Compiling and Translating the Bible

Introduction

God revealed himself to mankind through men inspired by the work of the Holy Spirit using about forty writers over many centuries. He originally spoke directly to leaders and heads of families as in the cases of Adam, Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. Later He spoke to the people through prophets such as Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel, as well as some lesser-known prophets.

Webster gives the meanings of the word bible as

a) the sacred scriptures of Christians comprising the Old Testament and the New Testament

b) the sacred scriptures of some other religion (such as Judaism). (www.merriam-webster.com)

The "sacred scriptures" in one book are a compilation of

a) writings of the Jews pertaining to their relationship with Jehovah God - Old Testament.

b) writings of the apostles or those very closely associated with them pertaining to the message of the Son of God, what he said and did while on earth - New Testament.

The Bible is a collection of many books by many writers over a period of approximately 1500 years. This collection of books has been divided into two sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament.

400 B.C. The Old Testament began to be translated into Aramaic. This translation is called the Aramaic Targums. This translation helped the Jewish people, who began to speak Aramaic from the time of their captivity in Babylon, to understand the Old Testament in the language that they commonly spoke. In the first century Palestine of Jesus' day, Aramaic was still the most commonly spoken language. For example, Maranatha: "Our Lord has come," 1 Corinthians 16:22 is an example of an Aramaic word that is used in the New Testament. [4]

During the third century, around 250 B.C., Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt, translated the Old Testament into Greek. This translation became known as the Septuagint or 'Seventy' because according to tradition (legend) 70 (or 72) scholars labored 70 (or 72) days to produce [it]. The Septuagint was often used by New Testament writers when they quoted from the Old Testament. The LXX was the translation of the Old Testament that was used by the early Church. [5]

By 100 B.C. these writings in Hebrew and Aramaic comprised the thirty-nine books referred to as "The Law and the Prophets" or "The Law and the Prophets and the Psalms" by the Israelites. During Jesus' and the Apostle's time they were also called the "Scriptures". We refer to them as the Old Testament. "Josephus, a non-Christian Jewish historian, declares that, since the death of Artaxerxes (424 B.C.), 'no one had dared, up to this day, to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them.' This clearly indicates that the Jewish Canon assumed a settled form in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah." [6]

Manuscripts currently available [extants] of the Old Testament written in Hebrew and Aramaic [language acquired during Babylon captivity (rd)] are:

a. Chester Beatty Papyri 100- 400 AD

b. Codex Vaticannus and Codex Sinaiticus 350 AD [Codex is Latin for English word code (rd)]

c. The Masoretic Text (MT) is the Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible (Tanakh). It defines not just the books of the Jewish canon, but also the precise letter-text of the biblical books in Judaism, as well as their vocalization and accentuation for both public reading and private study. The MT, probably between the seventh and tenth centuries, is also widely used as the basis for translations of the Old Testament in Protestant Bibles, and in recent decades also for Catholic Bibles.[6a]

Old Testament (Jew / Hebrew writings)

Tanakh - Name for the Jewish Bible. It is an acronym for [Torah, prophets (*Nevi'ilm*) and writings (*Ketuvim*)].[1]

Torah

Torah is a Hebrew word meaning doctrine or teaching. It has been revered as the inspired word of God. It is said by tradition to have been revealed to Moses by Him. The Torah is sometimes referred to as the (written) Law or written Torah. The Torah is the first part of the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible, and is made up of five books. For that reason, it is also called the Pentateuch, Chumash, or "the Five Books of Moses." [2]

Talmud

Talmud (aka Shas) is the record of rabbinic discussions. [Could this be the "Traditions" the Jews accused Jesus of violating? (rd)] Their discussions pertained to

a) Jewish law
b) ethics
c) customs
d) history

The Talmud has two components:

a) The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law.
b) The Gemara (c. 500 CE), a discussion of the Mishnah and related

Tannaitic writings often venture onto other subjects and expound broadly on the Tanakh. The terms Talmud and Gemara are often used interchangeably. The Gemara is the basis for all codes of rabbinic law and is much quoted in other rabbinic literature. The whole Talmud is also traditionally referred to as Shas – an abbreviation of *shisha sedarim*, "six orders" of Mishnah. [3]

New Testament

"The New Testament was complete, or substantially completed, about A.D. 100. The majority of the writings being in existence twenty to forty years before this."

According to F. F. Bruce as early as 367 A.D. twenty-seven books were recognized as having been accepted by many Eastern Church leaders as authentic. Shortly afterwards Western church leaders accepted them. "It was not until c, 508 A.D. that 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation were included in a version of the Syriac Bible in addition to the other twenty-two books." None of the original writings are present today. However, thousands of copies of manuscripts (MSS), fragments, cursives, and quotations in writings by early first and second-century Christians are available to translators. It is probably safe to say that none of these writings were copied without some errors or without copyist notes.

"The first steps in the formation of a canon of authoritative Christian books, worthy to stand beside the Old Testament canon, which was the Bible of our Lord and His apostles, appear to have been taken about the beginning of the second century, when there is evidence for the circulation of two collections of Christian writings in the Church.

"The *corpus Paulinum*, or collection of Paul's writings, was brought together about the same time as the collecting of the fourfold Gospel. As the Gospel collection was designated by the Greek word *Euangelion*, so the Pauline collection was designated by the one-word *Apostolos*, each letter being distinguished as 'To the Romans', 'First to the Corinthians, and so on. Before long, the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews was bound up with the Pauline writings. Acts, as a matter of convenience, came to be bound up with the 'General Epistles' (those of Peter, James, John and Jude). … The only books about which there was any substantial doubt after the middle of the second century were some of those which come at the end of our New Testament … James, Jude, Peter, 2 and 3 John. … Athanasius in 367 A.D. lays down the twenty-seven books of our New Testament as alone canonical; shortly afterward Jerome and Augustine followed his example in the West. … One thing must be emphatically stated. The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the [Catholic] Church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the [Catholic] Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognizing their innate worth and generally apostolic authority, direct or indirect."

Things Christ did and said were recorded by four different writers, one of whom, Luke, may have been a Gentile. Originally, they were considered as one book and simply referred to as "The Gospel" with each writer's work as "the Gospel according to Matthew" or "the Gospel according to John." "The fifth historical writing, the Acts of the Apostles is actually a continuation of the third Gospel, written by the same author, Luke, the physician and companion of the apostle Paul." [7] "When Luke and Acts were separated, one or two modifications were apparently introduced. Originally Luke seems to have left all mention of the ascension to his second treaties; now the words 'and was carried to heaven' were added to Luke 24:51, to round out the narrative, and in consequence 'was taken up' added to Acts 1:2." [8]

Josephus confirms many things recorded in the Bible that occurred during Jesus' time on earth and the early years of the church in his writings about the Jewish nation.

This does not mean every word in any particular translation carries the exact meaning of the word as originally spoken or written.

Ten Stages of NT Formation and Transmission [12]

The Historical Jesus - words are spoken and deeds are performed by Jesus himself during his lifetime on earth.

Oral Tradition - traditions and beliefs about Jesus are developed and passed on by early Christian communities.

Written Sources - some of the miracles and/or sayings of Jesus are compiled and recorded in early written documents.

Written Texts - individual letters, full Gospels, etc., are written with particular messages for particular situations.

Distribution - some writings are copied and shared with other Christian communities throughout the Mediterranean.

C**ollection** - certain Christians begin collecting the letters of Paul and gathering together several different Gospels.

Canonization - four Gospels, several collections of letters, and a

few other texts are accepted as authoritative scriptures.

Translation - biblical texts are translated into other ancient and modern languages: Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian.

Interpretation - the meaning of the scriptures is investigated on various levels: literal, spiritual, historical, social, etc.

Application - communities and individuals use the NT for practical purposes: liturgical, moral, sacramental, theological.

Documents Available for Translators

These writings can be divided into three parts:

- **Autographs:** The original texts were written either by the author's own hand or by a scribe under their personal supervision.
- **Manuscripts:** All Bibles were hand copied onto papyrus or parchment until Gutenberg first printed the Latin Bible in 1456.
- **Translations:** When the Bible is translated into a different language it is usually translated from the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, cursives and papyruses. However, some translations in the past were derived from an earlier translation. The first English translation by John Wycliffe in 1380 was prepared from the Latin Vulgate. [10]

The writings were either in UNCIALS [all words in caps].

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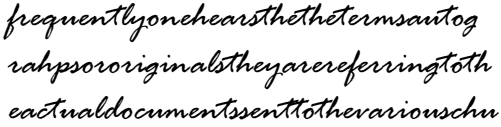

Initially many considered the writings to be in the Classical Greek; i.e., Homer's Iliad. However, years later "Thousands of papyri

were discovered in Egypt around the turn of the century which displayed a form of Greek called *'konie'* Greek, meaning common. New Testament scholars began to discover that most of the New Testament was written in *Koine* Greek, the language of the people, rather than the kind of Greek used by the Greek poets and tragedians." [11]

Manuscripts, Cursives and Other Writings

There have been volumes written about how the Bible was compiled and translated. Countless others have been written critical of the translation effort and still others praising the excellent scholarship. Several scholars lost their lives or suffered persecution as a result of their desire to get the Bible into the language of the common man.

There are over 24,000 manuscripts (5,000 in Greek). Nearly a hundred manuscripts were discovered in the 1900s with portions of the New Testament. In the 1800s, other manuscripts were found, some of the more important ones described below. [15]

Codex Sinaiticus. [16]
This was discovered by Constantin von Tischendorf in St. Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai, dating around 350 AD, containing the entire New Testament.

Codex Vaticanus. [17]
This manuscript had been in the Vatican's library since about 1481 but had never been made available to scholars until the middle of the 18th century. The entire Old and New Testaments are included except from Hebrews 9:15 through to the end of Revelation, and the Pastoral Epistles. Most scholars consider the Codex Vaticanus as being some of the most trustworthy of the New Testament text.

Codex Alexandrinus. [18]
Fifth-century manuscripts containing nearly all of the New Testament and are considered to be very reliable witness to the General Epistles and Revelation.

Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus. [19]
Another fifth-century document containing a large portion of the

New Testament but partially erased and written upon with the sermons of St. Ephraem. It was later deciphered by the painstaking efforts of Tischendorf.

Codex Bezae. [20]
More fifth century manuscripts containing the Gospels and Acts with a text quite different from the other manuscripts of that era.

Codex Washingtonianus (also called The Freer Gospels). [21]
Fifth-century manuscript with all four Gospels - housed in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C.
"Before the 15th century and Guttenberg's press, all copies of any work were by hand and thus called manuscripts. Although there are certain differences in text between some of the manuscripts, there are no significant fundamental doctrine differences. We can have faith in today's Bible to truly be the very Word of God."

Dead Sea Scrolls
The Dead Sea Scrolls consist of roughly 1000 documents, most likely written by the Essenes during the period from about 200 BC to 68 AD including texts from the Hebrew Bible, which were discovered between 1947 and 1979 in caves near the Wadi Qumran on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea) in Israel. [22] The Dead Sea scrolls pre-date Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus (350 AD) and the Hebrew 9th-century manuscript, Masoretic text. [23]

The Protestant Reformation saw an increase in translations of the Bible into the common languages of the people. None of these manuscripts were available to the translators of the King James Bible.

Dick Sztanyo wrote in 1985 "There are over 5,336 MSS (manuscripts) of the Greek New Testament (in whole or in part, mostly part) currently catalogued." [24] ... "in addition there are over 2,000 ancient versions, like the Coptic, Armenian and Syriac Peshitto, most of them dating from the second and third centuries. Moreover, we have around 8,000 copies of the Latin MS. Add to this the thousands of citations in the 'church fathers' " "Astounding" number of ancient manuscripts extant: 5,000 Greek manuscripts,

10,000 Latin and 9,000 other--totaling over 24,000 manuscript copies or portions of the New Testament. These are dated from 100 to 300 years after the originals. [25] "No doubt there are more today. With so many manuscripts, cursives and writing of the "church fathers" most differing in some degree, how can anyone believe the Bible has translated the intent of the original writers?

Consider the following:
"The case is like that of a certain will. A gentleman left a large estate entailed to his descendants of the third generation, and it was not to be divided until a majority of them should be of age. During the interval many copies of the will were circulated among parties interested, many of these being copies of copies. In the meantime, the office of record in which the original was filed was burned with all its contents. When the time for division drew near, a prying attorney gave out among the heirs the report that no two existing copies of the will were alike. This alarmed them all and set them busily at work to ascertain the truth of the report. On comparing copy with copy, they found the report true, but on close inspection, it was discovered that the differences consisted in errors of spelling or grammatical construction; some mistakes in figures corrected by the written numbers; and some other differences not easily accounted for; but that in none of the copies did these mistakes affect the rights of the heirs. In the essential matters for which the will was written the representations of all copies were precisely the same. The result was that they divided the estate with perfect satisfaction to all, and they were more certain that they had executed the will of their grandfather than if the original copy had been alone preserved; for it might have been tampered with in the interest of a single heir, but the copies, defective though they were, could not have been. So, with the New Testament. The discovery of errors in the copies excited alarm leading to inquiry, which developed the fact that he who has the most imperfect copy has in it all that the original contained of doctrine, duty and privilege." [26]

Translation Process

Now that confidence in using these manuscripts for translating has been established, the very complex matter of translating into other languages (tongues) can begin. The translators must decide:

- What words or phrases must be taken together as an idiomatic expression?
- What is the proper word in the receiving language?
- Is the word active or passive? Is it past, present or future tense?
- Is the word's mood indicative, subjunctive, and imperative?
- What methodology, translation theories, is to be used in translating?
- For the New Testament, which MSS should be used, the MSS with the most copies, the oldest manuscript, or the one the translators consider the most reliable? MSS are not exact copies, are spread out over many years, and may be just quotations from memory by early writers.
- What translation rules will be followed or should new ones be established?

Organized, Analyzed, Categorized and Compared

Before any actual translation can begin rules must be agreed upon and documents must be:

1. Group Writings with similar styles and grammar into Text families.[27]

A. Byzantine or Eastern –tenth century, the primary text used by King James Version (KJV) translators.

B. Western - probably least reliable and most heavily disputed.

C. Caesarean - Origen may have been brought to Caesarea

D. Alexandrian - by scribes in Alexandra, Egypt and used as the primary text by RSV translators

1) Vaticanus or B MSS (fourth century)
2) Sinaiticus or Alpha MSS (fourth century)

E. Coptic

F. Latin Vulgate (Jerome translated in the fifth-century - Catholics).

G. Syriac or Peshitto (probably a second-century MSS).

H. Quotations found in copious writings of "church fathers."

2. Study the Manuscripts, "textual criticism," with the goal of reproducing the original text compiled out of a text family using variant readings from many MSS as no two MSS are exactly alike. This process results in a Greek text or type.

Text Types

A. Byzantine - taken from the Byzantine Text referred to as the Majority text by its supporters and used in KJV. It is also known as the Textus Receptus.

B. Westcott-Hort - taken from the Alexandrian Text used in Revised Standard (RSV), English Standard (ESV) and American Standard (ASV).

C. Eclectic - utilizes "best evidence" approach and used by translations since ASV [28]

"In 1841, the English Hexapla New Testament was printed. This textual comparison tool shows in parallel columns: The 1380 Wycliffe, 1534 Tyndale, 1539 Great, 1557 Geneva, 1582 Rheims, and 1611 King James versions of the entire New Testament, with the original Greek at the top of the page. By the latter part of the 19th century there were available three very good Greek New Testament texts: Tregelles', Tischendorf's, and Wescott and Hort's. These texts were improved greatly from the Textus Receptus used in earlier English translations. By then, much had been learned about the meaning of various Hebrew words and Greek words." [29]

Today the United Bible Society's UBS 4th Ed. and Nestle's 27th Ed. are the Greek text generally used for translating.

3. Establish Rules to determine which books or writings should be included and/or which ones must be excluded.

a. The writing must claim to be the word of God either explicitly or implicitly.
b. Was it written by those who have been attested to as representatives of God for the purposes of revelation?
c. Is it authentic and does not contradict known authentic writings?
d. Was it received (i.e., collected, read, and used) by God's people (Israel in the Old, the church in the New) immediately after composition?

e. Was it written by an authoritative writer, a founding stone of the church or an eyewitness to the events?
f. Did the people who knew of the alleged events have the chance to test them? To be testable, they must have occurred within the lifetime of those who are judging their authenticity. [30]

The examples listed below have been excluded in most Bibles but there are many more. [31] These can be summarized as:

a) written too late
b) not written by an apostle or close associate
c) contradicted known authentic writings (heretical).

The Apocrypha was from manuscripts of the Greek Septuagint for which no Hebrew versions exist. [32]

The Letter of Clement I was written about AD 95-6 in the name of the church of Rome and was included in some early canonical lists. Clement I is the oldest Christian manuscript that is NOT in the canon. The letter is now categorized as part of a group of manuscripts called the "Apostolic Fathers," a group of manuscripts written while the apostles and other eye-witnesses to Jesus Christ's life were still alive.

The Didache: The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations. The Didache is a manual of moral instruction and church practice known for its eucharist service which does not use sacrificial language. The Didache was "lost" for several centuries until it was re-discovered in 1875 in the Jerusalem Monastery of the Holy Sepulchre at Constantinople. Like Clement I, the Didache is now part of a group of manuscripts called the "Apostolic Fathers," the oldest writings of a larger grouping called "Church Fathers."

First Apology by Justin Martyr: Justin Martyr is one of the most famous Christian apologists (defenders of the faith). He was born about 100 C.E. in Shechem, Samaria. He was converted to Christianity about 130. Justin's works are now part of a group of manuscripts called "Church Fathers." His first apology seeks to disprove Christians from various

charges that had been made against them and to justify the Christian religion.

The Gospel of Thomas is an example of a book that originated from a group that was labeled heretical. It is a Gnostic document. Of all of the Christian Gnostic manuscripts that were among those discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt in 1945, the Gospel of Thomas has the most similarities with the canonical books. It is a collection of 114 sayings (*logia*) of Jesus, many similar to those in the Bible and others considered by scholars to be genuine sayings of Christ. Thomas was probably written in Syria about 140 CE (Christian or Common Era).

The Infancy Gospel of Thomas opens with a story about five-year-old Jesus making twelve sparrows out of mud. He claps his hands; they come to life and fly away. A nice story but in the next story, child Jesus curses a boy and makes him wither up. Later Jesus is angered when another child bumps into his shoulder and strikes him dead! This gospel, which may be as old as the second century, is a different book from the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas.

The Life of Adam and Eve: A more detailed story of creation than what is found in Genesis, this book includes jealous angels, a more devious serpent, and more information about Eve's fall from grace from her point of view.

The Book of Jubilees: This obscure Hebrew text offers an answer to a question that has vexed Christians for centuries -- if Adam and Eve only had sons, and if no other humans existed, who gave birth to humanity? This text reveals that Adam and Eve had nine children and that Cain's younger sister Awan became his wife. The idea that humanity was born of incest would have been radical -- and heretical.

The Book of Enoch: This book reads like a modern-day action film, telling of fallen angels, bloodthirsty giants, an earth that had become home to an increasingly flawed humanity and a divine judgment to be rendered though denied a place in most Western Bibles; it has been used for

centuries by Ethiopian Christians. Large portions of this book were found as part of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Protovangelion of James: This book offers details of the life of the Virgin Mary, her parents, her birth and her youth, stories not found in the New Testament Gospels but were beloved by many early Christians.

The Gospel of Mary: This Gnostic Text reveals that Mary Magdalene may have been an apostle, perhaps even a leading apostle, not a prostitute. While some texts in the Bible seem to deny women a voice in the Christian community, this text helps spark the debate about the role of women in the church.

The Gospel of Nicodemus: This is the story of Jesus' trial and execution and his descent into hell. According to this gospel the Savior asserts his power over Satan by freeing patriarchs such as Adam, Isaiah and Abraham from Hell.

The Apocalypse of Peter: Peter's apocalypse suggests that there is a way out of punishment for evildoers and implies that the threat of the apocalypse is a way for God to scare people into living a moral life and committing fewer sins.

4. Translation Theories or methods considered most appropriate must be determined.

A. Highly literal (Attempts to retain the grammatical form, sentence structure and consistency of word usage). Young's Literal Translation and Interlinear Bibles are examples
B. Modified literal or formal equivalence – word for word.
C. Dynamic Equivalence – thought for thought. Dynamic Equivalence has more subjectivity and paraphrasing associated with this theory contributing to some heavy criticism but generally much easier to read.
D. Unduly Free (Translators' opinion by paraphrasing as to meaning with little or no consideration to form).
E. Linguistic or closest natural equivalent translation

5. Manuscript Text Family and Text Type to Use. Which manuscript should be used the oldest available manuscripts;

e.g., those around 350 AD or the most available copies but dated much later?

6. Remain True to Original Words and Meanings. Many words in the receiving language have varied meanings as does the transferring language. Therefore, much thought must be given in deciding the most appropriate word in the receiving language that should be used to convey the meaning of the original. An example of one in previous and current translations is the Greek word *baptizo* meaning to dip, plunge or submerge (bury). Should it be translated as immerse, pour or sprinkle? In this case, translators yielded to political pressures by not translating but created a new word, baptize, by transliterating the Greek word. This allowed the new word to include current practices in its meaning. Therefore, pressures and politics overcame integrity.

Idiomatic expressions can cause problems if not understood, e.g., the English phrase "fox in the hen house" has nothing to do with foxes or hen houses in its meaning. One may not even be aware that such expressions are being used in the transferring language. Also, since there were no spaces or punctuation in the UNCALS or cursives manuscripts, a string of letters such as "*godisnowhere*" could mean "God is no where" or "God is now here." The context must determine which is correct.

Word for Word Translation Difficulties [33]

Word for word translation is impossible as different languages have different moods and tenses that do not carry into other languages. For example, 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 states: "But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me" (NIV).

Word for Word: Will continue but at Ephesus until Pentecost. Door for me opened great and effective and adversaries many.

Sometimes literal translations would make no sense in English due to Greek euphemisms or metaphors. Acts 17:18 (GWT) Some

Epicurean and Stoic philosophers had discussions with him. Some asked, "What is this babbling fool (*spermologos*- seed picker, babbler or gossiper) trying to say?" Other translations state; "He seems to be speaking about foreign gods." The philosophers said these things because Paul was telling the Good News about Jesus and saying that people would come back to life.

1 Thessalonians 4:4 (NIV) …that each of you should learn to control his own body (*Skeuos ktaomai en hagiasmo*) in a way that is holy and honorable. [*skeuos*, (vessel, an implement, household utensils, domestic gear) *ktaomai* (to get, acquire, own, obtain, possess, provide, purchase) *en* (about, after, against, almost, in, altogether, among, as, at, before, between) *hagiasmo* (purity; holiness, sanctification, honor pre-eminence)]
Some words have different meanings depending on the context. For example, the Greek word *splagchnon* - bowels, guts, affection, mercy, pity.

For example in Acts 1:18 states (NIV) "With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines (*splagchnon*) spilled out" and Philippians 1:8 (KJV) states "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels (*splagchnon*) of Jesus Christ."

Bible scholars tend to rely upon translation utilizing the modified literal theory of translating, the eclectic text type and the Alexandrian text family. However, the NKJV used the Byzantine family, Byzantine type and Modified literal theory, the ASV used the Alexandrian or Western family, Westcott-Hort type and the Modified literal theory and the NIV used the Alexandrian or Western family, Westcott-Hort type and Dynamic Equivalence theory. The Dynamic Equivalence translation theory is more subjective and prone to paraphrasing, thus considered less reliable.

Early Translations

The first translators began with a few manuscripts, fragments and writings of "Apostolic Fathers" and early "Church Fathers" as they often quoted from the apostles' writings. Years later the discovery of many additional documents led to new and improved Greek text

which generally clarified some disputed passages or words while raising doubts about others.

Early translations of the New Testament can give important insight into the underlying Greek manuscripts from which they were translated. [13]

180 A.D. Early translations of the New Testament from Greek into Latin, Syriac, and Coptic versions began.

195 A.D. The name of the first translation of the Old and New Testaments into Latin was termed Old Latin. Both Testaments having been translated from Greek and no copies exist today. Parts of the Old Latin were found in quotes by the church father Tertullian, who lived around 160-220 A.D. in North Africa and wrote treatises on theology.

300 A.D. The Old Syriac was a translation of the New Testament from Greek into Syriac [an Armenian dialect possibly for the Assyrians Maronite and Chaldean (rd)].

300 A.D. The Coptic Versions: Coptic was spoken in four dialects in Egypt. The Bible was translated into each of these four dialects.

380 A.D. The Old Latin also called Italia was considered unreliable. "There existed by this time a multiplicity of translations differing from one another, and there was none possessed of commanding authority to which appeal might be made in case of necessity. It was the consideration of the chaotic condition of the existing translations, with their divergences and variations, which moved [Pope] Damasus to commission Jerome to his task and Jerome to undertake it." [14]

"Most scholars believe that all of the New Testament was originally composed in Greek. The three main textual traditions are sometimes called the Western text-type, the Alexandrian text-type, and Byzantine text-type. Together they comprise the majority of New Testament manuscripts. There are also several ancient versions in other languages, the most important of which are the Syriac

(including the Peshitta and the Diatessaron gospel harmony) and the Latin (both the Vetus Latina and the Vulgate).

"A few scholars believe in Aramaic primacy - that parts of the Greek New Testament are actually a translation of an Aramaic original, in particular the Gospel of Matthew. Of these, a small number accept the Syriac Peshitta as representing the original, while most take a more critical approach to reconstructing the original text."

"During the 4th century, Latin began to replace Greek as the common language. Several Latin translations, often inaccurate, leaked into circulation. The Church needed an official translation.

Latin Vulgate

"Pope Damasus assigned the job to Jerome, his theological advisor and perhaps the most learned man of the time. Jerome's translation, called the Latin Vulgate (meaning vulgar or common) became the Bible of the Middle Ages."

Jerome was a pupil and great admirer of the philosopher-theologian Origen, who, though very influential in the West, was not accepted by all as orthodox.

The Old Latin version, or *Itala*, which Jerome was to revise, dated back to the second century, not later than 157 A.D., when its New Testament was translated from Greek manuscripts of that period. The majority of its copies still corresponded in the main with the traditional text of the West. But many had suffered corruption and were more like the Greek manuscripts of the so-called Eusebio-Origen tradition, influenced by and partially synthesizing heretical and even semi-pagan corruptions that had become rampant as early as 200 A.D. And Jerome tended to revise in favor of these and his theological bias more than in favor of the oldest Italic or *Itala*, and included several Apocryphal books. And, though he was partially checked by a few strong scholars in the West exposing him and the corrupted Greek manuscripts to which he gave priority, the result was nevertheless that in the course of time "Origenism flooded the Catholic Church through Jerome, the father of Latin Christianity."

The Latin Vulgate became the Bible of the Western Church until the Protestant Reformation in the 1500's. It continues to be the authoritative translation of the Roman Catholic Church to this day.

As centuries passed Latin became the language of the educated but not the language spoken by most people. The Bible would be read in Latin but the masses could not understand it. "The earliest printed edition of the New Testament in Greek appeared in 1516 from the Froben press. It was compiled by Desiderius Erasmus on the basis of the few recent Greek manuscripts, all of Byzantine tradition, [only five or six late manuscripts dating from the tenth to thirteenth-century manuscripts and were considered inferior to the earlier ones (rd)] at his disposal, which he completed by translating from the Vulgate parts for which he did not have a Greek text. He produced four later editions of the text. Erasmus was a deeply religious Roman Catholic, but his preference for the textual tradition represented in the Byzantine Greek text of the time rather than that in the Latin Vulgate led to him being viewed with suspicion by some authorities of his Church.

Textus Receptus

"The first edition with critical apparatus (variant readings in manuscripts) was produced by the printer Robert Estienne of Paris in 1550. The type of text printed in this edition and in those of Erasmus became known as the Textus Receptus (Latin for 'received text'), a name given to it in the Elzevier edition of 1633, which termed it the text *'nunc ab omnibus receptum*' ('now received by all'). On it, the Churches of the Protestant Reformation based their translations into vernacular languages, such as the King James Version.

"The discovery of older manuscripts, such as the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus, led scholars to revise their opinion of this text. Karl Lachmann's critical edition of 1831, based on manuscripts dating from the fourth century and earlier, was intended primarily to demonstrate that the Textus Receptus must finally be rejected. Later critical texts are based on further scholarly research and the finding of papyrus fragments dating in some cases from within a few decades of the composition of the New Testament writings. It is on the basis of these that nearly all modern translations or

revisions of older translations have, for more than a century, been made, though some people, partly out of loyalty to the translations of the time of the Protestant Reformation, still prefer the Textus Receptus or the similar 'Byzantine Majority Text'."

Other early translations of the Bible were in Armenian, Georgian, and Ethiopic, Slavic, and Gothic."
During the 14th and 15th centuries, the Roman Catholic Church even prohibited their publication as did the British Empire.

Translating Into The Language Of The Common Man

The first European translation of the Bible was into English in 1382.

1382 A.D. - Wycliffe
The first complete English translation of the Bible was made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his followers. He sent itinerant preachers, Lollards, throughout England which inspired a spiritual revolution."[34] Wycliffe's work was 200 years more or less prior to that of Luther or Tyndale. All of Wycliffe's works were condemned at the Council of Florence in 1415.

1408 Council of Oxford
This council forbade translations of the Bible into the vernacular unless approved by Church authority.

1454-1456 - Guttenburg
Access to the Bible was dramatically increased by Guttenburg's invention of the printing press.

1525 - Tyndale's Bible
Tyndale's English translation of the New Testament was made from Erasmus's Greek text and compared to the Vulgate. In 1536, Tyndale was put to death.

1534 - Luther's Bible
By this time, Luther had translated the entire Bible into German (he finished the New Testament first). A version was published in 1541 in Wittenberg. In translating the Old Testament, Luther excluded the Apocrypha from the canon. He also assigned a

greater value to some New Testament books than to others, considering James, Jude, Hebrews, and Revelation to be inferior.

1535 Miles Coverdale
Coverdale, the first Protestant Bishop of Exeter, published his English Bible translation, which was translated from Latin and German.

1539 The Great Bible
Also known as Cromwell's Bible, it was the first English Bible to be authorized for public use in churches. It was revised in 1561 and was then known as the Bishop's Bible.

1557 Geneva Bible
The only New Testament translation to be published during Mary Tudor's reign, it was most likely the Bible Shakespeare read, and it remained the family Bible in England until the Civil War (1642). The text was divided into verses for the first time in any English Bible.

1610 Catholic Bible
A Catholic English translation of the Old Testament was published. Earlier, a New Testament had been translated at Rheims, and some claimed the King James was indebted to it.

1611 King James (Authorized Version)
The most famous English Bible translation was commissioned by King James and included the Apocrypha as an appendix. "James gave the translators instructions intended to guarantee that the new version would conform to the ecclesiology and reflect the episcopal structure of the Church of England and its belief in an ordained clergy [Daniell 2003, p. 438]. The translation was done by 47 scholars, all of whom were members of the Church of England [Daniell 2003, p. 436]." [34a] Since it was authorized by King James it became known as the Authorized Bible.

1885 Revised Version

1901 American Standard Version

1946 Revised Standard Version
This Version is a rewording of earlier English translations, substituting modern idiom for archaic language. The Apocrypha was so translated in 1957, and a Catholic version of the RSV appeared in 1966. The New Revised Standard Version came out in 1998.

1978 New International Version
This translation, made by Evangelicals and relying directly on the original languages, was completed after over two decades of study.

1982 New King James Version
Not a new translation - just a revision of the King James Version to more modern English, thus with the same weaknesses as the KJV

1988 New Revised Standard Version
This version insists on gender-neutral language and was created by a committee of Protestant and Catholic scholars, which included also one Jewish scholar. [35]

1995 God's Word to the Nations (GWT)
GOD'S WORD uses a linguistic translation method -- similar to the widely accepted translation method used by missionary translators throughout the world today. As a result, it reads more easily, is more literally accurate, and communicates the intended meaning of the Bible more clearly and naturally than any other English translation. [36]

2001 English Standard Version (ESV)
Unlike many modern paraphrases, which pursue the Dynamic Equivalence (DE) approach, the ESV "seeks as far as possible to capture the precise wording of the original text and personal style of each Bible writer." Its goal, therefore, was to produce, a "word-for-word" edition. The original-language texts employed in the project were the Masoretic text for the Old Testament, Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (1983 - 2nd Ed.), and for the New Testament, The Greek New Testament (1993 - 4th ed. UBS) and Novum Testamentum Graece (Nestle/Aland - 27th ed.). The

English rendition of this new version is somewhat analogous to the RSV of 1971, minus the liberal elements of that translation. [37]

No perfect translation of the Bible.

A. Bible translators are not inspired by God.
B. Only the original autographs were inspired by God
C. All versions have weaknesses and differences.
D. Translators bring a personal bias to their translation.

It is a good practice to read primarily from the same version but not exclusively. If for instance, you read primarily the NKJV (Byzantine family, Byzantine type and Modified literal theory) you may find it useful to also read the NASV (Alexandrian or Western family, Westcott-Hort type and the Modified literal or the NIV (Alexandrian, Westcott-Hort type and Dynamic Equivalence theory). Although the NIV is easy to read it uses the less reliable Dynamic Equivalence translation theory which is a more subjective and prone to paraphrasing.

Weaknesses In Translations

King James Version [38]

In the early 17th century there were many religious struggles going on: Catholics vs. Anglicans ..... the Prelate Party vs. the Puritans ..... Calvinists vs. the Non-Calvinistic theologians ..... and many other such conflicts. These translators brought with them to their work of translation and revision their various religious backgrounds and biases. In fact, no matter how careful a translator is, or how honest and sincere, or how objective and unbiased he tries to be, his biases and beliefs will still affect his work to some noticeable degree. For example, certain passages in the KJV clearly reflect a Calvinistic perspective.

#1 --- In Acts 2:47 the KJV reads, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The actual Greek verb form here is: "the ones who are being saved." The rewording of the KJV (from "are" to "should be") is felt by some scholars to reflect the doctrines of election and predetermination.

#2 --- In Galatians 5:17 the KJV reads: "...so that ye cannot do the

things that ye would." This particular verb appears in the Subjunctive Mood in the Greek text; thus, it is a conditional statement, not an absolute statement! Its correct translation would be, "so that ye might not do..." By failing to correctly translate this verb form the KJV implies a lack of free will, which is another strong Calvinistic doctrine.

#3 --- In Hebrews 6:6 the KJV reads, "If they shall fall away." The word "if" is not in the original Greek text; it has been added by the KJV translators. The text actually reads, "and having fallen away." This is a statement of absolute fact, yet the KJV translators have changed it into a conditional statement. By making it more hypothetical, the implication is left with the reader that the statement is unlikely at best, thus upholding the Calvinistic doctrine of The Eternal Security of the Believer or "Once Saved, Always Saved" (the "P" in TULIP theology --- Perseverance of the Saints).

#4 --- In Hebrews 10:38 the KJV reads, "Now the just man shall live by faith; but if any man draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." The words "any man" have been added to the text. The actual subject of the verb "draw back" is "the just man." The Calvinists, however, do not believe that the "just man" can draw back after having drawn near, so the wording of the verse was changed to better reflect their false doctrine. The correct reading of the verse is: "...but if he draws back," with the antecedent of "he" being "the just man."

#5 --- There are seven passages where the KJV has the phrase "be converted" (Passive Voice), when these verbs are actually in the Active Voice. This changes the meaning of the verb. Instead of the person performing the action of the verb, the action of the verb is performed upon the person. The Calvinists believed that conversion was passive on man's part. The individual was acted upon from an outside source: The Holy Spirit. Thus, if God chose to save you, you were saved regardless of what your will in the matter might be. This is the "I" in TULIP theology --- Irresistible Grace of God. Acts 3:19 is an example of this doctrinal manipulation of the text.

New International Version [39]

As the NIV translators themselves freely admit, this translation is not without its weaknesses and faults. One of the major problems arises from its philosophy of translation (Dynamic Equivalence). The basic nature of this problem is: When one leaves off trying for a literal, word-for-word translation, and instead seeks to give the message of the text, there is always the danger that the translators may not fully understand that message, and thus render the passage incorrectly in their translation.

Romans 1:17 is a perfect example of this. The NIV reads, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last." There was such a public outcry over this rendering that the translators felt compelled to put the more literal "from faith to faith" in a footnote in their later editions.

#1 --- Ephesians 1:13 leaves the impression in the minds of many that one is "included in Christ" at the point he hears "the word of truth," and that he is then sealed with the Holy Spirit when he believes. The wording here is very unfortunate and certainly implies the doctrine of salvation by faith only, which is a direct contradiction of such passages as Gal. 3:27 and Acts 2:38.

#2 --- Psalm 51:5 is perhaps one of the most criticized passages in the NIV: "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." This seems to clearly teach the false doctrine of "inherited sin" (or "original sin"), which in turn has led to such false practices as infant baptism.

#3 --- Romans 10:10 in the NIV reads, "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." Much like #1 above, this seems to imply a justification and salvation at the point of confessed faith, apart from obedience. In point of fact, the verb "are" is not in the Greek text here; it is rather the preposition *eis* which means "unto." Also, by noting the context of the surrounding verses, one will clearly see that the verbs dealing with salvation and not being put to shame are future tense. All of this clearly shows that these things are anticipated through confession and belief/faith, and not

already acquired.

#4 --- I Corinthians 13:10 in the NIV reads, "But when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears." This passage literally says, "But when that which is perfect comes" or "when the perfect thing comes." The word "perfection" used in the NIV is felt by many to be too general and non-specific, and that it has opened the door for the interpretation that the time of miracles and tongues is not yet passed.

#5 --- Sometimes footnotes can be a cause of confusion to the reader of a particular version. This is the case in a footnote to I Timothy 3:11. With reference to deacons, Paul writes, "their wives are to be...." In a footnote, the NIV says, "Or: 'deaconesses.'" The Greek word for "deaconess," which is different from the word for "wife," is not used in this verse! To imply in a footnote that Paul is referring in this passage to deaconesses, rather than to the wives of deacons, is very misleading to the reader.

The Living Bible [40]

As with any effort by a mere man, this work is filled with some glaring weaknesses and faults. Before one makes use of the Living Bible (or any version, for that matter), one should be made aware of these areas of difficulty.

#1 --- Kenneth Taylor is a premillennialist, and since the LB reflects his own beliefs (as he himself admits), it has many obvious premillennial renderings. For example, note the following: [only one included in this study (rd)]

II Timothy 4:1 --- "And so I solemnly urge you before God and before Christ Jesus --- who will someday judge the living and the dead when he appears to set up his kingdom." It is the belief of the premillennialists that the Lord has not yet established His kingdom. The church is just an "after-thought," a temporary measure until Christ returns to earth to set up His kingdom, at which time He will reign in Jerusalem for 1000 years.

#2 --- The Living Bible promotes the doctrine of original sin. Psalm 51:5, for example, has the same problem as in the NIV. The

LB reads, "But I was born a sinner, yes, from the moment my mother conceived me." In Ephesians 2:3 he has Paul saying, "We started out bad, being born with evil natures, and were under God's anger just like everyone else."

#3 --- The doctrine of "faith only" is promoted in the Living Bible. Romans 4:12 reads, "Abraham found favor with God by faith alone." This view cannot be harmonized with James 2:21-24. This belief in salvation by faith only has led him to mistranslate Colossians 1:23 as follows: "...the only condition is that you fully believe the Truth."

#4 --- In Mark 1:4 baptism is described in the LB as a "public announcement of their decision to turn their backs on sin," rather than stating it is for "forgiveness of sins," as the original text does. The "water" of John 3:5 is interpreted in a footnote this way: "Some think this means water baptism." The actual meaning, he states, is that it refers to "the normal process observed during every human birth" (i.e., the amniotic fluids). In I Peter 3:21 Taylor writes, "In baptism we show that we have been saved." This implies that we're already saved and are just baptized to show it.

#5 --- In I Corinthians 6:12 the Living Bible reads, "I can do anything I want to if Christ has not said no." Martin Luther also maintained "We can do anything the Bible does not forbid." He and Zwingli debated this issue heatedly.

New American Standard Bible [41]

#1 --- Some feel that the NASB reflects a premillennial preference in some passages of Scripture. For example: Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1 read, "Now it will come about that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it." The word "as" is not actually in the text; it is the word "on" (which the NASB admits in a footnote in both places). Some have regarded this as reflecting a premillenial bias.

Additionally, when the word "*genea*" (meaning "a generation of mankind") appears, the NASB will often place in a footnote an

alternate meaning of "race." Mark 13:30 reads, "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place." The implication of the footnote is that the Jewish race is really intended here.

> [NOTE: One should always be careful of marginal notes and alternate readings. Although a great many of these are good, they are not always completely reliable. Remember that these are opinions and insights of mere fallible men, and although they may be correct 99 out of 100 times, there is always that "margin of error."]

#2 --- Like many translations and versions of the Bible, the NASB has fallen into the trap of seeking to interpret, rather than translate, I Corinthians 7:36-38. They have added the word "daughter" to the word "virgin," thus stating their belief that the passage is referring to a father and daughter relationship. To their credit, they have placed the word "daughter" in italics, thus indicating that this word is not in the original text, but that it has been added by the translators. Another example of interpreting instead of translating is found in I Corinthians 2:13 ... "combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." Again, the NASB uses italics to show words which have been added to the text. Although their understandings of these passages may well be correct, they are nevertheless interpretations, and not simple, uncommented upon translations. This makes it more commentary than translation.

#3 --- There are times when a Greek word or phrase may have more than one meaning. The NASB has at times made this less clear by consistently translating a particular Greek word with just one English word. Just as rendering a single Greek word with a wide variety of English words can cause confusion (as in the KJV), so also can a lack of any variety at all be the cause of confusion in certain cases. For example the word "*sarx*" is consistently translated "flesh" in the NASB, even though Paul in his writings uses this word in several different senses. In Romans 3:20 and 4:1, it is used to refer to the physical body. In Romans 8:4, however, he uses it to denote the seat of one's sinful passions (i.e., a fleshly nature rather than a fleshly body). By selecting different words, one could perhaps convey this distinction better.

#4 --- There are other occasions where the NASB will render two different Greek words with just one English word, thus creating confusion. For example: The word "abolish" appears in both Matthew 5:17 ("Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill") and Ephesians 2:15 ("...by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances..."). These are two different Greek words, but this distinction is lost on the reader by using only one English word. This lack of distinction has also led some to suggest that these two passages actually contradict one another, when in fact they do not.

A similar problem occurs in the KJV in Galatians 6:2, 5 where the word "burden" is used in both verses ("Bear ye one another's burdens" ..... "every man shall bear his own burden"). These are actually two different Greek words. The NIV and NASB, as well as other translations, have corrected this by translating the first word as "burden" and the second word as "load." The NASB, like most translations, also fails to make a distinction in John 21:15-17 between the words "*agapao*" and "*phileo*," both of which appear in the text. It translates both words as "love," and in so doing the reader misses out on the true meaning of this important exchange between Jesus and Peter.

#5 --- The NASB is not consistent in its use of "KJV pronouns" versus those of 20th-century America. Pronouns such as "Thou," "Thine," "Thee," and "Thy" are retained in the Psalms, in prayers, or whenever someone is addressing Deity. However, these are dropped in the majority of the text for the more common "you" and "your." By continuing the use of these archaic forms in certain places in the Bible, the NASB carries on the illusion that these words are somehow "holier," when in fact such a distinction in pronouns was never made in the original Hebrew or Greek ... or even in the KJV, for that matter!

New World Translation [42]

#1 --- The Jehovah's Witnesses deny that God has established different covenants or testaments for His people. Thus, they oppose the idea of an "old" covenant (testament) and a "new" one. Much of their teachings are still based in the writings which we

call the "Old Testament," for the simple reason that they do not believe it has been replaced (or fulfilled) by a new covenant (testament). For this reason, they refuse to designate the two sections of the Bible as the "Old Testament" and the "New Testament." Instead, they refer to them as "The Hebrew-Aramaic Scriptures" and "The Christian Greek Scriptures." It's interesting to note, however, that they have failed to be consistent in this stand even in their own translation. In II Corinthians 3:14 the NWT speaks of "reading the old covenant." "New covenant" and "former covenant" both appear in Hebrews 9:15, and "mediator of a new covenant" appears in Hebrews 12:24, just to cite a few examples.

#2 --- Even though the Jehovah's Witnesses acknowledge that the word "Jehovah" is a mispronunciation of the Tetragrammaton (meaning "having four letters" -- a reference to YHWH), they nevertheless insist that this is God's true name and that it should be used exclusively.

Insisting that the original Scriptures have been "tampered with" in regard to the Divine name, they use only the name "Jehovah" in both the OT and NT. "YHWH" appears 6828 times in the OT, but in the NWT the word "Jehovah" appears 6973 (an additional 145 occurrences). "YHWH" never appears in the NT, and yet the NWT uses "Jehovah" 237 times in the NT.

NOTE --- They appeal to John 17:6, 26 as their justification for placing so much emphasis on this name: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world" .... "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it" (KJV). This "name" they believe to be "Jehovah."

#3 --- With regard to the concept of the Trinity, the Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a person/being. In their notes, which appear at the end of the NWT, they write, "The holy spirit is not a person in heaven with God and Christ" ..... "it is an active force, not a person." As a result of their belief that it is just an "energy from God," and not a divine being, the words "holy spirit" are never capitalized in the NWT.

#4 --- The Jehovah's Witnesses also do not believe in the deity of Jesus Christ. They teach "the son of God was created, and only Jehovah was pre-existent." They further write, "The son is inferior to the Father both before and after coming to earth." God and Christ are "one" only in the sense of husbands and wives being said to be "one." They are "always in complete harmony," but certainly not equal! This belief has found its way into the NWT in several places.

In Colossians 1:16-17 the word "other" has been added to the text a total of four times to imply that Jesus was just one among many "other" created things.

In Titus 2:13 the NWT reads, "we wait for the happy hope and glorious manifestation of the great God and of the Savior of us, Christ Jesus." II Peter 1:1 reads, "the righteousness of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ." In both of these passages the definite article "the" has been added to the text to make a separation between God and Jesus. In point of fact, the text literally speaks of Jesus as being "our God and Savior." The Jehovah Witness's do not believe Jesus is the former, and thus seek to make a distinction between the two.

John 1:1 reads, in the NWT, "In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god." Vs. 14 says that Jesus was "full of undeserved kindness and truth." This clearly teaches polytheism; Jesus and God are not one, but Jesus is merely "a god," upon whom the God (Jehovah) has bestowed undeserved favor!!

#5 --- In the NWT the "cross" is referred to as a "torture stake" (Matthew 10:38; 27:32), and rather than being "crucified" on it, the NWT says Jesus was "impaled" upon a stake (Luke 23:21 ... "Then they began to yell, saying, 'Impale him! Impale him!'").

Comments on Other Bibles [43]

New American Bible
From the original Greek (NT); revision of confraternity version (based on Latin Vulgate) in the OT. Catholic Committee consulted

with Protestants in final stages. More conservative than JB but introductions to sections and to individual books "moderately liberal in tone" (Kubo and Specht, p. 164). Format differs with the publisher.

Today's English Version (Good News Bible)
From the original. NT by one man, approved by a committee. Aimed particularly at English - as – a second - language audience and those with little formal education. Achieves its goal well - very readable, good format. Translates dynamics well but not dependable for deeper study if used by itself.

New English Bible
From the original by an interdenominational British committee. Exciting literary style, very readable but with distinct British flavor and idiom. Excellent for non-churched. Departures from the original text and too much liberty in certain renderings make it undependable as a study Bible.

J.B. Phillips' Translation
From the original but definitely a paraphrase by J.B. Phillips, a competent Greek scholar. More than any other, makes the Bible "live" for educated or literary people, although in British expression. Does not read like a translation. Provokes new insight and understanding which should, however, be checked with more literal translations and by deeper study. Excellent for the educated, unchurched person as well as the thinking Christian.

Amplified Bible
Amplified Bible done from the originals. Neither a true translation nor a paraphrase. This type version offers readers possible renderings or interpretations and can be helpful for study or deepening understanding. However, users must realize the original author had one meaning in mind, determined by context and usage in that language, not our personal preference or whim. These versions must not be substituted for responsible deeper study."

God's Word Translation [44]
GWT is one of a growing number of new translations of the Bible that uses a paraphrasing method which goes beyond the aim of a

pure (literal) translation, which may result in difficult, misunderstood terms and produces a translation that also interprets the scripture. It is argued that this process is fraught with danger, as the passage could equally be misinterpreted.

The few weaknesses in the translations cited above should reinforce your desire to be diligent in your Bible study. Examine the context of the passage and ascertain if it conflicts with other scripture. Read translations from different Greek families and text and where a there is a difference determine which more nearly expresses the intent of the original language.

Summary and Conclusion

This study has identified the difficulties in translating ancient languages into the languages of the common man. It should be clear that those past scholars had a very great knowledge of the ancient languages. Those who gave their lives so all people could have the opportunity to read and know God's word were very dedicated. We owe a great debt of gratitude to them. Over time languages change and our understanding of words, phrases and idioms of these ancient languages are improved. Discovery of an ever-increasing number of manuscripts, cursives and fragments of 30 both secular and sacred writings some of which predate our earliest copies greatly help enhance our understanding of the idioms of a language. These new discoveries require as much textual criticism as all those in the past.

All translations appear to have some translation errors due to lack of knowledge or personal bias. Therefore, to avoid being trapped into someone else's bias, one should read and study from Bibles translated from different text families, text types and different translation theories and methods with as little interpretation as practical to convey the original message. Translation by a committee of scholars with differing backgrounds and beliefs should be preferred over translations by individuals as committees tend to offset personal biases, but committees composed of men from the same background differ little from individual translators.

CAN WE ALL INTERPRET THE BIBLE ALIKE?

One of the most powerful weapons in Satan's arsenal to thwart the good news of Jesus and the spread of his kingdom surely is divisiveness. When unbelievers look upon a divided church of our Lord Jesus Christ, they stop and they mock, "Why should we believe what those people are trying to tell us? After all, they can't get along among themselves. They argue about this and they disagree about that. They meet in different buildings right across the street from each other, and they go on about their business like the two don't even exist." So, the skeptics continue, "Christianity must be an impotent religion. They can't even unify their believers, much less offer answers that the rest of the world needs." If your ears have been open, you have heard those kinds of excuses--and they are excuses--for not examining what Scripture holds about Christianity and about Jesus. But they still sting those of us who are believers because, you see, there is a grain of truth there.

Universally, those of us who look to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we have been divided. We do disagree. We sometimes fuss and we often fight about religious matters and about spiritual doings. If you trace that division far enough back toward its roots, you go back to the rather simple fact that frankly, we just can't agree about the Bible. Now isn't that ironic? The Bible may be the most valuable thing that we tangibly hold in our possession. The Bible is our link to the path; it gives us the revelation of God more completely than anything else about us. In the Bible we know about God's creative forces, we know how God chose a people, and from that people, God brought Jesus to this earth. The Bible is our spiritual guidebook, it's our road map to heaven. It is our in-hand revelation of the mind of God. How wonderful the Bible is!

Yet, at the same time if the truth be told, the Bible is the focal point of our division. We can't seem to even agree about what this book is. Then we have a hard time agreeing on what it says. Why is that? Is there anything we can do about it? Can't we all see the Bible alike, can't we all interpret Scripture the same? Well, I'm going to give you what I call my practical answer, and the answer is, "don't hold your breath?" I hate to sound so pessimistic, but frankly, we've endured centuries and centuries of trying to look at the Bible alike and we've not done that. Even before that Scripture

became canon and that we now call the Bible was all consolidated, men were disagreeing about how to interpret it. I want you to be assured that Satan will still continue with his strongest effort to thwart consensus about what the Bible says. It will be his number one priority.

Added to the difficulty is the fact that every person comes to the Bible with some kind of preset notion. Let's be honest about it--no one comes to the Bible with a blank slate. Every one of us who picks up the Word of God comes with certain biases, we come with certain prejudices, and we come with certain teachings that we have received in the past (from whatever source--good or bad). You see, all that is out there. I saw a cartoon, a little one-framed cartoon, that kind of was the extreme on this. A husband was sitting over his Bible and his wife was standing behind him and apparently, she was trying to interrupt him. His comment at the bottom of the cartoon was, "Don't interrupt me now, honey, I'm trying to find a verse to back-up my preconceived notion." If we are honest, there is a lot of that in the religious world.

Now having said that, I want to say this on a positive vein. I do believe that much of the Christian world can be drawn closer together. I believe we can be much closer than what we are now in terms in what we see the Bible saying, and in what we practice and how we worship, and what we consider to be vital and essential to this thing called fellowship. We don't have time in the space to flesh out every ingredient that will be necessary for that kind of consensus, but I want us to take just a few moments to look at some of the basic ingredients to help us interpret the Bible alike.

Step 1- What Is The Bible: The Bible tells us what it is; it makes some claims and the clearest one is the one is from 2 Timothy 3:16. "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." Now folks, in the world of Christianity, this is the first and the primary fork in the road. Is the Bible the Word of God, or as it says in the NIV, "the very breath of God", or is it not? Is the Bible absolutely God's will revealed to man--without error, absolutely infallible--or is it just some loose-knit history of an ancient people filled with all kinds of folklore?

Those who respond by saying the Bible is the inspired inerrant Word of God have taken a major step toward having a congruent view about Scripture because we have got a reason to have a congruent view. If I believe that this is the mind of God, then I'm going to search it with every fiber of my being and I'm going to know what it says because it is the most important thing, I'll lay my hands on in this lifetime. But if on the other hand, I don't believe that is what the Bible is, that it is just some loose-knit collection of writings, then frankly, why would I care what everybody else thought about it?

You have to come to terms with what the Bible claims to be. It is the Word; it is the breath of God. But all right, having said that that still leaves the challenge among Bible believers about interpretation. In that same letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 2:15) here's what Paul wrote: "Do your best," he said "to present yourself to God as one approved. A workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." I like that last phrase, who correctly handles the word of truth." Now there's the hitch ... how do I correctly handle the Word? All right, let's think about four or five things that are very basic:

1) Flow of Scripture. If I am going to correctly handle the Word, I am going to correctly understand what I call 'the flow of Scripture'. People, the Bible is not a random collection of sayings from God. There is a scheme to it; there is a flow to it. Someone once rightly noted that the Bible really has three major chapters, but they are not of equal length. Chapter 1 is the chapter about God's creative power, including the creation of man. You can read about that in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 2 in the Bible is the story of the fall of man. You can read about that in Genesis 3. Then the third, the last and the largest chapter in the Bible begins at the end of Chapter 3 of Genesis and goes through the rest of the Bible. It is the story of God reaching down and redeeming mankind. People, that is the flow of Scripture.

In that last section, that largest segment, there is a progressive revelation of how God does reach down and redeem mankind. It starts with God choosing a people. He called them Israel-they were the descendants of Abraham. He led Israel through judges,

kings, prophets, through captivates, and then finally as Roman 5 says, "In the fullness of time through that people in accordance with prophecy, Jesus came." Jesus, the Son of Man and the Son of God, and as prophecy said he would, he delivered man from his sin. We read about that, by the way, in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Then beginning with the book of Acts and going through the rest of the New Testament, we find that everybody who comes to Jesus for the saving power of his blood, and is baptized in his name, is added to the Lord's church.

It is important to understand that flow of Scripture to know what God is saying in the Bible. You've got to understand the flow. Don't misunderstand--God is consistent all the way through about his nature and about his character and about his love, but his specific instructions in the Bible are going to vary, depending on where you are in the flow.

For example, way back in the Old Testament, in the book of Leviticus, God used to make people offer animal sacrifices to Him--bullocks, lambs and goats, but He doesn't do that now. By the time you get to Hebrews 9, you find that with the sacrifice of Jesus, it was absolutely final, it was all-sufficient, it was the ultimate sacrifice. We don't offer sacrifices anymore, not like that. You know that the Jews in days gone by had dietary restrictions, particularly with certain kinds of meat. But in Acts 10, Peter received a vision three times, coming down in a sheet, all these unclean animals and the voice of God commanding, "Arise and kill and eat." What's going on there? Is God crazy? Inconsistent? No, No, No. God was just unfolding revelation in his chosen flow.

If you and I are going to interpret the Bible alike, and there are many, many religious groups who can't even get Point 1 down here--they don't see the flow of Scripture.

2)Context of Passage. If we are going to interpret the Bible alike, we are going to have to understand something about context. Once a scripture or scriptures are identified with respect to their place in the flow of the Bible, it is crucial to understand its immediate context. Before asking the question of, "what does this passage

mean to me?", I need to ask the question, "what was this writer saying when he first wrote it?" People, that is a crucial element of Biblical interpretation; otherwise, Scripture will mean anything we want it to mean.

Let me give you an absurd example: Ecclesiastes 10:19 says, "A feast and wine makes merry, but money answers all things." How would you like for that to be your life's philosophy? Pull that verse out of context and you would live an Epicurean lifestyle that is absolutely contrary to the ways of God. Somebody says, "Steve, how can that verse be in the Bible?" If you understood anything about Ecclesiastes, and if you knew who wrote it, and if you knew what was happening in his life when he wrote it, and if you particularly knew the context of Ecclesiastes chapter 10, it would make sense to you. You see, you do have to understand the context.

Let me give you a more up-to-date example that I hear abused just about every week. Somebody will turn to Philippians 4:13 where Paul says, "I can do everything through Him who strengthens me." Boy, the positive mental attitude specialists have a field day on that one. How many times have you heard these television preachers get up there and say, "God wants you to be rich! God wants you to be successful! God wants you to have everything you ever wanted! How do we know? Paul said 'I can do everything through him who strengthens me'." People, you ought to read that in context because in the four verses that surround that Paul is talking about being content, even when he is in the most adverse of circumstances. The passage is saying exactly the opposite of what is usually preached about. Point #2 in understanding and interpreting the Bible is I have to understand the context.

3) <u>Let the Word Govern.</u> Let the Word speak for itself. Earlier I noted that no one studies the Bible totally exempt from imposing on a passage his own ideas, or ideas he has learned from someone else. But let me encourage you, to do your best to be a "blank sheet". Once you know where that passage is in the flow of the Bible, and once you know its immediate context, let the Word speak. That is when it is profitable, as 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "for instruction and for rebuking and for correcting and training." Not

when I have my preconceived notions to massage it into what I want it to be; it is profitable when I let it speak.

By the way, there is a sub-point here I need to bring out. Let the Word govern your experience and don't let your experience govern the Word. If I had a quarter for every time somebody has had some experience, then they have taken the Bible to justify or validate their experience, I'd be a rich man. If we are going to look at the Word as the inspired Word of God, let it mold our experiences, don't let our experiences mold the Word.

Let me give you another absurd example of this: I read just this week about a man who thought about marrying a woman. He went to the preacher and said, "Preacher, how do I know she's the one?" Do you know what advice this preacher gave him? He (the preacher) said, "If it were me, I'd walk around her seven times like Israelites did around the city of Jericho, then if the walls of her heart tumble, you know she's the one." Do you know he did it? This is a true story. He walked around her seven times and he said, "Honey, how do you feel?" She said, "Well, I feel a little strange inside." To tell you the truth, I'd probably felt strange if somebody had walked around me seven times. He proposed, they got married, and they were divorced less than a year later; then they wondered why God had given them a false signal. Is that not the most ridiculous thing you've ever seen? God didn't give them a signal at all! They were taking something out of the Old Testament, out of context, trying to let their experience dictate what the Word said. People, don't do that! That is not how God designed his Word to be interpreted.

4) Other Scripture as Commentary. If I am going to interpret the Bible like you will interpret it, and if we will all do it the right way, let's compare scripture with other scripture. When you study scripture, sooner or later you are going to run into real difficult passages. Most of us when we hit that difficult passage run and grab a commentary. We look up what that's supposed to mean. Commentaries have a worthy purpose, but I want to tell you today that they have limitations, and here's why:

- commentaries are uninspired documents written by men for men.

- one commentary can show an exegesis of any passage in scripture and another commentary will offer a totally different view. Therefore, commentaries have contributed to this issue of controversy about interpretation.

The best place t on a passage of scripture is other passages of scripture. If you don't already own what is called a cross-reference Bible (most Bibles today are), what that means is by a verse there is a little letter, a little number, and a footnote somewhere on your page that will let you know other places in the Bible that deal with that same thing. If you don't own one of those, get one of those. I would also advise to you some topical Bibles and some concordances that can let you know where words appear in the Bible. These are not commentaries, they don't offer any insights or any man's opinion, they just help you correlate Scripture. People, the Bible is its best interpreter. If you have problems with a verse, find another verse that talks about the same thing and it will make it clearer to you. Compare scripture with scripture.

5) Pray. When you study the Bible, pray. Keep two things in mind: a) the devil will try to keep any one of us from correctly determining what God would have us know. The devil doesn't want us to know what is in God's Word. So, when you read the Bible, you pray that God protect you from the evil one as you try to search for his will. b) Remember that prayer and Bible study go hand-in-hand. You see, the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17). And that same Holy Spirit is our intercessor in prayer (Romans 8:26). So, you see, the Holy Spirit wants us to merge Bible study with prayer, and it's amazing how clear the Bible can become when you diligently study and pray.

Folks, the thing I'm worried about most is not how we interpret the Bible but whether or not we read the Bible. Just this morning in the newspaper, I saw a Gallup poll. It said that 82% of America believes that the Bible is the literal, inspired Word of God, but only 21% study it. I believe if we would just study it, we would come closer to interpreting it alike. If we would just be honest, and study. Let's try to use these principles and see if we can't see what God wants us to know. (Steve Flatt - Lesson #1012 June 16, 1991)

Some Beliefs of Often Quoted Church Fathers

Many Christians often quote the "Apostolic Fathers" or the "early Church Fathers" to support a belief or opinion, showing that during the first or second century Christians understood the scriptures just as the speaker or writer is espousing. But while calling upon their writings for support of a particular belief or opinion, one should recognize and admit these "witnesses" also held beliefs and opinions contrary to some other personal beliefs and opinions. Below are a few to give some examples.

Justin Martyr [45]
Worship of angels. Christians also worship "the host of other good angels who follow and are made like to Him (Jesus)" (1 Apology 6), adding elsewhere "that there are angels who always exist, and are never reduced to that form out of which they sprang" (Dialogue 128).

Doctrine of works. His writings are full of salvation by works. For example: " "if men by their works show themselves worthy of this His design, they are deemed worthy" (1 Apology 10). " "...those only are deified (sic) who have lived near to God in holiness and virtue..." (1 Apology 21) " "...we hold it to be true, that punishments, and chastisements, and good rewards, are rendered according to the merit of each man's actions" (1 Apology 43).

Ignatius [46]
Ignatius was a bishop (presbyter, pastor) of the church at Antioch who separated the presbytery and the episcopate. Throughout these three letters, Ignatius writes of the bishop (singular), the presbytery, and the deacons, insisting that they be respected and obeyed. He equates the bishop to "the Lord himself" (L.Eph 6:1; L.Mag 6:1; L.Tra 2:1); the presbyter to "the council of the apostles" (L.Mag 6:1; L.Tra 2:2); and the deacons to servants of Christ himself (L.Mag 6:1) or to the "mysteries of Jesus Christ" (L.Tra 2:3). He commands the church "to act in harmony with the mind of the bishop" (L.Eph 4:1), and "not do anything without the bishop and the presbyters" (L.Mag 7:1; cf L.Tra 2:2). He seems to ascribe greater power to the prayer of a bishop (L.Eph 5:2), and even suggests the bishop is to

be feared (L.Eph 6:1). To his credit, Ignatius does not call for such obedience to himself, but then he is not the bishop of these cities. Nevertheless, Ignatius projects a consistently humble attitude with such statements as "I am only beginning to be a disciple" (L.Eph 3:1); "I do not know whether I am worthy" (L.Tra 4:2). This notion that Christians are "not to do anything without the bishop (and the presbyters) is particularly odious. "Without these (bishop, presbyters, deacons)," he writes. "No group can be called a church." (L.Tra 3:1)

Polycarp [47]

The Bible itself clearly uses the Greek terms *episkop*? (overseer, bishop) and *prebuteros* (elder, presbyter) interchangeably. There is not even a hint of apostolic teaching for one-man (bishop) rule of an individual congregation, let alone an entire city or region. Yet, the monoepiscopate emerged in the second century, and Polycarp is cited as one of those city rulers. Throughout his seven authentic, extant letters, Ignatius of Antioch repeatedly separates the *episkop*? from the *prebuteros*, calling them respectively, God's "managers" (*oikonomos*, chamberlain, governor, steward), a civil term applied to Erastus in Romans 16:23; and "assistants" (*paredroi*, a term not used in the New Testament). This idea that elders are assistants to the bishop has no basis whatsoever in Scripture. In the Roman brand of Christianity, the presbytery morphed into the priesthood as a specialized class of intermediaries uniquely authorized to administer sacraments (baptism, communion, etc.) on behalf of the bishop. This too has no basis in Scripture, where all Christians are called priests. Hierarchicalists in the modern Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox churches use the letters of Ignatius as proof-texts to justify the monoepiscopate and the papacy. Polycarp is also used as a vital link in the doctrine of apostolic succession, which suggests that authority rests in bishops because of an unbroken chain of appointment through ordination back to the apostles themselves.

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