

A History of English Bible Versions

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This is a chronological list with summary detail of old English, Middle English and modern English Bible translations. While the Bible has been translated into other languages (i.e. French, German, Spanish, etc.), no other language is represented in this document. While this is not a complete list of *all* English Bible Versions, the list contains some of the more popular and/or influential versions of the English Bible. This is a work in progress and may be frequently updated. It is the author's intent to not advocate one Bible translation over any others, but rather to present historical and (hopefully!) accurate information regarding the various translations. The reader should determine which version(s) of the English Bible is most appropriate and/or helpful for private reading, public reading, and personal Bible study.

OLD ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS (A.D. 300-1100)

A.D. 300s – First Christians arrived in Britain.

A.D. 400s – Angles, Saxons, and Jutes arrive in Britain.

A.D. 500-700 – Evangelization of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes.

A.D. 700-1100 – Only parts of the Bible translated into “Old English.” King Alfred the Great (reigned A.D. 871-899) translated parts of the Ten Commandments and Psalms into English. All translations prior to Tyndale's version (A.D. 1525/26) were translated from the Latin text, not the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.

MIDDLE ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS (A.D. 1100-1500)

A.D. 1066 – Norman Invasion brings French influence into English language development and creates “Middle English.”

Important persons during this period:

John Wycliffe – died 1384. An Oxford professor, scholar, and theologian who wanted to take the gospel to the commoners. Wycliffe believed the way to prevail against the church's abusive authority was to make the Bible available to the people in their own language. With the assistance of Nicholas of Hereford, he translated the Bible from Latin into English. Wycliffe's translation followed the Latin Vulgate very closely, as it was the only source text available at the time. Decades after his death, Wycliffe's enemies condemned him for heresy, dug up his body, burned it, and threw his ashes into the Swift River.

John Hus – died 1415. One of Wycliffe's followers who actively promoted Wycliffe's ideas: that people should be permitted to read the Bible in their own language, and they should oppose the tyranny of the Roman church that threatened anyone with execution for possessing a non-Latin Bible. Hus was burned at the stake in 1415, with Wycliffe's manuscript Bibles used as kindling for the fire. The last words of John Hus were that, *“in 100 years, God will raise up a man whose calls for reform cannot be suppressed.”* Prophetically, almost exactly 100 years later, in 1517, Martin Luther nailed his famous 95 Theses.

Important events at the end of this period:

- ❖ **Renaissance** (1300s to 1600s) – a revival of learning occurred which prompted a renewed interest in the original Hebrew and Greek languages. A new challenge to authority also emerged.
- ❖ **Printing Press** (1440s) – Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press and the first book to ever be printed was a Latin Bible. This made printed material accessible to the masses, not just the wealthy.

EARLY MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS (A.D. 1500-1700)

- ❖ **Protestant Reformation (1517-1648)** – Martin Luther and those who followed had a tremendous desire to get the Bible into the hands of the common people. If people could read the Scripture in their native language, they could understand God’s Word for themselves.

1525/6 – Tyndale’s New Testament. William Tyndale translated the New Testament into English from Greek, using Desiderius Erasmus’ 1516 Greek version. Tyndale was the first man to ever print the New Testament in the English language. He was translating the Old Testament at the time of his death as a martyr in 1536. Tyndale’s last words were, “*Oh Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*” This prayer would be answered just three years later in 1539 when King Henry VIII finally allowed, and even funded, the printing of an English Bible known as the “Great Bible.”

1535 – Coverdale Bible. Miles Coverdale completed and published the first *complete* Bible in English. Coverdale did not translate the Bible directly from the Greek and Hebrew texts, but he used Luther’s German translation, more than one Latin text, and Tyndale’s Old Testament portions. This translation placed the Apocrypha – those books the Roman Catholic Church accept as canonical but which Protestants reject – at the *end* of the Old Testament rather than interspersed throughout the Old Testament. All *Protestant* Bibles that followed, if they included the Apocrypha, placed these books as an appendix, just like Coverdale had done.

1537 – Matthew’s Bible. This was a complete English Bible by John Rogers, whose pen name was Thomas Matthew. He was a friend of William Tyndale. This Bible received royal sanction by King Henry VIII. Rogers combined Coverdale’s Old Testament with Tyndale’s New Testament. Rogers also added about 2000 notes, many of them controversial. This was the first revision of Tyndale’s New Testament.

1539 – Great Bible. The Great Bible was a revision of Matthew’s Bible by Coverdale and was the first English Bible “authorized” for public reading. In September 1538, King Henry VIII ordered an English Bible to be placed in every church, specifying that each church was to have in its possession “*one book of the whole Bible of the largest volume in English.*” The churches began to use Matthew’s Bible but it contained many controversial notes. Therefore, because of the king’s order, Oliver Cromwell commissioned Miles Coverdale to publish a new Bible that was to be larger than Matthew’s Bible. This version was thus called the Great Bible – because of its enormous size. Coverdale took Matthew’s Bible, revised it, and deleted the notes. The Great Bible was also known as the Cromwell Bible, the Whitchurch’s Bible (after its first English printer), and the Chained Bible, since it was chained to prevent removal from the church. The Great Bible became the second revision of Tyndale, after Matthew’s Bible.

1560 – Geneva Bible. In 1553 Mary Tudor ascended the throne and began to systematically burn both Bibles and Protestants. Many Protestant scholars fled from England to Geneva, where the famous Reformed theologian, John Calvin, was living. One Reformer, William Whittingham (John Calvin’s brother-in-law), completed his translation of the New Testament in 1557. He and other Reformers worked on the whole Bible, and three years later, produced the Old Testament and a *revised* New Testament. The Geneva Bible was produced by Protestant scholars in Geneva, using Theodore Beza’s Latin translation, Hebrew texts, Greek texts, and Tyndale’s work. The Geneva Bible had several significant features, which eventually led to the reputation that it was the very first study bible:

- It was the first translation done by a committee.
- It was the first English Bible with *verse divisions*, which became the basis for all “versification” in later English Bibles.
- It was the first Bible to use italics extensively for words that were *not* in the original text.
- It contained copious notes in the margins, some doctrinal, and others simply explanatory.
- It was the Bible of Shakespeare, John Bunyan and the Bible the Pilgrims took to America.
- It influenced the King James Version (KJV) enormously. The KJV translators employed the Geneva Bible as much as Tyndale’s version to translate the KJV.

- It had a long and stellar history. Fifty years after the KJV was published, the Geneva Bible was still the most popular Bible in England.

1568 – Bishops’ Bible. This was revision of the Great Bible and was the second “authorized” English version, authorized by the Church of England as their official translation. The Geneva Bible could not be used in ecclesiastical settings because it was too *Calvinistic* for the English clergy and was so popular among the lower classes that it was deemed politically incorrect to use from the pulpit. This translation was called the Bishops’ Bible because bishops produced it. However, it never gained popularity and its last printing occurred in 1606. Ironically, though, this translation was the *official* base version the KJV translators were directed to use in making the KJV. However, only about an estimated four percent of the KJV’s wording is from the Bishop’s Bible.

1582/1610 – Rheims-Douai Bible. This was a Roman Catholic translation based on the Latin Vulgate. The Council of Trent (1544) had decreed that Bibles should be translated from Latin. It was not until Vatican II that this order was rescinded. Since all of the previous English Bible translations were “protestant” Bibles, the Catholics wanted their own English Bible. This was not because they agreed that lay people should have a Bible in their own language. Rather, since they could not stop laypeople from reading the Bible, they at least wanted them to read a “correct” version of it. As with the Geneva Bible, the Rheims-Douai translators inserted many notes and annotations into the margins and chapter ends, with the difference, that they promoted Roman Catholic doctrine. The Rheims-Douai Bible also had some influence on the wording of the KJV.

1611 – King James Version (KJV or Authorized Version). For much of England, there were two competing Bible translations: the Bishops’ Bible that was used in the churches, and the Geneva Bible that was read in the homes. By far, the Geneva Bible was the more popular one. The clergy desired to have a translation in the churches that would be revered by the masses. The KJV was commissioned by King James I of England and was translated by approximately 50 biblical scholars. The rules of procedures for translating the KJV was that the Bishop’s Bible was to be followed as much as possible, along with certain other translations (Tyndale’s, Matthew’s, Coverdale’s, the Great Bible and the Geneva Bible) if those versions agreed better with the text. Somewhat surprisingly, the Rheims-Douai version of the New Testament, which was based on the Latin Vulgate, also had some impact on the KJV. Another rule for translating was the KJV must not have any marginal notes – except for those that explained the Greek and Hebrew words or cross-referenced other passages. The translating committee was divided into six panels: three for the Old Testament, two for the New Testament, and one for the Apocrypha. When one panel finished a revision of a book, it was sent to the rest for their suggestions.

The original edition of the KJV included a preface by the translators (usually omitted in modern editions of the KJV), which described the principle of Bible translation and explained that the KJV was really a revision, not a new translation. In fact, the translators based their work on existing published texts. The aim of the revisers (translators) was clearly stated in the preface: “...we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new Translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one... but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one.” The omission of this preface has probably been one of the reasons why some people believe the KJV is the *only* inspired Bible, something the KJV translators would hardly agree. The purpose of the KJV can also be summed up in another statement from the preface, which was “to deliver God’s book unto God’s people in a tongue which they understand.” Therefore, the KJV was designed to be contemporary (or current) with the English-speaking people of the 17th century. The KJV went through numerous revisions after the first printing and two larger overhauls in 1629 and 1638. Altogether, nearly 100,000 changes have been made to the 1611 edition of the KJV. Most KJV Bibles published today in America are actually the 1769 revision of the 1611 edition.

Although it would take fifty years after 1611 for the KJV to overtake the Geneva Bible in popularity, it eventually became the preferred version for both public and private use, superseding both the Bishops’ Bible and the Geneva Bible. There are several reasons why the KJV was so popular and went unchallenged for so long:

- Unlike the Geneva Bible, it was produced in England.
- Unlike the Bishops' Bible, it appeared in both *folio* size (large) and *quarto* size (small). It could therefore compete with the Geneva in the home as well as in the church.
- It was adopted and promoted by the Church – without the stigma of persecution found with the Geneva Bible, and without the stigma of the poor literary quality of the Bishops' Bible.
- Unlike the Geneva Bible, it did not have numerous marginal notes from a particular theological perspective.
- It involved approximately 50 biblical scholars, whereas the Bishops' Bible had been translated by nine men and the Geneva Bible by a small committee.
- It had excellent English, unlike the Bishops' Bible, and was more lyrical and rhythmic than the Geneva Bible.
- It was a *compromise* between various factions within England – including High Churchmen and Puritans, and to a degree, between Protestants and Catholics. It was based on the Bishops' Bible (to satisfy the High Churchmen), looked a lot more like the Geneva Bible, and even borrowed some from the Rheims-Douai (Catholic).
- Finally, it had the financial and political backing of the English throne.

Essentially, the KJV went unchallenged due to a mixture of political influence, religious compromise, and literary power. It is worth noting that the first English Bible to be printed in America was a King James Version, by Robert Aitken in 1782. Robert Aitken's 1782 KJV Bible was also the only Bible ever authorized by the United States Congress.

MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS (A.D. 1800 – Present)

1833 – Noah Webster's Translation. Just a few years after producing his famous Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster produced his own modern translation of the English Bible. Like previous translators had believed, Webster wanted to make the Bible available to the people in their own language, a language that was continuing to evolve. He explained his changes to the KJV by stating the following: "*In the lapse of two or three centuries changes have taken place, which, in particular passages, impair the beauty, in others, obscure the sense of the original languages...Whenever words are understood in a sense different from that of the original languages, they do not present the reader the Word of God.*" For Webster, if the Bible didn't convey the same meaning as the original writers intended, it ceased to present God's Word. Webster found some 150 words and phrases to be erroneous or misleading, of which he corrected in various passages where they appeared. The later Revised Version (RV) used nearly all of Webster's changes, yet without any credit given to him.

1885 – Revised Version (RV). In the 1800s, scholars recognized the KJV's language was dated and its textual basis, especially for the New Testament, was deficient. The Revised Version (RV), sometimes called the English Revised Version or the British Revised Version, was a revision of the KJV incorporating more recently discovered manuscripts and more modern language usage. As the Bishops' Bible had been the basis for the KJV, so now the KJV was the basis for the RV. This translation was the first *corporate* effort to revise the KJV. Sixty-five British scholars and several American scholars, working in various committees, made significant changes to the KJV text. The Old Testament scholars corrected mistranslations of Hebrew words and reformatted poetic passages into poetic form. The New Testament scholars made thousands of changes based upon what they considered to be better Greek texts, such as Tregelles's, Tishendorf's, and Westcott and Hort's. No change was finally approved without a two-thirds majority. The RV translators also included many helpful textual and lexical notes. Whereas the KJV took seven years to produce (1604-1611), the RV took fifteen years (1870-1885). Over 3 million copies were sold in the first year of publication.

1901 – The American Standard Version (ASV). In the years after the RV was published, several "unauthorized" American versions were published which incorporated readings from the American scholars of the RV that were not included in the original RV edition. As a result, the American committee later issued the American Standard Version (ASV) and copyrighted it to insure purity of the text. This

version was an *American* revision of the KJV produced by the American scholars who had participated in the RV translation. It was an accurate and literal rendering of the best-known texts at the time of both the Old and New Testaments. It was also regarded as superior to the RV. In a bold move, the scholars removed verses that did not have good textual support in the original language texts. As a result, this provoked the wrath of critics who claimed they were taking verses out of the Bible. Actually, the ASV translators were attempting to faithfully translate the Bible from the best-known Greek texts. Two significant changes were implemented in the ASV Old Testament: the poetic books were set in poetic format, and the personal name of God (*Yahweh*) was translated as “Jehovah” instead of the traditional LORD. The ASV also introduced some distinct improvements over the RV, such as removing some archaic 16th century words and correcting pronouns relating to persons. Like the RV, the ASV also contained many helpful textual and lexical notes. One criticism of both the RV and the ASV was that they both tended to be *too literal*, often inverting the natural order of English words to represent the underlying order of the original language. Despite the improvements both versions made, neither the RV nor the ASV succeeded in supplanting the popularity of the KJV.

1952 – Revised Standard Version (RSV). The RV and ASV gained a reputation for being good for biblical scholars, but not so good for general Bible readers. This was primarily due to their overly literal (or “wooden”) construction. The organization that held the copyright to the ASV authorized a new *revision* that was not a new translation, but one that sought to preserve all that was known to be best in the English Bible throughout the years. The demand for a new revision was also reinforced by several important and recently discovered manuscripts, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Chester Beatty Papyri. The Standard Bible Committee, charged with revising the ASV, decided the RSV should stay as close to the KJV as it could in light of present knowledge and meaning of the Greek text on the one hand, and the present usage of the English language on the other. The RSV was well received by many Protestant churches and soon became their *standard* text. Evangelical and fundamental Christians, however, did not receive the RSV very well, primarily because of the removal or modification of certain passages. As with the ASV, the translators made the changes because of new manuscript evidence. Where these changes were made, the previous rendering of the passage was placed in a footnote, or a notation was included to state the reason for the change. This was usually because the earliest manuscripts did not support the original rendering. Though the translators tried to reflect what they thought was the best manuscript support, these “changes” were too liberal for some and consequently disregarded.

1965 – Amplified Bible. This was an English translation of the Bible produced jointly by The Zondervan Corporation and The Lockman Foundation. This was the first Bible project of The Lockman Foundation, a nonprofit Christian corporation committed to Christian education and evangelism. The first edition of the Amplified Bible was published in 1965. It is largely a revision of the ASV of 1901. It is based on the ASV of 1901, Rudolph Kittel’s *Biblia Hebraica* Hebrew text, the Greek text of Westcott and Hort, and the 23rd edition of the *Nestle Greek New Testament*, as well as the several Hebrew and Greek lexicons. It was designed to “amplify” (expand) the text by using a system of punctuation and other typographical features to bring out various shades of meaning within the original texts. The Amplified Bible attempts to take both the word meaning and context of a passage into account in order to accurately translate the original text. Multiple English word equivalents to each key Hebrew and Greek word are intended to help clarify the meanings that may otherwise be concealed by the traditional translation method.

1966/1985 – Jerusalem Bible. This translation is a Catholic version of the Bible that began in 1948 by a group of French Dominicans and others in conjunction with a series of biblical commentaries. An English edition of this work was later completed by members of the British Catholic Biblical Association. The translation of most of the books of the Bible was made from the original Hebrew and Greek languages. The Jerusalem Bible breaks from St. Jerome’s Latin version (the Vulgate) and is the first complete Roman Catholic Bible in English that was translated from the original languages. It was also the first translation to take major advantage of the Dead Sea Scrolls since their discovery. The wording of the Jerusalem Bible was more contemporary, removing such archaic words as “thee”, “thy”, “thine” and “ye”, and adopted modern English usage. This translation usually reflects modern textual judgments widely held among Protestants and most Roman Catholic scholars. As a Roman Catholic Bible, it includes the

deuterocanonical books along with the sixty-six others included in Protestant Bibles, as well as copious footnotes and introductions. It was revised in 1985 and called the **New Jerusalem Bible**. The newer version corrected some defects in the 1966 edition and reduced many of the masculine-oriented language in passages that clearly reflected both men and women.

1970 – New American Bible (NAB). In 1944, the Bishops' Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine invited a group of Catholic scholars to begin work on a new translation. This translation was to be the first Roman Catholic English translation of Scripture *in America* to be made from the original languages. The group of scholars began translating the Scriptures and in 1970, they published the New American Bible (NAB). This version of the Bible provides a rendering of Scripture in modern American expression along with a brief introduction to each biblical book and many literary and theological annotations. In the Old Testament, the translators departed from the Masoretic Hebrew text, what many scholars consider to be the authoritative Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible, in favor of what was considered better and often more ancient manuscripts. The NAB was the work of several translators and as such, many passages that have the same underlying words are rendered differently, causing some inconsistency. In 1986, a revision of the New Testament of the NAB was published that aimed to be more of a *formal-equivalence* (word-for-word) translation. Also, many corrections were made to reveal both the similarities and differences of the Greek text, thus making similar passages more harmonious. The revised New Testament also provided more gender-inclusive language as was possible.

1970 – New English Bible (NEB). The New English Bible (NEB) was a new translation that was not based upon earlier translations or versions. The main British churches sponsored it. The aim of the NEB was to break away from all previous translations and render the Greek text in the best way the translators understood it into the English language of the present day. The translation committee comprised of four panels dealing respectively with the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, the New Testament, and the literary revision of the whole. The translators were very experimental, updating many of the familiar words and phrases to reflect what was considered to be more accurate English renderings. In 1989, the translation was revised into the **Revised English Bible (REB)**.

1971/1995 – New American Standard Bible (NASB). This translation was a revision of the ASV of 1901 by the Lockman Foundation. A group of evangelical scholars realized that the RSV was not read by *conservative* Christians and decided to make their own revision of the ASV. Fifty-eight anonymous translators strove to produce a literal translation that would bring the contemporary reader as close as possible to the actual words and grammatical structure of the original manuscripts. The Lockman Foundation instructed the scholars to adhere to the original languages of the Holy Scriptures as closely as possible while maintaining a fluent and readable style according to current English usage. The scholars reverted back to the traditional format of the Geneva Bible and the KJV in which each verse begins a new paragraph. The translators also *introduced* the printing of Old Testament quotations into the New Testament by smaller capital letters. They retained archaic language, such as “thou”, “thee”, and “thy”, but only in prayers to God. They also chose to capitalize all personal pronouns when referring to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, something that was uncommon to the scribes of biblical manuscripts as well as to most other translators. Verses that were removed from the RSV were retained in the NASB, yet they were bracketed to denote problems with ancient manuscript support. Some recent manuscript discoveries, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, seem to not have influenced the translation very much. The NASB became a good study Bible, as it was very literal; yet, it was not considered a very good translation for daily Bible reading. The version was updated in 1995 to make corrections to spelling, word omissions/additions and some gender-inclusive language. The NASB is still preferred by many biblical scholars and students for serious Bible study.

1971 – Living Bible. This Bible is a *paraphrase* by Kenneth N. Taylor who originally wrote it for his children. Taylor decided to paraphrase the ASV. He began his work in 1962 and published it in stages. By 1971, he had completed the entire Bible, entitled the *Living Bible, Paraphrased*. His version of the Bible was so well received that he established his own publishing company, which he named Tyndale House Publishers after William Tyndale, the father of English translations. Many biblical terms in his translation are rendered with evangelistic terms and revivalist clichés. “Righteousness of God” becomes “way to

heaven” and “justification” becomes “glorious life”. “Eternal life” is “get to heaven” and “gospel” becomes “wonderful story” or “way to heaven.” Although the language is intended to be more easily understood, it sometimes expands the text with imaginative detail when there is no warrant for it. Other times, the translation omits words when there is no textual problem. More recently, Taylor’s “paraphrastic” version was abandoned in favor of a revised translation from the original languages using *dynamic equivalence*, attempting to translate the thought of the passage and not necessarily the literal word order. The revised translation is called the **New Living Translation (NLT)**.

1973 – Common Bible. This was a revision of the RSV, which attempted to be ecumenical in scope. This version included the Old Testament, New Testament, Deuterocanonical books, First and Second Books of Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh, and had international endorsements by Protestants, Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox. The deuterocanonical books were bound together and separated from their normal place in the Catholic versions of the Bible, which was essentially an accommodation to the Protestant arrangement of the books of the Bible. Since the Bible was to be “common,” for Catholic and Protestant use alike, no Catholic notes were included.

1976 – Good News Bible (Today’s English Version or TEV). A translation by the American Bible Society into “vernacular” English. This translation was primarily a response to requests to have an English bible designed for readers who spoke English as an acquired language. This version of the Bible was first published as the New Testament under the name *Good News for Modern Man*. The complete bible with both the Old Testament and the New Testament was released in 1976. The apocryphal and deuterocanonical books appeared in 1979. The Good News Bible is a “dynamic equivalence” translation, or “thought-for-thought” translation, translating the thought or meaning of a passage and not necessarily the word order or literal meaning of the words. Unfamiliar biblical customs are reworded to be more easily understood by the casual reader. The translation also uses contemporary colloquialisms of American speech. The Good News Bible attempted to avoid gender specific language, however, the first edition failed to meet the expectations of some regarding this issue. A revision that was more sensitive to gender issues was published in 1992.

1978/1984/2011 – New International Version (NIV). The New International Version (NIV) began in the 1950s when committees were appointed by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church (in 1956) and the National Association of Evangelicals (in 1957) to study the feasibility of creating a new translation. A self-governing body of fifteen biblical scholars, the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT), was formed and charged with the responsibility for the version. In 1968, the New York Bible Society (which subsequently became the International Bible Society and later Biblica) sponsored the project. The translation committee began the work in 1973 and the entire Bible was finished in 1978, published by Zondervan Publishing House. The NIV is the product of an international group of more than a one hundred scholars. It is called “international” because it was prepared by scholars from thirteen different denominations from five different English-speaking countries, and because the translators attempted to use vocabulary common to the major English-speaking nations of the world. The translators sought to make the NIV not too literal but also not too “liberal.” Their goal was to convey in English the thought of the original writers. The NIV is considered to be a very readable translation that incorporates the most recent textual evidence. For the Old Testament, the standard Hebrew text, The Masoretic Text, was used with some deviations. The translators also used the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and other versions of biblical text. The New Testament of the NIV basically follows United Bible Societies’ first edition *Greek New Testament* (1966). Though the translators professed a high view of the authority and infallibility of God’s Word, they took some liberties in omitting or adding words that had no original manuscript basis.

The CBT has the responsibility of meeting every year to review, maintain, and strengthen the NIV’s ability to accurately and faithfully render God’s Word in modern English. The NIV underwent a minor revision in 1984. Simplified versions of the NIV were later produced in 1996 that aimed at a third or fourth grade reading level. The *New International Version: Inclusive Language* (NIVI) was published by Hodder and Stoughton in Great Britain while the *New International Reader’s Version* (NIRV) was published by Zondervan in America. Forty translators and “simplifiers” from fourteen denominations were chosen to do

the work. A 2011 update to the NIV is the latest revision. The committee worked with pastors and Bible scholars, using the latest discoveries about biblical languages and the biblical world, in order to update the text. The 2011 edition contains some gender inclusive language and seeks to clarify names of people and places where it may have been unclear in a literal translation. The CBT reviewed and reconsidered changes introduced into the **Today's New International Version (TNIV)** relating to inclusive language. Some changes were preserved, some rescinded in favor of the 1984 rendering, and many were re-worded in a different way.

1982 – New King James Version (NKJV). The NKJV is a revision, or modernization, of the KJV. Commissioned in 1975 by Thomas Nelson Publishers, 130 respected Bible scholars, church leaders, and lay Christians worked for seven years to create a modern translation of Scripture. The goal was to update the vocabulary and grammar of the KJV, while preserving the classic style and literary beauty of the original KJV. The revisers of the NKJV New Testament chose to use the Textus Receptus, rather than the modern critical editions of the Greek text. Where the Textus Receptus differed from the Majority Text and the Nestle-Aland text, they included footnotes to denote such. All of the 17th century Elizabethan English of the KJV was replaced with contemporary American English.

1982 – Readers' Digest Bible (RDB). The RDB is not so much a translation of the Bible as it is a "condensed" version of a translation. The Reader's Digest Association chose to use the RSV as the base text for the RDB. This condensed version of the Bible contains all sixty-six books of the Protestant tradition and preserves every incident, personality and teaching of substance, while keeping the essence and flavor of the familiar language of Scripture. Nonessential words were pruned from the text, such as condensing "he answered and said" to be "he answered". The Old Testament was cut by about 50 percent and the New Testament by about 25 percent. The RDB was not intended to replace the complete and uncondensed Bible, but rather, was designed to be a shortened, simplified and easy-to-read summary of the contents of the entire biblical text.

1987 – New Century Version (NCV). This is an update of the International Children's Bible. Two basic premises guided the translation process of the New Century Version (NCV). The first concern was that the translation be faithful to the manuscripts in the original languages. A team composed of the World Bible Translation Center and fifty additional qualified and experienced Bible scholars and translators was assembled. The team included people with translation experience on such accepted versions as the NIV, NASB, and the NKJV. The most recent scholarship and the best available Hebrew and Greek texts were used, principally the third edition of the United Bible Societies Greek text and the latest edition of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, along with the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament). A gender-neutral version was published in 1991.

1989 – Revised English Bible. This is a revision of The New English Bible (NEB) published in 1970. The NEB had gained popularity in British churches and was regularly used in public reading. Several British churches decided there should be a revision of the NEB to keep the language current and the text up-to-date with modern biblical scholarship. The revised translation committee was more representative of British Christendom than that of the NEB and included such members as the Roman Catholic Church, scholars of the Salvation Army and the Moravian Church. The Revised English Bible (REB) revisers used the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament as it appears in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and the twenty-sixth edition of Nestle-Aland's *Novem Testamentum Graece* for the New Testament. They also used the Dead Sea Scrolls along with the Septuagint. The revisers adopted several renderings never before seen in an English bible. The REB revisers strove to maintain literary quality while avoiding idiosyncratic language.

1990 – New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). The NRSV continues the tradition of William Tyndale, the KJV, the ASV, and the RSV. In 1974, the National Council of Churches directed the Standard Bible Committee to undertake a thorough revision of the RSV. The committee was mandated to make necessary changes in paragraph structure and punctuation, in eliminations of archaic language while retaining the essence of the Tyndale-KJV tradition, in attaining greater accuracy and clarity, and in eliminating masculine oriented language concerning people. No gender changes were made in language

referring to God. The NRSV Bible Translation Committee consisted of thirty men and women who came from Protestant denominations, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Greek Orthodox Church. The committee also includes a Jewish scholar. The NRSV is available in several formats: a standard edition with or without the Apocrypha, a Roman Catholic edition, which contains the "Apocryphal" or "Deuterocanonical" books in Roman Catholic canonical order, and The Common Bible, which includes all books that belong to the Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox canons. Seven publishers in the United States and Great Britain were licensed to publish the new edition. According to one source, the NRSV is the most ecumenical of all translations. It contains all the sixty-six books of the Protestant canon, as well as all the books accepted by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Slavonic Churches. An "Anglicized" edition of the NRSV was published in 1995. This edition introduced British spelling, grammar, and punctuation, as well as replacing "Americanisms" with expressions more common to British readers.

1995 – Contemporary English Version (CEV). A simplified text originally conceived for children and produced by the American Bible Society. It was originally planned to be a translation for early youth and focused on the vocabulary and understanding of children in grades one through three. This translation was not based on any previous translation, but was made directly from the original language. The committee that worked on this translation consisted of over one hundred translators, English language specialists, and biblical scholars. The aim of the project was to produce a version of the Bible that could be understood more easily by readers and hearers than even the Good News Bible. Theological terms such as justification, sanctification and righteousness are replaced by other expression or phrases. The word "story" replaces the word "parable" and "hooray" replaces the word "hosanna". Where both men and women are intended, gender inclusive language is used.

1996 – New Living Translation (NLT). The Living Bible has been a popular translation, but various criticisms prompted the translator, Kenneth Taylor, to revise it. Tyndale House Publishers decided to abandon the paraphrase Living Bible in favor of a more "dynamic equivalence" translation. Work on the NLT began in 1989 with more than ninety evangelical scholars from various theological backgrounds and denominations and lasted over seven years. The scholars revised the text of The Living Bible using the most reliable editions of the Hebrew and Greek texts. They also made use of the Dead Sea Scrolls and some other versions of the Bible, including the Septuagint. The rendering of the NLT uses vocabulary and language structures commonly used by the average person, aimed at a reading level of a junior-high student. The NLT uses gender-inclusive language where the passage is speaking of people in general. The type of translation method chosen by the translators aimed at providing a "thought-for-thought" translation that represented the interpretation of the group, rather than the interpretation, or thoughts, of a single translator.

2001 – English Standard Version (ESV). This is a revision of the 1971 edition of the RSV. The first edition was published in 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. This was a major attempt to bridge the gap between the simple readability of the NIV, and the extremely precise accuracy of the NASB. A team of more than 100 leading evangelical scholars and pastors, who sought to create an "essentially literal" translation, produced the ESV. To that end, they sought as far as possible to capture the precise wording of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer, while taking into account differences of grammar, syntax, and idiom between current literary English and the original languages. The result was a translation that is more literal than the NIV, but more idiomatic than the NASB. Only about 5%–10% of the RSV text was changed in the ESV. Many corrections were made to satisfy objections to some of the RSV's interpretations that conservative Protestants had considered as theologically liberal, for example, changing the translation of the Hebrew "almah" from "young woman" (in the RSV) to "virgin" (in the ESV) in Isaiah 7:14. The language was modernized to remove "thou" and "thee" and replace some obsolete words. The ESV underwent a minor revision in 2007. The ESV is rapidly gaining popularity for its readability and accuracy.

2002 – The Message. The Message translation is the work of Eugene H. Peterson. Similar to the Living Bible, The Message is an attempt to render the biblical text in an informal English language. Peterson states the reason for beginning his translation of the New Testament, "I hoped to bring the New Testament to life for two different types of people: those who hadn't read the Bible because it seemed too

distant and irrelevant and those who had read the Bible so much that it had become 'old hat.'" He often remove passages from their Jewish context to make the biblical personality sound like a twentieth-century American. Peterson also sometimes embellishes the text with additional details to heighten the vividness and drama. It is a highly idiomatic translation, and as such falls on the extreme dynamic end of the dynamic and formal equivalence spectrum. *The Message* was published in sections over a nine-year period. The New Testament was published in 1993. The Old Testament Wisdom Books were published in 1998. The Old Testament Prophets were published in 2000. The Old Testament Pentateuch (first five books of Moses) was released in 2001 and the Books of History came out in 2002. The entire Bible was released in 2002 and follows the traditional Protestant Biblical canon.

2004 – Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB). After several years of preliminary development, Holman Bible Publishers, the oldest Bible publisher in America, assembled an international, interdenominational team of 90 scholars, all of whom were committed to biblical inerrancy. Smaller teams of editors, stylists, and proofreaders then corrected and polished the translation. Outside consultants contributed suggestions from their areas of expertise. An executive team then reviewed the final manuscripts. The textual base for the New Testament is the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th edition, and the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament*, 4th edition. The text for the Old Testament is the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 5th edition. The translation team sought to combine the best features of both formal and dynamic equivalence translations. In the many places throughout Scripture where a word for word rendering is clearly understandable, a literal translation was used. In places where a literal rendering might be unclear, then a more dynamic translation was given. Traditional theological vocabulary (such as justification, sanctification, redemption, etc.) has been retained in the HCSB since such terms have no translation equivalent that adequately communicates their exact meaning. Some features of the translation include the following: traditional spellings of names and places found in most Bibles have been used to make the translation compatible with most Bible study tools, most nouns and pronouns that refer to any person of the Trinity are capitalized, and small lower corner brackets indicate words supplied for clarity by the translators.

2005 – New English Translation (NET). The NET is a free on-line English translation of the Bible sponsored by the Biblical Studies Foundation and published by Biblical Studies Press. It is a completely new translation of the Bible, not an update or revision of an older translation. It was completed by more than 25 scholars – experts in the original biblical languages – who worked directly from what was considered the best currently available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. The NET Bible was initially conceived at an annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in November 1995 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The translation project originally started as an attempt to provide a digital version of a modern English translation over the Internet and on CD-ROM without cost for the user. The translation is most notable for its 60,932 lengthy translators' footnotes (which often explain its textual translation decision), its open translation process, its availability on the Internet (both during its beta process and in its final form), and its open copyright permitting free downloads. The level of documentation in the NET is claimed to be a first for a Bible translation, making available the textual basis and the rationale for certain textual renderings (including major interpretive options and alternative translations).

2005 – Today's New International Version (TNIV). This contemporary language version incorporates the continuing work of the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT), the translators of the NIV, since the NIV's update in 1984. The translators agreed that faithful communication of the meaning of the original writers demands frequent modifications in sentence structure (resulting in a "thought-for-thought" translation) and constant regard for the contextual meanings of words. The CBT wanted to build a new version on the heritage of the NIV and like its predecessor create a balanced version that would fall in-between the most literal translation and the most liberal one. The result was a Bible text that reflects the NIV, but also clarifies and updates passages and words to provide a more contemporary English rendition. Some of the improvements in the TNIV text are simple word changes that reflect contemporary English terms. The TNIV retains gender-accurate, masculine terminology for references to God. There are passages in the TNIV, however, in which the contemporary English rendition used to refer to both men and women has been translated to reflect the original language, context, and understanding. One criticism of the TNIV is the translation committee's belief that it is "appropriate to mute the patriarchalism of the culture of the biblical writers." The TNIV is superseded by the 2011 revision of the NIV.

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