

# The History of the Bible

## MODERN TRANSLATIONS

### *Aren't Modern Translations All Copyrighted, Unlike The KJV?*

**KJV - 1611**  
**Living - 1971**  
**NASB - 1971**  
**NIV - 1978**  
**NKJV - 1982**  
**NRSV - 1946**  
**ESV - 2001**  
**Message - 2002**  
**HCSB - 2004**

The King James Version is technically held under a copyright principle the United Kingdom calls "Royal Prerogative." It can only be produced by the Queen's Printer which is, at this time, Cambridge University Press. Although, nobody is enforcing that in the US.

Modern translations, with the exception of the World English Bible, are copyrighted. Each copyright holder has issued a "fair use" statement allowing their Bibles to be used and quoted in part, as long as writers aren't profiting from it. As we've seen in this series,

financial competition is not foreign to Biblical work. For example, Erasmus was motivated to beat his competition to press with his Greek New Testament. The King James Version has its own history of lawsuits and financial interests in its earliest years of printing.

Copyright interests have undoubtedly led to the proliferation of modern translations. However, the principle of 1 Timothy 5:18 says the laborer, especially in the Word, is worthy of being paid.

### *Are Modern Translations Grounded In Roman Catholicism?*

**What is true:** Roman Catholicism has had an influence on most religious issues within Christianity for the past 1,600 years, including the preservation of manuscripts. The Codex Vaticanus is one of the oldest complete Greek manuscripts known and is often favored by textual critics. However, the translators of modern translations (with the exception of the NRSV) are not attempting to promote Catholic doctrine.

**What is false:** It is false to say The King James Version is without Catholic influence. The Greek text on which it is

based is the work of a priest named Erasmus. The translators were all Anglican, a denomination that is at least 'Catholic-ish' in its doctrines (universal church, baptize infants by sprinkling, etc). This is evident in the rules imposed by the king such as:

#### **King James' Rules For Translators:**

**Rule #3** *"The old Ecclesiastical Words to be kept, viz. the Word Church not to be translated Congregation etc."*

#### **Translations Based on Byzantine Texts**

In 1516, a Catholic priest named Desiderius Erasmus, collected 6-10 Byzantine manuscripts and combined them – using Textual Criticism – into one document representing a Byzantine reading in most cases. The commonly available English translations using a Byzantine text include:

- King James Version (KJV)
- New King James Version (NKJV)
- Modern English Version (MEV)
- World English Bible (WEB)

#### **Translations Based on Alexandrian Texts**

In 1881, two men – Brooke Wescott and Fenton Hort – published "The New Testament in the Original Greek" to promote the Alexandrian text family, especially the Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus. The commonly available English translations using an Alexandrian text include:

- American Standard Version (ASV)
- English Revised Version (ERV)
- Good News Bible (GNT)

#### **Translations Based on 'Reasoned Eclecticism'**

Reasoned Eclecticism uses logical rules to determine each variant on a case-by-case basis. The publication is known as the Nestle-Aland (NA) or United Bible Society (UBS) text. Common English translations with this text include:

- English Standard Version (ESV)
- New International Version (NIV)
- New American Standard (NASB)
- Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)
- New Revised Standard (NRSV)
- New Living Translation (NLT)

## Aren't Modern Translations Less Literal Than The KJV?

Yes – or No – depending on which modern translations you're using for a comparison and what passage of scripture you're looking at. When translating Greek into English, translators are faced with difficult decisions: should they produce a word-for-word literal translation which can result in a difficult-to-read product, or should they translate ideas smoothly from one language to another at the risk of losing precision? There are three basic translation methods in use today: formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence and paraphrase (shown at right).

### Myles Coverdale on Multiple Translations:

“Now whereas the most famous interpreters of all give sundry judgments of the text (so far as it is done by the spirit of knowledge in the holy ghost) methink no man should be offended thereat, for they refer their doings in meekness to the spirit of truth in the congregation of God; and sure I am, that there commeth more knowledge and understanding of the scripture by their sundry translations, than by all the glosses of our sophistical doctors. For that one interpreteth something obscurely in one place, the same translateth another (or else he himself) more manifestly by a more plain vocable of the same meaning in another place. Be not thou offended therefore (good Reader) though one call a scribe, that another calleth a lawyer; or elders, that another calleth father and mother; or repentance, that another calleth penance or amendment. For if thou be not deceived by men's traditions, thou shalt find no more diversity between these terms than between four pence and a groat.”

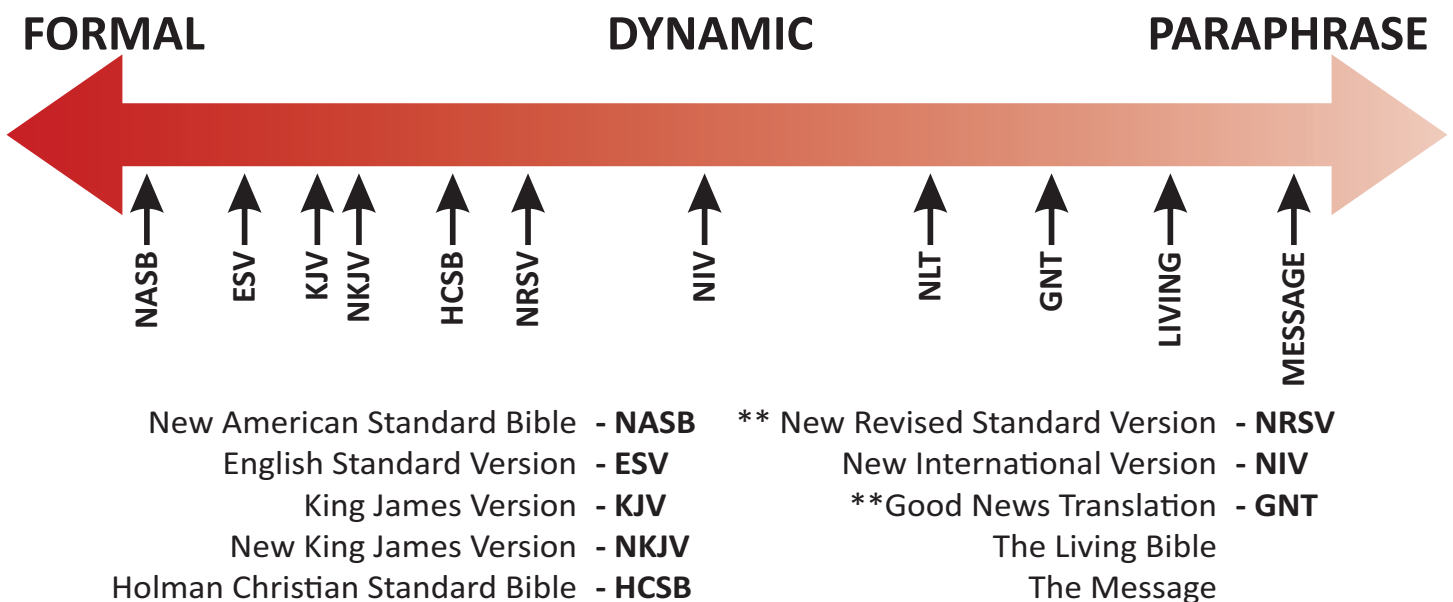
### Three Philosophies of Bible Translation

**Formal Equivalence** is sometimes called literal translation or word-for-word translation. The goal of formal equivalence is to preserve the original grammar and syntax of the Greek manuscript being translated. Word order is also maintained whenever practical.

**Dynamic Equivalence** is sometimes called functional translation or thought-for-thought translation. The goal of the translator is to preserve the intent of the text more than an even exchange of words. This sometimes makes the translator and interpreter, which is not ideal.

**Paraphrase Bibles**, in my opinion, should not be considered translations at all. They intend to put the Scripture into modern language and figures of speech that are not reflective of the original manuscripts. Most paraphrase Bibles are done by individuals and reflect less scholarship.

## TRANSLATION PHILOSOPHY SPECTRUM



\*\* Jehovah's Witness GNT and Catholic NRSV are on the list for comparison purposes only!

## **A Translation Test Case**

Is there only one “right” reading? The Greek text of this portion of Mark 12:38-40 and Luke 20:45-47 are virtually identical. Note how the King James translators, using a formal equivalence method, still arrived at different readings:

### **Mark 12:38–40 KJV**

... Beware of the scribes,  
which *love* to *go* in long  
*clothing*, and love *salutations*  
in the *marketplaces*, And the  
*chief* seats in the  
synagogues, and the  
*uppermost rooms* at feasts:  
Which devour widows' houses,  
and for a *pretence* make long  
prayers: *these* shall receive  
greater damnation.

### **Luke 20:45–47 KJV**

... Beware of the scribes,  
which *desire* to *walk* in long  
*robes*, and love *greetings*  
in the *markets*, and the  
*highest* seats in the  
synagogues, and the  
*chief rooms* at feasts:  
Which devour widows' houses,  
and for a *shew* make long  
prayers: *the same* shall receive  
greater damnation.