

## How We Got Our Bible

### THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

The first record of the Bible being translated in any way is probably **Nehemiah 8:8 (read 8:1-8)**.

- 8:8 “clearly”
  - ESV footnote
  - NASB “translating to give the sense”
  - CSB “translating and giving the meaning”

Bible translation is vitally important! The Word of God will not profit a person if they do not understand it.

#### Greek OT

The OT was translated into Greek between 250-100 B.C. This translation is called the Septuagint, a name that comes from a Latin word meaning “seventy.” This name probably was derived from an account (possibly legend) of the translation of the Septuagint, dated about 100 B.C., which states that 72 Jewish scholars translated the Pentateuch in 72 days.<sup>1</sup> The name, ‘Septuagint,’ is often abbreviated LXX.

The Septuagint translation was done because many Jews knew Greek better than Hebrew, including the large number of Jews living in Egypt.

In the NT, a good number of OT quotations seem to have been taken from the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew OT.

Good translations of the Septuagint into English are the Brenton translation (1851), and *The Lexham English Septuagint* published by Lexham Press in 2019.

- *Show a copy*

#### Syriac

Syriac is an Aramaic dialect that was used in Syria.

Some of the Jews who were saved on Pentecost were visiting Jerusalem from the other side of the Euphrates River, a region largely outside the border of the Roman Empire.

- **Acts 2:9** “Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia...”

From this area, Syriac translations of the Bible emerged. It appears the OT was translated the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. Several translations of the whole Bible were made. One of these translations is called the Peshitta and was the standard version from the 5<sup>th</sup> century onward.<sup>2</sup>

#### Latin

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<sup>1</sup> Wegner, 194-95.

<sup>2</sup> Wegner, 244, 246..

Greek prevailed over Latin in most of the Roman Empire until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, except in southern Gaul (modern-day France) and northern Africa, where the earliest Latin translations emerged. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Latin emerged as the major language throughout the empire.<sup>3</sup>

It appears that a translation of at least part of the NT was made by 180 A.D.<sup>4</sup>

The most important Latin version is called the Vulgate. It was translated by Jerome from 383-405. It played a dominant role in Western Europe for about 1,000 years. During the Reformation, the Latin Vulgate was translated into many other languages.<sup>5</sup>

Pope Damasus I, bishop of Rome, commissioned Jerome, his secretary, to revise and standardize the Latin version. At that time, there were many significant differences among Latin texts in circulation. Jerome was a brilliant scholar with a firm grasp of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. His work was later known as the Vulgate, meaning “common” or “plain.” In general, he translated in a sense-for-sense rather than a literal, word-for-word manner.<sup>6</sup>

Jerome anticipated the severe criticism he would face. He wrote to Damasus in the preface to the four Gospels the following:

You urge me to revise the old Latin version, and, as it were, to sit in judgment on the copies of the Scriptures which are now scattered throughout the whole world; and, inasmuch as they differ from one another, you would have me decide which of them agree with the Greek original. The labor is one of love, but at the same time both perilous and presumptuous; for in judging others I must be content to be judged by all; and how can I dare to change the language of the world in its hoary old age, and carry it back to the early days of its infancy? Is there a man, learned or unlearned, who will not, when he takes the volume into his hands, and perceives that what he reads does not suit his settled tastes, break out immediately into violent language, and call me a forger and a profane person for having the audacity to add anything to the ancient books, or to make any changes or corrections therein?<sup>7</sup>

Jerome used the Hebrew text as a basis for his OT translation, and for this he was severely criticized by the church, which claimed the Septuagint was inspired and therefore authoritative, and viewed Jerome’s actions as a sign of Judaizing.<sup>8</sup> He did much of his work on the Vulgate after moving to Bethlehem, where he was further trained in Hebrew by a rabbi who came to him at night for fear that the Jews would condemn him for teaching the sacred language to a Gentile. Jerome’s knowledge of Hebrew, though defective, was much greater than that of the small handful of other church fathers who knew any Hebrew.<sup>9</sup>

The Latin Vulgate has had a great influence on the language and thought of the Western church. English words like “justify” and “sanctify” derive from Latin.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Wegner, 252.

<sup>4</sup> Wegner, 253.

<sup>5</sup> Wegner, 254.

<sup>6</sup> Wegner, 254.

<sup>7</sup> In Wegner, 255.

<sup>8</sup> Wegner, 255.

<sup>9</sup> Wegner, 256.

<sup>10</sup> Wegner, 256.

The Latin Vulgate was the first book ever to be printed by moveable print in the West, and was Johann Gutenberg's greatest printing achievement. It is called the Gutenberg Bible. He printed a second edition in 1457-1458.<sup>11</sup>

### Coptic

Egyptian Jews were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). And following Pentecost, the gospel spread quickly into Egypt. While the Greek language had significant influence on Egypt, native Egyptians would probably have spoken primarily Coptic (meaning "Egyptian"), of which there are multiple dialects. The Bible was probably translated into Coptic in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century for the evangelization of non-Greek-speakers.<sup>12</sup>

### Armenian

This word is not to be confused with the word, Arminian!

The Armenians lived north of Mesopotamia between the Roman and Persian empires. The gospel spread to Armenia by the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The first version of the Armenian Bible appears to have been produced in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. In order to make the translation, a new alphabet was created. Prior to this, all books in this region were written in Syriac or Greek.<sup>13</sup>

### Other Early Translations

At an early time, the Bible was also translated into Gothic, Slavonic, Georgian, Ethiopic, and Arabic. For some of these translations, an alphabet had to first be created.

The spread of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century forced Jews and Christians in conquered lands to adopt Arabic. Translation of the Bible into Arabic was outlawed, but Jews and Christians translated it undercover.<sup>14</sup>

### The Reformation

In the Protestant Reformation, many translations of the Bible were made, including Italian, French, Spanish, Dutch, and German.<sup>15</sup>

The Reformers recognized the great value of the Greek text published by Erasmus (1516), which was the first Greek New Testament accessible to the people. However, the Roman Catholic Church fought any nonallegiance to the Latin Vulgate. Erasmus' Greek New Testament was based on about six Greek manuscripts. The manuscript of Revelation that Erasmus used was

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<sup>11</sup> Wegner, 263-64.

<sup>12</sup> Wegner, 246, 248.

<sup>13</sup> Wegner 248-49.

<sup>14</sup> Wegner, 252.

<sup>15</sup> Wegner, 266.

missing the last page. So Erasmus translated the Latin Vulgate back into Greek for the last six verses. Erasmus' Greek NT was used by Martin Luther for his German translation (1522), and William Tyndale for his English translation.<sup>16</sup>

Luther made his German translation of the Bible in hiding. His vibrant and easily understood translation helped standardize the German language.

Greek New Testaments were also published by others. In 1633, the Elzevir family from Leiden, in the Netherlands, published the second edition of their Greek New Testament. The preface states that even the most minute mistakes had been corrected and thus this edition was "the text which is now received by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted." This sentence gave rise to the name *Textus Receptus* ("Received Text"), abbreviated TR. Since the King James Version was translated from this Greek text, it too is often called the Received Text.<sup>17</sup>

### English Translations, prior to the KJV

For more than 900 years English-speaking people did not have a Bible in their own language. The Roman Catholic Church deemed the Latin Vulgate to be the authoritative translation of the Bible, and resisted the idea of translating the Bible into English.<sup>18</sup>

Christianity reached England by at least the early 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup> The first portion of the Bible to be translated into Anglo-Saxon was the book of Psalms, which was translated from the Latin Vulgate around A.D. 700.<sup>20</sup> Over time, various portions of the Bible were translated into Old English and later Middle English, but never for laypeople until John Wycliffe changed this.

### *The Wycliffe Bible (NT, 1380; Entire Bible, 1382)*

John Wycliffe (c. 1329-1384) was educated at Oxford and then taught there. He was also the rector (head) of a couple churches. He was a brilliant scholar and superb debator. Over time, he became greatly concerned about the corruption in the church and the papacy.<sup>21</sup> He devoted increasing time to speaking and writing against this corruption. He opposed the requirement of an intermediary (a priest or pope) to communicate with God. Wycliffe summoned people back to a more biblical Christianity. Wycliffe held that the people needed the Bible in their own language for a revival to take place.<sup>22</sup>

Wycliffe, with the help of others, translated the whole Bible from Latin into English. For this he was proclaimed a heretic. Archbishop Arundel denounced him in a letter to the Pope in 1411:

This pestilent and wretched John Wyclif, of cursed memory, that son of the old serpent...endeavored by every means to attack the very faith and sacred doctrine of

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<sup>16</sup> Wegner, 266-67.

<sup>17</sup> Wegner, 270.

<sup>18</sup> Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible*, 273.

<sup>19</sup> Wegner, 274.

<sup>20</sup> Wegner, 275.

<sup>21</sup> Wegner, 281.

<sup>22</sup> Wegner, 282.

the Holy Church, devising—to fill up the measure of his malice—the expedient of a new translation of the Scriptures into the mother tongue.<sup>23</sup>

Wycliffe's first version of the NT in Middle English was published in 1380, and the OT in 1382 (with the help of Nicholas of Hereford).<sup>24</sup> After Wycliffe's death (1384), one of his followers, John Purvey, produced a second edition (1388). In the preface, Purvey prayed, "God graunte to us alle grace to kunne [understand] wel and kepe wel Holi Writ, and suffer ioiefulli [joyfully] some peyne for it at the laste."<sup>25</sup>

The church condemned the Wycliffe Bible. Both Purvey and Hereford were thrown into prison, and some of their friends were burned at the stake with Bibles tied around their necks. A church synod in 1408 forbade the reading of Wycliffe's Bible:

It is a dangerous thing, ...as witnesseth blessed St Jerome, to translate the text of the holy Scripture out of one tongue into another; for in the translation the same sense is not always easily kept, as the same St Jerome confesseth, that although he were inspired...yet oftentimes in this he erred; we therefor decree and ordain that no man hereafter by his own authority...translate any text of the Scripture into English or any other tongue, by way of a book, pamphlet, or treatise; and that no man read any such book, pamphlet or treatise, now lately composed in the time of John Wycliffe or since, or hereafter to be set forth in part or in whole, publicly or privately, upon pain of greater excommunication, until the said translation be approved by the ordinary of the place or, if the case so require, by the council provincial. He that shall do contrary to this shall likewise be punished as a favourer of heresy and error.<sup>26</sup>

People who were caught reading this Bible were liable to forfeiture of their "land, cattle, life, and goods." But this threat actually roused curiosity among the people to know what the forbidden Bible said! This sparked a desire among the people to learn to read.<sup>27</sup>

In 1415, a church council condemned Wycliffe's writings and ordered that Wycliffe's bones be dug up and burned, and his ashes scattered in the river. He is called "the morning star of the Reformation."<sup>28</sup>

### *The Tyndale Bible (NT, 1526; OT Portions, 1534)*

William Tyndale (c. 1494-1536) studied and taught at Oxford University and then Cambridge University. Tyndale became increasingly convinced that both laity and clergy knew very little Scripture. In a heated debate between Tyndale and a priest, the priest burst out, "We are better to be without God's law than the Pope's." Tyndale replied, "I defy the

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<sup>23</sup> In Wegner, 282.

<sup>24</sup> Wegner, 282.

<sup>25</sup> In Wegner, 283.

<sup>26</sup> In Wegner, 283.

<sup>27</sup> Wegner, 283-84.

<sup>28</sup> Wegner, 284.

Pope and all his laws,” and added that if God spared his life, before many years he would cause a boy that drives the plough to know more of the Scripture than the priest did.<sup>29</sup>

In 1523, Tyndale went to London to request permission from the bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall, to translate the Bible into English, and was denied. So Tyndale began doing so illegally. Unlike Wycliffe, Tyndale translated from the original languages. For the next six months, Tyndale worked in London on translating the NT from Erasmus’ Greek NT. He included marginal notes that explained the text. Half of the notes were translated directly from Luther’s German Bible. He also included an introduction to each book.<sup>30</sup>

Because England was not a safe place to translate the Bible, Tyndale relocated to Germany. In 1525, Tyndale tried to have his NT printed in Cologne, but church authorities heard about it and forbid the printing. He fled to Worms, where Reformation sympathies had been aroused. By 1526, Tyndale’s NT was printed there. The Bibles were then smuggled into England in cotton bales and other innocent looking containers.<sup>31</sup>

When Bishop Tunstall learned of the Bibles, he was furious and gathered up as many of them as possible to be burned publicly in the presence of Cardinal Wolsey, who ruled with nearly royal authority over England. Tunstall called Tyndale’s Bible a “pestiferous and most pernicious poison.” He believed the translation to be infected by Lutheranism, and was convinced the common person could not properly interpret Scripture.<sup>32</sup> In God’s providence, the money Tunstall spent to buy up Tyndale’s NT’s helped finance a second edition.<sup>33</sup>

Tyndale’s NT was attacked in writing by Thomas More, who asserted that Tyndale’s NT “was not worthy to be called Christ’s testament, but either Tyndale’s own testament or the testament of his master Antichrist.” The errors that More purportedly found can probably be attributed to differences between the Greek and Latin texts, and included translating church as ‘congregation,’ penance as ‘repentance,’ and charity as ‘love.’<sup>34</sup>

Tyndale published the Pentateuch in 1530, and the Book of Jonah in 1531.

Though Tyndale was not in England, his life was still in danger since Charles V, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, considered Tyndale a heretic. As long as Tyndale stayed in Antwerp, a free city of Belgium, he was safe. But in 1535, Charles employed Henry Philips to kidnap Tyndale and take him outside the city so he could be imprisoned.<sup>35</sup> From prison, Tyndale wrote the following letter to someone in authority:

I believe, right worshipful, that you are not unaware of what may have been determined concerning me. Wherefore I beg your lordship, and that by the Lord

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<sup>29</sup> *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, in Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible*, 286.

<sup>30</sup> Wegner, 289.

<sup>31</sup> Wegner, 286-87.

<sup>32</sup> Wegner, 287.

<sup>33</sup> Wegner, 288.

<sup>34</sup> Wegner, 290.

<sup>35</sup> Wegner, 288.

Jesus, that if I am to remain here through the winter, you will request the commissary to have the kindness to send me, from the goods of mine which he has, a warmer cap, for I suffer greatly from cold in the head, and am afflicted by a perpetual catarrh [a chronic inflammation of the nasal passages], which is much increased in this cell; a warmer coat also, for this which I have is very thin; a piece of cloth, too, to patch my leggings. My overcoat is worn out; my shirts also are worn out. He has a woollen shirt, if he will be good enough to send it. I have also with him leggings of thicker cloth to put on above; he has also warmer night-caps. And I ask to be allowed to have a lamp in the evening; it is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark. But most of all I beg and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the commissary, that he will kindly permit me to have the Hebrew Bible, Hebrew grammar and Hebrew dictionary, that I may pass the time in that study. In return may you obtain what you most desire, so only that it be for the salvation of your soul. But if any other decision has been taken concerning me, to be carried out before winter, I will be patient, abiding the will of God, to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ; whose Spirit (I pray) may ever direct your heart. Amen.”<sup>36</sup>

In August 1536, Tyndale was found guilty of heresy and condemned to death. On October 6, he was strangled and burned at the stake. His last words were, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.” Less than one year after his death, Henry VIII granted permission for an English version of the Bible, which was largely Tyndale’s version, to be printed in England.<sup>37</sup>

Tyndale’s second edition (1534) was done with such excellence, that nine-tenths of the King James NT would be Tyndale’s wording. Though the church authorities did their best to wipe out almost every trace of the Tyndale Bible, it has lived on.<sup>38</sup> His translation has influenced almost every English translation of the Bible. Much of the style and vocabulary we know as “biblical English” is traceable to his work. He coined such English words as, ‘atonement.’

### *The Coverdale Bible (1535)*

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) was born and grew up in York, England. He became an Augustinian friar, but was influenced so strongly by the Reformation that he eventually left his order. After continuing his studies at Cambridge, he worked in Europe with Tyndale on a translation of the Pentateuch. Coverdale produced a translation of the entire Bible that largely followed Tyndale’s translation. He finished the first edition in 1535. Rather than scattering the Apocrypha through the OT as in the Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, Coverdale included the Apocrypha separate from the canonical books. He included a note that the apocryphal books did not appear in the Hebrew Bible and thus were not of the same authority.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> In Wegner, 289.

<sup>37</sup> Wegner, 289.

<sup>38</sup> Wegner, 291.

<sup>39</sup> Wegner, 293.

### *The Matthew Bible (1537)*

John Rogers studied at Cambridge. In 1534 he went to Antwerp as chaplain of English merchants. There he met Tyndale, began to embrace the Reformed faith, and helped to smuggle English Bibles into England. After Tyndale's death, he took the pen name Thomas Matthew and finished Tyndale's Bible. He followed Coverdale's version of the books from Ezra to Malachi.

Back in 1534, Henry VIII severed all relationships with Rome, and appointed himself head of the Church of England (the Anglican church). Licensed by the king, the Coverdale Bible and the Matthew Bible gave the people of England greater access to reading or at least hearing the Bible in English. This provided incentive for the illiterate to learn to read. But not everyone was excited. Edward Foxe, a theologian, complained that: "The lay people do now know the holy scripture better than many of us."<sup>40</sup>

When England reverted to Roman Catholicism under Mary Tudor, John Rogers was one of the first people to be burned at the stake in 1555.<sup>41</sup>

### *The Great Bible (1539)*

The Upper House of Convocation of Canterbury petitioned the king in 1534 to authorize a translation of the Bible into English. Thomas Cromwell, vicar-general under Henry VIII, asked Coverdale to make a complete revision of the Bible, based upon the Matthew Bible. This revision is commonly known as the Great Bible because its pages are so large (16 ½ inches by 11 inches). Henry VIII decreed that copies of the Great Bible be placed in each church. This was the first English translation to be authorized for public use in churches.

To keep this Bible accessible to all people, it was chained to the church pillars. So it also became known as the "Chained Bible."<sup>42</sup>

Bible reading became so popular that Bishop Bonner complained that it disrupted his services, stating: "Diverse willful and unlearned persons inconsiderately and indiscreetly read the same, especially and chiefly at the time of divine service, yea in the time of the sermon and declaration of the word of God." This became such a point of irritation that in 1539 the king created the following law against reading the English Bible aloud during the service: "[No man] shall openly read the Bible or New Testament in the English tongue in any churches or chapels <or elsewhere> with any loud or high voice, <and specially> during the time of divine service," but "quietly and reverently read the Bible and New Testament by themselves <secretly> at all times and places convenient." Apparently, some people found Bible reading more interesting than listen to their pastor.<sup>43</sup>

### *The Geneva Bible (1560)*

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<sup>40</sup> Wegner, 295.

<sup>41</sup> Wegner, 295.

<sup>42</sup> Rose Publishing, *How We Got the Bible*.

<sup>43</sup> Wegner, 296-97.



During Mary I's ("Bloody Mary's") reign, Protestant fugitives fled from England to various Protestant centers including Geneva, Switzerland, the home of John Calvin. William Whittingham, brother-in-law of Calvin's wife, was one of these Protestant fugitives who fled to Geneva. There in Geneva, Whittingham and other British reformers produced a revision of the English Bible. This was the first time for the English Bible to be divided into verses. Italics were introduced into the translation to indicate where English idiom required words that were not in the original text. They translated directly from the Hebrew the many OT books that Tyndale did not translate. This was the first time for these books to be translated from Hebrew into English. This Bible, now known as the Geneva Bible, was completed in 1560.<sup>44</sup>

Long introductions were included for the books, along with chapter summaries and plentiful marginal notes. The notes were clearly Calvinistic in doctrine, and expressed anti-Roman sentiments. They made a strong impact on the people of Scotland and England, where British Puritanism became a strong force. The Scottish Parliament even made it compulsory for every householder whose income was above a specific sum to buy a copy of the Geneva Bible.<sup>45</sup>

The Geneva Bible was brought to America on the *Mayflower* (1620), and was the Bible of John Bunyan. It was the Bible that William Shakespeare read. The 1640 edition was the first English Bible to omit the Apocrypha completely.<sup>46</sup>

*Sidenote on the Puritans:* Puritanism was a reform movement that originated during the English Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The name came from efforts to "purify" the Church of England by those who felt that the Reformation had not yet been completed. In the days of James I, some Puritans grew discouraged about their reforming efforts and separated entirely from the Church of England, gaining the title, "Separatists."<sup>47</sup>

### *The Bishop's Bible (1568)*

The bishops in the Church of England recognized deficiencies in the Great Bible, but were unwilling to replace it with the superior text of the Geneva Bible because of its Calvinistic marginal notes. Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury (an archbishop is a leader among other bishops) was asked in 1563 to oversee a revision of the Great Bible. Bishops were invited to have a part in the work, hence its name.<sup>48</sup>

The bishops were instructed "to follow the common English translation used in the churches [the Great Bible] and not to recede from it but where it varieth manifestly from the Hebrew or Greek original." They were "to make no bitter notes upon any text or yet to set down any

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<sup>44</sup> Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible*, 301. Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible*, 320.

<sup>45</sup> Wegner, 301-302. Geisler and Nix, 320.

<sup>46</sup> Rose Publishing, *How We Got the Bible*.

<sup>47</sup> Mark A. Noll, "Puritanism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

<sup>48</sup> Wegner, 303.

determination in places of controversy.” They were to mark unedifying passages “that the reader may eschew [avoid] them in his public reading,” and were to alter offensive words.<sup>49</sup>

This Bible became the authorized version, to be placed in all the churches of England. However, it never gained the popularity of the Geneva Bible, which went through 120 editions. Because of this, it looked as if English-speaking Protestantism was to have two versions of the Bible, one representing the Anglican viewpoint and the other the Genevan viewpoint.<sup>50</sup>

*Douay-Rheims Bible (NT, 1582; OT, 1609-10)*

The Roman Catholic Church was driven to produce an English translation of the Bible with marginal notes in support of its teachings; otherwise the people would read existing versions, which reflected the teachings of Calvin and other Protestants. This was done by William Allen, who was from Oxford University. He was a devout Roman Catholic who left England during the reign of Protestant-favoring Elizabeth I. Allen established an English college in the French cities of Douay and Rheims. He and other scholars that came to the college from Oxford translated the Latin Vulgate into English and wrote Catholic marginal notes.<sup>51</sup>

The translators acknowledged in the preface that they were compelled to make a translation to refute the many “false translations” produced by the Protestants. They wrote,

To meet the Protestant challenge, priests must be ready to quote Scripture in the vulgar tongue [the language of the common people] since their adversaries have every favorable passage at their fingers’ ends; they must know the passages ‘correctly used by Catholics in support of our faith, or impiously misused by heretics in opposition to the Church’s faith.’<sup>52</sup>

The preface also stated that the Latin Vulgate was the superior text for making an English translation:

It is translated from the Vulgate which possesses ecclesiastical [pertaining to the church] authority and is the least partial text, “truer than the vulgar Greek itself.” The translators follow it precisely, risking unfamiliar Latinisms and not presuming to mollify hard places “for fear of missing or restraining the sense of the Holy Ghost to our phantasy,” whereas Protestants use “presumptuous boldness and liberty in translating.”<sup>53</sup>

Adherence to Roman Catholic doctrines resulted in renderings such as the following. In the Lord’s Prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread,” was translated, “Give us today our superstantial bread,” reminding the readers of the Lord’s Supper and transubstantiation. The translators used the words “do penance” instead of “repent.” And in their translation Paul and Barnabas ordained “priests” instead of “elders” in every church.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> In Wegner, 303.

<sup>50</sup> Wegner, 303.

<sup>51</sup> Wegner, 304.

<sup>52</sup> In Wegner, 304.

<sup>53</sup> In Wegner, 305.

<sup>54</sup> Wegner, 305.

The marginal notes appealed as much as possible to Augustine to substantiate controversial points, since they believed the Reformers looked favorably upon Augustine's teachings.<sup>55</sup> The notes were in harmony with the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545-1563).<sup>56</sup> This council was the official Roman Catholic response to the Lutheran Reformation. Among other things, it denied the Protestant teaching on justification; upheld Catholic teaching on the sacraments; and declared that tradition was equally authoritative with Scripture, that only the Catholic Church could correctly interpret the Bible, and that the Latin Vulgate was to be used exclusively in public readings and doctrinal commentaries.<sup>57</sup>

This Bible would be the standard Roman Catholic English translation for centuries.

### The King James Version (1611)

A good documentary on this is, *KJB, the Book that Changed the World: The Amazing Tale of the Birth of the King James Bible*, presented by John Rhys-Davies, and released in 2010.

Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603, and was succeeded by James I, who had been king of Scotland. On his way to England he was presented with a petition in which the Puritans set out their grievances against the Church of England. The Puritans' main contention was that they could not with good conscience subscribe to the *Book of Common Prayer*, since it was based on the Great Bible, which they said was a corrupted translation. In 1604, it was decided "that a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek; and this to be set out and printed, without any marginal notes, and only to be used in all churches of England in time of divine service."<sup>58</sup>

This idea suited King James, who had been trained in early life as a student of the Bible. One reason he took up the suggestion of a new translation was his objections to the Geneva Bible, which he believed undermined the divine right of kings. He labeled it as, "very partiall, untrue, seditious, and savouring too much of dangerous and traytorous conceits." He disliked various marginal notes, including one on Exodus 1:19 that taught that the Hebrew midwives' disobedience to the king of Egypt was lawful, and a note on 2 Kings 9:33 teaching that Jehu's command to throw down Queen Jezebel from her window was given to be a spectacle and example of God's judgments on all tyrants.<sup>59</sup>

The new translation was to be produced by university scholars, reviewed by the bishops, and ratified by the king. The goal was an excellent translation that all English Protestants could accept.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Wegner, 305.

<sup>56</sup> Geisler and Nix, 324.

<sup>57</sup> F. S. Piggin, "Trent, Council of," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*.

<sup>58</sup> Wegner, 308.

<sup>59</sup> Wegner, 308.

<sup>60</sup> Wegner, 308-309.

King James took an active part in organizing what was then called the Authorized Version, appointing 54 men as translators. Most were the leading classical and Ancient Near East scholars in England at the time, but some laymen were also included. Some of the translators were traditional Anglicans, and others Puritans. The intent was to build on earlier translation work to render a translation that would be easy to understand yet dignified enough to be read in church. This is expressed in the preface to the 1611 edition:

Truly (good Christian Reader) we neuer thought from the beginning, that we should neede 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, not iustly to be excepted against: that hath bene our endeauour, that our marke.<sup>61</sup>

The translators were arranged into six panels and the work divided among the panels. Once the panels completed their translations, the work was reviewed by a committee made up of two people from each of the panels.<sup>62</sup>

The work was guided by the following principles authorized by King James:

1. The 1602 edition of the Bishops' Bible was to be used as the basis for the revision, but the original Greek and Hebrew texts were to be examined.

The preface indicates that the translators examined all English translations, several foreign versions, several Latin translations, the Septuagint, and the Syriac Peshitta in determining the best readings of the Hebrew and Greek texts.

2. So that the English version did not become too stilted, a variety of words were to be used for the same Greek and Hebrew words.
3. Words necessary in the English but not present in the Hebrew and Greek texts were to be indicated by italics.
4. The names of biblical characters were to correspond as closely as possible to those in common use.
5. Old ecclesiastical words were to be retained. For example, Tyndale's 'congregation' and 'washing' became 'church' and 'baptism' in the KJV.
6. No marginal notes were to appear other than explanations of Greek and Hebrew words.
7. Existing chapter and verse divisions were to be retained, but new headings should be supplied.<sup>63</sup>

When the KJV was originally produced, the known Hebrew and Greek manuscripts were extremely limited compared to the known manuscripts today. The KJV scholars were aware of

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<sup>61</sup> In Wegner, 309.

<sup>62</sup> Wegner, 309.

<sup>63</sup> Wegner, 310.

fewer than 25 late NT manuscripts, and these were carelessly used. They had an even more limited knowledge of OT manuscripts.<sup>64</sup>

The KJV included the Apocrypha, of which the Puritans strongly disapproved. It became such an issue that in 1616 Archbishop Abbot decreed that anyone who published an edition of the KJV without the Apocrypha would be thrown in prison for one year. The Apocrypha continued to be included until about 1826 when, primarily for financial reasons, the British and foreign Bible Society omitted it.<sup>65</sup>

The KJV took five years to complete, and was first published in 1611. It was dedicated to King James and the title read:

The Holy Bible, conteyning the Old Testament and the New: Newly Translated out of the Originall tongues: & with the former Translations diligently compared and revised, by his Majestie's speciall Commandement. Appointed to be read in Churches.<sup>66</sup>

For 80 years after its publication, the KJV endured bitter attacks. The pilgrims who brought the Geneva Bible to the New World rejected the KJV for emphasizing the divine right of kings. It was denounced as theologically unsound and ecclesiastically biased, as serving the king and wrongly deferring to his belief in witchcraft, as untrue to the Hebrew text and relying too much on the Septuagint. The personal integrity of the translators was attacked. They were accused of “blasphemy,” “most damnable corruptions,” “intolerable deceit,” and “vile imposture.”<sup>67</sup>

However, in time the criticisms died out.

#### Later editions of the King James Version

Today's KJV differs significantly from the original 1611 edition. Primarily the language has been modernized. A major revision was published in 1629. Another revision was completed in 1638. The revision in 1769 became known as the Oxford standard edition and is used today. It differs in at least 75,000 places from the original 1611 edition.<sup>68</sup>

However, as English words changed in meaning, and developments were made in biblical studies, and biblical manuscripts were discovered that are much older than the texts used for the KJV, the need for a complete revision was recognized.<sup>69</sup>

One well-known problem with the KJV is found in 1 John 5:6-8. Compare with the KJV,

6 This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. 7 For there are three that bear record **in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the**

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<sup>64</sup> Wegner, 311.

<sup>65</sup> Wegner, 312-313.

<sup>66</sup> Wegner, 311.

<sup>67</sup> Wegner, 313.

<sup>68</sup> Wegner, 314.

<sup>69</sup> Wegner, 315.

**Holy Ghost: and these three are one.** <sup>8</sup> **And there are three that bear witness in earth,** the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

The words in question are owing to a bad decision made by Erasmus in his Greek NT. Originally (in the year 1516), his text did not contain these words which are in the Latin Vulgate. Erasmus was accused of removing part of God's Word. He replied that he had not found any Greek manuscript containing these words. In an unguarded moment, Erasmus promised to insert the words in further editions if a single Greek manuscript could be found that contained the passage. At length such a copy was found—or was made to order! As it now appears, the Greek manuscript had probably been written about 1520 by a Franciscan friar who took the disputed words from the Latin Vulgate. Erasmus stood by his promise and inserted the passage in his third edition (1522), but he indicated in a lengthy footnote his suspicions that the manuscript had been prepared expressly in order to disprove him.<sup>70</sup>

When subsequent translations of the Bible did not include these words in question, many people reacted very negatively, even though there was no sound reason to include these words.

*Question:* Why do you think people have reacted like this?

#### The Revised Version (NT, 1881; Entire Bible, 1885)

In 1870, the Anglican Church decided to revise the KJV. Scholars were selected from both Great Britain and America to do the work. It was hoped that one translation could be agreed upon for both England and America. However, this did not turn out to be the case. The American translators wanted to remove much more of the archaic language than did the British translators. For example, the Americans wanted to change "Holy Ghost" to "Holy Spirit," but the British did not.<sup>71</sup>

The translators were allowed to introduce only new wording that would render the KJV closer to the original languages and would not modernize the English unduly. Work on the NT incorporated advances in textual criticism by B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, both from the University of Cambridge.<sup>72</sup>

The KJV translators had used a variety of English words to translate repetitious Greek and Hebrew words. But the translators of the Revised Version reversed this, which greatly facilitated the use of an English concordance for biblical study.<sup>73</sup> They attempted to render a word-for-word translation of the Greek and Hebrew texts using only one English word to represent each Greek or Hebrew word and leaving no Greek word without a corresponding English word.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Wegner, 268.

<sup>71</sup> Wegner, 315-16.

<sup>72</sup> Wegner, 316-17.

<sup>73</sup> Wegner, 317.

<sup>74</sup> Wegner, 318.

The OT translation was improved over the KJV by printing the poetic passages as poetry. However, the NT translation lost the great elegance and artistic beauty that made the KJV stand out.<sup>75</sup>

Two days after the NT was made available in America, the *Chicago Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* published it in its entirety. Charles Spurgeon commented on this new version as being “strong in Greek, weak in English.” It never gained the popularity of the KJV.<sup>76</sup>

### The American Standard Version (1901)

The American scholars who had worked on the Revised Version were not pleased with the decisions made by the British scholars, and put together their own version, published by Thomas Nelson.<sup>77</sup>

Examples of changes in wording

<b>British Wording (Revised Version)</b>	<b>American wording (American Standard Version)</b>
Wot	Know
Wist	Knew
LORD or GOD	Jehovah
Holy Ghost	Holy Spirit
Grave, pit, or hell (OT)	Sheol
Hell (NT)	Hades
Charity	Love
Fray	Frighten
Seeth or sod	Boil

The most severely criticized change was the use of Jehovah instead of LORD or GOD.<sup>78</sup>

This version was much more widely accepted in America than was its British counterpart in England. However, it never was as popular as the KJV.<sup>79</sup>

### Modern English Translations

#### *J. B. Phillips' New Testament (1947-1957)*

This was the first popular paraphrase of part of the Bible.

#### *Revised Standard Version (1946 [NT], 1952 [OT], 1957 [complete], 1971 [rev. NT])*

This was a revision of the American Standard Version. It was the first translation to receive approval from Protestants, Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox. In the OT, they followed the

<sup>75</sup> Wegner, 318.

<sup>76</sup> Wegner, 317.

<sup>77</sup> Wegner, 319.

<sup>78</sup> Wegner, 319.

<sup>79</sup> Wegner, 319-20.

Septuagint more than other English translations did.<sup>80</sup> This translation was affected by theological liberalism. For example, they changed Isaiah 7:14 “a virgin shall conceive” (ASV) to “a young woman shall conceive.”

*New English Bible (1970), Revised English Bible (1989)*

This is a British dynamic equivalent translation. It was produced by leading Protestant churches of Great Britain.<sup>81</sup> Theological liberalism affected the translation. For example, “propitiation” is translated as “expiation” and “remedy for defilement.”

*The Living Bible (1971)*

Kenneth Taylor, an evangelical, produced this paraphrase of the ASV, as a result of his efforts to explain the Bible to his ten children in everyday English they could understand.<sup>82</sup> It appears to be influenced by Arminianism in paraphrasing Acts 13:48 “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (ASV), as “as many as wanted eternal life, believed.”

*New American Standard Version (1971, 1995, 2020)*

This was a revision of the American Standard Version, done by the Lockman Foundation. Unlike the RSV, all the translators were evangelicals and subscribed to the evangelical theological statement of the Foundation.<sup>83</sup> This is the most literal translation since the ASV.

In 1995, this translation was updated to increase clarity and readability.<sup>84</sup>

In 2020, this translation was updated again. Updates included making it more gender inclusive.

*Good News Bible (1976)*

This is also known as Today’s English Version. This was the first outgrowth of Eugene Nida’s dynamic theory of translation. Nida was the leading translation scholar of the American Bible Society, which society produced this translation. This dynamic equivalent translation strives to sound like contemporary American speech.<sup>85</sup>

*New International Version (1978)*

Within a few years after its appearance, it became the most widely used English translation among American evangelicals. It is more of a dynamic equivalent than a word-for-word (formal equivalence) translation. Some of the more recent editions are gender-inclusive.<sup>86</sup>

*New King James Version (1979 [NT], 1982 [OT])*

This is a revision of the KJV, but based on the same Hebrew and Greek texts.

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<sup>80</sup> Leland Ryken, *The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation*, 52.

<sup>81</sup> Robert L. Thomas, *How to Choose a Bible Version: An Introductory Guide to English Translations*, rev. edition, 40.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas, 44.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas, 28.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas, 30.

<sup>85</sup> Ryken, 53. Thomas, 41.

<sup>86</sup> Ryken, 54.



*New Revised Standard Version (1989)*

This is a revision of the RSV, authorized by the copyright holder of the RSV, the National Council of Churches of Christ. Unlike the RSV, this is a “gender neutral” translation, making it considerably less literal than the RSV.<sup>87</sup> For example, they changed Matthew 4:19 “...I will make you fishers of men” (RSV) to “I will make you fish for people.”

*The Message (1993)*

This is a paraphrase by Eugene Peterson, a Presbyterian pastor.

*Contemporary English Version (1995)*

Like the GNB, this was sponsored by the American Bible Society. It is even freer than the GNB, including gender neutral language and avoiding theological terms like “atonement,” “redemption,” and “righteousness.”<sup>88</sup>

*New Living Translation (1996)*

This was a revision of the Living Bible, accomplished by checking the Living Bible against the original languages. The goal of the 90 translators was to produce a new dynamic-equivalence translation.<sup>89</sup>

*New English Translation (NET Bible) (1996-1998)*

This translation was made available on a website free of charge, and contains many footnotes including study notes.<sup>90</sup>

*English Standard Version (2001)*

The translation committee wanted to produce a more literal translation than most of the versions produced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, combined with greater literary style than the NASB, and more accuracy than the NKJV. This is a revision of the RSV. The translators changed about 6% of the RSV text.<sup>91</sup> All the translators were evangelicals.<sup>92</sup>

*Holman Christian Standard Bible (2003), Christian Standard Bible (2017)*

This was produced by Broadman & Holman, part of the Southern Baptist Convention. Holman Bible Publishers is America’s oldest Bible publisher, having printed the country’s first Bible (a German version) in 1738.<sup>93</sup>

*Legacy Standard Bible (2022)*

This is a revision of the 1995 NASB, done by a small group of faculty of the The Master’s University and Seminary. The goal was to make it even closer to the words in the original languages. One of the most striking revisions is translating God’s personal name as “Yahweh.” Another striking revision is consistently using “slave” rather than “servant,” in

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<sup>87</sup> Thomas, 30.

<sup>88</sup> Ryken, 53.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas, 44.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas, 47.

<sup>91</sup> Ryken, 55.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas, 31.

<sup>93</sup> Thomas, 48.

both the OT and NT. Without thoroughly studying the issue, I am concerned that “slave” sometimes misrepresents the use of the Hebrew and Greek words.

### Issues in Modern English Translation

#### *Dynamic equivalence*

The goal of dynamic equivalence is to translate “thought-for-thought” rather than “word-for-word,” to make the translation more readable by people who live in a culture different from the cultures of the Bible. The goal is to put the Bible into the language and terms of our culture.

It is impossible to translate the Bible without interpreting the Bible. The interpretations of the translators will always be reflected to some degree in a translation. However, significantly more interpretation is reflected in a dynamic equivalent translation than in a literal translation (though not as much as in a paraphrase).

Dynamic equivalent translations can prevent misunderstandings of the Scriptures. However, they also inevitably introduce error, since no one correctly interprets all of the Bible.

Dynamic equivalent translations can be useful, as long as it is understood that the translation is taking some liberties and giving their interpretation. They can be useful for children, unbelievers, and new believers. They can also be useful when reading large sections of Scripture, looking for the main ideas. They can be useful when used as a simple commentary.

Dynamic equivalent translations are not suitable for expository preaching, or for being used as a primary version in careful Bible study. If a person uses a dynamic equivalent translation in Bible study, it should be compared with a literal translation.

Here is a well-known example of dynamic equivalence. The 1984 NIV translated “flesh” as “sinful nature” in places where they interpreted Paul’s metaphor in this way.

It is better for Christians to study the Bible in order to understand concepts that are foreign or unfamiliar to us, than to have a translation that has converted foreign concepts for us.

Consider how a court interpreter translates what a witness says in a trial. If they do their job well, they do not give their interpretation of the witness’ testimony, nor do they paraphrase. The testimony is too important for that. Too much hinges on what exactly the witness says. Rather, they give a literal translation. How then should the testimonies of God be translated, which are infinitely more weighty?

#### *Gender-neutral language*

Gender-neutral translation avoids using words like ‘he,’ ‘man,’ ‘fathers,’ ‘sons,’ and ‘brothers’ when such words refer to both males and females, and at other times to avoid male-overtones.

Examples:<sup>94</sup>

**John 14:23**

**NASB1995** “Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, **he** will follow My word; and My Father will love **him**, and We will come to **him** and make *Our* dwelling with **him**.”

Jesus specified that He and the Father would come and dwell with the individual believer. This emphasis is lost in the following gender-neutral translations:

**NRSV** “Jesus answered him, “**Those** who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love **them**, and we will come to **them** and make our home with **them**.”

**NIV2011** “Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love **them**, and we will come to **them** and make our home with **them**.”

**Psalms 34:20**

Quoted in **John 19:36** “For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, “NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN.” (NASB1995)

**NASB1995** “He keeps all **his** bones,  
Not one of them is broken.”

What is said here of an individual is fulfilled in the Messiah. This is blurred in the following gender-neutral translation:

**NRSV** “He keeps all **their** bones;  
not one of them will be broken.”

**Galatians 6:7**

**NASB1995** “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever **a man** sows, this **he** will also reap.”

This is a general statement that pertains to all people, unbelievers included. This is lost in the following gender-neutral translation:

**NRSV** “Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for **you** reap whatever **you** sow.”

**NLT** “Don’t be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. **You** will always harvest what **you** plant.”

**Genesis 5:2**

**NASB1995** “He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them **Man** in the day when they were created.”

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<sup>94</sup> These examples are found in Wayne Grudem, *What’s Wrong with Gender-Neutral Bible Translations?*, published by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.

In the Bible, names have great significance. God's choice of the word 'man' for the whole human race suggests some male headship in the race. This is lost in the following gender-neutral translations:

**NRSV** "Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them "Humankind" when they were created."

**NET** "He created them male and female; when they were created, he blessed them and named them "humankind."

### **Acts 10:26**

**NASB1995** "But Peter raised him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am *just* a man."

Peter is not to be worshiped because he is a creature made by God; he is not God, but a man. The meaning is distorted in the following gender-neutral translations:

**NRSV** "But Peter made him get up, saying, "Stand up; I am only a mortal."

**NET** "But Peter helped him up, saying, "Stand up. I too am a mere mortal."

### **Numbers 31:49**

**NASB1995** "and they said to Moses, "Your servants have taken a census of men of war who are in our charge, and no man of us is missing."

This reflects the historical fact that only men went forth to war in the OT. This is hidden in the following gender-neutral translations:

**NIV2011** "and said to him, "Your servants have counted the soldiers under our command, and not one is missing."

**NRSV** "and said to Moses, "Your servants have counted the warriors who are under our command, and not one of us is missing."

### **Proverbs 5:1-3**

Solomon warns his "son" against "an adulteress" (NASB1995).

Even though Solomon would not warn his daughters against an "adulteress," in some gender-neutral translations Solomon is warning his "child" (NRSV, NET) against the adulterous woman.

### **Matthew 18:15**

**NASB1995** "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother."

The word 'brother' speaks of a family bond in the family of God. This emphasis is lost in the following gender-neutral translations.

**NRSV** “If **another member of the church** sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained **that one.**”

- This seems to wrongly imply that correcting a sinning brother in private is only required if he is a member of the same church.

**NLT** “If **another believer** sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won **that person** back.”

Gender-neutral translations place more weight on contemporary cultural preferences than on representing what was written when writers penned Scripture. This creates a false impression about the cultures in which the Bible was written.<sup>95</sup>

In Scripture, every “jot and tittle” was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

**Matt. 5:18** “...Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (KJV)

I am concerned that the kinds of gender-neutral translations shown above are not consistent with belief in jot-and-tittle inspiration.

### Comparisons of English Translations

<b>Bible</b>	<b>Reading level<sup>96</sup></b>	<b>Type of translation<sup>97</sup></b>	<b>Gender language<sup>98</sup></b>
King James Version (1900)	12+	Word-for-word	
Young’s Literal Translation <sup>99</sup>	12+	Word-for-word	
Revised Standard Version	11+	Word-for-word	
New English Bible	7+	Dynamic-equivalent [close to paraphrase]	Gender-neutral
The Living Bible	5+	Paraphrase	
New American Standard Bible (1977)	11+	Word-for-word	
New American Standard Bible (1995)	11+	Word-for-word	
New American Standard Bible (2020)	11+	Word-for-word	Gender-inclusive <sup>100</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Robert L. Thomas, *How to Choose a Bible Version: An Introductory Guide to English Translations*, 108.

<sup>96</sup> “Bible Translation Spectrum,” [wiki.logos.com/Bible\\_Translation\\_Spectrum](http://wiki.logos.com/Bible_Translation_Spectrum), accessed 5/27/22.

<sup>97</sup> “Bible Translation Spectrum.”

<sup>98</sup> “Bible Translation Spectrum.”

<sup>99</sup> Young’s Literal Translation is an extremely literal translation made by Robert Young and first published in 1862. The NT is based on the Textus Receptus, and OT on the Masoretic Text.

<sup>100</sup> An example of gender-inclusiveness in the 2020 NASB is Rom. 12:1 “Therefore I urge you, brothers *and sisters*...”

Good News Bible	7+	Dynamic-equivalent [close to paraphrase]	
New International Version (1984)	7+	Dynamic equivalent	
New International Version (2011)	7+	Dynamic-equivalent	Gender-inclusive
New King James Version	7+	Word-for-word	
New Revised Standard Version	11+	Word-for-word	Gender-neutral
Contemporary English Version	5+	Dynamic-equivalent [close to paraphrase]	Gender-neutral
New Living Translation	6+	Dynamic-equivalent [close to paraphrase]	Gender-neutral
English Standard Version	11+	Word-for-word	
The Message	4+	Paraphrase	Gender-neutral
New English Translation	7+	Dynamic-equivalent [close to literal]	Gender-inclusive
Holman Christian Standard Bible	7+	Dynamic-equivalent [close to literal]	
Christian Standard Bible	7+	Dynamic-equivalent [close to literal]	

For personal Bible reading, I recommend an edition that arranges verses in paragraphs, rather than starting every verse on a new line.

### Global Bible Translation

Pentecost implied that God's Word is now to be proclaimed in all the languages of the world.

**Acts 2:5–11** “Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

The Great Commission changed the “come and see” religion of the OT into the “go and tell” religion of the NT, and requires translation of the Bible into the world's many languages.

### Historical statistics

By AD 200, the Bible had been translated into 7 languages.

By 500, 13 languages.

By 900, 17 languages.

By 1400, 28 languages.

By 1800, 57 languages.

By 1900, 537 languages.

By 1980, 1,100 languages.

By 2006, 2,426 languages had some portions of the Scripture.<sup>101</sup>

*Question:* Why do you think there was such an increase in translation between 1800 and 1900?

- William Carey, the “Father of Modern Missions,” baptized his first Hindu convert in 1800

Current statistics from Wycliffe Global Alliance<sup>102</sup>

Total world population: 7.9 billion

7,378 known living languages in the world, including 392 sign languages

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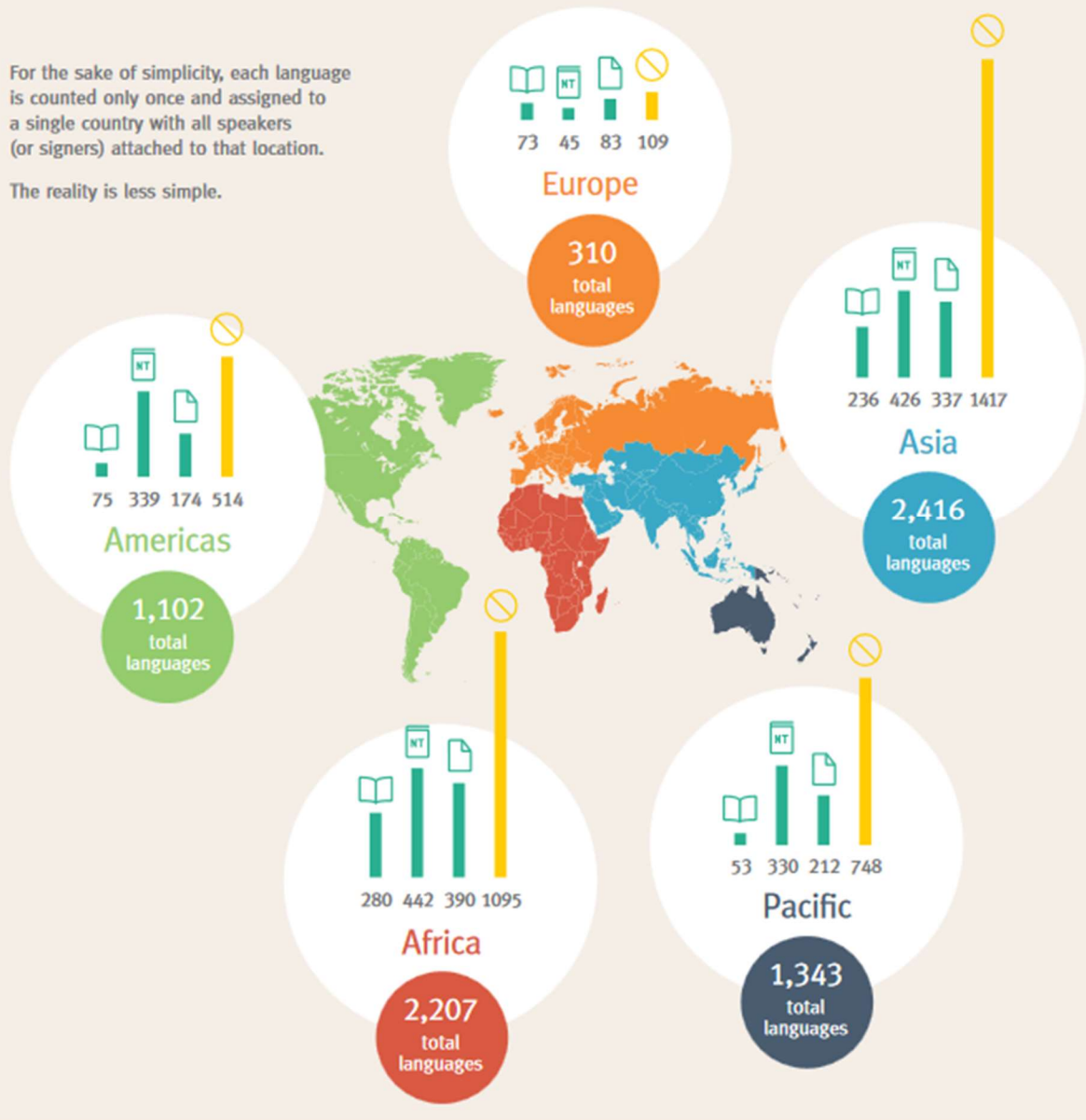
<sup>101</sup> *The World Christian Encyclopedia*; Wycliffe International; in Rose Publishing, *How We Got the Bible*.

<sup>102</sup> Wycliffe Global Alliance, Sept 2021, [www.wycliffe.net/resources/statistics](http://www.wycliffe.net/resources/statistics).

## Distribution of languages

For the sake of simplicity, each language is counted only once and assigned to a single country with all speakers (or signers) attached to that location.

The reality is less simple.

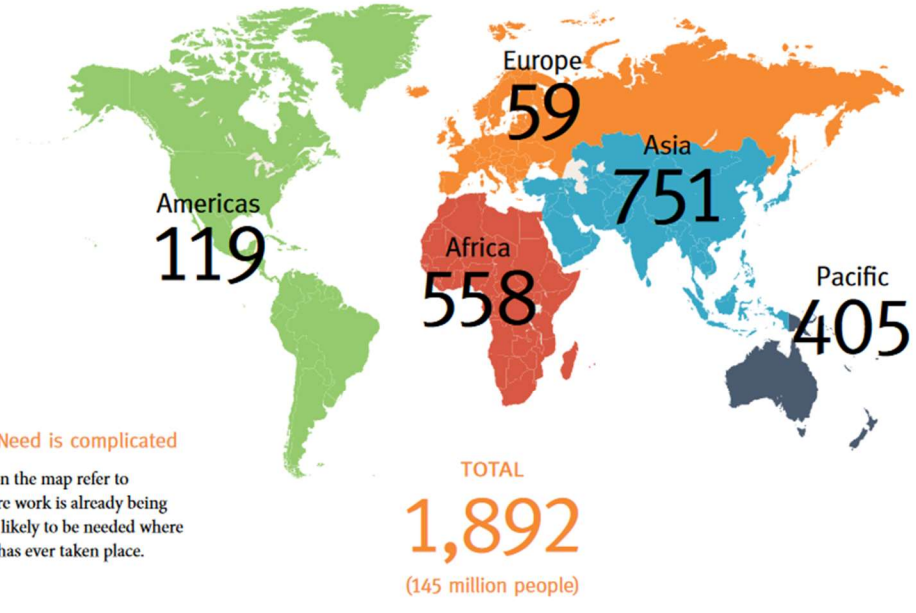




# Amount of Scripture known to be available for languages in active use worldwide



Potential and Expressed needs.  
Translation may need to begin in 1,892 languages.



Translation Need is complicated  
The numbers on the map refer to languages where work is already being requested or is likely to be needed where no translation has ever taken place.