

CHOOSING BIBLE TRANSLATIONS



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BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The man strides confidently up to the counter of the local Bible bookstore, and with a pleased look on his face he states: "I want to buy a Bible." The clerk is happy to comply with the request and immediately asks, "What kind of Bible would you like to buy?" To the prospective buyer this seems like a dumb question. Thinking that a stupid question deserves a stupid answer the buyer replies: "Why the **Holy** Bible, of course." Undaunted the clerk once again asks, "Which one?" The buyer is surely feeling frustrated. He did not expect to be given a hard time by the clerk in a Bible bookstore. In level tones, he says, "How many Holy Bibles did God write?" The clerk replies; "God only wrote one, but we have many brands." The clerk then introduces the prospective buyer to the world of Bible translations. The customer is shown the *King James Version*, and the *New King James Version*, the *American Standard Version* and the *New American Standard Bible*. Let us not forget that there is also the *Revised Standard Version* and the *New Revised Standard Version*. Finally, the person is shown a copy of the *New International Version*. The clerk concludes with the words: "The rest are in the back if you would like to see them."

Though the preceding dialogue is fiction, the scene itself is one that has no doubt been played out before. I must confess I was 15 years old before I realized that there was any translation but the *King James Version*. In 1957, however, there were only two other widely circulated translations, the *Revised Standard Version* and the *American Standard Version*. Today there are over 140 translations available with some dozen or so in wide circulation.

There is no doubt that the subject of Bible translations can be a confusing matter to more than a few people. We will first look at a few basic principles that will enable the reader to ease into the sometimes-frightening world of Bible translations.

Most people understand today that Paul did not speak English. Neither did he use the *King James Version*. Most of the Old Testament was written in **Hebrew**. A few sections in the books of Ezra and Daniel (Ezra 4:8-6:18; Dan. 2:4b-7:28) were originally written in **Aramaic**. The original language of the New Testament was **Greek**. Thus, unless one has a

desire to learn Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek (and a specific period of those languages at that), one must use a translation if one desires to study the Bible.

WHAT IS OUR AUTHORITY FOR NEW TRANSLATIONS?

The idea of translating the Word of God into the common tongue of the people is not a new one. In Nehemiah 8:8, the Bible says, "And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading." When the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity, they no longer understood the form of Hebrew in which the Law of Moses was written. They now spoke Aramaic. If the law were to be understood, it would have to be explained in Aramaic. Though what was done was probably more like a commentary than a translation, it still shows the necessity of people having the Scriptures in their native tongue. Later the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into the Greek language about 280 B.C. and became known as the Septuagint. Most important is the fact that almost all the quotes of the Old Testament contained in the New Testament are taken from the Septuagint, not the Hebrew Old Testament. This fact amounts to **divine authority** for translating the Scriptures today! This divine authority for translating the Scriptures into various languages is also implied from the first century gift of tongues so that the apostles and others could speak to people in their own tongue (Acts 2:4,8).

WHY SO MANY NEW TRANSLATIONS?

Few people object to the idea of translating the Bible into various languages. They understand the authority for it and that it is **expedient** to translate the Scriptures. Many, however, seem to believe that there is a saturation point where the proliferation of translations into any given language has become so great that it is no longer expedient to continue translating the Bible into that language. It is admitted that the great number of translations available today can produce problems. Most of us have experienced the confusion and frustration of trying to read along with a preacher or Bible class teacher who is using a translation different from the one we use.

There are a number of reasons why there are so many English translations available, with more being produced each year. The highest motive of course is the desire to have a translation that is **readable and true**. There is also the profit motive. Bible translations

make a lot of money for publishers. As long as there is money to be made in producing new translations, we will continue to see them. This is not to say it is wrong for publishers to make a profit, but let us not fool ourselves into thinking that all of the many translations would exist if they were losing money! Another motive behind some translations is **doctrine**. Some translations are produced for the sole purpose of placing some religious organization's doctrine in the text of the Bible itself. The *New World Translation*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (i.e. "Jehovah's Witnesses"), is an excellent example of a translation whose main purpose is to further the peculiar beliefs of a religious group. For instance, since they do not believe that Jesus was or is God, but was created, they translate John 1:1 as follows: "In the beginning the Word was, the Word was with God, and the Word was a god." There is no manuscript in the entire world that contains the article "a" before "God." This is just one example of hundreds of such changes they have made. There are also several "neuter gender" translations that are available today. These are an obvious effort to appease the **feminist** element in the religious world. There is also the more recent translation more commonly known as the **P.C. (Politically Correct)** Translation where terms such as "the right hand of God" in deference to left-handed people are taken out. It now says "the mighty hand of God." There was a time when denominations added scripture to their church disciplines and manuals, which contained their doctrines, but now we have denominational doctrines being added to the scripture by spurious translations and to some extent in recent and more widely accepted translations. Still, there will always be a need for good new translations.

GOOD REASONS FOR NEW TRANSLATIONS

First, we need new translations because there are some languages spoken in the world today into which the Bible has yet to be translated. For instance, they have just now come out with a translation of the Bible into the language of the Kuna Indians who live on the San Blas Islands off the coast of Panama. There are over 100 other languages and dialects, which need translations. Fortunately, most of these people are bilingual and can read other languages, which have Bible translations.

A **second** reason for continuing to translate the Bible even into English is that English is a living language. Languages that are in continuous use change. For instance, this is an

example of a passage from Genesis 1 from an early English translation, "In ye beginning God maid of nought hevене and erthe. Forsothe the erthe was idil and voide, and derknissis we run on the face of depthe, and Spyrit of the Lord was born on the waters. And God seide, Lizt be maid, and lizt was maid; and God sez the lizt that it was good, and he departaide the lizt fro derknissis; and he clepide ye hzt dai, nad ther derknissis nitz, and the eventyd and mornetyd was maid dai." Even though the King James has been revised a number of times through the centuries, it still contains words that have changed significantly in meaning such as "charity" for "love," "entreat" for "treat," "conversation" for "conduct," "viconvice" for "convict," "quick" for "alive," "quicken" for "revive," "careful" for "anxious," or "worried," "sith" for "since," "trow" for "trust," "ghost" for "spirit," "strange" for "foreign," "suffer" for "let," "prevent" for "precede," and others.

A **third** reason is that translators today have a better understanding of the Koine Greek language. Koine refers to the period of the Greek language in which the New Testament autographs (the original documents of which copies were made) were written. There was Classical Greek and Koine Greek. We now know that the New Testament was written in the language of the common people (Koine). This discovery was made as late as 1895. This helped translators in their understanding of some words that were very difficult before. **IT MUST BE POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT NO DISCOVERIES HAVE BEEN MADE THAT HAVE CHANGED ANY DOCTRINES TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE.** These changes have been for clarification only.

A **final reason** why it is necessary to continue to produce new translations or revise old ones is **additional manuscript evidence**. The discovery of the celebrated Dead Sea Scrolls is an excellent example of this. Portions of these scrolls date back to 200 B.C. Before then our knowledge of the Old Testament text was based on manuscripts that only dated back to around A.D. 850-1000. This means that the Dead Sea Scrolls are 1,000 years older than the previously known manuscripts. It is encouraging to know that thus far, except for few places of insignificance, they are in agreement with the Old Testaments we have today. It is important that we have **trustworthy and reliable** translations. We must understand how this is done and why it is true.

Those of us who speak English have two ways by which we can read the Bible; (1) We can learn the original languages in which it was written (biblical Hebrew, Koine Greek,

and some Aramaic), or (2) we can use an English translation of the Bible. A person living in Germany knowing only the German language who would like to read *Gone With The Wind* has similar choices: learn the English language or get a copy in German. However, there the similarity would end, for translating the Bible into English is quite different from translating a twentieth-century novel into a foreign language. When you understand the difference, you will understand why we have so many English versions of the Bible.

Someone translating *Gone With The Wind* into German can still refer to first-edition English copies of the novel. However, someone who wants to translate the Bible has no first-edition copies. None of the original manuscripts of the Bible have been found. The best copies we have available are handwritten, made at least 150 years after the first editions. In addition, the translators find differences among these various copies. The copies must be evaluated in order to choose the ones that seem most authentic; we refer to this task of picking and choosing as *textual criticism*. It is quite a sophisticated science. More will be said about this later.

Anyone who wants to translate *Gone With The Wind* into German is working with two current, known languages, but someone who wants to translate the Bible must deal with ancient languages as well as a modern language. The Bible translator must convert languages that have not been spoken for centuries, languages whose vocabulary and rules of grammar have been lost. Occasionally, he must compare biblical words with words in other ancient languages to discover their meaning. Then he must try to convey that meaning into modern English. In time, a particular translation will have problems because the meaning of words will change. That is why there will always be a need for additional translations.

A person translating *Gone With The Wind* into German is handling a literary work, written primarily to entertain. However, someone who wants to translate the Bible is handling a spiritual work, which God gave us to explain the way to eternal life. If the translator of the novel fails to grasp all of Margaret Mitchell's meaning, the readers of the novel will still have an enjoyable experience. If the translator of the Bible fails to grasp all of God's meaning, the readers may be sidetracked from the way of salvation. Therefore, the Bible translator must be very careful to convey the sense of the original and to avoid including any personal theological views.

ENGLISH VERSIONS: A BRIEF HISTORY

English translations or versions of the Bible have been made for almost 1300 years. The work began with Bishop Aldhelm of Sherborne, who translated the Psalms into Old English shortly before his death in the year 709. The Venerable Bede, a learned monk at Jarrow, had translated part of the gospel of John into Old English when he died in 735. By the tenth century, Old English scholars had translated all of the gospels and large portions of the Old Testament into their language.

The man responsible for first bringing the entire Bible into English was John Wycliffe of Oxford. Wycliffe felt that the common people needed to understand God's Word, and he knew that reading the Scriptures in their own language would greatly aid their understanding. Therefore, from his post as a lecturer at Oxford University, Wycliffe encouraged scholars of the Oxford community to begin the work of translating the Bible into English. He himself is regarded as the translator of the New Testament.

The printing press had not been invented, so these men had to publish their work as a handwritten manuscript. They completed the translation shortly before Wycliffe's death in 1384. It should be noted that Wycliffe's team did not work from any Hebrew or Greek manuscripts; they used a Latin translation called the Vulgate, made by the Roman Catholic scholar Jerome around A.D. 400. The manuscripts Jerome used were themselves late copies of the original manuscripts. Therefore, when you think about it Wycliffe's version was a translation of a translation of a copy.

More than sixty years later (A.D. 1450), John Gutenberg invented the process of movable type, which enabled him to change letters for printing different pages easily. This breakthrough made modern printing possible. It brought on a deluge of various editions of the Greek and Hebrew texts, with new editions of the Latin version and new versions in other languages. Martin Luther released his German New Testament in 1522 and the complete German Bible in 1534. Tyndale published his English New Testament in 1526. Miles Coverdale published an entire English Bible in 1535. The fourteenth century brought many other English versions. including the Matthew's Bible (1537), the Great Bible (1539), the Geneva Bible (1560), the Bishop's Bible (1568) and also the Rheims New Testament (1582) and Douay Old Testament in 1609-1610 which were Roman Catholic.

Afterwards, the King James Version of 1611 was written. It is called the King James Version because King James I of England authorized the project. His six teams of translators worked from printed critical editions. A critical edition is an edited text of an old book, made by comparing various copies of that book to see which ones seem best to reflect the wording of the original. They chose from each copy the passages that seemed most likely to have been in the original manuscripts. The critical editions used by the King James translators had been made using manuscripts no older than the Middle Ages. They also used earlier English versions such as Tyndale's translation. For the Old Testament they used a Hebrew critical edition, which consulted a third-century B.C. Greek version known as the Septuagint (a Greek version of the Old Testament translated by seventy Jewish scholars in 280 B.C. and is the translation Jesus and the apostles quoted from the most) and the earlier English versions. Their purpose was not to make a new translation, but to "make a good one better." The good one that they hoped to improve was the Bishop's Bible of 1568, which was preferred by the Anglican clergy. However, the most popular Bible of the masses was the Geneva Bible of 1560, produced by English scholars who had escaped to Geneva during the persecutions of Queen Mary. It was printed in a handy size and in clear Roman type. King James hoped that the new version would satisfy not only the Anglican clergy, but the Puritan reformers and the uneducated public as well.

All the people of England did not immediately accept the King James Version. The Pilgrims would not even allow a copy of the KJV on board the Mayflower when it sailed for the New World nine years later; they accepted only the Geneva Bible. Despite this grudging welcome, the KJV came to be accepted as the standard English Bible version of its day --- indeed, the standard version of the following centuries. Over the past four centuries, the KJV has undergone many revisions so that the edition of our day differs from the 1611 edition in hundreds of particulars, though the general content, of course, is basically the same. During its long history, the KJV has been revised in accordance with changes in English speech and in our growing knowledge of the original text of the Scriptures. Previous major revisions were prepared in 1629, 1638, 1762, and 1769. It is the revision of 1769 that we actually use today. The New King James Bible, first produced in whole in 1982, is the fifth major revision of the King James Version. However, it may be asked then why the KJV eventually

became the most prominent translation among the English. The King James Version enjoyed several advantages over the earlier English versions of the Bible:

- (1) It was sanctioned by the King of England, thus assuring that most English speaking people could use it. Many previous English versions had been suppressed (Tyndale's).
- (2) It was published after printers had perfected Gutenberg's process, which permitted them to make inexpensive copies of the KJV.
- (3) Its translators held various theological views, giving the project a system of "checks and balances" to override sectarian theological biases.
- (4) Its translators were masters of the English language; they could phrase their work in prose of exquisite beauty.

THE UNDERLYING TEXT: AN IMPORTANT MATTER

Since none of the original autographs (the actual manuscripts penned by inspired men) of the Bible exists today, one of the matters of prime importance is the establishment of a reliable text from which a good translation can be made. A majority of competent scholars believe that the most reliable way of determining the best Greek text is by means of the "critical" method. As pointed out earlier in this article, this is a very sophisticated science known as textual criticism. By this procedure, the scholars can compare **ancient Greek manuscripts** (over 5,000 of them dating from the second through the fourteenth centuries: SEE CHART #1, p. 20), **early translations of the Scriptures** in other languages such as Latin and Syriac (over 10,000 of them from the second through tenth centuries: SEE **CHART #2**, p. 21), quotations **from early "church fathers"** (over 200 "church fathers" with over 86,000 quotations: SEE CHART #3, p. 22) and **internal evidence**, and thus attempt to restore, as precisely as possible, the original documents. It has been determined that the 36,000 quotations from the first three centuries alone are enough to restore the entire New Testament except for eleven verses. It is important to know that there is far greater and earlier material on the New Testament than on any other ancient historical document: SEE CHART #4, p. 23.

How does textual criticism work? Textual criticism is actually one of two disciplines that is used to evaluate the Bible. As a whole, it is called *biblical criticism*, which is divided

into two kinds of evaluation; (1) Higher Criticism, which investigates the content of Scripture itself, and (2) Lower criticism, which evaluates Bible manuscripts for forming a text from which a translation can be made. Lower criticism is also known as textual criticism. Imagine that the discipline or specialty of textual criticism is a hotel building with several stories. To take a package to someone who lives on an upper story, deliverymen must enter at the ground level and be admitted by a security guard. In this case, the "lower level" with its cautious guard is textual criticism. This process makes sure that what we translate from is trustworthy and as accurate as possible.

From this simple illustration, you can see that lower criticism is vital to all other types of Bible study. Before we consider the meaning of scripture and sources of the text (higher criticism), we must be sure that we are using a critical text that best preserves what the original writers set down. We must be sure that it is genuine Scripture. To use the hotel analogy, we must let the "security guard" (textual critic) check the contents of the package (manuscript).

Several texts have been established throughout the centuries. This was made necessary because of archaeological discoveries and earlier scripture manuscript discoveries. Some prefer using the Textus Receptus, a Latin term meaning "the received text", which first appeared in 1550. Theodore Beza later published it again with little change in 1565. By 1633, it had become the standard Greek text. Others prefer the Majority Text, which puts all manuscripts together whether late or early to see which text is supported by the most manuscripts. The test of course is not in the number of manuscripts but in their importance. The earlier the manuscript the more reliable it is. It is therefore more important that these witnesses be weighed than numbered. Textual criticism can be a lengthy and difficult study. To simplify matters scholars have divided the manuscripts into several families; (1) The **Byzantine or Syriac Family**, which contain the most manuscripts (hence "Majority Text"), but are also the latest in date and are therefore set aside when it conflicts with the earlier families, (2) The **Alexandrian or Neutral Family** which contains some of the earliest manuscripts and quotes, (3) The **Caesarean Family** manuscripts reflect a mixture, and (4) The **Western Family** which are Greco-Latin manuscripts: SEE CHART #5, p. 24.

Today's textual critics now follow an **Eclectic Method** in seeking to reconstruct the original text of the New Testament. This means that they do not follow any one text-type

exclusively or even predominantly. They attempt to weigh readings from all the text-types and to judge each on its on merit. One warning in this method is that subjective elements can enter the picture. The real question is, "To what extent can we trust the present critical text to be the true text?" Westcott and Hort who developed some of the latest methods of textual criticism said the following, "If comparative trivialities, such as changes of order, the insertion or omission of the article with proper names, and the like, are set aside, the words in our opinion still subject to doubt can hardly amount to more than a thousandth part of the whole New Testament." That amounts to about a half page. If this half page were totally set aside, it would not change a single doctrine taught in the Bible.

THE CALL FOR A REVISED VERSION: A CONSTANT NEED

In the early nineteenth century, serious Bible students began calling for a thorough revision of the KJV, using these critical editions. They wanted a revision of the KJV so they could have a Bible version in the modern English language. The Church of England appointed a group of scholars to make such a revision. The group issued their version of the New Testament in 1881 and the Old Testament in 1885. Together, these became known as the English Revised Version or simply the Revised Version (RV). They then arranged for a group of American scholars who had worked with the committee to issue their own edition of this work. The Americans hoped to modify the translation a bit to reflect better American usage. This effort was published in 1901 and was called the *American Standard Version* (ASV). The continuing demand for more accurate and readable Bible translations prompted publication of other English versions after the ASV. In fact there were, 123 new versions issued between 1881 and 1973.

THE TRANSLATOR'S THEOLOGY: A WARNING

Consideration should be given to the translator's theological stance --- what is his attitude toward the Scriptures. It is theoretically possible for a scholar to translate faithfully even though he is a liberal; however, it must be admitted that the translator who labors under the conviction that he is dealing with God's words, could be more highly motivated to fidelity in rendition than the man who feels that he is merely dealing with the words of uninspired men. Theological liberals have dominated some versions of recent years. For example, according to translator Henry J. Cadbury, all nine members of the Revised Standard Version

New Testament translation committee were of "the liberal wing of scholarship."

Translations, which have only one person as author whether he is liberal or conservative, can be dangerous because there are no "checks and balances." It helps therefore to know who the translators of a version are.

TRANSLATION PHILOSOPHY: YOU NEED TO KNOW

Those undertaking the task of translation deserve a large helping of tolerance and understanding. Anyone who has ever studied a foreign language is familiar with problems of translation. Idiomatic phrases and certain grammatical constructions pose problems. Although some words carry with them a primary meaning, others are so versatile that the context must determine the definition. The first three definitions for *ago* in the Latin are "drive, do, discuss." Besides beginning with the letter *d*, what exactly do these definitions have in common? Both the noun and the verb forms of **drive** in the English have multiple definitions, many of which seem unrelated. All who seek to change the Bible from one language to another face these problems; so a little latitude must be granted. Again, it must be noted that the words, which still give the most difficulty, are not involved in doctrinal matters.

Generally speaking, **five translation philosophies** over the centuries have been used: (1) Literal, (2) Formal Equivalence or Modified Literal, (3) Dynamic Equivalence, (4) Paraphrase, and (5) Unduly Free (See CHART #7, page 44). Each of these reflects a philosophical approach to translation. A brief description of each is as follows:

(1) The **Literal Approach** is found mostly in Interlinear Greek-English translations. As with most foreign languages the order of words and phrases are different in the Greek language from English. Translating John 3:16 with the literal method it reads as follows: "For so loved God the world that his Son the only begotten he gave, that everyone who believes on him may not perish, but may have life eternal. For sent not God his Son into the world that he might judge the world, but that might be saved the world through him." The difficulty in this kind of translation is not that it cannot be understood but is that it is difficult to follow. Another problem the literal method can have is that sometimes the literal translation of a Greek word would make no sense to an English reader. Some philosophers

of Athens asked regarding Paul, "What would this seed-picker (Gk. spermologos) say?" (Acts 17:18). The original term is best rendered, "babbler, gossip," since "seed-picker" hardly reveals the actual meaning of their sarcastic query. In the Greek mind, it meant "one who picks at the crumbs of life and repeats the same." We must also keep in mind that it is not always possible to translate the same Greek word uniformly in all of its occurrences. The Greek word *splanchnon* means "entrails, intestines." Therefore, when the body of Judas fell, "he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out" (Acts 1:18). Since it is known, however, that the Greeks used *splanchnon* for the seat of the emotions, it is best to render Philippians 1:8 as, "I long after you all with affection of Christ Jesus," rather than "in the bowels of Christ" (KJV). The NKJV renders the verse, "I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ!"

(2) Another method, commonly known as **Modified Literal** or **Formal Equivalence**, attempts to translate "the words and nuances of the original as literally as possible" provided that clarity is conveyed in English. This was the disposition of those who produced the *King James Version* and the *American Standard Version*. The ASV translators stated that their aim was to bring the "plain reader more closely into contact with the exact thought of the sacred writers." Scholars Eke Luther A. Weigle of Yale (Chairman of the *Revised Standard Version* committee) and F. F. Bruce of the University of Manchester, though promoters of some of the more modern versions, have conceded that the ASV is the most meticulously accurate version in the English language. It is the most useful Bible for those who wish to be as close to the original text as possible, but who read only English. The *New King James Version* is an updating of the KJV using the Formal Equivalence method. The *New American Standard Bible* also uses this method to some extent. A translator who tries to achieve formal equivalence will pick words and phrases that closely parallel the original manuscripts; the object is to give you an English-language "mirror image" of the Hebrew and Greek originals --- the same thought pattern, the same level of sophistication, even the same cadence (rhythm of reading) that you would find in the original text. However, English is quite unlike Hebrew or Greek; so when a translator tries to give you formal equivalence, the English must be forced into a Hebrew or Greek mold. The result is a version that may be hard to understand and a bit choppy. This is true of the *American Standard Version*.

(3) A translator who tries to achieve **Dynamic Equivalence** will try to express the original *meaning in English*---even if it means restructuring the whole thought pattern of the passage. It attempts to convey the meaning of the text "in free and idiomatic English **without much regard for the exact wording of the original.**" The weakness of this method is that the translator may misunderstand the full meaning of the original and give a distorted or partial view of what the passage really says. Another problem is that the dynamic equivalence translator usually will try to express these ideas in a current, modern idiom. Thus, the version will be out of date in a few years, as the idioms and clichés pass from use. Though this approach is not totally void of merit, it does present some real problems. For example, whenever the translator feels that a literal rendition of the original language is too obscure for the English reader, he proceeds by choosing thoughts in **his own** language to tell his reader what the Greek text means. In effect, he becomes more of a commentator than a translator. D. A. Carson, a defender of the dynamic equivalence method, admitted that this attitude "can lead to all sorts of freedoms with respect to translation." He further conceded, "It is no doubt true that the closer one stands to the 'loose' end of this method, the greater the chances of subjective bias." A most important point in this connection is a recognition of the fact that the original autographs of the Bible were **verbally inspired** of God (I Corinthians 2:11ff), and this involved even the various grammatical peculiarities which were a part of the sacred documents. Christ made an argument on verbal tenses in His debate with the Sadducees shortly before His death (Matthew 22:32) and Paul stressed the singular form of "seed" in his presentation to the Galatians concerning Jehovah's promise to Abraham (Galatians 3:16). The translator must strive, therefore, to stay as close to the original as he can so as not to lose those subtle messages reflected in tense, voice, mood, etc. The most popular translation today using this method is the *New International Version* (NIV).

(4) The **Paraphrase** method takes greater liberties in translation by adding commentary for explanation. There are some KJV study help Bibles that do this but the additions are in brackets [] so that you can know they are explanations, but paraphrase translations do not make this distinction; so, it is difficult if not impossible to distinguish between the author's additional commentary and the translation of manuscripts. This also allows for the greater possibility of the translator(s) to slant the translation with their own

religious point of view. The most popular of these translations are the *The New Testament In Modern English* by J. B. Phillips and *The Living Bible Paraphrased* by Kenneth Taylor. In the case of the LBP, one English version is used and rephrased in English terms. The LBP is actually the ASV in modern clothing --- a paraphrase. A good example in the LBP of taking liberties in translation is found in 1 Kings 18:27, "About noontime, Elijah began mocking them, 'You'll have to shout louder than that,' he scoffed, 'to catch the attention of your god! Perhaps he is talking to someone, or is out sitting on the toilet, or maybe he is away on a trip, or is asleep and needs to be wakened!'" Another more serious example is found in Acts 2:32, "They joined with the other believers **in regular attendance at the apostles' teaching sessions** and at the **Communion** services..." and in Acts 2:46, "They worshiped together regularly at the Temple each day, met in small groups in homes **for Communion, and** shared their meals with greatest joy and thankfulness" (emphasis mine). These phrases are much different than "and they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers" (NKJV) and "breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness..." (NKJV). Here is an even more serious example, "(... in baptism we show that we have been saved from death and doom by the resurrection of Jesus Christ ...)." That is much different than "baptism doth also now save us..." (KJV). Some people call any dynamic equivalence version a "paraphrase," but strictly speaking, a paraphrase takes a translated version and restates it in other, simpler words in the same language.

(5) **Unduly Free** translations go even further than paraphrases. They pay virtually no attention to the form of the original. The intent of this kind of translation is to make the **meaning** as clear as possible, but with no premium attached to the original **form**. Admittedly, problems of "literalism" are noticeably absent, but other --- and more serious --- problems arise, viz., with respect to the imparting of incorrect **meaning**. The scholar F. F. Bruce describes the most notorious example of such is Edward Harwood's *Liberal Translation of the New Testament*. The opening part of the model prayer of Jesus (Matt. 6:9) appears as follows in this version:

0 Thou great governor and parent of universal nature --- who manifestest thy glory to the blessed inhabitants of heaven --- may all thy rational creatures in all the parts of thy boundless dominion be happy in the knowledge of thy

existence and providence, and celebrate thy perfections in a manner most worthy thy nature and perfective of their own!

No one would of course mistake this for "Our Father which art in heaven: Hallowed by thy name." An unduly free version which did gain some popularity in the 60's and 70's was Clarence Jordan's *The Cotton Patch Version* a "colloquial translation with a Southern accent." Jordan takes the New Testament scene and places it entirely in today's setting. Jerusalem becomes Atlanta, Georgia and Bethlehem becomes Gainesville, Georgia. Here is a sample:

"When Jesus was born in Gainesville, Georgia, during the time that Herod was governor, some scholars from the Orient came to Atlanta and inquired, "Where is the one who was born to be governor of Georgia?This news put Governor Herod and all his Atlanta cronies in a tizzy. So he called a meeting of the big-time preachers and politicians, and asked if they had any idea where the Leader was born," Matthew 2:1-5.

You can see why this is called an "unduly free" translation. If you have ever lived in Georgia, however, its makes for very interesting reading.

A good translation will strive for balance, staying as close to the original text as possible while conveying clearness of meaning to the reader. In view of the foregoing factors--selection of the best text, attitude toward Bible inspiration, translation philosophy, and inherent translation difficulties --- it should be apparent to every clear-thinking person that: (a) there is no perfect version, and (b) there are bound to be disagreements among sincere Bible students concerning the relative values of the various versions and how those versions will be employed in one's study and teaching efforts. Perfection of course is claimed

only for the original biblical autographs, which no longer exist. No Bible translator is inspired of God. In any translation, there is the possibility of translating bias or errors of judgment. All versions reveal these occasional weaknesses --- some more than others, of course. Versions vary, therefore, in their usefulness in degree. In regards to translation philosophy, it must be pointed out that some translations may fit in-between the different methods of translation.

In the next section, we will examine some of the more popular translations and identify their philosophy of translation. We will also examine a few of the translating errors and problems that are found in them. Finally, several recommendations will be made as to what **are the best** and most trustworthy translations, and we will look at how to use "comparison study" in order to benefit from them all.

CHART # 1

GREEK MANUSCRIPTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Uncials (Capital Letters)	267
Minuscules (Cursive or Small Letters)	2,764
Lectionaries (appointed church readings)	2,143
Papyri	88
Recent Finds	47
TOTAL EXTANT GREEK MSS	5,309

DATES OF EARLY MANUSCRIPTS

John Rylands	130 a.d.
Bodmer Papyrus II	150-200 a.d.
Chester Beatty Papyri	200 a.d.
Diatessaron (Harmony of Four Parts)	160 a.d.
Codex Vaticanus	325-350 a.d.
Codex Sinaiticus	350 a.d.
Codex Alexandrius	400 a.d.
Codex Ephraemi	400 a.d.
Codex Bezae	450 a.d.
Codex Washingtonensis (Freericanus)	450 a.d.
Codex Claromontanus.....	500 a.d.

CHART # 2

EARLY VERSIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

LANGUAGE	DATE
Syriac	
Old Syriac	350 a.d.
Syriac Peshitta	125-250 a.d.
Palestinian Syriac	400-450 a.d.
Philoxenian	508 a.d.
Harkleian	616 a.d.
Latin	
Old Latin	350 a.d.
African Old Latin	400 a.d.
Codex Corbiensis	400-450 a.d.
Codex Vercellensis	360 a.d.
Codex Palatinus	450 a.d.
Latin Vulgate	366-384 a.d.
Armenian	350 a.d.
Gothic	350 a.d.
Georgian	450 a.d.
Ethiopic	550 a.d.
Nubian	550 a.d.

MANUSCRIPTS OF THE EARLY VERSIONS

Latin Vulgate	10,000+
Ethiopic	2,000+
Slavic	4,001
Armenian	2,587
Syriac Peshitta	350+
Bohairic	100
Arabic	75
Old Latin	50
Anglo Saxon	7
Gothic	6
Sogdian	2
Frankish	1
TOTAL EXTANT EARLY VERSIONS.....	19,184+

Early Patristic Quotations of the New Testament

CHART #3

WRITER	GOSPELS	ACTS	PAULINE EPISTLES	GENERAL EPISTLES	REVELA- TION	TOTALS
Justin Martyr	268	10	43	6	3	330
Irenaeus	1,038	194	499	23	65	1,819
Clement of Alexandria	1,017	44	1,127	207	11	2,406
Origen	9,231	349	7,778	399	165	17,922
Tertullian	3,822	502	2,609	120	205	7,258
Hippolytus	734	42	387	27	188	1,378
Eusebius	3,258	211	1,592	88	27	5,176
Grand Totals	19,368	1,352	14,035	870	664	36,289

CHART #3

Note: Justin Martyr also made 266 allusions to various New Testament writings.

Taken with adaptation from William E. Nix and Norman L. Gelsler, Introduction to the Bible (Chicago: Moody, 1968). Used by permission.

To the chart above can be added Augustine, Amabius, Laitantius, Chrysostom, Jerome, Gaius, Romanus, Athanasius, Ambrose of Milan, Cyril of Alexandria, Ehraem the Syrian, Hilary of Poitiers, Gregory of Nvssa, and others, which would total over 86,000 quotes.

CHART # 4

COMPARISON OF CLASSIC TEXTS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

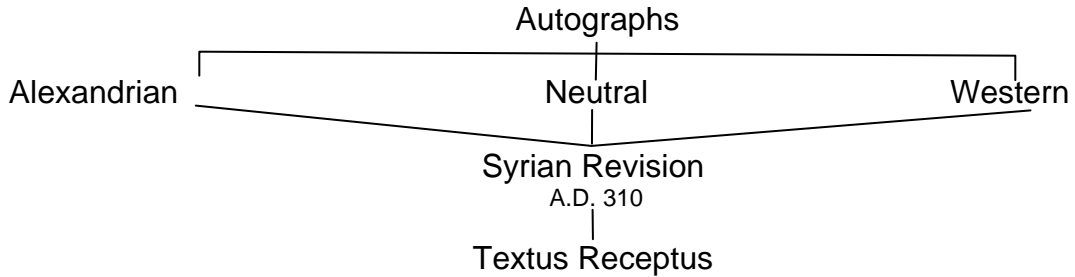
AUTHOR	WHEN WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	TIME SPAN	NO. OF COPIES
Caesar	100-44 b.c.	900 a.d.	1,000 yrs.	10
Livy	59 b.c.-a.d. 17			20
Plato (Tetralogies)	427-347 b.c.	1100 a.d.	1,200 yrs.	7
Tacitus (Annals)	100 a.d.	1100 a.d.	1,000 yrs.	20(-)
also minor works	100 a.d.	1000 a.d.	900 yrs.	1
Pliny the Younger (History)	61-113 a.d.	850 a.d.	750 yrs.	7
Thucyclides (History)	460-400 b.c.	900 a.d.	1,300 yrs.	8
Suetonius (De Vita Caesarum)	75-160 a.d.	950 a.d.	900 yrs.	8
Herodotus (History)	480-425 b.c.	900 a.d.	1,300 yrs.	8
Horace			900 yrs.	
Sophocles	496-406 b.c.	1000 a.d.	1,400 yrs.	193
Euripedes	480-406 b.c.	1100 a.d.	1,500 yrs.	9
Demosthenes	383-322 b.c.	1100 a.d.	1,300 yrs.	200*
Aristotle	384-322 b.c.	1100 a.d.	1,400 yrs.	49#
Aristophanes	450-385 b.c.	900 a.d.	1,200 yrs.	10
Homer (Iliad)	900 b.c.	400 b.c.	500 yrs.	643
New Testament	40-100 a.d.	125 a.d.	25 yrs.	24,000+

*All from one copy

Of any one work

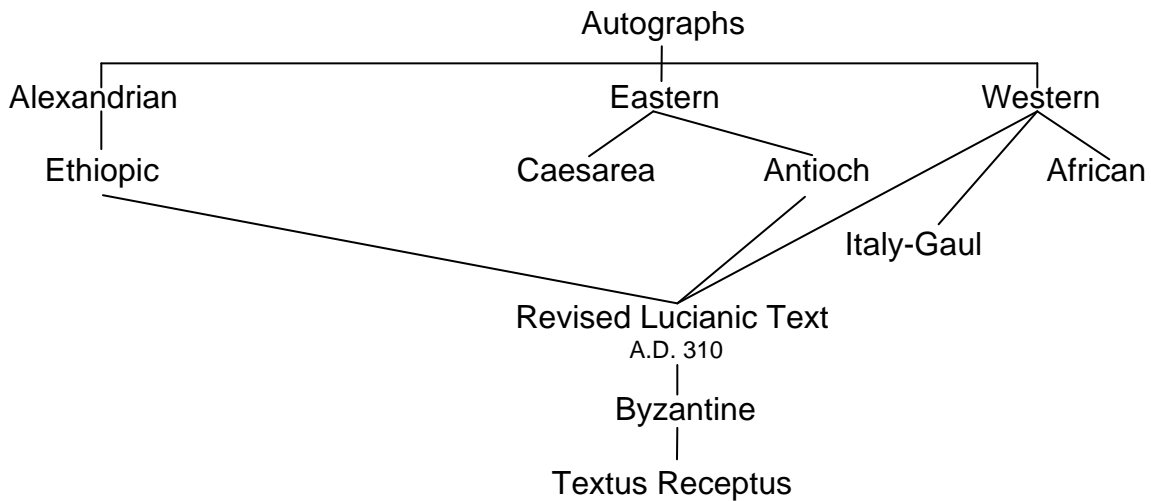
CHART # 5 Theories Concerning the History of the Text

I. WESTCOTT and HORT



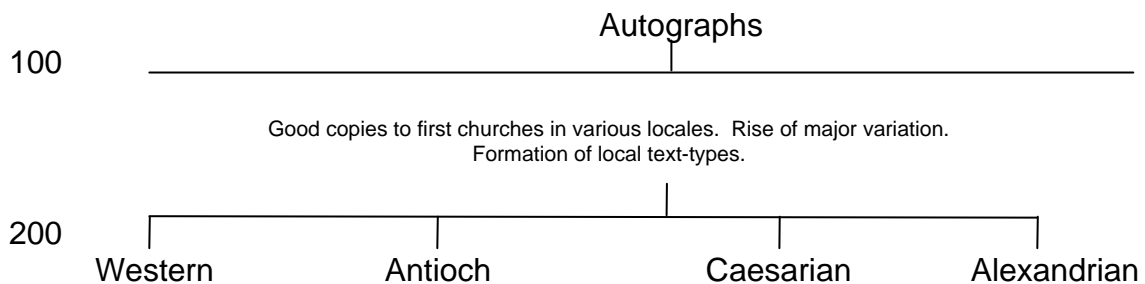
The Neutral group is highly favored as the correct reading. The antiquity of the MS evidence is the predominant external factor. The Majority (Byzantine) text-type is the result of a revision in A.D. 310 and is basically untrustworthy.

II. STREETER



Consideration is given to both the ages of MSS and the geographical distribution of the MSS. The Byzantine MSS are believed to contain the better readings, at times, even over the older MSS.

III. STURZ



EVALUATION OF VARIOUS TRANSLATIONS

Before beginning these evaluations, it should be noted that no translation is inspired. Raymond Elliott in his book *Translations* writes, "Is a Bible translation the inspired Word of God? Yes--to the extent that the translation relays to the reader what God directed the authors to write. No--to the extent that it misses the meaning of what God originally communicated." D. A. Carson in his book *The King James Version Debate, A Plea for Realism* rightly observes:

No translation is perfect. No translation has **ever** been perfect. Words in different languages and cultures have various shades of meaning. Even when two words are very close, their semantic idioms differ, syntax differs, sentence length differs. The stylistic devices used to indicate intensity of emotions are not the same. Poetical standards differ. Words and phrases change their meaning with time. On top of all this, old-fashioned human fallacy intrudes again and again, and just as there is no **biblical** reason for thinking a particular text-type necessarily bears divine approval, so there is no biblical reason for thinking a particular translation necessarily bears divine approval.

Actually, there is but one **version** of God's inspired Word ...**His Version**. What we have today are translations of copies of that version. We can rest assured; however, that God's providence has insured that we have his written word today. Jesus promised the apostles that they would be guided into all the truth, and he commanded them to preach it to every nation and to their descendants (John 16:13; Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 2:39). This could be possible only if God made sure that His word was preserved. However, because of various motives already pointed out (p. 2), **not all translations arc alike**. When choosing a translation a Christian must be an informed person. Otherwise, he could choose a translation that contains error about the most important doctrines contained within, such as the nature of God, the place of Jesus Christ, and God's plan of salvation. The following information is meant to help in this endeavor. Be sure to go over CHART #7 (p. 44) in this study.

KING JAMES VERSION:

Philosophy: Formal Equivalence

Background: All other English versions of the Bible are measured against this standard. The KJV is still the version most widely used even though “simplicity and clarity are not always its chief merits.” It was inaugurated by King James of England and translated by forty-seven men divided into six groups. The year of translation was 1611. Even though a number of manuscripts have been discovered since this translation, most conservative scholars agree that the differences between the manuscripts used by the KJV translators and those used later are not that great and the KJV is extremely faithful to the text then available. The KJV has been revised five times in order to clarify and update the language. The latest revision is the *New King James Version*.

Weaknesses and Problems: Since no translator after the apostles was ever inspired of God, no translation is without its weaknesses and problems. Even though the translators of the KJV had a very high regard for the sacred Scriptures, they were human and occasionally yielded to external pressures or to their own theological prejudices, and these inclinations are clearly reflected in some passages. The problem with this version is that some verses reflect the theological views of the translators, mainly Calvinism. In Acts 2:47, the KJV translators rendered as follows: "And the Lord added to the church daily **such as should be saved.**" However, the Greek expression *tous sozomenous* is present tense participle--the being saved ones. The thought in the KJV is that God determined who "should be saved" and hence added them to the church. E. H. Plumptre, Professor of Exegesis at King's College in London, noted: "The verse takes its place among the few passages in which the translators have, perhaps been influenced by a Calvinistic bias." Another example is found in Acts 3:19 where they rendered the term *epistrepsate* as "be converted" (a passive form), thus suggesting that man is passive in the matter of salvation; conversion is thus totally an act of God to which man must yield. However, the translation is incorrect for the verb is active voice, and so, is rendered in the American Standard Version as "turn again." The truth is man must, of his own free will, respond to the Lord (see Acts 2:40). Another Calvinistic doctrine, "once saved always saved," is reflected in Hebrews 6:6 where in following Theodore Beza's text they added the word "if" so that the text might not contradict this doctrine. So similarly, the words "any man" (KJV) are not in the original of Hebrews 10:38; rather, it is "the righteous" who could possibly draw back and hence invoke God's

displeasure. The necessity of having a supernatural influence in one's life before he or she can change is found in Galatians 5:17. The KJV renders this "ye cannot do the things that ye would." Since the Greek term *opiate* is in the present subjunctive it should be rendered "that ye **may not** do the things that ye would." It must be pointed out of course that there are many other verses in the KJV, which defeat the false doctrines of Calvinism.

Other weaknesses would include **obsolete words** like "fetched a compass" (Acts 28:13) which means, "sailed around." Many **words have changed in meaning** (see top of page 7). There are some **inconsistencies, which** might be confusing such as Jeremiah, Jeremias, Jeremy, which mean the same. There are a few wrongly substituted words such as Easter (Acts 12:4), which is used for Passover, *candle*, which is used for lamp (Luke 15:8), and Hell, which is used for both Hades (where everyone who dies goes) and Gehenna (eternal hell).

One special approach in the KJV is the use of italics to designate words appearing in translation, but having no equivalent in the Greek or Hebrew. These were necessary to make the sentence structure clear in the English. Some, such as the word *unknown* before the word **tongue**, were not necessary (I Cor. 14:13-14).

THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION: Philosophy: Formal Equivalent
Theology: 119 Conservative scholars from
various backgrounds.

Background: The NKJV is not new in the sense that it uses new attitudes in translating, but new in its use of methods and materials not available in 1611. In the preface to the 1611 edition, the translators of the *King James Bible* state that it was not their purpose to "make a new translation ... but to make a good one better." Indebted to the earlier work of William Tyndale and others, they saw their best contribution to consist in revising and enhancing the excellence of the English versions, which had sprung from the Reformation of the sixteenth century. In harmony with the purpose of the *King James* scholars, the translators and editors of the *New King James Version* have perceived their work as a continuation of the labors of the earlier translators, thus unlocking for today's readers the spiritual treasures of the *King James* tradition. A great deal of the NKJV's appeal as a reliable translation is the attitude of the **translators**. Bible readers may be assured that the

most important differences in English New Testaments of today are due, not to manuscript divergence, but to the way in which translators view the task of translation. The *New King James Version* follows the historic precedent of the *King James Version* in maintaining a literal approach to translation. Numerous scholars, editors, and church leaders who represented a multiplicity of religious groups and were willing to sign a statement affirming the verbal, plenary inspiration of the original autographs of the Bible produced the NKJB. Not intending to give a 'thought translation' or a paraphrase, they aimed at allowing only minor word changes from the original languages. The NKJV has the benefit of some 300 years of archaeological discovery and uses of the latest manuscript discoveries, and though the differences between the earlier witnesses and those later ones used in translating the KJV are minimal, there are still some scriptures that benefit from these findings, **giving us what some scholars consider a text that is 99% pure in comparison with the originals.**

Weaknesses and Problems: Unfortunately, as in the case with **any translation**, the NKJV still has its shortcomings. The "expanse" of Genesis 1:6 is still translated "**firmament**" in the body of the text. The footnote correctly translates the Hebrew word as "expanse." In Acts 3:19, *epistrapsate* is translated in the passive "be **converted**" where it should be an active "**turn again**," which calls on man to do something in regard to his salvation. In this case, the NKJV repeats the same mistake as the KJV. Perhaps the greatest criticism about the NKJV is that it does on several occasions repeat the mistakes of the KJV. They did make the necessary correction in Acts 2:47 from "**such as should be saved**" to "**those who were being saved**" (See notes on *King James Version* bottom of p. 26). "**Tartarus**," an intermediate existence of torment, is rendered as "hell," the permanent residence of the unrighteous, in 2 Peter 2:4.

Since the most familiar translation is the KJV, one of the advantages of the NKJV is that its "oral tradition" blends more readily making it easier to follow in public readings and to memorize. Its popularity is evidenced by the number of study aids, such as Nelson's *NKJV Exhaustive Concordance* and *The NKJV Greek/English Interlinear New Testament*, now available from religious book distributors.

THE AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION: Philosophy: Formal Equivalence

Theology: 30 mostly conservative scholars

Background: The ASV is the result of a desire for a revision of the KJV. It was begun by the Church of England, which appointed the task to a group of scholars. They then arranged for a group of American scholars who had worked with the committee to come out with their own edition, which would better reflect American usage. It has been identified by many as the finest of all English versions and is perhaps the most readable literal translation ever produced.

Weaknesses and Problems: Because the translators strove for as literal a translation as possible yet be readable, it is choppy in places and difficult to understand. Not all of the translators were conservative. Because of the influence of J. H. Thayer, a liberal of Harvard University, a footnote was added whenever the word "worship" was used. In John 9:38, concerning the man whose sight the Lord had miraculously restored, the apostle writes: "And he worshipped him (Christ)." The ASV footnote declares, "The Greek word (rendered 'worshipped') denotes an act of reverence, whether paid to a creature (as here) or to the Creator (see 4:20)." It is an attempt to take away from the deity of Jesus Christ. This influence is also found in the translation of John 1:18 where the expression "God only begotten" is relegated to the ASV footnote, while "the only begotten Son" is found in the text. They have Matthew 28:1 stating that Jesus arose on the sabbath day, but the Greek term is *opse*, which means "after" the sabbath (Cf.: Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 606).

Overall, this is an excellent translation, but because of its lack of smoothness in reading, it is becoming less popular and therefore more difficult to find in print. It is recommended as a study Bible.

THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION: Philosophy: Less than Formal Equivalence

Theology: 32 mostly moderate translators with an approval committee of nine liberals

Background: The National Council of the Churches of Christ ordered this revision of the ASV. However, the translators soon abandoned the idea of revising the ASV and set out to make an entirely new translation. Translator Henry J. Cadbury states that all nine members of the Revised Standard Version New Testament translation committee were of "the liberal wing of scholarship." Even though the RSV is easier to read than the ASV or the KJV, many conservative readers complain that it distorts the chief doctrines of the Bible.

They charge that the RSV "waters down" the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament and obscures the connection of certain Old Testament passages quoted in the New Testament.

Weaknesses and Problems: When the Revised *Standard Version* appeared in 1946/52, it aroused a storm of controversy, foremost of which was its treatment of the Hebrew word, *almah*, in Isaiah 7:14. The KJV and ASV translated the term "virgin" while the RSV rendered it, "young maiden" (dispatching "virgin" to the footnote). Matthew in quoting this verse used a Greek word, which without a doubt means virgin. The RSV translator's use of the term "young woman" in Isaiah is a reflection of the translators' liberal bias. The RSV also lends credence to millennialism in Acts 3:21 by the rendition "establishing" instead of "restoration." The rendition "only through faith" (Romans 11:20) adds "only" to the text, thus asserting a false doctrine. In Acts 10:43, the RSV has "does what is right" instead of "works righteousness," an expression related to gospel obedience (Cf. Romans 1:16, 17). Many people do "what is right" from a moral or ethical standpoint who never submit to God's plan for accounting man as righteous.

Because of its liberal bias, the RSV has never been accepted among conservative churches. However, because of its ease of reading, it can be used as a study aid to compare texts.

ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION

Philosophy: Formal Equivalence

Theology: Conservative fourteen-member Translation Oversight Committee with some fifty biblical experts and over fifty that made up an Advisory Committee.

Background: **Introduction:** J. I. Packer, ed., *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. Containing the Old and New Testaments*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles (a division of Good News Publishers), 2001. This is a conservative revision of the **Revised Standard Version**. It corrects the interpretation errors of the RSV; especially in the Old Testament, and improves the accuracy throughout with more literal renderings. The RSV was more of a "dynamic equivalent" translation, and it failed to take into consideration New Testament uses of Old Testament words for proper translation and meaning. The ESV seeks to be more formal but without being too literal which would have added the

problem of readability. It also updates the language to 21st century English. The producers of this version acknowledged the need (and demand) for a more literal translation than the New International Version but at the same time be more natural or fluent than the New American Standard Version.

The following is from the Preface of the ESV:

“The ESV publishing team includes more than a hundred people. The fourteen-member Translation Oversight Committee has benefited from the work of fifty biblical experts serving as Translation Review Scholars and from the comments of the more than fifty members of the Advisory Council, all of which has been carried out under the auspices of the Good News Publishers Board of Directors. This hundred-member team, which shares a common commitment to the truth of God’s Word and to historic Christian orthodoxy, is international in scope and includes leaders in many denominations.”

Michael Marlowe of bible-researcher.com/esv.html has written a detailed evaluation of the ESV and has provided several good comparative charts of the RSV and ESV. He wrote the following conclusion:

As modern versions go, the ESV should be counted as one of the best for use in teaching ministry. It is more literal than the NIV, and so it is largely free of the problems that come with the use of so-called “dynamic equivalence” versions; but it is not so severely literal that ordinary readers will struggle to understand it. Its English recalls the classic diction of the KJV, and so it has some literary power (this is not unimportant in a Bible version). Its handling of the Old Testament is agreeable to conservative principles of interpretation. As a revision of the RSV, it is much better than the NRSV in several ways. However, there are some weaknesses in it. We have noticed the bad influence of the NIV in several places. So, for close study the ESV is less suitable than the NASB or NKJV. These latter versions, despite their difficulties and obscurities, continue to be the most useful for detailed and careful study.

Weaknesses and problems: Marlowe offers this observation: “Although the ESV is in general more literal and reliable than most English versions published in recent years, it does need correction or improvement in a few places, and in some places the changes from the RSV are not for the better. Here I offer some criticism of weak renderings and other problems I have noticed here and there in the version.” See Marlowe’s web site for a thorough and detailed listing of these weak renderings and problems; bible-researcher.com/esv.html.

NOTE: From what I can tell, these do not involve doctrinal issues but better wording. CRW

**THE NEW AMERICAN STANDARD
VERSION**

Philosophy: More of a formal equivalence than **the RSV** but not as much as the KJV or ASV

Theology: 58 Evangelical conservative scholars

Background: Dissatisfied with the RSV's supposed revision of the ASV, the Lockman Foundation of La Habra, Calif., began work on this independent revision of the ASV in 1959. Their conviction was that the "words of Scripture as originally penned in the Hebrew and Greek were inspired by God ... The Editorial Board had a two-fold purpose in making this translation: to adhere as closely as possible to the original languages of the Holy Scriptures, and to make the translation in a fluent and readable style according to current English usage." The NASB is more of a formal equivalence version than the RSV; it is more careful to preserve the meaning of each word and phrase of the original next. Many believe that this is one of the most accurate and reliable translations available. Accuracy is its greatest strength.

Weaknesses and Problems: The NASB reflects the premillennial bias of its translators in several places---Isaiah 2:2; Galatians 6:16; Mark 13:30; Rev. 5:10; 20:4. It has Jesus saying, "Do not think that I came to abolish the law...", Matthew 5:17, which contradicts Ephesians 2:15. Premillennial bias is also found in some of their headings and footnotes. The heading of Revelation 20 reads, "The Millennium" (sic), and the marginal cross reference to "This is the first resurrection" (v. 5) directs the reader to I Thessalonians 4:16 and thereby supports the doctrine of the "rapture." Equally, the marginal notes for Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30 and Luke 21:32 offer "race" as an acceptable alternative to "generation," even though in every occurrence of the word in Matthew, for example, it can only mean "generation." Thus the translators' bias is shown since every occurrence of the (Gk. *genea*) in Matthew is translated "generation" without an alternative "race" except in Matthew 24:34, **where** it needs to be "race" to support the dispensational theory. This problem is also in the **NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION** because of their premillennial bias. The NASB misses the point of Galatians 3:26. It has: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus," where the rendition should be, "You are all sons of God, though faith, in Christ Jesus." The first says that one becomes a son of God through faith; the correct rendition says we maintain our sonship through faith. *Thee* and *Thou* have been retained in the prayers to Deity. This perpetuates the idea of a separate "prayer language" which the Greek and Hebrew do not uphold.

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION:

Philosophy: Dynamic Equivalent

Theology: Evangelical conservative

108 participants divided into translation teams, Intermediate teams

(O.T. and N.T.); General Editorial Committee, Translation Committee and literary consultants.

Background: The top selling Bible across the country is *The New International Version* (NIV). According to the *Bookstore Journal* (September, 1994), the *King James* is second, followed by the *New King James*, with the *Living Bible Paraphrased* in third place, the *New American Standard* in fourth. The New York Bible Society sponsored this new translation, using the newest critical editions of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. The Bible Society's translators tried to preserve the traditional sense of the text, while using the dynamic equivalence approach. The translation committee acknowledges that they sought for "more than a word-for-word translation." In the interest of what they considered essential for a readable version, they felt free to modify sentence structure and thus render the text consistent with their views of the context. In so doing, however, they sometimes stray too far from the original documents and so flavor the text with their doctrinal prejudices. There are verses that are translated closer to the Greek than most translations, e.g. 1 Timothy 3:16, for "inspired of God" the NIV has "all Scripture is God-breathed."

Weaknesses and Problems: Because of their use of the dynamic equivalent approach, the translators were left open to be more subjective in their translating. Although there are Calvinistic views expressed in a few verses in the KJV, there are many verses, which clearly express this doctrine in the NIV. In Psalm 51:5 the NIV has David saying, "Surely I have been a sinner from birth"---a completely unjustified rendition. Translated this way the verse reflects the Calvinistic doctrine of **total depravity**, which teaches that we are born as sinners with the Adamic sin and therefore need the Holy Spirit to work on us separate and apart from the word to convert us. This doctrine is especially reflected in their translation of the Greek word *sarx*, which means *flesh* (See Gal. 5:19 and Rom. 8:3). In the NIV, the word *sarx* is translated *flesh* only thirty times out of 138 Greek uses. The next most frequent translation of the word is **sinful nature**. Most other translations, with the exception of the unduly free translated *Living Word Paraphrased* render these passages simply *flesh*. All but four of the *sinful nature* passages are confined to Galatians and Romans, books that deal exclusively with God's plan of salvation. This cannot be by accident. It is peculiar that when regarding the Son of God they translate this word as *human nature*. What happened to "sinful nature"? They know that Jesus was not born with sin. The fact is no man was born in sin or with sin.

This false doctrine leads to other Calvinistic false teachings such as the necessity of an outward force (Holy Spirit) working directly on the heart of a person before he or she can be converted. This in turn has brought on the idea for the necessity of a **religious experience before conversion**.

On many occasions for no known reason, the NIV translators changed parts of speech rather than leaving them as the Hebrew and Greek have them. For instance in Luke 24:49 the word is *promise*, a noun, the direct object of the sentence. The NIV, however, decided it should be changed into a verb, *promised*. Similar changes are made in 2 Corinthians 5:11; Matthew 5:28; Ephesians 5:19; 4:13; 1 Corinthians 13:10; and Acts 2:31. The NIV committee altered some because they **wanted** to, not because they needed to (Refer to *The Future of the Bible*, Jakob Van Bruggen, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1978). Although many of these changes are harmless, this loose approach becomes the overriding philosophy and as a result, alterations in meaning will eventually follow. In fact, it has resulted in some words being left out entirely. Although the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to use the particle *behold* six times (1:20, 1:23, 2:1, 2:9, 2:13, and 2:19), the NIV translators removed it. The word is used by God dramatically to draw attention to a spectacular scene or event of **profound importance** such as the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. This word occurs in the Greek New Testaments 213 times but in 107 of those times (50%), the reader will find no equivalent of the word in the NIV.

Even though the NIV could not remove the many verses that show that baptism is essential to salvation, they **co-opt a popular verse in their favor**. They have performed what is called a "dynamic" reconstruction of Romans 10:9-10. Instead of, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation: (KJV), the NIV has:

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Who can read these verses without concluding that faith and saying: "Jesus is Lord," is enough to save someone? Instead of confession bringing a person unto salvation, confession "saves." Perhaps the most flagrant bias against baptism, however, is in connection with Mark 16:9-20. Most editions of the KJV include these verses with no comment. Other

translations have added qualifying notes. Compare the statements of other translations about this text with the one made by the NIV.

RSV: "Some of the most ancient authorities bring the book to a close at the end of verse 8. **NEB:** "At this point some of the most ancient witnesses bring the book to a close."

NAS: "Some of the oldest mss. omit v. 9 through 20."

NKJV: "Vv. 9-20 are bracketed in NU (a critical text from United Bible Societies) as not in the original text. They are lacking in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, although nearly all other mss. of Mark contain them."

ASV: "The two oldest Greek manuscripts, and some authorities, omit from ver. 9 to the end."

NIV (1978): "The two most reliable early manuscripts do not have Mark 16:9-20."

NIV (1984): "The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20."

The first four above assessments of these disputed Scriptures are correct: the last three are erroneous. The ASV of 1901 should have added the word **complete** to modify "Greek manuscripts," because the fact is the **earliest manuscripts** we have **do include** these verses and with no comment. The NIV's statements, however, are false and deliberately worded to deceive readers into thinking Mark never wrote these words. In fact, there is no way to read that statement and conclude that this ending belongs in the New Testament. People who use the NIV are drawing exactly that conclusion--whenever someone mentions Mark 16:16. By adding the word "reliable," they have rendered a verdict upon the quality of two manuscripts, which judgment everyone does not share.

Why has so much time been spent on pointing out the errors of this translation? It is estimated that the NIV is used by 90% of the young people. It is no wonder that at some recent youth rallies speakers have alluded to our "sinful nature," (Summers, *A Handbook On Bible Translations*, p. 760). The church of our Lord over the centuries has displayed a commitment to the **truth**, urged a respect for the **authoritative** word of God, and fought **battles** over the **accuracy** of proper translation. To embrace a version of the Scriptures that is scarcely better than a paraphrase, replete with doctrinal bias, and **arbitrary** in its renderings is to make less possible a person who uses that translation to 'know the truth and be made free,' (John 3:32).

THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE:

Philosophy: Dynamic Equivalent
Theology: Fifty moderate and liberal translators sponsored by Church of England and Scotland

Background: The NEB was jointly sponsored by the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, and most other major groups in the British Isles, which was intended to be an authoritative revision to use alongside the KJV. They strove for a dynamic equivalence version. They used expressions that can be hard for American readers to grasp. For this reason, the NEB is seldom used in the United States today, though it was popular for several decades.

Weaknesses and Problems: "The NEB's freedom in translation often becomes a paraphrase. It introduced many speculative changes, which have not necessarily clarified the original message" (Lewis Foster, *Selecting a Translation of the Bible*, Cincinnati: Standard, p. 56, 1978). Because of this, the translation has also been identified as a "new free translation." Its philosophy is toward the liberal end of the dynamic equivalent scale. It thoroughly imbibed the spirit of religious modernism. For example, the narrative concerning the tower of Babel began, "Once upon a time..." This was to alert the reader to the fact, as one review had it, that the "Babel account was never understood by biblical men as historical fact."

This version is fraught with scores of corrupted words. The woman's "seed" (Messiah) is removed from Genesis 3:15 and the coming "Shiloh" (Messiah) is deleted from Genesis 49:10. Matthew 1:18 states that "before their (Joseph's and Mary's) marriage she (Mary) was found with child," which is, of course, quite different from the virgin birth affirmation that she was "with child before they **came together.**" In Luke 1:27 they change "virgin" to "girl" twice. The Greek is quite specific in using a word that means virgin. In Acts 20:7, the "first day of the week" is changed to "Saturday night." They have Philippians 2:5 teaching that Christ did not desire "to snatch at equality with God," rather than the real meaning that He chose not to retain that equality, which he shared prior to the incarnation. These are but a sampling of errors of the NEB. As with other translations of this kind, the NEB it recommended only for comparison study.

EASY-TO-READ VERSION

Philosophy: Loose end of Dynamic
Equivalent

Theology: A number of translators and
consultants from Churches of
Christ and other religions such as
Hindu.

Background: Stanley Morris began it in the early 1970's under the oversight of the Hillcrest Church of Christ elders in Arlington, Texas. Dale Randolph, local preacher for the Hillcrest congregation, served and still serves as director of development and promotion. Much of this work came because of work done on the *English Version for the Deaf* by Benton Dibrell and Ervin Bishop. Goebel Music was invited early on by Stanley Morris to be a part of this work because of their association together at Oklahoma Christian College where they both studied New Testament Greek. Stanley Morris was dismissed from the work by the Hillcrest elders and Goebel Music later resigned from the work in 1976 because he says, "I felt WBTC (World Bible Translation Center) was departing from the original goal of translating the Word of God, and the Hillcrest elders were doing nothing to stop it ...Ervin began almost immediately to promote his pet theories of 'dynamic equivalent' translation and 'thought inspiration' for the Bible. These theories had been previously rejected before at WBTC, both publicly and privately. Dale Randolph and the Hillcrest elders did nothing to correct him. In fact, they encouraged him and gave him their endorsement. Consequently, the WBTC began paraphrasing the Scriptures, a practice which it previously condemned in its own 'newsletter' (*WBTC Newsletter*, September -October, 1975)..." At first, they even encouraged the translators to translate rather than transliterate the Greek *baptizo* to "immersion" when they came out with their foreign language translations. Unfortunately, they did not follow the same guidelines with their English translation. Goebel Music is of the opinion that 'the ERV is not a faithful translation of the Bible, but it represents the "guesses," the "think-so's," and "opinions" of liberal minded men who are prejudiced against the Truth.'

Weaknesses and Problems: The ERV has the same problems that all dynamic equivalence translations have, the adding of words that are not in the original, which can

change the meaning of scriptures, and the translation of "thought" being that, of the translator rather than the original writer. Here are just a few examples:

"...about Jesus" in Luke 1:1-4 is not found in any Greek manuscript.

"...then God will" in Acts 2:38 is not found in any Greek manuscript.

"Change your hearts and lives" in Acts 2:38 says too much; for, the Greek word for repent means only to "change one's mind." God "repented" in Genesis 6:6. He changed his mind that he had made man. He "regretted" it because of the multiplying of sin among his special creation. However, he did not 'change his life' which would imply that God was living a wrong kind of life.

"I am proud of the Good News" is an entire rewording of Romans 1:16. Translators call this REVERSE TRANSLATION. In the Greek, Paul actually said, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel." Someone might say, "But doesn't it mean the same, and isn't this being a little picky?" Remember, the duty of the translator is to translate as near as possible what the original writers said into another language. The Holy Spirit guided Paul to say, "For I am not ashamed" rather than "I am proud of." We might think that it is a "refreshing" change, but again, **it is not what God inspired Paul to say. When reverse translation is used often** as the ERV does, it becomes a dangerous practice even in dynamic equivalence translations. It should be used sparingly and only then to make clearer in English what might otherwise be ambiguous if translated literally.

"But a person cannot do any work that will make him right with God," is a contradiction to James 2:24 which says, "a man is justified by works." They compounded the problem by adding the word "any" which is not in any Greek manuscript. In this verse, alone they add the word "God" five times but it is not found even once in any Greek manuscripts.

Many other illustrations could be listed. Especially troubling are verses that emphasize faith as the saving point in salvation. If you want to read a detailed description of this one translation then it is recommended that you read Goebel Music's book *Easy-To-Read Version, Easy to Read or Easy to Mislead*, Goebel Music Publications, Colleyville, TX, 1994. It consists of 1,207 pages on the history and problems of the ERV.

ONE MAN TRANSLATIONS:

TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION,

GOOD NEWS BIBLE

Philosophy: Loose side of Dynamic Equivalent and Paraphrases in many places.

Theology: One man, Robert G. Bratcher, who is Southern Baptist.

Background: Robert G. Bratcher, a Southern Baptist, was assisted by members of the Translations Department, American Bible Society, and a Consultative Committee. The primary goal was to make a simple version for people who know English only as a second language. It is not as true to the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts as a study Bible should be. In spite of this, it sold more than 35 million copies within six years of its being published. The New Testament has had four editions in print. From the first edition to the second, there were some 700 to 800 changes, some of them major.

Weaknesses and Problems: The American Bible Society takes credit for the "new approach" called "dynamic equivalence." They describe it as follows:

It interprets fidelity to the original message of the Scriptures in terms of **contents and meanings rather than of words and forms**--this is the principle of dynamic equivalence rather than formal correspondence. This means making the message of the Scriptures come alive in the language of a translation by expressing it afresh in **thought pattern** natural to the new language (Emphasis mine).

Later they add, "...there has been no attempt to reproduce in English the parts of speech, sentence structure, word order, and grammatical devices of the original languages." As a result of this policy, the errors in the TEB are numerous, too numerous to include in this study. One must commend Mr. Bratcher, however, for changing his rendition of Romans 1:17, "...it is through faith alone from beginning to end..." In later editions, he omitted "alone" which does not appear in the Greek. He has the Lord's Supper being taken on Saturday evening and refers to it as a "fellowship meal." These are interpretations rather than translations. Many say that this translation should not be called a Bible. When you consider that this is supposed to be a translation of God's word, inspired and accurate then that might definitely be the case. Because of its ease of reading, it can be used as a good study aid for comparison study.

THE LIVING BIBLE PARAPHRASED Philosophy: Paraphrase
Theology: 1 man, Kenneth Taylor,
Evangelical conservative

Background: This version is truly a paraphrase, since the work was done from the ASV, an existing English version of the Bible. The project started when Kenneth Taylor, an editor at Moody Press, began paraphrasing portions of the New Testament into simple English for his children. Eventually, Taylor founded Tyndale House Publishers to publish his work as he continued paraphrasing the Bible.

Weaknesses and Problems: The *Living Bible Paraphrase* is such a loose paraphrase that it often departs from the meaning of the original. "This is not and should not be regarded as an accurate version of the Holy Scriptures," (Cyril J. Barber, *The Minister's Library*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974, p. 49). To paraphrase is to say something in different words than the author used. It is a restatement of an author's thoughts, using different words than he did. There are dangers in paraphrases as well as values. Whenever the author's exact words are not translated from the original languages, there is a possibility that the translator, however honest, may be giving the English reader something that the original writer did not mean to say. If clarity were the only criterion, the *Living Bible Paraphrased* would be outstanding. But the worth of its clarity is diluted just to that degree to which it does not do what it sets out to do--"to say as exactly as possible what the writers of the Scripture meant." All too often, the idea in the paraphrased passage is not the idea of the Scripture.

Because Taylor is an evangelical conservative, a number of verses were given a Calvinistic slant. In Psalm 51:5, he has David saying, "I was born a sinner." This of course teaches the false doctrine of **Hereditary Total Depravity**. This is also reflected in Ephesians 2:3 where he has Paul saying, "We started out bad, being born with evil natures..." Unlike the TEV the word "alone" has not been removed, "...favor with God by faith alone," Rom. 4:12. The place of baptism has been changed in 1 Peter 3:21, "In Baptism we show that we have been saved from death..." instead of the literal, "baptism now saves you" (NASB). In Acts 2:4, he has everyone being filled with the Holy Spirit, which excludes an alternate interpretation that it was only the apostles. Because Taylor is charismatic, he puts a great deal of emphasis on each person receiving the gift or power of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 he has the special power of tongue speaking lasting until we see God

face to face. Again, this is an easy to read translation and because of that was on the bestseller list for many years, but its ease of reading is not worth the many errors found within.

**THE NEW TESTAMENT IN
MODERN ENGLISH**

Philosophy: Liberal end of paraphrase
Theology: 1 man, J. B. Phillips, modern
writer

Background: British writer J. B. Phillips began this work by making a new version of Paul's epistles for his soldier friends in World War 11. C. S. Lewis then encouraged Phillips to translate the rest of the New Testament.

Weaknesses and Problems: "As I see it," Phillips said in his forward, "the translator's function is to understand as fully and deeply as possible what the New Testament writers had to say and then, after a process of what might be called reflective digestion, to write it down in the language of the people of today." This view of course presents the same dangers that all paraphrases have. There is a tendency for the translator's doctrinal views to become a part of the translations. Most agree, however that Phillips's translation is perhaps the best one-man paraphrase out today. Some say that it is even better than many dynamic equivalent translations and therefore categorize it simply as on the free side of this translation philosophy. It is not recommended as a study Bible, but it is highly readable and gives the reader a greater sense of "feeling" about the context in which the New Testament epistles were written. It should be used in a comparison study only.

THE COTTON PATCH VERSION:

Philosophy: Unduly Free
Theology: 1 Man, Clarence Jordan, a
Southern Baptist

Background: The CPV is a modern translation with a Southern accent. Clarence Jordan did not claim that his "cotton patch" version always represented a literal rendition of the Greek. He did not call his work a translation but a "version." As the introduction states "This gave him the liberty he desired to give a distinctly contemporary color and flavor to the

gospel story...The result has the effect of shocking some readers and amusing others..."

Clarence Jordan died unexpectedly on October 29, 1969, at the age of fifty-seven. As a result, he did not translate the book of Revelation, portions of the gospel of John, and the gospel of Mark.

Weaknesses and Problems: The problems with the CTV are of course obvious. It is not to be considered a word for word translation or even a paraphrase. Actually, it goes beyond a paraphrase. Nor is it to be considered the Bible. However, it does make for interesting reading in that the New Testament setting is brought down into our modern setting. Jerusalem becomes Atlanta, Georgia, the Jordan River becomes the Chattahoochee River, and the Sea of Galilee becomes Lake Lanier. It also contains some crude language. One should not take this "version" too seriously, but some familiar verses come alive with his colloquial expressions. Here are a few examples:

"Then Jesus arrived at the Chattahoochee from south Georgia, to be dipped by John," Matthew 3:13.

"Now when Jesus was immersed and just as he came up from the water, the sky was split and he saw God's Spirit settling upon him like a dove alighting," Matthew 3:16.

"Not everyone who glibly calls me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the God movement, but he who does the will of my spiritual Father. The time will come when many people will gather around and say, 'L-o-ord, oh L-o-ord, we sure did preach in your name, didn't we? And in your name we gave the devil a run for his money, didn't we? We did all kinds of stunts in your name didn't we?' Then I'll admit right in front of everybody, 'I've never known you. Get away from me, you wicked religious racketeers,'" Matthew 7:21, 22.

"The flood and ark business is sort of a symbol of how baptism now saves you (That is, by putting you on board the Christian 'ark', or community)..." 1 Peter 3:21.

"Take your 'spanking' like a man--it is evidence that God regards you as sons. For what son is there with a father who never spansks him?" Hebrews 12:7.

This translation should never be treated as God's word. It does, however, give a sense of application to today's world.

CLOSING REMARKS

In closing, there are several suggestions about selecting a translation that need to be offered; (1) One should choose for his or her personal, daily study, a good, solid translation that attempts to faithfully communicate the verbally inspired word of God as precisely as possible. (2) No person should be classified as "liberal" or "conservative" simply on the basis of the translation he or she uses. A person's soundness is determined by what he **actually teaches** -- from whatever version. If a person teaches error and attempts to prove such from a mistranslation of the KJV, he must be opposed. If he tries to establish a false doctrine from a corrupt rendition in the NIV, that must be opposed as well. (3) I am not recommending a wholesale use of the many modern versions of the Scriptures. However, there does need to be a balanced, sensible, and scriptural view of this matter. The problem with most folks is not the translation they use, but the fact that they do not use the translation they have.

CHART # 6

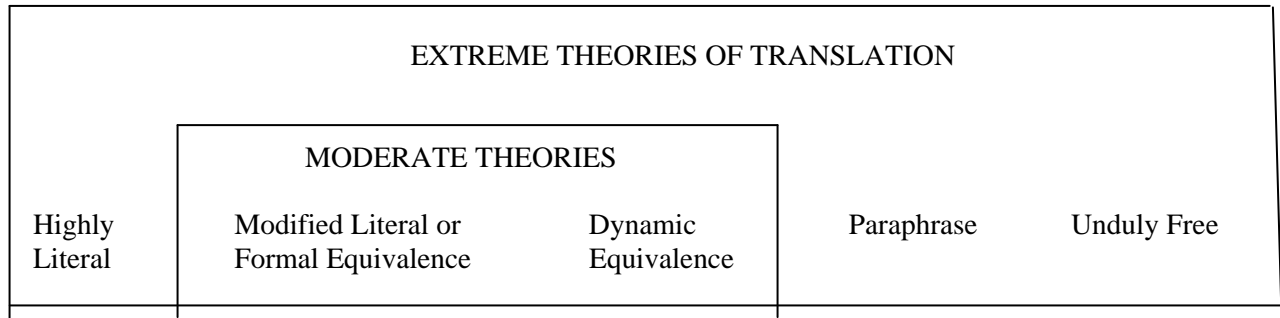
READING LEVEL OF SOME ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

TRANSLATION	GRADE LEVEL
King James Version	12.00
American Standard Version	11.55
New American Standard Version	11.32
Revised Standard Version	10.40
New King James Version	10.00
English Standard Version	10.00
New Testament in Modern English	9.55
New English Bible	8.54
Living Bible (Paraphrase)	8.33
New International Version	7.29
Easy-To-Read Version	3.87

Source: Baker Book House, P. O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506.

CHART #7

TRANSLATION PHILOSOPHIES



Most conservative theory-----Moderate theories-----Liberal theories

THE PHILOSOPHIES OF VARIOUS TRANSLATIONS

NOTE: The abbreviations for the translations are located below according to the philosophy(ies) they used in translation. For instance, the ASV is located under “Modified Literal or Formal Equivalence.” The KJV is also, but it is located a little further to the right because the ASV is more literal in translation from the original languages than are the KJV, NKJV, ESV and NASB. See key below for meaning of abbreviations.

Highly Literal	Modified Literal or Formal Equivalence	Dynamic Equivalence	Paraphrase	Unduly Free
GEL	ASV	RSV	NIV	LBP NTME CPV
	KJV NKJV ESV NASV		NAB NEB	ERV TEV

KEY:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>ASV ---- American Standard Version</p> <p>CPV ---- Cotton Patch Version, Jordan</p> <p>ERV ---- Easy-To-Read Version</p> <p>ESV ---- English Standard Version</p> <p>GEL ---- Greek/English Lexicons</p> <p>KJV ---- King James Version</p> <p>LBP ---- Living Bible Paraphrased</p> <p>NAB ---- New American Bible</p> | <p>NASV---New American Standard Version</p> <p>NEB ---- New English Bible</p> <p>NIV ---- New International Version</p> <p>NKJV--- New King James Version</p> <p>NTME --- N.T. in Modern English, Philips</p> <p>RSV ---- Revised Standard Version</p> <p>TEV---Today’s English Version, Bracher</p> |
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CREDIT NOTES:

1. There were a number of quotations taken from the introductions of the various translations evaluated in this study.
2. Some paragraphs and sentences in this paper are direct quotes from the sources listed above, but not all are referenced with footnotes or citation marks. This paper was produced for the purpose of teaching the material in a local church study group and not for general distribution. Do not reproduce this paper for sale or professional publication without my permission and the permission of the sources listed above.
3. The charts were mostly taken from the book, *Chronological and Background Charts of the OLD TESTAMENT* by H. Wayne House, Zondervan Publishing House. They were retyped, rearranged, and some information was added to the charts.
4. I highly recommend for your reading and study the sources listed above.