

SESSION FIVE

*WHAT BIBLE
TRANSLATION
SHOULD I USE?*

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I. INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL TRANSLATIONS

A. Translation defined

1. The rendering of meaning from one language (source or vorlage) into another language (receptor text), with the goal of maintaining the intent of the original message.¹⁶⁹

B. Principles of Bible Translation

1. Purpose of Bible translation
 - a. Life transformation through the Word of God regardless of language^{170 171}
2. Qualities of a good Bible translation¹⁷²
 - a. Accurate—conveys the same meaning as the original
 - b. Clear—easy to understand
 - c. Natural—reflects the natural use of the local language
 - d. Accessible—promotes engagement by its readers
3. Types of Bible translations
 - a. Formal equivalence (word for word)
 1. Staying close to the words and structures of the original, even if this means the result is less natural or wooden
 - b. Dynamic equivalence (thought for thought)
 1. Expressing the ideas of the original in the most natural way possible, even if this means using different words and structures than the original
 - c. Paraphrase (idea for idea)
 1. Rephrasing in modern, easy-to-understand terms
4. Selecting a translation that works best

¹⁶⁹ Jeremiah Coogan, "Myths about Early Translations," in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (eds), (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 278.

¹⁷⁰ Pioneer Bible Translators, "From Bible Translation to Life Transformation," Accessed on 5/26/25, <https://pioneerbible.org/about/>.

¹⁷¹ Wycliffe Bible Translators, "About Bible Translation," Accessed on 5/26/25, <https://wycliffe.org.uk/about/faqs>.

¹⁷² *ibid.*

- a. Determine your reading preference and level.
- b. Determine your reading purpose (personal, study, teaching, etc.).
- c. Determine which option (word-word; thought-thought; paraphrase) meets above purpose.
- d. Acknowledge that each translation has the power to transform your life as God can speak through any translation.

C. Core Truths about the Bible in Translation

- 1. We can trust the Bible even in translation.
 - a. God’s Word is living and active.¹⁷⁴
 - b. God’s Word will accomplish its purpose.¹⁷⁵
- 2. Translation is a part of God’s plan for His Word.
 - a. The Bible translates dialogue (Acts 22:2).
 - b. The Bible translates itself, with hundreds of quotations in translation (seven translated quotations in Hebrews 1 alone).
 - c. People from every language and people group will praise God together.¹⁷⁶
- 3. Translation is more than substituting equivalent words in order—languages often use very different words, expressions, and sentence structures to convey the same ideas.
- 4. Translations are necessary because all languages change in time.
- 5. Every translation of the Bible has been condemned by someone as soon as it rolled off the press.

II. HISTORICAL TRANSMISSION OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

A. Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)

- 1. Jews dispersed beyond Israel—Hebrew and Aramaic were replaced by Greek following the conquest of Alexander the Great (330 BC).
- 2. Greek became the universal language.

◆ **INSIGHT**

“Any idea in one language can be communicated in any other language, but each translation makes choices of what to focus on.”¹⁷³

¹⁷³ Tyler Heston, “Bible Translations” lecture in Legacy Series, Fellowship Bible Church, Rogers, AR, April 4, 2024.

¹⁷⁴ For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12, NIV).

¹⁷⁵ So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:11, NIV).

¹⁷⁶ After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands (Revelations 7:9, NIV).

3. Oldest surviving Hebrew Old Testaments (Masoretic)
 - a. Aleppo Codex (930 AD)—3/4 remain
 - b. Leningrad Codex (1010 AD)—complete
4. Source text (Masoretic) for later versions
5. Dead Sea Scrolls highly similar to Aleppo and Leningrad

B. Greek Septuagint (Old Testament)

1. Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (250 BC)—Septuagint (“Seventy” or LXX); seventy-two scholars participated in its writing which took 72 days ¹⁷⁷
2. First translation ever made of the Hebrew Scriptures ¹⁷⁸
3. When the Bible is quoted in the NT, it is almost always from the Septuagint version. ¹⁷⁹ However, some are from Hebrew version.
4. Early church’s only source of the Old Testament (in their language) ¹⁸⁰
5. Greek manuscripts of the Septuagint developed; 2400 surviving manuscripts
6. Hexapla ¹⁸¹
 - a. Origen’s attempt to purify all existing Greek versions of the Septuagint (3rd century)
 - b. Six parallel column comparison to the Hebrew OT
 - c. Six columns: Hebrew Text; Hebrew text transliterated into Greek characters; severely literalistic Greek (Aquila, 140) who attempted to reproduce individual Hebrew words exactly; Symmachus; Septuagint; Theodotion.
7. Authoritative biblical text of the OT for the contemporary Greek Orthodox Church
8. Dead Sea Scrolls similar to Septuagint
9. Ultimately the Septuagint was condemned by Talmudic (Jewish) scholars—late manuscripts were limited to Christian scribes.

¹⁷⁷ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Bible in Translation, Ancient and English Versions*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 14.

¹⁷⁸ Metzger, 18.

¹⁷⁹ Metzger, 18.

¹⁸⁰ Metzger, 18.

¹⁸¹ Metzger, 19.

10. Old Testament differences between Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox believers. See *Old Testament Comparison* (Appendix F)

C. Important Surviving Greek New Testament Manuscripts

1. Codex Vaticanus (350 AD)
 - a. Important source text for Erasmus and Textus Recepticus
 - b. Important source text for the 1881 Westcott and Hort Greek NT edition
2. Codex Sinaiticus (350-400 AD)
 - a. Oldest complete copy of the Greek New Testament
 - b. Highly valued by Bible scholars in their efforts to reconstruct the original biblical text
3. Codex Alexandrinus (400 AD)

D. Latin Vulgate (Jerome)

1. Significance
 - a. Poorly translated Latin versions were appearing as Latin had replaced Greek as the clerical and people's language.
 - b. Jerome translated the whole Bible into Latin (Hebrew OT and Greek NT)—commissioned by Pope Damasus I.
 - c. The official Bible for the Western Church for 1,000 yrs.
 - d. Translated over 23 years (382-404)
 - e. Included the Apocrypha, but Jerome was adamant these books were not canonical and limited only to edification. See *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* (Appendix G).
 - f. All subsequent medieval Western Bible use was based on the Vulgate.
2. About Jerome
 - a. "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ" reveals something of his passion.¹⁸²
 - b. Spent 35 years learning Hebrew in Bethlehem

◆ INSIGHT

Both the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls reveal an amazing consistency with the Masoretic Text.

¹⁸² Wycliffe Bible Translators, "A Brief History of Bible Translation," Accessed on 5/6/25, <https://wycliffe.org.uk/story/a-brief-history-of-bible-translation>.

E. Middle English

1. Translations of portions of the Bible into English (800- 900s)

F. John Wycliffe (1325-1384)

1. Significance

- a. First complete English translation of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate, not original Hebrew or Greek (translation of a translation) (1382)
- b. Latin does not have the definite article (like the Greeks) which is found 20k times in the Greek NT and is vital for understanding the text. (Latin word order and idioms used)
- c. Word for word translation from the Latin. Meaning of the original is not communicated clearly. Difficult to read.
- d. Two editions: 1382 and 1395
- e. 1408— Reading the English Bible (or translation) outlawed (for the next 130 years— no other English Bible).
- d. Latin Bible was not to be replaced or altered. Wycliffe was bold.

2. About Wycliffe

- a. A champion of the people and often called the “Morning Star of the Reformation;” famous English priest and Oxford Scholar.
- b. Believed the Bible was our ultimate authority and not papal authority
- c. Indirectly began to break down power structures in the political-religious Catholic Church
- d. Wycliffe bibles were handwritten and took one year to copy. Thousands of copies were made.
- e. Distribution methods were primitive. His followers (Lollards) spread these translations despite official opposition.
- h. “Pastors should live lives of simplicity and holiness”, he taught, “shepherding their flocks (people)—not plundering them.”
- i. Died of a stroke in 1384— In 1415 the Pope declared him a heretic and ordered his bones to be dug up, burned, and scattered into the river.

G. Erasmus of Rotterdam ¹⁸³

1. Roman Catholic Priest (committed catholic)
2. Best Greek scholar in the 16th century (didn't learn Greek until his 30's)
3. Latin Bible was the standard for Holy Scripture in W. Europe.
4. First Edition (1516), Revised Latin (one side) with Greek (other side); called *Novum Instrumentum omne*. A starting point for the Textus Receptus (first to be published, but not the first to be printed)
5. Seven Greek partial NT manuscripts used dated from 10th-15th centuries (only one Greek manuscript that contained Revelation that was just a commentary); Much of Revelation had to be "retranslated" from Latin into Greek and had no Greek manuscript support.
6. Second Edition (1519)
7. Third Edition (1520) included Comma Johanneum ¹⁸⁴ used by the King James translators.
8. Used the best Byzantine manuscripts as a source text at the time
9. No cardinal doctrines were jeopardized by its shortcomings.

H. William Tyndale (1494-1536)

1. Significance
 - a. English translation of the NT from Greek (1525); grandfather of all Bibles
 - b. Significantly improved accuracy
 - c. New Testament—complete; Old Testament—only Pentateuch and Jonah
 - d. Used Erasmus 3rd edition (1522) as a source
 - e. His translation formed the backbone of later English Bibles.
 - f. Heavily influenced the King James Version; about 90% of the 1611 KJV is Tyndale (with its beautiful expressions).
 - g. Five New Testament editions completed
 - h. Tyndale wrote the NT foundation of our English Bible today.

◆ *INSIGHT*

Italian, French, Spanish, and Dutch Bibles began to appear in the 1400's.

¹⁸³ Martin Heide, "Erasmus and the Search for the Original Text of the New Testament," *Text & Canon Institute*, Feb. 7, 2023, <https://textandcanon.org/erasmus-and-the-search-for-the-original-text-of-the-new-testament/>.

¹⁸⁴ "For there are three that bear record [in heaven, Father, Word, and Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth], Spirit, and water, and blood, and the three agree in one" (1 John 5:7-8) (Erasmus' third edition and contained in the Codex Montfortianus dated 1520).

2. About Tyndale
 - a. Fluent in eight languages including Greek and Hebrew
 - b. 15K printed copies of Tyndall's NT smuggled into England; illegal to read the Bible in any language beside Latin.
 - c. Early leader of the reformation; fled to Germany; betrayed; imprisoned x 15 months then strangled and burned at the stake (1536) for heresy, but his linguistic legacy endured
 - d. As he died he cried out, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes" (King Henry VIII).
 - e. True father of the English Bible

I. **Guttenberg Press (1440)**

1. Johannes Gutenberg:1440 invented the printing press
2. Revolutionized Bible distribution
3. The first printed English New Testament (Tyndale's) was produced in 1526.
4. Printing allowed for wider access and standardization of texts.
5. Gutenberg Bible - most valuable book in the world; first book ever printed.

J. **Coverdale Bible (1535)**

1. Coverdale (Tyndale's assistant) finished Tyndale's OT.
2. First complete Bible printed in English
3. Luther's German, several Latin texts, Tyndale's OT portion in English?
4. Placed Apocrypha at the end of the OT rather than dispersed in the OT.

K. **Matthews Bible (1537)**

1. Combined Coverdale OT and Tyndale's NT; (both were Tyndale's work); plus 2000 notes: (controversial)

2. John Rogers (Matthews bible); 1537 Revised Tyndale's NT, Coverdale, notes from Tyndale's OT and his own editorial notes
3. Also called the "Wife beater's" Bible because of how 1 Peter 3:7 is interpreted (Her husband may beat the fear of God into her.)
4. Made in large print

L. The Great Bible (1539).

1. Bible reading was at an all-time high in England.
2. Edited by Coverdale-based on the Matthews Bible; removed Matthews notes
3. Second revision of Tyndale (after Matthews Bible)
4. Very large size bible
5. Basically Tyndale's Bible plus the OT completed by Coverdale
6. Authorized by King Henry the 8th based mostly on the Tyndale Bible; broke ties with the Roman church because the pope refused to grant him a divorce; so he started the Church of England (Anglican church); married his mistress; commissioned Miles Coverdale to publish the Mathews Bible without the notes; the Great Bible; every church needed a bible; 1539
7. First Bible authorized for public use: Everyone was caught up in reading this new delight; approved to be read.
8. First Bible to be used in the church services of the Church of England (still too expensive due to size)

M. The Geneva Bible (1560)

1. Produced by English Protestant exiles in Geneva, it was the first English Bible with numbered verses and extensive marginal notes. Hugely popular, it was used by Shakespeare and the Pilgrims but disliked by the monarchy for its anti-authoritarian notes. Geneva Bible. (1557-NT). (1560 - whole) William Whittington (Calvin's brother in law)
2. Written in Latin letter so everyone could read small size. Verse divisions were used for the first time. Also first study Bible - notes in the margins and had footnotes; basis of the KJV

3. First English Bible to be translated entirely from the Greek and Hebrew.
4. First translation done by committee; still relied heavily on Tyndale's work as a base properly regarded as the 3rd revision of Tyndale; calvinistic in its notes.
5. First English Bible to use chapter and verse divisions
6. First Bible that used italics for words not in the original text
7. Alternative Bible - the Geneva Bible; contained equally reasonable annotations
8. Kings called Tyrants
9. Very different; text was based on the Textus Receptus (not Vulgate)
10. Created by Calvinists (thoroughly protestant)
11. Mass produced and therefore readily available and used
12. First to start putting words in italics that were not in the original language. (NASB uses italics when the words are absent... compared to the original.)
13. Anglican Bishops were not happy with this Bible because of the threat that it may undermine their authority. They produced the Bishop's Bible.

N. Bishops Bible (1568)

1. Authorized by Queen Elizabeth I
2. Situation in England: Bishops Bible read from the pulpit, but the Geneva Bible was read in the pews.
3. Primary text for the KJV (Rough Draft of the KJV)
 - a. Why so good? Richness in the words; scholarship
 - b. Psalm 77
 - c. Failure when it came out.; printer left off word; wicked Bible
 - d. Civil war broke out.
 - e. Puritan vs kings and bishops; no place for a royal Bible



TIMELINE

Historical Transmission of English Bible Versions (1300-1700)

O. Douay-Rheims Bible

1. New Testament (1582); Old Testament (1609-1610)
2. English Catholic Scholars in exile (Douay and Rheims, France)
3. First complete English Catholic Bible (translated from Vulgate)

P. King James Bible (1611)

1. Cultural Climate
 - a. Deeply divided people; rival factions; Puritans vs Episcopalians (Church of England)
 - b. Puritans desired Scripture only—no stained glass, ornaments or sign of Catholicism; believed Church of England was in violation of Scripture
 - c. Religious divisions threatened the King.
 - d. Hampton Conference in England (1604)
 - e. Puritans suggested a new Bible version, a “King’s Bible for a King’s church.”
 - f. King James Bible 1604 commissioned to unify the church
 - g. 47 scholars collaborated; first example of collaboration
 - h. 1611. KJ Bible
 1. Noted versions: Ruth 3:15 typo. Printing wasn’t refined. “He went into the city.” Others said, “She went into the city.” Collectively called “he” Bibles and “she” Bibles (first edition); huge Bibles; printed and chained to the pulpits (later printed smaller)

2. Authorized version; most printed book in history; reigned x 250 years. First 150 years went through four major revisions. You would not be able to read due to changes in the language.
3. In the preface it was stated that no version was perfect. Translators said in the preface that the Bible translation by its very nature required "Repeated revision and correction."

2. King James I Translation Requirements

- a. No marginal notes except explanation of Greek or Hebrew
- b. Must use Bishops Bible
- c. Keep ecclesiastical words (i.e. Church, not congregation; baptism, not wash)
- d. Exclude Puritan words (i.e. bishops) 23:54 Rules strangled puritans model.
- e. Rigorous scholarship was encouraged.
- f. Downside:
 1. Prayer is forgotten.
 2. Holy Spirit work is minimized.
 3. God's work is controlled.

3. Results

- a. Solved the problem between the Bishop's Bible (Anglicans) and Geneva Bible (Puritans)
- b. KJV stood for stability and came into prominence; better translation for style than for its accuracy.
- c. Drew heavily from the Bishop's Bible, Geneva Bible, and Tyndale's work (90% of Tyndale's NT was in the 1611 KJV)
- d. Writing was elegant, ceremonial, hierarchical, sacramental— not what the Puritans desired. (250 English idioms originate in KJV); (i.e. Psalms 23)
- e. Based on original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts (as opposed to using a translation)
- f. Word-for-word translation.

- g. Most popular Bible for 300 years: God has used this translations for millions.
 - h. This translation paved the way for many more later translations in English.
 - i. Versions: 1611, 1629, 1638, 1762, 1769 (100K changes (many trivial) made between 1611-1769)
 - j. 1769 Oxford version— updated and standardized; updated English; 10s of thousands of revisions to the 1611 text; most minor changes in spelling and punctuation (This is the version most have in America. That text has remained unchanged since that time. Even this one looks like a foreign language to modern readers.)
 - k. All living languages change over time. We can clearly express the original meaning of the Bible in today's English.
 - a. "Single greatest monument to the English language."¹⁸⁵
 - b. "Most beautiful book in the world;"¹⁸⁶ ... style and cadence.. memorization
4. Retrospective Greek base text comparison
- a. Basis was Textus Receptus (combined Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza).
 - b. Erasmus used 7-8 Greek manuscripts with Revelation mostly absent causing him to back-translate from the Latin.
 - c. Erasmus 3rd edition used by KJ translators
 - d. Since Textus Receptus completed, > 1000 Greek manuscripts have been discovered. No theological updates needed, but small changes in wording help better understand the original authors. More modern translations are able to use these better texts.
 - e. There are some verses that did not appear in earlier manuscripts (i.e. Angels stirring the water. John 5:4).
5. Problems
- a. Translation is over 400 years old.
 - b. Textual basis is inferior.
 - c. Translators themselves said no translation is perfect.

◆ **INSIGHT**

A translation cannot be exactly like the original language. If it were, you would not need the copy. It is simply a logical impossibility—like a “married bachelor” or a “square triangle.” It is a nonsensical contradiction.

¹⁸⁵ Wallace, “The Greek Text Behind the KJV” in *Textual Criticism*, Credo Courses, 1:00.

¹⁸⁶ Wallace, 2:00.



III. COMPETING PRIMARY NEW TESTAMENT SOURCES ¹⁸⁷

A. Textus Receptus (TR)

1. Any Greek NT that is essentially derived from Erasmus' text; ¹⁸⁸ any Greek NT published before 1831.
2. Broader term that includes the Greek NT editions from Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza (could be any of these); more than 30 editions of TR (hundreds of differences among them)
3. Believes Erasmus' work best reflects the original and is free from error
4. Based on late Byzantine manuscripts (12th century and later)
5. Versions: KJV, NKJV
6. Only has about 5K textual differences from our standard critical text today (only 2% growth over 1400 years). No essential doctrines at stake, same ones who signed KJ doctrines could do it today with the modern texts. No one has changed their doctrinal statements because they changed Bibles.
7. Is only the TR inspired? (KJ advocates say yes) ... but is Erasmus inspired? (catholic priest)? He writes last part of Revelation by back translation; is that inspired?
8. Luther used Erasmus' second edition (no Trinitarian formula). TR- only advocates may claim only English Bibles are accurate (not German).
9. TR- advocates are universally protestants, not Catholics.

¹⁸⁷ "Majority Text vs. Critical Text vs. Textus Receptus – Textual Criticism 101," *Berean Patriot*, March 18, 2020, <https://www.bereanpatriot.com/majority-text-vs-critical-text-vs-textus-receptus-textual-criticism-101/>.

¹⁸⁸ Wallace, "Textus Receptus, Doctrine of Preservation (Part 1)," *Textual Criticism, Credo Courses*, 1:06,

B. Majority Text

1. Believes where the text is in question, the majority of all manuscripts (regardless of date) best reflects the original
2. Uses a mathematical majority rule
3. Use only Greek manuscripts (not Coptic, not Latin, etc.)
4. Byzantine text (9th-15th centuries)
5. No version offspring; closest mention are the footnotes in the NKJV

C. Critical Text

1. Believes oldest manuscripts and Alexandrian manuscripts should be used where the text is in question. "Earlier is better."
2. Heavy reliance on Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus; therefore serve as the foundations for almost every modern NT edition (2nd-4th centuries)
3. Originates from Westcott and Hort's 1881; "The New Testament in Original Greek" or simply "Westcott and Hort"
4. Updated version by Nestle (1898) *Novum Testamentum Graece*.
5. Revised 1901
6. Revised again (Kurt Aland and his wife), the Nestle-Aland "*Novum Testamentum Graece*" (The New Testament in Greek), often abbreviated NA; multiple revisions (now NA28 as of 2020)
7. NA28 essentially unchanged from original Westcott and Hort 1881
8. Modern, most accurate; dethroned TR
9. All modern versions use critical text (not KJV or NKJV)

◆ **INSIGHT**

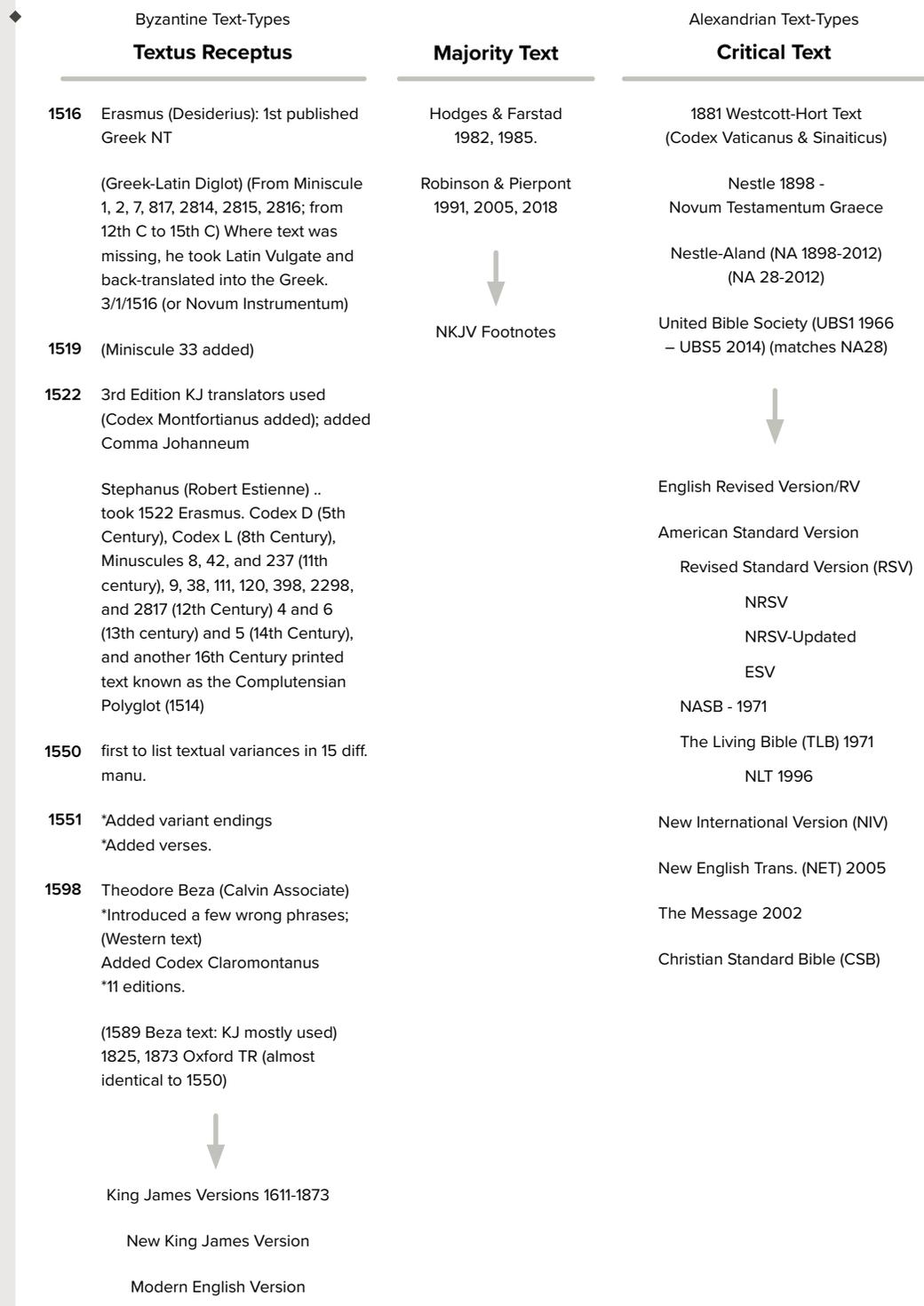
*"We do not need to bend our brains to explain away the errors of the Received Text."*¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Martin Heide, "Erasmus and the Search for the Original Text of the New Testament," *Text & Canon Institute*, Feb. 7, 2023, <https://textandcanon.org/erasmus-and-the-search-for-the-original-text-of-the-new-testament/>.

INSIGHT

“We do not need to bend our brains to explain away the errors of the Received Text.”

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IV. TRANSLATION METHODS AND PHILOSOPHIES

A. General Practices

1. Every translation of the Bible has been condemned by someone as soon as it rolled off the press.
2. Other religions struggle with translations. For example, the only true Qur'an is in Arabic—all others are commentaries.
3. There is no translation without interpretation (you can't translate idioms and make them the same or even use the same word order). Two languages don't match the same (not even same word order)!
4. If each man is accountable to God then each man needs a Bible in his own language.
5. Objectives for English Translations over time: Elegance (1534-1885) vs. Accuracy (started with the Revised Version in 1881 NT: 1885 whole Bible until 1984) vs. Readability¹⁹⁰ (might not be stated)
6. All translation is interpretation. It is impossible to separate.

B. Types of Translations

1. Formal equivalence (word for word)
 - a. Stay close to the words and structures of the original, even if this means the result is less natural.
 - b. Must remain as closely to the original Hebrew and Greek as possible; a literal transfer; word for word; the original words into English; greatest accuracy? (real problems with this method - some words do not have an English equivalent. The word order and entire sentence structure don't match. It becomes wooden and unnatural. Comprehension and readability are difficult).
 - c. KJV, NASB, RSV, NKJV, NASU, ESV, NIV, NAB, TNIV, NJB
2. Dynamic equivalence (thought for thought)
 - a. Express the ideas of the original in the most natural way possible, even if this means using different words and structures than the original.

◆ *INSIGHT*

KJV advocates...
to Critical-Text advocates
"You only have 90% of the
word of God."

Critical-Text advocates
respond....
"No, You have 110% of the
word of God."

¹⁹⁰ Daniel Wallace, Dan Wallace's
"Top 5 Bible Translations,"
on Mike Licona's podcast,
8/20/2020, 0:27

b. Transfer the message: exact thought and emotions of the original text. At the end they believe this method is more accurate and understandable.

c. NIV, NRSV, GNB, JB, NEB, LB, NAB, NLT

3. Paraphrase or free (idea for idea)

a. Living Bible

b. The Message

c. Phillips Translation

d. The Living Bible (TLB)

C. Choice of a Version

1. If possible use three types from different parts of the spectrum.

2. If only one option available—centrist position (NIV or ESV)

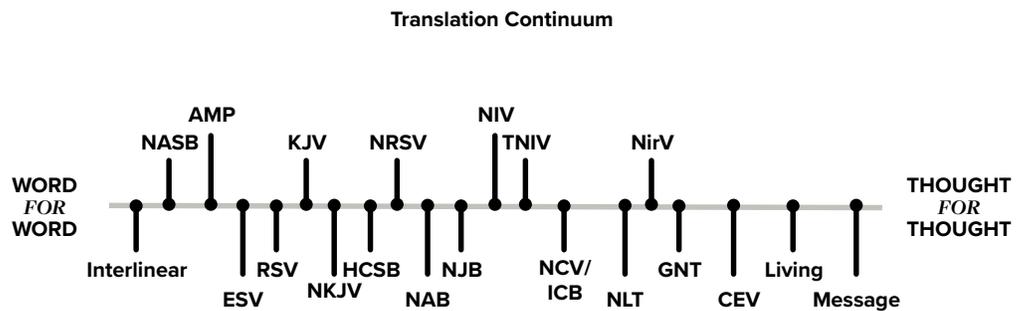
3. Study multiple translations to get full understanding of God’s Word

4. Different translations make different choices about how they balance dynamic and formal equivalence.

5. Optimal translations come from the original language.

CONTINUUM

This continuum shows how different Bible translations fit into the word-for-word and thought-for-thought translation philosophies.



V. COMPARISON OF MAJOR ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

A. Textus Receptus Lineage

1. KJV
 - a. would not use for its accuracy, but would use for its literary beauty
 - b. beautiful; rich wording
 - c. We should all have a copy.

2. New King James Version (NKJV) 1982
 - a. Updated modern English vocabular and grammar while preserving traditional KJ style (replaces “thee” and “thou” with “you”)
 - b. Uses Textus Receptus textual basis
 - c. References Majority text and Critical text in footnotes
 - d. Used as Greek Orthodox Study Bible (used by Eastern Christians)
 - e. Wallace’s least favorite; keeps all of the worst features of the KJV and gets rid of the best
 - f. KJV goal was not to be literal, but style (NKJV goal was to be literal!.. therefore much less elegant
 - g. Retains Textus Receptus (worst of all possible worlds)

3. Modern English Version (MEV); 2014
 - a. Textus Receptus based
 - b. Even more contemporary than the NKJV, but faithful to the KJ text

B. Critical Text Lineage

1. English Revised Version (ERV) or Revised Version (RV)
 - a. Revision of the King James (translation lineage of KJV, but not the textual lineage)
 - b. First major English translation to shift away from the textus receptus 1881 (NT) 1885 (OT)... UK

◆ INSIGHT

“He who translates a biblical verse literally is a liar, but he who elaborates on it is a blasphemer.”¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Tosephta, Megillah 4.41, ed. M.S. Zuckerman (Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrmann, 1937), 228.

- c. Committee translation (1st since the KJV)
- d. “Conquest of King Truth over King James”
- e. Unpalatable English
- f. Maybe more accurate than the KJV, but the English was as wooden and stiff and not natural as you could get (except maybe the New World Translation).

2. American Standard Version

- a. American Version of the ERV (1901); done by the American members of the RV translation team; had to wait 14 years after the RV to publish
- b. Formal literal translation (word for word)... *not elegant; not readable; (although more accurate and far more readable than the RV done 16 years earlier)*
- c. Accurate, but “stiff;” italics when words were added; added Jehovah in place of YAWY; also they used thee and thou. It became known for God over time.

d. Three branches:

1) 1952. Revised Standard Version (RSV)

- a. First truly ecumenical translation produced by scholars from several different denominations (i.e. Protestants, Catholics, Greek Orthodox, and Jewish Rabbis); published by the National Council of Churches (mainline churches)
- b. Eliminated “thee” and thou”
- c. Controversial; Why? How it translated Isaiah 7:14, “Young woman” used rather than “virgin”
- d. Many rejected this translation leading to NASB.
- e. Matt 19:23... It will be hard for a rich “man” to enter the kingdom of heaven.

A) 1989: New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) replaced RSV

- Published by National Council of Churches
- Preferred by most mainline denominations (more liberal .. Methodist, Episcopal, etc.), NOT evangelicals (Baptists or Pentecostals) and academics

- gender neutral (differs from RSV) Matt 19:23; It will be hard for a rich “person” to enter the kingdom of heaven.
- For Ecumenical reading and for cross-checking scholarly opinion
- Great translation “although it moved into the direction of “gender inclusiveness too much.”¹⁹²
- Metzger took over chairmanship; mix of scholars approved by the Vatican and denominational scholars (not an evangelical bias)

B) NRSV Updated Edition: year? Controversy! 1 Cor 6:9-10, “neither male prostitutes nor men who engage in illicit sex will inherit the kingdom of God.

C) English Standard Version (ESV) 2001

1. Conservative revision of the 1952 Revised Standard Version (RSV); 2001 ESV first edition
2. Formal equivalence (more literal); faithful to original text.
3. Partly developed in response to gender-neutral translations (i.e. later versions of the NRSV), ESV was committed to retaining masculine pronouns consistent with the original language.
4. Restored “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14 that had been changed to “young woman” in RSV
5. Purchased the rights to the RSV and bypassed the NRSV
6. Conservative alternative to the more liberal NRSV
7. Updates: 2007, 2011, 2016 (“permanent text”)
8. Widely used by evangelicals for its accuracy and literary quality
9. Best for “understated elegance;” more updated than the RSV

¹⁹² Wallace, 16:26

- 2) 1971. New American Standard Bible (NASB)
 - a. Designed to update language of ASV, but keep its literal translation
 - b. People did not like 1952 RSV because in Isaiah 7:14, it spoke of a “young maiden” rather than a “virgin.”
 - c. Most literal translation of all English versions (word for word)
 - d. Small caps indicated Old Testament quotes (only version).
 - e. Kept “thee,” “thou,” “art” when addressing God (removed in 1995 update).
 - f. Literal translation: 1 Cor 6:9-10 “Neither *effeminate* nor *homosexuals* will inherit the kingdom of God.” Later editions updated for clarity with *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*.
 - g. updated in 1995 and 2020 (removed “thee,” “thou,” and “art”)
 - h. Very difficult to read due to its literal or “wooden” translation

3) The Living Bible (TLB) 1971

- paraphrase (not translation) of the ASV (done by Kenneth Taylor)
 - easy to read; contemporary, everyday English
 - based on the ASV (not original language)
1. New Living Translation (NLT) 1996
 - Used Kenneth Taylor’s Living Bible as a starting point
 - Used dynamic equivalence; phrase by phrase
 - more readable
 - Revision of the Living Bible
 - Evangelical preference
 - Not study purposes (word/word)

C. **Independent Versions** (completely new) – Critical Text Lineage

1. New International Version (NIV)
 - a. Best-selling Bible

- b. Evangelicals call for a new edition; no prior translation; fresh translation from critical text lineage; evangelical preference
 - c. Used dynamic equivalence; phrase by phrase
 - d. More readable; conversational; appeal to broad global audience
 - e. Best for readability and accuracy
 - f. Scholarship is outstanding; terrific translation; examined very closely
 - g. Based on critical text
 - h. Emphasis on clarity, natural English, and accurate meaning. 1978 first edition.
 - i. 1984 NIV: You bring in areas of judgment and debate (Gal 5:7) Good thought; sometimes; add thoughts that were not there; 1 Cor 4:9. 2011 NIV; flesh not sarks; gender neutral (bending to culture)
 - j. Wallace says best for readability
2. Catholic Bibles
- a. Have deuterocanonical books
 - b. OT translated from both Masoretic with Septuagint influence
 - c. NT translated from critical texts and Latin vulgate (for liturgy)
 - d. Douay-Rheims (1582-1610)
 - 1. Textual basis: Latin vulgate
 - 2. Reactionary to Protestant translations
 - e. New American Bible (NAB) 1970
 - 1. Only English Bible authorized by the Catholic church to be read during mass
 - 2. Official US Catholic Bible
 - 3. Textual basis: critical text
 - f. New American Bible – Revised Edition (NAB-RE) 2011
 - 1. Recommended by Catholic church for personal use (most widely used)
 - 2. NAB updated

3. Good News Translation (GNT) (Today's English Version) 1966
 - a. Simple, accessible English
 - b. Dynamic equivalence

4. Holman Christian Standard Bible (Christian Standard Bible) or CSB 2004
 - a. Published by and popular among Southern Baptists
 - b. Critical text basis
 - c. Optimal equivalence (equal word/word and thought/thought)
 - d. 2017 revision; HCSB to just CSB (removed "Yahweh" for "Lord")
 - e. Good translation. .. just not the best
 - f. Driven by Southern Baptists, but other scholars worked on it (broad-based)

5. New English Translation (NET) 2005
 - a. 60K translation notes
 - b. Critical Text base
 - c. Faithful to the original meaning (not the original form)
 - d. Extremely accurate translation; great study Bible
 - e. In some respect, it has become the "translators' translation."
 - f. Look at favorite verse, then look at footnotes about it.
 - g. For study and accuracy... hands down the best

6. The Message 2002
 - a. Loose paraphrase, not considered a formal translation; highly readable; emotional tone
 - b. Eugene Peterson- author
 - c. Meant for devotional reading, not academic study
 - d. Critical text base; worked from Hebrew and Greek texts

7. New English Bible (NEB) (1970)
 - a. British Bible using modern literary English
 - b. Dynamic Equivalence

- c. Critical Text basis
 - d. Revised English Bible (REB) 1989
 - 1. Updated Biblical scholarship from NEB
 - 2. Clear and reverent
8. New World Translation 1950, 1960, 2013
- a. Jehovah Witness Translation—the anonymous work of the “New World Bible Translation Committee”
 - b. Most stiff and wooden translation in existence
 - c. “just not English”
 - d. Serious problems; bad at points; translate according to their theology, not Greek
 - e. Most word/word translation except where they disagree with the theology, then it becomes paraphrastic
 - f. The first intentional, systematic effort at producing a complete version of the Bible that is edited and revised for the specific purpose of agreeing with a group’s doctrine
 - g. Many call this a “perversion” and not a “translation.”
 - h. Sectarian translation; not valuable.

VI. SUMMARY

- A. God can speak fully in any language and time, and He delights in diversity. We are grateful to the Lord for the abundance of Bible resources available in English. All believers should utilize the abundance of excellent resources we have in English, including many great translations, to get a clearer understanding of God’s amazing Word.
- B. Pray for and consider supporting Bible translation for languages that do not have it yet. Remember that, by God’s grace, we can trust our Bible in translation.

VII. STUDY QUESTIONS

- A. Compare the three following translations of Psalms 119:9-16:

PSALM 119:9-16 NKJV

- ⁹ How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.
- ¹⁰ With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
- ¹¹ Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.
- ¹² Blessed are You, O Lord!
Teach me Your statutes.
- ¹³ With my lips I have declared
All the judgments of Your mouth.
- ¹⁴ I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As much as in all riches.
- ¹⁵ I will meditate on Your precepts,
And contemplate Your ways.
- ¹⁶ I will delight myself in Your statutes;
I will not forget Your word.

PSALM 119:9-16 TLB

- ⁹ How can a young man stay pure? By reading your Word and following its rules. ¹⁰ I have tried my best to find you—don't let me wander off from your instructions. ¹¹ I have thought much about your words and stored them in my heart so that they would hold me back from sin.
- ¹² Blessed Lord, teach me your rules. ¹³ I have recited your laws ¹⁴ and rejoiced in them more than in riches. ¹⁵ I will meditate upon them and give them my full respect. ¹⁶ I will delight in them and not forget them.

PSALM 119:9-16 (*The Last Night of our Lord, by Doug Van Dorn*)

Best way to keep a young man's way pure? By guarding it according to your word. Be thou the quest of my whole heart; let me not wander from your commandments. Buried deep in my heart, your word shall keep me from sinning against you. Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! By these lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. Boldly I delight in the way of your testimonies, as much as in all riches. Burrowing deep, I meditate on your precepts, and fix my eyes on your ways. Buoyantly I delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

1. Which phrases are most similar/different across the three translations?
2. What aspects of the original does each translation highlight?
3. Find at least one insight from each translation that is hard to see in the others.

B. Read the following passages below and then answer the questions.

Old English

Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum, si þin nama gehalgod. Tobecume þin rice. Gewurþe ðin willa on eorðan swa swa on heofonum. Urne gedæghwamlican hlaf syle us todæg. And forgyf us ure gyltas swa swa we forgyfað urum gyltendum. And ne gelæd þu us on costnunge, ac alys us of yfele. Sopllice.

Middle English (*Wycliffe's 1384 translation*)

Oure fadir that art in heuenes, Halewid be thi name; Thi kyngdoom come to; Be thi wille don, in erthe as in heuene. Yyue to vs this dai oure breed ouer othir substaunce, and foryyue to vs oure dettis, as we foryyuen to oure dettouris; and lede vs not in to temptacioun, but delyuere vs fro yuel. Amen.

Early Modern English (*KJV, 1611*)

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

More Recent Modern English (*NLT, 2015*)

Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation, but

