

# The Bible: What it is and How we got it

RCF Academy

Lesson 10: English Bibles

# English Bibles

- Principles
  - Which texts to use?
  - Literal Translations
    - Convey sentence structure, verbal, nuances, idioms of original languages
  - Dynamic Equivalence
    - Structure, style, and idioms can be adapted to new language
  - Paraphrase
    - Language and thoughts can be converted to common understanding
- Purpose of Translating
  - What is the aim of translation
  - For whom was it written
  - What is the main use
  - Who will be using it

# English Bibles

- Wycliffe Bible (1380)
  - First English bible.
  - First edition was New Testament literal translation from the Latin Vulgate
  - Second edition completed after his death, by student John Purvey
- Tyndale Bible (1526)
  - Began translating Pentateuch in London. Fled to Hamburg, then Wittenburg, Cologne, finally Worms.
  - Published first edition in 1526 and smuggled them into England
  - Controversial terms changed
    - Church = congregation
    - Priest = senior
    - Penance = repentance
    - Charity = Love

# English Bibles

- Coverdale Bible (1535)
  - Miles Coverdale (1488-1569)
  - Used various translations to make his “translation” in 1535
    - Tyndale Bible
    - Luther’s German Bible
    - Zurich Bible
    - Paganini's latin Bible
- Matthew Bible (1537)
  - John Rogers, follower of Tyndale who completed his work of the OT
  - Used a pen name of Thomas Matthew
  - Published in 1537 by appealing to King Henry VIII

# English Bibles

- **Great Bible (1539)**
  - Project of the Upper House of Convocation of Canterbury
  - Thomas Cromwell oversaw the project and enlisted Coverdale to translate using the Matthew Bible as the basis.
  - Released publically in 1539
  - Called “Great Bible” because of its size (16-½” x 11”)
  - In every church which encouraged public readings
- **Geneva Bible (1560)**
  - William Whittingham, a protestant refugee who fled to Geneva
  - Revised and translated the English scriptures exiting and released in 1560
  - First study bible with margin notes. Explicitly Calvinistic

# English Bibles

- Bishop's Bible (1568)
  - Matthew Parker updated the Great Bible
  - Completed in two years and was released in 1568.
- Douay-Rheims Bible (1582)
  - Catholic response to protestant English translations
  - William Allen and Gregory Martin translated Vulgate into English
  - Released NT from Reims in 1582 and OT from Douay in 1610
  - “Our Father which art in heaven, sanctified be thy name. Let thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, in earth also. Give us today our **superstantial** bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.”

# English Bibles

- King James

- 1611 Authorized Version

- King James sought to unify Christendom
    - Conference in Hampton Court in 1604 decided to make new translation
    - Gathered 54 translators from Anglicans and Puritans
    - Intent was to improve on what existed
    - Policies
      - Bishop's bible was to be the basis for revision and the original Greek and Hebrew texts were to be examined as well.
      - The same english words were to be used for similar Greek and Hebrew words.
      - Words necessary in English but not in Greek or Hebrew were to be italicised.
      - Biblical names were to correspond with common practical use.
      - Old ecclesiastical words were to be retained. "Congregation" and "washing" from the Tyndale version became "church" and "baptism" in the 1611
      - No marginal notes were to be added other than explanation of Greek and Hebrew words
      - Existing chapter and verse divisions were to be retained.

# English Bibles

- King James
  - 1611 Authorized Version
    - Completed in 5 years
    - Title of “Authorized” came from the respect of the people for the scholars, not any decree or law
    - Contained the Apocrypha
    - Geneva bible was still very popular amongst Puritans
  - Revisions
    - Codex Alexandrinus found after 1611 release
    - Revisions made in 1629, 1638, 1653, 1729 and varied between printers (LOOK UP “THE WICKED BIBLE”)
    - “It is probable...that our Authorized Version is as faithful a representation of the original scriptures as could have been formed at that period. But when we consider the immense accession that has been made, both to our critical and philological apparatus; when we consider that the most important sources of intelligence for the interpretation of the original scriptures were likewise opened after than period, we cannot possibly pretend that our Authorized Version does not require amendment.”



# English Bibles

- Revised Version (1885)
  - Samuel Wilberforce proposed a revision to Authorized Version in 1870
  - 16 scholars appointed over 54 translators, both British and American
  - Committees set up in America to unify acceptance
  - Policies
    - Alterations due to the adoption of a Greek text different from that used for the Authorized Version
    - Improvements where the Authorized Version was ambiguous
    - Correction of errors in the Authorized Version
    - Alterations where the Authorized Version inconsistently rendered the Greek through the use of more than one English word
    - Alterations where parallel passages were not rendered consistently.
  - Summary
    - Texts: Masoretic text for OT, and AV and Westcott and Hort's Greek text
    - Methods: Revision of AV and word for word translation of originals
    - Pros: very strong word for word translation of original languages
    - Cons: very poor English readings made it hard to replace AV

# English Translations

- American Standard Version (1901)
  - American scholars who worked on Revised Version continued to work on their own
  - 14 years later, Thomas Nelson publishers released the full version
  - Differences were archaic terms were swapped for modern terms
    - Holy Ghost replaced with Holy Spirit
    - Lord and God replaced with Jehovah
  - Did not overcome the Authorized Version
    - Advances in biblical archaeology rendered the text obsolete almost immediately. Just after its release, there were major findings of manuscripts for both New and Old Testament
    - There was rising interest in modern renditions
  - Summary
    - Texts: Masoretic text for OT, AV, and Westcott and Hort's Greek text plus others found
    - Methods: Revision of 1611 and word for word translation of originals
    - Pros: better word for word translation than the RV, read better in English, no Apocrypha included
    - Cons: Outdated early on, still poor English despite being better than RV

# English Translations

- The Revised Standard Version (1952)
  - ASV copyright ran out in 1928 so a revision was due
  - 32 scholars contributed including Bruce Metzger
  - Sought to embody the best results of modern scholarship as to the meaning of the scriptures, and express this meaning in English diction
  - NT was released in 1946, OT in 1952
  - Policies
    - Make use of the most recent textual and linguistic discoveries
    - Language is to be modern, but not Americanized. Good English is to be employed.
  - Summary:
    - Texts: Masoretic text for OT, ASV, improved eclectic Greek text
    - Methods: Revision of ASV and dynamic equivalent of original texts
    - Pros: better understanding of ancient language, reads better in English than any other at the time,
    - Cons: Outdated early on, still poor English despite being better than RV

# English Translations

- New American Standard Bible (1971)
  - Lockman Foundation sought to revise ASV
  - 58 scholars from a variety of denominations
  - Used a wide variety of manuscript resources
  - Policies
    - To adhere as closely as possible to the original languages
    - Make the translation in a fluent and readable style according to current English usage.
  - Summary:
    - Texts: Biblia Hebraica for OT, ASV, NA23
    - Methods: Revision of ASV and word for word of original texts
    - Pros: strict adherence to the ancient languages, most readable word for word translation, great for personal study
    - Cons: was over literalistic in its language which missed the meanings of certain texts, has a premillennial preference in the text

# English Translations

- New King James (1982)
  - Thomas Nelson publishers sought to update the language of Authorized Version
  - 130 evangelical scholars gathered
  - Used the latest Hebrew texts, but stuck strictly to the Textus Receptus which was used by the KJV
  - Summary:
    - Texts: Biblia Hebraica for OT, AV, Textus Receptus (1881)
    - Methods: Revision of AV and word for word of original texts
    - Pros: Modern language makes it more approachable for those who like the TR or Majority text
    - Cons: Readability is still rough compared to others. Lacks in its goal to retain KJV while being modern, since it differs with KJV in various places while also differing with Majority text in other places.

# English Translations

- New International Version (1978)
  - Evangelicals sought to make a universal English translation that is accurate and readable
  - 15 scholars oversaw 110 translators
  - Sought to find middle ground between literal and dynamic equivalent
  - Summary:
    - Texts: Biblia Hebraica for OT, eclectic text (NA and UBS)
    - Methods: literal/dynamic equivalent (thought for thought)
    - Pros: Modern language makes it more approachable for laymen, more accurate and literal than most dynamic equivalents or modern language transliterations, better thought translation of idioms and anthropomorphic language.
    - Cons: not consistent with measurements, softens the impact of some passages, not the best for studying

# English Translations

- The Message (2002)
  - Paraphrase by Eugene Peterson, professor of Theology at Regent College
  - sought to convey the tone, rhythm, events, and ideas in ways that we commonly think today.
  - Paraphrase of the original texts
  - NT released in 1993, OT fully finished in 2002
  - Summary:
    - Texts: UBS 4th edition
    - Methods: paraphrase
    - Pros: can give insight to the application of a certain passage
    - Cons: does not always communicate what the text actually says, contains various portions not in the best manuscripts

# English Translations

- New Living Translation (1996)
  - Tyndale House publishers sought to revise and overhaul the paraphrase translation “The Living Bible”
  - 90 scholars gathered and employed new translation methods compared to the source material over 7 years
  - Summary:
    - Texts: Biblia Hebraica for OT, UBS 4th edition, NA 27th
    - Methods: Revision of The Living Bible, dynamic equivalent (thought for thought)
    - Pros: one of the most readable translations among the dynamic equivalents,
    - Cons: readability is preferred to theological accuracy, theological choices are often the least agreed upon



# English Translations

- English Standard Bible (2000)
  - Published by Crossway as a revision to the Revised Standard Version
  - It is an “essentially literal” translation which seeks to render the text as word for word literal as possible while making the reading approachable without becoming a dynamic equivalent
  - Summary:
    - Texts: Biblia Hebraica for OT, UBS 4th edition, NA 27th
    - Methods: Revision of the RSV, word for word of the originals
    - Pros: one of the most readable translations among word for word translations,
    - Cons: can have ambiguous genitives that are left up to the reader to understand, inconsistent with genders