



The History of the Bible
Session 16: Topic 5.0
Modern English Translations: 1800 to Present

Study by
Lorin L Cranford

Overview of Session

- 5.0 Translations, translations, translations: **How do I make sense of all this?**
 - 5.1 **Methods: Why are there so many translations today?**
 - 5.1.1 *Structures for creating translations*
 - 5.1.1.1 Individual: Translations produced by an individual
 - 5.1.1.2 Committee: Translations produced by a committee
 - 5.1.1.3 Evaluation: Strengths and Weaknesses of each approach
 - 5.1.2 *Approaches: How do Bible translators do their work?*
 - 5.1.2.1 Formal Equivalent (FE) Translations
 - 5.1.2.2 Dynamic Equivalent (DE) Translations
 - 5.1.2.3 Mixture of Above Methods
 - 5.2 **Translations, translations, translations: How do I know which one is the best?**
 - 5.2.1 Context: Which translation is best?
 - 5.2.2 List of Translations
- Bibliography

Detailed Study

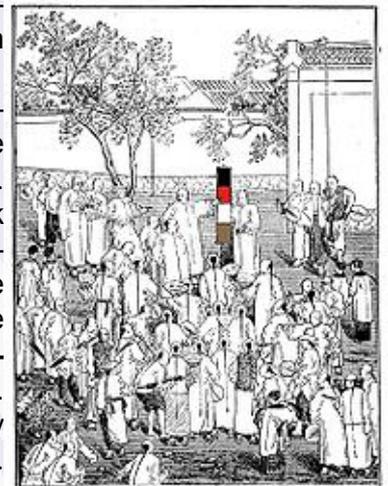
5.0 Translations, translations, translations. How do I make sense of all this?

Just a quick trip to a Christian bookstore will reveal an amazing number of different English translations of the Bible for sale. For a Christian without some background awareness of how and why such a large number of translations have been produced, shopping for a Bible can be an overwhelming experience.

5.1 Modern Translations: Why are there so many translations today?

Bible translation began an explosive growth in the late 1800s. As we have observed in previous chapters, the central push was the mushrooming number of ancient manuscripts of the New Testament that began to be discovered in the late 1800s. This led to the development of textual criticism, the way to analyze and evaluate this large number of manuscripts. The result of this analytical process was the production of printed Greek texts taking advantage of new manuscript discoveries with each successive edition of the printed Greek text. This led to a growing number of Bible translations reflecting these advances in the analysis of the increasing number of ancient manuscripts. A chain reaction process developed. This would characterize Bible translation until the post WWII era, when other dynamics kicked in gear driving Bible translation even more.

Two organizational structures and movements helped guide and stimulate the above process. **Biblical archaeology** came into its own toward the close of the 1800s. This was the key to the discovery of the ancient manuscripts. At the beginning of the 1800s barely a dozen ancient manuscripts of the Greek New Testament were known to exist. By the middle 1900s over 5,300 manuscripts had been discovered and now are located in museums etc. around the world. And the number continues climbing as more manuscripts continue to be discovered. Most of these were discovered after 1900. **Bible translation societies** developed somewhat in parallel to the biblical archaeology movement. But, more importantly, these societies were tied into the modern missionary movement among Protestant groups primarily in Europe, the UK, and the US. The spreading of the gospel around the world exploded during this same era, thus creating the need for the scriptures to be translated into the various languages where missionaries were ministering. As a side benefit of these efforts, translations into English, German, French and other European languages expanded rapidly. Only rarely were the translations for the missionaries based on the biblical languages texts. Most of the time the source language text for the missionaries was the native language of the missionary, i.e., English, German etc. Thus good quality translations in English etc. were needed as a foundation for translations in the different third world languages.



To fully understand the background for emerging Bible translation activities in the nineteenth century, one should pay close attention to events taking place in world history, and in particular to European and North

American history, during this century. Nothing in religious circles ever takes place in isolation and detachment from dynamics and trends in the surrounding world. Biblical archaeology, Bible societies, missionary movements and other trends were all shaped and propelled by the cultures they existed in during the 1800s and 1900s.

5.1.1 Structures for creating translations

In the modern era of Bible translation, translations have been produced by one of two basic methods. Either an individual, or small group of individuals, who were acting on their own initiative set out to translate either the New Testament or the entire Bible into the English language. The other approach is the committee approach. Since the late 1800s, this means that an organization -- typically a Bible society -- will agree to sponsor a translation project. A committee of individuals is selected by the sponsoring organization to produce a new translation of the Bible.

5.1.1.1 Individual

In the history of Bible translation for Christianity, the model of Jerome somewhat stands as the beginning example. His work in producing the Latin Vulgate set some standards that would be followed in varying degrees later on. Luther's work in the 1500s continued this model, although Luther did not work as thoroughly with the biblical language texts as did Jerome. Additionally, the Vulgate played a major role in Luther's role. This was for many reasons. The lack of far fewer early manuscripts was Luther's challenge. But equally important, if not more significant, was the influence of the Vulgate on Christianity in the sixteenth century. It was "the Bible" in the minds of many, many people. If Luther's translation strayed very far from the Vulgate, his German text would not find acceptance. Luther was smart enough to realize this, and his translation was but a part of a larger strategy to make his reforms of Christianity successful and widely accepted by German speaking Christians in central Europe.

The antecedent for individual translations in the English Bible tradition will go back primarily to the work of William Tyndale, who was highly influenced by Luther's example. The successive English Bibles, which depended heavily on the wording of Tyndale's, would be a mixture of dominate individuals, mostly Miles Coverdale, working in small groups and single individuals producing their own translation. Not until the Bishops' Bible does one encounter the beginnings of the "committee" approach with the official authorization from government leaders for the production of a translation. During the following centuries until the beginning of the modern era in the late 1800s numerous individuals would attempt revisions of the King James Version. Some isolated individuals would attempt new translations of either the New Testament or of the entire Bible:

1768 - Edward Harwood (NT);

1808 - Charles Thompson (1st American English translation of the Bible);

1833 - Noah Webster (the dictionary Webster; more an updated KJV revision of the entire Bible);

1876 - Julia E. Smith (attempt to translate Hebrew and Greek texts).

None of these ever achieved widespread circulation or popularity. Numerous defaults could be found in each one. Consequently, they had little impact or influence on the religious orientation of Christian groups on either side of the Atlantic.

In the modern era of Bible translation, a number of individuals have produced translations while working independently of organizations or of some kind of official authorization. Typically these individuals have been professors and/or recognized scholars in some aspect of religious and/or biblical studies. One exception to this has been Kenneth Taylor who produced the Living Bible, beginning with the New Testament in 1967. His work, as a Baptist lay person, was a paraphrase, rather than a true translation, of the 1901 American Standard Version. This work was done while he worked for the publishing arm of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

5.1.1.2 Committee

The other approach to structuring translation work is the committee approach. In the English Bible tradition, the Bishop's Bible begins the early model of a sort. Matthew Parker, archbishop of Canterbury, put together a committee of translators in 1564 to produce this translation in an effort to counteract the widespread popularity of the Geneva Bible. The translators were either archbishops already or would eventually become one. The King James Version represents the first effort at a translation committee under the hands-on sponsorship by a governmental authority, James I, king of England. A set of translation rules were laid out for the translators to follow.

Increasingly in the modern era of Bible translation, most new English translations are produced by committees under the sponsorship of some organization. Several factors have pushed this trend.

Not the least of which is the cost of producing Bible translations. For someone not familiar with this aspect, the figures can be astounding, since they normally run into the millions of dollars. With the KJV, everyone was supported through either the Church of England or their faculty salaries at Oxford or Cambridge universities. The sponsorship from James the First additionally meant the covering of the vast majority of costs by governmental funds. But in today's world, only the Roman Catholic Church has the resources to underwrite such a project by itself. For Protestants, the Bible societies and the National Council of Churches have provided the organizational structures and financial resources necessary for major translation projects. The costs typically cover the expenses of the translation committee(s), the printing costs of the first run of copies, and the marketing expenses. The variable factor is the structure and size of the translation committee. In today's world, this means at least three or four translation committees of several dozen people, except at the executive committee level, who work on different aspects of the process: biblical language text determination; initial translation of biblical language texts; proofing and revisions of draft translations; evaluations by committees made up exclusively with professors of English style and grammar; and other committees as well. In most of the "Standard" or "Version" labeled translations over the past three or four decades, the translation committees are comprised of scholars from all over the English speaking world. Periodically bringing of these individuals together in one place for long periods of translation work requires substantial amounts of money. Typically, a major translation project from start to finish will take at least five to seven years.

The committee approach in the modern era, as alluded to above, involves not the work of six or seven individuals as the "translation team." There will be multiple translation committees comprised of as many as three or four dozen individuals working on various aspects of the process. Sometimes this is done independently of other committees; sometimes the work of one committee doesn't begin until another committee's work is in finalized form. The more one moves toward the executive committee, which will have both final responsibility and final editing authority, the more times a committee may revisit the translation in doing revisions. To be sure, variations of this rather generic projection of structure will be true per particular translation. The most complex and multi-layered structure in modern times was that of the New International Version project. Additionally, it tops the list in cost for producing the translation. The International Bible Society (formerly the New York Bible Society) almost went bankrupt trying to complete the project. Only after Zondervan Publishing Company agreed to underwrite a major portion of the project for a portion of the income from the initial sales of the translation was the Bible society able to publish the translation. Once Zondervan had recovered their investment in the project, the Bible society was able to release the translation to different publishers for distribution.

Another more recent trend in the committee approach is the growing ecumenical orientation of translation work. The KJV was translated by a committee comprised only of members of the Church of England, although a few members had Puritan orientation. The English Revised Version was comprised only of British scholars, although some American scholars participated at a secondary membership level. The American Standard Version was made up exclusively of American scholars. These committees were either members of one denominational group, or else of a small number of the more traditional church groups. The post WWII pattern has expanded in two directions. Gradually, beginning with the Revised Standard Version, more Protestant denominational groups have been included in the translation committees. Also, with translations such as the NRSV, not just Protestant groups, but Roman Catholics and American Orthodox members have been represented on the committees. The second trend has been to internationalize the membership of the translation committees to include members from the major English speaking countries around the world.

One of the by-products of these two trends has been that two editions of each translation have been released simultaneously: a Protestant edition and a Roman Catholic and/or Orthodox edition. The difference is the presence or absence of the Apocrypha, and either a Catholic version of it, or an Orthodox version of it. Increasingly Protestant versions have been made available that include the Apocrypha as a middle section in the translation with the label Apocrypha. The Roman Catholic edition will vary between including these documents as a middle section under the label "Deutero-Canonical" books, or the older Roman Catholic pattern where these documents are woven into the list of the Old Testament books rather than being set apart in a separate section. When a distinct Orthodox edition is released, it will contain the additional books in the Apocrypha typically adopted by various eastern Orthodox traditions. Sometimes these are merged into the middle section with notations distinguishing between the Roman Catholic canon for the Apocrypha and the Eastern Orthodox canon.

5.1.1.3 Strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

Both the individual and the committee approaches have positive and negative aspects. One positive aspect about an individual translation is that it can be produced at a fraction of the cost for the committee

translation. Occasionally, the individual translator has a particular gift or skill that makes his/her translation outstanding in a certain area. For example, Charles B. Williams had a remarkable perception of the fine meanings of Greek verb tenses and also the ability to communicate that exceptionally well. Thus the C.B. Williams New Testament has made an enduring contribution to the English Bible at that one area. The negative side of the individual translation is that the theological bias of the translator inevitably works its way into the translation. Ken Taylor's Living Bible reflects his ultra-conservative viewpoint, which makes the LB reflect one theological perspective. Additionally, in today's world it is virtually impossible to find a single individual with the exceptional skills necessary in both the biblical languages, textual criticism, and in the English language. Virtually every scholar has a specialty in both training and career orientation. This makes him/her potentially outstanding in their specialization, but limits their skills in other areas. The world of biblical scholarship has become far too complex for one individual to possess the massive skills needed in the broad range of subject areas required to translate the entire Bible into English.

The strengths and weaknesses of the committee approach are fairly obvious. The weakness is the enormous cost involved in producing a single translation. Typically, that cost has been recovered in sales over a period of time. But for the first several years of publication, the distribution of the translation tends to be limited to the publisher(s) directly involved in financial underwriting of the translation. Not only can this limit the distribution to a smaller readership, but also it can necessitate higher sales costs for publications of the translations.

The strengths, however, of the committee approach are several. A well selected committee membership combines the strengths and diverse skills of many individuals into a single group where each committee member can make maximum contribution. In a very legitimate concern for Christian unity, the ecumenical orientation of translation committees helps avoid producing a "sectarian" Bible that favors one theological tradition over another. God gave us one Bible in its initial revelation; a non-sectarian translation of that becomes a common starting point for finding both similarities and differences in the different interpretative traditions embedded in various denominations. To be sure, a counter argument is that the Bible will favor one denominational viewpoint over another. But such an assumption is rather bold in assuming that one Christian group has a corner on biblical truth over against all the others. One of the subtle trends -- and dangers -- emerging in the English Bible at the beginning of the twentieth first century is the growing number of translations being produced by committees with a distinct theological orientation. The New Living Translation committee was comprised of evangelical translators possessing a very conservative theological stance. More than one denomination was represented on the committee, but collectively all represent a very conservative theology. Then there is the "Baptist Bible" that has emerged in recent times, the Holman Christian Standard Bible. This translation committee was comprised of Baptist scholars, and very rapidly is becoming the base translation for all the Sunday School literature produced by the Southern Baptist Lifeway Publishing agency. But the NCSB is not the only example of this. Such a trend stands over against the work of the New Revised Standard Version which sought to expand its inclusiveness to include Protestants, Roman Catholics, and English speaking Orthodox representatives. Another strength, but with possible weakness, is the globalization of translation committees. The most massive effort here is the Roman Catholic Jerusalem Bible project. This translation is being produced in most of the world's languages and a translation based on common methodology and approaches has been released in a growing number of languages. The New Revised Standard Version represents an ecumenical based international effort with translation committee members from all of the English speaking countries. The goal has been to produce one translation equally useful in every English speaking country of the world. This has meant sharp limitation of region jargon and dialectical idioms. The danger here is that such can move the translation toward blandness, since these regional aspects give the language color and vividness.

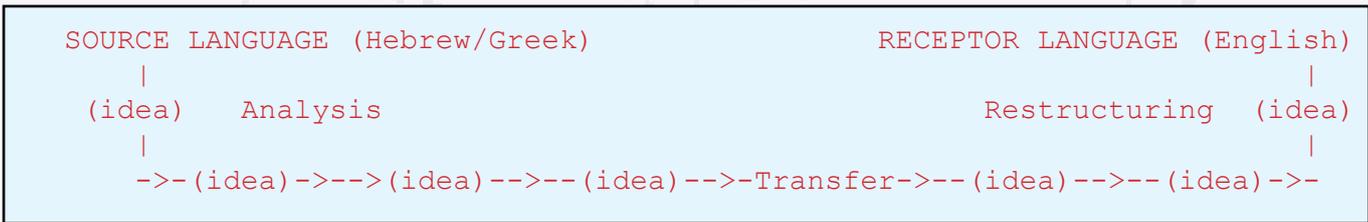
In my estimation, each of the two approaches offers some helpful and perhaps unique insights into the meaning of the biblical texts. But each approach is not without pitfalls that can sharply limit the understanding of the Bible. The challenge to the English Bible translator is the bridging of the rich, and profound meaning of the text in Hebrew and Greek. Any movement of ideas from one language to the next inevitably involves loss of meaning. The biblical languages, especially the Koine Greek of the NT, couched their ideas in an enormously more precise language structure than modern English uses. As I have told Greek students in the class room for over three decades, any movement of ideas in the Greek NT to an English translation means that close to 80% of the original meaning gets dropped in the translation process. This loss is heightened when the two languages don't exist in the same time period. For the Bible translator that time gap is up to four thousand years. Once the Greek students have enough Greek grammar skills to begin working with the Greek New Testament, the accuracy of my statement becomes vividly clear. All of this simply means two things. There's enough lost meaning to allow room for many, many English translations that catch different

aspects of what the biblical text is communicating. Also, for example, as long as American culture remains alive, its language continues to change along with the culture, since language is a mirror of culture. With the changing form of American English new translations are needed to keep the Bible relevant to that changing culture.

5.1.2 Types of translation methodology used:

Translation methodology has evolved over the centuries. And this is especially so in the second half of the twentieth century as translation methods have increasingly taken advantage of developing understandings of human language and communication, coming from the fields of linguistics, epistemology, and communication theory. I explore this in detail with fourth semester Greek students in a unit entitled “Translating the Text” (Lorin L. Cranford, “Translating the Text,” cranfordville.com: <http://cranfordville.com/Translating.pdf>). In that study, we explore the principles and theories of Bible translation as practiced by professional Bible translators in our day.

At the heart of translation in general, and Bible translation in particular, is the movement of an idea from the Source Language to the chosen Receptor Language.



The first stage 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 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 described below. All English translations are going to represent mixtures of both these methods. The issue is to identify which method dominates the particular translation.

5.1.2.1 Formal Equivalent (= Verbal = Form Oriented = FE)

This approach is variously labeled as indicated in the parenthesis. The label “Formal Equivalent” is the most commonly used label among Bible translators. Its answer to the translation issue is to stress that dominate emphasis should be placed on maintaining the source language form as much as possible and the use of as literal word equivalencies as possible. This means the preservation of very long Greek sentences in the English expression. The exact word sequencing of the biblical language text should be preserved unless it will create a seriously flawed English expression. The tendency is to work toward a word-for-word rendering of the Greek words into the English words.

The tendency of this approach is to stress the translation of words in the biblical text to their perceived “exact” words in the receptor language text. This approach will diminish the need for in depth sensitivity to

each of the three aspects mentioned in the above diagram.

Different levels of insistence on this “literalism” will be found among translations gravitating this direction. The most extreme example is the old Marshall’s interlinear NT where the equivalent English word is placed directly over the Greek word on the line below the English. The NASB is not far from this at times with its frequently very wooden English expression. The readability factor shoots out the window most of the time. If the Greek sentence is excessively long -- and in Paul they can be 20 to 25 lines long -- the resulting English sentence matching it in length is virtually incomprehensible.

5.1.2.2 Dynamical Equivalent = Content Oriented = DE)

This approach places greatest emphasis on the receptor language and its readability. The concern is to translate ideas from Greek into English. Given the cultural, historical etc. distances between the ancient source language text and the modern receptor language text, significant restructuring will almost always be necessary in the translation process. Consequently, translating for this methodology requires a broader range of skills on both sides of the process: source and receptor texts. The analysis must be more detailed; awareness of the dynamics in the transfer process must be deeper; and great skills in the restructuring aspect must be utilized. The presumption is that God gave the Bible initially for it to be read and clearly understood in its original languages. That should be preserved in the translation process. And preserved as accurately as is humanly possible.

5.1.2.3 Mixture of both methods

As is mentioned above, virtually all modern English translations represent a mixture of these two methods. The difference is going to be which method is more influential. Or, whether a rather balanced combination of both methods is used. Although somewhat subjective, a continuum can be set up with each translation placed on that range between each of the methods. In cranfordville.com in the assigned analysis paper for the OT and NT survey classes, I have set up such an evaluation for about two dozen English translations, with #1 representing a FE approach, #2 a mixture approach, and #3 a DE approach. It is now somewhat outdated, but does illustrate what I’m talking about here.

The value of being sensitive to this comes at several points. Without knowledge of the biblical language texts, the Bible student can get deeper into the meaning of the scripture text through the use of comparative study of different translations. But for this to be useful one should use translations representing a wide range of translation methods. Studying four translations using pretty much the same method will greatly limit the insights that can be gleaned from such study. Also, being aware of these approaches and which one a particular translation uses will help in understanding the value of that translation for specific uses. A pew Bible shouldn’t be a highly DE oriented translation. Instead, it should lean toward the FE approach with a high level of concern for rhythmic style of English. Responsive readings during worship services will flow much better and easier for the congregation. Additionally, most of the time, the translations falling toward the middle of the continuum will be a better multiple use Bible. Thus, if one is seeking to have a single translation the best choice would be this mid-stream type translation.

5.2 Result: Translations, Translations, Translations: **How do I know which translation is the best?**

Before a description of the English Bible translations can be presented helpfully, some “parsing” of the frequent, basic question, Which translation is the best?, must be done. I use the grammar terms “parsing” similar to the more contemporary term “deconstruct.” In other words, the question has to be placed in some context for a legitimate, correct answer to be given. The question, floating around outside a context, cannot be answered!

5.2.1 What are some possible contexts?

Or, put another way, **what baggage (assumptions) is attached to the question, Which translation is the best?** Here is a list of several possible meanings of the basic:

What particular use of the translation do you have in mind? Even a casual reading of the preface (sometimes labeled, To the Reader) will indicate that the translators and/or publishing company have very specific purposes in mind for their translation. For example, if you intend to use the translation for in-depth Bible study, you would not want the Bible in Basic English, which has been produced primarily for Sunday School use with children and for Bible translators using it as a source Bible text while translating the Bible into very primitive tribal dialects. The “best” translation is when your intended use matches the intended purpose(s) by the translation. This is the case, assuming the translation is a good quality translation in its handling of the biblical text.

How accurate is this translation? This bag is hard to open if one doesn't have some knowledge of the biblical languages, and, perhaps more importantly, knowledge of modern principles of Bible translation. The above discussion (particularly topic 5.1.2) intends to provide an introductory understanding of how translation is done, and how translation methodology has evolved to where it is today. This should solve one of the issues, at least to some degree. Without some awareness of the biblical languages, one is hard put to know "how accurate it is." But, knowing them, even deeply, doesn't guarantee intelligent grasping of the situation. The issue will eventually come down to where a translation concentrates on "words" in the source language text, or when the translation focuses on "ideas" in the biblical text. The FE translation approach will stress words in the Bible language texts. But the DE translation approach emphasizes accurate capturing of the ideas in the biblical language text. Comparison of two or three "serious" commentaries on a selected passage can help provide insights, for both those with and without knowledge of the biblical languages.

How easy is it to understand? Many people reach out to modern translations primarily because they can't make sense out of the KJV. It's archaic language etc. hides clear, easily understandable meaning from them. If this is the context in which the basic question is asked, then a wide range of choices are available. The more Dynamically Equivalent translation method will produce an English expression at a simpler reading level, usually targeting about a sixth grade reading level. This, typically, is the publishing goal for most all Sunday School literature, in religious publication. Additionally, most popular religious books etc. are aiming at this reading level also. This is an especially important consideration if the Bible purchase is as a gift for older children and teenagers.

What kind of English does it use? Two very different assumptions are possible here. First, is the translation done using American or British English? The English language has taken on many shades and forms, but two of the more widely used ones are found on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean. **North American English** is similar enough to British English (or, **Commonwealth English**) so that we can basically communicate with each other. But the use of different words for the same idea, different spellings of the same word etc. can quickly throw up large barriers to clear communication. Thus, the clarity of the English used in a particular translation will depend to some extent on whether it was targeting a British readership or an American readership. In some instances, translation committees are made up of individuals representing both forms of English. In such instances, careful effort is made to avoid the use of jargon etc. that is distinctive to one or the other form of English. This has both advantages and disadvantages. Removing these kinds of expressions tend to make the translation somewhat bland and "plain Jane." The presence of them tends to raise the interest level and level of understanding of meaning for the reader -- this assuming, e.g., the North American reader is reading a North American form of English translation. An emerging third form of English is **International English**, or sometimes it is labeled Global English. During the last decade of the twentieth century, a growing number of English Bibles were released using this form of English, rather than either American or Commonwealth English. Most notable of these is the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

The other assumption that sometimes goes with the basic question is that different people have different tastes in the style of English found in their favorite Bible translation. Generally, for older individuals who grew up with the more formal, rhythmic style of the King James Version, the preference will gravitate toward those modern translations that seek to preserve the KJV flavor while using a contemporary form of English. Younger people will tend to prefer a translation that "reads like we talk" and not "like we're at church." To be sure, age categories don't always dictate the direction of preferences. But these two styles form pretty much the range of preference. Again, for the "old style" English preference, a translation leaning toward the FE method will tend to come closer. In this direction, watch for the words "Standard" and/or "Version" in the name of the translation. For the preference for everyday language, the DE method translations will be more satisfying.

Do you prefer the one I prefer? Often over the past 40 years in ministry when the basic question *Which one is the best?* has been put to me, this is the actual question being asked. Or, else the real question is a derivation of it along these lines: **What do you think about my favorite translation?** or sometimes **Are you smart enough to know which one is the best?** The problem with framing the question this way is that it turns the meaning of "best" into "favorite.": *"My favorite translation is automatically the best."* This is the reasoning typically behind such contextualizing of the basic question. Thus, the "correct" answer comes only if my "favorite" happens to be their "favorite." The fallacy in this reasoning is that it ignores the real issues of Bible translation and the value of particular translations. The "correct" answer has no substance or helpfulness, other than to either confirm or

deny the biases of the one raising the question.

5.2.2 List of Translations

In order to read about a particular translation, click on the desired hyperlink below. This chart attempts to list the most basic information about the translation. An explanation of the headings in the table follows the table. When using this file online, click on the hyperlinked headings for explanations of their significance.

Title	Abb.	Texts Translated	Type	Method	Readability	Pub Date	BLT	English Form	English Style
American Standard Version									
ASV	Bible		Committee	FE	S: 82 G14>E17	1901 Grade Level: 7	---	US	Formal
Contemporary English Version									
CEV	Bible +Apoc; -RC		Committee	DE G14>E25	Score: 85 Grade Level: 5	1995 (NT, 91)	BHS 4 UBS 3	US	Simplified
Bible in Basic English									
BBE	Bible		Committee	DE	Score: 80 G14>E17	1965 Grade Level: 7	Heb	UK GK	Simplified
English Revised Version									
ERV (RV ESV)	Bible +Apoc -RC		Committee	FE G14>E17	Score 82 Grade Level: 7	1881- 1895	Heb Souter	UK	Formal
J.B. Phillips NT in Modern English									
Phil JBP	NT		Individual	DE G14>E19	Score: 74 Grade Level: 8	1958 (rev. 1972)	Nestle	UK	Contemporary
New American Standard Bible									
NASB	Bible		Committee	FE G14>E17	Score: 80 Grade Level: 7	1971 (NT 1963	BHS N-A 26th rev. 1995)	US	Formal
New Berkley Version (Modern Language Bible)									
NBV MLB	Bible		Individual	DE G14>E?	---	1959 NT-1945 Rev. NT - 1969	---	UK	Contemporary
New Century Version									
NCV	---	---	---	---	---	1986 (NT-1978)	---	---	Simplified
New International Version									
NIV	Bible		Committee	Mix G14>E19	Score: 81 Grade Level: 6	1978 (NT- 1973) rev. 1984	BHS	US	Formal
New International Reader's Version									
Nlrv	Bible		Committee	FE G14>E41	Score: 88 Grade Level: 3	1996	----	---	Simplified
New Revised Standard Version									
NRSV	Bible +Apoc: -RC, -EO		Committee	Mix G14>E17	Score: 79 Grade Level: 6	1989	BHS UBS 3rd	Int Eng	Formal
Today's New International Version									
TNIV	Bible		Committee	DE G14>E?	----	2001 (rev. 2005)	---	US	Contemporary
C.B. Williams NT in the Language of the People									
Wms.	NT		Individual	DE G14>E?	----	1937 (reprint ed. 2005)	W-H	US	Contemporary
Revised Standard Version									
RSV	Bible +Apoc (1957); -RC (1966); -EO (1977)		Committee	FE G14>E17	Score: 80 Grade Level: 7	1947-1977	Heb Nestle 17th	US	Formal

Bibliography

Contributing Movements

Biblical Archaeology

“Biblical Archaeology,” Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_archaeology

Bible (Translation) Societies

“Bible Society,” Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Bible_Societies

American Bible Society

“American Bible Society,” Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Bible_Society

A Timeline of American Bible Society History:

http://www.americanbible.org/site/PageServer?pagename=abs_history_of_abs

International Bible Society

“International Bible Society,” Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Bible_Society

Historical Highlights of the International Bible Society:

<http://www.ibs.org/aboutibs/historical.php>

Wycliffe Bible Translators

“Wycliffe Bible Translators,” Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wycliffe_Bible_Translators

“A History of Bible Translation,” Wycliffe Bible Translators USA:

<http://www.wycliffe.org/history/BibleTranslation.htm>

British and Foreign Bible Society

“British and Foreign Bible Society,” Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_and_Foreign_Bible_Society

Major Bible Societies homepages on the web:

United Bible Societies:

<http://www.biblesociety.org/>

This is an umbrella organization comprised of dozens of national Bible societies around the world. One link provides a gateway of links to all of the member societies in this organization.

American Bible Society:

<http://welcome.americanbible.org/intro/>

British and Foreign Bible Society:

<http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/>

International Bible Society:

<http://www.ibs.org/>

Wycliffe Bible Translators, USA:

<http://www.wycliffe.org/>

Wycliffe Bible Translators, International:

<http://www.wycliffe.net/index.shtml>

Translation Methodology

Cranford, Lorin L. “Translating the Text,” Cranfordville.com:

<http://cranfordville.com/Translating.pdf>

This is a pdf file containing the material used in Greek 202 for three week introductory study of the theory and practice of modern professional Bible translation. This file is a revised and simplified version of a chapter in volume two of the Workbook for New Testament Greek, published in 1989 in the second revised edition (1st ed. 1981). The online version has been adapted for use in fourth semester undergraduate Greek studies. A fair amount of technicality is present in the material and it assumes the translation activity is moving from the Greek New Testament to an English language translation.

“Bible Translation,” Bibliography: Special Topics, Cranfordville.com:

<http://cranfordville.com/biblioSpecialTopics.html>

This section of the Bibliography listings part of Cranfordville.com contains several lengthy bib-

liographical lists on different aspects of Bible translation. A total of about a dozen pages will provide several hundred references related to Bible translation.

Bible Translation:

http://www.geocities.com/bible_translation/

The web site maintained by the moderators of the Bible Translators Discussion List. This is a group, mostly of professional Bible translators, who discuss via an internet discussion group, various issues related to Bible translation either for publication or in a mission field setting. A fair amount of helpful information about translation methods and challenges can be found at this site and the links that it provides.

Bible Translations

General Discussions:

“Bible Translation,” Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_translation

“A List of English Bible Translations,” Religious Studies:

<http://home1.gte.net/deleyd/religion/solarmyth/bibles.html>

“English Bible Translations,” Tyndale House at Cambridge University:

<http://www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/Scriptures/index.htm>

Very helpful listing of over 100 English Bible translations. Also contains sample scripture comparisons for many of the translations, along with abbreviated publishing data.

“A Quick Guide to Bible Translations,” Religious Resources Page:

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/lits/library/guides/biblver.htm>

Leman, Wayne, “English Versions,” Bible Translators Discussion List:

http://www.geocities.com/bible_translation/english.htm#list

An exceedingly helpful description and critique of a large number of English Bible translations by Wayne Leman, one of the moderators of the Bible Translators Discussion List. Leman is a career missionary and has published numerous materials on Bible translation. One of the links listed on methodology is my study listed above. For several years I participated in this discussion group, until time and health limitations forced me to drop out. A long list of articles on different issues on translation methodology is found at this site, under Issues.

Erroll F. Rhodes, “A Concise History of the English Bible,” American Bible Society:

<http://www.americanbible.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=6145>

A major article providing a quick synopsis of the English Bible translations from the beginning through the end of the twentieth century.

“English Versions of Scripture,” Bible Researcher com:

<http://www.bible-researcher.com/versions.html>

“Translations of the Bible into English,” Ken Collins Web Site:

<http://www.kencollins.com/bible-t2.htm>

A description and evaluation (advantages/disadvantages) of selected modern English translations.

Code Identification of Chart in Topic 5.2.2:

Title:

This lists the official name of the translation, in alphabetical sequence. Also it contains the hyperlink to the page that goes into greater detail about the translation. That material is organized around the following items:

- 1) quotes about the translation, usually from 3rd party sources with a little more objectivity;
- 2) a sample translation of John 1:1-18 to provide sufficient volume of scripture text with a variety of translation issues;
- 3) a copy of the preface of the translation;
- 4) my personal assessment of the translation.
- 5) a bibliography of references to that translation.

Hyperlinks to other discussions are also provided with each translation.



The icon indicates that the above material has been developed for this translation in a separate page, hyperlinked here to the translation in this chart.

Abbreviation:

This will list the more commonly found abbreviation of this translation.

Texts Translated:

This indicates how much of the Bible is included in the translation:

Bible = the entire Old and New Testaments

NT = Just the New Testament is translated

Tanak = The Hebrew Bible, or Jewish scriptures, which Christians refer to as the Old Testament

+Apoc = The Apocrypha is included in the translation of the Old and New Testaments

-RC = The Roman Catholic version of the Apocrypha

-EO = The Eastern Orthodox versions of the Apocrypha

Translation Type:

This will list the translation according to whether it was done by an individual (5.1.1.1) or by a committee approach (5.1.1.2). See the above discussion (5.1.1) on structures for translations for more details.

Translation Method:

This will list the translation according to the dominant translation method used, whether FE [Form Equivalent] (5.1.2.1) DE [Dynamic Equivalent], (5.1.2.2) or a mixture of the two (5.1.2.3). See the above discussion (5.1.2) for more details.

One reflection of translation method is a simple tabulation of the number of English sentences in comparison to the number of sentences in the underlying Greek text. This tabulation will appear in the chart as G14 > E# for the sample text of John 1:1-18. The Greek text sentence count is based on the UBS Greek New Testament 4th edition. Fourteen sentences are found in these eighteen verses of the Greek text. Significance: The closer the English translation comes to the same number of sentences found in the Greek text, the more Form Equivalent the translation tends to be. Conversely, a large number of English sentences beyond the number in the Greek text tends to reflect the Dynamic Equivalent method of translation.

Readability

This column reflects the testing of John 1:1-18 in each translation for its readability from the standpoint of American English. The basis of the testing is the Fleisch-Kincaid testing method, which has become the standard method for evaluating readability in government and other circles in the United States.

The Wikipedia article on the Fleisch-Kincaid method makes this observation:

As a rule of thumb, scores of 90–100 are considered easily understandable by an average 5th grader. 8th and 9th grade students could easily understand passages with a score of 60–70, and passages with results of 0–30 are best understood by college graduates. Reader's Digest magazine has a readability index of about 65, Time magazine scores about 52, and the Harvard Law Review has a general readability score in the low 30s.

This test has become a U.S. governmental standard. Many government agencies require documents or forms to meet specific readability levels. The U.S. Department of Defense uses the Reading Ease test as the standard test of readability for its documents and forms.

Most states require insurance forms to score 40–50 on the test.

The listing for each translation will contain both the Score and the Grade Level. The online testing apparatus used for each translation is found at the Readability index calculator.

One should remember that different passages of scripture are going to generate different scores. The grammar and syntax of the Greek text of John 1:1-18 are relatively simple. This means that translation from Greek into English is going to generate relatively simple English sentences, regardless of the translation method employed. The result will be higher ease of readability for most all the translations.

Initial Publication Date:

This will list the translation publication date. If revisions have taken place, then a second number will be listed. These are listed by the year of publication.

Biblical Language Texts (BLT):

The first indicator suggests -- as far as is known -- the base text(s) used for the translation of the Old Testament scriptures. Specific printed Hebrew texts etc. will be provided if known. If translators only indicate

the Hebrew text generally, then Heb will be listed.

Heb = Typically means the Massoretic Hebrew text without any critical notes

Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia = Modern Massoretic based Hebrew critical text

The second indicator suggest which printed Greek text(s) served as the base text for the translation of the New Testament scriptures. Specific printed Greek texts etc. will be provided if known. If translators only indicate the Greek text generally, then Gk will be listed.

Gk = Greek texts with no specification of which printed Greek text

UBS = United Bible Societies printed Greek text; Edition indicated by superscripted number, e.g., UBS4 .

N-A = Nestle-Aland printed Greek text; edition indicated by superscripted number

Nestle = The Nestle printed Greek text up through the 25th edition; edition indicated by superscripted number.

W-H = Westcott - Hort printed Greek text

Souter = Novum Testamentum Graece

TR = Textus Receptus

English Form:

This will attempt to group the translation according to three forms of English:

1) American English (US)

2) British English (UK)

3) International English (Int Eng)

The first two categories are self-explanatory. The third, International English, represents an effort to avoid regional forms of English so that the translation has readability internationally or globally.

English Style:

This will attempt to group the translation according to three styles of English. The classification will suggest the dominating style, rather than an exclusive style:

1) Formal English

This style will reflect the more formal style of English first established by the Tyndale translation and crystallized by the King James Version. Attempts to maintain this style in varying degrees will be listed here.

In today's pattern, this approach is less concerned in preserving the flavor of the KJV. Instead, formal language focuses on other issues. Perhaps, the easiest analogy is that of a "pew Bible." That is, a translation suitable for use in public worship. Typically, the "purer" versions of this will also be concerned with easily memorizable poetic rhythm in its English expression.

2) Contemporary English

This pattern will reflect the influence on Eugene Nida and others to produce translations in "everyday" English. Attention is focused on readability for the Receptor Text. A concern typically here, that is shared with the Simplified English approach, is to produce an English expression that people without any Christian background can understand.

3) Simplified English

This will reflect the intentional effort to produce a very simplified form of English as a basis of the translation. The rationale for this is either for people with very low reading skills and/or for translators seeking to produce a simplified translation in primitive tribal groups in missionary settings. Typically, children's Bibles will adopt this approach as well.