

The English Bibles

From the Originals to the Various English Versions

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INTRODUCTION

The reason for this document is to shed some light on the profusion of different versions of the English Bible. My desire is to first provide good general background information, including both historical and archeological aspects, and then to progress through a variety of relevant points for evaluation. Comparison of Bible versions should be qualified by such things as:

- Selection of major textural material,
- Variations in actual content,
- Readability and quality of translation notes,
- Scholastic and institutional considerations.

This document does not close with a neutral presentation, but represents my personal conclusions. I have included a bibliography for the majority of my written sources, but should identify that my basis for most of the information on manuscripts and the history of the Bible was all primarily from a single work, Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts by Sir Frederic G. Kenyon. This is the revised edition, published in 1958. A second primary reference, valuable for guiding me to key differences between versions was Jack P Lewis' The English Bible from KJV to NIV. Additionally, I should identify that most of the information I have on specific Bible versions is from their respective publishers.

This study was originally intended only for myself, but I hope it will be useful to others. The only "original" contribution which I will accept credit for is the many long hours of sifting through scholarship, babbling, and verse by verse comparisons.

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SECTION ONE - THE ORIGINAL WRITINGS

Presented below is a general timeline of the original writing of the Bible, including date and author, as is supposed by conservative scholars.

OLD TESTAMENT

Date Written	Book / Author	Notes
2000 - 950 BC	Job / (Job / Moses / Solomon)	Probably written by Moses during the years 1445 - 1405 BC
1445 - 1405 BC	Genesis / Moses	Assembly of 11 "Toldots" - family histories, compiled by Moses
1445 - 1405 BC	Exodus / Moses	
1444 - 1405 BC	Numbers / Moses	
1410 - 430 BC	Psalms / David & others	At least 75 of the 150 psalms are by David, 50 more are anonymous and some of these are ascribed to Ezra. Various others identified Include Moses and Solomon.
1405 BC	Leviticus / Moses	
1405 BC	Deuteronomy / Moses	
1405 - 1390 BC	Joshua / Joshua	
1050 - 1010 BC	Ruth / Unknown	Ruth is written during David's life, possibly by Samuel
1043 - 1004 BC	Judges / Samuel	
971 - 931 BC	Song of Songs / Solomon	
935 BC	Ecclesiastes / Solomon	
932 - 721 BC	I & II Samuel / Samuel, Nathan, Gad	
931, 715-686 BC	Proverbs / Solomon, others	
848 - 841 BC	Obadiah / Obadiah	To Edom - Pre-Exile
835 BC	Joel / Joel	To Judah - Pre-Exile
782 - 753 BC	Jonah / Jonah	To Assyria - Pre-Exile
760 - 753 BC	Amos / Amos	To Israel - Pre-Exile
755 - 715 BC	Hosea / Hosea	To Israel - Pre-Exile
735 - 700 BC	Micah / Micah	To Judah - Pre-Exile
740 - 680 BC	Isaiah / Isaiah	To Judah - Pre-Exile
664 - 654 BC	Nahum / Nahum	To Assyria - Pre-Exile
609 - 605 BC	Habakkuk	To Judah - Pre-Exile
646 - 570 BC	I & II Kings / Jeremiah	
632 - 628 BC	Zephaniah / Zephaniah	To Judah - Pre-Exile
627 - 580 BC	Jeremiah / Jeremiah	To Judah - Pre-Exile
586 BC	Lamentations / Jeremiah	To Judah - Exile
592 - 565 BC	Ezekiel / Ezekiel	To Exiles in Babylon
605 - 536 BC	Daniel / Daniel	To Exiles in Babylon
520 BC	Haggai / Haggai	To Jews - Post-Exile
520 - 480 BC	Zechariah / Zechariah	To Jews - Post-Exile
464 BC	Esther / (Mordecai or c.)	
457 - 444 BC	Ezra / Ezra	Upon returning from Exile to Jerusalem, many works of scripture are ascribed to Ezra; The authorship of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and some of the Psalms, a translation to Aramaic of at least the Pentateuch, and great contribution towards the Old Testament canon.
457 - 444 BC	Nehemiah / (Ezra/Nehemiah)	(a.k.a. II Ezra)
450 - 430 BC	I & II Chronicles / Ezra	
432 - 424 BC	Malachi / Malachi	To Jews - Post-Exile

NEW TESTAMENT

Date Written	Book / Author	Direct Recipients
A.D. 46-49	James / James	Hebrew Christians
A.D. 49	Galatians / Paul	Believers in Galatia
A.D. 51	I Thessalonians / Paul	The church at Thessalonica
A.D. 51	II Thessalonians / Paul	The church at Thessalonica
A.D. 55-65	Mark / Mark	Romans
A.D. 56	I Corinthians / Paul	The church
A.D. 56	II Corinthians / Paul	The church
A.D. 57	Romans / Paul	Believers
A.D. 58-68	Matthew / Matthew	Jews
A.D. 60-90	John / John	The church
A.D. 60-61	Ephesians / Paul	Saints in Ephesus
A.D. 60-62	Philippians / Paul	The church at Philippi
A.D. 60-62	Colossians / Paul	The church at Colossae
A.D. 60-62	Philemon / Paul	Philemon and the church at Colossae
A.D. 62-63	I Timothy / Paul	Timothy
A.D. 63	Titus / Paul	Titus
A.D. 62-64	Acts / Luke	Gentiles
A.D. 62-65	Luke / Luke	Gentiles
A.D. 64	I Peter / Peter	Christians throughout Asia Minor
A.D. 64-66	II Peter / Peter	Believers
A.D. 64-68	Hebrews / Unknown	Jewish believers
A.D. 67	II Timothy / Paul	Timothy
A.D. 66-80	Jude / Jude	Christians
A.D. 85-90	I John / John	The church at large
A.D. 85-90	II John / John	"Chosen lady and her children"
A.D. 85-90	III John / John	Gaius
A.D. 81-96	Revelation / John	To the Jews, For the Jews

It should be noted for both the Old and New Testaments that none of the original writings are available, and there is in every case gaps of hundreds of years between the originals and the earliest copies available to us today.

SECTION TWO - THE IDENTIFICATION OF MANUSCRIPTS

Old Testament Manuscripts:

There are two main variations of the Old Testament. The first is the **Massoretic** text, from which we get the Vulgate and the vast majority of English texts, including the KJV, NASB, and NIV. The Massoretic Text was identified around 600 A.D. The second is the **Septuagint** from which we get the Old Latin. The Septuagint was originally just the Old Testament, but later versions which also contained the New Testament and Apocrypha were also called the Septuagint.

	<u>The Massoretic Text</u>	<u>The Septuagint</u>
Earliest:	200 A.D.	300 B.C.
Language:	Original Hebrew	Common Greek
Authority:	Used by Church Fathers	Used by Christ and the Apostles
Usage:	“Official” Jewish version	Used by early church

The early Christian church commonly used the Septuagint for its Bible, and later, the Old Latin version, which was based on the Septuagint. The Septuagint was historically considered a poor version because it was Greek, and varied dramatically from the Massoretic. Recent discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Samaritan Pentateuch reveal that the Septuagint was a very good translation, but from a different source text which we no longer have.

The Massorettes were a Jewish body who defined what they considered to be the pure Hebrew text, which they meticulously maintained. It was the basis used by Jerome for his Latin Vulgate. The Vulgate was also used by Wycliffe for his Old Testament, and Tyndale used the Massoretic text, but did not finish the Old Testament. The Massoretic text has been the preferred text for all major English versions. It is noteworthy that while the Vulgate, KJV, and others are based on the Massoretic text, they revert to the Septuagint and other manuscripts for particular passages.

Both families of texts can be shown to have wonderful preservation, but both also show corruptions. Some of the oldest, most important manuscripts, from various geographic areas, agree with the Septuagint in points of contention with the Massoretic, but the Septuagint can be shown to have added texts and loose paraphrases. The Massoretic text benefits greatly from the fact that it has been maintained by the Jewish synagogue, and also because it is in the original Hebrew.

The current scholarly consensus relies primarily on the Massoretic text, but with a more active consideration of the Septuagint and other manuscripts. The primary current standard for the critical text the Old Testament is from Rudolph Kittel's Biblia Hebraica, with seven editions published from 1937 to 1951. Kittel's work is based on a Tiberian Massoretic manuscript from about 1000 AD called "The Leningrad complete Old Testament". His work also considers what is known about the multitude of other extant manuscripts. English versions using Kittel's Old Testament include the RSV, ASV, NASB, and NIV Bibles. The current revision is the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS).

New Testament Manuscripts:

The New Testament manuscripts are more diversified than the Old Testament manuscripts, in that there are five different families of texts, but they are also much more similar to each other, more recent, and have more extant texts than the Old Testament. As a result we can have much greater confidence in the reconstruction of the original writings. Also, in addition to the multitude of manuscripts available, there is the writings of the church fathers, and also very early versions of the Bible in other languages.

The “Families” of the manuscripts - The process of reconstructing the original New Testament begins with an understanding of the families of extant manuscripts; their age, quality, and their character. Grouping manuscripts into families is based primarily on the presence or absence of common sets of variations in texts and is commonly relative to original geography.

α Byzantine - This is the family of the vast majority of the later manuscripts. As such, it is also the family used in earliest printings, becoming the “received text”. There is no “unambiguous evidence” of this family before 400 A.D. The only major manuscripts in this family are the Gospel sections of **A** and **E**.

β Alexandrian - This is the most neutral family of texts available, i.e. purest from known corruptions. It is the family most often employed by critical texts, and includes sources of **ℵ**, **A**(except Gospels), **B**, **C**, **L** and the Coptic, Sahidic, and Bohairic versions.

χ Ceasarean, **δ Western**, and **ε Eastern**. These last three categories do not include the most significant manuscripts, and each are highly characteristic, being the families suffering the most known modifications in content. They are primarily valuable for purposes of comparison.

The Church Fathers - Much of what has been written by the early church has been very valuable in discerning textual corruptions, and in ascertaining the authority ascribed various manuscripts during the early years of the church. The church fathers are also a source for quotations from manuscripts which are no longer available:

2nd Century

Justin Martyr - d.c. 165 A.D.

Tatian - d.c. 180 A.D. - Wrote the Diatessaron - a harmony of the Gospels.

Irenaeus - (125?-202?) - Smyrna, Asia Minor

Clement of Alexandria (150?-215?)

3rd Century

Hippolytus of Rome

Origen of Alexandria - (185?-254?)

Tertullian - (160?-230?)

Cyprian

4th Century

Eusebius of Caesarea (260?-340?) - Wrote “Ecclesiastical History”

Jerome - (342?-420) - Wrote the Vulgate, continued work of Eusebius on church history.

The Primary Manuscripts:

Ⲛ Codex Sinaiticus - This is the preeminent Greek manuscript. It dates from the 4th century, 340-350 A.D. It was originally the whole Greek Bible, but is now missing most of the Old Testament. **Ⲛ** also contains the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas. This manuscript is a very recent discovery, not being edited (documented) until 1938. It is of the Alexandrian family.

A Codex Alexandinus - This manuscript was preeminent until the discovery of **Ⲛ**. It dates from the first half of the 5th century. It is the whole Greek Bible, as well as the Psalms of Solomon, and two epistles of Clement of Rome. It was first edited in 1657, and again in 1720 and 1828. Except for the gospels, which are of the Byzantine family, it is the Alexandrian family.

B Codex Vaticanus - This manuscript has resided through the centuries at the Vatican in Rome. It dates from the 4th Century. It was the whole Greek Bible, including the apocrypha, but is lacking the pastoral epistles, part of Hebrews, and the Revelation. It was not made available and edited until 1889, and is of the Alexandrian family.

C Codex Ephraemi - This manuscript is a palimpsest, and dates from the 5th century. It has the interesting quality of containing texts identified with each of the five families.

D Codex Bezae - This manuscript is the chief example of the Western family of texts, and is noteworthy because of its wide discrepancies from other texts. It has Greek and Latin text, the Latin being very similar to the African family of the Old Latin text. Codex Bezae only contains the Gospels and Acts. **D₂ Codex Claromontanus** - This manuscript contains only the Pauline Epistles. It is likewise in both Greek and Latin, the Greek likewise being of the Western family and the Latin likewise being of the African.

L Codex Regius - This is another uncial codex and dates from the 8th century, but is conspicuously similar to **Ⲛ** and **B** and must have been copied from a much older work.

Of other manuscripts I will make no special note here, but ample resources are certainly available to those who want more information.

The Versions

Also of particular usefulness in reconstructing the original New Testament are some important early translations, which can also be compared to extant manuscripts. It is noteworthy to state that even these versions in other languages are classifiable by the textual families mentioned earlier.

The Latin Versions

The Latin Versions are the **Old Latin** (2nd Century) and the **Vulgate** (4th Century). The two are alternately important sources because the Vulgate is superior for the Old Testament and the Old Latin is superior for the New Testament. The Old Latin OT is from the Greek Septuagint and so is inferior to the Vulgate, which is from Messaretic Hebrew. The Old Latin NT is superior to the Vulgate, because the Old Latin is from the original Greek, but the Vulgate NT is a revision of the Old Latin.

Next to the Latin, the Syriac and Coptic versions are the most important.

Syriac Versions

The Diatessaron of Tatian - 2nd Century - Harmony of Gospels

The Old Syriac - 3rd Century

The Peshitta - 5th Century

The Philoxenian/Harkleian Syriac - 8th-10th Century

The Palestinian Syriac - 6th Century - Antioch

Coptic (Egyptian) Versions

Sahidic/Thebaic - 4th-5th Century

Bohairic/Memphitic - 12th Century

The Armenian Version - 9th Century

The Gothic Version - 5th-6th Century

The Ethiopic Version - 13th Century

A Word about the Textus Receptus - The Textus Receptus (TR) or “Received Text” is an eclectic work compiled by scholars including Erasmus, Beza, and Stephanus. Most of the manuscripts used were of the Byzantine family and of the 11th-13th century. It is not based on any one manuscript, but was essentially the critical text of that day. This is the text on which the Tyndale family of Bibles, including the KJV are based. Modern versions using the TR include the KJV, NKJV, and KJ21. Those who hold the TR to be superior to the critical texts primarily do so on the basis of a claim of universal, intentional, corruption of the Alexandrian family of manuscripts. This is a claim which I have been completely unable to substantiate.

In Conclusion, There are countless manuscripts and versions of the New Testament, as well as much historic commentary. The differences among so many manuscripts are relatively slight and the similarities among so many witnesses are a tremendous resource for reconstruction of the original. It is worth noting that the vast majority of these manuscripts and versions were not available to scholars when the KJV was being published in 1611. The primary current standard for the critical text of the New Testament is the **Nestle-Aland** text. This is the text used by United Bible Societies 3rd and 4th editions of the Greek New Testament. English versions using the Nestle-Aland text include the NASB and NIV Bibles.

SECTION THREE - HISTORY OF EARLY TRANSLATIONS

300 BC - OT Manuscripts of the Septuagint are in use, oldest extant copies.

2nd Century - The Old Latin version of the Septuagint, OT & NT.

5th Century - **Jerome** wrote his Latin Vulgate. He used the Messoretic texts for the Old Testament and the Old Latin revised with Alexandrian texts for the New Testament.

Prior to 1400 - Numerous English versions were around, but the main text, from 2-3rd century on, were Latin. Latin was political/educated language even during time of Christ, while Greek was the common language. Latin versions became Property of the church.

In 1382 - **John Wycliffe** - Was the first member of reformation and is called, "The Morning Star of the Reformation". He translated the Latin New Testament into English. Hereford translated the Vulgate Old Testament, and was revised by Purvey.

In 1456 - **John Guttenburg** - Germans invent the printing press, Print the Mazarin Latin Bible a.k.a. "The Guttenburg Bible".

In 1517 - **Martin Luther** - Posted his "95 Theses, in 1522 Luther had finished his German translation of the NT from the Erasamus' Greek, he later finished the OT.

In 1525, 1534 - **William Tyndale** - Translated the original Greek & Hebrew into English. He used Erasamus' Greek and the Messoretic for the Hebrew. For comparisons Tyndale used the Vulgate, Erasamus' Latin, and Luther's German translation. Tyndale published the New Testament, the Pentateuch, and the book of Jonah, and completed work on the books of Joshua through II Chronicles before he was killed.

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) - Worked with Tyndale, First to complete the Old & New Testaments in English. He used Tyndale's Pentateuch, and Latin (Vulgate and Pagnini) and German (Luther) for the rest of the Old Testament. It is basically Coverdale's translation of the poetic and prophetic books which is in the KJV. For the New Testament, Coverdale used Tyndale's work, revised against the work of Luther. Coverdale also separated out the Apocrypha. The church rejected this version of the Bible, primarily because of Tyndale.

Thomas Matthew (1500-1555) - Tyndale's primary assistant was John Rogers. Thomas Matthew is probably a nom de plume for Rogers, but it is possible that he was a real person who assisted Rogers. "Matthew" added margin notes to Tyndale's Bible and also "slightly" revised his work by a French text. Matthew was the first to license & mass produce his Bible. His Bible used Tyndale for all of his completed books, and Coverdale for Ezra through Malachi and the Apocrypha.

Richard Taberner (1505-1575) - Revised Matthew's Bible using Greek texts

1539 - The Great Bible - Named for its sheer size, this Bible was a work of Coverdale commissioned to be a revision of the Matthew Bible. In case you're not following this, the sole purpose of this version was to have the Tyndale Bible without the Tyndale name. This Bible was then acceptable to the Church of England and became the first "Standard" English Bible. They were issued to every church and purchased by individuals. It was extremely popular and widespread, as well as being long lived, being well used even years after the release of the KJV. It was "The Great Bible" in truth, being the first English version which broke in to the common use and common homes.

1557 - Geneva Bible (1557, Revised in 1560)

Revision of Tyndale - only used privately.

1. Better Greek and Hebrew translation.
2. More conservative in notes.
3. Smaller paper, more legible - Roman type.
4. First Bible using chapter and verse divisions.
5. Italics for added words for clear translation.
6. 140 editions - published through 1617.
7. More popular than Bishop's or King James.

The Geneva Bible was developed by scholars in exile in Geneva, it was very good, and was extremely popular, but never entered into churches.

1568 - Bishops Bible

Revision of Great Bible.

Better translation than Geneva.

Direct basis for King James version.

1611-1962 - King James Version - 16 revised editions, (1611, 1612, 1613, 1616, 1629, 1638, 1659, 1660, 1683, 1701, 1727, 1762, 1769, 1860, 1873, 1932, 1962)

Originally commissioned by King James in 1604, the KJV was based on the Bishop's Bible with comparisons with other contemporary works including the Geneva Bible, and the works of Matthew and Coverdale, as well as others. A large team of 48-50 scholars from Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge provided great literary quality and scholastic acceptance, and eventually, the King James Version became universally accepted. In its early years it competed strongly with both the Great Bible and the Geneva Bible, both of which were very popular. The King James Version was end of the Tyndale family of Bibles and essentially the last English version to be developed for about 200 years, having finally satisfied the need of having an excellent translation with literary beauty and political acceptability.

A Word about the Apocrypha

The Apocryphal books which are included only in Catholic Bibles are Old Testament books (and extra chapters) which were found only in the Septuagint. Coverdale was the first to distinctly separate the Apocrypha in the English Bible, but the books have a long history of rejection as the authoritative Word of God. They were rejected from the Hebrew canon as formed around A.D. 100, and most of the early church fathers concurred. The Syrian version omits them, Jerome refused them a place in the Vulgate, and Luther separated them out, giving them the title of "Apocrypha", meaning "secret" or "hidden". The Catholic Church did not accept them as authoritative until 1546 at the Council of Trent.

References to “New Testament Apocrypha” are in regard to writings of the early church and were not included in the books approved at the Council of Trent or found in Catholic Bibles. These epistles of the church fathers are often found in ancient manuscripts of the New Testament. The early church did not compose a NT canon, as such, until the beginning of the 3rd century. There has been some canonical debate, particularly against Hebrews, Jude, and Revelation, and for the Epistles of Clement, but generally, the books which have been the most universally accepted have always been the same books as are now in our New Testament.

A Word about the “King James Only” Stance

I must begin by expressing my personal love for the King James Bible, and by affirming that the KJV is worthy of firm confidence for both study and devotion. The KJV is beautifully written and has proven itself for almost 400 years as the effective, reliable, Word of God. Also, anyone familiar with this Bible is not greatly effected by archaic words or grammar. Finally, the textual corruptions and known problems which do exist in the KJV are not of a magnitude to be of doctrinal concern, and are noted in many study Bibles. Those who place their confidence in this version can rest in that confidence, it is well earned. There is no reason for any individual to abandon the KJV, or for any church to leave the King James, if the members prefer it, or if there is a lack of confidence in the critical texts or in the alternative Bible versions available.

At Issue, is the "King James Only" stance. This is the idea that the King James is the only version appropriate for public services, and that all other versions are inferior. This stance also frequently includes the discrediting and bashing of institutes and individuals who do accept other versions. This is in spite of the fact that many individuals and institutes with conservative, evangelical doctrine embrace new translations, indeed, many of these new versions are from such institutes.

The King James version is excellent, but it is not based on the best texts, and it predates almost 400 years of archeological and linguistic scholarship, including such landmarks as the Rosetta Stone and the Dead Sea Scrolls. We have, since the King James, discovered a vast array of superior manuscripts, learned a great deal about ancient Greek and Hebrew, and discovered identifiable families of variations and corruptions in texts. In short, we have moved much closer to establishing the original writings.

To **require exclusive use** of the KJV, is to **deny all progress** in biblical scholarship since 1611, and to **invalidate all present and future study** in this field! This is the exact stance which the Roman Catholic Church took against Martin Luther in declaring the Vulgate superior to the original languages.

The King James Only stance is unacceptable, and attacks the authority of the Holy Scriptures by placing the traditional translation of almost four centuries ago above our best knowledge of the original Word of God!

SECTION FOUR - THE ENGLISH VERSIONS COMPARED

Now we come to it, the qualification of a translation of the Bible. The question which must be asked is twofold; how should Bible versions be compared, and, which English versions can be identified as acceptable or unacceptable.

The qualifications should include:

- Textual Considerations
- Scholarship and Institutional Considerations
- Translation Notes
- Variations in Content
 - Inclusion or Exclusion of Certain Texts
 - Translation of Key Words in Particular Verses

Textual Considerations - The preferred critical texts are Kittel's Biblia Hebraica or Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia for the Old Testament and the Nestle-Aland text for the New Testament. Of the Bibles listed below, the Textus Receptus is used by the KJV, the KJ21, and the NKJV, and the best critical texts are used by the NASB, NIV, CEV, and NET Bibles.

Enhanced Texts - Several versions are available which are intended as supplemental references. Amplified Bibles, Interlinear, Parallel, Chronological, or Literal Translation Bibles fall into this category. "You get what you choose", but many of the same considerations will still apply.

Scholarship and Institutional Considerations - The King James Version was commissioned by King James, and worked on for 7 years by 48-50 scholars from 3 different major colleges. This is a pretty good standard. Bibles which are the work of a few individuals or in which little is invested will show their inferiority. Some of the most popular versions have very strong scholarship, others do not. Another factor here is bias on the part of the translators, which is an important disqualification of the New English Bible, and translations by the Jehovah's Witness church.

Translation Notes - Bibles which are too brief in their translation notes can be a great source of confusion and should be avoided. There are too many instances of contention between versions to omit translation notes. Also, there is much to be gained by the inclusion of notes in certain areas. If a Bible has adequate notes, other differences become much less significant.

Variations in Content - Below are six factors which will effect the actual content of the versions being compared.

- **Text used** - The text used will be the foremost source of variation. While differences in manuscripts are usually not radical, they are frequent.
- **Translation style** - The process of translation will always produce some variation. This refers to the dynamic human factor involved which results in style and readability. Translation can either be "literal" or "dynamic equivalence" in form, the first conveying a more accurate translation, the second being easier reading. Both

- styles of translation have their difficulties, but the literal style is preferred because of the divine nature of the work being translated.
- **Accuracy** - Accuracy concerns itself with how well the grammatical translation is done, how well the English is written, how many mistakes or typos exist, and manner in which alternative manuscripts are used.
 - **Objectives** - The Intentions of the translator may dramatically effect wording. One of the stated objectives of the NIV and CEV Bibles is to decrease the required reading level. The NASB and NET Bibles emphasize their included translation notes. Other Bibles are denominationally exclusive and vary accordingly, these versions should be considered automatic rejects.
 - **Omission/Inclusion** - Certain passages such as Mark 16:9-20, John 7:53--8:11 may be omitted or included. These passages should be present and should be annotated appropriately. The Apocrypha, if included, should be separate and prefaced with appropriate notes. Some test verses I used here include Matthew 17:21, 18:11, 23:14, Mark 9:44,46, 11:26, 15:28, 16:9-20, Luke 17:36, 23:17, John 5:4, 7:53-8:11, Acts 8:37, 15:34, 16:9-20, 24:7, 28:29, and Romans 16:24.
 - **Key Verse/Words** - Some contentions critically effect particular passages. Problem passages may present a verse opposite to its intended meaning, obscure Mary's virginity, name Joseph as our Lord's father, minimize the deity of Christ, or remove a reference to His blood. Not all of these are actually wrong, but even a valid translation can be misleading if wording is bad or if the context lends to confusion. **In many cases** the TR and critical texts will stand in unified contrast, this can be ascribed to textual difference. Some test verses I used here include Matthew 1:25, 5:44, 6:13, 10:3, 11:23, 19:17, 20:22, 24:36, 27:35, Mark 7:19, Luke 1:28, 2:14, 2:33, 9:35,54-55, John 14:16,26, 15:26, 16:27, Romans 1:6, 14:10,12, I Corinthians 5:5, Philippians 2:6-7, Colossians 1:14, I Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 11:11, and Revelation 1:11, 5:14, 20:12.

Notes on Specific Versions:

KJV / AV - King James Version / Authorized Version

Main Notes: Extremely high quality of translation resulting in accurate, reliable translation and beautiful literary form. The primary need is not correction of texts, but the difficulty of the almost 400 year old language, but it is also noteworthy that the KJV predates the vast majority of scholarship and manuscripts we now have.

Date: 1611

Organization: King James

Textual Considerations: Uses TR

Scholarship and Institutional Considerations: 7 years by 48-50 (17th century) scholars from Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge.

Translation Notes: No version specific notes, any notes provided by publisher.

Translation Accuracy: Tremendous accuracy, especially Greek.

Translation Readability: Very difficult, Elizabethan English, college reading level.

Omission/Inclusion: All test passages included, without notes.

Key Verse/Words: Most test passages good.

Other Factors: Extreme popularity and proven reliability for almost 400 years, millions of copies in print, and the only universally familiar standard in the English language.

NKJV - New King James Version

Main Notes: This Bible is a marketing attempt to put KJV text into modern English with slight revisions. There is something very wrong with this version, many documents have been published showing senseless variations and convolutions. The KJ21 is a much better try.

Date: 1979

Organization: Thomas Nelson

Textual Considerations: Based on the TR

Scholarship and Institutional Considerations: 150 Scholars (?!).

Translation Notes: None

Translation Accuracy: Based on TR, but deviates in many places.

Translation Readability: The words were modernized, but the grammar still reads like the Elizabethan. The literary style is awkward at best.

Omission/Inclusion: All test passages included without notation.

Key Verse/Words: All test passages same as KJV.

Other Factors: This revision of the KJV, uses 19th century texts for the OT and utilizes Byzantine texts for the NT, in many cases it is divergent from the KJV.

New American Standard Bible (NASB, NAS) And NASB Updated

Organization: The Lockman Foundation

Dates: 1977, 1995

Main Notes: Considered by many scholars and institutes to be the most accurate translation, it is clearly written and very well annotated. This Bible is a work of the highest caliber of true scholarship, and is pleasing to read.

Revision Notes: The changes to the revised edition are well documented and most notably remove the remnant of Elizabethan English which had been retained in prayer passages addressing God. Changes also include the smoothing of some passages which were awkward in the 1977 release. The revision is called the "Updated" version.

Textual Considerations: Uses Kittel for OT, Nestle-Aland for NT

Supporting Works: Concordances, study Bibles by Ryrie, Scofield, Thompson, et al., software available for most applications.

Institutional Considerations: The translators come from Presbyterian, Methodist, American Baptist, Disciples, Southern Baptist, Nazarene, General Association of Regular Baptist, Congregational, Independent Baptist, Free Methodist, and other denominations. All support the philosophy of literal translation and the inerrancy of Scripture, and the Lockman Foundation's fundamental doctrinal statement (available).

Scholarship: 12 Year project with 58 Translators with doctorates in Biblical languages, representing 20 colleges and seminaries, including Wheaton College, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Dallas Theological Seminary, Bob Jones University, and others. The revised edition was released 18 years after the first edition.

Translation Accuracy: Probably the best currently available.

Translation Readability: Very clear, easy reading, 12th grade reading level.

Translation Notes: Translation notes are excellent and appear frequently.

Omission/Inclusion: Test verses are included and annotated.

Key Verse/Words: Most test passages good.

Other Factors: The four main goals of this Bible are 1) to be true to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, 2) to be grammatically correct, 3) to be understandable, and 4) to give the Lord Jesus Christ His proper place in the Word.

NIV - New International Version

Main Notes: The NIV is not as reliable of a work as it should be, especially considering the scholastic strength behind it and its overwhelming popularity. While reliability is generally very good, it is not a literal translation style, and also has too many individual verses with "spot" problems. Additionally, it omits all of the omission/inclusion test passages.

Date: 1978

Organization: New York Bible Society International

Textual Considerations: Uses Kittel for OT, Nestle-Aland for NT

Scholarship and Institutional Considerations: 110 Scholars from several countries, from concept to complete Bible taking 10 years.

Translation Notes: Frequent, but sometimes brief.

Translation Accuracy: The translation style is "dynamic equivalence". Accuracy is usually good, but inconsistent, and sometimes very rough. This version has too many passages with irregular translations or unqualified deviations from the primary texts.

Translation Readability: Very easy reading - 7th grade reading level, modern use of quotes and paragraphs. The Nlrv (r=reader's) is available for younger readers and has a 3rd grade reading level.

Omission/Inclusion: All test passages omitted with notation.

Key Verse/Words: More unique test passage problems, examples include I Corinthians 5:5 which sounds like Satan destroying sinful nature and saving the spirit, and Hebrews 11:11 which replaces Sarah with Abraham as an example of faith.

Other Factors: This version is extremely well marketed, very popular, available in a multitude of formats, and seems to have taken its place as the new standard for English Bibles, especially in reference works.

Other English Versions

1611 - KJV - King James Version - See above.

1881 - RV - English Revised a.k.a. Revised Version - The first to use the better manuscripts. The translation tended to be overly literal on a word-for-word basis and was not clearly written. It was received well into pastor's studies, but generally failed to enter common acceptance and use. Spurgeon's often quoted remark was that it was "...Strong in Greek, but weak in English."

1901 - ASV - American Standard - Made very heavy use of the Revised Version, and was actually part of same project, but the translation was independent, being performed in America.

1946, 52 - RSV - Revised Standard Version - Revised American Standard Liberalized Messianic Passages - downplayed Israel, Messiah - emphasized church. Isaiah 7:14, the prophecy of the virgin birth, uses "young woman" instead of "virgin". This version is the popular bases for ecumenical translations. Omits all test passages without notations.

1950-60-70 - NWT - New World Translation - Jehovah's Witness

1960-1971 - NEB - New English Bible - The first to use Kittel's Biblia Hebraica, but has a marked Anglican bias. Phrase for phrase translation.

1965 - Amplified Bible - The "full expression" Bible, this work adds multiple word/meanings into the text so that a better understanding of the originals are represented in each verse. This Bible is from the Lockman foundation and predates the NASB.

1971 - LB - Living Bible - This is a paraphrase of the ASV.

1972 - Bible in Living English - Jehovah's Witness

1976 - TEV - Today's English Version a.k.a. Good News Bible - Paraphrased Greek, 7th grade reading level.

1977 - NASB - New American Standard Bible - See above.

1978 - NIV - New International Version - See above.

1979 - NKJV - New King James Version - See above.

1989 - NRSV - New Revised Standard Version - Revision of RSV, pays more attention to gender. Used for ecumenical translations.

1997 - NLT - New Living Translation - Thomas Nelson, replaces the Living Bible, but is a from the original languages instead of paraphrasing the ASV.

1994 - KJ21 - King James 21st Century Version - This is what the NKJV should have been. It is not a revision, but an updating of archaic words, spellings, and punctuations only. It is a superior version for those who want to keep King James, but just want a clean, modern text. This version also includes (some) textual notes.

1997 - CEV - Contemporary English Version - United Bible Societies, critical texts, dynamic equivalence translation at 5th grade reading level.

1999 - NET - New English Translation - This is a current work based out of Dallas Theological Seminary using critical texts, literal translations, abundant textual notes, and providing the text online. The critical texts and translation notes are primary features of this Bible. The Old Testament is incomplete, but the OT translation drafts are posted with the finished NT. The NT is now available in print.

SECTION FIVE – PERSONAL CONCLUSIONS

I Believe that translations, but not paraphrases, of the Bible are the authoritative Word of God, to the extent that they are faithful to the original texts. I do not believe that any translation is, or can be, perfectly reliable, nor do I believe that God's action of preservation of Scripture is limited to any particular translation.

The source texts which I prefer are the Critical Texts, over the Textus Receptus.

The style of translation which I prefer is the literal, over dynamic equivalence.

I have a **Strong Confidence** in the reliability of the Authorized or King James Version and also in the New American Standard Bible.

I Find Acceptable, but do not recommend, the New International Version and the New King James Version.

I am Optimistic about the NET, CEV(for children), and KJ21(for KJOnly) versions, but have not carefully compared their content, or investigated the background of their publishers.

I have **Strong Objection** to the Revised Standard Version, New Revised Standard Version, Good News for Modern Man, the Living Bible, the New English Bible, the New World Translation, and the Bible in Living English. These Bibles are either paraphrases or are denominationally biased.

I have **No Opinions** on any other English versions of the Bible, as I have not included them in the breadth of my investigation, but hope that the guidelines above will provide help in the evaluation of future versions.

I believe that it is detrimental to church services and coordinated Bible study for more than one translation to be implemented by those leading and teaching, but that one version should be selected as the standard. **It is my recommendation** for churches to use the **New American Standard Bible, 1995** as the normal version for all church services, classes, and Bible studies, and to provide this version for all church copies and gift Bibles.

There are two exceptions to this recommendation, firstly that churches should allow free use of the **King James Version** in services by visiting pastors, evangelists, or missionaries who prefer that version, and secondly, that **children's ministries** may benefit from standard use of an alternate version such as the CEV or NlrV Bibles.

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NLT - <http://www.newlivingtranslation.com/>
KJ21 - <http://www.kj21.com/>
NET - <http://www.bible.org/netbible/welcome.htm>
Wycliffe Bible Translators - <http://www.wycliffe.org/>
The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy - Unrecorded source

Bible Versions used for **extensive** verse comparisons:

The Bible versions I have used for extensive verse comparisons include the King James Version (or Authorized Version), the Revised Standard Version, the American Standard Version, the New American Standard Bible (and Update), the New International Version, the New King James Version, and the Living Bible.

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