

How the Bible Came to Us Translation Considerations

1. What manuscript should be used for the Bible translation? How do you know which one is the most authentic and correct?

Textual Criticism is the scientific method used to evaluate the authenticity and reliability of the ancient manuscripts and provides the means to determine how they relate to each other; the objective is to find the earliest copy. Textual Criticism considers 2 types of evidences but a third factor plays a role in this first of a two-step process:

- a) External evidence: This process evaluates the quality and age of the manuscripts as the means to evaluate the variant under study.
- b) Internal evidence: This process focuses on studying the copyist / authors such as their scribal methods, habits, and vocabulary.

Here is an example of differences that occur when different manuscripts are used for translation:

And if I give away all my possessions to charity, and if I surrender my body so that I may glory, but do not have love, it does me no good. (1 Cor 13:3, **NKJV**)

If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. (1 Cor 13:3, **NIV**)

Bible Version	Manuscripts used for translation
New American Standard Bible (NASB)	OT: Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Masoretic Text) and Biblia Hebraica Quinta with some use of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, and the Targums. NT: Editio Critica Maior 2
New King James Version (NKJV)	OT: Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Masoretic Text) with some use of Ben Hayyim edition of the Mikraot Gedolot (1524-25) NT: Textus Receptus with some use of Nestle-Aland's Novum Testamentum Graece and the Majority Text.
English Standard Version (ESV)	OT: Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Masoretic Text) with some use of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate. NT: Nestle-Aland's Novum Testamentum Graece and United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament.
New International Version (NIV)	OT: Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Masoretic Text) with some ancient variants. NT: Nestle-Aland's Novum Testamentum Graece by and United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament.

2. What method should be used to translate the manuscript into the desired language? How do you approach the historical time difference between the two languages (i.e. words, grammar, phrases, history, culture, etc.)? For example, how do you translate weights (i.e. talents vs. pounds, etc.), measure (i.e. cubits vs. meters, etc.), money (shekel vs. dollar, etc.), and euphemisms (i.e. outhouse, toilet, water closet, etc.)?

Literal / Formal Equivalence / Word for Word: This method attempts to translate the grammar, language, and style of the original language with little attempt to bridge the *historical distance* between the two languages. Some of the challenges are a) words, terms, phrases of one language that lack any complement in another, and b) the translation is harder to read and understand. Examples of American Bible translations using this approach:

NASB (Lockman Foundation, 1970 – original translation): For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; (Col 2:9-10)

NKJV (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982 - derived from KJV 1611): For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. (Col 2:9-10)

ESV (Crossway Publisher, 2001 - derived from RSV 1971): For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. (Col 2:9-10)

Dynamic / Dynamic Equivalence / Thought for Thought: Concentrating on the thematic interpretation for the target language, this method attempts to translate the grammar, words, and style of the original language into the equivalent of the other but maintains the *historical distance* of historical facts and objects.

NIV (Biblica / International Bible Society 1978 - original translation): For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. (Col 2:9-10)

Free: This method attempts to translate the ideas of the original language into another and is usually done by a single translator. There are three main areas of risk here: a) the reader is accepting the interpretation of the paraphraser, b) there is the possibility of theological distortion despite the translator's best effort, and c) the reader does not realize that the translation is a paraphrase. All translators are very cognizant of the dangers of paraphrases and state it clearly in their introductions. For the severe critic, the question that one would have to consider is, "if any comprehension is paramount, which translation would you want?"

The Living Bible: (Kenneth Taylor, 1970 – derived from ASV 1901): For in Christ there is all of God in a human body; so you have everything when you have Christ, and you are filled with God through your union with Christ. He is the highest Ruler, with authority over every other power. (Col 2:9-10)

The Message (Eugene H. Peterson, 1993-2002 – original paraphrase): Everything of God gets expressed in him, so you can see and hear him clearly. You don't need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ, and the emptiness of the universe without him. When you come to him, that fullness comes together for you, too. His power extends over everything. (Col 2:9-10)

For Bible study, it is recommended that one have available two Bibles: 1) one with dynamic translation for its accuracy (of historical distance) and ease of reading, and 2) one with literal translation for its literal fidelity to the manuscripts that the Bible is based on. The Free translation would not be recommended for serious Bible study but does have a place in one's library for those who seldom read or for those who desire a simpler text for reading (i.e. children).

The Teacher Note for this lesson is at:
<http://Helpmewithbiblestudy.org/25Curriculum/Class6-8/print/Bible.Transmission.TranslationConsiderations.6-8.pdf>

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A question that is often asked is, “why are there so many versions of the Bible?” This introduces the student to textual criticism and translation approaches. This brief overview will help the student gain a sense in what efforts go into the production of a Bible translation and perhaps an appreciation of the hundreds of scholars involved with the process.

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To understand the following table, explain to the student that all ancient manuscripts have been published so that they can be disseminated for wider study and are known by their publisher title such as the Ben Hayyim edition of the Mikraot Gedolot, Septuagint, Latin Vulgate, etc.

Almost all ancient manuscripts are recovered as fragments. Because of recent recovery of ancient manuscripts (such as the Dead Sea Scrolls), scholars use these fragments to determine the earliest version of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, which are published and updated as new discoveries are made (i.e. Biblia Hebraica Quinta, Editio Critica Maior 2, etc.). These published manuscripts, composed from various ancient manuscripts, serve as the basis of more current Bible translations.

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