
  - b. Tertullian (AD 150-220) and Cyprian (AD 200-258) quoted extensively from Latin versions of the Bible. (Miller, page 236)
  - c. Jerome produced a "revised Latin text" AD 383-405 which became known as the "Latin Vulgate", meaning "common Latin" (Price, page 86-88; Bruce, page 1)
3. The Latin Bible was the most commonly used version in the British Isles from the 5th century onward. (Bruce, page 1)
  - a. The most reliable extant manuscript of the Latin Vulgate was made in England in AD 716 (Bruce, page 1)
  - b. Thus, for the people of the British Isles and most of Europe and North Africa, the Bible was in the Latin language from the 5th century until the 14th century.

## I. THE EARLIEST TRACES OF THE BIBLE IN "ENGLISH"

- A. The earliest form of "English" was "Anglo-Saxon" which was actually the intermingling of the languages of the old Saxons, the Angles and the Jutes. These were tribes which had migrated from Germany to Britain. (Mombert, page 2)
- B. An inscription found on a cross in England, containing a poem about the crucifixion, was written by Caedmon (monk of Whitby, England, who died AD 680). It contains the following in Anglo-Saxon, or "Old English" (the forerunner of modern English which bears little resemblance to that language today):
  1. "*God almeyottig*" (means "God Almighty")
  2. "*heafunaes hlaford*" (means "heaven's lord")
  3. "*alegdun hiae hinae limwaerignae*" (means "laid down they him limb weary") (Mombert, pages 2-3; "From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations, David Ewert, page 183)
- C. The Lindisfarne Gospels (interlinear Anglo-Saxon/Latin) were produced by the scribe Eadfrith (or Eadfride), bishop of Lindisfarne, in about AD 687. (Ewert, page 183; Mombert, page 7; Pope, pages 41-44)

D. Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne, in the south of England, translated the Book of Psalms into Anglo-Saxon but no manuscript of it has survived. He died AD 709. (Bruce, pages 5-6; Price, page 226; Pack, page 102)

1. Being a skillful musician, Aldhelm set his translation of Psalms to tunes and thus presented the scriptures in musical form, attracting large audiences that listened with great interest. (Price, page 226)

E. The Venerable Bede, a monk and historian of Jarrow, in northern England, was in the process of translating the Gospel of John into Anglo-Saxon when he died (AD 700-735). (Bruce, page 6; Price, pages 226-227)

1. One dramatic account tells of his pupil Cuthbert, who transcribed as Bede dictated, informing the great scholar, "Master, there is just one sentence more." Upon hearing this Bede said, "Write quickly" and then died shortly thereafter.
2. Unfortunately, there is no trace of Bede's Gospel of John extant today, its existence known only from other writings.

F. King Alfred the Great, of England (AD 871-901) included in his literary accomplishments a translation of the Ten Commandments.

1. Near the end of his life Alfred translated the Ten Commandments into Anglo-Saxon, incorporating them into the laws of England. Below are his words with a modern English translation beneath:

Ne lufa thu othre fremde godas ofer me.  
Not love thou other strange gods over me.

Ne minne naman ne cig thu on idelnesse.  
Not my name utter thou in vain.

Gemine that thu gehalgie thone feste (reste) daeg.  
Mind that thou hallow the festal (sabbath) day.

Ara thinum faeder and thinre meder.  
Honor thy father and thy mother.

Ne slea thu.  
Not slay thou.

Ne stala thu.  
Not steal thou.

Ne lige thu dearnunga.  
Not commit thou adultery.

Ne saege thu lease gewitnesse with thinum nehstan.  
Not say thou false witness against thy neighbor.

Ne wilna thu thines nehstan yrfes mid unrihte.  
Not desire thou thy neighbor's inheritance unrightfully.

Ne wyre thu the gyldene godas, oththe seolfrene  
Not work thou thee golden gods or silvern

(Mombert, page 6)

2. About AD 900 King Alfred produced an Anglo-Saxon translation of the "Lord's Prayer", portions of Exodus 21 through 23, Acts 15:23-29 and, just before his death, a portion of the Book of Psalms.
- G. Aldred, a priest, made an interlinear Latin/Anglo-Saxon translation of the Gospels in AD 950. The Anglo-Saxon portion of the "Lord's Prayer" is given below (with modern English beneath):

Uren fader dhic ardh in heofnas, sic gehalged dhin noma,  
Our father which art in heaven, hallowed by thy name,

to cymedh dhin ric, sic dhin uilla sue is in heofnas  
Come thy kingdom, be thy will so as in heavens

and in eordho. Vren hlaef ofer uuirthe sel vs to daeg  
and in earth. Our loaf supersubstantial give us today

and forgef vs scylda urna, sue uee forgefan sculdgun vrum  
and forgive us debts our, so we forgive debts ours,

and no inlead vridh in costnung al gefrig vrich from ifle  
and not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil

(Mombert, pages 7-8, 14; Price, page 228)

1. Aldred's Gospels, in the Northumbrian dialect, are the earliest known gospels to survive. Notice that the spelling of Anglo-Saxon words varies widely, depending upon location.
2. Here are some Anglo-Saxon words found in a 10th century translation: "*hwaer*" (where); "*sceolde*" (should); "*hys hus*" (his house); "*andswarode*" (answered); "*windas bleowun*" (winds blew); "*Hyt rinde*" (it rained); "*wyreth*" (worketh)

H. Conditions over the next few centuries which affected the Bible being translated into English:

1. England was invaded in 1066 by the Normans (French), who were not in sympathy with the English people having the scriptures in their own language.
2. During those centuries the Anglo-Saxon language underwent a gradual change until by about 1250 it emerged into what we might recognize as an early form of "English"
3. From the 11th century until the 14th century there was little interest shown in translating the scriptures into English.

## **II. THE FIRST COMPLETE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE INTO ENGLISH.**

- A. Recall that early efforts at translation were into the Anglo-Saxon language, the forerunner of English as we know it. Also, such efforts that were made involved only PORTIONS of the Bible (Psalms, Ten Commandments, Gospels, Lord's Prayer, etc.)
- B. John Wycliffe (or "Wicklif"), a Catholic priest of Lutterworth, England, was the FIRST man to translate the entire Bible into English. 1380-1384.
  1. This translation afforded the first opportunity for those who read English ONLY to be able to read the scriptures for themselves.
  2. This was a hand-written manuscript, a copy of which is on display at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, England (170 manuscripts are known today, 25 being from the original 1382 edition).
  3. Wycliffe made his translation from the Latin Vulgate of Jerome (produced in about AD 383-405)
  4. Greek manuscripts of the Bible were not yet discovered or made available to scholars at that time, nor were there men qualified to translate from the original Greek.
  5. Wycliffe was bitterly opposed by corrupt church leaders who finally succeeded in having his translation banned from circulation.
  6. All copies, being hand-written, were very valuable. It is said that a load of hay was offered for permission to read a copy for 1 hour.
  7. In 1408 the province of Canterbury declared it an offense punishable by imprisonment to be convicted of reading Wycliffe's translation. In 1414 a law was enacted requiring all persons found reading the Bible in English to "forfeit land, catel, life, and goods from their heyres for ever."
  8. Wycliffe was not the sole translator, but was aided in his work by other scholars such as Nicholas of Hereford and John Purvey.
  9. In 1382 Wycliffe was condemned by a convocation of religious leaders at Oxford. He died of a paralytic stroke in 1384.

10. In 1428 his bones were dug up and burned by decree of the Council of Constance (Pope Martin V) and scattered in the River Swift!

C. Here is a sample of Wycliffe's translation ("The Lord's Prayer"):

"Our Fadir that art in heuenes, Halewid be thi name, Thi Kingdom comme to, Be thi wille done as in heuen so in erthe. Gyve to us this dai oure breed ouer other substance, And forgive to us oure dettis, As we forgyven to oure dettouris. And leede us not in to temptacioun, But delyvere us fro yvel." (Price, pages 225-239; Bruce, pages 12-23; Mombert, pages 40-76)

### III. WILLIAM TYNDALE TRANSLATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (1526)

A. Several events, important to English Bible translation, occurred since the time of John Wycliffe:

1. With the invention of the printing press using movable type (about 1450), books could now be produced relatively quickly, uniformly and given wide circulation.
2. The first such book was Johann Gutenberg's Latin Bible in 1456, with over 80 editions appearing in Europe by 1500.
3. Paper, suitable for printing, was introduced in Europe and produced relatively cheaply.
4. A revival of learning, bringing Greek scholars into western Europe and England, followed the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453.
5. The following significant scholarly achievements and publication "firsts" came into being about this time:
  - a. In 1458 the Greek language became a course of public instruction at the University of Paris.
  - b. In 1476 the first Greek grammar appeared.
  - c. In 1492 the first Greek lexicon appeared.
  - d. In 1488 the first Hebrew Bible was published.
  - e. In 1503 the first Hebrew grammar was published.
  - f. In 1506 the first Hebrew lexicon was published.
  - g. In 1516 Erasmus, the eminent Dutch scholar, published the first complete Greek text of the New Testament.

B. William Tyndale (also spelled Tindale), an English priest and eminent Greek and Hebrew scholar, published the first *printed* New Testament translated into English from the original Greek. (1526)

1. Portions of the New Testament, published in Cologne, France, first appeared in 1525. Only one small fragment of this edition remains today.
2. Tyndale's translation was the first PRINTED New Testament.
3. The entire New Testament was finally printed in Worms, Germany in 1526 and smuggled back into England in cases, barrels, sacks of flour, bales of cloth, etc. Only two copies of this edition exist today.
4. Tyndale's famous reply to an ardent Catholic scholar, objecting to his work by saying, "We are better without God's law than without the Pope's" was

"I defy the Pope and all his laws; if God spares my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost."

4. This translation met with such opposition from Catholic authorities that Bishop Tunstall, of London, purchased copies to be burned at St. Paul's Cross. A prohibition, dated Oct. 24, 1526, required all London residents to hand over, within 30 days, "all and every one of the books containing the translation of the New Testament in the vulgar (common) tongue (English)."
5. Further evidence of opposition is seen in the incident which happened to Tyndale's brother John in 1529. It seems that John was enthusiastically circulating the banned New Testament when he was arrested and paraded through London streets sitting backwards on a horse draped with copies of the Tyndale translation and a sign around his neck saying "I have sinned against the king."
6. Tyndale's translation came out about the same time that Martin Luther's reformation was getting underway in Germany.
7. In 1536 Catholic authorities were finally successful in trying him for heresy, removing him from the priesthood and turning him over to secular authorities for execution in Brussels, Belgium. He was tied to a stake, strangled by the hangman and then his body burned. His dying words were: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."
  - a. Probably unknown to Tyndale was that for several months prior to his death, a revised version of his New Testament was circulating in England with King Henry's permission (the Coverdale Bible).
8. Before his death Tyndale had revised and corrected his New Testament (in 1534). This edition became the standard English translation which was used by several succeeding English translations, including the King James Version. In fact, the KJV is about 9/10th Tyndale's wording.
9. Example of Tyndale's 1534 rev. New Testament ("The Lord's Prayer"):

O our father which arte in heven, halowed be thy name. Let thy kyngdome come. Thy wyll be fulfilled, as well in erth, as it ys in heven. Geve vs thisdaye oure dayly breede. And forgeve vs oure treaspases, even as we forgeve oure trespassers. And leade vs not into temptacion: but delyver vs

from evell. For thyne is the kyngedome and the power, and the glorye for ever. Amen. (Notice the variations in spelling the same words. This was a common practice in Tyndale's day).

(Weigle, page 6; Geisler/Nix, pages 405-407; Bruce, pages 24-52; Price, pages 240-251; Mombert, pages 77- 149; Dearden, page 223)

#### **IV. OTHER ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS WHICH LED TO THE KING JAMES VERSION.**

##### **A. Myles Coverdale Translation (1535)**

1. This was the first complete PRINTED BIBLE (probably produced in Cologne, France)
2. Coverdale was Tyndale's assistant and the proofreader of Tyndale's 1534 revision, produced in Antwerp, Belgium.
3. By this time the "Church of England" was forming and the 1534 Convocation of Canterbury petitioned King Henry VIII "that the holy scripture should be translated into the vulgar English tongue." Coverdale's Bible, imported into England, contained a dedication to King Henry VIII.
4. Coverdale, not being an able scholar himself, followed Tyndale's translation closely. He did not translate from the Hebrew and Greek but instead used Erasmus' Latin version, the Latin Vulgate, Luther's German Bible and a Dutch version.
5. Coverdale's Bible was the first to list the Apocrypha separately, as an appendix to the Old Testament. (Bruce, pages 53-64; Price, pages 252-255; Geisler/Nix, pages 407-408; Mombert, pages 149-174)

##### **B. Matthew's Bible (1537)**

1. While the title page said, "by Thomas Matthew" this was simply a pen-name of John Rogers, another assistant of Tyndale's, who served only as compiler of this translation.
2. Matthew's Bible was actually a compilation of about two-thirds of Tyndale's 1534 revision and one- third of Coverdale's 1535 Bible.
3. It is significant that the following words appeared at the bottom of the title page of Matthew's Bible:

"Set forth with the kinges most gracyous lycence."

4. The Church of England's Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer had written to Thomas Cromwell, King Henry VIII's chief minister, urging him to obtain the royal license for this new translation so that it could be

"sold and read of every person, without danger of any act, proclamation or ordinance heretofore granted to the contrary, until such time that we, the bishops, shall set forth a better translation, which I think will not be till the day after doomsday"



5. John Rogers later became the first martyr to die under the persecution of Queen Mary (Tudor), who attempted a revival of Catholicism in England. As a rector of the Church of England, he preached a sermon against the Catholic church three days after Queen Mary's accession to the throne, which led to his arrest, trial, torture and eventual death by burning at the stake in 1555.

(Mombert, pages 201-230; Bruce, pages 64-66; Geisler/Nix, page 408; Price, pages 254-258)

### **C. The Great Bible (1539)**

1. The word "Great" was given to this edition because of its especially large size (9" X 13 ½")
2. Since all previous translations were unacceptable to authorities because of their added notations, there was a growing sentiment for a translation with the text only.
3. By the direction of Cranmer and Cromwell, Coverdale was appointed to oversee the work of Hebrew and Greek scholars in producing this translation.
4. This was the first AUTHORIZED Bible translation. By an injunction of 1538 copies were to be placed in every church building in England. In the 1540 edition, the title page contained the following words:

"This is the Byble apoynted to the use of the churches"

5. In essence, this was Tyndale's translation, revised by John Rogers (Matthew's Bible) and then revised again by competent scholars under the oversight of Myles Coverdale. It became quite popular, and was reprinted six times by the end of 1541.
6. Here is a sample of The Great Bible ("The Lord's Prayer"):

Oure father which art in heauen, halowed be thy name. Let thy kingdome come. Thy will be fulfilled, as well in erth, as it is in heuen. Geue vs this daye oure dayly bred. And forgeue vs oure dettes, as we forgeue oure detters. And leade vs not into temptation: but delyuer vs from euyll. For thyne is the kyngdom and the power, and the glorie for euer. Amen"

(Weigle, pages 11-13; Geisler/Nix, page 409; Price, pages 256-259; Bruce, pages 69-80)

### **D. The Geneva Bible (1560)**

1. During the brief reign of Catholic Queen Mary (1553-1558) a fierce persecution was waged against Church of England scholars resulting in the deaths of nearly 300 persons, including John Rogers and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, who were burned at the stake.
2. Many Church of England (also called Anglican) scholars fled to Geneva, Switzerland where the religious climate was conducive to great advances in Biblical studies. Such men as John Calvin, John Knox and Theodore Beza were active in preaching and writing in Geneva during this period.
3. It was in Geneva that Protestant scholars, under the direction of William Whittingham, in 1557, produced a careful and accurate translation of the New Testament. A revision of it, together

with the Old Testament, came out in 1560 and proved very popular for many years. (It went through 140 editions over the next 84 years).

4. Based upon Tyndale's latest edition, the Geneva Bible divided each verse into a separate paragraph, using italics for words supplied which were not in the original. It was the first Bible printed in Roman type instead of "Old English" script.
5. It contained strongly Calvinistic footnotes which proved unacceptable to Anglican churchmen but found favor with the Puritans who brought it to America (on the Mayflower).
6. Although it was never appointed to be read in the churches, the Geneva Bible contained a dedication to English Queen Elizabeth and became the household Bible of English-speaking Protestants.

(Weigle, pages 13-15; Dennett, pages 24-25; Bruce, pages 81-92; Geisler/Nix, page 410; Mombert, pages 239- 265; Price, pages 260-265)

#### **E. The Bishops' Bible (1568)**

1. The idea, first presented under King Henry VIII a number of years earlier, was for a group of Anglican bishops to be commissioned to prepare an "authorized" Bible. The objectionable footnotes of the Geneva Bible led to a revival of that plan (see IV. B. 4 above).
2. Under the direction of Archbishop Matthew Parker (Church of England), a group of about eight Anglican bishops set about producing a translation based on the Great Bible. Their limited scholarship, however, made this translation somewhat less accurate than the Geneva Bible.
3. The Bishops' Bible became the official Bible of the Church of England and was ordered by the 1571 Convocation of Canterbury to be placed in the house of every archbishop and bishop and that copies should be made available to be read in every cathedral and church building.

(Weigle, pages 15-20; Dennett, page 25; Bruce, pages 92-95; Geisler/Nix, page 411; Mombert, pages 265-293; Price, pages 264-266; Foster, page 22)

#### **F. The Douay-Rheims Bible (1582-1609)**

1. This translation was made by Roman Catholic scholars from the Latin Vulgate of Jerome (AD 383- 405) under the direction of Gregory Martin, an Englishman who founded a college in northeastern France.
2. The New Testament was translated in Rheims, France in 1582 and the Old Testament in Douay, France in 1609. Hence, the name "Douay-Rheims" (sometimes spelled "Doway-Rhemes" etc.). It contained notes strongly favorable to Catholic doctrine.
3. The Douay-Rheims translation was revised by Catholic Bishop Richard Challoner (1749-1750) and has been the official Catholic Bible until recent years when replaced by more modern speech Catholic versions (New American Bible, 1970).

(Bruce, pages 113-126; Geisler/Nix, pages 412-417; Mombert, pages 293-338; Price, pages 266-267; Foster, page 22, Pope, pages 249-307, 339-506)

## V. THE KING JAMES VERSION (1611)

A. By the beginning of the 1600's, the most common Bibles in use were the following:

1. The Great Bible (1539) was now over 60 years old and considered antiquated by many.
2. The Geneva Bible (1560) contained notes that were viewed as more favorable to the Puritan party of the Church of England and some even felt that it contained passages condoning disobedience to kings.
3. The Bishops' Bible (1568) was considered by some to be a much inferior translation.
4. All of this led to a general feeling among church leaders that a new translation was needed. The time for just a translation seemed "ripe."

B. On January 14, 1604, at Hampton Court, England, a conference was held between King James I (of the house of Stuart) and 21 leading churchmen (17 Anglican and 4 Puritans) to discuss things "pretended to be amiss in the church."

1. It was at this conference that John Reynolds, a leader of the Puritan party of the Church of England, suggested that a newly authorized Bible translation be produced.
2. This proposal was opposed by Bishop Richard Bancroft of the established church party on the grounds that

"If every man's humour were followed, there would be no end to translating"

3. But King James I was favorable to the suggestion of Reynolds and proceeded to appoint scholars and lay out rules to govern work on the project.

C. The procedure followed in producing the "King James Version" Bible of 1611:

1. Forty-seven scholars (originally 54) from Oxford and Cambridge universities were assigned to do the work of translation. They were divided into six committees:
  - a. Pentateuch and historical books to the end of Kings. Ten men from Cambridge.
  - b. Chronicles to Ecclesiastes. Eight men from Cambridge.
  - c. The Prophets. Seven men from Oxford.
  - d. The Apocrypha. Seven men from Cambridge.
  - e. The Gospels, Acts and Revelation. Eight men from Oxford.
  - f. The Epistles. Seven men, mostly from Cambridge.

2. Translation began in 1606 and proceeded according to the following rules (among others):
  - a. The Bishops' Bible was to be the basis of this new translation with as little alteration as the original languages would permit.
  - b. The names of the Prophets and other Bible persons were to be retained in their popular form.
  - c. Old ecclesiastical words (that is, those that had been in use for many years in church creeds and ancient writings) were to be retained (such as "church", "bishop", "baptize", "apostle", etc.)
  - d. Chapter divisions were to be altered as little as possible.
  - e. Marginal notes were to be kept to a minimum, and then used only for explaining Hebrew and Greek words.
  - f. Cross references were to be added in order to help the Scriptures to become self-explanatory.
3. Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of Biblical books were to be consulted. However, the eight oldest manuscripts then available to the translators dated back ONLY to the 10th century (the 900's). They did NOT have available to them the three oldest manuscripts, discovered since that time (in the 1800's).
4. Besides Erasmus' Greek text (1516) as their basis, they also consulted the Peshitta Syriac (A.D. 150), Jerome's Latin Vulgate (383-405), the Septuagint (250 B.C.), Luther's German Bible (the 1530's), as well as Bibles in French, Dutch, Spanish and Italian. They attempted to incorporate the best readings from the above sources.
5. The entire work was to be reviewed by a panel of bishops and then approved by the King's council. Any competent scholar was to be consulted and whatever differences that arose were to be settled at a General Council with the final work being ratified by royal authority.
6. Here is a quotation from the Translators' Preface, written by Dr. Miles Smith:

"(We translators) never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation...but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one not justly to be accepted against."

#### D. Objections brought against the King James Version Bible.

1. It was "different"...an objection that has been raised against nearly every new translation ever since then.
2. It was alleged that it supported the King's belief in witches. Because something is mentioned in a particular translation, it does not necessarily mean that it is either endorsed or condemned.
3. It changed the customary wording of former translations ("love" became "charity"; "congregation" became "church", etc.)

4. Dr. Hugh Broughton, an eminent Hebrew scholar of that day, objected to King James by saying:

"Tell His Majesty that I had rather be rent in pieces by wild horses, than any such translation, by my consent, should be urged upon poor churches...the new edition crosseth me...I require it to be burnt." (Although some say that he was disgruntled over not being appointed to the panel of translators).

- E. The King James Version, also called "Authorized Version" has undergone numerous revisions and corrections (though some very slight) since it was originally published in 1611.

1. Slight revisions were made in 1613, 1629, 1638, 1653, 1701, 1762 (by Dr. Paris), 1769 (by Dr. Blayney) involving changes in the text, spelling, omission of Apocrypha or Preface, etc.
2. The revision of 1806 is substantially the King James version we have today (with minor changes).
3. More recent attempts at retaining the "basic" King James Version, while incorporating certain changes, have led to the King James II (Jay Green), Children's, Teenage and Modern King James Versions (Green), The New King James Version (1979-NT; 1982-Bible).

(Robertson, pages 17-24; Bruce, pages 96-112; Weigle, pages 16-96; Geisler/Nix, pages 417-422; Price, pages 268-277; Foster, pages 50-52; Mombert, pages 338-442; Carson's "The King James Version Debate" is an excellent critique).

## **VI. ENGLISH REVISED VERSION (1881-1885)**

- A. By the 1860's there had emerged several good reasons for needing a new translation of the Bible.

1. It had been about 250 years (KJV of 1611) since a MAJOR revision of the Bible had been produced.
2. Although about 100 English translations of the Bible or New Testament had been produced during that 250 year period (with some being very good ones), none had commanded the popular acceptability that the King James Version had enjoyed. (See "Translations of the English Bible: Revisions and Versions, A Reference Guide" by A. C. Brown; "The Complete Book of Bible Versions" by Philip W. Comfort; and "So Many Versions" by Sakae Kubo and Walter F. Specht)
3. By this time a great abundance of ancient Greek Biblical manuscripts were becoming available for study. This included the Sinaitic, Vaticanus and Alexandrian manuscripts as well as writings of the early church fathers.
4. The skills required for making accurate translations of ancient documents (such as the Bible) had greatly improved.
5. Scholars had become much better acquainted with the original Biblical languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek), and thereby were now able to produce much better translations.

6. Many words, which were commonly understood in the 1600's, had undergone such changes in meaning that the King James Version was becoming increasingly difficult for 20th century readers to understand.

B. The suggestion to make a revision of the King James Version.

1. On February 10, 1870, at the Convocation of Canterbury (Church of England), it was suggested by Bishop Samuel Wilberforce (Bishop of Winchester) that the King James Version be revised due to its inaccuracies and obsolete wording.
2. After an extensive report on the proposed project was presented that same year, two companies of translators, one for the Old Testament and one for the New Testament, were appointed to begin the work of translation.
  - a. The actual work on the translation (actually a revision) was begun in 1871.
  - b. The names of the 52 British scholars involved in this significant project are preserved. (See "Historical Catalogue of Printed Bible - 1525-1961" by A. S. Herbert, pages 427-428)
  - c. Twenty-seven American scholars joined the work a year later. (The actual total number of translators involved in the work at any one time varied as some resigned or died and others were appointed to replace them).
  - d. The scholars represented a cross-section of renowned theologians and language experts from Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational, Anglican and other churches.
  - e. It has been suggested that this assemblage of translators represented the greatest gathering of distinguished and competent scholars ever to participate in a single project. Those working on this translation included such Biblical commentators and lexicographers as Westcott, Hort, Stanley, Lightfoot, Trench, Ellicott, Angus, Moulton, Milligan, Scrivener, Strong, Thayer, Schaff, etc.

C. Some of the procedures followed in producing the English Revised Version (called ERV) of 1881-1885.

1. It was to be a REVISION of the King James Version, with as few changes as possible and then ONLY where the Greek and Hebrew texts and English clarity seemed to demand them.
2. Each passage being revised was to be gone over TWICE carefully by each company of translators, with the final decision being determined by a 2/3rds vote of the companies. The British and American companies exchanged drafts for review and suggestions.
3. The English Revised New Testament, differing from the King James Version in some 36,000 places, was first published in England on May 17, 1881, after 10 years of painstaking work. The Old Testament was published four years later in 1885.
4. A later edition of this version (incorporating the word preferences of the American company of translators) was published in America in 1901 and called the American Standard Version (ASV). See VII. A. 1.

D. The reception given to the English Revised Version.

1. Over one million advance copies were sold in America. In less than one year nearly 3 million copies were sold in Britain and America.
2. On May 22, 1881, much of the New Testament was teletyped from New York to Chicago and appeared in the Chicago Times and the Chicago Tribune.
3. There were objections to this translation because of such things as its use of paragraphs (instead of each verse being a paragraph), the use of altered wording in familiar passages, a difference in the "rhythm" from the King James Version, etc.
4. As was the case with the King James Version (and most others throughout history), the English Revised Version met with considerable opposition for many years.

E. The value of the English Revised Version (especially the American Standard Version of it).

1. It attained a greater degree of accuracy throughout in translating articles, verbs tenses, prepositions and shades of word meaning, than previous versions.
2. By the use of paragraphs, dividing one thought, subject or event from others, the understanding of many passages is greatly improved.
3. It eliminated numerous obsolete words, replacing them with words that were meaningful to English speaking people at the turn of the century.
  - a. "Conversation" (in the KJV) was changed to "conduct, behavior" I Peter 3:1-2.
  - b. "Communications" was changed to "companionships" I Cor. 15:33.
  - c. "Take no thought" was changed to "be not anxious" Matt. 6:34.
  - d. "Anon" was changed to "immediately" Mark 1:30.
  - e. "Prevent" was changed to "precede, go before" I Thess. 4:15.
  - f. "Let" was changed to "hinder" Rom. 1:13. (Here is a case where the meaning became just the opposite of what it meant in the 1611 KJV).
  - g. "Wit, wot, wist" were changed to "know, knew" Acts 23:5; Rom. 11:2.
4. By rephrasing or using a better word, the meaning of numerous passages was clarified.
  - a. "Charity" (in the KJV) was changed to "love" I Cor. 13.
  - b. "Give with simplicity" was changed to "give with liberality" Rom. 12:8.
  - c. II Cor. 5:21 clarified that it was JESUS, not US who knew no sin.
  - d. Rom. 6:17 clarified that "thanks" was NOT to be given for "being servants of sin."
  - e. "Holy Ghost" was changed to "Holy Spirit" throughout. ("Ghost" having become associated with "spooky things")

- f. "Too superstitious" was changed to "very religious" (which is the meaning of the Greek Acts 17:22).
  - g. "Hell" was changed to "Hades" when being translated from the Greek word "hades." "Hell" was retained when it came from "Gehenna."
  - h. "Damnation" was changed to "condemnation".
5. While the changes for the better made the translation far superior to the King James Version, the revisers purposely avoided doing away with such archaisms as "thee", "thou", "thy", "art", and words ending in "eth".
- F. While the English Revised Version was a distinct improvement over the King James Version, it failed to replace the older version as the most commonly used Bible of the English speaking world. (Geisler/Nix, pages 422- 425; Mombert, pages 442-521; Bruce, pages 135-152; Robertson, pages 25-38; Price, pages 278-291; Dennett, pages 33- 34).

## **VII. TRANSLATIONS AND VERSIONS SINCE THE ENGLISH REVISED VERSION.**

A. Committee translations, produced by a panel of linguistic and literary scholars.

### **1. American Standard Version (1901).**

- a. This is the basic text of the English Revised Version, but with the preferences of the American company of revisers incorporated into the text.
- b. George Day served as Secretary of the Old Testament committee; Joseph H. Thayer (who produced Thayer's Lexicon) was Secretary of the New Testament committee.
- c. Reasons why this translation has been widely regarded as perhaps the most accurate since its introduction over 100 years ago.
  - (1) The recognized scholarship of the committee of revisers.
  - (2) The broad base of Evangelical scholarship making up the committee tended to insure it against any particular bias.
  - (3) The extreme care taken in its preparation stretched over some 30 years.
  - (4) The wealth of ancient, authentic manuscripts, papyri and tablets not previously available to Bible translators.
  - (5) The translators made use of the most current Bible revisions in the languages of Germany, France, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway.
  - (6) Because of its almost universal recognition by scholars as such an excellent translation the ASV earned the nick-name "the rock of Biblical honesty."



- d. The need for an American revision of the English Revised Version was evident from the numerous antiquated words, phrases or spellings that had been retained in the ERV of 1881- 1885.
  - (1) Such obsolete words as the following were replaced: "Bewray," "grisled," "holpen," "hough," "marish," "sith," "strowed," "hale," "chapiter," etc.
  - (2) Certain exclusively "English" words also had to be replaced because they were unfamiliar to American readers: "corn" (meaning "grain"); "charger" (meaning "platter"); "chapmen" (meaning "traders"); "occupiers" (meaning "merchants"); "fat" (meaning "vat"), etc. (Price, pages 288-291; Mombert, pages 499-521; Miller, pages 379- 383; Dennett, pages 77-79; Robertson, pages 35-38; Lewis, pages 69-105)

## **2. Revised Standard Version (1946-NT; 1952-Bible)**

- a. A revision of the American Standard Version was first proposed in 1937. Its design was to bring the ASV's language into more current usage.
- b. Thirty-two scholars, headed up by Dr. Luther Weigle and assisted by an Advisory Board of some 50 representatives of cooperating denominations, made up the translation committee. The entire project was under the auspices of the National Council of Churches.
- c. It made use of a large body of Greek papyri discovered and made available to scholars since the ASV was produced at the turn of the century.
- d. While generally considered to be a good translation, the RSV shows evidence in places of liberal scholarship regarding several important doctrinal issues.
  - (1) Through the use of certain pronouns and in other ways the divinity of Jesus is not given adequate recognition by the translators. (The principal objection centered on translating Isa. 7:14 as "young woman")
  - (2) Liberal theology regarding the authorship of the inspired books is noticeable in a few places.
  - (3) Old Testament prophecy and New Testament fulfillment are not harmonious in places.
- e. In 1989 a revision of the RSV was published called the New Revised Standard Version. Sponsored by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., it makes use of the discoveries and interpretations of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other recent Hebrew language studies. (Lewis, pp. 107-128)

## **3. New American Standard Bible (1963-NT; 1970-Bible)**

- a. Fifty-eight anonymous Biblical scholars under the sponsorship of the Lockman Foundation (producers of the Amplified Bible) worked on this translation with Dr. Reuben Olsen serving as chairman of the editorial board.

- b. With the ASV fast disappearing from use among English speaking people, evangelical scholars felt the need for a more conservative translation than that afforded by the rather liberal RSV of 1946-1952.
- c. Although its title sounds like a revision of the ASV, "the gulf separating the ASV and NASB is such that the NASB must be evaluated as a new translation" (Lewis, page 167).
- d. The NASB claims only "to follow principles used in the ASV" and actually "abandons the textual choices underlying the ASV in numerous cases and reverts to the readings underlying the KJV" Lewis, pages 167, 173)
- e. Its conservative theological stance and definite improvement over the ASV are evident although, as with all translations, it has its areas of weakness. (Acts 10:43 in first edition was corrected in subsequent editions - 1977).
- f. Among the more recent translations, the NASB tends toward greater literalness, while perhaps sacrificing some degree of readability. (Lewis, pages 165-197)
- g. An "Updated Version," with minor changes, was released in 1995.

#### **4. New International Version (1973-NT; 1978-Bible)**

- a. This translation, first proposed in 1965, was produced by a committee of over 100 scholars under the sponsorship of the New York International Bible Society (now International Bible Society).
- b. The conservative scholars who worked on this translation were from the following churches: Anglican, Assemblies of God, Baptist, Brethren, Independent Christian Church, Christian Reformed, Church of Christ, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, etc.
- c. This is a fresh translation, not a revision of any previous one, which uses a rather free style but is generally quite accurate. It was 15 years in the making.
- d. Among its noticeable departures from other translations, and objectionable to some, is the substituting of "sinful nature" for "flesh" in many passages.
- e. "While striving for accuracy, dignity and clarity, the NIV has moved beyond the RSV, the NEB and the NASB in attaining a contemporary style for the English reader." (Lewis, page 314).
- f. In 1991 the NIV surpassed the KJV in sales of Bibles in Christian bookstores in America. This attests to its growing popularity. (Lewis, pages 293-328)
- g. A new edition, with minor changes, was released in 1984.
- h. A "gender-inclusive" version appeared in 1995 (see VII., I., 4)

## **5. New English Bible (1961-NT; 1970-Bible)**

- a. The NEB project, first initiated in 1946, was a cooperative effort of Protestant churches in the British Isles (Church of England, Church of Scotland, Church of Wales, Church of Ireland, along with British Methodist, Baptist and Congregational churches). Most of the translators would be classed as theological liberals.
- b. This is a completely new and fresh translation which emphasizes literary and stylistic qualities in a rather free style which involves some degree of paraphrasing. For this and other reasons, the NEB has not gained widespread use among evangelicals.
- c. Because of its being produced by British scholars, many words and phrases sound strange to American ears:
  - (1) "Fell foul" (Mark 6:3); "Meal tub" (Matt. 5:15); "Bedizened" (Rev. 17:4); "Stipend" (I Tim. 5:17); "Constable" (Matt. 5:25), etc.
  - (2) Some departures from the literal Greek are unfortunate: "On the Saturday night" should really be "On the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7).
- d. In 1989 a revision of the New English Bible, called the Revised English Bible, was produced. The translators' panels were under the chairmanship of W.D. McHardy and the 20-30 year old translation underwent a "major" revision. (Lewis, pages 129-163; Ewert, pages 232-235)

## **6. Today's English Version (also called Good News Bible) (1966-NT; 1976-Bible)**

- a. This translation, sponsored by the American Bible Society, was produced by a committee of scholars under the direction of Robert G. Bratcher, a Southern Baptist, who was responsible for the basic text.
- b. It is a completely new translation, with a considerable degree of paraphrasing. It downplays literary style in favor of gaining accuracy in communication.
- c. It has undergone modification in text and translation over the course of its four editions.
- d. Due to its principle of "dynamic equivalence" (attempting to produce the same impression on current readers as the original did on its readers), it takes liberties with the Greek text in a number of places:
  - (1) "On Saturday evening" (Acts 20:7)
  - (2) "It is through faith alone" (Rom. 1:17 in the original, now changed due to numerous objections).
  - (3) "Virgin" in the original edition of Luke 1:27 is now "girl". (Lewis, pages 261-291)

## **7. Jerusalem Bible (1966)**

- a. This translation was made from the French "La Bible de Jerusalem" (1956) by a committee of 27 Roman Catholic scholars and literary experts under the direction of Alexander Jones, of England, general editor. However, they did make use of the Latin Vulgate and Greek texts in its production.
- b. It is a fresh translation in a rather free style as opposed to a closely literal version.
- c. Being produced by Catholic scholars, it is to be expected that it would reflect their viewpoint on doctrinal matters.

The footnote for Matt. 1:25 comments, "...Mary's perpetual virginity which, however, the gospels elsewhere suppose and which the Tradition of the Church affirms."

- d. This translation also exhibits an ecumenical atmosphere and "represents the theological stance of liberal literary and historical criticism" (Lewis, page 201) which questions the authorship and dates of some Bible books.
- e. In 1985 a revision of the Jerusalem Bible, called the New Jerusalem Bible, was produced. It was based on the 1973 revision of the French "Bible de Jerusalem" and claims somewhat less paraphrasing than its predecessor. (Lewis, pages 199-214)

## **8. New American Bible (1970)**

- a. Not to be confused with the New American Standard Bible, this translation was sponsored by the Roman Catholic Bishops' Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. It was produced by a committee of some 50 scholars, members of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, together with a few non-Catholics for ecumenical flavoring.
- b. The editors-in-chief devoted 25 years to its preparation and it now replaces the Douay-Rheims (and its revisions) as the official Catholic Bible. It is the first Catholic Bible to utilize Hebrew and Greek manuscripts rather than only the Latin Vulgate to determine the original Biblical text.
- c. Its footnotes, characteristic of Catholic Bibles, tend toward establishing Catholic doctrine. For example, Matt. 16:18 has the following comment, "'rock' is here conferred on Simon as a personal name to indicate his role as the firm foundation on which Jesus builds his church."
- d. In 1986 an edition of the New American Bible New Testament was produced which claims to be a "thorough revision." But, unlike other recent revisions, this NAB seems to retain its same name.

## **9. The Amplified Bible (1958-NT; 1965-Bible)**

- a. A group of Hebrew and Greek scholars, sponsored by the Lockman Foundation, and under the direction of Frances E. Siewart, produced this rather unusual "translation."

- b. It is actually an "expanded" type of translation which incorporates, as part of the text itself, words and phrases taken from 27 other translations, several Greek lexicons, word study books and even commentaries. These "additions" constitute alternative meanings of words, word explanations and synonyms, and are sometimes enclosed in brackets ([ ]).
- c. In 1987 the Lockman Foundation acted jointly with Zondervan Bible Publishers in issuing The Amplified Bible, Expanded Edition, which appears to be the same text, but with additional study notes and a concordance.

### **10. Berkeley Version (1945-NT; 1959-Bible)**

- a. Dr. Gerrit Verkuyl, a Presbyterian, produced his Berkeley Version New Testament in 1945 (from Berkeley, CA). With the aid of a staff of 20 theologians, the Old Testament was produced in 1959.
- b. This is a completely new, fresh translation, not a revision. Its English, in places, reads less smoothly than some of the other modern speech translations.
- c. A distinctive feature is its abundance of footnotes which not only explain word meanings, but also include textual variations, historical notes, interpretations and even "application" comments on moral issues.
- d. In 1969, "several experienced Bible scholars" revised the New Testament by making "numerous changes in the New Testament text, explanatory notes and headings." This effort warranted calling the revision The Modern Language Bible, The New Berkeley Version of the New Testament.) (Ewert, pages 231-232) (Also see A. C. Brown, Wayne Walden, Lewis Foster, Herbert Dennett, Jack P. Lewis, David Ewert)

### **11. Contemporary English Version (1991-NT)**

- a. The CEV is a completely new translation "not an adaptation of any existing translation or translations" produced by the American Bible Society.
- b. In its early stages the translators submitted drafts to "biblical scholars, theologians and educators representing a wide variety of denominations" for their review and comment. In addition, these drafts were sent also to "more than forty United Bible Society translation consultants around the world."
- c. A sample of how the CEV attempts to "restructure" certain Biblical words, according to the "dynamic equivalence" principle, appears in its rendering of "grace" in Acts 20:32:

"I now place you in God's care. Remember the message about his great kindness! This message can help you and give you what belongs to you as God's people."  
CEV

"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." NIV

- d. In keeping with modern marketing practices, the CEV is being made available under such titles as "Life Source: The Handbook for Life," and "The Bible For Today's Family"

## **12. The New Translation (1990-NT Letters)**

- a. This translation was produced by The Society for the New Translation, consisting of "several world class scholars" with Kenneth N. Taylor serving as Secretary and Literary Editor.
- b. Its specialties include a careful italicizing of supplied words and the use of "inclusive" language which uses "whoever" for "he" in numerous places.
- c. It also follows the NIV's lead in substituting "sinful nature" for "flesh" throughout.

## **B. Modern speech translations (often paraphrased), usually produced by an individual translator.**

### **1. Weymouth Translation (1903)**

- a. Richard F. Weymouth produced "The New Testament in Modern Speech", based on his own Greek text.
- b. Later editions were partly revised by Ernest Hampden-Cook, James A. Robertson and others. It is still in print after having gone through at least five editions (each slightly revised, some with theologically liberal renderings).

### **2. Moffatt Translation (1913-NT; 1924-Bible)**

- a. This version, by James Moffatt, called "A New Translation of the Bible" became very popular as it underwent several revisions (latest in 1935).
- b. It contains much paraphrasing and some liberal renderings.
- c. The Moffatt translation uses "The Eternal" for Jehovah and "barge" for ark.

### **3. Goodspeed Translation (1923-NT; 1927-Bible)**

- a. Edgar J. Goodspeed's translation, called "An American Translation" contains a good bit of paraphrasing and is considered somewhat liberal in its renderings.
- b. The Old Testament portion was produced by a group of scholars under the direction of J. M. Powis Smith.
- c. This translation uses "car" for chariot in Acts 8:29 and "Enoch" for Noah in I Peter 3:19.

#### **4. Montgomery Translation (1924)**

- a. Helen Barrett Montgomery, one of a handful of women translators, produced "The New Testament in Modern Speech" (also called "The Centenary Translation") to commemorate the 100th year anniversary of Bible distribution by the American Baptist Publication Society.

#### **5. Phillips Translation (1958)**

- a. J. B. Phillips, a Vicar of the Church of England, began translating "The New Testament in Modern English" during World War II to meet the needs of his church youth group which found the KJV difficult to comprehend.
- b. This translation is highly paraphrased. It underwent a few minor changes (1960) until it was thoroughly revised in 1972.
- c. Some unusual (and controversial) renderings appear in the Phillips translation, which nonetheless has gained considerable popularity.

(1) "Give each other a hearty handshake all around in Christian love" Rom. 16:16.

(2) "To hell with you and your money" Acts 8:20.

#### **6. Beck Translation (1963-NT; 1976-Bible)**

- a. William F. Beck translated "The New Testament in the Language of Today" and, with the help of two other scholars, later produced the Old Testament.
- b. One significant feature of the Beck translation is that he made use of the two oldest Biblical papyri (P66, formerly dated c. 200, now c. 125, and P75 dating to c. 200)
- c. Although involving some paraphrasing, the Beck translation provides a clear expression of the Biblical message.

#### **7. Barclay Translation (1968-Gospels/Acts; 1969-Letters/Revelation)**

- a. William Barclay, distinguished British scholar, produced "The New Testament: A New Translation". His two objectives were to provide a translation for someone who was "not a technical scholar" and which "did not need a commentary to explain it."

- b. Some of his renderings were interpretive, instead of being strict translations, however:

"On the *Saturday evening* we met for our *common meal*" (Acts 20:7). The NIV says, "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread."

- c. Other renderings, although somewhat paraphrased, seem to clarify meaning very well:

"It takes more than bread to keep a man alive; man's life depends on every word that God speaks." (Matt. 4:4)

## 8. Living Bible (1967-NT; 1971-Bible)

- a. Kenneth N. Taylor produced this very free paraphrase, initially in portions ("Living Letters," "Living Gospels" etc.) in an attempt to meet the needs of his children who asked him questions when being read to from the King James Version.
- b. Because of many of its very questionable renderings, it fails to qualify as a legitimate "translation" since it incorporates explicit interpretations into the text itself or the footnotes.

(1) "Abraham found favor with God by faith alone" Rom. 4:12

(2) The footnote under "born of water" John 3:5 says, "Physical birth is not enough...interprets 'born of water' as the normal process observed during every human birth."

(3) "In baptism we show that we have been saved from death and doom..." I Peter 3:21

(4) Premillennialism is taught by the insertion of such unwarranted phrases as "when he appears to set up his kingdom" II Tim. 4:1 (See also Isa. 2:2-4).

(5) Perhaps the most untenable of all possible interpretations is found in the initial volume ("Living Letters" 1962): "Give a warm welcome to any brother who wants to join you as a member of the church, even if he scarce believes that Christ alone can save him." Rom. 14:1 (This was changed to "even though his faith is weak" in subsequent editions).

- c. Certain crudities, changed or softened in later revisions, met with strong objections:

(1) The false god Baal is said to be perhaps, "out sitting on the toilet" I Kings 18:27.

(2) "Saul boiled with rage. 'You son of a bitch' he yelled at him." I Samuel 20:30 (1985 revision says, "You fool!")

(3) "'You illegitimate bastard, you' they shouted." John 9:34 (His footnote shows how unwarranted such a "translation" is by saying "Literally, 'You were altogether born in sin.'")

- d. **New Living Translation (1996)**

(1) This is a revision of The Living Bible. In their own words: "...ninety evangelical scholars from various theological backgrounds and denominations were commissioned in 1989 to begin revising The Living Bible. The end result of this seven-year process is the Holy Bible, New Living Translation..." ("A Note to Readers, " The Publishers, July 1996). It is, however, considerably less of a paraphrase than The Living Bible.

## 9. The Message: The New Testament in Contemporary English (1993)



- a. The “translator” is Eugene H. Peterson, professor at Regent College, Vancouver, B.C.
- b. This is *not* just another paraphrase, but a *notoriously loose rewriting* of many passages (See Matt. 6:9; John 14:28; Rom. 16:19; I Cor. 1:10; I Cor. 1:17; I Cor. 6:18; Eph. 4:26; II Thess. 2:9, etc.).

**C. Limited vocabulary translations produced for the benefit of children, those with learning disabilities or those learning English as a second language.**

**1. Basic English Bible (1949)**

- a. S. H. Hooke produced this translation by using "Basic English," a special 850 word vocabulary, to which he added 150 additional "Biblical" words, making it 1000.

**2. Charles Kingsley Williams translation (1952)**

- a. By the use of a "common word" vocabulary of 1660 words, Williams produced "A New Translation in Plain English."

**3. Norlie translation (1961)**

- a. Olaf M. Norlie produced "A New Translation in Modern English for Today's Readers" by using "simpler words" and "shorter sentences."

**4. Green translations (1960, 1962)**

- a. In an attempt at simplification, Jay P. Green produced slightly altered KJV versions he called "Children's King James Version" (1960); "Children's Version of the Holy Bible" (1962); and "Teenage Version of the Holy Bible" (1962).
- b. This same translator (apparently addicted to the KJV) also produced "Modern King James Version" (1962); "The Living Scriptures: A New Translation in the King James Tradition" (1966); "King James II" (1970-1971), etc. These are all very slightly warmed over KJV's!

**5. Cressman translation (1969)**

- a. Annie Cressman, one of the few women translators, produced "The New Testament in Worldwide English" (also called "Good News for the World") intended for those who are beginners in learning the English language.

**6. Ledyard translations (1969)**

- a. Gleason H. Ledyard used "about 850 different words" to produce "The Children's New Testament". He says that "many Bible scholars, grammarians and other well-qualified critics have had a part in checking the rough draft, work sheets, and final manuscript over a period of nearly four years."

- b. Slightly revised editions of Ledyard's translations were later produced under the name "New Life Testament" (1977) and "New Life Bible" (1986), etc.
- c. The idea for this translation, Ledyard tells us, first came to him and his wife Kathryn in a Canadian Arctic igloo as they were working with a few primitive Eskimos who were just starting to learn English.

## **7. Deaf/Easy-To-Read/International Children's/New Century Version**

- a. This version, produced anonymously by the World Bible Translation Center in 1978, was originally intended for use by the deaf community. Certain words of the original were restructured into the closest English equivalents suitable for being conveyed by sign language.
- b. With slight revisions in 1980, it was marketed as "The New Testament: A New Easy-to-Read Version". By 1983, it was issued, with almost identical wording, as "International Children's Version". In 1984, slightly revised again, it appeared as "The New Century Version." This same version is also produced with such titles as "The Word," "The Everyday Bible," "The Youth Bible", etc.
- c. Information concerning the WBTC indicates that those working on this translation included Ervin Bishop and Brenton Dibrell (with suggestions made by Harvey Floyd, Everett Ferguson and Richard Walker). These men are all affiliated with Churches of Christ.
- d. To help discourage theological bias the WBTC selected the following scholars as a special Translation Review Committee: Harold W. Hoehner, Virtus E. Gideon, Bruce M. Metzger, Neil R. Lightfoot and Stanley M. Horton.

## **8. Simple English Bible (New Testament) (1978)**

This translation claims to be a "smooth rendering," neither "loose" nor "paraphrase." Using about a 3000 word vocabulary, it was published anonymously by International Bible Translators, Inc. (principal translator was Stanley L. Morris, affiliated with Churches of Christ).

### **D. Literal translations.**

#### **1. Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible (1862)**

- a. This is the same Robert Young who produced "Young's Analytical Concordance" still in wide use today.
- b. Though accurate in translating Hebrew and Greek verbs, its literalness makes for rather difficult reading:

"All things, therefore, whatever ye may will that men may be doing to you, so also do to them." Matt. 7:12.

- c. This translation was revised in 1887, again in 1898 and is currently in print today.

## **2. Rotherham translation (1872).**

- a. Joseph Bryant Rotherham, a British minister of the Church of Christ, produced "The Emphasized Bible: A new Translation" with special markings in the text for emphasizing the proper degree of stress to be given various words.
- b. His literal rendering of verbs makes for less than smooth reading:

"Whatsoever things therefore ye would, that men be doing unto you, So be ye also doing unto them." Matt. 7:12.

- c. Rotherham made revisions (from different Greek texts) in 1878 and 1897, the latter being in popular demand as a reprint edition today.

## **3. Concordant translation (1926)**

- a. Although initially published anonymously, the translator was Adolph E. Knoch who produced what he called the "Concordant Version: The Sacred Scriptures, An Idiomatic, Consistent, Emphasized Version."
- b. In harmony with his principle of using "one English word which is the most suitable equivalent for each word of the Greek vocabulary" the renderings make for difficulty in comprehension:

"Whatever you may be wanting that men should be doing to you, thus you, also, be doing to them." Matt. 7:12

- c. Some editions of Knoch's translation, revised in 1931, 1944 and 1966, appear in what he calls "Greek Sub- and Superlinear" (meaning English words appearing beneath the equivalent Greek words).

## **E. Interlinear translations (containing the Hebrew/Greek words with exact English equivalents beneath them).**

1. George Ricker Berry's "Interlinear Greek-English New Testament" (1897). Based on Stephens' 1550 Greek text. In print today.
2. Benjamin Wilson's "Emphatic Diaglot" (1864). Based on Griesbach's Greek text. In print today by Jehovah's Witnesses.
3. A. E. Knoch's "Concordant Version of the Sacred Scriptures" (1955). Based on Weymouth's Greek text.
4. "The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures" (1969). Produced by (and slanted toward) Jehovah's Witnesses. Based on Westcott-Hort Greek text. In print by J.W.'s.
5. Jay P. Green's "Interlinear Greek-English Bible" (1972-1979). Based on Scrivener's Greek text. Several edition, still in print.

6. Alfred Marshall's "Interlinear Greek and English New Testament". Various editions, accompanied by KJV, RSV, NIV, NASB, etc., in margin. Based on Nestle's 21st edition Greek text. In print today.
7. John R. Kohlenberger's "The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament" (1979-1985). Based on the Stuttgart Bible text.
8. Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort's "The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament" (1990). Based on the United Bible Societies' 3rd Corrected Edition/Nestle's 26th Edition (which share the same wording). With New Revised Version in margin.

**F. Special feature translations (containing a particular emphasis, feature or quality in the translation).**

**1. Charles B. Williams translation (1937)**

- a. "A Private Translation in the Language of the People" is a New Testament characterized by particular emphasis upon the exact rendering of the tenses of the Greek verbs.

**2. New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures (1950)**

- a. Produced by Jehovah's Witnesses (and slanted to its teaching).
- b. The text was revised in 1961, 1970 and 1984 with several other editions containing revised footnotes.

**3. The Translator's New Testament (1973)**

- a. This translation, by 35 scholars, was designed for missionaries who have no access to Greek texts or only a limited knowledge of the Greek language, yet need to translate the Bible into tribal languages.

**4. The Christian Counselor's New Testament (1977)**

- a. This translation, by Jay Adams, a professor and author in the counseling field, features yellow highlighting of all passages relating to problems encountered in personal counseling sessions, together with marginal topic headings.

**5. Kenneth S. Wuest translation (1961)**

- a. Wuest, longtime professor at Moody Bible Institute, calls this "An Expanded Translation." It contains elaborate, extended comments, as part of the text, designed to clarify meaning. However, it is highly interpretive, incorporating Wuest's theological point of view.
- b. The subject of "baptism" is completely circumvented by such renderings as "Do you not know that all we who were *placed in* Christ Jesus, in his death were *placed*? We therefore were entombed with Him through this *being placed in* His death..." Rom. 6:3-4.

**6. Divine name translations (incorporating Jehovah, or similar term, for God's name in the Old and/or New Testaments).**

**a. The Holy Name Bible (1963)**

Traina's translation uses "Yahweh" for God and "Yashua" for Jesus.

**b. Restoration of the Original Sacred Name Bible (1970)**

Produced by the Missionary Dispensary Bible Research Society, this is basically Rotherham's 1897 translation. Uses "Yahvah" for God; "Yahshua" for Jesus.

**c. The Sacred Scriptures (Bethel Edition) (1981)**

Edited by Jacob O. Meyer, of the Assemblies of Yahweh, this translation is basically the ASV, using "Yahweh" and "Elohim" for God; "Yahshua" for Jesus.

**d. The Messianic Version of New Covenant Scriptures (1981)**

This is a special edition of the New King James Version NT using "Yeshua" for Jesus.

**e. Jewish New Testament (1989)**

Translated by David H. Stern, this version uses "Yeshua" for Jesus and contains numerous Jewish words throughout, together with glossaries of meanings and pronunciations.

**7. Immersionist translations (which translate the Greek word 'baptizo' as 'immerse' instead of transliterating it as 'baptize').**

**a. Nathaniel Scarlett translation (1798)**

**b. The Living Oracles by Alexander Campbell (1826)**

**c. American Bible Union Version (1865 and later)**

**d. Joseph B. Rotherham translation (1897)**

**e. A. S. Worrell translation (1904)**

**f. Authentic New Testament by Hugh Schonfield (1969)**

**g. The Better Version by Chester Estes (1973)**

**h. Numerous others use "immerse," including a special ASV New Testament published by Star Bible Publications.**

**G. Translations with Sectarian or Cultic slants, either in text or footnotes.**

1. Catholic

- a. Douay-Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (1582-1941)
- b. Ronald Knox translation (1944)
- c. Kleist and Lilly translation (1954)
- d. Jerusalem Bible (1966)
- e. New American Bible (1970)
- f. Christian Community Bible by Bernardo Hurault (1988)

2. Jewish

**a. Judean and Authorized Version New Testament (1970)**

Removes all references to Jews being responsible for Jesus' death.

**b. Authentic New Testament by Hugh Schonfield (1939)**

**c. A Messianic Jewish Version (1981-NT)**

3. Jehovah's Witnesses

**a. New World Translation (1950-NT; 1961-OT)**

(1) Uses "a god" in John 1:1

(2) Adds "other" five times in Col. 1:16-20

**b. Kingdom Interlinear (1969); Revised edition (1985)**

4. Mormon

**Inspired Version by Joseph Smith (1867).** An altered (in places) KJV. Used only by the Reorganized Mormon church.

5. Meta-physical

**People's New Testament by Arthur Overbury (1925).** "Interprets the NT...from a spiritual or meta-physical standpoint."

**H. Eccentric translations (Totally unreliable because of faulty principles which preclude them from being considered as legitimate translations).**

1. **Johannes Greber translation (1937).** "In the rare instances in which a text pronounced correct by the divine spirits can be found in none of the manuscripts today, I have used the text as given to me by those spirits."
2. **Authentic Version New Testament by Claire Pershall (1951).** "Believing that I have been given divine authority through the Holy Spirit to bring the true translation of the original Greek text...I set forth this work, not as of my own ability, but alone through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."
3. **Cotton Patch Version by Clarence Jordan (1963-1970).** Approaches "translation" from a Civil Rights Movement orientation. Changes titles of books; uses "lynching" for crucifixion; "white man" and "Negro" for Jew and Gentile; extreme slang terms, etc.
4. **The Word for Us by Joann Haugerud (1977).** This work avowedly affirms as one of its goals, to examine and reinterpret scripture and theology from the feminist perspective." This viewpoint removes *all* references to God, Christ and the Holy Spirit in the masculine gender.

"I am concerned that the language describing God has been heavily masculine in the past, with the result that people can scarcely avoid thinking of God as a male person...God has no pronoun references, nor are any metaphors used which might seem to indicate that God is confined to one sex. Gone are the lords, fathers, kings and kingdoms." (Introduction, pp. I, ii.).

5. **Good News For the Warrior Race (1995).** This is a *contrived* language based on the popular and fictitious Klingon people of the Star Trek TV series. "Translated" by Glen F. Klingon" has a dictionary, cassettes and is taught in the Interstellar Language School in Red Lake Falls, MN.)
6. There are several other so-called "translations", equally unreliable, which make use of parody, street language or "hip" talk, etc. ("God Is For Real, Man" and "God Is Beautiful, Man" by Carl F. Burke; "Letters To Street Christians" etc.)

Inclusive Language translations ("translations" which replace gender specific terms with general terms in various Bible passages).

1. **The New Testament of the Inclusive Language Bible (1994).** Produced by Cross Cultural Publications, Inc., using the services of over sixty persons.

Matt. 6:9: "Our heavenly *Parent*, I pray that Your holy name is honored"

Matt. 16:16: "You are the Messiah, the *Son* of the living God"

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that God gave the only begotten *Son*..."

Rom. 10:9: "If you acknowledge with your mouth that Jesus is *Sovereign*..."

2. **The Inclusive New Testament (1994).** Produced by Priests for Equality (Catholic).

Matt. 6:9: "*Abba God* in heaven, hallowed be your name"

Matt. 16:16: "You are the Messiah...the *Firstborn* of the Living God!"

John 3:16: "Yes, God so loved the world as to give the Only Begotten *One*..."

Rom. 10:9: "For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is *Sovereign*..."

*People* are worth much more than sheep” (Contemporary English Version, 1995)  
*human* is more valuable than a sheep!” (God’s Word, 1995)  
“And how much more valuable is a *person* than a sheep!” (New Living Translation, 1996)

- b. At least two motives appear to be involved in the changes being made under the principle of “gender inclusive” language:
- 1) Those offended by what they regard as the “male domination” of the older versions (including the Greek MSS) are attempting to remove gender distinctions in various degrees (some even entirely)
  - 2) Those who are attempting to accurately represent certain passages which obviously include people in general and not just males (or females) exclusively (see translations of Matt. 12:12 above)



- c. So, even though they may not be *strictly literal* translations, *all* uses of gender-inclusive language should not be rejected simply because liberals, feminists and other unbelievers carry the principle to unwarranted extremes! (For an example of the extreme feminist viewpoint, see VII, H, 4)

## CONCLUSION:

### A. Just what is "the Bible?"

1. A proposed definition:

"The Bible is God speaking through recorded manuscripts produced by inspired men which convey to people today that message in accurate and comprehensible language."

### B. Why so many translations and versions?

1. Archaeologists, scholars and researchers continue to discover older (and therefore closer to the original) Biblical manuscripts.
2. Language experts continue to increase their understanding of linguistic features of Biblical texts, thereby making the translation of particular words more accurate.
  - a. For instance, the Greek word for Jesus' "coming" ("parousia") has been discovered by archaeologists to refer often to the arrival of royalty in ancient documents, thus validating its use in referring to King Jesus! (See Comfort, page 60).
3. Languages, including English, are undergoing constant changes, thus necessitating the need for translations which convey God's truth in current, understandable terminology.
  - a. Such words as "clout," "party," "finalize," "trash," "torch," "launder" (money), "gross," "enjoy," "gay," etc. have assumed different or additional meanings in recent years.

### C. Which English translation is "the best one?"

1. Consider the Hebrew and Greek texts utilized.

- a. The Received Text (Textus Receptus).

- (1) A Greek text (of the New Testament) based on the work of Erasmus, first produced by the Elzevir brothers between 1516 and 1633. It was similar to the 1550 Stephens text.
    - (2) It is the Greek text on which the King James Version (and NKJV) is based and utilized only a few Greek manuscripts, the oldest dating to the 10th century.
    - (3) "Textus Receptus" lies at the basis of all principal Protestant English versions prior to 1881.

b. The Majority Text.

- (1) This Greek text, also called the Byzantine or Traditional text, consists of a large group of manuscripts dating from the 5th to the 16th century.
- (2) It is called "Majority Text" because it is based upon 80-90% of the Greek Manuscripts so far discovered.

c. The Eclectic (or Critical) Text.

- (1) "Eclectic" means "composed of elements drawn from various sources" and refers to a text selected from the nearly 6,000 Greek manuscripts, and 13,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament, on the basis of exacting principles.
- (2) This text is produced by the United Bible Societies (3rd corrected edition, 1983) and Nestle-Aland, et al, (26th corrected edition, 1986).
- (3) The majority of Biblical scholars regard this as the best one for arriving at a text that most accurately represents the original.
- (4) All of the more recent translations are based upon this Eclectic text (NASB, NIV, TEV, RSV, NEB, JB, etc.).

d. While the "Received Text" and the "Majority Text" "have much in common the TR ("Received Text") is a late and somewhat corrupt form of the "Traditional Text" or "Majority Text." (See Sakae and Specht, pages 291-292; Also, Lewis, "Questions...")

e. It is noteworthy to observe that all of the above mentioned Greek manuscripts agree on 97% of the New Testament text.(See Metzger, pp. 102-106; Lewis, p. 42; Sheehan, pp. 3-16; McDowell, "Evidence That Demands A Verdict" p. 46; Comfort, "The Origin of the Bible" pp. 183-207)

2. Consider the principles from which the translation is approached.

- a. The "Formal Correspondence" approach emphasizes FORM. It says that words in the original language should be reproduced by their exact English equivalents. This principle tends to produce a more literal translation.
- b. The "Dynamic Equivalence" approach emphasizes CONTENT. It says that words in the original language should be reproduced in current language that expresses the same idea. It attempts to use words that will produce the same effects in today's readers that the original produced upon its readers. This principle tends to produce a greater degree of paraphrasing.

3. Consider the academic credentials and language skills of the translator(s).

- a. What is their proficiency in understanding and translating the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek languages?

- b. How much access do they have to the numerous manuscripts, papyri and other ancient documents that can shed light on the translation process?
  - c. How much capability do they possess in the fields of English grammar and literary style?
4. Consider the theological position of the translator(s).
- a. Modernists, who place great emphasis on higher criticism, tend not to accept the supernatural elements of Christianity. This could have an effect on their objectivity in translating certain Bible passages.
  - b. Fundamentalists, on the other hand, accept both the supernatural and the principle of verbal inspiration. This would no doubt affect their approach to translating certain parts of the Bible.

D. Which translation should you use?

1. Generally speaking, the best translation would be the one which incorporates a basic literalness with current language.
  - a. The American Standard Version (1901) has long been highly regarded by scholars. Philip Comfort calls it "an accurate, literal rendering of very trustworthy texts" and "a monumental work of scholarship" ("The Origin of the Bible" pages 272, 282). Its archaic language in places, however, makes it less suitable for today's readers.
  - b. The New American Standard Bible (1977, 1995) retains much of the literalness of the ASV, yet incorporates current English. Its literalness, in places, proves to be a weakness.
  - c. The New International Version (1978) provides a fresh, understandable translation, yet tends toward paraphrase in a few places.
2. Obtain and use several translations for your devotional reading and Bible study.
  - a. The use of various translations is to be preferred over consulting commentaries during your initial research. Translations are other words FOR what the Bible says, while commentaries are other words ABOUT what the Bible says.
  - b. Include an interlinear translation so that you can look up the original words in a lexicon or word study book.
  - c. Make use of a strictly literal translation so that you have the advantage of seeing an exact English equivalent (although it may not always be possible to obtain a "one word for one word" rendering).
  - d. Consult an expanded translation or paraphrase with a degree of caution. Although you can obtain some good insights from its use, be aware that it may well contain interpretation as well as translation.

E. Some final suggestions about using translations.

1. Realize that as long as languages continue to undergo changes (and it is happening as we write), there will be the need for new translations for conveying the meaning of God's word.
2. Do not become so attached to any particular translation that you become resistant to considering the merits of others.
3. Realize that your witnessing and teaching of non-Christians requires great care so as not to confuse them by referring to many translations.
4. Consider any "new" translation that comes along with caution and reservation until its accuracy and value are tested by time and competent scholarship.

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