

A Critique of Selected Bibles

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Monday, 02 January 2017 05:22

King James Version (1611) The King James Version was translated by a committee of 47 in England in 1611. It is a revision of the Bishops' Bible of 1568. Only after 80 years did the KJV become accepted by the English speaking world, but then it became the standard English Bible until the present day. At first, it included the Apocrypha. The KJV was revised in 1613, 1629, 1638, 1762, and 1769. The *Textus Receptus* is the underlying New Testament text. The *Masoretic Text* is the underlying Old Testament text.

Much of the language is hard to understand for today's English-speaking people. The language used is on a twelfth grade level. However, most consider the language a work of art. The philosophy of translation was formal equivalence. It was a good translation for its day.

John Wesley's New Testament (1755)

This revision of the KJV by Wesley in 1755 was an attempt to improve the KJV in three areas: (1) Better text: (2) Better interpretation; and (3) Better English usage. He used his own Greek text, based on *Bengel's Gnomon with Critical Apparatus* of 1734, which was an improvement on the *Textus Receptus*.

Literal Translation of the Bible (1862)

This is a private translation by Robert Young, completed in 1862. Young was an Edinburgh bookseller, and author of the valuable *Analytical Concordance*. It is very literal.

Dean Alford's New Testament (1869)

This is a private revision of the KJV by Henry Alford, Dean of Canterbury, made in 1896. He used his own edition of the Greek New Testament as a basis for translation.

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The Holy Bible,
Containing the Old and New Testaments,
in the Common Version,
with Amendments of the Language (1833)

This is a revision of the English in the KJV by the American lexicographer, Noah Webster, in 1833. His work was in the area of proper English and did not involve using a better text. It was sound as far as it went. (Luther A. Weigle, CHB).

Revised Version (1885)

This is a committee revision of the KJV, in 1885. The New Testament was published in 1881, the Old Testament in 1885, and the apocrypha in 1895. The committee included B. F. Wescott, F. J. A. Hort, J. B. Lightfoot, W. Milligan, W. F. Moulton, F. H. A. Schrivener, and G. Vance Smith (a Unitarian).

Westcott and Hort's text,
The New Testament in the Original Greek
(1881)--better than the
Textus Receptus
--was was the basis of the New Testament. The
Masoretic Text
was the basis of the Old Testament. (This was the same text used for the KJV, but the Revised Version had better scholarship). This is a British translation. It is faithful to the texts, but weak in English. It is literal.

The Emphasized Bible (1897)

This is a private translation by Joseph Bryant Rotherham in 1897. The New Testament was first translated in 1872 with the underlying text being Tregelles. The third edition of the New

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Testament was based on Westcott and Hort's text. He attempted to "convey the most detailed shades in the original." This is the first translation to use

YAHWEH

for the name of God in the Old Testament. It is a scholarly, literal translation. (Bruce).

American Standard Version (1901)

This revision of the KJV was published mostly because of American translator differences with the British translators of the Revised Version. American scholars, with Philip Schaff as president of the committee, had been invited to help with the Revised Version. Later, nine surviving members of the American committee published the American Standard Version under the title, "The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments translated out of the original tongues, being the version set forth A.D. 1611 compared with the most ancient authorities and revised A.D. 1881-1885. Newly edited by the American Revision Committee A.D. 1901."

Like the Revised Version, it also is a literal translation, faithful to the texts, but weak in English. It is a good study Bible.

The Holy Bible in Modern English,
containing the complete sacred scriptures
of the Old and New Testaments,
translated into English
direct from the original
Hebrew, Chaldee and Greek (1903)

This is a private translation made by Ferrar Fenton, in 1903. Fenton was a businessman, apparently sincere, but lacking in scholarship. His translation was popular because of his sincerity.

The New Testament in Modern Speech (1903)

This is a private translation by Richard Weymouth, in 1903. It is based on his own *Resultant Greek Text* (1886). Weymouth died before it was published. E. Hampden-Cook, a Congregational minister who helped translate The Twentieth Century New Testament, edited it and saw that it was published. It was revised by J. A. Robertson in 1924. Weymouth wanted his translation to be used alongside the KJV and Revised Version. It is a good translation.

The Twentieth Century New Testament (1904)

The translating work was done by Mrs. Mary Higgs (the wife of a Congregational minister in Oldham), Ernest de Merindol Malan (a signal and telegraph engineer of Hull, who was the grandson of a Swiss preacher), plus an assortment of preachers and laymen that numbered less than 30 total. It was published from 1898-1901 in three volumes. The purpose was to be readable by children and working people. It was revised in 1904. The full name was "The Twentieth Century New Testament: A Translation into Modern English Made from the Original Greek." Westcott and Hort's text was the underlying text. "How they succeeded in producing such an excellent version is difficult to understand." (Bruce).

Modern Reader's Bible (1905)

This translation was completed by R. G. Moulton in 1905.

The 1911 Tercentenary Commemoration Bible

The KJV was lightly corrected by biblical scholars in North America and issued under this name. A similar revision was published three years later by E. E. Cunningham in London.

The Riverside New Testament (1923)

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William G. Ballantine translated the New Testament in 1923, based on NESTLE'S GREEK TEXT (1901). It was revised in 1934. It was in the modern English of 1923.

Complete Bible:

An American Translation (1931)

Edgar J. Goodspeed published the New Testament in 1923. Four other scholars published the Old Testament in 1931. The Bible was revised in 1935.

The New Testament

in the Language of the People (1937)

Charles B. Williams translated this New Testament with the idea of revealing tense distinctions in the Greek verbs. It is neither a literal translation or a paraphrase. Bruce Humphries copyrighted the work in 1937 and Edith S. Williams renewed the copyright in 1965. It is a conservative translation published by Moody Press.

Revised Standard Version (1952)

This is a revision of the American Standard Version of 1901 by a committee of 32 American scholars. The New Testament was published in 1946, the whole Bible in 1952. The underlying texts are eclectic. The Apocrypha was a revision of the 1611 and 1895 versions. It was copyrighted by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. In spite of being criticized as being liberal, it was possibly the best multiple use translation of its day (general scholarly consensus).

The Interlinear Greek-English

New Testament (1958)

Beginning with Eberhard Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece* (TEXT), Alfred Marshall gives an English translation parallel to the Greek text. As such, it cannot be a smooth translation. However, it does give the reader who cannot read Greek a sense or "feeling" of the Greek text. It was published by Zondervan. For those who cannot read Greek, it should be read along with a good New Testament translation.

The New Testament

in Modern English (1958)

J. B. Phillips, a vicar in the Church of England, finished this translation of the New Testament in 1958, which he had begun in 1947. "It occasionally follows. . . readings of inferior Greek manuscripts or departs from the Greek text. . .or omits part of it, or incorrectly translates it. On the whole, however, a most excellent meaning-for-meaning translation." (Hawthorne). It is a paraphrase.

The Old Testament is in the process of being translated.

The Holy Bible:

The Berkeley Version

in Modern English (1959)

Gerrit Verkuyl, a Baptist, translated the New Testament in 1945. Under the editorship of Verkuyl, the Old Testament was translated by 20 scholars, in 1959. The New Testament was revised in 1969. It is called the Berkeley Version because it was published in Berkeley, California. It is a "conservative counterpart of the RSV." (Bruce). The Gideons have distributed the New Testament.

Expanded Translation

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of the New Testament (1959)

Kenneth S. Wuest translated the New Testament, which was published in 3 volumes, 1956-1959. It is a study Bible for the "Greekless student of the New Testament." It "does for all the parts of speech what Charles B. Williams does for the verb. . . ." (Bruce).

The New World Translation (1960)

The "New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures" was published in 1950. It was followed by the "New World Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures" from 1953-1960. This is a translation by the Jehovah's Witnesses, and it is published by their company, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Inc. The translation includes both literal and colloquial renderings. However, it is colored by the Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrine. Apart from this, it is a good translation. (Bruce).

The New Testament

in the Language of Today (1963)

William F. Beck, a Lutheran, made this translation in 1963. It is "reasonably faithful" to the Greek text, with "very little paraphrase but good translation of cultural concepts. . . ."

"It is . . .unusually good . . . for reading aloud." (LeSor). Beck writes in everyday speech. Beck comments: "If Jesus came into our home today, how would he talk? Just as we talk to one another. He would take the words out of our lives and put heaven's meaning into them." (Preface to the 1964 printing). It is a conservative translation, published by Concordia Publishing House.

The Amplified Bible (1965)

The Amplified Bible was translated by a committee of 12 editors in 1965. Frances E. Siewert was the Research Secretary. The New Testament was published in 1958.

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The New Testament was based on Westcott and Hort's text. The Old Testament was based on the *Masoretic Text*.

It is an "expanded" version by which the rich shades of meaning in the original texts are more fully expressed. Key words in the texts are especially defined and amplified. It is published by the Lockman Foundation of La Habra, CA. The fourfold aim of the translation committee was,

"That it should be true to the original Hebrew and Greek; that it should be grammatically correct; that it should be understandable to the masses; that it should give the Lord Jesus Christ His proper place, the place the Word gives Him" (The Amplified Bible jacket, 1965).

It is conservative, and a good study Bible.

New Testament: A New Translation (1969)

William Barclay produced this translation in 2 volumes: "The Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles" (1963), and "The Letters and the Revelation" (1969). It has a British-Scottish thrust, "made by a long-time, skilled master of Greek." (Ehrenstein).

New English Bible (1970)

This version was produced by the best British scholars, in 1970. The New Testament was published in 1961.

The New Testament text is eclectic, and was published by R. V. G. Tasker as The Greek New Testament, Being the Text Translated in the New English Bible 1961.

The Old Testament text is the third edition of Kittel's Biblia Hebraica (1937).

The Living Bible (1971)

Kenneth Taylor is the main translator of this work, that was finished in 1971. Taylor's

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translation grew out of family devotions--he tried to communicate the Word of God to his children in contemporary English terms they could understand. It is paraphrase of the ASV. (Ehrenstein). It was reviewed by a team of Greek and Hebrew experts for accuracy, and by English critics for style. It was translated from a "rigid evangelical position." (The Living Bible Preface, 1973).

It is especially suitable for youth and those not having a church background. People would be wise to begin their Bible reading with The Living Bible and then move to a general purpose Bible like the New International Bible and a good study Bible like the New American Standard Bible. It is written on an eighth grade level.

The New American Standard Bible (1971)

The New American Standard Bible was published in 1971. It is a committee revision of the American Standard Version of 1901. It was a 9 year effort by 58 scholars from Presbyterian, Methodist, Southern Baptist, Church of Christ, Nazarene, American Baptist, Fundamentalist, Conservative Baptist, Free Methodist, Congregational, Disciples, and Independent Baptist backgrounds. The New Testament was translated in 1963.

The New Testament text was Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece*. The Old Testament text was Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*.

It is a literal translation (formal equivalence) that is true to the texts. The NASB New Testament was the best version for study of its time (Earle).

The Common Bible (1973)

This was a new edition of the RSV, the first translation to be approved by Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Greek Orthodox leaders.

Today's English Version (1976, 1992)

This translation is sometimes called *Good News for Modern Man* and later, *Good News Bible*. The New Testament was translated by Robert Bratcher, a Southern Baptist missionary, in 1966. The New Testament was sponsored and published by the American Bible Society.

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The New Testament underlying text was the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (third edition, 1975), the best text available at the time.

A Catholic version with Deuterocanonicals/Apocrypha was released in 1979.

The Old Testament was a committee translation, finished in 1976. The underlying Old Testament text was the

Masoretic Text

as found in Rudolph Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (third edition, 1937). The line drawings were by Miss Annie Vallotton. The translation of the Old Testament was sponsored by the United Bible Societies, which also published the whole Bible.

The genius of this translation is the vocabulary selection. Words are used that are understood by common people and people who use English as a second language. If Jesus were here today, he would communicate in such language. The Today's English Version New Testament is "most like what the New Testament was to its original readers. Superb!" (Hawthorne).

The second edition was published in 1992.

New International Version (1978)

The New Testament was completed in 1973, and represents the work of conservative scholars. The entire Bible was completed in 1978, and was revised in 1984. A self-governing Committee on Bible Translation, composed of 15 people, included Ralph Earle. It was international in scope, drawing scholars from the USA, Canada, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The denominational backgrounds of the translators included Anglican, Assemblies of God, Baptist, Brethren, Christian Reformed, Church of Christ, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and others.

The Greek text used in translating the New Testament was eclectic. The Hebrew text used in translating the Old Testament was the Masoretic Text as published in the latest editions of *Biblia Hebraica*.

The New York Bible Society International was the sponsor and publisher--its name has since been changed to the International Bible Society. The New International Version is neither literal or paraphrased, but fits in the philosophic camp of formal equivalence, near dynamic equivalence. The English used is high seventh grade. It is the best translation for general use today.

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New King James Version (1979)

The New King James Version was the result of 7 years work of over 100 scholars from most of the English-speaking nations. It was first published in 1979 and revised in 1980 and 1982. The translators and editors have attempted to continue in the tradition of the earlier translators of the KJV.

The underlying text of the New Testament was the antiquated *Textus Receptus*.

The underlying text of the Old Testament was the 1967/77 Stuttgart edition of Biblia Hebraica.

Philosophically, it is in the formal equivalence category. The language is on the seventh grade level.

New Century Version (1987)

The New Century Version is a new translation, published in 1987 by Worthy Publishing, Fort Worth, Texas.

The third edition of the United Bible Societies' Greek text was the underlying Greek text. The Biblia Hebraica was the underlying text for the Old Testament. The Septuagint was consulted.

The English translation was made with the idea of clear understanding by the reader. The sentences were kept short and simple. Vocabulary choice was based on The Living Word Vocabulary by Dr. Edgar Dale and Dr. Joseph O'Rourke (Worldbook-Childcraft International, 1981)--the vocabulary used in *The World Book Encyclopedia*

. Rhetorical questions were changed into their implied answer. Figures of speech were changed into their meanings--this is good, because some could misinterpret the original writers' intended meaning. Idiomatic cultural expressions of the original cultures were translated so today's readers could understand them. It is written on the fourth grade level. Philosophically, it is in the dynamic equivalence category.

Billy Graham chose to publish the New Testament under the name, *The Everyday Bible*
. His endorsement speaks highly of the translation.

The New Revised Standard Version (1989)

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The New Revised Standard Version was a revision of the Revised Standard Version (1952), which was a revision of the American Standard Version (1901), which embodied earlier revisions of the King James Version (1611).

The Revised Standard Version Bible Committee is a group that continues to function. It is comprised of about thirty scholars of men and women, representing Protestant, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Jewish faiths.

The underlying Greek text was *The Greek New Testament*, prepared by the United Bible Societies (1966; third edition, corrected 1983).

The underlying Hebrew text was the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977; ed. sec. emendata, 1983). It is the Masoretic text of the Old Testament.

The NRSV is a literal translation with this qualification: "As literal as possible, as free as necessary." It fits the formal equivalence category. Tyndale places it on the seventh grade level, and Zondervan places it on the tenth grade level.

Scholar Bruce Metzger is a member of the translation committee, which speaks highly for the translation.

The Catholic version was published with Apocryphal and Deuterocanonical Books.

The NRSV was copyrighted in 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

The Message: The New Testament in Contemporary Language (1993)

The Message: The New Testament in Contemporary Language is a new translation by Eugene H. Peterson. It is a fresh translation from the Greek text of the United Bible Societies (third edition, corrected, 1983). It is a meaning-for-meaning translation (paraphrase) by Pastor Eugene H. Peterson. He says,

The goal is not to render a word-for-word conversion of Greek into English, but rather to convert the tone, the rhythm, the events, the ideas, into the way we actually speak.

The New Testament translation was sponsored by the Navigators and published by NAVPRESS. An exegetical committee of five scholar consultants checked the translation for accuracy and style. Billy Graham endorsed the translation.

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The Old Testament is in the process of being translated. An exegetical committee of twelve will check the translation.

Contemporary English Version (1995)

The Contemporary English Version was a 10 year project involving a team of over 100. It was sponsored by the American Bible Society.

The New Testament was published in 1991 as Bible for Today's Family, New Testament.

The Greek text of the United Bible Societies

(third edition, corrected, 1983, was used to translate the New Testament. The fourth edition was used later--it was published during the translation process.

The Old Testament text was the United Bible Societies' *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, fourth edition, corrected.

It is a meaning-for-meaning translation (dynamic equivalent). That is, it seeks to be both *reliable*

to the Greek and Hebrew texts and *readable*

for common people. The language is on a fifth grade level. Theological language is translated into easily understood English terms. Common language was selected for all English-speaking people.

It was designed to be understood by both hearers and readers.

It fills a need to communicate God's Word to a largely secular society.

The Deuterocanonicals/Apocrypha edition is due in 1997.

New International Reader's Version (1996)

Zondervan produced guidelines to develop a simplified version of the International Bible Society's New International Version, in 1991. The language used is on a high third grade level. Philosophically, it is in the formal equivalence category, but close to dynamic equivalence. This is a noble undertaking in that this is probably what Jesus would do. He would communicate the

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Word of God so people of all ages could understand it.

The project began in 1991 and the New Testament was published in 1995. Three complete Bibles were published in 1996: a Bible for children, an adult Bible and a devotional Bible.

Forty translators and simplifiers from fourteen denominations produced the Nlrv, which would tend to reduce doctrinal bias and produce a more objective translation.

New Living Translation (1996)

The New Living Translation is a revision of The Living Bible. Philosophically, it is a move from a paraphrase to a dynamic equivalent translation. A team of 101 translators worked seven years to produce it. The translation team included both Arminians and Calvinists. This broad base of evangelicals should provide a more objective translation. It was sponsored by Tyndale.

The underlying New Testament text was the *United Bible Societies*, fourth revised edition, 1993. Nestle and Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece*, twenty-seventh edition, 1993 was also used. (Both texts are the same, but differ in textual notes and punctuation.)

The underlying Old Testament text was the *Masoretic Text* (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* --1977). The Dead Sea Scrolls and ancient translations were consulted.

The language chosen was on the sixth grade level. The words used were designed for clarity and for public reading.

The NLT is recommended by Billy Graham and Josh McDowell. A portion of the sale price goes to Wycliffe Bible Translators, a well-respected group that seeks to give all language groups their own Bible translation.

Taken from my Book, English Translations of the: A Brief Critique

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