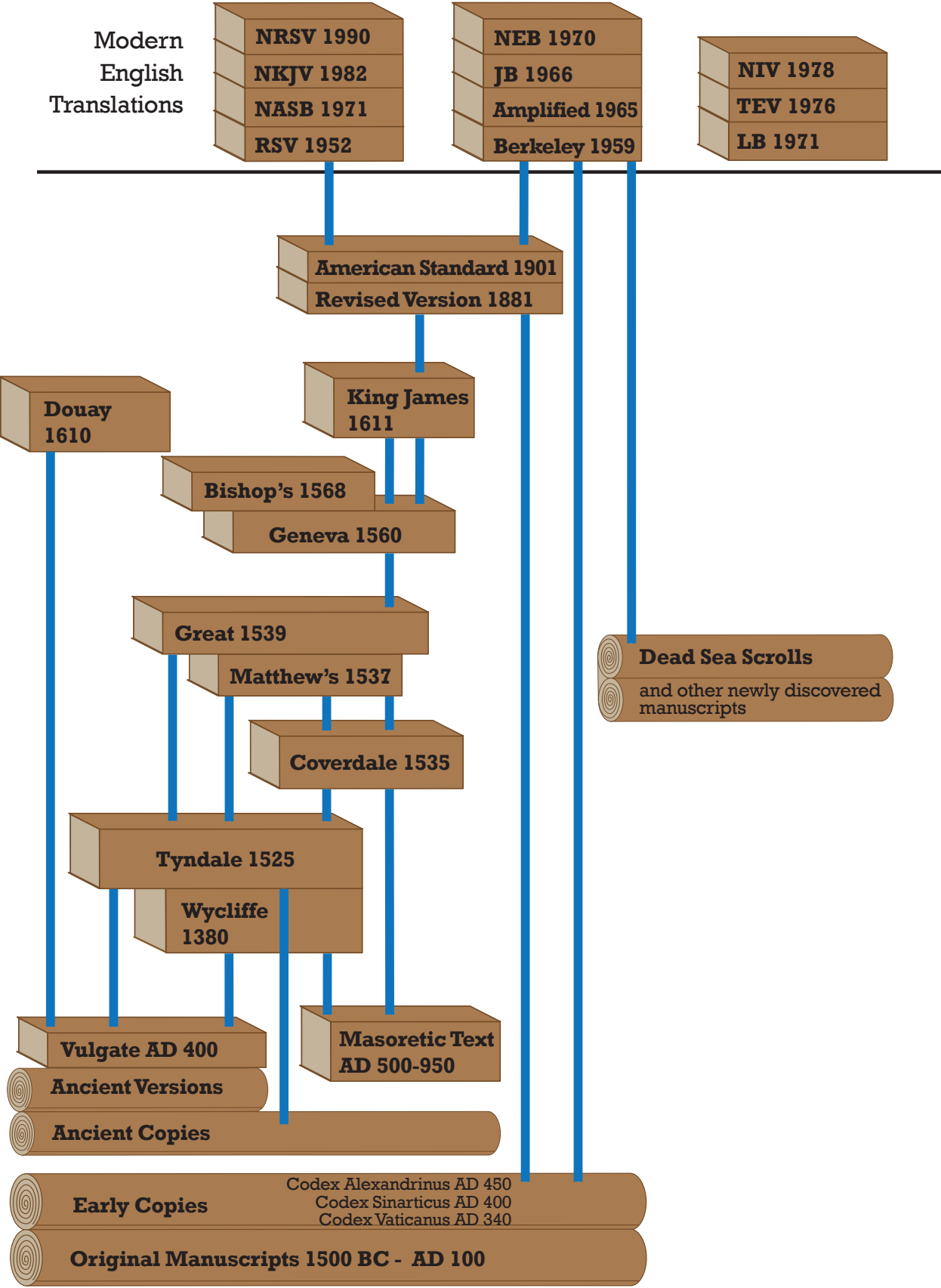


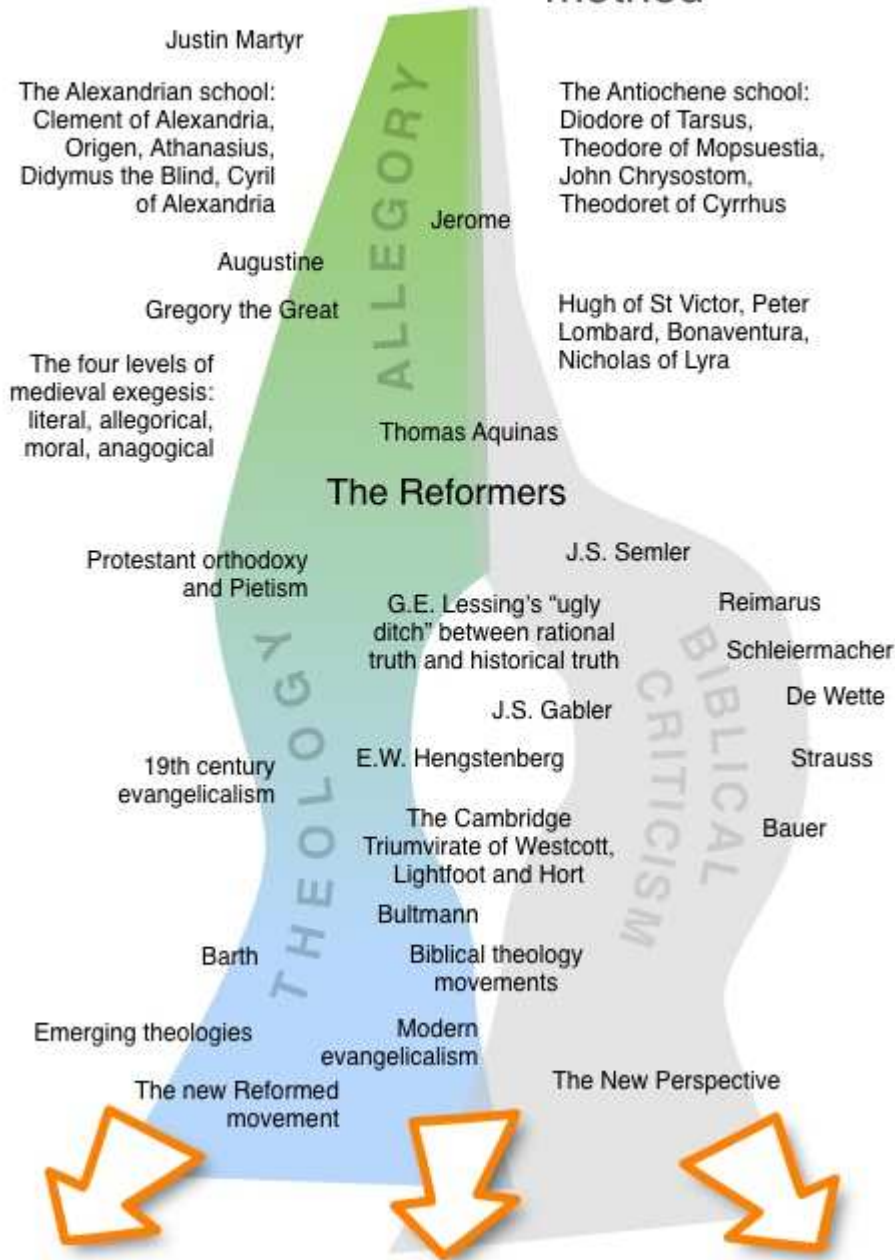
The History of the English Bible



As Pastor I recommend the RSV, NASB, ESV, or NET for accuracy of translation

Allegorical-theological method

Literal-historical method



English Bible Notes

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The 66 books we call scripture originally were written in three languages:

<i>Hebrew</i>	Most of the Old Testament
<i>Aramaic</i>	(Sister language to Hebrew) Used in most of Daniel and two passages in Ezra, it is thought to lie behind many of Jesus' statements in the Gospels
<i>Greek</i>	All of the New Testament

As most readers of the Bible have very little or no understanding of these languages, the basic tool for studying and understanding the Bible should be a good English translation. Such translations are chosen for strictly personal reasons, with many persons having little or no knowledge of the market forces or "politics" that developed the Bible version they use. Never before have so many differing texts been used in a worship service. Few are aware how much translations vary ...

1 Corinthians 7:36

KJV	"If any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin ..."
NASB	"If a man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter ..."
NIV	"If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to ..."]
NEB	"If a man has a partner in celibacy and feels that he is not behaving properly toward her ..."
RSV	"If any one thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed..."
NRSV	"If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his fiancée ..."

GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING A TRANSLATION

1. It is good practice to use mainly one *good* translation. This will aid in memorization and offer consistency.

2. For Bible *study* refer to at least one other *good* translation for insight.
3. Know the drawbacks of the version(s) you use.

THE CONTENTS OF THE BIBLE

The contents of the Bible are generally categorized into six types of literary forms (Genre):

1. **Discourse and Logical Literature:** Extended discourses and the writings which involve the presentation of ideas in argumentative form; the Epistles, some prophetic sermons, and the longer discourse of Jesus.
2. **Prose Narrative:** Personalized history in the form of stories and biographical sketches; Genesis, Exodus, the Gospels, Acts.
3. **Poetry:** Uses much figurative language to express feelings rather than rigid logical concepts: Psalms (wisdom literature is sometimes included in this category), Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job.
4. **Drama and Dramatic Prose:** The dramatic method involves the personification, particularization, and vivid description of events or ideas for the sake of their moving effect. It is closely related to poetic expression; Isaiah 2.
5. **Parabolic Literature:** The parables employ the principle of analogy. The parable consists of two parts – the spiritual truth which is being illustrated, and the brief physical narrative which is placed beside it for the purpose of clarification.
6. **Apocalyptic Literature:** The term “apocalypse” literally means “uncovering” or “revelation.” Symbolism and descriptions are prevalent in this literature; Daniel, Revelation

FOUNDATIONS FOR BIBLE INTERPRETATION

1. **The Clarity of Scripture:** The Bible is understandable to all as the Holy Spirit illuminates the reader’s mind.
2. **Revelation if Accommodated to Man:** As shown in the parables, a human and earthly vehicle is the bearer of spiritual truth. We must recognize these accommodations. The fact of God’s almightiness is spoken of in terms of a right arm because, among men, the right arm is the symbol of strength or power. Our interpretations must reflect this understanding.
3. **Progressive Revelation:** By progressive revelation it is meant that the Bible set forth a movement of God from Old to New Testament. This perspective is important to the interpreter since he/she will expect the full and complete revelation of God in the New Testament.
4. **Scripture Interprets Scripture:** The entire Holy Scripture is the context and guide for understanding the particular passages of Scripture. That is to say, obscure passages in Scripture must give way to clear passages. The whole can be understood only through its parts, and the parts can be understood only through the whole.

5. The Analogy of Faith: The assumption here is that there is one system of truth or theology contained in Scripture, and, therefore, all doctrines must cohere or agree with each other. That means that the interpretations of specific passages must not contradict the total teaching of Scripture.
6. The Unity of the Meaning of Scripture: In emphasizing the unity of the Scripture, it is not meant to reduce the meaning to a narrow liberalism which ignores any depth of Scripture. However, it is to say that the Bible is not to be seen as a book in which anyone can impose a meaning on the writings.

GUIDELINES FOR BIBLE STUDY AND INTERPRETATION

1. Interpret Under the Guidelines of the GRAMMATICAL-HISTORICAL-CONTEXTUAL APPROACH:
 - A. Grammatical – It is important to observe the rules of grammar. Commentaries can help with Greek matters.
 - B. Historical – It is important to observe the circumstances of history, geography, and culture.
 - C. Contextual – Enough cannot be said about this ... CONTEXT! CONTEXT!! Proper interpretation can never be done without observing the context of the whole Bible, and of the particular book, chapter, and paragraph.
2. The Plain-Literal Meaning Is the Goal – The meaning of the Bible can be drawn only from the meaning that the original author meant for his readers. We are not to “spiritualize” or “allegorize” at random. Only when the plain-literal interpretation fails to provide appropriate answers can we abandon it and explore metaphorical/figurative readings of a passage. This will specifically vary with different kinds of literary genre.
3. Strive for Pure OBJECTIVITY – Everybody approaches the Bible with certain presuppositions. Know your prejudices and deal with them. Learn to read out of the text and not into it.
4. Interrogate the Text – Ask questions! “What does the author mean by that phrase?” “Is that statement prescriptive or descriptive?”
5. Learn to “Principlize” – A principle is an outstanding abiding truth that is not limited to a moment of time. Principlizing seeks to discover the enduring ethical, spiritual, doctrinal, and moral truths which the author sets forth with specific details in a particular contextual setting.

The King James Bible was translated in 1604-1611 and had its last revision in 1769. It is a work taken from the Tyndale (1535) and Bishop’s Bible (1572) which is based upon Roman Catholic tradition. It contains many verses and texts that are disputed and known not to date to the earliest church. The New King James Bible of 1982 continues to use this disputed version of the Greek Bible called *Textus-Receptus*. In 1901 the American Standard Version was an attempt to make the King James Version accurate. It is difficult to read, but is the best translation that has been done in the English language.

In 1937 the Council of Churches voted to update the American Standard Version with the Revised Standard Version. The final revision was of the New Testament in 1971. This is the Bible used by many Christians. Conservatives/Evangelicals reacted to the Revised Standard Version in the U.S. Senate, calling it the devil's Bible. In Mount Olives, Carolina, it was burned publicly, and the ashes sent to the translators. (At least we don't burn the translators themselves anymore!)

These reactions resulted in the evangelical conservatives publishing twenty-six different translations in the last 30 years. They include the New American Standard Bible in 1968 by the Lockman Foundation, the New International Version in 1973 by the Reformed Church and later the New York Bible Society, and Today's English Version in 1966 by the American Bible Society. The Romans Catholics, in their own effort, produced the New American Bible in 1969, and the Jerusalem Bible (which was originally written in French) in 1966 and 1985. Had the Revised Standard Version not caused so much reaction, we would not have the rainbow of Bibles from which you can choose today.

Several of the versions have been funded because the Evangelicals wanted translations that met their concerns for conservatism. Issues such as whether or not to capitalize pronouns that refer to the Lord (an issue that did not exist in the hour of the KJV) have led to a new measurement of conservatism, rightly or wrongly.

THE SCIENCE OF TRANSLATION

The many available translations today have come about as men have attempted to transfer the contents of the original languages into other languages. Because of the grammatical, syntactical, and literary differences in language, the task is difficult. Although the details of the problem of the text in the Old and New Testaments differ, the basic concerns are the same:

1. No original autographs (that which the prophet himself wrote) exist.
2. Thousands of handwritten copies written over about 1400 years exist.
3. The vast majority of manuscripts come from the medieval period and they are very much alike, yet they differ significantly from the earliest copies. (There are over five thousand Greek manuscripts of parts or all of the New Testament, as well as thousands in Latin, and no two of them anywhere in existence are exactly alike.)

The Keys to Translating

1. Textual Criticism:
 - A. *External Evidence* – The character and quality of the manuscript
 - B. *Internal Evidence* – The kinds of mistakes made by the copyists.
2. Linguistic Factors:
 - A. *Literal* – The attempt to translate by keeping as close as possible to the exact words and phrasing in the original language, yet still make sense of the receptor language (English in our case).

B. *Free* – The attempt to translate the ideas from one language to another, with less concern about the exact words of the original (sometimes called a paraphrase).

C. *Dynamic Equivalent* – The attempt to translate words, idioms, and grammatical constructions of the original language into precise equivalents in the receptor language.

Every translation is at many points a trade-off between literal precision and readability, between “formal equivalence” in expression and “functional equivalence” in communication, and are attempts to convey concepts from one culture to another. The English Bible translations over the past half-millennium come from the fountainhead which was William Tyndale’s New Testament of 1526. Based on Tyndale is the King James Version of 1611 (KJV), the English Revised Version of 1885 (RV), the American Standard Version of 1901 (ASV), and the Revised Standard Version of 1952 and 1971 (RSV), and then the New American Standard and the English Standard Versions. After the KJV the “textus receptus” manuscripts were no longer the ancient texts used. In that stream, faithfulness to the text and vigorous pursuit of accuracy were combined with simplicity, beauty, and dignity of expression.

<u>Literal</u>	Dynamic Equivalence	<u>Loose</u>
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------(word for word)------(more literal)-----(less literal)-----paraphrased)---					
NASB	*KJV	NIV	NCB	Phillips	Living
RSV	*NKJV	REB	JB	TEV	Message
ESV		NRSV	NEB		
		NET			

*These translate from manuscripts (textus receptus) which are not as old as the first two but are literal – this causes verses to appear that are not in other versions.

The Council of Churches in 1990 released a new translation that they named the New Revised Standard. The principles for this version were stated by the Committee as:

The decision to produce a further revision of the RSV was basically due to the social changes that took place during the sixties and early seventies. One of these was the tendency, whether for good or ill, toward less formality in social relationships, a relaxation of manner and dress that led inevitably to the use of a less formal style of language in public worship, sometimes almost to the point of colloquialization. Even in the stiffest of traditions it brought about the use of normal twentieth-century literary style in place of the archaic forms that had for many generations characterized the language of worship.

The RSV had already moved a long way in this direction by translating the Bible into contemporary English except, as was noted above, for speech addressed to God. In

such passages (most of the Psalter, for example), the “thee’s” and “thou’s” were retained. For a full generation this had seemed a satisfactory compromise, as is evident from the fact that it was adopted for the New English Bible when it was published in the late sixties and early seventies. But by the time the decision was reached to revise the RSV all were agreed that the middle way was not good enough. After all, the KJV made no distinction between speech to God and speech to human beings, and neither did the ancient languages in which the biblical books were originally written. The RSV compromise had been a halfway step that demanded eventual completion; in the early seventies the time had obviously come for the committee to begin this necessary, though relatively mechanical, task.

A second, and much more important, impetus for reconsidering the style of the RSV was given by the widespread demand that the English language be purged of what seemed to many to be “sex-biased” language, notably the word “man” in the so-called generic sense that covers both men and women, and the indefinite “he”, referring to an antecedent that might be either male or female. Many other examples are easily found. There is a large constituency of women and the leaders of the mainline churches that are committed to the use of “inclusive language,” as are younger publishers and educational organizations. This principle overruled sentence structure in the NRSV and, upon occasion, altered verb forms or adjusted singular nouns into plural.

Finally: The Bible is at its deepest core about God. All of it: the Hebrew scriptures, and the Christian scriptures. For the followers of the crucified one that God comes to us in Jesus of Nazareth. The disciple of Jesus must learn that the Psalm one is reading is actually about Jesus. The story of Israel is about Jesus. The prophets are speaking politically and socially but they are speaking, preserved in the writings, in the Spirit of Christ in advance of the incarnation. All of the holy writ tells one revelation and all other theories are human creations and prone to lead you astray.

John 5:39 You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me;

1 Peter 1:10-11 The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory.

Luke 24:44 Then he said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us – for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree" – 3:8 The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, proclaimed the gospel to Abraham in advance, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." So then those who believe are blessed along with Abraham the believer. - 3:22 But the scripture imprisoned everything and everyone under sin so that the promise could be given– because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ– to those who believe. - 3:27-29 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, not slave nor free, neither is there male nor female– for all are one in Christ Jesus. If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

