
	Links to Topics: Introduction 5.1 Translating 5.2 History 5.2.1 To the Reformation 5.2.2 Modern Era 5.2.2.1 Thru the 1800s 5.2.2.2 1900s - Present 5.2.2.2.1 New Methods 5.2.2.2.2 Bible Societies 5.2.2.2.3 Current Trends	MAKING SENSE OF THE BIBLE 5.0 Bible Translations	Links continued: 5.3 Interpretation 5.3.1 Choices 5.3.2 Comparing 5.3.2.1 Methods 5.3.2.2 Analyzing 5.4 Third John Conclusion	<i>Studies by</i> <i>Lorin L Crauford</i> All rights reserved © 
---	--	---	---	--

INTRODUCTION

One of the dramatic distinctions of Christianity from most all other religions of the world is in its positive attitude toward the translating of its sacred scriptures into the languages that people use on a daily basis. The vast majority of Christians living in today's world have access to a copy of the scriptures that have been translated into their native language.

But such has not always been the case. From about the seventh or eighth century until the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s Christianity in the western world was essentially the Roman Catholic Church. It made use of the Latin Vulgate exclusively in the local parishes. From the beginning of the Vulgate in the early 400s to the beginning of the middle ages, this worked reasonably well since Latin was the official language of the Roman Empire, and continued to be widely spoken even after the demise of the empire in the eighth century. But all across Europe beginning in the middle ages, Latin became increasingly the language exclusively of the church and of the emerging universities. The local languages regionally in Europe, although in existence for centuries earlier, now flourished as the language of communication by the vast majority of people. Latin was for the church officials and the educated elite.

Isolated efforts to translate small portions of the Bible into local western European languages reach back to the eighth century.¹ In the English speaking world, the Roman Catholic John Wycliffe completed a translation of the Vulgate into English in 1384, in spite of the ban on unauthorized translations by Pope Innocent III in 1199. Wycliffe's followers, called Lollards, promoted the distribution of this middle English translation of scriptures throughout England as a protest movement against the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church at that time. Wycliffe managed to survive the opposition to him from the church and died of a stroke on December 28, 1384 while participating in the RC mass. He was formally declared a heretic on May 4, 1415, and his remains and his books were publicly burned.

It was not until Martin Luther's protest actions against the Catholic Church in the early 1500s that Bible translation came into its own. By then the printing press was available thus making possible the quick production of massive numbers of copies. In 1522 Luther published his German translation of the Bible. This was followed by Tyndale's translation in 1526. And others followed. But the initial flourishing tapered off by the early 1600s when the Luther Bibel became standard in German speaking Europe and the King James Version in English speaking Europe. Not until the late 1800s did Bible translation flourish again as an outgrowth of the Modern Missions Movement, combined with the discoveries of the Biblical Archaeology movement and the developing Textual Criticism activity in analyzing the exploding number of ancient manuscripts of the New Testament. The primary channel for promoting Bible translations came through the emergence of Bible Societies.

¹“During the Middle Ages, translation, particularly of the Old Testament was discouraged. Nevertheless, there are some fragmentary Old English Bible translations, notably a lost translation of the Gospel of John into Old English by the Venerable Bede, which he is said to have prepared shortly before his death around the year 735. An Old High German version of the gospel of Matthew dates to 748. Charlemagne in ca. 800 charged Alcuin with a revision of the Latin Vulgate. The translation into Old Church Slavonic was started in 863 by Cyril and Methodius.

“Alfred the Great had a number of passages of the Bible circulated in the vernacular in around 900. These included passages from the Ten Commandments and the Pentateuch, which he prefixed to a code of laws he promulgated around this time. In approximately 990, a full and freestanding version of the four Gospels in idiomatic Old English appeared, in the West Saxon dialect; these are called the Wessex Gospels.”

[“Bible translations,” wikipedia.org]

Since the beginning 1900s the translation of the Christian scriptures into the vernacular languages of the people has steadily grown into a massive effort around the world. Today the flourishing of Bible translation has created perhaps an over abundance of Bible translations in the major western languages.

Consequently the vast majority of Bible study done among Christians today is through the use of a translation. Unfortunately, a diminishing number of pastors and priests have reasonably developed skills in using the original biblical language text for preparing sermons and teaching materials. The extensive use of Greek and Hebrew in Bible study is increasingly being done only by highly trained scholars -- and even there the appalling ignorance of these languages is growing. The unavoidable consequence is a diminishing understanding of the Bible. And this, in turn, leads to a growing dependency on other sources of authority -- a charismatic preacher, a doctrinal confession etc. -- as the basis of the Christian faith. Thus Christianity is sliding down hill into a tangled maize of confusion, spiritual confusion, and religious shallow-ism that is pushing it off the world stage as a viable way of living.

One of the core principles of the Protestant Reformation was *sola scriptura*. That implies that the Bible is the ultimate authority for understanding the Christian faith in terms of belief and practice. Every other authority -- spiritual leaders, doctrinal declarations, church tradition and liturgy -- must be subordinate to the Bible. But Christianity, while not openly denying this principle, is by practice setting it aside systematically today. And this sometimes while thunderously proclaiming its commitment to scripture! Substitute authorities are taking its place and spelling disaster for a vital Christian faith.²

My objective with this study is to stand against this flow inside Christianity. By the presentation of interpretive skills using translations, I want to enable the Bible student without skills in using ancient Hebrew and Greek to recover a large part of the meaning that is lost in the translation process.

5.1 The Idea of Translating the Scriptures

First, a clear understanding of the concept of 'translation' is necessary.³ In English, the term in this context means "a rendering from one language into another; also, the product of such a rendering."⁴ Implicit in this definition is the concept of carrying an idea or set of ideas from one language (=source language) to another language (=receptor language). But as any bilingual person readily understands doing such carries with it huge challenges. Every verbally expressed idea or written idea is embedded inside a particular language, which itself is largely a cultural mirror reflecting the shaping of those ideas by the culture in which the languages exist. Thus the act of translating an idea means lifting the idea out of its beginning cultural setting and depositing it in the new cultural setting of the receptor language. And doing this without changing the meaning of the idea! How to best do this has been debated since the classical Greek philosophers of the fourth century BCE. At times over the centuries, it has often been felt that such was impossible to do successfully. And thus if one wanted to study some literature written in another language -- either ancient or contemporary -- he must learn the language (and culture) of that

²One of the most subtle ways this is happening is, ironically, by declaring one particular translation, e.g., the King James Version, to be the only inspired, infallible Word of God. As a PhD dissertation years ago at the University of Iowa exposed very clearly, not even the content of the KJV stands as authoritative inside this movement in the US. Instead, a set of theologically oriented words found in the KJV functions as code terms. Thus when these words are read, terms like salvation, redemption etc., the meaning that is understood is not usually the natural meaning of either the English word or that of the biblical language word behind the English word. Rather an already memorized doctrinal system that has been associated with these words found in the KJV text is the understood meaning. Thus the passionate resistance to any other translation stems out of the fact that no other translation, not even the New King James Version, adequately contains the right code words to trigger the 'understanding' of the Bible. What is the actual authority is not even the KJV itself, but the memorized doctrinal system attached to certain words in the KJV. Normally this doctrinal system has been instilled into the minds of the church members by the pastor of the church.

³The **Spanish** equivalent to 'translation' is either *traslación* or more so *traducción*, defined as "Traslación, la acción de transportar, transferir, trasladar o mudar de un paraje a otro; traslación de un obispo, la acción de mudarle de un obispado a otro. 2. Traducción, versión, traslación, la acción de traducir de un idioma a otro." ["Traducción," Spanish Dictionary]. In **German** the English word 'translation' comes across as *Übersetzung*. This noun is derived from the verb *übersetzen*, literally meaning to 'set over.' The official definition for languages is "einen Text schriftlich oder mündlich in eine andere Sprache übertragen."["übersetzen," DWDS.de] In **French** 'translation' is *traduction*. It means "1 action de traduire, de traduire, de transposer dans une autre langue; 2 le texte ou l'ouvrage ainsi traduit." ["traduction," dictionnaire.Reverso.net]

⁴"Translation," Merriam-Webster online dictionary. A helpful introduction to the general idea of 'translation' is "Translation," wikipedia.org.

literature. Although this remains the ideal even to our day, it is also out of reach for most people. And thus translations enable them to gain at least a core understanding of literature written in languages different from their own.

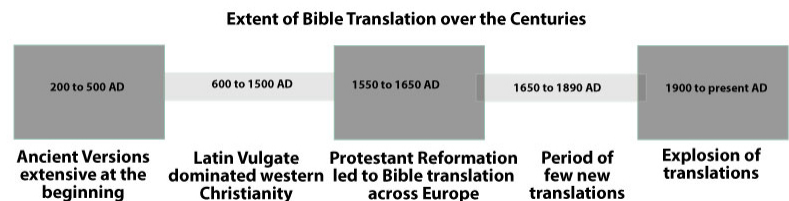
Second, out of this general understanding of translation next comes that of Bible translation. The procedures and processes are identical. But the difference is that what is being translated is sacred scripture. On one extreme is the Islamic attitude that the sacred words are impossible to be translated. Thus although translations of the Qur'an are made, they cease to be divine words in the minds of Muslims when in translation. Interestingly, not too far from this way of thinking is the KJV Only mindset which has functionally done something similar with the words of one English translation.

The vast majority of Christians readily accept and use translations of the Christian Bible as their "Bible." Typically, most will have a favorite translation which they prefer. Usually, this is due not to careful analysis of the merits of a range of possible translations, but rather to an association of their translation to some special event such as their conversion, or to some influential Christian leader in their lives.

What is important to remember is the massive availability of printed (and now electronic) translations of scripture to the vast majority of the Christian world. This has been true barely a century. Prior to 1900 individual owning of a copy of the Bible was limited. A family might have a Family Bible, but a personal copy for each family member would have been highly uncommon. Prior to the 1800s the possession of copies of scripture were much more limited. Sometimes only the church would have a Bible for use in gatherings. The invention of the printing press in the 1400s made the possessing of copies of scripture massively greater than ever before, but the distribution of copies remained somewhat limited. This in part, due to cost. In part due to major segments of the population being illiterate. Prior to the 1400s, typically only the local church would have a copy of the Bible. Often it would be available during the week days for individuals to come and read it, while it was chained to something in order to prevent it being stolen. In western Christianity this Bible always was the Latin Vulgate, since this was all that was used in church etc.

5.2 History of Bible Translation⁵

The history of Bible translation moves from being fairly extensive in the first five or six centuries to almost dying from the middle ages to the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s, and then exploding for about a century afterwards, then coming largely to a halt in the 1700s and 1800s to exploding again beginning in the late 1800s.



5.2.1 Bible Translation up to the Reformation

When the Septuagint became the functional Bible of first century Christians, the universal use of Koine Greek created little incentive for translating it into other more localized languages where Christianity was planted during the second half of the first century. This *lingua franka* of Koine Greek also led to the documents of the New Testament being written in Koine Greek as well, although the first century form of Koine was different than the very early form of Koine Greek represented in the Septuagint.⁶

But by the 300s a variety of very inferior quality translations of both the LXX and documents of the NT began appearing in Old Latin, the very beginning attempts at translation. Quite a number of fragmented documents reflecting this Latin approach to translation are still in existence. It was both the uneven quality of translation and the variations in translation that prompted Pope Damasus I in 382 to commission Jerome to make a revision of these translations, which he accomplished from 382 to 405 AD. Over time this translation was done in careful comparison of the Old Latin, but also was largely based on the available manuscripts of the Greek Septuagint and Greek manuscripts of the NT documents. Interestingly Jerome also published a translation of the Hebrew

⁵For a more detailed study of this history, see sessions 15 and 16 of my "The Origin of the Bible" in the Bible Study Series section of cranfordville.com.

⁶Greek students in their study of Koine Greek find a dramatic encounter with this difference when they attempt to translate the longer OT citations in the NT. These are from the Septuagint and are written in the much earlier form of Koine Greek, which tends to be much harder than the Koine of the NT.

text of the OT scriptures independently of his use of the Septuagint in 405. This much superior Latin translation was rapidly adopted across the Latin speaking churches of the Roman empire, and came to be called the Latin Vulgate.

But Christianity elsewhere continued using Greek during most of this period and at least by the fourth or fifth centuries began translating the Christian Bible into regional languages. In Egypt the Coptic language was used beginning as early as 200 AD but flourishing a couple of centuries later. In the middle east just beyond the boundaries of the Roman empire, a form of classical Syriac called the Peshitta was translated beginning with the OT in the second century and the NT following. This translation became the standard translation for Syriac speaking Christians by the fifth century. And the Peshitta remains the official Bible of the Syrian Orthodox Christian Church still today. Additionally ancient versions in ancient Armenian, Georgian, and Ethiopic surface in the later centuries of this early period.

In western Christianity, however, the publication of the Latin Vulgate in 405 AD signaled a rapid reduction in Bible translation. The Vulgate quickly became the universally used scripture and would survive the downfall of the Roman empire in the eighth century AD to become the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent in the second half of the 1500s. This action came largely in response to the proliferation of Bible translations by the Protestants into the various European languages.

Although Wycliffe had attempted to promote Bible translation into middle English a couple of centuries before, the resistance of the Catholic Church succeeded in crushing these efforts until the work of Martin Luther in the early 1500s. With conditions ripe for Luther to break away from the Roman Catholic Church and to lead most of German speaking central Europe with him, he utilized every available tool for protesting the abuses of the Catholic Church of his day.

One of the most important tools for getting his ideas across was his translation of the Bible into middle German which was the every day language of the people of Central Europe.⁷ Although not the very first German translation,⁸ Luther utilized the printing press for mass distribution of his translation so that it reached a wide audience across central Europe.⁹ The impact of Luther's work was substantial. Not only did it help promote his religious reform movement, it's influence ultimately reshaped the German language.¹⁰ Additionally, it opened the door for other European translations into the various languages. He succeeded where



⁷“To help him in translating into contemporary German, Luther would make forays into nearby towns and markets to listen to people speaking. He wanted to ensure their comprehension by translating as closely as possible to their contemporary language usage.” [“Luther Bible,” wikipedia.org]

⁸“The earliest German translations consist of glosses of the Lord’s Prayer; the first partial translation was a version of the Gospel of Matthew (ca. 800, Monsee-Wiener Fragments), followed by the Old High German Harmony of the Gospels of Tatian (Fulda, 9th cent.), culminating in learned commentary-translations in the 14th century, still focused on biblical poetry and mostly based on the Latin Vg. Before the Reformation, 14 mostly anonymous versions were published in High German and 4 in Low German.” [Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley, vol. 1, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 1999-2003), 243-44.]

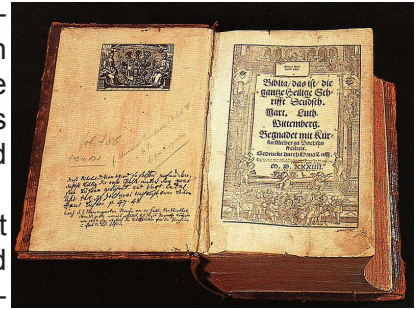
⁹“Martin → Luther’s translation (NT 1522, Bible 1534) inaugurated a new era of translation, using the original languages for the whole Bible (for the NT a Strasbourg edition of the Greek of → Erasmus, for the OT the 1494 Brescia edition of the Hebrew) and giving priority to the comprehension of the reader. Constantly revising his work and seeking the counsel of others (e.g., P. → Melancthon and J. Bugenhagen), Luther forged a German style that contributed profoundly to the formation of the written language. The results may be seen in the first revision of 1541 and then in the final editions of 1545 and 1546.” [Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley, vol. 1, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 1999-2003), 244.]

¹⁰“During his stay in the Wartburg, Luther began work on what proved to be one of his foremost achievements—the translation of the New Testament into the German vernacular. This task was an obvious ramification of his insistence that the Bible alone is the source of Christian truth and his related belief that everyone is capable of understanding the biblical message. Luther’s translation profoundly affected the development of the written German language. The precedent he set was followed by other scholars, whose work made the Bible widely available in the vernacular and contributed significantly to the emergence of national languages.” [*Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s. v. “Martin Luther”, accessed November 16, 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/351950/Martin-Luther/59848/Diet-of-Worms>.]

other before him had failed in large part because the political atmosphere of Europe was ripe for rebellion against the heavy handed domination of the Roman Catholic Church. On the negative side, although Luther's work spurred Bible translation in other European languages, it quickly replaced the Latin Vulgate as the universal Bible for German speaking Protestant Europe so that revisions and updates of it would not be seriously undertaken until the nineteenth century.¹¹

Of primary interest to us is the impact on the English speaking world that Luther's work had.¹² Small portions of the Bible had been previously translated either into Old English or Middle English by Catholic priests centuries before Luther.¹³ Of these the more significant work was that of John Wycliffe in the 1400s.

But with the floodgate now opening because of Luther, the era of the English Bible begins with the work of William **Tyndale** (1492-1536).¹⁴ Tyndale fled to Germany in order to translate the Bible. In 1525 his first draft



¹¹“The Luther Bible became a kind of *textus receptus* for German Lutheranism throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. Only toward the end of the 17th century was revision ventured (by J. Dieckmann and J. Pretten). In the 18th century → Pietism undertook a conservative revision (J. R. Hedinger 1704) and even retranslation, partly on theological and devotional grounds (N. L. von → Zinzendorf 1739, the Berleburg Bible 1726–42), partly on textual grounds (J. A. Bengel 1753).

“New versions in the 19th and 20th centuries followed the originals more accurately (W. De Wette 1809–14, E. Kautzsch 1888–94, C. H. von Weizsäcker 1875, H. Menge 1926), sought a more faithful rendering of what was regarded as the verbally inspired text (Elberfeld Bible 1871, NT rev. 1974, OT 1985), or aimed at greater intelligibility for readers (F. Pfäfflin 1939; A. Schlatter 1954; J. Zink, NT 1965, OT selection 1967; U. Wilckens 1970). *Die Gute Nachricht* (NT 1967, OT 1983, rev. ed. 1997) offered a rendering in everyday speech. Roman Catholics also attempted many new translations in the 19th and 20th centuries (J. F. von Allioli 1837; J. Ecker 1903; O. Karrer, NT 1950; Pattloch Bible 1956; Herder Bible 1965), finally resolving this multiplicity of translations by its union version *Einheitsübersetzung* (NT 1979, Bible 1980).”

[Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley, vol. 1, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 1999-2003), 244.]

¹²“Martin Luther is assuredly one of the most influential figures in Western civilization during the last millennium. He was the catalyst for the division of Western Christendom into several churches, but he also left a host of cultural legacies, such as the emphasis on vernacular language. He was primarily a theologian, and there is a great wealth of insights in his writings, which in their definitive scholarly edition (the so-called Weimar Edition) comprise more than 100 folio volumes. But he was not a systematic theological thinker. Much like St. Augustine in late antiquity, Luther was what might be called a polemical theologian. Most of his writings —such as *Bondage of the Will* against Erasmus and *That These Words ‘This Is My Body’ Still Stand Against all Enthusiasts against Zwingli*—were forged in the heat of controversy and were inescapably given to one-sided pronouncements, which are not easy to reconcile with positions he took in other writings. It is, therefore, not easy to find agreement on the elements of Luther's theology.

“Moreover, the assessment of Luther's theological significance was for centuries altogether dependent on the ecclesiastical orientation of the critic. Protestant scholars viewed him as the most stunning exponent of the authentic Christian faith since the time of the Apostles, while Catholics viewed him as the epitome of theological ignorance and personal immorality. These embarrassingly partisan perspectives have changed in recent decades, and a less confessionally oriented picture of Luther has emerged.”

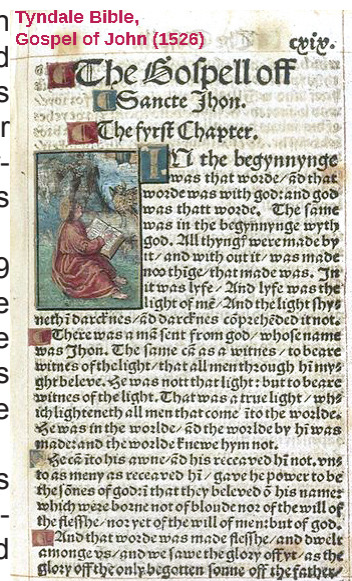
[*Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “Martin Luther”, accessed November 16, 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/351950/Martin-Luther/59848/Diet-of-Worms>.]

¹³For a helpful survey prior to 1500 AD, see “Old English Bible Translations,” wikipedia.org and “Middle English Bible translations,” wikipedia.org.

¹⁴“Early Modern English Bible translations are those translations of the Bible which were made between about 1500 and 1800, the period of Early Modern English. This was the first major period of Bible translation into the English language. It began with the dramatic introduction of the Tyndale Bible. The early 16th century Tyndale Bible differs from the others since Tyndale used the Greek and Hebrew texts of the New Testament (NT) and Old Testament (OT) in addition to Jerome's Latin translation. Tyndale is also unique in that he was the first of the Middle English translators to use the printing press to help distribute several thousand copies of this translation throughout England. It included the first ‘authorised version’, known as the Great Bible (1539); the Geneva Bible (1560), notable for being the first Bible divided into verses, and the Bishop's Bible (1568), which was an attempt by Elizabeth I to create a new authorised version. It also included the Douay-Rheims Bible (NT in 1582, OT during 1609-1610), and the landmark Authorized King James Version of 1611.

“The Douay-Rheims Bible was the first complete Roman Catholic Bible in English. It is called Douay-Rheims because the New Testament portion was first completed in Rheims, France, in 1582, followed by the Old Testament, finished in 1609-1610 in Douay (or Douai), France. In this version, the 14 books of the Old Testament Apocrypha are mingled with the other books, rather than kept separate in an appendix.”

of the New Testament was published in Cologne but the final draft was released in 1526 at Worms where he fled because of persecution. He was subsequently captured and executed by the authorities before completing work on the Old Testament. His work was publicly condemned by the Roman Catholic Church in England out of fear of leading to uprisings against the church in England.¹⁵ But his work would have enormous impact in that it became the primary basis for subsequent English translations for the next century through the King James Version in 1611.



Coming out of Tyndale's work in rapid succession was the **Great Bible** in 1539 barely a decade after Tyndale's translation, officially authorized by Henry VIII for the newly form Church of England. It was prepared by Miles Coverdale working under the commissioning of Sir Thomas Cromwell, then secretary to the king. Coverdale was heavily dependent on Tyndale's work, although the more controversial elements were removed, e.g., 'elder' was returned to 'priest,' 'repent' returned to 'do penance.'

With the rise of the Puritans, the **Geneva Bible** was published in 1560.¹⁶ It was produced by English protestants who fled to Geneva, Switzerland from the persecution of Queen Mary I in England. It became the most popular and widely distributed English Bible until long after the KJV was released in 1611. Versification¹⁷ to the existing chapter divisions was included for the first time allowing for quick referencing of a passage of scripture. It contained extensive study notes reflecting the influence of John Calvin on these English refugees living in Switzerland. Thus it stands as the first study Bible ever to be published. A team of translators worked on it including Miles Coverdale and a few others who produced the authorized Great Bible previously. The heavy influence of Tyndale on the translation continued.



In 1568, Queen Elizabeth I authorized a revision of the Great Bible that came to be called the **Bishop's Bible**. It was in part intended to discourage the use of the Geneva Bible with its "Puritan doctrine" in the study notes. But even with substantial revisions in 1572, it remained unpopular even among the lower levels of clergy in the Church of English. The translation was produced by

[“English translations of the Bible,” wikipedia.org]

¹⁵“Tyndale’s translations were condemned in England, where his work was banned and copies burned.[14] [15] Catholic officials, prominently Thomas More,[16] charged that he had purposely mistranslated the ancient texts in order to promote anti-clericalism and heretical views,[17] In particular they cited the terms ‘church,’ ‘priest,’ ‘do penance’ and ‘charity,’ which became in the Tyndale translation ‘congregation,’ ‘senior’ (changed to ‘elder’ in the revised edition of 1534), ‘repent’ and ‘love,’ challenging key doctrines of the Roman Church. Betrayed to church officials in 1536, he was defrocked in an elaborate public ceremony and turned over to the civil authorities to be strangled to death and burned at the stake. His last words are said to have been, ‘Lord, open the eyes of the king of England!’” [“Tyndale Bible,” wikipedia.org]

¹⁶“The Geneva Bible is one of the most historically significant translations of the Bible into the English language, preceding the King James translation by 51 years. It was the primary Bible of 16th century Protestantism and was the Bible used by William Shakespeare, Oliver Cromwell, John Milton, John Knox, John Donne, and John Bunyan, author of Pilgrim’s Progress. It was one of the Bibles taken to America on the Mayflower, it was used by many English Dissenters, and it was still respected by Oliver Cromwell’s soldiers at the time of the English Civil War.

“This version of the Holy Bible is significant because, for the very first time, a mechanically printed, mass-produced Bible was made available directly to the general public which came with a variety of scriptural study guides and aids (collectively called an apparatus), which included verse citations which allow the reader to cross-reference one verse with numerous relevant verses in the rest of the Bible, introductions to each book of the Bible which acted to summarize all of the material that each book would cover, maps, tables, woodcut illustrations, indexes, as well as other included features — all of which would eventually lead to the reputation of the Geneva Bible as history’s very first study Bible.”

[“Geneva Bible,” wikipedia.org]

¹⁷The verse markings were originally produced by Stephanus (= Robert Etienne) of Paris that originally appeared in 1551 with the fourth edition of his Greek text of the New Testament. The OT markings were added shortly afterwards. For a helpful history of this see “Chapters and verses of the Bible,” wikipedia.org.

various individuals and the quality of the translation work is very uneven. Where controversy over the translation erupted, as with the books of the OT Apocrypha, the translation of the Great Bible was largely adopted in tact. Interestingly, the Bishop's Bible was the basis for the King James Version, which was intended by King James I to be a revision of the Bishop's Bible. Again the early work of Tyndale remained a heavy influence on the translation.

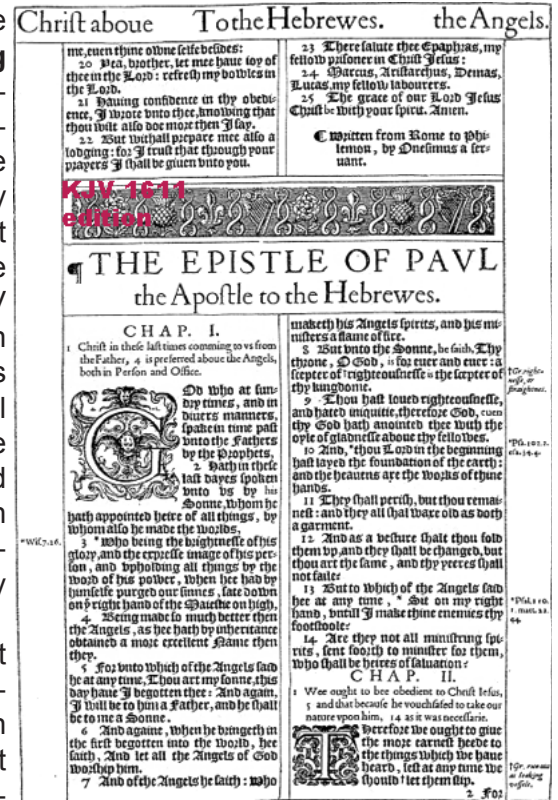
The third English translation to be officially authorized by the English king for official use in the Church of England was the **King James Version**, following in the path of the Great Bible and the Bishop's Bible. The translation was born in controversy because of the desire of the leadership of the Church of England to reduce the influence of the Geneva Bible with its Puritan doctrinal emphasis. Created by order of King James I of England in 1604 the translators worked on it until the beginning publications in 1611.¹⁸ These were done by three separate printers and consequently three distinct versions of the KJV made their beginning appearance at the same time in 1611.¹⁹ Known for the first thirty to fifty years popularly as "The Devil's Bible" this authorized version was slow to catch on simply because the general public along with local Church of England leaders identified it with the English king who was not well liked. The language of the KJV shifted somewhat to the London dialect of English which was associated with the ruling elite of the British government. It contains numerous Latinisms (e.g., words ending in -tion) and technical terms not commonly used in every day English of that time.

The translation approach, contrary in large measure to what is stated in the Preface (these were notorious for misleading statements in the first two to three hundred years of Bible printing), was an attempt to update and correct the inferior work of the Bishop's Bible. It continued much of the tradition of the English Bible pattern of expression of the English wording from Tyndale. Consultation with the available Greek and Hebrew texts was made minimally, but far more important was the established idea expression of the Latin Vulgate. The places where significant changes from the Vulgate were made came in areas seemingly advocating the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on penance, the role of priests etc., which Tyndale had initially changed nearly a century before. The Geneva Bible had so cemented these 'corrections' into the minds of English Christians so that no translation deviating significantly from them would be tolerated. Gradually through the 1700s, the KJV supplanted the Latin Vulgate as the Bible of English speaking Christianity. The explosion of inferior printed editions of this Bible led to efforts by the 1770s to try to clean up the KJV from all the massive errors that were in circulation. The Oxford University edition that began appearing in 1769 gradually replaced most all of the other versions of the KJV. Not

¹⁸The general agreement and translation guidelines were worked out between the king and those invited to participate in the translation project at the Hampton Court Conference held in January of 1604. This meeting included the translation project only as one of the side issues of the meeting. Basically the meeting was to try to settle the quarreling among the leaders of the church, and especially with the Puritan leaders of that time.

¹⁹The print industry that had rapidly developed in the European continent was slow to come to England. William Caxton introduced print publication to England around 1474. Not a printer by trade, it was more a past time for him. All across Europe the competition to print books was fierce and this led to enormous carelessness in doing editorial proofing. In reality, proofing was seldom done before the printing began. The rush to be first and to make the most money drove printers in the 1400s through the 1800s to produce mistake ridden publications. But the general public seemed to care little about such matters, allowing the publishers to get away with their sloppy work.

"The book trade during this early period showed enormous vitality and variety. Competition was fierce and unscrupulous. A printer of Parma in 1473, apologizing for careless work, explained that others were bringing out the same text, and so he had to rush it through the press 'more quickly than asparagus could be cooked.' Though most of the early firms were small printer-publishers, many different arrangements were made and at least one businessman, Johann Rynmann of Augsburg, published nearly 200 books but printed none of them. Publishing companies, which both financed and guided the printing enterprise, were also tried, as at Milan in 1472 and at Perugia in 1475. Publishers were not slow to promote their books." [Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. "history of publishing", accessed November 16, 2012, [http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/482597/history-of-publishing/28620/The-book-trade.](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/482597/history-of-publishing/28620/The-book-trade)]



until the 1870s was there another attempt to update this translation. By then the discovery of a massive number of ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament were calling into serious question the accuracy of the KJV with its dependency on both the Vulgate and the Textus Receptus. The British Revised Authorized Version was released beginning in 1881 and was officially adopted for use in the Church of England in 1899.

The King James Version signals the end of an era that began primarily with the work of William Tyndale in the early 1500s. From the late 1600s through the 1800s this translation was the dominate Bible among Protestants in the English speaking world. And that domination extended into the 1900s in North America, despite the preference for the Geneva Bible during the colonial era of the US.

5.2.2 Modern Era of Bible Translation

The modern era of Bible translation both for the English Bible, as well as for other European languages, begins in earnest with the 1800s. It is closely connected to other movements arising in this same period of time. The Modern Missions Movement got underway with significantly increasing impact. This in turn generated massive need for Bible translations for doing missionary work. Out of this came in part the formation of Bible Societies for promoting the translation of the Bible into various languages. Also during this same period saw the emergence of the Biblical Archaeology movement which played an important role in the discovery of exploding numbers of ancient manuscripts of the Greek New Testament etc. From this came the discipline of Textual Criticism as the proper way to do comparative studies of this growing mass of documents containing parts or all of the text of the Christian Bible in ancient Greek and related languages of the first eight to ten centuries of the Christian era.

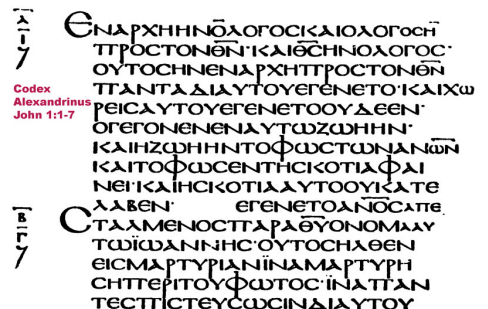
All of these movements are inner connected and to some degree feed off one another. The full impact of these movements comes in the later decades of the 1800s. The Western hemisphere would not play much of a role during the 1800s, since it was largely pre-occupied with the American Civil War and recovery from the devastating effects of that on both society and the economy. South America remained overwhelmingly Roman Catholic and thus outside the sphere of these largely Protestant oriented movements in Europe.

For Bible translation a combination of the proliferation of mistake ridden print copies of the King James Version with the discovery of growing numbers of ancient Greek texts calling into question the accuracy of this translation with the original language text led efforts to revise and 'correct' the KJV with translations based on more accurate Greek texts of the New Testament.

We will focus mainly on the English Bible in this presentation, although the history of the German Bible is available at cranfordville.com (See session 17 of *The Origin of the Bible*).²⁰

5.2.2.1 Beginning Patterns through the 1800s

Although its existence had been known for many years,²¹ during the early 1800s serious study of Codex Alexandrinus containing most of the Septuagint and all of the New Testament began. This copy coming out of the 400s would become one of the three most important ancient copies of the Greek New Testament to be discovered (Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus are the other two about a century older²²). Growing awareness



²⁰For some overview help with the Spanish Bible see “Bible translations into Spanish,” wikipedia.org. Forthcoming will be a session 18 on *The Origin of the Bible* tracing out in greater detail the history of Spanish Bible translations, with some critique of each.

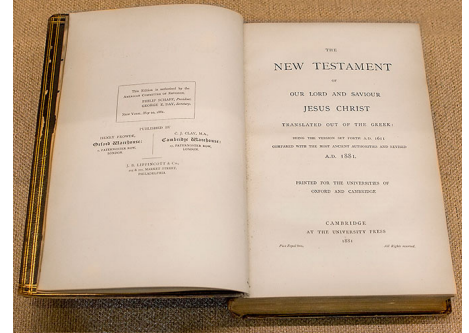
²¹“Codex Alexandrinus was sent as a gift to James I of England by the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople, Cyril Lucar, although the ms did not actually arrive until after the succession of Charles I in 1627. The British Museum became the repository of the codex in 1757 and designated it Royal I.D. V–VIII (Gregory-Aland A). Cyril Lucar had been Patriarch of Alexandria before coming to Constantinople, and it is believed that he brought the ms with him from Egypt (Finegan 1974: 150). A 13th or 14th century note (in Arabic) on the first page of Genesis maintains that the ms belonged to the Patriarchal library in Cairo.” [Joel C. Slayton, “Codex: Codex Alexandrinus” In vol. 1, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1069.]

²²“The main uncials and some significant minuscules that were discovered and investigated in the 19th century changed the course of the textual criticism and led the way to better manuscript evidence and methods of dealing with it. This has continued into the 20th century. The main new manuscript witnesses are designated \aleph or S, B, W, and Θ .

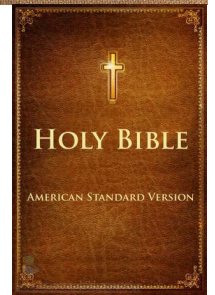
“A. \aleph or S, Codex Sinaiticus, was discovered in 1859 by Tischendorf at the Monastery of St. Catherine at the foot of Mt. Sinai (hence, Sinaiticus) after a partial discovery of 43 leaves of a 4th-century biblical codex there in 1844. Though some of the Old Testament

of different wording in this manuscript from the wording of the Textus Receptus caused increased concern about the Textus Receptus, since it was based on thirteenth century manuscripts and Alexandrinus was a fifth century manuscript. These concerns existed only in the universities where scholars were working. But the awareness of these inconsistencies only grew as a growing number of much earlier manuscripts significantly closer in time to the original writings were discovered and the pattern of inconsistencies matched those of Codex Alexandrinus. When coupled with the growing mess of large numbers of differing versions of the King James Bible that were being circulated by extremely careless methods of printing with almost no proofing of texts prior to printing, the calls for a revision of the King James Bible to correct these deficiencies grew louder.

This resulted in the English Revised Version being commissioned in 1870. The NT portion was published in 1881, the OT in 1885 and the Apocrypha in 1894. Some fifty British scholars across several denominations in the UK were involved in the project. The intention was to update the language of the KJV to more contemporary British English, and to base the translation on the better understanding of the original language texts coming out of the work of scholars in the field of Textual Criticism. Some 30,000 changes just with the text of the NT were made. Although used extensively the excessively literal translation approach created a rather flat, mechanistic style of English expression.



Although American scholars were invited to make suggestions, none were accepted. This led to intense dissatisfaction with the project on the other side of the Atlantic, and thus the formation of a translation team to create a revision of the KJV using the now emerging American English that was becoming distinct from British English. In 1901, the American Standard Version was published to become widely used in the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century especially in seminaries and universities.²³ Philip Schaff served as chair of a thirty member translation team from a large spectrum of denominations in the US. But it did not displace the dominance of the KJV among American Protestants.²⁴ It suffered from the same excessive



is missing, a whole 4th-century New Testament is preserved, with the Letter of Barnabas and most of the Shepherd of Hermas at the end. There were probably three hands and several later correctors. Tischendorf convinced the monks that giving the precious manuscript to Tsar Alexander II of Russia would grant them needed protection of their abbey and the Greek Church. Tischendorf subsequently published \aleph (S) at Leipzig and then presented it to the Tsar. The manuscript remained in Leningrad until 1933, during which time the Oxford University Press in 1911 published a facsimile of the New Testament from photographs of the manuscript taken by Kirsopp Lake, an English biblical scholar. The manuscript was sold in 1933 by the Soviet regime to the British Museum for £100,000. The text type of \aleph is in the Alexandrian group, although it has some Western readings. Later corrections representing attempts to alter the text to a different standard probably were made about the 6th or 7th century at Caesarea.

“B, Codex Vaticanus, a biblical manuscript of the mid-4th century in the Vatican Library since before 1475, appeared in photographic facsimile in 1889–90 and 1904. The New Testament lacks Hebrews from chapter 9, verse 14, on the Pastorals, Philemon, and Revelation. Because B has no ornamentation, some scholars think it slightly older than \aleph . Others, however, believe that both B and \aleph , having predominantly Alexandrian texts, may have been produced at the same time when Constantine ordered 50 copies of the Scriptures. As an early representation of the Alexandrian text, B is invaluable as a most trustworthy ancient Greek text.”

[*Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “biblical literature”, accessed November 17, 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EB-checked/topic/64496/biblical-literature/73401/Uncials.>]

²³“Accordingly, in 1901, the American committee issued the American Standard Version of the Bible. This was a newly edited form of the Revised Version of 1881 and 1885, incorporating about six hundred readings and renderings preferred by the Americans. It was called the ‘Standard’ edition because it had to compete with at least three editions that had been mechanically put together by others and then usurped the name of ‘American Version’ or ‘American Revised Bible.’ Understandably, the American Standard Version was copyrighted to insure purity of text.” [Bruce Manning Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 103.]

²⁴“The ASV has been used for many years by the Jehovah’s Witnesses. The reasons for their choosing of the ASV were twofold: its usage of ‘Jehovah’ as the Divine Name, which was congruent with their doctrine, and they derived their name from Isaiah 43.10, 12, both of which contain the phrase, ‘Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah.’ Also, there was a perception that the ASV had improved the translation of some verses in the King James Version, and in other places it reduced the verses that they found to be erroneously translated in the KJV to mere footnotes, removed from the main text altogether.⁴

“Jehovah’s Witnesses’ publishing organization, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, had printed its own edition of the King James Version since 1926, but did not obtain the rights to print ASV until 1944. From 1944 to 1992, they printed

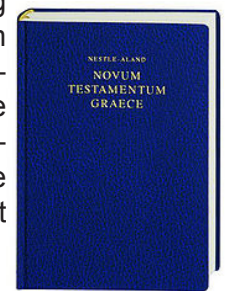
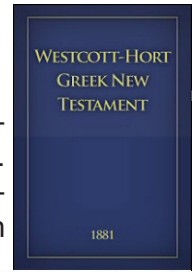
literalism of its British counter part, which limited its popularity.²⁵

5.2.2.2 Last Two Centuries of Bible Translation

At the beginning of the 1900s translating the Bible was becoming very popular both in Europe and in North America. The trend was to move toward 'modern-speech' versions of the Bible. Among the more influential of the early ones are *The Twentieth Century New Testament*, Weymouth's *New Testament in Modern Speech*, Moffatt's *A New Translation of the Bible*, and Smith and Goodspeed's *The Bible: An American Translation*.²⁶

The work in ancient manuscript analysis by the turn of the century had produced the Westcott - Hort *The New Testament in the Original Greek*. This printed Greek text replaced the older and much outdated *Textus Receptus*, along with the early modern efforts beginning with Lachmann in 1831. The pioneering methods of manuscript analysis developed by these two British scholars laid the foundation for the continuing work still being done today over a century later. The descendants of this Greek text, the United Bible Societies *The Greek New Testament*, and the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*, are the two standardized printed Greek texts of the NT universally used today for modern translations.²⁷

The Bible translation trends emerging in the early twentieth century reflected a growing realization that the text of the Bible, especially that of the NT, was written in an every day form of ancient Greek rather than in the more formal styles used by the highly educated of the beginning Christian century. The reasoning went that since at least the NT and to a lesser extent the LXX Greek text of the OT were targeting common people in the language used, then translations should have a similar objective. Increasingly the form of English used in the KJV, and the very wooden language of the ERV and the ASV, made understanding the Bible more difficult



and distributed over a million copies of the ASV. By the 1960s, the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, made by members of their group and the rights to which they controlled, had largely replaced ASV as the Bible used most by Witnesses.⁵ Jehovah's Witnesses publications have continued to quote ASV renderings of Scripture, and have noted, 'it would be good to have in your personal library the Authorized Version and the American Standard Version'.⁶'

[“American Standard Version,” wikipedia.org]

²⁵“The fate of the Revised Version in Great Britain was disappointing. Complaints about its English style began to be made as soon as it appeared. Charles Hadden Spurgeon, the great English preacher at the close of the nineteenth century, tersely remarked that the Revised New Testament was ‘strong in Greek, weak in English.’ The revisers were often woodenly literal, inverting the natural order of words in English in order to represent the Greek order, and they carried the translation of the article and of the tenses beyond their legitimate limits. An example of the rather tortuous order is Luke 9:17, ‘And they did eat, and were all filled; and there was taken up that which remained over to them of broken pieces, twelve baskets.’

“Although these criticisms apply as well to the American Standard Version, in the United States the work of the revisers was somewhat more widely adopted than in Great Britain.⁵ But in both countries the revision failed to supplant the King James Version in popular favor. Furthermore, proponents of other versions in a more modern idiom deprecated the revisers’ continued use of archaic speech.”

[Bruce Manning Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 104.]

²⁶Bruce Manning Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 106

²⁷“This Greek text [UBS 4th rev ed], established by an international and inter-confessional committee, is identical with that of the 26th and 27th editions of *Novum Testamentum Graece* by Nestle Aland except for some minor punctuation differences. The apparatus includes only those textual variants that involve significant differences in meaning for translators. For each variant, extensive manuscript evidence is cited, and an indication is given of the relative degree of certainty for each textual decision. A separate apparatus provides information on major differences in punctuation. The Introduction and section headings are in English. The appendices include: index of quotations (both in OT and NT order), index of allusions and verbal parallels, list of principal manuscripts and versions, and list of principal symbols and abbreviations. The text in this 4th edition is the same as in the 3rd edition (1983). However, the selection of passages for the apparatus has undergone considerable revision. The evaluations of all sets of variants cited in the apparatus have been reconsidered.” [“The Greek New Testament,” United Bible Societies online]

than easier.²⁸

The positive impact of the influence of the four above mentioned modern English translations, along with a large number of lesser similar translations, was to provide tools for Bible readers, sometimes with little background in church life, to read and understand the essence of what the scripture was saying. One of the weaknesses that appeared, however, is that most of these translations were done by individuals. No matter how skilled in the field, a single translator is going to embed his own religious biases into his translation, which then will distract from the value of the translation. During the first half of the twentieth century the recognition grew that Bible translations would best be done by committees representing a wide spectrum of denominational viewpoints. Such would help prevent a 'sectarian Bible' representing a single denominational preference.

Added to this understanding was also the functional reality of the enormous cost in producing a translation and promoting its use on a widespread basis. This pushed Bible translation increasingly into the hands of Bible Societies, such as the American Bible Society,²⁹ who alone could raise the necessary funding for translation projects.³⁰ Additionally, the Bible societies were best equipped to put together a inter-denominational translation team that would be representative of the various Christian groups participating in the project. In the US most of these Bible societies work closely with the National Council of Churches for coordination of the projects.



AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY
Sharing God's Word with the World

The second half of the twentieth century is somewhat bracketed by the Revised Standard Version (1952) and the New Revised Standard Version translations (1989).³¹ An enormous number of English language translations have been released during that period.³² These publications represent the growing diversity of translation methods emerging during this period.³³ And they increasingly represent particular theological biases in doing Bible translation. Additionally, the expansion of the role of English translations beyond the US and the UK readers is reflected in the diversity. The NRSV coming at the end of the century represents another pioneering effort in being the first official English translation to be done using the newly emerging Global English, rather than either British or American English.



GlobalEnglish™

To be clear, the advances made during the past century have come often in the midst of controversy. Just about every aspect of Bible translation has been debated vigorously during this period of time. These include which Greek text of the NT to use; whether or not to include the Septuagint, and especially the Vulgate, in the translation of the OT; should the OT Apocrypha be included, and if so, how to include it; what kind of translation

²⁸“The four versions described in this chapter inaugurated the era of modern-speech Bibles in the twentieth century. Through them the English-reading public became accustomed to having the Scriptures in modern English. In addition, each of these versions has an intrinsic merit of its own and is still being used. They are all noteworthy also because of the contribution they made to the Revised Standard Version (1946–52). Two of the translators, Goodspeed and Moffatt, were members of the New Testament committee for the RSV, while Leroy Waterman was on the Old Testament committee. James Moffatt served as secretary for both committees until his death in 1944.” [Bruce Manning Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 115-16.]

²⁹“American Bible Society (ABS), international agency under lay control, formed in New York in 1816 as a union of 28 local Bible societies ‘to encourage the wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures throughout the world, without note or comment, through translation, publication, distribution, and stimulation of use.’ Early in its history it set as its goal the placing of a Bible in every home, including those on the frontier. The ABS is supported by more than 80 Protestant denominations. In 1946 the ABS helped to form the United Bible Societies, which has offices and affiliates in more than 140 countries.” [*Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “American Bible Society (ABS)”, accessed November 17, 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/19347/American-Bible-Society-ABS>.]

³⁰Since the 1950s most of the major translations have cost at least one million US dollars to produce and a few such as the NIV -- the most expensive translation project ever undertaken -- cost over ten million dollars.

³¹A helpful and extensive web site on Bible translation is “Bible Research: Internet Resources for Students of Scripture,” bible-researcher.org, by Michael Marlowe.

³²A helpful survey of this period is available online in the article “Modern English Bible translations,” wikipedia.org.

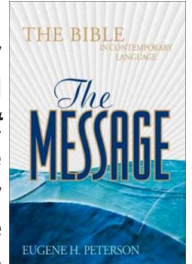
³³One work in progress is my “List of Translations,” at cranfordville.com, that attempts to explain the background and orientation of the more significant English translations.

methodology is appropriate; should the translated text be formatted into paragraphs, and what is the best division of the paragraphs; whether an ecumenical oriented translation team is better or whether a more restricted team such as only evangelicals should be used; the role of and / or danger of study Bibles; the gender-neutral issue more recently -- to name only the major issues. Sometimes the discussions have been civil, but occasionally they have been bitterly argued back and forth.

5.2.2.2.1 Emerging Methods

In describing how Bible translation is done in today's world, a variety of perspectives comes into the picture.

One perspective on methodology is whether the translation is produced **by an individual or by a committee**. Not too many individual based translations are being produced today, simply because of the cost involved in producing a translation. Perhaps the most popular recent individual translation -- actually a paraphrase -- is Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The New Testament in Contemporary English*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1993. This highly interpretive paraphrase reflects an evangelical theological perspective and was never intended for serious Bible study by Peterson, despite being marketed as such by its publisher. Prior to Peterson's *The Message* came Ken Taylor's *The Living Bible* in 1971. As Taylor asserts in the preface, this is a highly interpretive paraphrase of the American Standard Version from 1901. Once more, Taylor comes out of a very conservative evangelical heritage and training. His work reflects this theological bias. On the British side, some popular individual translations include J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English*. London: G. Bles, 1958 and William Barclay, *The New Testament, A New Translation*. London and New York: Collins, 1969. Both represent interpretive paraphrases reflecting British Church of England perspectives. Numerous others appeared but seldom gained wide readership outside of a small denominational perspective as the targeted readers.



The vast majority of recent translations are coming as a project supported by a Bible society or occasionally some religious publisher. Whether such a committee based translation is of better quality or not depends entirely on how the committee is structured and who is supporting it. The most preferable approach is for a committee to represent a wide spectrum of Christian denominational perspective. Although far from perfect an ecumenical oriented translation represents the best approach. What Christianity does not need is a proliferation of 'sectarian' Bibles with each reflecting some particular theological agenda. The obvious example of this is *New World Translation* by the Jehovah's Witnesses. The NT portion was released in 1984 in order to make the NT conform to the doctrinal system of this group. But this fringe group is not alone in doing this kind of translation work. One questionable example is the so-called "Baptist Bible," *The Holman Christian Standard Bible*. Published by the Southern Baptist Convention publishing house, LifeWay Christian Resources, particularly as an in house copyrighted translation for use in SBC publications in order to avoid paying royalties to copy right owners of other translations. The preface carefully avoids being truthful about the financial reasons for the translation. The NT was first released in 2001, the entire Bible in 2004, and a revision in 2009. These kinds of translations, even though reasonably accurate, do not serve the larger Christian community well by promoting a scripture biased in favor of their particular theological belief system.



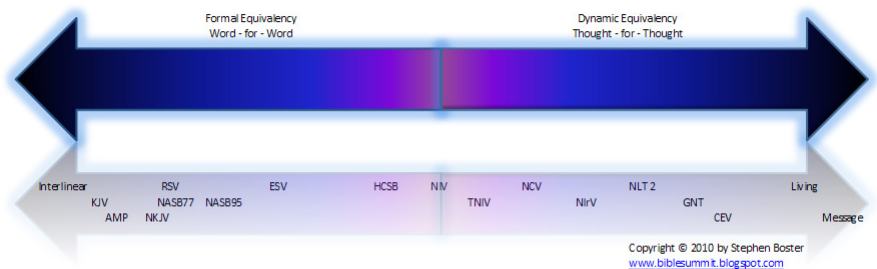
A second perspective regarding Bible translations comes from the adoption of a **particular translation methodology**. With the beginning of the twentieth century two distinct types of translation methodology began to emerge.³⁴ The dominant older pattern until the last century was some form of "formal equivalence" in which a word for word method that retained the syntactical form and word sequence of the source language was retained as much as possible. But in the twentieth century the realization that the Bible itself was written in every day language rather than a formal language style prompted the movement toward the 'modern speech' Bibles. The

³⁴For a helpful overview of general principles of translating from one language to another see "Translation," wikipedia.org. This article is more 'how it has been done over the centuries' rather than 'how it should be done.' For the latter see my "Translating the Text," cranfordville.com. This comes out of a unit on the theory and practice of modern Bible translation in Greek 202, the fourth semester Greek class I taught for many years.

For a more detailed discussion of Bible translation methods, see **Topic 5.1 Modern Translations** at cranfordville.com. Similar but with a slightly different emphasis is also my "**Topic 5.1.1. Structures for creating translations,**" cranfordville.com. Both of these studies were created for use in local churches, the first one at the First Baptist Church of Shelby, NC, and the second one at the International Baptist Church of Cologne, Germany.

most common label today will be the dynamic equivalence method.³⁵ The massively influential work of the Baptist minister, Eugene Nida, at the American Bible Society in the second half of the twentieth century has shaped the agenda and discussion of how to do Bible translation profoundly. He advanced the use of dynamic equivalence procedure in Bible translation tremendously. One of the by-products of his work was the *Good News for Modern Man* translation series. Robert Bratcher at the ABS developed this translation initially in response to a request for a highly simplified English translation to be used by missionaries working with people in Asia and Africa with little or no Christian background understanding. But its popularity exploded so that well over eighty million copies have been distributed world wide and parallel type translations have been generated for all European languages as well as several others.

The **formal equivalent method** is somewhat a word-for-word approach to translation. But the **dynamic equivalent method** is more a sense-for-sense approach. Both approaches seek 'equivalence' between the source text and the receptor text, that is, correct transfer of meaning. But the formal equivalent approach assumes that this can best be done by retaining the formal structure of



the source language in the receptor language expression. On the other hand, the dynamical equivalence method contends that idea expression is handed differently in each language. In order to best communicate the ideas in the source language text the translator must restructure them into the most natural expression of the receptor language.

One very important consequence to remember is that virtually no Bible translation is going to represent a pure expression of either of these basic methods. Instead, translations done especially over the past century will represent distinctive combinations of elements of both methods. Thus it becomes important for the Bible reader to pay attention to the preface in each translation that hopefully will set forth the translation guidelines followed by the translators.

For some examples of the difference of these approaches, note the following examples from 3 John 5-8:³⁶

GNT. 5 Ἀγαπητέ, πιστὸν ποιεῖς ὃ ἔαν ἐργάσῃ εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τοῦτο ξένους, 6 οἱ ἔμαρτύρησάν σου τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐνώπιον ἐκκλησίας, οὓς καλῶς ποιήσεις προπέμψας ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ· 7 ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐξῆλθον μηδὲν λαμβάνοντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνικῶν. 8 ἡμεῖς οὖν ὀφείλομεν ὑπολαμβάνειν τοὺς τοιούτους, ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ.

Extreme Formal Equivalent: 5 Beloved, faithful you are doing whatever you worked for the brothers and this for strangers, 6 who have witnessed about you love before a church, whom well you are doing having sent on worthy of God; 7 for in behalf of the name they went out nothing taking from the Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to assist such ones, in order fellow workers we might become in the truth.

Formal Equivalent: NASB. 5 Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; 6 and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. 7 For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. 8 Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

Mixture with FE dominant: RSV. 5 Beloved, it is a loyal thing you do when you render any service to the brethren, especially to strangers, 6 who have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey as befits God's service. 7 For they have set out for his sake and have accepted nothing from the heathen. 8 So we ought to support such men, that we may be fellow workers in the truth.

Mixture with DE dominant: NLT. 5 Dear friend, you are doing a good work for God when you take care of the traveling teachers who are passing through, even though they are strangers to you. 6 They have told the church here of your friendship and your loving deeds. You do well to send them on their way in a manner that pleases God. 7 For they are traveling for the Lord and accept nothing from those who are not Christians. 8 So we ourselves

³⁵For a more detailed comparison of these two approaches see "Dynamic and formal equivalence," wikipedia.org.

³⁶For a listing of a large number of English translations reflecting these translation methodologies, see my "English Translations," cranfordville.com. This list was the official list of approved translations usable for Religion 101 and Religion 102 students at GWU to use in their exegesis paper assignment for each semester. The type listing is as follows: #1 = Formal Equivalent; #2 = mixed method used; #3 = Dynamic Equivalent method followed.

should support them so that we may become partners with them for the truth.

Dynamic Equivalent: GNB. 5 My dear friend, you are so faithful in the work you do for other Christians, even when they are strangers. 6 They have spoken to the church here about your love. Please help them to continue their trip in a way that will please God. 7 For they set out on their trip in the service of Christ without accepting any help from unbelievers. 8 We Christians, then, must help these people, so that we may share in their work for the truth.

For analyzing these approaches pay attention to several aspects.

1) Number of English sentences: GNT, 2; EFE, 2; NASB, 4; RSV, 4; NLT, 5; GNT, 5.

2) Note the extent of sequential shifting of words, phrases etc. The first translation is virtually a word-for-word expression in the exact sequence of the Greek. It should be used as the launch pad for analyzing the others.

3) Give attention to the extent of restructuring of sentence expression. For example in verse six, two relative clauses (οἱ...; οὓς...) express two important qualities of the brothers and strangers. The syntax here means that these are secondary qualities of these two groups. The NASB elevates them to main clauses (and they have...; You will send...) but in two separate sentences. The RSV preserves the first one as a relative clause (who have...) but puts the second one into a separate sentence as a main clause. Thus restructuring of idea expression is taking place in all of the examples.

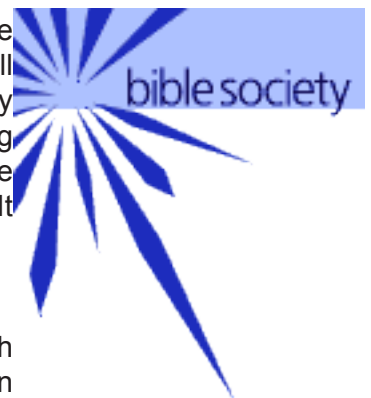
4) Pay close attention to how individual words and phrases are translated. For example, πιστὸν ποιεῖς (faithful you are doing) is translated as “you are acting faithfully” (NASB); “it is a loyal thing you do” (RSV); “you are doing a good work for God” (NLT); “you are so faithful in the work you do,” (GNB). Without a knowledge of the Greek, the next alternative is to turn to good quality commentaries to see how they interpret the word or phrase. But even apart from doing this, you can sense that the idea of faithfulness is important in the biblical expression by how many translations use some form of the English word.

Not only is the issue of how clearly the translation expresses the idea in the word or phrase of the biblical text. But equally important is whether the translation accurately expresses the idea of the Greek. Again the commentaries are the primary tool apart from knowledge of the biblical languages. But even if such commentaries are not available some sense of accuracy is possible by comparing the dominate idea pattern across the translations. Any translation significantly deviating from this primary pattern should be cause for caution.

Another potential benefit from such word comparisons will be to bring to the surface potential interpretive differences in the passage, that come out of the Greek text. One interpretive alternative in this passage is whether just one or two distinct groups of individuals are intended in the expression εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τοῦτο ξένους in verse 5. By comparing the way this expression is handled you can sense the possible alternatives: “for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers,” (NASB); “to the brethren, especially to strangers,” (RSV); “the traveling teachers who are passing through, even though they are strangers to you,” (NLT); for other Christians, even when they are strangers (GNB). The first two translations assume two groups who may at times be one group: brothers who are strangers. But the last two translations assume one group. And for clarity’s sake they identify the brothers as itinerant Christian teachers, which is clearly implicit but not directly stated in the Greek text. Actually the clearest and most accurate expression here is that of the NLT.

Thus some interpretive benefit comes from this kind of comparison. The real value is that it will limit the need to check commentaries etc. to only those questions for which you can’t derive a definite answer to. Thus the commentary answers your questions about the text rather than dictates to you what to understand from the text.

What comes out with both approaches is a translation product that can have advantages for different targeted readers and different settings for Bible use. A well done formal equivalence type translation will be most useful for detailed Bible study with a group of mature Christians with some church background. But for working with young people without much religious background a dynamic equivalence type translation is the only way to get them interested in reading and studying the Bible. It is also the better type translation for use in personal witnessing to non-Christians.



5.2.2.2 Role of Bible Societies

The beginnings of the modern Bible societies are in the 1800s.³⁷ The British and Foreign Bible Society founding in 1804 marks the beginning of this movement in

³⁷For a detailed early history of Bible societies see “Bible Societies,” 1911 Encyclopaedia Britannica.

our day.³⁸ In 1816, the American Bible Society was formed in New York City.³⁹ The many different Bible societies formed subsequently have been non-denominational oriented and usually ecumenical in nature. The central purpose is the producing of and the distribution of translations of the Bible in the various languages of the world. Interestingly, “Pope Gregory XVI in his 1844 encyclical *Inter Praecipuas* condemned both bible societies and ‘the publication, dissemination, reading, and possession of vernacular translations of sacred Scriptures’, and subsequently Catholics did not officially participate in the Society. This encyclical was reversed by Vatican II in the 1960s.”⁴⁰ But since Vatican Council II the Roman Catholic Church has increasingly participated in the various national Bible societies.

In 1946 representatives from thirteen different countries came together to form the United Bible Societies, which now has 146 member societies working in over 200 countries and territories. Since 1950, the UBS has been publishing *The Bible Translator*, a journal especially for Bible translators dealing with various topics in the field of Bible translation.



Since the mid-1950s the vast majority of Bible translations have been produced under the sponsorship of one or more Bible societies. They serve as the best organized entity for pulling together scholars across church denominational lines to serve as the translation team for producing new translations. Typically, they either have the financing available for such projects, or else have the organizational structure and experience in place to do the required fund raising for new projects.

During the past two decades a new pattern is beginning to emerge, which mostly is negative. To be sure, the non-sectarian translations produced by the various Bible societies do sometimes adopt ‘the lowest common denominator’ approach to translating texts where substantial ambiguity exists. The objective of these translations is universal usage by Christians, and other interested readers of the Christian Bible. In the sharpening sectarianism, emerging especially in Protestantism in the U.S., coupled with the electronic age where distribution of translations can be done cheaply through electronic rather than by print means, a growing number of denominations and individuals are producing their own translations for ‘in house’ usage.⁴¹ Although not inherently wrong, the objectives of these translation stand at variance with the ‘standard’ translations done for the entire Christian community. The standard translations seek to bring Christians into closer working relationships through reading a common Bible. The other type of translation usually has another agenda in mind that it seeks to achieve.

On the positive side, the growing diversity of different kinds of translations exposes particular aspects of the translation process. An increasing pattern is for a translation to be based on some particular printed Greek text, and / or some specific ancient manuscript.⁴² For example the *Lexham English Bible* is based on the SBL

³⁸“British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), first Bible society in the fullest sense, founded in 1804 at the urging of Thomas Charles and members of the Clapham sect, who proposed the idea to the Religious Tract Society in London. An interdenominational Protestant lay society with international representatives in London, the British and Foreign Bible Society was mainly concerned with making vernacular translations of the Scriptures available to peoples of all races at a price they could afford to pay. It also offered financial assistance to Bible societies in other countries. The BFBS has on occasion divided territory with the American Bible Society.” [*Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS)”, accessed November 21, 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/79923/British-and-Foreign-Bible-Society-BFBS>.]

³⁹“American Bible Society (ABS), international agency under lay control, formed in New York in 1816 as a union of 28 local Bible societies “to encourage the wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures throughout the world, without note or comment, through translation, publication, distribution, and stimulation of use.” Early in its history it set as its goal the placing of a Bible in every home, including those on the frontier. The ABS is supported by more than 80 Protestant denominations. In 1946 the ABS helped to form the United Bible Societies, which has offices and affiliates in more than 140 countries.” [*Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “American Bible Society (ABS)”, accessed November 21, 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/19347/American-Bible-Society-ABS>.]

⁴⁰“Bible society,” wikipedia.org.

⁴¹For a limited discussion of this see “Modern English Bible translation,” wikipedia.org. A more complete list of all English translations can be found at “List of English Bible translations,” wikipedia.org.

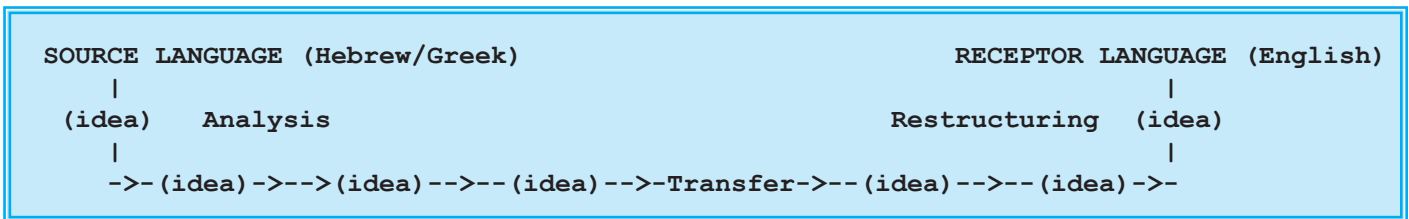
⁴²One consequence of the choice of Greek text for the English translation will be the issue of variations of readings in the Greek text. Two websites in wikipedia provide some helpful summation of where these variations will produce differing translations: “List of major textual variants in the New Testament,” wikipedia.org and “List of Bible verses not included in modern translations,” wikipedia.org. The base text is going to be the King James Version and the Textus Receptus, which depend on the quasi-paraphrase Byzantine text tradition. Without needing skills in Koine Greek, these two sites are helpful to see the larger picture of the issues of variant readings of

Greek New Testament with the NT portion, while *The Comprehensive New Testament* is based on the Nestle-Aland 27th edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece*, and the *Open English Bible* is based on the Westcott-Hort Greek text. Ronald Knox's *Translation of the Vulgate* provides an English translation of the Latin Vulgate. Interestingly, James Murdock's *Translation of the Syriac Peshitta* provides an English translation of this very early Syriac version of the New Testament. Charles Brenton in 1844 published an English translation of the Septuagint that is still in use. When the Bible reader understands the background and the theological perspective of these translations, they can become useful tools of study. Often they provide clear illustrations of some particular interpretative understanding of a passage that can be useful in teaching.⁴³

What remains important always is to read the preface of the Bible translation in order to learn about how the translation was produced, what its purpose is etc. One cannot always trust the honesty of these prefaces, but at least they provide a starting point.⁴⁴ Where more information about the history and nature of the Bible translation becomes necessary, usually an internet web site, especially one such as wikipedia.org or bible-researcher.com,⁴⁵ exists that will provide more detailed information. I would urge caution about the web site of the publisher of the translation, since these are done from a marketing perspective that will only highlight supposed positive aspects of the translation.

5.2.2.2.3 Current Patterns of Translating

All Bible translation in today's world will represent some combination of the formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence methodologies. No Bible translation in any modern western language can be a perfect example of either of these two basic approaches. But every translation, whether individual or committee based, will have adopted a set of translation guidelines reflecting some combination of the elements of these two methodologies. It is important to understand these if at all possible.



The process of doing translating as diagrammed above stresses the three key aspects of Analysis, Transfer, and Restructuring of the idea in the source language text.

The first stage (**Analysis**) is to thoroughly analyze the idea in the source language text. For the Greek NT this means understanding vocabulary, and grammar. Equally important is identifying literary forms, context etc. to produce the most detailed possible understanding of the text in its original historical setting.

In the moving of that idea to the receptor language (**Transfer**) careful attention must be paid to how meaning is structured both in the source language and in the receptor language. One obvious aspect is sentence structure patterns. Koine Greek sentences, depending on the style of the biblical writer, tend to be much longer than English sentences. Word sequencing in Greek sentences vary greatly from English sentences because the inflected nature of Greek allows the Greek writer enormously greater range of sentence structure than an English writer possesses. Figurative language is a challenge here. For example, the body part where emotional feeling was understood to take place in the ancient world was the large intestine, or gut. In English it is the heart. Writing styles must be considered. Even inside the Pauline corpus, Romans represents a rather formal, almost ancient

the Greek New Testament.

⁴³In my teaching of fourth semester Greek students about Bible translating, one of the learning tools that was developed centered on developing skills for identifying interpretive viewpoints adopted by different translations. Usually to use a short quote from the translation was a much better way to illustrate in preaching or teaching one particular interpretive view of a passage than to try to explain the details of that interpretation. For more details see my "Translating the Text," cranfordville.com at topics II. C, D, E especially.

⁴⁴The sad but true reality is that the more theologically conservative a translation publisher is the less trustworthy it is to be honest in the preface of the Bible translation.

⁴⁵Be careful with the bible-researcher web site. The legitimate one is bible-researcher.com. A highly questionable imitator is bible-reearcher.org, which is a KJV only highly biased web site. This sort of deception is common on the internet.

tractate style, while Philemon is a terribly intimate, personal letter style. These aspects, and many others, must be given serious consideration. To translate all the letters of Paul with a flat, uniform style in English is to make Paul a very one dimensional person, which is far from the truth.

Restructuring means that the idea of the source language text must be carefully and accurately preserved in a natural, clear English expression. Restructuring of word sequence, sentence structure etc. is inevitable in order to achieve this goal. The translator must have deep skills with the English language in order to accomplish this effectively.

Any failure along the above path is going to limit the accuracy and effectiveness of the English translation. How to best accomplish this? Different answers have emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. They revolve around two basic methods, although one would be hard put to find a single English translation as a pure example of either of the basic methods. All English translations are going to represent mixtures of both these methods. The issue is to identify which method dominates the particular translation.

5.3 Utilizing Translations for Interpretation

In this section I want to tackle the challenge of learning how to use Bible translations effectively for more in depth Bible study. Learning how to do this well is going to take practice over a period of time. There just simply is no short cut to effective Bible study. And I suspect the Lord has designed things this way in order to make available His truths only to those with deep desire to learn them. But for those with sufficient hunger to know God's Word the blessings of such study go beyond adequate words to describe.⁴⁶

We will continue to work extensively with Third John as the scripture text for practical application.

5.3.1 Choosing a Translation

The first step in beginning Bible study is choosing which combination of translations that you will turn to for your study. Some practical suggestions are in order.

First, be sure that your selection of three or four different translations reflect the range of translation methodology. To choose three translations following essentially the same translation methodology will severely limit the range of wording used by the translations. They will mostly use the same terminology. The negative aspect of this is to push you toward particular English words as defining the meaning of the passage.

Let me illustrate from 3 John 9-10:

N-A 28th. 9 Ἐγραψά τι τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ· ἀλλ' ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς. 10 διὰ τοῦτο, ἐὰν ἔλθω, ὑπομνήσω αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιεῖ λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς, καὶ μὴ ἀρκούμενος ἐπὶ τούτοις οὔτε αὐτὸς ἐπιδέχεται τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τοὺς βουλομένους κωλύει καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκβάλλει.

KJV. 9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrefes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. 10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

ASV. 9 I wrote somewhat unto the church: but Diotrefes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. 10 Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth and casteth [them] out of the church.

NKJV. 9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrefes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. 10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.

All three of these translations fall into the dominantly formal equivalent type of translation. One important background note: the KJV and the NKJV are based on the *Textus Receptus* Greek text (1550), while the ASV comes off the *Westcott-Hort* Greek text.⁴⁷ The single translation variation based on a different reading of the Greek text

⁴⁶One related question treated in a previous study on this topic is *How do I know which translation is the best?* Without repeating this material, let me refer you to topic 5.2 in "The History of the English Bible: Modern Bible Translation: 1800 to the present," at cranfordville.com: <http://cranfordville.com/Studies/HisBibleLec5.html>. The answer to this question requires a 'context' before it can be legitimately answered. These details are discussed in depth here.

⁴⁷**Nestle-Aland 28th edition GNT.** 9 Ἐγραψά τι τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ· ἀλλ' ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς. 10 διὰ τοῦτο, ἐὰν ἔλθω, ὑπομνήσω αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιεῖ λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς, καὶ μὴ ἀρκούμενος ἐπὶ τούτοις οὔτε αὐτὸς ἐπιδέχεται τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τοὺς βουλομένους κωλύει καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκβάλλει.

comes in the beginning clause Ἐγραψά τι τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ. The *Textus Receptus* does not contain the indefinite pronoun τι, **something**. Thus the KJV and the NKJV reflect the wording of the *Textus Receptus* with **I wrote to the church**, while the ASV reads **I wrote somewhat unto the church**.

A careful comparison of these three translations only uncovers updated wording by the NKJV from the older previous translations. Some variation in wording does surface. For example, the KJV's **I will remember his deeds** becomes in the ASV **I will bring to remembrance his works** and in the KJV **I will call to mind his deeds**. The ASV says with **wicked words** while both the KJV and NKJV say with **malicious words**. But more of it is simply updated language such as **casteth them out of the church** in both the KJV and ASV becomes **putting them out of the church** in the NKJV.

To be certain, one can learn a few things from comparisons using very similar translations, but much more is to be gleaned by expanding the variety of translations. For example the (NIV) which represents a mixture of methods, and the New Living Translation (NLT) which is dominantly dynamic equivalent in its methodology:

NIV. 9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will not welcome us. 10 So when I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, spreading malicious nonsense about us. Not satisfied with that, he even refuses to welcome other believers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.

NLT. 9 I wrote to the church about this, but Diotrephes, who loves to be the leader, refuses to have anything to do with us. 10 When I come, I will report some of the things he is doing and the evil accusations he is making against us. Not only does he refuse to welcome the traveling teachers, he also tells others not to help them. And when they do help, he puts them out of the church.

Thus ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν rendered as **who loveth to have the preeminence among them** (KJV / ASV) and **who loves to have the preeminence among them** (NKJV) now becomes easier to understand as either **who loves to be first** (NIV) or **who loves to be the leader** (NLT). The **receiveth us not** (KJV) becomes **will not welcome us** (NIV) or **refuses to have anything to do with us** (NLT), both of which are clearer. Actually, the most literal translation of οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς is the NIV **will not welcome us**. Quite helpfully τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς in v. 10 becomes **the traveling teachers** in the NLT, which is a correct interpretation of the significance of the expression in this context.

Second, turn to those translations that provide helpful information which you can use to identify interpretive issues found in the passage. Many of the questions naturally arising from this passage can be understood from most all of the translations. For example, the writer indicates that he has written to the church. But what church? In verse 6, a reference to a church is made, but that church clearly is a different one than this one. The church in verse six is where the Presbyter is, but the one in v. 9 is where Gaius is. Also, all five of the above translations say **"I wrote."** Implied by this past tense English verb is a letter written to the church prior to this one. Do we know what this letter was? Is it possibly Second John? These kinds of question naturally arise from an examination of the various translations.

But those translations more oriented toward the dynamical equivalent method will seek to communicate the significance of many of the expressions in order to be more specific in their translations. For example, the expression in verse nine Διοτρέφης οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς literally means **Diotrephes does not welcome us**. From the context, this clearly does not mean that the Presbyter had paid a visit to the church where Diotrephes refused to greet him. The refusal of Diotrephes is connected to this prior letter sent to the church -- as the sentence expresses. So exactly what does οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς imply in this context? The NRSV expresses a likely implication of it by translating the expression as **does not acknowledge our authority**. Also the GNB (*Good News Bible*) renders it as **will not pay any attention to what I say**. *The Message* expresses it as **denigrates my counsel**. From these three interpretive expressions a picture should begin to emerge. The prior letter sent to the church by the Presbyter was rejected by Diotrephes. He would not accept what had been said in the letter.

Hopefully the picture is now clear enough that you can check some commentaries to see how this issue is

Westcott-Hort GNT (1881). 9 εγραψα τι τη εκκλησια αλλ ο φιλοπρωτευων αυτων διοτρεφης ουκ επιδεχεται ημας 10 δια τουτο εαν ελθω υπομνησω αυτου τα εργα α ποιει λογοις πονηροις φλυαρων ημας και μη αρκουμενος επι τουτοις ουτε αυτος επιδεχεται τους αδελφους και τους βουλομενους κωλυει και εκ της εκκλησιας εκβαλλει

Textus Receptus GNT (1550). 9 εγραψα τη εκκλησια αλλ ο φιλοπρωτευων αυτων διοτρεφης ουκ επιδεχεται ημας 10 δια τουτο εαν ελθω υπομνησω αυτου τα εργα α ποιει λογοις πονηροις φλυαρων ημας και μη αρκουμενος επι τουτοις ουτε αυτος επιδεχεται τους αδελφους και τους βουλομενους κωλυει και εκ της εκκλησιας εκβαλλει

These three texts are presented here to illustrate that sometimes the different translation wording actually reflects a slightly different wording of the underlying Greek text of the New Testament.

treated. What will emerge is a range of viewpoint seeking to ‘flesh out’ the concept in more detail.⁴⁸ Just the one look at Raymond Brown’s comments on the passage both confirms the picture of Diotrephes refusing to accept the letter sent to the church, and Prof. Brown adds a further dimension to our understanding of the statements in vv. 9-10. This refusal was not a single incident, but rather an ongoing stance of Diotrephes. Also his rejection of “us,” which is obscured in *The Message*, but affirmed in the other translations with “us,” asserts the identification of the Presbyter with his representatives mentioned in verse 10b. We now recognize the greater scope of the rejection of Diotrephes. As a leader in the church he was seeking to completely exclude any influence by the Presbyter or his representatives upon the church. The full extent of the seriousness of this problem begins to emerge.

Now we may evaluate whether this prior letter was Second John or not. In the beginning phrase “Ἐγραψά τι τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ, the Presbyter indicated clearly that he had written ‘something’ to the church, i.e., τι, the Greek indefinite pronoun. What was in that letter to provoke not only this harsh rejection of the Presbyter and his representatives, but also to prompt Diotrephes to (v. 10) λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς, *spreading evil words against us*?

If this letter here refers to Second John, then what is there in the letter that Diotrephes found so objectionable? The two central themes of this letter are 1) loving one another as disciples (vv. 4-6) and 2) deceivers denying the incarnation of Christ (vv. 7-11). The latter issue in some ways would be a more likely point that may have been objectionable to Diotrephes. But given his ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν, *loves to be in first place over them*, it could well be the emphasis in Second John on brotherly love was what this fellow objected to.

With the extent of Diotrephes’ rejection of the Presbyter in Third John, some commentators find neither of these issues in Second John of such a nature to provoke such a response. Thus they turn to First John seeking an answer -- assuming that all three letters are going to the same church -- for the more intense criticism of false teaching in the first letter. Themes such as ‘hating one’s brother signals lack of salvation’ (2:7-11), the presence already of antichrists deceiving believers (2:18-25), the demand for holy living (3:4-10), loving one another in concrete actions (3:11-24), the warning about false prophets (4:1-6), provide a potentially better explanation for

⁴⁸“does not pay attention to us. In v. 8 the ‘we’ referred to Johannine Christians in general; but this clause describes a reaction to ‘I did write,’ and so the meaning has to be more confined. A number of scholars speak of an editorial or majestic plural, so that ‘to us’ is equivalent to ‘to me.’ Elsewhere in this letter, however, the Presbyter consistently writes in the first person singular when he means ‘I’; and certainly that is the situation in the immediate context (9a; ‘I did write’; 10a: ‘I come ... I shall bring up’). Throughout this commentary I have recognized that Johannine style is replete with meaningless variants, a principle that Schnackenburg invokes here. Yet this is a context where the Presbyter would have wanted the seriousness of his grievance to be clear, and so more may be involved in the choice of the ‘us’ than a stylistic variant. Is the pronoun here a genuine pl. distinguishing the Presbyter and some others (NOTE on ‘we’ in 1 John 1:1b)? One possibility is the Presbyter and those who have sided with him in the secessionist struggle (Wendt). This explanation would place Diotrephes on the opposite side with the secessionists, but there is no other suggestion of that in III John. Another explanation is that the Presbyter is speaking as a member of the Johannine School (INTRODUCTION V C2c), so that the ‘we’ here refers to the tradition-bearers mentioned in 1 John 1:1-5. (If this is true, the argument for common authorship is enhanced.) This last interpretation is strengthened in my judgment by v. 12: ‘We give our testimonial as well,’ for the primary function of the Johannine School is to bear witness (give testimony) to the tradition.

“The present tense of the verb (*epidechesthai*) indicates that Diotrephes’ action was not a solitary incident but part of an enduring attitude. This verb has two shades of meaning either of which could be applicable here. (a) The meaning ‘to receive or welcome’ would indicate that Diotrephes was refusing hospitality to the Presbyter. The verb definitely has that sense in the next verse, which states that Diotrephes refuses to welcome the brothers. But III John gives no evidence that the Presbyter attempted a visit and was turned away; and so one would have to assume that he regarded his letter as a surrogate for his presence (B. Weiss). Refusal to receive his letter was a refusal to receive him (as a representative of the Johannine School). (b) The meaning ‘to acknowledge, accept, recognize’ would indicate that Diotrephes had rejected the role of the Presbyter (and of the Johannine School) in being responsible for the tradition. Presumably Diotrephes arrogated that role to himself as leader of the local church. Too free is the NEB translation, ‘will have nothing to do with us,’ even though it leaves room for Käsemann’s interpretation whereby Diotrephes is a bishop who will not enter into association with the heretical Presbyter. Verse 9b does not exclude Diotrephes’ dealing with the Presbyter as a brother Johannine Christian; it excludes Diotrephes’ acknowledging that the Presbyter has a right to intervene and be heard. Against this second meaning of *epidechesthai* is the objection that the verb would then have meaning (b) in v. 9b and meaning (a) in v. 10d; but that phenomenon is found in 1 Macc 10:1 (‘welcome’) and 10:46 (‘accept’). In my view both meanings of *epidechesthai* are present in 9b: the letter was looked upon as an extension of the Presbyter’s presence in his role as a member of the Johannine School; his missionaries would have had precisely the same function. The refusal to welcome the missionaries (10d) and to accept the letter (9b) are two sides of the one policy. Nevertheless, I find lacking in evidence the thesis that Diotrephes’ refusal to accept the letter was based on the doctrine therein (W. Bauer, Käsemann, Wendt).”

[Raymond E. Brown, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John: Translated, With Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 717-18.]

this harsh rejection by Diotrephes. The correctness of this interpretive understanding in large part depends on a rather substantial assumption that all three letters were written to the same church. Considerable difference of opinion at this point has existed since the second century, thus giving pause for some hesitancy to move this direction very strongly.

What may actually be the case is that the gigantic ego of Diotrephes specifically mentioned by the Presbyter (vv. 9-10) may well be the heart of the problem. An intensely egocentric leader normally sees loving others solely in terms of manipulating them for one's own purposes rather than self-sacrificing servant ministry. If this was the case with Diotrephes as it seems to be, then the strong emphasis on self-sacrificing love for one another in both First and Second John could have provoked this leader to complete rejection of the Presbyter's council in the prior letter as well as his representatives seeking to visit the church. This leader was intent on building his own personal empire, rather than advancing the Kingdom of God.

Now a more detailed picture of the contents of Third John are starting to emerge. And in a way that will make it easier to find connecting links of application to our day.

5.3.2 Comparative Study of Translations

How does one go about studying the Bible using multiple translations? The above illustration from 3 John 9-10 provides some examples of how to do analysis of the scripture text. What I want to do now is to provide some help in learning how to identify issues needing interpretation in the biblical text. These are intended as 'starters' that open up paths of study, but not as a final word on procedure. One's own background and training will play an important role in how the scripture is approached. With both pluses and minuses attached to it, this individual background is simple reality. It's how we approach life in general, as well as scripture study. Our work in the field of Bible study is designed to enhance that background, not to change or reject it.⁴⁹

5.3.2.1 Selection of Translations reflecting Methods

Critically important is the beginning selection of the translations to be used for Bible study. Since most people will not have the finances to purchase multiple print copies of scripture, the best alternative is to draw those Bible translations from an electronic sources, usually the internet. There are two so-called Bible gateway web sites that I highly recommend. The first is the Online Bible Study Tools site at <http://www.biblestudytools.com>. This website contains a significant variety of Bible translations in a large number of western languages. Plus it has additional tools for looking up terms in Bible dictionaries etc. The few commentaries contained, however, are old, copyright expired commentaries that will provide very limited help. Additionally, you can create a free personal account with the possibility of saving notes etc. for future reference. The second web site is the Bible Gateway URL at <http://www.biblegateway.com>. This website doesn't contain as many secondary tools such as dictionaries etc., but it does contain a better range of non-English western language Bible translations.

The practical suggestion I would make is to make your selection of translations from the possibilities on these two web sites. Using your word processing software, create a file and format it for three or four columns so that you can copy and paste the biblical passage from each of the translations in each column in order to create a parallel listing of the biblical passage. This will make doing the comparative study much easier. Plus you can record your observations from your study for future reference.

One additional tip that could strengthen your study. If your language skills are at a sufficient level, reach out to a fourth translation in a different language. For example, the first three in English, and the fourth one in Spanish. By studying across a couple of different languages, you will be more inclined to focus on ideas rather than specific words. I think you will be surprised at how much insight this opens up in your study.

In making your selection of translations, the following suggestion would be important. The listing "English

⁴⁹For the eager beaver Bible student, let me suggest taking a look at with the idea of possibly using the procedure that was required by Religion 102 New Testament survey students at Gardner-Webb University. The **Analysis Paper** assignment required of all students was a ten page exegesis of an assigned passage of scripture that was turned in as a term paper toward the end of the semester. This was the freshman Bible survey class along with Religion 101 (OT survey) that every student attending the university had to complete as a part of the core requirements for a bachelor's degree at the school. Some preformatted MS Word doc etc. files with the parallel columns are already set up at this page. The procedure followed by the students was a more detailed process built off the same approach being discussed in this study.



Translations” at cranfordville.com (<http://cranfordville.com/P-Trans-L.htm>) can serve as a helpful starting point that indicates the basic methodology used by over thirty major English translations. For translations in other languages, pay close attention to the official name of the translation. If the title is more official sounding, e.g., *Reina-Valera 1995*, it most likely will be a formal equivalent category translation, but if it is something like *Dios Habla Hoy*, it will be a dynamic equivalent type translation. With some practice and experience, you will discover three or four favorite translations that maximize the benefits of the comparative study.

Take some time to check out the preface to the translations. This is easier to do with the Bible Study Tools web site. Once you enter a passage with a translation specified, at the bottom of the page there will be a hyperlink containing more information about that particular translation. The posting will normally contain most of the same information in the preface to the print copy of the translation. Just for English translations, the www.bible-researcher.com web site also contains background information about a good number of translations.⁵⁰

5.3.2.2 Analyzing the Selected Translations

Now that you have selected the translations to be used, what comes next? Several actions become helpful. Turning again to 3 John 9-10, let's apply them using the NRSV this time:

9 I have written something to the church; but Diotrefes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. 10 So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing in spreading false charges against us. And not content with those charges, he refuses to welcome the friends, and even prevents those who want to do so and expels them from the church.

First, determine the number and content of the sentences.

This translation is expressed in three separate sentences. One sentence in verse nine and two in verse ten. The first sentence contains two contrasting ideas, separated by the connector 'but.' What the Presbyter has written has not be accepted by Diotrefes. Several questions arise out of this sentence: Who is the writer of the letter? Do we have a copy of this letter? What was the 'something' that he wrote? Who is Diotrefes? What does 'putting himself first' mean? Why did he not acknowledge the authority of the letter sender?

The second sentence at the beginning of verse ten stands as a warning from the letter sender. The heart of the warning is his promise to 'call attention to what he is doing.' Exactly how would he do this regarding Diotrefes? In a public rebuke before the assembled church? Or, privately, face to face with Diotrefes? From the additional qualifier 'in spreading false charges against us' what possibly were those charges? How did the letter sender learn about these charges? The picture emerges here of an intense confrontation between the letter sender and Diotrefes. What does the rest of the New Testament say about handling conflict as a Christian? We would assume that the general guidelines taught in the NT would have been followed by the letter sender. But also to be noted is the if-clause at the beginning: 'So if I come.' How likely was a trip to the church by the letter sender?

The third sentence adds a further criticism of Diotrefes. He first refused the counsel contained in the prior letter, then he preceded to spread false charges against the letter sender through the congregation. Now he is criticized for two other actions. He refuses to allow the 'friends' traveling to the church to be given Christian hospitality. And also those members in the church who desire to extend hospitality to these guests are forbidden to do so, and if they do, then Diotrefes removes them from participation in the life of the church. Some questions arise here. How important was showing hospitality to visiting spiritual brothers in early Christianity? How could a single leader claim the power to put members out of the church? What does 'expels them from the church' mean? An official expulsion from membership in the church? A prohibition preventing them from attending the meetings of the church? The issue of church discipline is raised here. What does the rest of the NT say about practicing church discipline? And then, how does what is described here fit into that larger picture?

⁵⁰For background on Spanish Bible translations, somewhat helpful is "Bible Translations into Spanish," wikipedia.org. Particularly helpful is a list of Spanish translations dating from 1280 to 2011. Quite a number of Spanish translations have been produced by English Bible translation agencies, and thus their similarity to the English translation is going to be close. For example, the Nueva Versión Internacional (NVI) (1999) is the Spanish equivalent to the New International Version in English.

While the "Bible translations into German," wikipedia.org is not as helpful as the one for Spanish Bibles, it does provide a summary overview of Bible translation in German. Most helpful is the Bibelportal for the German Bible Society at <http://www.die-bibel.de/>. This site provides access to ten different German Bible translations along with some additional features.

Unfortunately, less helpful is "Bible translations into French," wikipedia.org. Much better is "Traductions de la Bible en français," wikipedia.org. The article is written in French, thus you would need skills in French to make use of it. Very helpful is the listing of French translations from the Middle Ages through 2011.

Second, compare this translation with the others.

Look at your other translations to see whether their wording throws light on the questions raised by examining one translation. Often times this will be the case. The phrase ‘put himself first’ is handled in different ways. When comparing all of the translations of this together, what picture emerges? Often the composite picture from several translations provides a much clearer understanding, than that from just a single translation. In these three sentences of the NRSV, several expressions will become clearer by such comparisons: 1) ‘put himself first’; 2) ‘does not acknowledge our authority’; 3) ‘in spreading false charges against us’; ‘the friends’; and 4) ‘expels them from the church.’ By carefully examining the other translations at these points, a lot of answers to many of these questions can be found.

Third, turn to secondary resources for answers to your unanswered questions.

Secondary sources includes Bible dictionaries, commentaries, concordances, Introductions to the Bible etc. These are ‘secondary’ tools. That is, they exist to help you find answers to the questions coming out of the scripture text from your own study. They are to serve you, not to tell you what to understand about this passage!

As an illustration, let’s examine the name Diotrephes. Who was this fellow? The first tool to use is the concordance. The two web based Bible gateways also function as an electronic concordance. Just type into the search box the word ‘Diotrephes’ and click the button to activate the search. It will search in a few seconds what would take you several minutes to do in a printed book. Remember, sometimes it is helpful to do searches using different translations. When such is done with the name Diotrephes, only one instance of this name exists in the entire New Testament, here in verse 9. That helps us realize that this fellow was not well known in early Christianity, and his influence was limited to this congregation. But who was he? The next tool to use is a Bible dictionary. Some dictionaries are better than others! The Bible Study Tools web site contains the *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*, which is commonly found in Bible study web sites. Under “Diotrephes” the following is stated: “Jove-nourished, rebuked by John for his pride (3 John 1:9). He was a Judaizer, prating against John and his fellow-labourers “with malicious words” (7).” Much of this doesn’t make much sense -- “Jove-nourished” ?? -- and the second sentence “He was a Judaizer...” does not come out of anything in this single scripture reference to him. This very old Bible dictionary, published in 1897, is not very helpful, and may contain incorrect information. Unfortunately, this is often the case with the free resources on the internet. But a cross check in Wikipedia.org, turns up something more helpful:

Diotrephes was a man mentioned in the (Third Epistle of John, verses 9–11). His name means “nourished by Jupiter”. As Raymond E. Brown comments, “Diotrephes is not a particularly common name.”[1]

In addition to being ambitious, proud, disrespectful of apostolic authority, rebellious, and inhospitable, the author of the letter says that Diotrephes tried to hinder those desiring to show hospitality to the brothers and to expel these from the congregation. Not even the location of Diotrephes’ church can be determined from the letter. It is debatable whether the antipathy expressed in 3 John is based on “a theological dispute, a clash of competing ecclesiastical authorities, a disagreement about financial responsibilities for the mission, or personal dislike”.[2]

Adolf von Harnack was of the view that Diotrephes was the first monarchical bishop of whom we have the name.[3]

This free web based source provides some more insight and avoids baseless speculation about Diotrephes. But it still leaves many gaps. One of the better multi-volume Bible dictionaries is the *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*. It is not available on the internet, but is available in electronic form (Logos Systems software) and in print form. The article on this fellow provides more insight:⁵¹

DIOTREPHESES (PERSON) [Gk Diotrephes (Διοτρεφες)]. An early churchman who asserted authority over all in his local church, rejected the authority of the elder who wrote 3 John, attacked the elder in public, forbade anyone to receive the elder’s emissaries, and excluded all who did (3 John 9–10). The name Diotrephes, which means “nourished by Zeus,” occurs in the NT only in this one passage.

Some consider Diotrephes as a representative of the same docetic interpretation of Jesus as 1 and 2 John reflect (Bauer 1971: 93). The author of 3 John, however, never charged Diotrephes with heresy. The conflict was over authority in the church instead of theology.

According to one view, Diotrephes was a monarchical bishop (Zahn 1909, 3: 374–81). On the other hand, he could have been an elder or a deacon who abused his authority. Or he may have exercised authority over the entire church by the dominance of his personality without holding any office.

⁵¹Virgil R. L. Fry, “Diotrephes (Person)” In vol. 2, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 204.

The conflict between the elder and Diotrefes probably represented a transition period in church government. In that case the elder represented the older, centralized leadership of an elder over a number of churches in the region. Diotrefes represented a younger generation that sought greater local autonomy and moved in the direction which eventually led to the monarchical episcopacy (Dodd *Johannine Epistles* MNTC, 163–64).

Here we get a clearer picture of who this fellow was, though not without question marks. The material in the article about Diotrefes is carefully presented in distinguishing between stated items in the biblical text, opinions of scholars down through the centuries, and the author’s own interpretive viewpoint.

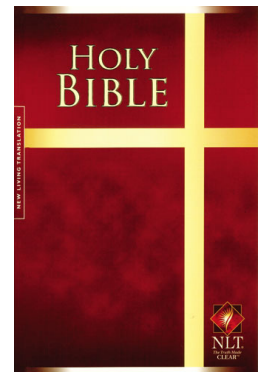
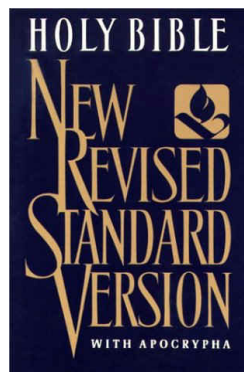
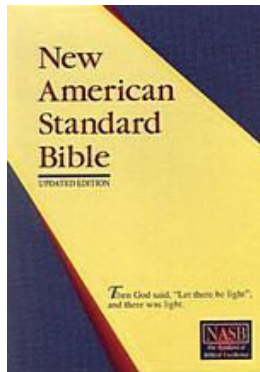
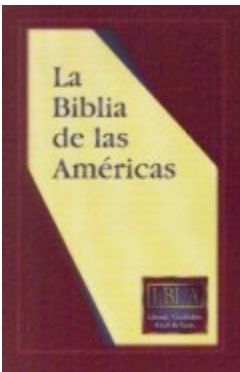
To be sure there is going to be a lot about this fellow that we don’t understand. But it is important to understand as much as is possible. Included in this is critical evaluation of the material in the secondary tools. We should not just take what they say at face value. We can then draw our own interpretive conclusions on a more solid foundation.

5.4 Applying Insights to Third John

Now let’s apply what we have learned to 3 John 9-10. ***First, let’s set up the parallel columns for our***

La Biblia de las Américas	New American Standard Bible	New Revised Standard Version	New Living Translation
<p>9 Escribí algo a la iglesia, pero Diótréfes, a quien le gusta ser el primero entre ellos, no acepta lo que decimos. 10 Por esta razón, si voy, llamaré la atención a las obras que hace, acusándonos injustamente con palabras maliciosas; y no satisfecho con esto, él mismo no recibe a los hermanos, se lo prohíbe a los que quieren hacerlo y los expulsa de la iglesia.</p>	<p>9 I wrote something to the church; but Diotrefes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. 10 For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church.</p>	<p>9 I sent a brief letter to the church about this, but Diotrefes, who loves to be the leader, does not acknowledge our authority. 10 When I come, I will report some of the things he is doing and the wicked things he is saying about us. He not only refuses to welcome the traveling teachers, he also tells others not to help them. And when they do help, he puts them out of the church.</p>	<p>9 I sent a brief letter to the church about this, but Diotrefes, who loves to be the leader, does not acknowledge our authority. 10 When I come, I will report some of the things he is doing and the wicked things he is saying about us. He not only refuses to welcome the traveling teachers, he also tells others not to help them. And when they do help, he puts them out of the church.</p>

study.



We need to understand the choice of translations. The sequencing of the translations from left to right represents on the left side the formal equivalent approach to Bible translation while the right side represents the dynamic equivalent translation approach. Thus the BLA and NASB translations on the left side are both heavily formal equivalent translations. The NLT on the right side is heavily dynamic equivalent in methodology, while the NRSV is a mixture of the two methods but more oriented to DE methods than to FE methods. Additionally La Biblia de las Américas translation is actually the Spanish version of the NASB in the adjacent column.⁵² The NASB above is the 1995 revision produced by the Lockman Foundation, and is perhaps the only heavily FE English translation with some legitimacy as a Bible translation.⁵³

The NLT translation in the fourth column represents a committee revision of Ken Taylor's *Living Bible*.⁵⁴

⁵²“*La Biblia de las Americas* is a Spanish translation of the Scriptures from the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. Completed in 1986 by a team of Latin American evangelical Bible scholars, *La Biblia de las Americas* uses the Vosotros form of Spanish, presenting the Word of God in a clear and flowing style, while strictly adhering to the original Hebrew and Greek texts.

“Following the same translation principles set for the New American Standard Bible, *La Biblia de las Americas*, the most popular Spanish Bible, is understandable to a wide, general audience and also suitable for serious study.”

[“*La Biblia de las Américas Bible, BLA,*” *BibleStudyTools.com*]

⁵³“The *New American Standard Bible* (NASB or NAS), completed in 1971, is widely regarded as one of the most literally translated of 20th-century English Bible translations. According to the NASB’s preface, the translators had a ‘Fourfold Aim’ in this work:

- These publications shall be true to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.
- They shall be grammatically correct.
- They shall be understandable.
- They shall give the Lord Jesus Christ His proper place, the place which the Word gives Him; therefore, no work will ever be personalized.

“Seeing the need for a literal, modern translation of the English Bible, the translators sought to produce a contemporary English Bible while maintaining a word-for-word translation style. In cases where word-for-word literalness was determined to be unacceptable for modern readers, changes were made in the direction of more current idioms. In such instances, the more literal renderings were indicated in footnotes.

“In 1995, the Lockman Foundation reissued the NASB text as the NASB Updated Edition. The removing or replacing literal renderings of antiquated phrases and words, and many conjunctions, the current edition is slightly less literal than the original. It has introduced inclusive language in about 85 places. The NASB remains, however, the most literal version of the English Bible commonly used in churches today. It is commonly used in many Christian colleges and seminaries for in-depth study, because of its strict adherence to the original languages.”

[“*New American Standard Bible, NAS,*” *BibleStudyTools.com*]

Although the third and fourth “Fourfold Aim” statements sound nice, they are hugely misleading. The readability factor (as measured by scales such as the Flesch Kincaid Reading Ease and others) for the NASB is typically one of the highest, if not the highest, for all English Bibles produced over the past half century. Thus it typically is among the most difficult English Bibles to understand. The fourth statement is essentially meaningless, since no serious Bible translation would de-emphasize the deity of Christ. What this betrays is the adoption of the illegitimate ‘diction theory’ of inspiration as the theological underpinning of the publication, as stated in earlier prefaces of the print version. Thus words become far more important than ideas. But this puts the translators between the horns of an impossible dilemma: literal Greek / Hebrew words into English on the one hand and reasonable understandability by the reader on the other. Thus their acknowledgment of compromising their ‘literal’ translation method, which has been the case increasingly with each revision of the translation.

⁵⁴“The translators of the *New Living Translation* set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential literary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

“On the other hand, the NLT translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader’s understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts and eminently readable. The result is a translation that is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful.

“More than 90 Bible scholars, along with a group of accomplished English stylists, worked toward that goal. In the end, the NLT is the result of precise scholarship conveyed in living language.”

[“*New Living Translation Bible, NLT,*” *Biblestudytools.com*]

With the switch from an individual to a committee approach, the Tyndale House Publishers, the sponsoring publisher, put together a translation team of evangelical scholars to produce a true translation rather than the pure paraphrase that the Living Bible was. Also it would incorporate some elements of FE methodology but would remain dominantly DE oriented. In effect the NLT is a contemporary English evangelical translation of the Bible. Thus where interpretive decisions become necessary in translating, this translation will gravitate towards views acceptable inside evangelical Christian tradition.

The NRSV translation in the third column represents one of the better mixed method approaches to Bible translation.⁵⁵ This translation is representative of the long tradition of the English Revised Version in the 1880s from the American side. But while its predecessor, the Revised Standard Version, was an American English translation oriented toward American audiences, the NRSV has moved toward a more global audience. It is the first translation to attempt the use of the newly emerging Global English or International English that is being developed in the international business world. Very intentionally it is an ecumenical translation seeking to be useful in Christian groups across denominational boundaries. It is among the early efforts at ‘inclusive language’ translation, where non-gender oriented references in both the Hebrew and the Greek are translated by inclusive terms. In the NT one of the most common instances is where the Greek text uses τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς (e.g., 3 John 5) the NRSV will use inclusive terms such as ‘the friends’ in 3 Jhn. 5, or “brothers and sisters” more often. Although somewhat controversial in some circles, most all contemporary English translations are moving this direction increasingly.

With this background understanding of our translations, we can both grasp better why certain words are used either in Spanish or English by each translation. When critiquing one particular translation, we can measure it against the stated translation guidelines adopted for the translators. It’s very unfair to critique two or more translations across differing methodologies that served as the official guidelines for producing the translation. We may have our own preferences regarding methodology, but to criticize the NLT for not being sufficiently ‘literal’ is not honest criticism, since the translators were not working within a FE methodology.

Second, let’s analyze the sentences and their content. Since a good bit of this analysis was done above (topic 5.3.2.2) with a different set of translations, I will try to minimize the repetition here. In the BLA and NASB we find just two sentences, which match the number of sentences in the underlying Greek text. But the

⁵⁵“The *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) first appeared in 1989, and has received wide acclaim and broad support from academics and church leaders as a Bible for all Christians.

“The NRSV Bible Translation Committee consists of thirty men and women who are among the top scholars in America today. They come from Protestant denominations, the Roman Catholic church, and the Greek Orthodox Church. The committee also includes a Jewish scholar.

“Standing in the tradition of the RSV, which was the only major English translation that included both the standard Protestant canon and the books that are traditionally used by Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians (the so-called “Apocryphal” or “Deuterocanonical” books), the NRSV is available in three formats: a standard edition with or without the Apocrypha, a Roman Catholic Edition, which has the so-called “Apocryphal” or “Deuterocanonical” books in the Roman Catholic canonical order, and The Common Bible, which includes all books that belong to the Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox canons.

“The NRSV stands out among the many translations available today as the Bible translation that is the most widely “authorized” by the churches. It received the endorsement of thirty-three Protestant churches. It received the imprimatur of the American and Canadian Conferences of Catholic bishops. And it received the blessing of a leader of the Greek Orthodox Church.

“Rooted in the past, but updated for today’s Bible readers, the NRSV continues the tradition of William Tyndale, the King James Version, the American Standard Version, and the Revised Standard Version. Equally important, it sets a new standard for the 21st Century. The NRSV stands out among the many translations because it is “as literal as possible” in adhering to the ancient texts and only “as free as necessary” to make the meaning clear in graceful, understandable English. It draws on newly available sources that increase our understanding of many previously obscure biblical passages. These sources include new-found manuscripts, the Dead Sea Scrolls, other texts, inscriptions, and archaeological finds from the ancient Near East, and new understandings of Greek and Hebrew grammar.

“Improvements over the RSV are of four different kinds:

- updating the language of the RSV, by replacing archaic forms of speech addressed to God (Thee, Thou, wast, dost, etc.), and by replacing words whose meaning has changed significantly since the RSV translation (for example, Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 11.25 that he was “stoned” once)

- making the translation more accurate,

- helping it to be more easily understood, especially when it is read out loud, and

- making it clear where the original texts intend to include all humans, male and female, and where they intend to refer only to the male or female gender.”

[“New Revised Standard Bible, NRS,” *BibleStudyTools.com*]

NRSV and NLT both contain four sentences. All four translations match with just one sentence in verse nine. But it is verse ten that is the challenge. The single sentence in the underlying Greek text is reproduced by the FE oriented translations in the left columns. But the question is regarding the understandability of this very long, complex sentence in both Spanish and English. The Gunning Fog index test of the NASB suggests that a person would need 21.97 years of formal education to understand this second sentence well; the Flesch Kincaid Grade level for this sentence is 19.80 and the F-K Reading Ease rating is 43.93. In other words, this sentence, although rather literally translated from the Greek, is not going to be easy to understand. In contrast, the NRSV with its three sentences in verse ten scores at F-K Grade Level of 8.3 and the Gunning-Fog Score is 10.1. This is half that of the NASB meaning that the NRSV is twice as easy to understand. The NLT is even easier to understand with a F-K Grade level score of 5.6 and the G-F score of 7.6. For American English readers this is very important, since popular reading publications are intentionally written for a sixth grade reading level. What this data means is that it will be much easier for us to grasp the ideas in the NRSV and NLT translations than in the NASB. This should be remembered as we analyze the ideas in these two verses.

Third, now let's take a close look at the content of the sentences. The heart of this activity is raising questions about the ideas being presented in the translations. One excellent beginning activity is to identify time and spatial or place references in the sentences. Let me sort these out with the interpretive issues here:

a) **Something / algo / a brief letter.** What was written? When was it written? Do we have access to that letter today? Is it 2 John or 1 John?

b) **To the church / a la iglesia.** Which church is this? By context we know it wasn't the church mentioned in verse six. So, where was this church located? Presumably it was the one that both Gaius and Diotrephes were connected to. Be sure to distinguish what the scripture text indicates and what secondary sources like commentaries say. The first source from the passage context is certain information, while the other will have elements of speculation and thus be less certain.

c) **Diotrephes.** Who was this fellow? First, what is said about him in this letter? Only vv. 9-10 mention him. We should list out the specific things said about him. Next, do we know anything else about him from other sources? Sometimes ancient church traditions provide some helpful information.

d) **What we say / lo que decimos / our authority.** Why does the elder say 'we' when he is the only one writing the letter? Who is included in the 'we'? What implications come from the first person plural pronoun?

e) **If I come / si voy / So if I come / When I come.** Does the elder indicate a planned trip to this church? Or, is it just a possibility?

f) **I will call attention to his deeds which he does / llamaré la atención a las obras que hace / I will call attention to what he is doing / I will report some of the things he is doing.** Just what did the elder threaten to do regarding Diotrephes should he make a trip to the church?

g) **Unjustly accusing us with wicked words / acusándonos injustamente con palabras maliciosas / in spreading false charges against us / and the wicked things he is saying about us.** Just what was Diotrephes being accused of doing? Did his slander criticize the conduct of the elder? His beliefs? His style of leadership?

10) **And not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either / y no satisfecho con esto, él mismo no recibe a los hermanos / And not content with those charges, he refuses to welcome the friends / He not only refuses to welcome the traveling teachers.** Just who were these people that Diotrephes refused hospitality to? Why would he treat fellow Christians this way?

11) **And he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church / se lo prohíbe a los que quieren hacerlo y los expulsa de la iglesia / and even prevents those who want to do so and expels them from the church / he also tells others not to help them. And when they do help, he puts them out of the church.** How could one person prevent other church members from showing hospitality to visitors? Also, how did Diotrephes punish those who ignored his directives against the visitors?

Fourth, allow some time to reflect upon these questions. Formulate answers as much as you can from just thinking about the content of this pair of scripture verses. Next, turn to the secondary tools -- concordance, Bible dictionary, Bible commentary, NT Introduction -- to both double check your answers and to possibly find answers to those questions you had no information about. They may alert you to issues you overlooked as well.

Remember also that this passage involves several literary and historical aspects to not overlook. Literarily, one sub-genre item is a warning in v. 10a. Using these secondary tools, look up how individuals gave warnings

to others in the ancient world. It may very well be different than in your culture.

Historically, a couple of social history items are important background aspects. 1) How were various groups, especially religious ones, structured in the ancient world? We see in Diotrephes what appears to be a dictatorial control over a church. How does this compare to principles of church leadership taught in the NT? 2) The second item of important social history here is church discipline. Diotrephes seemed to have the ability to throw people out of the church on his own authority. How does this compare to the principles of church discipline taught in the NT? Beyond that, are there descriptions of disciplinary practices in various organizations in the first century world?

Fifth, write out a brief summary of your interpretive conclusions about this passage. Putting your thoughts down into written expression can help clarify them in your thinking. This doesn't have to be lengthy. If you do this in electronic format on a computer, these ideas can be saved for future reference. Additionally, if you create a free personal account at the Bible Study Tools web site, you can copy and paste them into permanent notes attached to 3 John 9-10 there. They will then be readily available for future use.

CONCLUSION

With this chapter we are launching into serious study of the Bible. Both the challenges and the joys of digging deeper into the scripture will keep you going for the rest of your life. Every time you dig below the surface of scripture you will find blessings and insights to inspire and push you into greater commitment to Christ. God has some really wonderful ways of instilling convictions and confidence into our lives through His Word.

By using the above procedures you can spend as much -- or as little -- time as needed or as you have available for doing Bible study. By digging out the ideas in a series of passages inside a single book of the Bible you will begin to accumulate a growing data bank of understanding about that document. And such an approach to Bible study will build on to itself, so that many of the steps outlined above do not need to be repeated because you already have gained insight about that part. For example, the background questions of the composition history of the book need to be explored only in the beginning study. Subsequent studies will simply extend or build off what you learned in the initial study.

Additionally, over time you will discover that your developing skills with these procedures means that it takes less and less time to cover the range of questions. At some point just your simple reading of the text from different translations will cause insights to jump off the page at you with immediate grasping of most of the issues.

In the next chapter we will explore how these ideas apply to our world today. Some of the applications with greater success.

But for now let's work on having the foundation for legitimate Bible study. We must have the right foundation.



ideas in the biblical text to that can help us make the

text. This always stands as this part correct in order to