

Overview of English Bible translations

Amplified Bible

The Amplified Bible showed the verbal equivalence and amplification of word meanings in the text. It started in 1965 and is revised in 1987. Mostly used in charismatic circles, because of the lack of Greek and Hebrew teachings from the pastors.

Common English Bible (CEB)

The Common English Bible is not simply a revision or update of an existing translation. It is a bold new translation designed to meet the needs of Christians as they work to build a strong and meaningful relationship with God through Jesus Christ. A key goal of the translation team was to make the Bible accessible to a broad range of people; it's written at a comfortable level for over half of all English readers. As the translators did their work, reading specialists working with seventy-seven reading groups from more than a dozen denominations review the texts to ensure a smooth and natural reading experience. Easy readability can enhance church worship and participation, and personal Bible study. It also encourages children and youth to discover the Bible for themselves, perhaps for the very first time.

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH BIBLE (CEV)

A rendering of the intent of the Hebrew and Greek text published in 1995 by the American Bible Society. It uses inclusive gender language and is sensitive to concerns over Jewish sensitivities. There is some controversy over this version's claim to contain no anti-Judaism since there are biblical texts which seem, in the original, to express such sentiments. The interpretive translation strategy eliminates these and sometimes masks the language of the original writer. Although this is done to help modern readers avoid drawing wrong inferences about Judaism, this version is sometimes less of a translation and more of a commentary. A readable version but should be used with caution and checked against other versions.

ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV)

An "essentially literal" translation that seeks to capture the precise wording and personal style of the original writers. Produced by an international 100-member team of many denominations who share a "commitment to historic evangelical orthodoxy, and to the authority and sufficiency of the inerrant Scriptures." Its emphasis is on 'word-for-word' correspondence, at the same time taking into account differences of grammar, syntax, and idiom between current literary English and the original languages. Thus it seeks to be transparent to the original text, letting the reader see as directly as possible the structure and meaning of the original". First published in 2001. (www.esv.org).

JERUSALEM BIBLE (JB)

Catholic. Originally a French translation of the original languages. The English translation of the French was checked against the original languages, but sometimes the French is followed more closely than the original languages. It includes an abbreviated form of the original French notes. Although the English is a translation of a translation, it is still thought to have captured well the sense of the original. It is good for study and reading purposes.

KING JAMES VERSION (KJV)

Also called the Authorized version, this text dates from 1611. It is a revision of the Bishop's Bible (which was somewhat based on the original languages) by a commission appointed by King James I. It was

favorably received by the authorities and authorized to be read in the churches. It has had an important influence on English literature. However, it is based on III CE (or later) Byzantine Greek texts, which have subsequently proven to be fairly unreliable from a text critical perspective. The **New King James Version (NKJV)** updates the language of the KJV while preserving its basic literary structure. There is also **The 21st Century King James Version (KJ21)**.

NEW ENGLISH BIBLE (NEB)

British Protestant churches set out to produce a completely new translation of the Bible, based on the Greek text, under the general directorship of C.H. Dodd (1961/70). It shows excellent scholarship and vigorous modern British style. The translators had access to all the important Greek manuscripts, including the major codices. It is good for general reading but is not literal enough for detailed study. Now revised as the **REVISED ENGLISH BIBLE (REB)**.

NEW AMERICAN BIBLE (NAB)

Catholic. A translation from the original languages by a group of Roman Catholic scholars done in the 1970s and revised in the 1980s. Also includes helpful reading notes. A good study Bible.

NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE (NASB or NASV)

In 1901 the American Standard Version was produced by American Protestants who reworked the Revised Version (not the RSV), which was a revision of the KJV done by British Scholars on the basis of available manuscripts. It used readings preferred by the Americans and with "American" English and weights and measures. In 1963/71 a conservative revision of this became the NASB. They used the most up to date critical editions of the biblical texts and attempted to be as literal as possible in terms of translation and sentence structure. A good Bible for close textual study.

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV)

Evangelical. A translation of recent critical editions of the biblical texts by conservative, protestant biblical scholars done in 1973/78. It is based on a dynamic equivalence model (see below) and thus the text is very readable. It is recommended for reading large blocks of material. This is probably the most widely-used translation in the world. There is also a **New International Readers Version (NirV)** which is for readers of English as a second language. In England a gender inclusive language edition was produced but has generally not caught on as well as the original NIV. A new, gender inclusive language edition of the NIV - "Today's New International Version" (TNIV) - is quite controversial among the conservative evangelical community (www.tniv.info/index.php).

THE LIVING BIBLE (TLB)

A paraphrase of the Bible done by one man, Kenneth Taylor, between 1962 and 1970. His sources were the English versions of the Bible available to him. He took some liberties in his modernization of the English text which often alters and distorts the biblical message. It has a fundamentalist theological bias.

THE MESSAGE

A translation of the New Testament by a single person, Eugene Peterson, rather than a committee, that seeks to capture the expressiveness of the original languages. Whilst not a word-for-word translation, The Message has become very popular because of its poetic language and readability. Earlier versions did not include Chapter and Verse numbers, which made it more difficult to cross-reference against other Bibles. This was improved with an update, The Message Version 2.

NEW LIVING TRANSLATION (NLT)

Conservative Evangelical. A new translation (1996) of the original languages based on a dynamic equivalence model done by a large group of American evangelical scholars. Although marketed as a

revision of the Living Bible (to capitalize on the earlier version's popularity) it represents a fresh, easy to read translation. It is better used for reading large amounts at a time than for detailed study of a text.

NEW JERUSALEM BIBLE (NJB)

Catholic. Published in 1985, it is a completely new translation into English of the original Hebrew and Greek text of the Bible. It is a more literal translation than the original JB. The introductions and notes are revised and expanded to take account of recent advances in scholarship. Where some aspect of an interpretation of a text is involved in the translation, the interpretation chosen by the editors of the JB has generally been followed by the NJB. It reflects consistency in translation of similar synoptic passages and in using the same English word for a particular Greek or Hebrew word. Primarily a study Bible but it also reads well.

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION (NRSV)

True to its name, this is a revision of the RSV, taking full account of the most recent papyrological finds. The committee of scholars was able to break free from adherence to the KJV. It attempts to use inclusive gender language. It is somewhat quirky in its translation in a few places but generally it is a good choice for reading and study.

REVISED STANDARD VERSION (RSV)

Commissioned in 1937 and authorized by the National Council of Churches, this American work is the best of various attempts to revise the KJV (published 1946/52). It stays faithful to the KJV where possible, but uses modern scholarship and a good sense of English. Its two problems are that its loyalty to the KJV prevents the full play of modern critical knowledge and it retains much "Bible English." It was able to employ better Greek manuscripts than its predecessor, particularly some that are both early and important. It is a fairly literal translation and thus good for study purposes.

TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION (TEV)

= GOOD NEWS BIBLE (GNB)

Published in the 1960-70s by the United Bible Societies. A translation of the original texts which does not use the traditional vocabulary and style found in English versions but "attempts in this century to set forth the Biblical content and message in standard, everyday form of English." A few "cultural" or "historical" notes are supplied to explain aspects of the texts. Available in Catholic and non-Catholic versions. In some editions line drawings attempt to illustrate various aspects of the text. In 1990 a revised edition was published which attempted to use inclusive language and correct passages in which the translation was seen to be problematic or insensitive from either a stylistic or an exegetical (accuracy) point of view. Good for general reading and to supplement more literal translations for Bible study. The Good News Bible is widely used in schools in the UK.

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