

CHAPTER 3

Modern Versions of the Bible

The Dominance of the King James Version

After the monarchy was restored to England, the King James Bible remained unchallenged. Yet, as we know, there are numerous modern versions. We must ask the question: After 275 years, why another Bible?

In the late 1800s, the English language had changed immensely (just as it has continued to this day). The KJV has words that even by the 1800s were foreign and unknown, as seen in the list below:

- Almug (I K 10:11-12)
- Capt (Jer 14:4)
- Habergeon (Ex 39:23, Job 41:26)
- Hosen (Dan 3:21)
- Ligure (Ex 28:19)
- Pilled (Gen 30:37-38)
- Trode (2 Kings 14:9)
- Wimples (Is 3:22)
- Ouches (Ex 28:11-14)
- Wot (Rom 11:2)
- Trow (Luke 17:9)

Also, new manuscripts were found that brought great light to Bible translation work.

The Discovery of Greek Texts

We earlier discussed the work of Erasmus in compiling a Greek New Testament. His work eventually became the basis for the numerous English Bibles of the 16th century, as well as the King James Version of the Bible. In the chapter that follows, we will deal very specifically with the shortcomings of this Erasmusian text (often called the “Textus Receptus.”). However, even with its shortcomings, it was the ONLY Greek text available for many years.

Constantine von Tischendorf

Constantine Von Tischendorf was a German Protestant looking for old manuscripts in 1844 in Middle Eastern monasteries. In a monastery on Mount Sinai, he found monks fueling fire with paper to bake bread. He investigated and discovered that the papers were original hand-written scraps from SEPTUAGINT.

He managed to get them to stop so he could look at them and asked permission to read them overnight. The monks grew suspicious and refused to cooperate.

He tried again in 1853 with no success. In 1859, he went back but still no luck. However, on the evening before he was to leave, he presented HIS personal copy of a LXX to a monk. The monk said he had copy



too, and went to his closet and pulled out a gigantic book wrapped in red cloth. The monk had no idea what he held in his hand – CODEX SINAITICUS, already 1500 years old.

Having learned his lesson, Von Tischendorf somehow hid his excitement and asked to examine the work. He spent ALL NIGHT reading and he tried to buy it in the morning but the monk refused. He memorized as much as possible. Today, this very copy resides in the British Library.

Discoveries like this happened all across Egypt and the Middle East and as we collected more manuscripts, scholars began to see the need to create a new Greek NT (just like Erasmus did in the early 1500s).

We now have approximately 5,400 New Testament manuscripts. Of these 5,400:

- About 100 are **papyrus fragments**.
 - These fragments date to as early as AD 200 and AD 250. Two of the more important ones are #45 (30 portions of an original 220 leaves that includes all four Gospels and Acts) and #46 (86 of 104 leaves from Pauline epistles).
 - The most famous is #52, a small 2.5”x3.5” fragment that contains portions of John 18:31-33 on one side and vv. 37-38 on the other. This is the OLDEST fragment we have and it has been dated as early as AD 125.
- About 266 are **uncial** (capital letters only) manuscripts.
 - This is a very early form of Greek writing and thus are more important (being closer to the original writings of the biblical authors).
 - We have about 50 that date from the second to the fourth century. The three most famous are Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrian.
 - **Vaticanus** – This fourth-century manuscript is regarded by many as the most important Bible known today. As you might guess, it is located in the Vatican Library in Rome and has been there since 1481. It is almost complete, missing the first 45 chapters of Genesis (beginning in 46:28) and some of the Psalms. It is also missing the end of Hebrews, the letters of Timothy, Titus and Revelation. Today’s Greek texts rely heavily on this book. This text does not include Mark 16:9-20 but the scribe left almost a complete column (each page had three columns) blank. This seems to indicate that he knew of the existence of the disputed verses but could not decide whether or not to include the passage.
 - **Sinaiticus** – This is of almost equal importance. It got its name from its discovery by Tischendorf at a monastery near Mount Sinai. This Bible is located in the British Library, purchased from Russia for 100,000 Pounds in 1933 (about half a million dollars then). The original Bible had about 730 leaves but only 393 remain (245-OT and 148-NT). However, the NT is complete. The pages are fifteen inches square and each page contains four columns (except in poetical books, which contain 2 columns).¹
 - **Alexandrinus** – Last among the three large ancient uncials, this copy of Scripture got its name because it was known to have been kept in Alexandria for several centuries. This Bible was presented to Charles I, the son of King James, in 1627 (only 16 years after the publication of the KJV). This find instantly created interest in finding other such manuscripts. The Bible was placed in the British Museum in 1757. It was originally in one volume but now is in four. This book is dated to the fifth century. While this may be the oldest, it was the first ancient uncial found and caused as a great a stir as did the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in modern times.
 - **Codex of Ephraem** – This is a PALIMPSEST (Greek for “scraped again”). In certain periods, writing materials were had to find so old parchments were “erased” and reused. Often, the original writing is still legible. This codex was originally a manuscript of both the OT and NT. Around the 1100s, someone took some leaves from the bible and wrote a sermon preached by Ephraem of Syria. This manuscript has been in Paris since the 1500s but no one decipher or transcribe the underlying biblical text. In 1840, a 25-year old Tischendorf succeeded by using

¹ Amazingly, additional sheets from this Bible’s OT were found in 1975 after a fire had collapsed portions of the monastery. The pages were found among the rubble. The monastery still has not released these pages but reportedly are preparing them for publication.

- special chemicals. The biblical text is not complete, especially in the OT. However, only 2 Thess and 2 John are missing from the NT.
- **Codex Bezae** – This Bible is stored in a metal cabinet at Cambridge University, arriving there in 1581. It was given to the library as a gift from Theodore Beza, who owned it for about twenty years. It contains two languages (Greek and Latin). It contains the almost all of the four Gospels, Acts and a fragment of 3 John. The additions and deletions of the text make is dubious. It was the ONLY uncial known at the time of the KJV but it was little used by the translators.
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 - About 2,795 are **minuscule** (lower case letters) manuscripts.
 - These manuscripts comprise the vast majority of all the manuscripts that exist today.
 - These manuscripts did not begin to appear until the 800s. Certain minuscules deserve out attention:
 - **Minuscule 1** and **Minuscule 2** are from the 1100s and are located today in Basle, Switzerland. These come first because they are the primary manuscripts used by Erasmus.²
 - **Minuscule 61** is from the 1400s (maybe 1500s) and is kept in Dublin, Ireland. It was the first manuscript to contain the “Three Witnesses” pasasage of I John 5:7-8 and it is on the authority of this manuscript alone that Erasmus included the verse in his Greek text (third edition – it was not in his first two editions).
 - The remaining are portions of Scripture found in **lectionaries**.
 - A “lection” is a selected passage of Scripture designed to be read in public worship services. Basically, Bible verses were “cut and pasted” into other documents to be used in church.

In 1898, Eberhardt Nestle published his NOVUM TESAMENTUM GRAECE. In 1927, his son Erwin published the 13th edition. In 1950, Kurt Aland started working with Erwin Nestle and in 1993, the 27th edition of the Neslte-Aland Greek NT was printed.

The BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY also produced one.

The UNITED BIBLE SOCIETY (UBS) produced a Greek NT in 1966 (using Westcott/Hort). In 1993, the UBS came out with a 4th Edition.

I tell you this because you will find footnotes in your Bible. These two major Greek New Testaments are marked in the following way:

- The Alexandrian texts will have the initials “NU” which stands for Neslte-Aland/UBS
- The Byzantine texts will have a fancy “M” which stands for the Majority text.

The discovery of many more ancient manuscripts lead to an explosion of new Bible versions in the last century. Several of them are explained below.

The KJV and the Next 270 Years

It is often thought that after the KJV of 1611, Bible translation stood at a standstill until work on the Revised Version began in 1870 (see below). However, several English translations appeared during that almost-three-century timespan. We’ll discuss these briefly:

² Erasmus had three manuscripts of the Gospels and Acts; four manuscripts of the Pauline Epistles; and only one manuscript of Revelation

Edward Harwood's NT (1768)

Harwood, a classical scholar, challenged the position of the KJV, which contained “bald and barbarous language” in his opinion. His Bible contained an “elevated” style of English in vogue in the late 1700s. For instance, at the occasion of the Transfiguration, Harwood renders Peter’s words as “Oh Sir! What a delectable residence we might establish here!” It’s hard to imagine the rough fisherman saying those words.

Robert Aitken's KJV Bible (1782)

Robert Aitken's King James Version of the Bible was the first English-language Bible to be printed in America, and also the only Bible to receive Congressional approval.

Aitken's Bible, sometimes referred to as "The Bible of the Revolution," is one of the rarest books in the world, with few copies still in existence today. This little Bible was small enough to fit into the coat pocket of the Revolutionary War soldiers. The leaves measure only 6 inches tall by almost 4 inches wide.

Isaac Collins Bible (1791)

After losing the Revolutionary War, England refused to send the Americans any more Bibles, so demand for Bibles was high and supply was very low. Publication of the Bible was regulated by the British government, and required a special license. Isaac Collins printed the first “Family Bible” in the United States – a King James Version.

Collins was obsessed with accuracy, and he had his children proofread the entire Bible eleven times to catch typographical errors. Analysis in modern times has revealed that in fact, there are only two errors in the entire printing: a single broken letter, and a missing punctuation mark! This level of accuracy would be very impressive today... but in the 1700's, it was astonishing. It set the standard of excellence for the next 110 years of Bibles printed in America. Only a few dozen of these “Bibles of Colonial America” exist today.

The Bible measured approximately 10 to 11 inches tall by 8 to 9 inches wide. Because rag cotton linen paper was a precious commodity in early America, these leaves were printed on wood-pulp paper; somewhat like books today... but a much thicker stock of paper.

Charles Thomson's Bible (1808)

Thomson emigrated to America in 1739, shortly after his mother died. En route to America, his father died and his body was dumped overboard. The ship’s captain dropped the orphaned boy ashore in Delaware where he was placed in the care of a blacksmith. He overheard the blacksmith talk about putting him in indentured servitude so he ran away. On the road, a woman gave him a ride in her carriage. She asked him what he wanted to be and he replied “A scholar.” This impressed her so much that she took him in. After much schooling, he moved to Philadelphia to teach Latin and Greek at the Philadelphia Academy (founded by Ben Franklin, which later became the University of Pennsylvania).

Later, he grew weary of teaching and entered politics. He was a leader of the resistance to the landing of the East India Tea Company. Later, he was unanimously chosen as the secretary of the Continental Congress. For fifteen years, he recorded every detail. His last act was to travel from New York to Mount Vernon to notify George Washington that he was the first president of the United States.

He hoped for a presidential appointment but did not receive one. He retired to live another 35 years. During this time, he revised his version of the Bible and, most notably, the Septuagint.

Thompson published his translation of the Bible in 1808 and it was printed by Jane Aitken, one of very few female printers in America at that time (and daughter of Robert Aitken – see above). This is the first Bible translated in America (non-KJV) and it was bound in four volumes (OT in three, NT in one). This Bible never enjoyed much popularity with the public.

Noah Webster's Bible (1833)

The famous figure attended Yale College but graduated early after serving in the Revolutionary War. His spelling and grammar books sold one million copies annually by 1850, when the entire American population was only 23 million. His greatest work was his "American Dictionary of the English Language," published in 1828 with 12,000 words and 40,000 definitions.

After completing the dictionary, Webster turned his attention to the Bible. He liked the way the KJV read but noted that "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." He found some 150 words to be "misleading" after the changes in vocabulary over time.

The Revised Version of 1881

In 1870, the bishop of Winchester proposed that the Authorized Version be revised. Sixteen scholars were appointed to supervise the revision and fifty-four people were chosen to do the translation work. An additional thirty men from the United States were asked to help. The two committees did not get along as the American translators thought the British rules to be restricting. For instance, the Americans did not like the word "Holy Ghost" and wanted to change it to "Holy Spirit." The British would not compromise.

It was slow work. The head of the committee would read a short verse from the Authorized Version and asked for any textual changes. After discussing any differences in the original languages, the chair asked for opinions on how best to translate that particular verse. After much discussion, a vote was taken and the verse was recorded. After nine days of this pattern, the committee discovered they were working at a rate of seventeen verses per day. The pace never rose above thirty-five verses in a single day.

This revised version (NT only) was available in England on May 17, 1881 and in America on May 20, 1881. Three million copies were sold in the first year with two million copies sold in the first few days. The *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Times* printed the entire New Testament on May 22, 1881. It took 92 compositors and 5 correctors a full twelve hours to complete the setting-up of the New Testament.

This new revised version did not retain its popularity for long. It was TOO literal and hard to read. Charles Spurgeon said it was "strong in Greek, weak in English." The translators attempted to use only one English word for each and every Greek or Hebrew word and left no Greek word without a corresponding English word. Yet, for all its shortcomings, this Revised Version of 1881 played the important role of keeping the Bible in a "vulgar" language. If not for this version, later versions would have had an even harder time.

Brooke Westcott and John Anthony Hort

The most famous from among the men working on the Revised Version were Brooke Westcott and John Anthony Hort. These two scholars were working on a new Greek New Testament based upon the numerous manuscripts recently discovered. This caused some troubles because in many of these newly found Greek pages, verses in the King James Bible were not found in the original languages (such as John 5:3-4; Acts 8:37; I John 5:7).

In 1881, these men published a new Greek New Testament, using the newly-found ALEXANDRIAN document. This text became the basis for new Bible translations.

The American Standard Version of 1901

Some of the American scholars who worked on the English Revised Version banded together to produce their own revision of the KJV that was more suited to people in the United States. Headed by J. H. Thayer, the American Standard Version was published in 1901 and differed little from the English Revised Version except on points of idiom, spelling and word-order. It naturally was preferred in the United States and enjoyed a wide circulation. It was adopted almost immediately by the Presbyterian church.

The ASV is known for its very accurate and very literal reading of the Old and New Testaments. The ASV, however, did not escape criticism. Though much criticism was simply grumbling from those resisting unfamiliar changes, some felt that too many archaic phrases and words from the KJV remained. Other felt

that in the desire to be accurate and literal, the wording of the ASV was too stiff and unnatural and certainly did not carry the poetic beauty of the KJV.

The ASV had the misfortune of being completed just prior to significant finds of even more ancient manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments. It was rendered out of date almost at its inception. Nevertheless, English-speaking people were closer than ever to the original message of the Bible.

Moffatt's Bible of 1924

James Moffatt (1870-1944) was a brilliant Scottish scholar. He created a modern-speech bible that was very popular between the two World Wars. He deliberately refused to look at other translations while doing the work on his new Bible. He came up with an idiomatic translation.

However, he was unable to take his culture at bay, calling Noah's ark a "barge" and having David dance before the Lord in his "kilt" and adding "bagpipes" to the list of instruments in Daniel 3:10 (Nebuchadnezzar's dedication).

Sadly, Moffatt fully embraced the Documentary Hypothesis of Wellhausen, printing the Old Testament text in different fonts for their alleged respective sources. Moffatt's work was controversial for a few reasons. He accepted readings with little or no support, writing in Luke 3:22 that "Thou art my son, the Beloved" and adding "today have I become thy father." He also rearranged certain passages: John 3:22-30 is placed between 2:12 and 2:13; John 7:15-24 is placed after 5:47; and John 12:45-50 is inserted in the very middle of John 12:36.

The last edition of Moffatt's work was printed in 1935. Moffatt later served on the translation committee of the RSV.

The Revised Standard Version of 1952

In 1928, the copyright for the ASB was acquired by the International Council of Religious Education, which set up a committee to determine the feasibility of making a new revision. This did not begin until 1937 because of the shortage of funds after the Great Depression. This committee recommended that they thoroughly revise the American Standard Version but try to stay with the tradition of Tyndale in its readability and style.

Two reasons for the revision included

- 1) the desire to correct the stiffness and unnatural reading of the ASV, and
- 2) the desire to include the findings of the very important manuscript discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Chester Beatty Papyri.

The NT appeared in 1946 and the entire Bible was published on September 30, 1952 by Thomas Nelson and Sons and called the Revised Standard Version. It was launched with an amazing publicity campaign.

The most significant change from the ASV to the RSV was the modernization of the language. The "eth" endings were removed ("speaketh" became "speaks"). The "these" and "thous" were removed except in reference to God. The translators decided to use "you" when referring to Jesus on earth and "thou" after the resurrection.

The use of the pronoun "you" for both plural and singular cases brought confusion. For instance, in Luke 22:31-32, the RSV reads:

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have **you** (plural), that he might sift **you** (plural) like wheat, but I have prayed for **you** (singular) that **your** (singular) faith may not fail; and when you (singular) have turned again, strengthen **your** (singular) brethren."³

³ Modern versions spell this out clearly in their footnotes.

The RSV also added quotation marks to delineate conversations, though not without difficulty. In the RSV in John 3, the words of Jesus end at verse 15 with John 3:16 being the words of the writer John. In the NIV and other modern versions, quote marks indicate that Jesus is thought to have verbalized all those words.

The Bible enjoyed success but not without its usual detractors. Some did not trust the Bible because the copyright owner was the National Council of Churches, considered by most to be very liberal theologically.

Others focused on translational issues, the most famous of which is found in Isaiah 7:14. The Hebrew word is *“almah”* which can be translated as “young maiden” and the RSV translators chose to do so. However, the KJV and almost every Bible since has translated the word as “virgin” – *“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”*

Also, in John 3:16, the RSV reads that God gave “his only Son” instead of “his only begotten Son.”

Phillips’ Bible of 1958

John Bertrand Phillips (1906-1982) was a teenaged atheist when he started at Cambridge but became a Christian in his first year. He began working with teenagers during WWII and noted their inability to interact with the KJV. He translated some passages and sent them to CS Lewis, who encouraged Phillips to continue.

He first published Paul’s letters as a book called “Letters to Young Christians.” He created a very loose translation. It is not a paraphrase but close to it. FF Bruce says “of all the modern English translations of the New Testament epistles, this is one of the best – perhaps actually the best – for the ordinary reader.” His work in the Gospels does not match his brilliance in the epistles.

The New World Translation of 1961

This Bible, produced by the Watchtower Bible and tract Society of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, is clearly flawed by its doctrinal biases. The cult was founded in 1918 by CT Russell and took the name “Jehovah’s Witnesses” in 1931. The errors are everywhere and easily discerned. The Witnesses do not believe that Jesus is God but that he instead is the first created being: a god but not the God.

The Jerusalem Bible of 1966

This is the first complete Roman Catholic Bible translated from the original languages into English. This Roman Catholic translation includes Apocrypha, which are interspersed amongst the other OT books. One of the translators was J.R.R. Tolkien. The note on Matt 12:46 about Jesus’ brothers reads “Not Mary’s children, but near relations, cousins perhaps.”

The New English Bible of 1970

In October 1946, representatives of the major Protestant churches in Great Britain met at Westminster Abbey to commission a new translation that would be better suited to British readers. The New Testament portion of this New English Bible was released in 1961, exactly 350 years after the publication of the KJV. The complete NEB was released in 1970. C. H. Dodd was the director of the project. The NEB was unique from the older revisions in that it was a “free translation” emphasizing a “sense for sense” meaning rather than a “word-for-word” meaning. In breaking with the strict Greek constructions, the NEB was easier to read but in so doing sacrificed accuracy. As Lightfoot says, “no translation of recent years varies more from the standard Hebrew text than does the New English Bible” (Lightfoot, p. 150). The NEB was both praised for its ingenuity and readability and severely criticized for its liberty.

The New American Bible of 1970

The Douay-Rheims Bible of 1609 was the bible for English-speaking Roman Catholics for many years. It was a fairly literal translation of Jerome's Latin Vulgate. A revision was made in 1750 and was used by Rome for 200 years.

In 1941, Roman Catholic scholars revised the NT but it was still a translation of the Vulgate with some corrections from the Greek. The Pope finally allowed direct work with the Greek and Hebrew texts in 1943. With access to these new sources, the entire Bible was released in stages between 1948 and 1970.

The Living Bible of 1971

Kenneth Taylor mirrors JB Phillips to a degree. Taylor traveled North America as a speaker for InterVarsity. He had ten children of his own and encountered difficulty in getting them to understand the words of the KJV. Using the American Standard Version of 1901 as his working text, Kenneth Taylor rephrased the Bible into modern speech with the intent that even a child could understand its message.

The Living Bible is a paraphrase and not a translation.

His paraphrase was so well received that he started his own publishing house called "Tyndale House." Billy Graham endorsed his earlier work in 1963 ("Living Letters") and Taylor appeared on Graham's televised events. With this publicity, Taylor sold over nine million copies of "Living Letters." The Living Bible was the best-selling book in America in 1972. Royalties in 1973 reached eight million dollars. In 1973, the LB accounted for 46% of all Bible sold in the USA and royalties reached twenty million dollars.

The LB is vivid and even shocking at times (I Samuel 20:30 has Saul calling his son Jonathan "You son of a bitch" where the ASV has "you son of a perverse rebellious woman.")

The New American Standard Version of 1971

The American Standard Bible of 1901 was revised and published by the Lockman Foundation of La Habra, California in 1971. This translation proposed to take advantage of recent advances in textual understanding and to modernize the English. Fifty-eight anonymous translators from a wide variety of denomination backgrounds (Presbyterian, Methodist, Southern Baptist, Church of Christ, Nazarene, fundamentalists, Conservative Baptists, Evangelical Free, Mennonite, Assembly of God and others).

The translators set a goal to "adhere as closely as possible to the original languages" and "to make the translation in a fluent and readable style according to current English usage." The ensuing differences are so vast that this cannot be considered a revision of the ASV but a completely new translation.

The NASB retained the second-person singular form of "you" instead of "thou" when speaking of God. It also italicized English words with no corresponding Greek or Hebrew words.

The NASB went back to the Geneva and Authorized Version by starting each verse in a new paragraph. This Bible stopped using the name "Jehovah" because that is not a real word. Instead, the NASB uses the name LORD (small capital letters) for the name of God. Names like Jehovah-jireh (Gen 22:14) and Jehovah-nissi (Exodus 17:15) and Jehovah-shalom (Judges 6:24) are instead spelled out as "The Lord Will Provide" and "The Lord is my Banner" and "The Lord is Peace."

The NASB has an interesting system of capitalization.

- The KJV capitalized the beginning of each verse. The NASB does not do so when the beginning of a verse is not the beginning of a new sentence.
- The verses that begin a new paragraph are numbered with a bold font.

- If a paragraph begins with a verse, the first letter of the paragraph is bolded (see I Corinthians 12:31 and the middle of Isaiah 59:15).⁴
- The first word of each chapter is printed in all capital letters. See Isaiah 4:1, which is printed in all capital letters yet Isaiah 3:16-4:1 is treated as a paragraph.⁵
- Words referring to divinity are capitalized, such as “He” in Genesis 1:27 and “Us” in Genesis 1:26 and 3:22.
- The word “Spirit” is capitalized when it refers to the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:2).
- Other pronouns are capitalized such as “Anointed” and “Son” and “King” (Ps 2:2, 6, 12) and “Holy One” in Ps 16:10. This is not done consistently (see “him” in Genesis 3:15 and 49:10; see “star” and “scepter” in Numbers 24:17).
- Quotations from the Old Testament found in the New Testament are printed in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.

The NASB was very well received, especially amongst conservative evangelicals. The editors carefully avoided the controversial translations of the RSV. They used “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14 and used “only begotten” when referring to Jesus and “only” when the Greek word was used elsewhere.

The translators tried to be as literal as possible in their work. This ideal makes the NASB an excellent tool for Bible study.

An updated version of the NASB was published in 1995.

The Good News Bible of 1976

The American Bible Society published a new, modern-speech version of the NT in September 1966 called “Good News for Modern Man: The New Testament in Today’s English.” By 1976, the ABS had sold 52million copies of this NT under two names (*Today’s English Version* and *Good News for Modern Man*). A fourth edition with the completed OT was produced in 1976 and called the “Good News Bible.”

This translation was heavily influenced by the theory of dynamic equivalence. It used American idioms such as “You smart aleck, you” in I Samuel 17:28 and “until it comes out your ears” in Numbers 11:20.

Its readability made it very popular as evidence by the 35 million copies sold within the first six years of publication.

The New International Version of 1978

In 1965, a “Committee on Bible Translation” (fifteen scholars from many different denominations) met to consider another new modern-English translation. The translation began in 1965 with over 100 translators and moved slowly until the New York International Bible Society agreed to support the work financially in 1967.

Daniel and Isaiah were released to the public in 1976 to gauge reader response. By the time the completed Old Testament was released in 1978, they already had 1.2 million in advance sales.

The amount of translators from such a wide diversity of national and denominational backgrounds ensured minimal theological and denominational biases. The translators were divided into twenty teams with a translator, co-translator, two consultants and an English stylist on each team. Each team’s work was submitted to an intermediate committee, after which a general editorial committee from all walks of life followed. A fifteen-member executive committee then reviewed and revised as needed.

⁴ Remember, it was Stephanus (a printer from Paris, France) who first divided the Bible into numbered verse and chapter divisions in A.D. 1551.

⁵ This has been changed in the 1995 updated edition of the NASB.

The NIV attempted to compromise between the strict formal word-for-word translations of the ASV and NASB and the loose dynamic thought-for-thought translations of other Bibles. The resulting language is both dignified for public reading and simple enough for private study and devotion.

Passages are divided into paragraphs based on content and thought. Brackets (instead of italics) indicate words that are not in the original text but included for clarity (see Gen 4:1). The NIV has over 3,350 footnotes indicating textual variants, parallel quotations and explanatory notes.

The translators used the latest texts of Nestle-Aland and the United Bible Society. Eighteen passages in the NIV appear only in the footnotes, differing from the KJV. Yet, others with little manuscript support remain (Matt 21:44; Luke 24:6a). Even Mark 16:9-20 is set off by horizontal lines.

The NIV is the top-selling Bible of the last half-century and has replaced the KJV in most evangelical churches.

The New King James Version of 1982

Thomas Nelson Publishers claims to be the world's leading Bible publisher and they believe that a vast majority of Americans still prefer the King James Version. Therefore, the president of that company, Sam Moore, proposed a new revision of it in order to modernize the language. The company advertised the new Bible as the "fifth major revision of the King James and the first since 1769."

More than 130 evangelical scholars worked on the translation to "produce an English Bible that retains as much of the classic KJV as possible, while at the same time bringing the English up-to-date." This was a difficult objective to achieve. The result is a "curious mixture of Elizabethan ecclesiastical style with glosses of twentieth century vocabulary and grammar."

The NKJV became a very popular translation. It translated the name of God as LORD. It also continues to use italics for English words not backed by a corresponding Greek or Hebrew word. Pronouns are capitalized when referencing deity and each verse is set as a separate paragraph.

The translators used the Greek text of Erasmus. The text does a very good job of noting the differences between Erasmus' edition and the more modern texts used for every other English Bible but the KJV and NKJV.

The New Revised Standard Version of 1989

The RSV was a very popular Bible since its publication in 1952. In 1971, a second edition of the NT was published with the OT never touched. In 1974, it was recommended that a complete revision of the RSV be made.

This NRSV appeared in 1989. Some versions had the apocrypha, others did not. The primary principle used in translating was to be "as literal as possible, as free as necessary." For instance, this text uses modern designations for time (four o'clock for "the tenth hour").

The NRSV did NOT change the controversial verses in the RSV.

This Bible met some controversy due to its use of gender-neutral language. For instance, in John 12:32, Jesus says that he will draw all men to Himself when He is lifted up. The NRSV says that He will draw "all people."

The Message of 1993

Eugene Peterson attempted for the 1990s what Kenneth Taylor did in the 1970s. Peterson created a fresh rendering of the Greek into contemporary English using common idioms and vibrant speech. It is a

paraphrase, not a translation (technically). Peterson's goal was to "convert the tone, the rhythm, the events, the ideas, into the way we actually think and speak." He reasoned that the New Testament was written in a very informal Greek, therefore, the English should be just as informal. His goal was not just to be simplistic but to be forceful.

RECENT MODERN BIBLES

- **Amplified (1965)** – This Bible was intended to be a companion to other Bibles, not to be used alone.
- **New Century Version (1991)** – used "Living Word Vocabulary" which is used by WORLD BOOK ENCYCLOPEDIA, changed ancient measures, figures of speech (high places), but also "rested with fathers" is simply "Died"
- **New International Readers Version (NIrV) (1995)** – based on NIV, for children and adults learning to read, cuts up sentences into shorter length, also gender-neutral but does not say so in preface so earned nickname "Stealth Bible"
- **Contemporary English Version (1995)** – Sponsored by American Bible Society – written for HEARER and not just READER, again is gender-neutral
- **New Living Translation (1996)** – revision of Living Bible but is translation not paraphrase, entire thoughts and not word-for-word, again is gender-neutral
- **NET (New English) 1998** – internet Bible, extensive notes (over 16,000 in NT alone). Lot of input online (www.netbible.com)
- **The Holman Christian Standard** – The newest Bible produced by the Southern Baptist Convention. A very good Bible.
- **Today's New International Version (TNIV) (2002)** – Very controversial new version, updated with politically correct language and gender-inclusiveness