

HOW TO NAVIGATE ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

THE BEST BIBLE?

WITH INSIGHTS INTO  12 CONTEMPORARY VERSIONS

MATTHEW J.
BARRON



The Best Bible? is divided into three main sections to frame the process of translation and Bible production:

- (1) The decisions that translators make,
- (2) a survey of historic English Bibles, and
- (3) reviews and assessments of twelve contemporary translations

Includes a glossary, a scripture index, and a subject index.

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HOW TO NAVIGATE ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

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WITH INSIGHTS INTO **12** CONTEMPORARY VERSIONS



MATTHEW J.
BARRON

The Best Bible? How to Navigate English Bible Translations with Insights into Twelve Contemporary Versions.

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Abbreviations & Acronyms

AD	<i>anno Domini</i>	in the year of [our] Lord (a.k.a. CE—in the common era*)	
a.k.a.		also known as	
BC		before Christ (a.k.a. BCE—before the common era)	
c.		century	
<i>c., circa</i>		approximately, around	
<i>cf.</i>	<i>confer</i>	compare with	
<i>e.g.</i>	<i>exempli gratia</i>	for the sake of example	
<i>et al.</i>	<i>et alia</i>	and others	
<i>i.e.</i>	<i>id est</i>	that is	
MS, MSS	manuscript(s)	NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament	so	so also with, and so it is with

BIBLE VERSIONS

Alter	<i>The Hebrew Bible</i> by Robert Alter (2018)
AMP	<i>The Amplified Bible</i> (1965, '87, 2015)
ASV	American Standard Version (1901)
Ballantine	<i>The Riverside New Testament</i> by William G. Ballantine (1923, '34)
Bishops'	the Bishops' Bible (1568, '72)
CEB	<i>Common English Bible</i> (2011)
CEV	<i>Contemporary English Version</i> (1995, '99)
Coverdale	Miles Coverdale's Bible (1537)
CSB	<i>Christian Standard Bible</i> (2017, '20)
Douay	the Douay Old Testament (1609–10)
Douay-Rheims-Challoner	the Douay-Rheims Bible edited by Bishop Richard Challoner (1749, '72)
<i>EasyEnglish</i>	<i>EasyEnglish Bible</i> , online (2018)
EHV	<i>Evangelical Heritage Version</i> (2019)
ESV	<i>English Standard Version</i> (2001, '16)
Geneva	the Geneva Bible (1560, 1599)

* This book retains the traditional abbreviation since the approximate reckoning from Christ's birth is common only to those influenced by the spread of Christianity.

GNB, TEV	<i>Good News Bible Today's English Version</i> (1976, '92)
Great	the Great Bible (1539)
GW	<i>God's Word</i> (1995)
HCSB	<i>Holman Christian Standard Bible</i> (2004, '09)
ICB	<i>International Children's Bible</i> (1986)
ISV	<i>International Standard Version</i> (1996, 2010)
JB	<i>The Jerusalem Bible</i> (1966)
KJV	King James Version (1611)
LEB	<i>The Lexham English Bible</i> (2010, '12)
<i>Living</i> , TLB	<i>The Living Bible</i> (1971)
LSB	the <i>Legacy Standard Bible</i> (2021)
LXX	the Greek Septuagint (circa 280 – 130 BC)
Matthew	the “Thomas Matthew” Bible (1537)
MEV	<i>Modern English Version</i> (2014)
<i>Message</i> , MSG	<i>The Message</i> by Eugene H. Peterson (2002, '18)
Moffatt	<i>The Bible. A New Translation</i> by James Moffatt (1922, '54)
Montgomery	<i>The New Testament in Modern English</i> by H. B. Montgomery (1924)
NAB	<i>The New American Bible</i> (1970, '86, '91)
NABRE	<i>The New American Bible, Revised Edition</i> (2010)
NASB	<i>New American Standard Bible</i> (1971, '77, '95, '20)
NCV	<i>New Century Version</i> (1990)
NEB	<i>The New English Bible</i> (1970)
<i>NET Bible</i> , NET	<i>NET Bible: New English Translation</i> (2006, '17, '19)
NETS	<i>A New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> (2007)
NIV	<i>New International Version</i> (1984, 2011)
NIRV	<i>New International Reader's Version</i> (1996, '98)
NJB	<i>The New Jerusalem Bible</i> (1985)
NJPS	<i>New Jewish Publication Society Tanakh</i> (1985, '99)
NKJV, RAV	<i>New King James Version</i> (a.k.a. <i>Revised Authorised Version</i> , 1982)
NLT	<i>New Living Translation</i> (1996, 2015)
NRSV	<i>New Revised Standard Version</i> (1990, 2021?)
NWT	<i>New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures</i> (1960, '84, 2013)
Phillips	<i>The New Testament in Modern English</i> by J. B. Phillips (1958, '72)
REB	<i>The Revised English Bible</i> (1989)

Rheims	the Rheims New Testament (1582)
RSV	<i>Revised Standard Version</i> (1952, '71)
RV	the English Revised Version (1881, '85, '95)
TNIV	<i>Today's New International Version</i> (2005)
TPT	<i>The Passion Translation</i> by Brian Simmons (2018, '20)
Tyndale	William Tyndale's versions (1525–36)
Vulg.	the Latin Vulgate of St. Jerome (c. late 4th c. AD)
Weymouth	<i>The New Testament in Modern Speech</i> by R. F. Weymouth (1903, '29)

BIBLICAL BOOKS

Old Testament (or *Tanakh*)

Gn	Genesis	Pr	Proverb(s)
Ex	Exodus	Ecc	Ecclesiastes
Lv	Leviticus	Sg	Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs, Canticles)
Nm	Numbers	Is	Isaiah
Dt	Deuteronomy	Jer	Jeremiah
Jos	Joshua	Lm	Lamentations
Jg	Judges	Ezk	Ezekiel
Ru	Ruth	Dn	Daniel
1Sa	I Samuel	Ho	Hosea
2Sa	II Samuel	Jl	Joel
1Kg	I Kings	Am	Amos
2Kg	II Kings	Ob	Obadiah
1Ch	I Chronicles	Jon	Jonah
2Ch	II Chronicles	Mi	Micah
Ezr	Ezra (or 1 Esdras [Douay]; 2 Esdras 1–10 [LXX])	Na	Nahum
Ne	Nehemiah (or 2 Esdras [Douay]; 2 Esdras 11–23 [LXX])	Hab	Habbakuk
Est	Esther	Zp	Zephaniah
Jb	Job	Hg	Haggai
Ps, Pss	Psalms	Zc	Zechariah
		Ml	Malachi

New Testament

Mt	Matthew	1Ti	I Timothy
Mk	Mark	2Ti	II Timothy
Lk	Luke	Tt	Titus
Jn	John	Phm	Philemon
Ac	Acts of the Apostles	Heb	Hebrews
Ro	Romans	Jas	James
1Co	I Corinthians	1Pt	I Peter
2Co	II Corinthians	2Pt	II Peter
Gal	Galatians	1Jn	I John
Eph	Ephesians	2Jn	II John
Php	Philippians	3Jn	III John
Col	Colossians	Jd	Jude
1Th	I Thessalonians	Rv	Revelation (or Apocalypse)
2Th	II Thessalonians		

Apocrypha (or Deuterocanon)

1Esd	I Esdras (or Greek Esdras; 2 Esdras [Eastern Orthodox]; 3 Esdras [Douay])
2Esd	II Esdras (or Latin Esdras; 3 Esdras [Eastern Orthodox]; 4 Esdras [Douay])
Tb	Tobit
Jdt	Judith
Est+	Additions to Esther
Ws	Wisdom of Solomon
Sir	Wisdom of Sirach, Ecclesiasticus
Bar	Epistle of Baruch
Dan+	Additions to Daniel
Song of 3	Song of the Three Children
Sus	Susanna
Bel & Drag	Bel and the Dragon
Prayer Man	Prayer of Manasseh
1Mc	I Maccabees
2Mc	II Maccabees

Preface

For God's Word to have any say in God's Church, it must be understood. "For indeed, if the trumpet produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare for battle? And so you through the tongue, unless you produce a clear message, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air." (1Co 14.8–9 LEB)

The Bible is the Church's charter. It's her heritage, her founding document, and her written authority, even when it is locked behind ancient languages. But it has no force until it is displayed with a language that people can understand. If the English-speaking church is to hear God's Word with authority and clarity, she must insist on a clear English translation.

Today, millions of English-speaking Christians world-wide rely on several English translations of the Bible to understand their relationships and obligations to God and each other. With over forty translations in print, and each asserting its own merits, some find it intimidating to decide which Bible they ought to read, study, and devote themselves to. Adding to the confusion are various groups who publicly reject one translation, denounce another, and promote their preferred version as the one and only worthy of attention.

Who is to say one Bible is better than another? More importantly, what are the criteria for judging the qualities and accuracy of each?

I wrote this book to put those doubts to rest and to frame the whole endeavor of Bible translation so that you, the reader, will be equipped to decide for yourself. Not only will you gain an appreciation for the processes involved in producing translations, you will also gain insight into the production and merits of several popular versions currently in print.

Use this reference to grow your knowledge about the Bible and translation, to guide your next Bible purchase, or to inform what counsel you give someone when they ask you, “What is the best Bible?”

WHAT THIS BOOK DOES

Though ultimately intended to answer “Which Bible is best or most accurate?” this book frames the entire process of Bible translation—its goals, methods, audiences, *etc.*—to help readers arrive at a more rounded and informed decision. It offers the tools and standards for measuring what “the best” or “most accurate” ought to be. It tells the stories of our most popular versions and the circumstances from which they arose, helping answer the question “Where do our Bibles come from?” It describes the processes and methods employed in the production of these translations. And it suggests solutions to practical questions, like “Which Bible is best—for reliable Bible study? For early language learners? For reading the Bible in a year? *Et cetera.*”

This book does not, however, give attention to the ever growing number of editions available for each translation. There are far too many than can be covered in a volume this size. Rather, this book focuses on the text of the translations themselves.

HOW THIS BOOK IS STRUCTURED

This book is organized into three parts. The first reveals the kinds of decisions that translators have to make before, during, and after their translation work. It explains the intentions, philosophies, methods, and difficulties of rendering Scripture from its original languages into something that makes sense for readers and listeners today.

The second part surveys the history of our earliest English Bibles, especially those which lay the foundations upon which the popular King James version was built.

The third and final part reviews and assesses twelve of the most popular and accessible English versions commonly used today.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Words followed by asterisks (*) are strewn throughout these pages. These terms are defined in the Glossary near the back of the book.

Common abbreviations and acronyms for biblical books and Bible translations are listed and expanded following the Table of Contents near the front of this book.

Each chapter concludes with a section of Endnotes. These notes either add interesting details or cite the sources of each chapter's facts.

Footnotes (indicated by superscripted, lowercase letters), instead of Endnotes (indicated by superscripted numbers), are added to Part Two, "History of English Bibles," to reveal insights and sources for the histories written therein.

Twelve contemporary Bible translations are reviewed in Part Three, "Modern English Bibles." Each review shares the same divisions:

- (1) An overview (called "At a Glance") with three timelines—
 - [a] one for events contemporary with the version's publication,
 - [b] another placing the version's publish date alongside those of other versions, and
 - [c] one more indicating significant milestones during the version's publication;
- (2) the version's history;
- (3) the translators' stated goals;
- (4) the underlying text bases;
- (5) the translation's process and method;
- (6) representative samples and notable or contested passages;
- (7) significant revisions;
- (8) a summary estimation; and

(9) an explanation of the copyright permissions, which govern how the version may be cited in other works.

Specifics regarding the selection and method of evaluating these translations is detailed in the “Introduction” on page 195.

Finally, there are two Indices in the back of the book. The first, a Scripture Index, locates every place in the text where passages of Scripture are cited or referenced; the other is a Subject Index to help readers link relevant topics scattered throughout these pages.

THE AUTHOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Numbered scripture references in this book follow the traditional English order as found in the Geneva and King James Bibles. Therefore, references to certain passages, particularly in the major prophets and the Psalms, may differ from those printed in editions of the Jewish *Tanakh*, the Greek Septuagint, or the Latin Vulgate.

This book identifies those portions of the Septuagint not found in the Hebrew Scripture as Apocryphal, not Deuterocanonical. It frequently refers to the Hebrew-Aramaic *Tanakh* as the “Old Testament.” (See page 4 and following regarding biblical canons.) Selections of Scripture presented herein should prove relevant to those who adhere to Christian beliefs, yet they should still interest critics of Bible translation in general.

My own strengths are in the Greek New Testament, for which I find occasion to translate portions into English when the need arises to study it in depth. My competence in Hebrew is elementary and limited. This is why I have given many more examples from the New Testament than from the Old.

This work is a labor of love for my Christian friends rooted in fundamentalist, Pentecostal, and evangelical Charismatic persuasions. I pray this work will equip and unite you around God's revealed Word—both living and written.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The translation review chapters have benefited from the observations of those who have gone before me. Where I include their insights, I cite their works in that chapter's Endnotes.

I also relied on the knowledge and experience of those who were actually in the trenches of Bible production. I thank the editors, translators, scholars, and professors, who have participated on the teams and committees which have produced the translations described in this book. Some of these individuals have shared their insights with me over telephone and email. In particular, I thank the following for the time and attention that they have given in reviewing initial draft portions of this work. You have helped me to keep the record straight:

Dr. Barry J. Beitzel, *Professor emeritus of Old Testament and Semitic Languages, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (NLT)*; Dr. James A. Borland, *Professor emeritus of New Testament, Liberty University (NKJV)*; Dr. C. John "Jack" Collins, *Professor of Old Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary (ESV)*; Dr. Dorian Coover-Cox, *Acting Director of Ph.D. Studies and Professor of Old Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary (CSB)*; Dr. A. Andrew Das, *Professor of Religious Studies and Assistant Dean of the Faculty for Assessment and Accreditation, Elmhurst College (CSB)*; Dr. Paul R. Gilchrist, *former President of Biblical Studies, Covenant College, and former Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (NKJV)*; Dr. Wayne Grudem, *Research Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies, Phoenix Seminary (ESV)*; Rev. Dr. David Instone-Brewer, *Senior Research Fellow in Rabbinics and the New Testament, Tyndale House, Cambridge (NIV)*; Dr. Karen H. Jobes, *Gerald F. Hawthorne Professor emerita of New Testament Greek and Exegesis, Wheaton College and Graduate School (NIV)*; Dr. Gordon H. Johnston, *Professor of Old Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary*

(NET); Dr. John F. Kutsko, *Executive Director of the Society of Biblical Literature and Affiliate Professor of Biblical Studies, The Candler School of Theology (NRSV)*; Mr. Pike Lambeth, *Executive Vice President, The Lockman Foundation (NASB)*; Dr. Tremper Longman III, *Distinguished Scholar of Biblical Studies, Westmont College (NLT)*; Prof. Alan R. Millard F.S.A., *Rankin Professor emeritus of Hebrew and Ancient Semitic languages, and Honorary Senior Fellow (Ancient Near East), at the School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, University of Liverpool (NIV)*; Dr. James D. Price, *retired Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, Temple Baptist Seminary (NKJV, CSB)*; Dr. Brian Simmons, *Lead Translator for The Passion Translation and Core Residential Faculty, Wagner University (TPT)*; Dr. Andrew E. Steinmann, *Distinguished Professor of Theology and Hebrew, Concordia University (CSB)*; Dr. Mark L. Strauss, *University Professor of New Testament, Bethel University (NIV)*; Mr. Mark D. Taylor, *President and C.E.O. of Tyndale House Publishers (NLT)*; Dr. Eugene C. Ulrich, *John A. O'Brien Professor emeritus of Hebrew Scripture and Theology, Department of Theology, University of Notre Dame (NRSV)*; Dr. Rick Wadholm, Jr., *Adjunct Professor of Old Testament, Horizon College & Seminary, of Biblical and Theological Studies, SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary, and of Theology, North Central University (TPT)*; and Dr. W. Don Wilkins, *Scholar in Residence, The Lockman Foundation (NASB)*.

Please note that none of those listed here have corresponded with me as representatives of the boards or committees on which they sit. Each has consented to relate their expertise in an individual capacity only.

For their insight and suggestions, I also thank Dr. Donald L. Brake, Sr., *Dean emeritus, Multnomah Biblical Seminary, Multnomah University* and author of *A Visual History of the King James Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011); Dr. Loren L. Johns, *Professor of New Testament, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Semi-*

nary (regarding the RSV); James Snapp, Jr. author of *A Fresh Analysis of John 7:53–8:11 with a Tour of the External Evidence* (2016); Dr. Mark L. Ward, Jr., author of *Authorized: The Use & Misuse of the King James Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018). Thanks also goes to Jeffrey Pelton (inscribeministries.com) for his edits to the bulk of this material. Any remaining deficiencies herein are clearly my own.

My many friends and family have encouraged me during the production of this book. I wish to mention two in particular: James M. V. Sligar, who first suggested this work and saw its value to critical Bible readers, and Andrew R. Pomeroy, who showed deep interest in my talks and encouraged this book's publication. Of course, I mustn't fail to mention mine own, Molly Maria, my beloved wife, who patiently endured and labored while I wrote and edited this work. To you all, I am deeply grateful!

In memoriam, Ryan J. Harter (1985 – 2019). Thank you for encouraging me to go for it.

Soli Deo gloria,
Matthew J. Barron
July 6, 2021

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Part Three

Contemporary English Bibles

Introduction

to the Contemporary English Bibles

TRANSLATION REVIEW SECTIONS

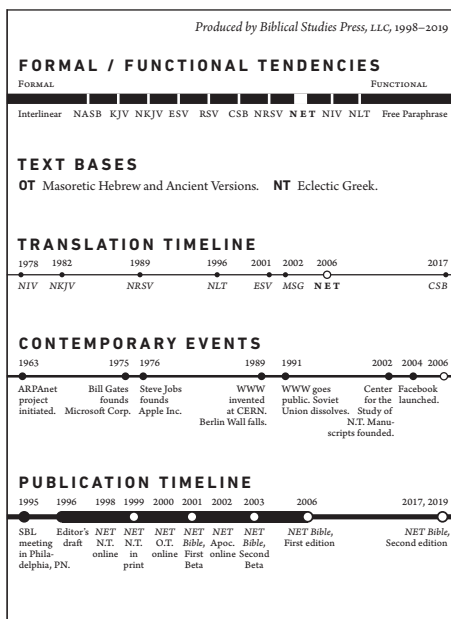
Each of the review chapters includes the following sections:

At a Glance Overview • Historical Introduction • Stated Translation Ideals • Method • Text Bases • Contributors • Theological Assumptions • Features • Reception • Representative Samples • Revisions • Assessment • Endorsements • Copyright • Endnotes

The At a Glance Overview

Each review chapter is prefaced with a page of summary information called the “At a Glance” overview. This overview includes a diagram titled *Formal/Functional Tendencies*. On this diagram, each translation is listed horizontally by their initialism and set in relation to one another according to their general translation tendencies. For example, the NET tends to be rendered more formally than the NLT, though it could not be considered a formal translation.

The words “interlinear” and “free paraphrase” on opposing ends of the diagram indicate extreme renderings that cannot be considered translations. For example, even though the NASB is closer to the “Formal” end of the spectrum, it could never be considered an “interlinear.”



The At a Glance overview

Footnotes are not usually considered when characterizing the formal or functional tendencies of a translation's main text.

Translation Review Sections

The "Historical Introduction" begins each review and gives readers context for the circumstances by which the translation arose.

"Stated Translation Ideals," which may be read from a Bible's preface, jacket cover, marketing copy, or interviews with the translators and editors themselves, give readers an idea of the editors' general hope for the outcome of their work. In the following review chapters, I judge whether or not they met their goals by offering my conclusions under the "Assessments" heading.

The "Method" section describes how each translation or revision was organized and executed.

"Text Bases" gives a short bibliography of the original language sources used by each translation. Regarding such, translators and translation committees usually view their text bases with a critical eye. Standard texts (e.g. the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies or *Editio Critico Maior* Greek NTS) or traditional texts (the *Textus Receptus*) may be set as a base for reference, but final editorial decisions lay with the editors and translators themselves. Few, if any, follow their base texts blindly.

"Contributors" identifies some of the people who have worked on each translation either as editors, translators, or specialists in some related field. Some of these individuals are recognized for their work on other translations, which are indicated by their initialisms in parentheses following the contributor's name.

"Theological Assumptions" summarizes any explicit faith-claims held by the translators and editors.

"Features" lists the typical translation or typesetting features shared by a translation's printed editions.

"Representative Samples": I benefit from reading several translations all the way through. In preparing for this book, however, I could not read exhaustively all of the Bibles that are evaluated

here in time for publication. Therefore, I approach the review of each translation as a modern archaeologist approaches a previously inhabited hill. Earlier generations of archaeologists would strip the entire surface of the hill layer-by-layer, one after the other. They would record their discoveries for one layer before continuing down to the next layer, and so on, until they reached the bottom. In contrast, later generations learned to plan ahead by cutting a length of trench straight through the entire hill. Thus they are able to quickly characterize the nature of the hill, distinguish and identify the site's habitation layers, examine a sampling of artifacts, give approximations of each layer's relative age, and determine where to look next—all without having to sift and record every potsherd and rock before proceeding to the next underlying layer.

So too, I do not need to read every page of each Bible translation in its entirety in order to get a good sense of that Bible's general character. All I require are "Representative Samples" to discern a translation's functional or formalistic tendencies and test the translators' theological assumptions. Some of these samples are listed in each review so that you may follow the method and know what kinds of passages to look for.

Many of the samples that are listed for comparison have Hebrew or Greek transcriptions to the left of their references. All of the references are included for specific reasons:

Familiar Passages (Gn 1.1–2; Ps 23.1–2; 27.4; Jn 3.16) offer a very quick glimpse into a translation's style and give a rapid comparison for those who already know these verses by heart.

Divine Name and Titles (Gn 1.27; Ex 6.3; 1Sa 17.45; Ps 24.1; 73.28; 90.1, Dn 9.3; Mt 16.16; Lk 20.42) summarizes the ways that references to God have been rendered throughout a translation.

New Testament Text Base (Mt 17.21; 18.11; Ac 8.37; 1Jn 5.7–8) indicates significant text-critical passages which reveal the Greek textual basis for the translation's NT. For example, all of the passages in this section are generally found in the late

Byzantine MSS used for the production of the *Textus Receptus* in the 16th century. They are not found in any of the standard critical Greek editions in use today (except as footnotes in the critical apparatus).

Gender Language (Gn 9.6; Lv 24.17; Pr 15.5; Mt 4.19; 5.9; Ro 2.6; Gal 5.13; 1Ti 3.11; Ti 1.6) reveals the manner in which the translators and editors handled language related to gender. Some generic masculine nouns include both males and females when their meaning is unaffected by context (e.g. *’ādām, nephesh, anthrōpoi*). Some exclusively masculine nouns, when influenced by context, may also extend to females (*huioi, adelphoi*). Some translations (e.g. NRSV) render specific male or female nouns in an inclusive manner for liturgical reasons without regard for their context (*’āvīw, gynaikos, anēr*).

Two passages for *Difficult Renderings* were chosen, not because of any difficulty in rendering the words of their primary text base, but because of how difficult it is to judge what their original text-basis ought to be (1Sa 13.1) or how hard it is to render the intent of the words written there (Is 28.13).

Significant Renderings were picked for their traditional familiarity (Pr 15.11; Mt 1.2; Jn 1.14) or for the theological controversies surrounding those passages (Is 7.14; Jn 18.36; Ro 3.22; Tt 2.13). For example, *she’ol . . . ’abaddon* in Pr 15.11 are traditionally rendered as “Hell and Destruction” (κῆρ), but they are typically transcribed as “Sheol and Abaddon” in modern translations. Some fear that modern renderings mask a valuable doctrine by using terms that are unfamiliar to modern readers. On the other hand, there is a need to distinguish between notions of Hell, which have been conditioned by later societies influenced by Dante’s *Inferno*, and the habitation of the dead as understood by ancient Israel and her contemporaries.

The words *tois ioudaiois* in **Jn 1.14** is controversial because of how its referent has been confused: If rendered formally (“to the Jews,” so KJV, NASB) it can be construed to apply to Jews universally for their collective culpability in sending Christ to the cross, despite the handful of loyal Jewish followers who were powerless to do anything on his behalf at his trial. But when rendered in its context as “by the Jewish leaders” (NIV), the referent is narrowed to just those Jews who were directly involved with condemning Jesus to death.

Plenty has already been written about the rendering of *‘almah* in **Is 7.14** regarding its historic translation and theological controversy. (See page 110 and following.)

The “Revisions” section: While preparing for this book, I have either collated and compared different text editions of the various translations under review or sifted through collations produced by the editors or publishers themselves. These collations demonstrate the improvements that translators and editors have made to their translations over time. A sampling of their revisions are included in each review chapter.

Some review chapters may include additional sections. For example the KJV chapter includes a section on “Language Changes.”

WHY THESE TRANSLATIONS?

The twelve contemporary translations reviewed in the following chapters are here because of their popularity based on sales or readership or their significant influence on other translations.

An argument can be made that the King James Version (KJV) is not really a contemporary translation. It is included in this section, because it is still a text that is widely available. Its copyright status makes it profitable and popular among publishers (particularly in the United States), and, though it is four hundred years old, it is still second in sales following the *New International Version* (NIV).¹

26.22 room] space
 26.24 My] my
 26.25 Yahweh,] the LORD
 26.25 slaves] servants
 26.29 ^done
 26.29 done~
 26.31 Then~
 26.32 slaves] servants
 26.33 ^still
 26.33 to this day.] today
 26.34 40] forty
 26.34 Hittite,] Hethite,
 26.34 Hittite.] Hethite.
 27.2 /Take] /So now tak
 27.7 the~
 27.7 /Now obey every or
 27.8 son.] son, listen to
 27.20 worked] made
 27.20 out] happen
 27.25 “Serve] “Bring it c
 27.25 ^closer
 27.29 down] in worship
 27.29 brothers;] relative
 27.29 down] in worship
 27.30 the hunt.] his hun
 27.31 Then he] He
 27.37 Esau:] Esau,
 27.38 ^have
 27.38 have~
 27.38 /Then his] /His
 27.39 him:] him,
 27.46 Hittite women.] H
 27.46 a Hittite woman] s
 27.46 one of them,] thes
 27.46 /Isaac] /So Isaac
 28.1 him: “Don’t take] hi
 28.1 wife from the~
 28.1 women.] girl.
 28.6 woman.”] girl.”
 28.12 heaven,] the sky,
 28.12 /Yahweh] /The LO
 28.13 Yahweh,] the LORD
 28.13 that] on which
 28.13 now sleeping on.]
 28.20 on] during
 28.20 journey,] journey
 28.20 He] he
 28.21 house,] family,
 28.22 You] you
 28.22 You] you

A sample
 collation of
 changes made
 between the
 HCSB (2009)
 and the CSB
 (2017) in
Gn 26–28.

As of just five years ago, it was still held as the most popularly read and listened to translation, far surpassing the better-selling NIV.²

The *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) is included because it is still in print and found in the pews of many mainline liturgical churches today. It is also influential as the English base text for later translations and revisions, like the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV), the *English Standard Version* (ESV), and the *Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition* (RSV2CE).

The NRSV is a familiar presence in mainline denominations, and can be found in many pews, seminary bookstores, and as a text of choice for religious courses in state colleges. It is currently undergoing revision.

The ESV has earned its reputation as a trusted evangelical translation and is now gaining ground in certain conservative Roman Catholic circles.

The *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) is a significant evangelical translation touted for its formalistic “literalism.” It has recently been revised in two different versions: The NASB 2020 edition has moved in a more functional direction, while the *Legacy Standard Bible* has moved in a more formal one.

The *New King James Version* (NKJV) is a static translation that is still in print and supported with many study resources. It is an ideal version to set alongside the classic King James Bible.

The *New International Version* (NIV) has been a trusted evangelical translation for the last four decades and is today’s best-selling version. Its revision history could use some explanation.

The *Christian Standard Bible* (CSB) is the successor to the *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (HCSB). It is a modern version that cleverly frames its balance between formal and functional translation methods. The CSB has a unique heritage extending to the success of the NKJV.

The *New Living Translation* (NLT) is here as a modern functional translation. It follows in the commercial success of *The Living Bible* paraphrase.

The *NET Bible: New English Translation* (NET) is a functional translation whose many thorough footnotes have influenced other familiar Bibles, including the ESV and the revised NIV.

The Message is a popular paraphrase which has received endorsements from those outside typical ecclesiastic circles.

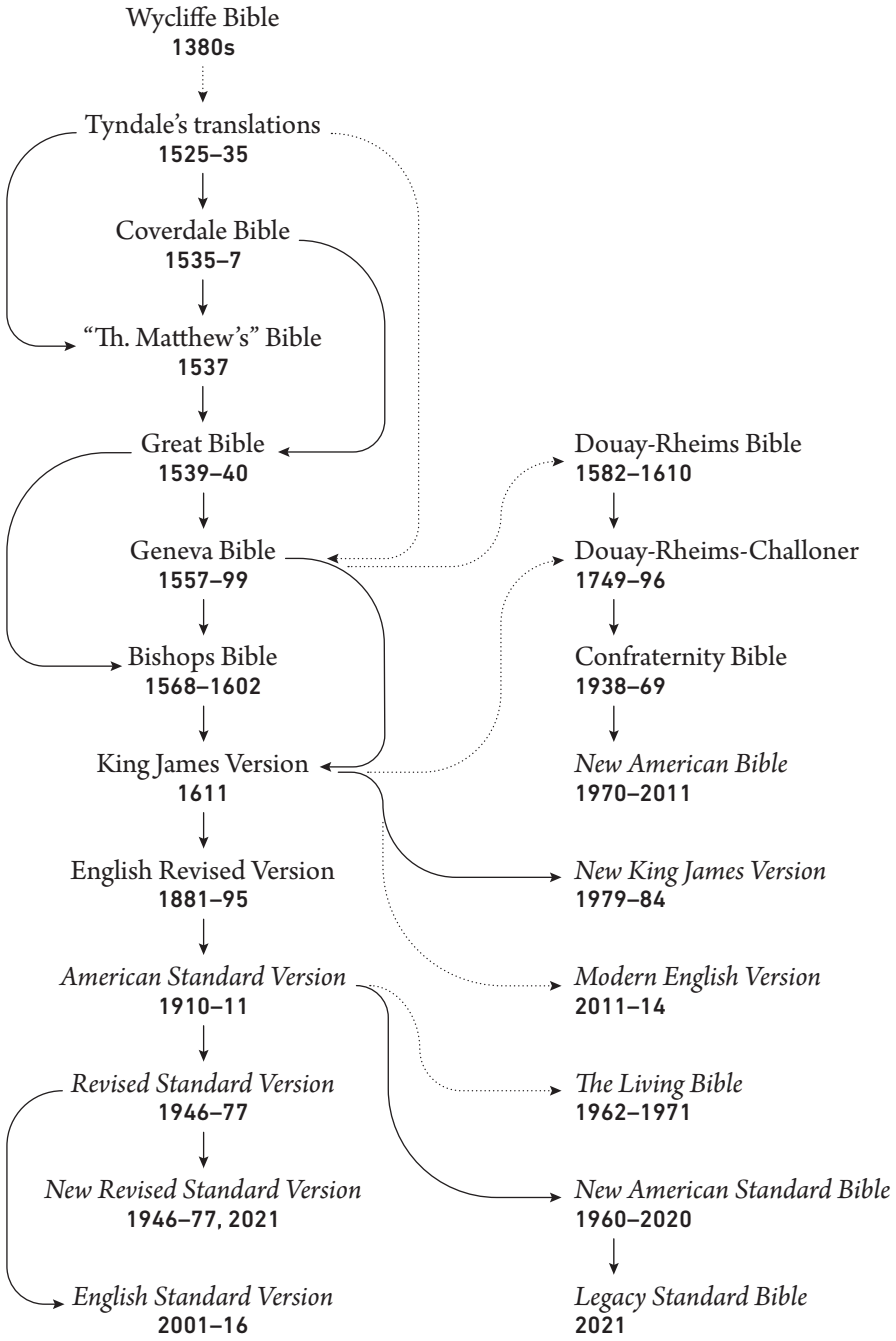
The Passion Translation (TPT) is a work in progress, yet its future sales seems promising due to its popularity within Charismatic groups.

GENEALOGY AND TIMELINE

The following two charts illustrate the relationships of some of the more common and familiar English translations by their derivation and by their publishing history. The “Genealogy of Familiar Bible Translations” starts with the earliest, complete English biblical text (Wycliffe’s Bible). Lines terminating with arrows show a direct relationship between translations (as between an ancestor and a descendant), whereas dotted lines indicate a lesser or a less strict influence.

The “Timeline of Modern English Bibles” sorts some of the more familiar and common modern English Bible translations by their initial publication dates, even though some of the more popular editions have been revised more recently. For example, the NIV is posted in 1969 (since the publication of its *Gospel of John*), yet it has been revised as late as 2011.

Genealogy of Familiar English Bible Translations



Timeline of Modern English Bibles

<i>American Standard Version</i> 1910–11		Confraternity Bible 1938–69	1910 – '49
Jewish Publication Society <i>Tanakh</i> 1917		<i>Revised Standard Version</i> 1946–77	
<i>New World Translation</i> 1950–2013	<i>New English Bible</i> 1961–70	<i>Good News Bible</i> 1964–92	1950 – '69
New Jewish Publication Society <i>Tanakh</i> 1958–1999	<i>The Living Bible</i> 1962–1971	<i>Jerusalem Bible</i> 1966	
<i>New American Standard Bible</i> 1960–2020	<i>The Living Bible</i> 1962–1971	<i>New International Version</i> 1969–2011	
<i>New American Bible</i> 1970–2011		<i>New Jerusalem Bible</i> 1985	1970 – '89
<i>New King James Version</i> 1979–84		<i>Revised English Bible</i> 1989	
		<i>New Revised Standard Version</i> 1989–2021	
<i>Contemporary English Version</i> 1991–99		<i>NET Bible, New English Translation</i> 1995–2017	1990 – '99
<i>The Message</i> 1993–2018		<i>New Living Translation</i> 1996–2015	
<i>New International Reader's Version</i> 1995–96		<i>Holman Christian Standard Bible</i> 1999–2009	
<i>Today's New International Version</i> 2001–05	<i>Modern English Version</i> 2011–14	<i>Revised New Jerusalem Bible</i> 2018	2000 – Present
<i>English Standard Version</i> 2001–16	<i>Evangelical Heritage Version</i> 2017–19		
<i>Common English Bible</i> 2010–11	<i>Christian Standard Bible</i> 2017–20	<i>Legacy Standard Bible</i> 2021	

ENDNOTES FOR THE INTRODUCTION

- ¹ E.C.P.A., “Bible Translation . . . Best of 2020,” *Christian Book Expo*, accessed January 26, 2021, <https://christianbookexpo.com/bestseller/translations.php?id=B020>.
- ² American Bible Society, “Preferred Bible Version,” *State of the Bible 2015*, research by Barna Group (New York, NY: American Bible Society, February 2015), p. 16.

King James Version

The Holy Bible Containing the Old Testament and the New

*Produced by various representatives from Oxford and
Cambridge Universities and the Church of England, 1611*

FORMAL / FUNCTIONAL TENDENCIES

FORMAL

FUNCTIONAL

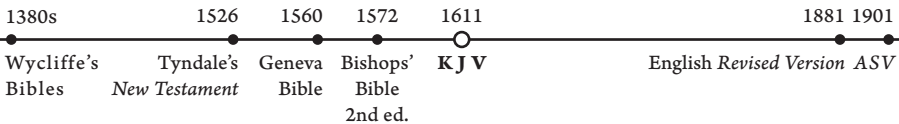
Interlinear NASB **KJV** NKJV ESV RSV CSB NRSV NET NIV NLT Free Paraphrase

TEXT BASES

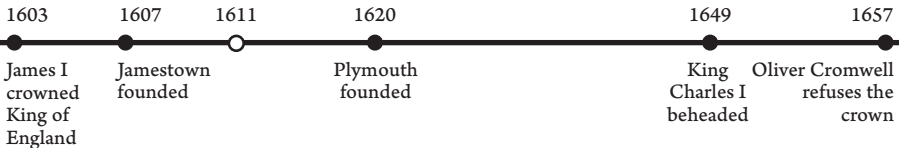
English Base Bishops' Bible, 2nd edition (1572, 1602).

OT Masoretic Hebrew and Ancient Versions. **NT** *Textus Receptus*.

TRANSLATION TIMELINE

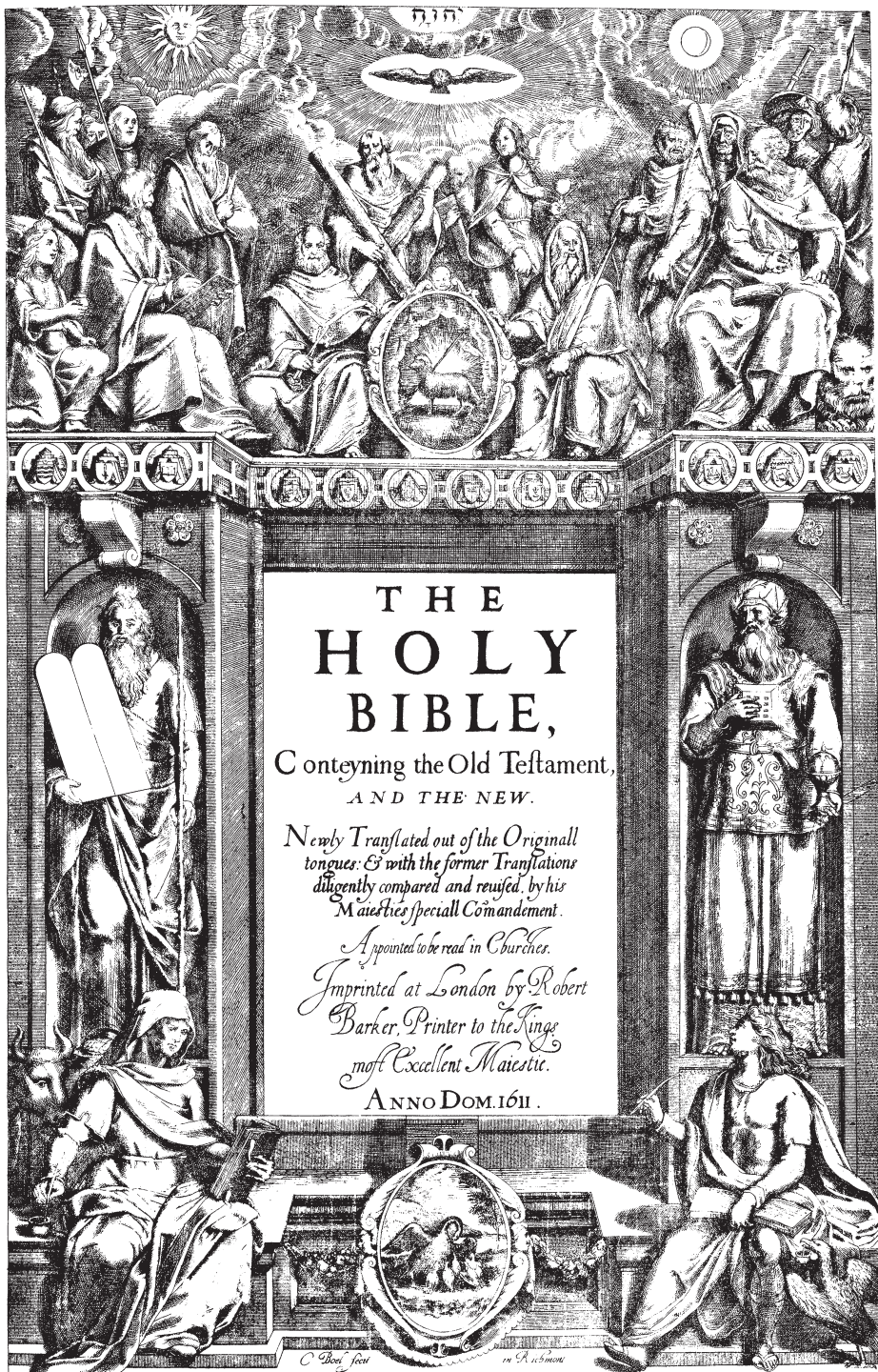


CONTEMPORARY EVENTS



PUBLICATION TIMELINE





In 1603, Queen Elizabeth I rested on her deathbed without a natural heir. Before dying, she implied that her second-cousin, James Stuart (*i.e.*, James VI, king of Scotland), should succeed to the English throne. She would leave him a kingdom rife with religious division and civil discord. Her own glorious reign preserved the island nation from Spanish invasion and Catholic plots, but the cost emptied England's coffers. The English Exchequer was left with outstanding debts and deficit spending.¹

The English church, too, faced threats to its internal unity and its external peace: Elizabeth expelled English Catholics during her reign, yet Protestants were not all content with her Acts of Uniformity (1559), which governed church doctrine, practice, and polity, and vested authority over the church in the crown.

When Elizabeth died, James Stuart traveled to London with his retinue, *en route* to unify the two crowns of England and Scotland as the new English King James I. As he rode south surveying his new country, members of the English church intercepted him and offered him a petition signed by a thousand Puritan ministers.² Their petition humbly bade the king to cleanse the official Anglican liturgy from what they saw as remnants of Popism. The king promised to hold court the following year to discuss the matter.

James now had a kingdom held together by compromise and coercion. He did not need party divisions within his church, too. In 1604, the king met with Anglican bishops, clerics, and Puritan leaders at Hampton Court Palace in order to unite the church. However, the debates and decisions did not bode well for the Puritan sectarians. James refused all their requests—save one.

A certain Puritan leader, John Reynolds hoped to gain wider support for the popular Geneva Bible against the Anglican Bishops' Bible and other early translations. Reynolds may have doubted that his preferred version would gain the king's support. So he proposed the creation of a *new translation* in their stead. Reynolds defended his request with examples where the earlier renderings had mistreated the text.³ One bishop there complained, "If every man's humour should be followed, there would be no end of translating!"

s zeale



EPISTLE Apo

CHAP.

1 Paul commendeth his calling
9 and his desire to come to
his Gospel is, and the righte
sheweth. 18 God is angry
fin. 21 What were the sunn



fed afore by his Prophet
Scriptures.)

3 Concerning his S
Christ our Lord, which
the seed of David accordu

4 And † declared to be
God, with power, accordi
rit of holinesse, by the reli
the dead.

5 By whom we have
and Apostleship || for ob
faith among all nations k

6 Among whom are
led of Jesus Christ.

7 To all that be in R
of God, called to be Saints
and peace from God our
the Lord Jesus Christ.

8 First I thanke my
Jesus Christ for you all, t
is spoken of throughou
world.

9 For God is my Wit
I serue || with my spirit in
his Sonne, that with
make mention of you, a
prayers,

10 Making request, (if b

King James had no love for the Geneva Bible, chiefly because he suspected its marginal notes. For the most part, the notes were politically innocuous and simply clarified the meaning of Scripture (though, later revisions made the notes more partisan and hostile towards Rome). The king took issue with certain notes that appeared to denigrate the monarch's divine right and authority—particularly those affixed to **Ex 3.19**, which permitted some people to disobey kings, and **2Ch 15.16**, which criticized another person for only deposing a regent instead of executing her.⁴ James would not tolerate any reading of the Bible that questioned his right to rule.

Instead of dismissing Reynolds, James heartily assented to the Puritan's request and asked Cambridge and Oxford Universities to produce a new version with the support of church authorities. He “wished, that some special pains should be taken in that behalf for one uniform translation (professing that he could never, yet, see a Bible well translated in English, but the worst of all his Majesty thought the Geneva to be).”⁵ King James hoped to unite his divided church and country around his new Bible—on condition that it contained no marginal notes.

STATED TRANSLATION IDEALS

The King James Version (KJV) is not a strictly word-for-word translation, as its preface indicates: “We (the translators) have not tied ourselves to uniformity of phrasing, or to an identity of words, as some perhaps would wish we had done.”

“The old ecclesiastical words [were] to be kept, namely, as the word church [was] not to be translated congregation, etc.” (in accordance with Archbishop Bancroft's Rule No. 3). This was to guard the church from controversies that Tyndale stirred up eighty-five years earlier in his debates with Sir Thomas More over which terms the Bible ought to employ. As the KJV's preface continues:

We have avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans, who leave the old ecclesiastical words, and betake them to other, as when they put “washing” for “Baptism,” and “Congregation” instead of “Church.” [A]lso, on the other side, we have shunned the obscurity of the Papists, in the *Azimes*, *Tunike*, *Rational*, *Holocausts*, *Præpuce*, *Pasche*, and a number of such like, whereof their late Translation (*i.e.*, the Douay-Rheims Bible, 1582, 1609–10) is full, and that of purpose to darken sense. . . . But we desire that Scripture may speak like itself.



Read the original KJV preface at booklink.id/kjv-preface

The translators made their goal clear: “Truly . . . we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, . . . but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that has been our endeavour, that our mark.”⁶

METHOD

King James wanted his Bible “to be done by the best learned in both the Universities [of Oxford and Cambridge], after them to be reviewed by the Bishops, and the chief learned of the Church; from them to be presented to the [King’s] Privy Council; and lastly, to be ratified by his Royal authority, and so this whole Church to be bound unto it and none other.”⁷ Thus he intended, but James needed a way to pay for his translation. With a bare treasury, James had no money to offer his translators. Though, as the head of the Anglican Church, it was his right to fill the church’s vacant positions whenever they opened with whomever he wished.⁸

Fifty-four scholars and theologians skilled in various languages were chosen to revise the Bible.⁹ They were divided into six companies, two each for Oxford and Cambridge Universities and two for Westminster Abbey in London. Each company of seven or eight men was tasked with revising a portion of Scripture, including the Apocrypha.

The men in each company were expected to revise their portion, section by section. Each would translate the same section by himself. Then he would regroup and examine the others' work in that section. Whatever rendering they agreed upon would stand as the company's decision. They would then submit their revision to the other companies for their consideration (Bancroft's Rules 8 and 9).

Wherever words and phrases had several possible meanings, they were to be rendered consistently with writings of earlier Christian theologians, so long as they fit the immediate context and precedent found throughout Scripture. If there were still debates about the meaning of passages, they could be decided in a general conference. Two men from each of the six companies would settle the text when the companies' revisions were complete. If the revisers were still in doubt about the meaning of any passage, they could ask any available scholar in England for his judgment (Rules 4, 10–13).

From these twelve editors, three were responsible for further refining the work. The whole effort was finished by a general editor and assistant who made final edits and decisions before sending the text to print.

At last, after seven years, the KJV's text was published by the King's printer, Robert Barker, in 1611.¹⁰ Eventually, this Bible would surpass its predecessors as a principal, standard version against which all modern English translations are still compared today.



For a complete list of translators, visit booklink.id/kjv-translator

18 He that beleueth on him, is not condemned: but hee that beleueth not, is condemned already, because hee hath not beleued in the Name of the onely begotten Sonne of God.

Jn 3.18 “He that beleueth on him, is not condemned: but hee that beleueth not, is condemned already, because hee hath not beleued in the Name of the onely begotten Sonne of God.” (KJV 1611)

TEXT BASES

English Text

The King James Bible is a revision of a 1602 edition of yet another revision—the Bishops’ Bible (1568, ’72).¹¹

New Testament

Textus Receptus. The 4th (1588/9) or 5th (1598) major folio edition of Theodore Beza’s Greek New Testament,¹² or the 3rd (1550) or 4th (1551) edition of Robert Stephanus. In 1881, F. H. A. Scrivener published an edition which conforms the Greek text to the editorial decisions of the KJV.¹³

Old Testament

Masoretic Hebrew-Aramaic text. Bomberg’s second Rabbinic Bible (Venice, 1524–25), Complutensian Polyglot (1517), Pagninus (1528), Münster (1539), Antwerp Polyglot (1572).

Ancient versions. Tremellius and Junius (Latin, 1590).

Apocrypha

Basel Bible (1545/50), Complutensian Polyglot (1517), Aldine Bible (1518). When the apocryphal books of Tobit and Judith differed between their Latin and Greek sources, the translators followed the Greek.¹⁴

CONTRIBUTORS

Fifty-four Anglican bishops and scholars worked on the KJV. Archbishop of Canterbury, Richard Bancroft († 1610), oversaw the direction of the work. Lancelot Andrews (bishop of Ely, 1601; bishop of Winchester, 1618), John Harding († 1610), and Edward

Lively († 1605) were chosen to further review and edit the project. Miles Smith (who became the bishop of Gloucester in 1612) was the ultimate overseer and guided final production. He and Thomas Bilson (bishop of Winchester until 1616) put the final touches on the work before sending it through the printer.

THEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Each of the translators of the KJV was a member of the official Church of England, but their loyalties were divided on church practice and polity. All upheld the *Thirty-nine Articles of Religion*, a Reformed Protestant and moderately Calvinist document imposed under Elizabeth I. All worked under Archbishop Bancroft's rules, which favored a conservative view of religious offices and practice.¹⁵

LANGUAGE CHANGE

Since the translators intended to revise the earlier Bishops' Bible (1568, '72), the language of the KJV reaches back to a previous century. In fact, the KJV held on to certain grammatical features and vocabulary that were starting to go out of style in its own day. The contrast with language we use today is so great that if someone exclusively reads the KJV without helps, they might question their faith in the perspicuity (*i.e.*, clarity) of Scripture.¹⁶

Sometimes the KJV uses words so old that they have altogether dropped from modern English use. These are what we call "dead words", such as:

- "amerce" (which means to "punish with a fine," Dt 22.19),
- "bolloed" (to "swell," that is to "bud," Ex 9.31),
- "beeves" (*i.e.*, "oxen," plural of "beef," Lv 22.19),
- "bewray" (to "expose," "reveal," or "disclose," Pr 29.24; Is 16.3; Mt 26.73),
- "crisping pin" (a tool for "crisping" or curling the hair, Is 3.22),

“trow” (to “trust” or “believe,” Luke 17:9).

Several significant words have changed their meanings over time. Many of these words occur frequently. We call these words “false friends,” because they sound or look familiar, but their earlier use radically differs from how they’re used today.¹⁷ They can trick modern readers, because their familiar spelling does not alert readers to check their definitions in a dictionary. For example:

Mk 1.30	Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.	“Anon” meant “immediately,” not “after a time”.
Ro 5.8	God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.	“Commend” meant “display” or “show”.
Ps 50.23	[T]o him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.	“Conversation” meant “manner of life” or “citizenship”.
1Kg 18.21	How long halt ye between two opinions?	
Mt 18.8	[I]t is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.	“Halt” meant “lame” or “to limp”.
Ro 1.13	But was let hitherto	“Let” meant “prevent” in some cases.
2Th 2.7	[H]e who now letteth will let	
Jn 14.2	In my Father’s house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.	“Mansions” meant “rooms”.
Mk 8.8	So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.	“Meat” generally meant “food” or a “meal”.
Ps 119.147	I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.	“Prevent” meant “precede” or “go before”.
1Pt 4.5	Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.	“Quick” meant “alive”; “quickened” meant “made alive”

Pr 22.28	Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.	<i>“Remove” meant much more than “take from a place.” It also meant “change”, “replace”, or “destroy”.</i>
Ac 14.18	[W]ith these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.	<i>“Scarce” was an adverb that meant “barely”.</i>
1Ti 6.20	O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called	<i>“Science” is an anglicized Latin word that meant “knowledge”.</i>
Eph 2.13	[N]ow in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.	<i>“Sometimes” meant “formerly”, not “occasionally”.</i>
2Ti 2.15	Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”	<i>“Study” meant “strive”.</i>
1Co 10.24; cf. Ezr 9.12; Est 10.3	Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth	<i>“Wealth” meant “welfare”.</i>
Ps 66.12	We went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.	<i>“Wealthy” meant “happy”.</i>
2Co 8.1	We do you to wit of the grace of God	<i>“Wit” meant “know”.</i>

The KJV revisers did not have as broad of a zoological understanding that we have today. Sometimes the identifications of certain animals were unknown. They interpreted some biblical animals as the medieval heraldic beasts that they were familiar with, or they borrowed from older translations in other languages:

Nm 24.8 is rendered, “God brought him (*i.e.* Israel) forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an *unicorn*” (KJV, *emphasis added*, so Wycliffe, Tyndale, *et al.*). The word “unicorn” may conjure up an image of some fantastic heraldic beast, but it formally renders the Greek (LXX) *monokerōtos*—a crea-

ture with a single horn. The Douay Bible renders it “rhinoceros” from the Latin Vulgate *rinocerotis*, which itself is half-transcribed from its Greek source (*monokerōtos*). With further study, linguists learned that the underlying Hebrew word (*re'em*) actually meant a “wild ox” (RV/ASV, CSB, ESV, NASB, NIV, NLT, *et al.*; “wild bull” NET)—a much more fitting and familiar analogy in this passage and a better lexical fit for the number of times it occurs throughout the OT (*cf.* Dt 33.17; Jb 39.9, 10; Ps 22.21; 29.6; 92.10; Is 34.7).

Dt 32.33, “dragon” (instead of “serpent”)

Is 11.8, “cockatrice” (also known as a *basilisk*. This fantastic, fire-breathing *chimera* is a cross between a rooster and a dragon. In all likelihood, the Hebrew word refers to the familiar venomous snake that we know today as an “adder”),

Is 13.21, “satyrs” (now known as “wild goats”, *cf.* ESV, NET, NLT, CSB, NIV, GNB; but “goat-demons” NRSV, or “shaggy goats” NASB),

And there are some words and phrases that no preacher should say aloud without due caution:

THY FINE ENGLISH TONGUE. In late Middle English the plural, second-person pronoun (*ye, you, your[s]*) started to replace the singular forms (*thou, thee, thy, thine*). Shakespeare’s English no longer held a regular distinction between the forms “ye” and “you.” “Ye” eventually found itself consigned to poetry, while “you” became the norm for both subject and object. The singular, second-person pronouns (*thou, thee, thy, thine*) used to function as familiar address, but, thanks to the Bible’s influence, they became the exclusive address to God.

Part of speech	2nd Person Singular	2nd Person Plural
Subject	Thou	Ye
Object	Thee	You
Possessive determiner	Thy, Thine	Your
Reflexive pronoun	Thyself	Yourself

The benefit of these older English forms is they better map the underlying grammars of Greek and Hebrew, which also use both singular and plural, second-person pronouns. For example:

Lk 5.24, “But that **ye** may know ... I say unto **thee** ... take up **thy** couch, and go into **thine** house.” — Here, Jesus addresses the crowd before speaking to the individual.

(continued next page)

Jn 3.7, “Marvel not that I said unto **thee**, **ye** must be born again.” — Though spoken to Nicodemus, Jesus’ words apply to a broader audience.

2Sa 7.23, “And what one nation in the earth is like **thy** people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for **you** great things and terrible, for **thy** land, before **thy** people, which **thou** redeemest to **thee** from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?” — In the midst of his public prayer to God, David addresses the people of Israel.

With the loss of the second-person, singular forms in modern English, we’ve also lost their corresponding verbal endings (*-est*, *-st*, *-t*; *-edst*, *-dst*). Also, the third-personal singular endings (*-eth*, *-th*) have yielded to other forms (*-es*, *-s*).

Verb ending	Present tense	Past tense
1st Person Singular	I walk, I am walking	I walked
2nd Per. Sg.	thou walkest	thou walkedst
3rd Per. Sg.	he walketh	he walked

Awareness of these kinds of language features help us read the KJV and earlier English Bibles accurately. It even gives us advantages where modern editions lack these specific language distinctions. ◀

“He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (**Jn 15.2**)

“Solomon loved many strange women” (**1Kg 11.1**)

“Nevertheless even [Solomon] did outlandish women cause to sin” (**Ne 13.26**)

“Mt. Sinai was altogether on a smoke” (**Ex 19.18**)

“I will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall” (**2Kg 9.8**)

“And Jacob sod pottage” (**Gn 25.29**)

FEATURES

The KJV was not intended as a strictly concordant or formal translation. For example, the Greek word *splangchna*, whose unaffected meaning is “bowels”, is rendered figuratively twice out of the eleven times it occurs in the New Testament (as “mercy” in **Lk 1.78** and “inward affection” in **2Co 7.15**).

Proper names were meant to follow traditional English use. They were not to follow the Catholic Vulgate’s spelling or transliterate the Hebrew and Greek anew (Bancroft’s Rule No. 2).

No marginal notes about controversial doctrines were allowed, as King James intended. There were marginal

notes, however, that gave explanations or alternate renderings where the original language fought easy translation. And, if a Greek or Hebrew word allowed for multiple meanings, or if a formal rendering was too hard to understand, then an alternate or literal meaning would be printed in the margins. The revisers printed notes with references to parallel passages (Rules 6, 7).¹⁸ And there were even notes indicating text-critical issues.¹⁹

The KJV was originally set in a thick, black letter font. Words that were inserted into the text to complete its meaning were distinguished by small, roman type. Modern editions set supplied words with *italic* or *oblique* fonts.

Chapters followed familiar, traditional divisions. (Bancroft's Rule No. 5) Originally, each verse started at the beginning of a new line. Paragraphs were indicated with pilcrow (¶).²⁰ Later editions, like the [*New*] *Cambridge Paragraph Bible* (1873, 2011), formatted the text into indented paragraphs.

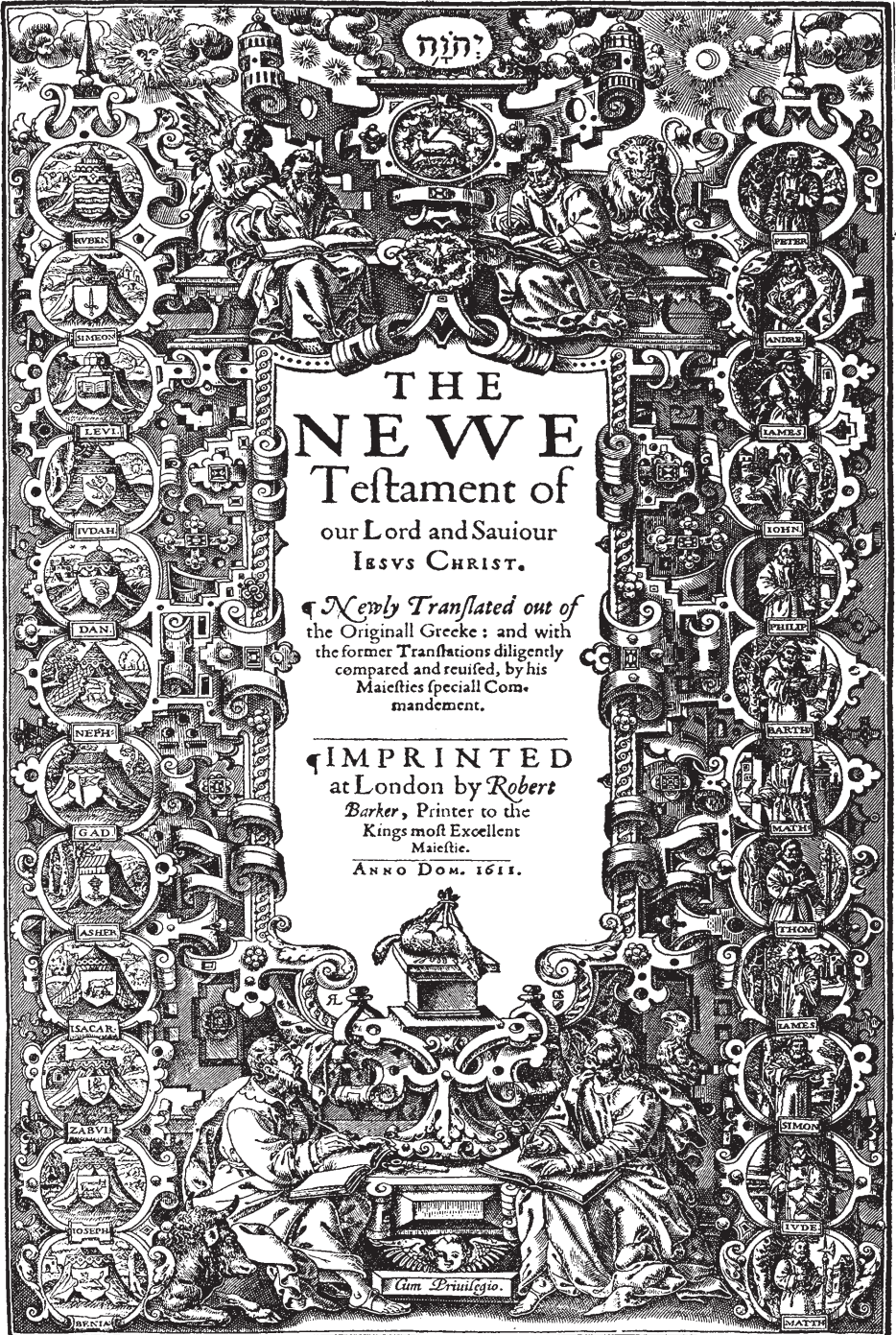
The original KJV had headings and summaries at the beginning of each chapter. It also had a genealogy and a map of the Holy Land among other prefatory matter. Modern printed KJV Bibles usually omit these features.

RECEPTION

At the time of the KJV's publication, the Geneva Bible was still the most popular version available. In fact, the preface of the KJV, titled "The Translator to the Reader" (written by Miles Smith), quotes the Geneva Bible wherever it cites Scripture.

King James banned the continued production of the Geneva translation in 1616 in order to suppress competition in favor of his Bible. But European printers continued to publish and export it to England until 1644. Even Robert Barker, the King's printer, continued to print the Geneva Bible in England after its prohibition. He simply left the date, 1599, unaltered on its title page.

The KJV only started to gain influence after the death of King James and after the Bishops conspired to suppress the publication



יהוה

THE
NEWE
Testament of
our Lord and Sauour
IESVS CHRIST.

*Newly Translated out of
the Originall Greeke: and with
the former Translations diligently
compared and reuised, by his
Maiesties speciall Com-
mandement.*

IMPRINTED
at London by Robert
Barker, Printer to the
Kings most Excellent
Maiestie.
ANNO DOM. 1611.

Cum Præiſegetio.

of the Geneva Bible. Also, Robert Barker invested much to obtain the rights to print the King James Bible. He was eager to promote the KJV since he had a significant financial investment that he hoped to recoup.

REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLES

Familiar Passages

Gn 1.1-2	<p>In* the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.</p>
	<p>1611 marginal note <i>with original spelling</i> (mn): *Pfal.33.6. and 136.5. acts.14.15. and 17.24. hebr.11.3</p>
Ps 23.1-2	<p>The LORD is* my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in † green pastures: he leadeth me beside the † still waters.</p> <p>mn: * Efa.40.11 Iere.23.5. Ezech. 34. Ioh.10.11.23. I.Pet.2.25. † Heb. <i>pastures of tender graffe.</i> † Heb. <i>waters of quietnesse.</i></p>
Ps 27.4	<p>One <i>thing</i> have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.</p> <p>mn: <i>Or, the delight.</i></p>
Jn 3.16	<p>¶* For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.</p> <p>mn: * I. Iohn 4.9.</p>

Divine Name and Titles

YHWH	Ps 24.1a	The earth <i>is</i> the LORD's , and the fulness thereof
<i>adonai</i>	Ps 90.1b	Lord , thou hast been our dwelling place † in all generations. mn: † <i>Heb.in generation and generation.</i>
<i>elohim</i>	Gn 1.27a	So God created man in his <i>own</i> image
<i>adonai</i> YHWH	Ps 73.28b	I have put my trust in the Lord God
<i>adonai elohim</i>	Dn 9.3a	☩ And I set my face unto the Lord God
YHWH <i>saba'oth</i>	1Sa 17.45b	I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts
<i>el shaddai</i>	Ex 6.3a	And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty
<i>kyrios</i>	Lk 20.42b	The LORD said unto my Lord , Sit thou on my right hand ²¹
<i>christos</i>	Mt 16.16b	* Thou art the Christ , the Son of the living God mn: * Ioh.6.69.

New Testament Text Base

Mt 17.21	Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.
Mt 18.11	* For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. mn: * Luke 19.10.
Ac 8.37	And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
1Jn 5.7b-8a	. . . in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit . . .

Gender Language

'ādām	Gn 9.6	Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man .
'ish . . . nephesh	Lv 24.17	☞ * And he that †killeth any man shall surely be put to death. mn: * Exod 21.12.deu.19.21. † <i>Hebr. smiteth the life of a man.</i>
'āvīw	Pr 15.5a	* A fool despiseth his father's instruction mn: * Chap.10.1.
huioi	Mt 5.9	Blessed <i>are</i> the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
anthrōpōn	Mt 4.19	Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men .
hekastō . . . autou	Ro 2.6	Who will render to every man according to his deeds
adelphoi	Gal 5.13	For, brethren , ye have been called unto liberty; only <i>use</i> not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.
gynaikos anēr	Ti 1.6a	If any be blameless, the husband of one wife , having faithful children
gynaikas	1Ti 3.11	The women likewise must be serious, no slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things.

Difficult Renderings

1Sa 13.1	Saul † reigned one year ; and when he had reigned two years over Israel mn: † <i>Hebr.the sonne of one yeere in his reigning.</i>
Is 28.13	But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little ; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

Significant Renderings

<i>'almah</i>	Is 7.14	Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; * Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. mn: * Math.1.23.luc.1.31.
<i>she'ol, 'abaddon</i>	Pr 15.11	* Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men? mn: * Job 26.6.
<i>egennēsen</i>	Mt 1.2	* Abraham begat Isaac; and * Isaac begat Jacob; and * Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; mn: * Gen.21.3. * Gene.25.26. * Gen.29.35. * Gen.38.27.
<i>eskēnōsen</i>	Jn 1.14	* And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. mn: * Mat.1.16.
<i>tois ioudaiois</i>	Jn 18.36	Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews : but now is my kingdom not from hence.
<i>dikaiousunē theou, pisteōs Iēsou Christou</i>	Ro 3.22a	Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe
Granville Sharp's rule not applied	Tt 2.13	Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ

VARIANTS, MISHAPS,
& REVISIONS

Even the first printed edition of the KJV had variations. The first edition's initial printing is called the "He' Bible" (1611), while its second issue is the "She' Bible" (1611-3), because of a debate over

the interpretation of **Ruth 3.15** (“he [Boaz] / she [Ruth] went into the city”). Further corrections were made in 1616.

In 1629, two members of the original translation team (Samuel Ward and John Bois) revised the entire KJV, but omitted the Apocrypha. Supplied words were more thoroughly and consistently revised in the 1638 edition. After these revisions, the text was left alone for more than a century.²²

During that time, certain editions were printed with curious errors. For example, in 1631, Robert Barker omitted a single word from a single sentence in what today is called the “Wicked” Bible. The word “not” was left out of the sixth commandment, so that it reads “Thou shalt commit adultery.” Upon discovering the error, King James fined Barker, and he was forced to enter debtors’ prison.²³ Here are few more errata from a handful of editions:

Year	Misprinted Edition	Error
1611	The “Judas” Bible	Mistook “ Jesus ” so that Mt 26.36 reads, “Then cometh Judas with them unto a place called Gethsemane”
1631	The “Wicked” Bible	Omitted “ not ” so that Ex 20.14 reads, “Thou shalt commit adultery.”
1653	The “Unrighteous” Bible	Added a prefix “ un- ” so that 1Co 6.9 reads, “the un righteous shall inherit the kingdom of God.”
1717	The “Vinegar” Bible	A heading at Luke 20 reads “The Parable of the Vinegar ” instead of the “ Vineyard ”
1795		Misprinted “ filled ” in Mk 7.27 to read “Let the children be killed ”
1801	The “Murderer’s” Bibles	Mistook “ murmurers ” in Jude 16 to read “These are murderers ”
1804		Changed “ to death ” in Nm 35.18 to read “the murderer shall surely be put together ”
1823	The “Rebecca” Bible	Misspelled “ damsels ” in Gn 24.61 so that Rebecca arose with her “ camels ”.

Drs. Francis S. Paris from Cambridge (1762) and Benjamin Blaney from Oxford (1769) corrected a number of errors, regu-

larized spelling and punctuation, and added over 30,000 marginal references. Their text differs from the 1611 editions in almost 24,000 places. Blaney's text forms the basis of most modern editions. Most changes were insignificant, but a few are meaningful and important, such as:

Verse.	1611 original edition	1769 and later editions
Gn 6.5	God (<i>i.e.</i> , Elohim)	GOD (YHWH)
Gn 39.16	her lord	his lord
Nm 6.14	lambe	ram
Jos 3.15	at	All
Jg 11.2	his wives sons	his wife's sons
Ru 3.15	he	she
1Kg 8.61	your	our
2Ch 13.6	his LORD	his lord
2Ch 28.11	God	the LORD
2Ch 32.5	prepared	repaired
Jb 39.30	he	she
Dn 10.16, 17, 19	Lord	lord
Jn 15.20	his Lord	his lord
1Co 15.6	And	after

24

ASSESSMENT

Besides recording divine revelation, Bible translations also function like balance sheets or snapshots of a language's development. Just as John Wycliffe preserved for us a picture of middle English from the late fourteenth century with his translations, so the KJV enshrines for us a portrait of early modern English idiom at the height of the Tudor era. Its style is simple, yet dignified. It is rightly praised for its cadence and rhythm, features intended by its revisers to make it more suitable for preaching.

The KJV's use of second-person, singular pronouns ("thee", "thou", *etc.*) give readers a greater degree of formal precision that

modern translations altogether lack. Its number remains clear when context is silent so the pronoun is disambiguated. (For examples, see “Thy Fine English Tongue” on page 215).

The King James Bible has no copyright restrictions outside the British Commonwealth. With no demand for royalties, the KJV has the largest number of references and resources supporting it—though these vary in quality. The most popular and helpful of these tools is Strong’s *Concordance*, ideal for thorough word studies and for finding passages when all one can remember is a single word.

What the KJV gains in linguistic precision, though, cannot compensate for its lack in accuracy. The KJV revisers were the greatest biblical scholars that England had produced—up to that time. However, scholarship does not stand still, and just as King James’s men relied on the studies of those who had gone before them, so do modern translators. They could not anticipate the many significant discoveries made in the last 400 years since the KJV’s publication. (See “New Discoveries of Old Sources” starting on page 21.) Those who originally labored over the KJV could not have imagined the increase of knowledge or the access to resources that are now at the fingertips of modern translators.

The language of the KJV can give readers a false sense of authority simply because of how strange it sounds. It sounds like how one might expect an ancient religious document ought to sound. But just as scholarship has moved on, so, too, has language. In particular, readers ought to beware of words in this version that look familiar, yet have changed their meaning over time. (See page 213 for examples of “false friends.”)

Those who persist in the exclusive study of the KJV ought to become better acquainted with early modern English, so as not to read into its passages what its translators never meant to say. There are a number of useful references to this end, including *The King James Bible Word Book* (1994) from Thomas Nelson Publishers.



Read the
original KJV
preface at
[booklink.id/
kjv-preface](http://booklink.id/kjv-preface)

Readers who study the language of the KJV benefit from a closer connection to earlier generations of English writers, a gift which modern translations cannot give. Familiarity with Elizabethan and Jacobine English offers readers access to historical treatments of Christian doctrine. It opens a door to old communities of faith and insight into the development of the English language.

Finally, readers will benefit from studying Miles Smith's original preface to the 1611 KJV, titled "To the Reader."

ENDORSEMENTS

King James I originally intended his Bible to be the sole official translation for the Anglican Church, but we have no evidence that he ever gave it any official authorization. Even though its title page reads "Appointed to be read in Churches," it was never officially acknowledged as the exclusive—the one and only—Bible for the Church of England. Nonetheless, some believe that its royal patronage and the ad copy on its title page give it official status, hence the KJV's British nickname—the "Authorised" Version (AV).

Members of the Anglican Communion—the Church of England, the Episcopal Church, and the Anglican Church of Canada, *et al.*—and the Christian Reformed Church in North America all authorize or approve the KJV/AV for use in public worship.²⁵ (The Reformed Episcopal Church considers the KJV their historic "standard Bible.")²⁶

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America has encouraged the use of the KJV in liturgical service and Bible study until such a time when a better alternative to the RSV and NRSV becomes available.²⁷

There are some who persist in arguing for the superiority and sole authority of the KJV over and against all other English translations. The more sophisticated of such opinions are based on the conviction that the KJV is the culmination of a single, pure line of transmission extending from the original autographs.

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The King James Version has been in the public domain in the United States of America since 1776.²⁸

For those in the United Kingdom, you may quote up to 500 verses from the King James Version in any form without prior written permission; the verses may not constitute a complete book of the Bible; they must comprise less than 25% of your work's content; they may not be quoted in a commentary or other biblical reference work; and your work must include the following copyright acknowledgment.

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Jn 1.4, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." (KJV)

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ENDNOTES FOR THE KING JAMES VERSION

- ¹ Elizabeth I not only inherited the debts of her spendthrift father, Henry VIII, she also spent deficits on foreign policy and national survival (*ala* the Spanish Armada). She left James I with a national debt of £ 365,254 in 1603, which is roughly £ 112.3 million (\$ 140.5 million USD) as of late 2019.
Graham E. Seel and David L. Smith, *The Early Stuart Kings, 1603–1642*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 5.
The current inflated value of the Tudor debts were determined by the Bank of England’s inflation calculator, accessed June 1, 2020, <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>.
- ² This petition, which was signed by the thousand Puritan leaders, is also known as the Millenary Petition.
- ³ John Reinolds (alternately Reynolds or Rainolds) gave **Gal 4.25**; **Ps 105.28**; **106.30** as examples where earlier translations missed the meaning. The Geneva Bible, on the other hand, had rendered them all to Reinolds’ satisfaction.
- ⁴ The marginal note at **Ex 1.19** reads, “Their disobedience in this was lawful, but their dissembling (deception) evil.”; and the one at **2Ch 15.16**, “Or grandmother: & herein he showed that he lacked zeal, for she should have died both by the covenant (**2Ch 15.13**) and by the law of God, but he gave place to foolish pity & would also seem after a sort to satisfy the law.”
- ⁵ William Barlow, *Summe and Substance of the Conference* (Clerkenwell, England: Bye and Law, Printers, 1804), p. 35.
- ⁶ Miles Smith, “The Translator to the Reader,” preface to the KJV (London: the King’s Printer [Robert Barker], 1611).
- ⁷ Barlow, *Summe and Substance*, p. 35.
- ⁸ The practicing of buying and selling church offices is a form of simony.
- ⁹ *The English Hexapla exhibiting the Six Important English Translations of the New Testament Scriptures. . . .* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1841).
- ¹⁰ Robert Barker († 1643) inherited the royal patent (official monopoly) for printing Bibles from his father, Christopher Barker († 1599).
- ¹¹ One copy of the 1602 Bishops’ Bible that the King James revisers worked from now sits in the Bodleian Library with this catalogue number: Bib. Eng. 1602 b. I.
- ¹² There is some confusion as to how to number Beza’s ten or eleven Greek NT editions. This is according to the best of my reckoning.

- Donald L. Brake, *A Visual History of the King James Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), pp. 141–2;
- Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2005), pp. 151–2.
- Daniel B. Wallace, “3. From the KJV to the RV (from Elegance to Accuracy),” *Bible.org*, last modified March 21, 2001, accessed July 3, 2020, <https://bible.org/seriespage/3-kjv-rv-elegance-accuracy>.
- ¹³ Scrivener’s “Appendix” identifies 190 places where the KJV departs from its Greek base (Beza 1598).
- F. H. A. Scrivener, *The New Testament in the Original Greek According to the Text Followed in the Authorised Version. . . .* (Cambridge University Press, 1881), pp. vii–xi.
- ¹⁴ “Report on the Making of the Version of 1611 Presented to the Synod of Dort” (November 1618) in *Records of the English Bible*, ed. Alfred W. Pollard (Oxford University Press, 1911), p. 339.
- ¹⁵ The KJV has been charged with theologically biased translation in some passages (cf. **Ac 2.47**; **Heb 6.6**; **10.29**), yet these verses follow precedent from earlier versions.
- ¹⁶ Two-hundred, seventy-three years after the publication of the KJV, William Aldis Wright published *The Bible Word-book*, 2nd rev. and enlarged ed. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1884). It is filled with articles explaining 2,316 archaic words and phrases used in the KJV and the *Book of Common Prayer*. Aldis’ work could be expanded now, 134 years later, to further demonstrate how a popular, revered translation can lose its usefulness when its meaning fades into obscurity.
- ¹⁷ Mark Ward, “Dead Words and False Friends,” in *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).
- ¹⁸ According to F. H. A. Scrivener, the Old Testament had “6,637 marginal notes, 4,111 of which expressed the more literal meaning of the original Hebrew; 2,156 gave alternate renderings (indicated by “Or” preceding it); 63 gave meanings of proper names; 240 relate to harmonization of parallel passages; and 67 refer to variant readings of the Hebrew text which he listed.”
- The Cambridge Paragraph Bible of the Authorized English Version*, ed. F. H. A. Scrivener (Cambridge University Press, 1873), pp. xxiv–xxv, via James D. Price, “A Response to Pastor Robert J. Sargent’s pamphlet. . . .” accessed March 1, 2019, http://www.jamesdprice.com/images/Price_A_Response_to_Pastor_Robert_J.pdf.

- ¹⁹ Samples of text critical notes found in the KJV's margins (1611 edition):
Mt 26.26 "blessed it: Many Greek copies have, gave thanks";
Lk 17.36 "Two men shall be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left: This 36. verse is wanting in most of the Greek copies";
Ac 13.18 "suffered: Gr. ἐτροποφόρσεν (*etropophórsen*), perhaps, for ἐτροποφορήσεν (*etropophórēsen*) as a nurse beareth or feedeth her child, **Dt 1.31**; **2Mc 7.27** according to the Sept[uagint] and so Chrysost[om]"
- ²⁰ Pilcrow's (¶) indicate paragraphs as far as **Acts 20.36**.
- ²¹ The 1611 editions of **Lk 20.42** do not set the initial "Lord" in [small-]caps; though, the 1769 Blaney edition does.
- ²² Parliament even moved to make an official revision during the reign of Oliver Cromwell, but nothing came of the proposal.
- ²³ Robert Barker's fine for his misprint was £ 200. As of late 2020, Barker's debt would be valued at about £ 41,970 (\$ 57,908 USD).
- ²⁴ James D. Price, *King James Onlyism: A New Sect* (Chattanooga, TN, 2006), p. 104.
- ²⁵ General Synod of the Church of England, "Versions of Scripture," by David Michael Hope, Archbishop of York (Eboracensis), October 9, 2002, GS Misc 698. "Bible Translations" from the website of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, accessed September 6, 2019, <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/bible-translations>.
 "What We Believe: The Bible" from the website of The Episcopal Church, accessed September 6, 2019, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/bible/>.
- ²⁶ Fifty-fifth General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church, "Of Translations of the Bible," in *Constitution & Canons* (Dallas, TX, 2017), Title III, Canon 36.
- ²⁷ Bishop Tikhon, "Bishop's Pastoral Letter on the New Revised Standard Version," from the website of the Holy Trinity Cathedral, accessed September 6, 2019, <https://www.holy-trinity.org/liturgics/tikhon.nrsv.html>.
- ²⁸ The date, July 4, 1776, marks the American colonies' break with the English crown. Whenceforth, the citizens of the United States of America have refused to pay any of the British sovereigns' perpetual royalties for the publication of the "Authorised Version," beginning with the edition printed by Robert Aitken in Philadelphia, PA, in 1782.

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