

The History of the Bible

MODERN TRANSLATIONS

Aren't Modern Translations All Copyrighted, Unlike The KJV?

KJV - 1611
Living - 1971
NASB - 1971
NIV - 1978
NKJV - 1982
NRSV - 1946
ESV - 2001
Message - 2002
HCSB - 2004

The King James Version is technically held under a copyright principle the United Kingdom calls "Royal Prerogative." It can only be produced by the Queen's Printer which is, at this time, Cambridge University Press. Although, nobody is enforcing that in the US.

Modern translations, with the exception of the World English Bible, are copyrighted. Each copyright holder has issued a "fair use" statement allowing their Bibles to be used and quoted in part, as long as writers aren't profiting from it. As we've seen in this series,

financial competition is not foreign to Biblical work. For example, Erasmus was motivated to beat his competition to press with his Greek New Testament. The King James Version has its own history of lawsuits and financial interests in its earliest years of printing.

Copyright interests have undoubtedly led to the proliferation of modern translations. However, the principle of 1 Timothy 5:18 says the laborer, especially in the Word, is worthy of being paid.

Are Modern Translations Grounded In Roman Catholicism?

What is true: Roman Catholicism has had an influence on most religious issues within Christianity for the past 1,600 years, including the preservation of manuscripts. The Codex Vaticanus is one of the oldest complete Greek manuscripts known and is often favored by textual critics. However, the translators of modern translations (with the exception of the NRSV) are not attempting to promote Catholic doctrine.

What is false: It is false to say The King James Version is without Catholic influence. The Greek text on which it is

based is the work of a priest named Erasmus. The translators were all Anglican, a denomination that is at least 'Catholic-ish' in its doctrines (universal church, baptize infants by sprinkling, etc). This is evident in the rules imposed by the king such as:

King James' Rules For Translators:

Rule #3 *"The old Ecclesiastical Words to be kept, viz. the Word Church not to be translated Congregation etc."*

Translations Based on Byzantine Texts

In 1516, a Catholic priest named Desiderius Erasmus, collected 6-10 Byzantine manuscripts and combined them – using Textual Criticism – into one document representing a Byzantine reading in most cases. The commonly available English translations using a Byzantine text include:

- King James Version (KJV)
- New King James Version (NKJV)
- Modern English Version (MEV)
- World English Bible (WEB)

Translations Based on Alexandrian Texts

In 1881, two men – Brooke Wescott and Fenton Hort – published "The New Testament in the Original Greek" to promote the Alexandrian text family, especially the Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus. The commonly available English translations using an Alexandrian text include:

- American Standard Version (ASV)
- English Revised Version (ERV)
- Good News Bible (GNT)

Translations Based on 'Reasoned Eclecticism'

Reasoned Eclecticism uses logical rules to determine each variant on a case-by-case basis. The publication is known as the Nestle-Aland (NA) or United Bible Society (UBS) text. Common English translations with this text include:

- English Standard Version (ESV)
- New International Version (NIV)
- New American Standard (NASB)
- Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)
- New Revised Standard (NRSV)
- New Living Translation (NLT)

A Translation Test Case

Is there only one “right” reading? The Greek text of this portion of Mark 12:38-40 and Luke 20:45-47 are virtually identical. Note how the King James translators, using a formal equivalence method, still arrived at different readings:

Mark 12:38–40 KJV

... Beware of the scribes,
which **love** to **go** in long
clothing, and love **salutations**
in the **marketplaces**, And the
chief seats in the
synagogues, and the
uppermost rooms at feasts:
Which devour widows' houses,
and for a **pretence** make long
prayers: **these** shall receive
greater damnation.

Luke 20:45–47 KJV

... Beware of the scribes,
which **desire** to **walk** in long
robes, and love **greetings**
in the **markets**, and the
highest seats in the
synagogues, and the
chief rooms at feasts:
Which devour widows' houses,
and for a **shew** make long
prayers: **the same** shall receive
greater damnation.